

Media Coverage of Domestic Women's Football in *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff*

Student Name

Ezekiel Kekana

Student Number: 2512242

Supervisor

Dr Nechama Brodie

An independent research report submitted to the Department of Journalism and Media Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Journalism and Media Studies. Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa, March 2025.

Declaration

I declare that the work submitted in this research is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.



.....
Ezekiel Kekana

14 March 2025

Acknowledgements

This was a long journey that saw so many people supporting me directly and indirectly. Without such support, it would not have been possible for me to finish this race. First and foremost, Jesus Christ, you are the King. Thank you for everything.

To my supervisor, Dr Nechama Brodie, thank you so much for walking this journey with me from day one until the last day. You have gone beyond your responsibilities as my academic supervisor on this project, because you taught me that there is no replacement for hard work.

To my family, my mother, Mma Kekana, brother Godfrey Kekana, and sister Tumelo Mashao, thank you so much for your support and believing in me. I know I missed so many family gatherings, because I was busy with this project. I am grateful that you supported me throughout the process.

To my late sister Elsie Mahlako Kekana, and my grandmothers, I dedicate this qualification to you. How I wished both of you were here to celebrate this win with me. But I know that you are forever watching me all the time.

To my cousin, Selina Moetjie, if it was not for you, I would not have pursued this research topic. You are such a great footballer, and I pray that one day you will be able to live your dream and play in the elite women's league.

I would also like to thank Dr Mari Haugaa Engh, Lorenz Köhler, Busisiwe Mokwena, Fran Hilton-Smith, Moonira Ramathula, and Mark Gleeson for taking their precious time to participate in the study.

Special thanks also to Steve and Juliet Briggs for their financial support. May God continue to bless you guys for your good hearts.

Lastly, to friends and comrades, Divashnee Naidoo, Lillian Selapisa, Thabang Malatji, Khuliso Nemarimela, Luke Oosthuizen, Christopher Fisher, Tshililo Tshivhundo and Tiesetso Malepa, thank you so much for your support.

Abstract

Women's football tends to receive less media attention than men's football, despite its growing popularity. When the media decides to cover women's football the focus is often on non-sporting attributes such as the players' private and social lives rather than their on-the-field successes. This study examines the coverage of South African domestic women's football in *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* between 2019 and 2023, using content surveys and analysis, as well as interviewing former editors, journalists, and relevant stakeholders to understand the coverage of women's football. The study finds that although the coverage of domestic women's football in *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* increased on a year-to-year basis during the period of analysis, the focus on women footballers is still frequently on non-sporting attributes. This finding is consistent with previous studies that found the media tends to focus on non-sporting attributes when it covers women athletes.

Table of Contents

Declaration	2
Acknowledgements	3
Abstract	4
Chapter 1: Introduction	8
1.1 African Women's Sports Attracts more Viewership	8
1.1.1 Narrative Statement	9
1.1.2 Media Coverage, Gender, and Football in South Africa	12
1.1.3 The Importance of Media Coverage in Women's Football	13
1.2 Aims and Objectives	15
1.3 Rationale	16
1.4 Research Questions	17
Chapter 2: Background	18
2.1 A Brief Background of Women's Football in South Africa	18
2.2 KickOff	20
2.3 Soccer Laduma	21
Chapter 3: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework	22
3.1 General Themes on Media's Coverage of Women's Sports	22
3.2 Media Coverage of Women's Sports Across the World	25
3.3 Media Coverage of African Women's Sports	26
3.4 Media Coverage of Women Sports in South Africa	26
3.5 Theoretical Framework	28
3.5.1 Agenda-Setting Theory	28

3.5.1.1 Social Media Setting the Agenda on Women's Sport	30
3.5.2 Media Framing Theory	31
Chapter 4: Methodology	38
4.1 KickOff and Soccer Laduma	38
4.2 Quantitative Survey and Content Analysis	38
4.3 Data Collection	40
4.4. Interviews	46
4.4.1 Participants	47
4.5 Limitations	49
Chapter 5: Research Results and Findings	50
5.1 Research Results	50
5.1.1 Sample one (KickOff)	50
5.1.2 Sample two (Soccer Laduma)	58
5.2 Research Findings	67
5.2.1 Coverage of Women's Football in KickOff and Soccer Laduma	67
5.2.2 Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies Gets More Coverage	70
5.2.3 Focus on Sporting Attributes and Challenges	71
5.2.4 Frequency of Articles	72
5.2.5 Portrayal of Women Footballers	72
Chapter 6: Conclusion	74
6.1 Key Findings	74
6.1.1 Increase in Coverage of Women's Football	74
6.1.2 International Competitions get Increased Coverage	74
6.1.3 Inconsistent Coverage of Domestic Women's Football	75

6.1.4 Successful Teams Get Increased Coverage	75
6.1.5 Same Journalists Covering Women's Football	76
6.1.6 "Beauty", "Saucy", and "Hot"	77
6.1.7 Not Only Feminizing	77
6.2 What the Media Can Do to Increase Coverage on Women's Football	78
6.3 Limitations	80
 Bibliography	 81
Appendix A: Consent Form	99
Appendix B: Consent Form	100
Appendix C: Consent Form	101
Appendix D: Consent Form	102
Appendix E: Consent Form	103
Appendix F: Consent Form	104
Appendix G: Ethics Clearance Approval Letter	105

Chapter 1: Introduction

Women's sports including women's football, rugby, and cricket are attracting growing audiences and increasing media coverage in international tournaments (Women in Sport 2018). The 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup attracted a record combined television viewing of 1.2 billion viewers (Reuters 2023), with the final match between the United States and the Netherlands reaching just over 263 million viewers (Glass 2019).

This was a massive improvement as compared to the previous coverage of the FIFA Women's World Cups. In 1999, the FIFA Women's World Cup final between the United States of America and China, recorded a little under 18 million viewers (Muller 2015), while the 2011 edition, hosted in Germany, saw 17 million viewers watching the quarter-final match between the host country and Japan (Inside FIFA 2012).

1.1 African Women's Sports Attracts More Viewership and Audience

In the context of the African continent, women's sports are also increasing both in viewership figures and growing live audiences in stadiums (Griffin 2022). The 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup saw over 2 million viewers in South Africa (Letshaba & Selikane 2024).

The 2023 Netball World Cup, which was hosted in Africa for the first time, recorded a viewership of just over 27 million (Islam 2023). The 2023 Women's T20 Cricket World Cup recorded a 1.2 million viewership in South Africa (SuperSport 2023). The increase in local viewership numbers in the T20 could also be attributed to South Africa reaching the final of the competition, - the first African country to do so.

Women's football is also attracting live audiences at the stadiums. During the 2022 Women's African Cup of Nations (WAFCON), a new record of just over 45 thousand spectators attended the semi-final match between Morocco and Nigeria (Lonwabo 2022). That was followed by similar numbers in the final match as 40 thousand fans attended the final match between South Africa and Morocco (Griffin 2022).

The same trend of live audience attendance was also evident at the 2024 Council of Southern African Football Association's (COSAFA) Women's Championship final between South Africa against Zambia, which saw a packed crowd at the Isaac Wolfson stadium in the Eastern Cape (Sasol in Sport 2024). These numbers are very

impressive as women's football is still trying to gain its own support and popularity in an African continent where men's football's popularity has made it difficult for women's football to develop (Saavedra 2010).

These viewership figures are significant given that the media's coverage on women's sport has historically been disproportionate when compared to the men's sport (Cooky et al 2015). For decades, women's sports, in particular women's team sports, such as football and basketball, received minimal coverage from print, broadcasting, and digital media in the United States and Europe when compared to their respective male counterparts' sports (Duncan & Hasbrook 1988, Parks & Kane 1992, Kian 2007, Trolan 2013).

The increased coverage and attendance that has been noted above is due in large part to these being international competitions involving national teams rather than domestic women's teams. Journalists seem to prefer to cover international tournaments because they recognize not only the pride that comes with seeing their own national teams and athletes attain success on the world stage (Women in Sport 2018) but the potential increase in television viewership (Gasparetto et al., 2024). Gasparetto et al. (2024), who examined Russian television viewers interest in domestic and foreign football matches, found that the match quality as result of the team quality and star players, increases television viewership. That is, football fans show great interest in watching football matches when the teams have quality players, because such matches are expected to be of a high-quality level. This becomes possible with international tournaments such as the FIFA World Cup, because they are able to bring not only top players together in one team but also top players who compete against each other in the team.

It is also easier for international tournaments to bring high-level teams and players to compete against each other. This is because such competitions not only involve national teams where only top players are selected in the teams, but they also tend to take place when most of the domestic competitions are off-season, resulting in top players and quality teams participating in the competition. The participation of such top teams and players gives the media an opportunity to broadcast high-quality matches, as argued by Gasparetto et al. (2024), which would result with increased television viewership and potentially high live audience. And as evidenced with men's

sport, more support (television viewership and live audience) attracts funding and sponsorship to not only the media but also teams and athletes (Baker et al., 2019, Commission for Gender Equality 2024).

Rowe & Silva (2023:731) argue that mega events such as the FIFA World Cup and Olympics games always get “considerable media coverage” but that does not extend to the women’s football domestic leagues. Petty & Pope (2019), who studied the British media coverage of the 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup, suggest that more research needs to be done to assess whether the media interest in mega events can also be found in the domestic women’s sport competitions.

1.1.1 Narrative Statement

In South Africa, it is evident that there is increased media interest in national women’s sporting events and teams – netball, football, and cricket (Letshaba & Selikane 2024). This study explores whether this interest extends to domestic competition, through a close examination of media coverage of the domestic women’s football in two of the country’s largest dedicated football titles, *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff*. This involves an analysis of articles published by *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma* in terms of number (quantity of articles), frequency (how many articles are published monthly), and the nature of how women footballers in the league are portrayed (femininity versus physical attributes) between 2019 and 2023. In addition, the study attempts to contextualise these articles through interviews with selected journalists and other relevant stakeholders who work in the field, to gain insight into the coverage of women’s football in these publications.

The years between 2019 and 2023 marked a significant period of success for women’s football in South Africa. The South African Football Association (SAFA), who are the custodians of South African football, launched the first national women’s football domestic league in 2019 (Sibembe 2019), 23 years after the men’s national league. The post-apartheid men’s league was launched in 1996 (South African History Online 2021) and is currently known as the Betway Premiership named after its commercial sponsor, Betway, a sporting betting company (Klate 2024).

The domestic women’s league found its first commercial sponsor, Hollywoodbets (also a sport betting operator) in 2021 (Soccer Laduma 2021), and the league was

immediately renamed after its commercial sponsor (it was previously known as the SAFA National Women's League).

The sponsorship of Hollywoodbets has not only afforded football supporters' opportunities to make their bets on domestic women's football matches (Mpungose 2023) but also provides financial benefits for the betting company.

The sponsorship of sports betting companies like Hollywoodbets brings the much-needed revenue generation for sports teams and the leagues (Venter 2019). For example, Hollywoodbets' sponsorship of R2 million prize money it provides to the winners of the league (Idiski Times 2021), possibly goes a long way in providing financial revenue for most teams. However, the involvement of sport betting companies in sponsoring several sporting codes has raised concerns about what scholars like Hing et al. (2023) calls the increasing 'gamblification' in sports, which they posit has the potential to negatively affect the entertainment value of the game among others. Hing et al. (2023) argue that sports betting makes sports fans no longer see the entertaining value of sport but more of a gambling product.

The Hollywoodbets Super League (HBSL) is made up of the following 16 teams from the provinces of South Africa.

Table 1: The names and locations of the teams that participated in the 2023 HBSL.

Team name	Location
Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies	Gauteng
Janine Van Wyk or JVW FC	Gauteng
University of Pretoria FC	Gauteng
University of Johannesburg FC	Gauteng
TUT Matsatsantsa FC	Gauteng
University of the Western Cape	Western Cape
University of Fort Hare	Eastern Cape
TS Galaxy Queens FC	Mpumalanga
Royal AM Ladies	Kwa-Zulu Natal
Durban Ladies	Kwa-Zulu Natal
Lindelani Ladies	Kwa-Zulu Natal

First Touch FC	Limpopo
City Lads	Eastern Cape
Richmond United	Northern Cape
Thunderbirds	Eastern Cape
Copperbelt Ladies FC	Limpopo

1.1.2 Media Coverage, Gender, and Football in South Africa

Interest in the domestic football league can be viewed in a national context. On the international stage, the national senior women's football team, commonly known as Banyana Banyana, made history on the international stage by winning the Women's African Cup of Nations in 2022 (Vedan 2022). Having previously made their first FIFA World Cup appearance in 2019, the team also made history in 2023 by progressing to the knock-out stages of the competition for the first time (Tshwaku 2023). This was the first time in history that a South African national football team had ever progressed to the next stage of a FIFA World Cup, as, despite their participation in three FIFA men's World Cups (1998, 2002, and 2010), the men's senior football team have never made it to the knock-out stages of the competition (Sarinias 2010).

It is not yet clear how these changes in women's football in South Africa impacted the media's coverage of the women's game, in particular domestic women's football. Historically, the media in South Africa has given more coverage to domestic men's football than to women's football (Mokwena 2022). A study by the Commission for Gender Equality of South Africa (2024:20) found that "between 95% and 99% of media coverage is dedicated to men's sports, leaving only 1% to 5% for women's sports."

The long-held reasons for this mismatch of media coverage have been attributed to the supposed lack of audience for women's football and/or that the women's game lacks excitement (Cooky et al., 2015). Guyot et al. (2024:1049) also found that the reason why journalists prioritize men's sport is because they believe that it is "what readers expect."

However, the Commission for Gender Equality study (2024) found that to be incorrect in the South African context, as both male and female audiences expressed the desire to watch more women's sports, including women's football. This is further supported

by the number of fans who viewed and attended recent sporting events, such as the 2024 COSAFA final (Sasol in Sport 2024).

This imbalance of media coverage between men's and women's football has resulted in the former attracting significantly larger financial sponsorships than the latter. For example, it was announced that the Betway Premiership champions (men's premier club league) would get R20 million prize money from their sponsors (Molefe 2024), while the HBSL champions get only R2 million prize money from the sponsors (Idiski Times 2021), that is a massive R18 million difference. This is despite both leagues having the same number of teams (16 teams), and playing the same number of matches, 30, before a champion can be declared.

1.1.3 The Importance of Media's Coverage in Women's Football

In a country like South Africa which is still ideologically influenced by patriarchal values and attitudes (Burnett 2018), the media's coverage of women's football is important as it might help with the normalization of women playing football and thereby shift patriarchal and sexist attitudes. This is because women who play sports such as football overcome a lot of stereotypical beliefs about their perceived athletic inferiority (Gomez-Gonzalez et al., 2023).

According to Pelak (2010:63), the reason for such stereotypical beliefs is because football has always been "explicitly gendered as a male-only sport." Women were not considered suitable to play football because of their gender but men were allowed. Therefore, the media's coverage of women's football is important as it might influence change to such patriarchal stereotypical attitudes and normalize football as a sport that can be played by anyone irrespective of their gender.

Also, the coverage of women's football might help make society see women footballers as what Bruce (2017:32) calls "serious athletes" and "model citizens". Discussing the 16 rules that the media often use in the representation of sportswomen, Bruce (2017) argues that because during mega events, such as the Olympics games, the media tends to provide positive coverage of women athletes. The subsequent success and extensive coverage women athletes receive during these games make society take them more seriously as athletes and national heroes.

Therefore, the media's coverage of women's football in South Africa might also translate into making women footballers be taken as "serious athletes", who will be appreciated for their sports-related success. Women footballers might become role models to young girls through the level of coverage they receive from the media (Bertold 2024). For instance, if young girls see women footballers being appreciated as serious athletes, who are successful because of their achievements, they could be inspired to follow in their footsteps, increasing participation of women in sports.

The coverage of women's football might also bring women's game popularity and economic benefits (Commission for Gender Equality 2024). There is no denying that men's football continues to be the most popular sport which attract live attendance, enjoys broadcasting revenues, and other economic benefits, such as higher wages for male athletes because of the high amount of media coverage (Gomez-Gonzalez et al., 2023). Consistent media coverage of women's sports might also have similar economic and public support benefits for women footballers, as advertisers and sponsorship could pump more financial investment into women's football and women footballers (Commission for Gender Equality 2024).

The coverage of women's football might also help demystify the stereotypical notions that women's football lacks excitement (Cooky et al., 2015). Women's sports, including women's football has always been covered by the media in ways that communicate that it lacks entertainment, as "less exciting", and with women footballers' skills devalued compared to men's (Cooky et al., 2015: 264). However, a Women in Sport (2018) study found that the media's coverage of women's sport has the potential to showcase that women's sport including women's football is as entertaining, exciting, and inspiring. Providing coverage would help people to generally start appreciating the women's game for what it is, and not what they were made to believe about the women's game.

The crowds at the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, where a combined 1,9 million people attended the games (Inside FIFA 2023), the 2022 WAFCON semi-final match between Nigeria and Morocco, where a record 45 thousand fans attended (Lonwabo 2022), or even the 2.9 million viewers recorded at the Women's Hockey League in Canada in 2024 (Bertold 2024) further proves that women's sport is entertaining, otherwise people would not go to the stadiums to watch these games.

This study attempts to explore the coverage of women's football in South Africa using data and content analysis of published articles during the study period combined with interviews with journalists and editors who worked at *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* as well as other industry experts and role players to document not only how often these publications covered the women's league but also how women footballers are portrayed in the coverage.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the study is to understand the media's coverage of women's football, and how women footballers are portrayed in the coverage in South Africa. Recent studies by Peeters & Elling (2015), Bell & Coche (2018), Leflay & Biscomb (2021), Rowe & Silva (2023), and Guyot et al. (2024) have all found increased media coverage of women's football.

While there is a quantitative increase in the media's coverage of women's sports, including women's football, the qualitative aspect of the coverage continues to be a major issue (Pfister 2015). Pfister (2015), Black & Fielding-Lloyd (2019), and Cooky et al. (2015) have all supported earlier South African literature by Serra & Burnett (2007) and Goslin (2008) who found that the media tends to focus on personal issues and utilizes feminizing language when it decides to cover women's sports and women athletes.

Therefore, the objectives of this study are two-fold. The first objective is to understand the coverage of the domestic women's football in *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma* in terms of the quantity of articles produced between 2019 and 2023, to see whether the increased quantitative coverage mentioned in the above literature during mega international events can also be found in the South African domestic women's football league. The second objective is to explore how women footballers are portrayed in the coverage through searching for any feminizing adjectives such as "babes", "hot", "love", and "sexy" in the coverage. These were some of the feminizing adjectives used to portray women athletes in the earlier literature by Trolan (2013:218) and Pfister (2015).

This study is important not only because it will add to the ever-increasing body of work on the media's coverage on women's sport but will also highlight the role of sports media in the promotion of gender equity in sport in South Africa.

1.3 Rationale

The motivation for undertaking this study is based on recent research studies that have called for exploration of the media's coverage of domestic women's football leagues. While there is a consensus among researchers that the media has increased its coverage of women's sports including women's football during mega international competitions such as the FIFA World Cup (Peeters & Elling 2015, Bell & Coche 2018, Petty & Pope 2019, Leflay & Biscumb 2021), there is a call from the likes of Rowe & Silva (2023:731), who want to see whether this "temporary attention" from the media during these mega international events extends to domestic women's football leagues.

The Women in Sport (2018:5) study also found that national teams attract "media interest" while the domestic leagues continue to be "significantly under-represented" in the media's coverage. In South Africa, an earlier study by Serra & Burnett (2007:151) found that international events such as the World Cup "take priority" in the media's coverage, while "local events get coverage when there is space" in South Africa.

Based on this literature, I am undertaking this study to explore whether the coverage that women's football enjoys during mega international events extend to the domestic women's league in South Africa. I use South Africa's domestic women's football league as a case study.

There is also limited research work on the media's coverage on a single women's sporting code in South Africa. Most of the available research work focuses on the media's coverage of multiple women's sporting codes, and most of the work is now quite outdated. Therefore, this study would further add to the body of work that investigates the media's coverage on women's sports in South Africa through its focus on media's coverage of a single sporting code (women's football).

Unlike print media that has, over years, generated great research interest when assessing the coverage of women's sport in South Africa (partly because print media is the oldest medium), the literature that examines online media's coverage on women's sport in South Africa is still very limited. Therefore, this study aims to see whether these online football-only publications also focus on the femininity and personal lives of women footballers in their coverage as it was the case with earlier

print media findings (Koivula 2001, Serra & Burnett 2007, Goslin 2008, Pfister 2015, and Delorme & Pressland 2016).

The motivation for undertaking this study is to see whether even when publications report on a single sporting code - football, women's sports such as women's football still receive little coverage from a quantitative standpoint. Also, whether women footballers are qualitatively portrayed in ways that focus on their femininity and their personal lives.

1.4 Research Questions

- What is the quantity of articles produced by *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* on the domestic women's league from 2019 to 2023?
- How are women footballers in the domestic league portrayed in the coverage by *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma*?
- Overall, has coverage of women's football in South Africa changed in terms of the number, frequency, and how women footballers are portrayed in the articles by *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* in the past five years?

Chapter 2: Background

This section gives the historical background of the domestic women's football league in South Africa. Additionally, it looks at the background of the selected football-only titles, *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff*, and the reason for their selection.

2.1. A Brief Background of Women's Football in South Africa

There is a consensus among researchers that women's football in South Africa can be traced back to the early 1960s, where women were recorded to have first engaged in organized football (Saavedra 2004, Pelak 2010, & Haugaa Engh 2010, Haugaa Engh 2010a). Pelak (2010) states that white women from middle-class backgrounds were among the first to play football in the cities. Black and Coloured women, despite the harsh realities of the apartheid system which promoted separate segregation among races (Pelak 2010), would join later in 1970s to participate against their white counterparts in tournaments organized by the South African Women's Football Association, SAWFA, as it was known (Saavedra 2004).

According to Pelak (2010), SAWFA, while it was a white-led organization, had managed to integrate all race groups through its annual interprovincial women's competitions which included all the teams from different townships and suburbs. These teams, which were mostly organized along racial lines, Coloured-only teams, Black-only teams, and White-only teams came from different provincial structures to compete in the SAWFA annual interprovincial women's competition (Haugaa Engh 2010).

This annual interprovincial women's competition, which started in 1975 and rotated in the big three host cities of Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg (Saavedra 2004), was a platform that saw the development and growth of organized South Africa's women's football during apartheid years until early 1990s (Pelak 2010).

With the fall of apartheid rule in the early 1990s, and the ushering of a new democratic society, SAWFA, and other organizing structures such as South African Women's Soccer Administration, which represented Black players, would emerge into the newly integrated football body called SAFA (Saavedra 2004). SAFA was re-admitted into the international football arena in 1992 after it had been banned by the Federation of International Football Association (FIFA), the world football governing body in 1964 (Saavedra 2004).

The re-admission of SAFA back into the international football governing bodies paved the way for the establishment of professional leagues which legally included teams from different race groups (South African History Online 2011). Men's football, like women's football, had to deal with racial segregation from its existence around 1862 until the fall of apartheid in 1990s, was first to launch a professional domestic league in 1996 following the establishment of the Premier Soccer League (South African History Online 2011).

Evolution of the Domestic Women's League

The re-admission of SAFA back into the Confederation of African Football (CAF), the African continental football governing body in 1991, paved the way for South African women's football to gain lost ground internationally. By the time South Africa was welcomed into international football, other African nations such as Nigeria had already made strides in international women's football. Nigeria had already qualified to participate in the first FIFA Women's World Cup in 1991 (BBC 2023).

A new mixed-race national senior women's team was announced and played their first match against Swaziland (now known as Eswatini) in 1993, where they managed to hammer their fellow southern African neighbours 14-0 (Saavedra 2004). This national team was made up of players who played mostly for amateur teams that were not even playing in any formal league structures at the time.

However, that would change in 2001, when SAFA announced the first national semi-professional women's league called the SAFA Sanlam National Women's League (News24 2001). The league was named after its commercial sponsor, Sanlam, the financial services giant, where teams from the 25 SAFA's regional structures battled it out for a spot to compete in the provincial playoffs until the national winner was declared through a knock-out format.

When Sanlam's sponsorship came to an end in 2002/2003 season, telecommunication company Vodacom took over as the commercial sponsor using the same regional-to-national tournament structure to declare the national winner in the same knock-out format (Erasmus 2009).

In 2009, Vodacom also pulled out as a commercial sponsor (Erasmus 2009). The league was re-structured into two divisions, where the banking giant, Absa, would

sponsor the regional league. This was called the Absa women's regional league, which was contested by the SAFA's regional teams. The Sasol league was the provincial league and named after its commercial sponsor, Sasol, the energy company (Erasmus 2009). To date, the Sasol league remains a provincial league where respective provinces battled it out in a league format. The league winners of each province compete in the Sasol League National Championship, which uses a knock-out format to declare the national winner. The winner of the national championship also gets a promotion into the newly established national domestic women's league.

In 2019, SAFA launched the national domestic women's league, which was initially called the SAFA National Women's League (SNWL) (Sibembe 2019). Unlike the Sasol league which uses a knock-out format to declare a national winner from the competing nine provincial Sasol league winners, SNWL is a 30-match league competition where each of the 16 participating teams in the league plays against each other twice in a season (using the home and away format), and the team that finishes with the highest number of points after 30 matches is declared the winner of the league. The team that finishes with the lowest points is relegated to the lower league, which is the Sasol provincial league. It is this national domestic women's football league where this study draws its analysis of media's coverage of *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma*.

The next paragraphs provide historical background of the chosen publications, and why they were selected for this study.

2.2 KickOff

Owned by Media24, *KickOff* was launched in 1994 as a football-only publication which focused on local, continental (Africa) and international football (Strydom 2022). Mark Gleeson was its founding editor. Before 2022, *KickOff* was both a printed magazine and online publication, however that changed when the publication announced that it would shut down its print edition and focus fully on the online edition (Strydom 2022). The online version has been selected for this study not only because it includes all stories including those from print but also that it has an online following, with over 950 thousand followers on X (formerly Twitter), and 1.9 million followers on Facebook as of December 2024.

The *KickOff* website has no designated tabs for women's competitions, including the domestic Hollywoodbets Super League, the national women's team, Banyana

Banyana, or FIFA Women's World Cup as of December 2024. According to audience surveys, 81% of Kickoff's audience is male, with just 19% of readers being women (Adspace24 2024).

2.3 Soccer Laduma

Similar to *KickOff*, *Soccer Laduma* is not only one of the oldest football-only newspapers but also the most followed football-only publication on social media. The publication has 1.1 million followers on X, and a further 3.1 million followers on Facebook as of December 2024. The print edition of *Soccer Laduma* has a readership of 1.7 million, with a weekly circulation of just over 66 thousand (Soccer News Lifestyle 24 2023).

The online edition, which runs through its website, has over 3 million active users and just over 5 million page views on mobile, while it has over 211 thousand active users, and just over 490 thousand views on desktop (Soccer News Lifestyle 24 2023). The publication is updated daily, with breaking news stories, opinion pieces, and interviews with both women and men footballers.

On its website, there are no tabs for women's football teams, neither the Hollywoodbets Super League, nor the national women's tab, Banyana Banyana. All women's football news is included in men's related tabs. According to audience surveys, 86% of *Soccer Laduma's audience are male*, with just 14% of women audience (Adspace24 2024).

Chapter 3: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This study's main objective is to understand the coverage of the domestic women's football league in *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff*, and to explore how women footballers are portrayed in the articles. This chapter draws on previous literature from across the globe, the continent of Africa, and South Africa that help provide an understanding of the media's coverage of women's sports including women's football.

Previous studies have not only found that there is a little media coverage on domestic women's sports (Serra & Burnett 2007, Women in Sport 2018) but that women athletes are portrayed and described in languages that focus on their femininity rather than their positions as athletes (Koivula 1999, Pfister 2015, Bruce 2017, Onwumechili 2021).

This study links these previous findings with the agenda-setting and media framing theoretical frameworks to understand to what extent domestic women's football was covered in *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma* between 2019 and 2023. Additionally, the study examines how women footballers were portrayed in the coverage, that is, whether the language used in describing them was similar to previous studies.

3.1 General Themes on Media's Coverage of Women's Sport

Bruce (2017:26) has identified what she calls persistent "rules" that the media uses in the representation of women athletes in their coverage. These include, among others, gender-marking, which involves the media's emphasis on the gender of the women's athletes in the coverage and gendering competitions involving women's athletes (Petty & Pope 2019).

Infantilization of women athletes is another such rule used by the media in the representation of women athletes, which involves the media calling women athletes young girls in the coverage reducing them into children rather than the adults (Trolan 2013).

Bruce (2017) also lists feminizing women athletes, which often involves the media reducing women athletes to their social roles as wives, girlfriends, motherhood, and their beauty standards to highlight that they are women before they are athletes. Linking to the feminization of women athletes is the media's focus on non-sporting

aspects, which includes focusing on personal and social lives of the players such as who they are dating and the cars that they drive (Bruce 2017).

Making women's sports be inferior to men's sports is another dominant rule that often features when the media covers women's sports (Black & Fielding-Lloyd 2019). The media often makes comparisons between women's sports with men's sports, often with the former being described as inferior to the latter.

Despite these being considered as some of the oldest rules that the media uses to represent sportswomen (Bruce 2017), recent researchers who studied the media's coverage of women's sports have also made similar findings (Rowe & Silva 2023, Gomez-Gonzalez et al., 2023, Parry et al., 2023, Guyot et al., 2024). The following section describes some of the recent literature which found some of these general themes in the coverage of women's sport, including women's football.

Gender-Marking and Infantilization in Women's Sports

Onwumechili (2021), who studied the evolution of women's football in Nigerian newspapers found that women athletes were not only called 'girls' but that the coverage consistently specified the gender of the sport to signify that this was a sport played by women. The gender of the sport was emphasized to indicate its difference from men's sport. This is a trend that continues to be normalized by not only the media but by football organizations like FIFA (Haugaa Engh 2011). Haugaa Engh (2011) makes this point that the 'FIFA World Cup' is often assumed to refer to the men's competition without mentioning the gender of the players involved, whereas the women's competition is gender-marked and referred to as the 'FIFA Women's World Cup' to indicate that this is a competition which involves women.

Petty & Pope (2019:498) arrived at a similar observation about gender-marking of women's sports, where they found that the British media's reference of "football" is always assumed to be men's football, whereas women's football needs to be gendered to draw the distinction between men's and women's football. They argue that this is how the media reinforce gender-marking when it comes to women's sport.

Feminizing Women Athletes

Several studies have all revealed the media's coverage on women's sport tends to focus more on characteristics that are associated with femininity such as motherhood,

beauty, marriage, family, and non-aggressiveness (Cooky et al., 2015, Bruce 2017, Kiefer & Scharfenkamp 2018, Dietl et al., 2020, Guyot et al., 2024). Cooky et al. (2015), who conducted a longitudinal study on television coverage of women's sports in the United States, found that the media positioned women athletes as mothers and girlfriends first before they are athletes. Trolan (2013), who made similar findings, argues that the media lauds the femininity of women athletes more than their athletic ability.

Masculinity and femininity in sports media are reinforced differently. The former is associated with stereotypical qualities and characteristics such as physical strength, dominance, competitiveness, and risk preferences in reference to men (Haugaa Engh 2011, Trolan 2013, English 2017). The latter is associated with stereotypical qualities and characteristics such as sexuality, less athletic skills, beauty, non-aggressiveness and attractiveness in reference to women (Koivula 1999, Trolan 2013, Cavalier & Newhall 2018, Burch et al., 2018)

Focus on Personal Issues

Focus on personal issues is another theme that frequently emerges in the media's coverage of women's athletes (Wensing & Bruce 2003, Kian et al., 2008). More like the feminizing frame, the coverage on personal lives includes the focus on women athletes' lifestyle and social lives such as who they are married to, dating, cars they drive, fashion taste, family life, and their health in general (Koivula 1999, Cooky et al., 2015, Bruce 2017, Petty & Pope 2019). The successes of women athletes are often ignored in the process while the focus is on personal issues (Trolan 2013, Bruce 2017). By comparison, while men's athletes' personal issues are also covered by the media, the coverage is still dominated by their on-field successes. That is, the media covers both personal issues of men and women athletes – such as their romantic relationships and the cars that they drive etc. (Koivula 1999, Trolan 2013) – but male athletes receive increased coverage about their on-field successes, such as their performances and athletic abilities (Trolan 2013). Coverage of women athletes tends to focus less on their on-field success but more on personal issues (Cooky et al., 2015, Pfister 2015, Onwumechili 2021). Cooky et al. (2015:280), who conducted a 25-year longitudinal study on the coverage of women athletes in American sports outlets, found that sports media cover women in ways that emphasize “conventional gender norms”

positioning them as either “mothers, wives, or girlfriends. Parry et al., (2023: 595) argue that by focusing on the personal issues of women athletes, the media reject the status of women as “legitimate athletes.”

The following paragraphs look at the media’s coverage of women’s sports including women’s sport across the world, Africa, and South Africa.

3.2 Media Coverage of Women’s Sport Across the World

Women’s sports, including women’s football, continue to be underreported in the media when compared to men’s sports (Cooky et al., 2015, Black & Fielding-Lloyd 2019, Burroughs et al.,2022). While there has been progress in the media’s coverage of women’s sports during international competitions (Women’s in Sport 2018, Coche 2022, Rowe & Silva 2023), the coverage is minuscule when compared to men’s sports, as only 15% of the coverage is dedicated to women’s sports (European Parliament 2024).

The European Parliament (2024) study found that while media coverage on women’s sports has increased from 4% in 2018 to 15% in 2024, men’s sports still dominate 85% of the coverage. Parry et al. (2023:593) posit that men’s sports is still viewed by the media as the “pinnacle of sporting value.”

However, recent studies across the world indicate that women’s sports including women’s football, rugby, and cricket are growing in media coverage during international mega events such as the Olympics Games, European Championship, Women’s Rugby World Cup, and FIFA Women’s World Cup (Peeters & Elling 2015, Delorme & Pressland 2016, Leflay & Biscomb 2021, Coche 2022, and Clargo & Skey 2024).

Pressland (2016:330) found that there was “fairness” in media coverage of the 2014 winter Olympic games across different European countries on women’s sports. Black & Fielding-Lloyd (2019) and Petty & Pope (2019) found that the British media provided an increased coverage of England’s women’s football team during the 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup. Additionally, Coche (2022) also found an increase of 20% in the media coverage of the 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup.

Furthermore, there was also a high viewership audience during the 2020 T20 Women's Cricket World Cup, which saw 89 million viewership (Rogers 2022), while the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup saw a record 1.12 billion viewers (Reuters 2023).

3.3 Media Coverage of African Women's Sports

In terms of media coverage of women's sports on the Africa continent, some women's sporting codes saw increased media coverage over the years, while others have not (Griffin 2022, Islam 2023, Marketing Spread 2024). The 2023 Netball World Cup, which was hosted on the African continent for the first time saw a record rating of just over 27 million viewership on television. This doubled the number of audiences from the previous 2019 edition (Islam 2023). The 2023 cricket Women's T20 World Cup final where South African senior women's cricket became the first African team to reach the final, saw a record of 1.2 million viewers on television watching the game (SuperSport 2023).

With regard to women's football, several studies found that the media has provided coverage of women's games both during international competitions and in domestic competitions (Ogunniyi 2014, Onwumechili 2021, & Khatija et al., 2024). Khatija et al. (2024) found that the 2022 CAF Women's Champions League was broadcast in 45 countries in the continent. The same men's competition, which has been running for decades, saw the 2024 edition being broadcast in 90 countries (CAF Online 2024).

Ogunniyi (2014) found that there was an unusual higher media coverage of women's football in the 2010 Women's African Cup of Nations hosted in South Africa, where the tournament received 8.1% of media coverage. The 2022 WAFCON final between South Africa and Morocco saw 3.2 million viewers in South Africa (Rogers 2022).

Furthermore, Onwumechili (2021) found that from the colonial period to present, Nigerian newspapers have provided coverage of women's football in Nigeria, though it is unclear whether the coverage has increased.

3.4 Media Coverage of Women Sports in South Africa

The early study by the likes of Serra & Burnett (2007), who examined the media coverage of women's sports in South African mainstream newspapers, found that the media provided little coverage of women's sports when compared to men's sports.

This would be the same finding made by Goslin (2008), who also studied the coverage of women's sports in the daily mainstream newspapers and made a finding that all women's sports were under-represented when compared with their male counterparts.

A recent study by the Commission for Gender Equality of South Africa (2024) made a similar finding almost two decades after the Serra & Burnett (2007) and Goslin (2008) findings. The Commission's study, which examined challenges in the national women's soccer team found that only between 1% to 5% of media coverage is dedicated to women's sports including women's football, while a massive 95% to 99% of coverage is dedicated to men's sports.

The 1% to 5% coverage could be attributed to schools and university sports, which seem to attract increased coverage from local media (Jonckie 2012, Abrahams 2021). The varsity sports competition, which involves different sporting codes, including women's university football, are televised on pay-for-view channel SuperSport (Jonckie 2012). In a recent private/public partnership deal, SuperSport and the public broadcaster, the SABC, teamed up to expand the coverage of schools' sports matches on their respective platforms (SABC Sport 2025). The reason why the media, in particular television, provide coverage on school and university sports could be attributed to the high number of live supporters at these games, which often result in sold-out affairs in stadiums (Varsity Cup 2025).

This is in contrast when it comes to the coverage of Hollywoodbets Super League, because even though some of the games are free to attend in stadiums (Sibembe 2019), there are still fewer fans in stadiums including those matches that involve the national women's team (Madlala 2022). It could be argued that this gives the media less motivation to provide coverage, in particular commercial media which needs a large audience for its own financial benefits. This has been given as one of the reasons the media is reluctant to provide increased coverage on women's football (Commission for Gender Equality 2024). This leaves the coverage of domestic women's football league to community-based media such as community radios and newspapers, who typically would provide the audiences with day-to-day updates such as upcoming matches and results (Mavhungu 2023).

The relatively low media coverage has resulted in women's sports, such as women's football, failing to attract sponsorship, advertising, and good salaries for women

athletes (Johnson et al., 2024, Commission for Gender Equality 2024). Currently, the national domestic women's football league only has Hollywoodbets as its commercial sponsor (Sibembe 2021), while energy and chemical company, Sasol, has been the only commercial sponsor for the national team (Sasol 2021).

3.5 Theoretical Framework

The discussion in this section will provide an explanation of the two theoretical frameworks chosen for this study: agenda-setting and media framing. The first discussion is on agenda-setting theory, looking at whether the media and journalists in South Africa set the agenda on women's sports including women's football to the public. The second part of the discussion focuses on the media framing in sports media, looking at different frames that are often used to describe women athletes including women footballers by sports media. While many other theoretical frameworks could have been applied, these are most relevant to this study because both are able to explain how the media is able to influence the public through what it covers most and how it covers sports.

3.5.1. Agenda-Setting Theory

Rogers & Dearing (1998) define agenda-setting as a process where the media places importance on certain issues to the public through what it regularly covers. McCombs, Shaw & Weaver (2014:787) take it further stating that agenda-setting involves the transfer of "issue salience from the news media" to the public. That is, the media's extensive coverage on a particular issue not only signifies the importance attached to that issue but the issue also becomes important to the public. Wanta, Golan & Lee (2004:367) argue that extensive media coverage on particular issues help the audiences "with salience cues regarding the relative importance of these issues."

When it comes to women's football, several literature works by the likes of Peeters & Elling (2015), Petty & Pope (2019), and Black & Fielding-Lloyd (2019), who all examined the media's coverage of women's football during the FIFA Women's World Cups, found that there is an increased media coverage on the women's game. This means that the media is now providing increased coverage of women's football to the public. The increased coverage suggests that the media has now placed more importance on women's football to the public. The public, as argued by McCombs (2002), does not only rely on the media for information but also depend on the media

to formulate their own opinion and deem certain issues as more important to them - what is often defined as public agenda.

Dearing & Rogers (1988) define public agenda as opinions formulated by the public which are influenced by the media. That is, what the media transfers in the minds of the public through consistent coverage of a particular issue becomes what shapes the public's opinion and support.

Wanta, Golan & Lee (2004), who conducted a content analysis on the coverage of foreign nations in US news outlets, found that the positive and consistent coverage a foreign country received from the news outlets resulted with the US public believing that the country is important to the US. Similarly, the more a country received negative coverage, the more likely the people viewed that country in a negative light. This shows the effect of the media messages to the public. Wanta, Golan & Lee (2004:367) posit that the public places importance on an issue "based on the amount of coverage" the issue receives.

For instance, Pfister (2015:652), who examined the *Bild Zeitung* newspaper coverage of the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup, found that the games were on the public agenda because they were "presented by the press as important events." This was because *Bild Zeitung* was able to provide coverage of the games to the public.

In contrast, using the same argument posited by Wanta, Golan & Lee (2004), it is logical to assume that the less an issue receives coverage from the media, the less that issue becomes important to the public. For instance, the study by the Commission for Gender Equality (2024:20), found that women's sports in South Africa receives just "1% to 5%" of the media coverage, while 95% coverage is dedicated to men's sports. This finding strongly suggests that the media in South Africa presents women's sports as less salient to the public. Therefore, the public would also place less importance on women's sport.

In this regard, as argued by McCombs & Shaw (1993:63), the media agenda (what the media deems as important) influences the public on "what to think about and how to think about it." The public's perception and opinions are strongly shaped by what the media presents as important to them. For instance, Clargo & Skey (2024), who conducted an exploration study on rugby fans' perception towards women's rugby, found that the extensive media coverage of women's rugby shifted male fans' attitude

towards women's rugby. This suggests that the frequent coverage of women's rugby helped the fans to formulate new attitudes.

As an example of how this can be evident in this study, the stories that *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* frequently share with the public would become what the public deems as more important to them.

3.5.1.1. Social Media Setting the Agenda on Women's Sport

The emergence of the internet has long shifted the public reliance for news from the traditional media (Russell & Choi 2015). Bo (2016:78) argues that the plethora of news providers in the digital era has made it difficult for "news organizations to set the agenda outside newsrooms." This suggests that the public no longer just rely exclusively on the news organizations to formulate their own opinions on certain issues.

Russell & Choi (2015), who conducted a content analysis study on eight news organizations' coverage of the 2013 government shutdown in the US, found that journalists used social media platform, X (which was called Twitter at the time) to not only distribute their articles to the public but increase engagement with the public.

Not only journalists use social media platforms to distribute information to the public. McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver (2014) argue that the public themselves also use social media to distribute information. Social media platforms have allowed sports athletes and sports organizations to transfer any information with the public (Creedon 2014). Creedon (2014:711) posits that digital media such as social media has not only generated more attention on women's sports but also agrees that it has "changed the delivery of news." For instance, Creedon (2014), who examined the use of social media during the 2012 Olympics Games, found that athletes not only used social media platforms such Facebook and X to share information with the public, but that the media also used such information shared by the athletes on social media to further produce news out of it. That is, social media platforms helped to also set the media agenda.

In South Africa, there is, however, little to no available literature that examines how social media is setting the media agenda on women's football. However, there are

several case studies that show that sport organizations use social media platforms to distribute information on women's sports including women's football with the public.

For instance, Gsport, which is an online non-media movement that is committed to provide "daily coverage of women's sport to bridge the gap with men's sport" uses its website to transfer women's sport information with the public. Therefore, by providing consistent coverage on women's sports on its website, it could be argued that Gsport transfers the salience of women's sports to the public.

Futballing Girls is another non-media organization that is also promoting and creating public awareness on women's sports in South Africa using social media platforms such as X and Facebook. Initially set-up to promote women's football from grassroots level, the organization has since expanded to include the promotion of all women's sports by sharing women's sport content through their social media (Manaleng 2024). It could be argued that through using their social media and websites respectively, these organizations set the public agenda by distributing information on women's sport to the public.

Additionally, using social media, teams are able to advertise their next games by posting on platforms such Facebook and X to invite their fans to stadiums, thereby informing the public about their activities. Some teams in the Hollywoodbets Super League are able to live stream some of their matches using platforms such as X and Facebook to further increase the team's reach to the public (SAFA 2024).

Similar to how Pfister (2015) examined the coverage of the FIFA Women's World Cup in a German newspaper, this study investigates to what extent have *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* covered domestic women's football between 2019 and 2023, and whether or not the coverage influenced the importance of women's football.

3.5.2 Media Framing

This study uses media framing to query how *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* journalists framed women's football and women footballers in their coverage. There have been debates among scholars as to whether media framing theory is an extension of agenda-setting theory or not (McCombs, Shaw and Weaver 1997), or whether there is a need to differentiate the theory from other similar media effects theories such as agenda-setting and priming (Scheufele 1999). McCombs, Shaw and Weaver (1997)

have suggested that framing is just an extension of agenda-setting and describe framing theory as the second level of agenda-setting. Despite the debate, there seems to be some agreement that media framing theories look at how the ways in which an “issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences” (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007:11). While media framing theory focuses on *how* the media presents certain ideas, and the ways in which this influences how the audience interprets and understands the issue, agenda-setting focuses on determining which issues and ideas the media consistently report to the audience, and when these are reported, increasing the perception of the importance or salience of the issue at a particular point in time. Using Goffman’s theory of media framing, Parry et al. (2023) define media framing as the process of how journalists draw attention on events and issues in the news reports, thereby forcing the audience’s interpretation and understanding of such events and issues to be more important. Through framing journalists select and organize facts (Devitt 2002, Lind & Salo 2002) in their articles to advance a certain perspective (Onwumechili 2021), and draw the attention of the audience, who based on the repetition of such facts and perspectives are able not only make sense of such facts but also to adopt them (Smith & Pegararo 2020).

Using these definitions, it means that media framing basically involves journalists curating certain information as more important for their audience, while deeming the omitted information as less important.

Iyengar (1991) posits that the media reports on certain issues using what he calls thematic frames (when issues are covered using different themes) and episodic frames (when issues are carried in the form of different episodes) which influences how the public attributes certain responsibilities to either themselves as individuals, society, and political elites. This suggests that how the media presents certain issues consistently has a way in which to influence the public. For example, if the media covers a series of challenges faced by women’s sports such as the lack of media coverage, lack of public support, lack of sponsorship, discrimination faced by women’s athletes, and unfair remuneration, the public could also attribute such challenges to themselves for failing to support women’s sport.

In this regard, journalists play a huge role, as they are responsible for structuring, organizing, and covering how issues are presented to the public (Scheufele 1999).

Scheufele (1999) posits that there are several factors that may influence a journalist to structure and organize issues in their articles in a certain way which includes among others their social norms and values, political orientation, pressure from the organization that they work for, and pressure from interest groups.

Journalists are members of their own society, and their social norms and values can influence how they cover certain issues when it comes to coverage of women's athletes (Guyot et al., 2024). For example, male journalists who come from societies that believe women should not play football could report on women's footballers in ways that portray them as not being good footballers and/or football being dangerous to their health. For instance, Cooky et al. (2015) found that journalists covered women's athletes as mothers rather than them being successful athletes. This could suggest that journalists saw women athletes less as athletes but more as mothers.

Pressure from their own media organizations could also force journalists to frame issues in a certain way. For example, some online media organizations have daily targets of website clicks for their journalists. Such targets might force journalists to cover issues differently because they want to reach more clicks. For instance, journalists could decide to focus on the personal lives of the women's footballers to gain more clicks than just focusing on the success of women's footballers.

Therefore, while it is important to understand that journalists use certain words to present certain information as more salient to the audience, it is equally important to understand what influences journalists to report on certain issues differently. The following paragraphs discuss some of the general frames identified in previous studies when the media covers women athletes.

Gender-Marking frame

Emphasizing on the gender of women athletes or gender-marking as it is known, continues to be a dominant feature when the media covers women's sports (Bruce 2017, Onwumechili 2021). Onwumechili (2021), who examined the history of Nigeria's women's football in Nigerian newspapers, found that not only was the gender of women footballers emphasized but that the sport was consistently marked as one that is played by women. Journalists gender-mark women athletes to remind their audience about the gender of the players (Petty & Pope 2019).

Haugaa Engh (2010:138) argues that this gender-marking of women's sports aims to place men's sports as "the standard", while women's sports is just "the other." Petty & Pope (2019) found that the mention of 'football' in the United Kingdom is automatically assumed to be referring to the men's game. While with women's football, their gender needs to be mentioned, so that it can be known by their audience that the reference is directed at the women's game.

Femininity Frame

Femininity frame is also used by the media/journalists to portray women athletes based on their aesthetics, and their social roles as mothers, wives, and girlfriends (Trolan 2013, Bruce 2017, Guyot et al., 2023, Onwumechili 2023). Haugaa Engh (2010:67) argues that the media portray women athletes in this frame because women playing sports such as football is seen as a "signal of non-compliance" to heterosexual culture of society.

For instance, Pfister (2015) found that the media coverage in *Bild Zeitung* centered around women's footballers' beauty. This was also the case with early studies, where the studies by Terkildsen & Schnell (1997:884), also found that women were exclusively described by their "looks and fashion tastes" to emphasize their femininity.

Women's Sports Inferiority Frame

Several researchers have found that journalists tend to present women's sports including women's football as inferior to men's sports (Pfister 2015, Black & Fielding-Lloyd 2019). In their coverage of women's sports, journalists would compare women's sports to men's sports using markers such as success and skills (Black & Fielding-Lloyd 2019), often declaring the former as being inferior to the latter without acknowledging the fact that men's sports have had several advantages over women's sports (Gonzalez et al., 2023). For instance, Black & Fielding-Lloyd (2019), who examined the English media's coverage of women's football during the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup, found that the media was comparing women footballers against the established standards set by their male counterparts, thereby making women footballers look inferior to their male counterparts.

The Sexual Orientation Frame

Women's sexuality is another frame that is often used by the media (Haugaa Engh, 2010, Trolan 2013, Onwumechili 2021). For instance, Onwumechili's (2021) study on women's football in Nigerian newspapers found that women footballers were described as lesbians because of their ability to play football. That is, when women footballers performed exceptionally better than men, journalists referred to them as lesbians because their ability to play football well was considered unfeminine (Onwumechili 2023). It is even worse for women athletes who are muscular, because they are often accused of being 'men' and less feminine, with their sexuality questioned (Haugaa Engh 2010).

The other ways in which journalists frame the coverage of women athletes include describing them as being the weaker sex to play sports (Clargo & Skey 2023). In this frame, women athletes, particularly those who play physically intensive team sports such as football and rugby are often described as lacking the physical power to play sports which demand physicality from the players (Clargo & Skey 2023).

Sports being a danger to the health of women athletes, and women's sports lacking the entertainment are other media frames which are often used by journalists when reporting on women's sports (Allison 2018, Codoy-Pressland 2014).

Positive Framing of Women's Sports

Lewis & Weaver (2015) suggest that there are positive and negative frames when it comes to communicating a message. This can also be true in sport journalism, as some articles could be deemed to portray women's sport and women's athletes in a positive and negative light. In what could be described as a contrast to the above identified frames, Parry et al., (2023), who examined the coverage of women's football during Covid-19 pandemic in the United Kingdom, identified the following media frames used by journalists on women's football and women footballers. These could potentially be described as positive frames.

Critiquing of Commercial prioritization of men's football frame

Men's sport continues to enjoy dominance over women's sport in terms of commercial gains from sponsorship, broadcasting revenue, pay, and overall funding because of extensive coverage provided by the media (Baker et al. 2019). However, Parry et al., (2023) identified a frame that the UK media used during the Covid-19 pandemic where

they critiqued the commercial prioritization of men's football at the expense of women's football. This is a frame that not only challenged the prioritization of the commercial interests of the men's team but also questioned the continued marginalization of women's football.

This frame presents a massive shift in how journalists have changed and acknowledged the unfairness in the prioritization of men's football over women's football. Women's sports, including women's football, continue to attract less commercial interest because of having been given little priority by the media in terms of providing adequate coverage (Commission for Gender Equality 2024). This frame presents to the audience the unfairness in the prioritization of men's football, which has always been presented in media coverage as the ultimate sporting value (Wensing & Bruce 2003). Therefore, it can be argued that this is a positive frame from the media as it highlights the inequalities between men's and women's sports.

Concern for Players frame

Parry et al. (2023) also identified a media frame that showed a concern for players' mental health, financial health, conducive working environment, and their safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. That is, instead of the coverage being centered around women's footballers' bodies not being physically strong to play football and how playing football could negatively affect their ability to give birth (Onwumechili 2021), this frame focused the attention of the audience to the well-being and safety of women's players at a period where their health and safety were under threat. In this frame, women's footballers' health is not framed in terms of their sexual and biological orientation but based on their well-being.

Serious Athletes Frame

Bruce (2017) found that women athletes are also starting to be portrayed by the media as serious athletes. Bruce (2017:32) posits that the media is starting to represent women athletes as "determined, courageous, physically competent sportspeople" particularly during international events. This is contrast from the past frames where women athletes were regarded as being inferior to their male counterparts in terms of their athletic strength, and the ability to play sport (Allison 2021).

The Skills of Women's Athletes Frame

Petty & Pope (2019), who examined the media's coverage of 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup in the UK, found that women footballers were portrayed based on their good skills to play the game. That is, the skills of women footballers centered the coverage more than anything else. This is a positive frame because previous studies found that not only were the skills of women athletes less mentioned by journalists in their coverage, but women athletes were more often described in sexual ways than their ability to play sports (Vincent 2004, Pfister 2015). This study explores the frames that *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* utilize in the coverage of women footballers. The objective is to understand whether women footballers are also described in frames similar to how other women's athletes were portrayed in previous studies.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter introduces the methods used to collect data in this study, which consist of a quantitative survey, qualitative content analysis, and interviews. The first section explains the chosen methods, how data was collected, and how it was sampled in different categories. The second section looks at the process followed in the selection of the interview participants, how and why they were chosen, the ethical process, and ends with the limitations.

4.1 KickOff and Soccer Laduma

KickOff and *Soccer Laduma* are the longest-standing football-only publications that were launched after South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 (Klein 2016, and Strydom 2022). *KickOff* was launched in 1994 (Strydom 2022), while *Soccer Laduma* was launched in 1997 (Klein 2016). Both publications started as print-only, however, *KickOff* closed its print version in 2022 and subsequently only published online (Strydom 2022). *Soccer Laduma* still has its weekly print version and online publication.

These publications focus exclusively on covering international and domestic football in South Africa, and both have a sizeable online audience and social media followings. The other football-only publications, *FarPost* and *Idiski Times* were both more recently established in 2019 (excluded for that reason) and have lower social media followings compared to both these publications.

4.2 Quantitative Survey and Content Analysis

This study combines a quantitative survey of articles together with content analysis. Content analysis has been employed by several studies examining media coverage of women's sports like in Serra & Burnett (2007), Goslin (2008), Pfister (2015), Delorme & Pressland (2016), and Petty & Pope (2019). Some researchers have objected to the continuous use of content analysis in the examination of media coverage of women's sports. This is because they argue that all findings have produced the same results over the years (Bruce et al., 2010). However, those who support the use of content analysis in this research area, argue that the fact that these studies have produced similar results not only show that there are limited changes from the media but also makes the use of content analysis even more useful and

important in continuously monitoring the media's progress in the coverage of women's sports (Delorme & Pressland 2014).

Krippendorff (2004) defines content analysis as a methodology that involves a systematic, quantitative analysis of content, usually consisting of texts, images, and/or other symbolic matters. This study uses quantitative survey and qualitative content analysis to examine the articles about women's football that were published in *KickOff and Soccer Laduma* between 2019 and 2023. In addition to an analysis of the article content, the quantity and frequency are documented within the period of analysis. The use of quantitative survey and qualitative content analysis aligns with recent studies which find that there is an increased media coverage of women's sport (Peeters & Eling 2015, Delorme & Pressland 2016, and Petty & Pope 2019, Leflay & Biscomb 2021, Coche 2022).

Earlier South African studies by Serra & Burnett (2007) and Goslin (2008) also used quantitative survey and qualitative content analysis to compare the number of articles of women's sports and men's sports in newspapers, where they found that the latter received more articles. Therefore, the use of quantitative survey is a suitable method for this study because of its ability to count the amount of media content (Macnamara 2018).

As the other objective of study is to understand how women footballers are portrayed in both publications, the use of qualitative content analysis is suitable because of its ability to examine articles (Neuendorf 2002). Neuendorf (2002) posits that qualitative content analysis is a suitable method of conducting analysis of the texts. Therefore, this study utilizes this method to interpret and examine which themes emerged from the articles in both publications, and whether these are the same themes which focus on the femininity of women's athletes as has been found in previous studies (Pfister 2015, Dietl et al., 2020). Pfister (2015), who used qualitative content analysis in her examination of the *Bild* newspaper's coverage of Germany's senior women's football team during the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup, found that sexual innuendos were rife in the articles.

The disadvantage of using these methodologies is that because the articles have been published already, it is difficult to predict what the prior motivations of journalists and

editors were in writing and publishing these articles. Neuendorf (2002) argues that content analysis cannot provide prior motivations of producers of the content.

The other disadvantage of using these methodologies is that one cannot fully guarantee the validity of the data because the collection is done by a single recorder (myself). I had to manually collect data from both websites and add it onto the Microsoft excel spreadsheet. Specifically, this includes all the article website links (URLs), article headlines, authors, and the date on which the article was published. This means that mistakes could happen during this process, because collection of data is not done by multiple recorders. In order to reduce any errors, the data entries on the spreadsheet were checked manually a number of times, to make sure they corresponded to the websites' articles.

4.3 Data Collection

Samples of analysis

The study has two samples for analysis. Sample one includes all articles in *KickOff* mentioning these categories: "Women's Football" (WF), "SAFA National Women's Football League" (SNWL) and "Hollywoodbets Super League" (HBSL), and all the names of the HBSL teams as presented in Table 1. Sample two also includes all articles in *Soccer Laduma* mentioning: "Women's Football", "SAFA National Women's Football League" and "Hollywoodbets Super League", and all the names of the teams. All the article website links (URLs) which included the above-mentioned categories were copied onto a Microsoft excel spreadsheet, where different categories were systematically created to assist with content analysis (see below Table 2 for categories).

Period of Analysis

The period of analysis for both samples is between January 2019 and December 2023, which are the years when the SAFA National Women's Football league was launched, and when the domestic women's league reached its five-year anniversary respectively.

Key Categories

Each article is a unit of analysis. The categories were divided into two groups. The first group included all articles that had these categories: "Women's Football", "SAFA

National Women's Football League" and "Hollywoodbets Super League", which on the spreadsheet tab were named "KickOff - WF/SNWL/HBSL" and "Soccer Laduma - WF/SNWL/HBSL" each on different tab.

The second category was named "Teams" on the spreadsheet, which was a category that saw a name of each team being searched on the websites. On the spreadsheet, the tabs were named "KickOff Teams" and "Soccer Laduma Teams". This means that *KickOff* had its two separate tabs, "KickOff- WF/SNWL/HBSL" and "KickOff- Teams". It was the same with *Soccer Laduma* as it had its two tabs: "Soccer Laduma-WF/SNWL/HBSL" and "Soccer Laduma-Teams" tabs on the spreadsheet. This was done to create a separation between the data collected from *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma*.

As presented in Table 1, the following were the names of teams that were searched on each publication's website: Mamelodi Sundowns (Ladies), Tshwane University of Technology (was renamed TUT Matsatsantsa), University of Western Cape (Ladies), University of Pretoria (Ladies), Thunderbirds, Richmond United, First Touch FC, and University of Johannesburg (Ladies), JVW FC, Royal AM Ladies, TS Galaxy Queens, Lindelani Ladies, City Lads FC, Copperbelt Ladies FC, University of Fort Hare (Ladies), and Durban Ladies FC.

Table 2: Categories created for content analysis.

Categories	Explanation
Title	The title of the publication.
Date	The date when the article was published.
Headline	The title of the article.
Author	The name of the author of the article.
URL/website article link	The website link of the article.
Categories	Words used to search for the article.
Type of Article	Classification of the article.
Theme	The key idea which emerged from the article.
Adjective	The description of the feminizing adjective used in the article.
Feminizing	Whether or not the article has a feminizing adjective or not.

The first category on the spreadsheet was the title/name of the publication: *KickOff* and/or *Soccer Laduma*. This helped to differentiate whether the data is from *KickOff* or *Soccer Laduma*.

The second category was the date on which the article was published. The date helps to examine the frequency at which articles were published monthly. This aligns with the study's objectives of understanding the frequency at which both publications were able to publish articles monthly.

The third category included the article's headline. The headlines were mostly copied from the websites and pasted onto the Microsoft spreadsheet without any alterations even if there was a grammatical mistake picked.

The fourth category included the name of the author/journalist who wrote the article. Like the headlines, the names were copied from the websites as they appear on the article and pasted onto the spreadsheet without any alterations. The names of the author/journalists helped to understand whether there were different journalists from both publications who covered domestic women's football.

The fifth category was the article website link or URL. The links were copied from the websites as they appeared without any alterations. There were article links which were behind a paywall and needed subscription to access the full article. I had to subscribe to the Soccer News Lifestyle 24 website, which hosted both websites, for a period of a month to access those articles.

The sixth category included these categories: “Women’s Football”, “SAFA National Women’s League”, “Hollywoodbets Super League” and “Teams”. As described above, these were categories used to search for articles on the websites.

The seventh category was on the types of articles. As presented in Table 3 below, this included whether the article is a news report, column, editorial, interview, profile interview, or match report, and any other classification the article may fall under.

Table 3: Explanation of the types of stories.

Types of Articles	Explanation
News Reports	Articles that are based on facts and are not fiction or opinions.
Columns	These are the opinion pieces written by journalists/editors and/or experts.
Editorials	These are the opinions of the publications.
Interviews	These are one-on-one conversations with either: the players, administrators, coaches, management, etc.
Profile	These are articles focusing on the biographical and personal background of the players, coaches, management, and administrators.
Match Reports	These are articles that report about the results of the matches, and interviews after matches etc.

Themes Selected

As presented in Table 4 below, this study borrowed the thematic categorizations framework created by Serra & Burnett (2007) in their study which examined South African newspapers' coverage of women's sports. Serra & Burnett (2007) came up with thematic categories which included personal stories, performance, success, policies, economic resources, ethical and deviant behaviors. Borrowing the frameworks from other studies which conducted similar studies is not something new as Clargo & Skey (2024), who examined rugby fans' attitude towards women's rugby used the same framework developed by Pope et al., (2013) in their study examining fans' attitude towards women's football and rugby.

In terms of the analysis of the articles in this study: the articles were annotated to see whether similar themes also emerged from the articles. Moreover, articles which are determined to have any focus on feminine attributes of the players were specifically examined as part of the themes which emerged from the articles from both publications. These were articles which included feminizing adjectives like "beautiful", "sexy", "babes", and "hot" in reference to women footballers. This is significant because, for example, Pfister (2015) and Onwumechili (2021) found that women footballers were sexualized, infantilized, and trivialized using such words in the coverage. In terms of themes, the following themes outlined Table 4 were annotated for this study.

Table 4: Explanation of the themes.

Themes	Explanation
Feminine	These were articles that focus on the players' sexuality, facial beauty, and physical attraction, infantilization, and contain phrases such as "beautiful", "sexy", "babes", "cute", and "hot" in reference to women footballers.
Awards	These are articles that focus on players, teams, and coaches winning awards and/or getting nominations for awards.

Competitions	These are articles that focus on women's football competitions such as Hollywoodbets Super League, SAFA National Women's League, FIFA Women's World Cup, CAF Women's Champions League, and other women's football competitions.
Player Signings	These are articles that focus on players' movements such as signing for new teams, renewing contracts with their teams.
Personal Stories	These are articles which focus on personal non-sport-related issues such as players, coaches, management buying new cars, their partners, marriages, personal lifestyle, and public appearances etc.
Success	These are articles that focus on winning trophies, winning matches, qualifying for competitions, and trophy parades etc.
Technology	These are articles that focus on players' involvement in the gaming technology, and on technology instruments used in football games.
Funding	These are articles that focus on the funding of women's football and women's sport in general. This includes articles on financial rewards for clubs, and/or players' salaries, the league's funding sources, sponsors, and overall financial issues faced by women's football and women footballers.

Failure	These are articles that focus on the team's losses.
Charity work	These are articles focusing on the teams, players, and coaches involved in charity works.

The ninth and tenth categories, which are linked to the themes category, was on identifying which feminizing adjectives were used in the articles, and whether it is feminizing or not respectively.

Articles Excluded

Repeated articles were excluded from the study. These were articles repeated under “Women’s Football”, “SAFA National Women’s League”, “Hollywoodbets Super League”, and “Teams” categories in the same title. The other excluded articles are those that cover women’s football from other countries without any link to the domestic women’s league in South Africa.

The other excluded articles were those that cover the men’s team that shares the same name as the women’s team. For example, university teams such as University of Johannesburg, University of Pretoria, Fort Hare University, and Royal AM, both the men’s and women’s teams share the same names. So, in this regard, an article that included the names of these teams, but the article was about the men’s team, such an article was excluded.

4.4 Interviews

In order to consider the research questions more deeply, the quantitative survey was supplemented with interviews with journalists, editors, and role players in domestic women’s football.

Similar to how Trunečka (2022) borrowed from Gillham (2005), Amis (2005), and Corbin & Strauss (2008) on their qualitative methodology (which follows these practical steps: creation of a sample choice of the form of interview, preparations of questions, transcription of all interviews and most importantly, explaining to the participants the purpose of the study), this study also borrowed and followed the same practical

methodology in how interviews were conducted. Ethical approval was obtained from the Wits Centre for Journalism before proceedings with the interviews.

Interviews took place in the months of October and November 2024, and each lasted less than an hour. The interviews were conducted in English, and in a semi-structured fashion to get more information from the participants. Some participants were in far provinces such as Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Western Cape (I am based in Gauteng), while others preferred the convenience of online platforms, and so all interviews were conducted using the online platform, Microsoft Teams. Permission was sought with every participant at the start of every interview to record the interview, and none of the participants objected to the recording.

The next step saw each recorded interview being transcribed using TurboScribe. Each transcribed interview was saved in a Microsoft Word document with the name of each participant and saved on a password protected drive.

4.4.1 Participants

This study not only seeks to understand the coverage of women's football in *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma* but also aims to get a better understanding of the process and motivations that informed decisions of the coverage and portrayal of women's football from the perspective of the producers of the content in these publications.

The initial plan of the study was to conduct interviews with current editors and journalists at *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff*. However, because of sudden retrenchments, which were announced at Media24 (parent company for both publications) between June to October 2024 (Maggs 2024), editors and journalists of both publications were unable to participate in the study during the required period of study. This is because management indicated that the staff are under pressure as their future is uncertain.

Therefore, a decision was taken to conduct interviews with former editors and journalists of *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma* to not only get their perception around the coverage of women's football during their tenure, but to understand the process which informed the decisions to cover, or not, domestic women's football at both publications.

This study opted for the use of purposive sampling techniques to select the participants in this regard. The Commission for Gender Equality (2024) study, which

used purposive sampling on its study into the insights of South Africa's national women's soccer team, argues that purposive sampling is a useful technique when targeting individuals with a deep understanding of issues that are relevant to the research questions.

The following are the names of the people interviewed because of their suitability and their relevance to the study's research questions.

1. Mark Gleeson

Mark Gleeson is a founding *KickOff* editor. He was selected for this study, because he has knowledge of when the publication started publishing women's football and what factors were considered on whether or not to publish women's football. He was an editor for three years, where he was responsible for what content got to be published, including women's football stories. He remains a leading football journalist, and a commentator.

2. Lorenz Köhler

Lorenz Köhler worked at *Soccer Laduma* for four years as a reporter. Köhler was tasked with providing content on football stories on the website including women's football. He was selected on the basis that his name appeared as an author on the set of the articles collected, which suggested he would be familiar with the criteria used to publish stories in the publication. Moreover, while he is no longer with *Soccer Laduma*, he remains one of the leading football journalists in the country with a better understanding of domestic football including women's football.

3. Busisiwe Mokwena

To add not only additional journalistic perspective but also a perspective from a female journalist, a decision was made to also select Busisiwe Mokwena. Mokwena is a freelance journalist who specializes in women's football. She has worked in several newsrooms in South Africa, including at the tabloid newspaper, *Daily Sun*, and at a commercial radio station, *Kaya FM*, where she covered women's football.

4. Fran Hilton-Smith

Fran Hilton-Smith was selected because she has been at the forefront of women's football in South Africa dating back to apartheid years. Hilton-Smith has been involved

in promoting the development of women's football since the 1980s. She was the president of the now-defunct South African Women's Football Association. She has been a coach for the national senior women's team, and a former FIFA instructor. She remains one of the leading voices of women's football in South Africa.

5. Dr Mari Haugaa Engh

To get a perspective from someone who has extensively published research papers on women's football in South Africa, a decision was made to include Dr Mari Haugaa Engh. Haugaa Engh is an academic who has published numerous research papers that focus on numerous aspects of women's football in South Africa, including the historical account of women's football, tackling femininity in women's football, to the heterosexual paradigm of women's football in South Africa.

6. Moonira Ramathula

With some non-profit organizations having taken a decision to promote women's sports including women's football on digital media platforms, a decision was taken to interview the head of such an organization to get their perceptions on the media's coverage of women's sports including women's football in South Africa. Moonira Ramathula was selected for this study, because she leads an organization called Futballing Girls. Futballing Girls is a grassroots organization which is aimed at developing grassroots women's sports including promoting women's football using digital media.

4.5 Limitation

The use of former journalists and editors of *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* respectively as participants instead of the current ones, limits the study. The current journalists and editors might have given a fresh perspective on the coverage of women's football in both publications. Additionally, current journalists and editors' participation would have helped to understand their perception and attitude towards the coverage of women's football, and how they understand the portrayal of women footballers in their respective publications.

Chapter 5: Results and Findings

This chapter provides results from the data collected in *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma*. The first part looks at sample one (*KickOff*) and sample two (*Soccer Laduma*) data results. This section provides detailed results from both samples in terms of: the quantity of articles; frequency of the articles published per month between 2019 and 2023; types of articles recorded; and feminizing adjectives identified and other themes. This also incorporates the findings from the interviews. The second part combines the results from the two samples to see how this data might provide answers to the study's research questions and objectives.

5.1 Research Results

5.1.1 Sample one (*KickOff*)

Table 5: Quantity of articles recorded for analysis per each category in sample one.

Categories	Quantity of Articles
Teams	64
Women's Football	21
Hollywoodbets Super League	5
SAFA National Women's League	2
TOTAL	92

Sample one (*KickOff*) analysis was conducted on a Microsoft excel spreadsheet and included articles from these categories: "Women's Football", "Hollywoodbets Super League", "SAFA National Women's League", and "Teams", which includes articles from *KickOff* website with the names of all 16 teams in the domestic women's football league between 2019 and 2023.

As presented in Table 5, the "Teams" category recorded =64 articles, "Women Football" =21 articles, "Hollywoodbets Super League" saw =6 articles, and "SAFA National Women's League" with just =2 articles. A total of =92 articles were recorded for analysis.

Frequency of Articles (Monthly- 2019-2023)

To get a proper quantity of how many articles were produced monthly in sample one, the =92 articles from the “Teams”, “Women’s Football”, “Hollywoodbets Super League”, and “SAFA National Women’s League” categories were combined to arrive at the frequency of articles produced by *KickOff* between 2019 and 2023.

Table 6: Frequency of articles published per month in sample one from 2019 to 2023.

Month	Articles in 2019	Articles in 2020	Articles in 2021	Article in 2022	Articles in 2023
January	3	1	0	3	3
February	2	0	0	0	2
March	1	0	0	2	4
April	1	2	0	0	0
May	2	0	1	0	0
June	1	2	0	1	0
July	0	4	1	10	1
August	1	1	1	2	1
September	2	0	3	2	6
October	0	0	1	0	0
November	0	0	8	7	5
December	0	0	0	2	3
TOTAL	13	10	15	29	25

2019

The first year of the domestic women’s league saw =13 articles published. With January (=3) recording the highest number of articles.

2020

In 2020, there was a decrease in articles as just =10 articles were published, with only June (=4) registering more articles than the rest of the months.

The potential impact of Covid-19

South Africa was put under a national lockdown in March 2020 necessitated by Covid-19 (Nicolson 2020), which saw all sporting activities suspended including the domestic women's football league (Soccer Laduma 2020). With the extended lockdowns throughout the year, SAFA was forced to end the season after 21 games played, declaring Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies as the winners in June 2020 (Soccer Laduma 2020). This means from March 2020, there were no official football matches played in the domestic league, which could have potentially been the reason why both publications recorded lower articles in 2020.

2021

There would be an increase in 2021, with =15 articles published for 2021. November (=8) and September (=3) registered the highest number of articles respectively.

2022

The increase of articles continued in 2022, with =29 articles published. July (=10), November (=7) saw the highest number of articles published.

2023

=25 articles were published in 2023, further adding on the year-to-year articles' increase. September (=6) contributed to most articles.

Type of articles

From the =64 articles recorded under the "Teams" category (see below Figure 1), there were =45 news articles recorded, that is, reports that were based on facts and not opinions. These were matter-of-fact reports that covered general news about women's football. Cooky et al., (2015:275) argue that when the media covers women's sport, the reporting is typically couched in what they describe as a "matter-of-fact".

Additionally, there were =11 lifestyle articles, which were reports that focused on social and personal issues involving women footballers and women in football such as the administrators. This was followed by match reports (=5), which are an important feature in sports journalism as it details the results and performances of the teams/players (Domeneghetti 2021). Lastly, there were only =3 interviews conducted, which focused on one-on-one conversations with the players.

Figure 1- Types of articles recorded under the "Teams" category in sample one.

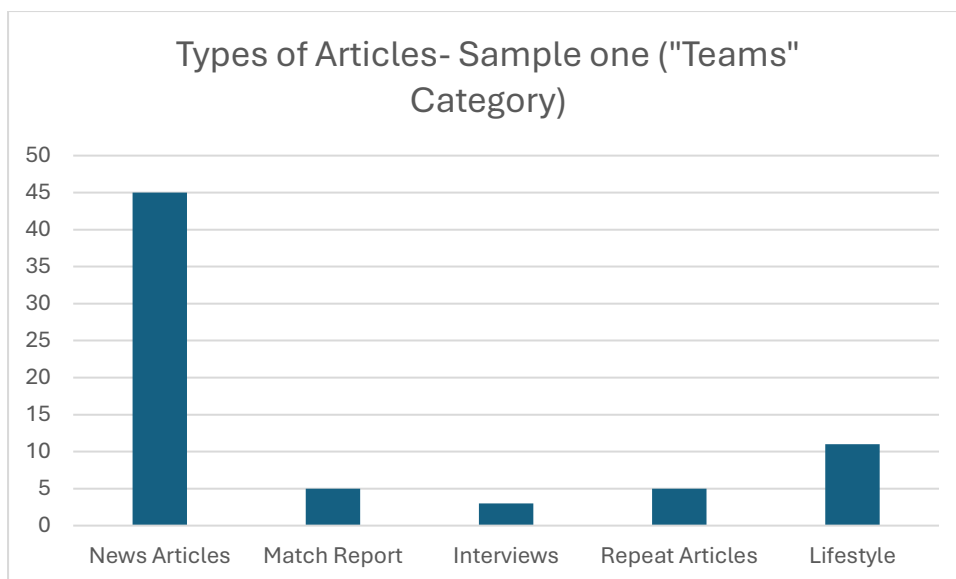


Table 7: Top five teams with more articles published in sample one from 2019 to 2023.

Teams	Quantity of Articles
Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies	33
JVW	9
UWC	7
Royal AM Ladies	7
TUT	3

In the “Teams” category, Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies was a team with the highest number of articles of the top five teams in the domestic league covered in the period of analysis (see above Table 7). There were =33 articles published involving the team between 2019 and 2023, which included match reports (=5), news articles (=23), and lifestyle articles (=5). Sundowns Ladies won all domestic league titles between 2019 and 2023 (see Table 8).

KickOff founding editor, Mark Gleeson admitted that successful teams would always get more coverage, because of their success, saying:

“I think genuine coverage comes from achievement, you know. You are going to get more and more space in the paper when you win, that’s the bottom line. Ultimately, people want to read about winners.” [Gleeson]

JVW was the second with =9 articles, with news articles (=8) and interview (=1). The University of Western Cape (UWC) was third with =7 articles, ranging from news reports (=6) and lifestyle articles (=1). Royal AM Ladies had the same number of articles as UWC. The team had news reports (=3), and lifestyle reports (=4).

The Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) closed out the top five teams with just =3 articles, which included interviews (=2) and news report (=1). The rest of the teams either had =1 article each, had no articles under their names, and/or had articles repeated under their names.

Table 8: Teams that finished in the top five of the Hollywoodbets Super League between 2019 and 2023.

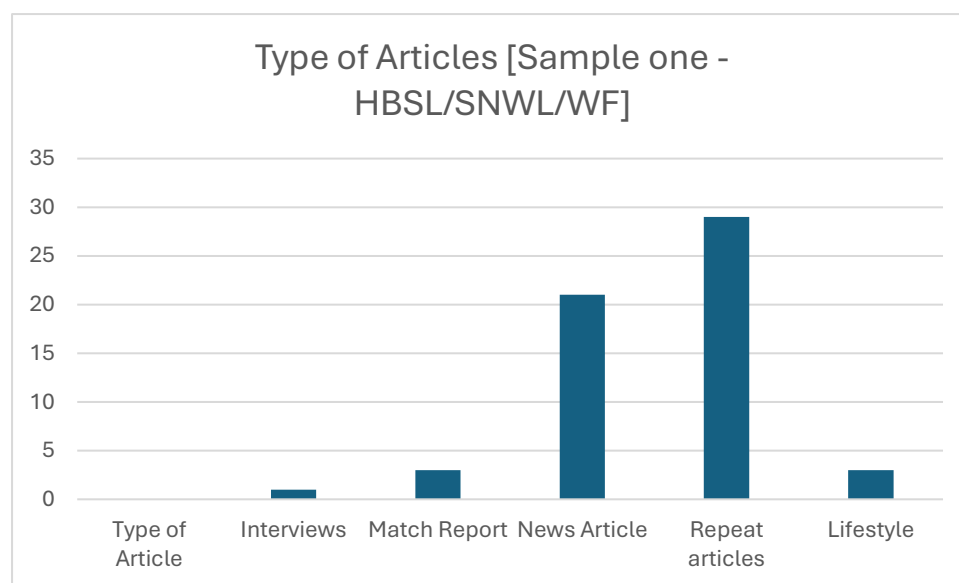
2019/2020	2021	2022	2023
1.Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies	1.Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies	1.Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies	1.Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies
2. TUT	2. TUT	2. UWC	2. UWC
3.Bloemfontein Celtic (renamed to Royal AM Ladies)	3. UWC	3. TUT	3. JVW
4. First Touch	4. JVW	4. JVW	4. TS Galaxy Queens
5. City Wizards	5. First Touch FC	5. UJ	5. Royal AM Ladies

As depicted in Table 8, Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies finished on top of Hollywoodbets Super League between 2019 and 2023 (SAFA 2020). TUT finished twice in 2019/2020 (matches ran two years because of Covid-19) and 2021 (SAFA 2020, SAFA 2021). However, the Tshwane team finished third in 2022, only to miss finishing in the top five in 2023. UWC was able to finish second in 2022 and 2023, having finished third in 2021 (SAFA 2022, Global Sports Archive 2022). JVW were able to finish fourth in 2022 and improved their position to third in 2023 (Global Sports Archive 2023).

Analysis of the types of articles (HBSL/SNWL/WF)

As depicted in the below Figure 2, from the combined =29 articles sampled under the categories “Hollywoodbets Super League”, “SAFA National Women’s League”, and “Women’s Football”, =21 were news articles, interviews (=2), lifestyle articles (=3), and match reports (=8).

Figure 2 - Type of articles recorded from the HBSL/SNWL/WF categories in sample one.



From the =21 sampled under the “Women’s Football” category; news articles (=18) dominated the reports with a high number of articles. The dominance of news reports highlights that the publication focused on a matter-of-fact reporting. The other reports saw interviews (=1), match reports (=1), and lifestyle articles (=1).

There was a slight increase of match reports (=2) recorded from the =5 articles sampled under the “Hollywoodbets Super League” category. News articles (=1) were few, while interviews (=2), which are important to know the players, increased under this category.

From the =2 articles under the “SAFA National Women’s League” category, there were just news articles (=2).

Themes

One of the study’s key aims was to search for feminizing adjectives in reference to how women footballers are described in the coverage. These were words such as “beautiful”, “babes”, and “hot”, which were used to feminize women’s athletes in

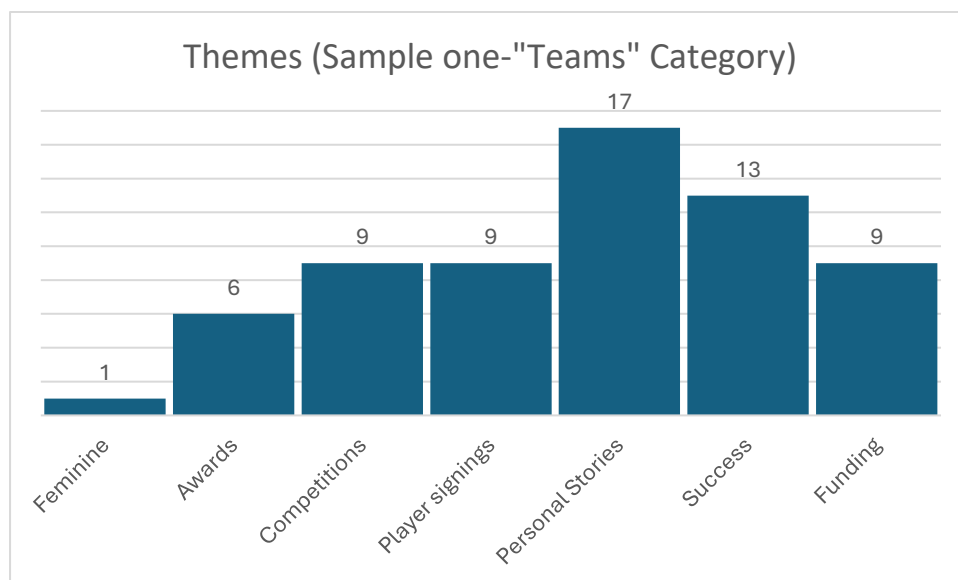
previous studies (Bruce 2017, Pfister 2015, Trolan 2013). Therefore, this study categorized any familiar words used in the articles under the feminizing theme.

Feminizing theme

Under the “Teams” category, the feminizing theme appeared once with the adjective “saucy” used to describe the look and fashion taste of Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies goalkeeper, Andile Dlamini (Mtuta 2022).

The other themes which emerged under the “Teams” category (see Figure 3) were success, awards, personal stories, funding, player signings, and competitions, and are discussed in detail below.

Figure 3: Themes emerged from the “Teams” category in sample one.



As presented in the above Figure 3, the personal stories theme, that is, articles that focus on non-sport-related personal stories, was a theme that emerged strongly with =17 articles. These were articles which specifically covered personal lives of women footballers, coaches, and management including what cars they drive, who they are married to, dating life, and social life. This is consistent with previous findings that the media tends to focus more on off-the-field personal issues rather than on-the-field success when it covers women’s sports and women athletes (Bruce 2017, Pfister 2015).

Dr Mari Haugaa Engh, lecturer at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal makes a point that this kind of coverage where emphasis is placed on off-the-field subjects is often motivated by the patriarchy in sport, saying:

“And for me, you know, that has to do with the patriarchal structures and histories of sport itself. So, in a way, it's unavoidable. So, I think professional sports can, in a way, never escape that patriarchal, heteropatriarchal, capitalist, sort of colonial, imperial, sort of history and form that it has.” [Haugaa Engh]

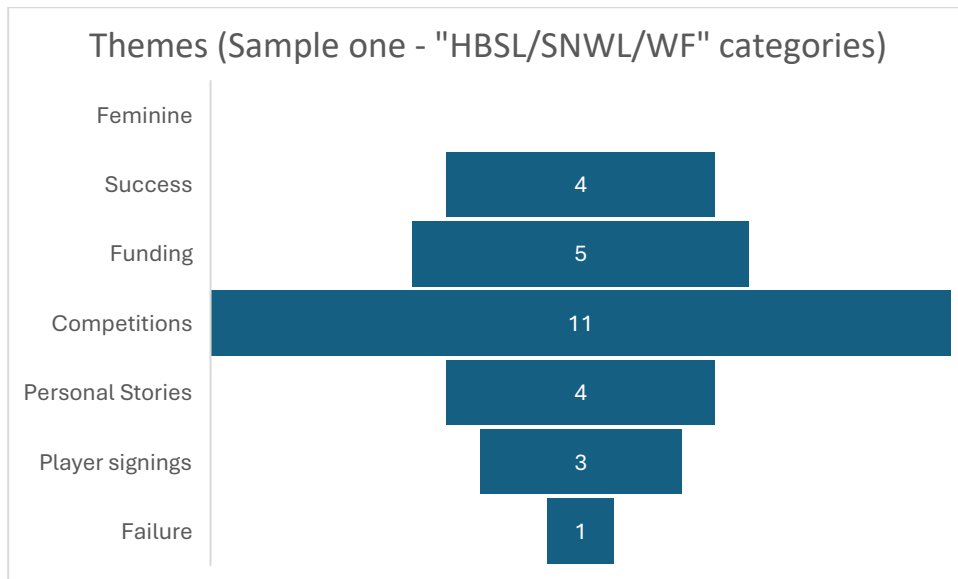
Success was the second theme which emerged strongly with =13 reports. These were exclusively match reports involving Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies for their successes such as winning trophies and matches.

The other themes which emerged strongly from the articles were the player signings theme (=9), which were reports focusing on players and coaches moving from one team to the other. The funding theme (=9) also emerged, which are reports that focus on players' personal sponsorship deals, endorsement deals, and financial perks.

It was the same number of articles for the competitions theme (=9), which were reports that covered different women's football tournaments such as the Hollywoodbets Super League, CAF Women's Champions League, and the FIFA Women's World Cup.

For the awards theme, which are reports that focus on players, coaches, and the team's winning accolades for their on-the-field success, there were just =6 reports involving Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies.

Figure 4 - Themes which emerged from HBSL/SNWL/WF categories in sample one.



From the =6 articles sampled under “Hollywoodbets Super League” category, there were no articles that contained any feminizing adjectives. It was the same even for the =2 articles sampled under the “SAFA National Women’s League”, and the =21 articles sampled under “Women’s Football”.

However, there were other themes that emerged under these categories (see Figure 4). From the =2 articles sampled under “SAFA National Women’s League” category, the competition theme was identified in both articles.

The =6 articles sampled under the “Hollywoodbets Super League”, included the success theme (=2), which were reports that focus on sports-related victories, and personal stories theme (=2), which focused on personal matters involving players. The competition theme (=1) was the least represented theme in this category.

From =21 articles sampled under the “Women’s Football”; the competition theme (=8) emerged strongly showing that the publication focused more on different women’s football competitions. The funding theme (=5) emerged second with the number of reports, highlighting the financial aspects related to women’s football. The player signings theme (=3), success (=2), personal stories theme (=2), and failure (=1) made up the list of other themes identified in the articles under this category.

5.1.2 Sample two (*Soccer Laduma*)

Table 9: Quantity of articles recorded for analysis per each category in sample two.

Categories	Quantity of Articles
Teams	97
Women's Football	25
Hollywoodbets Super League	11
SAFA National Women's League	3
TOTAL	136

Sample two included articles in *Soccer Laduma*. Similar to sample one, sample two included articles from these categories: "Women's Football", "Hollywoodbets Super League", "SAFA National Women's League", and "Teams", which included articles that had the names of all 16 teams in the national domestic women's league football. As presented in Table 9, from the "Teams" category, =97 articles were recorded for analysis. The "Hollywoodbets Super League" category recorded =11 articles, "SAFA National Women's League" recorded =3 articles, and "Women's Football" recorded =25 articles. A total of =136 articles in sample two was sampled for analysis.

Frequency of Articles

=136 articles from the "Teams", "Hollywoodbets Super League", "SAFA National Women's League", and "Women's Football" categories were combined to see how *Soccer Laduma* was able to publish articles on a month-to-month basis between 2019 and 2023.

Table 10: Frequency of articles per month from 2019 to 2023 in sample two.

Month	Articles in 2019	Articles in 2020	Articles in 2021	Articles in 2022	Articles in 2023
January	1	0	0	1	2
February	0	1	1	1	2
March	0	3	0	3	9
April	0	2	0	0	5
May	1	0	0	2	4
June	0	1	1	0	1
July	1	1	2	7	6
August	7	0	0	3	7

September	3	0	1	3	8
October	0	0	0	1	4
November	0	0	12	7	10
December	5	0	2	0	5
TOTAL	18	8	19	28	63

2019

This year saw a total of =18 articles published. August (=7) and December (=5) contributed the highest number of articles respectively.

2020

The year 2020 saw a decrease in articles, as just =8 articles were published for the whole year, with the highest number of articles recorded in March (=3), and April (=2) respectively.

2021

=19 articles were published. The month of November (=12) contributed the highest number of articles.

2022

The year-to-year increase of articles continued in 2022, with =28 articles published. July (=7) and November (=7) saw the highest articles published.

2023

=63 articles were published, with each month registering a minimum of two articles. November (=10), March (=9), September (=8), and August (=7) published the highest number of articles. This resulted with *Soccer Laduma* publishing =136 articles in the period of analysis, doubling the numbers that *KickOff* published in the same period of analysis.

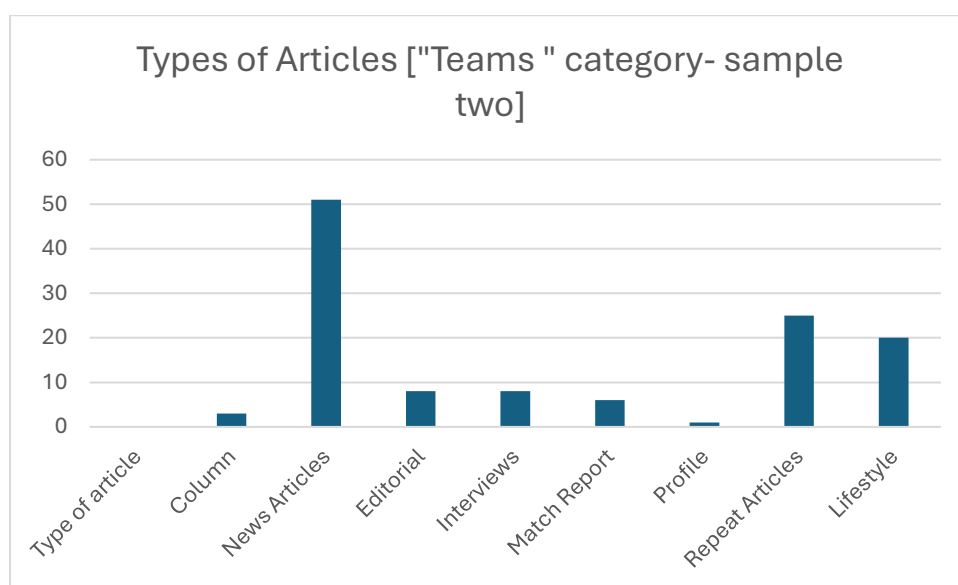
Women's football activist, Fran Hilton-Smith, who herself was once a community journalist, says that coverage has not always been like that in the early days, particularly in *Soccer Laduma*. She states:

“When it comes to Soccer Laduma, they were very resistant, they did not want to write about women’s football, I must be honest. It’s only in recent years, they have run a couple of articles on women’s football.” [Hilton-Smith].

However, it looks like the digital period has changed and increased coverage of women’s football in *Soccer Laduma* as it published a greater number of articles than *KickOff* during the period of analysis.

Types of Articles

Figure 5 - Type of articles recorded in the “Teams” category in sample two.



As presented in the above Figure 5, from the recorded =97 articles under the “Teams” category, news reports (=51) dominated the articles, highlighting once again women’s football is covered in a matter-of-fact style (Cooky et al.,2015). There were =21 lifestyle reports which focused on personal and social lives of the players and women in football, and match reports (=5), which show that journalists cover women’s football live matches. The publication also published interviews (=8), columns (=3), and profile interview (=1), which helps to provide background information on the players without having to interview them. *Soccer Laduma* also published its views in the form of editorials (=8).

Analysis of the types of articles (“Teams” category)

Table 11: Top five teams which had more articles published in sample two between 2019 and 2023.

Teams	Quantity of Articles
Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies	56
JVW	16
Royal AM Ladies	9
UJ	6
TUT	4

Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies dominated most of the articles as it recorded =56 articles from the ‘Teams’ category (see Table 11). 31 of the articles were news reports, match reports (=5), lifestyle articles (=7), editorials (=6), interviews (=5), and columns (=2).

When asked why Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies received more coverage in *Soccer Laduma* than the rest of the teams, former *Soccer Laduma* journalist, Lorenzo Köhler made the following admission, saying:

“They are winning, and because they are in our face all the time. They are winners, so it is easier to associate and create content about winners because it get[s] engagement and better read.” [Köhler]

JVW was second with =16 articles, which included =11 news articles, interview (=1), lifestyle articles (=2), editorial (=1), and match report (=1). Royal AM Ladies was third with =9 articles, which included just news articles (=1) and lifestyle stories (=8). The University of Johannesburg (UJ) came in fourth with =6 articles, which included news articles (=3), editorial (=1), and interviews (=2). TUT was the fifth team with just =4 articles, which included news articles (=2), column (=1) and lifestyle article (=1). The rest of the teams got =2, =1, =0 articles throughout the period of analysis.

Analysis of the types of articles (“HBSL/SNWL/WF” category)

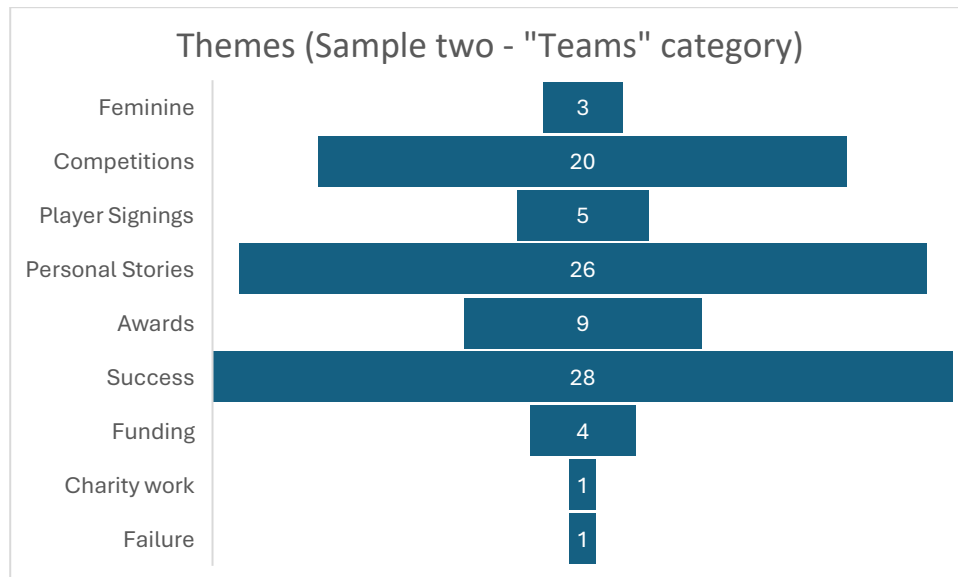
From the =11 articles sampled under “Hollywoodbets Super League” category, news articles (=7) emerged strongly in the sample. There was also editorial (=1), which is the opinion of the publication, and editor’s column (=1), which is an opinion of the editor. Additionally, there were interviews (=1), and match reports (=1) published.

From the =3 articles sampled under the “SAFA National Women’s League” category, there were news articles (=2), and interviews (=1) published.

Under the “Women’s Football” category, there were =25 articles sampled. News articles (=17) dominated. In terms of opinions, there were editorials (=1) and editor’s column (=1). There were also match reports (=3) and interviews (=3) published.

Themes

Figure 6- Themes which emerged in sample two (“Teams” category).



From the “Teams” category, feminizing adjectives “hot”, “ravishing”, and “beauty” were identified in the articles. The adjective “ravishing” was used in reference to Royal AM Ladies chairperson, Tamia Mpisane (Lithuli 2023), with “beauty” being used to describe Royal AM Ladies team after their spa treatment (Lithuli 2022). While “hot” was used to describe how former Banyana Banyana player, Amanda Dlamini looked similar to her new car (SL Social 2020).

Haugaa Engh says that the portrayal of women in sport media using such feminizing adjectives is not just a local problem but an international phenomenon that goes beyond just women’s football. Saying:

“This is a trend, you know, internationally, and it's a trend beyond women's football as well, that somehow when we are talking about women athletes, we need to always remind the audience that they are women, right? So, they might also be athletes, but there's this expectation that, I guess, traditionally, right, that being an athlete and being a woman are contradictions in terms, right.” [Haugaa Engh]

Other Themes (“Teams” category)

Success Theme

Under the “Teams” category, the success theme emerged strongly with =28 articles recorded. =21 of those articles were about the success stories of Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies, ranging from their match victories, trophy accolades in both domestic league, and continental competition. JVW was second with just =4 success stories, UJ with =2, and the University of Pretoria (UP) with just =1.

Personal Stories Theme

The personal stories theme followed with =26 articles. These were stories ranging from players buying new cars, new hairstyles, and romantic and social lives. Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies team once again dominated with =13 stories.

Royal AM Ladies was second with =6 stories involving mostly the team chairlady’s romantic lifestyle. =2 articles each for the UWC and JVW involving the romantic and social lives of their former players respectively. UJ and City Lads had =1 article each on this theme.

Köhler explains why *Soccer Laduma* journalists often tend to focus on lifestyle reporting:

“It’s about page views and interest. They [journalists] would find lifestyle thing that maybe people find interesting.” [Köhler]

However, Hilton-Smith disagrees with that approach and pleads with journalists to cover on-the-field success of players, saying:

“I think that’s an area that needs a lot of introspection. Journalists need to focus on the success of footballers on the field, being signed by top clubs, play professional football, and not worrying about their personal lives per se.” [Hilton-Smith]

Competition Theme

The competition theme (=20), which focused on women’s football competitions, and players’ participation in different competitions, was third with the highest number of articles. Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies dominated with =8 articles. However, other

teams also recorded several articles under this theme. JVW recorded =5 articles, which included their participation and promotion in the domestic league, and their players' participation in the national team. TUT recorded =3 articles, while UJ had =2 articles. UP and the UWC recorded =1 article each under this theme.

Awards Theme

Of the =9 articles recorded for analysis, =8 of them were about Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies' winning and being nominated for awards. This also included an off-the-field music award nomination for their player, Lehlogonolo Mashigo, who doubles as a musician (Lithuli 2023). JVW had =1 article under this theme, which focused on their player being nominated for a domestic women's football award.

Player Signings Theme

It was again Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies and JVW, who recorded articles under the player signings theme. Out of =5 articles recorded under this theme, JVW recorded =3 articles. These were articles about JVW signing an athletic champion, Caster Semenya (Soccer Laduma 2019). Sundowns Ladies recorded =2 articles under this theme.

Funding Theme

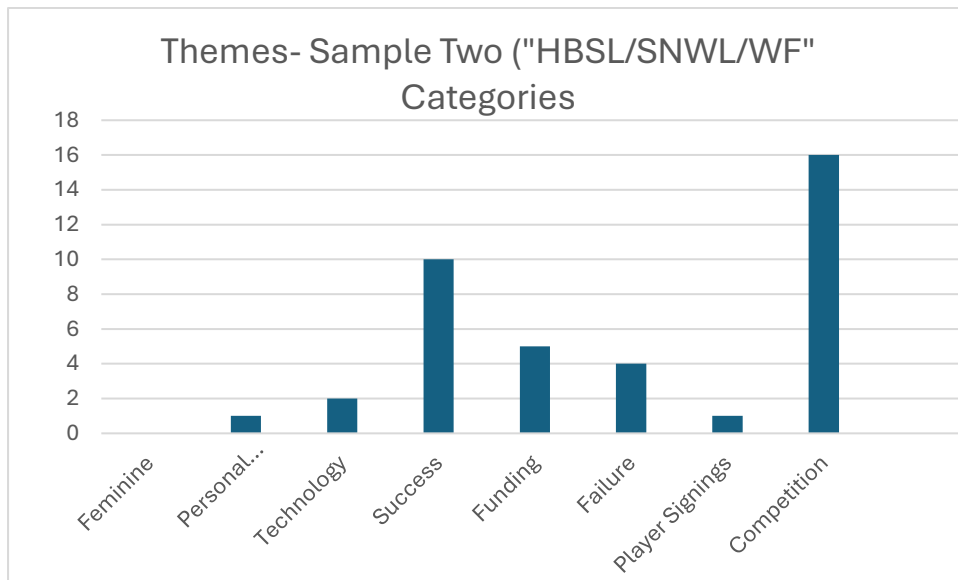
The funding theme, which includes reports that focus on sponsorship deals, financial rewards, and other financial partnerships, emerged with just =4 articles. Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies recorded =2 of those articles, which included their players' sponsorship deals with sporting brands. UJ and Royal AM Ladies recorded =1 article each under this theme, which on the former, the focus was on the business of players' agents and how they manage the financial deals of their players, and on the latter, the focus was on players receiving financial rewards in a form of being given a beauty treatment (Lithuli 2023).

Charity and Failure Themes

Under the charity and failure themes, there was just =1 article published for each theme. Both were about Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies recording a defeat in their match (failure), and the other article which carried the charity theme focused on the team donating school shoes and stationery (Lithuli 2023).

Themes (“HBSL/SNWL/WF” categories)

Figure 7- Themes which emerged from sample two- (HBSL/SNWL/WF categories).



Under the “Hollywoodbets Super League”, “SAFA National Women’s League”, and “Women’s Football” categories, there were no articles with feminizing adjectives. However, there were several other themes which also emerged from the articles under the three categories as depicted in the above Figure 7.

From the sampled =3 articles under “SAFA National Women’s League”, the competition (=2) theme recorded an extra article than the success theme (=1).

From the =11 articles under the “Hollywoodbets Super League” category, there were several themes that emerged from the articles. The competition theme recorded =3 articles, highlighting once again there is a focus on women’s football competitions. The other themes saw funding (=2), success (=2), and failure (=2), player signings (=1), and personal stories (=1) making up all the themes identified in the articles.

From the =25 articles under “Women’s Football”, the theme that came out tops was the competition theme (=11). The second theme with more articles was the success theme (=7), which focused on achievements of the teams and players. The funding theme also emerged in the articles with just =3 articles, technology (=2), and failure (=2) wrapped up the themes.

5.2 Research Findings

This section looks at the findings from the results presented in sample one and two in terms of: the quantity; frequency of articles produced; and the feminizing adjectives identified in the portrayal of women footballers in the coverage. In this regard, it combines the results from both samples, and the findings from research participants to answer the study's research questions and objectives.

5.2.1 Coverage of women's football in *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma*

The first finding from the results is that the coverage of women's football in *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma* has increased between 2019 to 2023. *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* managed to produce =228 articles in the coverage of domestic women's football. Despite Covid-19 having played a role in limiting the coverage in 2019 and 2020, the results show that coverage of women's football in both publications increased on a year-to-year basis.

Soccer Laduma published double the number (=136) of articles, in comparison with *KickOff's* figures (=92). *Soccer Laduma* published articles each month in 2023, which is something that it failed to achieve in other years, and something which *KickOff* failed to do in the period of analysis.

Hilton-Smith admitted that "when it comes to the coverage of women's football, I think over the years, it hasn't been too bad."

However, given the fact that in a period of five years, *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma* as the two leading online football publications only managed to publish just =228 articles, not everyone agrees with Hilton-Smith's sentiment about the coverage not being too bad.

Freelance journalist, Busisiwe Mokwena, who has been covering women's football for 14 years in South Africa is not happy with the coverage of women's football in the two publications, saying:

"I don't think they have done enough to cover women's football. They (*Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff*) are the leading football publications in the country for years." [Mokwena].

Mokwena adds that she thought after Banyana Banyana qualified for the first World Cup in 2019, “coverage would be more than what it was before the World Cup. But no, it [s] still fluctuates, and it bothers me because you always get some coverage when there’s something big happening, when Banyana wins the COSAFA Women’s Championship, or when Banyana are in the semi-final of the women’s AFCON, or Banyana have qualified for yet another World Cup. However, the day-to-day coverage of the leagues is really appalling.”

She admits that the media’s coverage of women’s football in South Africa has not changed much since she started her career as a football journalist, saying:

“I have been covering women’s football just about over 14 years, and the change in the coverage, maybe has changed by 2%, definitely not more.”

[Mokwena]

Mokwena’s sentiments that the coverage has changed slightly points to what Köhler said about the coverage of domestic women’s football not being given a priority in *Soccer Laduma* during his time. He says:

“Updating of Hollywoodbets Super League, or updating of what the players are doing overseas, or pre-match press conference and post-match press conference, following up Desiree Ellis during league, getting a comment, is not a priority.” [Köhler]

The results revealed how some of the women’s teams received little to no coverage in the period of analysis. Besides Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies, no other team received more than =30 articles in both publications in the period of analysis. A team like TUT, which has been part of the league since its inception in 2019 (Sibembe 2019), received just =7 articles in both publications throughout the five-year period.

When contrasting the number of articles recorded by the women’s league in the five-year period with the men’s football league, Köhler is correct in his assertion that women’s football was not a priority. For example, it was announced that the 2024 men’s football season would see =240 matches being covered by broadcast media (Premier Soccer League 2024), that is more than what the women’s football league received in both publications in the five years period.

Therefore, the question is, what makes men's football part of the media agenda more than women's football. Köhler admits that journalists at *Soccer Laduma* are expected to meet their website page view targets, and with women's football it becomes difficult to achieve that, hence the lack of priority to provide consistent coverage. Saying:

"You need to answer why you are not reaching your target. Why are you writing a story that gets 5000 views, explain yourself, because it does not make a company money." [Köhler]

Despite admitting that, "the growth of women's football has been massive in terms of how quickly it has grown. The standard of women's football, particularly internationally, is excellent," Gleeson echoes Köhler's sentiments that it becomes difficult for decision makers in the newsrooms to prioritize the coverage of domestic women's football.

"If you're a decisionmaker in the media, how do you know whether you're going to really sell a publication with women's football content, is there genuine interest or is it an incidental interest because it's free. I think that's an issue that clouds women's football." [Gleeson]

Gleeson makes this point on the basis that most of the women's football matches are free at stadiums, including Banyana Banyana's matches. The public do not have to buy tickets to go and watch them.

However, not everyone agrees with Köhler and Gleeson's sentiments on why women's football should, therefore, receive less priority because of not "selling".

Moonira Ramathula, who leads a non-profit organization called Futballing Girls, refuses to accept that as an excuse for the media's failure to prioritize women's football, saying:

"You can't say women's football is not selling when you have a major sponsor like the Hollywoodbets, you know, Super League. You cannot say that it's not being watched on SABC because SABC can produce the stats. So, what exactly is it that you say it's not selling? And if it's not selling, what needs to be done? You have more Banyana Banyana players playing overseas than Bafana Bafana players currently. And that should be telling that you cannot say that it doesn't sell. Is it a mindset? What exactly is it." [Ramathula]

Ramathula's comments flow from the fact that there are 50 live Hollywoodbets Super League matches that are broadcast on the SABC (SAFA 2021). Furthermore, it was announced that each match attracted about 2 million viewers in 2021 (SAFA 2021)

Ramathula's comments were supported by Mokwena, who not only argues that women's football should not be shunned in the coverage because of the low views, but that journalists must be obligated to publish stories on a weekly basis about women's football, saying:

"If then you stop writing women's football stories because the views are low, how you hope to grow it. Maybe at some point there has to be an obligation that on a certain day or every week there has to be two not one [stories], because there are so many women's football stories to tell." [Mokwena]

Mokwena posits that "the more we cover women's football; it would change how people view women's football. It would change how people take women's football." She adds that:

"There's many perspectives that would change if as journalists, if as the media industry, cover it more." [Mokwena]

However, she admits that "if in the newsroom there's no one who is passionate about women's football, or the growth of women's football, or someone who wants to see change in women's football, we are not going to see a change in the coverage of women's football."

5.2.2 Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies Gets More Coverage

The second finding is that successful teams and those teams that compete in international competitions receive more coverage in *KickOff and Soccer Laduma*. The results revealed that Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies received =89 articles from both publications during the period of analysis. That is substantially more than what their other rivals, JVW (=25) and Royal AM Ladies (=16) managed to receive from both publications.

Sundowns Ladies also won the continental CAF Women's Champions League twice in 2021 and 2023 (Ngidi 2023), and its participation in the competition contributed to its increased number of articles. The results depict that in the month of November

(which is the month on which the CAF Women's Champions League take place) in 2021 and 2023, =19 match reports recorded from both publications involved Sundowns Ladies' participation in the competition.

Köhler admits that "Sundowns Ladies gets more coverage in the Champions League", because "it's elevated competition." The finding is consistent with the previous research that found international competitions receive more coverage than domestic competitions (Ravel & Gareau 2016, Delorme & Pressland 2016, Petty & Pope 2019, Rowe & Silva 2023).

However, Mokwena argues that the media needs to stop obsessing about big international events but instead should "go and find stories of that 11-year-old player that plays for Springs Home Sweepers, who is a leftie, and is doing well, or the one that plays in Rosyln in Pretoria, there are so, so, so many stories to tell."

She further adds that:

"In those articles that you are talking about, how many people have written those articles. It is probably the same journalists who are not more than 10. As the media, we need to change the mindset of big events." [Mokwena]

5.2.3 Focus on Sporting Attributes and Challenges

The third finding is that *KickOff and Soccer Laduma* provided increased coverage when it comes to on-the-field success and other challenges related to women's football in South Africa. The results showed that several themes emerged from the articles in both publications covering on-the-field sporting attributes. Themes such as success, awards, competitions, funding, and player signings were dominant in several articles in both publications, which focused on the on-the-field success of women's football including winning trophies and awards, matches, securing qualifications in top competitions and sponsorships. These also included off-the-field success such as women football administrators appointed in top positions.

The publications also devoted their coverage to different women's football competitions. The results show that =52 articles in both publications focused on women's football competitions such as the FIFA Women's World Cup, domestic league, CAF Women's Champions League, WAFCON, and other international tournaments, where the focus was on sport-related issues.

5.2.4 Frequency of Articles

The fourth finding is that the coverage in both *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma* is inconsistent on a month-to-month basis. The results show that it was only in 2023 that *Soccer Laduma* managed to not only publish a minimum of one article each month but registered the highest number of articles (=63) in a single year. Besides 2023, both publications failed to register article (s) each month in the five-year period.

The failure to register articles monthly between 2019 and 2020 could be attributed to Covid-19 restrictions, which saw the league matches being cut off. However, post Covid-19 restrictions, there were still months where both publications still registered zero articles despite the domestic league in action.

5.2.5 Portrayal of Women Footballers

While this was only picked up in a few articles, *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma* still portray women footballers in feminizing language. One of the key objectives of the study was to explore how women footballers are portrayed in the coverage in *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma* through searching feminizing adjectives. The results revealed that feminizing adjectives such as “saucy”, “beauty”, “hot”, and “baddie” were used to describe not only women’s footballers but also women who are involved in football such as administrators. While these feminizing adjectives were not used more often, the findings still confirm that women footballers continue to be described in such feminizing words as was the case with previous studies (Trolan 2013, Pfister 2015).

These feminizing adjectives were used in articles which focused on non-sport-related personal issues, where the emphasis was on women footballers’ fashion looks and taste. The results show that =48 articles published by both publications had the personal stories theme, which focused on non-sport-related personal issues.

From the results, there were also =47 articles produced by both publications that focused on the lifestyles of both women footballers and women who are involved in football such as the administrators. Similar to the personal stories theme, the lifestyle theme also focuses on the off-the-field issues, where mostly the coverage focuses on the social lives of the players such the cars they drive, their lifestyles away from football, etc.

However, that approach of covering off-the-field personal and lifestyle stories is not something that Ramathula agrees with, as she believes that “anybody who writes about that should be fired.”

From the articles analyzed, no player and/or administrator was interviewed in lifestyle stories in both publications (most of the lifestyle stories ideas are taken from social media posts). However, Ramathula adds that the players should be encouraged not to participate in such coverage when invited for interviews.

Table 12: Top five authors of articles published in KickOff and Soccer Laduma between 2019 and 2023.

Authors/Byline	No. Articles	Publication
Soccer Laduma	43	Soccer Laduma
Lukhanyo Mtuta	26	KickOff
Lusanda Lithuli	17	Soccer Laduma
KickOff/Staff Reporter	16	KickOff
SL Writer	11	Soccer Laduma

It is worth noting that from the 228 articles published by both publications, the author with the most articles was a generic byline “Soccer Laduma” (=43) as depicted in Table 12. The other generic bylines saw “KickOff/Staff Reporter” and “SL [Soccer Laduma] Writer” authoring =16 and =11 articles respectively. *KickOff* journalist, Lukhanyo Mtuta authored =26 articles, while Lusanda Lithuli authored =17 for *Soccer Laduma* to close off the top five authors with most authored articles in the period of analysis. Other journalists authored less than =5 articles each in the period of analysis.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Key Findings

This study set out to explore the coverage of domestic women's football in *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma* in terms of the quantity, frequency, and how women footballers were portrayed in the coverage over a five-year period of analysis.

The following key findings revealed in the previous chapter are addressed in detail. The findings are compared with previous research findings to not only explain whether there are consistencies and differences but, most importantly, whether the findings answer this study's research questions and objectives.

6.1.1 Increase in Coverage of Women's Football

The study revealed a slight increase in media coverage of domestic women's football in *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma* over the period of analysis. Both publications published a combined =228 articles. Despite the national lockdown which disrupted media coverage in 2019 and 2020, the findings show that both publications had a year-to-year increase in the quantity of articles in the subsequent years.

A general observation suggests that coverage of domestic women's football league in both publications would continue to increase on a year-to-year basis, unless there are unforeseen disruptions as seen with Covid-19.

6.1.2 International Competitions get Increased Coverage

The study has shown that Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies received the highest number of articles in *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma*. The team received a combined =89 articles. Most of the articles Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies recorded were from their participation in the CAF Women's Champions League competition, which is an international competition contested by teams across the African continent. This study has shown that in November 2021, 2022, and 2023, which was a period when Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies participated in the CAF Women's Champions League competition, both publications recorded combined =49 articles, which were mostly match reports covering the team. As revealed by Köhler that the team gets more coverage in this competition because it is an "elevated competition".

This finding suggests that international competitions such as CAF Women's Champions League gets more coverage from *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma*. This finding is consistent with previous literature which found that women's football enjoys coverage during major international tournaments (Bruce 2017, Bell & Coche 2018, Petty & Pope 2019, Leflay & Biscumb 2021). Rowe & Silva (2023:731) argue that while international tournaments always "gets considerable media coverage" that attention hardly extends to the domestic leagues. This study has shown that this is also the case in South Africa.

A general observation based on the above-mentioned finding is that for teams to receive increased media coverage, they must be successful in the domestic league (winning the domestic league qualifies a team into CAF Champions League) and play in CAF Champions League as evidenced by Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies team.

6.1.3 Inconsistent Coverage of Domestic Women's Football

While the findings revealed an increased coverage of women's football league over the period of study, the coverage is inconsistent from month-to-month basis. Between 2019 and 2023 in both publications, there was inconsistency in terms of the number of articles published on a month-to-month basis. This study showed that there were months when both publications recorded zero articles. Between 2019 and 2023, *KickOff* failed to register a minimum of one article each month every year, while *Soccer Laduma* only registered a minimum of one article per month in 2023.

While the lower number of articles recorded in 2019 and 2020 by *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma* could be attributed to Covid-19 disruptions, where the media could not cover the games because of the sporting activities suspended in March 2020 (Soccer Laduma 2020), the study has shown that the trend of inconsistent coverage continued even post the Covid-19 disruption.

6.1.4 Successful Teams Get More Coverage

The study has shown that successful teams get increased media coverage than teams with less success. Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies received the highest number of articles (=89) in both publications than any other team in the domestic league. JVW and Royal AM were the second and third most covered teams, with =25 and =16 articles

respectively. Gleeson (*KickOff*) and Kohler (*Soccer Laduma*) admitted that Sundowns Ladies' success is the reason why it was covered more than any other teams.

Sundowns Ladies team won the domestic league titles between 2019 and 2023. The team was the only South African team that participated in the CAF Women's Champions League from its inception in 2021 until 2023. This is on top of having won the CAF Women's Champions League twice in 2021 and 2023 (BBC 2023), a feat that is yet to be achieved by any men's or women's teams in South Africa as of January 2025.

This finding is consistent with previous literature which found that women's sports and women athletes who are successful both on-the-field and off-the-field attract more media coverage (Cooky et al., 2015, Women in Sport 2018). Cooky et al. (2015: 271) found that women's sports only receive media coverage "only if and when they are winners."

The general observation is that while teams that enjoy more success receive more media coverage as has been shown in this study and other previous studies, the other teams without and/or with less success can use social media platforms to attract not only the media interest but also the public. Ramathula recommended that teams should utilize digital media platforms such as social media, podcasts, and streaming channels to attract media attention.

Bruce & Hardin (2014) suggested that access to digital media platforms such as social media, websites, and blogs provide a space for women's sport and women athletes to promote their sport, whenever mainstream media decides not to cover them. There are currently some teams in the Hollywoodbets Super League, who are already utilizing their Facebook and X platforms to broadcast their matches live. Other teams should also follow such trends.

6.1.5 Same Journalists Covering Women's Football

The study has shown that it is the same journalists who authored most of the articles. *Soccer Laduma* journalist Lusanda Lithuli authored =37 out of =136 articles published in the period of analysis (see Table 12). A generic byline "Soccer Laduma" authored most of the articles in the period of analysis.

It was the same with *KickOff*, with journalist Lukhanyo Mtuta authoring =26 out of =92 articles. Other articles were authored by generic bylines such as “KickOff Reporter”, “KickOff Writer”, “KickOff staff reporter”. Several other journalists authored a minimum of five articles each.

This finding is consistent with the study by Guyot et al. (2024), who examined the internal and external factors that hinder Swiss sports journalists to cover women’s football. They found that the passion that most journalists have for men’s sports leads them to having little interest in covering women’s football. This applies both to male and female journalists, because for many journalists covering men’s football comes with “symmetrical benefits” (Guyot et al., 2024:1059).

The general observation is that the coverage of women’s football would require a different shift of culture in newsrooms where women’s football becomes a priority for all journalists and not just a few. The finding from Köhler that *Soccer Laduma* would not prioritize women’s football and that “there is no designated journalist for it” is evident in the articles produced. For publications which solely focus on football-only, even if there is a “small staff”, one can still factor women’s football in the daily coverage if it is given a priority by every staff member.

6.1.6 “Beauty”, “Saucy”, and “Hot”

One of the objectives of this study was to examine the portrayal of women footballers in the coverage through searching for feminizing adjectives in the articles. The study found how feminizing adjectives such as “saucy” and “hot” are still used to describe and portray women footballers based on their physical beauty and fashion sense. Although this was identified less often in the articles, however, this indicates that women footballers are still described in feminizing languages.

The use of feminizing adjectives is consistent with previous literature from the likes of Trolan (2002) Pfister (2015), Guyot et al. (2024) and early literature findings by likes of Kane & Parks (1992) and Koivula (1999), who all found that the media portray women athletes in languages that reduce them first as being women rather than athletes.

6.1.7 Not Only Feminizing

The study found how these publications frequently focused on lifestyle and personal issues of the players. These were articles which included the players' buying new cars, their dating, social, and marriage lives, which has nothing to do with their on-the-field performances and achievements. The study has shown that =48 articles in both publications had a personal stories theme, which mainly focused on the personal and social lives of the players.

This finding is consistent with early findings by Duncan & Hasbrook (1988), Koivula (1999), Serra & Burnett (2007), Cooky et al., (2015), Bruce (2017), who all found that when the media decides to cover women's athletes, the focus tends to be on their personal lives.

The general observation from this finding is that the media covers non-sport-related personal and lifestyles of women footballers not only for pageviews, as suggested by Köhler, but to reduce women footballers as "women first" before they can be considered as athletes. While male athletes are also the subjects of extensive lifestyle coverage, this tends to differ from the framing of female athletes as their successes on the field is largely covered before their masculinity (Trolan 2013).

6.2 What the Media Can Do to Increase Coverage of Women's Football

Public support and growth of women's football in South Africa depends on the media's coverage, because it is the media that teaches people what is worthy of their attention (Bruce 2017). Gleeson recommended that smart editors should include the coverage of women's football as part of their portfolio.

It is crucial to have journalists, editors, and media houses who take the responsibility of ensuring gender balance in sport coverage (Women in Sport 2018). The following are ways in which the media, journalists, editors, and media owners can provide increased, consistent, and positive portrayal of women footballers.

First, just like how journalists are given targets to reach certain pageviews as alluded by Köhler, editors should also demand that journalists reach a certain target on women's football stories on a weekly basis. As pointed out by Mokwena, newsrooms should adopt a culture where it is compulsory to publish two or more women's football stories weekly. This would result in more stories on women's football being covered in a month.

Secondly, besides enforcing targets on women's football stories for journalists, media owners should adopt gender equality policies in the newsrooms, where journalists and editors are encouraged to factor in gender equality in sports coverage. This could encourage journalists to go beyond the enforced targets for women's football stories, because they would see it as a moral obligation to cover women's football equally as men's football. Educating journalists and editors on gender equality could also encourage them to factor that in their coverage of sports (Women in Sport 2018).

Thirdly, there is no doubt that some newsrooms have small staff complements due to financial strains that have forced retrenchments as evidenced with the downsizing of *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* journalists in 2024 (Maggs 2024). However, even with small staff complements, newsrooms should have designated journalists who cover women's sport, including women's football. This could potentially see more women's football stories covered on a day-to-day basis because there would be someone in the newsrooms who is specifically tasked to cover women's football. If patriarchal and sexist attitudes persist in the newsrooms where journalists still see women's football as not being a real sport, boring, and unattractive as argued by Allison (2018), then women's football in South Africa would still receive less coverage than men's football. It would, therefore, also continue to be less attractive to financial investors who need to see more coverage to invest in the sport. That is, for as long journalists do not present equitable quantity of coverage between men's and women's football as recommended by Cooky et al. (2015) because of how they put high value on men's game over the women's, then it becomes clear that women's football in South Africa would never attract the same level of financial investment, sponsorship, broadcasting revenue, high salaries, and television viewership and live attendance that men's sports continue to enjoy.

Lastly, with women's sport, including women's football continuing to attract more live audiences, journalists need to create different content from the stadiums that would ignite the public's interest in women's sport (Women's in Sport 2018). For example, journalists can report about the amazing skills of women footballers, the entertaining part of the women's game, and the excitement of the crowds at the stadiums, etc. This could help to not only create an interest from different audiences but could also limit the media from reporting about the lifestyles and personal stories of women's athletes as shown in this study. Most importantly, if there are more fans watching women's

football in stadiums and on television, more financial investment on women's football and women footballers from corporate and sponsorship would follow because visibility and investment goes hand in hand in sports (SAFA 2021). This has always been the funding model of sports as evidenced with men's sports and individual athletes over the years (Baker et al., 2019).

6.3 Limitations

The study's findings need to be understood within the limitations of this study. The study has two limitations. First, this study examined the coverage of women's football in *KickOff* and *Soccer Laduma*. Therefore, the findings that the media's coverage of domestic women's football has increased between 2019 and 2023, is thus only limited to these publications and cannot be generalized to the wider football-only sport media in South Africa or the media in general.

The second limitation is based on the chosen period of analysis and the use of former journalists and editors. This study analyzed the media's coverage of women's football during Covid-19 pandemic.

However, with the emergence of more football-only publications, future researchers can examine whether or not media coverage of domestic women's football in South Africa is increasing year-to-year using a different sample and period of analysis.

The findings provided answers to the study's three research questions in terms of (1) the quantity of articles produced by *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* on the domestic women's league between 2019 and 2023, (2) how women footballers in the domestic league were portrayed in the coverage and (3) how the coverage of women's football changed in terms of the frequency of articles in *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff* between 2019 and 2023.

Bibliography

Abrahams, C. (2021). Zahraa Bodiat welcomes increased media coverage. Gsport, 14 December 2021.

Available from:

<https://gsport.co.za/zahraa-bodiat-welcomes-increased-media-coverage/>

Adspace24. (2024). Soccer Laduma online. Adspace24. (no date) 2024.

Available from:

<https://www.adspace24.co.za/misc/publication?brand=soccerladuma-online&key=E7A995AA19BE5C2B211E84D75DF348EB#demo>

Adspace24. (2024). KickOff online. Adspace24. (no date) 2024.

Available from:

<https://www.adspace24.co.za/misc/publication?brand=kick-off-online&key=21AF3F04DBBEDBE1A479657937074C2B#demo>

Allison, R. (2018). *Kicking center: Gender and the selling of women's professional soccer*. Rutgers University Press.

Amis, J. (2005). Interviewing for case study research. *Qualitative methods in sports studies*, 104-138.

Baker, C., Seymour, E., & Zimbalist, A. (2019). Female athletes are undervalued, in both money and media terms. *Forbes*, 10 April 2019.

Available from:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewzimbalist/2019/04/10/female-athletes-are-undervalued-in-both-money-and-media-terms/>

BBC, 2023. Nigeria's path to the Women's World Cup. BBC, 5 August 2023.

Available from:

<https://www.bbc.com/audio/play/w3ct4sj4>

BBC, 2019. Women's World Cup 2019: Fifa reports record-breaking viewing figures. BBC, 18 October 2019.

Available from:

<https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/50096999>

Bell, T. R., & Coche, R. (2018). High power kick: Content analysis of the USWNT 2015 world cup victory on American front pages. *Communication & Sport*, 6(6), 745-761.

Bertold, I. (2024). The power of media coverage in women's sports: why it matters more than ever. Concord Pacific Racing, 20 September 2024.

Available from:

<https://www.concordpacificracing.com/blog/the-power-of-media-coverage-in-womens-sports-why-it-matters-more-than-ever>

Black, J., & Fielding-Lloyd, B. (2019). Re-establishing the 'outsiders': English press coverage of the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 54(3), 282-301.

Burch, L. M., Billings, A. C., & Zimmerman, M. H. (2018). Comparing American soccer dialogues: Social media commentary surrounding the 2014 US men's and 2015 US women's World Cup teams. *Sport in Society*, 21(7), 1047-1062.

Burnett, C. (2018). Politics of gender (in) equality relating to sport and development within a sub-Saharan context of poverty. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 3, 27.

Burroughs, B., Malik, M., Johnson, R., & Romney, M. (2022). Content analysis of biological sex-specific media coverage of sport: The case of National Collegiate Athletic Association athletic department home webpages. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 57(5), 673-692.

Bro, P. (2016). Gatekeeping and Agenda-Setting: Extinct or extant in a digital era?. In *The Routledge companion to digital journalism studies* (pp. 75-84). Routledge.

Bruce, T. (2017). Sportswomen in the Media: An Analysis of International Trends in Olympic and Everyday Coverage. *Journal of Sport and Gender Studies*, 15, 24-39.

Bruce, T., Hovden, J., & Markula, P. (2010). *Sportswomen at the Olympics: A global content analysis of newspaper coverage*. Brill.

Clargo, B., & Skey, M. (2025). 'Forgive me for saying, but rugby is not a game for women:'an exploration of contemporary attitudes towards women's rugby union. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 22(1), 52-66.

Cavalier, E. S., & Newhall, K. E. (2018). 'Stick to Soccer:'fan reaction and inclusion rhetoric on social media. *Sport in Society*, 21(7), 1078-1095.

Coche, R. (2022). A new era? How the European ESPN covered the 2019 Women's World Cup online. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 57(1), 73-91.

Commission for Gender Equality. (2024). Gender Inequality in Sport: Insights into the Women's National Soccer Team – Banyana Banyana. Commission for Gender Equality South Africa, 1-42.

Cooky, C., Messner, M. A., & Musto, M. (2015). "It's dude time!" A quarter century of excluding women's sports in televised news and highlight shows. *Communication & sport*, 3(3), 261-287.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2014). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Sage publications.

Creedon, P. (2014). Women, social media, and sport: Global digital communication weaves a web. *Television & New Media*, 15(8), 711-716.

Darwin, I. (2023). Media Coverage For Women's Sports Has Nearly Tripled In Five Years, According To New Research. Forbes, 31 October 2023.

Available from:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/lindseyedarvin/2023/10/31/media-coverage-for-womens-sports-has-nearly-tripled-in-five-years-according-to-new-research/>

Delorme, N., & Pressland, A. (2016). The visibility of female athletes: A comparison of the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic Games coverage in French, British, and Spanish newspapers. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 33(4), 317-333.

Devitt, J. (2002). Framing gender on the campaign trail: Female gubernatorial candidates and the press. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 79(2), 445-463.

Dietl, H., Özdemir, A., & Rendall, A. (2020). The role of facial attractiveness in tennis TV-viewership. *Sport management review*, 23(3), 521-535.

Duncan, M. C., & Hasbrook, C. A. (1988). Denial of power in televised women's sports. *Sociology of sport journal*, 5(1), 1-21.

Domeneghetti, R. (Ed.). (2021). *Insights on reporting sports in the digital age: ethical and practical considerations in a changing media landscape*. Routledge.

English, C. (2017). Toward sport reform: hegemonic masculinity and reconceptualizing competition. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 44(2), 183-198.

Erasmus, J. (2009). Women's football league kicks off. Brand South Africa, 20 February 2009.

Available from:

<https://brandsouthafrica.com/112016/uncategorised/absa-womens-football-league-190209/>

European Parliament. (2024). International Women's Day 2024. Women in Sport. European Parliament, [no day] February 2024.

Available from;

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/760226/IPOL_BRI\(2024\)760226_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/760226/IPOL_BRI(2024)760226_EN.pdf)

Gasparetto, T., Abgaryan, E., & Batargaleev, S. (2024). Domestic vs. foreign football matches: are viewers interested in the same features?. *Journal of Media Economics*, 36(3-4), 74-92.

Glass, A. (2019). FIFA Women's World Cup Breaks Viewership Records. Forbes, 21 October 2019.

Available from:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/alanaglass/2019/10/21/fifa-womens-world-cup-breaks-viewership-records/>

Global Sports Archive. (2022). Hollywoodbets Super League. Global Sports Archive, 26 November 2022.

Available from:

<https://globalsportsarchive.com/competition/soccer/hollywoodbets-super-league-2022/regular-season/78875/>

Global Sports Archive. (2023). Hollywoodbets Super League. Global Sports Archive, [no date] 2023.

Available from:

<https://globalsportsarchive.com/competition/soccer/hollywoodbets-super-league-2023/regular-season/78876/>

Gillham, B. (2005). *Research interviewing: A practical guide*. Open University Press.

Godoy-Pressland, A. (2014). 'Nothing to report': a semi-longitudinal investigation of the print media coverage of sportswomen in British Sunday newspapers. *Media, Culture & Society*, 36(5), 595-609.

Gomez-Gonzalez, C., Dietl, H., Berri, D., & Nessler, C. (2024). Gender information and perceived quality: An experiment with professional soccer performance. *Sport management review*, 27(1), 45-66.

Goslin, A. E. (2008). Print media coverage of women's sport in South Africa. *African Journal for Physical, health education, recreation and Dance*, 14(3), 299-309.

Griffin, T. (2022). The Women's Africa Cup of Nations was thrilling but hard to find on TV and online. AndScape, 15 August 2022.

Available from:

<https://andscape.com/features/the-womens-africa-cup-of-nations-was-thrilling-but-hard-to-find-on-tv-and-online/>

Guyot, R., Ohl, F., & Schoch, L. (2024). Symbolic power of sports journalists as challenged by external recognition of women's sports performance. *Media, Culture & Society*, 46(5), 1045-1063.

Engh, M. H. (2010). The battle for centre stage: Women's football in South Africa. *Agenda*, 24(85), 11-20.

Engh, M. H. (2010). Football, empowerment and gender equality: An exploration of elite-level women's football in South Africa. *Gender, Sport and Development in Africa: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Patterns of Representations and Marginalization*, 63-78.

Engh, M. H. (2013). Tackling femininity: The heterosexual paradigm and women's soccer in South Africa. In *Sport Past and Present in South Africa* (pp. 136-151). Routledge.

Hing, N., Rockloff, M., & Browne, M. (2023). A bad bet for sports fans: the case for ending the "gamblification" of sport. *Sport Management Review*, 26(5), 788-812.

Idiski Times. (2021). Multi-Million Prize Money For Women's League Confirmed. Idiski Times, 18 May 2021.

Available from:

<https://www.idiskitimes.co.za/local/multi-million-prize-money-for-womens-league-confirmed/>

Inside FIFA. (2012). Women's football, a year on from Germany 2011. Inside FIFA, 17 July 2012.

Available from:

<https://inside.fifa.com/tournaments/womens/womensworldcup/canada2015/news/women-football-year-from-germany-2011-1664554>

Inside FIFA. (2023). FIFA Women's World Cup 2023: Beyond Greatness. Inside FIFA.

Available from:

<https://inside.fifa.com/fifa-womens-world-cup-2023-tournament-recap#commercial>

Islam, A. (2023). Netball World Cup 2023 doubles linear TV audience to 14.9m. SportsPro, 8 December 2023.

Available from:

<https://www.sportspro.com/news/netball-world-cup-2023-tv-audience-sponsorship-value/>

Iyengar, S. (1996). Framing responsibility for political issues. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 546(1), 59-70.

Johnson, M. P., Aregbeyen, O., & Emmanuel, B. D. (2024). Influence of Socioeconomic Factors on Wage Remuneration in Liberia Women Football. *African Journal of Sports and Physical Sciences*, 2(1), 96-114.

Jonchie. (2012). More Varsity sports in South Africa heading for television. Insurance Chat, 15 November 2012.

Available from:

<https://www.insurancechat.co.za/2012-11/more-varsity-sports-in-south-africa-heading-for-television/#:~:text=All%20games%20will%20be%20broadcast,.facebook.com/varsitysportssa>

Kane, M. J., & Parks, J. B. (1992). The social construction of gender difference and hierarchy in sport journalism—Few new twists on very old themes. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 1(1), 49-83.

Khatija, B., Nkosini, N., Duane, D. O., & Zarina, B. (2024). Migration Trends of Female African Footballers who Competed at the Women's African Cup of Nations over the Last Decade (2012-2022). *African Journal of Gender, Society & Development*, 13(1), 27.

Kiefer, S., & Scharfenkamp, K. (2018). Does online media put beauty before performance? The impact of physical attractiveness on the popularity of female tennis players in online media. *International Journal of Sport Finance*, 13(2), 156-182.

Kian, E. M. (2007). Gender in sports writing by the print media: An exploratory examination of writers' experiences and attitudes. *The SMART journal*, 4(1), 5-26.

Kian, E. M., Vincent, J., & Mondello, M. (2008). Masculine hegemonic hoops: An analysis of media coverage of March Madness. *Sociology of sport journal*, 25(2), 223-242.

Kian, E. M., & Hardin, M. (2009). Framing of sport coverage based on the sex of sports writers: Female journalists counter the traditional gendering of media coverage. *International journal of sport communication*, 2(2), 185-204.

Klate, C. (2024). PSL confirm Betway as new sponsors for flagship league. SABC Sport, 24 July 2024.

Available from:

<https://www.sabc sport.com/soccer/news/psl-confirm-betway-as-new-sponsors-for-flagship-league>

Klein, B. (2016). #Newsmaker: Vuyani Joni, editor of Soccer Laduma. BizCommunity, 21 November 2016.

Available from:

<https://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/196/90/154134.html>

Koivula, N. (1999). Gender stereotyping in televised media sport coverage. *Sex roles*, 41(7), 589-604.

Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage publications.

Leflay, K., & Biscomb, K. (2021). England's summer of sport 2017. *Sport in Society*, 24(9), 1633-1648.

Lewis, N., & Weaver, A. J. (2015). More than a game: Sports media framing effects on attitudes, intentions, and enjoyment. *Communication & Sport*, 3(2), 219-242.

Leshaba, S., & Selikane, T. (2024). Where to next for women's sports? Bizcommunity, 19 January 2024.

Available from:

<https://www.bizcommunity.com/article/where-to-next-for-womens-sports-567100a>

Lind, R. A., & Salo, C. (2002). The framing of feminists and feminism in news and public affairs programs in US electronic media. *Journal of Communication*, 52(1), 211-228.

Lonwabo, M. (2022). Record Breaking Attendance at AWCON 2022. Gsport, 20 July 2022.

Available from:

<https://gsport.co.za/record-breaking-attendance-at-awcon-2022/>

Luthuli, L. (2023). From Royal Wives To Netflix Stars, Here Are The Fab' 4 DStv Prem WAGs. Soccer Laduma, 26 January 2023.

Available from:

<https://www.sn124.com/soccerladuma/fan-park/dstv-premierships-most-glamorous-wags-cindy-mahlangu-sphelele-makhunga-tumi-majoro-tamia-mpisane-20230126>

Macnamara. J. (2018). Content analysis. *Mediated Communication*, de Gruyter Mouton, Berlin, Germany and Boston. 191–212.

Madlala, RD. (2022). Disappointed Ellis Hopes For Bigger Turnout In Durban. Idiski Times, 5 September 2022.

Available from:

<https://www.idiskitimes.co.za/latest-news/disappointed-ellis-hopes-for-bigger-turnout-in-durban/>

Maggs, J. (2024). Media24 halts job cuts and newspaper closures. Moneyweb, 12 July 2024.

Available from:

<https://www.moneyweb.co.za/news/south-africa/media24-halts-job-cuts-and-newspaper-closures/>

Manaleng, P. (2024). Futballing Girls NPO celebrates and builds up women in sports. EWN, 06 March 2024.

Available from:

<https://www.ewn.co.za/2024/03/06/futballing-girls-npo-celebrates-and-builds-up-women-in-sports>

Marketing Spread. (2024). Historic run of Proteas Women's cricket team shines with SuperSport viewers. Marketing Spread, 13 November 2024.

Available from:

<https://marketingspread.co.za/2024/11/13/historic-run-of-proteas-womens-cricket-team-shines-with-supersport-viewers/>

Mavhungu, F. (2023). Maindis to face Amatuks' Ladies. Limpopo Mirror, 16 November 2021.

Available from:

<https://www.limpopomirror.co.za/articles/sport/59374/2023-11-16/maindis-to-face-amatuks-ladies>

McCombs, M. (2002, June). The agenda-setting role of the mass media in the shaping of public opinion. In *Mass Media Economics 2002 Conference, London School of Economics*: <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/extra/McCombs.pdf>.

McCombs, M., & Reynolds, A. (2002). News influence on our pictures of the world. In *Media effects* (pp. 11-28). Routledge.

McCombs, M. E., Shaw, D. L., & Weaver, D. H. (2018). New directions in agenda-setting theory and research. In *Advances in foundational mass communication theories* (pp. 131-152). Routledge.

Molefe, M. (2024). PSL chairman Irvin Khoza confirms Betway Premiership prize money.

Available from:

<https://www.sabcsport.com/soccer/news/psl-chairman-irvin-khoza-confirms-betway-premiership-prize-money#:~:text=Four%20months%20since%20the%20launch,R20%2Dmillion%20to%20the%20champions>

Mokwena, B. (2022). Women's sport in SA aims high, but needs a more level playing field to get there. TimesLive, 24 August 2022.

Available from:

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times-daily/sport/2022-08-24-womens-sport-in-sa-aims-high-but-needs-a-more-level-playing-field-to-get-there/>

Mpungose, M. (2023). Preview: 2023 Hollywoodbets Super League – Round 4. Hollywoodbets, 3 March 2023.

Available from:

<https://blog.hollywoodbets.net/soccer/hollywoodbets-super-league/preview-2023-hollywoodbets-super-league-round-4/>

Muller, A. (2015). Soccer: Women's World Cup smashes viewership figures in United States. Daily Maverick, 25 June 2015.

Available from:

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-06-25-soccer-womens-world-cup-smashes-viewership-figures-in-united-states/>

Neuendorf, K. A. (2017). *The content analysis guidebook*. sage.

News24. (2001). Sanlam promotes women's soccer. News24, 05 September 2001.

Available from:

<https://www.news24.com/news24/sanlam-promotes-womens-soccer-20010905>

Nicolson, G. (2020). Government needs to ditch the paternalistic approach to prevent flouting of Covid-19 regulations. Daily Maverick, 01 June 2020.

Available from:

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-07-01-government-needs-to-ditch-the-paternalistic-approach-to-prevent-flouting-of-covid-19-regulations/>

Ogunniyi, C. (2016). Perceptions of the African Women's Championships: female footballers as anomalies. In *Women's Sport in Africa* (pp. 89-101). Routledge.

Onwumechili, C. (2021). Media framing of women's football in Nigeria from the early twentieth century to present. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 38(12), 1249-1268.

Parry, K. D., Clarkson, B. G., Bowes, A., Grubb, L., & Rowe, D. (2023). Media framing of women's football during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Communication & Sport*, 11(3), 592-615.

Pedersen, P. M. (2002). Examining equity in newspaper photographs: A content analysis of the print media photographic coverage of interscholastic athletics. *International Review for the sociology of sport*, 37(3-4), 303-318.

Peeters, R., & Elling, A. (2015). The coming of age of women's football in the Dutch sports media, 1995–2013. *Soccer & Society*, 16(5-6), 620-638.

Pelak, C. F. (2013). Women and gender in South African soccer: A brief history. In *South Africa and the Global Game* (pp. 63-78). Routledge.

Petty, K., & Pope, S. (2019). A new age for media coverage of women's sport? An analysis of English media coverage of the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup. *Sociology*, 53(3), 486-502.

Pfister, G. (2018). Sportswomen in the German popular press: A study carried out in the context of the 2011 Women's Football World Cup. In *Mediated football* (pp. 57-74). Routledge.

Pope, S. (2013). "The Love of my Life" the meaning and importance of sport for female fans. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 37(2), 176-195.

Posetti, J. & Reid, J. (2024). 'Sexualised, Silenced and Labelled Satan' — horrific levels of online violence targeting women journalists. Daily Maverick, 22 May 2024.

Available from:

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-05-22-sexualised-silenced-and-labelled-satan-horrific-levels-of-online-violence-targeting-women-journalists/>

Premier Soccer League (2024). SuperSport and SABC agree terms on sub-licensing of PSL broadcast rights. Premier Soccer League, 16 September 2024.

Available from:

<https://www.psl.co.za/news/article/5607834-supersport-and-sabc-agree-terms-on-su>

Ravel, B., & Gareau, M. (2016). 'French football needs more women like Adriana'? Examining the media coverage of France's women's national football team for the 2011 World Cup and the 2012 Olympic Games. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 51(7), 833-847.

Reuters. (2023). Women's World Cup final draws record TV figures in Spain, England. Reuters, 22 August 2023.

Available from:

<https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/womens-world-cup-final-draws-record-tv-figures-spain-england-2023-08-21/>

Rogers, E. M., & Dearing, J. W. (2012). Agenda-setting research: Where has it been, where is it going?. In *Communication yearbook 11* (pp. 555-594). Routledge.

Rogers, D. (2022). Where to now for women's sport? Sports Industry Group, 18 September 2022.

Available from:

<https://sportindustryawards.co.za/where-to-now-for-womens-sport/>

Russell, F. M., Hendricks, M. A., Choi, H., & Stephens, E. C. (2015). Who sets the news agenda on Twitter? Journalists' posts during the 2013 US government shutdown. *Digital Journalism*, 3(6), 925-943.

Rowe, D., & Silva, K. K. P. (2023). Women's sport and media: a call to critical arms. *Feminist Media Studies*, 23(2), 729-733.

Saavedra, M. (2003). Football feminine—development of the African game: Senegal, Nigeria and South Africa. *Soccer & Society*, 4(2-3), 225-253.

SABC Sport. (2025). SuperSport Schools and SABC Sport partner to expand school sports coverage. SABC Sport, 6 February 2025.

Available from:

<https://www.sabcsport.com/news/supersport-schools-and-sabc-sport-partner-to-expand-school-sports-coverage>

SAFA. (2020). Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies win SNWL title as inaugural season is called off. SAFA, 23 June 2020.

Available from:

<https://safa.net/2020/06/23/mamelodi-sundowns-ladies-celebrate-2020-snl-title-as-inaugural-season-is-called-off/>

SAFA. (2021). 121 goals scored in first 5 weeks of Hollywoodbets Super League. SAFA, 18 May 2021.

Available from:

<https://safa.net/2021/05/18/massive-boost-for-womens-soccer-with-hollywoodbets-super-league/>

SAFA. (2021). Massive Boost for Women's Soccer with Hollywoodbets Super League. SAFA, 18 May 2021.

Available from:

<https://safa.net/2021/05/18/massive-boost-for-womens-soccer-with-hollywoodbets-super-league/>

SAFA. (2025). SAFA and Hollywoodbets reaffirm their commitment to Women's Football with partnership renewal. SAFA, 9 May 2025.

Available from:

<https://safa.net/2025/05/09/safa-and-hollywoodbets-reaffirm-their-commitment-to-womens-football-with-partnership-renewal/>

SAFA. (2021). Champions Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies conclude Hollywoodbets Super League season in style. SAFA, 5 December 2021.

Available from:

<https://safa.net/2021/12/05/champions-mamelodi-sundowns-ladies-conclude-hollywoodbets-super-league-season-in-style/>

SAFA. (2022). Sundowns Ladies officially crowned as the 2022 Hollywoodbets Super League Champions. SAFA, 27 November 2022.

Available from:

<https://safa.net/2022/11/27/sundowns-ladies-officially-crowned-as-the-2022-hollywoodbets-super-league-champions-2/>

SAFA. (2024). Week 2 of Hollywoodbets Super League to host eight exciting matches. SAFA, 8 March 2024.

Available from:

<https://safa.net/2024/03/08/week-2-of-hollywoodbets-super-league-to-host-eight-exciting-matches/>

Santonniccolo, F., Trombetta, T., Paradiso, M. N., & Rollè, L. (2023). Gender and media representations: A review of the literature on gender stereotypes, objectification and sexualization. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 20(10), 5770.

Sarinas, J. (2010). 2010 FIFA World Cup: Bafana Bafana Face Uphill Climb to Reach Knock-Out Stages. Bleacher Report, 2 June 2010.

Available from:

<https://bleacherreport.com/articles/399932-bafana-bafana-face-uphill-climb-to-reach-knock-out-stages>

Sasol in Sport. (2024). Heartbreak for Banyana Banyana as COSAFA Cup Dreams Fade in Penalty Shootout Against Zambia. Sasol in Sport, 4 November 2024.

Available from:

<https://www.sasolinsport.co.za/heartbreak-for-banyana-banyana-as-cosafa-cup-dreams-fade-in-penalty-shootout-against-zambia/>

Sasol. (2021). Sasol and SAFA renew women's football partnership. Sasol, 22 October 2021.

Available from:

<https://www.sasol.com/media-centre/media-releases/sasol-and-safa-renew-womens-football-partnership>

Scheufele, D. A., & Tewksbury, D. (2007). Framing, agenda setting, and priming: The evolution of three media effects models. *Journal of communication*, 57(1), 9-20.

Soccer, News and Lifestyle 24. (2023). SNL24.com = Soccer, News and Lifestyle 24 hours a day. Soccer, News and Lifestyle 24, 17 January 2023.

Available from:

<https://www.snl24.com/snl24/about/snl24com-soccer-news-and-lifestyle-24-hours-a-day-20230117>

Serra, P., & Burnett, C. (2007). The construction and deconstruction of gender through sport reporting in selected South African newspapers. *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation*, 29(1), 147-158.

Sibembe, Y. (2021). New sponsorship deal another giant stride in women's football in SA. Daily Maverick, 19 May 2021.

Available from:

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-05-19-new-sponsorship-deal-another-giant-stride-for-womens-football-in-sa/>

Sibembe, Y. (2019). National women's football league takes flight under stormy conditions. Daily Maverick, 23 August 2019.

Available from:

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-08-23-national-womens-football-league-takes-flight-under-stormy-conditions/>

Smith, L. R., & Pegoraro, A. (2020). Media framing of Larry Nassar and the USA gymnastics child sex abuse scandal. *Journal of child sexual abuse*, 29(4), 373-392.

Strydom, M. (2022). Iconic SA football publication Kick Off magazine shuts down, TimeLives, 21 August 2022.

Available from:

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/sport/soccer/2022-08-21-iconic-sa-football-publication-kick-off-magazine-shuts-down/>

Soccer Laduma. (2021). SAFA announce new sponsor for national women's soccer league. Soccer Laduma, 16 May 2021.

Available from:

<https://www.sn124.com/soccerladuma/local/safa-announce-new-sponsor-for-national-womens-soccer-league-20210516>

South African History Online (2011). Football in South Africa Timeline 1862-2012. South African History Online, 03 April 2011.

Available from:

<https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/football-south-africa-timeline-1862-2012>

SuperSport. (2024). Historic run of Proteas Women's cricket team shines with SuperSport viewers. *SuperSport*, 14 November 2024.

Available from:

<https://supersport.com/cricket/icc-womens-t20-world-cup-2024/news/e2099204-7e77-4898-b715-a2985b30a898/historic-run-of-proteas-women-s-cricket-team-shines-with-supersport-viewers>

Terkildsen, N., & Schnell, F. (1997). How media frames move public opinion: An analysis of the women's movement. *Political research quarterly*, 50(4), 879-900.

The Associated Press. (2015). FIFA reports record viewership for Women's World Cup. The Associated Press, 18 December 2015.

Available from:

<https://apnews.com/fifa-reports-record-viewership-for-womens-world-cup-8acddb057298432f81a710b0d4f3743a>

Trolan, E. J. (2013). The impact of the media on gender inequality within sport. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 91, 215-227.

Trunečka, O. (2022). Sports news, commentary and interviews, from the other side: Journalists seen through the eyes of athletes. *Communication & Sport*, 10(3), 477-492.

Tshwaku, K. (2023). Banyana Banyana make history by qualifying for World Cup knock-outs. News24, 02 August 2023.

Available from:

<https://www.news24.com/sport/soccer/worldcup/never-say-die-banyana-banyana-make-history-by-qualifying-for-world-cup-knockouts-20230802>

Vedan, E. (2022). Hildah Magaia's brace earns Banyana Banyana first ever Wafcon title. IOL, 24 July 2022.

Available from:

<https://www.iol.co.za/sport/soccer/banyana/hildah-magaias-brace-earns-banyana-banyana-first-ever-wafcon-title-c392d8f6-b626-4915-bb41-7fad3d5636ab>

Vincent, J. (2004). Game, sex, and match: The construction of gender in British newspaper coverage of the 2000 Wimbledon Championships. *Sociology of sport journal*, 21(4), 435-456.

Wanta, W., Golan, G., & Lee, C. (2004). Agenda setting and international news: Media influence on public perceptions of foreign nations. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81(2), 364-377.

Watson, K. (2021). LGBT+ History Month: Eudy Simelane - the international footballer murdered for being gay. BBC, 12 February 2021.

Available from:

<https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/55950480>

Wensing, E. H., & Bruce, T. (2003). Bending the rules: Media representations of gender during an international sporting event. *International review for the sociology of sport*, 38(4), 387-396.

Women in Sport. (2018). Where are all the women: shining a light on the visibility of the women's sport in the media. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*. Vol 10, no 1, 1-24.

Varsity Cup. (2025). Maroon Machine ready to dig deep in FNB Varsity Cup final. Varsity Cup, 13 April 2025.

Available from:

<https://www.varsitycup.co.za/news/maroon-machine-ready-to-dig-deep-in-fnb-varsity-cup-final>

Venter, G. (2019). Do gambling firms have a role in South African sport sponsorship? Global Sports Matters, 8 March 2019.

Available from:

<https://globalsportmatters.com/business/2019/03/08/do-gambling-firms-have-a-role-in-south-african-sport-sponsorship/>

APPENDIX A: DR MARI HAUGAA ENGH**CONSENT FORM**

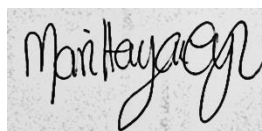
Research topic: Media coverage of women's football in *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff*.

- I agree to be interviewed by Ezekiel Pepe Kekana. The interview will last approximately less than hour.
- My participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
- I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way in answering any questions, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
- I understand that my identity will not anonymous.
- My answers will be included in this research report.
- I have read and understand the explanation provided to me in the Participant Information Sheet. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Name and Surname Mari H Engh

Date 31 October 2024

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mari H Engh', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

APPENDIX B: BUSISIWE MOKWENA**CONSENT FORM**

Research topic: Media coverage of women's football in *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff*.

- I agree to be interviewed by Ezekiel Pepe Kekana. The interview will last approximately less than hour.
- My participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
- I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way in answering any questions, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
- I understand that my identity will not anonymous.
- My answers will be included in this research report.
- I have read and understand the explanation provided to me in the Participant Information Sheet. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Name and Surname ___Busisiwe Mokwena___

Date ___31/10/2024___

Signature



APPENDIX C: MOONIRA RAMATHULA

CONSENT FORM

Research topic: Media coverage of women's football in *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff*.

- I agree to be interviewed by Ezekiel Pepe Kekana. The interview will last approximately less than hour.
- My participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
- I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way in answering any questions, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
- I understand that my identity will not anonymous.
- My answers will be included in this research report.
- I have read and understand the explanation provided to me in the Participant Information Sheet. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Name and Surname _Moonira Ramathula_____

Date _04 October 2024_____

Signature _____

APPENDIX D: LORENZ KÖHLERCONSENT FORM

Research topic: Media coverage of women's football in *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff*.

- I agree to be interviewed by Ezekiel Pepe Kekana. The interview will last approximately less than hour.
- My participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
- I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way in answering any questions, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
- I understand that my identity will not anonymous.
- My answers will be included in this research report.
- I have read and understand the explanation provided to me in the Participant Information Sheet. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Name and Surname Lorenz Köhler

Date 21 October 2024

Signature  _____

APPENDIX E: MARK GLEESON

CONSENT FORM

Research topic: Media coverage of women's football in Soccer Laduma and KickOff.

- I agree to be interviewed by Ezekiel Pepe Kekana. The interview will last approximately less than hour.
- My participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
- I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way in answering any questions, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
- I understand that my identity will not anonymous.
- My answers will be included in this research report.
- I have read and understand the explanation provided to me in the Participant Information Sheet. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Name and Surname

Date

Signature

participate in this study.

MARK GLEESON

4 - NOV - 2024

[Signature]

APPENDIX F: FRAN HILTON SMITH

CONSENT FORM

Research topic: Media coverage of women's football in Soccer Laduma and KickOff.

- I agree to be interviewed by Ezekiel Pepe Kekana. The interview will last approximately less than hour.
- My participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
- I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way in answering any questions, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
- I understand that my identity will not anonymous.
- My answers will be included in this research report.
- I have read and understand the explanation provided to me in the Participant Information Sheet. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in

I agree to participate in this study.

Surname

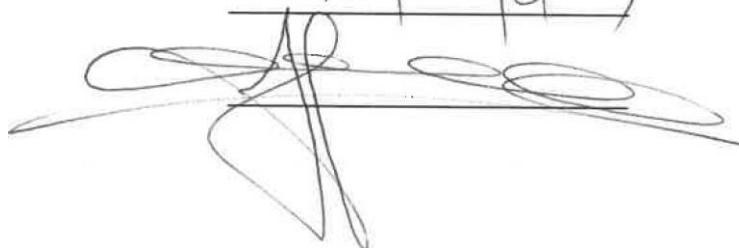
Surname

FRAN HILTON SMITH

Date

23/10/24

Signature



APPENDIX G- ETHICS CERTIFICATE



SCHOOL OF Literature, Language and Media ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: JOMS 2023/18

PROJECT TITLE: Media coverage of women's football in *Soccer Laduma* and *KickOff*

INVESTIGATOR: Ezekiel Pepe Kekana (2512242)

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT: Wits Centre for Journalism

DATE CONSIDERED: August 04, 2024

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE: Approved

RISK LEVEL: Minimal Risk

EXPIRY DATE: August 03, 2027

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE

CHAIRPERSON

September 13, 2024

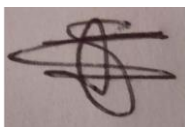
Dr Nechama Brodie (nechama.brodie@wits.ac.za)

cc: Supervisor: Dr Nechama Brodie (nechama.brodie@wits.ac.za)

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.



Signature

____/____/____ 16 09 2024
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES