

Print vs digital : the changing production of Singaporean women's magazines

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**NANYANG
TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY**

SINGAPORE

**PRINT VS DIGITAL:
THE CHANGING PRODUCTION OF
SINGAPOREAN WOMEN'S MAGAZINES**

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**A thesis submitted to the Nanyang Technological University in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the degree of Master of Communication Studies**

2020

Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research, is free of plagiarised materials, and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lydia', written in a cursive style.

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LYDIA CHENG RUI JUN

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their experiences and kind in their responses. Academic scholarship has tended to – unfortunately in my opinion – overlook lifestyle and magazine journalism. This, combined with my own experiences as a lifestyle journalist, became the main motivation for me to embark on the present research topic. I hope that this thesis can be a small contribution towards the creation of a richer and more inclusive journalism research field that does not discriminate against any journalism types or genres.

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Summary

Digitalisation has prompted a myriad of changes in the journalism industry. This has affected different aspects of news work, particularly in newsroom production processes. Though such changes have received much scholarly attention, most studies have focused on newspapers and hard news journalism. Much less research has been done on the impact of digitalisation on magazines and lifestyle journalism. Boczkowski (2004, 2005) identified three production factors that are particularly relevant with respect to the adoption of digital technologies in newsrooms: organisational structures, work practices, and representations of users. Through in-depth interviews with 24 journalists from *Female*, *Her World*, *Harper's Bazaar Singapore*, *L'Officiel Singapore*, and *Elle Singapore* and the textual analysis of both the print issues and online websites of these magazines, I looked at how technological advances have affected the three production factors outlined above in Singaporean women's magazines and the corresponding impact on the content being produced by these publications. The findings suggest that there is a functional differentiation (Hanusch, 2017) in magazine newsrooms, where magazine journalists adopt different values, norms, and behaviours when engaging in print and digital productions. Furthermore, besides production factors, I found that individual-level factors related to magazine journalists' self-perceptions have also contributed to the functional differentiation in magazine newsrooms. This has resulted in differentiated content and procedures in print and digital productions in Singaporean women's magazines.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Digital technology has fundamentally changed how news is produced and consumed. Unsurprisingly, there is no shortage of studies on how newsrooms have adapted their production processes with the continuously transforming media environment (Anderson, 2013). Research in this area has taken on a variety of angles, such as analysing how newsrooms have incorporated the use of web analytics in their news work, changing workplace structures and practices, and evolving journalistic role conceptions and identities.

However, the majority of such research has focused exclusively on news journalists, newspapers, and news organisations. Comparatively, less attention has been paid to newspapers' print counterpart—magazines. In fact, on the first page of their book *Magazine Journalism*, Holmes and Nice (2012) describe how “magazines have generally not been taken seriously” (p. 1) by both the academy and the journalism industry. This tendency is emblematic of a larger trend in journalism studies, where the “fourth estate” (Peters & Witschge, 2015, p. 19) function of journalism is privileged over other journalism types. Magazine journalism, however, is deserving of study: magazines are often reflective of larger societal and cultural trends, are consumed by a wide audience, and along with newspapers, broadcast news, radio, and online news make up the journalistic field.

I aim to address this gap in the literature by investigating the impact of digitalisation on magazine production. Looking at the specific context of Singaporean women's magazines, I sought to understand how technological advances have affected organisational structures,

work practices, and representations of users in magazines. Boczkowski (2004, 2005) identified these three production factors as particularly relevant with respect to the emergence of online papers as prompted by developments in digital technology.

Theoretical Framework

I will begin this study by describing what a magazine is and what is lifestyle journalism, with a focus on women's magazines. Next, I will take an in-depth look at the three production factors in turn. While Boczkowski (2004, 2005) focused on the relationship between print and online production in the case of organisational structures, I additionally explored the dynamic between the editorial and advertising departments in magazine newsrooms. Regarding work practices, I followed Boczkowski's (2004, 2005) approach and looked at the long-standing conception of journalists as gatekeepers, and how this gatekeeping function has evolved in magazines in the digital age. As for representations of users, Boczkowski (2004, 2005) looked at two issues. The first concerns how technologically savvy readers are and their level of access to digital technologies. The second is about journalists' conception of the audience, or, in other words, whether journalists now perceive readers as producers or consumers. Given that the majority of today's users have some technological competency and basic internet access, I only focused on the second issue of magazine journalists' conception of the audience.

Apart from Boczkowski's (2004, 2005) production factors, the issue of journalistic role conceptions emerged as an important factor that determines the extent to which digitalisation affects magazine production. As Hanusch (2019) argued, there has been scant attention paid to how lifestyle journalists conceive of their professional roles and their purpose in society. Given the very different nature of hard news journalism compared with softer, lifestyle journalism, it would be useful to look into magazine journalists' role conceptions to find out how that influences their news work. Hence, I further looked at role

conceptions to determine how magazine journalists might perceive their professional identity and how this then affects the impact of digitalisation on magazines.

Like many other countries, the Singapore media industry has been grappling with increasing financial instability as digitalisation drastically transforms every aspect of media production and consumption. To give some relevant background context, I will also provide a brief description of the Singapore media environment as well as an overview of the local magazine industry.

Method

This thesis adopted the two qualitative research methods: semi-structured interviews with Singaporean women's magazine journalists and textual analysis of the content of these magazines. Five Singaporean women's magazines were chosen for this research: *Female*, *Her World*, *Harper's Bazaar Singapore*, *L'Officiel Singapore*, and *Elle Singapore*. I conducted 24 interviews between September and December 2019, while both the print and online editorial outputs of the magazines were analysed for a duration of three months, from September 2019 to November 2019.

Significance of Study

Ideally, the findings of this study can explain the current state of media production and shed some light on how magazine journalists have adapted to the challenges of digitalisation. Hopefully, the results can then aid in strategising policies that can help content producers better utilise the capabilities of digital technology in their work. Additionally, I hope that this study can help in extending the theorisation of Boczkowski's (2004, 2005) framework and contribute to research on magazines and lifestyle journalism.

Thesis Plan

Chapter Two will provide an overview of the existing body of literature regarding magazines and lifestyle journalism and the current state of scholarship on these two topics. I

will also detail Boczkowski's (2004, 2005) framework on the digitalisation of media production that focuses on the three production factors of organisational structures, work practices, and representations of users. Next, to contextualise this study, I will describe the characteristics of Singapore's media industry.

Chapter Three will present the methodology used for this research. This includes a description of the sampling strategy, the way both interviews and textual analysis were conducted, and how the data was collated and analysed.

Chapter Four will report the findings on how digitalisation has changed the production factors of organisational structures, work practices, and representations of users of the magazines in this study, and the role conceptions of Singaporean women's magazine journalists.

Chapter Five will review how the changes illustrated in Chapter Four have impacted both the print and online content being produced by the magazines.

Chapter Six will summarise this study and its results, as well as discuss the study's place in the existing literature. I will also look at the implications of this research, the limitations, and propose recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

What are Magazines?

To understand what a magazine is, it is useful to take a look at where the word ‘magazine’ comes from. It can be traced back to the Arabic term *makhazin*, meaning storehouse, and *magazin*, which means shop in French (Holmes & Nice, 2012). Thus, early definitions of magazines tended to revolve around how a magazine acts as a storehouse for specific types of information. This characteristic was indeed displayed in some of the earliest magazines—for example, the *Journal Des Scavans* of 1665, which “contained a miscellany of content that made it metaphorically like a storehouse” (Holmes & Nice, 2012, p. 4), and the *Ladies Mercury* of 1693, which “contained a miscellany of material” (Holmes & Nice, 2012, p. 3) crafted to specifically target women.

Over the centuries, magazines have grown from a unique entity to the mass media form it is today, owing to the combination of many factors such as advancements in printing and production technologies that helped reduce cost and improve quality, as well as the growth of consumerist cultures that encouraged the emergence of countless magazines serving specific hobbies and interests (Holmes & Nice, 2012). Despite the proliferation of magazines, however, one problem that has continuously plagued academic research on it is the improbability of arriving at a universal definition of what a magazine actually is. Le Masurier (2014) contends, for instance, that miscellany is too general to define the medium; after all, books and newspapers can arguably be ‘storehouses’ of information too.

Indeed, trying to provide a succinct, comprehensive definition for a magazine is difficult. This challenge is further exacerbated by today's digital environment, where the definition of a magazine can no longer be strictly limited to or shaped by the fact that magazines are a print medium (Le Masurier, 2014). Hence, we can no longer identify a magazine based on its physical appearance, nor can we identify a magazine by its frequency in production given its online presence (Holmes & Nice, 2012).

Another problem relates to the sheer number of the different types of magazines that exist. Categorising magazines into typologies is problematic, given their wide variety: consumer, business-to-business (B2B), customer, electronic, alternative, newspaper supplements, etc. (Le Masurier, 2014). Organising magazines by revenue models is also complicated, given that they can be reader-funded, advertiser-funded, or others (Le Masurier, 2014). Nevertheless, some scholars have tried to provide a working definition or classification. These serve as a good starting point to better understand what exactly a magazine is. One example is that proposed by Le Masurier (2014):

Magazines are containers for the curated content of words, images and design, where each of these elements is as important as the other and the entire content is filtered through an editor via an editorial philosophy that speaks and responds to the specific needs of a niche readership. Magazines are serial in nature and finite in execution.

Each issue is almost always produced and consumed in a mid-temporal media space, allowing time for contemplation and desire (p. 13–14).

Meanwhile, Holmes and Nice (2012) opted to propose a General Theory of Magazines, which serves to cover the essential characteristics a magazine should possess:

- (a) magazines always target a precisely defined group of readers;
- (b) magazines base their content on the expressed and perceived needs, desires, hopes, and fears of that defined group;

- (c) magazines develop a bond of trust with their readerships;
- (d) magazines foster community-like interactions between themselves and their readers, and among readers;
- (e) magazines can respond quickly and flexibly to changes in the readership and changes in the wider society (p. 7).

From the above characterisations of magazines, we can deduce some attributes that seem to apply to all magazines. If trying to provide an accurate, conclusive, over-arching definition of a magazine is challenging, we can try to identify magazines by highlighting some of their common main qualities.

Magazines target a precise audience. According to Abrahamson (1996), the American magazine industry decided to “shift away from general-interest mass-market publications toward more specialised magazines” (p. 19) in the 1960s. Abrahamson (1996) provides social-psychological, political, and economic reasons for this trend, such as a “greater assertion of freedoms and tastes” (p. 25) and falling production costs. While there are magazines that are more broadly-oriented, like news magazines (e.g., *TIME*, *Newsweek*) and general-interest titles (e.g., *Life*, *Reader’s Digest*), we see today several magazines that often have a clear idea of who their readers are and target a very defined segment of the population. Using women’s magazines as an example, we have publications targeting specific age groups (e.g., *Seventeen*, *Teen Vogue*, targeting teens), races (e.g., *Essence*, targeting black women), and locations (e.g., *Elle* has 45 editions globally).

Similarly, in studying women’s magazines, Duffy (2013) notes their long-standing tradition of targeting “narrowly defined segments of the female populace” (p. 69) in order to remain competitive by setting themselves apart from other titles. These magazines rely on market research to gain a deep understanding of their readership and might even actively collect data from their readers by asking questions related to their interests and preferences

(Duffy, 2013). The information gathered helps magazines produce a profile of their “ideal reader” (Duffy, 2013, p. 69). An example of this can be observed via how *Harper’s Bazaar UK*, a leading women’s magazine, describes its reader:

Our reader is a discerning, style-conscious, intelligent 30+ woman who is cultured, well-travelled and independent. She knows her own mind, yet also appreciates Bazaar’s curated edit, helpful advice, and knowledgeable point of view (Hearst UK, n.d.).

Because magazines target such a precisely defined readership, it is possible for many different magazines to exist, as they all try to service their chosen target audience.

Magazines are consumer-oriented. That magazines are consumer-oriented is not meant to say that all magazines are consumer magazines. Though consumer magazines certainly occupy a large portion of the magazine industry, there exist several other categories of magazines. For instance, B2B—or trade—magazines, which are publications providing highly focused content for a certain trade, actually outperform consumer magazines both in terms of the number of titles produced and in terms of market share (Holmes & Nice, 2012). While consumer magazines tend to appeal to a wider, general public, B2B magazines usually publish content that is industry-specific and informative for professionals belonging to a particular field (Sivek, 2011; Trade Press Services, 2012). There also exist customer magazines, which are publications produced for an organisation. This can include all types of enterprises, from shops to finance corporations to government institutions (Holmes & Nice, 2012).

Consumer-oriented in this context refers to how magazines generally produce content that is based on their readers’ needs and wants (Holmes & Nice, 2012; Le Masurier, 2014). Magazines normally pay close attention to readership research and know their readers’ characteristics. By knowing their readers’ interests, desires, and preferences, magazines typically produce content with a view of satisfying their readers by giving them what they would like to read.

This habit of offering content that can be expected to attract the magazine's target audience also serves the purpose of keeping the classic "advertiser/magazine/reader trichotomy" (Holmes & Nice, 2012, p. 23) afloat. Magazines earn profit mainly through two ways: from readers paying for the magazine and from advertisers who are willing to advertise their products and services in the magazine. By continuously creating content specifically for their niche readership, magazines are simultaneously proffering advertisers a platform where they can directly reach a select population segment that they want to market to (Holmes & Nice, 2012).

One effect of being heavily consumer-oriented is that magazines also develop a personal relationship with the readers (Le Masurier, 2014). In fact, magazine staff and readers often see themselves as both belonging to a wider, imagined community (Holmes & Nice, 2012). The idea of there being such close engagement between magazines and readers is similar to what Abrahamson (2007) proclaims as the non-existent "journalistic distance" (p. 669) between magazine journalists and readers, and what Duffy (2013) calls the "intimacy rhetoric of women's magazines" (p. 32), wherein the context of women's magazines, publications strive to cultivate an intimate connection with their readers and a sense of a wider, inclusive community in the hopes of gaining their readers' loyalty. To do so, there is a heavy emphasis on magazines' editors being as similar as possible to the readers in terms of demographics and lifestyle practices (Duffy, 2013). This makes it easier for readers to forge a strong kinship with the magazine and its imagined community. Subsequently, this helps magazines in its commercial purposes, as readers are more likely to respond favourably to advertised products and services if they trust the magazines.

Magazines are curated. As Le Masurier (2014) contends, magazines usually operate under an editorial philosophy that guides the production of the magazine in all aspects. This is not just limited to the magazine's content—subject matter, voice, style, etc.—but also the magazine's presentation. This includes everything from the format and

design of the magazine to the choice of its materials (Le Masurier, 2014). This distinct editorial philosophy reinforces the notion of how magazines are largely curated in accordance with a very niche readership in mind.

While all magazine staff is responsible for adhering to a magazine's editorial philosophy, perhaps no one is more instrumental to the curating of a magazine than the editor-in-chief (EIC). The responsibility of constructing a unique identity for the magazine normally falls on the EIC, which results in magazines often embodying the personality of the EIC himself or herself (Duffy, 2013). In other words, the EIC can be construed as the 'face' of the magazine, and it is thus vital for them to share as many characteristics as possible with their readers so that the magazine can forge a closer connection with the audience (Duffy, 2013).

Targeting a precise audience, being consumer-oriented, and curated are common characteristics of magazines, though this is definitely not an exhaustive list. Because such a wide variety of magazines exist, it is also probable that there are differences between different types of magazines. This study will focus on women's magazines—as Holmes and Nice (2012) note, the majority of research in magazine studies has focused mainly on women's magazines, such that "the story of magazine studies is also the story of women's magazines" (p. 123). Most of such studies usually come from a feminist perspective, and the majority of these take an audience-centred approach. For example, Ytre-Arne (2011) discusses the relationship between practices of reading and textual features among readers of women's magazines; Ytre-Arne (2014) investigates how readers interpret representations of women's lives in women's magazines; and Karan, Park, and Xie (2016) examine how women perceive women's magazines that are based online.

However, a limitation is that comparatively fewer studies focus on the production of women's magazines or its ties with journalism practice (Gough-Yates, 2003; Holmes & Nice, 2012). There are a few exceptions, such as Duffy's (2013) research into how the women's

magazine industry is adapting to the digital age, and D'Enbeau and Buzzanell (2011), which looks at how a feminist popular culture magazine navigate the tension between promoting feminist ideology and ensuring financial viability. Arguably, more research can be conducted in this area, especially given that women's magazines occupy a large portion of the magazine industry: as of 2018, 10 of the top 25 magazines by circulation in the U.S. are explicitly targeted at women (Alliance for Audited Media, 2018).

To begin analysing the production of women's magazines, it is perhaps pertinent to ask what kind of journalism women's magazines practice. Such magazines are consumer magazines, aiming to attract as wide an audience as possible that fits their readership profile. With their consumer- and service-oriented nature, women's magazines fall under the umbrella of lifestyle journalism.

What is Lifestyle Journalism?

Understanding what lifestyle journalism is necessitates a discussion on the classic dichotomy between hard news and soft news. Reinemann, Stanyer, Scherr, and Legnante (2011) argue that there are no hard and fast rules indicating what is hard news and what is soft news, leading to what they call a state of "collective ambiguity" (p. 225) with regards to the usage of these two terms. Nevertheless, other scholars have tried to define, or at the very least differentiate between the two. Boczkowski (2009), for instance, focuses on the production of news and highlights temporality as one differentiating factor. While the newsworthiness of hard news is entirely dependent on its immediate dissemination, the opposite is true of soft news, which is largely unaffected by temporal factors during publication. Kristensen and From (2012), on the other hand, use content as a differentiating factor. While hard news represents content that is of public relevance, soft news represents lighter issues that relate more to the private sphere. Meanwhile, Hanitzsch and Vos (2018) make a distinction between hard and soft news by looking at journalistic roles. They argue that there are certain roles that

are reserved for the domain of everyday life—a hallmark of soft news—which they suggest encompass the seven ideal-type roles of marketer, service provider, friend, connector, mood manager, inspirator, and guide.

What scholars can generally agree on is the fact that lifestyle journalism rests definitively in the realm of soft news. Hanusch (2012) defines lifestyle journalism as a distinct journalistic field that primarily addresses its audiences as consumers, providing them with factual information and advice, often in entertaining ways, about goods and services they can use in their daily lives (p. 5).

Fürsich (2012) identifies three dimensions of lifestyle journalism: it performs a review function, provides advice, and has close ties with commercialisation. Lifestyle journalism is largely market-driven in that the content produced is based on the readers' demands, which is why it has sometimes been referred to as consumer or service journalism (Fürsich, 2012). By providing critical reviews and problem-solving advice, lifestyle journalism embodies a practical aspect by giving readers helpful information that can better their lives. This helpfulness aspect of lifestyle journalism is echoed by Thomas (2019), who argues that helpfulness should be considered an important journalistic norm.

Lifestyle journalism is not just limited to the magazine realm; it can also be found in certain sections of newspapers, as well as on radio, TV, and online. Genres or topics that fall under lifestyle journalism can run the gamut from travel to fashion to food (Hanusch, 2012). Of course, not all magazines practice lifestyle journalism. There also exist news magazines such as *TIME* and *Newsweek* that arguably perform a journalism that is more closely aligned to the classic watchdog or fourth estate function of newspaper journalism (Peters & Witschge, 2015). Certain local magazines also strive to provide a combination of both traditionally hard news and soft news topics, such as the American city and regional magazines studied by Sivek (2015) and Jenkins (2016).

Meanwhile, Dyson (2007) argues that customer magazines occupy the grey space where journalism and marketing cultures overlap. Bueno, Cárdenas, and Esquivias (2007) look at what they term “personality journalism” (p. 623) in their study of gossip or celebrity magazines. Women’s magazines, however, largely conform to the practice of lifestyle journalism: with their consumer- and service-oriented nature, women’s magazines know their audiences and create content with a view of satisfying their readers’ demands. Like Fürsich (2012) and Hanusch (2012) described, women’s magazines routinely provide useful content (e.g., product reviews, step-by-step tutorials, recommendations) that serve a practical function.

The Challenges of Magazines and Lifestyle Journalism

Both magazines and lifestyle journalism are understudied, with scholars lamenting that a dearth of research in these areas is an obstacle to better understanding them (Fürsich, 2012; Hanusch, 2012; Holmes & Nice, 2012; Jenkins, 2011; Kristensen & From; 2012). The underlying reason for this phenomenon is the fact that there is a normative privilege of public-oriented journalism—or, hard news—that emphasises journalism’s role of disseminating information about political affairs (Hanusch, 2012). In fact, in trying to define what journalism is, Deuze (2005) argues that journalists use a set of self-constructed, ideal-typical values to lend legitimacy and credibility to their work. The first of these five values is public service.

In contrast, journalism that falls outside of this practice of serving the public good, such as market-driven journalism, is relegated to a corner. Such journalism is deemed as “almost unworthy” (Hanusch, 2012, p. 3) or occupying a “low status” (Holmes & Nice, 2012, p. 1) in the journalistic field. While some have compared magazines to tabloids (Holmes & Nice, 2012), lifestyle journalism has also tried to assert its place in the journalistic field by trying to follow “traditional professional news practices” (Fürsich, 2012, p. 15) such as objectivity, authenticity, and ethics.

There are attempts to argue for the importance of studying magazines and lifestyle journalism. Magazines arise out of the needs of the population and can reflect larger cultural, economic, and political transformations (Le Masurier, 2014). They can often tell us more about the social processes shaping society at a particular time and place (Holmes & Nice, 2012; Le Masurier, 2014). In other words, magazines are powerful cultural markers and reflect sociocultural realities (Jenkins & Tandoc, 2017). A magazine is also a unique medium in itself—Abrahamson's (2007) proposed concept of magazine exceptionalism states that the magazine form is fundamentally and genuinely different from all other forms of media and warrants its own investigation.

The increasing popularity of lifestyle journalism is also a trend that can no longer be ignored by both practitioners and scholars. The rise of lifestyle journalism means that traditional watchdog journalism is no longer the dominant voice in the journalistic field (Brennen, 2009). Scholars have noted the “softening” (Fürsich, 2012, p. 12) of news and the increased “featurisation” (Steensen, 2011, p. 50) of journalism. While many magazines certainly fall under the realm of lifestyle journalism, there is evidence that newspapers have also increased their reportage of such soft news, sometimes at the expense of hard news (Steensen, 2011). And as the journalism industry continues to face decreasing advertising revenues and subscriptions, this trend of turning towards lifestyle journalism is unlikely to disappear as news organisations become more market-oriented in an effort to battle journalism's precarious financial state (Beam, 1996, 1998). It would be remiss for scholars to not conduct more research on lifestyle journalism given its growing social relevance. As Hanusch (2012) argues, for us to fully understand the journalistic field, we need to adopt a more holistic approach that extends beyond “the idealist journalistic notions of critical watchdog journalism” (p. 7) to include other journalism types.

I aim to contribute to this effort by looking at how magazines, particularly women's magazines in this case, have adopted their production practices in response to the digitalisation of the media landscape. To do so, I focused on the three production factors underscored by Boczkowski (2004, 2005) as pertinent to analysing the impact of digital technology on journalism: organisational structures, work practices, and representations of users. Boczkowski's (2004, 2005) framework is useful in understanding technological adoption in newsrooms because it rejects the overly simplistic linear model that adopting digital technology leads to changes in editorial content. Instead, the framework argues for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding that it is the complex combination of production factors in a broader newsroom context that facilitates the process of technological adoption.

Multiple scholars have similarly noted the value of Boczkowski's (2004, 2005) framework and have used it to better understand different facets of news production. For instance, Paulussen and Ugille (2008) looked at the incorporation of user-generated comments in news work in Belgian newspapers and concluded that organisational structures, work practices, and perceptions of readers have led to a rather muted development of a participatory journalism culture. Meanwhile, Lillie (2011) focused on multimedia production—specifically the usage of audio slideshows in editorial content—amongst American and Canadian news journalists and found that the three production factors affect how and why journalists use audio slideshows.

Organisational Structures

Regarding organisational structures, Boczkowski (2004, 2005) focused specifically on the complex relationship between print and digital operations in a newsroom and how this relationship affects the adoption of digital technologies. From his ethnographic studies of three different online newsrooms, Boczkowski (2004, 2005) concluded that there is not one path of innovation all newsrooms have taken in response to digitalisation. For newsrooms

whose print and online operations align closely, there seems to be a reproduction of print's way of doing things in their online counterparts. The opposite is true for online operations that work independently—they are more likely to take advantage of the multimedia opportunities presented by digital technology (Boczkowski, 2004, 2005). Whether this observation would hold true for magazines needs to take into account some considerations.

Pavlik (2001) has called the internet “a journalist’s medium” (p. 3), citing how the internet has all the functions of older media, such as the ability to display text and images, but also boasts newer capabilities, such as interactivity and on-demand access. While this might be beneficial for news journalists whose very responsibility is to publish time-sensitive stories, the situation might be different for magazine journalists. Magazines espouse a slower journalism, with less emphasis on immediate publication (Boczkowski, 2009; Le Masurier, 2015). Coming from a traditionally non-time-based media environment, what kind of unique challenges would magazines face in trying to incorporate digital tools? Would they be welcoming of this new ability for faster content dissemination? Or would they shun it as something fundamentally incompatible with the nature of their product?

Another defining aspect of magazines rests in its physicality. For example, magazine covers do not just serve the purpose of being the face of the magazine, but also function as cultural symbols that are “imbued with institutional meaning” (Jenkins & Tandoc, 2017, p. 283). Publishers put in a lot of effort to make magazine covers as appealing as possible, while still ensuring that they are representative of the magazine brand (Holmes & Nice, 2012; Jenkins & Tandoc, 2017). Holmes and Nice (2012) term this focus on magazine’s materiality as “magazine craft” (p. 25), which encompasses everything from the magazine cover, layout, and rhythm of content to external additions such as cover mounts (i.e., free gifts). A magazine’s editorial philosophy is intrinsically tied to its presentation, where every single element, from the typography to the material used, is essential in making the magazine a

unique entity (Le Masurier, 2014). Holmes and Nice (2012), for instance, observed how an independent magazine combined different paper qualities and binding to inform its aesthetic.

In sum, physicality is a defining trait that lets consumers know what the essence of the magazine is. Arguably, this is a feature that newspapers do not have to consider when balancing print and digital offerings, given that presentation in newspapers is much more formulaic and inflexible (Le Masurier, 2014). For magazines, however, this physicality trait is an integral part of a magazine's execution and the reason Le Masurier (2014) argues that magazines' websites cannot replace their print counterparts. The act of flipping through a physical magazine from beginning to end is an experience that simply cannot be replicated or translated online. Abrahamson (2015) terms this the "linearity of print" (p. 3), which is a vital component of a magazine reading experience.

Indeed, in their study of millennials aged 18 to 25 years old, Bonner and Roberts (2017) found that participants derived more enjoyment from a print magazine's physical attributes, including factors such as the scent of paper, which outweighed the convenience of online content. Also, Thurman and Fletcher (2019) found that when the UK magazine *New Musical Express (NME)* became an online-only publication, the title's reach unsurprisingly improved, but engagement decreased. Yet, the reality is that media consumers are now moving online, particularly on to their mobile devices—Guenther (2011) asserts that "consumers now spend as much time on their mobile devices as they do reading newspapers and magazines combined" (p. 328).

In that case, how do magazines balance their digital presence with their print output? Do they attempt to integrate both mediums or produce them separately? It seems that no one has been able to find a sustainable solution to this problem—publishers, for instance, have struggled with tablet versions of print magazines, plagued with difficulties such as sluggish audience adoption and technical issues (Inman & Van Wyke, 2014; Santos Silva, 2011). As

magazine organisations continue to work on their online presence, are there hierarchical relations or power dynamics that exist between print and online operations? What is the impact then on the content published in both print and online?

Clearly, taking into account the unique traits of magazines such as the difference in temporality and its emphasis on physicality, the way the print-online relationship is manifested in magazine newsrooms might vary significantly from newspapers. Undeniably, this would then have a discernible impact on magazine content. Hence, to understand how the print-online relationship influences the adoption of digital technologies in magazine newsrooms and the corresponding impact on magazine content, I ask:

***RQ1a.** What is the relationship between print and digital operations in magazine newsrooms in Singapore?*

While Boczkowski (2004, 2005) only focused on the print-online relationship for organisational structures, I additionally wanted to explore the relationship between editorial and advertising departments in magazines. Studies looking at the impact of digitalisation on the editorial and business relationship in the newsroom note the disintegration of the “ethical fire wall” (Beam, 1998, p. 3) separating news and business operations. With the financial instability brought about by digital technology, editorial staff now have to think about generating revenue, leading to closer collaborations with the advertising staff and a flatter organisational structure (Gade, 2008; Petersen, 2015). Indeed, the integration of editorial and business functions is already a norm in many news organisations (Cornia, Sehl, & Nielsen, 2020; Drew & Thomas, 2018).

Critics of this phenomenon lament that this increased market orientation means that readers’ preferences are now more important than journalists’ expert judgement (Beam, 1998). This then leads to a situation where important, serious stories are replaced by less substantial, shallow content, resulting in a scenario where journalists “fail to live up to social

obligations to disseminate the kind of public-affairs information essential to a democracy” (Beam, 1998, p. 3). Journalists have responded to this situation by actively trying to preserve their journalistic integrity. For example, editors interviewed by Petersen (2015) explain that the editorial-advertising relationship only goes one-way, where editorial staff members keep the advertising staff updated on stories so that the latter can sell ads, but the editorial staff would never let the advertising staff influence news content in any way. This can be interpreted as an attempt by the editorial department to maintain an organisational hierarchy where advertising personnel do not get to dictate editorial content.

The tension between upholding the duty of public service while balancing commercial interests is something almost all news organisations have to contend with in the digital age. This might not be so, however, for magazines. While newspapers used to mainly serve one group of customers (readers), magazines have long had to serve two: readers and advertisers. The ‘ethical fire wall’ that exists in newspapers is arguably more porous in magazines. Magazines are inherently market- and consumer-oriented, striving to satisfy both their readers and advertisers (Fürsich, 2012; Hanusch, 2012). How then, would the financial insecurity brought about by digitalisation affect the editorial-business relationship in magazines? Are there changes to the hierarchical relations or power dynamics between editorial and advertising departments? How is this reflected in a magazine’s organisational structure, and what is the corresponding impact on the content produced? To answer these questions, I further ask:

***RQ1b.** How has digitalisation affected the editorial-advertising relationship in magazine newsrooms in Singapore?*

Work Practices

Boczkowski (2004, 2005) focused on the concept of gatekeeping when investigating how the editorial function in newsrooms has transformed with digitalisation. Just like the

observations about organisational structures, Boczkowski's (2004, 2005) findings reflect two extremes: the more traditional gatekeeping processes guided news work, the more likely that the practice of a one-way dissemination of information was replicated for online production. On the other hand, when news work was more open to a deviation from gatekeeping, the more likely that workplace routines involved managing information flows from both journalists and readers.

Trying to theorise whether this is also the case in magazines would benefit from a discussion on what gatekeeping entails. Gatekeeping refers to the act of news selection in the news production process, where journalists actively *select*—and hence implicitly *de-select*—at each 'gate' (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Tandoc, 2014). In other words, journalists act as media gatekeepers who have the power to decide which news items to discard and which news items to send to the audience (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). They are mediators who transform raw information from "multiple news discourses" (Van Hout & Jacobs, 2008, p. 67) into a single narrative that is labelled as news and disseminated to the public. This gatekeeping attribute, Boczkowski (2004, 2005) argues, is a defining trait of the journalism profession.

Gatekeeping in magazines can be understood as a process encapsulating the whole series of events involved in the manufacturing of content, from the initial proposal of ideas to when the finished magazine finally leaves the newsroom (Morrish, 2005). Based on Morrish's (2005) detailing of this process, magazine gatekeeping can perhaps be categorised into the four following stages: ideation, data-gathering and writing, editing and planning, and evaluation of content. During the ideation stage, magazine staff will meet to discuss the stories they would like to do and agree on a general skeleton of how the current issue should look like. Next, magazine staff engage in data-gathering and writing; editors ensure the correct commissioning of stories and set appropriate story deadlines, while writers collate the information they need and write their stories. Then, during editing and

planning, stories undergo rounds of editing which involve both copy- (adjusting headlines, standfirsts, etc.) and sub-editing (checking of facts, grammar, spelling, etc.). Final proofs then get sent to print and online stories are scheduled. In addition, Morrish (2005) highlights that editorial strategy is tested with each issue and a magazine needs to revisit its strategy frequently. Most commonly, this is in the form of evaluating how well editorial outputs are resonating with the magazine's readers.

The traditional gatekeeping model has come under scrutiny in modern times. In researching how journalists are now working in the era of new media, scholars have found that it is increasingly difficult for journalists to disregard the audience in the newsmaking process (Anderson, 2013). In the past, audience feedback to journalists was mostly limited to the occasional letter (Gans, 2004). Now, however, digital technology has made it easy for the audience to exert a direct influence on the journalistic process. For instance, more and more individuals are generating their own news content online, motivating some scholars to label the audience as "content creators" (Goode, 2009, p. 1288) and "co-creators" (Lewis, Kaufhold, & Lasorsa, 2010, p. 165). The existence of these "content creators" and "co-creators" indicates that the audience is now increasingly involved in the journalistic gatekeeping process.

In light of these changes, scholars and journalists alike have reconceptualised the gatekeeping function to varying degrees. For instance, Shoemaker, Johnson, Seo, and Wang (2010) proposed a revised version of the gatekeeping model that they term audience gatekeeping. This updated gatekeeping theory states that the gatekeeping process is now characterised by a more circular flow of information, where the audience wields significantly more power in the gatekeeping process (Shoemaker et al., 2010). Elsewhere, Yu (2011) found that in China, journalists who blog (j-bloggers) are using blogs to "transform their traditional roles of gatekeeping into those of gate-watchers, gate-pokers and gate-mockers"

(p. 380). Meanwhile, Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc (2018) documented the emergence of the ‘audience-oriented editor’ whose task is essentially to interpret audience data for the rest of the journalists in the newsroom, rather than being a traditional ‘gatekeeper’ of news content. Using discourse analysis, Vos and Thomas (2018) concluded that some journalistic actors have even gone so far as to try and “shed the language of gatekeeping” and create “a new norm” (p. 15) to replace it instead.

Clearly, there is evidence that the work practices of newsrooms no longer revolve around traditional gatekeeping tasks. How such changes might manifest in magazine newsrooms deserves attention. Magazines and newspapers are fundamentally different products with differing production processes. How then has gatekeeping evolved in magazines in the digital age? In their thorough examination of gatekeeping theory, Shoemaker and Vos (2009) applied five levels of analysis to the study of gatekeeping: individual, communication routines, organisational, social institution, and social system. Differences at each level can result in variations to gatekeeping practices, which then affect editorial outputs.

Individual level. At the individual level, different professional role conceptions and types of jobs might lead to distinct gatekeeping practices. How journalists perceive their own professional identity affects the kind of news stories they will produce (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). While newspaper journalists might perform in accordance to Deuze’s (2005) ideal-typical values of public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics, Holmes and Nice (2012) emphasise that magazine journalists should instead “have a keen sense of audience and market imperatives” (p. 52) and a good understanding of the subject matter they are dealing in. Hartley (2000) additionally points out that magazine and lifestyle journalists belong to a distinctive class of “smiling professions” due to their role in bringing pleasure and entertainment, which is something that “serious journalists” (p. 40) do not do.

Meanwhile, for types of jobs, Shoemaker and Vos (2009) contend that individuals with different positions—news gatherers vs. news processors, photo vs. text journalists—would make different gatekeeping decisions. Given how magazines and newspapers are dissimilar products, perhaps it would also be useful to treat magazine journalists as a separate entity and consider how they have traditionally accomplished their gatekeeping function, and how that has changed with digitalisation.

Routines level. At the communication routines level, three discrete factors can affect the repeated practices and patterns journalists engage in to produce news: the journalists' orientation to the audience, the external sources journalists rely on for news, and the organisational culture journalists operate in (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Arguably, the most significant differentiating characteristic of magazines relates to the first source—their orientation to the audience. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) argue that traditional journalists tend to rely on an abstraction of their readers rather than actual knowledge of their readers to determine news content. In other words, if journalists believe their readers value drama, news content will be dramatic; whether that is what real readers actually want does not matter.

Hence, studies looking at how news production has evolved in newspapers note the ongoing “negotiation” (Karlsson & Clerwall, 2013, p. 72; Tandoc, 2014, p. 572) or “balance” (Cohen, 2018, p. 10) between traditional journalistic news instinct and audience data when making editorial decisions, given that journalists have historically been dismissive of the latter. While this is the case for traditional news outlets, the impact of digitalisation on magazines is less clear. Given how magazines have always been consumer-oriented, how has digital technology affected their gatekeeping process? Do magazines, for instance, find it easier to incorporate the usage of audience data (i.e., web analytics) into their workplace routines as compared with newspapers?

Organisational level. At the organisational level, Shoemaker and Vos (2009) state that how a newsroom operates will shape gatekeeping decisions. As Le Masurier (2014) contends, magazines are typically curated following a specific editorial philosophy championed by the editor-in-chief. Hence, it is probable that the editor might wield significant influence when it comes to directing gatekeeping practices in a magazine newsroom. Furthermore, supporting Boczkowski's (2009) temporality assertion, magazines' "longer production deadlines and longer feature journalism" (Le Masurier, 2015, p. 141) allow them to be classified as "slow journalism," in contrast with the culture of fast news as propagated by newspapers. Based just on temporality alone, it is likely then that a magazine newsroom has a different workflow when compared with a newspaper newsroom. Consequently, how do these factor into different gatekeeping practices in magazines?

Social institution level. At the social institution level, Shoemaker and Vos (2009) take an in-depth look at several external actors that can influence the gatekeeping process. These include the markets, audiences, advertisers, and many others. In particular, Shoemaker and Vos (2009) highlight how magazines face unique pressures from the advertiser segment. In general, there is a tendency for magazines to succumb to advertiser pressure in order to ensure their profitability (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Advertisers thus have a strong and direct influence on magazines' gatekeeping decisions—for example, magazines might give more coverage to major advertisers (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009), while advertisers might also have the power to make specific requests, such as asking magazines to edit or change their covers (Holmes & Nice, 2012). With these considerations in mind, how do external influences affect work practices for magazines? For example, would advertisers have even more influence on gatekeeping than before, given the poor financial state of the journalism industry?

Social system level. This level focuses on more macro-level influences on media content. Here, we can also theorise how magazine and newspaper journalists might engage in

gatekeeping differently. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) argue that in a working society, there have to be individuals occupying roles fulfilling different functions. News has taken on the responsibility of serving the democracy by providing citizens with political knowledge, mobilising citizens, and being a space for citizens to engage in political discussions (Kaufhold, Valenzuela, & de Zúñiga, 2010; Schudson, 2013). By being society's watchdog, newspapers produce stories with the purpose of keeping political institutions and actors in check (Peters & Witschge, 2015).

Magazines, however, might have a different function. Of course, this does not mean that magazines and lifestyle journalism cannot fulfil democratic purposes. For instance, some have observed that certain women's magazines such as *Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan* have ramped up their political coverage in recent years while continuing to push out content on the usual topics of cosmetics, celebrity, and others (Griffin, 2018). Still, with their largely market-driven nature, magazines likely take on a different role in society where their main priority is not to be society's watchdog. Hence, it is probable that newspapers and magazines have different newsroom practices to produce their own types of content. How have gatekeeping processes transformed as magazines strive to fulfil their own function?

It is evident that the way gatekeeping practices are now enacted in newsrooms has an impact on technological adoption. Thus, to understand how work practices in magazine newsrooms are guided by gatekeeping processes and how this then affects magazine content, I ask:

RQ2. *How has digitalisation affected the gatekeeping function in magazine newsrooms in Singapore and how does this manifest in specific work practices?*

Representations of Users

When looking at user representation, Boczkowski (2004, 2005) found that how online newspapers perceive their audience will influence the level of technological

innovation or adoption in online newsrooms. Those that continued to view readers as passive consumers of content are less likely to provide opportunities for interaction, whereas those that treated readers as information producers tended to enact “multiple information flows” (Boczkowski, 2005, p. 175) to allow readers to contribute content. Boczkowski (2005) called the factors related to work practices and user representations as “two sides of the interactivity coin” (p. 176). While work practices deal with the changing influence of gatekeeping on the editorial function in newsrooms, representations of users deal with the changing ways journalists perceive their readers.

Traditionally, the news production process is “highly subjective” and entirely dependent on the editor’s own evaluation of a news item (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 15–16). Because journalists usually rely on their own news judgement or their innate “nose for news” (Zelizer, 2005, p. 68) when making editorial decisions, they often do not take into account the audience’s needs or wants when selecting which news items to accept or reject (Usher, 2013). This means that journalists would publish information that they think the audience *ought* to know, without letting readers have direct input—or, as Boczkowski (2004) terms, a “we-publish-you-read” (p. 206) mode of news production. In fact, in early journalism research, most scholars conceded that journalists typically do not know who their readers actually are (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Journalists are likely to ignore market research findings on the audience and instead depend on their own construction of their readers (Gans, 2004) when producing news. The construction of this imagined audience is based on journalists’ own social circles; thus, journalists rely on their immediate supervisors, colleagues, or close referents (i.e., friends and family) to inform their news judgement (Gans, 2004; Sumpter, 2000).

This perception of the readers has changed in modern times. In his ethnographic study of *Philly.com* and two Philadelphia newspapers, Anderson (2013) found

contradictory attitudes towards conceptions of the audience. Some staff, especially management personnel, understood the need to view readers as generative instead of just passive consumers and were open to letting the audience have more agency in shaping the news. A tangible example of this is how executives at *Philly.com* “spoke with pride” (Anderson, 2011, p. 556) about how comments were turned on by default on stories so that readers can respond freely, instead of needing comments to be specially approved. On the other hand, some staff—particularly lower-level journalists such as reporters—were not as welcoming of increased audience empowerment. At best, they continued to ignore audience feedback, and at worst, they displayed contempt for reader comments. Similarly, in their study of British newspaper websites, Hermida and Thurman (2008) concluded that though journalists recognised the need to be more inclusive of the audience’s voice, there is lingering doubt over the value of user-generated comments, and journalists still preferred to vet such comments instead of leaving them unmoderated.

While news journalists traditionally do not know who their readers are and do not involve the readers in the news production process, magazines often know who their readers are, actively try to get to know their readers’ interests and preferences, and use that information to produce content to satisfy their readers’ needs and wants. Logically, one would assume that magazines would be much more open to perceiving their readers as equal contributors. Yet, just like Anderson (2013) observed, it appears there are opposing views regarding conceptions of the magazine audience.

Journalism research has detailed the rise of citizen journalism (Goode, 2009; Lewis et al., 2010) and participatory journalism (Singer et al., 2011) due to advancements in digital technology. Now, with the democratisation of the media propelled by the creation of the internet, ordinary citizens can be active content contributors alongside traditional news journalists. In the area of lifestyle media, lifestyle influencers—who can be defined as users

who have gained an objectively large following online (Abidin, 2016)—pose a formidable threat to lifestyle journalists as they present another avenue from which consumers can obtain similar types of lifestyle content. In fact, in the area of fashion, some believe that the social media app Instagram and the influencers operating on this platform have entirely replaced fashion magazines as audiences now rely on the former rather than the latter to discover fashion related news and content (Sherman, 2018).

In the context of women's magazines, there seems to exist reservations about treating readers as fellow content producers. For instance, there is evidence that fashion magazine journalists have been critical of fashion bloggers (Duffy, 2013), as the former perceive their expertise and authority as being challenged by the latter while being dubious about the bloggers' knowledge and skills (Rocamora, 2012). On the flip side, some magazines have acknowledged that readers can indeed be fellow producers. This goes beyond simply inviting bloggers or influencers to pen guest columns or be cover stars (Manning, 2018). There is evidence that social media is now considered an essential skill for traditional editorial positions, and some publications also try to leverage on the popularity of influencers by featuring them in their editorial outputs (Maares & Hanusch, 2020). Aitamurto's (2013) research on the launch of a co-creation platform for magazine journalists and readers to produce content together in a Finnish women's title also suggests that women's magazines might feel increasingly obliged to include readers in their production routines.

Because audiences can now look to lifestyle influencers rather than traditional lifestyle publications for content, the latter must now engage—or perhaps even compete—with the former when it comes to capturing readers' attention. In addition, influencers might be seen as a more attractive option to advertisers compared with traditional journalistic mediums due to their immense online clout and perceived authenticity (Civeris, 2018). A strategy that some publications such as *Marie Claire Australia* and *Cosmopolitan* have taken,

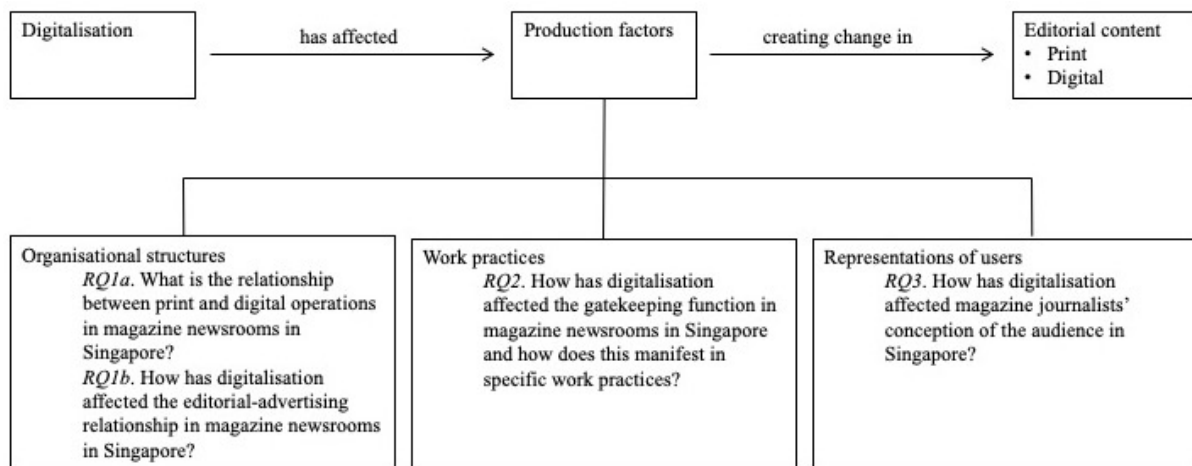
for instance, is to launch their own influencer networks in recent years to tap on popular influencers for collaboration purposes. These influencers work together with the magazines—and maybe even external brands—to generate content for the magazines (Marie Claire Australia, 2016; Tan, 2017). Such titles seem to have adopted a ‘if you can’t beat them, join them’ mentality where they now treat readers as collaborative, equal partners. Whether this approach is voluntary or born out of necessity, however, is up for debate.

What is worth investigating is why some magazines are vehemently opposed to treating their readers as producers, while others are open to doing so, and actively pursue strategies to create fruitful partnerships with such readers. Would we see similar observations made by Anderson (2013), where upper management is more welcoming of audience participation compared with lower-level journalists? How has content output changed for magazines that view readers more as fellow producers and less as passive consumers? To answer these questions, I ask:

***RQ3.** How has digitalisation affected magazine journalists’ conception of the audience in Singapore?*

Conceptual Framework

To summarise, I sought to understand how digitalisation has affected the production of magazines by investigating how technological advances have impacted (a) organisational structures, (b) work practices, and (c) representations of users in Singaporean women’s magazines. Please see Figure 1 for the conceptual framework of this paper as well as the list of research questions I aim to answer.

Figure 1

To give additional background context, I will provide a brief overview of the Singapore media environment and the local magazine industry.

The Singapore Context

As of end-June 2019, Singapore's total population is 5.7 million (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2019a). Our media market corresponds to this small population size—while the estimated U.S. daily newspaper circulation was around 29 million in 2018 (Barthel, 2019), for Singapore, it was about 710,000 in 2018 (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2019b). *Her World*, Singapore's oldest and most-read women's magazine, has a monthly print readership of 188,000, while American counterparts such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour* have circulations well above two million (PSA Research Center, n.d.). This translates to a modest advertising revenue that has to be shared across various media (Ang, 2016), and further compounding this problem is Singapore's high internet penetration rate (Kemp, 2017). Now, not only do local magazines have to compete with each other, but they also face increasing competition from the websites of countless international magazines and several digital start-up sites.

Unlike several developed countries, Singapore also has a low freedom of press—it is currently ranked 151 out of 180 countries on the 2019 World Press Freedom Index, with a

score of 51.41 (Reporters Without Borders, n.d.). While in the U.S., “the press is given virtually unfettered freedom” (Ang, 2016, p. 7), in Singapore, the press is tightly controlled by the government (George, 2002). The Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), a statutory board in the Singapore government, has rigorous regulations across various media sectors such as television, radio, and print publications. Particularly relevant for lifestyle magazines, for example, is that publishers and distributors have to follow strict guidelines laid out across areas such as alternative lifestyle, coarse language, and nudity. If found that the guidelines are not adhered to, “strongly punitive action may be taken against a publishing firm or its editors” (Pugsley, 2010 p. 175–176).

Singapore Press Holdings (SPH), one of Singapore’s leading media organisations in newspaper and magazine publishing, has undergone organisational restructuring, including layoffs, in efforts to mitigate the company’s declining profits in recent years (Tay, 2017). Most recently in October 2019, SPH announced the trimming of its workforce by about 130 employees, including those in the magazine division, in response to a 23.4 percent decline in full-year net profit (CNA, 2019; The Straits Times, 2019). Such a situation is not surprising, given that the company’s media segment has been facing steadily dwindling profits, which it has attributed mainly to falling advertising revenues in addition to decreasing circulations as well as retrenchment costs (Pillai, 2020).

Moreover, it has been highlighted that the drop in profits is also due to the company’s deteriorating magazine business, which incurred impairment charges of S\$37.8 million amid unfavourable market conditions in 2017 (Tan, 2017). This is a serious problem, given that as of end-2019, media advertisements and circulation generate approximately 52.3 percent of the company’s operating revenues, while magazines make up a sizeable 24.2 percent of the total media advertisement revenue (SPH, 2020). SPH Magazines, a wholly-owned subsidiary of SPH, produces and publishes more than 80 magazine titles covering a wide range of topics

such as lifestyle, fashion, beauty, and health. Thus, the consequences of a worsening magazine business have already forced SPH to take on drastic measures, such as the closure of Singapore's edition of *Cosmopolitan* in 2015 (Chung, 2015), as well as the closure of home-grown women's magazine *Simply Her* in 2017.

Other media companies and publications have not been spared as well—Mediacorp, Singapore's incumbent broadcaster, announced its digital-first strategy for its host of magazines in 2017 (Mediacorp, 2017). It announced the closure of the monthly print editions of the home-grown *Style* and *Style: Men* magazines, with more content being channelled into its digital portal *styleXstyle*, while *Manja*, the Malay lifestyle print title, became a weekly television programme. This trend of print closures continued in 2018, where the company further terminated the print distributions of local entertainment and lifestyle titles *8 Days* and *i-Weekly*, as well as its flagship fashion magazine, Singapore's edition of *Elle* (The Straits Times, 2018). The licensing rights for *Elle Singapore* was then subsequently picked up by a smaller publishing house, Atlas Press, in early 2019.

In addition, smaller, independent magazines have also adopted a fully digital strategy to combat declining print sales. *Nylon Singapore* has started publishing online only since April 2017, while its main international edition ceased its print run in October 2017 along with a 12-member layoff (Bloomgarden-Smoke, 2017). *JUICE Singapore*, a local magazine dedicated to street culture and music, has also gone fully digital since 2017, except for an annual print edition, along with a revamped website (Ho, 2017).

The intersection of a small media market, high internet penetration rate, and controlled media environment in Singapore presents a unique set of circumstances that has arguably been underexplored, given that most journalism studies focus on the Western media landscape. Hopefully, looking at the specific context of magazines in Singapore can provide novel and valuable insights that can further inquiry in global journalism research.

CHAPTER III

Method

The purpose of this study is to find out how technological advances have affected organisational structures, work practices, and representations of users in Singaporean women's magazines and the corresponding impact on the content produced. To do so, I adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative research can unveil new insights to help researchers dig deep into the particular phenomenon they are studying, and advance knowledge by introducing new theories and concepts (Bansal, Smith, & Vaara, 2018). I employed the two qualitative research methods of semi-structured interviews with magazine journalists and textual analysis of magazine content.

Interviews. In-depth interviews can produce a set of rich and detailed data that will help researchers better understand and explain the topic or situation under investigation (Howson, 2013). I adopted the format of semi-structured interviews, which enabled me to set the agenda for the topics covered but is flexible enough such that I was able to adapt questions easily based on the interviewees' responses (Green & Thorogood, 2004). Hence, an interview guide consisting of a list of questions covering the three areas of organisational structures, work practices, and representations of users was used to conduct the interviews. Probing and follow-up questions were posed during the interviews based on the interviewees' responses to the pre-constructed questions (Turner III, 2010). This allowed the interviewees to express their various viewpoints and encouraged the emergence of important information to provide a deeper understanding of the interviewees' perceptions (Tracy, 2013). To make

interviewees feel at ease and to contextualise subsequent answers, they were all first asked to describe their background and job responsibilities.

Textual analysis. Apart from interviews, I also conducted textual analysis of the content of the women’s magazines selected for this study. Textual analysis emphasises the investigation of “underlying ideological and cultural assumptions” (Fürsich, 2009, p. 240) and allows a researcher to perceive latent meaning and more implicit themes in the text under study. This approach is useful here as a research design incorporating both production analysis (i.e., the interviews) and textual analysis provides essential contextual information that can help explain the scope or conditions of the textual production (Fürsich, 2009). The combination of interviews and textual analysis is needed to understand how a specific media text—in this case, the content of Singaporean women’s magazines—can be placed within its broader production setting (Fürsich, 2009). With that in mind, I analysed both the print magazines and the magazines’ online websites with a view of trying to understand how the changes prompted by digitalisation on organisational structures, work practices, and representations of users have impacted the magazines’ editorial outputs.

Sampling

Five Singaporean women’s magazines were chosen for this research (see Table 1). They were selected based on their similarity in branding and topics covered—all are positioned as more upscale publications focused on luxury fashion—and their dominant market share.

Table 1

Magazine	Website
Female	https://www.femalemag.com.sg/
Her World	https://www.herworld.com/
Harper’s Bazaar Singapore	https://www.harpersbazaar.com.sg/
L’Officiel Singapore	https://www.lofficielsingapore.com
Elle Singapore	https://www.elle.com.sg/

The first three magazines are published by SPH Magazines while *L'Officiel Singapore* and *Elle Singapore* are published by smaller publishing houses Heart Media and Atlas Press respectively. Below is a brief background of each magazine. The information are either provided by interviewees or taken from the most recent rate cards of these magazines which were obtained from the magazines' sales departments in February 2020.

Female. Launched in 1974, *Female* is a local monthly publication that brands itself as a fashion-forward luxury magazine with a heavy emphasis on visuals. It covers fashion, beauty, art, design, and pop culture. Its readership is made up of 97% women with the majority aged between 20 and 39 years old and two-thirds being professionals, managers, executives, and businessmen (PMEBs) or white-collar professionals. The magazine's website was launched in December 2014. *Female* has a print circulation rate of 67,000 and an average of 41,000 monthly unique visitors for its website. At the time of the interviews, the magazine has a small-sized newsroom comprising five editorial staff and three art staff.

Her World. Launched in 1960, *Her World* is a local monthly publication that covers fashion, beauty, topical women's issues, relevant social trends, career matters, health, relationships, and lifestyle pursuits with a specific focus on Singaporean women. Its readership is made up of 97% women with one-third aged between 25 and 39 years old. 78% are PMEBS or white-collar professionals with half earning S\$3,000 and above, and 32% of the total readership has a monthly household income of more than S\$10,000. The magazine's website was launched in December 2011. *Her World* has a print readership of 160,000 and 900,000 unique visitors for its website. At the time of the interviews, the magazine has a modest-sized newsroom comprising 12 editorial staff and four art staff.

Harper's Bazaar Singapore. Launched in 2001, *Harper's Bazaar Singapore* is a monthly publication that produces stories on high fashion, beauty, watches, jewellery, travel, arts, and culture. Its readership is made up of 85% women with 75% aged 30 years old and

above. 55% are PMEBS and the average monthly household income of the total readership is S\$10,333. The magazine's website was launched in March 2015. *Harper's Bazaar Singapore* has a controlled print circulation rate of 25,000 and an average of 261,000 monthly unique visitors for its website. At the time of the interviews, the magazine has a modest-sized newsroom comprising 10 editorial staff and two art staff.

L'Officiel Singapore. Launched in 2007, *L'Officiel Singapore* produces ten print issues per year and is a luxury fashion magazine that covers high fashion, beauty, watches, jewellery, and other lifestyle-related topics. Its readership is made up of 80% women with 80% aged between 25 and 39 years old. 75% are PMEBS and 90% have an annual income of S\$50,000 or more. The magazine launched a revamped version of its website in March 2017. *L'Officiel Singapore* has a print circulation rate of 36,000 and an average of 30,000 monthly unique visitors for its website. At the time of the interviews, the magazine has a small-sized newsroom comprising three editorial staff and one art staff.

Elle Singapore. Launched in 1993, *Elle Singapore* is a monthly publication that covers fashion, beauty, watches, jewellery, and culture. Its readership is made up of 89% women with 72% aged between 18 and 44 years old. The magazine's website was launched in October 2015. *Elle Singapore* has a print circulation rate of 40,000 and an average of 41,067 monthly unique visitors for its website. At the time of the interviews, the magazine has a modest-sized newsroom comprising 10 editorial staff and two art staff.

Interviews. Interviews were conducted with journalists from the five magazines identified above. These journalists had to be part of the editorial team of the magazines and are or were responsible for producing content for print, online, or both. Following the sampling strategy from Hanusch, Hanitzsch, and Lauerer (2017), I made sure to interview journalists across the whole editorial hierarchy, from lower-level journalists (e.g., entry-level writers) to senior journalists (e.g., editor-in-chief) so as to attain the saturation of ideas. To

identify potential interviewees, I used a snowball sampling method to gather interviewees by first contacting suitable journalists from these magazines I knew personally, and then asking them to recommend other possible interviewees that fit my research criteria. IRB approval was granted by Nanyang Technological University in September 2019.

I conducted a total of 24 interviews between September and December 2019. Because of the small sample size and the relative homogeneity of the specific field of Singaporean women's magazines, 24 interviews were enough to reach the point of theoretical and data saturation (Saunders et al., 2018). While 21 interviews were conducted in person in a one-on-one setting, two interviews were conducted over the phone and one interview was conducted over Skype audio call based on interviewees' requests. Due to interviewees' time constraints, two interviews lasted 21 and 23 minutes respectively. However, the remaining 22 interviews lasted between 48 and 104 minutes ($M = 76$). All interviews were recorded and then transcribed by undergraduate students from the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information.

Between two to eight journalists from each of the five magazines were interviewed. Because of a combination of the limited sample pool restricted to journalists from the five Singaporean women's magazines, the rather small size of the newsrooms of these magazines, and the high turnover rate in this industry (which is something that multiple interviewees commented on), interviewees comprised both current employees and past employees of the five magazines. At the time of the interviews, the 10 interviewees who are past employees left their magazine jobs ranging from one month to slightly over three years ago. Three of them are now working for different lifestyle-related publications, three are freelancers working within lifestyle journalism, two have gone back to school, one is working in social media marketing, and one is working in finance.

Sample parameters. Interviewees are aged between 21 and 47 years old with half falling within the 25 to 34 age range. Due to the genre of the magazines under study, it is

perhaps unsurprising that nearly two-thirds of the interviewees are women, which is also in line with past findings that lifestyle journalists tend to be female (Hanusch, 2019; Hanusch et al., 2017). On average, interviewees have worked at their current magazine (present employees) or their most recent magazine (past employees) for two years and two months. Meanwhile, interviewees have been working or had worked in the broader area of lifestyle publishing—including both magazines and newspapers—for an average of seven years and nine months (see Table 2).

Table 2

Sample characteristics	Number ($N = 24$)
Age	
21-24	5 (20.8%)
25-29	6 (25.0%)
30-34	6 (25.0%)
35-39	4 (16.7%)
40 and above	3 (12.5%)
Gender	
Male	9 (37.5%)
Female	15 (62.5%)
Work experience (mean months)	
At most recent magazine	25.8 ($SD = 26.3$)
In lifestyle publishing	93.2 ($SD = 73.9$)
Have newspaper experience	6 (25.0%)
Education level	
Diploma	4 (16.7%)
Bachelor's	18 (75.0%)
Master's	2 (8.3%)
Degree specialisation	
Journalism	4 (16.7%)
Fashion Journalism	2 (8.3%)
Fashion Communication	2 (8.3%)
Communications/Media	9 (37.5%)
Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences	6 (25.0%)
Physical Sciences	1 (4.2%)
Job position	
Lower-level writer	10 (41.7%)
Mid-level editor	8 (33.3%)
Senior-level editor	6 (25.0%)

It is worth noting that only six interviewees have newspaper experience while the rest have worked exclusively in lifestyle magazines. These six interviewees have newspaper experience ranging from six months to three years, and all of them worked at the lifestyle or fashion desks of their news organisations with none having hard news experience. Of these six interviewees, three worked at newspapers before moving into magazines, two alternated between newspapers and magazines throughout their careers, and one moved into newspapers after working at magazines. Additionally, it is more common for interviewees to ‘job-hop’ rather than stay at one publication for a prolonged period of time—in fact, 10 interviewees have worked at two or more of the five magazines analysed for this study. Only six interviewees have ever worked at just their current or most recent magazine; for five of them, this magazine position is or was their first job out of school, while the other interviewee transitioned over from a newspaper position.

In terms of education level, 20 have at least a bachelor’s degree, and the rest have diplomas. Four specialised in journalism, two specialised in fashion journalism, and two studied fashion communication. Of the rest, nine pursued studies in the general field of media or communications (Mass Communications, Communication Studies, Media, etc.), six have a degree in the arts, humanities, or social sciences (History, Psychology, English Literature, etc.), and only one obtained a degree in the hard sciences.

Because of the small sample of the five magazines and the fact that several interviewees have very specific job titles that could make them easily identifiable, I will not be identifying interviewees based on their job titles in the results section to preserve their anonymity. Instead, interviewees will be grouped into and identified via the three broad categories of lower-level writer, mid-level editor, and senior-level editor. Lower-level writers comprise editorial assistants, interns, and entry-level writers (i.e., fashion writer, digital writer). Mid-level editors comprise section editors and anyone who has jurisdiction over lower-level writers, but who are

not necessarily involved in administrative or management duties (i.e., fashion editor, digital editor). Senior-level editors comprise higher-level editors who are responsible for both editorial and administrative tasks (e.g., budget, manpower allocation) and who routinely make managerial decisions (i.e., editor-in-chief, executive editor).

Textual analysis. For the textual analysis, I studied the editorial outputs of the magazines for a duration of three months, from September 2019 to November 2019. This consisted of analysing the September, October, and November 2019 print issues of all five magazines, as well as their online websites, which was monitored on a daily basis from 1 September 2019 to 30 November 2019 inclusive. This allowed a direct comparison between the content published in print and online in the same time period.

The research questions guided my textual analysis, and I focused primarily on the content that could lend insight to the three core concepts of organisational structures, work practices, and representations of users. Because magazines are such visual-heavy mediums (Maares & Hanusch, 2020), I analysed not just the text but also the design (e.g., layout) and photography of the magazines. This is especially so for the print magazines, since editorial photoshoots that comprise minimal text make up a substantial number of pages in each issue. As for the online websites, I took note of certain important homepage elements such as the carousel of the newest stories and the ‘most read’ or ‘most popular’ lists. Mainly, I paid attention to the new articles uploaded, including both their textual and visual aspects. For instance, I studied the stories’ headlines, bylines, and body texts, and also accompanying photos, videos, and other visual items (GIFs, infographics, etc.).

For the print magazine, a combined total of 2,704 pages across all five magazines were analysed, with *Female* and *Her World* being the thinnest magazines and *Harper’s Bazaar Singapore* being the thickest magazine on average. For online, a combined total of 1,771 posts across all five magazines were analysed, with *Harper’s Bazaar Singapore*

publishing the most and *Elle Singapore* publishing the least online stories. It should be noted that not all magazines updated their websites daily—*Female*, *L’Officiel Singapore*, and *Elle Singapore* almost never posted new stories on the weekends (see Table 3).

Table 3

	Average (<i>M</i>)			
	Print		Online	
	Pages per issue	Posts per month	Posts per weekday	Posts per weekend
Female	131	139	6.40	0.08
Her World	131	132	5.18	2.23
Harper’s Bazaar Singapore	229	210	8.42	3.19
L’Officiel Singapore	195	72	3.26	0.15
Elle Singapore	216	40	1.80	0.15

Data Analysis

I adopted a deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) approach for both the interview and textual analysis data. A deductive approach—which is driven more by the researcher’s analytic interests in a specific area—is suitable here in order to address the explicit research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For both interview and textual analysis data, I followed a constant comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). While guided by the research questions and sensitising concepts from the literature, the analysis was also an iterative process where codes were continuously refined as they emerged inductively (Tracy, 2013).

Coding was done in two stages. In the primary-cycle coding stage, I conducted a close reading of the data to identify and generate first-level codes. As recommended by Tracy (2013), I coded the data line-by-line, where each new line was compared with the previous one, so as to fracture or break down the data into smaller pieces. In the secondary-cycle coding stage, I compared and grouped first-level codes into broader conceptual categories

that addressed the research questions. I then finalised these categories and constructed narratives around each one, supported by specific examples drawn from the data (see the Appendix for more information about the coding process).

CHAPTER IV

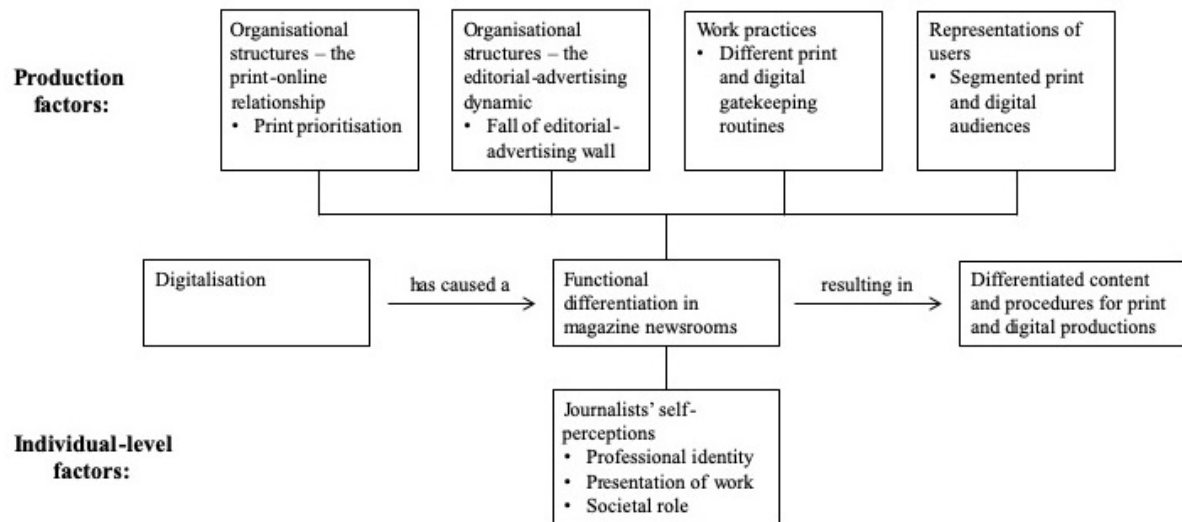
Results – Changes in Production

This study aims to understand how digitalisation has affected the production processes in women's magazine newsrooms in Singapore, and the subsequent impact on their content. Boczkowski's (2004, 2005) framework posits that how technological advancements affect editorial outputs is mediated through the three production factors of organisational structures, work practices, and representations of users. In this study, organisational structures refer to two things: one, how magazine newsrooms have incorporated digital production into their traditionally print-based operations; and two, how the editorial-advertising dynamic in magazine newsrooms has changed with digitalisation. As for work practices, I looked at how digitalisation has affected the gatekeeping function of magazine newsrooms, and for representations of users, I looked at how magazine journalists' conception of their readers has evolved with digital technology.

However, while technological adoption in the magazine newsrooms is indeed mediated by the above production factors, I additionally found that individual-level factors stemming from how journalists conceive of their role are equally important in determining how digitalisation affects editorial outputs. That is, magazine journalists' self-perceptions, or what they believe of their professional identity and societal role and how they present their work, has an impact on content as it influences how and the extent to which magazine journalists incorporate digital technology into their news work. Such individual-level factors, combined with production factors, affect both the quality and the type of content magazine

journalists produce for the print magazine and the online website. Figure 2 summarises this expanded conceptual framework, one that is grounded in the data for this study.

Figure 2



All the magazines analysed for this study house print and online productions in the same newsroom; in other words, the same editorial team is tasked with producing both print and online content. Generally, a clear overall narrative emerged from interviewees' responses: that there is a distinct segregation between their print work and online work, resulting from the way interviewees approach print and digital productions and how these are configured in their newsrooms. Interviewees' responses indicate that print production is essentially insulated from the onslaught of digital demands, as interviewees invoke a different set of practices, norms, and values when they engage in print production compared with digital production.

This is reminiscent of Hanusch's (2017) findings on functional differentiation, where in the context of web analytics usage, news journalists seem to be enacting different strategies when they partake in new practices like day- and platform-parting. So, depending on the time of day or the platform they are dealing with (e.g., print, website, social media), journalists will engage in specialised practices that have developed around the specific time

of day or platform (Hanusch, 2017). Indeed, several studies have found that journalists use web analytics to determine the platform(s) a story should be published or promoted on to maximise readership (Cohen, 2018; Giomelakis, Sidiropoulos, Gilou, & Veglis, 2018; Lawrence, Radcliffe, & Schmidt, 2017; Tandoc, 2014) while Duffy, Ling, and Tandoc (2018) found that due to feedback gleaned from reader comments and analytics, journalists adapted stories to be more suited for mobile consumption as that was the most popular way that readers were consuming content.

While the above studies looked specifically at web analytics to conclude that technological advancements have led to a functional differentiation in newsroom processes, this research provides support for the notion that it is all the various practices involved in producing content in a digitised media landscape—and not just those related to using analytics—that have led to fundamental transformations in the content produced by magazines. In this chapter, the emergence of this functional differentiation will be explored through Boczkowski's (2004, 2005) framework and individual-level factors to show how this phenomenon is manifested in the magazine newsrooms analysed in this study. The subsequent impact on the magazines' editorial outputs will be detailed in Chapter Five.

Organisational Structures – The Print-Online Relationship

RQ1a asked: What is the relationship between print and digital operations in magazine newsrooms in Singapore? From interviewees' responses, it is clear that there is an unmistakable segregation between print and digital along the whole production chain in their newsrooms, from the initial story conceptualisation to the execution of content. Most of these magazines entered the digital space very late, with many of the websites being launched only around 2015. Interviewees, especially those that worked for magazines published by SPH, acknowledged this and attributed it largely to corporate culture and management structure: a writer discussed how "SPH is run almost by like dinosaurs" who are not well-versed in

digital technology, which resulted in the late adoption of online production. A senior-level editor also said: "I'm very certain if you go to...an independent publisher which is very small, you know, they have a less hierarchical system, they are able to make decisions faster."

Clearly, producing for digital is still rather new for many of the magazines in this study and it is unsurprising that they are still in the midst of adapting to digital production.

Presumably due to their late entrance into the digital space, the adaptation to digital was—and still is—a struggle for most magazines. When asked about their general thoughts on digital production, multiple interviewees referred to digital as a "monster" and attribute the difficulties they still currently face with digital production to the constantly changing nature of the digital medium. Essentially, interviewees are still struggling with attaining digital success and are undergoing a continuous process of trial and error in an attempt to figure out the best practices for the publication of online content.

Apart from the struggles with having to keep up with technological advancements, the main gripe that interviewees brought up about having to produce online content is the increased workload tacked onto the existing editorial team members. A senior-level editor from SPH recounted her experience during the initial days in 2015 when the organisation was starting to shift into digital production:

"I think the whole doing print and digital became a really harsh reality...I would be very honest with you, it was a struggle...We had to get on board, but I think it was a huge cultural shift that was very hard to, you know, a lot of people who have worked for very long, they were like struggling like, no, I already do print why must I do digital, I already have so much work to do."

The prioritisation of print. Regarding how magazine journalists perceive the relationship between print and online, they still largely prioritise their print product over digital production. The general disgruntlement towards going digital still persists today and is

reflected in how a majority of interviewees acknowledge that their newsrooms still direct most of their attention and resources on producing the print magazine, while digital is treated as an ‘add-on’ or ‘extra’ that they have to squeeze into their already busy schedules. The reasons for this response can be grouped into three broad categories: journalists’ preferences, advertisers’ preferences, and the affordances of the platforms.

Journalists’ preferences. By and large, print prioritisation stems from the fact that magazine journalists seem to demonstrate a stronger liking for the print magazine and would rather spend more effort on print production. There is an increased workload caused by the added responsibility of having to produce online content apart from the usual print magazine. However, for all the magazines in this study, manpower has either remained small or actually dwindled due to budget constraints—a writer noted that “when people leave nowadays, they don’t really replace them because of budget and everything so everyone else just has to double up and do more.” As such, everyone at the magazines is expected to take on digital responsibilities on top of their continuing print duties. But, interviewees still tend to devote a significant amount of time and energy into print while often ignoring their digital obligations. A former mid-level editor pointed out that for her past colleagues, “online stories are last on their list” and this becomes most prominent when the editorial team is rushing to close a print issue. Because print deadlines are inflexible as the magazine must be sent for printing, the same mid-level editor noted that during this period they “usually don’t have time to do their digital story.”

This preference for print can be partly attributed to interviewees’ own background. Generally, more experienced interviewees tend to favour print more as they were trained in print journalism and were present during print’s ‘heyday.’ A mid-level editor who has been in the magazine business for nine years described it as: “...you remember your so-called glory days of print, there is some kind of lingering...um, lingering kind of like...obsession

with print." Another mid-level editor who has worked in magazines for eight years called himself a "dinosaur" due to his print background and felt that "newer writers and journalists" would be "more well-versed" with digital production, and acknowledged that he still treats print as a more "special" and "sacred" product. Hence, for a number of interviewees, there is the belief that print is a more precious or prestigious product than digital assets such as the magazine's online website.

Also, another trend that emerged from interviewees' responses is that the amount of time an interviewee dedicates to print and digital directly correlates with his or her position in the editorial hierarchy: the higher his or her position, the more likely he or she spends more time on print than digital. In fact, some EICs are hardly involved in digital production at all. An EIC admitted that "I'm doing mostly print so I'm not really going to talk about digital" while a writer observed that her EIC "doesn't really touch [digital], she is too busy to care." In most cases, digital production is entrusted to a sole digital editor and it becomes the responsibility of the digital editor to oversee everything related to online content. A likely explanation for this phenomenon is that those who occupy higher positions at a magazine tend to be journalists who have worked in magazines for a longer time. As such, it is probable that they are more attached to the print product rather than lower-level journalists, who are usually newer employees.

Advertisers' preferences. For magazines, advertisers' preferences have a significant influence which is unsurprising given that "advertising has been central to the business of women's magazines since the 1890s" (Gough-Yates, 2003, p. 56). Hence, when discussing the influence of external actors' preferences, interviewees stressed that advertisers (along with many others like models, stylists, photographers, and readers) still prefer the print product. This is evident in how advertisers still tend to advertise in print rather than online. A writer noted that "if you look at it in terms of like brands who advertise with us, which is

where we make our money right, I think that they still value print a lot” and another writer observed that “even though it's a dying trend, a lot of luxury brands are willing to pay money to still be in print.” Similarly, a mid-level editor stated that “fundamentally I think clients still like to see print ads, it just looks nice and it looks impressive” while another mid-level editor even claimed that “there are clients who are still not advertising on digital.”

When pressed about why advertisers might prefer advertising in print than online, a writer explained that advertisers and luxury brands “want their product shot professionally, placed on magazines, distributed to hotels...for them it’s for reputation” while a mid-level editor said that “somehow when it comes for brands to measure their ROI...as much as digital has its reach...they prefer pages in the magazine.” Another mid-level editor brought up the physicality aspect and said that the “tangibility” of the print product is still something that brands treasure. A writer also hypothesised that “when there’s lesser supply of these magazines, it is actually a competition for brands to put their products there,” suggesting that the scarcity of print magazines compared with online websites might lead brands to believe that print ads are more prestigious. Because of advertisers’ behaviour and magazines’ reliance on ad revenue, interviewees are pressured to devote more time and energy into print production.

Affordances of the platforms. The nature of the print magazine and the online website, as well as the production of print and digital content, are very different. These differences contribute to print prioritisation, as magazine journalists seem to be more in favour of the innate capabilities afforded only by the print medium and the processes involved in print production.

In terms of the characteristics of the print and digital mediums, a mid-level editor drew a parallel between women’s magazines and the fashion industry by describing print and digital as such:

“...we always say print is like the haute couture of publishing, at least for a magazine, that's where you can go be, honestly, really indulgent...and online is really the ready-to-wear of publishing, of news, so it's really off the shelf.”

In essence, interviewees demonstrate a stronger liking for print because they are allowed to be more “creative,” “artistic,” and “playful” for print content, something that is not possible for online content due to the inherent nature of the two platforms. For example, interviewees can play around with the layout of photos and text in terms of size, font, orientation, etc. for the print magazine, whereas the layout for online stories is fairly standardised. This extends to writing too, as a writer explained:

“I mean, print we can have fun with the headline, like recently one of my headlines was like...it was talking about drag queens, and so I put like ‘Don’t be a drag, just be a queen,’ which is like a Gaga song. But you can’t put that online. People will be like, what the hell are you talking about?”

Furthermore, interviewees stressed the tangible and permanent nature of print magazines as something that cannot be replicated online, providing support for Le Masurier’s (2014) assertion that magazines’ websites cannot compare to or replace the print product. Interviewees discussed how the ability to hold a tangible product lends print a sort of “beauty,” “prestige,” and “premium sort of quality” while a senior-level editor stated that “I myself would actually prefer reading something that’s on paper rather than on the screen.” They also emphasised how print content is “mobilised in print forever” while online content is easily editable. Hence, print is viewed as more deserving of quality content that takes more resources to produce, thus giving it priority standing.

In terms of differences in production, interviewees also pointed out the temporality factor when it comes to creating print and digital content. The two have very different production timelines: print, in general, is planned two to three months in advance, where the

major theme of each issue can be confirmed as much as up to one year before. In contrast, digital runs on a 24/7 timetable due to the need to accommodate breaking news. This type of non-stop production schedule is not something interviewees are used to, with a senior-level editor commenting that digital functions “almost like a newspaper newsroom.” Indeed, past research has found that even print newspaper journalists struggle to adapt from their once-a-day deadlines to online which requires “more frequent feeding” (Singer, 2004, p. 847). Predictably, magazine journalists who have long functioned on a monthly deadline find the unceasing demands of digital hard to grapple with.

The need to stay constantly connected and up to date is stressful and challenging for many interviewees. A senior-level editor lamented that for digital there is “more or less no break” while a mid-level editor commented that “it’s a lot of work.” Another mid-level editor underscored the particular difficulty that print-based news workers face when adapting to digital when she explained that “for some of the print people, we find it a bit difficult, because we still want to detach.” Arguably, this discomfort with digital production has pushed interviewees to stick to what they are comfortable with—the print magazine, which results in its prioritisation over digital platforms like the website.

Efforts to go digital. While magazine journalists might prefer print production and the print magazine, that is not to say that magazines in this study have not taken steps to incorporate digital production into their newsrooms. Digital production is often entrusted to a digital editor, which is a role that is present in all the magazines in this study. Here, the creation of the new role of a digital editor should be noted. The installation of what a mid-level editor called “a dedicated digital gatekeeper like an editor” is evidence of the normalisation of technological advancements in the newsroom. Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc (2018) came to the same conclusion when they looked at how the emergence of audience-oriented editors confirmed the increasing importance of audience metrics in the editorial

process. However, the problem here is that because magazines lack the resources to hire more help, often times the digital editor is, as a writer described, “literally [a] one-woman or one-man show.” Combined with the sporadic contributions from the editorial team as they focus on print, digital editors usually have to rely on interns or freelancers to create content for the online website.

Another strategy that has been adopted by some magazines is the introduction of a dedicated digital production team. This is the case with SPH, which publishes three out of five of the magazines in this study. Interviewees from these magazines mentioned the establishment of a Digital Trending Desk (DTD) by management in early 2018. The DTD was staffed by dedicated writers whose sole purpose was to produce online stories that could be adopted by various titles owned by SPH so as to help individual magazines reach the target number of online stories that they are expected to produce. As such, a mid-level editor explained that DTD’s stories “had to be useful to multiple titles,” and so its output was limited to “listicle-style articles” because these were thought to be “easier to manipulate with different titles.” While a writer acknowledged that the DTD “really helped to lighten our workload,” another writer thought that the whole operation was useless and just “literally wasting time and manpower.”

The main complaint that interviewees had about the DTD was that it was difficult for different types of magazines to adopt the same story and hence when individual magazines did so, they had to spend extra time tweaking the story to fit their own magazine’s tone or DNA. Essentially, a writer labelled the operation as “like a cookie-cutter system that totally failed.” Moreover, interviewees commented on how the quality of the DTD’s stories were “shitty” and “trashy” and the writing was bad. A writer who previously worked at the DTD explained that because management put overwhelming pressure on the DTD to churn out

stories while not hiring more manpower, quality suffered—in fact, this particular interviewee was let go because management thought “he didn’t write fast enough.”

Unfortunately, the DTD was short-lived and lasted for only slightly over a year; a writer cited that the unreasonable management pressure “overstretched” the DTD’s writers and caused them to quit. In sum, while interviewees understood the logic behind the operation, the execution of the DTD was deemed poor. So, although strides have been made to incorporate digital production into the magazine newsroom such as with the creation of the digital editor role and the DTD, these efforts either ultimately failed or have a limited impact at best.

Organisational Structures – The Editorial-Advertising Dynamic

RQ1b asked: How has digitalisation affected the editorial-advertising relationship in magazine newsrooms in Singapore? The first thing to note regarding the editorial-advertising dynamic in magazine newsrooms is that interviewees are keenly aware that magazine publishing, at the end of the day, is a business. Concurring with Gough-Yates’ (2003) claim that no women’s magazines “can make a profit on its cover price alone” (p. 56), a mid-level editor claimed that subscription revenue is “peanuts” and that it is the number of advertisers or amount of ad revenue, not the number of subscribers, that determines a magazine’s success. This is also encapsulated in a senior-level editor’s response:

“I mean there's no question about it. We know who pays our bills right, we know who pays our salaries and if the ad revenue does not come in, you know, that's why magazines close...your readers may love the magazine but if you can't reach out to the people who will pay your salary every month, you are not a commercial success.”

This is perhaps a factor why interviewees prioritise their print product: advertisers still like advertising in print magazines. Given the heavy reliance on ad revenue, it is perhaps not unexpected that interviewees will spend more time on their print product.

The supposed ‘wall’ that exists between editorial and advertising in newsrooms has long been a highly debated topic in journalism scholarship. Many studies today look at the blurring of the news-business divide in newsrooms and its subsequent impact as the media industry battles with increasing financial instability (Artemas, Vos, & Duffy, 2018; Coddington, 2015). On the other hand, unlike traditional watchdog journalism, lifestyle journalism and magazines have long had a close relationship with the commercial function of their publications (Duffy, 2013; Gough-Yates, 2003; Holmes & Nice, 2012). But, while this ‘wall’ has always been porous in such titles, interviewees’ responses seem to provide support for the idea that this wall might now be non-existent in their newsrooms.

The fall of the editorial-advertising wall. The commercial side of a magazine business is governed by a three-way relationship between editorial, sales, and advertisers. The purpose of the magazine’s sales department is to serve as a liaison between the advertisers and the editorial team. Traditionally, sales personnel are responsible for poaching clients and bringing in ad revenue while the editorial team is solely responsible for editorial content. Hence, though interviewees acknowledge that the two have always worked closely together, they do recognise the traditional “push and pull” that exists between editorial and sales due to their different priorities. Interviewees admit that this “love-hate” relationship can be “thorny,” “unsavoury,” “combative,” and “strained” at times.

So, while tensions between editorial and advertising do exist in magazines, it seems that the boundary between the two parties is increasingly less clear. Having to engage in digital production is not the direct cause of why this editorial-advertising wall might be crumbling; rather, it is due to the broader digitisation of the media landscape. Magazines today face increased competition for ad revenue from the likes of influencers, new online publications, and even social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, where advertisers can spend money to place their own ads. Hence, a senior-level editor commented

that advertisers “don't necessarily turn to magazines by default as they used to.” So, magazines today have to fight harder for a smaller pool of ad revenue and thus usually do not decline any advertising opportunity. This is reflected in how a writer stated that “you cannot say no to money” while a mid-level editor similarly said that “there's no choice because advertising money is hard to come by.” Even if for some reason a magazine had to reject an advertiser's proposition, a senior-level editor stated that the magazine “would probably say like: do you have something else that we can support?”

This is further exacerbated by the fact that Singaporean magazines are operating within a small media market. As a writer illustrated:

“Singapore's market is very small, so if you don't have a lot of readers you cannot tell your advertisers to spend so much money. So, it's like you're stuck between a rock and a hard place, in a sense. Because you need more money to survive, to grow, but then you don't have enough readers to persuade your advertisers to give you more money, and your readers aren't giving you enough income from reading.”

In comparison, a senior-level editor argued that magazines from bigger markets such as the U.S. or China can potentially earn a bit of revenue from their larger subscription base, while also command a higher advertising rate due to their broader reach. Because of this inherent disadvantage Singaporean publications face, local titles likely have to fight even harder for limited advertising money.

What this means is that editorial and sales, as a mid-level editor put it, “cannot work in silos.” A senior-level editor also described that the two have to work even closer together because “there is realistically a pressure on magazines to retain our clients.” Since magazines today have to fight harder for dwindling ad revenue, interviewees also admitted that they are now more willing to compromise to please advertisers. As a senior-level editor noted, all magazines today feel the “pressure to deliver or please their clients to a greater extent” and

thus “compromises now are much more easily made.” So, while the editorial-advertising relationship has always been close, the power dynamics between the two has shifted. As a mid-level editor put it:

“...how I feel is that the power dynamics has changed. When in the past I would feel that majority of the power was sitting with editorial, I think the editorial team now are more conscious of the limitations and they are less demanding or insistent on their point of view to the sales team. So, I’d say the power dynamics is more equal now where in the past the power dynamics, I would say it rested mostly on editorial.”

Similarly, a senior-level editor argued that magazines are no longer “the end all and be all of every relationship” while another senior-level editor acknowledged that “advertisers’ power has definitely grown over the years.” They have generally come to terms with this new reality, as a mid-level editor stated: “I feel that in the current climate where everyone is struggling for that small pot of gold, I would say the editors and the editorial team are much more accepting that they have to compromise on what they want to do.” In extreme cases, the power dynamics might have shifted completely as a mid-level editor confided that she has heard in other publications “salespeople are the ones who would influence the editors and then the content itself is influenced by the advertisers.”

Negotiating the editorial-advertising dynamic. Similar to what past studies have found (e.g., Beam, 1998), when looking at the editorial hierarchy, the higher one is, the more he or she is involved with the commercial side of the magazine business. Normally, EICs are the ones most active in handling any sales projects and serve as a bridge between advertising and editorial. Hence, a mid-level editor noted that the EIC “has a very, very challenging job because they somehow have to appease all the stakeholders and at the same time still communicate their vision.” Indeed, an EIC expressed that she often has to “tread that line quite delicately” between satisfying advertisers while not compromising on “editorial

integrity.” Meanwhile, lower-level writers tend not to be involved in the initial discussions of a sales project and are only brought in to execute the project, such as writing the advertorials.

This arrangement has led to conflicting attitudes between interviewees at different positions in the editorial hierarchy. Mainly, writers often feel pressured to write about or support clients against their wishes. A writer stated that “there’s no negotiating with the editor, of course, if she tells you to do it, just do it and then like, there’s nothing you can do” and another recounted that “sometimes if I don't write something then my editor is like, huh, why you don't, they are big advertisers, must make them happy. Make advertisers happy is a main thing.” Writers feel that this constant pressure to “show love” to advertisers can be “tiring,” but if they do not do so they might incur the wrath of their editors. Indeed, a mid-level editor acknowledged the difficulties that writers face because “if you are a junior writer and they said that you have to support your clients, it is very hard for them to push back.” On the other hand, a senior-level editor argued that “I can’t keep going to my writers to say, eh, did you support this advertiser or eh, this story, how come we didn't write about this advertiser?”

The impact on writers is that many of them feel that they have compromised their editorial integrity or feel limited in what they can or cannot write about. A writer related how her editor was unhappy when she wrote a story on a non-advertiser brand; another described how:

“Like there was one time I was writing an advertorial for a shoe brand called Geox, it’s not [the magazine], the shoes are hideous and I was like, why am I interviewing them? Because, oh, they are putting lots of money to put in. Ok. That’s how it is.”

The most extreme case concerned a beauty spread that was sponsored by a particular makeup brand that appeared in one of the magazine issues analysed for this study. Because this brand’s products were not effective in creating the makeup looks required for the spread, other brands’ products were used; however, the captions in the published spread falsely credited all the makeup products used to the sponsoring brand. When detailing this incident, the writer who

was in charge of this story repeatedly called herself a “liar” and that she was “cheating” but also defended herself by saying that writers usually “just have to do it and not question.”

In order to assuage their own feelings concerning paid projects, writers have adopted the coping mechanism of compartmentalising their work. If tasked with a paid project that might involve doing things one is not particularly inclined to do, a writer remarked that “you just don’t put yourself in it.” Writers understand that advertisers are paying and so when it comes to such projects, they work on “autopilot” mode and function “like a machine” whose sole purpose is to give advertisers what they want. As a writer stated simply: “I just put my feelings aside because it’s like a paid project.”

Interviewees’ responses seem to suggest that besides a functional differentiation along the print and digital divide, there is also the existence of different subcultures across the editorial hierarchy in response to the increased commercialisation of their work. Namely, senior editors and lower-level writers harbour different attitudes and values regarding the production of paid projects, with the former more accepting of commercial influences on news work than the latter. While this might not be caused by digitalisation per se, such varying beliefs might have been deepened by the increased financial instability brought about by the digitisation of the media landscape.

Work Practices – The Gatekeeping Function

RQ2 asked: How has digitalisation affected the gatekeeping function in magazine newsrooms in Singapore and how does this manifest in specific work practices? When discussing how digitalisation has affected work practices, Boczkowski (2004, 2005) argued that the way journalists reconfigure their gatekeeping tasks has an effect on technological adoption in news routines. According to all interviewees, the fundamental theory of gatekeeping—which is that journalists are media gatekeepers that filter information to the audience—has not

changed with digitalisation. What has evolved, however, is how interviewees carry out their gatekeeping roles with respect to both print and digital productions.

Interviewees' responses seem to indicate that while print gatekeeping remains largely unchanged, the gatekeeping processes invoked for digital production deviates significantly from the ones for print. Essentially, interviewees seem keen on keeping print production as is and insulate it from the onslaught of digital. This provides further support for the notion of functional differentiation along print-digital lines in magazine newsrooms. Here, how gatekeeping tasks are carried out during the news production process is broken down into four stages: ideation, data-gathering and writing, editing and planning, and evaluation of content.

Ideation. This stage refers to when magazine journalists engage in decisions about the kind of content and stories they would like to do for their magazines. Based on interviewees' responses, it is clear that print ideation and digital ideation are vastly different. Generally, there is the trend of keeping better quality, extensive stories that take more effort for print while producing lesser quality, shorter stories for online. A reason for this goes back to the fact that the magazines in this study face a shortage in manpower. So, to help ease their workload, interviewees enact what a senior-level editor termed a "single production, multiple deployment" mindset. In other words, interviewees strive for maximum efficiency at whatever they do, and one distinct example is the common habit of repurposing print stories onto the online website. This, in turn, reinforces the notion of print prioritisation, as a mid-level editor expounded:

"...we repurpose all our print stories onto online. So, because of that, very often the writer or journalist will feel that I should put my best stories on print first then anyway, it's going to go up online, at the end of the day. So, they tend to hold like the people stories, the stories that take more legwork, just for print."

On the other hand, online stories are comparatively simpler, shorter, and more basic with many of them being PR stories and listicles that take less time to do. Interviewees acknowledged this and a writer confessed that for online, “all the fashion magazines are just regurgitating press releases.” This is because there is, as a mid-level editor explained, the general mindset to “always save the best kind of stories and ideas for print. And then use more like fast to cook, good to eat kind of stories for digital.” Furthermore, interviewees expressed reluctance at having to put in too much effort for digital stories—the same mid-level editor noted that “anything that takes longer than like a few days, generally we find it a bit too much leg work already.”

This difference between print and digital ideation can be extreme in certain cases. For example, some magazines are actually putting in more effort to ‘innovate’ their print product such that it stands out against online websites. A senior-level editor justified it as such:

“So why would anybody buy print if everything is up there online? That means that all teams, all magazines that have a print and online component, have to work five times as hard for their print component. Because you have to put stories up there that cannot be found online, and you have to be out there with stories that online will never be able to do. For example, visual spreads, you know, in-depth investigative stories, even more curated stories that help readers make decisions about whatever it is they are doing.”

Another senior-level editor said that print nowadays has to be “printier...meatier...more evergreen...have longevity as well.” What this means is that interviewees are putting in more effort to make their print magazines even more desirable by sharpening the quality of print content or trying to turn print magazines into what a mid-level editor labelled as “collectible coffee table editions” with improved design and photography. This in turn takes away time for interviewees to spend on improving their digital outputs.

Additionally, interviewees also discussed certain ideation practices that are reserved for digital production only. For online content, many name social media in particular as a very helpful tool, both as a way to keep on top of trending topics as well as using it as a source of news. For example, a writer described how he will look at “what's trending on Twitter, what’s trending on Instagram, what’s trending around in Singapore or globally” to help him decide what online stories to pursue, while another writer explained: “I actually rely on Instagram quite a bit for my work to find people and get news on things, so to me I see it as a boon.” Also, some interviewees mentioned that they keep track of their competitors’ analytics or track their Facebook pages. A writer explained that this is to see which online stories have “quite a number of shares” because interviewees believe that similar stories that did well for their competitors will likely also do well for their own magazine’s website.

Data-gathering and writing. This stage refers to when magazine journalists engage in newsgathering and the reporting of their stories. Here, it is again clear that the gatekeeping standards for print and digital are not the same. When it comes to data-gathering, print stories tend to involve more active legwork, where interviewees partake in actions such as interviews, extensive background research, and reaching out to experts when they are sourcing for information to write a story. On the flipside, interviewees tend to rely passively on press releases and provided information when writing for online. For instance, when penning listicles or simple aggregate news stories (Duffy, Tandoc, & Ling, 2018)—such as what a mid-level editor described as “a collation of red lipsticks” —for online, writers might just rely on already published information.

There is a difference with regards to writing style too. As a mid-level editor explained: “...my assumption when I write for print is that someone already has the magazine so I can be so-called as artistic as I want to be. But when I write a digital story, half of my mind is thinking: how do I make this article very searchable?”

Thus, the priority for online writing is searchability, something that print writing does not have to contend with. A writer summarised it as such:

“...for digital right, the way we write, like the headline, the excerpts, the teasers, the everything—they all have to be very, to use a better word, clickbait. So, it'll be things that boost Google SEOs.”

Interviewees stressed that strategies such as using repeated words, keywords, and synonyms as well as using simple language to increase searchability are extremely important for online writing. This can make it difficult to jump from one writing style to another, as a writer observed that “for my colleagues at digital, they also find it very hard to write for print because the way you write is also different.”

In extreme cases, separate copies of the same story are written; a senior-level editor elaborated on how “the same writer might be producing the same story for print and the same writer might be producing a slightly different copy for digital.” This is reminiscent of Hanusch’s (2017) finding on platform-parting where “broadcast stories had to be rewritten for the website” (p. 1581). In essence, print and digital conceptualisation is different from ideation to writing—a writer mentioned having to switch out of “print mode” when writing digital stories because both the types of stories and writing styles for print and online content are very different.

Editing and planning. This stage refers to the procedures involved in the final publishing of content, including the editing of stories and the decisions related to content dissemination and line-up. In terms of story editing—which is typically performed by mid- and senior-level editors—interviewees noted the influence of management pressure to get clicks on how they carried out their editing for online stories. Here, advertiser influence is evident: management emphasises volume for digital production in order to maximise the number of clicks because this is needed to command a higher ad revenue. Thus, interviewees

remarked that online gatekeeping is ‘looser’ as even substandard stories can pass through the ‘gate’ just to get as many clicks as possible. A mid-level editor who had been working in magazines since the pre-digital era pointed out:

“I would say that the gatekeepers were much more strict in the past. At the moment, a typical gatekeeper, especially if you are doing digital, you are going through hundreds of stories a month. So, you have to go through 250 stories and you have to hit that quota, it’s not like you can say this story is bad, no, don’t publish it. It’s more like this story is bad, rewrite it, quick, I need to publish it still (laughs). So, I would say that, definitely, some things get slipped in the cracks, because of the sheer quantity.”

On the other hand, editing for print stories is more controlled, recalling the prioritisation of print. A senior-level editor explained that “with print, everything is just so, so calculated and everything is just very curated,” and as such, stories undergo several more rounds of detailed edits compared with online stories. Interviewees spend more time and energy editing print stories to ensure that only the best stories pass through the ‘gates’ for print.

Additionally, the way print and digital operations are structured in the magazines’ newsrooms also have an impact on story editing. Digital production tends to be relegated to a single digital editor who is in charge of overseeing all digital content, while the rest of the editorial team focus on print. So, online gatekeeping is much flatter compared with print; a writer described that “for print we go through a lot of layers, but for online it’s like, we just go to the digital person, then the digital person uploads, done, finish.” In other words, print stories tend to be edited several times by multiple individuals whereas online stories might only be edited once by the digital editor. A side effect of this is that writers tend to feel that they have more freedom when they write online stories—they only have to pass through the digital editor ‘gate’ (who is concurrently desperate for stories), and they are not restricted by the rigid standards and multiple layers imposed by their superiors for print stories.

Gatekeeping with regards to content dissemination and line-up also varies across print and online. Most prominently, the temporality difference between print and digital productions and the segregation between both in the newsrooms of the magazines in this study seem to have a profound impact on the planning of content. Magazines' digital websites operate on a 24/7 production schedule while the print magazine is typically planned months in advance. Because of the need to accommodate breaking news online, interviewees find that the scheduling of online content must be more flexible and fluid compared with print. A senior-level editor elaborated that "with digitalisation it's harder to have a gatekeeper like print" simply because "everything is moving so fast" online; interviewees are unable to plan out their editorial calendar as they are used to with print.

A discussion on content editing and planning also warrants a closer look at how decision-making plays out across the editorial hierarchy. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) propound that news workers holding different newsroom positions make different gatekeeping decisions. While the consensus is that everyone is a gatekeeper at their own individual level, the amount of gatekeeping power increases as one goes up the newsroom ladder. A writer explained that "editors will have a stronger say" over content because "they will be more familiar with the brand identity and who the readers are." Hence, the ultimate magazine gatekeeper is undeniably the EIC. Indeed, Gough-Yates (2003) believes that "the best selling aids for a women's magazine is the editor" (p. 118) simply because he or she is the living embodiment of the magazine and its DNA. A senior-level editor agreed by saying that editors are "associated as the voice and face of a particular publication" while a writer believed that EICs know their publications best as they are both "the reader and the editor." Thus, most decisions about story editing and content planning are usually up to the EIC's discretion. A writer described how this is accomplished in her magazine:

“...why everything looks cohesive in the magazine is because of the editor. She edits all our pieces to her own writing style so technically it’s her writing style, it’s not really ours.”

Despite this disparity in gatekeeping power, interviewees are quick to note that magazine production is a team effort. Because a magazine issue is always incredibly thematic, no one individual can work in silos and everyone needs to work on the same wavelength. A unique trait of magazines is also its emphasis on visuals—a writer mentioned that “the design really does affect how much space I have to write or even how I write it.” Therefore, dialogue with the art team is constant, and ‘art skeds’ (i.e., meetings solely to discuss the layout and design of the magazine) can be as frequent as meetings about content. With this groupwork mentality, it is unsurprising that most editors indicate that they welcome external input and are open to comments from others, though this is usually confined to colleagues working on the magazine. Also, the “editor’s gut” usually takes precedence when it comes to making final decisions. An EIC argued that “it is a very small pool of people who will be able to influence the editor-in-chief” while another EIC maintained that “it is an innate sense of knowing what should and should not be done and so when the editor-in-chief says no, then it's a no.”

Evaluation of content. This stage refers to the processes involved in the evaluation of editorial outputs and the corresponding actions taken. Again, the way interviewees determine the success of print and digital content and how they react accordingly differs between the two mediums. Since advertisers exert a strong influence on print content, interviewees mainly shape and assess their print outputs based on whether they have fulfilled their clients’ demands and the level of ad revenue they attract. On the other hand, evaluation of online content and any decisions made regarding online outputs are based mainly on web analytics.

Before delving into how web analytics is incorporated into online gatekeeping, it is perhaps pertinent to understand how readers traditionally exert influence on magazine content. Past research suggests that women's magazines pay close attention to market research and are very attuned to their readers' preferences and align their content accordingly (Duffy, 2013). However, this does not seem to be the case for the magazines in this study. Indeed, a senior-level editor explained that "we know very well what kind of content we're creating...we expect that naturally the readers who are with us resonate with that" and another stated that "every editor-in-chief has his own view or understanding of what the magazine is or should be, like the identity or the DNA, the reader profile, what is cool and what is right and what is wrong for the magazine."

Hence, it appears that interviewees are writing for an idealised version of the reader, which is based on the magazine's DNA that is in turn determined mainly by the EIC since the EIC has the most control in shaping the brand identity of the magazine. This is presumably why a writer commented that "all my time I was just very influenced by this vision that [the editor] had, so I worked towards that vision." Similarly, when questioned about the most important factors they consider when making editorial decisions, another writer mentioned that "something that is very to our DNA is a must." Rather than having actual reader preferences guide the magazine content, the established magazine DNA guides the content, and interviewees assume that their actual readers are subscribers of this DNA.

That said, it is untrue that magazines prefer to ignore or reject market research, which past studies have found to be the case for some news journalists (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). The audience-oriented nature of magazines is chronicled by a writer: "...you always create something with a person in mind. And then as you execute it, then you tweak, you see, oh, are the people that I think I'm creating for actually buying my things? If not, who is it and what do they want?" Yet, the problem today is that magazines simply lack the manpower,

budget, and time to conduct such audience research compared with the past. A senior-level editor summed up the situation:

“We used to have focus groups...but because budgets have really went down over the years, we haven't done focus groups in a very, very long time. So, the danger is that a lot of magazines work in their own silos, we work thinking that, oh, a reader is like that, then we hope that the reader really is like that. It's a very dangerous way to work, but because you need to react so quickly now, a lot of these things fall by the wayside. I don't know of any magazine right now who does this kind of thing. Everybody is really just focused on surviving.”

Though magazines might no longer have the resources to conduct market research like focus groups, their audience-oriented nature is demonstrated by their unrestrained use of web analytics. While past studies have found that news journalists tend to be hesitant about using audience data to help with editorial decisions (Hanusch, 2017; Vu, 2014; Welbers, van Atteveldt, Kleinnijenhuis, Ruigrok, & Schaper, 2016), interviewees seem to harbour no reservations incorporating the usage of metrics into their work routines. Interviewees openly admitted that what determines digital success is numbers; a senior-level editor said that “there's no point in putting up stories that you're not going to get a response for.” In fact, the foremost evaluation criteria for online stories is whether a story can get clicks, and often times this is at the expense of quality, as the response from a mid-level editor shows:

"And then for digital, again, there's another layer. It's the layer of how much, how successful will that story do. There's no point in us doing a very good story that will win a Pulitzer prize if like, okay, only two people read it."

This click-driven mentality seems to already be normalised and internalised by interviewees. A senior-level editor reasoned that “people consciously now are trying to post

things that they think get more likes, more views and that is true for all the digital platforms” while a writer noted:

“Initially when I joined [the magazine] right, I would still have that, some sort of equilibrium. But then I would soon realise that they were more focused on the number of clicks. Then that's when, you know, you want to make your life easier during those meetings.”

Both editors and writers perform certain behaviours that reinforce this click culture. Editors might publicly praise writers whose stories get many views, which is a behaviour that has been reported in other newsrooms (Bunce, 2017). Also, writers are aware of which types of stories are likely to attract more readers and adjust their content accordingly. For example, a writer explained that “human features...are easier to translate online” because those featured would usually share the story with their friends so that such stories “get a lot of traction online.” The same writer also mentioned how if view count is not good at a certain time, he will “shelf” any planned stories that he knows will probably be less popular and instead “do more accessible, easily digestible stories online to boost the numbers.” In fact, a senior-level editor mentioned that her writers actually express frustration when being asked to do stories that they know would not get any clicks because they believe “it doesn’t matter.”

This endorsement of analytics might, on the surface, suggest that interviewees are more than happy to produce content that satisfies readers’ demand. However, this is not the case. The pressure to accrue clicks usually comes from upper management’s desire for profits because more clicks directly translates to the ability to attract more advertisers and command a higher ad revenue. This pressure then gets passed down through the editorial hierarchy. Hence, a writer described how if the numbers are not hitting management’s target, there will be an “emergency meeting” and the editors “literally will come to me and tell me, can you think of something viral?” Another writer recounted how before he was hired, he was told

explicitly that he would not be allowed to write opinion or long-form pieces but only celebrity stories because the latter were deemed as more click-worthy. In essence, everything goes back to advertising—the open embrace of analytics and the uninhibited chase for clicks is prompted more by the need to woo advertisers rather than the wish to serve readers.

This might be a factor why even though interviewees do not shun the use of analytics in their news work, they demonstrate very little knowledge of who actually collects the audience data, what is collected, and how it is collected, and also display minimal enthusiasm for finding out more about analytics in general. For magazines in this study, most editorial staff are not the ones tracking their own metrics, but when asked who does, interviewees are unsure or point to a variety of possibilities (sales staff, ops, backend people, a separate analytics team, etc.). When asked what exact analytics are tracked, interviewees usually only name a couple of the most basic metrics (page views, time spent, bounce rate, etc.). When asked how the analytics are tracked, interviewees mostly do not know and only a few interviewees mentioned Google Analytics. Interviewees essentially do not actively seek out analytics, but passively receive them and are content with this.

The only exception might be the digital editor who is typically more involved with analytics. However, even digital editors do not seem particularly passionate about collecting and analysing audience data. One such digital editor clarified:

"But if to expect a digital editor whose background is mainly as a print journalist, which if I'm not wrong most of our digital editors at SPH are, then it might be expecting too much. But I think Google Analytics for me when I was a digital editor, it was enough already, I didn't want anything more. Unless someone else is doing it."

Besides the lack of background or training deterring interviewees from learning more about analytics, interviewees also mentioned the lack of time to do so. This goes back to the prioritisation of print—interviewees are simply too preoccupied with the print product to bother

about analytics. A senior-level editor also believed that “digital analytics is something that the digital team should do [as] they would know how to track it better.” Furthermore, there is the sentiment of not needing to know analytics in-depth as a mid-level editor rationalised:

"For me, I think editorial is just like, oh, this story does well then let's do more of that...I think for us we just need to know this then it's enough already. I don't need the breakdown like, oh, this post people stay usually on average...we just need a broad overview, we don't need to know the nitty-gritty."

This circles back to the idea that interviewees are not actively collecting and analysing reader data because they are not motivated by the want to better know and please their readers.

Instead, the pervasive click culture is caused by the need to attract ad revenue. And so, interviewees just need to know enough analytics to get clicks, and nothing more. Because interviewees do not deal with analytics themselves, a mid-level editor described that they “have no first-hand knowledge” of readers and “there’s a line between us and the readers, actually.”

In summary, the evaluation procedures for print and digital content are different because the latter, unlike the former, is based almost entirely on web analytics. However, the underlying motivation for both is the same: interviewees base the success of both their print and digital outputs ultimately on the number of advertisers they attract and the amount of ad revenue they generate. This demonstrates the overwhelming influence of advertisers on the content of women’s magazines in Singapore.

Representations of Users – Magazines’ Conception of Their Readers

RQ3 asked: How has digitalisation affected magazine journalists’ conception of the audience in Singapore? Boczkowski (2004, 2005) believed that how journalists conceive of their readers will affect the level of technological adoption in newsrooms. If journalists continued to perceive readers as passive consumers of content, journalists would be unlikely to initiate new channels for journalist-reader communication and vice versa. Previous

research has shown that magazines, unlike newspapers, tend to know who their readers are and actively engage with them (Duffy, 2013; Homes & Nice, 2012). Hence, one might assume that magazines would be more open to taking advantage of digital capabilities to perceive their readers as equal contributors and interact with them constantly. Yet, this does not seem to be the case with the magazines in this study.

Who are the readers? While past research suggests women's magazines know their audiences well (Duffy, 2013; Gough-Yates, 2003), this finding does not seem to apply for the magazines in this study. It seems that the magazines are writing for an 'imagined' reader; this 'imagined' reader is born out of the magazine's DNA and might not reflect the real reader. Some interviewees are aware of this and point to their magazines' aspirational nature—while actual readers might not fit the target reader profile, they might aspire to be someone like that. A mid-level editor detailed how her magazine navigates this mismatch between the imagined and actual reader:

“So, usually we have a target audience and then we have our actual audience, and then we try to bridge the gap so that the stories will reach both our target audience as well as our actual audience. So, we are quite conscious that there are two different types of readers.”

As for web analytics, while interviewees do rely heavily on metrics to guide editorial decisions for digital, again, they are not the ones tracking these metrics and also do not actively try to learn more about their readers or conduct further analysis on their preferences. Interviewees just want to know which types of stories are more popular so that they can react accordingly. As such, rather than actually 'knowing' their readers, interviewees only know an 'abstraction' of their readers that they have constructed based mostly on their interpretations of page views (Zamith, 2018).

It might be useful here to make a distinction between print and digital readers. By and large, interviewees believe there are two different audiences for the two mediums. Because of the accessibility and what a few called an almost zero “barrier to entry” for digital, interviewees believe that they have a wider and younger audience for digital. Whereas for print, interviewees think that readers are older and more niche due to the relatively high cost of the print issue (the average is \$6). Furthermore, a writer also felt that it is “a more specific group of people who have that time to actually sit down, read the magazine, who actually want to go out, purchase the magazine.” Thus, a mid-level editor commented that “the idea of a target audience doesn’t apply as much” for digital compared with print while a writer observed that “for online definitely we are targeting anybody and everybody, but for print, it’s a tighter group of readers.”

Reasons for limited magazine-reader interaction. As for communication with readers, interviewees noted that they hardly interact with readers and attributed that to their limited time and energy due to the shortage in manpower and resources. A senior-level editor explained that “where appropriate we try to develop some kind of loyalty and interaction, but I mean realistically speaking we're not able to do it on a constant basis” while another senior-level editor bemoaned that:

“Although there are more channels for readers to get in touch with us and stuff like that...we don’t have a social media manager that basically responds to every single one of the comments that we get. So, it's very arbitrary, a lot of times these people go unanswered.”

Furthermore, interviewees find it hard to find—let alone engage—their print readers simply because of the nature of how their magazines are distributed. While subscriptions can certainly give interviewees an inkling of who their readers are, a large portion of their magazines are sold on newsstands and distributed via controlled circulation to selected

places like airport lounges, hotels, beauty salons, etc. Hence, interviewees maintained that it would be difficult for them to track and interact with their print readers. As for digital readers, interviewees believe that ‘knowing’ their audience via metrics is enough; engagement is unnecessary. A mid-level editor confessed that while she keeps in mind the types of stories that do well, the thought of having a relationship with or interacting with readers has never crossed her mind.

A few interviewees also admitted that it is unnecessary for them to take time to engage with readers simply because magazines are advertiser funded. Hence, establishing ways for readers to interact with the magazine is not a priority because interviewees are more preoccupied with serving their advertisers. A senior-level editor stated that since she joined the magazine, no focus groups have been conducted, and “the reason why that is not as important for us, unfortunately, is because we are advertiser driven.” This is reflected in magazine content as well, as a writer noted: “If I were to say it in my own words, I’d say that our stories and whatever content we produce are for advertisers or for brands that we support, that's it.”

How magazines communicate with their readers. Although some believe that feedback from readers is important, almost all interviewees stated that they hardly receive reader feedback and do not deliberately solicit them either. A senior-level editor said: “I don't think we try extra hard to connect with them necessarily” while a writer pointed out the lack of comments on her magazine’s website. Indeed, all the magazines’ websites in this study do not have any comment box or forum function where readers can leave their comments. Besides limited time and manpower, a writer explained that the lack of initiative to establish more avenues for reader interaction stems from the magazine’s nature and the genre of its content:

“Because you know, within the fashion world, in Singapore, they are very elitist, it’s very in their own world, it’s not like Mothership, The Smart Local, Zula; they really

go all out to have engagement. Here, it's like you need to know us, you want to know us, you want to be us. That's really the mentality, which makes no sense.”

Mothership and The Smart Local are local start-up online news sites while Zula is a digital-only platform targeting Singaporean women that covers fashion, beauty, and lifestyle topics. The ‘elitist’ characteristic of the magazines is hardly surprising—fashion has historically been intrinsically tied to social class and the magazines’ focus on luxury clothing and products can realistically only apply to a small group of higher-class consumers (Crane, 2012). This is perhaps why a mid-level editor stated that “we rarely contact readers; readers contact us if they have [comments].”

Still, this does not mean that there is completely zero interaction between magazines and readers. But, the very limited interaction is often confined to the magazines’ branded social media accounts. As a senior-level editor observed:

“Even though obviously we have emails, we don't get as many emails as we get DMs or comments or tags on social media. I think that's our main source of engagement with readers nowadays.”

Also, interactions do not happen equally across all social media platforms. For the magazines in this study, interviewees remarked that most interactions happen only on Instagram. A mid-level editor commented that: “I feel that there is a certain distance between our Facebook audience and us, but IG is a lot closer.” It seems that while Twitter might be the favoured social media platform used by news journalists to break news (Brems, Temmerman, Graham, & Broersma, 2017; Gil de Zúñiga, Diehl, & Ardèvol-Abreu, 2018), Instagram is the preferred social media platform for magazines, arguably because fashion and lifestyle titles are traditionally very visual-heavy mediums (Maares & Hanusch, 2020). However, while interactions do happen on Instagram, interviewees admitted that these are usually ad-hoc and wholly dependent on whether interviewees have the time to engage readers. Also, even when

interviewees reply, it is usually what a senior-level editor termed “very simple engagement” and what a writer described as “Instagram story repost, or like, someone says anything, then oh like, love heart, that’s it.” Extensive engagement is not the norm.

In real life, the only time that interviewees get to talk to readers is when the magazine hosts some sort of event. But, this comes with a caveat—such events typically have a commercial orientation because they are usually hosted in conjunction with an advertiser where the ultimate goal is to connect the brand with potential new customers. Hence, the guestlist for such events is “curated” and “targeted” and not representative of the magazine’s actual audience. A senior-level editor detailed how her magazine chooses the people to invite:

“So, we look at their Instagram and you see like, oh ok, actually not bad, this person, wow, damn hype, got wear the newest this, blah blah blah, that kind of thing. And then there are of course also a few people in the scene that you already know...a lot of these second-generation socialites...they also have the money to spend and they love to shop. We also have a relationship with them, so we do invite them to our events.”

Although the editor admitted that this way of selecting invitees “sounds very superficial,” she maintained that “it’s a win-win situation” because the aim of these events is for the partnering brand to acquire new customers, and not really for magazines to get to know their readers. Additionally, even though such events are an avenue for interviewees to meet a select group of their readers, interactions are again quite superficial. A mid-level editor described how communication is “like idle chit chat” so she does not end up having sustained engagement with readers.

On the flipside, interviewees believe that the lack of interaction between magazines and readers is also partly because of readers’ disposition. In particular, multiple interviewees pointed out the inherently “passive” and “not outspoken” nature of Singaporeans and that readers do not tend to frequently reach out nor respond to the magazine. Going back to

Instagram, a mid-level editor mentioned that comments are “just very like, oh this is beautiful, this is lovely, you know, like heart shape, emojis of love, like that” and readers “are not predisposed to, like, engaging you.” The only time that readers engage extensively with the magazine is when it hosts giveaways or contests. However, multiple interviewees labelled these readers as “freebie aunties” or “freebie hunters” who are not reflective of the real readers as these people, as a senior-level editor proclaimed, “are actually not interested in engaging with the magazine really, they just want the prize.”

Perception of influencers. A discussion on how technological advancements might have allowed readers to become producers themselves necessitates a look at influencers. Past research has chronicled the rise of citizen journalism (Goode, 2009; Lewis et al., 2010) and participatory journalism (Singer et al., 2011) where previously passive readers have taken advantage of digital technology to now become active creators of content. In the area of women’s magazines and lifestyle journalism, such reader-turned-creator is best encapsulated by influencer culture. Interviewees acknowledged that in the early days when influencers were just emerging, there was “tension” between lifestyle journalists and influencers as the former did not know nor understand what a writer termed as a “relatively new genre” of people.

Nowadays, however, the general consensus across interviewees is that influencers are both friend and foe. When asked how influencers are competition, a mid-level editor explained how influencers are “definitely competition especially in terms of advertising dollar” and not necessarily competition in terms of readers’ attention; this arguably shows the advertiser-driven nature of magazines. A senior-level editor also detailed how brands today—especially beauty brands—would “actually prefer working with KOLs [key opinion leaders] than magazines” and this directly affects a magazine’s revenue. However, a mid-level editor stated that cooperation with influencers can also result in a “mutually beneficial” relationship, while multiple senior-level editors noted the “symbiotic” nature of this partnership as

magazines tap on the popularity of the influencers while influencers are “validated” and “legitimised by the authorities of fashion.” A senior-level editor recounted a specific example of such a ‘mutually beneficial’ cooperation where her magazine worked with a popular local lifestyle influencer on an online article about the influencer’s leaked sex tape. The editor stated that the story increased the traffic for the magazine website “tenfold,” and at the same time, the influencer was also proffered a respectable platform “to own back her video and own back her voice and her actions.”

This collaboration with influencers, however, largely seems forced rather than voluntary; multiple interviewees stated that they cannot “beat” or “fight” influencers. A senior-level editor felt that “they have become part of the publishing ecosystem” while a mid-level editor commented that magazines “can’t not work with them nowadays.” A senior-level editor further explained:

“...they are a part of the industry at the moment, so to be quite frank it is something that can't really be ignored and so to not involve them on some level, that would be to the detriment of the magazine...if they aren't incorporated somehow into the content at some level, then the magazine will be perceived to be out of date and not rolling with the times, and that doesn't reflect well, at least in the client's eyes.”

Much of the collaboration with influencers is also prompted by advertisers as a senior-level editor related that “three-party collaborations between magazine, client, and influencer” are very common. Hence, the first thing that advertisers often demand when embarking on a paid project with a magazine is if there are suitable influencers that can be brought into the project. As such, a writer claimed that “when we work with influencers, I think at least half the time it’s because there is a paid project.” This also shifts the power dynamics between magazines and influencers, because magazines are the ones that need the influencers to ‘help’ them. As a mid-level editor detailed: “...the relationship would be that we have to

contact the influencers, saying are you free to come down for a shoot, to front this particular advertorial for us.”

Furthermore, while interviewees have almost no choice but to collaborate with influencers, they impose strict criteria on who they want to work with in a bid to retain the upper hand in the magazine-influencer power dynamic. In particular, interviewees displayed disdain for influencers who, as a writer described, “aren’t really doing anything in their lives besides taking pictures and posting them on social media.” As such, a senior-level editor emphasised that they “don’t work with pure influencers that only do Instagram for a living” and will only work with those who are popular because of their work. Another senior-level editor explained how the latter group is perceived to have “more substance” and thus magazines usually work exclusively with people such as radio DJs, TV hosts, or entrepreneurs who also happen to have a large online following. This disregard for ‘pure’ influencers even extends to linguistics—interviewees appear to dislike using the term ‘influencer’ because it seemingly denotes someone who has gained popularity solely off of posting on social media. Rather, interviewees prefer to refer to those that they work with as “KOLs” or “personalities.”

This categorisation of influencers shows that interviewees are still actively resisting readers-turned-creators who have emerged with digitalisation to compete directly against magazines. While ‘KOLs’ and ‘personalities’ also have large followings, they are not competition because they have their own jobs; this allows them to be classified outside of the lifestyle media industry. On the other hand, influencers who have become popular just based on their content exists within the same sphere of content creation as magazines. So, while interviewees declared that influencers are both friend and foe, it is clear that they are not particularly enthusiastic about treating readers as active content creators.

Individual-Level Factors

While Boczkowski (2004, 2005) only focused originally on the three production factors of organisational structures, work practices, and representations of users, the interviews revealed that intra-personal factors also influence how digital technology is adopted in newsrooms. This is consistent with the important role of the journalist-gatekeeper, whose individual preferences and beliefs shape the content they eventually produce.

Hanusch (2019) found that lifestyle journalists' role conceptions can be grouped into four main categories: being service providers (dispensing information, advice, and reviews), life coaches (giving practical guidance), community advocates (creating a like-minded community), and inspiring entertainers (providing entertaining, fun, and inspiring content). As for magazine journalism, Homes and Nice (2012) believe that magazine journalists practice "audience-oriented journalism" (p. 50) where they serve to provide readers with information aligned to their interests and preferences. The interviews in this study revealed that it is useful to consider how women's magazine journalists conceive of their roles; their responses suggest that how they perceive their own professional identity, how they present their work, and what they believe their societal role is also mediate the impact of digitisation on the content they create.

Professional identity. When asked about how they conceive of their professional identity, a majority of the interviewees were either unsure of or do not think that they are journalists; some of them prefer the term "writer" instead. This preference calls to mind Holmes and Nice's (2012) claim about "the long association of magazines with literature" (p. 58) as writers have historically staffed magazines, fuelled by their passions for both writing and the particular magazine genre they are writing for. For the interviewees, there are two main reasons they do not brand themselves as journalists. First, many interviewees shared the sentiment of a writer who said that "the definition of a journalist would be a

newspaper journalist” and associate the label strictly with hard news. The title of ‘writer’ also seems more appropriate as it better reflects the “story-telling” nature of interviewees’ work and the inherently creative characteristic of magazine content absent in traditional newspaper journalism.

Second, a senior-level editor discussed how the evolving nature of their jobs requires “moving away from descriptors like journalists and editors.” Indeed, many interviewees instead talked about being “content creators” or “content strategists” and not merely writing but also what a senior-level editor called “360 content creation.” Interviewees not only have to write, but they also have to produce videos, manage photoshoots, handle social media, and more. Furthermore, editors also pointed out that besides writing, a large portion of their time is dedicated to different managerial duties like managing budgets, manpower, and relations with various stakeholders. As such, a mid-level editor argued that the term ‘journalist’ is not able to encompass “the broader as well as the deeper nature of the work” that they do today.

The changing editorial-advertising dynamic brought about by digitalisation seems to have also contributed to a reconceptualisation of magazine journalists’ professional identity. In particular, interviewees appear to have taken on a more complicated job scope as part of their daily work practices. As a senior-level editor summed up: “magazines are no longer information portals, magazines are creative agencies nowadays.” Advertisers are moving away from simply placing ads in magazines but instead treat magazines like creative agencies to collaborate on content production. This means that editorial staff members are becoming more and more directly involved with advertisers as they are in talks with advertisers every step of the way, from the initial idea pitching to the final execution of content.

For advertisers, the allure of approaching magazines lies in the latter’s ability to “soft-sell.” A senior-level editor described that magazines now operate like creative agencies who collaborate with advertisers on “a lot of creative content and special projects that are

paid for or sponsored by the client but executed by the editorial team.” Many of these projects are essentially native advertising (Carlson, 2015b; Schauster, Ferrucci, & Neill, 2016) or advertorials (Gough-Yates, 2003) where advertised products or services are treated to look like original editorial content. So, editorial staff will be tasked with, for example, providing artistic direction for photoshoots, storyboarding and shooting videos, or writing advertorials that feature advertisers and their products. Because of this phenomenon, editorial staff seems to increasingly become sales staff themselves.

This reconceptualisation of professional identity can be attributed to a confluence of low manpower, increased competition, and diminishing ad revenue, which has resulted in a situation where journalists—especially higher-level editors—are expected to be actively involved in selling the magazine. A senior-level editor explained: “the rationale is that when editorial goes out to pitch, our ideas are stronger and more creative and hence clients are more interested in coming in to collaborate with us and give us their money.” Indeed, a mid-level editor commented that:

“...editors are kind of expected, in my company, to actually put their commercial hat on and then build relationships with brands so that they will spend money. Some editors I know have basically sales targets as well. All of us editors are actually trained to go out and pitch for good relationships and pitch for jobs...”

A senior-level editor illustrated how she tries to poach new clients:

“We sometimes meet new brands, that haven’t really been to Singapore before, wanting to open a new shop, so we kind of also meet them to kind of introduce how [the magazine] could actually help to elevate the brand in Singapore, what kind of projects we can do together.”

These changing practices have had an effect on how interviewees view the actual sales personnel in their newsrooms. Some interviewees noted that they would rather talk to

the advertisers directly rather than go through what a writer described as “this middleman that is really useless and just not disseminating the right information” because they themselves might be closer to the advertisers. A senior-level editor also felt that:

“...to be honest, sales has a smaller role in things and very often, I mean just honestly, clients might even just skip the step of talking to sales and talking directly to the editors or the creative teams because very often their questions simply can't be answered by the salespeople...”

Because there is the emerging pattern of editorial people taking on the sales role while still maintaining their own editorial commitments, some do express frustration at how the sales staff do not seem to be doing their prescribed job.

Another trend is that while senior-level editors tend to be the ones more involved with sales and advertiser relations, they also encourage—and at times demand—lower-level writers and editors to, as a senior-level editor stated, “have their own relationship with the brands and the sales team as well.” Senior-level editors mentioned that writers are “not excused” from being involved with the commercial aspects of the magazine business; a senior-level editor asserted that writers cannot be “snooty about supporting clients.” This might even be a consideration during the hiring process as another senior-level editor argued:

“...gone are the days where you're like this introvert that like just wants to sit down and write your stories - gone, cannot. It's like, the first thing when I interview people is, I look at your personality. If you're quiet, I'm like, you got confidence to client-face or not?”

In summary, due to the evolving editorial-advertising dynamic fuelled by digitalisation, magazine journalists' professional identity has been reconceptualised to accommodate the growing power of advertisers over magazine production.

Presentation of work. Besides changing professional identity, it appears that the way interviewees present their work has also been affected by digitalisation, especially in light of growing advertiser influence. On the one hand, while interviewees might distance themselves from the journalist label, some do believe, however, that the content they produce is journalism, at least in certain cases. A mid-level editor noted that magazine journalists still abide by “journalism fundamentals” and that content is “grounded in news values, news points, all the 5Ws and 1H.” A writer believed that their work still “falls under the umbrella of journalism,” a mid-level editor said that magazines operate “more in terms of lifestyle content,” and a senior-level editor felt that magazines produce “soft news.” There are finer nuances, however, when interviewees discuss the specific types of stories that can or cannot be considered journalism.

Generally, when interviewees are actively ‘digging’ for a story and going through processes like interviewing sources or finding experts, they are more confident in proclaiming their work as journalistic. But they do not think their content is journalism when they are simply being, as a writer termed, an “armchair warrior” relying on press releases and already available information. Hence, the types of stories matter: human-interest or long-form stories that take more legwork are journalistic, whereas listicles and simple aggregation stories are not.

Meanwhile, some interviewees believe that what they do is not at all journalism because of their magazines’ strong commercial orientation. A writer noted that advertorials are “obviously” not journalism while another writer illustrated the journalism-advertising dilemma:

“But for magazines, they're really heavily influenced by the clients. So, I don't know, I feel like in a way if you are like cheating the reader, because like by not disclosing sponsored materials, things like that, I don't think it's very journalistic in a way?”

This is especially pertinent since commercially-oriented content can make up a huge chunk of a magazine's overall editorial outputs. For instance, a writer believed that up to 70% of the fashion coverage in her publication is paid content, while a senior-level editor from another magazine explained that "officially sponsored pages tends to be 20% to 30% of a magazine," though "the rest of the pages will probably be...they are editorial, but they are client-support, if you know what I mean." In other words, to please their advertisers, interviewees still strive to feature their advertisers' products in these pages even if they are not explicitly paid for.

Interviewees' discomfort and uncertainty with identifying as journalists coupled with the presentation of some parts of their work as journalism seem to reveal a continuous inner reconciliation: while still wanting the prestige and respect associated with journalistic work, interviewees are also aware that some of their content and their close ties with commercialisation are in direct opposition to this ideal. Unfortunately, interviewees are unable to choose one over the other, because while magazines are dependent on advertising for survival, advertisers are attracted to magazines because of the legitimacy conferred on the latter due to their journalistic identity. Essentially, magazines cannot discard their association with journalism, as that is the very characteristic attractive to advertisers. The compromise that interviewees have come to is to reject the journalist label, while presenting some parts of their work as legitimate journalism. This gives interviewees more leeway to include commercial influences in their work, which is antithesis to traditionally strict journalistic values.

Societal role. While newspapers take on the function of being society's watchdog and produce content accordingly, interviewees generally think that the purpose of their magazines is to inspire, educate, and entertain, and this, in turn, affects the kind of content they create. Also, interviewees from *Female*, in particular, believe that their magazine should serve as a platform to highlight deserving individuals. These are in line with Hanusch's (2019) findings about lifestyle journalists' professional role conceptions where such journalists reported that

being service providers, life coaches, community advocates, and inspiring entertainers are part of their job responsibility. Yet, a writer also mentioned that magazine content is “just content that encourages consumerism.” Given its heavy emphasis on supporting advertisers, it is probable that what interviewees believe of their societal role might just be what they think magazines should do in an ideal scenario. Whether this role is performed fully in reality and the extent to which commercial interests affect this role is up for debate.

In addition, interviewees believe that they should serve as authorities in their field who are the best individuals to turn to for any information related to the type of content they produce (i.e., fashion, beauty). The way interviewees try to safeguard their authoritative stature is perhaps best exemplified by how they try to situate themselves vis-à-vis influencers. Broadly, interviewees seem to have enacted a few strategies to defend and uphold their authoritative position in response to the increasingly powerful foothold influencers have in the industry.

First, interviewees believe that magazines still have “credibility,” “prestige,” “clout,” and “knowledge” that influencers do not have. Thus, they think that consumers are still more likely to trust a magazine than an influencer. Second, interviewees note the quality of content—a mid-level editor described how influencer content “will be just standard, cookie-cutter” while a magazine can “give that creative edge.” Third, interviewees point out the lack of skills and knowledge influencers have compared with them. A senior-level editor commented that: “I haven’t met a single influencer who is a great writer...I wouldn't say they have the capacity to educate because educate is a heavier word.” Interviewees believe that while influencers might be able to take pretty pictures, they cannot compete in terms of writing actually informative, useful, and well-researched content. Fourth, interviewees appear to want to ‘claim’ influencers and their practice. For example, a writer recalled how magazines “were the first” to feature a popular influencer

and a senior-level editor related how magazines “used to work” with an influencer when she was still relatively unknown. Also, another senior-level editor proclaimed that “actually, journalists are the original influencers...they just didn't have the platform to really show their work like influencers do nowadays.” Such sentiments seem to suggest that interviewees want to take responsibility for influencers’ success and hence preserve their dominant status by exerting control over the influencer narrative.

On the other hand, interviewees’ responses also indicate the trend of merging, where influencers start to resemble magazines and lifestyle journalists take on traits of influencers. For example, a mid-level editor commented that “the more established” influencers behave similarly to magazines as their work practices become more formalised (e.g., hiring of team members, following certain protocols when deciding who to work with). This echoes the finding from Lowrey, Parrott, and Meade (2011) who contended that as personal blogs become more popular, they start to adopt organisational forms and bureaucratic practices. Arguably, these kinds of more established influencers might be seen as a bigger threat to interviewees’ authoritative position.

Seemingly in response to this situation, several interviewees agree that it is advantageous if writers and editors—especially the EIC, since he or she tends to be construed as the face of the magazine—become more visible such as by fronting videos or actively trying to build their personal online following. Indeed, being adept at social media is now considered a valued skill for traditional editorial positions as exemplified by the emergence of the “influencer-editor” (editors who also have a sizeable personal following online; Fernandez, 2018, para. 4) in fashion media. Having an EIC who is also an influencer can help make a magazine seem more accessible and intimate, which are strengths that interviewees recognise influencers have over magazines. But another motive for trying to become an influencer is the potential increase in ad revenue. Interviewees reason that having an EIC who

is popular online will keep the magazine top of mind for advertisers and thus likely make them more willing to invest in the publication the EIC represents.

In sum, it appears that interviewees are trying to preserve magazines' status by dismissing influencers as possible co-creators who can take on the same societal function of magazines as being the foremost authority on lifestyle content. Also, even though magazines today work with influencers frequently, this stems mostly from the need to please and work with advertisers and is not something magazines conduct voluntarily. The belief that they are the prime authorities plus that they should aim to inspire, educate, and entertain then informs interviewees' decisions on editorial content.

Serendipitous Finding

A common theme that I did not actively seek for, but that emerged inductively amongst a number of interviewees, is a general sense of exhaustion with their job and hopelessness with what the future holds for their line of work. When pressed to explain why they feel this way, interviewees explained that though they do recognise the need to better incorporate digital production in their traditional print operations, they are prevented from doing so because of the severe lack of manpower. Magazines are essentially stuck in a vicious cycle: digitalisation demands the generation of more content, which requires more manpower; but, magazines today have no budget to hire more manpower, which means the increasing workload falls on to existing editorial staff; editorial staff are overwhelmed with the amount of work they have to do and thus prioritise print while neglecting digital; the demand for more online stories continues.

The result of this unceasing cycle is that one, online stories are of mediocre quality, and two, the outlook of existing editorial staff is increasingly pessimistic. In fact, in response to the ever-increasing demand for more online stories and more clicks, a writer commented: "I need to get out of here." Meanwhile, a senior-level editor noted that if her employees want

to leave, she would actually encourage them to do so because of how bleak the future seems. This is also the reason why I had to interview so many interviewees who had already left their magazine jobs, simply because of the high turnover rate, which is something that many interviewees highlighted. The mounting pressure on interviewees to produce more content, coupled with the ethical conundrums they have to contest with due to the growingly commercialised nature of their work, has arguably led to worsening unhappiness amongst a considerable number of these journalists.

CHAPTER V

Results – Impact on Content

Because digitalisation has changed organisational structures, work practices, representations of users, and role perceptions, it is unsurprising that there has been an impact on both the quality and type of content that the magazines in this study produce. These changes are dependent on how technology has been adopted in the magazine newsrooms, mediated through both production and individual-level factors.

The Print-Digital Divide on Content

Naturally, interviewees' attitudes towards print and digital as well as changes implemented within magazines prompted by technological advancements have a direct impact on both print and online content.

Impact on print content. Interviewees prioritise the print magazine and devote most of their time and energy to it. Due to this continuing strong focus on print which has essentially insulated print from the onslaught of digital, it is perhaps unsurprising that the impact on print content has been slight. There have been minor changes: an example is that the magazines *Female* and *Her World* have shifted news snippets from print to online because, as a mid-level editor explained, the latter “is a better environment for that kind of thing.” Instead, interviewees strive to deliver more long-form, in-depth stories for print that a senior-level editor proclaimed, “you wouldn’t want to put...on digital because it’s just something that’s like a seven to eight-minute read.”

Furthermore, some magazines have actually decided to spend even more effort to improve print quality to better differentiate it from the online platform. A prime example, in this case, is *Female*. A member of the editorial team described how they have recently “overhauled the entire look of the magazine” such that “every issue is thematic, every issue is written like a book, every issue does not have [a] fixed and standard” template. The October 2019 issue, for instance, was themed ‘punk,’ and everything in the issue adhered to this theme. Spreads were done in black and white and focused on punk fashion; shopping stories presented picks like combat boots; fonts used were graphic; personalities featured included pop-punk musicians. The layout was also unorthodox: the issue opened with five different spreads back-to-back. Contrast this with the more traditional layout that women’s magazines follow—fashion, beauty, and lifestyle sections presented in that order, shorter trend or shopping stories opening the issue, the cover story located somewhere in the middle, and spreads interspersed throughout. This time and energy spent on revitalising the print product serve to re-emphasise the prioritisation bestowed upon the print magazine. This is in line with past findings showing that when faced with digital challenges, women’s magazines have responded by “celebrating the unique strengths of print” (Duffy, 2013, p. 41).

Impact on online content. On the other hand, the prioritisation of print has led to several consequences for digital production. As a mid-level editor observed, the online website has “no set pages,” so it is perceived as “secondary” and essentially a ‘dumping ground’ for stories that could not make it into the more elite and limited pages of the print magazine. Hence, online stories tend to be shorter and just simple PR or aggregate stories that require less time to do. So, listicles like “9 Best Moisturisers To Combat Singapore’s Humid Weather” (*Female*) are very common, while all the magazines consistently publish PR stories that could be as simple as a video of the live stream of certain brands’ fashion shows with minimal additional text.

Also, there seems to be a relationship between the quality and number of online stories and newsroom size: the leaner the manpower, the lesser the quality and fewer the number. *Elle Singapore*, for example, averaged around two stories per day and periodically went as long as five days without updating the website; a senior-level editor from the magazine admitted that “the digital team is very, very lean.” In comparison, *Female* and *Harper’s Bazaar Singapore* published around seven and nine stories daily respectively. Moreover, many of the online stories from *L’Officiel Singapore*—which has the smallest editorial team amongst the magazines in this study—were simple PR stories about new collections or events and a substantial number of them were authored by the interns.

When it comes to republishing a print story for online, interviewees will make it more online-friendly. The most common way to do that is to tweak the story’s headline and standfirst. For instance, the same shopping story from *Her World* that had the print headline “A Deeper Shade Of Beige” had the online headline “Here’s How You Can Wear F/W’19’s Latest Colour Trend For Work And Play.” Interviewees might also shorten a story and add more photos to intercept the chunks of text when publishing a print story online. This was the case for a Q&A story from *L’Officiel Singapore*, where multiple questions and answers that were in print were deleted from the online version, and additional photos were added to the online story to break up the text.

Something else that magazines with international editions (*Harper’s Bazaar Singapore*, *L’Officiel Singapore*, *Elle Singapore*) partake in to ease workload is to lift stories from other countries’ websites. So, for *Harper’s Bazaar Singapore*, half of its daily online stories tended to be originally from *Harper’s Bazaar US* or *UK*. This job of lifting stories is usually reserved for interns or junior writers. When asked to elaborate on how such stories are chosen, a writer responsible for this task explained that she will “look at things that I know I can’t write myself, but readers would still want.” A writer from another magazine similarly said that he would “see

what's relevant in terms of whether it's available in Singapore, what the Singaporean readers would like, and, to be honest, it's just really whatever would get the clicks." Slight tweaks are usually made to localise such stories, such as by changing product prices to Singapore dollars, or changing American spelling to British spelling.

While the findings so far seem to paint a picture of negligence for digital production, this is not necessarily the case. Interviewees are highly aware of the need to be digital-first and that magazine production today has to be "360" —as a senior-level editor stated, with the "execution of work and so on, everything is done with digital content already in mind." A practical application of this is that when doing a photoshoot for print, interviewees will now often also shoot a video concurrently. For instance, the print cover stars of *Her World's* November 2019 issue also appeared in a video on the magazine's website; this video was part of an online-only video series on beauty.

Furthermore, interviewees stress that magazines actively try to redirect a digital reader to the print magazine and vice versa. All the magazines' websites have numerous site banners enticing readers to subscribe to the print magazine with attractive discounts and free gifts. When *L'Officiel Singapore* repurposed print stories online, the magazine frequently put a sentence such as "Read the full story in the September 2019 issue of L'Officiel Singapore" at the bottom of the article. Meanwhile, except for *L'Officiel Singapore*, all the magazines ran multiple one-page advertisements for their digital platforms in their print magazine. Most of these are aimed at directing readers towards the magazine's website, while *Elle Singapore* also had a one-page ad in each issue dedicated to showcasing the title's Instagram page.

Moreover, some magazines have also started to realise the pressing need to produce online stories that are comparable to print stories. Hence, *Female* writers now have to submit three stories per week instead of one per day previously so that, a writer reasoned, they "could do supposedly more substantial stories." Yet, despite these steps taken to recognise

the importance of digital production, the impact is meagre, and interviewees by and large still prioritise the print product mostly because of the shortage in manpower.

The Editorial-Advertising Dynamic on Content

Because the magazines in this study are almost wholly reliant on ad revenue for survival, when questioned about purely original editorial content, a senior-level editor proclaimed: “There is no such thing anymore. There is no such thing. We exist to give clients support so if I have a story then I have to think about which brands can I support in this story.” Giving coverage to non-advertising brands is described as “very, very rare” by a writer. This means that even if the interviewee is not writing a paid or sponsored piece, pleasing advertisers is still top of mind as a senior-level editor stated:

“But it is very openly accepted these days that if a client is advertising in every issue of your magazine, then you know, every single issue of your magazine you should have something in return for your client.”

So, for instance, another senior-level editor admitted that: “If I’m doing a story about the best pampering spas, you know, the first place I look to is who are my advertisers within this list that I can write about.” A tangible example of this can be found in a print issue of *Female*—in a story reviewing the fashion collections from the new season, long-standing advertiser brands received a full page of coverage each, whereas non-advertiser brands occupied lesser space (four such brands were squeezed into two pages). Interviewees also noted that if they are hoping to partner with a certain brand, they will purposely write about this brand as much as possible so that the brand might be more inclined to collaborate with the magazine.

How commercialisation impacts content. Interviewees must constantly keep their advertisers in mind and “show love” to them whenever possible. Sometimes, this can be enforced through policies or directives imposed on the editorial team by upper management. For instance, a writer recalled how:

“...my CEO was a bit crazy, so whenever if like we feature a brand that doesn’t advertise or he feels it’s like not worthy to feature, he’ll get quite angry, he’ll be like no and he’ll send out an email and be like, blacklist them.”

In print, the way advertisers can have an influence on content is perhaps most prominently exhibited through magazine covers. As past studies have demonstrated, magazine covers are vital in positioning a publication and hold much cultural value (Holmes & Nice, 2012; Jenkins & Tandoc, 2017). For women’s magazines, anyone who makes it onto the cover of *Vogue*, for instance, is instantly granted some sort of validation, and the more high-profile covers often generate much attention. Hence, magazine covers are valuable “real estate” and it can be assumed that advertisers who hold sway over them are heavily influential over the magazine.

How advertisers can exercise their power on magazine covers is explained by a writer, who discussed how having multiple covers for a single issue is not an editorially led decision, but simply a strategy to make more advertisers happy. As the magazine is able to feature multiple brands on the covers, it can earn multiple times the ad revenue as each brand pays to be featured on the cover. For the magazines in this study, all of them apart from *Her World* had multiple covers for at least one issue between September and November 2019. Each of the covers will always feature only a single predominant brand—for instance, for the three covers for *Harper’s Bazaar Singapore* in September, the three different celebrities featured wore clothes and accessories from three different brands (Chanel, Dior, Gucci) head-to-toe respectively.

For online, advertisers’ influence can be seen in how they affect the visibility of paid stories. A writer discussed how the most popular list or the slideshow of main stories on a website’s homepage are not aggregated based on actual page views but are used to feature paid stories. Many times, paid stories are also reposted on the website’s homepage—where stories tend to be listed in reverse chronological order—so that such stories have a higher

chance of getting more clicks. For instance, a sponsored story about the jewellery brand Swarovski that was first published on *Harper's Bazaar Singapore* on 20 August 2019 appeared on the website's homepage again on 3 September 2019, embedded in between the newest stories actually published on that date. Interviewees actively trying to raise the visibility of paid stories so that they can get more views is a clear example of how advertisers have a direct impact on magazine content.

Duffy (2013) found that women's magazines adopt "semantically inflected changes" (p. 55) as a way to incorporate the growing commercial leanings of the magazine business. Magazines in this study have taken on the same strategy. *Elle Singapore* had recently created a new editorial position exclusively for managing client projects; the job title is 'Creative Projects Specialist.' In fact, interviewees tend to refer to paid projects as 'creative projects,' with a senior-level editor confessing that it "is just a nicer way to say advertorials." Such liberal reconfigurations of semantics are evident in magazines' content as well. Of course, in certain cases magazines can be quite upfront about a story that is paid—for online, *Her World* frequently put a disclaimer such as 'Brought to you by [brand name]' at the bottom of their paid stories; for print, *Harper's Bazaar Singapore* and *Elle Singapore* and will put the special headers 'Bazaar Showcase' and 'Elle Spotlight' on the top corners of the pages displaying paid content; multiple titles also often designed the layout of paid stories differently from editorial stories such as by including a border around the page for the former.

However, there are many instances when such declarations are less clear or even missing and interviewees do confess that this is the case. A senior-level editor admitted that: "They used to be stated that they are like, um, whatever brand special, or, um, sponsored by, blah blah blah. But I think this practice has gone away, yeah, to be completely frank." So, for spreads in the magazines, almost all the titles tended to use ambiguous language like 'Female teams up with Chanel to...' (*Female*) or 'Together with Moschino, we...' (*L'Officiel*

Singapore) in the headline or standfirst. Sometimes magazines even forwent such active proclamations—in a fashion spread in the November 2019 issue of *Elle Singapore*, the headline and standfirst read ‘Theory of Everything: Refresh, rewind, renew with fashion that melds bold Eighties silhouette, Art Deco architectural graphics and Elizabethan opulence.’ It is only in small font on the bottom of the first page of the spread where it was stated that all the clothes and accessories featured are from Louis Vuitton. There are no other indications that this fashion spread was a paid project. A writer acknowledged that this practice can be quite “shady” but explained that magazines are also under advertiser pressure to make such content seem as ‘editorial’ as possible.

Sometimes, magazines might take advantage of their position as authorities to promote certain paid products. A writer shared that:

"When you talk about the beauty awards, the spa awards, the hair awards, on [the magazine], it's all fake, it's all sponsored...If you're willing to pay, you get the "[magazine name] loves". If you're willing to pay. Money talks."

Indeed, this was the case for *Harper's Bazaar Singapore* which ran multiple online stories on the ‘Bazaar Beauty Awards 2019’ throughout November. Virtually all the products showcased as the ‘best product’ were sponsored, as gleaned from how right above the headlines for all these stories was the slug ‘Bazaar X [brand name].’ But, this was the only indication that these stories were paid and there were no other clear or active declarations that these stories were sponsored. When probed on the legalities of this practice and whether they were comfortable with how paid stories are labelled and presented, a writer said that she “don’t know what’s the exact protocol,” another writer admitted that “I’m not sure about the legal part, I just follow,” and another writer explained: “I don’t care, yeah (laughs)...I mean, whatever the client says goes, if they want to put [a label] then they put...if they never indicate then we just don’t put.”

Reconciling the editorial-advertising tension. Interviewees seem to have adopted certain strategies to negotiate this discomfort they have with the labelling and transparency of paid projects. First, interviewees appear to be shifting the onus onto readers to know when something is paid or not. Interviewees believe that readers are “savvy,” “smart,” and “discerning” and should be able to recognise a paid article; a writer believed that when something is paid, “it’s quite obvious.” Regarding whether something is paid or not, a mid-level editor even asserted: “I don’t think people actually pay attention to that.”

Second, interviewees—mainly mid- and senior-level editors—argued that when collaborating on paid projects, they are not sacrificing editorial integrity as they have learned how to be more “savvy” and that “there’s always a way to make it work.” For example, a senior-level editor is sure that “if it’s a matter of editorial integrity, there are always ways to feature or support these particular brands in an [magazine name] way.” Some others also frame collaborating on paid projects positively as seen by how another senior-level editor contended that it “is a good opportunity to be creative...it’s really about the editors being really, really creative.”

Third, a few interviewees maintained that they will always strive to provide fair coverage within the constraints they are operating in. For example, a writer noted that if she has to write a review for a beauty product she does not like, she will not publish a falsely positive review but will instead pen a “neutral” one. A mid-level editor also said that when she is discussing the benefits of certain beauty products in her stories, she will always qualify such claims by using words such as “reportedly” or “supposedly.”

Fourth, interviewees seem to be attempting to normalise certain doubtful actions surrounding paid projects by reasoning that other magazines are doing the same. For instance, the writer who discussed the case of paid beauty awards also highlighted that such practice is “across the board, it’s not just us.” Meanwhile, a senior-level editor explained that if they do

not become more deferential to advertisers, “other magazines are going to do it and then the money will be lost;” such a sentiment was echoed by multiple interviewees.

Fifth, for certain online stories that are sponsored, they will often be attributed to the magazine rather than an individual author. For instance, two articles promoting the same beauty brand that appeared on the websites of both *Female* and *Her World* in late September had the bylines ‘by Female’ and ‘by Her World’ instead of by a named author, as is the usual practice. It is probable that this is a conscious action taken to help interviewees distance or remove themselves from paid articles.

Yet, despite all these strategies, interviewees do concede that there is a negative impact on editorial integrity. A writer mentioned that unlike nowadays, editorial “didn’t have to pander to advertisers” in the past while a senior-level editor alluded to the non-labelling of paid content:

“Because the thing about this...that's where the integrity, I feel, is very sad, because integrity is not over there. In the past, it'll be like a Saint Laurent showcase. But now, because it's PR, it has to be PR, you cannot say that, you know what I mean? So, you mask it.”

Another senior-level editor compared magazines to a “dying artist” —essentially, magazines are caught in a bind because while they want to preserve their editorial integrity, they also need to earn ad revenue. Thus, a lot of the time interviewees are unable to prevent their magazines from turning into a “catalogue” because they have to support their advertisers. A writer went so far as to declare:

“...don't talk about editorial integrity anymore, there’s no such thing here in Singapore, editorial integrity. It’s all about editorial money, it’s money. If there was no editorial money, these people will have no jobs because there's no- nobody’s buying it.”

Gatekeeping on Content

How gatekeeping practices are enacted across print and digital productions have a discernible effect on the content published on both platforms. Specifically, the diverging gatekeeping practices in magazine newsrooms for print and digital content have resulted in vastly different editorial outputs.

Notably, because online gatekeeping is looser, the quality of the stories is poorer than in print. Accuracy has long been thought to be a fundamental journalistic ideal in news reporting; Sivek and Bloyd-Peshkin (2018) also argue that fact-checking is and should be a key routine practice in magazine journalism. However, there were a number of cases where seemingly careless grammar or spelling mistakes were found in the magazines' online stories. Furthermore, regarding the types of stories, listicles and simple articles that take less time to do often populate the magazines' websites. For example, an online story about fashion week street style published on *Female* in September is simply a 47-page photo slideshow with no added captions or text besides the headline and standfirst; a story like this did not appear in any of the print issues of the magazines.

The emphasis on gaining clicks online also determines the type of stories interviewees create for the website. A mid-level editor believed that "if shopping stories and gallery stories can help you, by all means, do that" while a writer admitted that magazine journalists might actively write about topics that are more "salacious." For instance, an online story posted in November on *Harper's Bazaar Singapore* had the headline "Why Kate Middleton And Meghan Markle Were On Different Balconies For Remembrance Sunday" accompanied by a header image depicting an unsmiling Meghan Markle dressed in black. Clearly, the need for clicks can at times override the need to publish content in line with a title's DNA. Indeed, a writer proclaimed that: "Online, is

really, we want the clicks, we don't care what you put there, we just want the clicks. Then online, some forget the brand, that we are [the magazine], we are not TMZ.”

The heightened freedom that writers experience for digital production due to the less stringent story editing by their editors also has an impact on the variety of subjects that are covered online. As a mid-level editor explained:

“...writers have a lot more say in their content in digital as compared to print. Print, usually the editors have a certain idea of what they want to talk about or certain themes. But digital, very much, we allow the writers to tell us what they want to write about and we will advise them – this is doable, this is not doable, can you change it to this. But the onus is a lot on them to come up with the ideas themselves.”

This results in online content being more diverse in terms of topics covered compared with the print magazine. A writer noted:

“I think with the introduction of the website, I think the content became more diverse. I mean when we used to have print it was very fashion, then there's beauty, but then on online, we can cover a lot more topics. We can cover food, lifestyle. I mean the lifestyle content is a lot more robust online than on print.”

Indeed, throughout November, *Elle Singapore* published online stories about burgers and tarot reading which are issues not normally covered in the print magazine.

Reader Conceptualisation on Content

The first thing to note about the impact that reader conceptualisation has on content is that while interviewees mentioned keeping readers in mind when making editorial decisions, this is based on an idealised reader rather than an actual reader. So, some interviewees discussed how they might use those close to them (e.g., colleagues or friends) who they believe fit their reader profile as ‘proxies’ to get some sort of reader preference. This echoes

the findings by Gans (2004) and Sumpter (2000) where news journalists depend on the preferences of closed ones when making editorial decisions.

Because interviewees believe that print and digital readers are different, naturally, the content crafted for both platforms differ as interviewees think that the reader demand and behaviour vary for both. As a writer summarised:

“...print is more content-heavy, it’s more like, I need to sit down on like a Sunday afternoon and I’ll read this. Whereas for online, people want to read it on their way to work or whatever, and then they want something fast and quick.”

Thus, digital and print content diverges—interviewees tend to reserve longer and more in-depth stories for print, and shorter and more digestible articles for digital. As such, perceived reader objective for print and digital is a factor contributing to the emergence of a functional differentiation in magazine newsrooms, as interviewees believe there should be a distinction between print and digital content and impose different norms and beliefs accordingly when they engage in the production for either.

The way interviewees conceive of their readers is reflected in the content they produce. While there are efforts made to show that interviewees want to better connect with their readers, generally, these are all actions taken from a top-down approach that does not encourage dialogue with readers. For example, one way that interviewees attempt to connect with their readers is to tap on the capabilities of digital technology to try and be more personable or approachable to their readers. A senior-level editor explained that for her magazine:

“...we create videos, for example, that are sometimes fronted by team members, or like I said, Instagram stories where we show what we do...So, I would like to think that readers can feel closer to us, it’s easier for readers to feel closer to a publication now, and for a magazine to generate a following.”

Indeed, an online story published on 1 October 2019 on *Her World* features a video where the magazine's beauty writer sits down with a makeup artist to introduce a new beauty product. *Harper's Bazaar Singapore* also routinely produces a video series called 'Café a la Mode' where the publication's EIC interviews various celebrities, models, and designers.

Apart from these digital efforts, a few interviewees also noted that they consciously try to make their writing sound more friendly or, as a senior-level editor described, "like as if we are in conversation with our girlfriend sort of tone." She continued to say that:

"...we like to put a little about ourselves, like the editor's voice and everything or the editor's experience in the magazine, because we don't want the magazine to be so cold, like you don't know who the hell is writing behind the magazine."

These are done in a number of ways—in print, for instance, all the magazines always open with an 'Editor's Letter' where the EIC pens a letter to the reader describing the content in the current issue; such letters are typically accompanied by a photo of the EIC and his or her signature. In *Elle Singapore*, there is a regular column titled 'Top Picks' where different editorial staff will recommend chosen beauty products; these are always written in first person alongside a headshot of the individual writer or editor.

However, despite these efforts, it is clear that the magazine-reader communication is still very much one-way and interviewees do not demonstrate particular enthusiasm for taking advantage of the capabilities of digital technology to have a two-way conversation with readers. In essence, magazines still largely treat their audiences as passive consumers of content rather than active contributors of content.

Individual-Level Factors on Content

How interviewees conceive of their professional identity and what they believe is the purpose of their work also has an impact on editorial outputs. Interviewees seem to be operating within the grey area of wanting to be journalistic yet having to accommodate their

rather overt commercial leanings. While they reject the journalist label, they do believe that some of their work is journalism. Sometimes, their content supports this sentiment—*Her World*, for instance, published a three-page article on mental illness in their October 2019 issue, which involved the profiling of three different women and their experiences with depression. Meanwhile, *Female* ran an eight-page feature on emerging beauty creatives in Singapore (i.e., hair stylists, nail artists) that documented their work. Arguably, such stories can be categorised under the broad term of journalism in that they involved active research and interviews, and also retain a certain amount of objectivity in that they were not paid content or content that were crafted to support advertisers.

However, much of the rest of editorial content is the direct opposite. Interviewees have no choice but to allocate much more of their print and online content to supporting advertisers, given that digitisation's impact on the media landscape has had adverse effects on the ad revenue levels of these magazines. While some of such stories are explicitly labelled as sponsored, interviewees admit that in many cases they are not. This makes it difficult to discern the exact amount or the portion of overall content that is produced with the aim of fulfilling commercial objectives.

Interviewees also believe that their magazines' purpose is to inspire, educate, and entertain. These aspects are reflected in the content that they create in both print and online—for instance, a colourful fashion spread in the October 2019 issue of *Harper's Bazaar Singapore* hopes to inspire readers to wear monochrome looks; a beauty spread in the September 2019 issue of *Elle Singapore* teaches readers how to use graphic eyeliner step-by-step; in the November 2019 issue of *Her World* is a 26-page feature on “24 Good Men” in Singapore which presumably is meant to be an entertaining read. Online, *Harper's Bazaar Singapore* published a story in September advising readers about the new films to

watch on Netflix, while *Her World* published an educational story in October on the different ways to use essential oils.

Interviewees also believe that magazines should be authorities in their field and try to portray themselves as such in their print and online content. For instance, in print, *Her World* consistently includes one-page features on fashion or beauty buys that are accompanied by the tagline “HW Endorses.” In every issue of *Elle Singapore*, there is a section titled “Elle Recommends” where “The Elle Singapore team shares what we’re currently into this month.” Apart from trying to frame themselves as trustworthy tastemakers, *Female* in particular frequently produces content aimed at highlighting emerging individuals and creatives. As an interviewee from the publication said: “I’d like to think we support the creative community, we spotlight up-and-coming talents and give them that platform.” In fact, the theme of the entire September 2019 issue of *Female* is exactly that and the cover describes the issue as being about “the emerging designers and photographers, independent collectives and unconventional models making fashion more woke and way cooler.”

For online, magazines try to present themselves as authorities usually via the language used in the headlines and standfirsts, presumably to quickly grab readers’ attention. In September, *Female* published a story on the best manicure places in Singapore, with the standfirst proclaiming that “These are the best FEMALE-approved places to get your manicure fix.” In October, *Harper’s Bazaar Singapore* published an article on cool things to do and see with the standfirst “We give you the best of new spaces, things to see and even what to read.” In November, the headline for a story on *Elle Singapore* was “An Exclusive Look At The New Louis Vuitton Maison in Seoul.” Using qualifiers such as ‘approved,’ ‘best,’ and ‘exclusive’ is arguably a way interviewees try to consciously depict their magazine as the trusted authority in fashion, beauty, and other lifestyle-related topics.

CHAPTER VI

Discussion

Undoubtedly, the digitalisation of the media has induced seismic shifts in newsrooms around the globe. Using a framework based on Boczkowski's (2004, 2005) findings, I looked specifically at Singaporean women's magazines and how digital advancements have facilitated transforming production processes in the newsrooms of these publications. Particularly, I investigated how the organisational structures, work practices, and representations of users in these magazines have evolved with the onslaught of digital technology.

Overall, there seems to be a clear development of a functional differentiation within newsroom processes (Hanusch, 2017) where distinct sub-cultures mostly aligned with either print production or digital production have emerged. Interviewees' responses indicate that they enact a different set of attitudes, norms, values, and practices when they produce content for the print magazine and when they produce content for the online website. These differences are simultaneously caused by and reflected in how these magazines have structured print and digital productions in their newsrooms, the changing nature of the editorial-advertising dynamic in these magazines, alterations in interviewees' work practices, and the way they perceive their readers today.

Before delving into each of these factors in turn, it is important to note that interviewees' responses suggest that advertisers have an overwhelming influence on the production processes of these magazines. While magazines being advertiser-oriented is not an unexpected finding (Duffy, 2013; Gough-Yates, 2003; Holmes & Nice, 2012), the amount

of influence they can exert have seemingly increased exponentially given the rather precarious financial state of the magazines in this study and the local publishing industry more broadly (Lee, 2019). While digitalisation is not the direct cause of magazines' waning profitability, the competition posed by digital actors (new online publications, content creators, social media) for existing ad revenue has dampened magazines' profit margins significantly. This, in turn, means that advertiser influence has expanded considerably and now reverberates through decisions made in every single facet of magazine production.

Another related factor is that the dismal financial performance of the magazines and the publishing sector means that news organisations now face budget constraints and cannot hire more help, despite the fact that digital production demands additional manpower. This means that interviewees have had to double up and contribute to digital production while still having to commit fully to their print duties. Thus, it is clear from interviewees' responses that they are suffering from 'role overload' (Reinardy, 2007) in that they find that they have way too much to do and not enough time to do everything. This has already led to negative consequences, most notably the high turnover rate at these magazines. Clearly, a continuous stream of journalists working at these magazines become unhappy enough with the demands of their work that they leave the job. This overwhelming workload provides the condition needed for the rise of a functional differentiation in the magazines' newsrooms, as interviewees have to largely ignore their digital responsibilities in order to still produce the print magazine.

Organisational structures. Regarding how magazines in this study have incorporated digital production into their traditionally print-based newsrooms, digital assets—comprising both the magazine's website and its social media platforms—are still treated as second-rate, tacked on products that are inferior to the print magazine. Interviewees still devote most of their time and energy on to their print publication and perceive online

content as an afterthought. Jenkins (2011) came to a similar conclusion in her study on city and regional magazines which found that magazine publishers and owners can be unwilling to invest in online-exclusive content.

This prioritisation of print stems from journalists' and advertisers' preferences and the affordances of the print and digital platforms. For journalists' preferences, interviewees' responses indicate that they still view their print magazine as more prestigious and deserving of attention compared with its online counterpart, and so dedicate more effort creating content for the former than the latter. While editorial staff members are not exempt from creating online stories, interviewees admit that online stories are last on their to-do list. Such an attitude is also partly accounted for by interviewees' demographics: generally, those with more print experience tend to favour print over digital.

Further reinforcing the functional differentiation in production processes is the standard practice of having two separate persons be in charge of print and digital. The responsibilities for the latter are normally relegated to a single digital editor, who has to look after the entire digital production. Meanwhile, the former is usually entrusted to the EICs. The segregation between print and digital is so deep that EICs interviewed for this study admit that they are hardly involved in creating online content. It is perhaps important to note that all EICs interviewed for this study had spent many years in the magazine business and come from a print background. Thus, it is possible that the loyalty they demonstrate towards the print magazine is shaped by their own experiences.

Regarding advertisers' preferences, interviewees highlight that their advertisers still prefer spending money on print rather than digital, echoing what Jenkins (2011) had found. This further encourages interviewees to devote more time and energy into producing print content and reinforces the print-digital segregation in their newsrooms. The affordances of the print and digital mediums also contribute to print prioritisation, as interviewees seem to

relish in the 'indulgent' nature of the print product, citing that they are free to be as creative as possible in print, but are constrained by the inherent limitations of the online website, such as the standardised layout.

Additionally, in interviewees' eyes, the tactile and permanent characteristics of the print magazine render it a higher standing compared with the website, and thus worthier of quality content, lending support to Le Masurier's (2014) assertion that magazine websites cannot replace the print magazine. Also, the fundamental difference between print and digital in terms of temporality has an impact on interviewees' attitudes towards both. The 24/7 production timeline of the website is something that interviewees struggle with. Their replies suggest that they feel more comfortable with the monthly deadline of the print magazine, which is another impetus for interviewees to disregard the website and spend more time on producing the print magazine as they are more used to the latter.

Digitalisation has also had a profound impact on the editorial-advertising dynamic in magazine newsrooms. The magazines in this study are subjected to advertiser influence more than ever before. And because these magazines depend on ad revenue for survival, the heavy reliance on advertisers has a significant impact on how magazines function. There is a general sense that the editorial-advertising wall, while porous before, has now crumbled as interviewees acknowledge that they are more willing to compromise on their ethics and demands in order to please advertisers, causing a shift in the editorial-advertiser power dynamic to be more in favour of the latter.

Generally, while editors are used to this commercial aspect of the magazine business, writers seem to display reluctance and frustration at the extent to which they have to please and support advertisers. They feel restricted in the content that they can write, and also that they have compromised their editorial integrity at times. This echoes similar conclusions

from past studies where newsroom managers tend to be more accepting of commercial influences on their work compared with lower-level journalists (Beam, 1998).

A strategy that writers interviewed for this study have adopted is to actually enact a different set of norms and values when writing paid stories. Essentially, writers remove themselves emotionally when they are working on paid projects in an effort to avoid subjecting themselves to the same editorial standards that they do with non-paid stories. Thus, in relation to the commercial orientation of magazines, what we can see here is the formation of distinct sub-cultures across the editorial hierarchy and also the strategic enforcement of certain practices for paid vs. non-paid stories. Along with the functional differentiation in print and digital productions, this provides further support for a diverging rather than converging media environment in magazine newsrooms.

This phenomenon has implications on how we can understand magazines and journalism more broadly. Magazines pride themselves on having a singular identity; this is their unique selling point which allows them to capture a niche audience (Holmes & Nice, 2012; Le Masurier, 2014). Current circumstances, however, have forced magazine staff to produce two vastly different products for print and digital, with the latter embodying a diminished—if not totally unrelated—version of the magazine DNA. While we do not have the benefit of hindsight to determine how sustainable this strategy is, we can already see the dilution of a publication's supposedly unshakeable editorial philosophy (Le Masurier, 2014), which should have been a foundational cornerstone of a magazine product.

Being independent of commercial influences is a way “to legitimise journalism as a profession” (Artemas et al., 2018, p. 1008); it is thought to be an undeniable and essential characteristic of journalism (Carlson, 2015a). While magazines and lifestyle journalism have long enjoyed a close relationship with the business side of things—which is also the reason for the reluctance in identifying them as legitimate journalism (Hanusch, 2012; Holmes &

Nice, 2012)—the magazines in this study are operating under overwhelming economic pressures, almost to the extent where their editorial decisions are arguably dictated by advertiser needs and preferences. This raises the question of how we can understand and define the journalism field: we do see today the increasing number of newspapers that are also producing native advertising and advertorials (Carlson, 2015b; Schauster et al., 2016). Where do we draw the subjective line separating what is and what is not journalism?

Work practices. The functional differentiation along the lines of print and digital also has an obvious impact on gatekeeping routines in the magazine newsrooms. Overall, interviewees again impose varying practices, norms, and values when gatekeeping for print and when gatekeeping for digital. Interviewees tend to reserve higher-quality stories that require more legwork (e.g., long-form, human-interest stories) for print, which means that they can only do shorter and simpler stories (e.g., PR stories) for online with their limited time. This print-first mentality is further perpetuated by the fact that print stories are usually repurposed online, so in order to maximise efficiency, interviewees are more motivated to produce good print stories that will eventually be posted online rather than spend extra time on online-exclusive content.

Moreover, there is a difference between print and online writing styles: while print writing can be very creative, online writing emphasises searchability in order to increase clicks. This is so extreme that at times platform-parting occurs (Hanusch, 2017) where two different versions of the same story might be penned by the same author, one for print and the other for digital. Basically, interviewees spend much more time and energy to make sure that only the best content passes through the print ‘gates.’ On the other hand, the combination of a lack of time to write substantial online stories and the need for clicks has given rise to very loose digital ‘gates’ where even the most substandard stories can get published online. This distinction is further reinforced by how print and digital operations are structured in the

magazines. While print stories go through several layers and rounds of edits from writer to EIC, online stories go through a flatter hierarchy of just writer to digital editor. Thus, two almost contrasting gatekeeping routines for print and digital currently exist in the magazines.

The evaluation of stories differs too because unlike print stories, the success of online stories is wholly dependent on web analytics. That is, interviewees believe that the sole criterion for a successful online story is that it garners many page views, and hence are not at all hesitant to incorporate analytics usage into their editorial processes. So, based on what types of stories get more clicks, interviewees will adjust their online content accordingly to attract as many eyeballs as possible. This is in contrast to past studies that documented the reluctance of news journalists to have metrics play a part in editorial decisions (Vu, 2014).

However, it is important here to note that this chase of clicks does not stem from an inner desire to give readers what they want; instead, interviewees are solely motivated by the ability for more clicks to attract advertisers and command a higher advertising rate. Thus, interviewees essentially associate or equate the audience purely to ad revenue and profits (Duffy et al., 2018; Tandoc, 2014), which again demonstrates the overwhelming commercial pressure present in magazine newsrooms.

This is arguably the reason that while interviewees pay close attention to page views, they do not seem to care about other metrics that can tell them more about their readers. They simply want to know which stories are more popular so that they can continue to churn out similar stories. Interviewees are also generally unaware of and also unenthusiastic about knowing more regarding who collects and analyses metrics, what metrics are collected, and how it is done so. While this can be partly explained by role overload—interviewees simply have no time or energy to spend on anything analytics-related—and the continuing prioritisation of print, this dissociation with analytics is also further proof of the perhaps unwilling yet increasing disregard for readers in favour of advertisers. Even though most

interviewees did not openly admit it, how they describe their use of analytics is evidence for diminishing editorial integrity and ethics at the hands of growing advertiser power.

The usage of web analytics brings fore the question of what constitutes journalism. Past scholars have noted that a journalist's *modus operandi* is to publish information that the audience ought to know, and not what they want to know. That is, inherent to the journalist job description is to write stories based on one's own news judgement, without considering reader input in order to remain impartial and objective (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Usher, 2013; Zelizer, 2005). While studies have found that news journalists tend to exercise restraint when using web analytics (Cohen, 2018; Karlsson & Clerwall, 2013; Tandoc, 2014) the magazines here base their online content decisions fully on metrics with the only goal being to increase clicks. Although it is natural for magazines and lifestyle journalists to provide readers with what they want to read, this complete disregard here for journalistic instinct during digital production raises doubts about whether the magazines are practicing 'legitimate' journalism.

Representations of users. Functional differentiation is also apparent in how magazine journalists perceive their readers, as most interviewees believe that their print and digital readers are different. Interviewees believe that their print reader is someone who is aligned with their niche magazine brand and thus belongs to a very specific group. On the other hand, because of the need to get as many clicks as possible for online, interviewees admit that they do not have a target online reader and are simply trying to attract as many eyeballs as possible. This then provides fertile ground for the development of two almost seemingly different products and correspondingly separate production sub-cultures dedicated to each in a single magazine newsroom. It is also important to note here that interviewees are operating on their perceptions of readers rather than actual reader data. This is because interviewees admit that they no longer have the resources to conduct market research to find

out more about their print readers, and also, interviewees do not have the time nor desire to further analyse metrics to find out more about their digital reader.

Understandably, the increase in advertiser influence combined with the shortage in manpower have negatively affected interviewees' perceptions and relationship with their readers. While past studies have found that magazine editors are dedicated to building a strong reader community and actively interact with their audiences (Duffy, 2013; Holmes & Nice, 2012; Jenkins, 2011), this is untrue for the magazines in this study. One, interviewees report that they have no time to converse with readers, and two, interviewees' commitment to serving their advertisers means that knowing, engaging, and serving their readers is not top of mind. So, even though digital technology provides several new avenues for magazine-reader interaction, interviewees do not take advantage of these—all of the magazines' websites do not have comment or forum functions to welcome reader input.

That said, interviewees do point to social media, and Instagram especially, as a platform for them to engage readers, which is reminiscent of Jenkins' (2011) conclusion that magazine editors do regard social media as a useful tool to connect with readers. However, interviewees again note that they seldom have time to reply to reader comments on social media and that even if they do, engagement is usually very simple and superficial. Interviewees blame this superficiality in part on readers too, as they highlight the inherently reticent disposition of Singaporeans and the fact that they only actively communicate with magazines when there are giveaways or contests. However, given that interviewees do not have the time and resources to interact with readers nor exhibit any eagerness to do so, it is questionable whether they would have frequent dialogue with readers even if the latter were more forthcoming.

Away from online communication, advertiser power is also apparent in instances where interviewees get to meet their readers in real life. This usually only happens when the magazine is hosting an event where readers are invited, but because such events are

always held in conjunction with a certain brand, the objective here is to connect the sponsoring brand with potential customers rather than for interviewees to engage with their readers. Without advertiser help, magazines simply do not have enough resources to host their own meetups solely for meeting and talking to readers. As such, readers who are selected for these events are usually curated to meet the profile of a potential customer and do not accurately represent the wider magazine audience.

The rise of influencers due to digitalisation also has a profound impact on interviewees and their publications. Overall, interviewees view influencers as threats especially in terms of advertising dollar, but not necessarily in terms of readers, which provides further evidence for magazines' advertiser-driven nature. Interviewees do collaborate frequently with influencers, and while a benefit is certainly to draw an influencer's followers to the magazine, interviewees' responses indicate that a lot of times they have to work with influencers because that is a requirement for certain paid projects. So, collaboration with influencers also stems largely from advertiser pressure.

Just as with the absence of presenting a consistent niche magazine brand online, the shedding of another crucial element of magazines is apparent here from the lack of interaction with and understanding of readers. The building of a like-minded community of readers is something thought to be fundamental for a magazine publication (Duffy, 2013; Holmes & Nice, 2012). With the pivoting towards serving advertisers more than readers, we can once again start to wonder how exactly we can classify magazines in its current state—are they still considered a type of journalism, or are they simply an advertising and shopping catalogue disguised as something journalistic?

Individual-level factors

While this study is grounded in Boczkowski's (2004, 2005) framework, interviewees' responses suggest that beyond production factors, individual-level factors also have a hand in

how digital technology has impacted editorial content. Namely, how interviewees perceive their professional identity and societal role and how they present their work determine the kind of content they produce. In terms of professional identity, interviewees are uncomfortable with labelling themselves as journalists, presumably because such a large part of their work is for commercial purposes, which directly opposes traditional journalistic values like objectivity and ethics (Deuze, 2005). This is most prominent in how interviewees—especially higher-level editors—are increasingly becoming salespeople themselves and taking over the role of the sales or advertising staff in their newsrooms.

What this means is that editors actively go out to poach potential clients, pitch for paid projects, and strive to maintain good relations with existing clients. This is motivated by the fact that interviewees believe that editors are the most effective at selling the magazine because they know their product best. Hence, it is very common for editors to bypass the sales staff in their newsroom—literally bypassing the physical embodiment of the editorial-advertising wall—to liaise with advertisers directly. Furthermore, another result of the dire financial state of the magazine business is that editors are also mandating that their writers start to build their own relationships with brands so that they can help sell the magazine too. This practice is actually being institutionalised, as there is evidence that besides being able to write, the ability to sell is also now a criterion during the hiring of editorial staff.

When it comes to how interviewees present their work, they still believe that some of their stories fall under the broad term of journalism. These stories are confined to those that involve more traditional journalistic actions such as interviews and extensive background research (which are almost always print stories). Meanwhile, simple aggregate news (Duffy et al., 2018) or PR stories (which dominate the websites) are not deemed as journalistic. Such classifications that interviewees have imposed on themselves and their work can be interpreted as an attempt to still situate themselves within the journalistic field, but

simultaneously have one foot out of the journalism ‘door’ so that interviewees can exercise more liberty with their content. In essence, we can again see the strategic activation of different values or norms depending on the types of stories interviewees are dealing with (print, online, paid, non-paid, etc.). Because print stories are typically more ‘journalistic’ than online stories, there is again the functional differentiation along print-digital lines.

The move away from the journalist label might not be that surprising in this case given the long-standing association that magazines have with literature (Holmes & Nice, 2012). Indeed, interviewees do perceive a difference in their work with political journalism given that most believe the journalist label should be reserved for those working in hard news. However, their identification of some parts of their work as journalistic raises questions on how we can understand the concepts of journalism and journalist. This is already difficult due to the fact that the journalism field lacks formal barriers to credentials or knowledge (Schudson & Anderson, 2008); unlike fields such as law or medicine—where one needs a formal degree to be a lawyer or doctor—anyone can potentially be a journalist. There is an “inherent porousness” (Carlson, 2015a, p. 7) to journalistic work which makes it more susceptible to unending negotiations on what journalism actually means; what more for magazine actors who see themselves as routinely going in and out of journalistic work.

Deuze (2005) states that there is an intrinsic link between journalism and journalist where there is a “dominant occupational ideology of journalism” (p. 445). That is, journalism can be defined and understood via how “journalists give meaning to their news work” (Deuze, 2005, p. 444). Yet, we also see cases of how traditionally non-journalistic actors, such as lifestyle influencers on social media, believe that what they are doing can be characterised as journalism, even if they do not label themselves as journalists (Maares & Hanusch, 2020). The implication here is that perhaps rather than defining the journalism field based on journalistic identity, we have to understand what journalism is based on the nature

of content. In other words, not everyone is a journalist, but anyone can potentially produce journalistic content, and what constitutes journalistic content then has to be decided on a pre-determined set of values and criteria.

How interviewees perceive the societal role of their publications also has an impact on editorial outputs. While the majority of interviewees' responses are in line with Hanusch's (2019) findings on lifestyle journalists' role conceptions in that they believe magazines should ideally be inspiring, educational, and entertaining, among others, there are a few others who disagree and state that their titles exist solely to serve advertisers now. Multiple interviewees point out their publications' transformation from a source of lifestyle information to a creative agency that helps advertisers execute paid projects. It is likely that what interviewees believe of the purpose of their magazines is an ideal that does not match actual reality. If that is the case, this prompts the question: what kind of a function do women's magazines serve in today's media environment?

At the same time, interviewees believe that magazines should hold an authoritative position in society, and actively guard this stature, especially against the growing threat of influencers. Interviewees acknowledge that influencer power has grown tremendously, and they are now part and parcel of the lifestyle media industry, which means that interviewees have no choice but to include influencers in their content lest they seem behind the times. But interviewees very clearly enact certain actions to try and protect their own status and prestige against the perceived influencer threat. They impose strict conditions on whom they will collaborate with while simultaneously disparaging influencers for their lack of actual knowledge, subpar writing skills, low-quality content, and more. In particular, interviewees express disdain for influencers that do social media full-time for a living; presumably because such influencers are working in the same sphere of content creation as magazines and can be seen more as a direct competitor.

Perhaps in an attempt to hold on to their authoritative stature, interviewees also try to claim the narrative over the success of popular influencers by declaring that they were the first to feature the influencer when he or she was still relatively unknown. At the same time, we see the clear rise of the influencer-editor (Fernandez, 2018) as interviewees largely believe that having an EIC who also has a sizeable personal online following can help the publication. However, again emphasising magazines' advertiser-driven nature is the fact that interviewees believe having a popular EIC is more beneficial in terms of increasing a publication's credibility and trustworthiness in advertisers' eyes, rather than for the potential to attract more readers. The question of magazines' authoritative stature vis-à-vis influencers can arguably be best explored by future studies taking a consumer approach investigating how today's readers perceive both types of content producers.

Impact on content. Digitalisation has, through the mediation of both production and individual-level factors, affected magazines' editorial outputs. Compared with print stories, online stories tend to be of lesser quality because of the need to generate clicks. Hence, interviewees often forgo quality for quantity and produce more clickbait-esque articles for online; interviewees usually justify this click culture by arguing that every other publication is doing the same thing. This poor online quality is further exacerbated by the fact that interviewees tend to treat the website as a literal dumping ground for substandard stories that were not good enough to make it into the limited pages of the print issue.

In this situation, writers do see a positive upshot in that they find more freedom in doing online stories. Because of the strong demand for clicks and quantity, it is easier for writers to propose a more diverse array of stories for online and to get them published, compared with print where writers have to stick closely to the niche branding of the magazine. Hence, it is clear here that the functional differentiation along the print-digital divide has led to the creation of two vastly different products. While the print product is still

closely aligned to the brand identity of the magazine, the online website is home to such a wide variety of stories that it no longer accurately reflects the niche brand identity of the magazine. Future studies should examine how, if at all, this seemingly dual identity affects general perceptions of the brand.

Advertiser influence on magazine content cannot be understated. Advertisers can have a say over what goes onto the print cover, and for online, the placement of stories are manipulated such that paid stories are more prominent. Even for non-paid stories, interviewees consciously try to show as much love to their advertisers in whatever way possible. For example, they always prioritise the promotion of their advertisers' products over non-advertiser products and grant advertising brands more physical space in print coverage. It is also common for interviewees to frame any sort of paid or sponsored opportunity as a chance to exercise their creativity to account for why they might work with advertisers who do not complement their magazine identity.

Because interviewees are so desperate for ad revenue, they constantly strive to please advertisers which results in several compromises that are often detrimental to editorial integrity. Native advertising or advertorials are not new to women's magazines (Gough-Yates, 2003), but interviewees' responses show the incredible extent that they have gone to mask such sponsored content and present them as original editorial content. While Carlson (2015b) and Schauster et al. (2016) noted the rise of native advertising in news publications, these stories are still at least marked with some sort of logo or slug to indicate that such content is sponsored. However, for the magazines in this study, there are many instances when such a marker is excluded and there is no indication whatsoever if a story is paid or not. In the most extreme case, a magazine deliberately lied by falsely crediting makeup products used in a photoshoot to an advertiser brand. Interviewees clearly know that such actions raise grave ethical concerns by going on the defense to argue that readers

are smart enough to recognise sponsored content or that they might not even notice or care if something is sponsored or not. Interviewees also rationalise their actions by insisting that all magazines are doing the same thing.

While Boczkowski's (2004, 2005) framework proposes that how technological advancements affect editorial outputs is mediated through the three production factors of organisational structures, work practices, and representations of users, this study additionally found that individual-level factors are equally important in determining how digitalisation affects editorial outputs. Journalists' self-perceptions, in terms of what they believe their professional identity and societal function is, and how they present their work, also affect the way they incorporate digital technologies into their news work, which then correspondingly impacts the content they produce. Future studies should also look at intra-personal factors when investigating how digitalisation has led to changes in newsroom operations.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is mainly based on interviews with writers and editors who are working or have worked at women's magazines in Singapore. While in-depth interviews are useful to garner a rich set of data (Howson, 2013), it is limited in that the results might be coloured by social desirability bias (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). In particular, interviewees might have downplayed the extent to which they neglect digital production or the extent to which advertisers influence their content, both of which can be seen in a negative light.

In addition, I focused only on women's magazines which tend to produce content revolving around fashion and beauty. Past studies suggest that the amount of advertiser pressure on content can differ based on the particular lifestyle genre that journalists operate in. For instance, Hanusch, Banjac, and Maares (2019) found that journalists working in travel, beauty, and fashion were more susceptible to commercial influences than those working in living and gardening, health and wellness, and personal finance. Future studies

should look at other types of lifestyle media to tease out any differences between journalists working in different lifestyle beats.

Furthermore, interviewees' responses suggest that operating in Singapore poses a unique set of challenges. Specifically, interviewees highlight the constraints with working in a small media market—they are limited by the modest pool of local readers they can target, which makes it difficult for them to earn revenue through subscriptions nor command high advertising rates. It would be useful for future studies to investigate how digitalisation might have affected the production of magazines originating from larger markets. Such publications could potentially have higher budgets, more manpower, and a larger readership base, and a cross-country comparison of the findings can possibly reveal some interesting trends.

Lastly, I conducted the present study as a single researcher, which means I was the only one involved in the interviewing and textual analysis as well as the coding and analysis of data. This calls for self-reflexivity (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012), as this study is suspect to single-researcher bias where my own perceptions might have influenced the research process (Mays & Pope, 1995). The results and its reliability should thus be interpreted by other scholars with this factor in mind.

Conclusion

For the magazines in this study, there is a distinct functional differentiation in production processes where print production is essentially insulated from the onslaught of digital. The newsroom culture in these magazines is currently fractured along the fault lines caused by the print-digital divide and also advertiser pressure. Interviewees are enacting different sets of practices, values, and norms when they deal with print and digital productions, and when they have to negotiate the conflict between advertiser influence and their journalistic values.

In conclusion, mediated through both production and individual-level factors, digitalisation has caused a functional differentiation in women's magazines in Singapore, where print and digital productions are separated from each other. This has led to the development of distinct journalistic sub-cultures in a single newsroom, and a progressively divergent rather than convergent media environment.

CHAPTER VII

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CHAPTER VIII

Appendix

Description of Coding Process

In the primary-cycle coding stage, I conducted a close reading of the data to identify and generate first-level codes. For example, while analysing the interview data, I gave the quote “And in this digital age, it is very important for someone- for everyone actually, for the magazines, to make print printier in that sense, like it has to be meatier, it has to be more evergreen, it has to have longevity as well” the primary code ‘print innovation.’

The primary code ‘print innovation’ refers to how interviewees discussed the need to make print content stand out against online content. Subsequently, any quotes I came across that expressed a similar sentiment was given the same primary code. Using another example, I gave the quote “The management and the direction, or the driver of the commercial projects - typically the section editor” the primary code ‘editorial hierarchy.’ This primary code refers to how higher-level editors tend to be the ones more directly involved with the business side of the magazine than lower-level writers (see Table 4).

Table 4

Primary code	Definition/ Explanation	Exemplar(s)
Print innovation	Print has been re-conceptualised to make it stand out against digital; in other words, print and online content should be different	<p>“And in this digital age, it is very important for someone-for everyone actually, for the magazines, to make print printier in that sense, like it has to be meatier, it has to be more evergreen, it has to have longevity as well.”</p> <p>“So why would anybody buy print if everything is up there online? That means that all teams, all magazines that have a print and online component, have to work five times as hard for their print component. Because you have to put stories up there that cannot be found online and you have to be out there with stories that online will never be able to do. For example, visual spreads, you know, in depth investigative stories, even more curated stories that help readers make decisions about whatever it is their doing.”</p>
Editorial hierarchy	Editors deal with sales projects, clients, and pitching for business more than writers; writers merely execute such projects	<p>“The management and the direction, or the driver of the commercial projects - typically the section editor.”</p> <p>“...very often, especially editors-in-chief, and say the other key personnel like the fashion director, for example - these people are also very much involved in the client relations.”</p> <p>“I think also because at a higher level then you get to be closer and because you have to really understand the business side of things.”</p> <p>“Ok, because I’m just the writer right, so I don’t usually do anything related to numbers. That one sales can do, or anyone that is at editor level can do. ”</p>

In the secondary-cycle coding stage, I compared and grouped first-level codes into broader conceptual categories that addressed the research questions. So, I grouped the primary code ‘print innovation’ together with the primary codes ‘print as desirable’ and ‘tangibility.’ ‘Print as desirable’ refers to how magazines might want to make their print product as desirable as possible (e.g., “...print magazines have been really focusing on that,

like sharpening their quality and content and trying to be, you know, like collectible coffee table editions and have that sense of desirability around them”) while ‘tangibility’ refers to how the tactile nature of the print magazine is an advantage that an online website cannot replicate (e.g., “...print will always have that sort of like prestigious role, premium sort of quality. Mainly because you can actually feel it, it’s tangible;” “...there is beauty in print. There is that, the way of being able to hold onto something tangible”). Together, these three primary codes formed the broader conceptual category of ‘print prioritisation,’ which discusses how and why interviewees prioritise the print magazine over the online website. This conceptual category is then used to help address RQ1a.

Using another example, I grouped the primary code ‘editorial hierarchy’ together with the primary codes ‘editor power’ and ‘stakeholder relations.’ ‘Editor power’ refers to how editors usually wield ultimate power with regards to decisions made about paid content (e.g., “It is still editors, because they can spin advertisers’ angles to suit the brand, so editors always have the final say”) while ‘stakeholder relations’ refers to how editors have the hard job of having to appease all parties by constantly balancing editorial and business needs (e.g., “I think these days the editor has a very, very challenging job because they somehow have to appease all the stakeholders and at the same time still communicate their vision;” “So, I mean, in my position as EIC, I have to be very...we have to tread that line quite delicately, yeah, but you cannot compromise your editorial integrity or your value there”). Together, these three primary codes formed the broader conceptual category of ‘editor as bridge’ which discusses the role editors play in bridging the editorial-business divide in the magazine newsroom. This conceptual category is then used to help address RQ1b. Following this coding procedure, I finalised all the conceptual categories that would help answer the research questions (see Table 5).

Table 5

Conceptual category	Definition/ Explanation	Primary codes
Print prioritisation	Interviewees actively prioritise the print magazine over the online website resulting in differentiated content for both	Print innovation Print as desirable Tangibility
Editor as bridge	Editors are most involved in sales activities and serve as the bridge connecting the editorial and business sides of the magazine	Editorial hierarchy Editor power Stakeholder relations

IRB Approval Letter



Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information

Reg. No. 200604393R

02 September 2019

WKWSCl IRB Code: **DIS201920S1-001**

SUPERVISOR, Assoc Prof Edson Tandoc
Lydia Cheng Rui Jun

WKWSCl Institutional Review Board Approval

Project Title: Print in a Digital Age: The Singapore Magazine Industry

I refer to your application for ethics approval with respect to the above project submitted on **19th Aug 2019**.

The school board has deliberated on your application and noted from your application that your research involves **Human Subjects**.

You have also confirmed that informed consents will be obtained from the participants and you have guaranteed the confidentiality of your participants' biodata obtained from them.

The documents reviewed were:

- a) Epigeum Certificate of Completion
- b) Participation Information Sheet and Consent Form
- c) Survey Questionnaire
- d) Letter of Invitation to Subjects

The board is therefore satisfied with the ethical considerations for the project and approves the ethics application under Exempted Review. The approval period is from **02 Sep 2019 to 01 Sep 2020**. Please use the WKWSCl IRB Code **DIS201920S1-001** for all future correspondence.

The following protocol and compliances are to be observed upon WKWSCl IRB approval:

1. All research involving procedures greater than minimal risk on minors (individuals who are less than the legal age of 21 years old) requires IRB approved written Parental Consent and assent from the participant to be obtained before any research protocols can be administered. Minimal risk refers to an anticipated level of harm and discomfort that is no greater than that ordinarily encountered in daily life, or during the performance of routine educational, physical, or psychological examination.
2. Only the approved Participants Information Sheet and Consent Form should be used. It must be signed by each subject prior to initiation of any protocol procedures. In addition, each subject should be given a copy of the signed consent form.
3. No deviation from, or changes of, the protocol should be initiated without prior written WKWSCl IRB approval of an appropriate amendment.
4. The Principal Investigator should report promptly to WKWSCl IRB regarding:

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www.ntu.edu.sg/sci Email: WKWSCl-IRB@ntu.edu.sg

- a. Deviation from, or changes to the protocol.
- b. Changes increasing the risk to the subjects and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the trial.
- c. All serious adverse events (SAEs) which are both serious and unexpected.
- d. New information that may affect adversely the safety of the subjects of the conduct of the trial.
- e. Completion of the study.

WKWSCI Institutional Review Board

On behalf of the Associate Chair-Communication and Information (Research)

(This is an auto-generated letter. No signature is required.)

Interview Guide

Introduction

Hi _____, once again, thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this research. So, just to reiterate, the purpose of this interview today is to explore the relationship between print and digital in Singapore women's magazines, which is the topic of my Master's thesis.

Before we begin, I would just like to clarify that there are no right or wrong answers for this, so please feel free to share your honest thoughts and opinions. This interview will be audio-recorded, but your response will not be identified in either the transcript or the final paper. Also, your participation today is voluntary, and you can opt-out at any time. Additionally, if you wish to expunge any of the comments that you made today, please let me know.

If you do not have any questions, we will begin the interview now.

Demographics/background

- Could you state for me your name, your age, and how long you have been working in magazines?
- How long have you been at your current position?
- How big is your magazine's newsroom (in terms of manpower; readership)?
- Could you describe for me your daily job responsibilities?

Organisational structures: print-online

- How has your newsroom incorporated the production of online content?
 - Possible probe: do your print and digital operations work together or independently, and why?
 - Possible probe: how many people work in your print and digital operations respectively?
- What are the challenges with producing both print and online content?
 - Possible probe: what characteristics, if any, of a print magazine do you think might be fundamentally incompatible with or cannot be translated to online? What makes you think so?
- Based on your own knowledge, what made your magazine decide to go into online publishing?
- How has digitalisation affected your magazine's content?
- How would you compare your print and online content?
 - Possible probe: why do you think there are such similarities/differences?

Organisational structures: editorial-advertising

- What is the relationship like between editorial staff and advertising staff in your newsroom?
- How has digitalisation affected, if at all, this relationship?
- How do the needs of the advertising department affect your editorial content?

- How do you balance the advertising and editorial needs of your magazine?
 - Possible probe: does your advertising department have a say in deciding editorial content? Why or why not?
- Based on your experience, who would you say has the most power in making decisions about content?

Work practices

- In newsrooms, some people refer to a gatekeeper, who is someone who has the power to decide what information gets disseminated to the audience. Who would you say is the gatekeeper in your newsroom?
- Would you consider yourself as a gatekeeper? What makes you say so?
- How do you think this gatekeeping function has changed from the past to the present?
- How do you make the decision on which stories to pursue?
 - Possible probe: what would make you decide not to pursue a story?
- Are there any external actors that affect your decisions on which stories to pursue? If yes, who are they? How do they affect your editorial decisions?
- Do you welcome input from external actors on editorial decisions or do you prefer to rely on your own judgment or instinct? Why?
- What do you think is your magazine's role in society? How does your magazine try to fulfil this role?

Representations of users

- What is the relationship like between your magazine and your readers?
- How has digitalisation changed this relationship?
- Does your magazine take active steps in learning who your readers are? What makes you say so?
- How does your magazine know who your readers are/what your readers want/what your readers do with your content?
- How does (specific measures mentioned; e.g. surveys/phone calls/circulation/analytics) affect your newsroom?
 - Possible probe: what is the effect of this on the content your magazine produces?
- In your own opinion, how would you describe your typical reader?
- What does your typical reader do with your magazine and your magazine's website? What makes you say so?
 - Possible probe: does your magazine have access to audience information i.e., circulation rates, surveys, analytics? If yes, what do you do with this information and why?
 - Possible probe: how does knowing such information affect your magazine's content?
- Who or what does your magazine perceive as your main competitor in the Singapore market? What makes you say so?

- Possible probe: what do you think is the impact of influencers on your magazine?
- Possible probe: does your magazine collaborate with influencers? Why or why not?

Misc. questions

- Do you consider yourself as a journalist? Why or why not?
 - Would you consider the content that you produce as journalism? Why or why not?
- What do you think is the difference, if any, between a newspaper journalist and a magazine journalist?
- Who or what do you think are some of the most prominent competitors to your magazine currently?
- What are your thoughts on 'influencers'?
 - Do you think influencers are a threat to your magazine or women's magazines in general? Why or why not?
- How do you think your magazine will change in the near future?
- What do you think are the steps your magazine needs to take to ensure its survival and success?

Conclusion

We have come to the end of the interview. Before we end, do you have any questions or anything you want to add on? [wait]. Great. If you have any further questions or comments at any point in time, please feel free to contact me. Thank you again for your time.