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EDITORIAL
MUCH MORE THAN PAPER: THE MAGAZINE AS A UNIVERSAL COMMUNICATION PLATFORM

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Let's look at the journals published by Taylor & Francis, which defines itself as "one of the world's leading academic publishers—and one of its most enduring."[1] And let's think about these five: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, *Journal of Gender Studies*, *History of Education*, *Asian Studies Review*, *World Leisure Journal*. What do they have in common? They all published articles connected to magazine studies during the first semester of 2025. And all those articles, as well as most of the around 700 found on 30 different Taylor & Francis journals with "magazine" as one of the keywords, could have been published in a journal focused on Magazine Studies.

This demonstrates that research on magazines is flourishing worldwide, despite being dispersed across the most diverse areas of knowledge. Nevertheless, the consolidation of the field of Magazine Studies has been shaped by both progress and setbacks, leading many scholars to distance themselves from the field due to the pressure to publish imposed by the current quantitative logic of academia.

For several decades, Magazine Studies has grappled with a diverse array of challenges. These issues include an overemphasis on historical approaches (Peterson, 1956, p. viii), a chronic lack of funding for research in this domain (Johnson, 2007), persistent misconceptions that the field is confined to women's magazines and even "academic snobbery" (Holmes & Nice, 2012, p. 159).

The underlying issue, however, may lie elsewhere. In prevailing discourse, the term "magazine" continues to evoke the notion of a tangible object. In French, the designation "presse magazine" (press magazine) inherently confines the term to its physical, paper-based medium. Indeed, many scholars within Magazine Studies, whether explicitly or implicitly, also adhere to the notion that magazines are delimited by their physical embodiment. This approach appears to be gaining renewed relevance in light of the recent print media revival. Some publishers even predict a printed-magazine renaissance, akin to the vinyl revival, which saw its highest sales in four decades in 2022 (Sweney, 2023).

However, magazines are not confined to print, as evidenced by digitally-born publications. In terms of format, magazines also exist in other media, such as radio and television, highlighting its adaptability. A magazine is, fundamentally, a universal communicational platform possessing distinct characteristics. It specializes in a diverse array of topics, covering subjects as varied as horticulture or snooker, and caters to specific audiences, including children, adolescents, women or men. It is within this intersection of interests and demographics that magazines uniquely foster community building, surpassing other formats in this regard.

This exceptional quality of magazines, long recognized by scholars such as Abrahamson (2009), can be significantly enhanced within the digital realm. Thus, online, and particularly through social media platforms, it becomes possible to cultivate micro-niches, giving rise to what might be termed "micro-magazines." This potential is fully realized when multimedia resources are effectively utilized to complement the inherently engaging communicational nature of the magazine format. However, doing so requires a conscious departure from the established paradigms of print media and an unreserved embrace of the opportunities afforded by digital innovation.

Digital innovations, particularly "all-you-can-read" services, like Apple News+, have contributed to circulation growth for several publications (Maher, 2025). Steven Watson, of Stack, a subscription service delivering a different independent magazine each month, observes that "the best magazines make readers feel part of a community of people who share the same worldview" (Ferguson, 2025, para. 16).

1 https://taylorandfrancis.com/about/

Magazines undoubtedly remain relevant and deserve critical academic study. They serve as a holistic reflection of society, offering insights into prevailing social trends and shedding light on the values and aspirations that unite individuals across a myriad of domains, encompassing a wide range of topics (e.g., celebrity lifestyles, forthcoming winter color palettes, optimal sponge cake recipes).

Within the digital landscape, only one type of magazine appears to be particularly vulnerable: the newsmagazine. David Abrahamson presciently anticipated this trend more than 15 years ago, when he projected the sector's evolution to 2020 (Abrahamson, 2009). This particular genre of magazine is a hybrid, positioned between newspapers and traditional magazines (Cardoso, 2022a). In the United States, *Time*, which pioneered the concept in 1923, emerged as an innovative product, offering a weekly synthesis of news.

However, the rise of real-time news dissemination in the digital era has rendered such recaps of the week's hard news increasingly redundant. Consequently, we are witnessing a dilution of newsmagazine identity (Cardoso, 2022b), as their websites adopt the visual design and thematic structure more commonly associated with newspapers. Nevertheless, the newsmagazine appears to be an exception rather than the rule. The prevailing trend encompasses a broad spectrum of potentialities serving both industry and academia.

The second issue (v.02, n.01) of the *International Journal of Magazine Studies* (IJMS) was organized by Professors Carla Rodrigues Cardoso, Ana Figueiras, and Ilo Alexandre. Following a rigorous double-blind peer review process, four outstanding articles were selected for publication, reflecting both academic excellence and critical insight.

The topics covered explore a wide range of subjects, engaging with diverse magazine formats and case studies from multiple national contexts. By examining both established print titles and emerging digital platforms, the research offers a nuanced understanding of how magazine media continue to evolve. Demonstrating the transnational nature of Magazine Studies, the articles featured in this issue originate from Brazil, Spain, Taiwan, and the United States. Collectively, the contributions illuminate the field's richness and complexity, affirming Magazine Studies as a dynamic, interdisciplinary domain that bridges tradition and innovation.

In this issue of IJMS, we are honored to feature an essay by Tim Holmes, from Cardiff University, one of the most respected scholars and advocates of Magazine Studies worldwide. He is the founder and pioneer of the Mapping the Magazine conference series, an initiative now integrated into the Magazine Media Lab at CICANT, Lusófona University.

Entitled "The Maga and the zine", Holmes's essay draws on a range of examples to issue a timely warning: are magazine publishers neglecting the crucial role of distribution, which connects a publication to its audience? He also revisits the often-overlooked subgenre of "little magazines," literary focused periodicals that remain underexplored in academic research. This essay takes readers on a journey from *Blackwood's Magazine*, affectionately known as "Maga" and rooted in the early 19th century, to the zines of the digital era, ultra-specialized, audience-driven publications that continue to embody and advance the spirit of the magazine form.

The peer-reviewed section opens with "Cosmopolitanism in Print: *The Atlantic* vs. *The Economist*," by Francisco Seoane Pérez. The article examines how the two magazines embody distinct models of cosmopolitanism. While *The Atlantic* is rooted, *The Economist* is global. Analyzing their editorial missions, content, and audiences, the study shows how *The Atlantic* fosters a plural, critical American identity, while *The Economist* champions Western cosmopolitanism and liberal rationality. Both target influential elites but reflect different ideological stances. The article argues that while

these outlets shape global discourse, they also perpetuate cultural and structural limitations in their engagement with the world.

Hong-Chi Shiau and Yen-Chieh Lo examine how *CommonWealth* magazine in Taiwan has evolved from a traditional publication into a data-driven platform focused on ESG (environmental, social, and governance) issues. Through interactive visualizations, corporate partnerships, and AI tools, the magazine is redefining its journalistic role, positioning itself as a bridge between the public sector, businesses, and society. The study focuses on three key areas: using data visualization to tell stories, integrating data from various stakeholders, and navigating the promises and challenges of artificial intelligence. The case illustrates the complexity of digital transformation in non-Western contexts, with an emphasis on the tensions between innovation, credibility, and institutional sustainability.

In "Evolution in Campus Media: How a Pandemic and Social Justice Movement Prompted Student Journalists to Rethink the Campus Magazine," Carol Terracina-Hartman describes how, although campus magazines typically eschew carrying breaking-news content in favor of exploring social and cultural impacts, during the global pandemic and social justice demonstrations, student editors redefined "campus culture" to reflect broader societal changes, particularly following the police killing of Breonna Taylor. This study examined how a student medium, as a Community of Practice, responded to and reflected on the social impacts of Taylor's death, analyzing editions based on covers, tables of contents, and editors' notes, identifying 15 themes and confirming that "identity" within these communities persisted despite changes in operational practices.

The issue concludes with "Paper and Screen: An Analysis of *Elle Brasil* Magazine's Multiplatform," by Vanessa Valiati, Amanda Caroline Dorr Ferreira, and Gabrielle Pacheco Jost. The article compares the print and digital versions of *Elle Brasil*, examining how the magazine reinvents its journalism style across platforms. The print edition takes an analytical, upscale approach, while the digital version (Elle View) focuses on current affairs, accessibility, and a youthful tone. Based on content analysis and an interview with the editor-in-chief, the study reveals thematic overlaps but apparent differences in audience, format, and language. It highlights the complementarity of formats and Elle's adaptation to mobile and digital logic, emphasizing the role of multimodality, hypertextuality, and interactivity in contemporary journalism.

Together, these contributions underscore the liveliness and diversity of contemporary Magazine Studies, showcasing how magazines, whether gender-specific, student-led, or mainstream, are sites of ongoing reinvention and negotiation across digital, cultural and ideological dimensions. The featured research spans geographies, from Brazil to Taiwan, exploring topics ranging from gender politics to artificial intelligence, and engages with actors including student journalists and elite opinion-makers. Understanding their complex cultural significance extends beyond appreciating their value as magazines, as they disrupt public discourse, negotiate identity, and respond to societal changes and technological advancements. These concepts, aligned with comparison, transnationalism, and transdisciplinary approaches, can elevate magazine studies, doing justice to magazines' critical relevance in navigating the complexities of our mediated world.

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THE MAGA AND THE ZINE

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I first came across the word "MAGA" thanks to my grandfather. It was not his political stance that brought about the encounter –although that was indirectly relevant–more his literary bent. A devout Jane-ist (that is, an admirer of the works of Jane Austen), he also allowed himself a subscription to *Blackwood's Magazine*, which had acquired the nickname MAGA.[1]

Blackwood's Magazine was first published as *The Edinburgh Monthly Magazine*[2] in 1817, when publisher William Blackwood founded it as a Tory-leaning[3] counterweight to the *Whiggish Edinburgh Review.* Despite its political leanings, from the outset it embraced controversy and was not afraid of publishing work by unconventional, and certainly un-Tory, writers such as theoretical-revolutionaries like Percy Bysshe Shelley and drug-addled visionaries like Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The magazine encountered some setbacks (there was, for example, a fatal duel caused by its publication of libellous statements), and from the mid-1820s began to incorporate tales of horror–which, like the political content, were categorised as "articles"–in an attempt to increase sales. In this it was sufficiently successful to reach the notice of Edgar Allen Poe, who wrote a piece called "How To Write A Blackwood Article", supposedly based on a conversation between Mr Blackwood and an author-manqué named Signora Psyche Zenobia. Poe's story, which included an interesting explanation of the "cut-up" writing style, later famously used by William S Burroughs and David Bowie, can be read here[4]. And if you have access to JSTOR, there is a scholarly exegesis of it (dos Reis, 2010).

The Maga may not be as widely known as other progenitors of the form such as *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1731-1922) but it occupies an important space in the canon of literary-political publications, and it is heartening to see that, as magazines become a respectable field of study, it is gaining deserved recognition. William Cairns, in his review of British literary periodicals that published work by American authors between 1815 and 1833, called *Blackwood's* "the most important of the magazines" (Cairns, 1922). More recently, John Strachan in his Introduction to a scholarly edition of critical prose from *Blackwood's* characterised it as "the most brilliant, troubling, acerbic and imaginative periodical of the post-Napoleonic age", further describing the magazine's "tonal registers: judicious and scurrilous, sober and satirical, generous and unscrupulous, partisan and open-minded, reactionary and avant garde" (2016, p. xii).

I wish I could say I agreed, or disagreed, with these points but I have to confess that I hardly ever looked at my grandfather's copies of his beloved Maga, even when copies were left to hand in the guest bedroom where I slept when visiting. But I did inherit at least some of his love for the literary magazine, because in 1977 when *Granta* had a major relaunch under the editorship of Bill Buford, I subscribed. *Granta* had been founded in 1889 by students at the University of Cambridge as a place to publish student politics, student humour and student literary efforts–although when those literary-minded students included people such as Arthur Conan Doyle, AA Milne, Ted Hughes, Sylvia Plath, Stevie Smith and Michael Frayn, it does show the original *Granta* in rather a different light. However, despite such contributors, over the decades of the 20th century interest in the magazine declined and its future seemed doubtful. Enter Cambridge graduates Buford,

1 I remember reading *somewhere* that this nickname was a result of William Blackwood's slight speech impediment. The story was that he would greet the arrival of each issue with, "Ah, here is my Maga ...", getting stuck on the "zine" part. But, of course, I cannot find a reliable source for this, so let it stand as an anecdote.

2 Editors' note: From October 1817 to December 1905, the magazine was titled Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, later adopting Blackwood's Magazine until its final issue in 1980.

3 In British politics the Tories have always been associated with the right-wing, even before the formation of the Conservative Party in 1834. In 1817, the main rivals of the Tories were the Whigs, who later became the Liberal Party.

4 https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/How_to_Write_a_Blackwood_Article

Peter de Bolla and Jonathon Levi. Buford quickly established himself as the leading editorial voice (as Simon Garfield's article in 2007 from *The Guardian* makes clear) and *Granta* became a showcase not just for literary writing, but for long-form narrative non-fiction–a pattern established when the tenth issue was devoted to travel writing. (Its fifth reprint is still available[5] from the publisher!)

The first issue of new-look *Granta* was devoted to new American writing and on the other side of the Atlantic, it may have been that Dave Eggers was taking notes (it seems quite a Dave Eggers thing to do). Eggers came to fame with his quirky novel *A Heartbreaking Work Of Staggering Genius* (2000) but by the time that book achieved global acclaim he had already founded *Timothy McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*, initially as a journal in which to publish work that had been rejected by other magazines, but soon developing into a "vibrant home for contemporary fiction and a living temple to the possibilities of print." (Lependorf, 2015, p. 3). That latter point is certainly true–when I ran the postgraduate magazine journalism course at Cardiff University I used various paper-based issues of *McSweeney's* to inspire students to think outside the box when it came to the "possibilities of print".

The temporal and cultural distances between "Tory-leaning" *Blackwood's* (1817), the "self-destructive calamity" (Garfield, 2007) of *Granta* (1889/1977), and the "urbane, cultured, inquisitive and hip" (Lependorf, 2015, p. 3) *McSweeney's* (1998) are considerable but there are several elements that link them. Most obviously–and perhaps most importantly–they are all the product of a single editorial vision; each one was founded or relaunched with a clear intention, and although actual editors may have changed and editorial/production teams may have shared responsibility for assembling the material, the original intention still managed to resonate at a cellular level.

They also share a genre, as examples of what is commonly categorised as the "little magazine". In the case of *Granta* and *McSweeney's*, with their global circulation and, in *Granta*'s case, international editions, using a description like "little" may seem inappropriate, but the term has been applied to literary publications for decades. The little magazine is a genre that has been studied and written about by fans and academics alike, and there is a corpus of work that is well worth exploring. What is a little magazine? Hoffman, Allen and Ulrich (1947), whose book *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography* set a standard for scholarly study of the genre, described it as a vehicle for "artistic work which for reasons of commercial expediency is not acceptable to the money-minded periodicals or presses" (p. 2).

However, like many generic terms, this one has evolved to mean different things in different contexts. In *The Handbook of Magazine Studies* (2020), that I co-edited with Miglena Sternadori, Gwen Allen gives us an original and exhaustive review of the little magazine as a locus of artistic experimentation in *Magazines as Alternative Sites of Artistic Practice* (pp. 263-277), while Nithila Kanagasabai in *Case Study: Little Magazines and Local Feminisms* (pp. 333-341) examines the social and cultural role of Tamil-language little magazines in India that have, amongst other things, "enabled women from marginalized communities–such as the Muslims and Dalits–to find a space to articulate their anti-hindutva and anti-caste stands" (p. 334). For Kanagasabai, little magazines are "fiercely anti-establishment … usually run without the patronage of mainstream advertisers".

Little magazines per se are not the main focus of this essay, but they provide several key principles that I want to explore, namely–a creative vision, focus on a very specific niche, controlling the means of production, and controlling the means of distribution. Long life and financial success? Not so much. Ian Morris and Joanne Diaz, in their preface

5 https://granta.com/products/granta-10-travel-writing/

to an edited collection of papers about the little magazine, cite no less a literary figure than T. S. Eliot (who was also a banker and thus presumably well acquainted with the need to remain solvent): "T. S. Eliot believed that a magazine should have 'a single editor, a small circulation, and a short life span, rarely exceeding that of the founding editor'" (Morris & Diaz, 2015, p. ix).

If some of the above rings a bell of recognition, it may be that the term *little magazine* also applies to the other end of the key word; we have met the *Maga* and we will later be meeting the *Zine*[6] . Before then, I want to look at the first of the principles I listed–a creative vision. In its purest form, this will be the property of a single person. Since its invention and popular uptake, the world wide web has proved an excellent place for individuals to express themselves ("The Power To Publish!"), and numerous services have been provided for those who wish to do so–UseNet, bulletin boards, Blogger, LiveJournal, Medium, Wordpress, etc. When Google bought AdSense and AdWords it became easier to monetise blogs, thus allowing some people to make a living, or part of a living, from their writing. YouTube has been the most successful visual equivalent, and it is more than possible for a popular channel to provide an income for its creator, whether an "influencer" or a more conventional content provider.

As the list above shows, platforms for creative expression come and go. The current hot favourite is Substack, which describes itself, not at all grandiosely, as "a new economic engine for culture" (Substack.com[7]). More prosaically, it is an online platform that allows authors to publish articles, collect subscription payments, pore over analytics and deliver newsletters. It has been around since 2017 and in the intervening years more than 50 million people have signed up as (free) subscribers–so there is a big potential audience. (Of that 50 million, five million have chosen to sign up for paid subscriptions to individual writers.)

Thus, anyone looking for a facile way to characterise Substack (someone writing an essay like this, for example) could categorise it as a site of *micro-zines*–the littlest magazines imaginable, each being the elaborated product of a single mind, delivered one article at a time. Those providing content are able to avoid gatekeepers (Lewin, 1943) (the spoilsports who spike or edit one's stories) by becoming gatewatchers (Bruns, 2005) (the good sports who provide different perspectives on mostly known topics). As a collective entity, Substack has the potential to offer an enormously varied magazine-like experience, provided that one is prepared to put in the work of collating everyone and everything that might be of interest. And in the end, it's another platform not owned or controlled by the "publisher"–Substack is owned by Chris Best, Jairaj Sethi and Hamish McKenzie, who have raised a significant amount of venture capital from Andreesen Horowitz and others. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but if there is one truth of which we can be sure it is that venture capitalists want to get their money back, preferably with an extra whack on top. As of November 2024, Substack had not turned a profit; it is a private company so it does not have to disclose financial results, but an internet search returns a revenue figure of $29 million in 2023. The business model is that writers can publish for free, or they can set a fee for access to their work, of which Substack takes 10% (plus another 4% to pay Stripe for processing payments). Should the three owners, or their investors, suddenly feel the need for a greater return, there is no guarantee that the currently reasonable commission will not jump–nor that the whole platform will not change the way it works.

6 Definitions of "zine" frequently include the words "self-published", "small scale", "non-commercial", "booklet", "printwork" and "magazine".

7 https://on.substack.com/p/switch-blog

If there is an overall guiding principle for modern publishing it must be the need to be constantly alert to changes–changes to whatever platform one is using, changes in the way the fish are swimming so you can follow them to the next new thing, changes in the consumption needs of your audience (more on this below).

It follows that any pundit or academic writing about publishing also has to be aware of changing circumstances. I have written previously (Holmes, 2020, p. 3) about the concept of the "metazine", citing instances of Facebook groups and pages that operated in a way that accorded with my General Theory Of Magazines (Holmes and Nice, 2012, p. 7), essentially that they were serving specialised content to a specialised audience–but in this case an audience that could contribute (or, perhaps, "co-create") directly through the comments section. The pages I cited all still exist and operate, but since I wrote that chapter the underlying platform (Facebook) has made some significant changes to the way it works, to the powers of administrators and to the way that Facebook subscribers can interact with it. Good groups/pages already have vigilant admins but their roles and powers are subject to potential whimsical change by the corporate owner of the platform (Meta). It is also possible for bots to infiltrate the admin roles, as the 376,000-member *Home Studio* group found in January 2025, causing a former admin to post:

The bots have taken over, folks.

They infiltrated the admin list, and removed [name redacted] and myself, as well as apparently all of our moderators from the admin list and we can no longer access the activity logs or any of the admin tools.

The admin list for the page looked like this:

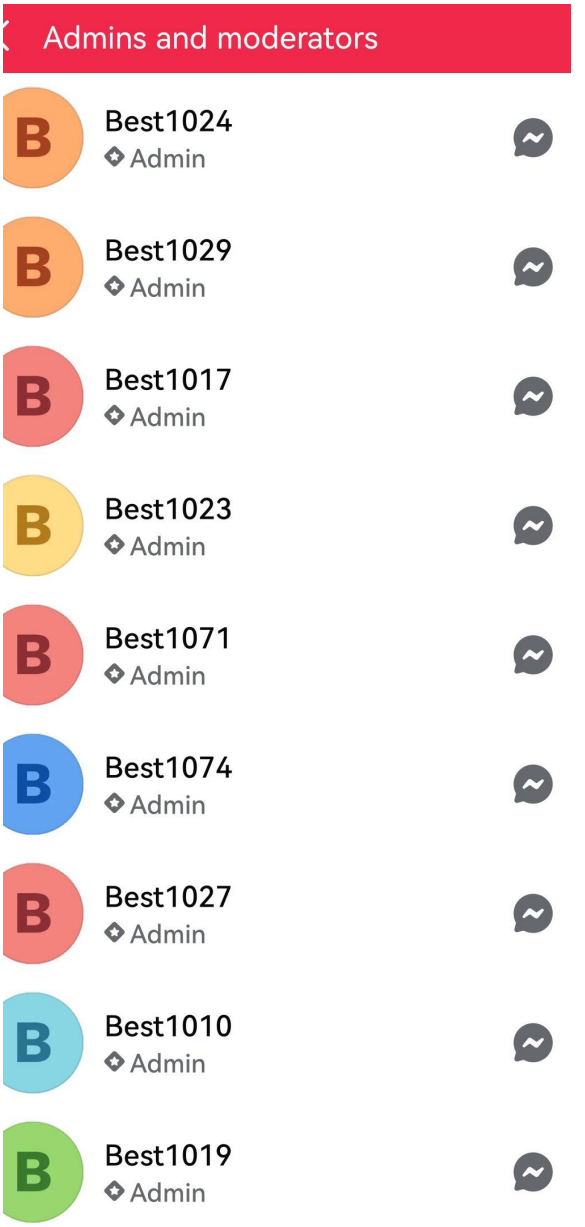

Fig. 1 Screenshot of the Facebook's Home Studio group admin list (January, 2025).

Once that has happened it is very difficult, if not impossible, to find a way back. *The Home Studio* page is still operational and appears to be sticking to its interest area, so there is no immediately obvious reason for the infiltration–it just happens as a consequence of using someone else's platform; they make the rules and the user suffers the consequences.

The individualism and focused view available to a writer on Substack is one thing, but is it ever possible for an editor to fully convey a creative purpose to the team on a mainstream magazine? I would argue that it is–think of *Vogue* under Anna Wintour or *Vanity Fair* under Graydon Carter. I would also argue that these are exceptions that do not necessarily prove a rule. When men's magazine *Loaded* launched in 1994 under the editorship of James Brown it had a clear creative direction that, sadly, did not endure, and what began as a blast of irreverence became a cliché of sexist self-indulgence. It did, however, open a new sector, or at least sub-sector, in the men's magazine market (or, if it didn't do that, it re-set certain parameters to serve a new generation of men). As is generally the way, other publishing houses scurried to add their own offering. EMAP, then the UK's second biggest magazine publisher, bought *For Him Magazine*, which had started in 1985 as a high fashion journal sold in clothing shops, shortened the name to *FHM* and proceeded to copy the new formula (girls, football, flash cars, crisps …). Fortunately, they also installed Mike Soutar as editor–fortunately because Soutar is a great example of where working in magazines can take you if you are an intelligent, thoughtful person. He began his magazine career in Dundee, Scotland (the city famous for "jute, jam and journalism"), at DC Thomson. Like many other talented Scots,[8] he made his way to London and the editorship of EMAP's flagship *Smash Hits*, then *FHM*, then to the US as editor-in-chief of *Maxim,* then back to the UK as group editorial director of the magazine division of IPC, which was the UK's largest magazine publisher. There is more to say about Mike Soutar later, but it is his editorship of *FHM* that is important here–under his command the title reached circulations of over 500,000 per month, which was unheard of for a men's magazine. In an interview with *Press Gazette*, Soutar explained that he had concentrated his editorial vision for the magazine into three words: funny, sexy, useful. That is, every piece of content had to match one of those criteria. As a mantra it could hardly be simpler and, for a while at least, it seemed to work. That said, it is impossible to overlook other attributes of publishing–you can't sell more copies if you have not printed enough or if they are not in shops, so those other factors in the creation of a successful product, production and distribution, must also be given due credit.

FHM was a good-looking magazine and the production side, which starts with processing copy and finishes when the issue rolls off the press, clearly played a key role–even funny, sexy and useful content is not going to play well in a dull and drab layout with clichéd images and error-strewn copy. In other words, quality also played an important, if unspoken, part. As anyone who has taught on a practice-based journalism course will know, teaching professional-level "quality" is fundamental, even if it can initially lead to students grumbling about harsh grading. In this context the concept of "quality" is inextricably combined with the concept of "professionalism"–after all, we (the instructors/teachers/lecturers) are moulding the students into "professionals", so that they can fit seamlessly into a newsroom, radio studio or television gallery, having absorbed all the necessary indoctrination. But of course, "professionalism" itself is not an unproblematic concept; I have discussed elsewhere (Holmes and Nice, 2012, p. 55) competing theories of professionalism, including John Hartley's asseveration that journalism is not a profession, but a "craft defined principally by its practice (a practice that cannot be professionalised since journalism remains a trade where the employer regulates entry)". (Hartley, 2000, p. 39)

8 As Dr Johnson said (very unfairly) in *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1775): "The noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England!"

This statement is now itself problematic as there are multiple points of entry for self-appointed journalists.

Regardless of professionalism, one mutable aspect of "quality" is that the criteria by which it is judged change with technology, so over time teaching students or apprentice workers (probationers) about the traditional values of a medium is not constant and thus not always useful and sometimes positively harmful. By the time I entered journalism, no-one used the terms *brevier*, *minion* or *nonpareil* to specify typefaces or sizes, but I do remember anguished discussions about the options for screening halftone images to suit the printer's skill and the paper stock's qualities. In time this changed to arguments about the best system of colour proofing (Ozachrome vs. Chromalin, etc.) and the limitations or otherwise of digital scanners. Likewise, the rules of grammar and usage are not fixed, or at least not in English, which has no equivalent of the Académie Française or Instituto Internacional da Língua Portuguesa to keep it on the straight and narrow.

In fact, it seems that "quality" as a criterion of acceptability in a media entity is not just shaped by our journalistic concepts of professionalism, nor by technological determinism—it is also shaped by cultural expectations engendered by the audience. Doug Shapiro (former Chief Strategy Officer at WarnerMedia) published an essay on (where else?) Substack that examines the concept of "quality" through a different lens—the "algorithm" of consumption. This is not the place to précis the piece, but one of the key quotes is,

"It is clear today that consumers are redefining quality in media. Creator content usually has none of the traditional markers of quality, but it keeps taking share … Consumers must be drawn by something else" (Shapiro, 2025).

I adjure anyone involved in producing, teaching or analysing media content to read it and think about what the ideas and findings mean in their specific context. Shapiro urges producers to believe consumers when they say what they value and prefer, rather than dismissing or denying it. I think this statement can be modified or expanded to make it clear that consumers "saying" what they prefer includes the idea of noticing where they put their money or attention. My enduring memory of this lesson came when my wife and I were publishing a start-up magazine dedicated to old motorcycles; the market leader ran very much more content in colour and the in-person feedback we got from customers and potential customers at, for example, shows and exhibitions was that they did not believe so much colour was needed or warranted, the aesthetics of old bikes could be captured in black and white, just like magazines in the old days. Yet they continued to buy the magazine with all the colour, so we listened to what they were "saying" and upped the colour content. As Shapiro notes, "consumers are not necessarily aware of all the attributes they consider", but he does offer practical ways for producers to make some kind of assessment.

One of his suggestions is that companies with a large enough dataset could use machine learning to identify attributes that consumers consider important. Machine learning is a subset of AI and AI is a huge discussion point in media now—not that you would necessarily divine that from what high-ranking media executives contributed to the end of year "predictions" rounded up by B2B publications like *Press Gazette*. An awful lot of them came up with half-baked nostrums about keeping close to the reader, creating content that the reader would value, and so on—the kind of thing that magazines have been saying for decades (latterly followed by newspapers). I am sure there are all sorts of plans for using AI in all sorts of scenarios, but media executives should bear in mind that people do not trust AI (as reported by Kylie Robison in *The Verge* in April 2025) and that AI is yet another platform that can be altered at the whim of an owner trying to court favour with, for example, the President of the United States.

In his essay, Shapiro also touches on distribution, specifically on how the internet disrupted old models, although he does not see it as the most important element in play for the concepts he is discussing. For that we must turn to another Substacker, Ted Gioia in his essay *Why Creatives Will Win By Thinking Small* (2024). Gioia has had a varied career, ranging from stints working for the Boston Consulting Group through being a musician and producer to founding Stanford University's jazz studies programme. While he was studying for his MBA at Stanford Business School he came across the works of Peter Drucker, an almost legendary management consultant and author. Gioia's essay was inspired by the news that several top name film directors and producers (JJ Abrams, Christopher Nolan, Steven Spielberg, et al.) had clubbed together and bought a film theatre in which they could show whatever films they want to a physical audience. "We have reached a point," writes Gioia, "where even the people in power at the top of the industry want to bypass the system. Even the gatekeepers are sick of dealing with the gatekeepers." This then leads him to recall his discovery of one of Drucker's insights about a commonly overlooked aspect of doing business–distribution, i.e., the process of actually getting your product to the consumer.

Gioia says he first came across this idea in the 1990s, but Drucker had been thinking about it for a lot longer, because back in 1962 he had published an article entitled *The Economy's Dark Continent* in the April issue of *Fortune* magazine (Kelly J. Thomas has an entertaining article on the Worldlocity website that explains how and why he tracked down this copy of *Fortune*.) Essentially, as the somewhat-of-its-time title suggests, Drucker believed that many CEOs had no idea of what happened in the distribution departments of their businesses and just did not care. The solution, he suggested, was for "businessmen to look at their business in a new holistic way–by seeing distribution … as an integral part of the manufacturing process". (Schechter, 2002).

Gioia frames his precis of the version of Drucker's theory he read as, "The most powerful distribution model of them all was finding a pathway directly to the consumer, or as close as you could get" (2024), and he adds the usefully relevant thought that, "The key thing is that the Drucker strategy is the right one for creatives." In other words, it applies to individual creators[9] who want or have to think small, not just corporations that want to conquer the world.

Substack *almost* manages that–their About page includes an encomium from Diana Butler Bass that emphasises the "direct relationship with my readers" and another from Dan Gardner appreciating the "direct relationship between me and my readers"[10]. This seems to be a key point for Substack and it is a valid one–but it has to be remembered that the relationship between creator and reader is mediated via the highly-venture-capitalised platform, and thus subject to the potential drawbacks discussed above.

For a better example of thinking small about distribution consider the history of *Crack* magazine. Founded by Tom Frost and Jake Applebee in 2009, *Crack* began as a free cultural what's on style magazine for Bristol before expanding its remit to Cardiff, London, Manchester, Berlin and Amsterdam. Distribution was done in-house–somewhere in the depths of YouTube is a video detailing the arrival of the printed copies in a garage, their being loaded onto a hired van, then driven by a member of the *Crack* team to various locations in and around Manchester, before the drive home in the wee small hours. For some business analysts (those who have not read enough Drucker) this effort would represent an opportunity cost–that is, the team member could have been undertaking

9 The world of creators and the creator economy should be a required research area for anyone working in or teaching about media. A good starting point is Doug Shapiro's *The Relentless, Inevitable March of the Creator Economy* (2024).

10 https://on.substack.com/p/switch-blog

other, more productive duties that would contribute to the main purpose of the business, creating content or raising advertising revenue. But to the Drucker-savvy observer, this mode of distribution has several advantages: it allows the creator to maintain direct communication with the nodes of distribution; it allows a direct inter-personal connection with the people who run those nodes; it allows a direct check of how the previous issue performed; it allows the exploration of potential new distribution nodes in the region.

(It is perhaps worth noting here that controlling distribution does not have to be small scale–the giant Frontline Distribution started with EMAP but eventually included Haymarket, BBC Worldwide, Dennis and others. But owning your distribution division, as Drucker notes, does not necessarily mean understanding what it does …)

Another example of Drucker-influenced distribution can be found in the print version of men's magazine *Shortlist* (2007-2018). This takes us back to Mike Soutar, who is currently best known for his role as an adviser to Alan Sugar on the British version of *The Apprentice* television programme. After his role as director of IPC's magazine division and an outlook-changing bout of typhoid, Soutar headed up the launch team for *Shortlist*, a men's magazine with two USPs–it was free and it was high quality ("no profanity, no nudity, and there is no gutter journalism") (Snoddy, 2010). Soutar acknowledged to me[11] that Drucker's views on the importance of understanding and "owning" the distribution chain influenced him when developing the business plan for *Shortlist*, and there still exists on YouTube a video of him demonstrating how members of the distribution team should approach "customers"[12] (the video gave rise to a number of snarky comments about Soutar's performance, but I think we know who had the last laugh). Handing out free products is not, of course, a new idea but by using it in a precise way, Soutar managed to harness what Drucker characterised as the "most powerful distribution model … by finding a pathway directly to the consumer".

Which brings us to the other end of the MAGA, the zine–the small-scale, self-published, non-commercial printwork. Zines have existed since at least the 1930s, certainly for as long as there have been readily-accessible and relatively (or absolutely) cheap duplicating machines like the mimeograph. In fact, as technology advanced zine producers had the opportunity to own not only the means of *distribution* (e.g. hawking the product in pubs or gig-goer queues) but also the means of *production*–a discarded Roneo or photocopier.

In fact, nowhere is it easier to encompass all the key principles mentioned earlier: a creative vision, focus on a very specific niche, controlling the means of production and controlling the means of distribution–and all unmediated by a third-party digital platform. By its very nature a zine can be the product of a solitary creator (although teams and collectives are not uncommon), and the intensely personal outlook is likely to result in a purity of editorial vision and equally likely to be political, in the sense of "having to do with power relationships, not the narrow sense of electorial politics", as Carol Hanisch, who is credited with coining the expression "The personal is political", has written (2006).

There have been and are zines covering every topic imaginable, from music and poetry to sexuality and health, and their collective importance in the culture of media is becoming recognised in academia and beyond. The university libraries

11 Personal communication

12 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZXrc3QqNmk

of Reed College,[13] Wisconsin-La Crosse[14] and Texas,[15] for example, have significant zine collections, while the Wellcome Trust is currently (as I write—it ends on 14 September 2025) hosting Zines Forever! DIY Publishing and Disability Justice, an exhibition that

"looks at how zines have been used to share experiences of disability and disabled identity …The display draws on our growing collection of over 1300 zines themed around health. It explores how the making and sharing of zines can further disability activism and political resistance and serve as a vehicle for community building and mutual support." (Wellcome Collection, 2025)[16]

The exhibition is co-curated by Dr Lea Cooper, who is closely associated with the Edinburgh Zine Library[17] and whose doctoral thesis (2024) on zines is available from the University of Kent.

Are zines the answer to the serious issues that face the magazine as an industrial, socio-cultural and journalistic entity? Not entirely, not on their own, and not unless there is some way for some creators, at least, to make a living from them. As Peter Houston of *The Magazine Diaries* (published on Substack—naturally) firmly states, "Making magazines that sell is not selling out. Being passionate about profits is what lets you make your next issue" (2025).

But between them, the MAGA and the zine offer important reminders of why people love magazines and what drives the very best of them forward. Other voices, like some of those referred to above, provide perspectives on the changing qualities and values of the mediascape and the creator economy. These are all lessons that publishers and teachers forget or overlook at their peril because unless we collectively take note of them, we will all be out of jobs, and not even Substack will save us.

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COSMOPOLITANISM IN PRINT: *THE ATLANTIC* VS. *THE ECONOMIST*

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Abstract

This essay offers an interpretation of the ideal readers of *The Atlantic* and *The Economist* magazines as representatives of two kinds of cosmopolitanism, vernacular and Western, respectively. This claim is grounded in several sources of evidence: their editorial missions, their content, and their 'media kits', which refers to commercial documents where the editors promote the publication to potential advertisers. *The Economist*'s ideal reader is a Western cosmopolitan, often encouraged to hold the torch of liberalism as a civilizatory universal creed. *The Atlantic*'s implied reader is a vernacular cosmopolitan, concerned with continuing the so-called American experiment by re-creating a national identity marked by diversity. These two understandings of cosmopolitanism have been present in the publications from the outset: *The Economist* was born to fight protectionism, and *The Atlantic* to end slavery.

Keywords: magazines; journalism; cosmopolitanism; liberalism; *The Economist*; *The Atlantic*

Introduction

The roots of cosmopolitanism can be traced back to classical Greece's Stoics and Immanuel Kant's search for a perpetual peace but the resurgence of the term as an overpresent contemporary trope owes much to the globalization phenomenon of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. It is easier than ever before to feel like a citizen of the world when modern mass media brings home distant suffering, cheap air travel makes the globe smaller and transnational risks (climate change, terrorism) highlight the interdependence of any place on Earth.

The Economist's emergence as the magazine of record for the global business class and other cosmopolitan types (academics, NGO workers, high flying college graduates, etc.) has run in parallel to globalization, the presumable 'end of history' and a renewed interest in one-worldism. There are many ways to define a cosmopolitan but there is only one publication that a cosmopolitan cannot miss: *The Economist*.

In this essay, I argue that if this 182-year old publication has become the reading of choice for the transnational thought leaders of globalization, then it is because it has become the voice of a particular kind of cosmopolitan, what sociologist Craig Calhoun calls the 'constant traveller', a figure that thinks of himself (the masculine might be forgiven in this case due to *The Economist*'s overwhelming masculine audience) as far more rootless and disinterested than he really is (Calhoun, 2003a; 2003b). This 'Western cosmopolitan' is tightly linked to the magazine's concept of liberalism, as if the 19th century ideology has finally come closer to realization than ever.

To explain *The Economist* as the voice of Western liberal cosmopolitanism, I will use a comparative heuristic, contrasting this sort of cosmopolitanism with that of another centenary publication, *The Atlantic*. Where *The Economist* carries much of the civilizatory overtone of British colonialism, trying to make the world more liberal, then *The Atlantic* has purported from its beginning in pre-Civil War America to represent and help build 'the American idea', a nation defined, however contradictory it may sound, as cosmopolitan. Where *The Economist* is the voice of the cosmopolitan ideology of liberalism, then *The Atlantic* is the voice of a new nation that wants to be defined by cosmopolitanism.

One of the great pleasures of reading *The Economist* is learning by comparison. The magazine offers answers to the question of why airfares are cheaper in Europe than in the US, or why mobile phone adoption has been slower in the US than in the EU. Tocqueville's famous quote that "without comparisons, the mind does not know how to proceed" is dropped from time to time in the magazine's reports. Learning by comparison is a heuristic device undertaken frequently by *The Economist*, and it is also how this essay will proceed. The brand of cosmopolitanism lauded by the British publication will be defined more sharply by comparing it to the cosmopolitanism of one of its American rivals (or companions) in the market, *The Atlantic*. First, I will distill the cosmopolitanism of these publications by paying attention to their editorial mission (established in their respective foundational moments but often recreated in recent editorial pieces). Second, I will reflect on their content, citing examples of reports representative of their core principles. Third, I will infer the cosmopolitanism of their respective audiences by looking at the descriptions of their ideal readers (as explained in the magazines' promotional materials to advertisers) and the available readership data in the U.S. (to allow for a better comparison, although I will also make reference to their global audiences).

Cosmopolitanism in the editorial mission

The foundational moments of *The Economist* and *The Atlantic* are surrounded by a sense of urgency and opposition that animates both publications to this day. *The Economist* was born to support free trade, oppose protectionism, and became the voice of liberalism. *The Atlantic* was born to oppose slavery

and to develop what their founders enigmatically named as 'the American idea', embodying and shaping the spirit of a new nation.

The Economist was launched in 1843 by supporters of the Anti-Corn League, a movement of British middle-class industrialists who encouraged free agricultural trade and wanted to repeal the Corn Laws that protected the economic monopoly of traditional landowners (Schonhardt-Bailey, 2006). Even to this day, the magazine states on its masthead that it was created to take part in "a severe contest between intelligence, which presses forward, and unworthy, timid ignorance obstructing our progress."

The ideology of *The Economist* is the object of much debate. It could be defined as classic liberalism, arguing for little state intervention, free trade, and privacy. Very tellingly, the author of a recent comprehensive study about liberalism, Edmund Fawcett, worked at *The Economist* for more than three decades. In his book *Liberalism: The Life of an idea* (2014), Fawcett defines "the liberal outlook" (p. 10) as comprised of four guiding principles (pp. 10-19): 1) the unavoidability and positive character of social conflict (channeled as competition, conflict can be the source of argument and creativity; social harmony is neither sought nor desired); 2) the need to control and divide economic and political power (so as to avoid domination by any single interest); 3) a belief in constant progress (an optimistic belief in the possibility of always advancing towards a better society); and 4) respect (understood as a triple protection from "intrusive power", that which "might interfere with property or with opinions" (p. 15), "obstructive power", which "might block mechanical innovation or imaginative invention" (p. 15) and "exclusive power", which "might deny civic protection to the poor, the unlettered, the unorthodox" (p. 15).

From time to time, *The Economist* allows a glimpse into its working ideology when commenting on current events. In June 2013, the magazine reported on a survey that showed young Britons to be critical of state intervention and tolerant of social and cultural difference. *The Economist* celebrated British youth's embracing of liberalism's "old tune" with a cover featuring a photomontage that replaced the faces of the Rolling Stones with the faces of classical liberal thinkers: Adam Smith (on lead guitar), John Stuart Mill (bass), William Gladstone (vocals), along with the then-leader of the Liberal Democrats, Nick Clegg, on the drums (2013, June 1). In its editorial, the magazine claimed that for the past 170 years, it had "consistently advocated free trade, punctured government bloat and argued for the protection of individual liberties," so it celebrated that "the young want Leviathan to butt out of their pay cheques as well as their bedrooms." "Young Britons", *The Economist* observed, "are classical liberals: as well as prizing social freedom, they believe in low taxes, limited welfare and personal responsibility. In America they would be called libertarians." More recently, when discussing the many meanings of liberalism, the publication reminded that its founder, James Wilson, had been a Liberal member of Parliament in the 19th century. "This liberalism, the sort that this newspaper champions, emphasises individual freedom, free markets and a limited state" (2016, July 30, p. 66).

Liberalism and cosmopolitanism are intimately linked (Sánchez-Flores, 2010). Where democracy thinks of community and particularities, liberalism thinks of the individual and universalism. Where democracy is guided by the respect of the majoritarian principle, liberalism is guided by the respect of the individual as a human being (Bellamy and Baehr, 1993). The contemporary emphasis on human rights could be seen as the consequence of the expansion of the Western liberal ethos beyond the confines of Western liberal democracies (Langlois, 2007). To present *The Economist* as the voice of such high principles is, granted, controversial. David Harvey's critical view of certain cosmopolitan discourses as "an ethical and humanitarian mask of hegemonic neo-liberal practices of class domination and financial and militaristic imperialism"

(2009: 84) could very well be applied to *The Economist* if the eye of the beholder is that of the frequent reader of neo-Marxist publications like *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Theres is no vision from nowhere, and no cosmopolitanism, as Calhoun argues, is devoid of local and particularistic overtones (Calhoun, 2003b). Therefore, I would like to define *The Economist*'s cosmopolitanism as 'Western', however universalistic liberalism might purport itself to be.

Also following Calhoun and his claim that cosmopolitanism need not be opposed to localism or nationalism (Calhoun, 2003b), I will argue that *The Atlantic's* founding ethos is that of building a cosmopolitan nation. Its first issue was published in 1857 on the eve of the American Civil War, carrying the views of New England's abolitionist intellectuals. These included a group of noted Bostonian writers (Ralph Waldo Emerson and Oliver Wendell Holmes, among others) who aimed at "forging a national consciousness", and wanted "to educate and reflect America, to welcome contrary ideas but often to promote the liberal, to represent all the country but to trade on Boston's cultural capital" (Fletcher, 2012). Even its literary tone, subdued in recent years, had a political underpinning: "the magazine believed in the power of American literary realism to create a national identity" (Fletcher, 2012).

A text published by Randolph Bourne in *The Atlantic* in 1916, intriguingly titled 'Trans-national America', outlines the theory of a cosmopolitan nation that the magazine founders may not have been able to encapsulate better. Rather than arguing for a melting pot that would result in a bland and soulless assimilation into the Anglo-Saxon heritage, Bourne believes in a country marked by difference, an essay of a would-be world federation:

> In a world which has dreamed of internationalism, we find that we have all unawares been building up the first international nation (…) What we have achieved has been rather a cosmopolitan federation of national colonies, of foreign cultures, from whom the sting of devastating competition has been removed. America is already the world-federation in miniature, the continent where for the first time in history has been achieved that miracle of hope, the peaceful living side by side, with character substantially preserved, of the most heterogenous peoples under the sun. (…) Only the American (…) has the chance to become that citizen of the world. America is coming to be, not a nationality but a trans-nationality (Bourne, 2007 [1916]: 583).

Unfortunately, the coexistence of different cultures and races has not been as peaceful as Bourne had dreamed of. The very founding drive of *The Atlantic* (anti-slavery) has come back recently with the discussion about the pending institutional "reparations" that African-Americans deserve as a historically discriminated ethnicity (Coates, 2014, June).

Cosmopolitanism in the content

The very structure of *The Economist*, with regular sections on Europe, the Americas, Africa and the Middle-East and Asia, along with a section called 'International', is ideal for the fulfillment of the three indicators of cosmopolitan coverage outlined by Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw (2013): 1) cosmopolitan monitoring (covering a wide variety of foreign countries), 2) cosmopolitan debating (including voices from other countries different than those of the publication's country of origin), and 3) transnational diversity (making sure that the range of foreign countries covered is ample enough so as not to focus on just a few).

Assessing how well *The Economist* meets those three ideal criteria would demand a dedicated content-analysis. One of the dangers of global media is falling prey to national bias or a "North-Western elite perspective", as Dencik (2013) found in her study of the satellite TV channel BBC World News.

Whatever counts as a 'global news interest' was filtered through a national journalistic culture dominated by the political rhetoric of domestic political powers (e.g. "war on terror"). The BBC news gathering was found to be shaped by British military engagements and its colonial legacy. Although *The Economist* might be liable due to having the same biases, it would not be too daring a claim to say that the magazine excels at the cosmopolitan monitoring function. As Hirschorn (2009, July/August) eloquently wondered, which other publication would you turn to to keep up with Africa?

A key issue when assessing the degree of cosmopolitanism in any publication is what counts as the 'we': who is the implied addressee? To which community do the publishers and journalists belong to, if any? *The Economist* does not hide away from its Britishness. Actually, "that hint of pseudo-Dickensian creakiness in its prose" is part of its appeal in North America (Bakshian Jr., 2012: 84). But whenever reporting about Britain, the publication tries to maintain some distance, either positioning itself as an outsider whose ideas are not properly represented by anyone (with the partial and occasional exception of the Liberal Democrats) or by casting a pitiful glance at some perennial British problems, be it youth binge drinking or the excessive centralization exerted by London. *The Atlantic* prides itself as being a quintessentially American publication but one-third of its online audience comes, at present, from outside the United States, so their editors are now talking of "the United States" instead of "we" (Seoane Pérez, 2016). According to the typology of transnational media suggested by Brüggemann and Schulz-Forberg (2009), *The Economist* would be a global medium (its audience is larger abroad than at home). *The Atlantic*, due to its increasing international online audience and especially since the opening of a London bureau in the summer of 2017, could be considered a national media outlet with a transnational mission (*The Atlantic*, 2017, March 27). Very much like the Deustche Welle, it might very soon become a benchmark publication for expats.

By sifting any news through the interpretive frame of liberalism, *The Economist* adds a Western cosmopolitan tone to its coverage. Again, just as no one political party ever rightly holds the torch of *The Economist*'s classical liberalism, no one country ever fulfills its call for economic and social openness. Still, the publication celebrates the intellectual figures and governments who support free trade and tolerance. After the arrival of Donald Trump to the presidency of the U.S., *The Economist* claimed from its cover that liberty had moved north to Canada. Trudeau's policies, "liberal on trade and immigration, activist in shoring up growth and protecting globalisation's losers," are "a reminder that the centrist formula still works," and evidence that "tolerance and openness are wellsprings of security and prosperity, not threats to them" (2016, October 29: 9). The rise of populism and ethnic nationalism in France, Russia, and the U.S., among other countries, moved *The Economist* to long for a more conciliatory "civic nationalism" and "enlightened patriotism" (2016, November 19: 9). What is more, it deemed the "new political divide" between open and closed regimes and societies as "the gravest risk to the free world since communism" (2016, July 30: 7). On the eve of Trump's victory, *The Economist* published a special report in defense of globalization, linking this position to the foundational moment of the publication:

> The case for openness remains much the same as it did when this newspaper was founded to support the repeal of the Corn Laws. There are more—and more varied—opportunities in open economies than in closed ones. And, in general, greater opportunity makes people better off. Since the 1840s, free-traders have believed that closed economies favour the powerful and hurt the labouring classes. They were right then. They are right now. (*The Economist*, 2016, October 1: 9)

To be fair, it should be acknowledged that although *The Economist* lamented Britain's exit of the EU after the 2016

referendum, it celebrated the frustrated referenda of the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands in 2005. Though supportive of European economic integration, the magazine has kept a very British weariness about further political integration. Time and again, it has cast doubt on the value of a European Parliament, preferring instead a deeper involvement of national parliaments. In this regard, *The Economist* has been inconsistent, at times regretting the sinking of the EU as "the world's greatest experiment in post-nationalism" (2016, November 19: 9), while celebrating any break to a further federalization of the EU.

Socially, the liberal ethos of *The Economist* has been loudly exposed when supporting same-sex marriage, the decriminalization of prostitution, the legalization of cannabis, and doctor-assisted dying. The magazine began supporting homosexual marriage as early as 1996. Always suspicious of seeing prostitutes as victims, the increasing offer of sexual services online—which allows for the building of a brand and the publication of customer reviews—is for *The Economist* evidence of the normalization of this practice as a "normal service industry" (2014, August 7). Uruguay's passing of a law to legalize and regulate the production, sale and consumption of cannabis, along with other socially progressive policies, made it deserve the magazine's 'country of the year' nomination in 2013 (December 18). The case for assisted dying of the terminally ill was even the subject of a dedicated international survey conducted jointly by *The Economist* and the Kaiser Family Foundation, a US think tank, in four countries (the United States, Italy, Japan and Brazil). The survey revealed that living as long as possible was a lesser concern compared with other final wishes, such as not burdening the family with financial costs and being at peace spiritually (2017, April 29). Just as with economic liberalism, *The Economist* is always ready to defend and support the spread of social liberalism, making the world more cosmopolitan in a Western way.

The evangelism of *The Atlantic* is limited to the American borders, as its is a cosmopolitanism from the inside. Following its initial concern with slavery, race relations are to this day one of the main issues for the magazine. The election of Barack Obama as president has had one of its great interpreters in Ta-Nehisi Coates (January/February, 2017). There have been, however, some inconsistences. One of *The Atlantic*'s most influential pieces, the "broken windows" article published by two sociologists, George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson in the March 1982 edition of the magazine (Kelling and Wilson, 1982, March), had mixed results. On the one hand, it inspired the policy against street violence in New York and other big American cities, as mayors like Rudolph Giuliani followed the advice of fixing any traces of violence (the broken windows) to increase the sense of safety in the neighborhoods (Harcourt and Ludwig, 2006). On the other, and this speaks to the magazine's openness to review its own postulates, *The Atlantic* recently wondered if the broken windows policy had led to the generalization of the so-called "stop-and-frisk" practice, leading to the harassment of individuals that, because of their outward appearance or skin color, are deemed as suspects (Bergner, 2014, April).

If *The Economist* surveys government practices across the world to encourage the generalization of the initiatives that follow liberalism's tenets, *The Atlantic* scans foreign countries with a more nationalistic concern: how to keep America on top of the world. One of its most noted national correspondents, James Fallows, has lived in, and reported from, two of the countries challenging America's world leadership: Japan and China. This strategic surveillance of the world has both external and internal purposes. Externally, *The Atlantic* is worried about containing China's influence in the Pacific Ocean while internally, the magazine reports on how Asians might be changing the cultural fabric of the nation, with 'tiger moms' encouraging ever more competition among their progeny, turning their children into success-oriented freaks.

Passively, and more subtly, *The Atlantic* is also concerned about the currency of *the American idea* throughout the world, specially with regards to the respect of diversity. It even recently wondered whether it was time for Jews to leave Europe, given the continent's rising xenophobia (Goldberg, 2015, April). America is always seen as a beacon of tolerance whose ideals are worth spreading, a messianic tone that might remind of *The Economist*'s Western liberal cosmopolitanism. In 1917, Ellery Sedgwick, editor of *The Atlantic* from 1909 to 1938, called on the involvement of the U.S. in the First World War, as the country's success in dealing with diversity could be exemplary to Europe:

> And the United States, a world in miniature where the nations have joined together as a single people in a supreme experiment in the art of living together, can alone provide a common clearinghouse for the discussion of a worldwide pact. (Sedgwick, 2014 [1917, March]: 93).

The American cosmopolitanism, which sees the country as a 'trans-national' nation or a 'world in miniature', has an inward predicament (respect for diversity) and a seemingly disinterested transborder appeal: proving that the American experiment works and can be exemplary to the rest of the world.

Cosmopolitanism among the audience: real and ideal readers

In his classic 1940s study of "influentials" in a typical American town, sociologist Robert K. Merton (1968 [1949]) distinguished between two types of influencers: cosmopolitans and locals. Merton's cosmopolitans were respected for their technical expertise but had little sentimental attachment to the town and were ready to move out at any time. The locals, by contrast, were notable within their communities because of their social connections and could not imagine living out of Rovere, the fictional name Merton gave his site of study.

Merton's research was commissioned by Henry Luce, the founder of *Time* magazine, "to learn the functions served by a national newsmagazine [*Time*] for various types of readers" (Merton, 1968[1949]: 442), namely the influential in comparison with more regular, 'rank-and-file' readers:

> For the rank-and-file reader, the information found in the newsmagazine is a commodity for personal consumption, extending his own conception of the world of public events whereas for the influential, it was a commodity for exchange, to be traded for further increments of prestige, by enabling him to act as an interpreter of national and international affairs. It aids him in being an opinion leader. (Merton, 1968 [1949]: 446).

The goal of Luce was to find scientific evidence of *Time*'s appeal to wealthy readers in order to charge more for its advertising. Merton provided it. It was principally the "cosmopolitan" influencers, mobile professionals who were sought for their expertise and who cared about national and international affairs, who subscribed to Luce's flagship publication. The local influentials largely rejected *Time* because they were not significantly concerned about what was going on beyond the limits of their town. According to Merton, "the so-called 'class' magazines which devote much of their content to foreign and national affairs and to the arts [Merton included *The Atlantic* among them] are read by twice as many cosmopolitans as locals" (1968 [1949]: 463).

In sum, the social roles of the readers determined their communication behavior regarding political magazines. These social roles are determined, among other factors, by education. Lazarsfeld and Wyant (1937) studied magazine reading habits in 90 American cities. *The Atlantic* was among the

publications in their sample, and they found that it was most popular in state capitals on the East Coast "where school expenditures are high and the per cent of population over forty-five is high" (1937: 38).

It is the claim of this essay that cosmopolitan influencers can still be found among the readers of political magazines, and that two ideal contemporary types of cosmopolitans can be identified. The first type is the 'vernacular' or 'rooted' cosmopolitan (Bhabha, 2000; Appiah, 2005; Cohen, 1992; Knowles, 2007), who is concerned about world affairs but who sees global events through the lenses of their nation-state. This would be the prototypical reader of *The Atlantic*. The second type of cosmopolitan may be an individual who is part of the 'global elite' (Friedman, 2000) or the 'new cosmopolitan class' (Shiller, 2006), whose national identity is posited as secondary to the status they hold among their peers from other countries for having lived a transnational life as constant travelers or international businesspeople. This would be the characteristic reader of *The Economist*.

The rooted cosmopolitan could also be a reader of *Time* and the global cosmopolitan may have a soft spot for publications like *Monocle*. But *Time* lacks *The Atlantic*'s foundational quest of a cosmopolitan nation, and *Monocle* is more of a lifestyle magazine that does not explicitly stand as the torch carrier of Western liberalism. Their different cosmopolitanisms (one national-American, the other Western-liberal) make the publications compatible. According to *The Economist*'s Andreas Kluth, "In America, readers in our segment are more likely to read the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New Yorker*, *The Atlantic* and *Wired* than *Time* and *Newsweek*." (quoted in Oberholzer-Gee, Anand, and Gomez, 2010: 6).

The demise of newsweeklies like *Time* or *Newsweek* as the publications of choice for cosmopolitans was analyzed by *The Atlantic* itself: "the audience it [the newsweekly] was created to serve—middlebrow; curious, but not too curious; engaged, but only to a point—no longer exists" (Hirschorn, 2009). There is only one newsweekly that, far from faltering, is thriving in the digital age: *The Economist*. For Hirschorn, the British magazine was ahead of its time in providing a comprehensive survey of world affairs to a global elite.

The editorial mission of political magazines has been "'to inoculate the few who influence the many'", to use the words of Robert Manning, former *The Atlantic* editor (quoted in Sherman, 2002: 188). In its 2013 media kit (the document magazines use to present potential advertisers with data on their readership), *The Economist* labels its readers as "the ideas people". Given that political magazines are not mass-media, a key selling-proposition for them is the presentation of their readers as influencers, as the "molecular opinion leaders" that would tell their neighbors whom to vote for or what to buy (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 2006 [1955]). Magazines must convince advertisers that their influence far exceeds their circulation (Fletcher, 2012). By this logic, for *The Economist*, its readers are:

> […] the rainmakers of this new world. Their thinking wins others over. They are the buyers and influencers who make things happen. And when they believe in an idea—or a product or service- they champion it through their personal and business networks. (*The Economist* Group, 2013: 1).

The gold dust that magazines seek to convince advertisers they possess is redolent of the "two-step flow" model formulated by Lazarsfeld and colleagues (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 2006 [1955]). In other words, the readers of the prestige magazine, as a matter of course, influence the people around them.

The Economist and *The Atlantic* have retained and perhaps increased their appeal to influentials. *The Economist* has greatly benefited from the status of English as a global language (Bakshian Jr., 2012) and the worsening of foreign reporting in the U.S. (Hafez, 2007). *The Atlantic*'s cover pieces have

become more influential thanks to their circulation on social networking sites (Seoane Pérez, 2016). However, neither publication is free from the problems affecting the magazine industry, notably the unstoppable decrease in newsstand sales. According to data from the Alliance for Audited Media quoted by the Pew Research (2014), since 2008, *The Economist* has lost 54 percent of its single-copy sales in the United States. *The Atlantic* lost 33 percent of its single copy circulation in the same period. *The Atlantic* sold an average of 33,468 p copies er issue in 2013, *The Economist* 32,279. However, most of the circulation of both publications comes from subscriptions. According to *The Atlantic*'s media kit, 93% of the 477,990 copies it sold in 2013 were to subscribers (2014). In the U.S., where *The Economist* has half of its global subscription base (*The Economist* Group, 2013), the magazine sold 803,528 copies, 96% through subscription. Subscriptions have been flat for the past few years but, as the authors of the State of the News Media 2014 report warn, "these are normally kept from declining through discounts or special offers" (Pew Research Center, 2014).

When the data available in the magazines' media kits is compared, the readers of *The Atlantic* turn out to be more balanced by gender (60% male, 40% female) than the American readers of *The Economist* (86% male, 14% female). They are also older. The median age of *The Atlantic* readers is 55 years, whereas the median age of *The Economist* subscribers in the US is 48 years. The readers of *The Economist* are considerably wealthier than those of *The Atlantic*: subscribers to the British magazine have an average household income of $250,000, whereas the readers of its American rival have a median household income of $96,690.

The worldwide readership figures for *The Economist* print edition confirm the inference of its elite cosmopolitan character: 63 percent of its readers have lived abroad for 3 months or more, 11 percent of them are expatriates, and 71 percent are prepared to work abroad (The Economist Group, 2013). *The Atlantic* readers could be considered what Elvestad (2009) calls 'local cosmopolitans' (those who have an interest both in local and foreign affairs). They are also portrayed by the magazine as "influential" (holders of executive positions), "connected" (they share contents online), "affluent" (but certainly not so much so as the readers of *The Economist*) and "educated" (holders of college or graduate degrees) (*The Atlantic*, 2014).

More than half a century ago since Lazarsfeld and colleagues coined the "two-step flow" model, the contemporary magazine media kits keep on insisting on the influential character of their readers. Here, 86% of *The Economist* print readers agreed with the statement "I am good at persuading people to see things from my point of view" (*The Economist* Group, 2013: 5).

When considering their online audiences, *The Atlantic* seems to be the publication that could be more affected by its increasing international audience (approximately one-third of its current online readership) (Seoane Pérez, 2016). *The Atlantic* is widely seen as one of the finest examples of how a legacy media magazine can become a successful media brand in the digital age. In 2011, it reported that more than half of its advertising revenue was coming from digital media, with 10 million unique visitors to its website. In March 2014, it reached 16 million unique visitors. *The Economist*, however, did not manage to secure its full name for its domain (it operates with economist.com) but its print circulation in North America grew 119 percent in 2000s (*The Economist* Group, 2012), the decade when the penetration of the Internet reached three quarters of the adult population in the U.S. (Rainie, 2010). As Hirschorn says, "unlike its rivals, *The Economist* has been unaffected by the explosion of digital media; if anything, the digital revolution has cemented its relevance" (Hirschorn, 2009). *The Economist*, nevertheless, is now trying to recover lost ground. It redesigned its website in 2010, adding several editorial blogs but hiding its print contents behind a pay wall. In June 2012, it claimed 6.9 million monthly

unique browsers worldwide (3.2 million in North America), with 57,314 digital subscribers.

The Atlantic's most successful digital bet so far has been *Quartz*[1], with content focused on global business and technology news that has mobile and tablet-readers in mind and relies on sponsors. It is obviously a direct competitor to *The Economist* (of which *Quartz*'s editors are declared fans). In July 2013, for the first time, *Quartz* surpassed the online audience of economist.com in the United States, reaching more than 2 million unique visitors in a month, while the British magazine website stood at 1.6 million (Fiegerman, 2013). *Quartz* was eventually sold to Uzabase, a Japanese media company (Purdy, 2018, July 2).

Conclusion: Two brands of cosmopolitan journalism

The two cases studied here, *The Economist* and *The Atlantic*, are publications that represent two sorts of contemporary 'cosmopolitan influentials': rooted and global. *The Economist* animates and is animated by its readers' global lives, marked by frequent travel and international business relations, whereas *The Atlantic* seeks to respond to the demands of Americans who are concerned about the status of their country in this global world.

The Atlantic readers are worried about their country's future, as one of the consequences of globalization is that the fate of one's national community is no longer in the hands of that community (Held, 1995). *The Economist* readers, though more global in their shape and scope, are not avatars of a one-world, unified global society and demonstrate that globalization is more fruitfully seized, and perhaps even enjoyed, by an elite public. The magazine's readers may, in this view, be interpreted as forming an imagined international community of fellow 'new cosmopolitans' (Shiller, 2006) that are nevertheless detached from their co-nationals (Freeland, 2011). Their community is the community of their peers. *The Atlantic* and *The Economist* readers exemplify the limitations of contrasting cosmopolitan public spheres: that is, their readers are, respectively, either constrained by their national blinkers or by their belonging to an elite class. Both *The Atlantic* and *The Economist* could be deemed as 'specialist media' that serve a particular segment of the audience, so the cosmopolitan project extolled by authors like Held (1995) still lacks a global 'general media sector' (capable of reaching heterogenous publics) that Curran (2007 [2000]) sees as essential to a fully democratic media system. Rather than reflective of a near-to-be one-world, *The Atlantic* and *The Economist* might be better understood as cultural products of their respective "imperial" motives (Curran, 2011). *The Atlantic*'s concern about keeping America on the technological edge is another way of trying to keep the 21st century as American as the twentieth. *The Economist*'s quest is that of making the world more liberal, and it carries with it the colonial overtone of its country of origin, Britain, the former imperial head of a commonwealth of nations. As if the fight for liberalism were, to paraphrase the famous poem by Rudyard Kipling, "a white man's burden". To quote Calhoun:

> To some extent, the cosmopolitan elite culture is a product of Western dominance and the kinds of intellectual orientations it has produced (…) It is the culture of those who attend Harvard and the LSE, who read *The Economist* and *The New Yorker* (…) The cosmopolitanism of most theories reflects the experience of business, academic, and public sector elites (…) It is neither freedom from culture nor a matter of pure individual choice, but a cultural position constructed on particular social bases and a choice

1 https://qz.com/

> made possible by both that culture and those bases (Calhoun, 2003b: 543-544)

Political magazines emerged at the end of the nineteenth century "as a conscious response to the mass-circulation newspapers, which many intellectuals saw as a threat to civilized and enlightened public discourse" (Jacobs and Tonwsley, 2011: 31). In the twenty-first century, publications like *The Atlantic* and *The Economist* are trying to serve their initial editorial mission: shaping American identity and defending liberalism, respectively. Both missions have a cosmopolitan overtone: creating a national identity that respects diversity (*The Atlantic*) and fostering a world that is cut by the principles of Western liberalism (*The Economist*).

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PLATFORM POLITICS: *COMMONWEALTH MAGAZINE* AND THE MEDIATIZATION OF ESG IN TAIWAN

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Abstract

This study explores how *CommonWealth Magazine* has adapted to platformization and data integration through evolving partnerships with corporate stakeholders. Drawing on insider access and interviews with journalists, data strategists, and CSR professionals, the analysis highlights three key dynamics: (1) the central role of data visualization in editorial coordination and stakeholder communication; (2) the incorporation of partner-generated CSR data into the magazine's visualization systems; and (3) the ambivalent place of AI, which offers new content curation tools but raises concerns about audience displacement and copyright. While *CommonWealth Magazine* maintains a critical editorial stance, its engagement with CSR and ESG primarily serves to distinguish itself within an increasingly saturated financial media landscape. This case study shows that the platformization of legacy media extends well beyond content digitization or visualization as a communicative device. Rather, it involves the integration of external data infrastructures and the formation of long-term, system-level partnerships with corporate and governmental actors—initiatives that raise complex legal, financial, and reputational questions. As corporate subscribers take on greater strategic significance, *CommonWealth Magazine* exemplifies how legacy media institutions in non-Western contexts are redefining journalistic roles while navigating tensions between credibility, infrastructure, and the uncertain terrain of the platform economy.

Keywords: platformization, ESG, stakeholders, strategic alliance

Introduction

Drawing on the analysis of "platform capitalism" (Srnicek, 2017), this study examines how digital subscription models transform magazines from content producers into data-driven infrastructures. Srnicek (2017) argues that inevitably in the platform capitalism system, in order to survive or thrive, any media—magazine in this case—will function like a digital platform by using infrastructures for generating and capturing data. The value generated lies less in what they produce (i.e., content) and more in what they mediate.

In the platformization capitalism system, we introduce and examine how *CommonWealth Magazine* centralizes users, extracts behavioral data, uses that data to improve personalization, and monetizes via subscriptions, advertising, or services. In the case of *CommonWealth Magazine*, the shift toward digital is not merely a response to paperless policies or environmental consciousness. It reflects a deeper structural repositioning within a platform economy where value is extracted through reader analytics, algorithmic personalization, and behavioral retention strategies. Moreover, the analysis is grounded in the concept of platformization, with attention to how legacy media institutions—particularly in non-Western contexts—are experimenting with content infrastructure, stakeholder relations, and value creation beyond traditional advertising models—in the sense that *CommonWealth Magazine* distinguishes itself from other financial publications by repositioning its editorial authority around corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) reporting benchmarking, transforming advertisers into long-term data and reputational stakeholders. This strategic rebranding has enabled the magazine to dominate a niche market in Taiwan, arguably resulting in a form of platform monopoly within CSR/ESG media coverage.

Recent advancements in big data, algorithms, and analytics have significantly transformed media businesses (Martínez-Caro et al., 2020; Ustundag & Cevikcan, 2017). These changes underpin emerging business models that aim to create and deliver new forms of value (Dufva & Dufva, 2019; Hajiheydari, Talafidaryani, & Khabiri, 2019; Verhoef et al., 2021). Traditionally, the digital transformation has focused on content. However, the increasing integration of shared data systems and real-time visualizations between media outlets and stakeholders—often advertisers—has reshaped media value chains in underexplored ways. In many cases, magazines convert advertisers into stakeholders, or vice versa, entangling business relationships that influence editorial and strategic directions.

Given the heightened attention to ESG risks, companies are turning to external support for guidance (Coombs, 1998, 2007; McDonnell & King, 2013; Renn, 2017). Public accounting firms offer specialized expertise in risk management and assurance but media organizations such as *CommonWealth Magazine* are also becoming instrumental in this ecosystem. Because many conglomerates avoid third-party audits, a credible business publication can serve a dual role—as a public relations platform and as a consulting partner that highlights corporate improvements and offers solutions to setbacks.

Deuze (2016) notes that the media industry's evolution under digital transformation demands new tools and competencies. Magazine professionals must now operate in a space shaped not only by content but also by data-driven stakeholder management. Malmelin and Villi (2017) point out that media platforms increasingly function as promotional infrastructures, supporting brand marketing and advertising campaigns. Digitalization reduces advertiser costs and simplifies international transactions (Kind & Koethenbuerger, 2017; Carriere-Swallow & Haksar, 2019), while also enhancing customer acquisition and retention strategies (Sridhar & Fang, 2019). In this environment, *CommonWealth Magazine* positions itself not merely as a publication for individual subscribers but also as a strategic

partner capable of attracting and retaining corporate clients, consolidating its role in a transformed media economy.

The magazine's journey toward this transformation reflects a broader shift in the media industry, one marked by the increasing relevance of sustainable business practices and the growing demand for corporate transparency. Along this line, Lee and Hsu (2020) analyzed Taiwan's media landscape, including the evolution of magazines and their role in society, and briefly synthesized digital transformation and CSR in Taiwan's media industry. In another analysis, Chang (2018) contextualized the role of the media in promoting corporate responsibility in Taiwan. Over the years after the pandemic, *CommonWealth Magazine* has embarked on new initiatives fitting into the larger media landscape and CSR practices.

Research Method

Our study is based on long-term engagement with the magazine industry in Taiwan, particularly through our long-standing collaboration with planning and implementing industry initiatives. This positioning enabled us to conduct in-depth interviews with nine key individuals from magazine publishers and data teams, as well as four corporate stakeholders involved in ESG-related public communication.

Why was CommonWealth Magazine chosen?

Through the selection of a case, we do not pretend to prescribe a path forward for legacy print media, and instead have mapped how far one institution has gone in redefining its scope, its partners, and its infrastructural commitments—and how precarious, complex, and open-ended that journey remains. The selection of *CommonWealth Magazine* was thus purposefully guided by recommendations from Taiwanese publishers and media practitioners during two major symposiums held in September and November 2024. While other outlets such as *Liberty Times* and *Business Weekly* have also explored digital transformation, *CommonWealth Magazine* was consistently identified as a particularly meaningful case for its ability to maintain credibility while aligning with both government and corporate sectors.

This study focuses on the digital transformation by considering a legacy print publication that has received limited scholarly attention in English. Besides, unlike many studies on existing digital platforms, this research highlights how a commercially independent magazine—once operating with minimal government support—has repositioned itself as a key intermediary among the state, corporate, and civil sectors. As the government increasingly outsources ESG-related evaluations and rankings, *CommonWealth Magazine* is selected and introduced to illuminate how a traditional print media can platformize public accountability while retaining journalistic relevance. Given the broader decline of magazines across Asia, this case sheds light on an uncommon yet significant strategy for media sustainability and transformation, serving as a comparative study of international magazine digital transformation models. This case not only broadens the geographic scope of digital media research—especially as magazines remain largely neglected in studies of CSR and digital innovation—but also demonstrates a rare model of how journalistic institutions can platformize public interest functions without direct state control.

Procedure: Interviews and Textual Analysis

Interviews with nine magazine publishers and four CSR stakeholders were conducted online and in person (30–90 minutes each), then recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed. The analysis also drew on internal visualization materials and platform strategies to understand how digital transformation supports CSR engagement. Three major themes have been synthesized in the findings section. While the study does not claim statistical generalizability, it offers analytical depth through purposive sampling and insider access, presenting *CommonWealth Magazine* as an instructive example of how a

legacy magazine in a non-Western media system is navigating platformization, credibility, and public value in the face of rapid technological and political change. To analyze the interview data, we employed a thematic coding approach. After transcribing all 13 interviews, we conducted multiple close readings, identifying recurring patterns and points of emphasis across the participants' accounts. Our positional familiarity with the industry context helped us identify not only what was explicitly said but also the structural and institutional dynamics underpinning those statements.

The first round of coding involved open coding to surface initial concepts—such as "data dashboards," "audience reports," "editorial alignment," "ESG frameworks," and "AI concerns." These were then grouped into broader conceptual categories through axial coding. Through this process, three core themes emerged that structured our findings: (1) *the centrality of data visualization* as a tool for editorial planning and external communication, (2) *the integration of stakeholder data*—especially from CSR partners—into existing visualization infrastructures, and (3) the unsettled and often contested role of *artificial intelligence* in the ongoing transformation of legacy media practices.

These themes were not predetermined but evolved iteratively through comparative analysis across interviews, supported by memo-writing and frequent cross-checks between the authors. We also triangulated the interview data with internal presentation slides and platform documentation to contextualize the participants' narratives within broader organizational strategies. This analytic process allowed us to move beyond individual insights and identify patterned ways in which digital transformation is negotiated across editorial, technical, and stakeholder-facing dimensions.

This study uses *CommonWealth Magazine* and its affiliated CSR platform "Future Business" as a case study to examine how a legacy media organization adapts to digital transformation. Case studies are particularly effective for investigating complex, real-world phenomena involving multiple stakeholders (Leymun et al., 2017; Crowe et al., 2011). In this context, "stakeholders" refers not just to readers but to corporate partners engaged through public relations. *CommonWealth Magazine* has evolved from a traditional magazine into a CSR platform that co-develops strategies with its business clients, functioning more like a consultancy than a conventional media outlet.

Findings

Before delving into the findings, it is important to introduce *CommonWealth Magazine* as a print and quality legacy media so as to situate the upcoming findings. Founded in 1981, *CommonWealth Magazine* first intended to establish itself as a prominent business, financial and current affairs publication in Taiwan. Over the decades, similar to most magazines across the world, *CommonWealth Magazine* has faced challenges and business predicaments—as the decline of subscribers and the COVID pandemic economic slump that have threatened the business. *CommonWealth Magazine* has continually adapted to changing media landscapes, evolving from a traditional print publication into a dynamic digital platform. While several changes have been made so far in its digital transformation, this study focuses on a special aspect in that *CommonWealth Magazine* has maneuvered into a specific sector. In recent years, *CommonWealth Magazine* has positioned itself at the forefront of CSR and ESG, leveraging its digital transformation to promote transparency, accountability, and global best practices among Taiwan's corporate sector.

This study will synthesize the data to show how the case contributes to media platform studies and to our understanding of how legacy media can reassert institutional relevance by embedding itself within corporate governance and reputational infrastructures. The three themes outlined emerged through a grounded theory approach informed by interviews and fieldwork. They are (1) the central role of data

visualization in editorial coordination and stakeholder communication; (2) the incorporation of partner-generated CSR data into the magazine's visualization infrastructure; and (3) the ambivalent role of AI, which enables new forms of content curation but also raises concerns about audience displacement and copyright. These themes are not discrete but overlapping and interdependent, reflecting the entangled nature of technological, institutional, and narrative practices. For example, the magazine's integration of partner data feeds directly into its visualization strategies, which in turn shape how the editorial teams and corporate stakeholders engage with content. Similarly, AI technologies—while contested—are increasingly entangled with both visualization tools and data management. Rather than representing isolated shifts, these developments point to a deeper infrastructural reconfiguration in which editorial judgment, technical systems, and stakeholder expectations are becoming increasingly interdependent.

The centrality of data visualization for the platform

While *CommonWealth Magazine* recognized early the importance of embracing online platforms—launching its digital edition in 2008 and distributing content via its website, social media, and mobile apps—the establishment of its Future Business department in 2019 marked a pivotal shift toward a visualization-centered platform strategy. This initiative responded not only to the growing demand for CSR and ESG reporting but also to the need for integrated, visual representations of corporate responsibility data. As digital consumption habits evolved, so too did expectations for accessible, real-time, and visually intuitive content.

The centrality of visualization emerged as a defining feature of the platform's transformation. As a data visualization engineer stated in an interview:

> "Rather than simply digitizing articles, magazines (like CommonWealth) began integrating internal data systems with third-party databases—incorporating performance metrics, ESG indicators, and other benchmarks—into interactive, dynamic visual formats. These visualizations not only enhanced user accessibility but also offered businesses a compelling medium through which to communicate their sustainability narratives." (Data visualization engineer, interview in 2024)

In this context, the platform did more than host content; it became a data-driven interface that visualized corporate transparency and accountability. The Future Business department played a crucial role in this evolution by providing rankings, assessments, and visual reports that supported the companies' efforts to meet growing stakeholder expectations. By transitioning beyond traditional editorial content and advertising, *CommonWealth Magazine* developed a consultancy arm that leverages its "*journalistic credibility and visualization capabilities*" (Yin-Wei, publisher in interview). This strategic repositioning has enabled the magazine to act not just as a publisher but as a visualization-oriented ESG partner. *CommonWealth Magazine* is distinctively significant—as Kao (2024) explained:

> "We have studied on platforms launched by *Harvard Business Review*, *Reuters*, or *Forbes*, which similarly blend content with data-driven insight services—but we have leveraged our legacy and choose a path not travelled by these reputable magazines."

By 2019, *CommonWealth Magazine* had already begun shifting its focus toward corporate clients rather than just individual subscribers. The establishment of the Future Business department was part of this broader strategy to engage with companies as partners in promoting sustainable business

practices. The department's role was to provide customized reports, rankings, and advisory services related to CSR and ESG, thus strengthening the magazine's relationship with its corporate partners and advertisers.

Another significant aspect of creating the Future Business department was its potential to serve as a strategic business consulting platform. Beyond just offering rankings or reporting, *CommonWealth Magazine* recognized the opportunity to assist businesses with crisis and reputation management in the context of CSR and ESG. By doing so, they could offer insights into improving their public relations strategies by promoting strategic business consulting. In other words, these corporations are considered to be part of the stakeholders for the future. *CommonWealth Magazine* makes their business practices more transparent and accountable to the public.

> "In order to work with the business CSR fulfillment, we have to actually meet up with the private sectors to check on how their data system become better integrated with ours. Well, this means a lot to them because they are coerced to disclose their own data. It is hard but they find a venue and a concrete goal to work on" (Kao, data system analyst, 2024)

The visualization initiatives were the first stage of digitalization and platformization through the metric systems companies were required to use to quantify their contributions in a meaningful way. *CommonWealth Magazine* provides them with data-driven insights to support their CSR strategies and publicizes their role in positive environmental change.

A case in point is the Denshiu River Water Cleaning Metrics Project, which exemplifies how the magazine's Future Business Department merges environmental data with corporate reporting to promote transparency and accountability. By visualizing real-time data—such as air and water quality, pollutant levels, and corporate interventions in affected communities—*CommonWealth Magazine* has created a platform through which corporate claims can be tracked, validated, and publicly audited. In an increasingly crowded financial media landscape, *CommonWealth Magazine* has distinguished itself not only through ESG rankings and CSR consultancy, but also by experimenting with platform-driven visualizations to make sustainability efforts more transparent and comprehensible. Yet, making CSR and SDG data visible and accessible is far from straightforward. Most corporations—especially factories situated along environmentally sensitive areas like the Denshiu River—are reluctant to disclose data that could expose them to public scrutiny. While businesses are typically willing to highlight their CSR investments in annual reports, they rarely provide detailed metrics that could be independently verified or monitored over time. At the same time, Taiwan's government lacks access to private sector environmental data, limiting its ability to serve as a regulatory intermediary or visual data provider.

CommonWealth Magazine has attempted to fill this gap by aggregating disparate datasets—many collected over years of corporate reporting and journalistic investigation—into an integrated platform. Fig. 1 is a snapshot of the official entrance site of the Denshiu River Water Cleaning Metrics Project led by the magazine's Future Business Department. The platform overlays government-provided environmental data with corporate-reported CSR efforts across 37 river-adjacent neighborhoods. It tracks pollutant levels, map clean-up initiatives, and marks corporate and governmental interventions. Users can zoom in on specific sites to access real-time metrics, narratives, and visual stories, creating a granular, constantly updated view of the environmental impact.

Crucially, the platform has also evolved visually. Advances in graphic design, color rendering, and interactive storytelling—such as animated ecosystems, species icons, and embedded videos—have transformed earlier, clunky visual systems into

Fig. 1 Snapshot of the official entrance site of the Denshiu River Water Cleaning Metrics Project—the central button is the gateway to the metrics system along with other partner's datasets.

sophisticated, user-friendly tools. As one corporate partner candidly reflected:

> "We had a few earlier initiatives, but honestly, they weren't very visually pleasant. The new Chinese fonts are beautiful—thanks to a pioneering crowdfunding project that supported their development. I think the entire visualization system has been improving steadily." (Corporate public relations officer, 2024)

A key contributor to this transformation is a lead visual designer with prior experience at a Japanese publishing house, who joined *CommonWealth Magazine* and brought with her a design ethos shaped by international standards. In another snapshot of the infographics and among many others which is retrievably available, the implementation of this system is seen of as a personal milestone—"something that speaks for itself on her CV." This aesthetic evolution enhances not only the platform's appeal but also its communicative clarity and public legitimacy. What once resembled static CSR data tables has become a dynamic storytelling interface, accessible to the public and reusable by companies in their own ESG reports. In doing so, *CommonWealth Magazine* has significantly elevated the visibility and credibility of Taiwan's corporate sustainability practices, while simultaneously professionalizing the visual language of public accountability. In this way, *CommonWealth Magazine* does not merely visualize data—it creates an infrastructure of public accountability that few actors in Taiwan have the capacity or willingness to undertake. The project reflects a broader shift from content production to platform-building, and from reporting to facilitating systemic transparency. While such innovation has elevated *CommonWealth Magazine*'s influence in Taiwan's CSR landscape, the interviewees acknowledge that these efforts remain fraught with legal, reputational, and technical challenges. The aggregation of sensitive third-party data raises questions about confidentiality, data governance, and the sustainability of these partnerships. Even so, *CommonWealth Magazine*'s ongoing investment in visualizing and curating external stakeholder

Fig. 2 The Denshiu River Water Cleaning Metrics Project marks the degree of pollution using various colors.

Fig. 3 In an outer layer of the Denshiu River Water Cleaning Metrics Project, the fish depicted explain the degree of cleansing that allows that certain type of fish to survive.

data underscores a bold—if precarious—attempt to redefine media's role in shaping Taiwan's environmental and corporate future.

The integration of stakeholder data into existing visualization infrastructures

While *CommonWealth Magazine* maintains a critical editorial stance, its engagement with CSR and ESG functions less as a watchdog role and more as a strategic means of differentiation in an increasingly saturated financial media landscape. This case study argues that *CommonWealth Magazine* has pioneered a distinctive media-business model—one that integrates external stakeholder data, particularly from CSR and ESG partnerships, into a robust visualization infrastructure. Through this process, advertisers have been redefined as data-contributing stakeholders, with their metrics and initiatives made visible to wider publics and repurposed by firms themselves in investor relations and sustainability reports.

This model has had a significant impact in Taiwan, where the state has traditionally refrained from proactively auditing corporate responsibility unless violations were evident. Initially met with skepticism, this visualization-led model has gradually gained traction as firms have recognized its reputational value. In rendering CSR performance visible, *CommonWealth Magazine* has consolidated a near-monopolistic role as a private arbiter of public accountability—an infrastructural role rarely seen in other national contexts. Unlike models in Japan, Korea, or the U.S., where media organizations remain largely detached from corporate metrics systems, *CommonWealth Magazine*'s approach signals a significant redefinition of legacy media's function within contemporary governance frameworks.

The Denshiu River Water Cleaning Metrics Project serves as a compelling example of how *CommonWealth Magazine*'s Future Business Department merges its CSR and ESG consulting functions with digital innovation and data visualization to foster environmental transparency and corporate accountability. As part of the department's consulting role, this project can be strategically leveraged to support businesses in reputation management and crisis communication, particularly in the wake of environmental criticism. By partnering on initiatives like the Denshiu River project, firms can demonstrate a measurable commitment to sustainability and social responsibility.

What sets the project apart is the technical sophistication of its integrated platform. Drawing on databases provided by multiple actors—including government agencies, local municipalities, and corporate partners—the system maps 37 neighborhoods along the Denshiu River, overlaying pollution metrics, clean-up efforts, and site-specific SDG investments. The platform visualizes these interactions in an interactive format: users can zoom in on specific locations to access dynamic content, including real-time environmental data, explanatory texts, metrics, and visual narratives. These datasets are updated continuously, enabling both public users and institutional actors to monitor progress over time.

By curating and coordinating these disparate data sources into a coherent, accessible visualization platform, *CommonWealth Magazine* transforms abstract CSR commitments into publicly legible action, reinforcing its role as a private arbiter of environmental accountability in Taiwan's evolving media and governance landscape.

The Ambivalent Role of AI: Between Innovation and Uncertainty

Across interviews with editors, data strategists, and CSR coordinators, the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in newsroom and platform operations emerged as a recurring theme—marked by both cautious optimism and deep ambivalence. While AI technologies are widely acknowledged for their

transformative potential, particularly in content curation, data aggregation, and retrieval, stakeholders repeatedly emphasized the uncertainties and legal vulnerabilities that accompany their integration. This duality—the promise of increased efficiency and the fear of unintended consequences—shapes a complex and unsettled field of decision-making for media organizations navigating platformization.

Many publishers noted that AI tools have made data management and access more streamlined, especially for legacy institutions with extensive archives and growing pools of partner-generated content. In the case of *CommonWealth Magazine*, AI-assisted systems are increasingly used to organize, classify, and retrieve data—from CSR disclosures to ESG performance metrics. These functions are critical to the magazine's repositioning as a data-driven platform, and they support both editorial workflows and stakeholder-facing services. In this sense, AI is not simply a futuristic add-on, but rather a key infrastructural component of the magazine's evolving business model.

Yet this functionality is accompanied by widespread institutional hesitation. The respondents repeatedly emphasized that while AI can aggregate and surface content at unprecedented speed, it also raises pressing questions around intellectual property, copyright liability, and audience displacement. Several interviewees pointed to recent high-profile legal cases involving AI-generated content as cautionary tales, noting that regulatory frameworks are still nascent and poorly defined. There is also concern that AI-powered aggregation tools may disintermediate media organizations from their audiences, especially if the content can be extracted or repurposed without clear attribution. As one editor put it, "Once it's out there and trained into the system, you can't take it back—and that's what's scary."

This sense of irreversibility was mentioned frequently. The act of integrating AI into content infrastructure is not seen as a reversible experiment but as a path-dependent commitment with long-term maintenance obligations. "It's like building a highway," noted one project manager, "Once it's in place, you can't just tear it down when something goes wrong." This infrastructural metaphor points to another layer of ambivalence: AI integration requires ongoing technical upkeep that exceeds the existing capacity of most editorial teams. The demand for AI and data engineers—many of whom do not come from journalism backgrounds—further strains internal cohesion, raising questions about the division of labor and professional identity within hybrid newsroom-technical environments.

Because of these risks and resource demands, many actors adopt a "wait-and-see" approach. Rather than racing toward first-mover advantage, publishers are closely monitoring how peer institutions handle AI-related risks and liabilities. The general consensus is that there is little benefit in being a pioneer when the technological and legal terrain remains so volatile. This conservatism contrasts sharply with the enthusiasm surrounding AI in other sectors, and it reflects a pragmatic recognition of the fragility of media credibility and trust in the platform era.

Nonetheless, the value of AI in organizing complex data ecosystems is undeniable. In the case of *CommonWealth Magazine*, the ability to store, tag, and retrieve partner-submitted CSR data efficiently is central to the platform's operation. AI tools, when carefully deployed, enable the kind of backend coherence that sustains the magazine's public-facing expertise. It is this functional indispensability—paired with the fear of ethical and legal missteps—that encapsulates the ambivalent status of AI in the current media environment.

In sum, AI is neither fully embraced nor outright rejected by legacy media actors. Instead, it is approached with strategic caution, embedded into workflows where it offers clear operational benefits but kept at arm's length in editorial or

creative domains where the risks are higher and the norms less defined. This ambivalence is not a failure of vision but a measured response to the asymmetrical rewards and risks of platform technologies in an unstable regulatory and infrastructural landscape.

Platformization Beyond Content—Navigating Uncharted Terrain

To frame this more clearly, we reconceptualize the theoretical work around platform capitalism. This case study illustrates a new magazine business environment where the value no longer lies in content itself but in *how content is stored, curated, and accessed*, as Srnicek (2017) suggested. Additionally, this case further helps explain the debacles and benefits for magazine business to capitalize in visualization systems, data partnerships, and ambivalent adoption of AI technologies—not primarily for automation, but for strategic content orchestration and stakeholder visibility. In the case of *CommonWealth Magazine*, platformization efforts have extended far beyond the digitization of content or even data visualization as a communicative tool. While the initial wave of digital transformation in the media sector largely involved transferring print formats into accessible online interfaces, the current moment reveals a deeper shift: a move toward integrating external data infrastructures and developing long-term, system-level partnerships with both corporate and governmental stakeholders.

This transition has not simply been about leveraging technology for storytelling or outreach. Instead, it has involved building an internal division—Future Business—tasked with designing bespoke visualization systems that draw on sensitive CSR and ESG data submitted by external actors. In doing so, *CommonWealth Magazine* is not just curating public knowledge but actively shaping how firms represent their social and environmental performance to multiple publics. Visualization, in this case, is an infrastructural act: it connects data, value claims, and institutional legitimacy.

What makes this case significant is not that it offers a replicable model of success. In fact, several interviewees expressed doubts about the long-term sustainability of this model and were candid about the potential for missteps—particularly in areas involving *confidentiality, legal liability, data governance, and reputational risk.* They acknowledged that few precedents exist globally, especially within traditional journalism, and that this type of platformization requires continuous legal, financial, and technical maintenance well beyond the newsroom's conventional remit.

Indeed, *CommonWealth Magazine*'s position is not necessarily secure — it is navigating a volatile and under-regulated terrain. What emerges is not a case of best practice but an empirical illustration of the contours, risks, and limits of platformization as it is being shaped by non-Western legacy media. The magazine's transformation reflects not only institutional ambition but also a willingness to experiment under conditions of uncertainty—an effort to remain relevant, distinctive, and credible in an evolving media economy.

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SOCIAL JUSTICE IN COLLEGE MEDIA: HOW CAMPUS MAGAZINES REPORT, REFLECT, AND RESPOND TO POLICE KILLING OF BREONNA TAYLOR

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Abstract

Campus magazines by nature avoid event and breaking-news content, digging deeper to present social and cultural impacts. However, the killing of a Black woman in her own home–awakened by a flawed no-knock warrant–changed "culture" and "lifestyle" for student editors. Based upon a prior study, this study aimed to examine how student media–as a Community of Practice–would respond, report, and reflect on the social impacts of the police killing of Breonna Taylor. Editions from three nationwide contests were sampled 2019–2022, focusing on three variables: Cover, Table of Contents, and Editor's Note. Guided by Problematic Integration Theory and informed by semiotic analysis, the authors identified 15 themes from the dataset. Comparative analyses show demonstrations, responses, and profiles dominate coverage post-shutdown. Results confirm that "identity" persists in a Community of Practice even when "practice" demands operational scrutiny.

Keywords: campus magazine, Breonna Taylor, social justice, community of practice, problematic integration theory

Introduction

Magazines can serve as a touchstone for society—reflecting a readership's community, concerns, culture, and ideals (Magnus, 2020). Some say the relationship is two-way: magazine content is both a "mirror of and catalyst for the tenor and tone of the sociocultural realities of their times" (Abrahamson & Prior-Miller, 2015, p.1) while also serving community needs and interests.

When society experiences milestones—a prince becomes king, Olympic gold medallist earns their eighth national championship, India lands on the moon—magazines offer society a way to mark these moments with keepsake editions (Kitch, 2006), giving readers "memory vehicles" (p. 96); they serve as cultural artifacts (Piepmeier, 2008). But when trauma strikes —and life is inexorably changed—magazine editors face operational decisions in order to keep content authentic to continue to serve their readership with relevance to the times at hand.

How content reflects these decisions and direction is worthy of study, particularly as readers are known to turn to their magazine community during milestone moments. Research also shows that during times of great crisis, demand for information increases (Casero-Ripollès, 2020; Westlund & Ghersetti, 2015) and can vary depending on the nature of the need (immediate or long-term).

While lifestyle magazines vary by genre and reflect the personality of the editor-in-chief, campus magazines cover the various layers of campus culture, serving as a collector and expression of a community's ideals and as a statement of cultural identity (Piepmeier, 2008). Similar to consumer magazines, the content is a mix of features on the art scene, deep dives into lifestyle hacks, profiles of big personalities and local heroes, and a statement from the editor's notepad telling readers the backstory of the edition's goals and the message that contextualises in time and place. A campus magazine is an outlet for artistic, cultural, and lifestyle experimentation, but also a gatherer of moments and memories occurring on college campuses and in the lives of their students and how they intersect with the surrounding community. And, similar to consumer magazines, campus publications capture milestone moments with their voices and in their space; the sense of loss, isolation, and fear as campuses shuttered and social justice demonstrations occurred was captured and preserved during a historic moment. For a newly defined campus culture (Terracina-Hartman, 2024), the campus magazine offers a shared experience and maintains a community.

Literature review

Magazines

Building on a prior semiotic analysis study to examine the incidence and occurrence of changes in the editorial direction of campus magazines post-pandemic shutdown (Terracina-Hartman, 2024), this study further examines one result in detail: how racial justice protests appear in content. The research identifies the discourse, the design, and not only the wrongs that need rights, but faces called up as being wronged[A1] . Of particular interest is how the police killing of Breonna Taylor on March 13, 2020 appeared in college students' expressions of campus culture, society, safety, justice, racism, and their future.

Recent trends support the concept of magazines' role in building and sustaining communities during milestone moments: Katie Robertson (2022) writes how magazines such as *Jezebel* and *The 19th* saw a surge in readers and subscriptions after a leaked opinion from The Supreme Court suggesting Roe v. Wade would be overturned (p. B1). Other editors, such as Alexandra Smith, audience director of *The 19th*, say content isn't dedicated to daily news updates and that readers seek

"Context, implications for other parts of their lives and that's the niche we've been able to fill" (p. B1). *Jezebel* editor-in-chief Lauren Bassett says the magazine's content on reproductive rights emphasizes telling people's stories, giving people a voice (p. B1): "We do pieces of writing that should be readable for everyone, but am I trying to expand *Jezebel's* audience into the pro-life crowd? No, I am not" (p. B1).

Emergency Medical Technician Breonna Taylor was at home in her Louisville apartment on March 13, 2020, dozing in bed after spending the evening watching a movie with her boyfriend, Kenneth Walker. The pair heard pounding on the front door, but no answers to their "Who is it?" inquiries. Four LMPD officers used a battering ram to break down their door. Walker, using his licensed firearm, fired a warning shot, hitting one officer in the leg. Officers fired a volley of shots, hitting Taylor six times. One shot proved fatal. The investigation later revealed the no-knock warrant to search her apartment for drugs was falsified and the person of interest was known to be elsewhere. Four officers were charged and one is awaiting federal sentencing, while another is awaiting a trial date as of March 2024 (Nakamura, 2024).

Initially, news coverage of Breonna Taylor's shooting death numbered eight articles in major news outlets the 60 days after her killing (Samuels et al., 2021). Post-George Floyd murder, however, her death gained more attention and the news coverage shifted—essentially, a fuller story of the botched raid and her death were revealed and the initial narrative of Walker's arrest for shooting a police officer during a warrant attempt was dropped (Samuels et al., 2021). Consumer magazines, such as *Vanity Fair* and *O: The Oprah Magazine*, chose to feature her portrait on their September 2020 covers, honouring her life, her family, her service as a frontline medical worker, and all she hoped to be (a nurse). Elevating her life—not her death—gave readers a community space to grieve, vent, protest, but also learn about the person behind the #SayHerName and #BLM protests in 2020 (Grant et al., 2022).

As Abrahamson predicted, "This inextricable link between magazines and specific communities of interest will prove paramount in magazines' success … if only because over the next decade it may become ever more valuable to those people who are looking for voices that speak the truth to them about the things that they believe matter" (2009, p. 2).

Campus media

Recent surveys indicate growth among college-based magazines persists, establishing this medium as a valid choice for mass communication research. A 2021 survey shows more than one-third of general interest magazines boosted publication frequency since 2015 (eight), with 42% producing editions at least two to three times annually (CMA, 2021, p. 2). Additionally, those that report publishing four to five editions annually jumped to 24% in 2021 from 18% in 2015. Growth in publication frequency among two- and four-year institutions mirrors growth in page count in 2021 (CMA, 2021, p. 4).

In digital platforms, the Benchmark Survey (2021) reports more than 44% publish Web-based magazines—a decrease by half from those Web publishing in 2015. Between four-year and two-year institutions, Web magazines are more common at the former: 41% vs 18%. Notable is the decrease in this type of publication: 55% at four-year institutions but a 2% drop at two-year institutions (18). Among private schools, the data are similar: four-year private colleges host a Web-based magazine—a drop of nearly 50% since 2015. Recent growth includes the publication of fresh content to digital platforms while hosting and archiving Web versions of print editions (4, comments).

With regards to content, 73% of four-year, public colleges report Web versions mirror content of print editions; in 2015, however, content was fresh for 68% of Web-based publications. At two-year public campuses, the print and Web editions

mirror their content to four-year, private colleges. This is reflected in a 100% decrease in 2021 from 2015 (p. 19).

During the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown, campus publications proved essential to their communities as 94% continued publishing, in many cases providing the only local and regional information (Nierenberg, 2020) about rates of occurrences, resources, closures, and more.

Magazine elements

On a college campus, a magazine records a moment in time. As documenters of life for a defined community, staff editorial decisions reflect campus culture as much as the editor-in-chief at that moment. The Editor's Note, Table of Contents, and Cover elements all are essential to building a magazine's voice and brand and, therefore, require much attention and intention during production.

Like consumer magazines, the Cover content of a campus magazine is meant to attract readers, ideally to entice them to pick up the edition, turn the page, and keep reading (Kitch 2001, 5). The cover image can not only define a publication, but also draw a reader into a magazine's community, thereby creating an emotional response in both dedicated and potential readers (Page, 2020; Spiker, 2017).

The Editor's Note similarly states a magazine's personality. This standing element from the editor-in-chief declares the edition's intent, perhaps highlights specific articles, introduces contributors, and often discusses ideas important to the reading community but not necessarily featured in the edition's content. It may urge a call to action. This element gifts readers insight into production processes, thus expanding the boundaries of the magazine community and offering "significant evidentiary value" (Friedman, 2014). Any analysis of editorial philosophy or news value would, therefore, involve the Editor's Note as a variable over time.

The Table of Contents, while a standing item, offers potential to further assert magazine identity and goals for an individual edition. A Table of Contents can be simple: headline and page number. Or designers can choose to feature historical, environmental, or secondary photos to highlight contents in topic blocks and further draw readers to specialised or edi-tion-specific content; using page hierarchy design principles attaches an editorial value to those items. Given that most campus magazines likely are attached to a campus media programme housed in an academic area (Kopenhaver, 2015; Terracina-Hartman & Nulph, 2013), it can be expected that editors and designers have earned a degree of expertise in design, leading to the production of this section with intention and thereby worthy of analysis.

Research into campus media operation branches into studies of mass comm pedagogy and instruction. The teaching hospital model (Incollingo, 2017), and Community of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) are debated as options for providing experiential learning (Brandon, 2002) for students. CofP has gained much traction post-pandemic as its four pillars—community, identity, practice, meaning—have spurred examination for persistence during remote instruction.

Theoretical background

This study is well suited to examine complex, value-laden, and uncertain issues, relying on the fifth claim of Problematic Integration theory, which states communication is the primary medium, source, and resource (Babrow, 1995) for problematic integration incidents. Such incidents occur during a struggle for meaning as humans aim to establish what they ought to believe and whether what they are inclined to believe is good or bad (Babrow, 1995, p. 5).

Problematic Integration theory was developed "to illuminate communication in relation to distinct but interrelated forms of troublesome meaning" (Kuang & Babrow, 2021, p. 234). As

developed, the theory says humans navigate and respond to happenings in the world by forming "probabilistic and evaluative orientations" (Matthias & Babrow, 2007, p. 788). A probabilistic orientation involves a belief or expectation, leading a person to ponder questions about the nature of something, its characteristics, what has happened, how might it act in the future. An evaluative orientation leads to a pragmatic consideration, such as whether an object, event, or its characteristics are good or bad (p. 789). Mathis and Babrow say communication is key to experiencing problematic integration as these two processes can blend seamlessly. Lastly, while communication can trigger a problematic integration incident for being a source of bad news and / or when a person is messenger of bad news, communication also offers resources:

> For instance, communication can transform PI into a more palatable form or help an individual to reappraise the value she or he places on a particular event or object. In short, communication is not only a major source of probabilistic and evaluative meanings, it is also integral to struggles over elusive and/or troubling meanings (p. 789).

Communication can take the form of collective responses, whether it's songs, media content, prayer, poems, and other media that is shared across platforms and generations. The process is "fundamentally a communication phenomenon spread and shared by identification, sympathy, empathy, and interdependence" and "collective responses tied to communication acts and artifacts" (Gill & Babrow, 2007, pp. 136–137). Examination of this communication has value as it offers a lens into these artifacts that capture expression, perception, and introspection around moments in time.

Magazine content that addresses persistent social issues or sudden episodic strife fit the application of this theory. Scholars point to a lack of editorial distance among editors and their content as compared to other forms of media (Abrahamson, 2007); such affiliation with content allows for exploration of an issue or event on the reading audience rather than a recitation of facts surrounding an event. Gill (2007) finds magazines' focus on individuals rather than collective voices creates contradictions in discourse with readers, while Gauntlett (2008) reports that this gap is acknowledged among loyal readers who can accept these messages within the parameters of their own worldview. Scholars acknowledge the psychology involved, but apply PI to examine discourse around social issues that cannot be solved, but of which communication can connect a personal struggle to a society's broader discourse and organisation, such as a readership.

Specifically, Editors' Note, Table of Contents, and Cover all offer readers spaces to learn the intentions of the staff: they highlight topics for debate, celebrate communities, call for justice, mark milestones, dissect social complexities, give voices in profiles, bring issues to public attention, and engage with other discourse. They have done so both before and after the March 13, 2020 killing of a Black woman, Breonna Taylor, in her Louisville, Kentucky, apartment.

Research questions

College campus magazine staffs rarely focus their general interest magazine editions on one issue; rather, the mission of the publication ["campus life" or "arts & culture"] may be stated inside the cover, with an occasional theme, such as *Animals Issue* or *Finding Local*. Inside, readers would find a special section dedicated to this content. Student staffs have as their stated mission to reach as broad an audience as possible as they choose content; therefore, articles on trends (art, music, fashion, cars), a deep dive into history, explorations in photography and graphic illustrations, highlights on populations, and lifestyle (sports, career, social media) are common choices as such content serves to build, support, and mirror a community of readers. Such mission statements are often key to operational policy, defining the news value

of the publication. Thus, the structure of a campus magazine facilitates this study of the potential for culturally influenced changes to lead to revised commonsense meanings of a publication's news value, and, as a result, influence content decisions (Harcup & O'Neil, 2016; Bennett & Lawrence, 1995).

With prior research for guidance, (Terracina-Hartman, 2024), this study poses four research questions related to examination of college magazine content through analysis of Cover, Editor's Note columns, and Table of Contents, 2019-2022.

- RQ1: Which dominant themes appear in campus magazine content 2019–2022?
- RQ2: How frequent do themes of social justice appear in Cover content pre- and post-police killing of Breonna Taylor?
- RQ3: How frequent do themes of social justice appear in Editors' Note pre- and post-police killing of Breonna Taylor?
- RQ4: How frequent do themes of social justice appear in TOC pre- and post-police killing of Breonna Taylor?

Methods

To contribute to the knowledge of campus media operations and the reaction to social conditions during a historical moment in time, this study selected award-winning campus magazines from three national college media competitions: Associated Collegiate Press Pacemakers, College Media Association Pinnacles, and Columbia Scholastic Press Association Crown, collecting content from winning editions published 2019 through 2022. This method builds upon prior research, which confirms the legitimacy and affiliation of student-run publications and provides access to a variety of student publications content over time (Terracina-Hartman & Nulph, 2019; Terracina-Hartman & Nulph, 2016; Terracina-Hartman & Nulph, 2013).

Using general-interest, student-run magazines that placed first, second, or third once during the study period generated an initial list of 85 publications. Honorable Mention, Literary Magazines, and class-based entries were discarded; based upon these exclusions, N = 55 (Appendix 1). A magazine's edition, with three units (Cover, Table of Contents, and Editors' Note) is the unit of analysis; n = 215 elements were analysed. Award-winning editions were located on issuu.com and the media outlet's homepage. Entry submission was confirmed through contest winner announcements.

Using central tenets of fundamental semiotic principles (see e.g., Barthe[A1] , 1972; de Saussure, 1959) content was reviewed to reveal prominent themes. Building on prior work (Terracina-Hartman, 2024), 15 themes were identified organically after a review of contents, with topics tied to each theme to include prominent variabilities. Prominent themes containing social justice content were then selected for analysis, with measurement also for occurrences of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, #SayHerName, and #BlackLivesMatter.

List of prominent themes:

- social justice
- activism
- systematic racism
- environment
- profile: community
- profile: individual
- campus matters
- safe space / DEI
- police violence
- Findings

Theme analysis reveals frequent discussion of social issues, ranging from climate change / wildfire to immigration to LGBTQ rights to police violence. Similar to consumer publications, content features helpers, individuals, and creators. Post-George Floyd murder, the content raises questions and demands and eventually includes Breonna Taylor (Figure 1). To answer RQ1, a frequency analysis was run. Results

indicate the Profile: Community (69%, n=149) theme leads, with creator topics prominent throughout the study period. The result is not unanticipated given that some publications declare themselves as a "fashion and culture" magazine while others declare they are a "lifestyle" magazine. As this question allowed coders to select up to three themes, it is valuable to assess the frequency of co-occurrences for relationship. Noteworthy is the topic frequency tied to systemic racism / discrimination, directly pertaining to the culture wars of 2018 and social justice protests of 2020; police violence / brutality; driving while Black; police-involved shooting of Black people; and police-involved deaths of Black women: 28% (n=60). A closer look at the three elements of DEI when examined with frequency of Profiles / individuals, show that DEI appears in 79% of content (or 170), with 35% of this figure appearing in 2022 contest results. Lastly, environmental themes (conservation, climate change, pollution, drought, recycling, sustainability) account for 87 appearances, (40%), with 60% in 2019 and early 2020. With wildfires in Oregon and Northern California (Camp Fire), bush fires in Australia and Brazil, and drought in the Northeast capturing the public discourse, these themes occupied a big presence in collegiate mind space; much of college discourse centred on a civil right to a clean environment and need for generational activism in this arena, with mentions of the following: #choosetosavetheplanet #environmentaljustice. When examining the co-occurrence with Activism, the frequency of these two themes is 74, or 34%.

Examples of this discourse theme include *The Shorthorn*. In introducing "Common Ground" as a 'Culture Edition,' the editors write "A collection of stories painting a picture of the diverse community that makes up UTA'" (fall 2020, Cover). The TOC features "Spectrum of Diversity" content illustrated with a collage of images. Additionally, a *Pursuit* cover photo features a summer 2020 protest; front and centre is a young man in a "Hands Up Don't Shoot" posture (fall 2020). A cover line reads "Expanding the Boundaries of Social Activism, Outreach, and Ministry." Inside, the Table of Contents lists "A Call for Justice" (p. 3). Prominent in the accompanying photo are protesters' signs with #SayHerName and Breonna's image (1, 3). The *Distraction* cover image fall 2020 features a young student of color and coverline "Look at Him: Unpacking Stereotypes." The coverline refers to special section "Being Black in America," which begins with, "Timeline of Unjust Deaths in 2020" (TOC, pp. 4-5).

What these theme results suggest is support for fifth claim of Problematic Integration Theory: in this time, creators use communication as a mode to integrate milestone societal incidents, such as a jogger being gunned down by white racists or a mass school shooting, and offer context of these unsolvable issues for their campus-based audience. Perhaps a direct reference to a bungled no-knock warrant at Breonna Taylor's home is absent, as it would be in a newspaper; however, the context of presenting profiles of communities and individuals with intent signals an effort at a declaration of identity and exploration into the impact within their communities. Given publications schedules for semester-based institutions, reactions to the deaths of Atatiana Jefferson, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd may appear much later in content (Terracina-Hartman**,** 2024).

Topics for activism theme borrow from prior research (Tyson et al., 2021) indicating Gen Z's overall greater engagement with climate change than other generations. Pew Center's survey listing four activities specified four items–donating, contacting elected official, volunteering, attending rallies and protests–as measured engagement. Della Volpe (2022) says this level of engagement coincides with increased levels of activism that appears to have ignited during the culture wars sparked in 2018 and after the Parkland, Florida high school shooting. In content, this discourse is visible in exhortations to be active, be accountable, take responsibility, live with intention, practice sustainability. In particular, during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown months, this discourse was

prominent in Editor's Note columns to sustain the community of practitioners as well as serve the community of readers (Gill & Babrow, 2007). In line with the fifth claim of the Problematic Integration theory, editors used mass communication to address social issues affecting the reading community while asking the reading community to read the story of individuals and respond as individuals (Gauntlett, 2008; Abrahamson, 2009).

In response to RQ2, which asks, How frequent do themes of social justice appear in Cover content pre- and post-police killing of Breonna Taylor?, researchers conducted a comparative analysis to determine prominence using 2019–2020 with 2021–2022 publications. Top topics for social justice include demonstrations, local impact, racism, and more.

Topics related to prominent themes selected for analysis:

- systematic racism: Black on campus, hate speech, discrimination
- police violence / brutality: driving while Black, violence against Black women
- profile / individual: campus member or surrounding community
- profile / student pop'n–community: campus population or surrounding community
- environment: pollution, sustainability, recovery, climate change, recycling, wildlife
- DEI / safe space: representation, accessibility, disability, equity, inclusion
- resources: supplies, food banks, clothes closets, contacts, clinics, active shooter drill,
- social justice: demonstration, local impact, protest, activism
- activism: engagement, intention, accountability, personal responsibility, inform / educate, participate
- (Atatiana, Breonna, George: when present): victims of police-involved killing
- #SayHerName
- #BlackLivesMatter

Results (n=35) show highest theme prominence between 2019–2020 centres on Profile: Community (32, 91%), (which includes "student demographics, athletics"), followed by DEI/ Safe Space (15, 44%). Social Justice appears five times (14%) with Activism and Conservation both occurring six times (17%). Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and the hashtags

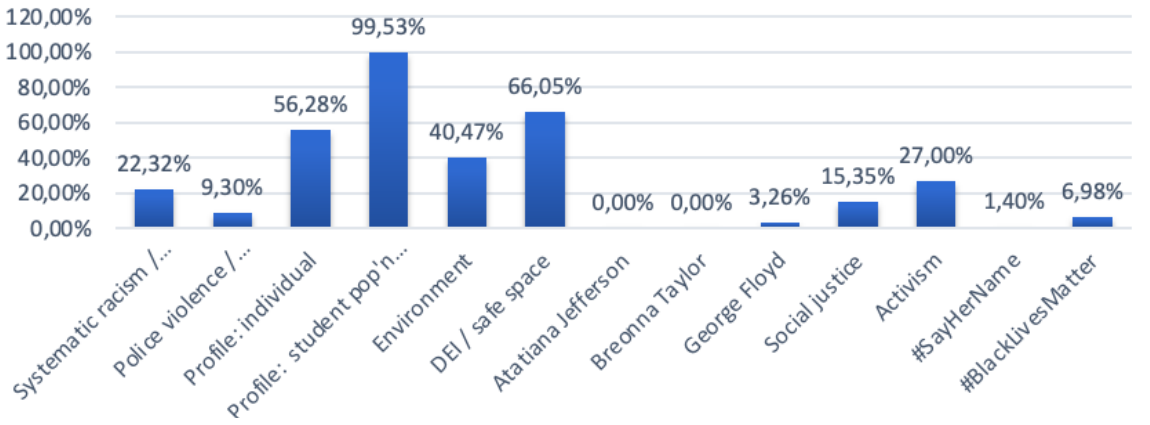

Fig. 1 Prominence of social justice themes in college magazines (2018-2022).

#SayHerName #BlackLivesMatter appear once (3%) respectively (Fig. 2), suggesting that spring editions–despite the hurdles of remote production and summer work stoppage–allowed some staffs to respond to her death with content.

Turning to magazine cover art, by comparison, covers published in 2021–2022 (n=40) showed nearly double profile content (individuals 35% and student population/community 82%), with Systemic Racism (which includes Hate Speech, Black on Campus, Discrimination) appearing with greater prominence (10,25%). DEI (15,35%), Social Justice (9, 23%), and Activism (7,17%) also increased.

Evidence of this result is visible in several publications. The *El Espejo* cover photo spring 2020 (issue 3) is of a frontline health worker, with the coverline "The Death of a Black Man Spurs Outrage Nationwide." The TOC listing contains images from San Antonio protests, which include protester signs of Breonna Taylor in her EMT uniform and 'No-Knock No More.' The *Ball Bearings* cover spring 2021 (12, issue 2) is a graphic illustration of facial, textile, and art images overlaying each other, with 'Woven Identities' in cutout letters. *El Sol* in summer 2020 teases "Black Men & Driving" in the TOC, with protest photos from Southern California in the description. Visible signs state #SayHerName, #BLM, and 'Running While Black.' *Tusk* offers 'The Five Stages of Grief in a Police State' in the 2021 (vol 22) TOC: photos depict protests, with 'No Justice No Peace,' #SayHerName, and #BLM visible. 'Letter From the Staff' shares the edition intent: "This year's edition took shape over the summer of 2020 [during] … uprising for racial justice. Because of this, three main themes emerged in our stories: Living Online, Familial Justice and Black Voices. … Our stories also confront racism and injustice underscored and exacerbated by the pandemic …" (p. 7).

But themes directly tied to discourse surrounding Atatiana Jefferson or Breonna Taylor (police brutality, driving while Black, Police-Involved killing of Black Women) are minimal (8%). Both #SayHerName and #BlackLivesMatter appear five times (10%) respectively.

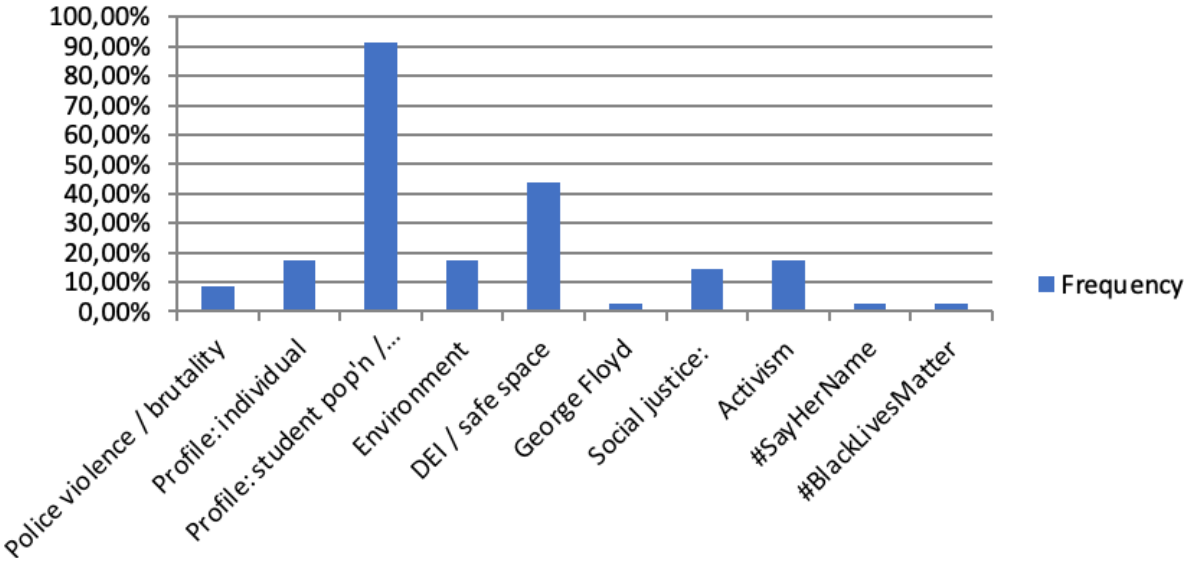

Fig. 2 Social justice on college magazines covers (2018-2020).

A magazine cover that lacks overlines or coverlines is open to interpretation (Spiker, 2015). Analysis of covers with use of graphical elements (n=75) shows those employing text (e.g., coverlines) (58, 77%); the rest (17) offered stand-alone images or photo illustrations, leaving the reading community to choose meaning. In terms of art choices, covers were equal in usage of photo (20) vs photo illustration (21) vs graphic illustration (21), accounting for 28%. Cover art, defined as "lead art" or relating to the edition's top content, accounted for 24 occurrences at 32%.

The Editor's Note is an opportunity for magazine editors to state the mission of the edition, highlight individual pieces or themes, and spotlight the culture of production as well as the times into which the magazine itself is delivered. It reflects the personality of the person at the helm as well as the goals and wishes for how it is received. Quite often, it is the last item produced and, therefore, able to introduce timely content not found elsewhere. To determine RQ3, which measures the presence of social justice themes in Editor's Note columns pre- and post-killing of Breonna Taylor, the analysis begins with prominence of themes. Post-pandemic shutdown and post-Breonna Taylor killing, the results are consistent with Gill (2007) in that social issues are addressed in terms of a smaller scope: telling stories of individuals / profiles (51%) and of communities (66%).

What does racism and social justice look like on campus and in our community? When combining Diversity + Equity + Inclusion themes, the total accounted for 86% in Editor's Notes, while 95% addressed Profiles: Community + Student Population (Fig. 3); together, these themes co-occur at 54%. The discourse of "NotSafeHomeX" appeared across editors' columns immediately after Breonna Taylor was killed (referencing a text message women often sent pre-COVID to indicate 'safe arrival'); while the hashtag persisted about 12 months, the "arriving home doesn't mean safe at home" produced content that called for activism.

Editors also expressed a direct wish for how their editions are received and read (38 of 70 columns, 54%). For example, co-editors Jocelyn Sandoval and Jose Castillon write in 'From the Editors,' "We wanted this issue to reflect the hope and strength our campus and community have shown this past year throughout all of the challenges it has thrown our way," (*El Espejo*, 2021, p. 3). The editors of *Measure* write, "After an unprecedented year, we find ourselves inspired by the words of MLK, Jr. 'The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in moments of challenge and controversy.' We believe the same is true of women. Through examinations of our interactions, a realistic look at the changing climate, and a commitment to social justice, we seek to provide new visions of possibility and progress in Marist," (2021, p. 1). Lastly, Editor-in-Chief of *DIGMag*, Bella Arnold, writes, "I hope that you enjoy these stories of color, imagination, and spirit. And when it comes time for you to make the decision between playing it safe and following the spirit of imagination (the theme of this issue), I hope you take the leap to let yourself dream" (2022, p. 5).

By comparison, analysis showed that profiles on individuals (12,43%) and communities (19,68%) co-occurred with Student Demographics for the highest topic frequency for the Community theme in Editor's Note columns between 2019-2020 (19,68%). Also, a notable finding is the frequency of Magazine Production, Legacy, and Farewell topics in the Profile: Individuals theme (16,48%) and best wishes for future editors.

Additionally, editors in 22 of 28 columns referenced themes not found on the cover or featured in TOC content. These include: loss of future (12%); a sense of uncertainty (9%); an outreach to readers: "celebrate personal history" and "reach out to others" (8%); a call to action at the dawn of a new decade: demand action on gun safety, save the planet, and claim personal responsibility to live sustainably (take steps at home, on campus) (17%).

The Table of Contents offers magazine staff a second front page to declare intentions for an edition: an edition theme, standing items, and–through photos and graphics–what's important. In response to RQ4, which asks which themes appeared prior to and after the police killing of Breonna Taylor, analysis shows that, post-shutdown, racism, social justice, and DEI-related themes dominated 14 (36%), 15 (38%), and 38 (99%) of magazines, yet similar to Editor's Note content, the emphasis on community and individual profiles persisted at 35 (90%) and 37 (94%), while the focus on Environment continued 18 (46%). Also notable is Representation 20 (38%) and police brutality 14 (36%).

By comparison, the Table of Contents between 2019–2020 shows content emphasising profiles, but focuses on creators (88%) and also has equal focus on the environment: conservation, climate change, Australian bush fires and historic wildfires in the Western U.S., including the Camp Fire (40%). Lastly, Activism theme is visible in nearly 43% of all Table of Contents content, similar to Representation at 40%. This finding may reflect editors' decisions to similarly attend to social conditions affecting the campus community; this time period includes the police killing of Atatiana Jefferson in her home, gun safety activism of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas HS shooting survivors, and the ongoing culture wars against the LGBTQ+ community, Muslims, immigrants, and people of colour.

Discussion

The intent of this study is to ask what are the commonsense meanings of social justice and how and when do these appear in college lifestyle magazines? Of particular interest is a historic, unprecedent time period and whether specific events serve to trigger and / or adjust cultural relevance for the creators. Semiotic analysis is appropriate for this study as it permits a close look at discourse and detection of usage patterns. The Problematic Integration Theory is fitting as the fifth claim (communication) suits the discussion of social issues, while the environment of college media in a structured environment (newsroom) suits the examination of operations and operational changes.

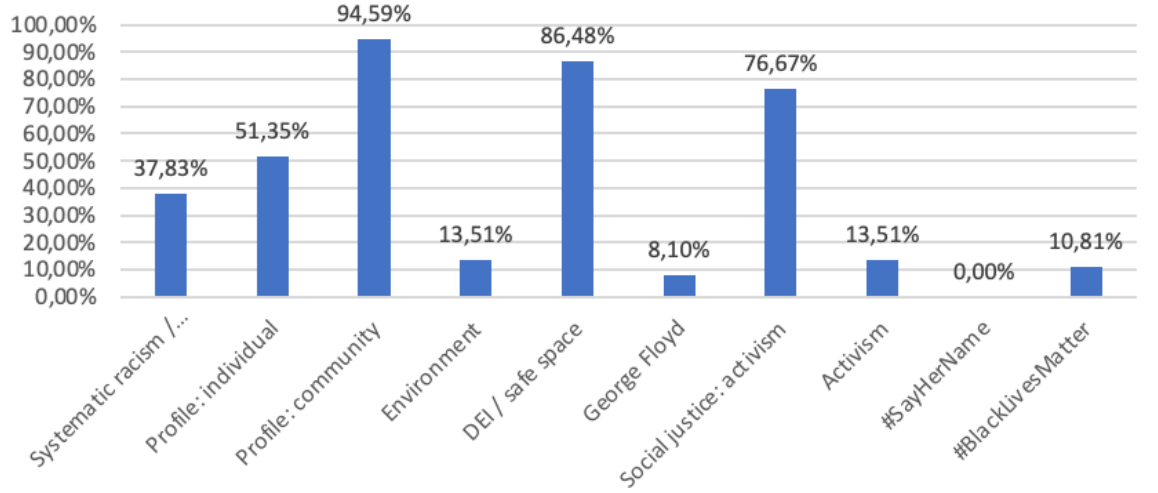

Fig. 3 Frequency of themes in Editor's Note Content (2021-2022).

Thus, this study's value is in its potential to deepen the understanding of Community of Practice principles, in particular location and identity as student creators faced being away from their institutional "home" and away from each other. The persistence in offering an editorial voice in Editor's Note columns—appearing as a "we" and as an individual editor-in-chief speaking for the staff—confirms consistency in operations over the time period. 'Practice' was maintained despite the changing conditions involved in location and identity, which Lave and Wenger (1991) state is critical. It also confirms the student staffs' efforts to communicate directly their intentions for the edition and why; thus, they include themselves as part of the community response to social issues as well as the need to respond, whether it's with a vote or with compassion ("Being Black in America: Educate Yourself" *Distraction* fall 2020; "Identity Beyond Borders" *Ball Bearings* November 2021).

The analysis shows the difference is in content: the COVID-19 pandemic and the racial justice demonstrations influence content so that the discourse is culturally relevant, but consistent with operations. The focus is community, but life for the community is very different and must be discussed. Here, we see how these results exemplify the core principles of PI: "identification, sympathy, empathy, and interdependence" (Gill & Babrow, 2007, p. 136–137). Whatever readers might think about Breonna Taylor or BLM or racial justice demonstrations, they may identify or empathize when a young person with such promise is shot and killed by police officers in the sanctity of her own home.

Results show a clear pattern in responding to outside social conditions with graphics in TOC sections: of 70 in the dataset, 60% use a secondary photo featuring social justice demonstrations referencing Breonna Taylor and / or no-knock warrants. Prior research confirms visuals can elevate

Table 1 Change in Table of Contents theme frequency: 2019-2022

Themes	2019-2020 Frequency / %		2021-2022 Frequency / %		Difference	
Systematic racism / discrimination	6.06%	2	35.88%	14	0.75	12
Police violence / brutality	9.09%	3	35.88%	14	0.64	11
Profile: individual	69.70%	23	97.43%	38	0.15	15
Profile: student pop'n / community	78.79%	45	89.74%	37	-97.56	-8
Environment	57.57%	19	46.15%	18	-27.02	-1
DEI / safe space	84.84%	28	128.00%	39	16.41	11
George Floyd	0.00%	0	5.13%	2	100	2
Social justice	27.27%	9	20.51%	8	-5.59	-1
Activism	51.51%	17	48.71%	19	5.56	2
#SayHerName	3.03%	1	0.00%	0	-3.03	-1
#BlackLivesMatter	3.03%	1	12.82%	5	66.67	4

reader attention to content, but social issues offering readers a chance to respond as a community with humanity is often the distinction between magazine content and newspaper content. The medium is not the message, but delivery can offer a difference (Abrahamson 2009).

Cover art varied between a standalone photo (44) with or without coverlines and an illustration (31) with no text. These choices leave the staffs with a lot of creative space and the readers with a lot of interpretive space. Cover art sets the tone for the edition and generally is credited for drawing readers to continue on and turn some pages (Spiker 2003). Photos captured protests and demonstrations; what we did not see is the commodification of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Atatiana Jefferson, or others lost to unjust killings. Photos showed orderly demonstrations, not chaos. Illustrations depicted graphics introducing sections like "Black Voices" (Tusk 2021) or "Spectrum of Diversity" (Shorthorn 2019).

The answer to the long-standing rhetorical question in journalism, "How do you tell the big stories? You tell the small stories," is the guiding principle for operations of general interest magazines. Results show this principle is visible in content changes in the two time periods. Post-police killing, we see a significant emphasis on story telling of individuals sharing their family traditions, neighbourhood life, and local community landmarks, and less emphasis on Arts & Entertainment and hobbyists and faculty spotlights. The shift in storytelling is marked, but also purposeful. Some editors state it directly: *El Sol*'s "Courage" edition profiled "advocates who continue to fight for justice, and against racism, erasure, violence, and murder" (Summer 2020) and *Pursuit* released "Expanding the Boundaries of Social Activism, Outreach and Ministry" (fall 2020).

Lastly, while this study's results don't position Breonna Taylor's name as frequently or as prominently as consumer magazines, such as *Vanity Fair* or *O*, it must be noted that Breonna Taylor's death was not highlighted among social justice protests until after the murder of George Floyd in May 2020; many college publications did not publish on regular schedules in summer 2020 so the earliest content appeared in Editor's Note columns, which are the last items produced before an edition goes to press. Sometimes these editions didn't post online until fall 2020. This study's results shows that content choices reflect an intent to respond to the social impact of her death.

While this study seeks to examine college magazine learning communities and production, certain limitations do exist; analysis of these winning publications over the study period, rather than during an entry in an award-winning year, would yield a richer picture of content decisions and the factors that prompt change. It also would account for changes in staffing or funding over academic years due perhaps to administrative or faculty shifts.

Future research could build on this massive dataset with surveys of campus media advisers and student editors about publishing and production decisions during this time period. Additional analysis could include further examination of graphics usage, locations, type of institution, and comparison of content on digital platforms vs. print editions (home page vs. front page, for example). Also, reviewing engagement during this time period could reveal feedback on the magazine content and how editors responded–either to comenters or with content decisions–and could add additional layers of understanding to the Community of Practice theory. These survey results also could offer additional applications of Community of Practice theory and reveal further variabilities in campus magazine operations and whether COVID-induced changes persist.

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Appendix 1

1 El Sol	2 Owl Magazine
3 The Summit	4 Baked
5 Echo (Columbia College)	6 Drake (Iowa)
7 The Vista (Greenville University)	8 Collegian Times, Los Angeles City College (CA)
9 Pacific Rim Magazine	10 The Sentinel, North Idaho College
11 The Bleed (2-year) (Pa)	12 Ball Bearings (C)
13 SHEI Magazine	14 Common Ground -- The Shorthorn Culture Edition
15 KRNL, University of Kentucky (C)	16 The Bull Magazine, Los Angeles Pierce College
17 PRM, Langara College	18 The Current, Amarillo College
19 Distraction Magazine (Miami)	20 DAMchic, (P) Oregon State U
21 FORM Magazine, Duke	22 MPJ / (Syracuse)
23 Tusk	24 Pursuit, Cal Baptist
25 Ampersand (CSPA)	26 Ball Bearings (C)
27 City Scene (San Diego City College)	28 Countenance, East Carolina University (C)
29 Crimson Quarterly, University of Oklahoma (C)	30 Dollars & Sense, Baruch College (C)
31 Etc. (2-year) (C)	32 Envision (Pa)
33 El Espejo (Pa)	34 Focus (C)
35 Flux (C)	36 FM/AM (C)
37 Measure, Marist College (C)	38 OR University of Oregon (C)
39 The Point (Biola College) (Pa)	41 SCAN, Savannah College of Design–Atlanta (C)
42 The Stephens Life (Pa)	43 Talisman, Western Kentucky University
44 Tempo (Pa)	45 TWO (Pa)
46 Uhuru (Pa)	47 Warrior Life (El Camino) (C)
48 Windhover, NC State, Raleigh, NC (C)	48 Woodcrest
49 Blush, FIT	50 Manhappenin' K State
51 Square 95	52 DIG Mag (Cal State Long Beach)
53 Textura	54 UNF Spinnaker
55 Inside Fullerton (Fullerton City College)	

Note: Pacific Rim Magazines becomes PRM

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PAPER AND SCREEN: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MULTIPLATFORM JOURNALISM OF *ELLE BRASIL* MAGAZINE

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Abstract

This study examines the dynamics between multiplatform and print formats within the context of media convergence by comparing two distinct versions of the same journalistic brand: the printed Elle Brasil and the digital Elle View. The research adopts a qualitative approach, combining documentary and bibliographic analysis with a comparative case study, supported by a semi-structured interview with the magazine's editor-in-chief. Two pairs of editions published in 2022 were analyzed, focusing on four axes: text, section, theme, and convergence. Elle View was also assessed using criteria specific to digital-native magazines—hypertextuality, interactivity, and multimodality. The findings show that while both formats share the same team and editorial line, they serve different purposes: the print edition takes on an analytical and collectible character, targeting the luxury market, whereas the digital version emphasizes current topics, accessible language, and ephemeral consumption. The study reveals that these differences reflect strategic positioning rather than just format variation, and highlights the untapped potential of digital features. Although limited in scope, the study remains relevant and opens new avenues for research on multiplatform journalism.

Keywords: Elle Brasil, Elle View, multiplatform journalism, magazine journalism, media convergence

Introduction

Magazines, traditionally associated with credibility and editorial curation (Scalzo, 2006), have in recent years faced a structural crisis driven by digital transformation. According to the Instituto Verificador de Comunicação (IVC), the circulation of printed magazines in Brazil dropped by 28% in 2021, and even digital versions experienced a 21% decline (Yahya, 2022). These figures reveal not only a decrease in consumption but also the need to reconfigure editorial models in light of new habits and technologies.

In Brazil, the trajectory of *Elle Brasil* magazine has become exemplary within this transitional context. After more than three decades of uninterrupted circulation under Grupo Abril, the publication was discontinued in 2018, surprising both the editorial market and the fashion industry (FFW, 2020). In 2020, however, *Elle Brasil* was relaunched under new management with an editorial strategy that combines two distinct fronts: a collectible print edition, published quarterly, and a native digital edition, published monthly and designed for mobile environments. This editorial decision represents a unique case of the resistance and reinvention of a traditional brand within the Brazilian media ecosystem.

Given this context, this article examines the dynamics between multiplatform and print formats within the framework of media convergence, using *Elle Brasil* as a case study. The proposal intersects with the fields of magazine journalism and digital communication by investigating how language, editorial design, segmentation strategies, and temporality are articulated across two products managed by the same team and editorial line. Based on a qualitative approach that combines comparative analysis, a bibliographic review, and an interview with editor-in-chief Renata Piza, we analyze two pairs of editions from *Elle Brasil* and *Elle View*1 published in 2022. The study also incorporates the criteria for analyzing digital-native magazines (Dalmonte, 2009; Dourado, 2014), focusing on the pillars of hypertextuality, interactivity, and multimodality.

As a contribution, this study fills a gap in the literature by offering an updated perspective on the challenges and opportunities of magazine journalism in Brazil—especially in a context where hybrid models have become an alternative response to audience fragmentation. By focusing on a title with strong symbolic and historical appeal, the study allows us to understand not only a specific case but also broader trends of adaptation and innovation in the national publishing sector.

Although the discussion around multiplatform journalism has been gaining ground in the field of communication, there is still a lack of studies specifically focused on segmented magazines within the Brazilian context, especially those adopting hybrid formats such as *Elle Brasil*. In this sense, although this study does not aim to propose a theoretical advancement, it seeks to contribute empirically to the field by analyzing a concrete case of editorial activity across platforms, offering insights for future research.

Methodologies

The case study (Gil, 1999) was conducted using *Elle Brasil* magazine in both its digital and print versions, aiming to achieve the main research objective2. This investigation also employed the comparative method (Schneider & Schmitt, 1998) with primary documents, defined by Gil (2008) as those that have not undergone prior analytical treatment.

1 *Elle View*. (n.d.). www.elle.com.br/elleview

2 The *Elle Brasil* website www.elle.com.br was not analyzed in this research.

This study analyzed four *Elle Brasil* publications to form two comparative pairs: two printed editions, published quarterly, and two digital *Elle View* editions, published monthly. The selected printed editions–numbers 7 and 8–were chosen based on the availability of physical copies. The corresponding digital editions were those released in the same months as the print issues: *Elle View* number 21 (March 2022) and number 24 (June 2022).

The pairs were analyzed using four main axes: text, section, subject, and convergence. The choice of these criteria is justified by their role as the foundational elements of editorial practice in contemporary magazines. The text allows for the observation of differences in language, depth, and narrative construction across both formats; the section reveals how content is organized and structured; the subject highlights thematic focus and editorial positioning; and convergence makes visible the articulation between platforms. Together, these criteria interconnect form and content, providing a clearer overview of the strategies adopted by *Elle Brasil* and *Elle View*.

The selected editions were chosen due to their full availability for comparative analysis. Although these issues date back to 2022, the decision is justified by the editorial stability observed in the period immediately following the brand's relaunch, marking a consolidated phase in *Elle Brasil*'s multiplatform strategy. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the relevance of future studies that revisit the material to reflect any editorial shifts that may have occurred since that period.

The texts were examined following the criteria established by Scalzo (2006), while the categorization of subjects was informed by Joffily's framework (1991, as cited in Flores, 2018). The analysis of the digital editions also drew on the perspectives of Bressan and Belda (2015) and Costa (2016), particularly regarding multimodality, hypertextuality, and interactivity–key features of digital-native media.

Based on this structure, the comparative analysis was carried out through detailed content mapping for each edition–both print and digital–always applying the four defined axes and considering the three core dimensions identified by Schneider and Schmitt (1998). Along with that, an interview was conducted with Renata Piza, *Elle Brasil*'s editor-in-chief, exposing her testimonial as a daily character of the vehicle's journalism, since it's a very useful resource to "gather answers from the subjective experience of a font" (Duarte & Barros, 2005, p. 62).

The Object: Elle Magazine

Elle, whose name translates from French 'she', is a French fashion magazine that was founded by Hélène Lazareff, on November 21, 1945. After coming back from a work season in New York, where she wrote for magazines such as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* (Lévêque, 2017, s.p.), Lazareff decided to put her skills into practice to work on her own goals (Bethke, 2020).

According to The Fashion Law - TFL (2018), the new publication innovated many aspects: ad-free editions, as an attempt to move away from the advertising industry; long, consistent journalism; and a new tone, putting "a particular emphasis on freedom, feminist demands, and consume society" (TFL, 2018).

Under the motto *Seriousness in frivolity and irony in graveness* (Elle Boutique, 2022), Lazareff combined style and substance in her articles, which became a tool for French women to claim notoriety in the job market and in relation to reproductive rights, for example (TFL, 2018). To do so, "it combined practical and feminine topics (fashion, beauty, horoscopes, cooking) and more feminist ones–such as sex education and abortion–with a view to informing women of their rights and leading them towards greater liberty and equality" (Lévêque, 2017).

Exactly 25 years after releasing its first French edition, *Elle* started its international expansion to Japan, in 1969. In 1985, it was time for the USA and United Kingdom to have their own editions (Dougherty, 1985). Three years later, Brazil also had its own edition. It is possible to define *Elle Brasil* in two phases: the first, while it belonged to Grupo Abril from 1988 to 2018, and the second after 2020, when it was purchased by Grupo Papaki.

Magazine Journalism

In printed journalism, there is the magazine genre, which aims for a specific section of the public, standing out for its visual strategies, thematic segmentation and periodicity not linked to the urgency of the information (Natansohn et al, 2013). Vogel (2013) details that magazines have a greater temporality than newspapers due to being less frequent–weekly, fortnightly, monthly, among others. The magazine "covers social functions that go beyond and below reporting" (Azubel, 2013, p. 25), aggregating the format functions of entertainment, analysis, reflection and reading experience, which meets Vogel's (2013) definition. Therefore, it is not expected that magazines will provide everyday news but an elaborate point of view, relating to aspects beyond the fact itself: historical, social, political, economical, cultural, educational, etc., so as to relate them to the possible consequences of the news to the reader (Baptista & Abreu, 2022).

Scalzo (2006) conceives the magazine as a brand, a product that synthetizes information, education and entertainment. This is confirmed by Tavares and Schwaab (2013), affirming that the informative compromise has the addition of other components. These publications cover functions that are "more complex than the simple news broadcasting; they entertain, bring analysis, reflection, concentration and reading experience" (Scalzo, 2006, p. 13), highlighting the capacity to store information that is "more substantial and less punctual" (Tavares & Schwaab, 2013, p. 310).

For Berger (2011), in opposition to newspapers, the magazine reader expects to receive the information in a pleasant way. According to Sodré (1992, p. 45, apud Berger, 2011, p. 28), "the magazine is made for entertainment or consumer's evasion. And the evasion demands the reporter or writer to always write shiny, light things". It is perceived that magazine journalism has the challenge of, beyond canvassing information correctly and searching for the best fonts, building a more interesting text than just reporting data, and searching for ways to involve the reader (Ali, 2009).

Printed Magazine

There is not a unique definition of what is, in fact, a magazine. Vogel (2013) sees it as a memories archive through the image collections in its pages, a vision shared by Azubel (2013) when saying that it's possible to better comprehend a determined period when searching for previous editions. On the other hand, Scalzo (2006) affirms that it is an invisible thread that unites a group of people, helping to build an identity.

Bringing in a more material concept, Dias and Machado (2022) detail that a magazine is also identified by the aspects of its composition: shape, thickness, and binding. The shape is related to the magazine's dimensions, having as standard 27 centimeters of height and 20 centimeters of width. A larger magazine, however, provides more sophistication and prominence, carrying more impact with big images (Ali, 2009). The paper's thickness, thinner or thicker, also denotes quality. The heavier, the more expensive, generating more expenses during transportation, for example (Ali, 2009). The paper finishing can be matte or shiny. The binding brings in two elements: the core–i.e., the internal part of the magazine–stapled, glued, or sewed, while the cover can be hard or flexible. All of this contributes to making it pleasant when touching its pages, making it a durable and collectable object (Ali, 2009); all characteristics must be considered when thinking of the product quality.

The magazine must also be periodic, whose frequence must be constant, whether weekly, monthly, annually, or otherwise (Scalzo, 2006). It must also have its own identity, defined by Ali (2009) as the reader's habit, whose trademark should be the balance between surprise and familiarity: fixed sections, columns, and number of pages. The sections, according to Scalzo (2006), are a tool used to determine the magazine's content, usually positioned on the first pages, whose title indicates clearly what the subject is. The columns bring heavyweight names, notorious people or specialists, which gives an aura of authority and influence to the vehicle (Ali, 2009). Every magazine should have, according to Ali (2009), a minimum number of pages in each edition, so the reader knows they're paying a fair price for the product. Some vehicles–usually the more frequent ones, for example, weekly–have a maximum number, so as not overwhelm the reader with content, due to the smaller space of time, but it does not apply to other types: "fashion magazines readers, for instance, like when the magazine has many pages" (Ali, 2009, p. 57).

Digital Magazine

Magazines in the cybernetic scenario are not new: the first known content adaptation of a Brazilian magazine to the internet was made by *Manchete* in 1995 (Natansohn et al, 2013). Since then, many changes have permeated this scenario–initially, they were mere copies of the printed content, then it started adapting to the digital language, including videos, maps and complements to the text (Natansohn et al, 2013). Finally, we come to the present era in which this research is set. Dourado (2014) delimits digital magazines into six categories–magazine website, webzine, portable magazine, expanded magazine, digital native magazine and social magazine–, among it was selected the concept of a digital native magazine for the present research.

Digital native magazines are exclusively developed for the digital environment. This model aims to, "in an innovative and unprecedented way" (Dourado, 2014, p. 120), renovate the magazine without necessarily reproducing the printed format. Independently of the model, Dourado (2014) defines hypertext, interactivity, and multimodality as the mains elements of digital magazines because "they allow the embedding of different writing styles and formats" (Freire, 2013, p. 48).

Hypertext, also called hyperlink, is a tool used to connect different complementary pages to the one being read (Dalmonte, 2009); they complete each other but do not necessarily need to be read to comprehend the main content. About interactivity, it is comprehended by Dalmonte (2009) as the reader's participation, and as the partner of the constructive method of the own vehicle's speech. "By interacting with a journalistic product, the reader aggregates to the informative piece not only their impressions, but their personal data" (Dalmonte, 2009, p. 193).

Multimodality is defined by Lenzi (2019) as the utilization of two or more media in the same informative production, either with texts, audios, or videos, and it's considered by Hill and Lashmar (2014) to be one of the main advantages of digital vehicles for bringing in a variety of formats that can be easily updated throughout the day.

Multiplatform And Convergence Journalism

According to Rodrigues (2019), the internet has provided journalism with a prompt to make many changes, such as the faster and more practical obtaining and broadcasting of information, in addition to the "possibility of converging in one single support texts, photos, videos, audios, maps, and also the easiness to interact with content consumers" (Rodrigues, 2019, p. 13). This format and content convergence rises in communication conglomerates to deal with the new fluxes in production, based on multiplatforms (Barbosa, Silva & Nogueira, 2013).

This way, Costa (2016) comprehends that multiplatform magazines publish on different access platforms, adapting the content and/or graphic project "to the different potentialities offered by new technological devices and the practices associated to them" (Costa, 2016, p. 32). Among the most utilized fonts for news consumption, Barbosa, Silva and Nogueira (2013) cite mobile devices, including cellphones, smartphones, tablets, and e-readers such as Kindle.

Jenkins (2009) affirms that convergence does not occur in the device itself but in the brain of who is doing the consuming. Meaning, it is said that convergence is less connected to the physical process of news broadcasting and more to the reader's comprehension and consumption, connecting different media.

Following this convergence line of reasoning, Caperuto (2011) analyzes that each one builds its own personal mythology, formed by information fragments "extracted from the mediatic flux and transformed in resources from which through we comprehend our own everyday life" (Caperuto, 2011, p. 20). This means that our own personal referential, built from the contact with media and information, is transforming knowledge into comprehended facts day by day.

Salaverría et al., (2010) conceptualize journalistic convergence from a multidimensional process, eased by the general implantation of communication digital technology. Specifically relating to communication media's editorial scope, the authors cite that convergence allows for an integration of tools, work methods and languages that didn't have any rules previously.

In this meaning, Jenkins (2009) says that convergence causes media companies to rethink old mediatic consumption concepts. In fact, it represents "an expansion opportunity

Table 1 Comparison of editions *Elle View* 21 and *Elle Brasil* 07.

CRITERIA/EDITION	ELLE VIEW EDITION 21	ELLE BRASIL VOLUME 07
Text	Longer but with a more youthful language; very tuned in with the target audience	Shorter texts with a more analytical language, using a greater variety of fonts in the articles
Section	It does not present any sections	The name of each section is related to the content format–Interview, Feature, Biography–, complemented by the kicker, in the case of Fashion, Beauty, Society, and Culture
Subject	Even though it brings analyses in from present time, it also presents services, giving practical tips	An in-depth analysis, complemented by the authors' personal reflections
Convergence	They converge on the central theme of their editions–aging–and in the writing team	

to media conglomerates, since a successful content in one sector can spread through other platforms" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 47). That is, news that reaches great engagement in digital social networks might lead, consequently, to a bigger access number to the vehicle's website. This is confirmed by Assis (2021), declaring that, sometimes "traffic in news websites comes, inclusively, more from popular social networks than the journalistic vehicles' homepages" (Assis, 2021, p. 16).

Data Analysis

To comprehend the characteristics of each of the *Elle* formats–printed, here approached as *Elle Brasil*, and digital, named *Elle View*–, we analyzed the contents of each edition according to the criteria of text, section, subject and convergence. We found, in *View*, which way that the three main digital magazine characteristics appear–hypertextuality, interactivity and multimodality. Tables 1 and 2 below present this analysis.

From observing the table, the characteristics of *Elle View* edition 24 and *Elle Brasil* 7 are similar when addressing deepened content, which is pertinent to the greater time taken to elaborate and canvass the subject, and exploring the different angles and theme itself, as pointed by Azubel (2013). Among the perceived characteristics in edition 7 is a very defined positioning when approaching fashion, culture and beauty from a political and social perspective. In the same way, even the more shallow, ephemeral content, such as in the Preview section, looks for greater subject deepening, searching for a historical or fun fact to complement the theme. It is possible to assert that momentaneous facts are just a starting point to help decide the subjects–the search of which is for long, durable narratives.

Regarding the second magazine pair, the same comparison, with the same criteria, is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Comparison of editions *Elle View* 24 and *Elle Brasil* 08.

CRITERIA/ EDITION	ELLE VIEW EDITION 24	ELLE BRASIL VOLUME 08
Text	Longer but with a more youthful language; very tuned in with the target audience. Many bring just one opening image	Shorter texts with a more analytical language and using a greater variety of fonts in the articles. Great to highlight images
Section	It does not present any sections	The name of each section is related to the content format– Interview, Feature, Biography– complemented by the kicker, in the case of Fashion, Beauty, Society, and Culture
Subject	Even though it brings in analyses from present time, it also provides services, giving practical tips	Deep analyses with many personal experiences and touches from the authors; bigger amount of content, almost double the number of subjects
Convergence	They converge when approaching similar themes in some reports depending on the writing team	

In this table, we found a very similar result to Table 1, with the difference that the edition's central theme is not the same, and the adding of a kicker, Society has confirmed once again that the positioning of *Elle Brasil* is not just as a mere fashion magazine but as a historical record of time, exactly according to what Vogel (2013), Azubel (2013) and Scalzo (2006) use to define a printed magazine.

Regarding the characteristics observed in the above-mentioned tables, it is possible to delimit the similarities and differences between the *Elle Brasil* and *Elle View* editions. It is undeniable that both are products that portray their own historical period, reinforcing their role as a memory album, just like Vogel (2013) describes, when bringing various contexts into its reports. Piza confirms the following: "political, economical, environmental, generational–generation Z thinks differently, people's relation with consumption is other–and how it all converges" (Piza, 2022, interview). It is very interesting to see that, despite auto proclaiming itself to be a fashion magazine, *Elle* is much more than that. It presents technology, health, and behavior reports, always trying to tie it down to facts that catch the reader's attention, looking for new angles to unexceptional day by day situations, and explaining the consequences and impacts of phenomena, corroborating what Baptista and Abreu (2022) affirm.

This is perceptible through the deepening of the content. Even though *Elle View* generally has longer texts than *Elle Brasil*, both concentrate on aggregating fonts, characters, stories and narratives that don't exclusively stay in the shallows, meeting what Scalzo (2006) stated. With that, *Elle Brasil* in particular has become more "big-headed" (Piza, 2022, in interview), meaning more analytical and almost scientific when presenting a great number of articles, along with highlighted images–this is extremely important when building a magazine of this kind, according to Ali (2009).

It is valid to regard *Elle Brasil* as a much more luxurious product than *View*. This is mainly due to the specific characteristics of it being printed: it's durable, it has a format of great dimensions, uses heavy weight paper, and has a great number of pages. As Ali (2009) punctuates, it is conceived to be visually beautiful and a decoration item, as observed in Figure 1. In addition to this, the contents relate to luxurious brands and to international trips; the ads themselves, even though are not the object of study of this research, prove this when bringing in worldwide brands.

However, instead of focusing just on consumption and the exaggeration of a frugal life, *Elle* also brings in more earthly and conscious content in *View* as in the print version: racism, transsexuality, sexism, social inequality, sustainability, just like Lévêque (2017) says its mother-magazine did in 1945, in France. An important point is that fashion is constantly debated, whether in an excerpt or question, from the point of view of conscious consumption and sustainable practices to expose the path that the industry takes in this direction.

Curiously, the digital edition has much longer texts than the printed, which goes against what Piza herself says in an interview. "[…] it *[printed]* got more 'big-headed' […]. *[in View, the texts]* are going to be shorter and more focused on the now" (Piza, 2022, interview). This way, it is possible to interpret that *Elle Brasil* being 'big-headed', i.e. complex, relates more to the amount of content and the way each is approached, bringing in philosophers, anthropologists and other scientists, for instance, rather than the size itself as observed in Figure 2.

The convergence phenomenon can be observed between the two comparative pairs in a less expressive way. It occurs through the integrated newsroom, something already pointed out by Sica (2017) as one of mediatic convergence consequences, in such a way that *Elle View* reporters work at *Elle Brasil* and vice versa. "They resemble for being produced by the same team, so the rational line is the same" (Piza, 2022,

Source: The author (2022)
Fig. 1 The luxury perceived in *Elle Brasil*'s content. Volume 08, page 56.

Source: The author (2022)
Fig. 2 Feature story *The pain and the pleasure of being a travesti*—loosely translated as trans woman—brings a complex theme. Volume 07, page 170.

interview). Comparative pair number 1—*View* edition 21 and *Elle Brasil* edition 07—has the same central theme in their editions, aging. To confirm whether this is a frequent phenomenon, a more in-depth study in this regard will be necessary, comparing a larger number of editions, since comparative pair number 2 does not share the same central theme. In fact, the only similarity found regarding this aspect is that both bring in content related to the series *Euphoria*, address drug use, and the impact that the series' make-up has had on the internet, especially TikTok.

An interesting aspect to observe is that *View* and *Elle Brasil* have very different temporalities and frequences. While the first one is monthly, the second one is quarterly. This reflects on the quality of each material: *Elle Brasil* is a magazine with no flaws found in the texts and no need for proofreading, which is related to having more time for production. *View* is a product under construction that has not managed to consolidate itself perfectly, as several formatting errors were found in the texts, with many unnecessary text breaks as well as hyperlinks that do not work and errors in the texts. These are small items that disrupt the user's navigation and reading experience.

In such a way, the resources of hypertextuality, interactivity and multimodality defended by Dalmonte (2009) could be better utilized, as observed in Figure 3, making reading much more differentiated from the printed format. It's positioned this way, as Piza (2022, interview) states, and Dourado (2014) details this in the digital native magazine model.

In Figure 3, some suggestions from the author can be observed to improve the reading experience based on the pillars established by Dourado (2014) and Dalmonte (2009). In hypertextuality, a hyperlink pointing to the interviewee's Instagram profile could be included. In interactivity, a frame could be made with an image that, as the user hovers their mouse over the screen, exhibits another image, side by side, comparing the series' make-up with an inspiration from real life. In multimodality, the series soundtrack could be used, since it's entirely instrumental and so wouldn't disturb, in a general way, the reading experience.

Source: The author, from a screenshot (2022). **Fig. 3** Proposal of better resource usage in *Elle View*.

With the data collected, it is possible to establish a table of similarities and differences between the two publications, as observed in Table 3.

From Table 3, it is possible to determine that *Elle Brasil* and *View* share many more differences than similarities. This is because they are different products with different audiences, meaning that the content construction cannot be the same. As Piza (2022, interview) states, they have unique positionings in a way where the observed phenomenon is justified.

We chose to analyze the most recent edition of *Elle View*—issue 56, published in May 2025—to identify any changes since the previous analysis. This edition demonstrates a more advanced use of multimodality, incorporating a variety of content formats. It introduces sections dedicated exclusively to video reports, presented in a 9:16 aspect ratio, native to digital platforms such as Instagram Reels and TikTok (Zehra, 2025). The edition also enhances interactivity. For example, one article features six photographs of singers that users can click on to reveal explanatory pop-ups about each artist. Notably, unlike the 2022 editions, this issue did not exhibit any formatting problems.

Final Considerations

In a media landscape still marked by uncertainty regarding the viability of print journalism, the coexistence of two editorial products—*Elle Brasil* and *Elle View*—reveals not a contradiction but a strategic adaptation. This study aimed to examine the dynamics between multiplatform and print formats within the context of media convergence, drawing on

Table 3 Table of similarities and differences between *Elle Brasil* and *Elle View*

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
	Frequence: View is monthly and Elle Brasil is quarterly
	Format: View is a digital native magazine and Elle Brasil is a printed magazine
Shared newsroom	
Texts with a variety of fonts	Audience: View has more accessible content, while Elle Brasil focuses on the high-luxury market
Highlighted images;	Language: View is more youthful; Elle Brasil is more analytical
	Fonts: View brings in real-life cases and market professionals; Elle Brasil brings in market professionals but in leadership roles, and also scientists from different areas
They have similar advertising strategies on Instagram, albeit at different frequencies	
	Positioning: Elle Brasil is a collection item; View is single consumption

the comparative analysis of print and digital editions and an interview with the editor-in-chief.

The findings show that *Elle Brasil* operates through two distinct products, each with its own editorial identity, frequency, language, and target audience. While *Elle Brasil* takes on an analytical, collectible, and high-end positioning, *Elle View* embraces a more immediate, accessible, and digitally native logic. The analogy of vinyl versus streaming illustrates the complementarity rather than substitution between formats. This distinction has implications not only for content strategies but also for how audiences relate to the different journalistic experiences across platforms.

Beyond the empirical comparison, the study highlights the relevance of multiplatform thinking in magazine journalism, particularly in markets with segmented readerships and strong brand legacies. It also reinforces the potential of digital-native formats to expand the storytelling capacity of journalism through hypertextuality, interactivity, and multimodality.

This is precisely why printed *Elle* was relaunched: to not leave abandoned those who seek out fashion journalism focused on contemporaneity and society behaviors, in such a way as to bring in more durable content that makes sense for a longer period, just like the historical portrait proposed by Vogel (2013) and Scalzo (2006). In order to not become anachronic, *Elle* invests in its exclusive digital format, not to merely reproduce the magazine but to create a way of producing it within digital media, a phenomenon described by Dourado (2014).

However, this is an exploratory and time-specific case study focused on four editions from 2022. Future research may build on this foundation to examine long-term strategies and explore the editorial decisions behind platform-specific choices.

In 2022, we concluded that *Elle View* held significant potential for investment in the three pillars identified by Dourado (2014) as foundational to digital-native magazines and characteristic of web journalism: hypertextuality, interactivity, and multimodality. To assess the evolution of these elements, we analyzed the most recent edition–issue 56, published in May 2025. We observed that *Elle View* made greater use of interactivity, notably through an article in which users can click on images to reveal explanatory text. This feature enhances user

engagement and reflects a more dynamic approach to content presentation. Furthermore, this edition did not present any formatting issues, suggesting a clear improvement in digital production quality compared to the 2022 editions.

In sum, this research contributes to the field by documenting and interpreting how multiplatform practices are implemented in a concrete case study, offering a basis for comparative studies and for the theoretical deepening on the hybridization of formats in magazine journalism.

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