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Traditional media and creating a public sphere in a new media dominated environment: the case of Newzroom Afrika

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Traditional media and creating a public sphere in a new media dominated environment.

The case of Newzroom Afrika

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Abstract

This study is conducted against the backdrop of the interaction between South African youth, new media and traditional media. Recently, it has become clear that new media is dominating the media industry. However, there is room for traditional media journalists to be gatekeepers of information and to facilitate public discussion. This study aims to answer the question: Can traditional media still create a public sphere for the youth in South Africa? Newzroom Afrika (hereafter NATV) is used as a case study.

The study uses qualitative research in the form of open-ended interviews with South African youth and major role players within NATV. The data and quoted literature clearly indicate that the youth are apathetic towards political news and are unlikely to watch television news.

Public sphere and agenda-setting frameworks are used as guidelines to identify why South African youth populations are disengaged from traditional media and whether NATV can create a public sphere where the youth can safely engage.

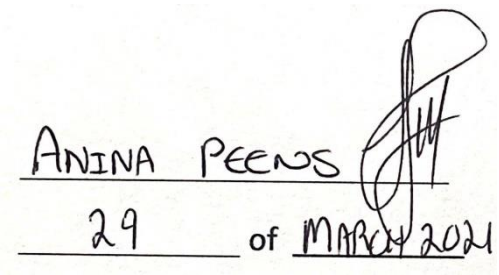
Some previous studies prove that even though youth avoid traditional media, they often look to it for confirmation of news stories published in the public domain and social media.

This places the newly established NATV in the perfect position to create a public sphere where the youth can engage and critically discuss relatable news. However, the data indicates that NATV currently does not create this space as it is enveloped in the systematic agenda setting like other news broadcasters in South Africa. This systematic approach to news production includes political talking heads and repetitive political news stories that do not interest the youth who are distant from politics. The study therefore argues that to create a public sphere, NATV must take on the role as gatekeeper and facilitator and become much more active in online spaces such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts by Coursework and Research Report in the Department of Journalism, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.



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CHAPTER ONE

1 Introduction

It is well known that a successful democracy depends on the involvement of citizens in the national conversation, and it is of pertinent importance that the youth participate (Malila & Oelofsen, 2016).

The interaction between youth, news and politics has been extensively researched across the world. The findings of various surveys to establish whether a general apathy or alienation from national politics and news exists amongst the youth (Malila & Oelofsen, 2016; Wayne, Petley, Murray & Henderson, 2010; Malila, Oelofsen, Garman & Wasserman, 2013; de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Ndlovu, 2015), suggest that South African youth are becoming disengaged from politics and political news does not interest them, relate to them or affect them.

Over the last ten years, the internet has developed rapidly, and more people are online than what was the case a decade ago, globally and in South Africa (Internetworldstats, 2020). Much of the research cited in this report was conducted before or during this rapid expansion of the online space. A number of the afore mentioned have concluded that the potential of the internet in drawing and engaging young people in news and politics was laid at the door of this expansion.

This research is conducted against the backdrop of the launch of Newzroom Afrika (hereafter NATV) in 2019, a youth-focused television news channel.

The research aims to:

a) Establish where the young South African content consumer resides, with a specific interest in establishing where they get their news and whether they are interested in news and politics at all and to
b) Ascertain whether the NATV channel could mobilise a young audience to watch television news in an era of internet dominance.

Given the fact that NATV is a traditional media platform, the research sets out to establish whether it is possible for a traditional platform to engage the youth in news and politics and if new media can be implemented alongside traditional media to achieve this. By using new and old media, the research asks whether NATV can create a safe space for the youth that can then be described as a designated public sphere. Can NATV take on a role of mediator or facilitator between members of its audience in order to create a safe space for deliberation on news and politics in the interest of promoting democracy?

The research indicates that the youth do not get involved in discussions on news and politics in the online space, as they describe it as ‘dangerous’.

The data is collected through focused interviews with South African youth individuals hailing from different geographical backgrounds, cultures, and ages. By using qualitative data collection tools, the research aims to provide a broad overview of the South African youth’s perception of traditional media and political news. It aims to understand their interaction and engagement with news. It further aims to determine whether it is possible to create a public sphere for them through utilising and merging traditional and new media platforms. The data collected also includes semi-structured interviews with decision-makers in NATV to establish whether NATV is capable and willing to become the public sphere where youth can engage with news and deliberate on issues that may eventually influence or change national policy.

None of the literature cited or quoted in the literature review focuses on the role that a new youth-focused television news channel can play in South African society. There is no research on how such a channel will be able to attract and engage the youth in national politics and how social media strategies could be applied to link the online news consumer to a traditional linear platform.

Furthermore, other studies have been done on the role traditional mainstream media can play in establishing a public sphere by using new media platforms such as social media sites (Haumann, 2014). Such studies were done long before the new youth focused NATV entered the media space in South Africa and they never focused on broadcast news media.

2 Background

NATV was launched as a 24-hour television news service in May 2019 on satellite pay-television platform DSTV (DSTV, 2019). Around that time, more than one-third of South African citizens owned smart phones and an estimated 90 million people had mobile internet connections (Statista, 2020). Across the globe, people were and are still moving online:

> "The number of global active internet users reached in 2015 is a total of 3,175 billion, which is nearly half of the world's population (7,357 billion)" (Weimann & Brosius, 2016)

In 2016, South Africans were introduced to the global streaming service Netflix (Brandsouthafrica, 2016) and could access the service for a monthly fee of less than R200.00d. A year before, DSTV launched Showmax, its own streaming entertainment service (Forbes, 2016). By the end of 2017, DSTV had lost more than 140 000 subscribers on their satellite TV service (Coursehero, 2019).

During this seemingly challenging time for the linear television industry, NATV entered the market with the aim of drawing young South Africans to watch television news (Katapodis, 2021; Phage, 2021). This, after the channel's owners, Thabile Ngwato and Thokozani Nkosi were awarded DSTV's bid to start the channel (Alberts, 2020).

Channel 405 on the satellite platform was vacant after DSTV removed the controversial 24-hour news channel, ANN7, from its bouquet in 2018 (eNCA, 2018). ANN7 was owned by the politically aligned Gupta family. Hailing from India, the family had close ties with former South African president, Jacob Zuma, and used their news platform to manipulate their news agenda in favour of Zuma and his cadres (Citizen, 2019).

Channel 405 is housed between news channels, eNCA, SABC News and world news services CNN and Al Jazeera. DSTV wanted its own news channel (Alberts, 2020), that could compare to the 24-hour television news channel eNCA, owned by a private media group and state-owned ETV and SABC News (Evans, 2014). NATV is thus funded by DSTV but is a 100% black-owned company shared by non-journalists

Ngwato and Nkosi who promised to add an alternative and fresh take on news at the time of the launch (Kekana, 2019).

Journalism's normative role in a democracy is to inform the public on issues affecting them (McChesney, 2008). In theory, within a public sphere, the media plays a pivotal role in creating or facilitating a safe space for citizens to deliberate news events of national interest, outside of the state (Calhoun, 1992).

The creation of NATV brought with it the potential to establish a public sphere with the normative mandate to promote democracy, especially given the fact that South African youth are apathetic towards politics. This could have been a safe space for the youth to engage with topics relevant to them and to add their voice to the national political conversations and subsequently influence policy changes.

One year after its launch, the channel gained some momentum and market share and viewership was growing (Phage, 2021; Katapodis, 2021) but not amongst the targeted youth. Despite this, shortly before the channel's first birthday, Ngwato was quoted thus:

> "Going into the bid for this channel, we were clear that we wanted to attract a younger news-watching audience because we know that news-watching people are predominantly 50+, and we've been able to achieve our desired epicentre, which is 35" (Finn, 2020).

Although the CEO told the national media that the channel succeeded in attracting a young audience, an interview with NATV's Director of News showed the contrary:

> "So, we are finding that we are appealing to a slightly older news audience. And when I say older, I mean forties, so it's not really old, but older than what was potentially initially the target" (Katapodis, 2021).

On the other hand, the Editor-in-Chief, Malebo Phage, describes the change in the channel's target market as part of the channel's strategy:

> "Yes, 18 to 49. But as we roughly put it, the youth are now consuming news more and more online and not that much on the traditional media and like any other broadcaster, you know, we revisit our strategies from time to time. You

somehow respond to the needs of the public, so our target audience has now shifted to 25 years old and 65 plus and the epicentre is of course 45" (Phage, 2021).

During the current worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, the role of broadcast news must be relooked at because the pandemic caused massive changes in lifestyles and the way in which people consume and disseminate information. There were spikes in television news consumption (Alberts, 2020) and for a channel like NATV, this was a golden time to establish a loyal audience. But did they use this opportunity?

In the context of analysing a new media platform in the very limited broadcasting sector, it is important to understand the development of television news in South Africa.

2.1 The Development of Television News in South Africa

The broader context and history of television news in South Africa may assist in understanding the reasons for what appears to be a disconnect between the youth and the media.

The South African government's ownership and control over the national broadcaster, the SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) brings various challenges for the media industry over and above the challenges of the perceived disconnect that exists between the South African youth, politics and news media. Although SABC 1, 2 and 3 TV channels are free to air and are watched by millions of South Africans, it does not mean that the masses perceive SABC as trustworthy given the broadcaster's history of editorial state control (Evans, 2014). It also does not mean that privately owned and independent media are automatically accepted as being credible and unbiased. It is paramount to note that privately owned 24-hour news channels have never been free to air for the masses and that they are only available to those who can afford it. This exclusion of the majority of the population will be discussed in the theoretical framework section of this research report.

Since 1976, the expansion of television platforms has been slow. This reflects the possible political restrictions of the government and its control over the distribution of news and information. South Africa was one of the last countries in the world to introduce television to its citizens. South Africans did not have visual access to amongst others, the first moon landing in 1969 nor the crowning of the first Miss World in 1966 (Evans, 2014). The lack of this access kept South Africans outside of the global conversation.

At the onset of television, the government's ownership of the SABC and its control over issuing of television licenses, indicated its sole control over what information it deemed in public interest and what information they kept from the public.

The first privately owned pay-television channel to receive a broadcasting license in South Africa was Mnet. The channel was launched by the newspaper group Naspers. At the time, Mnet was only permitted to broadcast for two hours daily and the license agreement restricted Mnet from broadcasting news (Pitchford, 2013).

Mnet’s programme, Carte Blanche, which covers current affairs as a spin-off of what was happening in the news, was launched in 1988 (Pitchford, 2013). Carte Blanche has been on television screens ever since. The in-depth nature of Carte Blanche, producing second wave news and deeper investigation into news events, has kept this programme in the same primetime slot on Sunday evening since its first broadcast. As one of the longest running investigative news shows, the programme is well trusted, and its producers and journalists enforce accountability from the subjects they address.

For more than 20 years, state-controlled information and news on SABC was the only news broadcasted by television stations. It was not until 1998, when eTV was founded (eNCA, 2018), that state-controlled television licenses allowed for independent media groups to broadcast news. eTV was launched as the first independent free-to-air television platform in 1998, and the only free alternative to the state-controlled SABC.

eTV had a bigger reach than Mnet because access to the platform was free. It became the first platform to provide alternative news programmes outside of the SABC.

In January 1999, eTV aired its first news bulletin called eNews (eTV, 2008). Its 24-hour satellite news service that was established ten years later was named after the first bulletin, eNews, and later rebranded to eNews Channel Africa (eNCA, 2020). eNCA became synonymous with news and current affairs as South Africans were now offered an independent, impartial voice; in comparison to what they have been used to:

> "… during the past decade the channel's most distinctive programming has undoubtedly been its news. eNews is widely regarded as the most reliable and independent television news source in the country and its prime-time bulletins are watched by an average of 1.6 million viewers each night. The success of the eNews brand spawned the launch of the 24-hour eNews channel, which launched in June this year" (Bizcommunity, 2008).

In 2014, the founder and CEO, Marcel Golding resigned amidst pressure from the board of eTV's holding company, HCI (Hoskens Consolidated investments). The board accused Golding of gross misconduct after buying shares from the satellite company, Ellies (Benjamin, 2014), the manufacturer of set-top satellite boxes that eTV was planning to introduce to the market. The board, of which Golding was the chairman, accused Golding of acquiring the shares without the knowledge of the board (Brownlee, 2014). Golding resigned citing reasons of political interference in the news content by a trade union that is a member of the HCI board. In a public statement he said that he was railroaded after he refused news coverage on requests made by ANC politicians:

> "The disciplinary hearing has been launched after months of attempts to get me to relinquish the chair of the board of HCI and resign as CEO of eTV and Sabido as a result of my refusal to permit eTV to be used for political purposes by a trade union that is invested in the group" (Golding, 2014).

Given eTV's credible news background and its position as a trusted news source in South Africa, the ousting of Golding from eTV resulted in widespread debates and awareness regarding ownership of news media companies. The researcher assumes that the ousting of Golding may have had a significant impact on the credibility of eNCA

and its audience's trust and that it took eNCA many years to recover to its former glory (Roper, 2020).

While eNCA restructured its strategy and management after Golding's departure, another independent 24-hour television news channel, ANN7, attempted to set the national news agenda. Given the political interference in the channel, it soon became known as the Gupta-channel and the channel lost its credibility due to reports of corruption and political interference in news content mostly from former president Jacob Zuma himself:

> "With some of the Gupta brothers even working at the editorial helm and deciding what stories to cover, South Africans quickly began to understand that ANN7 was a textbook definition of Fake News" (Andersen, 2018).

Shortly after ANN7 was taken off DSTV, NATV was launched into the already turbulent waters of the broadcasting news media in South Africa at the time. Notwithstanding the rapidly growing new media offering, the channel was faced not only with competing for market share in the news media sector but taxed with the political baggage of its predecessors. It did not only have to build an audience but also establish credibility as a news source (Phage, 2021).

2.2 Politics and Television as a Traditional Media Platform

Reportage on political events is the norm in national news media, especially in the broadcasting sector. If one watches television news at any given time, political events are often at the centre of every report. Since this research report is focused on a case study within the broadcast news media, the problem with news content in this context will be the central focus.

The view that political news is necessarily 'hard' and leading news, is indicative of the state of news media around the world, and this is not new. Hard news is described as "timely, important and consequential, such as politics, international affairs and business news" while soft news refers to human-interest stories and entertainment (digitalnewsreport, n.d.). In the 1980s already, the media was criticised for being machined to report on politics as hard news. This is mainly because news sources are usually drawn from the government or those in charge of the status quo. Journalists

also make use of established networks of people to consult when reporting on a news story, but their contact lists are limited to those in power and those who make the news:

> "…there is little doubt that the centre of news generation is the link between reporter and official, the interaction of the representatives of the news bureaucracies and the government bureaucracies. This is clear especially when one examines the actual daily practices of journalists" (Schudson, 1989).

An analysis of the state of news broadcasting highlights this as a reality in South Africa. Broadcast news media in South Africa is dominated by political news due to the ingrained systematic approach of news production practised internationally. This means that the way in which news content is sourced and generated remains unchanged, worldwide. News is dominated by those 'making' the news such as politicians and people in power.

Not only is this a result of the systematic approach and established networks journalists rely on but the way in which stories are positioned or told are also part of an approach that may have become outdated in the new media environment. There are tried and tested formats of storytelling that journalists rely on, and these moulded frames hardly ever change. Simon and Mugdha (2008) refer to the latter as 'communicative frames':

> "Routinely structuring and delivering news today are a number of 'communicative frames'. These professional ways of communicating 'news' have become naturalised through time and are now widely (probably universally) deployed by television journalists around the world". (Simon & Mugdha, 2008).

These frames referred to include the reporting frame, cultural display, dominant frame, content frame, contention frame, investigative frame, campaigning frame, cultural recognition and mythic tales (Simon & Mugdha, 2008). The frame used is closely determined by the agenda of the news usually derived from the go-to sources as explained earlier. In South Africa, the reporting frame is dominant. News stories are merely short, updated versions of news events regurgitated in a short format in what

is described as information conveyance and surveillance as part of the daily production cycle of television news (Simon & Mugdha, 2008). Stories within this reporting frame in the South African news broadcasting context can be described as headlines and leading news and are mostly dominated by political news and events. Followed by the reporting frame is the dominant frame, which is the same as the reporting frame, but these news stories rely on one external source (Simon & Mugdha, 2008). In order to publish a story, a journalist has to verify information based on a source who can confirm the facts. This source is usually a government official, politician or accustomed expert/analyst, sourced from an existing network/contact list, and the story therefore remains unchallenged by alternative views (Simon & Mugdha, 2008). This systematic approach to news production is aligned to what Schudson (1989) refers to as the sociology of news. Given the existing apathy towards news due to political apathy, together with the monotonous sourcing of political stories and the unchallenged use of the same frames, alienating the youth from the news can be a final result.

Institutional practices within the newsroom may further lead to audience alienation. This refers to the actual delivery of the stories that are determined by the systematic world of news production and the length and depth of a news story. The time limitation designated to television news stories can lead to disinterest as the news can become mere superficial updates. In the publication of stories for 24-hour news, the timeframe of the insert ranges between thirty seconds and one minute and thirty seconds. A story is hardly ever longer than that. This systematic approach to news is deep-rooted in news production practices across the world and it is hard to change. Even if a new/young journalist joins a newsroom and wants to take a different approach to the news publication, they will soon give up and become a part of the system.

> “If the organisational theorists are generally correct, it does not matter who they are or where they come from; they will be socialized quickly into the values and routines in the daily rituals of journalism” (Schudson, 1989).

This is a clear indication that broadcast news is in a crisis. But if it was already criticised in the 1980s, why is it still the practice today? Interviews with various television news practitioners found that although the editorial teams that publish the news are aware of the systematic approach to news, they don’t break free from it. During their survey, the Head of News and Current Affairs at SABC at the time of the interview said that

he would tell stories differently, but that the news production norm must be followed and that editors stick to the tried and tested methods:

> “I think that the way we present news is largely influenced by the way that news is presented internationally. I've argued for a very long time that I would rather do less stories longer and better than this obsession that we all have with stories not exceeding 1 minute 30 seconds” (Simon & Mugdha, 2008).

Research conducted by Wayne et al. (2010) based on television news and young people in the United Kingdom, also suggests that broadcast news is in a crisis:

> “On the political front, television news finds itself locked into uncritical reportage of the institutions of political power that have a declining legitimacy amongst the wider public” (Wayne et al., 2010).

The systematic approach practised by broadcasters, as discussed above, may lead to citizens turning to other sources of information available to get a variety of news and opinions in order to derive their own conclusions. The internet provides all the resources necessary for this. If there are alternative platforms disseminating news and information, why do people have to tune in to broadcast news? In fact, now that there are various sources available online, the news consumer can become critical of broadcasters that lack representative voices and views. If all mainstream news publications follow the same format and drive the same agenda, the consumer can become distrusting of the media and view it as a collective, rather than individual publications speaking to specific publics on topics that affect them.

That is why broadcasting must be re-examined, especially with regard to the interrelationship that can be fostered between traditional and new media. This stresses the importance of understanding media consumption in modern times. Understanding media consumption is key to communicating with consumers and social media is challenging traditional media in that sense (Limelight Consulting, 2017).

2.3 New Media: The South African Youth and News Consumption

The internet allows the public to engage with the media and in turn allows the media to become aware of issues outside of its go-to sources and networks. Research has established that young people want to be informed about the news (Pitt, 2019). They do not want to be catered for specifically with 'softer' news and news that news practitioners may think is of interest to them (Wayne et al., 2010; Mitchelstein & Matassi, 2017). Internationally, some news broadcasters embrace this and are adapting to the new media environment to draw the youth to their platforms, albeit it a slow process. On a question of how to get young people to watch TV news, Harvey Levin, the founder of TMZ (Thirty-Mile Zone), an American tabloid paper, was quoted saying that the next generation of TV news will need to be "different" and that future journalists will need to determine what, specifically, "different" means (Wallace, 2017). He also suggested that news consumers should be engaged in the news and that this can be achieved by the use of viewers' videos or amateur videos or photo submissions that can be added to the news story (Wallace, 2017). Although there is general consensus globally that good news is not news, Levin suggests that news publications must change this notion:

> "In order to truly win over a larger audience, and in particular, young people, newscasts need to do more in-depth, feel-good human-interest stories on a daily basis… even a small change in the way we gather and present news can make a big difference" (Wallace, 2017).

Despite a necessary change in the approach to news content and the way in which stories are packaged, how the information reaches the youth is of cardinal importance. A broadcaster may be able to package the news in a way that interests the youth, but if the story does not reach the young consumer, the entire adapted process is futile. CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System), one of the oldest and most established news companies in America (Britannica.com), is one international news media company that is leading the way in adapting to the new media environment. Despite being a traditional broadcast platform, an entire on-demand platform is available online:

> "The network (in other words) is trying to lure millennials not by providing programming targeted to a young audience, but by making the news available

> for the way millennials watch it – on platforms other than TVs… CBSN's leaders openly admit that there is plenty of work to be done. From embracing social media to diversifying the news gathering techniques right down to the way news stories are told" (Mzezewa, 2015).

If an established news broadcaster like CBSN – that is also accustomed to the systematic approach to news as set by the industry over time – can change their approach, it may lead the way for other broadcasters to change their strategies.

Central to this adaptation to new media, is engaging the audience online. This has been reiterated by CBSN's owners (Mzezewa, 2015). Broadcast media in South Africa still seems to have a long road ahead in terms of engaging young people with news content online. Some may argue that South Africans are not following the news online and that a model such as CBSN's online news portal may not be as successful due to the high cost of data and a lack of access to the internet. Contrary to this belief, Internetworldstats (2020) states that a large portion of the world's population is online, and they are on streaming services such as YouTube. Access is thus not seen as a challenge. What is seen as a challenge is the way in which news stories appear (or do not appear) online and how they are curated to engage the youth and the public at large. Because the youth are online, an audience exists online. Therefore, access to DSTV and broadcast platforms is also not supposed to be a challenge when it is true that the youth can be reached online. Streaming news online when big events happen also allows the audience to become engaged in the discussion while the live broadcast is delivered.

In research conducted on youth consumption of news in Argentina, Mitchelstein and Matassi (2017) found that the youth do not go online to access news, they stumble across the news while they are already online; this is referred to as 'incidental news' (Mitchelstein & Matassi, 2017). Ndlovu (2015) found similarities in online behaviour amongst the South African youth:

> "The manner in which online media could be accessed for news fits in with other online practices of young adults' online lifestyle: online personal communication, shopping, academic life, job search, etc. New media is a new culture and everyday practice" (Ndlovu, 2015, p. 10).

So, regardless of whether the youth access online platforms for news specifically, they stumble across news while being online. If someone has a particular interest in news and searches online platforms for news, news feeds on their social media will be even more prevalent due to algorithms picking up on their news interest (Mitchelstein & Matassi, 2017). Thus, news practitioners and especially broadcasters can use this opportunity to attract consumers to their platforms. They can report on mainstream topics by framing the topic and telling the story using interesting taglines, breaking the mould of the systematic reporting frame while embracing the new online space.

The Daily Sun, a South African daily newspaper, albeit a tabloid publication within traditional media, was able to create a bigger social media following than local broadcasters that have an online presence. By using citizen journalism within their audience reach, the newspaper took stories from their readers and curated them into news articles (Haumann, 2014). The stories were chosen against the backdrop of the national news agenda, so what the mainstream media was reporting on was not lost to the Daily Sun's readers. Instead, they reported on the news through the eyes of their audience, and this engaged their audience online:

> "…since it is the most widely read daily newspaper, it appeals to the largest number of ordinary citizens. Moreover, this also suggests that its brand is one that caters for and appeals to the interests of ordinary South Africans. Its Facebook fan page, which was established in 2011, is also very popular, with approximately 423 000 fans by April 2014" (Haumann, 2014).

Comparably, NATV's Facebook following at the time of this research is at 177 727 (Facebook.com), Daily Sun's Facebook following is at 1 966 876 (Facebook.com) and eNCA, NATV's direct competitor, is on 235 235 (Facebook.com). Although NATV is a new channel that still has to establish its following (its competitor, eNCA has been around for a considerably longer time), NATV is not actively reaching out to the youth using new media platforms (Phage, 2021).

Haumann's (2014) research into the Daily Sun's Facebook following indicates that traditional media platforms are able to form a public sphere in the online space by adapting news and content coverage using new media patterns and listening to their audience. This breaks the dominance of elites and politicians influencing the national

news agenda and is a good example of breaking the systematic mould. Can broadcasters achieve the same results? Given that broadcasters can present live news, it can be assumed that they have a bigger playing field when it comes to audience engagement by merging live broadcasts and online engagement.

The next section of this research report looks at the theoretical framework in which this study is placed in order to explain the way broadcasters set agendas through editorial decisions, and the way in which a public sphere for discourse can be created by a relatively young traditional TV news channel like NATV.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Broadcasting news in South Africa is facing many challenges in terms of staying relevant, especially to the youth. This is not only due to the internet dominating the world of information and entertainment consumption, but also due to rising apathy for politics amongst citizens (Malila et al., 2013; Ndlovu, 2015; Malila & Oelofsen, 2016). And it is now more important than ever that media publications understand their audiences (Limelight Consulting, 2017).

This report frequently draws on research that has been conducted on youth apathy towards politics. Despite the youth's apathy towards politics, and the fact that they do not watch television news, the youth still want to know about the world, news and current affairs (Pitt, 2019). In the findings section, the difference in apathy towards politics and apathy towards news will be explained.

Malila (2016), Mattes and Richmond (2015), Mattes (2012) Ndlovu (2015) and De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006) write extensively on findings they made, researching the South African youth and their attitude towards news and politics. The Afrobarometer's independent survey measuring citizen attitudes on democracy, governance, the economy and civil society across Africa (landportal.org), found that South Africans showed the lowest levels of political and civic engagement in the world (Tshuma & Zvaita, 2019). It is important to note that although the youth are often involved in protests, which creates the impression that they are active within the democracy, it cannot be assumed, based on the number of protests, that the youth are politically engaged and actively participating in democracy.

In his 2015 study on the declining interest of young people and news consumption, Ndlovu (2015) found that there has been a significant decrease in news consumption amongst the youth worldwide and that the situation is not much different for young South Africans. An interest in news and politics has declined since the 1994 elections and transition into democracy (Ndlovu, 2015). Malila and Oelofsen (2016) suggest that the declining consumption of news amongst the South African youth after 1994 – or whom they refer to as the 'born frees' – is ironic. Their research suggests that in

comparison with previous generations who lived under oppression, a ‘free generation’ should be more likely to embrace the new democratic system and participate in civil activities and become members of political parties or unions (Malila & Oelofsen, 2016). Despite a lack of access to news and the news being determined by the ruling National Party, the pre-democratic generations who lived under the oppressive apartheid government were far more politically active than the generations that came after the country’s transition to democracy (Mattes, 2012). But although they have better access and opportunities, they are less active politically and less interested in national politics and events in the news (Malila & Oelofsen, 2016). This is concerning as the future of the country is dependent on future generations and the health of a democracy is dependent on its media. This does not only apply to mass media but also to new media and the role journalism plays and can play in the new media environment. The media and communication industry across the world has been the most affected by the rapid development of new media and technological changes (Rodny-Gumede, 2018). This means that the youth today have much more access to information, and they are able to engage in national debate through the use of new technologies and platforms compared to previous generations. The youth are therefore expected to participate and become active in the national conversations in the new free South Africa, but they are not involved. Politics and news are rejected, and the youth do not relate to the news and politics, they view news and politics as part of the world of adults (Ndlovu, 2015).

Ndlovu also found that not only are traditional news platforms such as newspapers and television broadcast news rejected by the youth, but despite the potential of the internet to engage the youth in the national debate, this has not been realised (Ndlovu, 2015). Ndlovu (2015) points specifically to the rejection of political and economic news by the youth and describes this in journalistic discourse as ‘hard news’. Ndlovu’s study adds significant value to this research as it highlights the concern that the lack of interest in news amongst the youth has dire consequences for the promotion and health of the South African democracy. Ndlovu’s research also adds to a central theme in this research which is the notion that the youth do not relate to news content in the mainstream media.

> "…young adults would be interested in news if news was interested in them. Young adults' declining interest in news, the argument goes, is caused by mainstream news practitioners' detachment from and their irrelevance to, everyday lives of young people" (Ndlovu, 2015).

Ndlovu (2015) found that the youth do not feel connected to the news because journalists and news editors broadcast news to a general public, and do not aim to engage young people specifically. The youth do not relate to the news because they do not feel part of the addressed public (Ndlovu, 2015). Michael Schudson (1989) describes news sourcing and the generation of news content by the news media as the systematic approach to news and that the news content is a result of the system in which news practitioners operate; a tried and tested recipe of which the boundaries are hardly ever crossed. This systematic approach is practiced by news practitioners across the world and South Africa is prone to follow trends set by the international news media. So, the same format and mould used by global news broadcasters such as CNN and Sky News, are used in South African news broadcasts.

Wayne et al.'s (2010) study of news consumption of the youth in the United Kingdom reiterates the disconnect between news practitioners and what is really relevant to the youth in the international world. Ndlovu (2015) reflects this disconnect amongst the South African youth and says that the South African youth do not regard news as an extension of their own worlds or direct social standing.

Professor Ylva Rodny-Gumede (University of Johannesburg, 2018) highlighted the need for the South African media to move away from the operational methods of news production that has been determined by the West and focus on the narrative of the South (Rodny-Gumede, 2018). She suggests that if the South African media follows its own narrative in storytelling, it may engage and represent citizens who will, in turn, engage in the news content (Rodny-Gumede, 2018). The reporting style of the South African media as is later discussed in this study, is mainly based in political communication and reporting on the so-called political elite. Rodny-Gumede (2018) describes this as a penchant of the previous, apartheid government that spilled over to the new democratic government. But she also highlights the ANC government's obsession to control the media. This was especially evident under the rule of former president Jacob Zuma who wanted to control freedom of speech by amending media

laws (Rodny-Gumede, 2018). The systematic approach to news generation and production, as discussed by Schudson (1989) is still the case of news production in South Africa according to Rodny-Gumede (2018):

> "The news media is shaped by its colonial roots and the mass media have served as extensions of colonial and administrative power and as sites of the reproduction of patriarchal and colonial structures and later, as in the context of South Africa and southern Africa, apartheid and its aberrations. The mass media and broadcasting, in particular, has always played an important role as an enforcer of ideology by national elites, a trend often continued by post-liberation governments as well" (Rodny-Gumede, 2018).

It also has to be taken into account that the younger generation demands instant gratification and when they want specific information, they can search for it and gain immediate access to it (Weimann & Brosius, 2017). Appointment television, therefore, has little appeal to them. They are much more likely to search for the online space for stories that satisfy their need and interest at their own convenience.

The systematic approach to news and information and the focus on political news are thus major factors directly leading to the disconnect between the South African youth, news media and politics.

According to Mattes (2012), three types of political engagement are necessary to become politically active: the first is a cognitive understanding of politics and deliberation of political events in social context. This means that politics and the state of the country are frequently discussed with friends and family. In order to achieve this, one must be informed. The second requirement is the engagement with the political system through the media. The third and seemingly most important is to exercise the right to vote. The three levels of engagement are dependent on one another: if a citizen is informed and understands the political sphere, they will be able to make informed decisions when voting. Given Mattes' findings, Malila and Oelofsen (2016) further state that the youth's disconnect from the three levels of engagement creates a paradox within a democratic South Africa because a generation who has access to education, employment and the open economy at large, is supposed to be more politically engaged compared to previous generations who were excluded from these privileges:

> “They have access to more and better education, housing, health and social services and they are witnessing an unprecedented rise of a new black middle class. This creates an expectation of significant pro-democratic shifts in South Africa’s political culture, especially amongst the Born-Frees” (Malila & Oelofsen, 2016).

It is obvious that life after 1994 did not improve for all. Today, half of the South African youth between 15 and 34 are unemployed (De Lannoy, 2018). The young generation is also showing low levels of education and live with high levels of physical and material instability (Malila et al., 2013). This is despite the promises of an improved life and equal opportunities for all citizens, made by the ruling ANC government during the transition to democracy and the 1994 elections (Malila & Oelofsen, 2016). The same promises made by the ruling ANC during the 1994 elections have largely been unfulfilled yet repeated in all election campaigns that followed 1994. These included and are mostly focused on job creation for the youth and poverty alleviation. These unfulfilled promises along with corruption that is endemic to the ruling ANC may be reasons why the number of young voters is declining (Tshuma & Zvaita, 2019). When the youth is witness to corruption and see that those in power only benefit themselves and their cronies while the majority of South Africans are poor, this apathy towards the ruling party grows. Youth turnout at the voting stations has rapidly declined since the first election in 1994 and the most recent election in 2019 (Tshuma & Zvaita, 2019). Tshuma and Zvaita (2019) describe this rapid decline as a major threat for democracy and society at large:

> “Scholars note that although there has been a noticeable decrease in voter turnout in South African elections since 1994, the poor and disjointed participation by the youth in particular is concerning. A vibrant democracy anywhere in the world depends on active and effective participation by the electorate”.

Research found that large numbers of the South African youth are not voting, as they feel it is futile and makes no difference (Tshuma & Zvaita, 2019). There is thus a feeling of discouragement with the political system which eventually results in general apathy towards politics.

The lack of interest in politics leads to a lack of interest in news and news media (Ndlovu, 2015). This leads to a negative circular effect of engagement based on Mattes' (2012) requirements for political participation: if the youth are not informed about politics and events in the news, they cannot make informed decisions that may lead to the betterment of their own lives. If they do not become involved in politics and change the status quo they are dissatisfied with, the status quo will remain. They will become discouraged by the status quo and eventually become apathetic towards it. Once apathetic, they will not have any interest in following the news or events around them.

The mainstream news in South Africa is mainly driven by political news and events resulting from or leading to political news.

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

Both public sphere and agenda setting speak to the role that the media plays in a deliberative democracy. The concept of public sphere will be used to discuss whether a youth-focused television channel is able to establish a safe space for youth to deliberate on national news events. Agenda setting will be used to discuss news content and how traditional media can interact with new media in order to establish which news topics are of interest to a target audience and what role NATV can play in contextualising the news and mediating discussion to form a public sphere for the youth.

The focus of this research is the role that NATV, a youth-focused channel, can play in the establishment of a public sphere/space for youth to engage with news. In order to analyse NATV in terms of its establishment of a public sphere, it is important to understand the concept within both the traditional media and the new media context.

3.1 Public sphere

The public sphere refers to a space in which private people outside of government and state institutions are able to come together and deliberate on events of national interest which may finally lead to decision-making that can lead to policy change (Calhoun, 1992). According to its pioneer, Jürgen Habermas, the public sphere was a space for the bourgeois. It developed from the capitalist private middle class in Europe in the eighteenth century (Calhoun, 1992). However, the egalitarian ethos for public discussion envisioned by Habermas (Dahlgren, 2005) was not ideal as it only involved certain, more privileged members of society and did not consider the plebeian masses (Calhoun, 1992). The conversations happened in places such as coffee shops and salons, places where members of the upper classes and the elite regularly interacted. Considering that a person who attended the discussion had to at least contribute to buying a coffee while in the public space, the discussions were not a privilege enjoyed by the masses or broader society. Because the public sphere in its essence was therefore not inclusive of all members of society, it led to critique against the very notion of the public sphere. The most cited criticism is that of the feminist, Nancy

Fraser who analysed Habermas's theory in terms of the exclusion of women from the public sphere (Calhoun, 1992). Because of this exclusion, groups of people who found themselves on the periphery of the bourgeois public sphere, sharing similar ideas and values, started to form their own public spheres. Fraser as well as Michael Warner refer to these groupings, as 'counter-publics' (Calhoun, 1992; Warner, 2002).

> "The bourgeois public was never *the* public. On the contrary, virtually contemporaneous with the bourgeois public there arose a host of competing counter publics, including nationalist publics, popular peasant publics, elite women's publics and working-class publics. Thus, there were competing publics from the start" (Calhoun, 1992).

The formation of counter-publics is in contrast with the notion of a public sphere because it is in essence a fragmentation of the public and defeats the notion of private space for the public to discuss issues affecting the entire citizenry (Calhoun, 1992). In terms of media and target audience, the notion of counter-publics can be helpful in understanding the media's role in facilitating democratic deliberation. In South Africa, the public cannot be addressed as one public as the public is divided socio-economically, by culture and by language differences. For the purposes of this report, the youth can be regarded as a public. This is because the youth seem to share the same frustrations with government and the state in terms of quality of life, unemployment and access to basic services such as running water (Malila & Oelofsen, 2016; Tshuma & Zvaita, 2019). Although this is not a problem that is unique to the youth and is applicable to the South African society at large, the youth per se can form a public sphere as they are crucial to the health of the democracy. If they remain discouraged by the political status quo and distance themselves from national politics, the threat to the health of democracy now and in the future, will remain.

In the online space, members of the youth follow similar trends and are exposed to the news in a similar way despite differences in culture or language. Therefore, the youth in the context of this report are seen as a potential public sphere and can be addressed by the media in the interest of nation building and the promotion of democracy.

With the arrival of the internet, many theorists were researching the role the internet could play in the establishment of public spheres within a society (Dahlgren, 2005). A

variety of public spheres in society are formed online where ideas, events, debates and information can be circulated (Dahlgren, 2005). The internet was also seen as a destabiliser for political communication systems and can aid in changing outlived patterns (Dahlgren, 2005). This means that the rapid development of the internet brought along the need for the media to adapt in terms of how content is dispersed as well as which audiences are reached. Media practitioners now need to focus on how to reach the targeted public, and more importantly, how to elicit engagement from the public through new media. For a public sphere to be established, the public that is being addressed firstly need to know that they are being addressed, and secondly, respond to the address; once they respond, a public sphere starts to form (Warner, 2002). A public sphere is mainly self-organised according to Warner (2002), but this research argues that independent media can provide a platform for deliberation where the youth can create a public sphere of engagement, organically. In this way the independent media can fulfil its normative role in promoting democracy.

For the broadcast media to stay relevant and achieve the establishment and facilitation of a public sphere, agenda setting in a modern world dominated by new media has to be revisited.

3.2 Agenda Setting

The well-known 1960s quote by Bernand Cohen is appropriate when understanding agenda setting:

> "The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (Dearing & Rogers 1996, p. 1).

The concept of agenda setting originated in the 1920s and was influenced by Walter Lippmann who indicated that the picture that humanity has of the world is formed by the media and that the picture is created by the information the media decides to publish (McCombs, 2011). Cohen's words indicate clearly how mass media operates within society. Because there is a vast amount of news and information in the public domain, the media cannot tell people what to think, but the way in which they publish information can tell people how to think about events in the news. Mainstream media

determine which news events are important and so they set the national news agenda – promoting certain topics more than others – without the input from the public (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). Once the mass media has given salience to an issue, the given issue becomes a public issue and is considered public interest (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). Because of the systematic style in which news is gathered by news practitioners, the structural limitations of news publication are at play here. The importance of issues in the mind of the public is perceived in the hierarchy in which the media 'list' the issue (McCombs, 2011). This means that issues are given importance based on its placement within a news bulletin, in the case of broadcasting. In the case of newspapers, issues that are deemed more important than others will be placed accordingly; some issues will be published on the front page while stories lower down in the news agenda are published towards the back of the paper. The news agenda of the mainstream news is usually followed by all publications in the mainstream media. This is referred to as the salience of an issue (Dearing & Rogers, 1996).

> "Research on the agenda-setting process suggests that the relative salience of an issue on the media agenda determines how the public agenda is formed, which in turn influences which issues policy-makers consider… Policy-makers only act on those issues that reach the top of the policy agenda" (Dearing & Rogers 1996, p. 8).

Prior to the infiltration of new media in society, traditional mainstream media was at the core of setting the national news agenda and agenda setting was developed based on traditional media platforms such as newspapers and broadcasting:

> "The basic principles and assumptions of the agenda-setting theorem have been developed in the pre-internet era and the majority of the agenda-setting research was conducted in the traditional media context" (Weimann & Brosius, 2016).

But as new media rapidly developed and most people around the world moved online, the concept of agenda setting in modern media should be re-examined.

Although Dearing and Rogers (1996) analysed agenda setting in the classic form that is applicable to mainstream media in pre-internet context, it still applies to new media.

Even in a world where opinions are formed online, issues are still only considered important when they have salience in the mainstream media (Weimann & Brosius, 2016). Journalists' role as 'gatekeepers' is of specific importance in agenda setting of mass-communication and refers to the role of the media to filter and select the news content (Channel, 2010) on behalf of the public.

The internet brought along various changes to the classical way in which agenda setting functions in the media. News broadcasters and news publications online deploy strategies to engage their audience. Central to these strategies is listening to what the audience is talking about. So, in fact, the audience is now telling the media what is important to them, and the media is no longer telling the audience what to think about (Weimann & Brosius, 2017). The internet makes provision for agendas that may not have been noted by the mass media, to become relevant. These can include issues within minority groups, social justice issues or cultural issues that would not have salience on the mainstream agenda (Weimann & Brosius, 2017). The online space can provide a variety of different issues which the media can pick up on. But even in this new media environment, the mainstream media still have the power to give salience to issues and by priming the issue, the mainstream media can still influence the audience on 'how' to think about the issue (McCombs, 2011).

In this sense, what is referred to as 'priming' in classic agenda setting still applies. Priming is when the mass media gives more attention to certain stories on its agenda (McCombs, 2011). This means that the agenda is set and there are various issues listed from important to less important. Further to this, some issues on the list get more attention and publication time compared to other issues on the agenda. This is when an issue is primed, and it has a direct effect on how the audience perceives the story and how it influences the overall decision-making process. New media gives the opportunity for issues to appear in public. The more people react to the issues, the higher it will move up the news agenda and it will eventually reach the mainstream media from where it will be framed and given back to the audience.

The problem with television news broadcasters in South Africa, with specific reference to the case study in point, is that they are still of the view that they set the national news agenda (Katapodis, 2021). This agenda is still derived from traditional media practices and centres on events in the political arena which are sometimes far

removed from what the youth are talking about online. While issues discussed online may sometimes end up on the NATV screen, the salience of the issues still enjoys little attention compared to political news the broadcaster deems important. This adds to the massive challenge of drawing a young audience to the NATV platform. Given the development of independent 24-hour television news channels in South Africa, ownership and political agenda setting may thus further complicate the South African youth's perception of the media.

Adding to the complexity of agenda setting in South Africa is the role social media platforms, such as Twitter, play in the online space. Journalists frequent Twitter as it has become a way of 'breaking' news stories before it reaches the traditional platform (Weimann & Brosius, 2017). The story can originate on Twitter where people see it first. The journalist can then use hashtags of the news publication they are associated with and draw the audience to the publication by promising more in-depth coverage. In many newsrooms, editors encourage their journalists to be on Twitter. The speed at which social media operates, especially Twitter, is of vital importance when analysing agenda setting in a new media environment. News reporters, especially reporters who work for live 24-hour news broadcasting platforms, cannot afford not to be present on Twitter. Twitter provides a platform for a variety of micro-agendas (Wohn & Bowe, 2016). Twitter has become a massive source of news content for journalists and has reshaped the way journalists report on political news. Journalists seek out political tweets to find story ideas and news leads (Weimann & Brosius, 2017).

The use of Twitter in generating news content relates to the systematic approach to news gathering practices by the broadcast news sector of South Africa. Even though new media make provision for journalists to provide salience to a variety of different agendas, they are still prone to follow the tweets of those in power, the elites, the politicians and decision-makers. This is where the problem with micro-agenda setting in the online space occurs (Wohn & Bowe, 2016).

There are many agendas online that are not necessarily in the interest of the public at large. Micro-agendas originate from a reality created online by people sharing the same interest (Wohn & Bowe, 2016). Although these groups or micro-agenda setters can be seen to be active within different public spheres, the information they circulate between each other becomes their reality. Opinions formed on the available

information at their disposal can now be seen as ‘priming’. Social media networks/groups are formed when people share similar values and ideologies. It is however rare that a social media network/group will be inclusive of a variety of people in society to represent different opinions, races, cultures, languages, etc. (Wohn & Bowe, 2016). The opinions circulated are thus limited to the network/group and creates a fragmented reality of what is in the public interest and what is not. This defeats the purpose of the public sphere. Wohn and Bowe (2016) refer to this notion as the echo chamber effect:

> “Empirical evidence suggests that many online spaces, particularly those associated with political content, are echo chambers. Individuals who have a more diverse online network may have a very different sense of reality than those people with homogeneous online networks, but still think that their idea of reality is the ‘true reality’. At the end of the day, users may think they understand mainstream reality, but from a macro-societal perspective, there may be an increasing fragmentation of public perceptions, making it difficult to discern an actual ‘mainstream/social reality” (Wohn & Bowe, 2016).

The mainstream media thus still play an important role as ‘gatekeepers of the truth’ and from the new media platforms, news leads can be taken, contextualised and discussed on traditional platforms. This is referred to as reversed agenda setting (Weimann & Brosius, 2017). Strategies of using reversed agenda setting are being deployed by large news corporations across the world, such as Republic TV in India (Alberts, 2020). A circular approach to agenda setting is applied when the news breaks on social media, the mainstream media takes the news and contextualises it using a variety of sources, opposing views and different opinions, and publishing it on the traditional media platform, in this case, broadcast. By doing this, the social media audience is now following what the mainstream media is doing. It is irrelevant whether they consume that content online via streaming or on the actual linear platform. Once they consume this information, they return to the online space where they deliberate on the topic (Alberts, 2020). This does not only prove that the mainstream media still have the agenda setting power, albeit taking the lead from the online space, but it is also evident that the mainstream media have the power to engage their audience and thus create and facilitate the public sphere.

There are still various loopholes in this system that have negative effects on citizen engagement. Firstly, while journalists may get their news content from Twitter, the Twitter feed is still dependent on their network and these networks cannot be inclusive of society at large and can be dominated by politicians and those in power, or merely those with a large online following. Journalists are also likely to follow other journalists and publications and sometimes this leads to competing with one another to be first in publishing new content. The fact that this competition even happens between journalists and broadcasters in the South African media proves that a central agenda is still followed which does not allow much space for alternative agendas.

Secondly, if the publisher does not form a public sphere for its audience, which refers to a safe/mediated space to accommodate deliberation, various members of the given audience may not participate in the discussions. This defeats the role of the media as facilitator. If deliberation happens outside of a mediated space, people might suppress their views in fear of intimidation or victimisation by those who may not agree with them. Wohn and Bowe (2016) refer to this as ‘the spiral of silence’. This research report aims to prove that this ‘spiral of silence’ exists in terms of political deliberation of news amongst young South Africans in the online media space.

The next chapter outlines the methodology used in gathering information related to the topic.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

Qualitative methods of data collection were used. Data was collected through semi-structured open-ended individual focused interviews in order to answer the research question:

Can the establishment of a youth-focused television news channel attract young South Africans to news media and mobilise them to participate in the national political conversation?

The interview questions were posed under the following specific headings.

1. The Youth, News and Politics: How do youth respond to news and politics?
2. NATV and DSTV: How does NATV function within the South African society?
3. Traditional and New Media: How does the integration of online platforms of competitors compare with NATV's new media integration?

4.1 The Youth, News and Politics

The researcher selected 19 members of the South African youth at random to participate in the research. They represented age groups ranging from 18 to 36. The respondents came from 8 of the 9 provinces and spoke English, Afrikaans, isiZulu and isiXhosa. There was an equal balance of people residing in rural and urban areas.

In the main, respondents had matric certificates, were employed and self-sufficient. There were more male respondents than female respondents, but the gender balance was mostly maintained. Most of the younger respondents between the ages of 18 and 23 were students.

The data was collected in the form of 30 to 45-minute semi-structured, open-ended, individual, focused interviews. Three interviews were conducted via Zoom and the rest were done face to face. The interviews provided the respondents with the freedom to

answer the questions and when they felt comfortable, they elaborated and provided deeper context to their answers.

The variety of backgrounds, both geographically and in terms of language and culture, meant that the respondents were not connected to each other by any means. During the interviews, clear patterns emerged in which the respondents agreed with and shared similar views without being aware of the views of other respondents. This study can by no means suggest that the entirety of the South African youth share similar views, but the data is indicative that they are in agreement with key factors discussed in this report.

The table below summarises the demographics of respondents:

Table 1: Demographics of respondents

ETHNICITY	HOME LANGUAGE	PROVINCE	MALE	FEMALE	AGE
African	Xhosa	North West		X	19
White	English	Gauteng		X	20
Coloured	English	Free State	X		20
White	Afrikaans	Northern Cape	X		21
White	Afrikaans	Mpumalanga		X	21
White	Afrikaans	Mpumalanga		X	22
African	Zulu	Gauteng		X	22
African	Xhosa	Eastern Cape	X		23
African	Xhosa	Western Cape	X		26
White	Afrikaans	Gauteng		X	26
White	English	Gauteng	X		28
African	Xhosa	Eastern Cape	X		29
Coloured	English	Western Cape	X		30
African	Zulu	Limpopo	X		30
Coloured	English	Eastern Cape	X		30
White	English	Gauteng		X	34
White	Afrikaans	Eastern Cape		X	34
White	Afrikaans	Eastern Cape	X		36

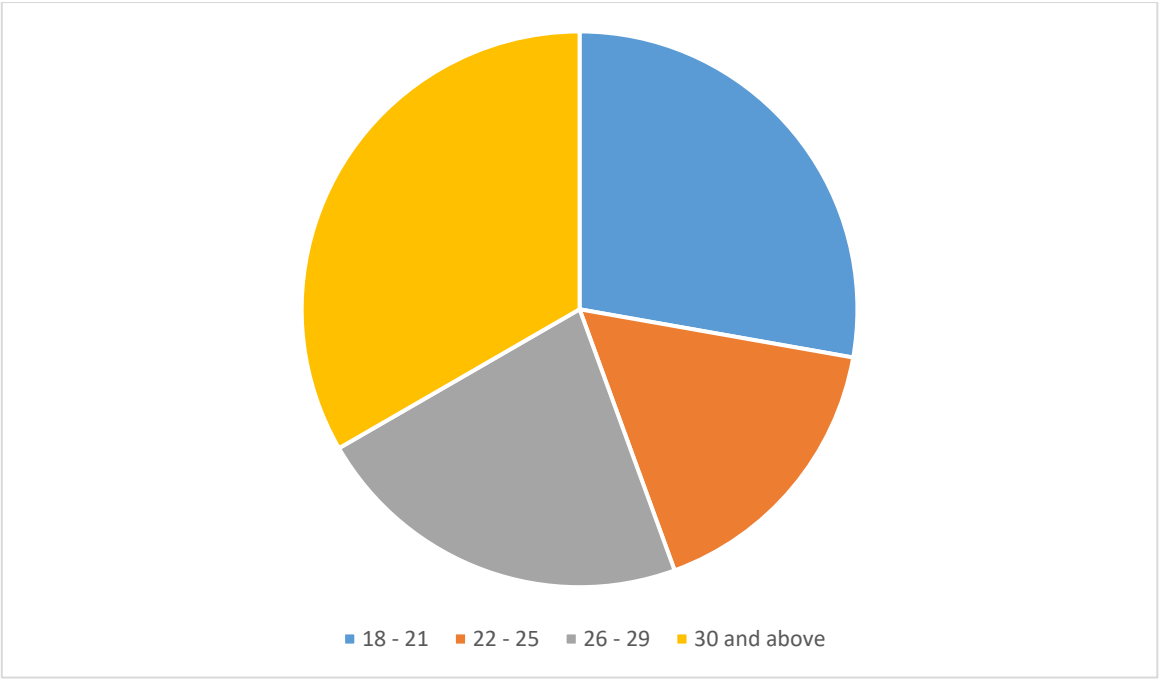


Figure 1: Age distribution of respondents

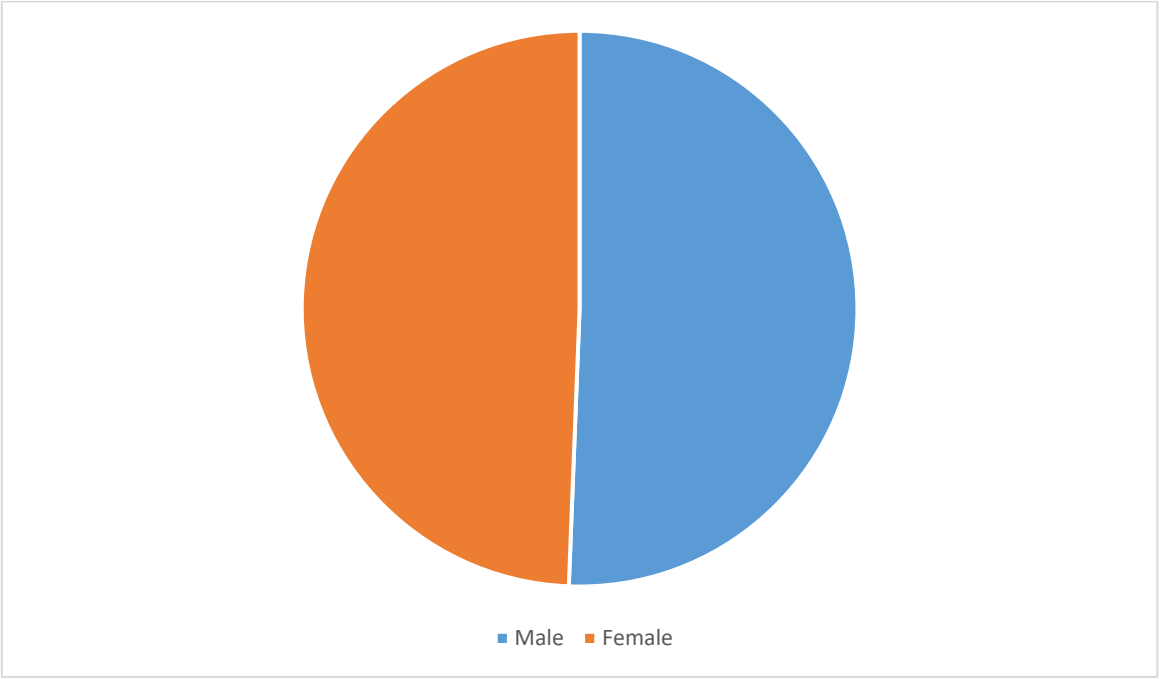


Figure 2: Gender distribution of respondents

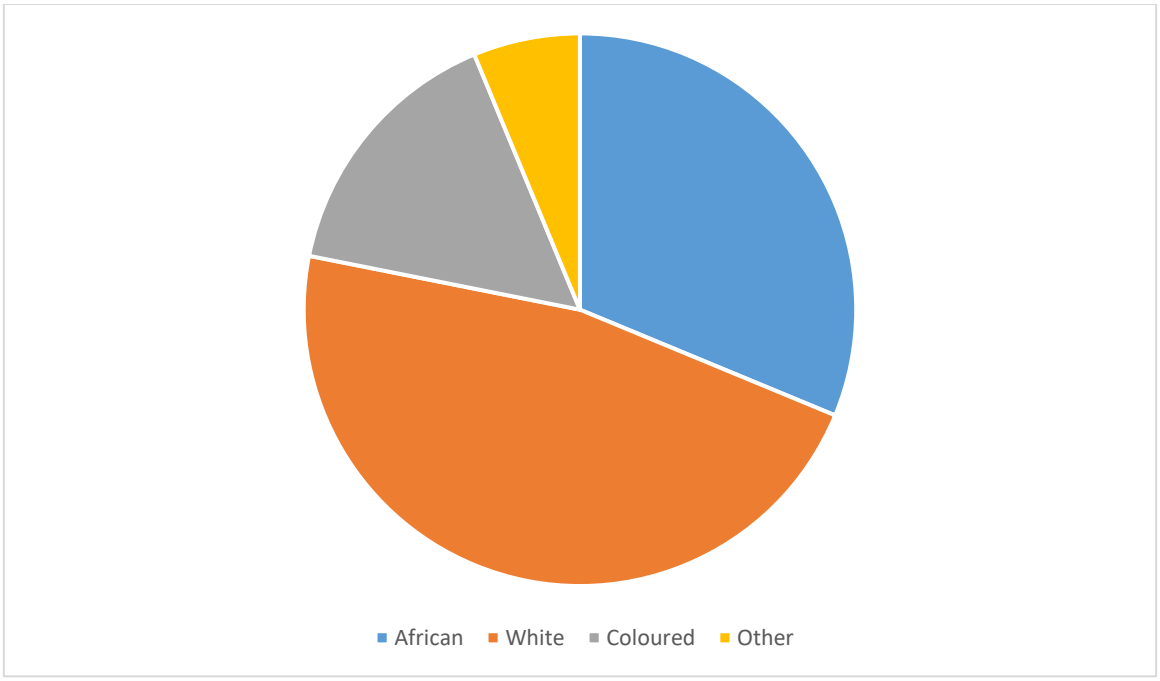


Figure 3: Reported ethnicity of respondents

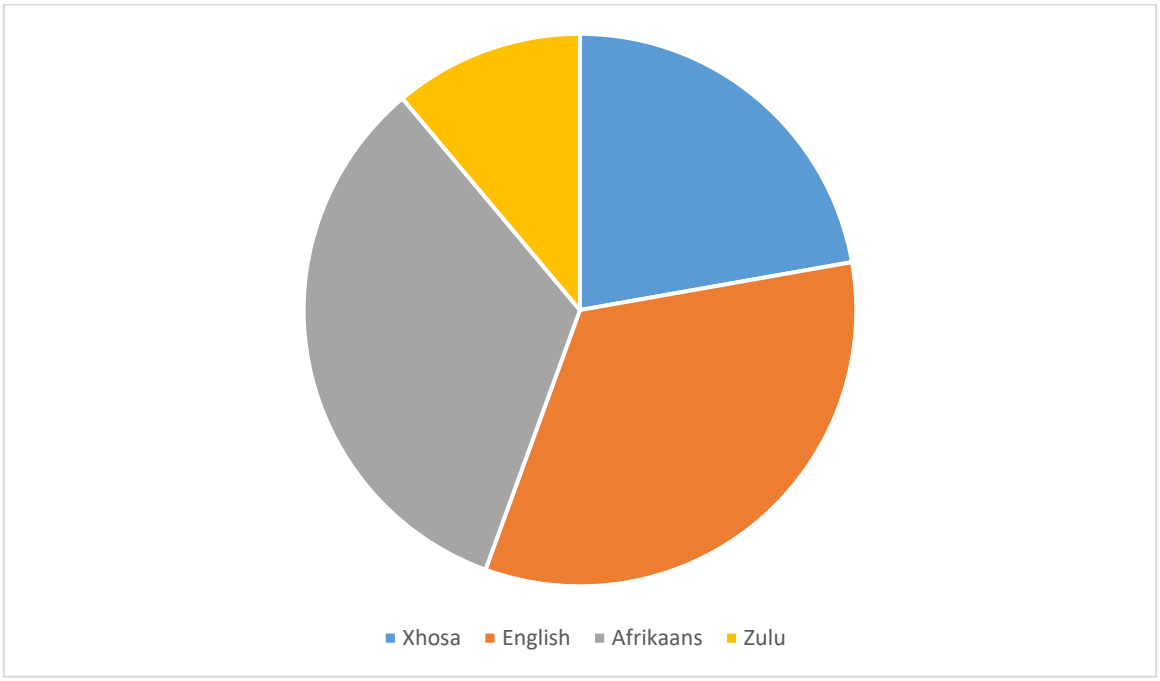


Figure 4: Home language of respondents



Figure 5: Geographical distribution of respondents over South Africa

4.2 NATV and DSTV

Core decision-makers within the NATV structure were interviewed in in-depth, semi-structured interviews that lasted between 45 minutes to 2 hours. The interviewees were chosen on the basis of their role within NATV or with reference to NATV.

Key players are listed below:

- Aletta Alberts, Head of channels at DSTV – she played a key role in the formation and establishment of NATV. She was part of DSTV's representatives who called for entries to bid for the vacant 405-slot. She was also central to the formation of the channel; providing the funding, assisting with strategy and was responsible for status reports on the performance of the channel within DSTV.

- Thokozani Nkosi and Thabile Ngwato, share the CEO position of NATV.
  The interview questions were answered via email. They were not open-ended and did not provide for follow-up questions. It is not clear whether the questions were answered by Nkosi or Ngwato; if they answered the questions together or if the answers were supplied by the marketing division of NATV through which they communicated with the researcher. Answers provided in the written submission to the questions were not very helpful in assisting the researcher to derive a conclusion to the research question as the questions were answered briefly and no in-depth analysis was possible. The email answers were more of a reflection of maintaining a corporate image instead of providing an understanding of what the NATV CEOs' view is of the role the channel can play in South African society.

- Malebo Phage, Editor in Chief, NATV.

  Phage's interview was a semi-structured, open-ended interview. It was conducted via Zoom and was done in a conversational manner that lasted just over an hour. Phage was central to the establishment of the channel, the decision of the name (Newzroom Afrika), positioning of the brand in the media, sourcing of onscreen talent and is core to editorial direction and decision-making. His interview is crucial to understand the day-to-day operation of the channel in both a structural and editorial sense.

- Katy Katapodis, Director of news, NATV.

  Katapodis' interview was also a semi-structured, open-ended interview that took place over Zoom and was conversational in tone. Katapodis is an interesting addition to the NATV team. She was the former editor in chief of EWN (EyeWitness News) within Primedia, one of South Africa's leading news publications. She was a consultant for NATV in 2019, after she resigned from EWN. Katapodis was central in the training of the new team of staff a few months before the channel was launched and she was adamant about three key issues during this training: to attract a younger audience by focusing on the 'who' before the 'what' in news stories, to be right rather than to be first and lastly and most importantly, to set the national news agenda. Katapodis remained on the team as a consultant until January 2020, when she took on the full-time position of news director and became central in editorial decision-making, employment of on-air talent and providing a news content strategy.

The questions asked were similar, although the questions to Alberts, Phage and Katapodis differed in terms of follow-up questions based on their responses to questions during the interviews. Although there were guiding questions which allowed the interviews to be semi-structured, the interviews were open-ended and allowed the interviewees the opportunity to expand on their views. Below is the list of guiding questions used in the interviews with Alberts, Phage, Katapodis, Nkosi and Ngwato:

- In a world dominated by new media in which television is seen as a traditional medium, what motivated the establishment of a new 24-hour television news channel?

- What is the main aim of the channel and what role does it fulfil in South African society?
- Who is the target audience and has the target shifted since the channel was launched in 2019?
- What strategies does the channel deploy to merge new and old media?
- How is the channel engaging the youth in news and politics?
- Does the audience respond to the news content published?
- How do you decide on news content?
- Do you follow up on leading topics on social media?

The responses to these questions are attached to this document in appendices and will be analysed in the discussion section of this paper.

4.3 Traditional and New Media

To illustrate NATV's position in the online space, comparisons with other existing news outlets have to be made. Related research cited in this report draws on case studies of user engagement with traditional platforms in the South African media. These platforms were studied in order to compare it with NATV's online presence. Screengrabs of social media updates of the Daily Sun were compared to social media updates made at the same time on the same date as the latter. Even though the Daily Sun is a tabloid newspaper, the comparison was drawn on issues that were on the national news agenda. Screengrabs of online social media activities of NATV's local competitor and international counterparts were also taken during big news events. These are only to illustrate what other traditional 24-hour news broadcasters were doing on a specific date and time, to compare it with what NATV was doing in order to understand what the youth are exposed to online in terms of NATV's content strategy in the online media space.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings

This section focuses on the findings and gives an overview of different themes that emerged.

Two fundamentally important factors emerged from this research. Firstly, youth do not watch television news, and secondly, they are not interested in political news, politics or politicians. This is despite cultural background, language, employment status and levels of education.

5.1.1 The Youth's Relationship with Television News

It is evident from the data that the youth are not watching television news. If they do watch news, it is mainly because of their elders watching news. They watch news when they are at home with their parents or grandparents who own television sets. The majority of respondents do not have access to satellite or linear television and do not pay subscription fees to DSTV. Those who say that they watch television news from time to time have access to television platforms and DSTV. Those who do not have televisions are less likely to follow politics and news. However, all respondents indicated that they watch television news or stream live broadcasts during big news events. This included news stories such as the Oscar and Reeva trial (the murder case of Paralympian athlete, Oscar Pistorius that was broadcast live), national announcements made by President Cyril Ramaphosa about the lockdown regulations amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and tertiary fees protests.

The South African youth still trust traditional news media such as well-known newspapers and radio broadcasting brands. They verify news they find online by going to social media pages of traditional platforms.

When they stream television news on online platforms, they tend to choose the platform with the fastest speed. They indicated that they choose the news publication based on the speed at which the broadcast/bulletin can be streamed. They "don't care" on which platform they consume broadcast content online; whether it is SABC, eNCA or NATV does not matter to them.

The majority of respondents indicated that they are likely to watch television news or stream television news on their smart devices if there was a publication they could relate to. If a news publication is not dominated by politics and politicians' talking heads, they may watch the news.

All of the respondents are of the view that there are not enough youth-focused topics in the mainstream media. The majority stated that they cannot relate to mainstream news and are not affected by it. Topics that are of interest to them do not enjoy attention in the media. Some of them indicated that these topics may include suicide and mental issues amongst the youth, equality for girls and women in traditional societies, education and training topics, entrepreneurship and innovation, and community initiatives such as clean-up operations. Some respondents residing in rural areas said that there is not enough news and information on agricultural-related topics. This includes news on farm safety, market analysis and predictions.

5.1.2 The Youth and Their Views on Politics

All the respondents stated that they do not trust politicians and that they are discouraged by the political situation in South Africa. The majority feel that the government does nothing for them, that they cannot relate to politics and that there is no bright future for them in South Africa. However, the majority of them indicated that they do vote as they feel that "it is the only thing they can do to bring about political change in South Africa". Those who do not vote indicated that they have given up hope in the ANC government and do not feel that their vote makes any difference to their lives.

5.1.3 The Youth are Still Interested in News

They are interested in news and want to know what is going on in the world around them. They do not get that news from broadcast media. They mostly get their news online through links posted on social media and topics trending on social media.

They do not follow general news online and scroll past news updates except if they can relate to it.

They only follow the mainstream news if there are big events and are likely to watch television if there are big events, otherwise, they stream broadcasters such as eNCA if big events happen.

Most of them indicated an increase in news consumption during the Covid-19 pandemic and that most watched President Cyril Ramaphosa's addresses of the nation on Covid-19 regulations and restrictions. They watched this on television with friends or with their families.

5.1.4 Different Age Groups Feel Differently

It is evident that there are differences in attitudes towards news in different age groups. The younger youth (18 to 24) indicated very low levels of interest in news. This was different for the age group 24 to 30. Members of the latter age group were more interested in the news because they believe the news is an indication of what they can expect for their future, how it affects their careers and how they must plan their lives. The youth of 30 years and older have the same attitude towards news as the younger age group (18 to 24). But across the board, from 18 to 36, the youth feel that the political system has failed them. Some of the reasons cited include that they are not interested in politics as it is dominated by corruption and that they do not trust the government and those in charge because of the corruption and empty promises.

It was interesting to note that respondents in their late twenties indicated a mistrust in the national media and said that the media fail to tell the real story and that their reports are not a true representation of what is happening on the ground.

5.1.5 Youth's Perception of NATV

The majority of the respondents have never heard of NATV, were not aware that a youth-focused news channel existed and they have never seen NATV's presence online. Those who have heard of the channel said they do not watch it.

The majority indicated that they would watch news to stay informed if a relatable platform existed. If the platform can create a safe space for participation in discussion online, they would participate.

5.1.6 The Youth's Access to News and Their Relationship with Social Media

The following emerged from the interviews:

- All the respondents own smartphones.
- They use their smartphones mainly for social media, work- or study-related searches, hobbies and interests. A fair number indicated that they search for news online when they see a topic is trending that may interest them.
- They all have access to the internet most of the time, either via Wi-Fi connections at work or at home and data usage when they are not close to Wi-Fi.
- They spend between three and seven hours online daily, mostly on social media.
- The dominant social media platform is Instagram.
- They see Facebook as a platform for 'old people' as their elders like their parents and family members have Facebook accounts. They also see Facebook as 'too slow'.
- The majority of them are not on Twitter. They describe Twitter as "too opinionated and dominated by politicians and celebrities". In general, they describe Twitter as "too much".
- The second dominant platform is YouTube. The majority of them spend three to seven hours daily on YouTube. On this platform they do follow news events, but mostly in the form of satire or comedy.
- The majority of them indicated that they "follow and read comments" online on news stories that appear on their social media feed and interest them. Only two people said that they join in the online discussion. The rest said they read the comments, but they do not participate and described online participation in discussions as "dangerous and stupid".

Below is a graphic illustration of where the South African youth live online, what their social media preferences are and whether they watch television news. It is clear from this research that the South African youth might be moving away from traditional television viewing. This however does not mean that they do not follow the news. The platforms on which they follow it, have just shifted.

Table 2: Findings of social media preferences and TV habits

Instagram	Twitter	Facebook	YouTube	TV News	DSTV	NATV
X			X	No, only big events	No, no TV	No
X				No, never	No, no TV	No
X		X	X	Yes	Yes	Yes
			X	No	No, no TV	No
			X	No	No, no TV	No
X		X	X	Yes, often	Yes	Yes, but does not watch it
X				Yes	Yes	Yes, but does not watch it
X			X	Yes, with family	Yes	Yes, but does not watch it
X			X	Yes	Yes	No
		X	X	No	No, no TV	No
		X		No	No, no TV	No
X		X		No	No, no TV	No
		X	X	No	No, no TV	No
		X	X	No	No, no TV	Yes, but does not watch it
X	X	X		Yes	Yes	No
X	X	X		Yes	Yes	Yes

5.1.6 Responses to Questions

The following responses to questions were recorded. Firstly, the respondents were asked if they are interested in politics. Below are some of the responses:

- “It makes no difference if I watch it or not, nothing is going to change.”
- “If it means the quality of life will improve, I’ll be more interested in politics.”

- “Politics touches us all, but young people don’t follow the news because they find it boring. People are not interested in current affairs, none of my friends are interested in news; and they find it boring and negative.”
- “Sometimes I trust the politicians sometimes they do bad things, but mostly I don't trust them because they don’t fulfil our needs. I want politicians to fulfil promises and take care of us.”
- “I don’t trust the politicians. There is a lot of corruption and recently people did not receive their disability grant and you can’t trust people who are not going to give people in need of their money to help them.”
- “Politics makes me angry to be quite honest because I am an advocate for honesty and transparency, and I take pride in values. I feel like politicians don’t do that. I always say;” “I avoid things that disturb my peace and politics is one of them.”

In order to establish whether the youth can be drawn to a television platform to watch the news, it is important to establish whether the youth watch television at all. Respondents were therefore asked specifically if they watch television news. Below are some of the responses:

- “No never, only when there is a big news event, like I followed the Oscar and Reeva case because I love watching crime stuff. I also watch a lot of that on Netflix.”
- “I haven’t watched any form of television since the age of 17. I find all television mind numbing. I only watch Netflix now and then with my girlfriend, but I don’t have an account.”
- “Never, not even online.”
- “I don’t watch television news because there is too much drama in South Africa, and I don’t like drama. I get irritated with the news because it is always negative, and I do not relate to the stories.”
- “No, I don’t have a television at home.”
- “I don’t really watch the news anymore. I consume the news using social media accounts and news accounts.”
- “Every once in a while, I watch news with my grandfather who watches a lot of news.”

The majority of respondents above the age of 23 indicated that although they are not interested in politics and do not watch television news, they are interested in news because it affects their careers and futures. All of the respondents get their news online, either by searching for it, or coming across it on social media:

- “Yes, I am interested in what happens in the country and I always want to know what is going on in the world. I visit News24 online.”
- “I access up to 14 publications on the same topics in order to draw conclusions. You got to kind of sift through it and make your own mind up. And if you are interested in it, you just research it thoroughly. But I don’t trust the news as it is on social media. So, I hear about the news on social media and then I’ll research it and look for all the different articles.”
- “I see what is happening on social media and then I search the net if the article interests me.”
- “I am interested because it affects business, and it is a natural component of the future of business. At the end of the day, for you to be successful in business, you need to make informed decisions.”

In determining whether the youth interact with news content online, they were asked whether they take part in public discussions on news and political topics online, especially on their social media feeds. Here are some of their answers:

- “It is dangerous to engage because of the backlash you get from people online, people can always take what you say and interpret it in the wrong way.”
- “Never. I only read the comments to see what other people think. I am scared of what people will say of what I think.”
- “No, I don’t follow news discussions online, I am not interested in that.”
- “When I was younger and I became interested in these topics, I always saw people online agreeing with each other. And there is always this one person who does not agree, and that person is attacked. I enjoyed reading the opinions that differed because it showed me that I was not the only one who thought about something in a specific way… I think it is important for people to see that there are other people who share your thoughts.”
- “I have Facebook debates often… but you would say something, and you will be immediately shut down, especially as a white male, they immediately shut

you down with ‘you’re a racist and you have privilege so you don’t understand it’, even though they might not know my background… it is automatically ‘your argument is invalid because of those two reasons’”.

Other responses from respondents are of particular importance to this study because it reflects how the youth perceive the media and how the media represent the youth and their views. Not one of the respondents felt that there is adequate representation of issues they deem important in the national media. The question they were asked was: *Do you think that your views and issues as a young South African, are reflected or addressed in the news media? And do you feel that you and your peers are represented in the national media?* Below are some of the responses:

- “The news is always about politics and it is all the same. They never bring us anything that is positive. The media will always give you what is real and what is true, not what people necessarily want to see.”
- “The general media focuses only on topics that influence the higher middle class or the very poor people.”
- “No, the news has too many politicians speaking about things that the youth are not interested in. I would like to see more stories based on gender equality. The media is not giving enough attention to gender-based violence.”
- “No, definitely not. The media hardly focuses on the youth. We don’t see them on the news, but we see them online on platforms like TikTok where they will be discussing issues like the price of data and access to the internet. We see a lot of social issues represented by older generations, but we don’t see the youth raise their own issues. In the Netherlands there is a news bulletin for children, but it is not necessarily kids’ topics. It’s news topics presented and discussed by kids.”
- “The only time they focused on us was with #FeesMustFall.”
- “I would like to see more representation of my peer group. It will draw me to watch the news much more if I know that my peers and my issues are coming to the fore like opportunities for young people to be more involved in the direction the country is going”.
- “In my own family, what I experience on the ground is not a true representation of what is reported on. So, from that sense I feel that there is a big gap between

what is reported and what is on the ground. Journalists can't cover everything, so they cover things in general but not everyone has a general interest".

The effects of the responses are discussed in Chapter 7 under Findings.

5.2 The Function of DSTV and NATV within the South African Society

5.2.1 Interviews

The following emerged from the focus interviews with Alberts, Phage and Katapodis.

The most important points which are of relevance to this report are two things that Phage and Katapodis agreed on:

1. The target audience that was initially envisioned, has shifted and NATV did not succeed in positioning itself as a youth-focused news channel.
2. Alberts, Phage and Katapodis said that the channel is aware that its social media strategies, to attract the youth, are not up to date.

Further to this, Phage and Katapodis both indicated that the news agenda is set by what is trending on the national news agenda. Phage described the sourcing of news content as "fishing from the same pond" as other broadcasters, and that the general news of the day is not different from what other broadcasters are doing.

In terms of strategy, Alberts and Phage said that the news channel was created to add a third voice to the national broadcast media space. According to Alberts and Phage, the channel was never mandated to be a voice for the youth, rather, it was just positioned as an alternative news voice from the outset. Katapodis however indicated that the channel did not succeed in drawing a younger audience only and that the channel will work on its social media strategies to achieve this. Katapodis also stated that NATV's role in South African society is not different to the role of the mainstream media nationally. She described this role as "being a mirror to society". Katapodis also stated that NATV aimed at attracting viewers in a mid- to high-income group (higher LSM-living standard measurement). This means that their target audience are people who have enough income to afford DSTV. She described the ideal audience as "young and upcoming people who have tentacles in society; people that were interested in

music television before but are now interested in current affairs as it affects their lives". This age group she described as 35 years and older. This researcher interviewed youth aged between 18 and 35. As stated earlier, those above 30 indicated lower levels of interest in news and especially political news.

The data also suggests that it is not part of NATV's long-term strategy to transform the channel into an online only channel or to form an online channel as subsidiary. The plan is to stay on a linear platform and to provide broadcast television news. According to Alberts, broadcast in South Africa will still have a lifespan of at least 15 to 20 years. Alberts stated that viewers still need their content to be curated for them. She said that with the rise of television on demand and streaming services such as Netflix, it has become evident that people do not know what they want to watch, and that linear television plays a big role in curating content. Second to this, linear television will stay relevant because of live broadcasts that consumers cannot find anywhere else. These live broadcasts include live sport events. DSTV owns Supersport which has had a monopoly on live broadcasting rights for all the big sport tournaments in the world, including the Premier League to which they hold rights until 2025 (supersport.com). According to Nielsen, measuring global television audiences, more than 3, 2 billion people world-wide watched the Premier League on standard in-home devices, excluding out-of-home and mobile devices between August 2018 and May 2019 (premierleague.com).

Along with live sports there are two other live television genres that keep broadcasting alive, one being reality TV shows and the other being news. Alberts said that a reality show such as "Our Perfect Wedding" is watched by millions of South Africans, and while people are watching the show, they are engaging in conversation online about the show. This is the utopia for broadcast news: if people are watching the linear platform, the ideal is that they take part in online discussions about the news and the topics that trend. But the research, as previously indicated, showed that the youth specifically are scared of participating in online discussions about current affairs. Although they indicated that they read what others are saying, they do not participate themselves. On the question of whether it can be the media's role to facilitate discussions and deliberations of news content online on the NATV's social media platforms, Katapodis described it as a waste of time saying that NATV's employees

“are journalists and not babysitters” and that it is too risky for the media to mediate online debate and, therefore, she does not see it as the role of NATV.

5.2.2 Comparing the Online Presence of NATV’s Competitors

It is clear from the interviews that NATV does not have a clear news media strategy on how to attract the youth to their platform. Alberts, Phage and Katapodis described this as a work in progress. Alberts said that NATV’s first and most important priority was to establish itself on air in the broadcast news environment and gain market share. She said that once the channel was established, it would focus on setting up a new media strategy. But if one looks at the content that is posted on their existing social media platforms, there are various concerns. As the respondents indicated, Instagram and YouTube are the two go-to platforms of choice. NATV has a profile on Instagram but they do not post any news content on it. The profile shows only pictures of employees behind the scenes and does not position the channel as an online voice.

If one looks at the Facebook page, content is taken from what is aired on the linear platform and posted in long monotonous interviews/talking heads on the social media page. In the majority of posts, the Facebook update is a one-liner stating: “[HEADLINES] In the news at this hour” but it does not give the headlines. Along with the headlines, posts have non-descriptive photos that do not grab the attention of followers. Below is a screengrab of a status update made on Facebook:

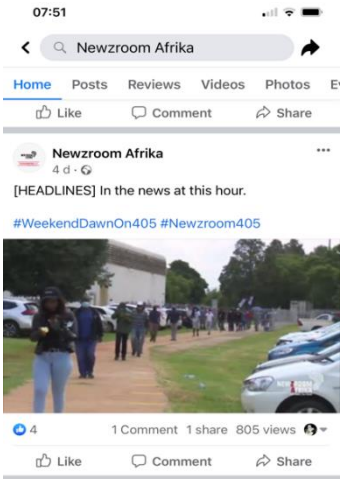


Figure 6: Screengrab 1: NATV Facebook status with no descriptions

This post made on 10 January 2021 tells the viewer that the news headlines are currently on air but does not say what the headlines are. The photos chosen to accompany the post is non-descriptive: it is a queue of people who appear to walk on a sidewalk; one is not sure why this photo is chosen or what the story is about. Thus, the news platform may have a presence, but the stories don't reach the audience.

Other posts that have more detail, but the majority of posts involve politicians and are about reporters following politicians around, as illustrated in another post made on 10 January 2020:

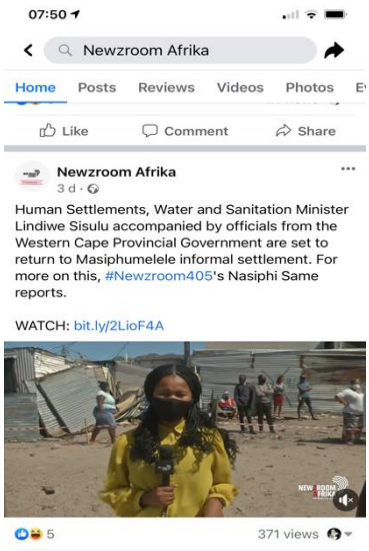


Figure 7: Screengrab 2: NATV Facebook status with description

This post states that the Minister of Water and Sanitation will visit an informal settlement. Katapodis stated in her interview that the NATV audience responds well to live reporting, as is the case in the story referred to here. But the content of the story may trump the live reporting as the youth indicated a disinterest in politics and politicians. They described this disinterest as due to the mistrust in government because of high levels of corruption. These are only some of the reasons they gave for not being interested in the news. Below is a third excerpt from the NATV Facebook page on 11 January 2021:

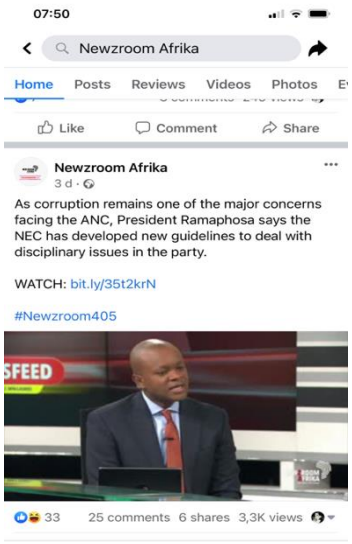


Figure 8: Screengrab 3: NATV Facebook status with description

This post refers directly to corruption and implicated politicians.

The posts were chosen to illustrate what will later be discussed in the discussion section of this report. These are typical examples of news coverage on the NATV Facebook platform. Similar posts were made on the Twitter platform, although the audience may differ from those who follow Facebook. The Twitter posts were driven even more by political news. As shown in the example below:

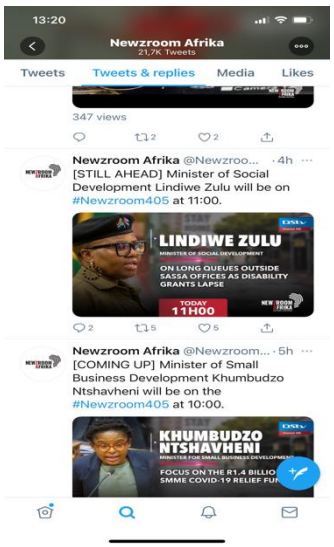


Figure 9: Screengrab 4: NATV Twitter updates

Screengrabs 2 to 4 all indicate the politically driven news reports that NATV posts on its social media platforms.

In the final part of the findings, an important element must be noted. The research suggests that young people will watch television news when big events are happening. They listed some of these events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and news on regulations that affect them, such as the sale of alcohol and tobacco. They also mentioned events like #FeesMustFall because they related to it. They listed criminal events like the Oscar Pistorius trial, the Paralympian gold medallist who was found guilty of the murder of his girlfriend.

It is extremely important to note that the youth indicated that they watch broadcast news during big events, but not on the actual linear platforms. World broadcasters such as CNN are streaming live to social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook while they also broadcast the same event, live on their linear platform. During the inauguration of the new American president, Joe Biden, most large international news broadcasters were streaming the event live. Many people (905 039) were watching the live stream on CNBC. The Telegraph, which is an American newspaper, streamed it live and had more than 37 000 people watching. ENCA, NATV's direct competitor, had just over 8 000 people watching the live event via its streaming service. NATV had no live streaming options available online for this event.

At the presidential address by President Ramaphosa on Covid-19 regulations on 11 January 2021, more than 42 000 people were watching the speech on mobile streaming devices. While the speech was delivered, eNCA opened its comment section and people were able to make live comments and give their views on what they thought of the speech. A screengrab of a part of this conversation is illustrated in the image below:

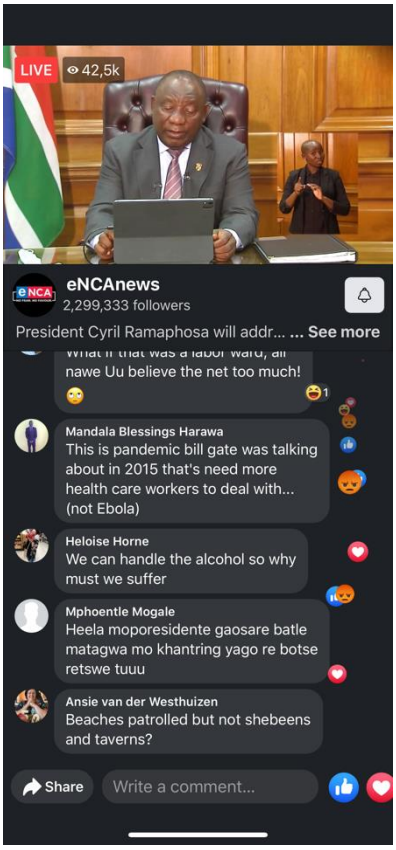


Figure 10: Screengrab 5: eNCA News live broadcast

South Africans were participating in the online discussion despite racial and language differences. NATV did not offer its viewers a similar service.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion

The research question will be analysed by dividing the findings into two topic areas:

1. The youth and apathy towards politics and news (agenda setting).

2. Television habits, devices and news access (public sphere and agenda setting) and the utilisation of new media by traditional media platforms

The research question: Can the establishment of a youth-focused television news channel attract young South Africans to news media and mobilise them to participate in the national political conversation?

Case study: The Case of Newzroom Afrika

6.1 The Youth and Apathy towards Politics and News

This study found that it is indeed the case that the youth are disconnected from politics and as a result of that disconnection, they are disconnected from the news media. Many researchers have previously suggested that the country's youth are disconnected from politics and are apathetic towards politics and news media and that this is not something that is unique to the South African youth only but seems to be the case across the world (Wayne et al., 2010; Malila & Oelofsen, 2016; de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Ndlovu, 2015). Some research and surveys conducted in the last decade concluded that the youth feel they have no voice in national matters (Mattes & Richmond, 2015). This study found that the youth may even be more apathetic today than they were five or ten years ago when similar studies were conducted. This could be a result of the ANC government under former president Jacob Zuma that became synonymous with corruption after nearly a decade of state capture (Satchwell, Bikitsha & Mkhondo, 2021). There has been a general decline in public service around the country, and service delivery protests have increased as a result.

The fact that the youth have become so apathetic towards politics and disheartened by the political environment and empty promises of the ruling government poses a direct threat to the health of the South African democracy. This study focused on the youth for two reasons, one being that they are the target market of the case study and secondly, and more importantly in terms of understanding democratic theory, is the notion that one can get an understanding of the general population by looking at its youth (Wohn & Bowe, 2016).

NATV's entrance into the market as a youth-focused channel had the potential of creating a platform that addresses the national news, not by generating content specifically aimed at young people, but by positioning the content in a way in which the youth can relate to it. Because when the news is specifically designed to attract young people, by incorporating more 'soft news' such as celebrity news, it can have the opposite effect and estrange the young viewer even more (Wayne et al., 2010). They may view the 'soft news' as patronising (Wayne et al., 2010) and they may turn away from the platform because they do not feel that they are getting the real news. Some of respondents indicated this and a particular respondent stated:

> "Youth-focused news topics are not the answer to draw young people to the news. News should inform and reflect society and not cater for a specific group or audience."

NATV director of news, Katy Katapodis reiterated the way in which the channel caters for younger people, by rewriting the story in a different way that is directed at the youth on social media:

> "So, the content itself is not adjusted, but often the social media team will write in a way that's more appealing for a social media audience, in the same way that our bulletin editors and our reporters will write in a way that's more appealing for a television audience. So, you write differently for the different markets although the content is essentially the same" (Katapodis, 2021).

Although what Katapodis refers to is ideal, it does not seem to be the case in practice. If one looks at the screengrabs of social media posts made by the channel on social media platforms such as Facebook, most news stories generated by NATV are political in nature. This report proves that political content is the exact thing that

alienates viewers. News cannot be completely free of politics as politics determine an array of other elements in society, such as the state of the economy, the standard of healthcare and education, etc. However, analysing NATV's online and general content, some stories are of little interest to the public even though these stories still make it to the news agenda because it is driven by politicians.

NATV's news stories often emanate from Twitter posts by government officials, newsletters and media releases and personal invitations to journalists. The news agenda is thus not formed by the integration of new social media onto the traditional platform by making use of reversed agenda setting techniques (Weimann & Brosius, 2017) but is a result of the systemised day-to-day operation of a newsroom that reflects the sociology of news production (Schudson, 1989). Generating and sourcing news is a function of the newsroom and is based on established networks:

> "Well, we are journalists, so we use our editorial acumen and our editorial prowess to decide what is the big story of the day. We've got an amazing team of editors who work, who sit in two diaries a day, one in the morning and one in the evening and together we talk about the big stories, what is unfolding in the country, what news agenda we like to set. So, in terms of how we set the news diary, this is what we do: our editorial meetings, our teams of reporters on the ground, in the provinces, we collate all this information, we just have a look at what is and what isn't of relevance to society" (Katapodis, 2021).

The fact that journalists and editors rely on their own networks/contact lists, results in the news content becoming dependent on that network and what information that network feeds to the news producers. In classic agenda setting, NATV is still fulfilling its role as gatekeeper of information they consider important for society. But there are key issues at stake here that have to be revisited if the channel intends to appeal to young South Africans. The first is the consideration for reverse agenda setting (Weimann & Brosius, 2017). It has to be considered that there are micro-agendas (Wohn & Bowe, 2016) online and that these micro-agendas are set by groups of people who share similar interests. Likewise, there are various members of these groups online that represent issues of concern to young people. One respondent noted

that the youth will be more engaged if their efforts and contributions to society make it onto the national agenda:

> “Politics, scandals and corruption trumps youth-themed interest stories constantly. There are many stories that can be covered, like imagine a youth clean-up operation in their hood, it is not issue-driven so it never makes the cut.”

The systematic approach to news nowadays includes generating and sourcing news content from the social media platform, Twitter (Weimann & Brosius, 2017). News organisations urge their journalists to create Twitter profiles and a following as it has become a source of news topics, marketing and a platform of competition amongst journalists to be the first to break a story. Not only has this watered down accurate and in-depth reporting, as found in a report on the state of media in 2021 (Satchwell, Bikitsha & Mkhondo, 2021), journalists on Twitter are also limited to information within their echo chambers (Weimann & Brosius, 2017). As a result, the news they cover is based on the people in their network and are usually those in power, government, decision-makers and members of the elitist society. The agenda that is set for the news is thus not driven by what is happening in the real and everyday lives of people as one respondent noted:

> “Most media outlets are biased. They follow one main agenda and that is always about politics and politicians and not a true reflection of what happens in real life.”

NATV is thus not only unrepresentative of a variety of voices in the news coverage they give but limits their stories to political news that alienates the youth. By not adapting to new media, they further fail in creating a public sphere for the youth. As discussed in the literature review of this paper, a tabloid newspaper succeeded in keeping their presence online even after the fall of the newspaper industry worldwide. The Daily Sun used their readers to determine the news agenda and in turn created a public sphere for their audience on a social media site (Haumann, 2014). By inspiring and mobilising their readers to send photos and videos of topics they would like to see on the news agenda, citizen journalism became a major role player in the news agenda they set as a newspaper. Through this, a circular effect, similar to the strategy used

by Republic TV in India, is created. The readers send in their stories, the news producers contextualise it, fact-check it, curate the stories and publish it back onto the same platform. In the case of Republic TV, the stories were published both online and on the linear platform. Once the story is published, the readers return to the post online to discuss the story. Therefore, the ideal public sphere is created, a safe space with trusted information in which citizens who relate to the same issues can deliberate and converse.

In the case of television broadcasting, creating this space should be easier, as broadcasters have the luxury of live television. As in the case with reality television, where the viewer is watching the live/recorded episode, while having a conversation online about the episode (Alberts, 2020), it is the ideal scenario that can be used by NATV to involve the youth. But if the content does not relate to the youth, this scenario cannot be created. Second to this, if NATV does not have a full online presence on platforms where the youth live, it is not possible to create a public sphere:

> "We do have an Instagram page, but it is not active as we want it to be. Remember the focus of the channel when we launched, the focus was more to get traditional television up and running and then once, and first when you're done with that, we are now introducing other social media platforms. As we speak now, we have Facebook, we have Twitter, we will be active on an Instagram account very soon and then we move on" (Phage, 2021).

If the channel was aware of the fact that the young audience was online prior to their launch, the question is why does NATV not have an online presence? It seems that the channel had no clear new media strategy on methods they were planning to use on social media platforms to attract the youth (Phage, 2021). If the normative role of journalism was considered during the formation of the channel, the establishment of a public sphere, aimed specifically at youth involvement, engagement and mobilisation in the interest of promoting democracy, would have been the focus. Instead, while democracy is in a crisis and the youth are becoming more apathetic to national politics under the ruling ANC government, the establishment of NATV seemed to be more of a commercial business opportunity than a youth-focused news channel.

This research found various reasons why the channel was unable to attract and establish a younger audience. These do not only stem from the challenge to attract young people to traditional media platforms but are rooted in a problem within the political system in South Africa. The research found that democracy in South Africa is indeed in a crisis and that politics and the national mainstream media are at the centre of this. At the time of this report, NATV was in its second year of existence and much could still be done to create a public sphere for young people. The channel also has the power to influence or set the national news agenda, but at this stage, the agenda they are setting is the exact thing that seems to alienate their young audience.

While much has been written on shifts in agenda setting from the mainstream media to new media and from journalists and news professionals to consumers and various publics, this research report found that a symbiotic interaction between linear-based NATV and an online audience/public is non-existent. NATV does not set their main news agenda from topics trending in the online space. The agenda is driven by the national news agenda determined by the news industry which is systematic and sometimes outdated (Wayne et al., 2010).

In an era dominated by new media and platforms that are particularly frequented by the youth, social media strategies to engage the youth are vital to the existence of any new entrant to the media sector, be it traditional platforms or new media platforms. It does not really matter whether the publication is traditional or not, the audience should be given an option to get the content online and the content should therefore not be limited to television screens when attempting to reach the youth. It is therefore not only crucial to understand the apathy towards politics and news preferences of the youth, but also important to understand how they engage with new media.

Along with the systemised approach to news coverage, it should be noted that society at large has an influence on what actually makes it onto the national news platform. This is an effect of the social construction of ideology: What is accepted by society as the norm of values and standards by which people are expected to live, is largely determined by the diversity within a democracy (Dahlgren, 2005) but if the democracy is threatened because the society is not participating in it, the scope of the ruling ideology will be limited, and this will be evident in news coverage. For example, in a dictatorship, the ideology will be determined by the state and the state alone; if the

news media report on topics that may question this status quo, it may place journalists and their institutions at risk. In extreme cases, criticising a dictatorship can be life threatening.

In a democracy, this should not be the case. The press should have the freedom to investigate any given story, even if it falls in the periphery of state officials.

This notion of not investigating those in power (for example) becomes a norm in news reporting for journalists across the national media landscape and no one will take a risk that may compromise their careers.

Contrary to this, if the media can succeed in creating a platform or safe space for the youth to become part of discussion on national issues, it can assist in healing democracy. This can be facilitated by the organic creation of a public sphere in which the youth can feel free to participate and not merely be outsiders looking in.

6.2 Television Habits, Devices and News Access (agenda setting)

This research set out to reach an understanding of whether the youth can be motivated or mobilised into becoming involved in matters that are of national interest. The study was launched on the basis of NATV positioning itself in the market as a youth-focused channel with a fresh take on news. The case of NATV was used as it was a new entrant to the South African media environment at the time of the study. What made NATV both important and interesting for this study is the fact that it was established as a traditional media platform aimed at attracting the South African youth to a linear television platform despite the rapidly developing new media environment. New media platforms and streaming services, as mentioned earlier in this report, are on the increase daily and the youth are particularly prone to visiting YouTube and other streaming services such as Netflix. This is because linear television is still appointment television in which programmes are scheduled for viewing at certain times of the day. Content on new media platforms dominate user choices in an era of consumerism in which the youth have a tendency to want instant gratification. This instant gratification is caused by the speed at which the internet functions and users can get access to information required within seconds of searching for it online. There is thus no waiting period or delay when accessing information (Weimann & Brosius, 2017) and therefore,

sitting in front of a television set, waiting for programming between advertisements, does not give the youth the same instant gratification. According to the interviews conducted for this study, on a service like YouTube, the youth can choose to watch things that interest them, teach them skills, make them laugh and introduce them to trending topics. Further to this, they do not own television sets and their smart devices, such as cell phones and tablets have replaced the traditional television screen.

The internet has the potential to create micro-agendas (Wohn & Bowe, 2016) that may automatically lead to organic public spheres: if a specific group of people share ideas, values, ideologies or discourse, they are likely to form a public sphere. This exchange and discussion of information can emanate from various echo chambers (Wohn & Bowe, 2016) and can form a public sphere. The formation of these small groups of different publics or counter-publics can be a result of a crowd experiencing similar things or witnessing similar events, or it can be a public that is created as a result of circulated information by text or social media posts (Warner, 2002). The latter is applicable to these publics forming on social media. People will only react if the information shared is applicable to them and if they can relate to the issues raised. If they react to the information, one crucial requirement for the establishment of a public sphere is achieved (Warner, 2002). Further to this, Dahlgren (2005) states that the public sphere is dependent on interaction and deliberation. Once the group realises that it is represented and that its issues enjoy attention, the public is addressed. But according to Warner (2002), to only be a voyeur to the exchange of information by merely being present, is not ideal for the formation of a public sphere:

> “The act of attention involved in showing up is enough to create an addressable public. But some kind of active uptake – however somnolent – is indispensable. The existence of a public is contingent on its members’ categorical classification, objectively determined position in social structure, or material existence. In self-understanding that makes them work, publics thus resemble the model of voluntary association that is so important to civil society” (Warner, 2002).

If self-organised publics already form online, the media can play the role of facilitator by ensuring that information shared is contextualised and it can present the group with

alternative views. A media institution like NATV can thus tap into already formed publics online and extend it by creating diversity and providing guidance.

Discourse within a public existing on social media can result in provocation of counter-discourse or can be as a result of discourse that already exists in other publics (Warner, 2002). To illustrate: if a person 'enters the public' to discuss the discourse or challenge the discourse, that person becomes part of the public he/she enters. Those outside the discussion are seen as onlookers (Warner, 2002) and new media has created the perfect environment for the onlooker to become aware of the discourse within a given public. In terms of social media, the onlooker is the person reading the comments without participating.

In democratic theory, participation is key. For Dahlgren (2005), this is especially true in a new media environment. For Dahlgren, the fragmentation caused by the formation of this variety of micro public spheres that exist online, destabilises media communication and public spheres as a theory (Dahlgren, 2005). The theory should thus be relooked considering three analytical dimensions: the structural, the representational and the interactional (Dahlgren, 2005) of which the interactional is of most importance. The structural refers to the media institution or organisation and the elements that determine the flow of information. Society and its ideological norms also form part of the structural dimension. Dahlgren (2005) refers to this as society's 'political ecology'. The representational dimension refers to media output and the way in which the media has the power to address specific publics (Dahlgren, 2005) and the new media environment has made this process more convenient for the media to reach specific target groups, especially when one considers the working of algorithms.

The interactional dimension is of specific interest to this report and refers to the public's interaction with both the media and other citizens:

> "…the classic idea that democracy resides, ultimately, with citizens, who engage in talk with each other. This is certainly the basic premise of those versions of democratic theory that see deliberation as fundamental. Interaction actually consists of two aspects. Firstly, it has to do with the citizen's encounters with the media – the communicative processes of making sense, interpreting, and using the output. The second aspect of interaction is

> that between citizens themselves, which can include anything from two-person conversations to large meetings" (Dahlgren, 2005)

It is in the dimension of interaction, based on Dahlgren's (2005) analysis of the public sphere that it becomes clear where the role of the media lies within the online space and where NATV can fit into the context of interaction.

Members of the youth may be taking the role of the 'onlooker' when it comes to online discussions of news and events of national interest. This research has established that the youth want to know about news and they want to know what is going on in the world around them. It is expected that even when they incur incidental news (Mithelstein & Matassi, 2017) online, that if a story grabs their attention, they will read it and they will read the comments. But they do not participate. In order to start the process of participation, a news story must include a variety of voices that represent the youth – not voices of young politicians – but ordinary members of the youth. If the story is representative of topics and people that interest the youth, it may be the first step in the formation of a public sphere. When the youth discover a story that is of national interest to them – which may include politics and economics – they will want to be informed. The findings indicate that the youth will then go and read the story online, or search for it. They may visit the official NATV sites online, stream the news or access the linear channel. At this stage, NATV does not yet have a streaming function, but, according to their management, it is in the pipeline. Once the viewer is consuming the news online or via linear delivery, they return to social media to discuss the information and open themselves up to others' opinions. If possible, they may even join or become an onlooker on the platform where the story is presented.

The last and most important step is for the youth to be aware that the editors and journalists within NATV create a safe environment on their online platforms for the youth to participate in conversation and interact with each other. NATV thus plays the role of gatekeeper of information, fact-checker of news online and the provider of various opinions as well as a platform for discussion. In terms of merging traditional and new media, NATV would thus fulfil its normative role as the media to create a public sphere in the interest of promoting national democracy.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

Traditional media still plays an important role in mass communication despite the rapid development of the new media environment. In mass communication theory, traditional media can still fulfil its normative role in the media to form a public sphere in the interest of promoting democracy. New media was once a threat to the future existence of traditional media, however as the internet resulted in a fragmented media environment in which fake news triumphed, consumers are more aware of the ills of new media today, as opposed to a decade ago. Therefore, they still use traditional media, especially traditional media that have presence and are active online, to verify information. They therefore look to platforms that have its heritage in traditional media, to contextualise information for them and provide different opinions. The consumer, especially the young news consumer, tends to compare various publications before drawing their personal conclusions.

This research found that NATV, despite being a traditional platform, has the potential to form a public sphere for the youth to deliberate on national issues and thus pull them into the national conversation. However, in order for NATV to achieve this, there are various elements that have to be aligned to the new media environment. Firstly, the systematised news content should be broadened to include a bigger variety of news that relates to the challenges and issues that concern young people. Political news should not be reported for the sake of reporting on political events as a result of convenience for journalists in terms of sourcing and the ease of verification based on trusted networks. Being active on Twitter does not mean the newsroom is on par with the youth and social media. The youth are not choosing platforms such as Twitter because it is dominated by politicians, celebrities and reporters. Further to this, journalists must not get stuck in their own Twitter echo chambers.

Secondly, NATV should target the platforms where the youth already reside. Here the youth will come across the topics incidentally, even though they might not be interested in that topic. If the news stories are positioned and produced to attract them, they will engage with the content. They are likely to further engage with the platform

of the publication online or in its traditional form, provided they can relate to the story. The research report found that the youth do engage with news media such as broadcasting when big events happen. So, likewise, if they relate to the news content, they will engage with the platform.

Thirdly, once the youth engage, they must be mobilised to participate in the debate/deliberation of the content. The online arena provides ideal platforms for this, but it is in the interest of the news content provider to mediate the discussion on their online sites. In this sense, the traditional media outlet, in this case, NATV is able to create a public sphere for the youth, which is seen as a designated public on the basis of sharing similar issues and frustrations despite ethnic or cultural differences.

It is important to note from previous studies that the South African youth seem to be politically active at face value, if one analyses their participation in political issues, such as service delivery protests. But protests alone cannot be seen as political participation. In fact, if there is a strong identification with the ruling party, it is less likely for people to protest even if they have reason to do so (Matebesi & Botes, 2017). The protest and frustration with the ruling ANC government are seen by some as reasons for the youth's apathy towards national politics. Some research suggests that the youth feel their voices are not heard and therefore their issues are not addressed or resolved. The lack of participation in democracy for change is further confirmed by looking at the low voter turnout of the 2019 national election, when the youth stayed away from the polls.

NATV was founded in 2019 with a vision and mission of becoming the first youth-focused 24-hour television news channel in South Africa. Although the channel exists on DSTV which is a pay channel, part of the strategy of the business was to populate all social media platforms and establish a presence on YouTube to be available to a larger audience. Some researchers found that although the youth may be apathetic towards news media, they do trust news media and research suggests that they trust television news more than any other form of news, as surveys found that when they see the pictures, the stories are easier to believe.

Therefore, even though this is not currently the case, NATV is in the perfect position to engage the youth online with relevant stories that appeal to the issues that the youth

are facing in South Africa. This will lead the youth to find the linear channel where they can either receive more information or ‘see’ the story unfold. If the story is of particular importance to them, they will seek more information online and discover conversations about the topics in the comment sections of stories posted online. As mentioned, the youth will not easily engage in online conversations about news topics out of fear of being intimidated or bullied. However, once they realise that there is no threat to them on a particular forum, they will start engaging and participating in discussion, creating a discourse and eventually a public sphere can form. The discourse around a topic is extremely important in stabilising or even changing a democracy.

Limitations and restrictions

This research was limited by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown and other time restrictions. Due to these restrictions, the researcher was not able to speak to some respondents face to face which might have impacted on their responses.

The sample selected for data collection was small, but nonetheless, data saturation occurred. The researcher is of the opinion that a larger group of respondents would not have changed the results of the data collected.

An analysis of qualitative data can sometimes be influenced by the bias of the researcher, though this report focused on more than one data collection stream to limit this influence.

Lastly, the researcher was employed by Newzroom Afrika before the channel was launched and worked as a news reporter for one year after the launch of the channel. The researcher was thus privy to attend training of personnel before the channel was launched and has a clear indication of the initial strategy. The researcher remained objective during the study and all interviews and research were conducted after the researcher resigned from the channel. The researcher has no prejudice towards the channel and analysed it as a media platform without being influenced by any staff member or stakeholder. The researcher is also a former employee of both eTV and eNCA.

Recommendations

This study broadly looked at the interaction of the youth with news and politics, focusing on both traditional media and new media. This research will be useful in future studies and can be expanded on in a few ways. Firstly, more focus can be given to new media and its impact on the perception the youth have of news media and politics. Secondly, research can be conducted into whether the youth's interaction in a public sphere can promote democracy. Thirdly, this research opens the question of whether South Africa has enough independent voices that distribute news amongst its population.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Aletta Alberts

Alberts, Aletta, Head of Channels, DSTV, 2020. Personal video conference interview with Anina Peens. South Africa.

“New generation (generation Z) cares more about the world and politics than millennials[1]. Millennials are thus more disconnected than the new generation”.

“I don’t think they watch news; I think they get their news from another place. They are conscious about what is going on”

“They (generation Z) are too intense and as such they are too aware. Look at the gender topics, it is as if they push the boundaries too far. I have a friend whose child is at university now and they go to parties and when they get to the door, they have to say whether they are gay or bi etc. before they are let into the door”

“News is a broad subject and I think you can target audiences using a variety of different media platforms. But broadcast news has to be wider than that (they cannot target a specific audience). Anyway, I don’t think that young people are watching the news as we (her generation of 50 years plus) watch it. And it doesn’t matter what they do (broadcasters to attract the youth) except if they have a very aggressive social agenda (then you can draw them) otherwise it will never work”

“If you establish any channel that is directed at the youth, it won’t work because young people don’t want to be categorized as such, meaning that you are like this and this and therefore you fit into this box. They watch everything and if you want to target them, you need to have a certain attitude”

“When we did VUZU (channel on DSTV) they (the producers) said, these programmes are for young people. But no, it is not what it is about, it is about the attitude the channel must have. We conducted research and found that old white men in their khaki outfits watch VUZU, but the researchers don’t believe them. Then the researchers ask them what programs they watch, and we established that they watched the vampire series like Twilight on VUZU. So, you cannot put people in boxes. It is about attitude and the type of content you put out these”.

“I think what is going to happen is, and I have been saying this for the past five years. If you look at what is happening with broadcast, I think broadcast will stay, it is like radio. It will always be there, radio didn’t kill the video star. Broadcast will never go away, you don’t listen to the radio for 24 hours, but there are times when you do listen to the radio and just like that, you will want to watch live sports, reality tv live. Because everything you do that is linked to social media, you have to watch live, because otherwise you cannot participate in the conversation. You cannot watch recorded sport later and then think you can talk to your

friends about it, it is about being in the moment. So all these types of reality tv, like the observational reality tv, and programs in which people do funny things, it will always be alive because it is like live sport"

"I think you will always have a hybrid of linear and video on demand next to it"

"In South Africa you can split your audience in two; people with money who have broadband and who want to watch television on demand. But also remember, when you are a very busy person, then on demand may become a problem for you, because you have to search for things to watch. So it is about brilliant curation because linear television is easier to watch. Those are two important things, while the lower end of the market will want linear television for the foreseeable future. They don't have access to broadband and the second thing is, their need is different than the top end of the market, they want to see vernacular things, they want to see local content".

"Many people have only one television set in their homes. And it was interesting to see during lockdown where people chose to lockdown. Lockdown changed many things, family structures changed because people moved in with their families or friends. So, there are now five to six people in the household and some children. So, who is in charge of the remote now?"

"During lockdown, people who would usually not be able to afford WIFI or broadband at home, were forced to get it because they had to use it for work"

"Our bosses (NASPERS OWNERS) come from a world in which they eradicate their competition. They either bought them out or they killed them. But today, you cannot kill Amazon and you cannot kill NETFLIX''

"During lockdown we did a huge qualitative study to see what people were watching and people were not watching NETFLIX. They were on YouTube. They used their WIFI to access social media"

"The youth watches everything, just like us and the whole thing about short format is a fallacy. When they watch short form, they will watch 5 or 6 episodes consecutively which make up an entire episode. So, they don't necessarily not watch 24 minutes, which is a full episode. So, the make-up of the content is just different".

"They don't watch documentaries and they don't really watch news except if there is a big event in the news like the 'Black Lives Matter' movement".

"It is about personal choice and not a collective choice of a certain group. That is what broadcasting is also about. It is about the campfire thing, people watch things together. But for OTT[3] the biggest problem is recommendations of content. Because when people exit their personal viewing space and they want to watch something with other people, it confuses the algorithms".

"I think OTT is going to become more niche, it is already happening. So, you will see a variety of platforms or services within households in which the genre of the platforms are user-specific"

“With TV on demand you are unable to keep your viewers on your platform. They come on, they watch what they want to watch and after that they are out. With us (broadcasters) people stay on the platform, today they watch lifestyle, tomorrow they watch news, it is all there on one platform”.

“Everything is about titles, it is not about channels. People don’t watch Mnet, the channel, they watch Mrs. America, carried by Mnet because the title draws them”.

“Our research during lockdown found consumer behaviour change was quite drastic. We still target families, but individuals are the growth market because they are searching for other content and they are watching it on other devices. So, there is a new type of experience, so there is the live viewing which is a different type of experience which is really popular. Then there are the live parties meaning people are watching television together, but they are far apart and then they discuss it on social media”.

“Social media is the new EPG (Electronic programme guide) because social media recommends the content. You don’t necessarily want your broadcaster to recommend the content because you don’t trust them. Broadcasters have an agenda, there is no return path for them, and they push things and want people to watch it. But we live in a world with a return path and viewers give feedback on likes and dislikes”.

“The media is still able to set the agenda, but the agenda follows its own route. It is a network effect; I tell you something, you tell someone else about it and so the word is spread, and this network effect is what makes social media so powerful”.

“Republic TV in India is one of the biggest news channels and media groups in the world. They do English news, and they adapted their entire strategy around social media. So, it works like this, you have breaking news on social media, then people go to YouTube to view the clip/story, from there you go to a news channel because you want the channel to analyse the story and they must offer a variety of opinions on it and after that you tweet or post on social media and by doing that you are closing the social loop. So, people don’t go to a news channel to watch the news story anymore, they remain online”.

- Republic TV was the leading English news channel across India with over five million views in the week of September 26 to October 02, 2020 (Statistica.com, 2020)

“They do very interesting things, they drive a massive social agenda. So what they do is, for example, it will be the Olympic games and India has won one gold medal, then all the news channels will praise the athlete who won that one medal. But Republic TV doesn’t do that, they will challenge the nation to win 20 gold medals at the next Olympic games and then they drive that agenda”

“The other thing they do is exposes, like Carte Blanche styled investigative stories. For example, they have a journalist there who went undercover to investigate Uber rapes. The Ubers transport women and then they switch on the child lock and the women cannot get out and then they are raped. This journalist went undercover to expose the story”.

“So, they do stories of people and their social circumstances and how to better themselves and they drive the country’s agenda in this way”

“Pay TV customers are much more future orientated. Free to air customers are much more traditional, they want vernacular and local content of things going on around them. They don’t care about what is happening in America. People who don’t have pay-tv have a tendency to think that their lives will be the same as that of their elders. They see no different future. People who do have pay-tv think their lives are exponentially better than that of their elders and that they are always moving up in life”

“We did research into the lower end of the market at the time Whitney Houston died. People bought less food to pay higher subscription fees to DSTV in order to watch Whitney’s funeral”.

“The domestic worker who works for me pays her DSTV account every month. It is one of her priorities because her children watch educational channels like Mindset. This domestic will sometimes borrow money in order to pay her subscription”

“We all think NETFLIX is so huge, but our research shows that YouTube is bigger and people are there consuming content because it is free and people don’t understand, it is not only about short format, YouTube has full movies and series”. “So, DSTV is going to put YouTube on our platform because it is free to air. DSTV takes the free to air channels because we don’t want people to exit our environment because once they leave, they will not come back. So, the box will now offer you the platforms so people will continue to buy the boxes”.

“People are still watching the news, they really are. There are some places in Africa where people want news. In Nigeria, CNN is in the top 5 channels. Here, eNCA is one of the top 5 channels”.

“If you look at our daily total viewing, then news channels range between 2 and 3% of the market. Documentaries are at about 4 or 5% and entertainment is 60% and sport is about 12%. So, sport is an acquisition tool, but it is not what people are watching all the time. So people watch when there are big games, just like it is with news, people watch when there are big stories”

“If you don’t spend a lot of money on marketing your content, then people won’t come to your channel. Because there are so many platforms available, people watch 5 channels of choice, so how do you get people to watch your other channels?”

“So, we are a full spectrum platform and having said that, we have to represent all the different genres. We want to carry a variety of news and local news is really important because people want to know what is going on around them. Our audience is quite an older audience and they still want news”.

“It is about giving people a choice of news. ENCA was done in a different time and we had different priorities back then[4]. First of all, it was the Guptas who disappeared, and we had an open spot and didn’t really have a choice but to fill it. We never spent as much money on Newzroom Afrika as we did with ENCA to get them

off the ground. We probably spent a third or less. It is our news like SABC news belongs to SABC, Newzroom Afrika belongs to DSTV".

"We wanted something with a little more social media integration and all of that. I don't think they are there yet, but they are getting all the building blocks in place now".

"It is difficult to do a news service and to start off with a social service on it, because first you have to start off as a new channel".

"If you say you want to target a young audience, you have to start by attracting everybody, otherwise you will start with nobody. You have things that are weird and wonderful that the youth will watch, but they are not. Then you start off with nobody".

"There was a younger target market, but they are not reaching that target market because it is not a news watching market and we could have told them that"

"Digital is just a delivery method, it is not that the content will be different"

"They might watch four ten-minute pieces that actually make up an episode, if you think of the traditional make-up of an episode"

"Let's take the example of VICE because that is a very apt analogy. They tried to go mainstream and they tried to go onto a linear channel and that was all a disaster. It is just the way that the content is covered is not necessarily the type of content that you put on a linear channel. It was about the idea of what the content was and what it stood for. It stood for the Arab Spring and that is how they made a big name. People consumed content differently than in the mainstream because it was also banned from the mainstream. They stood for anti-establishment and that kind of thing. But when they went to a mainstream channel, it didn't work".

"A Mainstream channel requires different things to actually make it happen. You have to have the news and you have to have the weather and you have to have sport. People don't want these things in their faces all the time but it must still be there"

"If the news was the whole time just about #FeesMustFall, then people will reach a point where they just tune out. Just like with Covid, people reach a point where they feel 'ok, enough now, I've seen it now, let's just move on'.

"I think it (Newzroom Afrika) was just an alternative voice. I wouldn't call it disruptive; I would just say, an updated version of what news should be"

"We are not telling them (Newzroom Afrika) editorially what to do, but in the beginning we had to make sure that they would go on air. They (the CEO's) were young, and they have never done anything like this. We took a great big chance, and it did pay off because I think they are getting better and we can see it in the ratings. They are growing exponentially, like every week they grow"

“You have to think how people are digesting your content. People have a need to digest things and for somebody to explain it to them”

“We have an arm’s length relationship with them editorially. Form a show idea perspective we are involved and on how social media should interact because we criticise them in performance reviews as is the case with all the channels we buy”

“It is very hard to keep a young person on a traditional platform to watch news”

“Even if you make general entertainment channels that are focused on the youth, it won’t work. They would come to you for certain kinds of things and it is about an attitude or a visual sophistication. They will come and watch but they will not make an appointment to come and watch news”

“Because we (DSTV) offer a variety of different views, from the Middle Eastern to the UK to the American to whatever, people flip between channels. For a long time, CNN was accessed for breaking news, but as soon as the news broke, people will move to Sky News because their analysis was always very good”

“For me, you can use social media influencers and celebrities on the news in certain segments, but not permanently. Because once a personality starts taking over the brand then it’s not a news channel anymore. People are fallible, look at someone like Richard Quest; then he is caught with a boy in a toilet in New York and then he is gone. So, news should be much more neutral and it is about the editorial team more so than the people in front of the camera because those are the people who make the content”

[1] Anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (ages 23 to 38 in 2019) is considered a Millennial, and anyone born from 1997 onward is part of a new generation (PEW, 2019)

[2] COVID-19 regulations included a lockdown period of 8 weeks between March and May 2020.

[3] OTT is an abbreviation for over the top and is content delivered via the internet to suit the needs of individuals.

[4] ENCA news was started in 2008.

[5] Gupta’s: referring to ANN7

Appendix B: Katy Katapodis

Katapodis, Katy. 2021. Personal video conference interview with Anina Peens. South Africa.

INTERVIEWER: In your view what is Newzroom Afrika's role in South Africa's society?

KATY: So, I think as like all media, Newzroom Afrika plays a very critical role in South African society. I think being able to reflect what's going on, on the ground, being able to hold a mirror to our society, so the role of Newzroom is actually no different to the role of all media. It's absolutely critical and for me the important thing is that it's critical, the timing is always important. So, the fact that South Africa, like the rest of the world, is going through such a difficult period at the moment, it's all the more important for organisations that are independent like Newzroom Afrika and media houses to actually exist.

INTERVIEWER: But there is quite a bit of diversity in the media, we've got a lot of newspapers, we've got a lot of online platforms, why did you think it was necessary to add an additional TV channel seeing that it's a bit of a traditional platform?

KATY: So, I mean that's certainly not a question I think that I could necessarily answer because it wasn't my decision.

INTERVIEWER: Okay

KATY: It's not necessarily for me to say because I…

INTERVIEWER: Do you think it's necessary that there should have been a third channel in the South African audience?

KATY: Absolutely and in fact I think there should be even more, because to have a population of 60 million plus, and have one public broadcaster and one independent TV channel, it's not nearly enough. We need diversity of voices. We've always needed diversity of voices and we need it in different mediums. So, I hear the argument that we've got online and social and digital platforms, but it's not television and it's not broadcast and I think it's important. I think an argument would be the same as saying you know maybe we only need two radio stations in the country. I don't… we're so used to having a plethora of dozens and dozens of stations all that offer very different things so it was very necessary and I think it's important to have those diverse voices.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, I'm going to get back to this question later because I have a follow up to this but I'm going to stick to my questions as they are. Has the target audience changed since the launch up to now? You've been in business now for just over a year, year and a half, well nearly a year and a half and you had an initial idea of who your target audience is or who you want to target. Has that changed in the last year?

KATY: So, the demographics have not changed, what has changed slightly is the age. So, we are finding that we are appealing to a slightly older news audience. And when I say older, I mean forties, so it's not really old, but older than what was potentially initially the target. But other than that slight change the audience is very much the audience that has been targeted.

INTERVIEWER: So, this is exactly where I want to pause. Who was your initial target audience? Was it the youth? What was that age gap? You wanted to attract the youth, you wanted to give them a voice, who was that and why did it change?

KATY: It was a slightly younger audience and when I say youth I don't necessarily mean teenagers, so it was a slightly younger audience. People who are up and coming in society, who have a voice, who want to contribute to South Africa and who are transitioning perhaps into a news environment where previously they might have been more interested in music radio and music television. Now they want news and current affairs. So, we were hoping to catch them in that transition and we did that very successfully. In fact, so successfully that we were able to even get those who are already established news consumers and current affairs consumers. So, the audience was always contributors to South Africa, young dynamic professional people who actually got a lot of tentacles in our society. What do I mean by that? So, they are young dynamic professional people but at the same time they've got elderly parents, elderly grandparents, they've also got family that perhaps doesn't live in business districts, doesn't live in suburbs and may live elsewhere. So, they've got there, they've got a reach everywhere from Soweto to Sandton they interact with young and old, with cousins, sisters, grandparents, parents. So, it's that beautiful in-between phase of their lives.

INTERVIEWER: So, when we talk about the youngest of this, that you did want to target, let's say 25 and up, and you lost that, do you think that because… well you haven't got them yet, so now your audience is 40… that's your base audience right?

KATY: That doesn't mean we don't have a 25-year-old. So, the 25-year-old is there but the majority of our audience sits above that… [05:21/23]

INTERVIEWER: Do you think it's because of the platform, do you think it's because they are more online and not necessarily watching TV anymore? But it doesn't mean that they're not interested or not engaging with your content.

KATY: So, I certainly think that young people are far more social media savvy and far more into digital platforms. The other thing to consider is that there might be a barrier to entry with DSTV. Even on the lowest package they may not necessarily be able to afford it. Having said that though a higher LSM was always our target, those who could afford it, who were living in homes who did have access to DSTV. And that's all that remains .

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting. Are you catching the rest of them online? Are you, now the people who don't have DSTV, are you forming a catch net for them or do they follow you online, in this

sense not only looking at broadcaster but saying we are a news hub, we creating news that we want to debate about deliberation of news, of politics, is that online? Is it available for young people under your brand as a news journalist as editors?

KATY: So, let's have a look at where Newzroom Afrika exists online. Newzroom Afrika online exists on social media platforms at the moment. We don't have a dedicated news website yet and we can see from the interaction that we have on the social media platforms, we have a lot of interaction with an array of people, both young, middle age, so to speak, slightly older. So, I do think we are catching them. Part of our strategy then is to not just catch them but appeal to them in such a way that they want to see more and consume more on our linear platform.

INTERVIEWER: Keep them basically. So, do you adjust your content for that? Do you kind of look at content that will interest them more? Do you then take leads from your social media for example to see what they are talking about and then bounce it back in your content?

KATY: So, the content itself is not adjusted, but often the social media team will write in a way that's more appealing for a social media audience. In the same way that our bulletin editors and our reporters will write for a way that's more appealing for a television audience. So, you write differently for the different markets although the content is essentially the same. Online and social media also offers us the opportunity to do different things like have polls. We've got daily polls that go out and we use the responses to these polls on air. So, there's such a beautiful symbiotic relationship between online and on air and we're able to do things on the linear platform that we can't necessarily do on social media and vice versa. So, it's easy for people to vote online, it's easy for people to take part in a poll on social media or on Facebook and then for us to take those results and to share them with an audience on a linear platform.

INTERVIEWER: So, you see a lot of engagements through that. Basically, you're seeing responses through your polls. I just want to get back to your content, you say you position it differently for your different platforms but your content is essentially the same, it's news content. What is that content? How do you dictate, how do you set that agenda? Where do you get your leads from? Do you get it from social media? Do you get it from your traditional platforms, where do you get that, how do you decide what is news?

KATY: Well we are journalists so we use our editorial acumen and our editorial prowess to decide what is the big story of the day. We've got an amazing team of editors who work, who sit in two diaries a day, one in the morning, one in the evening and together we talk about the big stories, what is unfolding in the country; what agenda would we like to… what news agenda rather would we like to set and I'll give you an example. Today we felt it was important for us to focus on borders and the chaos that's unfolding on borders and so we made that decision two days ago in the diary. And then from there you're able to assign reporters to various border posts across the country and tell a story from various positions across the country in a very beautiful way throughout the day while at the same time knowing what other big stories are unfolding. So, we know the issues of vaccines, COVID, deaths, hospitals, coffins, we know

all of that and that pretty much helps us understand the dynamics of South Africa and also what our dairies should look like, while also giving a very unique perspective. So, we've sent a reporter today to a mortuary. Grim work for most people but for journalists it's very important to tell the story of undertakers in a time of COVID-19. How are they handling COVID bodies, basically? Are they getting infected? One of the people we spoke to had an employee who, after 36 years, died because he was ferrying bodies up and down.

INTERVIEWER: Did he get COVID from the bodies?

KATY: No, he didn't get COVID from the bodies. It turns out he got it from the community but it was just a beautiful story to tell as grim as it is, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sorry I just have to pause it [10:35 – 10:58 chatting about covid]

KATY: So, in terms of how we set the news dairy this is what we do: our editorial meetings, our teams of reporters on the ground, in the provinces, we collate all this information, we just have a look at what is and what isn't of relevance to society, so yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Does your audience tell you what they want to see and do you see that on social media? I just want to understand your interlink, you know, how you link with social media. Because it's so important. Because there is this three-way street. There is this guy in India who did this study that says, so your audience tells the newsroom now what the agenda is. We don't have, as mainstream media, we don't have the power to set the agenda like we used to, so we take it from social media. Social media bounces it onto your linear platform, onto your traditional platform, onto mainstream media and then that media bounces it back for conversation onto your social media, do you see that?

KATY: So, we do see, we definitely see and when a topic is hot people pick up the conversation then on social media as well. So, we see it in two ways: the conversation is picked up on social media but then we also pick it up in our numbers. So, we can actually see the graph where our viewers were particularly interested in a topic on a particular day and we've seen that particularly with our live rolling coverage that's where our audience gets really hooked and we've seen some really impressive and strong numbers with live rolling coverage.

INTERVIEWER: And also this is one thing learning from the youth from especially the younger youth from between 18 and 25. They never watch news; they are not interested in general news, they don't want to watch it, but if there is a big story they will watch it. So, you see a spike in those numbers as well. So, if, for example, we have something like the Reeva thing happening, it'll be like crazy and that's what we see, that's what they are telling us. Are you seeing it reflecting?

KATY: We are definitely seeing it reflecting. The onus and the responsibility is then on us to be agile. And I'll give you an example: last night we saw the storming of capital hill in the US. There was another show prepped, there were other guests prepped but by half past, in fact, what time was it? Must have been quarter past 9 when things started heating up we canned all of those guests and did rolling live coverage of the US and what was happening there and we were able to get guests based both in the United

states and analysts who are here whilst showing live footage of rioters of Donald trump supporters do the most outrages things essentially. And it's that agility that is really required in order to give us the flexibility and to be able to do this live rolling coverage.

INTERVIEWER: Did you keep an eye on your competitors during that and what were they doing? Were they doing the same thing? Were they following your lead or were they doing other things?

KATY: Well let's just say that I certainly took a glimpse and to begin with, they were both on completely different things. Nobody was doing live coverage. Eventually one of them did pick up on it and started with it as well. They follow us.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that the mainstream media, let's just stick to broadcasting media, follow each other leads? Do you think the agenda is set like that or do you think that you are still able to set different agendas and actually lead the citizens towards that agenda?

KATY: Well it depends. I think it's a little bit of both. So, I like to think that we set our own agenda, using the United States as an example as well. We made a decision in the run up to the US elections last year that we were going to take the US presidential debates live and we were the only news room in the country to do the first debate live and we were live from 2 o'clock in the morning. At 2:30 in the morning if I'm not mistaken. In fact, apologies, the first one we were live from 3 in the morning and then we went even earlier for the next one and it was interesting to watch because none of our competitors were live at that hour. Nobody took the debate live locally, nobody had analysts and post-debate discussion in the studio before or after, so we took the debate from 3 to 4:30 and then we had an entire panel of guests from 4:30 in the morning until 6 o'clock analysing the debate basically.

INTERVIEWER: Were the viewers engaging in that conversation?

KATY: Our viewers were beside themselves. Number one, they didn't expect it. Number two, we could tell they didn't expect it because they kept saying on social media, 'what a shock, I woke up to watch this' or 'I was browsing, I didn't expect a local channel to have it'. So that was really great. Then one of the two competitors did the same for the third debate, if I'm not mistaken. I might have got my numbers wrong but for one of the debates they did the same thing. I like to think we did it better and I always say that imitation is the finest form of flattery so we will graciously accept the compliment.

INTERVIEWER: So, they followed your lead, that's fantastic. In that sense what do you think the future is of broadcast news in South Africa, specifically on television?

KATY: I think it's strong. I think there is a desire to watch broadcast news. I think that people are able to do things simultaneously by the way so you've got dual screen viewing and we know from our own experiences, we know from our own habits, it's not a difficult thing to have a screen or computer and also to be watching a television set in front of you. So, I don't think TV news is dead by a long shot. I think that it is thriving and I think it's got a great and strong future actually.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that you will one day from traditional media move completely to an online type of newsroom?

KATY: As an individual or Newzroom Afrika?

INTERVIEWER: Newzroom Afrika. Do you think the channel will move on to a complete online space?

KATY: No. I certainly don't think so. That's a strategy we'd have to ask the CEO's but as far as I'm aware that's definitely not the plan. Having a strong position in broadcast media is the plan and offering the audience that is really strong and credible and independent and ethical and has all of those good things.

INTERVIEWER: So as a journalist, I want to ask you as a journalist, do you think that setting up a channel in a traditional form… because we have such an array of online news platforms and it's so easy for people to get the wrong message or to get fake news because there are so many people writing stuff… Do you think establishing a channel or a traditional news platform gives you a bit more of an edge where people will see something online and go check with you whether it's fact? In other words, creating a gatekeeping role or being a gatekeeper as a traditional platform for online, beside the fact you are linear? Do you understand what I am trying to say?

KATY: I think I do. I don't think I would call it a gatekeeper role but I think it's all about the integrity and credibility that the channel has. So, if somebody wants to verify something and they are coming to Newzroom Afrika, then we know we are doing something right, we know that we are always giving news that is credible and verified and truthful. If there is news out there and people choose not to come to Newzroom Afrika to verify, then you know you are doing something wrong because there is a trust factor that's missing. So as long as your audience feels that they can trust you implicitly to keep them up to date and tell them what's happening, then I think that is the most important thing.

INTERVIEWER: I just want to ask. I think it's one last question. I've been speaking to a lot of youth to ask them are they have active online conversations. Say there's a new story, do they participate because everybody reads the comments? But do they participate? And most of them say no, it's too dangerous. What do you think could be Newzroom Afrika's role in that? Do you think Newzroom Afrika as a group of journalists and editors, can create a safe space online for deliberation to take place, for people to give their full opinion without being scared that they will be attacked? Kind of overviewed by a journalist protecting them or moderating… I don't really know how to put it but to say that there can be… you want them to partake, they want to participate in the debate but they are too scared. There is a lot of social bullying going on with young kids, especially with younger teenagers and so on. Can you create that space? Do you think you've got the power to do that?

KATY: So, I'm not entirely sure I understand the question and I'm also not entirely sure that's our role as Newzroom Afrika. So, to moderate discussions and debates online is not necessarily the strategy that we want to pursue and not necessarily what we want to do. That people feel free and safe

enough to be able to have conversations… I think that is a very important part of any democracy and you know hopefully when we eventually get an online platform hopefully, we will be able to have those and facilitate those discussions in such a way that is safe. Of course, the big question will be: are our stories open for comments? Many, many news organisations in the country have gone the route of closing comments sections entirely on all stories. Some of them have some stories that they think are controversial. So News24 shut down all of its comments a while ago. Daily Maverick shut down its comments a while ago. There are some and I'm not sure if it's on all stories or some stories, I know when I was still the editor of EyeWitness News a few years ago there was a very serious debate about what to do with the comment section on the stories. Do we shut it down or do we keep it open and very strictly monitor and moderate it? I personally felt it was the right thing to keep them open and strictly moderate it so that we don't allow any kind of hate speech whatsoever. It's my understanding that they have gone a different route now since I left but I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER: If you as the media create the debate, I mean you give it in the news you create, open the debate… Why would they close their comments?

KATY: Well I mean have you ever read through some of those comments? People abuse their democratic right to freedom of speech, I think. And so when a comment section is used to just to promote racial slurs or racial stereotypes or used for hate speech and people are just using that platform, not to debate coherently and intelligently, but rather just to promote hate speech or racism, then you do understand why moderators find it very, very difficult and why editors will decide that they need to close the comment section.

INTERVIEWER: Okay because debate is essentially …

KATY: I'm talking about two different things. I'm not talking about a proper debate on an article. I think that is very necessary. I'm talking about the abuse of the platform. When people go on a platform to purposefully abuse it and to use the platform to put forth hateful or racist agendas. I'm hoping as a journalist or an editor that we find a way, not just in South Africa but in the world, and I think there are ways. The Washington Post, the New York Times do it quite successfully because they've got resources to put very, very strict moderating processes in place so that the comment section is about constructive, proactive, interesting, thoughtful comments. I'll give you an example, Anina. When I was at EyeWitness News and we went the route of moderating the comments section, what we had to do was use a very intelligent programme that would block anybody from using a particular set of words. So, it was swear words, it was racist words, it was everything in the world that we thought was potentially harmful. But we had to keep updating it because people come up with so many different ways to insult that it becomes… it became extremely time-consuming. So, the obvious racist slurs we removed. You weren't allowed to use the word monkey or gorilla. It was just unacceptable. And then people started using butternut to describe the former president Jacob Zuma. Who would have ever thought that the word butternut would need to be included in a list of racial words?

INTERVIEWER: That's so interesting and in the end did you have to close it or?

KATY: Well in the end it just became the most time-consuming… We weren't doing journalism, we were babysitting and I think that's what's happening now, that people are finding especially small news rooms because resources are tight. So I would imagine that those who are choosing to close the comment section are doing so not because they want to stifle democracy by the way, but because you need dedicated teams to go through every fruit and vegetable to decide whether or not it's insulting and derogatory and try figure out what is and what isn't allowed on the site. It's a very very time-consuming process.

INTERVIEWER: It is time-consuming but do you not see it as the role of a journalist? Do you not see it as… how can I say it… not out of duty but… or facilitate good debate?

KATY: To moderate people's comments?

INTERVIEWER: To facilitate good debate.

KATY: To facilitate good debate is one thing but this is why I'm saying… facilitating good debate is one part of the argument but people abusing the platform to just swear or use derogatory or racist or hateful language is something completely different and that goes out of the realm of debate. That goes into the realm or abuse actually.

INTERVIEWER: Alright Katy, I think that is… that is quite what I am focusing on at the moment is the debate section is can Newzroom create a space in which young people feel that they can talk about news in a liberated and safe environment. That's one of the questions. Just a last question. Does DSTV give you any kind of input in your news content? Have they got any say?

KATY: No, nothing. None whatsoever.

INTERVIEWER: Would you describe yourself as objective, fairly?

KATY: Absolutely. Objective and independent and in fact I can go saying that in my entire time at Newzroom Afrika, I have never had a single conversation with anyone from DSTV or Multichoice that had to do with content ever. In fact, I don't know if I've ever had a conversation with them about anything other than they said congratulations to us on launch.

INTERVIEWER: Great, thank you very much. I appreciate your time.

KATY: Pleasure Anina, Keep well.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you, you too.

Appendix C: Malebo Phage

Phage, Malebo. 2021. Personal video conference interview with Anina Peens. South Africa

Chat and background [06:29]

INTERVIEWER: Who is the audience for Newzroom Afrika?

MALEBO: Just to answer you in terms of the target audience is that when we launched our target audience was 18 to 49.

INTERVIEWER: 18 to 49 that big…

MALEBO: Yes, 18 to 49. But as we roughly put it, the youth are now consuming news more and more online and not that much on the traditional media and like any other broadcaster, you know, we revisit our strategies from time to time. You somehow respond to the needs of the public so our target audience has now shifted to 25 years old and 65 plus and the epicentre is of course 45. So that is our audience in terms of the age demographic. In terms of race it is predominantly black, you know. Because obviously black is the majority in the first place and secondly, I mean black people were excluded from the mainstream economy and excluded from the mainstream media previously and that is the growing market and therefore it makes sense for us to target that market because it is a dominate market, like I said.

INTERVIEWER: Do you see that market reflecting in your ARs?

MALEBO: It does reflect of course. As I'm talking to you now it changes from time to time but up to 60% or more of our viewers come from the age group 35 to 65 plus and that's more or less 60% right. So yes, that is reflecting to answer you.

INTERVIEWER: Just to ask you a question on top of that, do you see that audience engage with you?

MALEBO: Yeah at 35 to 65 they do engage quite a lot, they do engage because especially the ages of 55 plus, you've got more and more of those viewers really engaging with us. So, we also have to define what engagement is because if you look at the social media space, their engagement will be through tweets, through Facebook all those things. So I can only say in the case of traditional media the engagement is, how do you react to our content? The fact they keep coming back to us this in itself is an engagement and I want to differentiate here between traditional and social media. Social media has a traditional role, and as you know it, it's quite interactive whereas traditional media is one-way communication. So that's why I'm saying you just have to be clear as to what you mean by: "are they engaging with us? Are they engaging with our content?".

INTERVIEWER: It can be engaged through social media. Are they speaking back to you? Are they giving you feedback? Whatever platform they are using, it doesn't… this isn't really about traditional media it's more about, is the audience responding to what they are seeing? Because in media studies you only

have an effect on the media if your audience responds. Otherwise you have a stagnant audience, and you don't know whether you are making a difference in their lives or you are influencing their thinking. So, you see that response coming from them via social media?

MALEBO: Yes, we do, quite a lot. The response in the first place is how they react to our content. The fact that we are a growing media states to us that they are responding, I mean as I've told you when we launched honestly on day one, we had zero audience. And that's back in 2019 May the 2nd. So, as I'm talking to you now, we average anything up wards of 30% of the market share and also, we have to be clear what we mean by market share… [11:13/12:00]

We are now growing; when we launched, we had zero audience and currently we are averaging between 25 and 30%.

INTERVIEWER: You were trying to explain to me the market share. You have 30% of the market share, right?

MALEBO: Yes between 25 and 30% of market share and remember that I'm talking about the local Tv channels. So, it's 25 to 30% market share and growing so that is very significant and again I need to emphasise first in this interview I always want to differentiate between traditional media and digital space. So, the 25 to 30% that I was talking about is more the traditional channel itself. Because of social media we are still growing and currently we are only on Facebook and Twitter. Very soon we want to activate our Instagram and then move on to introduce our website and so forth and so forth. We do have a website site, I need to emphasise that, but it's what you call a corporate website, it is not a news website like SABC.

INTERVIEWER: I just want to go back to your 30% market share; you say that is in local channels on the DSTV offering. That's competing with local channels the 30% market share on DSTV? So, in the DSTV space.

MALEBO: Yes, local channels being ENCA and SABC.

INTERVIEWER: Okay so you have 30% of that, right. That's great and this audience is 35 plus, that's great Malebo, it's great growth in a year, just a side note.

MALEBO: It is growth and it is great and of course the figure that I'm giving you the beauty about them is that these figures are available. I'm not making them up, you can go to television and all media products and it shows this information, it is available for everybody.

INTERVIEWER: That's great. Okay. Let's start with… so obviously we answered the question on the movement, the shift of your target audience… but let's just stop a minute on social media. What do you think…? No, let's take it the other way around. What do you think is Newzroom…? Why did you come into this into the media space? What is the role of the channel in South Africa?

MALEBO: When we launched, you will remember that we took over a channel called Afro world, right. And multichoice took it off air because it was not performing compared to SABC and ENCA.

So, we took over their channel because it was very important that the public sets force to multiplicity of views so that is the role that we are playing where clarity of voice to the SABC and ENCA. And if you remember well Anina, we launched before the elections and the constituent asked us why before the elections? Because, there had to be another voice that would be added to the SABC and to ENCA purely because those voices are entrenched and the way they are perceived is quite different. The way the public perceive SABC is a public broadcaster and as you know public broadcasters are not easily trusted as a voice of reason. And also, you may want to look at it from objectivity, so whether the SABC could be trusted to deliver an objective election is something that needs to be examined and I'm not sure whether that's how the public views SABC. But to answer your question, SABC would be perceived as a public broadcaster or as a state broadcaster or a governor of peace and ENCA of course would be seen as a liberal broadcaster. So there had to be a view around that time for another voice to be exposed to the public. So that's how we launched just before the elections. And then, to answer your question as to what our role is, our role is to disseminate information to the public, our role is to broadcast news that is trustworthy to the viewers so that is the role that we play.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think it is important to give the public information, like you said the SABC is compromised because of its ownership structure, ENCA you said is a liberal channel? We'll get to that now, but why do you think it is important to add another voice and to give information, why does the public need to be informed and why do you play this role?

MALEBO: Well, it is important for the public to make up their mind as to who is their preference. Their interest is to be… to have news that they can trust. But you earn trust, you don't deserve it, even as a person and for you to earn the trust from the public you've got to produce news. You've got to disseminate news that is objective, that can be trusted and also, you've got to sell yourself to the public that you are serving. What does it mean selling yourself? You sell yourself as the best broadcaster that can give you trusted news for you to consume. For me, choice is very important. Multiplicity of voices is very important for the viewer to say, we can trust Newzroom Afrika to disseminate news to us that we can trust and also to answer you. Once you give the public the news that they want, you are adding to the democratic voices out there in terms of the public having the choice to decipher news that would be helpful to them in terms of making decisions. Whether those decisions are political in nature, whether they are economic in nature or whatever form, educational, it is important for the public to have choice out there and not be exposed, for argument sake, as it was previously under apartheid, expose them to only the SABC as a public broadcaster as the only voice of reason. You don't give them a choice; you're not getting any variant to the democratic establishment of the nation.

INTERVIEWER: How do you know what the public wants ? You said you are going to give the public the news that they want to see. How do you know what they want?

MALEBO: There is something called public interest but public interest is like beauty. It depends… in the beholder's eye, whether you are beautiful or ugly or whatever, but for you to make sure

that you meet the public interest or what the people are interested in, you've got to conduct research from time to time. So, the research will tell you whether you are on track or not. You may want to give the public what they think they want but they will respond back by not reacting to what you are offering so we reassess from time to time to say what their interest is and whether it is politics, sports. So, you've got to do assessments.

INTERVIEWER: Do you take those types of leads, content leads or what you put out on Newzroom Afrika from other leading media institutions? Do you think there is a general subliminal consensus that exists in the South African media that you all cover the same kind of stories that you perceive as a public interest?

MALEBO: Look, it does happen, that's a reality. The reality in the news is that you're almost fishing from the same pond basically. If there is an EFF riot out there we will all cover it because that is what the public is interested in. If there is a Zondo commission out there, those are things that we will cover from time to time because that is what the public is telling you. When you show something on air and the review comes back to say if argument sake, I'm showing EFF toyi-toyi and someone else is showing Zondo commission and someone is showing something else, fortunately in today's world there is research that is real that all the broadcasters subscribe to and that research is trends. So, when we get the feedback in terms of what we are showing, the research will show you whether your choice of broadcast EFF was the right one because there will be a spike around that time or there will be a decline, either way. So, my point to you is that we are fishing from the same pond. What differentiates us is as in some cases it's how you treat your content. You may, for argument sake, cover the same rally, let's say EFF for argument sake, but someone can decide that they are going to give or add propaganda element to the EFF story and some can decide that we are going to give an objective view – the public will decide as to who is giving the best coverage of whatever event is taking place.

INTERVIEWER: How do you ensure objectivity from Newzroom Afrika's side? Do you think you can ensure objectivity from Newzroom Afrika's side? Do you think you can ensure objectivity?

MALEBO: Objectivity again is subjective in the beholders eye. So, to make sure that you are objective we give all sides of the story. That's journalism 101 and nothing beats covering all sides of the story.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so let's move on. What does agenda setting mean to you, what does the term mean to you?

MALEBO: Agenda setting obviously when you as a broadcaster, you take a stand, any position in terms of how you disseminate your news. For argument's sake and I'm not saying that is the case with us, because we are still the new kid on the block, we don't have an agenda. We just broadcast news based on the public interest, but I want to go back to the apartheid days because that is a good example where there was an agenda to serve the then apartheid government as the best government, as

the representative democratic government. But it was an apartheid-driven agenda. So, an agenda is where the media or public broadcaster or a publication regularises to subjugate a particular slant in a way the broadcast would disseminate their news.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, So how do you… we just spoke about influences fishing from the same pond and whatever, but how do you as a new-comer and trying to establish yourself in the South African society, how do you choose your news content? How do you know in public interest, is it a run of the mill thing that we always because of news rooms it's a traditional thing we start with politics and then we go into economy and then go into crime and we go into human interest stories then we go into sport and then the lighter side of the news? Do you follow the traditional methods of news publication in that sense or are you more disruptive? Do you just go for stories that are out there that are nothing to do with the daily agenda, how do you decide on your content?

MALEBO: I think today unfortunately or fortunately technology plays a major role in terms of how we cover our news. So yes, we are very, very disruptive by using our own technology. It is built in such a way that even if we cover the same story, we do add a little bit of social commentary in it, commentary as in how the viewers react. We are not shy in our news to show what the viewers are saying when they are Tweeting whilst we are on air about the subject matter. So, technology is one way of being very disruptive, the other way to answer you is obviously how we make a story from the perspective of the viewer. How the viewers out there are impacted upon by government policies. So that's the differentiator in our case. We don't always take the view from business or government, it's how those policies impact on the viewer and that's the… [25:07/25:08] for us.

INTERVIEWER: So, you don't care what other news stations are doing in that sense, you're taking it from human angel perspective. Basically, going to a viewer and going how are you experiencing this?

MALEBO: Yes, I mean we look at our specs you know, we are very competitive and I'm not sure when you say we don't care.

INTERVIEWER: No, I mean you're not influenced by what other channels are doing…

MALEBO: No, no we are not, we are answerable to the viewer.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, in this world Malebo, I mean there are so many news publications, there are so many citizen journalists out there, there's so much information out there. Do you think there is still a role for a proper news journalist in today's society?

MALEBO: There is, I mean there's quite a lot that is out there. Remember that your traditional media compared to your social media approach, it still operates within a certain regulatory framework or in some cases… what I mean by regulator, I'm going to use radio channels or stations that are licensed by ICASA. So, you are not broadcasting in a vacuum right. We will also subscribe to the BCCSA to make sure that we are careful about the language or the hate speech or about anything that could be perceived as being harmful information to the public out there. In the social media space, we don't have all those kinds

of regulatory policies that are taking place. So yes, there is still room in the traditional media space to be responsible in the way we broadcast our content.

INTERVIEWER: So, I just want to go back to your audience, you say your audience is 35 up but you aimed at 18 to 49 when you started, but you wanted the young audience, you wanted the young South African. Now what happened is you saw that young South Africans at that age 18 say to, let's make it 28 at least, don't watch TV news. We also see that they are not involved much with news media and politics. We saw that in the 2019 elections. The voters that we thought were going to come to the stations was the youth and did you see the youth turn out? The youth didn't come to vote. Why do you think that is, do you think that we are losing our youth because they don't trust our government or do you think they don't trust our media, do you think it should work together? What do you think is the reason why we can't get the youth to be involved in the news?

MALEBO: I don't think it's only a matter of trust, I mean it's a matter of lifestyle if you wish, right. Lifestyle as in what platforms the youth prefer. They prefer social media to consume content and that content is not just news, it's also entertainment. So, it's not like the youth aren't interested in traditional media because of news only. Even in content, entertainment, sport, any form of content youth is interested in consuming that content on social media. That's how it is, but however, that does not mean that they are not watching traditional media for news and entertainment just in general. So, it is a matter of choice, it is a matter of lifestyle, it's a matter of convenience, it is a matter of immediacy. All of this plays a major role in how the youth chose to consume their media. It's also about technology, technology has enabled youth to be able to be mobile all the time. If you look at your smartphone usability compared to previous forms of mobile phones, the youth are now more and more into smartphones, they are more and more into gadgets. So, it's more like a lifestyle over and above them being hungry for information to consume news.

INTERVIEWER: But for a democracy to work and for a democracy to have longevity you've got to get your youth involved in the national conversation that is the building blocks of democracy. They have to be involved, they have to vote… [30:52] and the news media must play a role in that. What do you think about a channel such as yourself, despite the fact you are traditional, what do you think you can do, to attract a younger viewer to watch TV news? Do you think Newzroom Afrika can do that?

MALEBO: Yeah, of course absolutely. We involve other marketing initiatives; we've got a continuous strategy. What it means basically is we drive an audience from social media to traditional television. In today's world you cannot, especially if you are a traditional media operator, you can't operate a television without an integrated approach. An integrated approach you target youth through social media, but you drive them more to your traditional television. So, to answer you in terms of youth to be interested in your channel, you've got to meet them where they are on the social media platforms but drive them back using your content to watch what you are showing. Let me give you an example: we interviewed Duduzane Zuma last week. He is young and he appeals to the youth. So, we promote on social media that there is going to be an interview with Duduzane Zuma. A week or two ago we interviewed Julius Malema who also

appeals to the youth. So, your content has to be so you can attract the youth and that's why they say content is king. If you don't have content that appeals to the youth, you're not going to get the youth so your content is key to attract youth to watch your television channel

INTERVIEWER: Still with national news not telling the youth that you are watering down the news for them because younger, it's different topics because the youth will say "but you're patronising us, we want to be part of the audience and see the real news". So, you can never really take content and make it youth pacific, so what you are you're using young personalities, am I right, to represent the news? But if you don't use personality how do you position the content for the youth?

MALEBO: Remember what I told you Anina… I said to you our target audience is 25 to 65 plus. And that's why we have something called the epicentre. The epicentre is where your older age and younger age meet, which is 45. So, your content has got appeal to that middle of the road or the audience voice… so both sides, yes. And also, in television we talk about the spill over, spill over simply means that you've got content that appeals to the 50/45 years old but it does spill over to your younger audience and it does spill over to the older audience. So that's how you appeal to both the young and the old in the way you produce your content and that's also how you are treating your story and that kind of thing.

INTERVIEWER: Do you use young presenters and anchors also to appeal to this specific epicentre?

MALEBO: Yes, you just have to have anchors who are mature. Now I'm moving away from young to old to mature. If your voice is mature, then it will appeal to the young and old.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think so?

MALEBO: Because once you are mature, the way you present, the way you script, the way you write the news, the way you project yourself, it is a mature voice.

INTERVIEWER: So, you won't necessarily say we are going to bring in a young funky black gay guy that appeals, that's got a huge Instagram following, blah-blah-blah, put him on the news. You won't do that?

MALEBO: It's more about a mature voice that presents, that has got a cross appeal.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see

MALEBO: It means they can appeal to women, they can appeal to men , they can appeal to their GBV communities, LGBTQ+, anyway. All those communities basically, cut across. That's why I'm talking about a mature voice basically.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Can I just go back one step? You said you must position your content and the way you treat your story to appeal to both sides. Is there an example of a story that you can give me of how it's told from the top of your mind?

MALEBO: I'll give you two. The young audience and old audience will be interested to listen to Malema. The old and young audience will be interested to listen to Duduzane Zuma. Remember when you interview Duduzane Zuma for argument's sake, you know that his father is Jacob Zuma who would be a voice of reason to older people, who either like or hate him, right. So, take it to him, you are going to cross appeal to someone young or old .

INTERVIEWER: How would you position a political economy story? A story about the economy because that is at the centre of our… what all of us have in common, but the youth is not really interested in always listening to those stories. Are there ways you think to position it to make it more attractive to the youth?

MALEBO: News is about simplifying it to your viewers, whether it is political, whether it is business, or any form of news, right. You need to meet the viewers where they are, you've got to simplify content for them. Don't make it too academic and everything else. So, in that way, whether it is business, economics news or whatever. If it makes sense to you in the first place, once it makes sense to you, then it will automatically… [37:07] automatically. So automatically it will make sense to your viewer.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. I'm going to leave you with this right. I've been reading quite a bit on youth patterns and research that have been done on the youth, and what I've found, and I just want to leave this with you, and I want you to respond and then that's it, but what I found is that the youth say we are aware of all the news that goes on because it comes on to our social media feeds anyway, right. We don't necessarily go to traditional platforms to go look for news, but once we see something that we are interested in, it will take us to the traditional platform, we'll go check it out. Then we'll come back to social media platforms to see the conversation. But we don't participate in the conversation, because the minute you participate, you put yourself at risk and you expose yourself to others' opinions. And some people might not agree with you so they attack you. So, we become silent observers, right. So, my conclusion with my study is that Newzroom Afrika is in a position to create a safe space next to the linear broadcast to create a safe social media discussion platform, to create a public sphere in which the youth feel comfortable to interact without being attacked. Do you think that that is something that Newzroom Afrika can grow into?

MALEBO: We have positioned ourselves as a digital-first company. What it means is that to help that opinion, you don't have to lose your viewers in the main, whatever you do, right, in practise of what you do, right. So as a digital-first company, it means that you are promising a chance in the media, the last tell that people adopt and chase from time to time, including the youth. So, in the main, once you are informed by your research, in terms of how you meet the youth halfway, you will find them to always get attached to your channel. Because if your emphasis is more than the news, that's why there has to be emphasis on that shading strategy, all the time. You have to make sure you understand the platforms where they meet like Instagram, Facebook, twitter, everything else. To us, following trends is very important and understanding them and gaining an insight from those trends so that you bring in the youth to your channel.

INTERVIEWER: But if you are a digital-first media company, why don't you have an Instagram page yet? Shouldn't you have started then to promote social media?

MALEBO: No, no no. We do have an Instagram page but it is not active as we want it to be. And remember when I told you early on, I said to you to get …. Remember the focus of the channel when we launched, the focus was more to get traditional television up and running and then once, and first when you're done with that, we are now introducing other social media platforms, right. As we speak now, we have Facebook, we have Twitter, we will be active on Instagram accounts very soon and then we will move on as I told you I'm sure you forgot, but if you go back to your recording, I said we've got Facebook, we've got Twitter, there's Instagram and then our website.

INTERVIEWER: So, it will come. It's not there yet. But is your… are your social media platforms performing? Are you getting in the conversation going on your social media platforms?

MALEBO: A lot, quite a lot. I mean, when you launch, and unfortunately you are part of us. You know, we're bashed for having grammatical errors or speaking errors and… and where were they bashing us? On social media. So, to answer you, yes, they do respond, and of course now you are improving on social media reacting to everything that they see wrong with us and the good thing about it is that we are winning the fight.

INTERVIEWER: That's great. And you're growing by the day, your social media platforms are growing daily.

MALEBO: Yeah, we're growing by the day. So that we were even seen by the presidency. You know, remember before everything, the president was saying that the nation must do the [] song, Jerusalem.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

MALEBO: So [] perform Jerusalem, and we had our Jerusalem and we had our own Jerusalem challenge here at Newzroom Afrika. And we posted it. We were reacting to the president saying that we have to… He responded back and they tagged us as Newzroom Afrika, right. So, one more issue if you go to a lot of social media pics and posts and whatever, they are crediting us to say this is something to watch.

INTERVIEWER: I actually have a question for you, two questions that just came up. What was your strategy with Ramaphosa the night of the launch? Why did you do that?

MALEBO: I think for me, when you launch, you want to go big and we knew that it was around election time. We knew that there were a lot of issues. We see the ANC, there were camps within the ANC and we learned to share someone who is caught in the middle of all those controversies, you know, those who are for him and those who are not for him. So, it was important to get like a figure that will be, that will

give us a voice for people to say wow. These guys are thinking big. If Ramaphosa can respond to the invitation, they are [43:03], so it was important for us to make that statement to say we are a serious player.

INTERVIEWER: It had nothing to do with an agenda, it had nothing to do with pushing an agenda…

MALEBO: Not at all. It was more to say we are serious players. If they take us seriously, if we are a serious player, it means that the viewers are particularly, I mean, the people that you interview don't take us seriously. But if you're not, if you think small, I mean, as I'm into now, initially comparing with the local TV channels, right. We were the first to decide what we are going to do… to cover the election – the previous elections – from all debates, the presidential debates. We broadcasted from as early as 2 am in the morning. That's a big move, right. And of course, all the broadcasters are now beginning to follow. So, you got to take yourself seriously. You've got to make bold decisions that say you are a serious player. You've got to invite newsmakers to your channel that show that you are a serious player, you think big.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, you must invite them to your channel, but you are also becoming the news at a stage, I think it was about 3 months ago Newzroom Afrika was the news, you didn't just broadcast, you became the news and you blurred the lines with the code of arms initiative. Can you tell me more why you did that? What was the strategy behind the code of arms initiative?

MALEBO: If you were to say to me that you blurred the lines with, let's say evidence, for lack of a better word. We haven't had a backlash that just said you guys crossed that line.

INTERVIEWER: It's a purely academic perception. I'm not… It's completely academic… that you become the news rather than distributing the news, right. That's what I'm talking about the blurring of the lines. Newzroom Afrika was not making the news, it was the news. You understand what I am saying? The code of arms was your initiative, it wasn't an initiative you just covered. What was your strategy?

MALEBO: And you love it.

INTERVIEWER: Ja, the response was positive, but what was your strategy?

MALEBO: Yeah, I remember that you broadcast news, you have your own campaigns as a marketing strategy for interviews [45:21].

INTERVIEWER: I see.

MALEBO: So, for us any strategy and any campaign that we believe in, we didn't see ourselves as merely blurring the lines by saying that we've got a campaign. And it's like I am saying, it was a serious backlash, they are saying, wow you guys are now blurring the lines. It was not about that that was forthcoming. If anything else, it gained traction, I mean day one we had thousands of people who signed up for the petition that we had. So, we haven't had anything that shows…

INTERVIEWER: So, was it a marketing strategy?

MALEBO: Sorry?

INTERVIEWER: It was a marketing strategy basically.

MALEBO: It is a marketing strategy, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Just like Ramaphosa was part of a marketing strategy, basically.

MALEBO: Remember today, in today's world the way you portray yourself, you're news, right. They become part of your marketing. The further you perceive us and you portray the channel becomes a marketing initiative on its own. Over and above that, you have to always have campaigns that show that visibility in the market out there.

INTERVIEWER: It's called the commercialisation of news.

MALEBO: No, it's both a content and also marketing initiative.

INTERVIEWER: It's interesting, Malebo. Thank you very much. I think I got pretty much what I need. It was great talking to you. You're adding a lot of value to my study. What I'll do is I'll send you a copy of the thesis. Because at the beginning I thought what my study tries to prove, it's not going to be able to prove. But the more I read, the more I see that Newzroom Afrika can become a public sphere for a specific, it can create a South African public sphere which is great. So, I'll…

Appendix D: Letter from the editor

Carine Miller

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Letter from the editor

22 March 2021

To whom it may concern,

I, Carine Miller, assisted in the editing and proofreading of the thesis Traditional media and creating a Public Sphere in a new media dominated environment, The case of Newzroom Afrika by Anina Peens.

The editing included fixing grammatical errors. A final proofreading was done to ensure that there are minimal mistakes. The tables and figures were only edited if there were misspelled words, and the numbering of tables and figures were checked to ensure that they follow chronologically on each other. The in-text references were compared with the reference list and the reference list was edited according to the standard Chicago referencing style.

None of the research, data or ideas portrayed by the authors were changed during the editing and proofreading phase and it only focused on the language-use for easy readability

Qualification: BA Honours in Applied Linguistics, University of Pretoria, 2016

Qualified in: Editing, proofreading, transcriptions, translations, script editing copywriting, academic writing, general language services.

Kind regards

Carine Miller