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# EDITORIAL

## THE INSPIRING ROLE OF MAGAZINE STUDIES: THE INTERCONNECTED JOURNALISM EXAMPLE

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In December 2022, the Magazine Media Lab (MagLab) became the first international scientific structure dedicated to the comprehensive study of magazines. This pioneering initiative, established within CICANT, a research centre at Lusófona University, has spearheaded various groundbreaking initiatives. These include the creation of The International Journal of Magazine Studies (IJMS), a journal that represents the culmination of the lab's research efforts. The IJMS was announced on November 2023, four months after the inaugural biannual international conference, The Future of Magazine (19-21 July), also organised by MagLab, marking a significant milestone in the field of Magazine Studies.

Why launch the first European journal dedicated to this area of knowledge? Magazine Studies is a vibrant yet dispersed field, with researchers worldwide examining magazines through diverse methodologies and within the most varied disciplines, including Communication, History, Design, Gender Studies, and many others (Charon, J.-M., 2008; Johnson, S., & Prijatel, P., 2013; Abrahamson, D., & Prior-Miller, 2018; McKay, J., 2019; Sternadori, M., & Holmes, T., 2020; Cardoso, C. R., & Holmes, T., 2022; Gonzales, L. dos S., & Santos, M. P. dos., 2023; Sumner, D. E., & Husni, S. A., 2023). The IJMS, published annually, aims to unify international research, thereby developing and consolidating magazine studies on a global scale. This effort underscores the potential and contributions of magazine studies to scientific production. To support this unifying goal, the journal accepts submissions in four languages: English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish.

There is an urgent need to pay attention to the magazine object, mainly because their absence in the digital universe is more problematic than for newspapers. The tactile experience of glossy paper, portability, vibrant colours, and meticulous design – all unique features that make magazines collectible memory builders – are diminished online. However, it is precisely this inability to replicate the physical experience digitally that sustains the existence of print magazines, even as they become fewer, more expensive, and are sometimes perceived as luxury items.

However, we only need to consider the existence of radio and television magazines to understand that the concept of a magazine extends far beyond paper. In an era where many are apprehensive about the future role of AI in society, we posed the question to ChatGPT: what is a magazine? The response was:

A publication that contains articles, photographs, and advertisements on a particular subject or topics of interest. Magazines are typically published on a regular basis, such as weekly, monthly, or quarterly, and cover a wide range of topics such as fashion, lifestyle, entertainment, news, and more. Magazines can be printed or digital and are often targeted towards specific demographics or interests. (OpenAI, 2024).

While all of that is true, AI still misses the essence of what a magazine truly is. The genuinely distinguishing element of a magazine is its ability to foster communities. A magazine acts as an aggregator of audiences, such as those drawn to women's or men's magazines, and aggregator of themes, like those found in decorating or cooking magazines. Moreover, magazines serve as aggregators beyond the newsstands. This is exemplified by the many free institutional magazines designed to bolster company team spirit.

Magazines bring people together, allowing them to share and enjoy common interests. In an era characterised by both connection and disconnection, magazines can serve as powerful unifiers. As an example, these qualities offer valuable insights into a field that often overlooks magazines: Journalism Studies. Traditionally seen as purveyors of soft news, magazines have been excluded from the role of democracy's watchdog, a position reserved for news media. Only newsmagazines have escaped this indifference as they are perceived as newspapers in magazine format.

Recent journalistic trends, such as Constructive Journalism (Gyldensted, C., 2015; Haagerup, U., 2015; Haagerup, U., 2017; Aitamurto, T., & Varma, A., 2018; Hermans, L., & Drok, N., 2018; Bro, P., 2019; Hermans, L., & Gyldensted, C., 2019; McIntyre, K., & Gyldensted, C., 2018; Mast, J., Coesemans, R., & Temmerman, M., 2019) and Solutions Journalism (Thier, K., 2016; McIntyre, K., 2019; McIntyre, K. E., & Lough, K., 2021; Lough, K., & McIntyre, K., 2023), underscore the evolving need for journalism to transcend traditional conflict-oriented news. There is an urge to shift its focus towards exploring viable pathways to overcome problems and actively contribute to the discourse surrounding plausible, actionable solutions. Journalism must move beyond its current paradigm to reconnect with an audience fatigued by negativity-centric news.

By merging these new perspectives on journalism with the concept of the magazine as an aggregator, community creator, and connector, we arrive at a novel journalistic configuration, which we term interconnected journalism. This new theoretical and practical framework has the potential to enhance the role of the media in a democratic society, counteract disinformation and populism, and contribute to greater peace and social order by fostering awareness of our interconnections. We define interconnected journalism as an evolving form of journalism that explores problems and

solutions across borders, grounded in the interconnections of local practices in diverse communities.

It's undeniable that we live in an interconnected world where local phenomena are part of broader dynamics that extend beyond their immediate surroundings, often shared by other communities or countries. Interconnected journalism aims to bridge gaps by highlighting the shared nature of problems that may seem local, emphasising their commonality across various communities within and beyond national borders. This collective awareness goes beyond recognising common issues, leading to the exploration of shared solutions that exist in other communities and could be applied elsewhere.

This new type of journalism provides visibility to the interconnections among national and transnational communities, promoting empathy and combating hate speech and social indifference. Beyond the obvious case of newsmagazines, magazines can be fertile ground for developing this type of journalism. For instance, a story about motherhood across different communities could be published in a women's or family-oriented magazine. Regardless of the magazine type, interconnected features serve as a valuable platform for discovering and sharing similarities and differences, enriching our understanding of others and ourselves.

The study of magazines can, therefore, inspire new ways of thinking about journalism theories and practices, but its scope is much broader. Magazines offer a social portrait of each era's habits, traditions, and customs. They can be found in print and online, within companies and distributed to customers. They can be analysed in the most varied ways, such as in terms of their editorial content, business models, design, advertising, and images. It is this richness that justifies the creation of the IJMS, launched to help understand the magazine's place in an interconnected world.

This is the inaugural issue (Vol. 1, Nº. 1) of The International Journal of Magazine Studies, an annual open-access and peer-reviewed journal published by MagLab. The publication is assigned with a DOI and uses the Open Journal System (OJS) platform.

This edition was jointly organised by Professors Carla Rodrigues Cardoso and Ana Figueiras from MagLab/CICANT, Lusófona University. Eight exceptional articles were selected for publication based on rigorous criteria and reviewers' comments in a blind peer review process. These articles offer a comprehensive examination of the diversity of interpretations across various dimensions of the magazine media. Proving the transnational nature of Magazine Studies, the articles come from eight different countries: Belgium, Brazil, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Portugal and UK. The articles aim to unravel the intricate complexities inherent in this field, employing diverse theoretical approaches, frameworks, and analytical methodologies.

The topics covered in these studies are remarkably varied, encompassing a wide range of specialised magazines and case studies. The research addresses both traditional print magazines and contemporary digital formats, providing a holistic perspective on the evolving landscape of magazine media. This collection of articles not only contributes to a deeper understanding of the subject but also reflects the dynamic and multifaceted nature of magazine studies.

Before presenting the individual articles, it is essential to highlight the first text of this journal, "The Future of Magazines: A Few Speculations About the Media's Evolution". David Abrahamson, one of the foremost academics in Magazine Studies from Northwestern University's Medill School, authored this article. He is known for his audacity in making predictions during a time of rapid change. Abrahamson generously contributed this piece to the inaugural issue of IJMS, and based it on his closing keynote speech at the first Future of

Magazine conference on July 21, 2023. While acknowledging the challenges magazines face, akin to those affecting all media, Abrahamson remains “optimistic”, inspired by the “very engaging and supportive role that magazines play in the lives of their readers”.

The peer reviewed section of this issue starts with an article entitled “The Digital Feminist Magazines, a Reformulation of Women’s Press from South to North: The Cases *AzMina* and *Madmoizelle*” by Mariana Fagundes-Ausani, aiming to analyse how engaged media adapt the format of women’s magazines to create new models for feminist digital publications. It compares the digital magazines *AzMina* from Brazil and *Madmoizelle* from France through the lens of gender studies and feminism, utilising in-depth interviews with content producers and support teams to understand the strategies for transitioning from print to digital and addressing gender issues.

In “The Emergence of Magazine Membership Models”, Mary Hogarth compares three special interest magazines – *Women’s Running*, *Vegan Food*, and *Country Walking* – to determine how each has developed and implemented a membership model and its impact on revenue and audiences. Utilising semi-structured interviews with editors and publishers, the study examines recurring themes and services, exploring the role of servitisation and referencing key literature to assess whether the magazines have achieved financial stability and deeper audience engagement.

Ullamaija Kivikuru shows how, for over 100 years and with differing focuses and tools, two magazines have reported about Finland to Finns in “The Story of Finland, as Narrated by Two Weeklies: the Long Narratives of *Suomen Kuvalehti* and *Apu*”. One targets the educated elite, and the other the general family audience. Throughout Finland’s independence struggle, three wars, and three recessions, these magazines – *Suomen Kuvalehti* and *Apu* – have alternately succeeded in capturing public interest, demonstrating a blend of consistency and

adaptability essential for their survival in the evolving media landscape.

This issue includes an article in French, one of the accepted languages for publication in IJMS, entitled “Les pratiques de streaming des magazines spécialisés en jeu vidéo – de l’information au divertissement?” by Boris Krywicki. In this article, the author explores how, despite the initial resistance from print journalists to appear on screen and their historical wariness of the internet, video game magazines have gradually embraced platforms like Twitch, transitioning to a “broadcast regime”. This study analyses the streaming practices of several French video game media outlets through journalist interviews to determine whether these channels act as entertainment extensions or maintain their role as sources of specialised information.

In “The Specialized TV Editorial Market in Brazil: A Study on Fan Culture in *Intervalo* Magazine”, Talita Magnolo and Daiana Maria Veiga Sigiliano analyse all 52 editions of the “Entreviste seu ídolo” section from Brazilian *Intervalo* magazine, focusing on the fan profiles, the idols’ activity segments, and the context of the questions answered by the interviewees in 1968-1969. Although the area of interest is somewhat niche, fan culture studies in Brazil are expanding, and this article examines a previously unexplored sample within these studies by highlighting the strategic movements of broadcasters and the resulting reader engagement facilitated by Editora Abril’s *Intervalo* magazine from 1963 to 1972.

Dali Osepashvili explores the case of Georgian magazines that transitioned to digital in “Magazines’ Transition to Digital: The Case of Georgia”. This article presents the results of a study that covers the innovations they employed and the challenges they faced. The study used semi-structured interviews with 12 editors and journalists and revealed that, in the digital age, Georgian magazines face significant challenges in retaining print edition readers, with a noticeable decline in readership.

In “The Decline of Music Magazines in Greece”, Coralia Xepapadea and Stylianos Papathanassopoulos show how Greek music magazines have experienced a significant decline over the years, which cannot be solely attributed to the advent of the internet but is due to multiple factors. The study reveals that market saturation, the financial crisis, and the resultant drop in advertising revenues have all contributed to this decline, reducing the number of active titles from 73 between 1946 and 2022 to just four today while highlighting their historical role in disseminating music culture in Greece.

This issue closes with “Magazines Currently: A Matter of Virtualisation” by Pedro Eduardo Ribeiro and Giselle Costa. In this article, the authors explore how the virtualization of media organisations affects magazine production, circulation, and diffusion, highlighting trends such as digital editions, digital-native magazines, transmedia dynamics, and press-edition websites while addressing challenges for the present and future. Pedro Eduardo Ribeiro and Giselle Costa highlight a noticeable reduction in material content due to various trends in the Portuguese magazine industry as magazines increasingly move online and explore the phenomenon by integrating insights from Organisational Communication Studies and the concept of virtual organisations with Magazine Studies.

The eight articles featured in this inaugural issue of IJMS vividly demonstrate Magazine Studies’ expansive scope and richness. They highlight the diverse methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches that make this field vital. These contributions underscore the importance of developing and consolidating Magazine Studies as a distinct academic discipline capable of providing deep insights into media evolution, cultural trends, and the socio-political impact of magazines in both historical and contemporary contexts.

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# THE FUTURE OF MAGAZINES: A FEW SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE MEDIA'S EVOLUTION\*

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\* This article is the result of the 21 July 2023 closing Keynote Speech at the first Future of Magazine international conference, organised by MagLab | CICANT at Lusófona University.

**David Abrahamson** is a professor emeritus at Northwestern University. Author of *Magazine-Made America: The Cultural Transformation of the Postwar Periodical*, editor of *The American Magazine: Research Perspectives and Prospects* and co-editor of *The Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research: The Future of the Magazine Form*, he has served as president of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies, as well as the past head of both the magazine and history divisions of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. He is a past winner of the AEJMC Magazine Division's Educator of the Year award and the American Journalism History Association's Sidney Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement in Journalism History. He holds a B.A. in History from Johns Hopkins University (1969), a Master's degree in Journalism from the University of California, Berkeley (1973) and a Ph.D. in American Civilization from New York University (1992).  
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## **Abstract**

This article examines ways in which technological change has transformed the creative editorial and design processes, the form and extent of magazine content and the industry's underlying business models. The question of whether the evolution of delivery platforms has allowed magazines to create new and more robust relationships with their readers and an enriched sense of community is explored.

**Keywords:** future of magazines, technological change, delivery platforms

The Jewel in the Crown, the Promised Land, the Raison d'Être of magazines is their unique relationship with their readers, their place in their readers' lives. Unlike newspapers, which are read for news of the last 24 hours. Unlike books, which demand days, weeks, even months from their readers. Magazines are what Francis Bacon, the 17th-Century English philosopher, meant when he referred to "the middle axiom". Magazines as a genre do not specialize in raw, undigested experience; nor, at the other extreme, do they present abstract generalities. Rather, their comparative advantage is in dealing with the in-between – the middle region, inhabited, according to Bacon, by "living axioms on which depend the affairs and fortunes of mankind"<sup>1</sup>.

More importantly, for their readers magazines play a special role in their lives:

- the better-informed dear friend;
- perhaps even older sibling;
- the experienced mentor, full of hard-won wisdom;
- the world-wise and kind aunt;
- and lastly, a guilty pleasure, the friend brimming with the latest juicy gossip.

And it is this special relationship and the resulting high level of engagement on the part of a magazine's readers that has long been – and I expect will long continue to be – the secret of the success of the magazine form. There is a great Dillon quote I like a lot: "Old magazines are cheap time machines, archaeologies of collective desire"<sup>2</sup>. But it's not yesterday's magazine we are concerned with. It's tomorrow's. So, let's begin.

Given the ongoing development of the Digital Revolution for the past 30 years, it has become a commonplace that the media world, especially that of most magazines, has been

seriously disrupted. Since the mid-1990s, most magazines have experimented with using the Web as a companion to the established print product. They have also responded to the various demands and opportunities offered by a range of delivery platforms: desktop, laptop, tablet, mobile, wearable, etc. In addition, new business models are being tested, which will have an impact on the editorial product. Moreover, Web-only publications – both destination sites and pure play ones – have emerged which explicitly lay claim to the magazine form.

With all this technological change, perhaps the most telling questions come easily to mind:

- What indeed lies ahead?
- How will digital technology shape the magazine form?
- Will the print medium co-exist with the digital, and if so, in what form?
- Or will digital replace paper as the Internet replaced telegraph wire?
- Or stranger still, might some further new technology emerge that would express all the advantages of digital yet somehow retain the tactile benefits of paper?

I do have a number of observations about the near-to-mid-term future. But let the record show that I do not possess enough self-regard to believe all of this must turn out to be true. I offer only educated guesses based on recent events, quasi-linear projections and a few heartfelt stabs in the dark. Let's start with a look at business considerations.

Advertising, while still a critical revenue generator, will not be as important as it once was. The Holy Grail of every marketer – the precision targeting of advertising to the most likely prospect – has become the property of Big Tech such as Google, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft. As a result, magazines will

1 Cited in Navasky, V.S. & Cornog, E. (Eds.). (2012). *The Art of Making Magazines: On Being an Editor and Other Views from the Industry*. Columbia University Press, p. VIII.

2 Dillon, B. (2023). "To Truly Understand the Past, Pick Up an Old Magazine," *New York Times Magazine*, p. 16.

have to further diversify. The traditional three-legged stool – editorial, advertising and circulation – has become an eight-legged octopus, embracing audiences across multiple, often-interactive platforms. These include public events, but also creative offerings such as themed ocean cruises sponsored by *The Nation* magazine. As a result, the revenue mix also will diversify away from conventional ads and paid circulation.

Ancillary revenue streams – either print-related or digital ones – will become more significant. Two of the largest publishers of magazines sold in America, Bonnier (a privately held Swedish media group operating in 15 countries) and Condé Nast (worldwide publisher of some 30 titles), are very active in these areas. Events related to editorial will prove to be important, as well as increasing revenue producers.

In addition, true magazine brands – those that evoke a positive experience in the minds of their audiences – will continue to create spinoff print products. I've happened to notice that the newsstand at my local drugstore has more specials, annuals and buyer's guides on display than regular issues.

In a similar vein, many magazine publishers will continue to discover that editorially driven newsletters – benefitting from and extending the magazine's brand – will become more successful. In many cases, they are already proving to be robust revenue generators. One trade magazine publisher says:

Twenty-five years ago, we did little or no hard news in our publications. But that has changed, and we are now in the business of delivering daily or even twice-daily news updates, delivered through our email newsletters and on our websites. Readership and interest in the news is high, and advertising sponsorships of the newsletters is a significant part

of our total revenues. Who would ever have predicted that publishers who used to concentrate exclusively on monthly content would now be in the daily news business via newsletters?<sup>3</sup>

The circulation side of magazine publishing will continue to have to reinvent itself. Since the Web and the Internet in general have replaced direct mail as the main source of circulation maintenance, growth and revenue, the business practices of magazines' Circulation Departments will remain in flux, while continuing to evolve.

This will become increasingly noticeable due to rapid development of technology and knock-on effects. For example, digital speeds and bandwidth will increase; video screens will improve on all devices; shipping costs will grow; ad revenue will fall; and print distribution networks, at least in the U.S, will decline.

Yet through it all, readers – especially younger readers – will not be inhibited by reading online. As a colleague once noted, "The original word magazine was derived from the French word for storehouse, it had nothing to do with staples"<sup>4</sup>. And in an era possibly defined by Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*<sup>5</sup>, people will still crave community, whether in micro doses or influencer-driven hordes.

About the future of Editorial, it cannot be emphasized enough: First and foremost, Editorial will always remain paramount, regardless of the delivery system.

The suitability of print as the best vehicle for in-depth analysis or expansive graphic treatment will remain valid. Nevertheless, websites will become increasingly important, and in some cases, they will continue to replace print editions entirely.

3 James Franklin, interview by author, 7 May 2023, via e-mail.

4 Abe Peck, interview by author, 8 May 2023, via email.

5 Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster.

I expect an interest in longform or narrative journalism to continue. But magazines will make greater use of the digital medium to enrich the text with links and interactivity. And to avoid what some people regard as endless seas of type.

The use of video will increase. I offer this prediction whether or not TikTok is banned in some jurisdictions in the West. The application of data, including interactive data, will increase and will prove to be of real use.

Magazine publishers will make prominent use of social media, but my most telling prediction is that I expect the platforms themselves will see marked improvements. Moreover, coming regulation by various government entities may determine the larger fate of social media.

Actually, at this moment in the third decade of the new century, social media in all its forms – blogs, customized email, sponsored content, webinars, whatever – can probably be considered together. While only a few of them by themselves are yet a significant part of the contemporary magazine industry, in total I expect they will make a growing contribution, offering both editors as well as advertisers alternative ways to reach readers. In doing so they will make an increasing contribution to the bottom line.

Speaking of bottom lines, editorial staff – already overworked – will continue to have to do more with less. Members of some Editorial Departments are already hard-pressed to service all content demands placed on them and the demands will certainly increase. Skills will improve, but headcounts will remain lean. Further, mentoring, a key factor in individual editorial success, will become increasingly difficult as in-office presence further gives way to hybrid or remote work.

Despite a number of somewhat positive predictions above regarding the magazine's evolving ecosphere, there are a number of issues – flies in the ointment, or the 800-pound gorilla

in the middle of the room. Most have to do with financial pressures on the magazines' print business model:

- In 2022 the cost of paper increased by up to 50 percent.
- In America, postage costs will certainly continue to increase. It is apparent that the United States Postal Service seems to be on a mission to recoup past and current operating deficits from the periodical's class of postage. There are now two rate increases per year – the most recent rate hike was more than eight percent. It is clear that the shipping costs of print issues will continue to be a moving and difficult target.
- On average, the budget category Manufacturing and Distribution (the actual printing of the copy and delivering it into readers' hands) makes up more than a third of a print magazine's cost. And since it appears that most magazines seem to not be able to pass on much of this cost to advertisers, there is a clear financial incentive for many magazines to further migrate to the Web.
- And in the world of trade magazines – or as they seem to prefer these days, business-to-business publications or B2B – publishers are finding it increasingly difficult to get readers to confirm that they want to receive even a free subscription. This has severe implications for both the cost of postage and the ability to maintain an audited statement of circulation required by advertisers.
- It is likely that these rapidly rising costs will eventually intersect with B2B publishers' revenues from print. It will force them to cut costs, possibly cutting back on the number of copies they print and distribute. Or decreasing the magazine's frequency (issues per year) or number of pages per issue. Or maybe eventually going all-digital. I am told this is something which many B2B publishers suspect could happen within the next decade.
- If further evidence is needed, a sign of major changes in the U.S. magazine industry is the recent closing down of the Magazine Publishing Association, after a feeble renaming itself the Alliance of Magazine Media. It was recently subsumed into the News Media Alliance, a Washington

D.C. lobby mostly concerned with postal and other legal issues, leaving the magazine industry without a dedicated trade association.

I suspect it might be valuable to pause here and confess that I may have painted a somewhat bleak picture. There is some not-so-bad news to report as well.

Print magazines remain an important source of readership and revenue for many magazine publishers, especially those serving specialized fields. When readers are asked in surveys, over half say they still want to receive the print edition of the magazines. Most of those, however, also say they want both the print editions and access to the digital ones.

Because many magazine publishers made the timely decision more than 20 years ago to require all visitors to their magazines' websites to register in full, publishers know their readers' profiles in detail. As a result, they can provide targeted editorial content they know will prove attractive to their readerships. And a more engaged reader is a better advertising prospect. As a further consequence, publishers have been able to charge premium prices to advertisers because they can provide them with real leads, instead of just visits or clicks. This has proven to be a unique competitive advantage and will continue to be a growing source of revenue.

In sum, I think the future of the magazine form is an indeterminate shade of gray. Publishers who continue to evolve their magazine brands – taking advantage of legacy media for the foreseeable future but also pursuing new media forms; offering better tracking of readership patterns; and more detailed demographics to advertisers – will still be around for some time to come.

As with many contemporary developments – for example, all-electric vehicles and autonomous driving; decarbonization and climate change; oh, and the headline topic de jour,

artificial intelligence, to name a few – it's hard to predict if and when factors, internal or external, might destroy the magazine business entirely.

Personally, I am optimistic. Two aspects suggest a fairly bright future: The first is Philosopher Bacon's "middle axiom," the sweet spot that magazines occupy between newspapers and books. The second, and perhaps most important, is that very engaging and/or supportive role that magazines play in the life of their readers. Marketers call it "perceived value", but I am convinced it is completely genuine. And it is that connection between magazines and their readers that suggests that, no matter what the delivery technology, the magazine form will persist.



# THE DIGITAL FEMINIST MAGAZINES, A REFORMULATION OF WOMEN'S PRESS FROM SOUTH TO NORTH: THE CASES *AZMINA* AND *MADMOIZELLE*

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## Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse how engaged media appropriate the format of so-called women's magazines to propose new models for feminist digital publications. I look at feminist media activism as a space made up of the interstice between other social worlds, such as journalism, digital activism and political activism. To understand the strategies for reformulating the magazine format from print to digital and from a perspective of reflection on gender issues, I compare, in a transnational approach, the digital magazines *AzMina* (from Brazil) and *Madmoizelle* (from France) using theories on gender studies and feminism as bibliographical support and the methodology of in-depth interviews with actresses and actors who participate to different degrees in the composition of the social world - content producers and support teams - to develop an analysis of the ways in which individuals are inserted into the context of these magazines. The results indicate that the interviewees rely on forms of writing and news gathering based on the reporting model both to write their content and to consume it. There is an inspiration in the pattern of so-called women's magazines for those who write the texts - and follow these writing patterns - and for those who read them - and create expectations of finding similarities with this writing pattern in the digital feminist media.

**Keywords:** women's press, feminist magazines, media activism

The role of the press in women's quest for more visibility and space in socio-political contexts is ambiguous. Media products have historically meant a form of liberation and resistance for women, based on the ability to read and the possibility of reflecting and developing critical thinking (Pinto, 2003). But these products are also manuals full of patriarchal rules on how a woman should act or behave (Pinto, 2003; Blandin, 2010). For centuries, the press has been a tool for liberating women from ties that prevent them from being on the same social, economic and cultural level as men (Duarte, 2017). However, it can also be an instrument for maintaining and reproducing current forms of domination.

Although the place assigned to both women and people in feminised positions in the world's socio-political conjuncture is constantly updated, it remains rooted in old family or political structures (Garcin-Marrou, 2019) and is reinforced by the dissemination of niche products for women, based essentially on economic purposes and stimulated by the advertising market (Pinto, 2003; Melo Cabral, 2008; Thérenty, 2010; Geers, 2016). The consolidation of women as readers rests on a strong economic character, as capitalism began to see them as potential consumers of literature, not just magazines and newspapers, but mainly products advertised in the press (Melo Cabral, 2008). Now, fashion manufacturers invest in these publications. Further to this, from the global South to the North, there have been historical efforts to control this consumption from forces and structures such as the church, state, family and school (Duarte, 2017).

In this article, in developing a multisite analysis of the transnational circulation of the phenomenon of digital feminist media activism, I turn to Brazil and France - as countries that are economically, politically and culturally representative, respectively, of the geopolitical scenarios of the global South and North - to try to understand feminist action aimed at producing magazine content. I mobilise the category of North-South (Santos, 1995; Meneses, 2008) of the world to bring

to the text the hierarchical nature of relations – marked by capitalist and imperialist logics – between these two parts of the globe.

### Methodological paths

Based on the analysis of field experience and 63 in-depth interviews with actresses and actors who make up the feminist media activism space in Brazil and France, this proposal is based on ethnography as a methodology for understanding the construction of the social world of feminist media activism and its ways of functioning. Thirty interviews were conducted in France and 33 in Brazil, with different participants in the social world (reporters and editors, columnists, readers, accounting and fundraising teams, etc.), from October 2020 to November 2022. The relevance of the work is that it proposes to listen to in-depth accounts of the trajectories of the members of this space and to monitor, through field research, the group's forms of cooperation and negotiation to oppose anti-feminist agendas.

Understood as "constructions of reality, occasions in which the interviewee seeks to fabricate meanings to their experience in view of their interlocutor" (Pereira, 2008, p. 71), interviews were used as a way of grasping in detail the beliefs, attitudes, values, feelings, desires and motivations that trigger people's behaviors in specific social contexts (Gil, 1987; Bauer & Gaskell, 2002; Dantas & Lima, 2018). I seek to use the technique as a dialogue to highlight its exploratory nature and its potential for understanding and explaining social phenomena. I propose the deinstitutionalisation of the act of interviewing, conceived through the positions of interviewer-interviewee (Becker, 1993). During the interaction, there is a reordering of experiences while trying to create a coherent narrative.

To choose the media activists interviewed, I checked the "who we are" tab or equivalent on the websites of each selected

project for the *corpus*. When the names were not clearly listed on the websites, I turned to the publications' LinkedIn to locate the participants. Some names were also located via social media or on the projects' websites. With readers, I used the strategy of identifying profiles on social networks (Facebook and Instagram) that interact through comments with the publications studied. From there, I accessed each of these profiles, analysed the content published and liked posts that had some connection to feminist agendas (in text or images), to try to create links and affinities with the potential interviewees. This process can only be done on open profiles or those with some open content, so these were the ones I selected to contact.

## Press and women

In France, the literacy of women was promoted by the state and increased considerably from the second half of the nineteenth century. However, even though women were becoming potential readers, encouraging contact with newspaper articles was often forbidden by husbands, who wanted their wives to be involved in domestic chores, and by religious institutions, who considered reading to be a moral deviation (Geers, 2016, p. 44). During the same period, women of the Brazilian bourgeoisie were not encouraged to read, as families and society at the time considered that information carried subversive risks and could encourage girls to communicate with boys. Subsequently, only young Brazilian women from the upper classes were allowed to receive elementary and religious education and notions of foreign languages alongside their embroidery and household chores (Cabral, 2008).

All over the world, by gaining access to literacy, women subsequently took ownership of reading and, therefore, writing - including critical writing. However, this process came up against a mentality of male superiority that still dominated the spaces of debate, so that there was an understanding based on common sense that the books and stories aimed

at women and read by them were not, in fact, literature, but rather a kind of subliterate that did not deserve to be taken seriously - similar to how women themselves were seen in society (Duarte, 2017).

Although the media was used as a tool for economic and political control - with publications that made an effort, against the backdrop of women's emancipation movements, to restore women's pride in being at home and reactivate familialist discourses (Blandin, 2010) - through contact with books and newspapers, groups of women with access to formal education became aware of their own subordinate conditions and the even worse conditions of illiterate women. "More than books, newspapers were the first and main vehicles of women's literate production, which from the outset were spaces for publicity, agglutination and resistance" (Duarte, 2017, p. 98).

From the beginning of the feminist movement, activists observed that the media played an important role in propagating gender stereotypes, which made them feel the need to create their own channels with alternative discourses to the hegemonic one. Women's ambiguous relationship with the press led to the emergence of two different new niches of journalism: the so-called women's press and the feminist press. The former was aimed at women to corroborate the standards that dictated their lives, imposing rules on their bodies and minds, while the feminist press emerged with the aim of promoting women's rights and showing them ways to free themselves from socially stipulated constraints (Buitoni, 1990).

These are categories that may eventually converge, but in general, the so-called women's press and the feminist press are distinct and even have opposite characteristics. The former is more conservative in nature and has historically been marked by the propagation of gender stereotypes and by corroborating discourses that emphasise the idea of women

as fragile figures assigned to the domestic sphere. Feminist journalism, on the other hand, denies the dissemination of labels and forms of writing linked to gender, proposing to construct narratives that encourage women and feminised people to deny structures of patriarchal domination and to occupy positions of power in society. In contemporary media culture, attempts to unite both perspectives are becoming increasingly frequent, transforming the content of the so-called women's press into channels open to the agendas of the feminist press.

### The (so-called) women's press

For almost half a century, the press portrayed the world of women through fashion, literature, beauty and entertainment information, focusing its content on the importance of women's role as mothers and wives (Bronstein, 2008; Lajolo & Zilberman, 2019) and imposing the ideology of this role through social and cultural criteria (Buitoni, 1981). Many newspapers, created by priests, doctors and journalists, strove to convince women - especially those from the bourgeoisie - to become dedicated mothers, stimulated by concerns about infant mortality figures and a strategy to ensure population growth (Duarte, 2017). Publications focused on women are therefore tools for perpetuating power hierarchies.

These are contents that offer cooking and embroidery recipes, guidelines for mothers and fathers on raising children and instructions on maintaining domestic life, presenting themselves as indispensable for the functioning of the family routine (Blandin, 2012), as well as personality tests and events linked to the privacy of film and television stars (Bronstein, 2008). A female imaginary is constructed, centred on the idea of taking care of oneself (Flausino, 2003). In addition, changes were made to the way journalism was written, with an emphasis on proximity to the reader and to the publications, seeking to create intimacy with those who read them, creating a dialogue between informative journalism and the

elements of personalisation and seduction typical of advertising (Schmitz, 2010).

Even at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were no major changes in content or form in the press aimed at this audience. Women continued to be treated as sensitive and fragile (Bronstein, 2008). Over the decades, however, cities grew and changed, enabling new readerships to emerge. The mass culture that was growing at the time, coupled with the First World War and its aftermath, opened up space for the figure of women to move from the representation of puerile fragility to the strength of motherhood. The publishing industry of women's publications as a niche press was growing, since the hegemonic media produced content primarily with a male audience in mind. As a result, the figure of the woman seemed even more distant from the events of public life, moving instead towards the archetypes of magazines and private life (Bronstein, 2008). Over time, stimulated by economic factors, some media companies had pages aimed at the female audience in newspapers or publications made for men (Geers, 2016).

As the market for so-called women's magazines grew and catered for consumers with money, publishers developed the popular novel press, relying on class stereotypes to offer poor women, who were considered to have little knowledge of political and literary issues, immediate pleasure from reading (Geers, 2016, p. 50). These publications were known as the "press of the heart" and contained little advertising and images, since advertisers believed that this was an audience without sufficient financial resources to devote to consumption.

The 1960s, however, represented a turning point in this situation and reinforced the emancipatory nature of specialised journalism for women. Inspired by the May 1968 movement in France, an international political scenario emerged that encouraged questioning and rebellion and mirrored the strength of a young and progressive culture. Media publications that

failed to grasp these changes saw part of their young, active readership, with a high cultural and intellectual level, migrating to more informative magazines (Charon, 2008).

But more than outlets for content concerned with gender equality and sexual freedom, the magazines were instruments for attracting more readers and, through advertising, increasing profits. The press' encouragement of women's autonomy allowed them to choose the direction of their own lives and, in particular, which products would be part of this (Buitoni, 1981). The empowerment fostered in previous decades entered the 1990s as a factor that consolidated the figure of the multitasking woman (Bronstein, 2008). The media corroborates the idea that women are capable of taking the lead in different areas of life<sup>1</sup>, conquering space in the job market, in universities, while at the same time looking after the home, maintaining a marital relationship and raising children.

Specialised journalism for women in recent years has kept pace with the capitalist order and has increased advertising in the media as women have risen in the workplace (Maia, 2013). The dichotomy in the women's press between the propagation of reactionary values and ideals of gender equality still persists. The massification of information technologies means that new channels for disseminating content can be created and ways of doing journalism that are different from the hegemonic one can be proposed. But digital environments still echo misogynistic and sexist discourses.

In short, unlike the daily media, the so-called women's press is not concerned with reporting *hard news*, but instead focuses on interviews, expert opinions, analysis of current affairs and, at the same time, is closer to entertainment and service (Buitoni, 1981). Although it does eventually make room for

feminist content, in general, this layer of journalism perpetuates gender stereotypes, helping to keep women out of the public debate and ensuring the existence of a consumer audience capable of maintaining the profitability of publications and the industry around them.

### Feminist press

The press plays an important role in disseminating feminist ideas around the world, helping to strengthen the movement politically. In journalism, discourses related to gender equality can appear in three ways: in publications that are resistant to dealing with feminist issues; in those that present a discourse that is sensitive to feminist agendas, but without directly claiming to be aligned with them; and, finally, there are explicitly feminist media, which assume themselves as such and echo the actions of the feminist movement of their time (Olivesi, 2017, p. 178). The last two are discussed below.

Ever since it was established, the press became the tool that people with new ideas sought to express themselves, even if this was limited to the educated urban middle and upper classes (Pinto, 2003). At first, newspapers and printed publications were the only way to massively disseminate information, as there was no radio or television. Since its emergence in the mid-nineteenth century, the feminist press has promoted actions to occupy public space through media tools, using these tools to denounce oppression and as a way of challenging androcentric narratives (Santos, 2019).

Feminist activists embarked on careers as journalists in the traditional press and often observed that the strategy of creating alternative media could be more effective in spreading their ideas (Lévêque, 2009; Boussahba-Bravard & Pasteur, 2014; Woitowicz, 2014). These activists created small newspapers,

<sup>1</sup> It is essential to note that the number of demands placed on women is a mechanism for maintaining patriarchal domination, since women are overloaded with activities that consume their time and consume them on a psychological level, making it difficult for them to find the space and energy to participate in public debate.

often handmade, to publish articles and opinions on the status of women. These publications were often produced by just one or two people, who put a lot of effort into keeping them in circulation (Pinto, 2003). This content was usually produced and consumed by women from the upper classes, linked to the agendas of the suffragette movement (Formaglio, 2017), and the projects were short-lived, especially due to their counter-hegemonic nature and the lack of advertising (Poupeau, 2018) that could support their financial survival.

Over time, other socio-technical elements contributed to the spread of feminist thinking. Television becomes more popular and the feminist agendas that manage to enter women's programs mean that, along with the traditional information on cooking, fashion and raising children, previously unthinkable topics such as female orgasm, contraception and domestic violence also appear (Costa, 2005, p. 15). In the current context, especially with the spread of digital tools and the growth of social media with the capacity to horizontalise discourses, the feminist press has been expanding and captivating a wider audience. The emergence of *online* magazines of a notably feminist nature, which have appeared in the last decade, are presented as "an uprising in favor of greater representation of other women and even in favor of other ways of being a woman" (Bittelbrun, 2019, p. 2087).

These projects set out to cover topics related to black feminism, the LGBTI+ cause and the routines of poor and socially marginalised women, in a fight against racist, classist and heteronormative journalistic approaches, in which institutionalised heterosexuality is mandatory within a context of cultural hegemony (McCarl Nielsen *et al.*, 2009). They are not restricted to white, bourgeois and highly educated women, taking a progressive stance compared to the traditional so-called women's media by dedicating themselves to women's rights, while the so-called women's press focuses on "duties" (Bandeira, 2015).

They tend to appropriate the journalistic style of the so-called women's press, adopting a lighter tone of writing than *mainstream* newspapers, but also proposing to deal with political and economic issues. They use journalistic writing and editing techniques and conventions - such as the use of the inverted pyramid format in texts and news value standards<sup>2</sup> - and content construction strategies similar to the so-called women's press - such as the use of the first and second person singular or the second person plural in texts, the use of lists and tutorials and articles whose purpose is to suggest services. It is a hybrid journalism that absorbs the characteristics of new media (Santos & Miguel, 2019, p. 7) and media activism to produce and broadcast free content that is avowedly independent of commercial and advertising ties.

Based on the work of Bandeira (2015), Bittelbrun (2019), Blandin (2012), Buitoni (1981), Olivesi (2017), Pinto (2003) and Santos & Miguel (2019) on the history of the press aimed at and made by women, it was possible to outline the similarities and differences between the two media niches, as shown in tables 1 and 2 below. It is worth emphasising, however, that these are generalisations of historically constructed scenarios, and that the so-called feminine media may have characteristics that are more in line with feminism and the breaking down of gender, race, class and sexual orientation stereotypes, as has happened in recent years in Brazil and France.

Even in the hegemonic media, gendered discourses are changing. Not only publications in the so-called women's press, but even non-niche periodicals that focus on factual and current affairs coverage are beginning to debate issues related to gender equality and are proposing reports that give visibility to the alarming numbers of violence against women and gender inequalities in the job market. Although there are commercial interests in this change, it also allows

2 Criteria for selecting and presenting events used by journalists in defining what information will or will not be published.



**Table 1** General similarities between the so-called women's press and the feminist press

Similarities between the so-called women's press and the feminist press
A lighter, more personal tone compared to mainstream newspapers
They use journalistic techniques and conventions for writing and editing content (e.g. news values and the inverted pyramid technique).
The aim is to create a close relationship with readers by using the first person singular or plural in the texts
Use of lists and tutorials and articles whose purpose is to suggest matters of public interest

**Table 2** General differences between the so-called women's press and the feminist press

THE (SO-CALLED) WOMEN'S PRESS	FEMINIST PRESS
Creating content focused on women as potential consumers	Creating content to stimulate women's critical thinking as active members of the political and social debate
Information related to the private sphere of life (cooking, fashion, and household chores)	Information related to the public sphere of life (politics, economics, the environment)
It focuses on addressing the social attitudes linked to duties or what is expected of women in society	It focuses on addressing women's demands and rights to reclaim new social roles for them
They often reproduce normative socio-cultural standards related to body, race, sexual orientation, and class	They seek to break with normative standards related to body, race, sexual orientation, and class

for the expansion of socio-political debates on women's rights and feminised people. It should therefore be recognised that, despite historical challenges, contemporary media are investing in more actions aimed at giving women visibility and a voice.

In this article, we start from the understanding that the organisation of a media structure is formed based on a system of relationships that different actors contribute to constituting, in unequal ways. The operating rules of a newsroom - both implicit and explicit - serve to support the construction of positions and strategies in the constitution of the complex dynamics of the social world (Damian-Gaillard *et al.*, 2010). There are structures of horizontal segregation between men and women reflected in the distribution of journalistic

specialties within newsrooms based on the existence of sectors, departments, media sections and skills linked to gender, as is the case in the magazine press, which has historically been the main professional medium for women journalists (Damian-Gaillard *et al.*, 2010).

By observing journalistic activity as a practice linked to limitations and a complex network of interdependencies that permeate relations with sources, the structuring of the journalistic field, and its relations with the economic field (Neveu, 2019), I try to understand the ways in which individuals, while suffering social constraints, manage to implement innovations and inventiveness within the profession in order to find spaces for expression, autonomy and fulfilment in the professional world (Lemieux, 2010). Looking at mutations in the

context of the media helps to analyse specialised subfields of journalism that have emerged in recent years, such as digital feminist magazines.

### **Feminist activism in the digital media**

For more than a decade, we have seen a variety of feminist initiatives emerge on the internet from different currents, but which have in common the use of digital tools to disseminate content (Jouët, 2022). This activist and combative feminism has erupted in different parts of the world, combining digital tools with traditional social movement strategies such as strikes and street demonstrations.

The transnational current spread to several countries, with slogans with global repercussions circulating in the form of hashtags: #NosotrasParamos, #WeStrike, #VivasNosQueremos, #NiUnaMenos, #TimesUp, #Feminism4th99 (Arruzza et al., 2019). The movement, however, is gaining momentum, especially in the global South (Pinheiro-Machado, 2019). It has developed in such a way as to increasingly reinvent local meanings of the international #MeToo movement.

It is a phenomenon that has been taking shape since the 2010s and is still in the making, being a model of militancy in the midst of construction (Castro & Abramovay, 2019; Paveau, 2020; Perez & Ricoldi, 2019; Pinheiro-Machado, 2019; Oliveira, 2019). It is characterised by the strong presence of its members in the digital media, by organisation in the form of collectives and by considering, more than before, the various social cleavages that permeate gender, configuring an intersectional feminism (Perez & Ricoldi, 2019). This is a form of activism that intersects class, gender, and race in an organic way, considering different systems of oppression (Castro & Abramovay, 2019, p. 24) in its action strategies.

During this reconfiguration of feminist activism, digital feminist media activism has emerged, a concept that goes beyond

the simple fusion of the notions of media and activism and expresses itself not only through words and techniques, but above all through people. It is a proposal that oscillates between approximation and, at the same time, the rejection of journalistic conventions, aiming to "break with (and establish resistance to) consolidated structures of vertical and unilateral dissemination of information" (Dias & Borelli, 2018, p. 841). It results in content characterised by aspects of collaboration, defending one or more social causes and trying to involve the public in debates (Santos & Miguel, 2019), applying digital activism strategies to produce plural content (Bentes, 2015).

Feminist media activism is guided by the pedagogical concern of providing a kind of political education on gender for readers (Silva, 2017). The producers of this content challenge pre-established conventions and reformulate journalistic production practices, seeking to position women as agents of their own lives, in order to detach them from the prejudices and stereotypes that want to condition the female gender to be supporting players in socio-political debates that impact the totality of their existence. Faced with socio-technical devices, activists appropriate the informational potential of the media and the format of magazines while also resorting to the technological environment to achieve their demands and setting out to master techniques for creating buzz and making noise on the internet (Jouët, 2018), exploiting the viral potential of social media.

In short, feminist media activism consists of processes in which feminist activists use socio-technical devices to build new forms of creation and writing on the web using digital technology, the use of online platforms and social media and the appropriation of journalistic techniques. This is a new digital practice in which feminist collectives, NGOs and publications share information on the internet that covers the gender debate and the rights of women and feminised groups. Although they are projects with different statuses (non-governmental organisations, collectives, women's magazines,

feminist magazines, websites), they share the central aim of producing quality feminist information based on journalistic research and investigation and precepts of form and writing derived from standard reporting, as well as offering opinion pieces.

### **AzMina: a magazine for women from A to Z**

*AzMina* magazine is part of the AzMina Institute, which tries to use information, technology and education to combat gender violence. The institute is a non-profit organisation whose aim is to broaden the gender debate and empower women. The wave of protests #NãoMereçoSerEstuprada<sup>3</sup>, or, in free translation, "I don't deserve to be raped", created by Nana Queiroz, the project's founder (Santos, 2019), propelled the organisation's launch. The magazine is a journalistic production that appeared in 2015 and is located on a web portal ([www.azmina.com.br](http://www.azmina.com.br)) and on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Santos & Miguel, 2019). The publication calls itself independent and feminist, claiming not to align itself with political movements and parties (Duarte *et al.*, 2017).

The team responsible for the project has created and feeds a digital magazine, runs campaigns, talks, events and consultancies, and develops other tools aimed at combating machismo in Brazilian society, - such as the PenhaS app, aimed at tackling domestic violence. The magazine's core audience is women aged between 18 and 35 - but there is also a proportion of women aged between 35 and 50 - and around 15% of readers are men (Duarte *et al.*, 2017). The project has been gaining recognition in its field. In 2017, the magazine won the Women's Press Trophy in Brazil, in the "Best Journalistic Project" category (Schander & Bertasso, 2019).

The magazine has no fixed editorial staff and brings together professionals from different locations (Buitoni & Lopes,

2018). Contributors often have to combine this work with other jobs to support themselves (Duarte *et al.*, 2017). The project is made up of a diverse group of women, including journalists, publicists, psychologists, lawyers, and other professionals - always women - and its focus is investigative journalism. *AzMina* mixes journalistic work with activist action (Machado *et al.*, 2019), based on a reconstitution of conventional journalistic practice.

The publication does not use any advertising funds and depends on collective financing, donations from legal entities, workshops, events and lectures, and the support of public notices to promote journalistic and cultural projects. It also carries out activities other than journalism, such as advising companies (Duarte *et al.*, 2017). The initiative is part of the new media perspective and is linked to the changes that the magazine genre has been undergoing (Duarte *et al.*, 2017). The content proposed by the publication seeks to deconstruct stereotypes about the feminist movement, including those that come from within the movement itself, such as the issue of abortion, which usually appears linked to death, silence and pain: the magazine proposes reinterpreting this from the perspective of freedom, choice and tranquillity (Schander & Bertasso, 2019), in a movement to re-signify meanings.

### **Madmoizelle: society is spelled feminine**

*Madmoizelle* is an openly feminist French digital magazine that began production in 2005. It presents itself as a committed, inclusive, and daring publication that informs readers about society, culture and people. In 2020, it was integrated into the Humanoid group, a French media company that acts as an *online* press publisher. This, in turn, is linked to EBRA, the French regional daily press group owned by the Crédit Mutuel Alliance Fédérale bank. Humanoid, however, like

3 The movement began after a 2014 survey by Brazil's Institute for Economic and Applied Research (Ipea) found that 65% of respondents believed that women deserve to be attacked when they wear clothes that show their bodies.

*Madmoizelle*, claims to be an independent project and interviewees for this research who work for the publication claim that the magazine's sponsors are selected according to criteria of alignment with the feminist agenda and the principles defended by the magazine.

The media outlet calls itself a women's magazine, with a lighter tone to its writing, although it also deals with socio-political issues. In addition to employing humorous strategies and tools such as memes and *gifs* to reach its audience through the website and social media, the project tries to move away from the reproduction of stereotypes around women's bodies, reflecting on whiteness, heterosexuality, thinness and the validity of restrictive norms and offering feminist and inclusive action tools to the public.

The stripped-down tone, inspired by social media interaction formats, makes the media address political and social issues with a focus on a young audience, even though it purports to be a publication that reflects all generations of women. The site inspires teenagers and young people by tackling various topics without taboo, such as the menstrual cup, homosexuality, threesomes, and free love (Lamy, 2019). It also appropriates icons from pop culture and internet culture to reach its audience.

### Analyzing digital feminist magazines

Digital feminist magazines directly work in dialogue with conventions from the world of traditional journalism, with which they intersect and dialogue directly, to establish themselves as a practice for producing information that is recognised as serious and reliable. By using resources and themes from the so-called women's press, the projects analysed offer texts in the form of entertainment tips (ranging from advice on love relationships, motherhood, work to suggestions for films and series) - a recurring content presentation strategy in magazines conventionally aimed

at women (Bittelbrun, 2019) - while still producing in-depth investigative reports based on the methods of informative journalism. They also use methods that emphasise feelings and sensations and apply techniques that deviate from part of journalistic conventions, such as first-person texts, keeping similarity in form to the tradition of so-called women's magazines. At the same time, they use technological tools to disseminate their content.

In the interviews with contributors to the publications studied, the concern with the use of journalistic techniques of verification and checking in the production of content stands out. The audiences also emphasise the use of investigative journalism resources in the format of the texts and reports in the magazines, listing the statistical and data base of the feminist media as the most relevant characteristic when asked about the differences between these and the hegemonic newspapers. This factor is directly pointed out in the responses of almost two thirds (18 people) of the readers of feminist publications when asked what interests them in the magazines. The story of Bruna, a literature columnist and journalist for *AzMina*, exemplifies this logic:

*AzMina* is a foot in the door of journalism, it's a lot of journalistic purism. "Let's check the information", "Let's do a good report, well done, with data". There's always this look: "Check it out properly", "Talk to more people", "See if it's really true", "Work on this data better", "Put it in accessible language", "Explain it better because it's not clear". (interview, August 2, 2021)

The reporters' work is monitored closely and regularly by the editors, which includes periodic meetings to discuss the progress of research and writing, a long investment of time - since production can take months, as the journalists interviewed reported - and revisions that involve more significant changes to the texts compared to columns and opinion pieces. In other words, as in hegemonic journalism, the work

dynamics and interactions of the editing and proofreading teams change depending on the format of the texts.

More than features reappropriated from journalism in general, these publications employ content construction strategies similar to the pattern inspired by so-called women's magazines - with techniques for humanising content, use of the first and second person singular or the second person plural in texts, debates around fashion and aesthetics-related topics, writing lists and tutorials, and writing articles for service purposes.

In addition, the bonds and ties created between team members develop from the socialisation processes that take place during the joint production of content. Interactions take place in the daily lives of media activists through cooperation and negotiations between writing and editing professionals, leaders and support teams. From a Beckerian perspective, there are two movements in the recruitment and formation of teams within feminist magazines. The first consists of the efforts of veterans, especially those from the world of journalism, to incorporate into the medium groups of individuals not yet trained in hegemonic journalistic practices or not aligned with them, so that these actors are more malleable and adapt more easily to remodelling or creating new forms of negotiation. The second movement involves insiders, especially in leadership positions, trying to maintain links with more experienced journalism professionals who can lend credibility to the group's work and validate its output. The publications then try to distance themselves to some extent from the world of journalism, but only selectively; they continue to follow some of the rules, change some practices and accept others (Becker, 1982).

Moreover, besides the conventional structures of journalism, feminist magazines are also structured around the conventions of political activism. This means that the production routines of the teams are based on constant dialogue with concepts and reflections from gender studies and feminisms.

The publications bear the foundations of militantism in their ways of conducting and maintaining the projects, from financial capture mechanisms to the very involvement of the collaborators in spaces of activism, a relationship that crosses the professional and personal lives of the group members.

Actresses and actors from the social world create actions with traces of performances (Hollanda & Costa, 2019), starting with the launch of *hashtags*, *online* petitions, and social mobilisation campaigns via the internet, trying to draw attention to the feminist cause. Through these tactics, the publications address debates on gender inequalities and try to give their content an aspect of insubordination - with characters who break the mould, such as black, fat, trans and indigenous women, among others, as can be seen on the websites of the digital magazines *Madmoizelle* and *AzMina*.

Therefore, the circulation of conventions and the ways in which conventional models reach this social world are associated with the collaborators' relationships with the journalistic production environment, with the practices of using socio-technical devices and with immersion in feminist collectives and militant movements and/or with the engagement of individuals in activist actions. The ways of working in these environments are absorbed and reproduced or adapted with a focus on producing feminist information.

However, engaging in the production of feminist magazines or the consumption of these products is not merely a professional choice or a career-related area of activity. The practice is enshrined in the routine of these people as a model of life, in which working time merges with the time of other activities linked to living and the interactions of the group's participants form a vital space of community activity (Malini & Antoun, 2013). Intersecting journalism and feminism, this engaged practice appropriates the characteristics and action strategies of social movements, building an inventive and performative news production environment.

## The digital feminist press from south to north

Socio-historical research themes, such as economic development, industrial policy, racial and ethnic relations, national identities, the emergence of democratic and authoritarian governments, and gender and women's rights, have gained prominence (Rueschemeyer & Mahoney, 2003). So, drawing a parallel between the Brazil-France cases, as representative of the global South and North, seems to contribute to the analysis of a transnational perspective of the world of feminist media activism, permeated by the context of engagement based on the use of socio-technical devices.

Elements of national identity and habits of using technology or even militant and activist tools make the observation of these two cases more dynamic as the field unfolds and analysis begins to emerge. Factors such as digital immersion, for example, make Brazilian militant movements stand out in activism on the networks, launching new techniques of militancy and engaged action *online*, as happened with feminist media activism initiatives in Brazil from 2015, long before *MeToo* and its developments in France.

The social world of contemporary feminist media activism has a transnational character and, despite the socio-political, historical and economic differences between the global South and North, these projects are based on common traits in terms of the ways in which media are created and maintained, with occasional differences related to raising funds and co-opting new members. The analysis of the interviews showed how the negotiation of identities and practices works within the Brazilian and French publications.

Tasks are divided according to the skills and experience of the collaborators and the needs of the team. There are regular agenda meetings and the media activists help each other to produce content, choose agendas, deal with tight *deadlines* and operate in situations where there are

difficulties in contacting sources or gathering data. There are also exchanges that allow people who are not journalists to enter the social world, or even for the public to regularly write and publish their own stories on the websites and social media pages of feminist magazines. In other words, the forms of collaboration are sustained by solidarity between the groups.

The players in the social world, especially the content producers and the publications' support staff (centred on administrative and accounting positions) are constantly exchanging among the group and building a network of solidarity that triggers a feeling of belonging. Meetings and moments of relaxation are offered to share stories about routines and daily life beyond work so that the collaborators can rest and relax together. The closeness of the group's practices to activism inspires in its members a sense of shared identity and of fighting for the same cause that unites them (Andrade, 2020).

The conventions are organised around the notion of activism that goes beyond the digital, permeating the physical experiences of the collaborators. They often don't know each other personally. People from different regions and cities make up the groups (both in Brazil and France), although the teams tend to be concentrated in large urban centres (São Paulo and Paris). Geographical distances don't seem to affect the cohesion of the group, since even the actresses who are in different cities or who don't even know each other face to face feel involved in the social world and consider that they belong to the group.

In addition, the link with ancestry runs through the discourses of the interviewees, whether they are content producers, support staff for the publications, or readers (although this appears in different ways in each country). In Brazil, interviewees mention their inspirations and links with African ancestors who were enslaved or with women who belonged to native peoples. Meanwhile, in France, the narratives (mainly

from readers) show identification with witches and women who were persecuted by the Inquisition, as an effort to reclaim voices that have been historically silenced.

In terms of bonds, there was a constant desire to change social structures in the interviewees' accounts. Through activism, they seek to transform the other social worlds through which they move. Feminist media activism also emerges as an opportunity to drive transitions in their careers and personal lives. What was surprising, however, were the narratives in which the changes begin not in the outside world, but with individuals on a personal level.

Regarding the differences between Brazil and France, there are two points that attract the most attention. The first is that, among the Brazilian feminist media studied, there are no men on the teams and the debate on this issue is not consensual. There are media activists who believe that the spaces should essentially be for women and others who defend the importance of having male figures in these groups. According to interviewees, the discussion tends to intensify as team members have children, especially if the children are boys, which gives media activists a new perspective to reframe the ways of conducting feminist activism. In France, *Madmoizelle* magazine has men on its staff. The leaders and regular members of the publication say (in interviews with the author) that they find the presence of men in feminist content production projects valid as a way of reaffirming the importance of a broad, joint struggle for gender equality.

Another important difference between the dynamics of how publications operate in each country is fundraising. In France, non-voluntary engaged media seek sponsorship and form partnerships with brands to maintain the group financially. In Brazil, there still seems to be greater resistance from the worlds of journalism and political activism to accepting the existence of links between feminist information production projects and private companies.

The very understanding and consensus on the status of publications that intend to monetise themselves becomes a challenge for the teams, who have to assume that they occupy a place at the intersection between activism and professionalisation. Feminist publications, therefore, rely on the strategy of maintaining themselves through money from donors as a form of mobilising communication, with a focus on raising public awareness and encouraging others to collaborate in order to make the production of content viable. This also presents itself as a way of trying to circumvent the limitations caused by advertisers (Peruzzo, 2013). However, in the case of feminist engaged media in both Brazil and France, this doesn't necessarily seem to be a viable or sufficient path, which leads media activists to look for other ways to enable the continuity of the social world.

The financial costs of engagement are often a factor that limits the capacity for action of the contributors to the publications analysed, especially for volunteers who would like to devote more time to media activism but have to keep day jobs. In publications that are closer to the world of activism, there is the reproduction of unpaid engagement logics with a high demand for participation and dedication to activities that are fundamentally linked to commitment to the cause, with no tangible financial or material rewards in the short term, which makes it difficult for collaborators to remain in these spaces. However, it can be seen that the interviewees who have stable jobs alongside their media activism manage to combine volunteering and other professional activities more easily.

Only a third of the media activists interviewed said they didn't need to juggle other jobs alongside their work at feminist publications, and that they were part of the teams as full-time members. However, these employment relationships are often loose as media outlets generally hire these professionals as *freelancers* without a formal contract or with fixed-term contracts, thus reproducing business logics of precarious wages and working conditions for professionals. At the same

time, the social world is also appropriating ways of working associated with innovations made possible by technology and which facilitate the routines of actresses and actors, such as the implementation of teleworking and/or hybrid working arrangements - which expands the territorial reach of the teams and promotes a diversity of professional profiles within them.

### Brief conclusions

Through activism, the actresses and actors try to transform the other social worlds which they circulate. This desire for change is a factor that connects the group, sensitising media activists and audiences to invest in engaged actions. Although they know that the impact of the productions they produce or consume and disseminate is limited, the interviewees find the incentive to continue their involvement with feminist agendas through the experience of immersion in a collective mobilization; once they have experienced the power of being, organising and living in a community, they cannot and do not want to leave these spaces (Pinheiro-Machado, 2019) to which they feel they belong.

The groups seek to act on different fronts, from capturing and reproducing readers' testimonies as a strategy to give voices to previously silenced women, to investing in institutional actions and campaigns that have repercussions in the state sphere, enabling the creation of public policies to combat sexism.

The functioning and participation processes of the individuals in this practice are based on forms of cooperation whose permanence is linked to emotional expressions of euphoria, pleasure, solidarity and hope that are socialised among the group and which sustain the maintenance of the space. Interactions between the group enable the formation of support networks in personal and emotional terms for the

contributors and reader, while networks of contacts between professionals from different fields, political activists and digital activists are also built. For these people, the social world becomes a collective network with transformative potential and, above all, tangible hope.

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# THE EMERGENCE OF MAGAZINE MEMBERSHIP MODELS

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## Abstract

This article undertakes a comparative analysis of three special interest magazines, *Women's Running*, *Vegan Food* and *Country Walking*, to determine how each title has developed and implemented a membership model. It explores if and how the model has impacted revenue and the audiences while looking for reoccurring themes and examining services. Semi-structured interviews were deemed to be the most appropriate methods by which to conduct this qualitative investigation. Thus, interviews were undertaken with editors and publishers to explore how membership has been established and ascertain the potential impact on revenue and audience engagement. Furthermore, the study reviews key literature themes around servitisation, including work by Viljakainen and Toivonen (2014) and Fließ and Hagenhoff's (2016) study of membership to establish if the magazines have achieved financial stability and a deeper engagement with their audience.

**Keywords:** membership, specialist magazine publishing, revenue, services, audiences

## Introduction

As a magazine scholar and consultant, I have observed how decreases in circulation and advertising revenue continue to disrupt the sustainability of magazine publishing. Magazine sales remain in decline, as illustrated by the latest UK ABC circulation figures showing an 11% drop in 2022, while global average magazine circulation fell from 26.8 million to 24 million (Majid, 2023). Although scholarly and industry-led research has yet to determine what could enable magazines to be sustainably profitable in this post-pandemic era, two themes have emerged as potential solutions – membership and servitisation (Viljakainen & Toivonen, 2014; Fließ & Hagenhoff, 2016; Media Futures, 2023). Could a membership strategy that provides services to members counteract falling circulation and advertising revenue? Possibly, scholars agree that by including a range of services and offerings to derive additional income, a membership strategy will “extend the brand” (Das et al., 2021, p.57-58; Stam & Scott, 2014). Yet, it is also vital to recognise that an audience-centric approach is a critical component of publishing business models (McPhillips & Merlo, 2008). Galbi (2001) further endorsed such an approach, proposing it should be a core part of a magazine’s value proposition. Johnston et al. (2007, p.55), however, take this approach a stage further, observing that the key to developing a strong customer value proposition “is to think about the four most common barriers keeping people from getting particular jobs done: insufficient wealth, access, skill, or time”. This reader-centric approach is conducive to developing a membership provision, reinforcing the scholarly perspective that membership programmes with benefits or services are emerging as a potentially viable proposition for magazines.

Before exploring membership and innovation in publishing further, it is first critical to examine the extent of digital disruption. Scholars and publishers alike agree that technology has substantially disrupted the long-established publishing model, concurring that prior to the millennium, most magazine

revenues came from advertising sales, which, to some extent, subsidised newsstand sales (Sannusi et al., 2015; Johnson & Prijatelj, 2006; Morrish, 2003). Prior to the disruption era, magazines were likely to succeed if publishers concentrated on aligning their editorial, circulation, and advertising revenue (Daly et al., 1997). Although technology evolved substantially pre-noughties, its impact began to gather momentum some 20 years after internet inventor Berners-Lee developed the first web server in 1990, with the invention of applications or apps taking hold in publishing (Cantoni & Tardini, 2006; Picard, 2011). The emergence of smartphones, beginning with the iPhone in 2007 and followed by the iPad and Android tablets in 2010 (Arthur, 2012), further disrupted the industry by expanding the digitalisation process, enabling digital editions to evolve from PDF page-turners into an immersive multimedia format (Oliver, 2018). Such was the impact that media organizations (from TV companies to publishers) had to reconfigure their businesses to keep pace with emerging markets. Subsequently, scholars observed a shift from traditional business methods as publishers focussed on producing content in a digital format (BarNir et al., 2003, p.792; Oliver, 2018). For scholars such as Slywotzky and Morrison (2000, p.7), moving from printed matter to online content delivery demonstrated that digitisation could be viewed as “a disruptive, creative force” in publishing, “revolutionizing how people work, play, communicate, buy, sell and live”.

As technology progressed, further disruption followed for print publishers and broadcast organizations worldwide as the focus shifted to digital. However, not all scholars considered this to be negative. Oliver (2018) and Tomas (2013) concluded that disruption has facilitated innovation across the media by creating a rich user experience. This evolution also contributed to a change in the role of websites; instead of being a signpost or advert for magazines, websites have become an extension of titles, a channel for delivering additional content and services. This shift is reinforced by an empirical study of anonymized Scandinavian women’s magazine, which examined consumer behaviour patterns on the

publication's website and found that with regard to magazine publishing, a website's potential to offer additional value was limited (Ellonen et al., 2015). These findings challenge the taxonomy of magazine websites, suggesting they could be little more than an extension of editorial content to enhance audience engagement yet unable to offer value in terms of revenue unless they offer additional benefits or services with a tangible worth. Therefore, this paper will explore how publishers are developing membership models with added benefits to retain and engage their readerships.

## A contextual review

As documented in the introduction, magazine publishing has undergone a turbulent transitional period, which has revolutionised how the industry connects to its audiences and has seen revenues decrease while expenditure to service online infrastructure has increased (Holmes & Nice, 2012; McKay, 2019; Morrish & Bradshaw, 2012). Indeed, between 2011 and 2018, the number of print magazines sold in the UK fell from 820.1m to 373.8m (Statista, 2019), a sharp decline in magazine circulation. Moreover, magazine advertising revenue has fallen from £935.9m in 2012 to £472.9m in 2021, with a further decline predicted to fall to £393.5m by 2027 (Statista, 2022). Such sharp declines in copy sales and advertising yields suggest that the conventional magazine business model of copy sales and advertising must be revolutionised to negate disruptive technology (Das et al., 2021; Karimi et al., 2015; McKay, 2019; Stam & Scott, 2014). This has been further compounded by technological changes that continue to impact how magazines are produced and consumed as the disruption progresses. Hence, publishers are taking more innovative approaches to revenue, as acknowledged by scholars who have found the continual disruption to be a fundamental driver of the need to expand revenue streams and rethink traditional business models as advertisers and audiences move away from traditional print products (BarNir et al., 2003; Holmes, 2019;

Karim et al., 2015; Oliver, 2018). Sannusi et al. (2015) also agree that disruption is at the heart of magazine publishers' challenges, with publishers having to reconsider their business model.

As digital technology evolved, print publishers and broadcast organizations worldwide have experienced further disruption as the focus shifted to digital. To lessen the impact of digital disruption, Guenther (2011) suggested publishers must control access to their magazines and exclusive content by implementing a membership strategy or selling their digital editions through core platforms. Indeed, some publishers have adopted a Netflix or Spotify approach by developing membership schemes to build reader loyalty and deepen audience engagement (Rashidian et al., 2020; Tobitt, 2021). The rationale for taking a Netflix approach is supported by Fagerjord and Kueng's (2019, p. 169) study of Netflix, from which they determined "access to exclusive content and ease of use as prime reasons for subscribing to streaming services". According to Phillips (2013), membership packages began to emerge in journal publishing, while Baker (2018) points out membership also extended to book publishing as general interest publishers expanded their subscription provision, repackaging them as memberships. Moreover, newspaper publishers have also diversified to incorporate membership models, e-commerce, and events into their business models (Jenkins & Nielsen, 2020).

However, it is crucial to understand what a membership model looks like in publishing. Vara-Miguel et al. (2023, p.6) see membership as including "defined benefits" in the package, suggesting the relationship is based on members paying because they support the publisher's stance of not developing paywalled content; under that business model, non-members can still access the editorial offering without restriction. This perspective is reinforced by Cook and Bakker (2019), who determined that membership models provided an opportunity for publishers to convert their



readership community into revenue. The study, which cited *The Bristol Cable* as an example, documented that the publication, which runs as a cooperative where members were involved in the publication's decision-making, was able to generate around €1,000 per month in revenue through their membership scheme (Cook & Bakker, 2019, p.41). A study of European native media by Pérez-Seijo et al. (2020) suggests that the role the readers play is changing from passive to active as those readers who have become members are becoming participants. They cite three reasons for this change: "Members pay a membership, so they contribute financially to the survival of the project; they can participate and contribute with their personal opinions—depending on the case, through comments, discussions, meetings, and posts on a blog; and sometimes, they even can collaborate as expert sources, according to their field of knowledge, as in the case of *De Correspondent*" (Pérez-Seijo et al., 2020, p. 88).

It is also crucial to consider the element of servitisation with regard to membership strategies, as services are likely to be a fundamental part of the overall package to increase the value to the end user – in this case, the audience. Many publishers offer a range of reader services such as events, courses and travel packages as part of their value proposition. Viljakainen and Toivonen (2014) identified an increasing emphasis on service-based offerings in the magazine sector while outlining the importance of understanding the audience to develop services that will offer value to the reader. Thus, an audience-centric approach is vital to publishing models and should be a core part of a magazine's value proposition (McPhillips & Merlo, 2008; Galbi, 2001). Johnston et al. (2007, p. 55) took this perspective a stage further, observing that the key to developing a strong customer value proposition "is to think about the four most common barriers keeping people from getting particular jobs done: insufficient wealth, access, skill, or time". It is, therefore, feasible to suggest that developing a membership strategy that is reader-centric (and

extends existing services that have a clear value to the audience) could, for some publishers, be a viable option to counteract falling circulation and advertising revenue. But caution is urged as there is currently insufficient data to support this preface notion; although scholars concur publishers need to explore alternative revenue opportunities, few have investigated the potential of membership at this time. However, scholars agree that it is feasible that by offering a range of services to derive additional income, a membership strategy could "extend the brand" (Das et al., 2021, pp. 57-58; Stam & Scott, 2014).

Despite membership models becoming more common in publishing, with many titles setting up schemes and tempting existing subscribers to become members, the literature on this topic is relatively scarce at this point. Thus, there is sufficient scope to further investigate the viability of membership provisions to determine if they could be a viable proposition for magazines. Moreover, there is an additional opportunity for study by delving deeper into the servitisation aspect of magazines because a range of benefits or services is a fundamental element of memberships.

## Methodology

A case study was determined to be the most suitable methodological approach to investigate the emergence of membership models in specialist magazine publishing, as it allows for a practical, adaptable perspective, enabling the investigator to encompass the real-world context and take a more flexible approach (Howe, 2012). This point is substantiated by Crowe et al. (2011, p.1), who also argue that case studies are "used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context". Harrison et al. (2017) also reinforce this perspective, thus underpinning the suitability of a case study methodology when investigating membership models in magazine publishing. Thus, the case study offers a practical and flexible research approach.

## The case study framework

Drawing from her experience as a consultant, the researcher has found specialist publishing to be the most successful area when developing memberships. Indeed, specialist magazines attract niche audiences; thus, it was determined to be an appropriate area of study. Moreover, the researcher selected the health and fitness genre because it was deemed an area more likely to attract a like-minded readership, which is critical when developing membership models. Furthermore, well-being is a growing and robust market which is thriving post-pandemic and, according to Statista, is projected to achieve a 3.8% annual growth rate, predicted to be worth £1.862.00m by 2028. Such figures indicate this is a market which has a strong community potential that is ripe for exploration by publishers.

Initially, this investigation sought to examine two cases in the well-being genre for the membership study: *Vegan Food & Living* and *Women's Running*. Both titles were selected because they were prominent in this sector and had developed then implemented membership models simultaneously. However, despite numerous approaches and requests, the researcher was unable to obtain an interview with the Editor of *Vegan Food & Living*, nor was she able to obtain confirmation of the magazine's circulation data. Consequently, the methodological decision to include a third case was made to complement the collected data on these two cases and add further insight to this study. Therefore, *Country Walking Magazine* was chosen as the third case as the title also had a well-being focus and had implemented a membership model around the same time.

This case study is a qualitative study based on three semi-structured interviews conducted with respondents from Anthem Publishing and Bauer Media Group, all in management roles, enabling them to talk with authority about their titles' membership strategies. The interviews were carried out using pre-determined questions, which were given to the interviewees in

advance of the interview. Each interview lasted approximately an hour and was conducted online using Zoom's video conferencing software. Although all three respondents were each offered anonymity, they agreed that their identity could be revealed as it would enhance the value of this investigation. The interviewees were Esther Newman, Editor of *Women's Running*, Cara Northcott, Marketing Manager at Anthem Publishing, and Guy Procter, Editor of *Country Walking Magazine*.

In addition, some desk-based research was also undertaken, examining each magazine's value proposition, their brand extensions, and audience engagement figures using information obtained from each title's social media following, their media kit, and data provided by the publisher. Where possible, data has also been collected from independent circulation sources such as the Audit Bureau of Circulation, with the researcher also evaluating each title's following across their social feeds. The results are detailed in each of the three cases outlined below.

### Case one: An insight into *Women's Running*

The magazine initially developed its membership scheme in 2021 during the pandemic to increase engagement and revenue and has become a digital-first title. This is a radical shift from being a sustainable, print-centric title following its launch in 2010 by Wild Bunch Media Ltd. According to figures from 2010 to 2016 obtained from the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), circulation peaked just three years after the launch before taking a downward trajectory. Between 1 July 2010 and 31 December 2010, the magazine achieved a total circulation of 21,242, with 17,178 single copies sold and 4,064 subscription sales. By 2013, sales had peaked, with the title achieving a total circulation of 25,842, 10,088 of whom were subscribers. Shortly after its inception, the title received the first of two PPA accolades, becoming Consumer Magazine of the Year in 2011 and then achieving Consumer Media Brand in 2015. By 2016, copy sales had dropped to 20,529 per

month, but subscription sales held firm at 9,530. However, in recent years, circulation has radically dropped, and at the time of writing the title's 2023 total circulation was approximately 8,000 per month, with only around 2,000 coming from newsstand sales, according to the editor Esther Newman (2023). There has been a significant shift in the landscape during the past five years, stating: "We were definitely magazine first in 2018/2019 and we are now definitely digital-first in terms of content" (Newman, 2023).

Despite the dwindling circulation, *Women's Running* remains a well-established and respected brand in the running world and is currently the only magazine dedicated to helping women achieve their running goals. In 2018, the magazine was acquired by Anthem Publishing (InPublishing, 2018); since then, it has been shortlisted for the Podcast of the Year Award and won the Diversity and Inclusion Award in the British Society of Magazine Editors Talent Awards in 2022. Like many print titles, there have been significant challenges following digital disruption. One such challenge is that *Women's Running* readers have become more youthful and tech-savvy, wanting information quickly. Newman (2023) admits that they have had to rethink their content provision as "some things still do work in print, but quick read stuff needs to be available on a smartphone on a digital platform". Yet, according to Newman (2023), *Women's Running* magazine is central to revenue generation but not the audience.

In 2020, Anthem Publishing began to explore moving from a subscription-based model to a membership provision to increase the brand's value proposition and offer more perceived value to readers. Newman (2023) explains this initiative transpired because some of the team had attended a publishing conference where the emphasis for moving forward focused on developing membership provisions.

The team wanted to try and create something that also offered a number of other benefits. Something that we could

then package up as membership, which felt much more kind of inclusive had a feeling of dialogue and community than subscription, which felt very transactional (Newman, 2023).

Newman also discloses she was part of "very successful PPA panel discussions about memberships," where publishers gave examples of their achievements and recalled the impact on the conversation when someone offered a gin membership.

We were all like, that's great because that meant she could offer customers the gin, the tonic, the flavour notes – there is so much wrapped up in that. And we were we were trying to emulate those sort of membership models – and it's quite difficult to do from a content perspective when you are still with the mindset of selling a magazine (Newman, 2023).

The publishing team began researching their membership provision by envisaging what the membership package could look like. They reached out to other brands and partners for potential collaborations so that the provision would encompass additional benefits for readers. The team were inundated with brands that wanted to work with *Women's Running* and were able to set up the membership package offering "a huge list of additional benefits" members would get while existing subscribers would be able to transfer on to membership at no extra cost (Newman, 2023). Unfortunately, the strategy was unsuccessful, uptake was low, and only a few subscribers converted their subscriptions. As a result, in the spring of 2023, the team decided to drop the word membership from the website and go back to subscriptions because the provision appeared (to readers) to be more akin to a subscription with add-ons Newman (2023). As Newman (2023) explains, "People understand what a membership is, but in the context of a print magazine that is offering additional benefits alongside that magazine – that isn't a membership".

In this case, *Women's Running* did not successfully implement a membership strategy to counteract the effects of digital

disruption and falling copy sales, as the audience didn't see the magazine in that context. So, what went wrong? According to Newman (2023), the fundamental flaw was the lack of a community, which became apparent when the team started a podcast. With the value of hindsight, Newman (2023) admits that having a community sphere "would have created a space through which the members could talk or meet," which she feels is a fundamental membership strategy.

### Case study two: *VeganFood & Living*

Launched at the end of 2015 by Anthem Publishing, *Vegan Food & Living* is a monthly title and, like its sister publication, has received awards in recognition of excellence. These accolades include the PPA (Professional Publishers Association) Independent Publisher Subscription Magazine of the Year and Consumer Magazine of the Year in 2017. The title was highly commended in The Drum B2C Brand of the Year Award the following year and achieved Favourite Vegan Magazine at the VegFest UK Awards in 2021 (*Vegan Food & Living*, 2023) – all indicators of a well-respected, reader-centric, and popular magazine. Indeed, when the UK went into lockdown in 2020, subscriptions began to rise, prompting the publisher to consider implementing a membership programme, which was launched in early 2021 (Northcott, 2023). Anthem's marketing manager, Cara Northcott (2023), explains the membership strategy was carefully researched and designed prior to implementation, admitting it was a "balance between what we were capable of offering as well as listening to our audience's needs," meaning it took a reader-centric approach. However, there was also a practical element to the membership following distribution problems as a result of lockdown.

We had a basic concept of wanting a digital element to the memberships as the post for the print mag became more

unreliable. We also wanted to increase our audience's access to the community through trying zoom colour-alongs<sup>1</sup>, to giving access a digital archive with every issue of the magazine available to read online (Northcott, 2023).

Yet despite the prior research and reader-centric approach, the membership model, like *Women's Running*, also proved to be unsustainable due to a lack of uptake, and the publisher has reverted to a subscription-based model. Part of the problem was the audience's grasp of membership, as "it took quite a bit of education around what 'membership' meant whereas 'subscribe' was a language that readers were familiar with and converted well" (Northcott, 2023).

As with many lifestyle magazines, the title's audience is believed to have declined, but unfortunately, the publisher has not shared any circulation figures for *Vegan Food & Living*, and a search revealed that no records had been documented online. Nevertheless, it is understood that its current circulation is under 10,000 copies per month, akin to its sister publication, *Women's Running* (Northcott, 2023). This is surprising, given it is such a well-respected magazine. However, the market for vegan titles has shrunk significantly in recent years, with titles merging or closing down. *Vegan Living*, launched by Select Publisher Services in October 2016, closed after only 37 issues in December 2019 (Tobitt, 2020). Then, in 2022, Anthem reached a deal with Prime Impact, acquiring *PlantBased* and *Vegan Life* to merge with *Vegan Food & Living* (*InPublishing*, 2022). Despite a growing interest in vegan foods, only two titles, *Vegan Food & Living* and *Simply Vegan* (both published by Anthem), remain on the newsstands.

Notwithstanding a decrease in publications, key factors indicate that veganism continues on an upward trajectory. The Vegan Society, for example, has registered more than 65,000 products through its Vegan Trademark (introduced by

<sup>1</sup> Zoom colour-alongs is an example of an effort that the team tried on the brand Colouring Heaven, where the Editor coloured the magazine with subscribers once a month on the video conference platform Zoom.

the Society in 1990 to authenticate vegan products). Moreover, according to YouGov statistics, the number of vegans equates to approximately five per cent of the UK's population (YouGov, 2023). These factors highlight a substantial growth in the vegan market while also supporting the sustainability of The Vegan Society's quarterly members' magazine, *The Vegan*. These statistics indicate growth in the retail sector, suggesting a potential market for vegan publications. According to Newman (2023), the community aspect was the missing link with *Women's Running*, which, if present, was likely to make membership a potentially viable proposition. Therefore, it is surprising that implementing a membership strategy did not increase engagement or help make this magazine a more sustainable title.

### A comparison with *Country Walking Magazine*

Like the aforementioned specialist titles, readers of *Country Walking* magazine, published by Bauer Media Group, are linked by their shared interest in walking. Yet this is where the similarities end, as this title is indeed thriving. *Country Walking's* current total ABC circulation is 42,000 combined, with its circulation trajectory enjoying year-on-year growth following its annual #Walk1000miles campaign initiated by editor Guy Proctor in 2017. The campaign is attributed to developing a community of loyal readers, indicating that print can prosper with the right audience. In 2021, the title, which had 37,651 print subscribers, became part of a pilot scheme where Bauer trialled a membership strategy. However, unlike the other two magazines, *Country Walking's* membership strategy has been hugely successful, with the team managing to convert 35,000 of its subscribers to members in just two years, with only 20 per cent consuming the magazine in its digital format (Proctor, 2023).

It is an encouraging success story, but what critical factors have enabled Bauer to achieve where others have failed? According to Proctor (2023), treating the readers as members

of their club as opposed to customers has proved to be a key element in the successful transition from subscription to membership. He has found that readers "respond brilliantly to the special messages we target just to them, like the member-exclusive email we send augmenting each issue with extra behind-the-scenes content". Furthermore, Proctor (2023) found that "it is easier to retain members than it was subscribers", attributing their success to readers being treated as members of the club as opposed to customers. Indeed, part of the team's strategy is to be audience-centric, ensuring their members feel "better-appreciated and benefitted". These targeted member benefits include a 50% discount on OS Maps' digital subscription, and the brand has plans to further expand the membership offering, "as always deep, well-targeted benefits perform much better than a broad array of shallow, more general-market ones" (Proctor 2023).

Analysing Proctor's assessment of the membership strategy, we can determine that much research has gone into evaluating which aspects of membership benefits work best, as well as the importance of distinguishing the differentials between subscriptions and membership. Proctor (2023) cites that one of the team's most important lessons was the community aspect: "people love being treated as members of our club rather than customers of our business". However, developing a membership provision is a lot of work for a magazine team and needs careful planning, with Proctor urging publishers not to "underestimate the time it takes to curate member benefits and exclusive content" and suggests it would be prudent to undertake "an audit of activities to see what the team can stop doing to give them more time".

Drawing from *Country Walking's* experience when moving from subscriptions to a membership strategy, it is feasible to suggest that having already established a strong community from the #Walk1000miles campaigns played a vital role in that transition. While the value of additional member-exclusive content cannot be overlooked, the community

created by the magazine has certainly contributed towards this thriving membership title. Prior to launching the campaign in 2018, figures obtained from the Audit Bureau of Circulation show that the magazine's circulation had dwindled to 23,489 by 2015, indicating that the readership was in decline, but by 2020, its circulation had increased to 37,972 (ABC, 2023). Therefore, it is likely that had the magazine not been as active in its reader community with the #Walk1000miles campaign, the membership strategy might not have been successful.

## Findings

An investigation of these three case studies has determined that all three magazines had actively researched membership propositions and engaged with their audiences, but only *Country Walking* managed to develop a successful membership provision. Indeed, there are some similarities between all three titles, including low copy sales, with *Country Walking* selling around 7,000 copies per month on the newsstands, while *Women's Running* sells approximately 2,000 copies. This similarity is indicative of a shift in consumption habits, with readers seemingly preferring to subscribe rather than buy their magazines from retail outlets. Moreover, a review of the findings documented in Table 1 signifies that *Country Walking Magazine* has achieved greater success with converting audience engagement into copy sales and membership, resulting in the magazine achieving more than five times the circulation of the other two titles. This is despite *Women's Running* and *VeganFood & Living* achieving significantly higher engagement across the socials, which suggests that there is unrealised potential that could be converted into readers.

In addition to the differentials in consumption, two themes have emerged from this cases study – the community aspect and servitisation, whereby publishers develop services for their audience to add value to the membership provision.

As illustrated in Table 1, while all three titles include some service provisions for their readers and have similar price points, the two independent titles could not successfully convert audience engagement across the socials. When comparing the three titles evaluated, it is prudent to consider the resources available to the publishers. For example, *Women's Running* and *VeganFood & Living* are owned by Anthem, a relatively small publisher with a stable of six magazines. In contrast, *Country Walking* is published by Bauer Media Group, which has a brand reach of 25 million consumers (Bauer 2023). Therefore, Bauer is likely to have an infinitely larger budget and far more audience development and conversion resources, which could account for the difference in circulation figures.

Overall, from the findings of this study, it is feasible to suggest that membership can work well for some titles but not others. Certainly, *Country Walking* has managed to establish a robust membership provision by learning what works and what doesn't and by building a vibrant, engaged community of actual readers before implementing a membership provision, resulting in a successful membership conversion. Proctor (2023) acknowledges that membership has been a learning curve, with one of the critical lessons being that "people love being treated as members of our club rather than customers or our business". Moreover, all three interviewees concur that publications must include relevant services in the provision. For example, in the case of *Country Walking*, their member-exclusive email with behind-the-scenes content helped members "feel better appreciated and benefitted" (Proctor, 2023). However, findings also indicate that readers struggle to understand what membership actually means (Newman, 2023; Northcott, 2023), suggesting that it would be feasible for publishers to invest in educating readers so that they can differentiate between membership and subscription and the value attached to each. Finally, this aspect draws a connection to the importance of relationship-building with the audience by ensuring continual dialogue using tools such as reader surveys, as indicated by Northcott (2023) and Newman (2023).

Table 1 Comparison of engagement and value proposition<sup>2</sup>

Cases	Case 1: <i>Women's Running</i> (Anthem Publishing)	Case 2: <i>VeganFood &amp; Living</i> (Anthem Publishing)	Case 3: <i>Country Walking</i> (Bauer Media Group)
USP	<i>A community for women who love to run</i>	<i>The UK's only dedicated vegan magazine</i>	<i>The UK's best-selling walking magazine</i>
Audience demographic	<p><b>Core profile:</b> ABC1</p> <p><b>The readers:</b> 90% are runners, predominately aged between 35 and 50 and do not have a running coach. The majority of readers run 1-3 times per week but also participate in a range of fitness activities.</p>	<p><b>Core profile:</b> ABC 1</p> <p><b>The readers:</b> 67% are vegans and spend more than £35 per week on vegan products. The readership is predominantly female with an average age of 35, with 16% interested in becoming strictly vegan, while 8% are vegetarian.</p>	<p><b>Core profile:</b> ABC1</p> <p><b>The readers:</b> Readership ratio is 56% female and 43% male, all of whom are walkers of all ages and abilities.</p>
Circulation and engagement	<p><b>Circulation/readership:</b> <sup>1</sup>approximately 8,000 and a 19,325 monthly readership</p> <p><b>Core social platforms:</b> Facebook 220k   Instagram 55.8k</p> <p><b>E-newsletters:</b> 32k opt-in subscribers</p> <p><b>Website:</b> 100k+ per month</p>	<p><b>Circulation/readership:</b> Not available but estimated to be similar to <i>Women's Running</i>, according to marketing manager Cara Northcott.</p> <p><b>Core social platforms:</b> Facebook 388k   Instagram 80.8k</p> <p><b>E-newsletters:</b> Not available</p> <p><b>Website:</b> Not available</p>	<p><b>Circulation/readership:</b> 42,445, of which 35,000 are members.</p> <p><b>Core social platforms:</b> Facebook 40k   Instagram 24.3k</p> <p><b>E-newsletters:</b> Live for the Outdoors 15,654 and #Walk1000miles 25,972</p> <p><b>Website:</b> 190K per month</p>
Pricing	<p><b>Single issue print:</b> £5.99</p> <p><b>Single issue digital:</b> £4.99</p> <p><b>Membership/subscription:</b> Ceased promoting memberships and has gone back to selling subscriptions offering a print and digital package for £49.99 for 12 months and digital only at £3 per month.</p>	<p><b>Single issue print:</b> £5.99</p> <p><b>Single issue digital:</b> £4.99</p> <p><b>Membership/subscription:</b> Ceased promoting memberships but offers <i>VeganFood &amp; Living Plus+</i> offering a print and digital package for £49.99 for 12 months or digital only at £2.99 per month.</p>	<p><b>Single issue print:</b> £5.20</p> <p><b>Single issue digital:</b> £4.99</p> <p><b>Subscription:</b> £54.99 print, digital £44.99 and print plus (combined) £59.99</p> <p><b>Membership:</b> £5.20 for print plus membership and £3.99 for digital membership</p>
Brand extensions and services	<p>Weekly podcast</p> <p>Weekly e-newsletter</p> <p>Competitions</p> <p><b>Subscribers' benefits:</b> <i>The Edit</i> (a weekly e-newsletter) plus exclusive gym, training, and kit discounts</p>	<p>Simply Vegan Podcast (weekly)</p> <p>Weekly e-newsletter</p> <p>Competitions</p> <p><b>Subscribers' benefits:</b> free newsletter, access to additional plant-based recipes and perks for plant-based partners.</p>	<p>#Walk1000miles extension, which includes retail merchandise and offers from partners</p> <p><b>Subscribers' benefits:</b> Unlimited access to CW's digital library, including back issues, a monthly Editor's Email, plus a customisable reading experience with audio, night mode and adjustable text.</p> <p><b>Members' benefits:</b> a member-only app and website, past editions archive, members-only rewards, discounts and prizes, monthly Editor's e-newsletter and 50% off OS Maps Premium Membership.</p>

<sup>2</sup> Data for Table 1 obtained from each publication's website, media kit and The Audit Bureau of Circulation.

<sup>3</sup> Circulation figures for *Women's Running* obtained from the editor, Esther Newman.

## Conclusion

While this study can only provide a comparative overview rather than an in-depth analysis of the three cases, findings indicate that a robust community of readers and a relevant service provision are fundamental requirements for a successful membership strategy. Moreover, findings also suggest that membership should be developed individually instead of using a standardised strategy across all titles. Membership should not be a one-size-fits-all approach. For example, in Case Study One, Newman (2023) discovered that a community aspect to the *Women's Running* membership was more valuable to the audience while "perks like extra discounts with other companies were of low priority". On the other hand, with Case Study Three, Protector (2023) stated that relevant discounts were a core part of the *Country Walking* members' package alongside the community aspect, both being a crucial factor in the success of the membership.

Thus, we can determine that publishers should take a more tailored approach with careful research, planning and testing. As illustrated by the first two case studies, while readers of some titles might value additional aspects to their subscription or membership, these were often of little or no importance unless directly relevant. In contrast, members embraced the opportunity to be part of an interactive community reinforced with merchandise. Indeed, these factors were vital components of *Country Walking's* success, signifying that membership can be an effective strategy in the right circumstances, particularly given the recent shift in consumption habits, with readers preferring to subscribe rather than buy magazines from retailers.

To conclude, we can draw two critical lessons from this paper. First, publishers need to develop a deeper understanding of how memberships work, together with a realistic grasp of the timeframe needed to curate a membership package.

Secondly, it is critical to understand what value looks like from the audience's perspective, meaning publishers should adopt a reader-centric approach when curating and developing value-added services for membership packages. As the first two case studies illustrate, a membership is unlikely to be successful without critical attention to detail.

## Further research and study limitations

This study is limited as it doesn't include audience data. Therefore, further research could include a comparative study of two contrasting magazine audiences to establish their perspective on membership. Moreover, methods, such as surveys or focus groups, could be employed to gain insight into the audiences' viewpoint and examine the publisher-audience relationship.

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**THE STORY  
OF FINLAND, AS  
NARRATED BY TWO  
WEEKLIES:  
THE LONG NARRATIVES  
OF *SUOMEN KUVALEHTI*  
AND *APU***

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## **Abstract**

Over 100 years, two magazines have reported about Finland to Finns. However, their focus and working tools have been different. One has tried to catch the gaze of the educated few, while the other has focussed on the whole family. During various social turns, one has better caught the public gaze and the other has been less successful – but during the following decade, the roles have changed. The eternal problem for both is the question of topicality.

**Keywords:** Magazine, Finland, History, Inclusion, Exclusion

Finland has a long tradition of weekly journals. Weeklies have advised Finns on occupational as well as religious matters. Reading circles have expanded their readership beyond subscriptions. One indication of the institutional role of weeklies is that even today, 74% of popular magazines are based on subscriptions; bookstand acquisitions mainly concern specialised magazines and crossword journals. Circulation figures of magazines have gone down during the past two to three decades, but the magazine field still represents one-fifth of the media industry<sup>1</sup>.

Two popular magazines have kept company with the Finns through the country's independence struggle, three wars and three deep recessions. However, their methods of catching the public gaze have varied.

*Suomen Kuvalehti* (Finland Pictorial, est. 1916) was established by a well-known publisher willing to bring to the country the then-fashionable European picture journal format. Right from its establishment, it has been a journal for the educated well-to-do in towns as well as in the countryside.

The start of *Apu* (Help, est. 1933) is markedly different. It was established by a newcomer in the field in the middle of the deep recession of the 1930s and sold in the streets of Helsinki by the unemployed, who shouted, "Help the helpless!" It was a pulp magazine, composed of crime stories, romances, exotic narratives and games. However, it also was one of the first entertainment journals attempting to catch the attention of the mixed urban population, not only people with esteem and wealth.

Up to the 1950s, practically the only feature these magazines shared were cover policies in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s:

both frequently used pictures of American film stars, pictures of mothers and children, as well as pictures linked to nature and the four seasons in their covers.

In the 1960s, the magazines started to report similar topics, thus entering the same market. *Suomen Kuvalehti* lost its *primus inter pares* status, appearing conservative and careful, while *Apu* developed into a family journal. Today, the size of their readerships<sup>2</sup> is on the same level, with 305,000 for *Apu* (2022) and 308,000 for *Suomen Kuvalehti* (2022). Both are subscription-based.

Both magazines have been able to survive through the capricious magazine gap in Finland. In this article, I try to analyse how they have done it; in short, how they have throughout history exercised inclusion and exclusion elements in their work. According to my understanding, this is possible in a small country only through catching the code of Finnishness.

## Literature frame

This study analysed 644 issues with 10-year intervals from 1916–2020.<sup>3</sup> The method is a crude frame analysis, combining quantitative and qualitative elements and paying special attention to cover policies, inclusion/exclusion mechanisms and dominant narratives – to put it simply, how the magazines have been able to reach to their publics via relevant content choices and focus.

Covers have special status in this study. Mehita Iqani (2012) talks about the perception of the *public gaze* and, via it, power in the Foucauldian sense – when members of the public meet magazine covers at newsstands. More concretely, Carla Rodrigues Cardoso (2010, pp. 584–586) emphasises that *the*

1 Statistics Finland: Media statistics (2022) [https://pxdata.stat.fi/PxWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin\\_jvie/statfin\\_jvie\\_pxt\\_12a8.px/](https://pxdata.stat.fi/PxWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin_jvie/statfin_jvie_pxt_12a8.px/)

2 Today, media in Finland announce exact circulation figures only to advertisers; they talk about readerships, which also include visiting web versions.

3 A total of 432 issues of *Suomen Kuvalehti* and 212 issues of *Apu* were analysed. Both magazines are available online.

cover communicates via its denotative and connotative messages (pictures and text layouts), via its link to the story inside and via elements left untold. However, in the Finnish system with subscription-based magazines, the role of covers is not as strong as in, say, the British system.

Besides the above magazine-specific sources, the analysis is based on Michael Billig's (1995) concept of *banal nationalism*. Billig's classic book turns the attention of nationalism scholars to the everyday discourses in which nationalism is reproduced. People do not forget their nationality when they are continually reminded of it. Natalie Koch and Antti Paasi (2016, p. 3) phrase it as follows:

While there are major differences in the intensity of how the "nation" is performed and mobilised, in practically all national contexts, people read national newspapers, watch national TV news and their weather forecast maps, and adapt to the peculiarities of national curricula in schools. Respectively, individuals learn about national territories and their borders, national identities, wars, and noteworthy "national heroes" from national history.

Billig (2023) recently elaborated on his concept of everyday nationalism, suggesting that nationalism and cosmopolitanism are historically entangled. He remarks that the period of globalisation coincided with the formation of nation-states, highlighting the national nature of globalisation. In my thinking, elements of banal nationalism definitely strengthen the analysis of inclusionary and exclusionary elements in media content.

Another dimension of the analysis is *media-constructed reality*. Jan Ekecrantz and Tom Olsson (1994, e.g. pp. 21-28) discuss this phenomenon in their study of the "editing history" of Swedish newspapers in the twentieth century, moving from a "non-edited society" to a "referring society" of expert

statements mediated by the media. According to them, a "discussion society" existed shortly in the 1960s, creating a space for democratic debate. However, it was soon replaced by an "edited society" with fixed media power – the media carry power to construct the frames of public society.

Vaia Doudaki, Nico Carpentier and Michal Glowacki (2022) take a different stand to media constructed reality. They note that media is "only one of the spheres in which change is addressed, reflected and given visibility, represented and co-constructed" (p. 7), but they admit that media and communication function as battlefields involving preferred understandings and interpretations of change. *Mediation of change and changing media are interwoven*.

The normative vision of *journalism's civic purpose is inclusive*. However, as Rodney Benson (2020, p. 93) states, exclusion is produced in different ways: economic and cultural. Advertisers do not want to reach everybody but only members of the public with enough income to buy products. Cultural exclusion takes place in publications freely available but only attracting the interest of those with economic and cultural resources. Media outlets also contribute to cultural exclusion when they adopt formats that are designed to attract upscale audiences, thus sending an implicit "not welcome" message to everyone else (Benson, 2020, pp. 98-101).

One pillar in my analysis is Göran Bolin's (2016) notion of *media generations and subjective media landscapes*. Based on Karl Mannheim's (1928/1952) and Henri Lefebvre's (1992/2004) thoughts, Bolin (2016) elaborated on *we-sense*, which is created by "waves of generations" in media landscapes. The *we-sense* is more easily expressed by older respondents, who have elaborated on their generational identity through remembrances: stories told to grandchildren and former classmates in class reunions and other occasions when people born around the same time congregate.



Bolin (2016) talked about generations as media users, while my work focuses on media content's ability to attract media users. However, there is a link. All journalistic products aim at inclusiveness, but their ability to do so depends on the ability to create a feeling of we-sense among receiver cohorts.

### Problem-setting and method

With these admittedly scattered theoretical considerations, I try to catch elements of inclusion/exclusion and social change as they have been expressed in the two magazines *Suomen Kuvalehti* and *Apu* over time. How have the two weeklies reminded readers of "being a Finn"? Throughout the decades, *Suomen Kuvalehti* has focused on well-to-do, predominantly male readers, while *Apu* has had a far wider lens: people in the streets, their family members and friends, grandmothers and children.

The past 100-year period has brought several radical and dramatic changes in Finnish society (e.g. Ylikangas, 1986). How have the two magazines been able to reflect on them? Assumingly, both magazines in principle aim at including as large a group as possible as their readers, especially because both – being subscription-based – prefer long-standing reader contacts.

My research question is as follows:

*What kind of Finnish reality have the two magazines constructed in their aim to create a we-sense among their readers?*

Based on sample material every tenth year, I try to detect changes in the journalistic history of the two magazines. The analysis is determined to remain crude because as many as

644 issues of the magazines have been studied.<sup>4</sup> The following aspects of each issue in the sample have been analysed:

- topics, actors and indicators of power;
- focus;
- journalistic style, angle and concept of time;
- cover policy<sup>5</sup> and photojournalistic approach;
- receiver addressing;
- dominant/hidden phenomena and weak signals (if found).

Thus, a crude quantitative content analysis is used for the coverage of the three first points, while the rest are analysed with qualitative methods. Ekecrantz and Olsson (1994) defined changing journalistic practices based on descriptions of events and time (pp. 140-148). The objective is to form a brief description of the journalistic frame for the year concerned based on the analysis of 16-34 issues per each sample year<sup>6</sup>.

Categories for *Suomen Kuvalehti* and *Apu* text analysis (filled for each text in issues included in the sample) as well as picture analysis are listed in Appendix A. In the following section, I describe the decade of 1910 in more detail. In the analysis, all decades are treated in the same manner.

### 1910s: Disaster; culprits outsourced

In addition to World War I, Finland has its own turmoil. In December 1917, the country declares independence from Russia. However, a civil war between the "white" bourgeois forces and the "red" working class breaks out only a few months later. Besides the Russian revolution, a key factor in the conflict is the scarcity of foodstuff (Haapala, 1995; Ylikangas, 1986, pp. 161–172).

4 The data analysis has been carried out by me, Ira Holmqvist, Alma Lüttge and Inka Tommila.

5 All covers of the sample year are included, not only the analysed issues.

6 In the analysis, it became clear that for a more specific reporting of changes, it would have been better to select fewer issues per year and to reduce the intervals to five years.

*Suomen Kuvalehti* is the only topicality-oriented magazine that reports on these events. This fact is reflected in its fast-rising circulation figures.

The independence declaration in December 1917 receives extremely modest attention – one picture and caption – by the magazine.

Only 38 issues came out because of the civil war in January-May 1918, and in five spring issues, practically nothing else but reports about the war are published. The magazine's first editor – a young white idealist – is shot during the war. Besides the "white general" Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, he is the only war victim who is personalised. Most texts refer to "troops" or "groups".

At the end of 1918, state organs discuss establishing a monarchy in the country. The magazine presents a cavalcade of German princes as candidates for the throne. After a few months, the plan is buried, and the country becomes a republic. The magazine keenly follows activities for strengthening administration. Party politics are avoided.

Throughout the civil war period, reporting remains reserved. Harsh language is used for the reds but not systematically. At the end of the year, the tone of reporting calms down, although portraits of fallen white soldiers receive attention. The focus in foreign reporting is on Germany and, to a certain extent, on Karelia, the Finnish-speaking region in Russian territory.

On covers, patriotic themes are frequent: two-thirds of 1918 covers present men in uniforms, General Mannerheim, artillery, national dresses and flags. However, German nobility and American film stars also have their share. A barbarous cover shows a young white woman – her body wrapped with rounds of ammunition clips. Thus, on the white side, women

activists are praised, while the morals of red women are repeatedly questioned.

The reporting – with some exceptions – tends to be rigid but reserved, lacking emotional flavour. Every issue includes jokes, crosswords and competitions for the readers.

**Summary:** The material provides support to Benson (2020). The magazine excludes readers who sympathise with the reds but does not advocate conflict, either. With repeated references to Karelia, the borders are extended to the region. Banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) is here extended to cover also the Russian Karelia.

However, the most interesting element is the fact that both extreme hate and extreme respect are "outsourced". The culprit for demagoguery and warfare is not the Finnish working class but the Russian forces existing in the country, while the biggest heroes – besides General Mannerheim – are German troops arriving in the country in April 1918. The country recovers surprisingly quickly from tragic civil war experiences. Now, independence receives appreciation among the white-collar groups in society, and state-building is emphasised. It is easier to do so when the core reasons for the conflict are placed outside. *Suomen Kuvalehti* reflects popular attitudes among state-builder activists in society. Party-based differences are not given attention.

Interestingly, attitudes towards red women are considerably harder than towards red men. In this way, the magazine reflects dominant contradictory perceptions about a woman's role in society, especially among the bourgeoisie. Women received suffrage in 1906 in Finland, the first country in Europe to do so, and women did function in various public organs. However, conservative attitudes about women's place in society are strong in many groups (Julkunen, 2010).

1920s: Optimism, Karelia, trust on technology	
<p><b>Society:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural country</li> <li>• Establishment of public institutions, seeking International acceptance</li> <li>• Soothing political contradictions</li> <li>• Hundred of prisoner camps</li> <li>• Minister of Interior shot in the street</li> <li>• Prohibition laws accepted</li> <li>• Interest in modernity, technology (cars, airplanes, ships)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Magazine(s):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Suomen Kuvalehti</i>: Building nation</li> <li>• No discussion on politics, attention to history and state-building, high culture</li> <li>• Topicality via pictures (not many)</li> <li>• Reporting style solemn</li> <li>• Karelia: poor, backwards, but common roots, no mention about Karelia's political instability</li> <li>• New technology: cars, airplanes, household equipment</li> <li>• Stories of 1918 heroes</li> <li>• Covers: Agricultural, religious symbols, men in uniforms, American film stars</li> </ul>

Fig.1 Dominant characteristics in society and magazines in the 1920s.

**Summary:** The magazines' tone in the year 1922 is dramatically different from 1917-18. It is optimistic and forward-looking. Topicality is brought in via the increased use of pictures. The reporting style is solemn and stale. Domestic high culture, classic music and theatre are covered frequently. Stories of fallen heroes appear in the magazine, but the focus is on state-building, Karelia and new technology. Under the state-building theme, the parliament and activities of ministers and ministries are reported. Political parties are rarely mentioned, so there is no discussion about political conflicts.

In Karelia, there is a succession of unsuccessful political uprisings, but *Suomen Kuvalehti* emphasises its Finnish roots. Karelia is poor and backwards, but folk culture is described in a romantic light.

A strong feature is the fascination with modernisation and its symbols: railways, cars, aeroplanes and agricultural equipment. The magazine publishes several special issues linked to these areas, and the United States is described as a country promoting such wonders.

The increased volume of poems, short stories, causeries, sport reports, jokes and competitions undoubtedly aim at expanding the scope of readers to new groups. Most texts – and large articles – are signed with pseudonyms<sup>7</sup>.

The cover policy respects seasons and the cycle of yearly activities in agriculture and religion, especially around Christmas, Easter and religious holidays. The concept of time is distinctly fixed with the calendar. American film stars have a large share of cover themes.

<sup>7</sup> Pseudonym journalism had a long tradition in Finnish media, starting from the eighteenth century. Both professional writers and members of the public have reported and debated about public matters under pseudonyms (Kuismin, 2018).

## 1930s: Decade of deep divisions

### Society:

- First part of decade: deep recession, second part better economically
- Multiple right-wing unrests (worst in 1932); groups support military activity in Karelia
- Politics, science and high culture focus on Germany, popular culture on US
- Decade end: Soviet Union starts war against Finland (Winter War 90 days), Finland loses large parts of its territory
- Division of whites and reds disappear, nation unified in the war

### Magazine(s):

- *Suomen Kuvalehti*: Political agenda-setting
- Limited coverage of political unrests
- Karelia's connection to right-wing activism often goes unmentioned
- Depression as social problem
- International focus: Germany, exotic places, Finns travelling abroad
- Covers: American film stars, Finnish high culture performers
- *Apu* (starts, 1933): Pulp magazine: romances & adventures, religion and children
- Urban focus, whole family
- Column on topicalities
- Covers: American film stars, illustrations

Fig.2 Dominant characteristics in society and magazines in the 1930s.

**Summary:** The two magazines speak to two different audiences, one to the middle class and the other to blue-collar worker homes in towns. *Suomen Kuvalehti* deliberately undermines the right-wing turmoil of the 1930s and political activities in general, emphasising state-building and formal leaders. The question of Karelia is central for the right-wing movement, which wants to extend the Finnish borders to include Karelia, a Russian region with Finnish cultural heritage. The continuous promotion of Karelia in the magazine hints at a need to gain political control over Karelia, although the issue is not explicitly expressed; thus, references to banal nationalism are made (Billig, 1995).

Although *Apu's* topical coverage is minimal, it mentions local unrest as frequently as *Suomen Kuvalehti* does. For *Suomen Kuvalehti*, high culture phenomena – theatre, classic music and sciences – are important, as well as modernity, cars and

gadgets. The basic tone is parallel with the programme service offered by the public radio, starting in the 1930s. On the other hand, the entertainment bias of *Apu* reflects the cinema and popular music leaning towards American-origin products popular in towns. *Suomen Kuvalehti* covers this sphere only in its cover policy with American film stars. *Apu's* romance and adventure material indicates the publisher's anticipation of the public's interest in exotism – and *Apu's* rapidly growing popularity shows that the anticipation has been right. With *Apu's* poorly translated stories, magazine readers become acquainted with the narrative mode.

High culture and political interests lean towards Germany, while entertainment and advertising search for exotic places or the United States. The popularity of American culture applies particularly to younger generations (Aapola & Kaarninen, 2003).

Marked changes in *Suomen Kuvalehti*'s reporting are a turn towards people instead of buildings, individuals with exceptional qualities, and Finns in distant places. The magazine uses plentiful pictures in covers and in stories to make narratives topical, but the reporting style remains solemn. In *Apu*, journalistic changes in covers and stories are multiple and sudden, and there is no journalistic policy in reporting.

In addition to American film stars frequenting covers of both magazines, they have light filler material in common: crossword puzzles, competitions for readers and jokes. Fillers tend to cover 20-25% of the volume. *Apu* has more intense contact with its readers than *Suomen Kuvalehti*.

In 1932, *Suomen Kuvalehti* introduces feature themes that are still frequent in Finnish magazine journalism. Exotic places receive coverage, and if Finns visit such places, the volume of the story extends. Excursions of a Finnish adventurer pilot in Asia and North America are applauded in 11 issues, and he is selected to be on the cover twice. Another feature repeating in the coverage is beauty contests arranged all over the country.<sup>8</sup> Personality orientation also emerges in stories of economy men of note; a decade prior, the emphasis in economy articles was on buildings and equipment. However, personality portraits remain formal and solemn, even when reporting the wedding of a great sportsman, Paavo Nurmi.

*Apu*'s visual policy is capricious. Many narratives are visualised with illustrations. Some pictures cover surprising themes, such as the Ku-Klux-Klan and British ministers.

*Apu* focuses on both women and men. Its coverage only rarely links to rural living, although covers present sowing in the spring and harvesting in the fall. Furthermore, references to religion appear in covers around Christmas and Easter. Two-thirds of the covers present American film stars, mainly women. The themes for the rest are pictures of children, smiling women and drawn illustrations of urban sceneries. Each cover carries the text "Buy *Apu*. Help jobless people". Jobless people sell the magazine in the streets of Helsinki and in some other towns. The jobless receive 50 percent of the price.

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8 In 1929, the magazine was among the organisers of the Miss Finland competition, which also included skull measurements. In the 1920s and 1930s, claims about Finns belonging to the mongoloid race were made in public – and denied. In 1934, the first Finnish Miss Europe was selected, and she received wide publicity also in *Suomen Kuvalehti*.

## 1940s: War and recovery, war reparations and resettlement of 320 000 Karelians

### Society:

- Decade labelled with war and recovery, but also new type of sharing power
- Society still strongly agriculture oriented
- Finno-Soviet "Friendship Treaty" 1948
- Industry develops, partly due to heavy war reparations to Soviet Union
- Huge public task: resettlement of 320 000 Karelian evacuees from the areas in eastern Finland lost in the war
- Entertainment popular but heavily taxed (music, journals, books, dances)

### Magazine(s):

- *Suomen Kuvalehti*: Cultural management
- Propagates tolerance and hard work to soldiers and home front
- War descriptions rare
- Role of women stressed in reporting
- Covers: Men in uniforms, idyllic rural scenarios, women and children, humour
- *Apu* and *Pulp* magazine: adventures, romances, almost nothing about the war
- *Apu* does not come out 1945-46 due to newsprint rationing
- Covers: American film stars

Fig.3 Dominant characteristics in society and magazines in the 1940s.

**Summary:** The Continuation War (Finnish WWII), ending in September 1944, is said to mean the end of the First Republic, dominated by the bourgeois realm (Ylikangas, 1986, pp. 199-206). The 1940s is a decade of war and recovery from war but also of a new type of sharing power. A huge task is the resettlement of 320,000 Karelian evacuees. "Pure" entertainment is forbidden after the war and later heavily taxed but extremely popular.

In the 1940s, newsprint rationing is heavy. *Apu* does not come out for two years. In 1948, *Apu* and a few other journals are moved from the entertainment category, thanks to support of the Social Democratic Party (Malmberg, 1991, pp. 110-115).

The two magazines have different agendas, but both seem to anticipate certain trends in the nation. People are tired and want pleasure, escape and fun. Both magazines offer elements of this, especially in the pages of games, jokes and crossword puzzles. The political arena of *Suomen Kuvalehti* is in accordance with those in power. There is very little debate about the dominant political line of the country but, interestingly, plans to reform the school system create pros and cons. The focus turns strongly to agriculture and farming,

especially farming women. The magazine is, as in the 1930s, concerned about the Finnish language<sup>9</sup>. A columnist getting considerable attention with his texts writes under the pseudonym Pekka Peitsi and gives his views about domestic and international matters. The man behind the pseudonym is Urho Kekkonen, a young right-wing politician at the time and later the Finnish president<sup>10</sup>.

The language used about the enemy in *Suomen Kuvalehti* is rude, but the home front is often romanticised. In particular, the role of Finnish women is emphasised. However, stories about individuals – men or women, on the front or at home – are rare. People are described as representatives of groups. Such "classic" values refer to Bolin's (2016) argumentation.

*Apu* is anarchistic in its short utterances of political substance. Its call for leisure and fun is far stronger – and this is the main reason for the lack of newsprint. *Apu* is not "serious" enough in the eyes of those in power. However, based on research on war and postwar mental atmosphere, *Apu's* simple and often banal content seems to match the dominant tones in society (e.g. Pilke, 2009; Pilke, 2016; Pylkkänen, 1987).

9 In the 1920s and 1930s, there were conflicts between the Finnish-speaking majority and the Swedish-speaking minority commanding, for example, the language used in university teaching.

10 Pekka Peitsi/Urho Kekkonen radically changes his view about the war in 1944, suggesting hope for peace negotiations.

## 1950s: Opening out, Olympics and welfare state emergence

### Society:

- Agricultural country, industries grow fast
- Urho Kekkonen president 1956
- Resettlement of Karelians and war veterans
- Social unrests: general strike in 1956
- Emigration from rural areas to towns and Sweden
- Outside world opens: key event Helsinki Olympics 1952
- Finnish Miss Universe Armi Kuusela
- Finnish design & architecture collect reputation
- Coca-Cola, rock & roll, Donald Duck, Reader's Digest
- Entertainment popular, heavily taxed

### Magazine(s):

- *Suomen Kuvalehti*: Branding nation
- More pictures, "own" stories from different parts of the country, prime minister columnist under pseudonym
- Public planning (education, health, youth), no discussion or debate
- Olympics a 1952 full-year theme (pre, post)
- No attention to Karelians and war veterans
- Covers: Olympics, national names, public figures, events
- *Apu*: Mainly pulp magazine, some domestic scandals: reported .
- 5-7 short stories per issue, leisure pages for grown-ups and children
- Covers: Young women, Olympics, harvesting, skiing, Lapland

Fig.4 Dominant characteristics in society and magazines in the 1950s.

**Summary:** Social changes in the country are deep and create unrest. The two magazines reflect mainly superficial changes, above all, to opening out with the Olympics (*Suomen Kuvalehti*) or domestic "tabloid events" (*Apu*). The resettlement of Karelians and war veterans is widely covered by the daily press, but the two magazines hardly mention them. Journalistically, *Suomen Kuvalehti* makes delicate steps forward via stories about 'new' elements (foreigners, Coca Cola, young volunteers helping in the Olympics), while *Apu* is still journalistically inconsistent, focusing mainly on foreign-origin exotic adventures, but also mentioning details about the Olympics as well as girls in national costumes. It collects attention with risky tricks by its journalists. *Suomen Kuvalehti* ensures its authority with columns by Prime Minister (later President) Kekkonen; in addition, other dignitaries appear as columnists and interviewees.

*Suomen Kuvalehti* still has problems with its slow printing, which results in missing topical coverage of the Olympics. *Apu* catches events more quickly but is not very interested in the Olympics. For a small, isolated country in the margins of Europe, just recovering from WWII, the Olympics meant a real mental re-orientation. Through the Olympics, Finland opened up for trends in Europe

Entertainment-oriented journals, such as *Apu*, must pay extra taxes throughout the decade because leisure culture is not officially favoured. However, a variety of family magazines emerge and their circulations remain between 70,000 and 80,000 copies. *Apu*'s circulation starts growing towards the end of the decade (Malmberg, 1991, pp. 145-149).

## 1960s: Period of transition, old values shaking

### Society:

- Radical social changes: urbanisation, industrialisation, consumerism, movement to towns and Sweden (60 000-70 000)
- Value contradictions, especially between generations, debate about women priests starts
- Windows open to Europe
- Mass tourism, trips to Canary Islands
- Changes in mediascape: television as mass medium, music radio, scandal journals

### Magazine(s):

- *Suomen Kuvalehti*: *Cultural management*
- Conservative, wide scope from politics to beauty competitions, irony used frequently, cinema as culture
- *Covers*: Artistic profiles of celebrities
- *Apu*: *Cultural management*: Reformed family journal, combination of entertainment and high culture
- Topicalities, trips to exotic places, adventure with own airplane to New Guinea with experts, question/answer columns, entertainment for old and young
- Version of *Apu* for Finns in Sweden (2 years)
- *Covers*: Young women, illustrations

Fig.5 Dominant characteristics in society and magazines in the 1960s.

**Summary:** The 1960s is the grand decade of the magazine press in Finland. New titles emerge and old ones disappear. Tabloids gain popularity, scandal magazine *Hymy* reaches a circulation of 500,000 and free-of-charge city papers emerge. Topicality is the key word in journalistic work. Links to television – themes and popular figures – are multiple.

In the fast-moving value carousel, both magazines represent continuity and flexibility. *Suomen Kuvalehti* tries hard, but drops out, and somehow its traditional leaning – high culture and serious social planning – does not touch the generation cord, although new elements like modern layout and interviews of popular cultural groups are included. The basic tone of the magazine remains as slightly elitist and conservative. The audience does not seem to accept its attempts to reform. When *Apu* changes the editorial course from entertainment to more “serious” and topical elements, it reached its audience. *Apu* has confirmed its ties with the audience in multiple ways.

*Suomen Kuvalehti* is assessed conservative, especially among younger generations; its nickname is “Kuivalehti” (dry journal). The magazine’s policy changes slowly, especially concerning domestic cultural radicals (Vares, 2016, pp. 252-264). It shows off its close relationship with power holders, especially with the president who – for the third time now – starts (1966) to write articles under the pseudonym Liimatainen.

*Apu* is the leading popular magazine in the 1960s. Competition is harsh, but the magazine plays high stakes. It turns 30 years in 1962, and the publisher sends a copy to every Finnish home. Further, the editor wants to uplift the editorial profile by establishing a discussion group of artists, writers and scientists.<sup>11</sup> An example of the company’s wild policy is its special issue for Finns in Sweden, published for two years. However, *Suomen Kuvalehti* also pays attention to the large – 250,000 – Finnish population in Sweden, but it talks about these Finns, not to them. The magazine describes several times the living and work conditions of the Finns in Sweden, while *Apu* tells Swedish-Finns about Finland, the old homeland.

11 “Lohisoppakerho” (Salmon soup society). Parts of its discussions are published in the magazine. In the 1950s, a group of young cultural dissidents received attention with their two books (Pidot tornissa, A party at Torni hotel I-II) about the state of Finnish cultural life. Lohisoppakerho was an attempt to use the same method a decade later, but the ripe time was gone.



## 1970s: International cooperation, political contradictions

### Society:

- Urho Kekkonen's presidency continues, political parties split and new ones emerge
- Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe in Helsinki 1975
- Finland joins EEC free trade treaty
- Oil crises affects economy
- New basic school system
- Radical leftist movements, greens, alternative culture
- Rock festivals, youth culture
- Scandal papers

### Magazine(s):

- *Suomen Kuvalehti*: *Building society*: Social planning
- Coverage of contradictions
- Culture, film, TV, gossip columns
- *Covers*: Well-known individuals (men), tabloid-style composition
- *Apu*: *Branding society*: Rapid change toward tabloidism when circulation drops
- Topicality (accidents, oddities), exotic places and events
- TV celebrities, sportsmen, gossip columns
- *Covers*: Mishmash covers (events, personalities), tabloid style layout

Fig.6 Dominant characteristics in society and magazines in the 1970s.

**Summary:** The magazinescape changes rapidly in Finland. Journals merge, some are dropped and some adapt to the challenges of topicality, tabloidism and television culture. In short, the publicity culture changes (Saarenmaa, 2010). For *Apu*, this development fits better, but it has many competitors with similar agendas. *Apu* drops its attempt at a high-brow profile from the 1960s. It grabs topicality and small scandals, accidents and personality drama.

During this decade, *Suomen Kuvalehti* gets its broad scope back. It often offers cynical comments on the same issues *Apu* has reported about two to three weeks after *Apu*. It no longer avoids contradictions and provides duels of experts on social planning, habitation, agricultural policies, alcohol policies and development activity. The magazine strongly opposes ultra-leftism.

The 1970s is the golden age of gossip in Finnish magazine journalism. *Apu* has an excellent gossip journalist, Mara Hari. *Suomen Kuvalehti* goes along with its own, often cynical gossip columns.

In sum, the two magazines now operate in the same field but in different positions. *Apu* appears to overdo its focus on immediate presence, while *Suomen Kuvalehti* tries to give a deeper view of what is happening in society. Reporting styles differ but not as much as earlier. *Suomen Kuvalehti* has given up its slightly exalted reporting, while *Apu*'s reporting approaches the style used by tabloids and scandal papers.

## 1980s: Wealth, international contacts, multiplicity of media

### Society:

- National economy grows
- Urho Kekkonen (Center) leaves presidency, Mauno Koivisto (Social Democrat) steps in
- Finland joins western international organisations
- Green movement develops into party
- Lutheran church accepts women priests (heated debate)
- More TV channels, foreign media ownership, heavy competition
- Home video popular

### Magazine(s):

- *Suomen Kuvalehti*: Branding society. Conservative editorials, choice of interviewees
- Multitude of foreign material (analytical and light)
- New president frequently covered, wife SK former columnist
- 35-40% of content question/answer columns, frequent 'offers' to readers (trips, visits, posters)
- Covers: 23% Mauno Koivisto & family, events, Falklands and Soviet leaders
- *Apu*: Branding society: Standardised format, TV celebrities, ordinary people's interviews
- Gossip columns
- Covers: President & family, TV celebrities, sportsmen

Fig.7 Dominant characteristics in society and magazines in the 1980s.

**Summary:** The contents of the two magazines differ again during the 1980s, but one element joins them: the presidency. Urho Kekkonen retires after 26 years, and Social Democrat Mauno Koivisto starts. The magazine publicity around this change is oversized and personalised, extending to Koivisto's wife and daughter. Particularly, at the start of the presidency, they receive celebrity treatment. Urho Kekkonen (called UKK) held the presidency for 26 years and developed an interesting profile of authority mixed with 'ordinary people's man'. Especially during the election campaign, the popularity of family Koivisto resembles more the popularity of beauty queens, musicians and sportsmen.

In the 1980s, Miss Finland contests are popular in the magazinescape. *Apu* follows selected beauty queens for years, placing them on its covers.

The mediascape is strongly mainstreamed. This process particularly affects *Apu*. Its format leads to question/answer

services in health, psychology, pets, culture, paper dolls, etc. (Numminen, 2003). *Apu* starts to arrange trips abroad with its journalists as guides. Its dependency on TV celebrities is strong, but interviews with "ordinary" people are also frequent on the pages. Still, circulation figures are on the downside.

*Suomen Kuvalehti* recovers gradually from its outsider role of the 1970s; the strong political controversies in the country lead it to take a stand and it does so, strongly opposing the ultra-left groups in particular. It keeps an eye on the school reform that enters in stages, starting from northern Finland. The magazine is concerned about the Finnish economy and devotes much attention to trade with the Soviet Union.

The focus of both magazines is similar concerning foreign countries: the Soviet Union – trade and leaders – and the Falkland war, which, in Finland, gets interestingly referenced to the Finnish Winter war. Journalistically, both magazines repeat their standardised formats, *Apu* to a further extent.

## 1990s: Turning to the West

### Society:

- Martti Ahtisaari starts as president
- Post-industrial service society
- Deepest depression in the country's history
- Finno-Soviet Friendship Treaty collapses
- Finland joins EU (1995) after referendum
- New technology (Nokia, internet)
- Mediahouses start operating in all Nordic countries
- International media ownership and International material in media increase considerably

### Magazine(s):

- *Suomen Kuvalehti*: *Building society*: Topicality (columns on actual issues), top/down
- International emphasis on Soviet Union/Russia
- Special issues on sports, nature, events
- *Covers*: Colour, event orientation, middle-aged men in focus
- *Apu*: *Building society*: Light tabloid material, also political events, not much international
- Decrease of service columns, jokes and games plentiful, packed format
- *Covers*: Tabloid style, several pictures in one cover (domestic, foreign Individuals), colourful (red & yellow)

Fig.8 Dominant characteristics in society and magazines in the 1990s.

**Summary:** The media market expands to and from the Nordic countries, but the studied magazines focus on the domestic market; more than three-fourths of larger stories in both deal with Finland – a change from the 1980s. Domestic economy and particularly depression are reflected in their content. In *Suomen Kuvalehti*, experts discuss and debate the economy. In *Apu*, some experts are interviewed, but stories about depression as “ordinary” people’s experience are plentiful. President Ahtisaari’s regional trips are covered by *Apu*.

Another repeated theme is the Soviet Union/Russia. As seen previously, rapid changes in the big neighbour country create concern in Finnish media. *Suomen Kuvalehti* reports regularly about the Soviet/Russian leadership changes and the question of Crimea, while *Apu* focuses more on topicalities in the neighbouring country.

A detail for both is the multitude of columns, small topical features and picture spreads. An overall tendency in both magazines is topicality. Both try to catch up with daily media. *Suomen Kuvalehti* publishes special issues on nature and sports, while *Apu* offers its readers posters.

*Apu* regularly selects a group of “its” celebrities from television, music, sports and beauty contests. *Apu* also fills its covers with these celebrities, domestic and foreign, while *Suomen Kuvalehti* prefers middle-aged male experts on its covers.

At the end of the decade, both magazines focus on the campaign for Finnish membership in the European Union and the campaign proceeding the referendum in October 1994; the result is tight. Again, the emphasis is different: *Suomen Kuvalehti* trusts experts, and *Apu* asks the public.

## 2000s: EU-Finland, environment worries, from emigration to immigration

### Society:

- First woman president Tarja Halonen
- Finland joins euro currency group
- Deep finance crisis 2008
- Environment become politics and part of everyday life
- Mass shootings, 2 in schools, 1 in shoppingcentre
- Internet and mobile phone in every household
- Number of immigrants grows considerably

### Magazine(s):

- *Suomen Kuvalehti*: *Branding society*: Topicality (scandals, accidents, political changes)
- Reporting style respectful but top/down
- Concern about shootings create, no attention to immigration
- *Covers*: Tabloid-style, 2-4 pictures, banderols
- *Apu*: *Branding society*: Strong tabloid flavour, scandals, sport heroes, TV celebrities, foreign royals
- Alarm about shootings, immigration not reported
- Service pages fewer, format packaged
- *Covers*: Colour, domestic celebrities, Swedish royals

Fig.9 Dominant characteristics in society and magazines in the 2000s.

**Summary:** President Halonen receives attention. However, her publicity is smaller than that of previous presidents. She gets more publicity in *Apu* than in *Suomen Kuvalehti*. The environment gains attention, and *Suomen Kuvalehti* presents contradictory views about environmental issues. The mass shootings get attention and create a wide discussion about societal problems in both. *Apu* focuses more on individuals. Interestingly, growing immigration figures receive marginal attention, and the financial crisis receives far less coverage than previously. Some experts indicate that the public is getting tired of repeating economic problems. *Apu* follows several sports regularly; special attention is paid to car rallies and ski jumping. *Apu* is still a magazine about personalities more than themes and processes.

*Apu* reduces its service columns, but its contact with readers is still tight. Several former top politicians write columns in *Apu*. Unlike decades ago, *Suomen Kuvalehti* gives attention to reader views and, on some occasions, starts discussions with contributors to letters-to-the-editor. A page with a media critique initiated by readers is published regularly.

Topicality is still a problem for both magazines. They develop various means – picture spreads and short-minute news – to cover as topical themes as the printing schedule allows.

## 2010s: Recovery from economic crisis, new parties, immigration

### Society:

- Sauli Niinistö starts as president
- Aftermath of 2008 financial crisis: trade, unemployment
- Right-wing populist Finns party popular
- Population greying, less babies
- Immigration now 2015-2016
- Tight limitations of cigarette smoking
- Social bubbles become visible, partly via media
- 2019 Covid-19

### Magazine(s):

- *Suomen Kuvalehti: Building society*: Social planning via expert interviews rarely on economy, populist party
- Immigration flow 2016 dangers overstated
- *Covers*: Domestic emphasis, less women on covers, layout tricky
- *Apu: Building society*: Strong Finnish orientation
- Supports voluntarism in helping the weak ones
- TV celebrities, sportsmen, space
- Service columns, competitions, jokes
- *Covers*: Finnish pop stars, singers, sportmen; more peaceful layout than in 2000s

Fig.10 Dominant characteristics in society and magazines in the 2010s.

**Summary:** Both magazines follow topical themes, but there are differences in their approaches. *Suomen Kuvalehti* concentrates on trends, tendencies and decision-makers, and *Apu* pays attention to events, celebrities and ordinary people. *Suomen Kuvalehti* is aware of “social bubbles” (Kantola et al., 2022) in society and utilises their existence. It regularly criticises examples of bureaucracy and ineffectiveness. Both magazines now “discover” immigration and its problems. In his first years as president, Sauli Niinistö does not receive more attention than his predecessor.

*Suomen Kuvalehti* publishes stories with contradictions; the interviewees are carefully selected so that the journalistic style remains neutral and the interviewed persons present their views. Both magazines are careful about the fast-rising populist party, and its coverage remains limited. *Apu* publishes six to eight personality interviews on every issue. The interviewees represent a wide scale, with various age, gender and occupational groups as well as geographical locations. The focus is on the domestic market. *Apu* arranges small charity campaigns.

COVID-19 fills the pages of both magazines, but, at this stage, they do not play a significant role in communication transmission about the pandemic. The main channels are topicality-oriented media.

## 2020s: 'The happiest nation in the world', new woman leaders, war in Ukraine, NATO

### Society:

- Covid19 pandemic
- Sanna Marin's government of five young women
- Employment rate highest since 1990s
- Effects of war in Ukraine: immigrants
- Relations with neighbouring Russia extremely poor
- Application to NATO membership in 2022, member 2023
- According to the World Happiness Report, Finns are the happiest nation in the world

### Magazine(s):

- *Suomen Kuvalehti*: Building society: Covid19 and Finnish society, economy, columns, environment policies, filmmakers, history (1920s)
- Donald Trump, North Korea, Jair Bolsonaro, Ukraine
- Covers: domestic topics, graphic layout, abstract topics (environment, space, crime, experts)
- *Apu*: Building society: Covid19 - what does it mean to Finns
- Special issues on nature, research articles (Finnish aid, unemployment)
- Donations to citizen organisations
- Covers: 2/3 individuals (celebrities, ordinary people), mainly Finnish women

Fig.11 Dominant characteristics in society and magazines in the 2020s.

**Summary:** The decade includes big, dramatic topics, and both magazines report on them. In general, both try to cover all topical themes somehow, at least with minute notes or single pictures; topicality is still a problem for both. In the case of COVID-19, the approaches are distinctly different. *Suomen Kuvalehti* reports on statistics, expert statements, support and criticism about government decisions concerning the pandemic and implementation of COVID-19. *Apu* prefers interviews with ordinary people, regional health officials and others close to the implementation phase. Its approach is more down-to-earth.

An interesting detail of *Apu* coverage is the magazine's praxis of publishing wide, research-based theme issues on nature, development assistance or unemployment. *Apu's* foreign coverage is limited: short stories about foreign royalty, film and TV stars, and musicians. *Suomen Kuvalehti's* profile is different. On the one hand, it focuses on Russia, and on the other hand, it focuses on foreign "naughty boys", such as Donald Trump, Jail Bolsonaro and North Korean leadership.

In covers, both prioritise domestic male dignitaries (*Suomen Kuvalehti*) and female celebrities (*Apu*). *Suomen Kuvalehti* also favours graphic covers on abstract, general themes, such as environment, space or crime.

### Discussion

Both magazines have – sometimes in a jerky manner – institutionalised themselves (Ekecrantz-Olsson 1994, pp. 251-254) during their journalistic history. They collect, mould and delete material for their views of society and world in a consistent manner to increase credibility in the eyes of their assumed primary audience. For *Apu*, the search took longer, up to the 1950s. From the beginning, it had tried to reach the whole family and especially people in urban settings. For *Suomen Kuvalehti*, the primary target audience was middle-class men and, in the 1920s and 1930s, men with right-wing sympathies. The two magazines complement each other. This particularly applies to their policies in the 1940s: *Suomen Kuvalehti* directs support to the home front, stressing

the importance of women's and children's roles in wars, while *Apu* offers leisure activity and fun.

The presentation mode of both journals has remained surprisingly similar throughout the decades. *Suomen Kuvalehti* started with a solemn top-down style, developing gradually to a reserved authority voice with situation reports, interviews and personal columns. Only once in the early 1940s did the magazine talk straight to members on the home front, stressing tolerance, hard work and comfort. *Apu's* contact with readers has been more intensive, first with narratives, then via selections of popular topics and pictures, plus short, personalised texts. In the 1970s and 1980s, journalism included tabloid tendencies, but they were recently reduced. *Apu* is not as consistent as *Suomen Kuvalehti* in its reporting style.

Both Billig's (1995, 2023) key ideas evoke responses in the content of the studied magazines. Repeatedly, they stress elements of "Finnishness" in their reporting – *Suomen Kuvalehti* particularly via ideological statements about Finnish culture and language and *Apu* via attention to "national" sports and entertainment. *Suomen Kuvalehti* in the 1920s and 1930s wanted to expand Finnishness to Karelia and, in the 1940s, to brotherhood with Germany. For both magazines, the country with strength and oddities, the United States, is included in the domestic sphere, and in the case of *Apu*, Sweden and particularly Swedish royalty and popular culture are presented.

During the harsh times in 1918 and in the 1940s, the two magazines tried hard – and with very different means – to support the nation in war, but such more intimate and instantaneous entertainment methods as touring music groups and radio programmes turned more effective (von Bagh & Hakasalo, 1986; Pilke, 2017). *Suomen Kuvalehti* utilises romanticism and history. *Apu's* undeniably vulgar content comes closer to the general public, but it does not get acceptance from decision-makers who deny print rations.

Several times during their editorial history, both magazines have calculated wrongly, lost readership and have been forced to modify their policies. The role of the subscription base in such phases is interesting. Obviously, it might give a false sense of security, suggesting the avoidance of radical social turns. In the 1960s, *Suomen Kuvalehti* lost touch with a large number of its readers due to cautious editorial policies during rapid social change. A decade later, *Apu* had to retreat from its attempt to strengthen ties to Finns living in Sweden by offering them a tailored version of *Apu*. The project failed, and Finns in Sweden were more motivated to get integrated into Swedish society.

*Apu's* editorial policy appears jerky and unplanned in several phases; it has invested in adventurous turns, supported oversized solutions and had to retreat several times. On the other hand, stress on continuity and cautiousness has driven *Suomen Kuvalehti* to face difficulties in detecting weak signals, an emerging phenomenon in society. Doudaki et al. (2022) suggest that the mediation of change and changing media are interwoven, but in the Finnish case, both magazines tend to be blind to emerging social phenomena.

It is tragic that *Suomen Kuvalehti*, initially introduced as a pictorial magazine, has had difficulty using pictures. With some exceptions, pictures have functioned as illustrations or fillers, while *Apu* mainly uses pictures as documentation: "Here we have been, this is the person we talk about". Undoubtedly, the role of pictures has become central for both since the 1960s, but pictures still play a side role in *Suomen Kuvalehti*. They have been used for documentation, illustration and source for layout tricks, while in *Apu*, pictures are part of the narrative itself.

*Apu's* reporting is more standardised, and pictures are always part of it. In many aspects, the 1960s appears to be a crucial decade for new, topicality-bound approaches to emerge for both, but the change started in the 1950s. Previously, the concept of time did not bother either of them. They operated

in the past tense. However, since then, topicality has been a continuous problem. *Suomen Kuvalehti* tries to solve the problem by promoting trends and continuity, while *Apu*'s approach is divided. Partly, it accepts tabloid-style crash news with personality pictures and, partly, wide special reports with a diffuse-time concept. Both have nostalgia in their arsenals.

*Suomen Kuvalehti*'s history is smooth and consistent. Since 1917<sup>12</sup>, it has appeared as an authority voice, avoiding extremes but leaning towards conservativeness. It puts stress on continuity and discrete influence, mainly via the selection of sources. Until the turn of the century, it had avoided political party preferences. The magazine has had trust in state-building and public institutions. People have had a role as representatives of an event, group or authority. Only in arts and culture have individuals been presented as personalities. This practice was very strong in the 1920s and 1930s, but it still exists to a certain extent. Both in 1918 and during WWII, high-ranking officers received relatively much attention, but they were still representatives of groups. In the same way, American film stars on covers in the 1920s and 1930s played an illustration role; they were not personalised as such.

For decades, *Suomen Kuvalehti* has used the inclusion and exclusion methods Benson (2020) elaborated on when describing "upscale audiences". It is a particular type of Finnish reader the magazine is interested in: an educated, reasonably alert person who can afford high-culture products – but who is not passionately active as a citizen. Earlier, the magazine focused more on men, but today, such a bias is difficult to detect. Elements for a Bolin-based middle-age "media generation" are clear. The magazine tried to reach younger people in the 1960s with complex layout tricks, but this was not successful. The magazine has kept a distance from its readers or, more distinctly, has been selective with reader response. Letters-to-the editor have not received much attention from the side of the newsroom, but sometimes, corrections have

been made with new texts around the criticised article, if the complaint has been important enough.

In its early decades, the magazine also tested banal nationalism in the sense that Billig (1995) discussed it. *Suomen Kuvalehti* operated systematically to include Karelia in the sphere of Finnishness. It is interesting that when Finland lost the part of Karelia that belonged to Finland in the Continuation War, the magazine did not show much interest in the 320,000 Karelians whom the government had to resettle. The earlier interest was clearly political, although culture and joint roots were kept in focus. After Karelia, *Suomen Kuvalehti*'s focus has been on the Western world, with an anxious side concern about the Soviet Union/Russia. In this way, the magazine follows the political line of the country.

*Apu*'s history is more complex and dramatic. First, it was a pulp magazine in a society that did not have many of that sort. It continued with its line, even when official society punished it by denying paper rations. It offered light material to a nation thirsty for entertainment after the war. Then, it turned into an all-inclusive family journal, giving support to Bolin's media generations. Popularity grew, and the magazine combined its adventure stories and sports with family leisure material, exotism and paper dolls. Newsroom ambitions grew, and *Apu* made a quick turn to invest in highbrow discussions. When circulation figures dropped, that attempt came to an end, and heavy competition with similar journals forced it to become more mainstream, publishing a little bit of everything. It continued with that line, investing in recent years on special issues with broad themes such as nature, environment, sustainability and nostalgia.

For *Apu*, people are and have been at the core of its reporting. *Apu* told stories about American film stars in the 1930s, about the magazine's own crazy reporters in the 1960s and television and sports heroes since the 1960s. These people

12 The introduction issue was published in December 1916, but regular publishing started in 1917.



were frequently standardised as heroes (beauty queens and sportsmen) or victims (persons who have met difficulties but defeated their problems), but politicians were included in the cadres of topics. *Apu* covered big social themes via individuals, and the victim theme was repeated frequently.

*Apu's* speciality since the 1950s has been its close contact with the audience: question-and-answer columns, competitions, jokes, posters and reader trips. Its experts were no authorities; they chatted with the readers and spiced their advice with humour. Recently, such reader contacts have been reduced considerably. People tend to search for answers from the web now.

*Apu* keenly follows other media – television and tabloids, above all. *Suomen Kuvalehti* does the same, but it is more selective. Accordingly, its editorial turns are not as dramatic. Only rarely do the journals accept social media as a source; they might report on issues that initiate in social media, but conventional media functions as mediators and quality check posts. Researchers have stated (e.g. Seuri & Ikkäheimo 2023, pp. 12-19) that social media today functions as a new capricious gatekeeper, bypassing conventional gates, but this does not apply to these magazines. Both also have a rigid relation to websites. They do have websites, but there are marginal discussions. In this way, they appear more conservative than most Finnish magazines, although they all have difficulty developing functional websites.

An interesting change took place in the reporting about presidents. *Suomen Kuvalehti* has been a “presidents’ journal”. However, the early presidents represented the institution, not the individual. The magazine cherished its close relationship with Urho Kekkonen, and the practice continued with Mauno Koivisto – the magazine tried to create a relationship with this president as well, disregarding his Social Democratic background. After them, Presidents Ahtisaari, Halonen and Niinistö were “delivered up” over *Apu* and its rivals as topical

public figures. Presidents became public figures – no longer symbols of power and prestige.

Unlike what Iqani (2012), Cardoso (2010) and Cantrell Rosas-Moreno et al. (2013) say, it is hard to claim that these magazines would have had a systematic cover policy, attempting to catch the public gaze. Covers do link to major articles inside, but pictures rarely play an independent role. They mainly assist in emphasising topicality, the eternal problem for magazines with slow printing procedures. Only in themes linked to nationalism have both magazines had a cover policy with conventional national symbols. The use of American film stars in covers from the 1930s hardly can be called a policy – the magazines published free-of-charge pictures that were easily available.

Neither magazine has been alerted about weak signals. Both have focused on dominant figures and issues in society, missing emerging phenomena. An interesting question is whether this kind of social blindness is at least partly caused by the subscription base that is dominant in Finland. It gives security and continuity but perhaps prevents far-sightedness. The main thing is to convince readers that everything is under control.

## Conclusions

There are multiple phases in which one magazine manages the course better than the other. It is impossible to say which is a better course indicator. In slow changes, *Suomen Kuvalehti* copes with time better. It draws policy lines. In dramatic changes, *Apu* is better off. It has its networks, it catches topical phenomena, names and notions – superficial perhaps but familiar to many and thus gives an impression of continuity and alertness.

Both have had a distinct share of the public gaze for decades. The mediascape is packed today, and it is unclear what kind

of space both magazines have in it in the future. However, these two long-distance runners have shown a cocktail of consistency and flexibility in the past, so there will probably be a place for them in the future as well.

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## Appendix A

Dimensions for *Suomen Kuvalehti* and *Apu* text analysis (filled for each issue included in the sample)

CONTENT CATEGORY	TOPICAL	FEATURE	OPENLY OPINIONATED	LINK TO HISTORY	ELEMENT OF NATIONALISM	LINK TO CALENDAR, NATURE
Domestic topic						
Domestic filler						
Personality story						
Discussion,debate						
Foreign topic						
History						
Picture story						
Fiction						
Entertainment						

Frame for cover analysis, *Suomen Kuvalehti* and *Apu* (filled for full year issues in the sample, in the interpretation, qualitative aspects are added)

YEAR	TYPE *	FORM **	ORIGIN ***	FORMAT ****	THEME *****	PERSON(S) *****	LINK TO *****

\*Personality, event, process, art work, building, animal, object, graphic construction

\*\*One person, group activity, scenery, object

\*\*\* Domestic, Nordic, Karelia, Russia, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, USA, rest of the world

\*\*\*\*Close-up, portrait, composition, natural activity, object

\*\*\*\*\*Politics, religion, defence, art & literature, sports, science, adventure

\*\*\*\*\*Finnish woman, foreign woman, Finnish man, foreign man, Finnish child, foreign child

\*\*\*\*\*Nationalism/patriotism, history, religion, war, agriculture gender, social class, minority

# LES PRATIQUES DE STREAMING DES MAGAZINES SPÉCIALISÉS EN JEU VIDÉO – DE L'INFORMATION AU DIVERTISSEMENT?

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## VIDEO GAME MAGAZINE'S STREAMING PRACTICES: FROM INFORMATION TO ENTERTAINMENT?

### Abstract

Were video game magazines, often image-centric (Mansuy, 2019), destined for an audiovisual transition? Despite the rise of platforms like Twitch and YouTube Live offering “vicarious gaming” (Barnabé, 2017), print journalists initially resisted appearing on screen, avoiding association with influencers. What drove this cautious sector, historically wary of the internet (Breem & Krywicki, 2020), to embrace Twitch and adopt a “broadcast regime” (Dagiral & Parasie, 2010)? Does this shift imply a move from journalist (information) to host (entertainment)? What role do print magazines and their investigations play in video streams? We'll analyze streaming practices of a few French videogame media outlets. Interviews with journalists will complement this examination. We seek to understand if these channels serve as entertainment extensions or genuine sources of specialized information.

**Keywords:** broadcasting, videogame, journalism, Twitch, magazines

## LES PRATIQUES DE STREAMING DES MAGAZINES SPÉCIALISÉS EN JEU VIDÉO – DE L'INFORMATION AU DIVERTISSEMENT?

### Résumé

Les magazines de jeux vidéo, souvent centrés sur l'image (Mansuy, 2019), étaient-ils destinés à une transition audiovisuelle? Malgré l'émergence de plateformes comme Twitch et YouTube Live proposant du “jeu par procuration” (Barnabé, 2017), les journalistes de la presse écrite ont initialement résisté à apparaître à l'écran, évitant toute association avec les influenceurs. Quels éléments ont motivé ce secteur prudent, historiquement méfiant à l'égard d'Internet (Breem & Krywicki, 2020), à embrasser Twitch et à adopter un “régime de l'émission” (Dagiral & Parasie, 2010)? Cette transition implique-t-elle un passage du rôle de journaliste (information) à celui d'animateur (divertissement)? Quel rôle jouent les magazines imprimés et leurs enquêtes dans les flux vidéo? Nous allons analyser les pratiques de streaming de six médias français spécialisés en jeux vidéo. Des entretiens avec des journalistes issus de ces médias complèteront notre étude. Nous cherchons à comprendre si ces canaux servent d'extensions de divertissement ou de véritables sources d'information spécialisée.

**Mots-clés:** diffusion, vidéoludique, journalisme, Twitch, magazines

Les études sur les magazines ont été témoins de bouleversements significatifs au cours de la dernière décennie, avec l'avènement de la révolution numérique et la prolifération des plateformes en ligne. Cette transition du *print* au numérique a entraîné des changements profonds dans la manière dont les magazines produisent et diffusent leur contenu, ainsi que dans la manière dont les lecteurs interagissent avec eux. Parallèlement, les médias traditionnels ont été confrontés à de nouveaux défis, tels que la convergence des médias et l'émergence de formes hybrides de diffusion de contenu, remettant en question les modèles établis de production et de consommation de l'information.

Dans leur exploration des dynamiques contemporaines des magazines, les chercheurs se sont penchés sur un certain nombre de questions clés. Parmi celles-ci figurent la question de la "mort" du *print* face à la montée en puissance du numérique (Boczkowski, P. J., & Mitchelstein, 2013), les implications de la convergence des médias pour l'industrie des magazines (Jenkins, 2006), et le rôle croissant des événements dans l'engagement des audiences de magazines. Des études récentes ont également examiné les nouvelles formes de journalisme et de récits narratifs qui émergent dans le contexte numérique (Küng et al., 2008; Deuze, 2008), ainsi que les stratégies innovantes que les magazines adoptent pour s'adapter à ce nouvel environnement médiatique (Singer et al., 2011). En outre, des recherches ont été menées sur les façons dont les magazines exploitent les plateformes en ligne pour élargir leur audience et renforcer leur présence dans le paysage médiatique contemporain (Davidson, 2017). En situant notre recherche dans ce contexte, nous cherchons à contribuer à la compréhension des défis et des opportunités auxquels sont confrontés les magazines dans le monde numérique d'aujourd'hui. Plus spécifiquement, nous souhaitons observer comment l'utilisation de la plateforme Twitch par les médias suscite de nouvelles pratiques, comme l'ont observé certaines études au sujet de la télévision (Spilker et al., 2018).

Pour cette étude de cas, nous nous arrêterons sur la presse vidéoludique, dont l'usage de Twitch peut sembler naturel, puisque la plateforme s'est orientée en 2011 vers la retransmission en direct de parties de jeux vidéo (Barnabé, 2017, p. 117). Comme d'autres sous-champs spécialisés, la presse de jeu vidéo est bien moins souvent étudiée comme un espace de production journalistique à part entière que comme sphère d'éclosion d'une culture spécifique, empreinte de divertissement. Elle est ainsi analysée de manière ponctuelle, par exemple par des auteurs se concentrant sur les magazines de leurs propres pays (Glashüttner, 2008 pour l'Allemagne; Kirkpatrick, 2015 au Royaume-Uni; Suominen, 2015 en Finlande). Autrement dit, les travaux académiques convoquent davantage la presse jeu vidéo pour sa thématique vidéoludique que pour ses caractéristiques journalistiques, en tant que source historique ou sous le prisme des usages qu'en font les joueurs-lecteurs. Les médias vidéoludiques occupent au sein de ces sources une posture secondaire, en tant qu'ils se font le support de la construction d'une culture vidéoludique partagée (Consalvo, 2007), ou encore d'un "habitus du joueur" (Kirkpatrick, 2015, p. 67).

La figure du journaliste de jeu vidéo, elle, est ainsi principalement étudiée du point de vue de son rôle de prescripteur, d'évaluateur d'œuvres culturelles charriant des enjeux commerciaux (Carlson, 2009; Zagal et al., 2009). À ce titre, les chercheuses et chercheurs rappellent la proximité économique avec l'industrie que sous-tend cet espace spécialisé, la comparant directement à la presse féminine (Consalvo, 2007, p. 22) ou "*lifestyle*" (Ribbens & Steegen, 2012, p. 3; Perreault & Vos, 2018, p. 565). Lorsque ces travaux se font le porte-voix des journalistes spécialisés, ils citent les critiques internes de la profession, qui appellent à y injecter plus d'exigence et de créativité (McCrea, 2007; Costikyan, 2008). Qu'ils proviennent de billets de blog ou d'entretiens, ces témoignages se plaignent du manque de profondeur (Stuart, 2005) et de la pauvreté d'écriture (Buffa, 2006) des médias vidéoludiques, ou encore de leur dépendance envers les "relations presse"



de l'industrie (Jenkins, 2010). Pour David Nieborg et Tanja Sihvonen, il s'agit, sur base du constat de ces critiques internes et de comparaisons avec les "principes fondamentaux" du journalisme généraliste, de démontrer en quoi la presse vidéoludique déploie une idéologie professionnelle basée sur "une nouvelle conception du journalisme: les journalistes ne visent pas à travailler comme des chiens de garde des institutions, mais plutôt comme des médiateurs d'évaluations qui délivrent du capital ludique"<sup>1</sup> (2009, pp. 7-8). En se basant sur des types de textes en particulier ou sur des entretiens avec des "critiques" de jeu vidéo professionnels, la littérature académique conclut du journalisme vidéoludique qu'il incarne une "presse enthousiaste" (Carlson, 2009, p. 12), "une extension, un porte-voix (...) des éditeurs de jeux vidéo" (Nieborg & Sihvonen, 2009, p. 6) qui "remet en question les notions journalistiques traditionnelles d'objectivité et de d'indépendance" (Ribbens & Steegen, 2012, p. 3); ou encore un champ professionnel dans lequel "la frontière floue entre les départements de l'éditorial et du marketing est considérée comme inhérente [au champ et aux standards professionnels]" (Ribbens & Steegen, 2012, p. 28).

Cet article se concentre sur la presse spécialisée en jeux vidéo et son exploration des plateformes de vidéo en direct pour interroger la manière dont celles-ci peuvent être mobilisées dans une optique journalistique. Au vu de l'état de l'art présenté ci-dessus, l'on pourrait poser l'hypothèse que les journalistes de ces médias utilisent Twitch dans le but d'y produire du divertissement, et non de l'information. Néanmoins, à travers cette étude, nous verrons que la plateforme est plutôt utilisée à contre-emploi, dans une optique de réappropriation, s'inscrivant dans une nécessité de renouvellement parmi les journalistes. Ceux-ci envisagent en effet les espaces en ligne comme complémentaires au support papier, qu'ils perçoivent souvent comme étant plus traditionnel et linéaire. Nous allons commencer par réécrire cette

exploitation des images par la presse vidéoludique dans une perspective diachronique, en remontant à l'ère où le papier constituait le seul support envisageable.

## Une prépondérance visuelle

Il peut sembler difficile de le croire aujourd'hui, mais c'est pourtant vrai: pendant des années, les informations sur les dernières sorties de jeux vidéo n'étaient disponibles que sous format imprimé. L'aspect visuel et l'iconophilie, prépondérants dans la plupart des titres de magazines en général (Dakhli, 2018, 50), sont particulièrement mis en avant dans la mise en page et les choix de couvertures des magazines spécialisés dans les jeux vidéo (Mansuy, 2019). Ils annoncent en lettres capitales l'arrivée imminente du "plus beau jeu du monde", comme dans ce numéro de *Génération 4* publié en septembre 1992.

À l'époque, les articles ne contiennent souvent qu'une demi-page de texte pour 3 ou 4 pages d'images. Dans ces magazines des années 1990, un "discours acritique" enthousiaste se déploie régulièrement, une "fascination pour un futur puissamment désirable" (Triclot, 2022, p. 49). Même au début des années 2000, on trouvait des rubriques intitulées "Rien que pour vos yeux", qui se contentaient d'ajouter des captures d'écran, sans "valeur ajoutée journalistique" (Ahva & Heikkila, 2010). En accumulant les images, les magazines spécialisés offrent une forme de "jeu par procuration" (Barnabé, 2017) et transmettent un "capital ludique" de première main (Consalvo, 2007), dont ils sont les principaux médiateurs. En marge de cette prépondérance visuelle, les journalistes utilisent des images fixes pour se mettre en scène aux yeux des lecteurs, dans les colonnes de leurs critiques, des avatars esquissés façon bande-dessinée construisent au fil des pages leur persona de joueur-testeur: celui-ci aime les jeux de sport, celui-là préfère les jeux de tirs.

<sup>1</sup> La notion de capital ludique, principalement développée par Mia Consalvo (2007), désigne les connaissances à propos du jeu vidéo en général ou d'un jeu en particulier qu'un agent peut ensuite valoriser, par exemple lors de discussions autour du jeu vidéo.



Fig. 1 Couverture de *Génération 4* n°47 (Septembre 1992).

Plus délirant: dans une rubrique intitulée “Trombinoscope”, les journalistes s’illustrent dans des romans photos rocambolesques à l’humour enfantin, flirtant avec la parodie ou l’absurde. Comme nous l’avancions dans un article co-écrit avec Björn-Olav Dozo (2018), les journalistes spécialisés incarnent alors des “amis de papier”: ils cristallisent la passion du jeu vidéo à une époque où ce médium est moins installé qu’aujourd’hui et font office de “bons potes” dont on suit les avis et les péripéties imaginaires. Cachés derrière leur pseudonyme et leur personnage, ces journalistes sont bien à l’abri.

À l’aube des années 2000, la presse imprimée spécialisée dans les jeux vidéo a totalement manqué le virage vers la

numérisation, commettant une double erreur stratégique: tout d’abord, les grands groupes de presse (EMAP, Hachette, Pressimage) ont refusé d’exporter leurs titres spécialisés sur le web, ne voyant en cela qu’une perte d’argent et de temps (Breem & Krywicki, 2020, pp. 180-184). Deuxièmement, la presse spécialisée “papier” exploitera l’arrivée du support DVD et développera la production vidéo comme un complément numérique au contenu principal rédigé par les journalistes, plutôt que comme une offre spécifique au web. Ce choix stratégique empêche les titres de presse jeu vidéo de se développer sur Internet: pour conserver la “valeur ajoutée” du numéro vendu en kiosque, les vidéos qui l’accompagnent doivent rester exclusives plutôt qu’être distribuées gratuitement sur un site dédié. À l’inverse, les médias audiovisuels et web (la chaîne de télévision Game One, les *pure players* Jeuxvideo.com et Jeuxvideo.fr) sont précurseurs en termes d’utilisation de la vidéo. Conçue comme un moyen de différenciation par rapport à la presse papier, la vidéo ambitionne de raffermir le lien avec le lecteur. Là où les médias traditionnels en général produisent peu d’émissions télévisées (Dagiral & Parasio, 2010, p. 115), un site comme *Gamekult* propose dès juin 2007 un programme s’inscrivant dans le “régime de l’émission” (Dagiral & Parasio, 2010, p. 112) qui, malgré quelques interruptions et rebondissements, existe encore aujourd’hui.

Durant cette période, une séparation s’est créée entre les *pure players*, misant fortement sur la vidéo et expérimentant très tôt des plateformes telles que Twitch et YouTube (formats dédiés, commentaires en direct des tournois d’e-sport...), et la presse imprimée, qui se concentre avant tout sur ses articles papier, négligeant les portails web: celui de *Canard PC* n’est lancé pour la première fois qu’en 2016, tandis que ses sites de *JV* et *Jeux Vidéo Magazine* constituent de simples boutiques dépourvues de contenu éditorial. Cet écart se vérifie aussi en termes de passage d’un champ à l’autre: les journalistes issus de médias en ligne sont nombreux à se reconvertir sur les plateformes de vidéo, tandis que ceux qui quittent la presse écrite passent à d’autres sphères (Fig. 2).

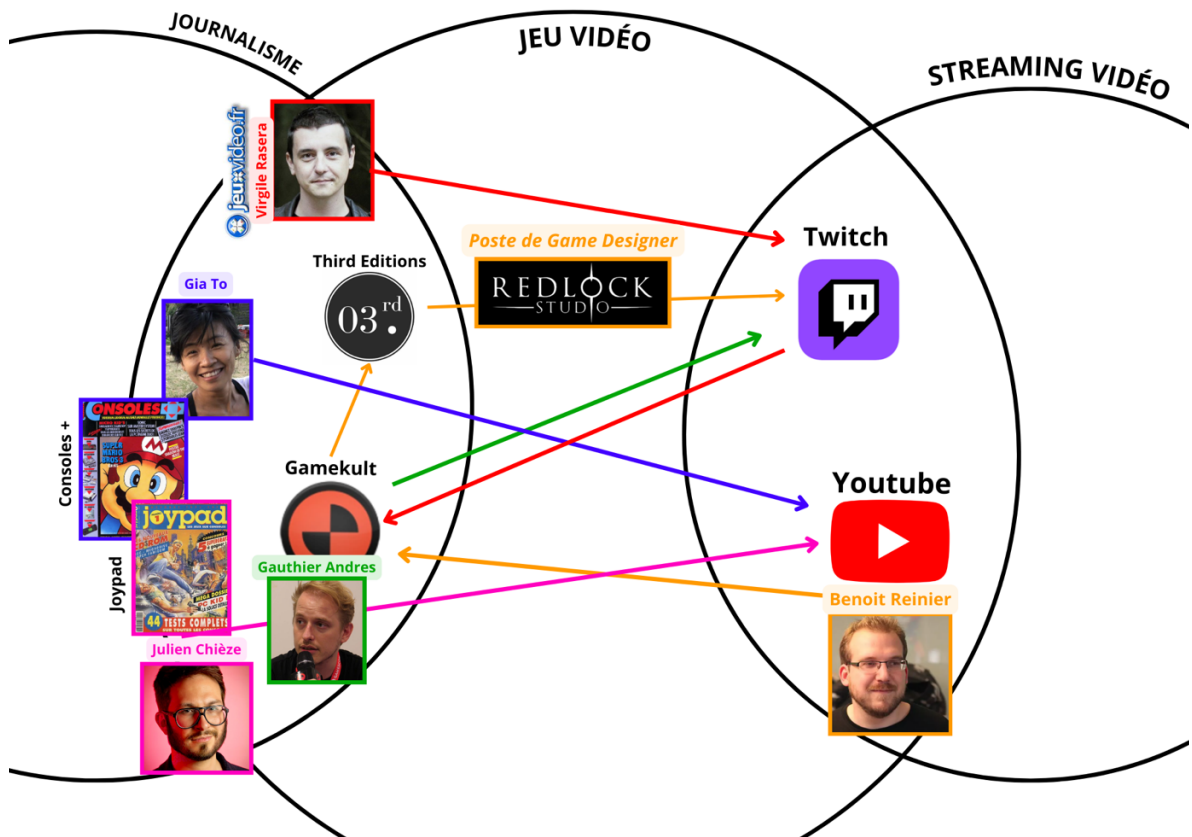


Fig. 2 Des médias spécialisés aux plateformes vidéo.

Cette réticence à investir dans le canal vidéo peut s'expliquer surtout par un désir de différenciation: pendant longtemps, aux yeux des journalistes écrivant pour ces magazines, YouTube et Twitch étaient le domaine des influenceurs, et le journalisme n'y avait pas sa place, comme l'a écrit Ivan Gaudé, directeur éditorial de *Canard PC*, en 2019:

Nous avons vu avec consternation éclore des heures et des heures de *Let's Play* affligeants animés par des casteurs dont le niveau de vocabulaire,

inversement proportionnel à leur enthousiasme forcé, ferait passer une pub de déodorant masculin pour un discours de réception à l'Académie française. Le sentiment que *YouTube* ou *Twitch* n'étaient finalement que les blogs du XXI siècle, s'adressant à un public de jeunes adolescents qui n'a jamais été celui de *Canard PC*, n'a pas aidé. L'apparition, au fur et à mesure de la « professionnalisation » des youtubeurs, d'émissions ne copiant de la télévision que le pire (ses sourires de marionnettes dans des décors

de jeux télévisés d'access prime time), non plus. Il n'était pas envisageable de se lancer dans le marécage pour faire comme tout le monde.<sup>2</sup>

Entretemps, la plateforme Twitch, principalement connue pour la diffusion en direct de jeux vidéo, est devenue un espace significatif pour les professionnels des médias, en particulier les streamers Twitch, qui discutent de divers aspects de leur carrière lors d'émissions telles que *"Dropped Frames"* (Bingham, 2020). Ce changement remet en question les pratiques traditionnelles de visionnage télévisuel, introduisant de nouvelles dimensions de flexibilité et de contrôle de l'utilisateur (Spilker, 2018). Les flux Twitch servent également de lieux de rencontre virtuels pour les communautés de joueurs, favorisant des communautés de jeu participatives (Hamilton, 2014). L'expansion de la plateforme dans la diffusion de contenus télévisuels archivés, tels que *Doctor Who*, a entraîné la convergence de publics divers et la création de nouvelles expériences de visionnage communautaire (Jacobs, 2020).

Dans ce contexte, cet article pose la question de recherche suivante: est-il possible de s'appropriier des plateformes vidéo traditionnellement dédiées au divertissement communautaire afin de "ne pas faire comme tout le monde", comme le souligne Ivan Gaudé dans la citation ci-dessus? Ou, inversement, l'investissement dans cet espace nouveau implique-t-il un changement d'éthos, passant de l'éthos du journaliste (information) à celui de l'animateur (dédié au divertissement)? Plus spécifiquement, quelle place reste-t-il au sein des émissions vidéo pour la matérialité des magazines imprimés et leurs investigations à long terme? Pour répondre à ces interrogations, nous avons analysé les pratiques de streaming de cinq entités françaises: les magazines de jeux vidéo *JV*, *Canard PC* et *Jeux Vidéo Magazine*, le programme matinal d'actualité du journaliste indépendant Gautoz, ainsi que l'émission de discussion "Gâchette Gauche", considérée

comme un bastion du journalisme spécialisé dans les jeux vidéo et animée par le quotidien généraliste *Libération*.

### Interactivité et horizontalité

L'interactivité constitue une différence évidente entre le contenu des émissions en direct et celui des magazines imprimés. Tous les programmes vidéo analysés n'utilisent pas l'interactivité de la même manière. Ils ont en commun de prêter attention aux messages envoyés par les spectateurs dans le *chat*. Dans l'émission "Gâchette Gauche", ces échanges ont lieu à un moment dédié (quelques minutes avant la fin de l'émission), lors duquel les spectateurs peuvent, de manière conventionnelle, poser des questions aux rédacteurs en chef des différents magazines de jeux vidéo présents. D'autres, comme *Jeux Vidéo Magazine*, choisissent parfois de mettre les spectateurs au cœur du débat, en les invitant à rejoindre leur plateau virtuel en direct pour débattre verbalement, rassemblant ainsi les membres de leur communauté autour! de la console de nouvelle génération qu'ils possèdent ("Club Xbox" versus "Club Playstation 5").

À mi-chemin entre ces deux pôles, le vidéaste Gautoz analyse les actualités des jeux vidéo tout en réagissant parfois aux interventions textuelles de ses spectateurs, ou en rebondissant sur leurs questions pour fournir des informations supplémentaires. L'interactivité ne consiste pas nécessairement à adopter le caractère divertissant d'un "talk-show": elle peut renforcer le lien entre un journaliste éclairé et son public, qui l'interroge pour étancher sa soif d'information, comme dans les *live* organisés par le quotidien généraliste *Le Monde* lorsqu'un événement incontournable se produit.

Évidemment, lors de leurs émissions, les journalistes jouent fréquemment en direct à des jeux vidéo. La diffusion peut notamment servir de complément à un test écrit publié dans le magazine. Inversement, le vidéaste peut aussi découvrir un

2 Gaudé, I., "Et si on faisait une émission?" Canardpc.com, [online] <https://www.canardpc.com/394/et-si-faisait-une-emission>, avril 2019.

jeu en direct (par exemple, le "13/14" de *JV*, Gautoz jouant à des jeux vidéo indépendants...), à la manière des streamers grand public. Sous couvert d'offrir un moment de divertissement et de jeu par procuration, les journalistes mettent également en scène leur fonction critique en train de s'opérer, sans pour autant que cette découverte ne débouche ensuite nécessairement sur une production écrite plus touffue.

### Divertissement et accompagnement

À la manière des sites internet des magazines au début des années 2000, les prises d'antenne sur Twitch sont aussi utilisées comme des compléments au numéro diffusé en kiosques. L'émission de *Canard PC* s'appuie sur les dossiers publiés dans le magazine pour lancer des débats entre ses intervenants, par exemple sur l'utilisation du jeu vidéo dans les centres de santé mentale. Le programme fonctionne alors soit comme produit d'appel: loin de dévoiler tout le contenu du texte, il invite à le découvrir en employant la discussion comme une porte d'entrée. De façon similaire, "Gâchette Gauche" remplit un rôle de "vitrine", en ce que chaque rédacteur en chef invité bénéficie d'une séquence pour mettre en lumière le sommaire de son numéro mensuel. Mais les débats découlant du sujet d'un dossier peuvent également être perçus en tant que prolongement: les lecteurs-spectateurs qui ont déjà lu le texte bénéficient du point de vue des autres membres de la rédaction et peuvent également faire part de leurs propres réactions et questions en direct. Ce lien ténu entre la production du magazine imprimé et le canal Twitch ne constitue en aucun cas une norme, car certains médias considèrent leurs canaux vidéo et imprimés comme deux entités distinctes. C'est le cas, par exemple, de *Jeux Vidéo Magazine*, dont les rédacteurs touchent à peine à la vidéo, et vice versa.

Les exemples cités ci-dessus sont diffusés *après* la publication du magazine. Mais la chaîne Twitch du magazine *JV* illustre une pratique moins orthodoxe: la production éditoriale y est occasionnellement montrée *avant* la publication. Le

rédacteur en chef Kevin Bitterlin, par exemple, orchestre sur la chaîne de la revue une session en direct intitulée "On cherche le jeu qui fera la couverture du numéro 101". Le duo d'auteurs rédigeant le livre "Génération jeux vidéo" organise également une série d'émissions dédiée à la redécouverte des jeux analysés dans ce livre à paraître. En participant à ces émissions, au-delà de la fonction purement promotionnelle, le public est également invité à assister à l'accomplissement de tâches de rédacteur en chef et de journaliste. Une façon de fédérer, bien sûr, mais aussi de désacraliser le quotidien professionnel et d'intégrer les lecteurs au dispositif éditorial. Loin d'être déconnecté de la matérialité de la revue, les plateformes de vidéo s'inscrivent dans une continuité entre les prises de parole sur les canaux numériques et celles du support imprimé que recevront les abonnés dans leur boîte aux lettres, contrant ainsi les délais incompressibles entre deux parutions par des rendez-vous plus ponctuels et informels.

### (Re)diffusion et commentaire

"State of play" (Sony), "Nintendo Direct", "Ubisoft Forward"... L'industrie vidéoludique autonomise sa communication grâce à ses propres événements depuis des années, et la pandémie mondiale a achevé d'institutionnaliser la transmission d'annonces en direct des éditeurs et constructeurs. Dépossédés de tout exclusivité, les journalistes en sont alors réduits à la même position que les joueurs "ordinaires": ils contemplent le flux et réagissent aux nouveautés en direct. Pour tout de même se démarquer et offrir aux spectateurs de leur retransmission une forme de "valeur ajoutée", il ne leur reste que leur expertise "incorporée", leur "capital ludique encyclopédique" (Dozo et Krywicki, 2022), mobilisable sur le moment pour contextualiser la genèse des œuvres, le profil de leurs créateurs, les conditions de travail des développeurs (quand elles sont connues) et déconstruire la communication. Plus prosaïquement, l'apport des journalistes se limite parfois à un avis "à chaud", à un lien avec des références de jeux existants, à des interprétations des *trailers* en vidéo, ou à une simple synthèse en fin de conférence.

La chaîne Youtube de *Jeux Vidéo Magazine* est probablement celle de notre corpus qui propose le spectre le plus exhaustif, mais la quasi-totalité des médias s'y sont mis: qu'il se réalise en équipe ou en solo, l'exercice semble devenu un passage obligé tant la communication vidéoludique transite par ce biais de la vidéo en direct. À ce titre, ne pas retransmettre une conférence constitue un choix éditorial plus affirmé, plus radical, que celui de la retransmettre: c'est le cas de *JV Le Mag*, qui s'abstient de commenter le "Summer Game Fest" de Geoff Kighley en raillant l'inanité de ce *show*.

Le commentaire et le débat ne sont pas toujours à l'initiative de l'industrie elle-même, mais viennent parfois d'une décision éditoriale propre aux journalistes. C'est le cas de "Gâchette Gauche" qui, chaque mois, rassemble autour d'une question trois rédacteurs en chef de magazines spécialisés imprimés. Lorsque la thématique rebondit sur l'actualité, elle le fait de manière irrévérencieuse, en soulignant les errances et travers des acteurs de l'industrie plutôt que de chanter leurs louanges ("Où va Ubisoft ?", "Microsoft, c'est quoi le projet ?"). D'autres débats se veulent résolument atemporels: "Faut-il défendre le jeu vidéo ?", "Le rôle des journalistes spécialisés", etc. Cette distance illustre donc la posture critique des journalistes, forcément mieux construite lorsqu'elle peut s'exprimer en aval des événements examinés plutôt que sur le moment-même. Si la diffusion en direct sur Twitch et Youtube ne favorise pas l'analyse "à froid", ces plateformes restent des lieux où un tel exercice peut s'illustrer. Les différentes sous-spécialités des orateurs constituent alors des points de vue complémentaires, là où les articles rédigés à plusieurs voix se font rare dans la presse imprimée, pour des raisons d'organisation pratique.

## Événementialisation et mise en scène

Grâce à la dimension spectaculaire de leur dispositif, les chaînes Youtube et Twitch constituent épisodiquement des

lieux d'événementialisation du jeu vidéo. Par exemple, Jeux Vidéo Magazine a accompagné d'une généreuse salve de vidéos la sortie du jeu à licence Harry Potter *Hogwarts Legacy*, qui était extrêmement attendu. Dans ce cas-là, il ne s'agit pas d'une simple retransmission puisque le média crée du contenu "original" à propos de l'œuvre sur laquelle il se focalise, en cherchant, bien sûr, à bénéficier à son tour du "capital médiatique" (Marchietti, 1997, p. 26) du jeu mis en lumière. Un magazine peut également créer ses propres événements relatifs à la vie interne de la publication, à l'instar de *Canard PC* qui a organisé une émission spéciale pour révéler, avec beaucoup de suspense, l'identité de sa nouvelle rédactrice en chef. L'événementialisation peut ainsi être vouée à donner un dernier coup de fouet à une campagne de financement participatif, à la manière de *JV Le Mag* qui propose aux spectateurs de vivre à leurs côtés les dernières heures précédant la clôture des précommandes de leur magazine hors-série.

On vient d'une presse papier ou on n'était que des signatures en bas des écrits, et de nos jours on porte des projets en termes d'image. Il y a une bascule qui se joue. Dans les magazines des années 1990 il y avait déjà les trombinoscopes, l'équivalent du *YouTube* avant *YouTube*. C'est autour de ça que tu vas fédérer une communauté. Il y a un côté très froid à l'écriture de magazines, et la vidéo peut te rendre plus humain<sup>3</sup>.

Ces événements construits par les chaînes Twitch revêtent également une fonction secondaire, mais néanmoins vitale: la mise en scène de la rédaction. Du point de vue des journalistes, l'identification que permet la vidéo a pris le relais des trombinoscopes et bandes-dessinées présents dans les magazines des années 1990. L'usage de la vidéo serait tout simplement une question de survie. Pour Kevin Bitterlin, sans son émission Twitch, le magazine papier *JV* aurait disparu

3 Tastet, S., "Gâchette Gauche #6, avec Origami, nouveau média jeux vidéo", Youtube.com, [online], <https://youtu.be/uvasaPl8VoA?si=yur9Z-rEqzNOZdxlb>, juin 2023.

depuis longtemps, car ce programme leur a permis de créer une proximité avec les lecteurs, qui seront ensuite prêts à offrir leur soutien financier via les campagnes de financement participatif:

Sans [notre émission *Twitch*] « Le 13/14 », le magazine imprimé *JV* ne serait plus là aujourd'hui. Car on a réussi à créer cette proximité avec les gens. Payer pour de l'actualité jeu vidéo, ça a longtemps semblé peu naturel. Pour que les gens passent ce cap moral-là, il faut qu'ils se sentent impliqués, qu'ils ne donnent pas de l'argent juste pour avoir de l'information ou un magazine, mais aussi parce que tu embrasses la philosophie véhiculée par le média que tu soutiens<sup>4</sup>.

## L'enquête

Signe d'une crise prégnante du papier et d'une réinvention professionnelle, les plateformes de vidéo deviennent dernièrement le lieu d'exercice d'un journalisme d'enquête nucléarisé, décentralisé, déconnecté des entreprises médiatiques classiques. Le journaliste Gautoz, ex-Gamekult, incarne un pionnier de cette pratique, en ce qu'il a commencé par de la revue de presse, soit de la reprise des travaux de confrères, pour ensuite réaliser progressivement ses propres enquêtes lorsque celle des autres médias laisse des zones d'ombres qu'il décide de combler:

Nous allons parler [du jeu vidéo en développement] *Beyond Good and Evil 2*, qui a fait l'objet d'un petit article d'enquête de Kotaku, qui m'a motivé moi, de mon côté, à aller creuser sur le sujet aussi. On va parler d'une enquête de l'inspection du travail chez Ubisoft

Montpellier ainsi que du départ du directeur créatif. [...] Ce projet *Beyond Good and Evil 2*, bien qu'il soit extrêmement ambitieux et motive énormément de gens, est une machine à casser, décourager les [travailleurs], et à réembaucher derrière de nouvelles personnes, pas forcément plus expérimentées, mais qui ont encore de la motivation, jusqu'à les démotiver, et ainsi de suite...<sup>5</sup>.

Ce même journaliste est récemment à l'initiative, aux côtés de trois confrères et une consœur, du lancement d' « Origami », un média décentralisé (c'est-à-dire sans site internet dédié, avec uniquement des comptes sur les plateformes de vidéo, de blog ou les réseaux sociaux). Celui-ci adopte le modèle social de la coopérative et se finance grâce aux contributions des internautes.

## Conclusion

Ni *duplicata*, ni entité étrangère, les chaînes de vidéo des médias imprimés constituent des espaces hybrides. Elles mettent en scène une pratique journalistique en train de s'opérer sous nos yeux, mais avec un ton décomplexé et dans un cadre souvent détendu et improvisé, laissant la place à l'interaction. Si elle constitue un prolongement de la ligne éditoriale de la revue imprimée, la chaîne Twitch d'un magazine déploie un ton souvent plus léger et une présence plus régulière de l'humour, l'espace étant davantage pensé comme un lieu de discussion que comme un vecteur d'information. Cet entre-deux invite à désacraliser la profession tout en réaffirmant son importance: si la diffusion en direct implique une forme de nonchalance, elle donne également à voir l'expertise des journalistes, qui illustrent l'étendue de leurs connaissances spécialisées de façon performative. Ainsi, ne serait-ce

4 Bitterlin K., "Gâchette Gauche #6, avec Origami, nouveau média jeux vidéo", Youtube.com, [online], <https://youtu.be/uvasaPl8VoA?si=yur9ZrEzqNOZdxlb>, juin 2023.

5 Gauthier, A., "Quel coût humain pour *Beyond good and evil 2*?", Youtube.com, [online] <https://youtu.be/7oche63hgz4?si=PJDqWSE6gaZrhULd>, mars 2023.



<b>Critères définitoires</b>	<b>« Journaliste »</b>	<b>« Influenceur »</b>
<b>Intention générale</b>	Informer	Divertir
<b>Posture</b>	Critiquer et expliquer (« à froid »)	Réagir (« à chaud ») et méta-commenter (souvent avec humour)
<b>Finalité</b>	Démontrer	Faire découvrir
<b>Marge de manœuvre</b>	Restreinte (éviter le « <i>spoil</i> », respecter les « <i>Non-Disclosure Agreement</i> »)	Totale (offrir du jeu par procuration)
<b>Rôle endossé</b>	L'éclaireur (guide d'achat et conseils d'utilisation)	Le miroir (« Comment jouerais-je à sa place ? Comment son expérience de jeu diffère-t-elle de la mienne ? »)

Fig. 3 Les rôles complémentaires des journalistes et des influenceurs.

que grâce aux multiples ponts qu'ils établissent avec leurs travaux rédactionnels, les journalistes ne troquent pas leur casquette professionnelle pour celle d'influenceur lorsqu'ils investissent Twitch:

On ne compte pas devenir des présentateurs qui, souvent, dans ce milieu, n'osent pas avoir face caméra des avis tranchés sur une industrie qui les nourrit et à la gâchette facile. On n'est plus du tout [dans ce rapport de force]: on va acheter les jeux de notre côté et se passer de l'industrie, fin de l'histoire<sup>6</sup>.

Leur rôle en tant que journalistes préexiste à leur présence en ligne, ce qu'ils ne manquent pas de rappeler en revêtant des postures et rôles différents et complémentaires de ceux des influenceurs (Fig. 3). À ce titre, les revues imprimées

semblent concevoir leur chaîne de vidéo avant tout comme un produit d'appel vers la production qui leur demande le plus de temps et d'effort: leur magazine imprimé. Car c'est avant tout cet objet, en voie de disparition, qui rassemble la rédaction et cristallise l'exercice de la pratique journalistique.

En marge de cette résistance prônant une sauvegarde du magazine, une autre pratique se construit. En revendiquant la présence de l'enquête au sein d'espace traditionnellement affilié au divertissement, les journalistes vidéoludiques qui diffusent leur enquête sur Twitch défendent une idéologie professionnelle journalistique (Deuze, 2004) transversale, qui peut s'exercer partout avec la même déontologie et la même rigueur, quel que soit le support. Épisodique, suscitée par le rebond sur l'actualité ou les contacts avec les sources confidentielles, l'enquête s'opère en marge du divertissement, de

6 Gauthier, A., "Quel coût humain pour Beyond good and evil 2?", Youtube.com, [online] <https://youtube/7oche63hzg4?si=PJDqWSE6gaZrhULd>, mars 2023.



contenus plus légers, tout comme elle n'occupe jamais l'entière d'un magazine papier. En s'affranchissant du carcan de la revue imprimée ou de la base de données d'un site web, des contraintes de la mise en page et des délais d'impression, mais aussi de la négociation avec les éditeurs de jeux vidéo, les journalistes entendent renouer avec une forme de réactivité et d'authenticité. Ils envisagent à ce titre Twitch comme un espace de liberté. Du côté du public, les modèles économiques du financement participatif et les abonnements de soutien aux chaînes Twitch ont habitué une partie des spectateurs à financer le média qu'ils suivent sans attendre de contreparties en retour.

Au départ lieu secondaire de la pratique journalistique, espace annexe employé comme vecteur promotionnel, la chaîne Twitch pourrait ainsi devenir l'espace de diffusion privilégié du journalisme spécialisé en jeux vidéo. Ce sentiment est renforcé, en miroir, par l'échec du média appelé "Le Live" lancé par le site *jeuxvideo.com*, qui avait tout misé sur le divertissement et s'était éloigné de l'information à propos du jeu vidéo. Si la pratique a tout de l'expérimentation et doit encore faire ses preuves, elle intervient dans une période cruciale, lors de laquelle le journalisme doit muter pour survivre. Après avoir participé à la perte de la presse vidéoludique au moment de l'avènement d'internet, le web offre aujourd'hui, à travers la porte d'entrée du streaming, un moyen pour le journalisme de jeux vidéo de se réinventer, de se financer autrement et de personifier les efforts nécessaires à la transmission d'informations de qualité.

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# THE SPECIALIZED TV EDITORIAL MARKET IN BRAZIL: A STUDY ON FAN CULTURE IN *INTERVALO* MAGAZINE

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## Abstract

This article analyses all 52 editions of the section “Entreviste seu Ídolo” from *Intervalo* magazine; based on the survey and analysis of issues published between 1968 and 1969, we discuss questions related to the fans profile chosen to participate in the section, the segment of activity of the idols and the context of the questions answered by the interviewees. In Brazil, despite being a minority, fan culture studies in communication are expanding and covering different areas such as identities, politics, and consumption. In this context, the article starts from a sample that has still not been explored in fan culture studies in the country. The magazine was a project of Editora Abril, published between the years 1963 and 1972; in turn, upon observing this strategic movement of the broadcasters and the consequent interest of its readers, it created several sections that established dialogues and built different relationships with its audience (Magnolo, 2023).

**Keywords:** *Intervalo magazine, fans, specialized journalism, television, 1960/70*

## Introduction

According to Jenkins (1992), becoming a fan of something leads the audience to engage emotionally and intellectually with the content, calling upon various critical and creative skills. Sandvoss (2005) argue that fans are a focal point in discussions about production and consumption in the current connectivity ecosystem. In Brazil, despite being a minority, studies on fan culture in the field of Communication are expanding and encompassing related contexts, such as identity, politics, and consumption (Amaral et al., 2022). However, research focuses on contemporary phenomena, mainly those guided by digital platforms.

On the national scene, *Intervalo* (1963-1972) pioneered incorporating fans into its publications. The magazine was an editorial product of Abril and is considered one of the most essential TV-specialized publications of the 1960s due to its extensive coverage of television programming, editorial quality, and the creation of various fixed sections that established different relationships with its readers. The study of specialized TV publications from the 1960s confirmed the creation of a unique identity that made readers identify and become accustomed to its “way,” format, style, fixed sections, and design (Magnolo, 2023).

The articles and reports helped the audience understand the facts that affected their lives, and, as they flipped through its pages, they encountered what they did not know, or discovered things they had never imagined they wanted to know. Like a friend, the magazine was akin to a person, there to provide information, entertainment, companionship, and distraction, establishing with the reader a relationship – familial, intimate, engaging, and affectionate—that was renewed with each edition. The novelties and discoveries in the magazine’s pages educated and taught the reader about TV and its world, consequently fostering and strengthening the fan culture of the time.

According to Bergamo (2010), the social, cultural, and technological context of the 1950s and 1960s caused the specialized press to evolve and create strategies to discuss a new medium of communication that had recently arrived in Brazil. All these aspects developed the viewer’s perspective on this new media device and led the public to embrace television as a means of communication. In fixed sections, for example, we observe a space where readers could actively participate, generating more significant interaction between the magazine and its audience. We were struck by the invitation the magazine extended to the reader to occupy a place of dialogue, participation, and engagement with *Intervalo*.

Building on this discussion, this article aims to analyze the “Entreviste seu Ídolo” section of *Intervalo* magazine – a sample still underexplored in fan culture studies in the country. Based on the survey and analysis of issues published between 1968 and 1969, we intend to discuss topics related to the profile of the fans chosen to participate in the section, the idols’ field of activity, and the context of the questions answered by the interviewees.

## The television context and the emergence of specialized TV magazines

The development of mass culture in Brazil gained substance and strength with the advent of television in 1950, bringing about various changes in how media content was produced and consumed. As a medium of communication, television instilled habits in its viewers – formerly readers and listeners – and, as technology and cultural experience, presented itself to society as a space for negotiation and for diverse communicative practices (Williams, 2016).

From an economic standpoint, Brazilian television evolved into an industry (Hoineff, 1996), thriving at systematically higher rates than most industries in the country. As a mass communication medium and technological innovation,

television brought convenience for people to watch from their homes, meaning that what was happening in the world “would be within the public’s reach in images” (Barbosa, 2013, p.268). Regarding this, Augé (1998) notes that, beyond the image, it changed from static to motion; the circulation conditions between individual and collective imagination also changed. Augé (1998) suggests that perhaps the ways of looking and encountering changed, that is, the consumption of symbolic goods and representations associated with technologies, globalization, and the acceleration of history.

The 1960s were a pivotal moment for the world of television in the country, undergoing drastic changes in social, cultural, political, and economic orders. The 1960s began with the transfer of the republic’s capital to Brasília, marking the arrival of more modern times that seemed promising but ultimately revealed themselves dark. Between 1964 and 1985, Brazil experienced one of the harshest and most violent periods in its history. During the Brazilian military regime, the country was governed by military generals and faced severe consequences, especially in communication, artistic expression, and education (cf. Magnolo, 2018). According to Bergamo (2010), during this period, practices of “how to make television” solidified, along with others rooted in radio that were either forgotten or modified. Television became a part of people’s everyday lives, influencing the tastes of individuals and even shaping the organization of their day and time, so that they did not miss any programs. By altering people’s daily habits, TV imposed a new culture and new parameters of behavior and innovated the language of Brazilians.

The television viewers and fans of the 1960s perceived messages as something ‘natural’ and ‘light’ during their leisure and entertainment moments. The image disseminated by TV could envelop its audience in the entertainment world. The invasion of the family scene by TV was facilitated “due to the familial ‘intimacy’ inherent in the language of video, the figure of the host or presenter was essential to the television

message, (...), responsible for introducing or ‘punctuating’ a program, or creating a special atmosphere for the program” (Mattos, 2010, p.60).

The history of television in Brazil permeated all sectors of our society. Thus, it primarily created consumer culture and disseminated Brazilian popular culture, materializing in television programs. According to Williams (2016), the media operate within a specific context and, as such, contribute, nourish, create habits, and establish dialogues, which, in turn, are responses to media stimuli within the social and cultural context in which they are embedded.

In this context, the first specialized TV magazines emerged in Brazil. Significantly, Brazilian television captured the people’s imagination, took shape, and gradually invaded the families’ homes (Barbosa, 2010). From this moment, it was no longer necessary to leave home to find out what was happening in the world of celebrities and idols, who until then only occupied the pages of magazines but were now there, on the TV screen. The print medium closely followed this change, from radio waves to humor shows and music competitions, which began to be broadcast by some TV stations during that period.

*Intervalo* magazine, published by Editora Abril, was launched in 1963 and remained in circulation until 1972. It is considered one of the most significant publications for national TV coverage. While local TV magazines were emerging, including *TV Semanal*, *TV Programas*, and *Sete Dias na TV*, Abril’s weekly publication invested in comprehensive, extensive, and diversified TV journalism.

### ***Intervalo* magazine and the section “Entreviste seu Ídolo” (Interview Your Idol)**

We know that *Intervalo* magazine and other specialized TV magazines created in the 1950s and 1960s played an



important role in introducing and shaping television as a device and as a communication medium for the emerging television audience during that period. When investigating fan participation, we consider that their relationship with the magazine did not necessarily stem solely from an understanding of television content or their media repertoire but also from the desire/need to be part of the television experience, leading us to the next aspect.

Previous studies (Magnolo, 2023) show that the ability to 'participate' was one of the motivators/stimuli for sending letters, critiques, praises, and questions, among other information, from readers and fans, who, in a way, became part of the collective experience of watching TV and felt a sense of belonging. In this sense, authors like Todd Gitlin (2006) argue that the audience has always had a 'voice,' as they could comment on different media content with their family, neighbors, and close friends. However, according to the same author, magazines provided visibility to these readers, allowing them to be part of the content on their pages.

We emphasize that visibility is also something selected and strategic in the editorial decisions of printed publications, forming part of the reading contract established therein. Regarding this, Storch (2013, p.132) states that reading is elaborated concerning socio-historical and cultural dynamics; in other words, this phenomenon must be understood as constitutive of the communication process. Thus, a text "only exists because there is knowledge of the existence of another, a reader who will attribute meaning to it."

From this perspective, it is possible to affirm that *Intervalo* magazine nurtured and shaped the interests of its readers. Similarly, when facing the printed pages, the fan looks for elements that define the editorial proposal and seeks clues that allow their acknowledgement as a magazine reader

(Magnolo, 2023). All this recognition, as well as the construction of relationships between printed media and their readers, is possible due to the organization around the communication contract, where, through an intersubjective relationship, the magazine and the readers engage with socially shared expectations about what appears on the printed pages.

By recognizing its readers, the magazine also learns their reading habits, preferences, curiosities, desires, and interests. Consequently, editorial strategies were developed to boost sales and strengthen the relationship with the audience. We propose that the relationship that *Intervalo* magazine built with its readers went beyond a simple offering of information, as reading became a dynamic and reciprocal interaction, a mutual exchange between the publication and its readership.

Throughout its history, *Intervalo* magazine created numerous regular sections. Mapping through carefully reading the 441 existing digitized editions in the Digital Hemeroteca revealed at least<sup>1</sup> 111 sections of different formats and subjects. Thirteen sections were categorized as those that, in some way, established relationships with the reader, totaling 13 regular sections (Magnolo, 2023). The initial years of the magazine were crucial for it to introduce television to its viewers and initiate coverage of the television world, primarily translated into the printing of the television schedule. The "Programas" (Programs) section was the leading guide, where viewers could consult and stay informed about everything happening on the channels.

When the magazine began to publicize the programming of various regions of Brazil, this section became a significant differentiator (Corrêa, 2017). We argue that the importance of *Intervalo* magazine to Brazilian society goes beyond the

<sup>1</sup> It is not possible to determine the exact number of regular sections because the collection of *Intervalo* magazine is not complete in the Digital Hemeroteca, as the weekly had a total of 501 editions throughout its existence.



Source: Digital Hemeroteca of the National Library <https://bit.ly/3FugWcg>

Fig. 1 Page from the "Programas" section, No. 233, p.27 – 1966.

dissemination of television schedules but also lies in creating regular sections that strengthen bonds and initiate dialogues with the reader. For this work, we propose an analysis of the "Entreviste seu ídolo" section (1968-1969).

Who has never dreamed of meeting their idol? Imagine being able to interview them. The "Entreviste seu ídolo" section was very similar to the pioneering *Chico Anísio Responde* section since it also proposed that the reader interview their idol, but there are some differences. The first is that a different

idol was interviewed in each section. Another difference lies in reader participation, since, while Chico Anísio's section brought various questions from several readers, here, a single lucky reader had this privilege. The interview took place in person and was recorded by the magazine's team. In other words, while the 1963 section maintained a distance between readers and the humorist, in this section, the reader could visit the celebrity's home, studio, rehearsal space, and program sets, among other locations.

In the following example, 18-year-old Rio de Janeiro student Cosme Damião interviews singer Rosemary, a star on TV Tupi and host of the program *Menina Moça*. The first page – as was the case with most editions – featured a photo of the student talking to the singer and was followed by the following introductory text:

Cosme likes playing the guitar. He prefers popular music over yé-yé-yé. Despite this, he is a fan of Rosemary, whom he considers one of the most beautiful singers of the present time. That is why he wrote to INTERVALO, asking to interview her. His letter was chosen, among many others. On a Wednesday afternoon, Cosme Damião and INTERVALO reporters went to interview the singer at her home in Flamengo, Rio de Janeiro. After the interview, Cosme Damião and Rosemary took advantage of a sunny afternoon for a stroll along Flamengo Park in front of the singer's house (*Intervalo*, No. 310, p.18, 1968)<sup>2</sup>.

As far as we could investigate, the interviews raised general questions about the artist's tastes and preferences, future projects, and dreams. In our understanding, this section portrayed the curiosities of readers/viewers who had 'some contact' with the celebrity through television but still had more underlying doubts and queries.

<sup>2</sup> Authors' translation.

As seen in the image below, the first selected interviewer was Ana Luiza, a student in the 3rd grade at Ginásio Riachuelo. The student chose the actor Jô Soares, who met with her at Teatro-Record Centro, São Paulo, during the rehearsals for *Família Trapo*.

One of the curiosities that sparked this research was discovering what subjects or topics the readers would ask their idols about. Based on Duffett's studies on fan culture (2013), one of our hypotheses was that, due to the fans' development of

an emotional relationship with TV stars, we would find questions of a highly personal nature.

The letters section promoted significant interaction between the magazine and the readers. Various TV-specialized publications in the 1950s and 1960s featured this section in their editions. Previous research (Magnolo, 2023) showed that studies of reader letters can provide important information, such as the gender, location, and profile of the magazine readers, and how they participated in this section. As a true



Source: Digital Hemeroteca of the National Library <https://bit.ly/46GHQJU>

Fig. 2 "Entreviste seu ídolo", Nº 310, pp.18-20 (1968).

fan, the reader felt comfortable expressing opinions about a celebrity, event, content, or TV program.

The letters section of *Intervalo* magazine, titled *Intervalo para Conversa*, also demonstrated and presented different profiles and types of fans. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that, to increase the level of interaction with its audience, the weekly magazine had the habit of responding to readers. In the following example, the magazine not only responds to the letter but also jokingly nicknames the fans as “pidonas” (beggars), in a sort of sarcastic humor, to depict the demands they make:

We will request a more extensive report featuring the famous Dr. Kildare and, if possible, placing him on the cover. We are students, the first 21 attending Anhanguera Institute of Education, and the rest, students from Campos Saltas School. (A petition follows [...] - São Paulo) Sinatra, my old friend, things are not looking good for you. This Dr. Kildare seems like he is going to outshine you when it comes to female “faints.” (The other day, we caught our four archivists snooping in the strongroom, where we keep the precious photos of the young man. We had to



Source: Digital Hemeroteca of the National Library <https://bit.ly/46BwKWq>

Fig. 3 “Entreviste seu ídolo”, Nº 330, no page number provided (1969).

replace the four with men – wearing sunglasses). Moreover, here we are, catering to “the beggars” with a cover and a new series of reports about “him.” Just one question (that is a hit): What does the American have? (*Intervalo*, No. 34, p. 8-9, 1963)<sup>3</sup>.

In the following letter, asserting the reader’s age with certainty is impossible. However, analyzing the excerpt from her letter, we find clues that allow us to infer her more conservative stance, possibly coming from an older person. The reader criticizes the cover and a “very negative report” that the magazine did with a “studio monkey” alongside a “youth idol”:

To make a report with a studio monkey! I want to put it on the front page alongside the youth idol! What do we care about this report? What do we have to do with your craziness and nonsense? It would be better to leave the pages blank than to write a negative report! - YOLANDA P C. SAO PAULO, SP. The report caught your attention, didn’t it, Yolanda? It showed an aspect of a fan’s life you did not know. Maybe that is why you were shocked. However, our goal was to show, without hiding anything, to what extent passion for an idol can go. (*Intervalo*, No. 275, p.24, 1968)<sup>4</sup>.

### The stereotypes of fan culture

As pointed out by Duffett (2013), Gray et al (2017), and Booth (2018), fan culture studies are guided by three waves. The first wave focused on reflections on gender and sexuality and the power dynamics of fans (fans and media content; fans and producers). Most of the works, framed within reception studies, analyzed the economic influence of avid audiences, affection, the social and political logic of communities, and the mediation of computers in audience production and mobilization.

According to Gray et al. (2017), researchers such as Hellekson, Busse, Jenkins, and Baym legitimized the field, emphasizing the specificities of fan culture practices despite starting from the methodological framework of British cultural studies. In the early 2000s, the second wave reinforced the connection between fans and producers, delving into the economic relevance of this audience. Scholars like Hills, Sandvoss, and Coppa conducted studies highlighting the complexity and multidimensionality of fan practices and communities characterized by various forms of participation and degrees of engagement (Sandvoss et al., 2017). Thus, while the first wave aimed at legitimizing the field, the second wave dedicated itself to analyzing more specific issues.

Finally, the third wave is marked by the valorization of fans within the industry and the popularization of fandom practices, reinforcing the interrelation between culture, society, technology, and the new commercial logic of the entertainment industry. Sandvoss et al. (2017) state that research by Hills, Booth, and Duffett explores the nuances of networked communities, fans’ motivations, and their relationship with identity.

However, beyond the epistemological reflections of the field, constant refutation of fan stigmatization is also guided by Jenkins (1992) and Duffett (2013). The negative and stereotyped bias can be observed in various areas, from the epistemological foundations of the word “fan” to how mass media portrays the subculture. The term “fan” originates from an abbreviation of “fanatic.” The word was often associated with excessive enthusiasm, devotion, possession, insanity, and false beliefs linked to religion and politics. According to Jenkins (1992), even though the term “fan” was used by the media in the late 19th century, especially in sports journalism, pejorative and stigmatized connotations continued to be reproduced.

3 Authors’ translation.

4 Authors’ translation.

The stigma that reinforced the supposed difficulty of fans in distancing fiction from reality is also evident in other pejorative representations, such as journalism and cinema. According to Jenkins (1992, p. 32-33), "(...) news stories characterized fans as psychopaths whose frustration with the fantasy intimacy with stars or dissatisfaction with the desire to achieve stardom takes violent or misanthropic turns." In other words, the stereotyped representation of avid audiences was guided by an argumentative perspective linked to the image of an emotionally unstable, infantilized, and out-of-touch subject. According to Jenkins (1992) and Duffett (2013), the archetype of the 'uncontrolled' fan inspired various films. Released in 1981, "The Fan" revolves around the unhealthy love of Douglas Breen (Michael Biehn) for Sally Ross (Lauren Bacall). In the story, the frustrated 'fan,' not having his passion reciprocated, kidnaps the idol and threatens her with rape and death. Similar contexts can be observed in "Fade to Black" (1980) and "Misery" (1992).

According to Jenkins (1992), Jensen (1992), and Bennett and Booth (2018) in the U.S. specialized press, fans were portrayed as a pathologized and stereotyped identity. Through figures like the geek, the nerd, the dweeb, the loser, reports highlight stereotypes such as emotional and intellectual immaturity, social displacement, obsession, and the cult of low culture. As Stanfi (2013) points out:

if representations of fans by non-fans in popular and news media have typically framed fandom as a practice of uncontrolled, socially unacceptable desire, scholarship has equally tended to understand fans as empowered through their fandom to have more control over their media experience, either by fighting the media industry or by being courted by it. What the two have in common is a tendency to consider fans as subjects with no history—both assume from the

outset that these individuals or communities are already fully formed (Stanfi, 2013, p. 118).

In the context of the Brazilian press in the 1960s, the stigmatization of fans can be observed in the term "macaca-de-auditório." According to the Aurélio dictionary, "macaca-de-auditório" is "a woman enthusiastic about radio or television singers who frequents audience programs"; Michaelis defines it as "a woman who is a great admirer of radio and television singers and who frequents auditorium programs regularly" (Aguiar, 2007, p.31). Nestor de Holanda coined the term to define a specific type of participant in radio programs in the 1940s and 1950s. According to Werneck (2013), the words "macaca" and "macaco" are pejorative terms to define a Black person offensively and inferiorly. Thus, by using this word, the reader would be accepting the rules of racism to describe Black women and their modes of participation as consumers of cultural products. "Excesses in gestures, noises, expressions are emphasized, seeking to highlight their opposite: lack of manners, restraint, elegance, and containment, prescribed to the 'good' women of the time"<sup>5</sup> (Werneck, 2013, p.1).

### The fans in *Intervalo*

As discussed earlier, the section that caught our attention and is the source of most of our questions and concerns is "Entreviste seu Ídolo", chosen to be analyzed in-depth in this article. From the beginning of the development of this study, we had seen its opportunities not only to understand the strategies created by *Intervalo* magazine to establish a relationship with its readers but also, and mainly, to understand how the reader participated in this interaction and what the profile of this fan, chosen to conduct the interviews, was.

Starting from this curiosity about the profile of the fans who gained space in the magazine, we chose to study this section

5 Authors' translation.



to quantify and qualify the data necessary for the analysis. As mentioned above, there was a previous survey of all sections to understand the complexity and variety of these strategies by creating fixed sections (Magnolo, 2023). The survey was conducted through the digitized collection in the Digital Hemeroteca of the National Library between January 10, 2021, and July 28, 2021. We opted to work with the Microsoft Excel program, which allowed information organization and its subsequent categorization. The analysis was carried out between September 1 and September 30, 2023.

The chosen analysis technique was Content Analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; Sampaio & Lycarião, 2021; Herscovitz, 2007), a method highly relevant to the field of Communication, with numerous possibilities. Content Analysis is a set of research techniques aimed at systematically analyzing content. Furthermore, it is considered a method grounded in empiricism, exploratory in process, predictive, and inferential (Krippendorff, 2004). Inference, therefore, allows for extracting knowledge about the analyzed message's aspects, and acquiring the message's underlying elements, behavior, text, and communicative practice. Thus, the researcher can make assumptions about the data according to the historical context.

For this article, the historical, social, and cultural contexts presented earlier helped us understand our object and the content that will be analyzed. For example, it would only be possible to think about the fixed sections alongside an understanding of all the changes that TV brought to Brazil, the need to create specialized magazines in television programming, or more, the perception of the change in behavior of readers and fans. We aim to investigate the profile of the fans chosen to participate in the "Entreviste seu Ídolo" section. To do so, it was necessary to list what our units of analysis would be, and we were faced with countless possibilities, as pointed out by Sampaio and Lycarião (2021):

One of the most crucial decisions in designing Content Analysis research is defining the analysis unit and possible subunits. In other words, what is the unit of content being investigated (are they social media posts? Newspaper editorials? Patient records?), and precisely how is the content being analyzed – are individual words being assessed, or are phrases or paragraphs the focus? Or is the unit of analysis the entire text as a whole? (Sampaio; Lycarião, 2021, p.51)<sup>6</sup>.

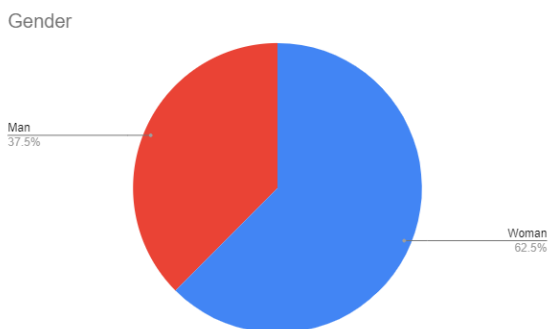
Our unit of analysis, therefore, was the texts of the section. To do this, the transcription of all editions was initially carried out, allowing, for example, the mapping of terms and words in the analysis. Herscovitz (2007) clarifies the possibilities and paths of applying Content Analysis in journalism, arguing that this method can be employed in various studies that may reveal trends, interests, and ideologies. Therefore, it is possible to define the analysis focused on journalistic products as follows:

"(...) a research method that collects and analyzes texts, sounds, symbols, and images printed, recorded, or transmitted in electronic or digital form found in the media from a random or non-random sample of the objects studied to make inferences about their contents and formats by framing them in categories that have been previously tested, mutually exclusive, and replicable (Herscovitz, 2007, p.126)<sup>7</sup>.

Once we identified *Intervalo* magazine as our primary object and the "Entreviste seu Ídolo" section as our corpus, content analysis helped us organize and categorize the vast amount of information we processed. We followed the classical application, believing it would address our research questions. We suggest that the analysis be restricted to message

6 Authors' translation.

7 Authors' translation.



Source: Developed by the authors (2023).

Fig. 4 Percentage of gender among Fans' Gender of the fans that participated in "Entreviste seu ídolo".

construction, focused solely on the text and its cultural and social applications, without measuring media effects (Nagy; Gillespie, 2015). The reason for this decision is that the publication no longer exists, and we lack sufficient information about circulation, readership, and the team handling reader letters. For these and other reasons, we cannot measure the effects the letters may have had on the magazine and society.

The gender of the fans who participated in the section is 62.5% women and only 37.5% men. The metrics highlight not only the profile of the avid consumers of the content addressed by *Intervalo*, but also align with other studies on fan culture. According to Jenkins (1992), fandoms are predominantly composed of women.

This survey aligns with previous research confirming that *Intervalo's* audience was predominantly female (Magnolo, 2023). This shows that, in this section, the magazine chose to cater to and meet the demands of its female readership. However, it is essential to highlight, in Table 1, the broad age range of the female readers who participated in the section. Even though it was not a publication for children and teenagers, several girls between 10 and 15 years old interviewed their idols.

Following an already established pattern (Magnolo, 2023), most interviews took place in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, where the magazine had branches. This likely corresponds to the TV structure at that time, where the most important and watched programs were recorded in the major studios in the capitals.

Considering social class, the magazine had readers who owned a television at home, belonging to the middle class. Still, it also reached an audience that sometimes watched television at a family member's or neighbor's house, or read *Intervalo* in establishments like beauty salons.

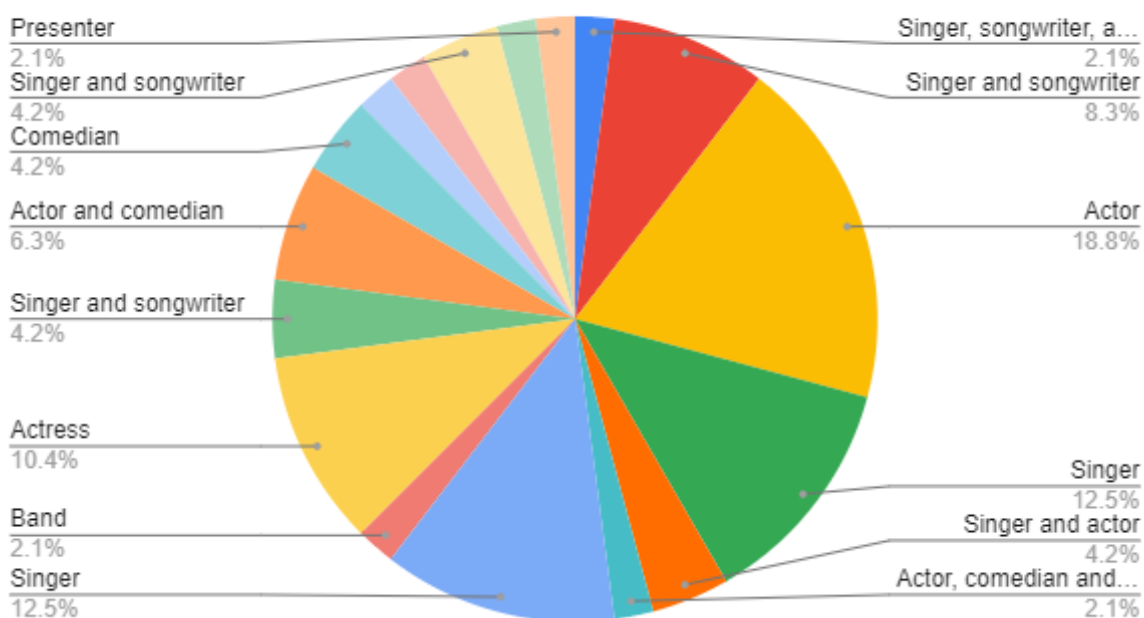
Regarding the fields of activity of the artists interviewed by their fans, there is a noticeable predominance of performing arts, specifically actors (18.8%) and actresses (10.4%). This aligns with the fact that most magazine readers, when participating in the letter section, referred to TV as a means of communication, writing about programs, artists, singers, movies, and soap operas. This is evident in the following figure:

Analyzing reader interests reveals a distinction. Magnolo (2023, p.209) states, "While men showed more interest in music festivals, comedy shows, and other genres, women were more curious about music programs, variety shows, soap operas, news programs, movies, and series." The covered topics were varied. This leads us to infer, for example, that this diversity of programs presented in excerpts from letters over the years reflected changes made by TV itself (Bergamo, 2010) but also the new technological and cultural reality of the time (Williams, 2016).

According to Jenkins (1992), in the realm of fiction, by learning behind-the-scenes information, the viewer can watch scenes with the suspension of disbelief or renewed respect for the skill and technical competence that made the scene believable. Thus, by visiting their idol in the studio where the program was recorded, fans gained a new perspective on the show and felt closer to the artists. During 1968 and 1969, the



### Field of activity



Source: Developed by the authors (2023).

Fig. 5 Chart related to the artists' field of activity.

readers' most significant interest was in series, soap operas, movies, and variety shows (Magnolo, 2023).

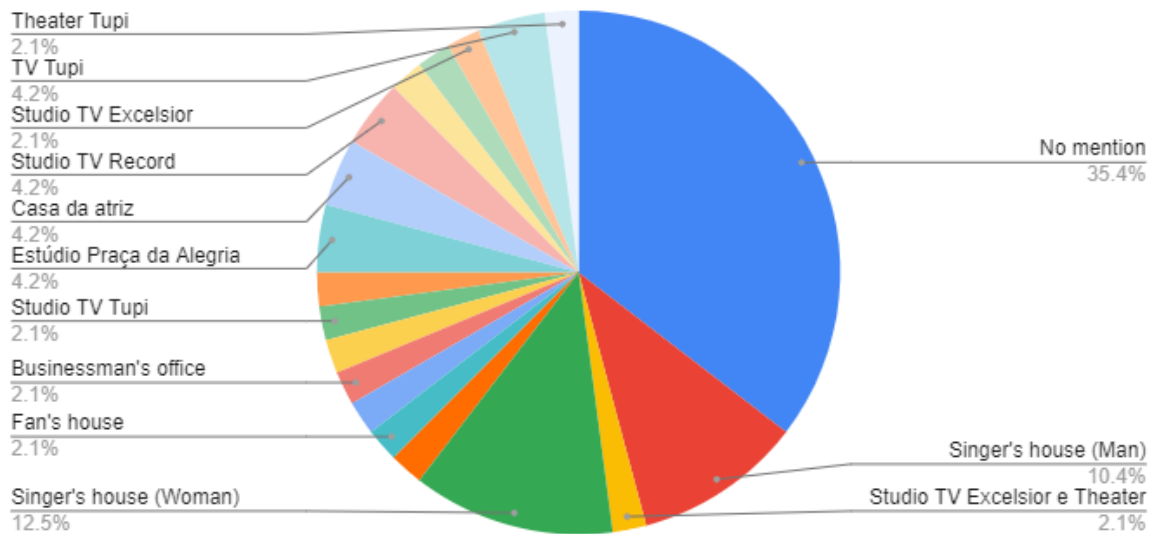
Furthermore, since its first edition, *Intervalo* magazine has always made it clear that its role was to be a companion and friend to the reader, bringing the latest and most curious from the world of Brazilian television (Magnolo, 2023). Below is the figure showing the locations where the interviews were conducted. We draw attention to the significant number of occurrences of encounters promoted in TV studio settings.

From the sample, we also searched for terms related to the word "fan." In addition to reinforcing the passionate relationship with media content, the recurrences engage with how

fans were represented. The stigma is based on the bias of fanaticism, where the audience cannot separate reality from fiction and has a toxic relationship with the idol.

The most frequent occurrences were with the terms 'Public,' with 31 appearances, and 'Fan,' with 19. This reflects how the magazine defined and presented the interviewees in the section. In most cases, the text made it clear that those young people conducting the interview were indeed fans of those personalities. In the case of women, we can observe the constant association of gender with issues related to marriage and romantic relationships. In line with the archetype of groupies, women cannot maintain a critical distance from the image they want.

### Interview location



Source: Developed by the authors (2023).

Fig. 6 Chart related to the location where the interviews were conducted.

### Conclusions

*Intervalo* magazine, as an editorial format, was part of a decisive historical moment for Brazilian mass media, and began to publicize the TV world's habits, products, information, behaviors, and culture. Furthermore, it was proven that such changing habits were also based on the standard developed in the United States, especially by Triangle Publications, with the creation of *TV Guide* magazine in 1953, bringing the rationalization of content production for the masses, technical procedures, international names, and genders. Editora Abril also used the entertainment industry as a business, thus contributing to building the history of television in Brazil

The fandom remains a pathologized and stereotyped identity, such characterizations are often inaccurate but still common in specialized press. The stereotyping of fans does not

come across as an issue to be discussed and deepened by *Intervalo* magazine - even though it dedicates a section to the avid public - but as yet another cliché that can garner laughs. In *Intervalo*, the fans are still seen as deviant, hysterical and pathological.

The analysis presented strongly relied on the interactionist nature of journalism, understanding how *Intervalo* magazine had to interact with its readers, especially with the creation of fixed sections and, in the case of this work, through the "Interview Your Idol" section. Moreover, this form of communication promoted by the magazine was possible thanks to the interchange developed with its readers and the nurturing of fan culture through dream fulfilling.

Since its early years, television has worked with audiovisual language, making it possible, for example, for the viewer

to perceive subtleties such as expressions and gestures of the presenters that enhance the apprehension of affective traits in the information. In contrast, *Intervalo* magazine, for example, offered limited resources to text and photography to create interaction with the reader. However, we could confirm that the weekly explored its content through detailed descriptions of characters, places, sensations, and, especially, the creation of fixed sections, which brought words and situations that were part of a collective experiential universe.

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# MAGAZINES' TRANSITION TO DIGITAL: THE CASE OF GEORGIA

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## **Abstract**

The goal of this paper is to show the results of a study into how Georgian magazines adapted to a digital transition, the kind of innovations they used and the kind of challenges they faced. For this purpose, we use the qualitative approach - the semi-structured interview method. The study was conducted among editors and journalists (n=12) of the magazines from 1 March 2023 till 15 December 2023. In the digital age, magazines in Georgia have faced a number of challenges: it is not easy to retain readers for the print edition, and the tendency of readers to decline is gradually becoming more apparent.

**Keywords:** print magazine, digital transition, online magazine, Georgian media, digital era

## Introduction

The transition from the print version of magazines to the digital space is a global trend which is associated with a number of challenges, but the biggest challenge is decreasing audience. According to Santos, the majority of print magazines have an online counterpart, but the quantity of digital-only magazines is also rising: "almost every print magazine has an online presence, but the number of digital only magazines is also increasing. However, the fact that a print magazine has an online presence doesn't mean that its 'online version' is a digital 'magazine'" (Santos, 2011, p. 301).

Digitization and transition are changing consumer habits because a part of the audience has moved mainly to the online space and new opportunities have emerged on digital platforms where magazines offer their content to readers through short texts and videos. Such content is especially preferred by young people: while scrolling on their mobile phones, they do not read printed versions.

The change of magazine readers has not been unnoticed by researchers. According to Hartley, "Suddenly, 'Readers' became 'users'. They used online and social media for their own purposes" (Hartley, 2020, p. 22).

The process of digital transition has been going on for several years in the Georgian magazine market and has related to some challenges. The number of readers of printed magazines in Georgia, as well as around the world, is decreasing day by day. Today, all magazines have an online platform, although some of them have completely moved to the online space and they do not exist in print. Today, there are only 12 magazines left in the print media market in Georgia; at the same time, they also have online versions. From these, only two are public magazines (*Indigo, Forbes*), five are thematic (*Arsenali, Gemrielia, Mkurnali, Rugby World, Sabavshvo Karuseli*) and five are yellow,

boulevard type magazines (*Bomondi, Sarke, Tbiliselebi, Gza, Nargis Magazine*).

*Tabula* and *Liberalli* ceased to exist in printed form and moved only to the online space. At the same time, there is a new trend of establishing new magazines only on electronic platforms (*Publika, At.ge*).

The goal of this paper is to show the results of a study into how Georgian magazines adapted to a digital transition, the kind of innovations they used and the kind of challenges they faced.

## Literature Review

Is a print magazine dead or not? What are the challenges for print magazines? These questions have been raised in a number of studies in various countries.

"Magazines face what may well be their greatest challenge to date: digital transition" (Cardoso & Holmes, 2022, p. 1). However, before the review of the literature about challenges, it is interesting to look at the effect of digitisation and the emergence of digitisation of print magazines.

BarNir et al. recognized that 'Digitisation' has had a negative influence on print media as "a disruptive, creative force that is revolutionizing how people work, play, communicate, buy, sell, and live" (BarNir et al., 2003, p. 792; Slywotzky and Morrison, 2000, p. 7).

Skog et al. (2018, p. 431) define digitisation as "environmental turbulence caused by digital innovation" which is the result of the erosion of boundaries and business practices that underpin production and revenue.

Skog et al.'s concept, according to Hogarth, was maybe used for magazine publishing while looking at a shift toward online content that began in the late 1990s but primarily



took hold in the early 2000s (Hogarth, 2022, p. 8). At this time, audiences started to shift away from print, preferring instantaneous, free online access to content. As Chandra and Kaiser note, as a result, advertisers shifted their focus from traditional media forms to the internet (Chandra & Kaiser, 2014, p. 1829).

As Hogarth writes, based on a Helen Powell cite (Powell, H, 2013, p. 186) the 2008 global economic crisis caused the loss of advertising in print magazines, which also caused the decline of their circulations (Hogarth, 2022, p. 9).

Abrahamson and other scholars (Abrahamson, 2015; Aguliar, 2020; McKay, 2019; etc.) noted certain negative aspects related to digital disruption, arguing that changing technology and a volatile environment have resulted in significant hurdles for publishers and readers. According to Abrahamson, "it distorts, even violates, the implicit magazine-reader social contract" (Abrahamson, 2016, p. 5).

While theorists have described the issues that digital disruption has influenced print media, it has also created new revenue streams through brand extensions such as events, database provision, and digital editions (McKay, 2019, p. 448).

In addition to the fact that digitisation and transition have changed consumer habits and some magazines have moved to the online space, new opportunities have emerged for digital versions through multimedia platform potential. However, at the same time, advertising revenue has also decreased, which has caused the reduction of circulations. Of course, the researchers noticed this problem.

This is exactly what Guenther was talking about when he tried to analyse the challenges of moving magazines to multimedia platforms: "The King is dead; long live the King. It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. The glass isn't half empty; it's half full. Most of us have used one of

these phrases to describe a noteworthy event or circumstance. But few of us view them as a near perfect description of today's magazine publishing industry. The traditional world of print magazines is in a gradual yet unmistakable decline under almost any measure of long-term value—paid subscriptions, single copy sales and ad revenue, to name a few. Magazine share of the global ad pie has declined from 13.5% a decade ago to a projected 8.7% in 2012" (Guenther, 2011, p. 327). However, Guenther was optimistic about the future of print magazines, and, as he wrote, in order to maximize brand and company value, we will have to design personalised touch screen experiences that excite customers, impress advertisers, and match top-line growth with a digital cost structure that offers enormous profit improvement (Guenther, 2011, p. 328).

When discussing the future of print media, researchers focus on the fact that changing reading habits must be taken into account, especially among digital natives. According to the survey conducted in Finland by "The Future Magazine. Transition from product to service", the authors noted that the internet is the primary media outlet in the world, especially for the generation born in the digital age. The ways in which consumers utilise media should be taken into consideration while thinking about the future of print media. Printed magazines continue to have a place as a calming and "slow" media, even though consumers are spending more and more of their free time on digital media (Seisto et al., 2013, p. 7). As they predicted in their research results, over the following ten years, there will be significant changes in the magazine industry:

Not only will the publishers meet increasing competition from other media (including user-generated content); the demand for content that targets specific reader groups and for offering advertisers a better way of reaching their customers will force publishers to develop their products continuously (Seisto et al., 2013, p. 7).

Lawrence's study investigates how successful media firms in the USA have transformed the way they distribute materials, namely by adding tablet versions. The relatively recent advent of tablet devices on the market, the rising prevalence of smart mobile devices, and the ability to be online more regularly all contribute to the growing popularity of printed magazine tablet editions (Lawrence, 2014, p. 1).

When Kundalkar discussed the life and death situation of magazines, he argued that "amidst those tombstones there is some good news - many magazines are being reborn or resurrected on the intangible building blocks of digital technology" (Kundalkar, 2015, p. 25).

As Holmes pointed out, magazines evolved as "megazines" and "metazines". According to him, a "megazine" is defined when a print magazine becomes a magazine brand with multimedia (print and digital) strategies. He notes that a magazine is not a necessary product; it might "also exist as a 'metazine', which is both a metaphor for a magazine and a meta representation of the form" (Holmes, 2020, p.15).

As Nosek et al. concluded from a study conducted in nine European countries in 2015, "print media are still an important component of the new communications environment among European audiences" (Nossek et al., 2015, p. 378).

According to Aguliar, who studied the Dutch magazine market, "the print form continues to be the dominant core for the independent magazine market in the Netherlands" (Aguliar, 2022, p. 2).

Although in most European countries print versions are still dominant along with their electronic versions, some magazines have stopped printing and have been converted to digital magazines: "Some magazines offer both print and digital versions while others are exclusively digital" (Nossek et al., 2015, p. 365).

Bradstreet studied US magazines and pointed out that numerous social media platforms and applications now pose a significant challenge to publishers. The forecast that the magazine industry will die may come true, but not for long. Magazines are currently gaining popularity with the help of social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Niche magazines will continue to offer both print and digital copies in the near future: "It is important for the magazine companies to continue to market towards those looking for the nostalgic experience while reading magazines, as well as those looking to advance with the times of technology" (Bradstreet, 2022, p. 47).

This topic of digitisation/digitalisation of print magazines is less researched in the Georgian context. The use of multimedia news by print media has been studied by D. Osepashvili, who compares it to Lithuanian print media. Analysing interviews with Georgian and Lithuanian newspaper editors and journalists, Osepashvili concludes that despite the global challenge of declining readership in such small countries as Georgia and Lithuania, print media will still not be completely replaced by online media (Osepashvili, 2019, p. 169).

Makarashvili discusses the challenges of print media within the framework of the concept of media morphosis and studies the attitudes of the audience (Makarashvili, 2023, p. 27-28).

Thus, it is timely and current for Georgia to study the issue of the transition of print magazines to digital, because this topic has hardly been worthy of special attention. Therefore, there is no doubt about the novelty and actuality of this research.

This paper aims to highlight the challenges related to digital transition processes by responding to the following questions:

RQ1. What are the main challenges that Georgian magazine industries are facing in the digital transition process?

RQ2. What kind of innovations do Georgian magazines use?

RQ3. Is digital transition a global challenge or the end for the magazines as traditional media?

To achieve this goal, this study provides an overview and two tables of high-quality and yellow magazines that shifted from print to digital. This is followed by qualitative analysis.

## Method

The qualitative approach of semi-structured interviews has been used as a main research method in order to respond to the research questions. The study was conducted among editors and journalists (n=12) of print and online magazines from March 1, 2023 to December 15, 2023.

Some of the interviewees are representatives of Georgian universities (n=8) who teach print media and online magazine. There are representatives from both state and private universities: TSU/Tbilisi State University, ATSU/Kutaisi State University, CU/Caucasian University, IBSU/International Black Sea University, GIPA/Georgian Institute of Public Affairs, CIU/Caucasian International University, UG/University of Georgia, and SEU/Georgian National University.

Purposive selection was used. For these semi-structured interviews, six magazines were selected based on the quality of the magazine (high-quality vs yellow): *Indigo* and *Forbes* for public magazines with both print and online versions; *Bomondi* and *Sarke* for print and online yellow magazines; *Liberali* and *Publika* for public magazines with online versions only.

## Main Findings

### Overview of the high-quality magazines which shifted from print to digital

The magazine industry in Georgia has been experiencing difficult times since 2014 when a popular and readable

high-quality monthly magazine, *Tskheli Shokoladi*, stopped publishing, and other high-quality weekly newsmagazines, *Liberali* and *Tabula*, started struggling for survival.

From 2013, *Tabula* decided to change the frequency of printing from weekly to monthly. However, after one year it stopped its printed version and remained only on its digital platform. It is worth mentioning that they started looking for a new way of survival and established online TV on this platform.

*Liberali* was published from 2009 and it was the most trusted weekly magazine, but it stopped publishing and decided to remain only in digital space.

The customer's habit has changed. If I look at Google Analytics, mostly they have switched to smartphones. Also, when one of your main products is news, the demand for the online version is much higher. The attitude is also changing, that they don't read long texts online (Editor of *Liberali*).

According to the editor, this change brought results immediately: the rate of online users increased significantly. He pointed out the main challenge – the lack of advertisements.

To the question how *Liberali* was going to increase the number of readers and advertisers, and whether it would happen by integrating a certain amount of "yellow" material, the editor answered that there were no planned changes in the content and style of the publication:

We really want to diversify the content and adapt it to people of different interests, but this does not mean that you must tell the readers about Hollywood scandals or various cheap topics. You can prepare quality materials on sports, culture, technological achievements or other interesting topics as well as politics or social topics (Chimakadze, 2018).

Table 1 High-quality magazines

#	TITLES OF THE MAGAZINES	PRINT VERSION	ONLINE PLATFORM	PRINT + ONLINE	VIDEOS
1	<i>Tskheli Shokoladi</i>	2004-2014	no	no	no
2	<i>Liberali</i>	2009-2016	From 2009 - Present time	no	yes
3	<i>Tabula</i>	2010-13 weekly 2013-14 monthly	From 2014-Present time	no	yes
4	<i>Publika</i>	-	From 2019-Present time	no	yes
5	<i>Forbes.ge</i>	2014	From 2014-Present time	yes	yes
6	<i>Indigo</i>	2015	From 2015-Present time	yes	yes
7	<i>At.ge</i>	-	From 2018	no	yes

One of the recent steps *Liberali* has taken to promote its product was to add a social media manager to the team. They started with frequent usage of Facebook.

*Liberali*, which was transformed to an online-only magazine in 2016, was divided into two teams after three years. A new young team (one of the two teams) of *Liberali* stopped preparing the online version because of some financial challenges. The young core of the *Liberali* team decided to establish a new online magazine, *Publika*. This magazine tries to use innovative ways more frequently, such as by using video and multimedia forms like interviews or reporting more often than *Liberali*, but they still have a problem regarding advertisements because some advertisers prefer TV - which is more expensive but has bigger audience - and other advertisers prefer social media ads - which are cheaper and more effective to engage the target audience.

So, the case of *Tabula* and *Liberali* showed the tendency of full substitution in the transition from print to digital magazines. Besides this tendency, another trend is also distinguished: the hybrid form of transformation in the era of media convergence

– i.e., when magazines still have printed versions alongside electronic versions. The examples of this tendency are two quality magazines: *Indigo* and *Forbes.ge*. However, this study does not review the *Forbes* case, because although it is published in Georgian, it works according to the *Forbes* magazine formula and has a specific business audience.

The print media market in Georgia is very small (the population of Georgia is approximately five million with more than 1.5 million having migrated to different European countries and the USA). Because of the small media market, it is difficult to maintain special interest print magazines with different topics such as literature, health, sport, religion etc. Most of them have been transformed from print and have been replaced to the digital space.

### Overview of yellow magazines which shifted from print to digital

Only sales-oriented yellow magazines and some lifestyle magazines that use loud headlines and leads to intrigue readers manage to survive in print. It should also be noted

Table 2 Yellow magazines

#	TITLES OF THE MAGAZINES	PRINT VERSION	ONLINE PLATFORM	PRINT + ONLINE	VIDEOS
1	<i>Sarke</i>	From 1995	yes	yes	yes
2	<i>Bomondi</i>	From 1996	yes	yes	yes
3	<i>Gza</i>	From 1996	yes	yes	yes
4	<i>Tbiliselebi</i>	From 1996	yes	yes	yes
5	<i>Nargis Magazine</i>	From 2014	yes	yes	yes

that for this purpose, they also use the online space: they try to attract readers and increase engagement in social media, such as Facebook, but in most cases the content is the same and is seldom different from print and online materials.

So, the main reason why yellow magazines could remain print versions along with online platform is the factor that they are sales-oriented with teasers and loud headlines.

### **Case of *Indigo* as the only high-quality Georgian magazine with print and digital versions**

*Indigo* magazine holds a distinct niche among independent, small-budget media outlets. *Indigo* was created in the summer of 2015 with the initiative of several people. The focus of this magazine is art and culture; however, in some cases you will find depth-reporting, articles on health care, human rights and other socio-political topics. Today, *Indigo* is the only printed periodical of this type in Georgia. It does not have a PDF version. On the online platform it tries to use not only multimedia or transmedia products, but also other innovative outlets.

Due to the quality and exclusivity of the texts and interesting authors, the magazine quickly established itself and gained a

few loyal readerships who consider themselves "somehow privileged" because they are readers of *Indigo*. The magazines have a small but certain influence on the public, which helped them to master a new niche and attract the interest of advertisers. In parallel with the magazine, the founders soon established a small but multifunctional publishing house through which they could work on commercial projects and maintain the magazine. By offering a variety of print services, *Indigo* helps customers structure and package their content into issues like a special sports edition, anniversary magazine, NGO report, booklet or more. After their earnings, the editorial team divides the money into investments and to help the magazine's direction. However, such orders are still periodic and, for stability, the founders have to constantly look for alternative ways of income.

As for advertising, there is little, but as the editor notes, *Indigo* cooperates with various companies, whose interest in this case is mainly the image of the magazine and the specificity of the readership. According to editors, "They advertise with us only because of the quality, this is not a big magazine that sells hundreds of thousands".

In addition to advertising and publishing activities, the editorial office periodically submits applications for small grants to international organisations in order to prepare articles and studies on a certain topic or hold discussions.

The frequency of print changed from monthly to quarterly. Today, the magazine is maintaining itself, although there are many challenges and they have to take care of it on a daily basis.

*Indigo* tries to be active in social media. Besides Facebook and Instagram, they started using Tik-Tok in order to attract Generation Z. Besides this, *Indigo* started printing an English version and sells this in eight European countries.

*The Indigo* is the only Georgian magazine which has a mobile application and subscribers' system:

And now our business model and overall strategy is primarily online, where we also independently produce digital content and that's completely open to everyone, and additionally there's print and there's content that's behind paywalls. Nobody has such a model in Georgia yet. (Executive Director of *Indigo* Magazine).

### **Main findings of Qualitative Study: Declining circulations and advertising revenues**

As it was revealed by this research, the main challenge for magazines is the lack of finance, which leads to a decrease in the circulation of printed magazines. The decrease in the audience also leads to a decrease in advertising revenues, because one of the main factors for the advertiser is the size of the audience. All the respondents named this as the primary problem for print media in the digital era:

The main problem is the decrease in readership. Consequently, business is less interested especially since social media has emerged, as it has become easier and less expensive for businesses to make and distribute advertisements independently. (One of the online magazine editors).

Nowadays, I think that the main challenge of magazines is to attract and keep regular subscribers, which does not work in any magazine in Georgia, unless we count *Indigo* as an exception. (One of the print magazine journalists).

It is natural that advertising is ordered by media organizations with a large audience. In Georgia, the audience of printed magazines is no longer large, which is caused by the effect of the Internet. (One of the media managers and lecturer).

Interviewed editors and journalists talk about the main challenge that has become even clearer in the digital age: the non-existence of print magazine as a business.

According to questioned respondents, one of the main challenges is the changed behaviour of the audience for printed magazines; they now read less and consume media mainly through social networks. Most of them pointed out that reading habits have changed in the digital environment:

I would say that they are no longer readers, but users, and consumption is just like that. Scrolling short texts, watching short videos on mobile phones. (One of the online magazine editors).

The habits of digital natives have completely changed, drastically different from 45+ people... (One of the magazine journalists).

In my opinion, the main challenge for magazines is that the audience, who are active users of social networks, find it very difficult to read long texts. The so-called long-readings texts are mostly read by people over 40 years old, while the younger generation is used to short texts, which is why the number of readers is inevitably reduced. (Lecturer of Magazine Production).

As most of the interviewed respondents mentioned, the content of the printed version of the magazine must be different from the content of the online platform. The web should be more innovative, and the stories should be told in a visual way:

I think it should definitely be different from the print version because the habit/taste/consumption style of online media users is absolutely different from print media users. (One of the magazine journalists and Lecturer of Media Managements).

I believe there should be some differences between the print and digital versions. Some things may only be available in print, while others may only be available digitally. The same content cannot be placed on the web in a reduced form. I do not think this is right, maybe they are satisfied with the material they read online and don't want to pay money to buy a printed magazine any more. (One of the magazine multimedia journalists).

Some of the respondents emphasised that it is preferable to offer multimedia and transmedia projects alongside videos to stimulate the desire to purchase the printed version and read long-read articles:

I think that in order to attract the audience and interest them in the printed magazine, you might digitize the part of the materials published in the printed magazine and offer it to the audience in different formats (posters, videos, animations). If it is interesting to the audience, there is a good chance that they will read the print magazine too. (One of the print magazine journalists).

If most of the interviewees think that the content should be presented on the web in a concise and innovative way – which would make people want to read more in print, according to

The *Indigo's* concept – the main materials are created for the web and print plays a more complementary role.

According to questioned respondents, marketing the magazines today is unimaginable without social media; the correct positioning of magazines in social networks is of great importance for sales:

One of the most powerful promotional tools is social networks which allow for more accurate selection of target groups, for the sale of industry press. Thematic groups in social networks are of crucial importance (Lecturer of Magazine Production).

Social media definitely has the potential to draw attention, but it will only increase sales if you take a professional approach to it. When a specific segment of the audience knows that a specific magazine always offers content that is necessary or interesting for them, it increases their interest. Announcing the content of part of the materials to stimulate appetite, operating successfully in social media, will definitely bring an increase in sales to the magazine. (One of the print magazine journalists).

As it was revealed, interviewed respondents think that it is very important to use not only Facebook, but also Instagram and Tik-Tok. The young generation prefers the latter platforms, and if editors want to attract Gen Z, they should actively use them:

One of the ways to engage the audience is to use social media. As many consumers are too lazy to read huge texts, perhaps print media that produce analytical, large-format content can do the following for digital platforms: today, the card system is actively working, many people share it and it spreads quickly. Therefore, conditionally, editor should extract a key

phrase, an important quote, turn it into a card with the respondent's photo and post it on social media. (One of the Magazine Editors).

I think that today the internet is no longer the enemy of print magazines, on the contrary, the correct use of the Internet and social media platforms can significantly increase the audience of printed publications. For this, it is even sometimes necessary to offer magazine content online for free. If you stay active online and have your own niche, this is a sign that your advertising revenue will increase, both online and offline. (Magazine editor).

Will print magazines disappear or not? The answer to this question is not straightforward. Most of the interviewees think that magazines will never disappear. Although print media faces challenges due to the effects of the internet and a readership which is decreasing day by day, the print magazine will still not disappear and will still have an audience who will comfortably flip through the pages:

Certain journals will be able to survive with print editions, at least for the foreseeable future. (Online magazine editor).

In my opinion, they will not disappear, magazines will exist for at least several decades, because the consumption of printed products is still very attractive. Just like printed books will never go away. (Lecturer of Magazine Production).

On the example of *Indigo*, I can say that they will not disappear, because if you adapt to the changing times and think about how to develop your own product, whether it is online or offline, you are not in danger of disappearing. (One of the print magazine journalists).

However, a small number of the interviewees do not optimistically see the future of printed magazines as digital natives have completely different habits of media consumption. Therefore, in the future, in their opinion, they will not have traditional readers at all:

Who needs a printed magazine today and even more in the future? In the age of Instagram and Facebook, how do you get a reader or advertiser interested in a print publication? Whereas online magazines have a much better chance of doing so. (One of the online magazine editors).

Online media is developing so much and creating so many new opportunities that it will be very difficult for print media to maintain an audience. Unfortunately, the generation that is used to reading printed magazines and newspapers will slowly go away" (One of the magazine journalists).

It is important that every magazine should create customized content on social media platforms, but as respondents mentioned, many magazines still fail to create separate content for social media. This is explained by insufficient resources as the same people work to produce both print content and online and social media platforms.

## Conclusions

According to this study, some challenges facing Georgian magazines in the digital era have been revealed. As a result of the research, it was determined that the circulation of magazines in Georgia decreases every year. Over the last 10 years, the existing number of circulations has been reduced.

It was revealed that the cost of printing is so high that media outlets are not able to fully cover the costs of publishing with the printed product. It's interesting that in some cases



the print version is financially supported by the revenue generated by the digital product. Therefore, print media do not consider their own digital platforms as enemies.

In the digital age, advertising and revenue is a particularly pressing issue for print media. Research has made it clear that the situation in this direction is very difficult. Businesses in Georgia do not view print media as an advertising market. The situation became especially acute after the onset of digital development in the country. Social media allow businesses to advertise on their networks at a much lower cost than in a print magazine. This also gives them the opportunity to research their audience themselves without print media; therefore, they are less interested in such cooperation. This can be said to be disastrously damaging for print magazines.

In the last decade, all Georgian high-quality magazines have entirely moved from print to digital platforms. Only *Indigo* and *Forbes.ge* managed to maintain print editions. However, the example of *Indigo* shows that their business model has changed: the online platform is their primary platform and print is a premium offer for a loyal audience. Only sales-oriented yellow magazines and some lifestyle magazines that use loud headlines and leads to intrigue readers, manage to save print versions.

The research also clearly revealed that consumer habits have changed in accordance with the digital environment, especially among digital natives, and other editorial strategies need to be developed to attract consumers to increase engagement in social media. Mobile applications and the development of the subscribers' system are also to be implemented.

Despite the challenges that print magazines face today, research shows that print magazines will not disappear

completely and, like printed books, they will have a small readership.

Recommendations:

- It is desirable for Georgian magazines to conduct frequent research not only among their readers, but also among the wider audience of social media in order to be able to satisfy their interests and increase engagement.
- It is desirable for Georgian magazines not to repeat the print and online content and use multimedia, transmedia projects and other innovative ways more often.
- It is desirable for Georgian magazines to introduce a subscribers' system, like *Indigo* magazine.
- It is desirable for Georgian magazines to have mobile applications (like *Indigo* magazine), which would help them to attract a young segment of audience.
- It is desirable for Georgian magazines to use not only Facebook, but also Instagram and Tik-Tok to increase their younger audience.

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# THE DECLINE OF MUSIC MAGAZINES IN GREECE

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## **Abstract**

Greek music magazines have witnessed a sharp decline over the years. This study posits that this decline cannot be attributed solely to the advent of the internet but is the culmination of various factors. The challenges faced by Greek music magazines resonate with those faced by the broader Greek newspaper industry, suggesting an interlinked adversity within the media landscape. A primary concern has been the saturation of the market; Greece had an unsustainable number of titles for its relatively small market. The country's financial crisis, in tandem with the rise of the internet, led to a significant drop in advertising revenues that traditionally supported these publications. Our findings indicate that from 1946 to 2022, there were 73 distinct music magazine and fanzine titles in Greece. Yet, as of now, only four remain in circulation. This paper delves into the historical significance of music magazines, elucidating their pivotal role in disseminating music culture in Greece, with particular attention directed towards elucidating the factors contributing to their contemporary decline.

**Keywords:** music magazines, journalism, media system, fiscal crisis, advertising

## Introduction

The Greek media landscape is primarily characterized by excess in supply over demand. In effect, there has been an oversupply of newspapers, TV channels, magazines and radio stations which have to compete for a small-country audience and advertising market share. Although the developments in the Greek media sector may not entirely respond to the needs of its advertising industry, it has been surprisingly adaptable to swings in the economic business cycle (Papathanassopoulos, 2001). The financial crisis of the 2010s, however, coupled with the crisis of the economy, brought major losses of advertising revenues for the media industry.

It is essential to note that decline in advertising expenditures, ongoing shrinkage in newspaper sales, liquidity challenges, cuts in the public broadcasters' budgets, and constraints on quality journalism are not exclusive to Greece. However, when these challenges, compounded by technological advancements, are set against the backdrop of fluctuating tax and regulatory landscapes, they seem to amplify existing trends that have been latent in the media industry for some time. This amplification is especially evident in the context of the Greek musical press.

Broadly speaking, the Greek print media sector has been severely impacted by two primary factors: digital disruption and the financial crisis. Notably, music magazines felt the brunt of the financial turmoil early on, emerging as one of the most affected entities. This study seeks to chronicle the evolution of the musical periodical press in Greece over the past half-century, concentrating particularly on the waning of Greek music magazines. Owing to a scarcity of comprehensive research and statistics on this specific niche, we sought insights from journalists and publishers actively engaged in the music press from the 1980s onward. Those who spoke within the scope of the research have been actively involved in the Greek musical press either as initiators and instigators

of certain publications, or as publishers, managers, columnists, and music critics. We consider that the sharp decline of the Greek music magazines is attributed to the impacts of the financial crisis, suboptimal sales figures, and the proliferation of internet and digital media platforms.

## Magazines: a neglected field of media research

The contemporary landscape of periodical press encompasses a diverse array of interests, pursuits, and demographic segments, yet the role of the music periodical press remains relatively underexplored within academic discourse. While early twentieth-century periodicals exhibited characteristics akin to mass media, their multifaceted nature and ambiguous influence have contributed to their underrepresentation in scholarly inquiries within media and communication research (McQuail and Deuze, 2022). Jacke and James (2014) emphasise the under-researched role of journalism in shaping perceptions of popular music genres. Similarly, Schmutz et al. (2010) advocate for systematic study and scholarly publications on the discourse surrounding popular music. However, despite fundamental insights provided by existing studies, scant attention has been paid to the role of music journalism in "serious" press publications, and few systematic comparative analyses have been conducted internationally (Schmutz et al., 2010).

Additionally, Lyng-Jorlén (2017) notes the lack of focus on defining genres or categories within magazine research, highlighting a broader neglect of periodical publications within academic discourse. During the 1970s, the music periodical press emerged as significant influencers, particularly with the surge of rock music groups and countercultural movements. Publications like *Rolling Stone*, *New Musical Express*, and *Melody Maker* played pivotal roles in documenting cultural shifts and amplifying the voices of musicians. Through in-depth interviews, reviews, and feature articles, these magazines provided insights into the creative processes behind music

production and contextualised the cultural significance of various musical movements. By championing specific genres, artists, and movements, music magazines shaped readers' tastes and fostered a sense of community and shared cultural identity among audiences.

Despite their historical significance and cultural influence, music magazines have been largely overlooked in scholarly inquiries, particularly within the Greek context. While scattered information about Greek musical press can be found in non-academic contexts, such as online articles and interviews, the absence of comprehensive studies reflects the peripheral position of the music periodical press within Greek academic discourse. Existing Greek media studies offer a few examples of music-historical overviews, further highlighting the need for dedicated research in this area.

### **The Greek media during the financial crisis**

The Greek media landscape has been conspicuously permeated by politics from its beginning. It is not a coincidence that the growth of the modern Greek media, the printed press in particular, paralleled, and reflected the political system of the country. In the twentieth century and more particularly after the fall of the dictatorship in 1974, the Greek press was modernised. Since then, the introduction of new printing technologies in the 1980s and the entrance of private investors into the media sector, along with strong competition from television, have changed the media sector at large.

The global financial crisis of 2007-08 triggered a process of crisis in the real economy with political and social consequences, while also impacting the media sector. This crisis, as expected, had profound consequences on the Greek economy, the so-called weakest link of the European economy, due to the slow development of its industrial and services sectors (Sotiropoulos, 2020). As it is known, on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010, Greece

applied for its international financial rescue that has led to the request of unprecedented austerity measures, resulting in a staggering and ongoing domestic crisis, evident in all aspects of economic, social, political, and cultural life of the country. On top of that, Greek woes deepened by the current austerity package put forth by the so-called Troika, that is, the European Commission (EC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the European Central Bank (ECB), which aimed at restoring the Greek economy.

In effect, the financial crisis has impacted the Greek media landscape, with print media bearing the 'first casualties'. The Greek newspapers, enduring long-standing challenges, have seen a precipitous decline in daily readership since the 1990s. Such a decline has been magnified by multifaceted factors, including the financial crisis, the digital media paradigm shift, and an overarching distrust in the mainstream media. According to the Journalists Union (2019) while 382 journalists lost their jobs from 1993 to 2008, the figure skyrocketed to 1,509 between 2009-2016, followed by 180 more in the subsequent two years. In effect, the period between 2011 and 2017 provides a clear illustration of this decline, with significant drops in newspaper sales. Furthermore, regional media, which once enjoyed increased readership in the 1990s, was not immune to these overarching challenges. In effect, over 40 local daily newspapers either ceased operations or transitioned to weekly editions, accompanied by a substantial drop in subscriptions (Skamnakis, 2018).

Greek TV channels also faced a similar downturn. The financial woes leading to the collapse of two prominent private/commercial channels, Alter Channel in 2011 and Mega TV Channel in 2018, underscore this trend. Nearly all television and radio stations experienced profound financial strains, exacerbated by plummeting advertising revenues. The regional press, like its counterparts worldwide, exhibits a trend of declining popularity and market share.

The financial crisis has exerted a profound influence on the magazine sector, manifesting in a notable reduction in the quantity of publications available in Greece, with the current count standing at fewer than 120 magazines in circulation. Particularly affected are lifestyle and glossy publications, which have witnessed substantial declines in both readership and commercial sustainability (Papathanassopoulos, 2020). This trend is corroborated by data from the Statista, indicating a decrease in the average daily time allocated to magazine consumption per capita in Greece, dropping from approximately 38 minutes in 2016 to 36 minutes in 2018 (Statista, 2024). Moreover, findings from the Hellenic Statistical Authority reveal a consistent downturn in magazine sales across all categories. Notably, categories characterised by higher sales volumes, such as TV magazines and miscellaneous periodicals, have experienced significant declines. For instance, over the period spanning from 2021 to 2022, the average reduction in Greek magazine sales was quantified at 18.9% (Table 1).

In contextualising these changes, the Greek media sector has faced perhaps its most daunting challenges since the birth of the modern Greek state. While factors such as declining advertising revenues, falling newspaper sales, and reduced government advertising spending are not solely limited to Greece, the unique interplay of the country's financial crisis, technological advancements, and regulatory shifts amplified pre-existing challenges.

However, the crisis in the media sector was somewhat anticipated, given that the Greek market size could not sustain the large number of media entities. The economic downturn, coupled with aggressive fiscal measures, negatively impacted consumption rates, leading to significant reductions in advertising budgets across the private sector. Advertising, once a booming sector between 1995 and 2008, saw revenues in the Greek media market plummet by 59.50% from 2007 to 2018 (Tempo OMD, 2018). Meanwhile, there was a dramatic reduction of 74.3% in the allocation of advertising budgets for newspapers and an astounding 90% decrease for magazines (Tempo OMD, 2018).

**Table 1** Magazines sales in Greece (in copies), per category, 2020 - 2022

MAGAZINES	2020	2021	2022	CHANGE % 2021/2020	CHANGE % 2022/2021
Total	18.737.410	19.295.298	15.640.590	3.0	-18.9
Women	879,046	739,173	594,225	-15.9	-19.6
General	1,886,301	1,551,107	1,135,755	-17.8	-26.8
Car-Motor	251,968	187,484	131,503	-25.6	-29.9
Children-Comics	2,362,635	2,437,964	1,408,340	3.2	-42.2
TV listings	6,923,592	6,945,939	6,176,036	0.3	-11.1
Sports	44,474	44,287	21,216	-0.4	-52.1
Leisure	3,574,243	3,249,700	2,969,148	-9.1	-8.6
Military	76,004	80,808	59,957	6.3	-25.8
Other	2,739,147	4,058,836	3,144,410	48.2	-22.5

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2023



Even as media outlets pivoted to digital platforms, the revenues garnered from online offerings often fell short of covering operational costs. During the height of the financial crisis, the media sector faced unprecedented challenges, but it was the print media that suffered the most profound impact. With an ongoing crisis since the mid-1990s, newspaper sales have seen drastic declines, exacerbated by the fiscal situation, the digital age, and a pervasive distrust in mainstream outlets. These trends are starkly evident in sales figures, sector turnovers, and the closure of numerous newspapers and media groups during this period. In essence, the Greek media landscape has been navigating tumultuous waters, reshaped by economic, technological, and societal forces. The subsequent sections will delve deeper into the nuances of the Greek musical press amidst this backdrop.

### The musical periodical press in Greece

Music magazines are the outcome of the developments in the publishing of consumer magazines and printing technology as well as changes in consumer lifestyles (Laing and Strong, 2018). As in most Western countries, the latter played a crucial role in the development of the music magazines in Greece. As the number of choices became gradually complex, magazines were increasingly acting as the key source of information and point of contact for consumers. This led to a huge growth in the number of special interest titles focusing on leisure pursuit, hobby, or interest, while each title aimed at a slightly different type of reader. The other trend in recent years has been increasing competition from other media, particularly television, radio and lately the internet. In effect, the magazines sector has sputtered for years, their monopoly on readers and advertising erased by Facebook, Google, and more nimble online competitors.

Within 2011-2016, the Western European magazine industry saw a steady decrease in print circulation revenues of consumer magazines, from 17.4 billion U.S. dollars in 2011 to an

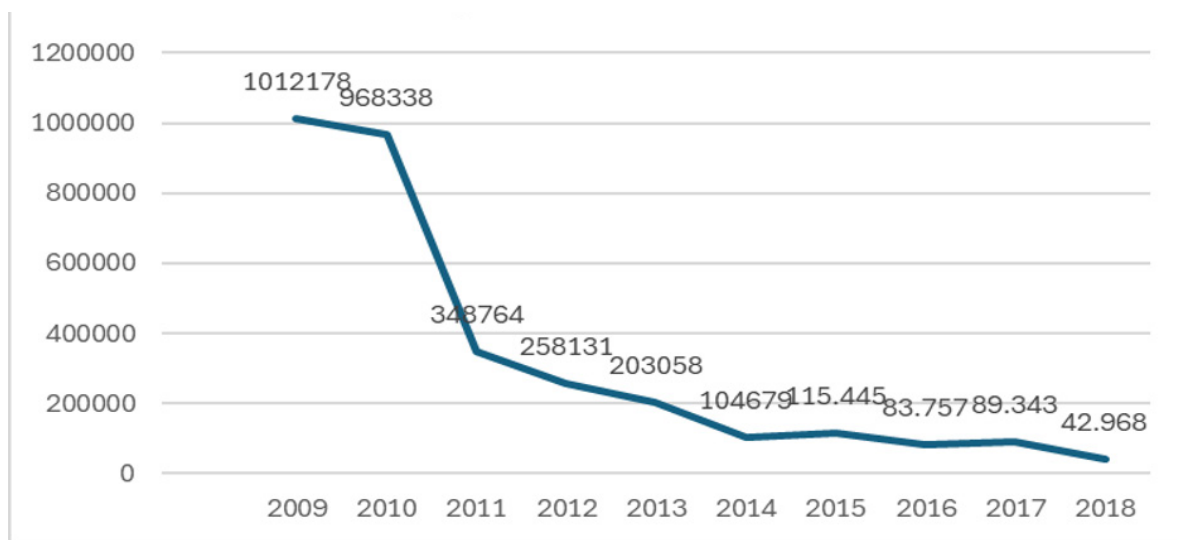
estimated 14 billion U.S. dollars in 2016 (Statista, 2023). Even though digital circulation revenues showed an upward trend, this was not enough to counter the overall loss of consumer magazine revenues. Consequently, magazine advertising expenditures in the European Union also declined, dropping from 10.1 billion euros in 2009 to 7.1 billion euros in 2015 (Statista, 2023).

Greek music magazines, as in other Western countries, initially used to be modest print publications. Their content predominantly consisted of concert previews for upcoming shows and reviews of recent shows, reviews of albums and songs, interviews with or profiles of musicians, critical essays about music culture and more. With the development of the web, music press and journalism has moved online as well in the forms of websites, zines, blogs and podcasts. Nevertheless, this decline was more than sharp (see Fig. 1).

In our research we have identified and recorded seventy-three (73) titles of music magazines and fanzines which appeared in the Greek press in the period between 1946 to 2022. Thirty-nine of them (39) have been incorporated in the indicative timeline created for the study aiming to constitute a first attempt of mapping the music periodical press in Greece from the mid-twentieth century onwards (the timeline is presented further below).

The compilation of the magazines was realized in two phases, with the turn to the new millennium being a pivotal point: In Phase A, there is a record of the music magazines circulating in the period 1946 to 2000, according to the year of their creation; while in Phase B, there is a record of music magazines circulating in the period 2001 to 2022 (see Appendix A).

From the second half of the 1940s until the beginning of the new millennium, the music magazines circulating in Greece, such as *The Greek Song* (Ελληνικό Τραγούδι), *The Modern Song* (Μοντέρνο Τραγούδι), *Modern Rhythms* (Μοντέρνοι Ρυθμοί),



Source: Compilation by the authors on data of the Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2009-2018.

Fig. 1 The evolution of sales of Greek music magazines 2009-2018.

*Diphone* (Δίφωνο), *MUSIC* (Μουσική), 'Jazz & Τζαζ', *Metal Hammer & Heavy Metal*, and *Tambourine* (Ντέφι), were outstanding sources of information regarding the ongoings of Greek and foreign music. These magazines, regarded as specialised press, usually appeared at the beginning of each month but not necessarily on a specific date. Some might be released in the middle of the month, some others every fortnight, while others on a monthly basis. By and large, they were distributed to kiosks and news agents across the country, with their readers and music lovers eagerly awaiting the publication of each new issue. In their pages, one could find music reviews, record reviews and special articles written in parallel with the music developments dictating the vibrant 'pulse' of the era, thus broadening the impact of print press among music audiences (Alexiou, personal communication, 2022).

Between the 1970s and 1990s, the Greek music press seemingly went through one of its best phases, enjoying an overwhelming response by music audiences and readers alike.

More precisely, the print journals with the most significant popularity, either due to their wider appeal to the public (for instance the magazine *Pop & Rock*), or due to the prestige of their record reviews (for instance the magazine *Sound & Hi-Fi*) seem to have contributed to the shaping of a wider culture, sharing common features such as an interest in music, ascribing substantial meaning through keeping abreast of music affairs and "fermentation" via the printed press (Alexiou, personal communication, 2022). *Sound & Hi-Fi* in particular, is described as the first sound-music magazine in the 1970s, founded by Kostas Kavvathas, a publisher and businessman. From *Sound & Hi-Fi*, an abundant generation of music journalists and critics emerged, including Argyris Zilos, head of the then editorial team, who is often depicted as a "pioneer" and "founder" of music reviewing in Greece. In effect, these magazines have created a community of adherents, readers with an accentuated love for music, who, apparently, seemed to have been interacting with the music columnists in a twofold sense: either "symbolically", through the

readership's agreement or disagreement to a given review of the journalists, or "palpably" on several occasions, taking into account that a considerable number of magazines enriched their diverse content by publishing on their pages their correspondence with their readers. Indeed, even though most music press had their distinct identity and direction, in the sense that some were rock, others metal, some others jazz, while some were into Greek music production, still all of them appeared to have been intersecting at one common point: they fostered the direct, vibrant and at times in person relation between transmitter and receiver (Haronitis, personal communication, 2022).

Remarkably, the music periodical press had a major impact on the support and promotion of both the domestic and international music scene: to a great extent, the music magazines acted as 'mediator' and 'intermediary' in terms of introducing musical bands and artists to the audience by hosting musicians on their front covers, publishing interviews and tributes in their pages, offering along with their issues supplementary CDs and vinyl records – collectible or not – or by organising and participating in live appearances and concerts (for instance the magazines *Tambourine*, *Diphone*, *Rock Hard*, etc). In effect, the music press played an important role in promoting the acceptance of rock or pop music in other Western countries (Dolfsma, 2004); the same, one could argue, applies in the case of Greece.

Furthermore, the contribution of magazines was instrumental in terms of information flow and updating of readers about special matters of interest to them, which somehow addressed their concerns (Sylvos, personal communication, 2022). Specifically in the decades before 2000 and the widespread of the digital media, the impact of music print press was felt even on a daily basis, with discussions among groups of friends but also in wider social circles having music or discussions about music seen in magazines as their focal point (Alexiou, personal communication, 2022). This is

how, it seems, a relation of "value" between transmitter and receivers must have formed, namely between the person who transmits the information and/or their views and the individual who is eager to read and process it to formulate an agreement or counter-argumentation and, eventually, share this experience with their closer circle (Haronitis, personal communication, 2022).

In the mid-1980s, one can also record the rise of the so-called music fanzines. In that period, messages, and exchange of opinions with the world outside Greece was achieved through a huge postal network. Fanzines, for the most part, constituted one – if not the exclusive – source of information regarding happenings of the musical underground and, in addition, they made dozens of addresses of bands, magazines and collectives available to those craving new knowledge and seeking ways to exchange views. From the mid-1980s and early 1990s, fanzines circulated to and from every corner of Greece: from Athens to Thessaloniki, to Crete, Alexandroupolis and Patras. These zines were adopted by punk, underground metal, psychedelia, garage, and indie-pop fans, as well as those writing about cinema, literature, comics, and science fiction (Souzas, 2014).

In effect, out of the seventy-three (73) Greek music print press which appeared in the period between 1946 to 2022, only four (4) are still publishing today. *Rolling Stone Greece* is the most recent endeavour in the musical periodical press, with the start of its release dating in 2021. Apart from *Rolling Stone Greece*, there are three more titles that keep being published until today: *Metal Hammer & Heavy Metal* since 1984, with 36 years in operation, *Μετρονόμος* ['Metronome'] since 2001, with 21 years in operation and the magazine *hxos + soundvision* (exclusively about stereophony now), since 1973, completing 49 years of circulation. These three magazines («Metal Hammer», «Μετρονόμος», «hxos + soundvision») have an online version and are accessible under the following domain names: metalhammer.gr, metronomos.gr and hxosplus.gr

respectively. In effect, in the period 2010 to 2017, at least nine (9) Greek music magazines suspended their operation. The nine (9) Greek music journals under examination, which suspended their operations between 2010 and 2017, were: *Rock Hard* and *Όασις* [*Oasis*] in 2010, *Δίφωνο* [*Diphone*] in 2011, *Ποπ & Ροκ* [*Pop & Rock*], *Ποπ Κορν* [*Pop Corn*] and *Πάλκο* [*Stage*] in 2012, *Jazz και Τζαζ* in 2013, *Πίστα* [*Dance Floor*] in 2014 and, finally, *Sonic* in 2017.

It should be noted that the conditions in the musical periodical press are nowadays quite different compared to the three last decades of the twentieth century. The music press of the 1970s, 1980s, and even some part of the 1990s, thrived considerably and was a driving force in the support and promotion of the domestic music scene as well as in the supply of updating music lovers and their readership. Consequently, the magazines then appealed way more to their readership which was far bigger and more "compact"; in addition, the ground for their creation was significantly more "fertile" and their human resources larger. Indicative of this last fact is the "profile" of the editorial team of a big magazine with stable readership in the 1970s and 1980s: it would employ 20 to 25 specialised journalists, each of whom had their own distinct role: some wrote the record reviews, other were responsible for the tributes, while some others wrote about popular music, rebetiko, jazz, and rock. According to journalist for print and electronic press, Giannis Alexiou, the Editorial Department of a magazine in 1973 or in 1980 numbered a lot more members compared to 2005 or 2022. Therefore, although a few music magazines are still published nowadays, it seems they work under different financial conditions and with reduced staff compared to the 1970s – 1990s. As a result, the extent in terms of pages and content published in a music magazine today is significantly smaller. The person responsible for the content of a magazine today is required to cover nine to 10 pages of the music section, which "in the past comprised a supplement along with an entire magazine of about 60 pages (!)". (Alexiou, personal communication, 2022).

With the periodical press experiencing a deep crisis today, which has been unfolding for some years now, the decline that, in their turn, music magazines have been subjected to is described as "devastating". The case of the music magazines published by Best End Printing and Publishing Inc is indicative: *Oasis* (2008 - 2010), *Diphone* (1995 - 2011) and *Pop & Rock* (1978 - 2012) were owned by Best End Printing and Publishing Inc., which, due to financial problems went bankrupt and the three titles ceased publication.

Another music magazine that suspended its printed publication from 2010 to 2012 due to financial problems was 'Rock Hard'. Its publisher, Mr. Sakis Fragkos, maintains that "music at that time had already been 'hit' by internet downloading", a phenomenon exacerbated by a shift in record companies' policies whereby they wouldn't invest in their releases, thus they wouldn't seek to advertise them (Kapella, 2020). Notwithstanding, advertising was the main source of income; therefore, the decline of advertising spending was the most crucial problem for the survival of the music press. Likewise, *Jazz & Τζαζ* magazine's publisher, Mr. Giorgos Haronitis, faced the same setback. Evidently, he holds the opinion that the magazine "had to shut down" in 2013 on the grounds of insurmountable difficulties regarding advertising revenue (Haronitis, personal communication, 2022). Even worse, some publishing companies went bankrupt (Best End), while others were forced to be sold to other companies. For instance, the magazine *Sound & Hi-Fi*, after being sold, became *hxos+Sound Vision* and now operates under new management while its content is solely related to stereophony.

## Concluding remarks

This paper has tried to provide an account of the decline of the Greek music magazines. It has argued that the crisis of the Greek musical press is the result of a combination of factors and not only the advent of the internet. It deems that the sharp decline of the musical press cannot be "isolated" from

the rest of the Greek media and economy. It considers that the music magazines in Greece have faced similar problems as the Greek newspapers: too many titles for such a small market to sustain. The financial crisis and the advent of the internet has led to the decline of the advertising revues for the musical magazines. In parallel with analogous trends observed across various media domains, publishing companies within the music industry underwent financial insolvency, with some compelled to undergo acquisition by other entities. Primarily attributable to an inability to generate advertising revenues, numerous musical periodicals found themselves compelled to terminate operations. Moreover, the ascendancy of online musical platforms and websites further attenuated prospects for resurgence. Consequently, the music press in Greece has entered a period of long decline.

One of the most significant contributions of Greek music magazines was their role in introducing audiences to new sounds and artists. Prior to the digital era, Greek music magazines served as primary conduits for accessing diverse musical landscapes. Whether through exclusive interviews with emerging musicians or comprehensive coverage of music festivals and events, these publications curated a sonic tapestry that transcended geographical boundaries and cultural barriers. However, both music journalism and the music press has been greatly affected by the rise of new media as well as the recent financial crisis. New digital media, for instance webpages, bloggers, and influencers, can source content from non-traditional sources and operate on different models. Most importantly, they bypass traditional publishers and attract internet users and subsequently advertising for revenue. In the contemporary digital landscape, consumers have an array of avenues to access music journalism. This includes individual bloggers' websites, dedicated music journalism platforms, and broader media sites. Additionally, auditory, and visual formats, such as podcasts and vlogs, notably on platforms like YouTube, have surged in popularity as mediums for disseminating music-related content.

While a significant portion of this content is available without any direct cost to the consumer, it is frequently monetised through advertising mechanisms. However, it is worth noting that some platforms or content creators have instituted subscription models or paywalls to sustain their work and offer exclusive insights.

Unfortunately, the circulation even of the remaining four titles is very low, and in effect consists of a niche-oriented market. Arguably, the decline of the musical periodical press in Greece was in part a failure to adapt to the new, more segmented, and specialised marketplace of a small market that barely can sustain even the mainstream media outlets. Regrettably, the Greek music magazines could not adapt to smaller circulations since they were already small neither lowering overheads nor using smaller teams. They had done it already.

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## Interviews - Personal Communication

Mr. Alexiou Giannis, music journalist for print and electronic press. Personal communication, 22 March 2022.

Mr. Haronitis Giorgos, publisher of 'Jazz & Τζαζ' magazine, music journalist for print press. Personal communication, 25 March 2022.

Mr. Sylivos Thanasis, publisher of 'Metronome' magazine. Personal communication, 4 April 2022.

## Appendix A

### Music magazines published in the period 1946-2000

- *Το Ελληνικό τραγούδι* [The Greek Song] since 1943, *Το καινούριο τραγούδι* [The New Song] (1949-1955), *Το μοντέρνο τραγούδι* [The Modern Song] (1946-1982). They are all magazines published by Kostas Manessis, who is dubbed “the first professional publisher of music magazines in the country”.
- *Μοντέρνοι Ρυθμοί* [Modern Rhythms] (1964-1969). The first music magazine of the 1960s. Manager and Publisher: Thanasis Tsogkas. Editorial team: Nickos Mastorakis, Thodoros Sarantis, Lefteris Kongalidis, Christos Leventis, Giorgos and Spyros Karatzaferis, Giannis Petridis.
- *ΣΩΟΥ* [Show] 1971.
- *Μουσική Γενιά* [Music Generation] (1972). Publisher: Stelios Elliniadis.
- *Ήχος & Hi-Fi* [Sound & Hi-Fi] (1973-). It is described as the first sound-music magazine in the 1970s founded by Kostas Kavvathas, a publisher and businessman. From the workforce of ‘Sound & Hi-Fi’, an abundant generation of music journalists and critics emerged including Argyris Zilos, head of the then editorial team, who is often depicted as a “pioneer” and “founder” of music reviewing in Greece. The editorial team is constituted, among many, of the following: Giannis Alexiou, Giorgos Haronitis, Kostas Giannouloupoulos, Tasos Falireas, Kostas Lyberopoulos, Emiliios Katsouris, Thodoris Manikas, Sokrates Papahatzis (Chief Editor of the music department). In its current form, the magazine is named “hxos+Sound Vision” and operates under new management while its content is solely related to stereophony.
- *Στέρεο* [Stereo].
- *Στερεοφωνία* [Stereophony].
- *High End*.
- *Hitech*.
- *Ποπ & Ροκ* [Pop & Rock] (1978 - 2012). Founded by Giannis Petridis (editing manager), Kostas Zougris and Vassos Tsimidopoulos.
- *18*: Monthly newspaper of ‘Pop & Rock’ magazine (1979), with Aris Gritzalis, publisher, Giannis Petridis, editing consultant, and Kostas Zougris, editing manager.
- *ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗ* [MUSIC] (1977-1988). Launched by Giorgos Kyriazidis (editing manager) and Nickos Grammatikas.
- *Μουσικό Εξπρές* [Music Express] (1979-1981).
- *Ντέφι* [Tambourine] (1982-1995). Editor in Chief: Stelios Elliniadis. Publisher: Sotiris Nikolakopoulos. Among others, the Committee is made up of: Akis Panou, Tasos Falireas, Nickos Xidakis.
- *Metal Hammer & Heavy Metal* (1984- ). Launching initiative undertaken by Giannis Koutouvos.
- *ΠΟΠ ΚΟΡΝ* [POP CORN] (1985-2008). Publisher: Giorgos Kourtis, owner of ΜΟΥΣΙΚΟΕΚΔΟΤΙΚΗ ΑΒΕΕ [ΜΟΥΣΙΚΟΕΚΔΟΤΙΚΗ Industrial and Commercial S.A.].
- *Δισκογραφία* [Discography]. Released by Kostas Giannouloupoulos in collaboration with NEFELI publications.
- *Μουσικά Θέματα* [Music Issues].
- *Μουσικός Κόσμος* [Music World].
- *Τοπ και Στίχοι* [Top and Verse].
- *Phenomenon*.

- *OZ* (1990-1994), music newspaper. Publisher: Antonis Panoutsos.
- *Πάλκο* [Stage] (1992-2012).
- *Jazz & Τζαζ* (1993-2013). Released by Giorgos Haronitis (publisher), Giouli Martini and Stefanos Samakas.
- *FRACTAL PRESS* (1993-2004).
- *Vox* (1994-1995).
- *Δίφωνο* [Diphone] (1995-2011). Envisioner, creator and individual responsible for the Music Department was Michalis Koubi-os, who had undertaken the role of Editing Consultant from the first issue. From 2000 to 2006, he served as Publication and Editing Manager. "Diphone" was published by MOUSIKOEKDOTIKI Industrial and Commercial S.A. owned by Giorgos Kourtis and Alekos Gitertsos, which at some point was taken over by Best End Co. of Giannikos S. A.
- *Metal Invader* (1996-2001).
- *Πίστα* [Dance Floor] (1996-2004). Creator and Publisher: Giorgos Spanos, owner of NEXT record company.
- *Zoo* (1997-2001) by Nickos Petroulakis.
- *Music Life* (1997-1998).
- *Μουσικό Καφέ* [Music Café] (1998-1999).
- *Μελωδία* [Melody] (1999-2000).
- *Voice*.

### Other music press circulating from the 1970s to the 2000s

- *Δίσκος κασσέτα* [Vinyl Record cassette].
- *Oktava*.
- *ΔΙΑΠΑΣΩΝ* [Turning Fork].
- *Lemon*.
- *Noiz*.
- *Μουσικοί Ορίζοντες* [Music Horizons].
- *Άσμα το Ελληνικόν* [The Greek Chant] by Publisher: Nickos Skorinis.
- *Λαϊκό Τραγούδι* [Popular Song] by journalist Giorgos Kontogiannis.
- *Καλλιτεχνική ενημέρωση* [Artistic Update] by Vassilis Koutsothanasis.
- *Opera*.
- *Ραντεβού με τα αστέρια* [Date with the Stars].
- *Συλλογές* [Collections].
- *Μουσικός Τόνος* [Music Tune].
- *Χορεύω* [I Dance].
- *Χορός και παράδοση* [Dance and Tradition].
- *Η Φωνή των Υπέρμαχων* [The Voice of Advocates].
- *NOTEΣ & stars* [NOTES & Stars].
- *ΜΟΥΣΙΚΟΣ ΤΟΝΟΣ* [MUSIC TUNE].
- *Νύχτα Live* [Night Live].
- *Νύχτα* [Night].



- *Χρυσή Νότα* [Golden Note].
- *MUZINE*.

### Music magazines created in the period 2001-2022

- *Μετρονόμος* [Metronome] (2001-). Publisher and Manager: Thanasis Sylivos.
- *Echo & artis* (2001-2003) by Kavvathas Publications.
- *Rock Hard* (2005-2010). Publisher: Sakis Fragkos.
- *Pop Eleven* (2005-2011) by Falireas Publications.
- *Όασις* [Oasis] (2008-2010). Inspired and managed by Kostas Balahoutis. Published by Best End Co. of Giannikos S.A.
- *Sonik:* (2004-2017). Launched under the guidance of Makis Milatos. Publication Manager: Tasos Vogiatzis, Chief Editor: Christos Symvoulidis.
- *Rolling Stone Greece* (2021-). It is the Greek publication of the American «Rolling Stone» launched with the «Εφημερίδα των Συντακτών» [‘Newspaper of Journalists’]. Publisher: people media, Manager: Eirini Sarli, Editorial committee: Markos Fragkos, Nickos Petroulakis, Antonis Villiotis, Maria Markouli, Aggelos Kleitsikas and Dimitris Kanellopoulos, with the participation of several collaborators.

### Music Fanzines (1985-today)

- *Psychagogos* (Ψυχαγωγός) by Nickos Kontogouris (1985-1991).
- *Rollin Under* by Babis Argyriou (1985-1991).
- *Βρωμιά* [Filth] (1985 onwards).
- *Στις σκιές του B-23* [In the shadows of B-23] (1985 onwards).
- *Miz Maze* (1985 onwards).
- *Merlin’s music box* (1989-1994).
- *Wake Up It’s ‘66* (in the 1990s).
- *Fuzz Scream* (1990s).
- *Shake* (1990s).
- *Girls In the Garage* (1990s).
- *Gew-Gaw* (1990s).



# MAGAZINES CURRENTLY: A MATTER OF VIRTUALISATION

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**Abstract:**

Magazines are increasingly online and virtual and produce less material due to the different ongoing trends within the Portuguese magazine industry. Combining contributions from Organisational Communication Studies and the concept of virtual organisations with Magazine Studies, it is possible to inquire: how does the virtualisation of media organisations interfere with magazine production, circulation, and diffusion? The answer primarily refers to an increase of magazine virtualisation. Then, it points to a diversity of magazine trends: availability of press in digital editions, emergence of digital-native magazines, intensification of transmedia dynamics along with the development of digital technologies, or availability of websites of press-editions-based publications. Taking from international contexts and specificities of the national one, magazines, their virtualisation, and more wide-ranging magazine phenomena are under discussion in this essay, as well as challenges referring to current and future times.

**Keywords:** magazines, virtualisation, virtual organisation, digitalisation

## Introduction

Press editions of magazines remain in circulation, but their online circulation and social media publishing have been increasing (e.g., Mattos, 2023), as well as their access and interactions (e.g., Cardoso et al., 2023). Recent data unveil a market share of smartphones surpassing 85% in Portugal, and, despite some variations in the last years, the number of purchased smartphones has been swelling (DN/Lusa, 2023). Rising numbers are also seen in social media profiles (We Are Social, 2023), and access to such platforms (Grupo Marktest, 2023). People use social media and interact with different media of a journalistic and non-journalistic nature online. Hence, magazine editorial boards and enterprises find opportunities for their stories and potential reach to thrive.

As organisations<sup>1</sup>, media enterprises or conglomerates perform in their own way, both internally and externally, when considering their interaction with society and vice-versa (Ruão, 2016). Any organisation gathers goal-oriented groups of people towards certain common finalities; these individuals communicate interchangeably and communication happens through what they do under a social and a cultural context. Accordingly, communication is key for their daily basis and sustainability (e.g., Costa et al., 2022). Types of organisations may vary, but essentially consist of either companies, institutions, or associations, with lucrative and/or non-lucrative purposes. The literature hints at the context of movement towards their virtualisation.

Attempting to apply the notion of virtualisation to magazines and debate it, as well as list a set of challenges within the magazine field, this essay provides a link between Organisational

Communication Studies, virtual organisations, and Magazine Studies. Magazines are here understood as parts of organisations, and their editorial boards as organisations themselves. Thus, elaborating on the Portuguese magazine industry, the central question in this essay asks: how does the virtualisation of media enterprises interfere with magazine activity, meaning its production, circulation, and diffusion?

## Notes on the Portuguese magazine panorama

Following Sousa and Lima (2020) from the nineteenth century onwards, industries began to grow stronger in Portugal, and magazines were not excluded from this. Such industry expansion led to the settlement of new ones, and photographs, infographics, and other resources were brought to their editions. After periodicals and previous magazines under strict government scrutiny such as *Flama* (Azevedo et al., 2021), followed by the end of a period of State censorship in 1974-1975, [A1] new magazines appeared, and some of them remain active nowadays. Inspired by the worldwide influential newsmagazine *TIME*, cover designing, a news stories approach, and personality highlighting (Cardoso, 2012)<sup>2</sup> *Visão* came into being in 1983. Shortly afterwards, some others took their place. Pursuant to Jorge (2008), by way of illustration, Portuguese-original *Máxima* released its first edition in 1988 on lifestyle topics and was demographically targeted at women. *Activa* and *Lux* came next. International magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Maxmin* (later, *Maxmen*), *GQ*, *Elle*, *Men's Health*, or *Women's Health* were released later.

The decade of 1980 marks the beginning of a period of the "informatization of newsrooms" (Bastos, 2023, p. 54). This is due to the availability of new software in newsrooms, such

1 For instance, Holmes (2020) writes that "the provocativeness, pleasure, and creativity of the print front cover should raise awareness of the brand (and organization)" are important on 'generating engagement', on social media but also beyond that (p. 12). It becomes clear that magazines can be akin to organisations, contending for their proper brands.

2 Having featured one of the 2009's covers, Barack Obama returned to the cover of *TIME* in 2012 and got media coverage in Portugal by media such as the TV station *SIC Notícias* (Lusa, 2012). More recently, in 2023, the magazine has celebrated its 100-year-existence by compiling a set of covers that have become "iconic" and left a mark on the magazine and its course (Pine, 2023, p. 6).

those for photo editing, pagination, and, later, a service of video text. In what concerns to magazines, with previous roots on newspapers, *Blitz* was the first publishing online stories on a website. Today, it belongs to Impresa group, and it is exclusively available on a website and via social media. Moreover, Santiago (2013) researched the “specialised press in celebrities”, relating these to lifestyle topics. In addition, the author demonstrates how this trend was in line with magazines of the same nature in Spain and Brazil, promoting interactivity between the magazine and people who interact with it, in order to endorse the magazine itself. The newsmagazine *Visão* and the ‘specialised magazine in celebrities’ (Sebastião, 2013) *Caras* were the first to let their press editions available on iPad electronic devices (Santos-Silva, 2021).

In the last decades, accessible through several platforms and under various formats, other magazines emerged, while some others changed their configuration. There are the press magazines, digital magazines, magazines in websites, “megazines”, and “metazines” (Holmes, 2020; Silva, 2011). These were originally created for press editions, now available only in online editions or both; digital-native editions, possibly available to buy in many newsstands or of similar nature, app stores, online websites; or by ordering via mail, e-mail or other online platforms through devices such as mobile phones, smartphones, tablets, e-readers and others. According to Holmes (2020, p. 16), “megazines” consist of magazines that are present in many spaces, physically and digitally, with proper strategies, whose “organizations seek to create 360° brands”, such as *The Economist*. An example of a “metazine” is the British Motorcycle Mechanics Facebook group, whose name was previously a “magazine” (p. 15). It affords “a non commodified mode of information exchange and entertainment, often based around a commodified field (motorcycles, guitars) but operating beyond the usual mediated boundaries” (p. 16). In Portugal, with a press edition, a website, and investing on digitally highly engaged actors,

*Women’s Health* and *Men’s Health* magazines have been increasing their visits to the respective websites (Redação, 2023), which is a trend to account for. In line with Holmes (2020), these magazines are then akin to “megazines”.

Many media forms have been digitalising themselves or emerging as digital-native. Beyond those aforementioned, examples are those which are natively digital, such as the magazine *NiT*, among the most read online media in Portugal (Grupo Markttest, 2023). Recent statistics by the Portuguese large-scale market studies undertaker, Markttest group, have ranked the lifestyle digital-native magazine in fifth position as the most accessed online publication, among TV and newspapers which are also digital-native or simply present online (Ramalho, 2023). Others have been contesting dominant logics and business models, such as *Gerador* magazine. Available in press editions and dependent on memberships, it is “a Portuguese independent platform of journalism, culture, and education” that publish “a quarterly magazine” (Gerador, n.d.). Such approach is similar to others at an international level (e.g., Sivek & Townsend, 2014). A differentiating case is the digital-native newspaper *Observador* that released a “lifestyle” magazine in 2017, which remains under activity (Ferreira, 2017)<sup>3</sup> *Observador Lifestyle* can exemplify magazinification: a newspaper that articulates certain magazine features to create one.

In times of media cultural convergence and transmedia due to the power of engagement through networks and activity production on them (e.g., Cardoso, 2023; Jenkins, 2006), the Portuguese media journalism is consolidating its presence on the digital (e.g., Mattos, 2023). The work of Ribeiro (2023a) underlines that the digital intensifies transmedia dynamics, considering the ability of people to consume and produce activity, from which magazines benefit. Additionally, according to the same study, drawing from the Portuguese recent editions of *Women’s Health*, the inclusion of

3 By the time of this article’s production, the last edition had been released in September 2023.

online personalities creates conditions for the magazine to get increased media and social attention. In another work, by exploring texts produced by newspaper first pages in its link to social media posts, Ribeiro (2023b) discusses how certain representations encourage negative representations about the self and, therefore, they strategically appropriate event negativity to attract attention and readers. Henceforth, magazines may promote themselves in several ways in relation to the digital and its activity.

The contemporary and current literature have been raising concern about the media landscape in recent years. Financialisation, dependence on circulation and advertising revenues, or high attachment to major media groups in Portugal, which involves companies of other media or even other sectors, portray a scenario of “crisis” for Portuguese media outlets (e.g., Fidalgo, 2021; Silva, 2017). The report of Camponez et al. (2020) mentions the exceptionality of the Coronavirus pandemic that has transformed the Portuguese media panorama, in many aspects, such as concerns as to the selection of information sources and covered topics. Professional trends, such as freelance work under a provision of services regime, sometimes even with no accordance, or working from other places that are not the newsrooms have also been contributing to different dynamics, as well as a “precariousness” of journalism, including “the low incomes” of those who work under a contract (Camponez et al., 2020, p. 15). This includes those contributors that are not journalists or media professionals, such as writers of opinion articles.

In 2023, according to the first semester data presented by the Portuguese Association of Circulation (APCT, n.d.), the national association for circulation, *Continente Magazine* was on the top of magazines in terms of circulation. This publication is of monthly frequency, mostly focused on food, and is produced and distributed by a hypermarket called Continente and its corporation. Distant from the third next with the

highest circulation, there are the ‘specialised in celebrities’<sup>4</sup> weekly titles, *Maria*, *Nova Gente*, and *TV7Dias*. Regarding digital circulation, the newsmagazines *Visão* and *Sábado* are on the top of the list.

### Magazine-related phenomena

The history of the Portuguese magazine industry reflects several international trends. Adopting Hesmondhalgh’s (2007) notion of “cultural industry”, magazines consist of “texts” produced by the ‘industry’ of “print and electronic publishing” (p. 12). Considering “texts” as the “products” that result from their production and circulation by “the culture industries”, the author underlines their influence power, including the one exercised “by entertainment” (p. 3). Indeed, an increased investment on advertising “has helped to fuel the spectacular growth of cultural industries” (p. 2). Since the eighteenth century, when magazines consolidated themselves as a genre in the United Kingdom (UK) (Cardoso, 2012), their editorial boards and enterprises have been seizing different technologies of analogic and digital natures at different speeds in various countries, to develop a sense of industry. Magazines are “text producers” (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p. 2), which affects the “understanding of the world” through representing it and “reporting” what is produced within it (p. 3). Once conceived as industries, magazines relate to industrialisation, but also other phenomena, such as standardisation, globalisation, marketisation, tabloidisation, or magazinification.

Within a discourse studies perspective, Fairclough (1993) writes that “promotional” and “consumer culture” correspond to “a relative shift in emphasis within the economy from production to consumption” and “cultural consequences of marketization and commodification” (p. 141). These include “the incorporation of new domains into the commodity market (e.g. the ‘culture industries’) and the general reconstruction of social life on a market basis” (p. 141). Machin and van Leeuwen

4 This classification follows the work of Santiago (2013).



(2007) link marketisation to magazine advertising in several genres. To this end, the authors offer as examples the presence of “advertorials” of magazines and the burgeoning lifestyle sections of the print media” (p. 139). Therefore, the “discourse” turns out to be “a vehicle for ‘selling’ goods, services, organizations, ideas or people” (Fairclough, 1993, p. 141).

Any type of industry relates to standardisation. According to Horkheimer and Adorno (2002/1944, p. 109): “The ostensible content is merely a faded foreground; what is imprinted is the automated sequence of standardized tasks”. As “a key feature of [North] America’s ‘industrialisation’ of creative production”, standardisation implies rule tightening: “whether as a result of imposing more, and stricter, rules (for example, the style guides of modern news agencies) or as a result of technological restrictions on what is possible (for example, the standard ‘landscape’ format of film and television screens) (...)” (Machin & van Leeuwen, 2007, p. 24).

Standardisation enhances another phenomenon: magazinification, i.e., the appropriation of specific magazine features by the media, offering of a unique sort of publication, distinguishable from newspapers or others. Magazines share some particularities: periodicity, material quality (e.g., if “glossy”, they ‘connote’ “sophistication and glamour”), and story and composition “heterogeneity” (McLoughlin, 2000, p. 2). The magazine cover also assumes a relevant role as the first page to be presented of any edition. There is an investment on its creative dimension, with a both informative and seductive role, aiming to attract readers, buyers, and advertisers (Cardoso, 2012; Holmes, 2020). Magazinification is linked to the appearance of an increased number of ads and supplements on newspapers (Le Masurier & Johnike, 2014), aiming to attract advertisers (Conboy, 2005). It is associated to the combination of “news” with “magazine features”, which can be illustrated by the UK’s *Daily Mail* (Hobbs, 2012, p. 5). Ana Jorge details “the sectionalisation of newspapers on the 60s or (...) the bigger attention towards the design and graphism”

(2008, p. 25). Many other countries have adopted such procedures through globalisation. Briefly, globalisation draws on the assumption of “the world of nation states, with their national languages and cultures, and the global world with its emerging global language and culture carried, not by nation states, but by global corporations and international organisations” (Machin & van Leeuwen, 2007, p. 2).

After the II World War (1939-1945), a different “system” has flourished from a “consumption crisis”, which “relied upon flexibilisation, customisation, plurality of consumptions, and “niches”” (Jorge, 2007, p. 6). Such trends lead to conceive consumption as “a unique form of individual differentiation” and “a choice and a construction, and not an imposition”, following a trend for a “psychographic segmentation, more than a demographic market one” (p. 6). With the development of the industry, Holmes (2020) contends a sense of community emerging within magazines; the editorial boards of these magazines must pay attention to communities and interact with them in an attempt to maintain themselves under activity[A1]. In current times, Hartley (2020) refuses a vision of “a market”, arguing in favour of a “language community” in line with Niklas Luhmann’s view of people who interact with magazines “use and create new meanings within an *autopoietic* (self-creating and self-renewing) sense-making system” (p. 26).

Besides magazinification, journalism has been subjected to other magazine trends and conditionalities. Mentioned by Jorge (2008), Conboy (2005) refers to tabloidisation. The author describes “an increase in news about celebrities, entertainment, lifestyle features, personal issues, an increase in sensationalism, in the use of pictures and sloganised headlines, vulgar language” (p. 16), “above ‘high facts’” (p. xv). In a quest for survival, within “intense competition, broadsheets have become heavier with more lifestyle and consumer coverage” (p. 17). Tabloidisation trends suggest they have also left a mark on newsmagazines, but also allowed other types of magazines to strengthen themselves in the market,

reinforcing their legitimation to exist. On this matter, authors such as Conboy (2005) or Thussu (2015) acknowledge the emergence of infotainment and its expanded visions on entertainment and celebrities within journalism and magazines, raising ethical or journalism quality issues.

The digitalisation of media production has also been impacting how magazines are conceived, since they are produced, put under circulation, and diffused within social and cultural contexts and beyond. Currently, transformations on the business models cut across circulation and advertising revenues (Cornia et al., 2017; Teixeira & Jorge, 2021). Membership plans and crowdfunding initiatives are increasingly becoming part of them[A2], aiming at magazine sustainability, sometimes in the form of resistance. A study that compares magazine sales between 2005 and 2022 in the UK reveals that *The Economist* was the only one registering an increase (Sweney, 2023). New labour forms have been assuming an increasing presence throughout the last two decades, such as freelance or remote work, including within magazine production (Camponoz et al., 2020; Jenkins, 2017). The user experience has also been changing, bearing their digital force, complexity of the screens, multiple layers and stimuli, content design, and a specific and super layered “semiotic organisation of the screen” (Coelho, 2010, p. 28), with multiple modes of meaning production. It also may impact on text and discourse production, when acknowledging texts as communicative events that are produced under certain contexts and are potentially impactful on one’s daily life through discourses (e.g., Ribeiro, 2023a, 2023b).

### Organisational Communication Studies and virtual organisations

Contemporarily, the word *virtual* is frequently employed as “the virtual”. In line with Shields (2003), it represents a place, a space, a whole world of graphic objects and characters who inhabit fictional domains, rituals, and digital-based ones

as representing people and real things. Any person is gifted with a virtual identity, once one has the ability to live, and to live is necessarily virtual. The virtual can be found in rituals, religious debate, architecture, or art. The digital virtuality of global, simulations, and virtual reality constitute the most recent embodiment of the virtual. Taking from the Literary Studies, Shields (2003) links the virtual concept to the following statement: “(...) real without being actual, ideal without being abstract” (p. 2). In addition, Trevisan (2006) suggests that to virtualise is to act: “It is about showing the self, opening up, presenting coherent information, a visual identity that is suitable to the institutional image towards constructing, and, mostly, giving rise to interactivity” (p. 2).

Virtual organisation is here contended as a concept used to identify companies, corporations, and, more broadly, profit-driven or non-profit-driven organisations that virtualise their operations. Their aim is to transfer their activity to software and digital platforms, enabling their power to expand boundaries and motivate new interaction and work models. Apropos, Costa et al. (2022) argue that “software and digital platforms are those which turn third party spaces (home, cafés, coworking offices) into organisations themselves, even temporarily” (p. 68). According to Larson (2020), a workspace corresponds to any place where work tasks or other activities are translated into practice. Under Cooren’s (2010) view, organisations take ownership of such spaces in order to deliver organisational actions, such as email messages sending and replying or setting up video conferences.

Among other attributes, any virtual organisation may be distinguished as a set of permeable, capable, and flexible interfaces, of which both internal and external boundaries have become undefined. Virtual organisations represent structures in constant changing, less hierarchised environments in which workers have deeper autonomy and independence to carry out activities (Davidow & Malone, 1992). Other features of virtual organisations include geographic spread and

decentralisation of those activities. According to Mowshowitz (1997), such structural changes within organisations allow those which go beyond their territories to boost virtuality, such as when print-based magazines begin to move towards social media by engaging trends and digital personae on these platforms. Such conceptualisation offers insights that point to a transformation of both public and private spheres, whose boundaries have been frequently redesigned. On this, Paul Jackson (1999) adds:

Organisations used to be places. They used to be things. However, as long as information technology leads us to the reality of an Einsteinian world, where old structures and organisation forms are dissolved, and sometimes become almost invisible, the old approach does not work anymore. Hence, virtual organisation is the attributed name to any organisation that is under constant evolution, redefining and reinventing itself for business practical purposes. (p. 10)

Therefore, virtual organisations follow the complex communicational structure of conventional organisations and operate in a continuous discursive flow (Costa et al., 2022). Its evolution considers the management of complex dimensions (collaboration, knowledge sharing, technology infrastructure, organisational processes, and integrated strategy), and therefore its knowledge is based on confidence (Kürümlüoğlu et al., 2005). Confidence is mentioned by Introna and Petrakaki (2007) as the basic element of any virtual organisation, once it allows the cooperation between people (Afflerbach, 2020). Such an organisational model also “emerges and is perpetuated as a network of events or communication processes, turning communication into a dynamic and interactive process itself” (Costa et al., 2022, p. 67).

Following Costa and colleagues (2022), the Communicative Constitution of Organisation (CCO) view acknowledges that communication constitutes organisation. One of its schools

is the theory of social systems. Conceived by Niklas Luhmann, the author elaborates on communication as being a system: any system shapes known things through action, communication and meaning production, varies from time to time, and prompts the risk of provoking acceptance or refusal. Any system has the ability to reproduce itself: it is gifted with “self-referentiality”, which is “a condition that allows production and reproduction of system’s operations”, and “autopoiesis”, meaning that “it refers to anything that happens in the system as an operation” (1998, p. 21). Among others, “cells, social structures, [or] society” belong to “conscience” within a basic system called communication (p. 21). By generating more communication, communication itself leads any system to be reproduced and then to preserve itself throughout time. From Luhmann’s perspective, Costa et al. (2022) highlight their sustainability applied to organisations once these are akin to systems within other systems, including the communication system.

### Magazine virtualisation

Magazine editorial boards and/or enterprises are then akin to virtual organisations. Supported by online strategies, they define what to share on social media, such as Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter, how to do it, or their posting frequency. The same applies to their websites. This follows an increasing adoption of digital approaches both on production and content, in an attempt to compensate for the loss of revenues from circulation and advertising. They share the need “to stay relevant to readers and to monetize their assets (Silva, 2017, p. 45), which refer to awareness. Some of them remain prioritising their press editions, with almost no social media activity, and are successful (APCT, n.d.), such as *Continente Magazine*. These cases reinforce one of Abrahamson’s (2009) predictions stressing the notion of ‘separated businesses’ due to “the separation function between the print and the Web”, but also the “distinct profit center based on new business models” (p. 2). As aforementioned,

some magazines are doing it differently with different sources of revenue.

Interaction with magazines becomes increasingly virtual and press circulation of editions decreases throughout the years. Some of them resist, while some of them shut. As previously noted, *The Economist* is an exception due to its worldwide reach, media outlets coverage and opinion-making references. At the same time, the magazine's success relates to its online-focused strategy, memberships, digital editions, and a considerable presence on social media. Without disregarding other cases, such as the cultural journalism magazine *Monocle*, by articulating the readers and the digital or diversifying its revenue sources (e.g., Santos-Silva, 2021), both cases may inspire the Portuguese magazine industry to change their strategies to avoid a lack of readers, risk of closure, and/or prejudice of media diversity. For instance, the editor of *Elle Portugal* an international magazine with a national edition in circulation in Portugal since 1988, announced its discontinuation in 2021. The reason behind such a decision relied on "the deep transformations within the women's magazines market, accelerated by Covid-19 pandemic" (Agência Lusa & Gonçalves, 2021).

Under a scenario of growing virtualisation, magazines appear to be in need of developing new strategies suitable to the Portuguese media context, and fulfilling different unsatisfied needs shared by people and social groups with a variety of stories and compositions. In addition, the "internationalization of press" could be largely beneficial to Portugal's magazine landscape by attracting readers from Portuguese-speaking countries, as well as tightening links with these countries to bear the "cultural and social heritage bound by History" (Silva, 2017, p. 46) and taking advantage of globalisation. Unsatisfied readers and communities about the country's overall media landscape may be engaged within magazine industries as well, the same way magazine industries of other countries do with many others across the globe.

Magazines, their editorial boards and respective enterprises and/or conglomerates must invest in strategies to ensure their sustainability, offering pluralism and diversity and guaranteeing proper working conditions to media professionals. A recent study of the Portuguese Journalists' Union concludes that, among other factors, "digitalisation/datafication has led to profound changes in production routines in the old newsrooms (...)" (Duarte et al., 2023, p. 2). In addition, it describes a deterioration of a "precariousness and de-professionalisation of the sector" (p. 2), stating there must be a 'reconstruction' of "work safety and critical autonomy in the world of journalistic labour" (p. 3). Following Jenkins (2017), who advocates for more regulation for freelance workers, if virtualisation strengthens with no proper regulation, the future of magazines and their professionals may be at high risk. In regard of the growing number of Internet users and the Internet's fragile character in Portugal, Internet regulation must be taken into account as well (Silva & Lameiras, 2021). Healthy work environments must be also ensured in times of cumulative virtualisation, so internal communication needs more further attention and organisation (e.g., Ribeiro & Costa, 2022). Labour conditions suggest a need for a change to avoid their precariousness and closure of many more media outlets. A multi-regulated empowerment of virtualisation is suggested, including in what comes to the optimisation of resources and the engagement of media professionals with communities.

Some cases of success deserve to be mentioned, though, considering their specific dynamics of virtualisation. *Observador Lifestyle* appears to follow historic magazinification trends, while being released exclusively in print edition. Likewise, in the slow journalism segment, the alternative magazine *Gerador* has both a website and a print edition available. These examples can be inserted in a phenomenon of neo-magazinification, contradicting the historic trend of online emergence from an already existent print edition, but, simultaneously, seizing the potentialities linked to magazines (e.g., Holmes, 2020; McLoughlin, 2000). Adopting a strong social media strategy,

NiT remains exclusively online with its website and successful results of circulation (Grupo Marktest, 2023). According to Marktest group (Ramalho, 2023), websites that produce media contents have been boosting their visits. In some cases, the print and the digital tend to co-exist, even if they do so with a variable importance scale. Those successful cases emphasise Abrahamson's (2009) following prediction: "The Internet will have a profound effect, but it will not displace print", and "the print version of a magazine product will remain essential to the creation of 'brand identity'" (p. 2).

Drawing on Luhmann's perspective (e.g., 1998), the magazine industry operates under a system and is self-observing and changing, despite maintaining certain aspects from the past and reproducing its industrial setting. Following Lévy (1998/1995) and Costa et al. (2022): "What is virtual is all that does not actually exist and tends to be updated" (p. 74). Magazines manoeuvre a system and operate within a system which reproduces itself and changes too little in what concerns to its basis: the industrialisation of press has become to change it and to remain, by standardising, homogenising, and globalising magazines. On the other hand, segmenting it, offering different publications to different people and social groups, within different spaces. Any system remains active through its ability to point to itself and self-refer within its specificities (Costa et al., 2022; Luhmann, 1998), taking into account adaptations aligned with social and cultural changes and potential individual interference (Hartley, 2020). The conception of convergence culture here applies (e.g., Jenkins, 2006), empowered by user access and activity consumption and production across digital platforms (Cardoso, 2023).

In conclusion, the magazine industry is increasingly virtualised. It is suggested then to keep research active on this field. Some suggestions for further research are: to understand deeper the phenomenon of industrialisation in Portugal and other related ones; to explore the notion of

neo-magazinification; to conduct empirical research on the comprehension of transmedia dynamics and how can they impact on other social phenomena, such as Ribeiro's (2023a) work that relates transmedia dynamics with body objectification and self-objectification; and to study adopted global strategies online and offline by magazines editorial boards and their respective virtual organisations (e.g., Costa et al., 2022).

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