



**THE ROLE OF MAGAZINE CONTENT IN THE CREATION OF YOUNG WOMEN'S  
IDENTITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Technology - Public Relations Management**

**in the Faculty of Informatics and Design**

**at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology**

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**Cape Town**  
November 2013

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## DECLARATION

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**Date**

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a qualitative analysis of the print media in South Africa. The print media as a form of mass communication, functions in various ways. One of the main functions is to supply news, information and entertainment through magazine content on worldwide aspects. Through various attention grabbing tactics magazine content is able to alter our ideology and thinking. However, through attractive and entertaining topics the public can be affected negatively by the content utilised in magazines, which affects the ideologies and thinking of readers. This effect is mainly evident in younger women and can in turn result in readers unwarily turning to the media to shape their identities.

This study examines numerous South African women's magazines with the main objective of determining the role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa. These magazines were selected on the basis of their content, structure, target markets and their editor's willingness to participate in the study. The ten magazines researched for the study are '*O Magazine*', '*Marie Claire*', '*Cosmopolitan*', '*True Love*', '*Move*', '*Glamour*', '*Grazia*', '*Fairlady*', '*Seventeen*' and '*You*' magazine.

The study provides a literature review on various normative theories of the press and also discusses the psychological effects of numerous persuasion theories. Some of these theories are the Feminist Media theory, Identity theory, Agenda Setting theory and the Uses and Gratifications theory. The study also analyses selected magazine covers with the aim of determining the ways in which readers are influenced by magazine content.

The methodology for the study used content analysis and surveys in the form of telephonic interviews and questionnaires which were conducted with the magazine editors. The main results of the study indicated that magazine content is primarily aimed at uplifting women and creating awareness within readers to embrace their personalities and attributes. Consequently readers are encouraged not to conform to the current trends in society thereby supporting the theoretical underpinning of the normative theories of the press.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### I wish to thank:

- God, for granting me the patience, guidance and the determination for the duration of this study.
- My Supervisor, Professor Nirvana Bechan, for her time, guidance, encouragement and supervision during the study.
- My parents, family and friends for their support, guidance and encouragement.
- Leon Chetty, for his support and encouragement.
- The editors of the following ten women's magazine's, *O Magazine*, *Marie Claire*, *True Love*, *Move*, *Glamour*, *Grazia*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Fairlady*, *Seventeen* and *You Magazine* for their time and participation in the study.
- The Centre for Postgraduate Studies for the financial assistance towards this research.

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## GLOSSARY

**Advertising** is paid, one-way communication through a medium in which the sponsor is identified and the message is controlled by the sponsor.

**Audience** is the assembled spectators or listeners at a public event, such as a play, movie, concert.

**Entertainment** is the action of providing or being provided with enjoyment or amusement.

**Female** (~) is the sex of an organism, or a part of an organism, which produces ova (egg cells) and is used in the thesis to denote female gender.

**Femininity** refers to qualities and behaviours judged by a particular culture to be ideally associated with or especially appropriate to women and girls.

**Feminism** and most modern sociological theory maintain that the differences between men and women are, at least in part, socially constructed 'differences', (i.e. determined through history by specific human groups), rather than biologically determined, immutable conditions.

**Feminist** is a person who supports feminism.

**Gender** in common usage, refers to the differences between men and women.

In philosophy, **identity** is whatever makes an entity definable and recognizable, in terms of possessing a set of qualities or characteristics that distinguish it from entities of a different type.

**Ideology** is a system of ideas and ideals, especially one that forms the basis of economic or political policy.

**Infotainment** is information-based media content or programming that also includes entertainment content in an effort to enhance popularity with audiences and consumers.

**Individuality** is the quality or character of a person that distinguishes them from others of the same kind.

**Socialization** is the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, language, social skills and value to conform to the norms and roles required for integration into a group or community.

**Mass media** are diversified media technologies that are intended to reach a large audience by mass communication.

**Magazine** is a periodical publication containing articles and illustrations, typically covering a particular subject.

**Norm** is something that is usual, typical or standard.

**Personality** is the combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character.

**Society** is the aggregate of people living together in a more or less ordered community. The community is people living in a particular region and having shared customs, laws, and organizations.

**Value** is the regard that something is held to deserve; the importance or preciousness of something.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study

The world today is increasingly driven by a combination of information and entertainment which are disseminated through various means of communication via the media, (Khouri, 1999:1). Communication as defined by Ongwatana and Chordia, (2008:24) and Manohar, (2011:1) is a vital aspect of human life. It is a learned skill through which we express feelings with one another through verbal and non verbal means. It helps people to connect with each other as individuals and as independent groups. Communication is the very basis, which drives the process of development in all fields.

Ongwatana and Chordia (2008:24) and Coates (2008:1) define the term Communication as the process through which we express and convey meaning as an attempt to create a shared understanding. It is the sharing of information through the giving and receiving of messages which are transferred from one person to another through various forms.

Tench and Yeomans (2009:648) state that the media encompasses any channel that allows for communication through messages to flow between senders and receivers, creating a public platform for discussions by reflecting events taking place in society. Communication is therefore a key factor in all aspects of our everyday lives, at home, at school at work and within our social groups. It is a powerful means of bringing about social changes in our lives. Furthermore the revolution in the media of communication according to Joshi, Pahad and Maniar, (2006:39) has helped to accelerate the pace of social change during the past few decades.

The media's impact on our lives is subtle but also very influential as the media communicates to individuals on different levels. Joshi *et al* (2006:39) indicate that various communication channels such as radio, television and print media are easily accessible to the public in this age of information as they each strive to perfect their mode of communication to become more effective as a medium. Chopra (2008:3) believes that by gradually shaping public opinion and personal beliefs, the media influences the process of socialization and shapes our ideology and thinking.

However Consterdine (2005:7) argues that within the print media, magazines attract the most attention over all other forms of media stating that they are the most action-oriented of all the

other media. Through the convenient, portable and easily accessible nature of magazines, the needs of readers are catered for through a multitude of subjects as magazines provide entertainment and information that draw the attention of readers on a regular basis.

### **1.1.1 The relationship between the reader and the magazine**

Consterdine (2005:13) states that magazines have gained immense popularity over the years, especially among female readers. South African magazines have developed into a specialised form of mass media communication. Magazines appeal to women since they offer value for money. The time spent reading is rewarding, and magazines are relaxing as they encourage readers to be reflective on their own personal lives and daily situations which they encounter. Consterdine (2005:17) further postulates that the individuality and personality of each magazine signifies that readers can feel a close relationship with the magazines they choose to read as these magazines reinforce the identities and the values of readers.

### **1.1.2 The function of magazines**

The content provided in women's magazines is interesting and informative and is tailored to the needs of readers, causing them to become deeply engaged with their magazines. Consterdine (2005:6) suggests that a reader's identification with an engaging magazine can go well beyond a simple provision of information and ideas. When magazines target the right audience with the right subject they have the capability to strengthen the readers self image as readers contain their own collection of magazines to meet their different needs and moods. Rodriguez (2007:37) claims that readers are bombarded with attractive headlines and images which are splashed across glossy magazine covers comprising all the latest trends and must have's, causing women to fall as easy targets to buying into these messages portrayed by the media.

### **1.1.3 Media and young women**

Young women often rely on magazines and their content for advice regarding their personal lives and situations which they face on a daily basis. If magazines promote solutions to particular problems, the young women will rely heavily on that advice. Thus they provide a silent advisory role for young women who are guaranteed to become loyal customers of

magazines. Marketers therefore intelligently focus their content and advertising methods around aspects that are most attractive to young readers. As Synnot [cited by Baker, (2006:9)] indicates for example, if models in magazines promote an image sporting designer clothing, young women are most likely to incorporate those particular items and trends into their own concept of femininity as a result of their own personal interactions with the self being socially constructed.

However, the representation of women in magazines are generally biased images in society, with issues of gender, race, sexuality and other forms of discrimination being deeply rooted within media texts.

Levy (2007:76) states that magazine content is easily absorbed by women both young and old as various methods are used to gain attention. Marketers structure advertisements and reporting styles around the content that women want to read regardless of the impact it might bring over their lives. Therefore the primary aim of the study is to explore the role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

The ways in which the media contributes to our lives on a daily basis are endless. We are often unaware that we might be affected in a negative way by media as content manifests on real life consequences. Lowe (2007:1) and McQuail (2010:124) state that the media's main objective is to provide news and entertainment or 'infotainment' as it has been termed, which is distributed honestly in an objective way. However, according to Jooste (2007:1) media content can be subtle but also very persuasive. A critical issue stemming from the role of the media is the portrayal of women in the media and the way in which women are represented especially by the print media.

Based on numerous studies, (Lowe, 2007; Rodriguez, 2007 and Sakamoto 2010), women have been found to be inappropriately represented by the print media. Through images of particularly thin women with faultless figures sporting the wardrobe of a particular Hollywood celebrity, this depiction indicates a certain way of life that has become the societal norm. However not every woman in South Africa has the capability of living a lifestyle or obtaining the physical features depicted in magazines. Baker (2006:8) suggests that women's magazines are targeted largely at young females providing up to date content on the daily lives of women, with the primary purpose according to Ytre-Arne (2011:9) of being able to

increase readership and circulation rates, forgetting that the content contained might have an impact on the lives of readers which may not necessarily possess the right influence.

Previous studies conducted by Webster (2007:1), Sakamoto (2010:87), Brooks and Hebert (2006:297) have shown that articles and images comprising the substance of these magazines inevitably create insecurities about female roles within careers, homes and social groups in turn affecting their images and their overall identities. All these aspects combine to cause long term negative effects in the mind-set of women. This societal obligation is eventually passed on to younger generations forcing young women to adopt media driven norms. Through this adoption, their personal traits and characteristics are shaped according to influential attributes of women's magazines causing the development of an exceedingly media driven generation.

This study therefore aims to explore the role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa, and to evaluate the magazines' overall representation of women. The study will evaluate the criteria utilised by magazine editors, in determining the magazine content that is produced in these women's magazines.

**1.2.1 Research question:** What is the role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa?

### **1.3 Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this study is to identify the role that magazine content plays in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa.

The objectives are:

- To evaluate how magazine content is determined.
- To explore who magazine content is determined by.
- To explore how the representation of women in the media contributes to the identity of women.
- To determine whether the popular representation of women is influenced by the media.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

The significance of the study is primarily to create a platform for further research to be conducted, specifically pertaining to the role that magazine content plays in the lives of young women in South Africa. The focus of the study explores the representation of women in magazines in South Africa and assesses the current image that is being portrayed to the public. Furthermore, the study will focus on determining whether the role of magazine content affects readers young and old in ways that can impact their images and lifestyles causing their identities and personal development to be shaped by the media through magazine content. The completion of the study will assist in understanding the influence that magazine content has on the creation of young women's identities in South Africa.

#### **1.5 Scope of the study**

Limitations that may influence the outcome of the study:

- Literature on the role of magazine content and its creation of young women's identities in South Africa is limited, (Baker 2006:6), as it is not a topic that is frequently and openly discussed. This may affect the outcome of the study.
- The study is limited to the South African media coverage of women and the shaping of their identities with specific references to women's magazines in South Africa.

#### **1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter provides a brief introduction and background to the study and to magazines and their attractive features. It highlights the research problem that is being investigated, that is the role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa. The chapter has further outlined the main aims and objectives for conducting the study. It focuses on the scope of the research as well as the limitations that may occur through the duration of the study. Chapter two of the study will provide a detailed examination of the key theories of persuasion and of the press which coincide with the background and the context of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

In chapter one an overview of the topic was provided with a discussion highlighting various ways in which the media communicates and interacts with the public. This chapter discusses underlying theories in the context of this study. It addresses the research question, what is the role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa? and it also examines the objectives of the study.

The literature focuses primarily on five normative theories and seven persuasion theories that correspond with the media and its powerful control over the public through the print media. Specific reference will be drawn to South African women's magazines and their increasingly credible features which impact heavily on the lives of their readers.

The five normative theories that are examined in this chapter are: Normative theory, Social Responsibility theory, Libertarian theory, Agenda-Setting theory and the Feminist Media theory. Stemming from the Feminist Media Theory is The Liberal Feminist Theory which is examined. Furthermore, the seven persuasion theories relating to the normative theories of the press are the Identity theory, Propaganda Model, Hypodermic Needle theory, Persuasion theory, Uses and Gratifications theory, Two-Step flow theory and the Spiral of Silence theory. These theories uncover aspects of the media and personal attitudes and behaviour of the public which are essential in determining the role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa. These theories also further assist in gaining an understanding of the ways in which women are affected and influenced by the media through persuasion of the print media. They provide an insight into the changes that readers undergo when determining their roles in society and through the development of one's identity.

Reference is also made to the autobiography entitled *Jane Raphaely Unedited: True Tales of a fun fearless female*. This autobiography is based on the life of a journalist over the past 50 years in South Africa and abroad. Having lived through the apartheid era, war, love, and the birth of numerous magazine brands the author takes readers through her journey inspiring and revealing to women the unique potential they possess to achieve their goals. She began as an advertising copywriter and assisted with providing the text to go with public relations



stories and then progressed to become the magazine editor of *Femina*, *Fairlady*, *Cosmopolitan* and the *Oprah magazine*, which comprise some of the key participants in the study.

The discussion of her book contributes significantly to this chapter and to the study as it describes aspects of the various normative and persuasion theories of the press through the years dating back from the early 1960's to our present day. It makes mention of the ways in which the above theories played a role in society over the years through times of struggle and oppression of women leading up to our present times, overall, supplying our evolving society with changes in roles and the expected norms of females as created through the magazine industry. The discussion of her book will therefore coincide with the theories listed to offer an understanding of the ways in which women's identities are established through the influence of the magazine industry.

## **2.2. Identity Theory**

The first theory that relates to the study is the Identity theory. McQuail, (2010:559), Smart, (2012:1) and Schneider, (2009:1) define the term identity as the specific characterisation of person, place, by self or others, according to biographical, social, cultural or other features. Communication is a necessary condition for forming and maintaining an identity. Schneider (2009:1) states that the identity theory relates to the relationship between the mind and the body.

Wise, (2009:2) postulates that aside from a personal identity, we are all participants of a social identity, as members of one or more groups. In these groups, our identity is either affirmed or contradicted. Previous studies, Wise, (2009:2), Smart, (2012:1) and Schneider, (2009:1) indicate that our personal identity will actually change over time to meet the affirmations of a group, depending on how much feedback we receive and how much value we place on the source of the feedback. Recent studies have shown that our identity is affected by our emerging global society and cultural norms that once created barriers between groups are now being dissolved as we become a community driven primarily by the media.

Simon (2004: 66–67) identifies three functions of identity:

- Identity helps to provide people with a sense of belonging (through their relational and collective self-aspects) and with a sense of distinctiveness (through their individual self-aspects).

- Identity helps people 'locate' themselves in their social worlds. By helping to define where they belong and where they do not belong in relation to others, it helps to anchor them in their social worlds, giving them a sense of 'place' or belonging. Many facets of identity help provide people with self-respect and self-esteem. People's positive evaluations of their own self-aspects help build their self-esteem.

Campbell, Assanand and Di Paula [cited by Spencer Oatey (2006:3)] offer a definition of self. The self-concept is a multi-faceted, dynamic construal that contains beliefs about one's attributes as well as episodic and semantic memories about the self. It operates as a representation, controlling the processing of self-relevant information.

Simon's [as cited by Spencer-Oatey (2006:3)] Self-Aspect Model of Identity proposes that a person's self-concept comprises beliefs about a person's own attributes. These elements can include:

- Personality traits (e.g. being shy)
- Abilities (e.g. poor dancer)
- Physical features (e.g. curly hair, slim)
- Behavioural characteristics (e.g. Usually wakes up early)
- Ideologies (e.g. Christian, democrat)
- Social roles (e.g. project manager)
- Language affiliation (e.g. English, Chinese)
- Group membership (e.g. female, academic, Christian)

These qualities of the self-aspect model of identity along with the Identity Theory form the basis of the literature review. They identify the relationship that exists between the mind and the body. By highlighting the physical body and the psychological changes that women undergo in the self development process the identity theory and the self-aspect model of identity enable women to understand who they are and where they belong in society. Through the theory of identity women are able to examine their stage of self development and establish their needs stemming from the media. It provides women with an understanding of their roles in their individual lives and encourages them to build their self esteem.

The Identity Theory is relevant and significant to the study as it assists in examining the ways in which women's identities are created and shaped by the daily activities of our society today which are fostered by the media. The mass media is a vital component in contributing

to the evolutionary nature of one's identity especially through the print media and magazine content. The selection of media content therefore plays a highly influential role over its readership as it establishes a sense of identity and belonging in society. Through the theory of identity the physical body and the psychological changes that one experiences, collaborate to assist the self development process that all readers undergo. The mass media is a highly significant tool in enhancing self development, women empowerment and self expression. A further discussion into how and why women are influenced through media content is explored in the media, communication and persuasion theories that follow.

### **2.3 The Propaganda model**

According to Herman and Chomsky, (1988:1) the mass media serves as a system for communicating messages to the general public. It is the function of the mass media to amuse, entertain, inform, and inspire individuals with values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, fulfilment of this role requires systematic propaganda.

Propaganda defined by McQuail (2010:567) and Sparks, (2007:69) is the process and product of deliberate attempts to influence behaviour and opinion through the use of multiple means of communication in ways that are systematic and one-sided. Propaganda is carried out in the interest of the sender, not the recipient. It is almost certain to be in some respects misleading or not fully truthful and can be entirely untrue, as with certain kinds of disinformation. It can also be psychologically aggressive and distorted in its representation of reality. Its effectiveness is variable, depending on the context and dispositions of the target audience more than on the characteristics of the message.

Through the print media readers have become accustomed to receiving up to date information regarding various aspects on a daily basis. The media supplies us with news, information and entertainment which are conducive to the shaping and altering of our ideology and thinking. Apart from providing an environment that keeps readers active, entertained and engaged, the Propaganda Model emphasizes the considerable control that the mass media wields over the public at large and influences its decision making process.

Herman and Chomsky (1988:1-2) further state that a Propaganda Model focuses on the inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choices. It traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to

publish, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public. The essential ingredients of the Propaganda Model, or set of news "filters," fall under the following headings described by Herman and Chomsky, (1988:1-2).

- the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms;
- advertising as the primary income source of the mass media;
- the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power;
- "flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and
- "anti-communism" as a national religion and control mechanism.

These elements interact with and reinforce one another. The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to publish. They fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place, and they explain the basis and operations of what amounts to propaganda campaigns.

The domination of the media that results from the operation of these filters occurs so naturally that media news teams, who are frequently operating with complete integrity and good will, are able to convince themselves that they choose and interpret news objectively. Within the limits of the filter constraints they are often objective; the constraints are so powerful, and are built into the system in such a fundamental way, that alternative bases of news choices are hardly imaginable.

The Propaganda Model relates to the study as it examines the ways in which the media portrays messages to the public regardless of this effect of these messages on the public. It highlights the use of wealth, power and authority by the government that is used by the mass media to gain the support and dependence of the public. It further examines the ways in which the media manipulates the public and controls their personal choices such as self discovery, belonging in society and even financial decisions. Often, readers buy into media and magazine content without being aware of the psychological long term effects that accompany the magazines content. Content can often be misleading and untrue and readers sometimes fail to differentiate between what is true and what is untrue due to their need for infotainment. This theory therefore relates to the first media theory discussed in the study, the normative theory, which uncovers the role that the media should fulfil in society.

## 2.4 The Normative Theory

The Normative Theory correlates with the role of the print media in influencing women's lives and identities. According to Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, and White (2010:2) this theory associates significantly with the media's capability of controlling the public and persuading them into believing any message that is broadcast through the print media much like the characteristics of the Propaganda Model stated above. This theory indicates that since the print media wields such a significant and persuasive role over the media, it contributes to the self development processes of young women as indicated in the Identity Theory and the Propaganda Model.

The Normative Theory is a theory of the press that consists of various sub theories that present a synthesis of ideas which developed over the past four centuries. However, Sasu (2009:1) argues that the role of the mass media has been frequently debated since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Peterson and Schramm, [as cited by Sasu, 2009:1] further proposed that the press system was divided into four categories namely:

1. Authoritarian Theory
2. Libertarian Theory
3. Social Responsibility Theory
4. Soviet-Totalitarian Theory

These four theories provide a brief background and overview of the Normative Theory of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the media was predominantly controlled by the government. These theories therefore implied that the buying public at this time was still heavily controlled by the mass media.

These theories of the press made up the Normative Theory and were based on observation only, Sasu (2009:1). Ostini and Fung, (2002:42) described the four theories as a linear combination of two analytical sub dimensions, based on state systems: authoritarian and libertarian. The Authoritarian Theory was seen as the most pervasive of all other dimensions having a great influence over press practices while the libertarian theory was seen as ideal. The primary libertarian function was to advance the interests of individual members. The social responsibility theory was based on the idea that the media had a moral obligation to fulfil in society. The soviet totalitarian also known as the soviet communist theory was the extreme application of the authoritarian ideas leaving the media to fall under total subordination to the interests and functions of the state.

However, Altschull [as cited by Sasu 2009:2] criticized the Four Theories of the Press, stating that they were no longer relevant in modern times due to the economic, political and social

power that they held within the system. Altschull's conclusion was that, all press systems were agents of the people who exercised political and economic power. Newspapers, magazines and broadcasting however, were not independent but they had the authority to exercise independent power. The content of the news media always reflected the interests of those who financed the press which lead to media content being entirely controlled by the government. However, today magazines operate independently through their own media houses and filter through the media fairly freely supplying various sources of infotainment for the public.

Renowned theorist Mcquail, (2000:8) supported by Sasu (2009:1) argued that the Normative Theory was concerned with what the media ought to be doing in society rather than what it actually does. Baran and Davis, (2003:5) further emphasized that the Normative Theory was the ideal way in which the media should be structured and operated within society with the public at liberty to obtain any information provided by the media. Similarly, magazines in South Africa are structured in ways that draw the attention of the public by portraying real life stories and experiences which are free for any member of the public to obtain. As a result the Normative Theory did not provide any scientific explanations but rather provided true facts based on daily activity and lifestyle, similar to the content depicted in women's magazines which is based on the lives of celebrities, their identities and lifestyles. Through the Normative Theory, the exposure of media content in magazines encourages women to participate in following and adopting the trends displayed by the media having a lasting effect on them.

Fourie, (2001:301), in contrast maintains that by reading media content over an extended duration of time, societal roles and expected norms can be learnt and adhered to by the public. Inevitably, controlling the mindsets and altering the lifestyle choices of readers worldwide. For example, if the attention of the media through women's magazines is focussed on the portrayal of a positive representation of women's identities, these patterns will become accepted by the public as the norm. Women's magazines however, continuously portray fashion images, trends, lifestyles and beauty do's and don'ts to improve one's look, style and identity bringing about the introduction of the hypodermic needle theory.

#### **2.4.1 The Hypodermic Needle Theory**

The characteristics of the Hypodermic Needle Theory according to Bunby (2013:1) indicate that through this theory, the media has a direct and an immediate effect on the audience. According to Proust (2010:1) the Hypodermic Needle or the Magic Bullet Theory as it is also known, are both used to suggest that there is a powerful and direct flow of information from

the sender to the receiver. Messages are received through magazine content and are wholly accepted by its readers. Women across South Africa follow magazine content on a daily basis for varied forms of advice, tips and gossip as this form of media has a powerful, direct and an immediate effect on them. This powerful influence is entirely controlled by the media or the 'sender' of media content.

Similarly, the interest of the Propaganda Model is with the sender, whereby senders communicate a message to the audience who is seen as completely passive as they are entirely submissive to the content they read regardless of whether the message is true or not. The media is seen as the most powerful communication tool over the audience, leaving the audience with no power as they are persuaded by the media. This reaction therefore leads to the introduction of the Persuasion Theory.

#### **2.4.2 The Persuasion Theory**

Simons [as cited by Dainton (2004:104)] defines the term 'persuasion' as human communication that is designed to influence others by modifying their beliefs, values or attitudes. Kumar (2010:1) suggests that the Persuasion Theory is a mass communication theory which deals with messages that are aimed at changing the attitudes of receivers in a very subtle way. Women's magazines in some way or the other contribute to the changing of attitudes, ideologies and beliefs of their readers through various aspects of their content as readers passively accept the content in women's magazines.

Similar to the Propaganda Model and the Hypodermic Needle approach, the persuasive theory considered audiences as passive although the scope of the message shifted from manipulation to persuasion. The effects of mass communication demonstrated that messages are successful if they embed the same opinions on their receivers.

Unlike the Hypodermic Needle Theory, the Persuasion Theory considers the Stimulus-Response model as interposed by a filter: psychological characteristics of an individual. Persuasive messages are thus able to activate an attitude change that can modify behavioural patterns of individuals.

Kumar (2010:3) indicates that a scientific formula following a rational approach to persuasion was developed:

Values, Beliefs and Motivation are key generators of people's attitudes; while attitudes influence behaviours. Therefore, Value + Beliefs + Motives = Attitudes and Behaviour.

According to the Persuasion Theory the communication process comprises a three phase model: communication-attitudes-behaviour. The concept underlying persuasion is that information is provided to influence the behaviour of receivers. Likewise, magazine content that is aimed at women uses images to communicate various messages to the audience that will eventually have an impact on their attitudes and ways of thinking therefore altering their behaviour patterns relating to particular topics. The ways in which these attributes that are moulded by the print media assist in determining how the representation of women contributes to one's identity. It further provides an understanding of the overall role that magazine content plays in the lives of readers in South Africa.

Similarly as indicated by Sypeck, Gray and Ahrens (2004:343) media images help foster a social climate in which fashion trends, beauty tips, slimness and lifestyles are all considered essential for female beauty. These aspects all contribute significantly to the creation of identities of young women across the country as women buy into the persuasive abilities of the media on a continuous basis and eventually alter their personal traits through the attributes of women's magazines.

According to numerous sources such as, Chow, (2004:132); Carr, 2007:43) and Wise, (2002:2) the media contributes to the maintenance of one's body image particularly in women through the conveyance of thinness-oriented norms and values. For example, images contained in women's magazines of young beautiful women dressed in trendy garments with perfect figures and flawless makeup portray a certain standard of living of an individual that readers desire to obtain. Sypeck *et al* (2004:342) state that women are theorised to internalise the thin ideal portrayed in the media through repeated exposure of such depictions, leading to increased body dissatisfaction. However, as readers the public is often unaware of the impact that such media content has on their lives. This impact not only affects readers at their present stage in life but inevitably affects them in the long term as well due to the lasting effects of media content.

Numerous women's magazines focus on the varied needs of many women by highlighting certain aspects which readers find challenging within their own lives. Therefore, women find themselves drawn to these magazines to seek some sort of comfort, advice and personal gain. This leads to the introduction of the theory of uses and gratifications.



### **2.4.3 The Uses and Gratifications Theory**

According to Spring (2002:1) and Ruggiero, (2000:3) the Uses and Gratifications Theory was introduced based on the notion that people make use of the media for their own benefit and own personal gain. Within the uses and gratifications approach, the audience is viewed as active, implying that they willingly seek out specific media and content to achieve certain results or 'gratifications' that satisfy their personal needs.

Some of these aspects may include weight loss or weight gain, healthy eating habits, exercise and fitness programmes and tried and tested diet options among the health segment within magazines. Topics such as these are constantly covered in the print media, especially in top selling women's magazines as readers are constantly affected by these issues on a daily basis, and readers purchase these magazines to assist them in finding ways to overcome these issues. It is believed that magazine content can offer the advice and comfort that readers want to read, without having to discuss these topics with other individuals. Therefore reaffirming Fourie's (2001:301) argument and coinciding with the persuasion theory proving that media content will eventually alter the mindsets of readers and in turn shape their attitudes and beliefs.

Similarly, Wise (2002:2) suggests that by constantly enforcing the importance of one's image, dress code and identity in society, readers are forced to believe that they need to conform to these lifestyle changes as they all form part of a social identity even though they possess a personal identity. Likewise, Sypeck *et al* (2004:343) further suggest that female models are employed by magazine houses to entice women into purchasing magazines as well as merchandise due to their desire to identify with fashion images set before them on the covers of magazines. This brings about the discussion of the Two-Step Flow Approach.

### **2.4.4 The Two-Step Flow Approach**

Sutton (2011:1) and Katz, (1957:2) support the above statements with the Two-Step Flow Theory which relates to the ways in which people affect or influence other people. In this case, the way in which models on magazine covers influence readers. The expected result of a study conducted was to prove that media messages have a direct influence on the public. However the theory proved that it is actually personal and informal contact that has more impact on the behaviour of the public. Magazines portray their content through the use of celebrities who readers tend to follow as role models or leaders with an opinion that is of a valuable nature.

This theory proves that the models showcased in magazines are strategically placed to develop a media-audience relationship. Raphaely (2012:146) maintains that women continuously seek a read that is new and delightful therefore through this media-audience relationship there is a personal attraction in the minds of the readers and cover models assist to create a desire among readers to follow the trends of the models used.

The magazine cover below depicting Miley Cyrus is an example of the strategy used by the print media to create a media-audience relationship. By targeting young women, specifically teenagers, who will purchase magazines containing various ideas, tips and trends to improve their current images are showcased through-out this magazine. Louw (2007:1) proposes that these detailed topics are structured in ways that provide the right amount of information combined with entertainment or 'infotainment' as the media has labelled it, making readers understand and connect with the printed content on a level that persuades them to alter their personal traits. By altering their personal traits readers are able to fit in with society and to be accepted within their social identities.

Younger women, mainly teenagers are more susceptible to these powerful influences of the media as they are easily driven by celebrity gossip, advertisements and trends within their social groups. This indicates that the re-enforcement of the same message repeatedly does eventually adjust and adapt the mindsets of the public to new beliefs and norms created.

*Glamour* magazine, for example, is one of South Africa's leading women's magazines, which comprises a large and rapidly growing readership across the country. It targets younger women in their 20's but also draws a large readership of teenagers who thrive on the latest fashion, social and celebrity trends by conveying a hint on the magazines' cover as to what the magazine contains. Raphaely (2012:241) claims that *Glamour* among numerous other women's magazines keeps evolving to meet the real needs of their readers by responding to the letters from the public to the editors.

The following figure is an example of a convincing image.

**Figure 2.4.1.1: *Glamour* Magazine Cover**



Source: Glamour Magazine cover, May 2004

The magazine cover above highlights weight loss programmes, various methods for staying in shape, hair style ideas, beauty and make up tips, relationship guidance and health advice. These cover stories are intelligent ways of ensuring that magazine sales increase as these topics are strategically placed on the magazine cover in bright colours and bold writing with an attractive and popular Hollywood celebrity to entice the reader.

The magazine contains information that readers wish to read, not only for their own personal gain but to stay up to date with the latest celebrity gossip as well, creating the infotainment that women desire. Not only do readers want the latest celebrity gossip, or fashion trends, but they also seek advice from well known celebrities who they turn to as their role models. Raphaely (2012:144) maintains that the huge surge in the print media creates celebrities and these celebrities play significant roles in the print media especially in magazines as they assist in influencing the buying power of the public.

Fourie's (2001:301) assumptions of the Normative Theory once again indicate that women's magazines are a means of controlling and shaping the minds of the public by utilising intelligent marketing skills and prominent public figures creating the right image to enforce media driven messages and images continually. In the same way, the Identity Theory, Propaganda Model, Hypodermic Needle Theory, Persuasion Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Two-Step Flow Theory all correspond with the assumptions of the Normative Theory specified above.

However, Chow (2004:133) further states that teen magazines engage and shape readers to consent to particular values which are threatening to women. These values encourage readers to conform to the media driven ways of life through images and content that is perceived to be positive. However, such content actually causes more harm to readers in the long term, by contributing to the creation of social identities that are primarily driven by media content. Readers across the country are inundated with media content that is enhanced by celebrity figures who wield a significant effect over the readership at large. Through this level of control the media has several roles and responsibilities to fulfil as it acts as a major mass communicator.

## **2.5 Social Responsibility theory**

The second media theory that is also commonly known for its association with the media's influence over the public is the Social Responsibility Theory. This theory relates to the normative theory as it also identifies components of the media regarding the media's responsibility owed to the public.

According to Middleton, (2009:3), the term 'Responsibility' is seen as the obligation for the proper care and safekeeping of one's audience. 'Society' defined by Ravi, (2012:2) is the system of human organisations generating distinctive cultural patterns and institutions and usually providing protection, security, continuity, and a national identity for its members. Therefore, social responsibility entails the necessity for the journalist to keep society's interest at top priority at all times. It can also be seen as collective responsibility or public interest responsibility.

Numerous sources Fourie, (2009:35), Middleton, (2009:6) and McQuail, (1994:53) suggest that the Social Responsibility Theory emphasized that the media has an important obligation to perform in society, as they are accountable to their audiences to whom they owe true, accurate, objective and well balanced information. The media is also compelled to avoid information that offends races, ethnic or religious groups. According to Skjerdal, (2001:34),

the Social Responsibility Theory assumes that human beings are compositions of a particular cultural background and free will does not guarantee ultimate good for everyone.

However, The Hutchins Commission, (2009:1) and Coleman, (2009:1) suggest that the media should serve and benefit the public, and should remain free of government interference. Middleton (2009:4) further suggests that this theory highlights the crucial role of the communications sector in shaping societal processes, the formulation of public opinion, and civil society movements, social and political development patterns. Guidelines have been defined by the Hutchins Commission for the media to follow in order to fulfil their commitments of serving the public. The Social Responsibility Theory claimed that the media could be self-regulating by adhering to the following basic principles according to the Hutchins Commission, (2009:1) and Mcquail [as cited by Ravi, (2012:2)]:

- Media should accept and fulfil obligations in society.
- These obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance.
- In accepting and applying these obligations, media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions.
- The media should avoid offensive content triggering crime, violence or civil disorder or harm to minority groups.
- The media as a whole should be pluralist and reflect the diversity of their society, giving access to various points of view and various rights of reply.
- Society and the public have a right to expect high standards of performance, and intervention can be justified to secure public good.
- Journalists and media professionals should be accountable to society as well as to employers and the market.

These characteristics indicate the nature of the Social Responsibility Theory within society. It outlines the role that this theory should play when providing the public with information of public interest. The media should actually provide the public with forceful messages that abide by the rules of the Social Responsibility Theory much like the features of the Hypodermic Needle Theory whereby readers receive content that is most suitable to them.

However, the print media does not always conform to this theory. Magazine content does provide information that will benefit readers but does not steer away from controversial topics. They cater for the needs of all readers from diverse backgrounds, cultures and ethnic groups, focussing on various aspects, providing content that may sometimes stir up conflict and create platforms for opinions and views to be aired. The outcome of these discussion platforms might not always impact the public positively, as some of the topics discussed

could be ones that are not openly confronted among peer groups causing a lasting negative effect on the lives of readers.

However, the Social Responsibility Theory indicates that individuals should be capable of determining right from wrong and should be able to evaluate whether information that is broadcast by the media will add value to their lives or will impact negatively on them. Although, magazine content is seldom reviewed in this way and content inevitably has an effect on the mindset of readers, eventually altering their beliefs. This brings the argument back to the characteristics of the Normative Theory, implying that media content is rapidly influential over readers across South Africa through various women's magazines. Readers are effortlessly drawn to media content and fail to see the outcome that the media has on their personal development as a result of magazine's composure. The figure below is an example of *Cosmopolitan* magazine cover.

**Figure 2.5.1: *Cosmopolitan* Magazine cover**



Source: Cosmopolitan Magazine cover, September 2007

The *Cosmopolitan* magazine, similar to Glamour magazine, is one of South Africa's largest brands in magazine publishing today. According to Raphaely (2012:239) it was started in 1984 alongside another popular woman's magazine in South Africa entitled *Fairlady*. *Cosmopolitan* targets young women by focussing on saucy and compelling aspects that every woman is faced with at some stage in her life if not on a daily basis.

Such aspects include relationship do's and don'ts, dating insights from male perspectives, how to handle tough careers, ways to improve your image and self esteem, confidence boosters, and fashion tips. Additionally all these aspects are exposed and enhanced by a world renowned and beautiful Hollywood actress or star that all readers aspire to emulate therefore reiterating the characteristics of the two step flow approach.

Numerous authors, Sutton (2011:1), Joseph (2012:1) and Griswold (2007:2) postulate that within the Two-Step Flow Theory information received from the mass media moves in two stages. Ideas flow from radio and print to the opinion leaders and from them to the public and those readers who are less affected by media content and are not actively involved in voicing their views and opinions. These opinion leaders are said to be more influential than the mass media alone. The power of the mass media is therefore indirect and is reduced by the authority of local opinion leaders.

The most attractive characteristic drawing readers to purchase this magazine is the thought that this particular Hollywood star on the cover is also faced with the very same challenges as the readers are confronted with just the same as any other individual. If this star has not faced these challenges readers would still be interested to hear her view point on these topics being a Hollywood celebrity. This once again is the media's approach of escaping into the minds of readers to control and re-shape their norms and values to believe that they need to follow the lifestyle trends of this Hollywood star because they have numerous daily lifestyle challenges in common.

Sutton, (2011:1) provides a description of the stages of the Two-Step Flow Approach:

- Firstly, opinion leaders who pay close attention to the mass media receive the media messages being portrayed. Opinion leaders exist in all groups and communities. The leadership may differ but opinion leaders are the most influential of the group. Two types of opinion leaders occur, namely monomorphic which means that they are only influential on one topic, and polymorphic which means that the leader is influential on a variety of topics.
- Secondly, these opinion leaders pass their own interpretations of the information as well as actual media content to opinion receivers.

Celebrities who appear on these magazine covers are seen as polymorphic opinion leaders as they provide advice and guidance on various topics ranging from relationships and career advice to fashion and beauty trends. However, the expertise of these celebrities offering such opinions is limited to these aspects of selected women's magazines. This assumption can leave one to question whether these selected celebrities are in the right position to offer such advice to readers based purely on their own personal experiences, who they are in society or whether celebrities are just used by media houses to promote a magazine brand and increase sales.

The topics listed on the magazine covers do not always comply with the rules and regulations of the Social Responsibility Theory. They are placed there to entice readers with



topics that sell. Readers are inundated with topics pertaining to sex and sexual behaviour with detailed descriptions, do's and don'ts for readers to assimilate. These are not openly confronted by other individuals. Bleakley, Hennessy and Fishbein, (2011:309), state some concerns including adolescents who are increasingly seeking media content containing information and behavioural aspects which should not be available to them or should not be of interest to them at such a young and vulnerable age. These interests result in causing confusion or corruption in the creation of social and individual identities especially among teenagers today. This argument therefore provides opposing views to the Social Responsibility Theory as readers continue to view magazine content and wholly accept the content produced in a passive way without objecting to it, leading to the discussion of the Spiral of Silence Theory.

### **2.5.1 The Spiral of Silence Theory**

Numerous authors, West and Turner (2004:1), Noelle-Nuemann (1993:1), Lima (2011:1), Minguzzi (2012:1), Abendroth, Fox and Hernandez (2013:1) suggest that the Spiral of Silence Theory determines the ways in which public opinion is formed. People form impressions about the distribution of public opinion and try to determine whether they are in the majority or not. This theory stipulates that there is a tendency for people to remain silent when they feel that their views are in opposition to the majority view on a particular subject. If they are in the minority and the public opinion is changing away from them then they prefer to remain silent on a particular issue.

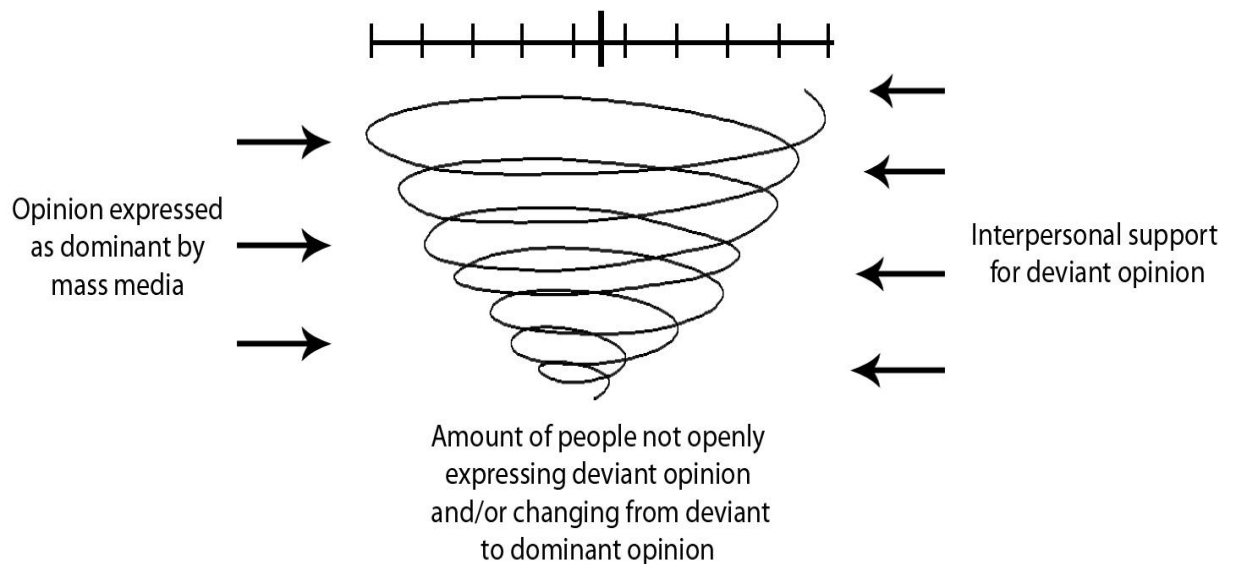
Noelle-Nuemann, (1974:1) maintains that the reasons for remaining silent are:

- Fear of isolation when the group or public realises that the individual has divergent opinions from the status quo.
- Fear of reprisal or more extreme isolation, in the sense that voicing their opinion might lead to a negative consequence beyond that of more isolation (loss of a job, status, etc).

However, as previously stated, the Social Responsibility Theory assumes that the reader is capable of differentiating between right and wrong and between content that is harmful to readers and content that is appropriate for them to consume, leaving the decision to be made by the reader. As the characteristics of the Spiral of Silence Theory indicate, individuals will continue to remain silent when their opinion is in the minority as they face a fear of isolation among their peers and social groups. This however, still does not stop media, particularly

magazines, from publishing any information that does not comply with the social responsibility owed to the public. Content that is harmful or not is still published freely and is made available to whoever wishes to obtain it provided that readers take the liberty to evaluate the content according to the principles of the social responsibility theory. The following figure illustrates the Spiral of Silence Theory.

**Figure: 2.5.2.1 The Spiral of Silence Theory, according to Noelle-Neumann [as cited by Minguzzi (2012:1)].**



**Elisabeth Noelle- Neumann’s Spiral of Silence**

Through the facets of the Spiral of Silence Theory illustrated above, the views of the opinion leaders are portrayed as dominant by the mass media, indicated by a larger spiral of interaction as shown on the left of the illustration. On the right, the views of those in opposition to the dominant opinion leader on the left are shown in a diminishing spiral motion. This movement portrays the level at which individuals are willing to object or promote their views on a particular issue, indicating that they prefer to remain silent.

Through this illustration the passive nature of the many magazine readers is demonstrated. While magazines may or may not always abide by the rules of the Social Responsibility Theory, readers accept information without objecting or voicing their views. They remain silent causing an impact on their lives in some way or the other if not on their overall mind sets, attitudes and beliefs. Through this process the content that they obtain will have some

effect on their overall identities over time which can be harmful to readers. For those younger readers who are more vulnerable to the media for infotainment purposes, the ability to question or select the appropriate media content for them is surpassed as they believe that they should be at liberty to consume media content as they desire. This in turn causes an identity to be moulded around a media driven lifestyle.

## **2.6 Libertarian Theory**

A Normative Theory that applies to the study is the Libertarian Theory which is also referred to as the free press model. Napoli (2001:227) and Karthik (2011:2) state that it is closely linked to the Social Responsibility Theory as the obligations of the Social Responsibility Theory to serve the public, are deeply rooted within the Libertarian Theory. As defined by Godwin, (2009:1) the Libertarian Theory is described as a philosophy that advocates free will, individual rights and voluntary cooperation.

The concept of the Libertarian Theory indicated by Skjerdal, (2001:33) and Karthik, (2011:2) implied that the media enjoyed full independence from the government, as it functioned to present the truth. According to Blerkom, (2008:1) and Fourie, (2009:34) this theory evolved from the idea that people who are rational beings, who are given any information will be able to distinguish between what is true and what is false, similar to the Social Responsibility Theory. Skjerdal (2001:33) further stated that the model also rested on the idea that individuals should be free to publish or broadcast any news, information or entertaining facts as long as it does not infringe on the freedom of others.

However, in contrast, the constraints women faced in the early 1960's, when women's magazines were being introduced into the print media industry in South Africa, were predominantly controlled by men. As suggested by Raphaely (2012:152) society was such that women did everything in their power to conceal their pregnancies from all those around them especially if they worked in male dominated environments. Prior to this it was a common practice for women to resign from their jobs when they discovered that they were pregnant. However, nowadays women are notably encouraged to embrace their pregnancies and to enjoy the nine month journey. The print media of the 21<sup>st</sup> century produces numerous magazines which are specifically dedicated and targeted at pregnant women offering them everything they would need to know during and after their pregnancy.

Similarly Ozturk (2006:49) concurs with the above statement by stating that within the libertarian system of the press, the main function of the media was to inform, entertain and sell, but especially to help discover the truth and to act as a check on the government. In this

view of the press, there should be no restrictions on import or export of media messages across national frontiers.

McQuail, as cited by Fourie, (2009:34), supports these statements by identifying a few basic assumptions of the Libertarian Theory:

- The media should be free from any external censorship.
- Publication and distribution should be accessible to any individual or group.
- There should be no intimidation to publish anything.
- There should be no restrictions on the export and import of messages across national borders.

Based on the assumptions above, Korpacz (2011:1) suggests that it can be understood that under the Libertarian Theory, the public is free or at liberty to obtain any public information via any form of media without any censorship, intimidation or restrictions. Individuals should be free to obtain any content regardless of whether it might impact negatively on whoever might access it or not. This applies to all forms of media, including print, radio and television.

However, within the context of the study the above statements apply greatly to the print media, specifically magazines as a form of media. As much as this theory is valid within this context, the liberty to publish any content in magazines does contribute significantly to the lives of those who read these magazines as readers generally accept magazine content in a passive way. Numerous authors, Bunby (2013:1), Proust (2010:1) and Kin (2011:1) indicate that the magic bullet theory describes a media message as a bullet being fired from the “media gun” into the audiences “head”. Similarly the Hypodermic Needle Model suggests that the media injects its messages straight into the passive audience which has an immediate and direct effect. Alomele (2011:1) claims that this injection of ideology caused the audience to be brainwashed into believing whatever message was put across, often causing a negative effect on the public. This theory draws attention to the link between the Identity theory, Propaganda model, Persuasion theory, Two-Step Flow Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Spiral of Silence Theory as they all correlate to form a basis for this literature review.

However, it is evident that the characteristics of the Hypodermic Needle Theory do not fully correspond with the Libertarian Theory which states that the public should be at liberty to obtain any information and can determine individually whether content is suitable or not. The Hypodermic Needle Theory emphasizes that the audience is seen as passive, where

information is received and wholly accepted without questioning it or been given the chance to differentiate from suitable or unsuitable media content. This can have a negative result among readers as it further supports the features of the Spiral of Silence Theory. It is assumed that the public is aware of the difference between content that is suitable and content that is not and that they will act accordingly but in most situations readers choose to remain silent to the content being exposed.

Although, Dalke and Blankenship, (2009:1), state that the extent to which women are being portrayed negatively by the media cause major concerns in society, Thomas, (2008:2) suggests that the media conveys different types of information about social issues and events and are responsible for depicting everything true and authentic. Chomsky and Herman [as cited by Thomas, (2008:2)] point out that the societal purpose of media is to select topics, distribute concerns, frame issues and filter information. However, it is not the primary concern of the media to engage in information that shields the public from harmful content. Thus, it is crucial that readers gain the awareness of the potential misrepresentation and manipulation by mass media. Additionally, they should develop media literacy skills in order to consciously and consistently recognize, analyze and evaluate media messages without letting the media take full control and persuade the public.

Women's magazines in South Africa play vital roles in contributing to the overall identities of women who read these magazines, especially younger women who are easily shaped and swayed by media content. A strong characteristic of the Libertarian Theory states that individuals should be capable of determining for themselves between truth and falsehood or between content that is harmful to them and content that is beneficial to them. However, consumers generally fail to grasp the differentiation of these content analyses when purchasing magazines. Even if readers are aware of content that is detrimental to them, they will not necessarily stay away from it. Readers will still be accustomed to consuming various printed content which will impact on their personal traits, values and beliefs. Through this adoption the individual identities will then be re-shaped by a world that is driven by the media through an attractive disguise.

## **2.7 Agenda-Setting theory**

Agenda-setting defined by 'Mass Media, Mass Culture [as cited by Sanchez (2002:1)], is the process whereby the mass media determines what readers think and what readers worry about. It is a process used to remodel all the events occurring in our environment, into a simpler model before we deal with it. McQuail and McCombs, (2010:2), Windahl, [as cited by

Fourie, (2009:238)] and Muin (2011:1) further state that agenda-setting describes the media's powerful ability to focus the attention of the public on specific issues.

According to Uscinski, (2009:796) and McCombs, [as cited by Davie and Maher, (2006:362)] the Agenda-Setting Theory states that the mass media, simply by the fact of paying attention to some issues and neglecting others, will have an effect on public opinion. Sexton, (2006:1) suggests that a constant flow of images or messages do have an effect on the masses as modern society's obsession with appearance proves to be unrealistic and unhealthy. Women, especially, are objectified by an unrealistic expectation of beauty put forward by models, actresses or other celebrity figures who do not reflect the average appearance of women in society.

However, McCombs and Shaw, [as cited by Fourie, (2009:238-239)] and Groshek, (2008:53-56) state that through the Agenda-Setting Theory emphasis is placed on events through news coverage, educating the public on how much importance to attach to a particular topic, which may set an agenda for public attention and discussion. For example, the 2012 Olympic Games which were held in London over July 2012 – August 2012, was one of the biggest sporting events of the world occurring every four years, showcasing the natural abilities of thousands of athletes from around the world. Daily news updates were provided on the events that took place at the Olympic Games and also provided world-wide coverage on these all important activities as each participating country fought for first place.

Events such as these are examples of agenda-setting through the media as the attention of the entire world was focused on this specific event with daily news updates on the latest winners. However, it can also be an indication of the influence that the public wields over the media, as this event was a public sporting event which drew the attention of the entire world through the media, shaping the media content, news and broadcasting schedules for the duration of the Olympic Games.

However, Uscinski (2009:797) points out that most agenda-setting literature illustrates very little evidence suggesting that the public influences the media agenda. Gokcedag (2011:1) indicates that the Spiral of Silence Theory is not thought of without the Agenda-Setting Theory. Public opinion is shaped by the help of the media and as a result of this people in society shape their thoughts according to the media which is the strongest tool between these two theories. Agenda-setting was intended to support the claims of media influence over the public emphasizing the sound of the majority, leaving the minority with no place in the process, therefore creating a spiral of silence. McCombs and Bell [as cited by Groshek, (2008:56)], state that through their day-by-day selection and display of news, editors focus their attention and influence the public's perception on important issues of the day.

Similarly women's magazines use celebrities and public figures to engage the public through a media-audience relationship to purchase magazines. Celebrities possess the attractive characteristics that readers wish to see as they turn to public figures for their opinions and advice. Celebrities through this process become 'opinion leaders' for the public to follow due to their prominence in society.

Studies by Lazarsfeld [as cited by Griswold (2007:2)] questioned the characteristics that define the opinion leader as follows:

- Is an opinion leader influential in all cases on all topics?
- Is the influence of an opinion leader constrained to particular topics?
- How does an opinion leader come to be influential?

Likewise these questions can be asked of the celebrity figure being used to provide guidance and recommendations to the public based purely on their own personal experiences and their role in society.

A study by Merton [as cited by Griswold, (2007:2)] reveals that opinion leadership is not a general characteristic of a person. It is rather limited to specific issues. Individuals, who act as opinion leaders on one issue, may not be regarded as influential on other issues. Opinion leaders seem evenly distributed among social, economical and educational levels. There are no particular traits about these individuals that stand out. For example, celebrities in women's magazines providing advice on topics such as fitness, diets or fashion do's and don'ts cannot be regarded as influential on health or medical topics unless they have personal experiences to reflect on. As previously stated in the Two-Step Flow Approach, celebrities can therefore be seen as polymorphic when commenting on issues pertaining to the content of women's magazines whereas qualified medical doctors for example, offering medical advice in a magazine would be seen a monomorphic.

However, within magazine content targeted at women, one can begin to question whether editors do actually focus attention on the most important issues of the daily lives of readers. Magazines focus on specific aspects that readers want to read which they find entertaining and enlightening as a result of their lives being affected by these aspects. Some of them include fashion trends, lifestyle tips, career advice, relationship advice, health and well being. Included in these articles are images contributing to the essence of the article and to the overall impact of the body of these magazines which in turn create a varied holistic view of society. These write ups and images portrayed by women's magazines do contribute to the lives of the women who read this content as it effortlessly contributes to the shaping and moulding of the identities of the readers. They offer ways to improve one's lifestyle and alter

individuality, leaving readers to believe that their current ways of life are inadequate for them. By focusing on particular aspects repeatedly one would eventually begin to believe that there is a need for a lifestyle change. This brings the Hypodermic Needle Theory back into the equation as readers of women's magazines are constantly inundated with the same topics month after month with new and improved tips to test. All these features are once again portrayed by a celebrity or 'opinion leader' who engages with the audience (illustrated by the Two-Step Flow Model above). This creates an individual interaction and association creating in the minds of the audience a need to follow the trends and lifestyles being portrayed in magazines.

For example, the immense emphasis that is placed on weight loss, dieting schedules and fitness programs in women's magazines providing readers with constant advice, and campaigns to create an awareness of the health risks that women place on themselves by being overweight. By outlining the health risks and fitness regimes women are constantly reminded that they need to stay in shape in order to ensure a healthy future. Health awareness among women is a vital aspect that should be highlighted for women to pay attention to. However, on the larger scale such as magazine content which is constantly re-enforcing the importance of self image, women are drawn to adapting to the thought that they need to alter their figures.

This is where agenda-setting takes control, by consistently providing updated and improved ways to keep fit and stay in shape as women are persistently concerned about their weight and their image. Topics such as weight loss, health and fitness are faced by women all over the world, even by celebrities and public figures. Magazines use this fact strategically by placing well known celebrities and public figures on the covers of women's magazines to draw the attention of the readers and by providing them with personal life changing stories and lifestyle challenges that these Hollywood stars face. The general public easily buys into the methods used by magazines as they are attracted by their favourite Hollywood celebrities.

The figure below is an example of a magazine cover which highlights the importance of weight control.

**Figure 2.7.1: The *Oprah Magazine* cover**





**Source: Oprah Magazine cover, December 2008**

The Oprah magazine was introduced to the South African print media in 2001. Raphaely (2012:315-316) states that having broken all the rules of the magazine world, O Magazine contained no horoscopes, crosswords, celebrity gossip or sleaze, instead it comprised everything that the legendary talk show host Oprah Winfrey believed in. By providing human interest stories, inspiring tales of travel and personal discovery and excerpts from visionary books, O Magazine captured and produced landscape photography and food that made readers want to lick the page. By showcasing Oprah Winfrey on the cover month after month instead of other Hollywood celebrities, the magazine captured the audiences by taking them through some of the challenges that the talk show host faced through her life. It allowed the South African print media to bridge the gap in the lives of those South Africans seeking a more lifestyle oriented read rather than a fashion and gossip based read.

This magazine cover above outlines some of the main features contained within the magazine. One particular topic of high priority is the weight gain of Oprah Winfrey. The

cover shows that this star has had a battle with weight on numerous occasions, and provides insight on how to correct this problem and keep it under control before it gets worse, providing ways to keep to a diet that works for each individual. This therefore brings the agenda setting theory into the equation once again. By indicating that when a message is broadcast repeatedly above any other message, the public will focus on the issue being broadcast and will neglect other aspects. In the same way, women who are faced with weight gain will seek content that caters for dealing with weight control, diet and fitness programs compared to women who seek other information from magazine content. This in turn shapes the minds and the attitudes of the women allowing them to receive the information they seek without having to discuss the topic with another individual but rather be able to read the information they require through the convenience of a magazine.

Katz and Lazarsfeld, [as cited by Griswold, (2007:3)] state that opinion leaders are identified as having the strongest interest within their niche. They hold positions within their community affording them special competence in their particular niches. In this case Oprah Winfrey is seen as that opinion leader having battled with weight control for years. Through this personal experience she can be regarded as monomorphic on this particular topic allowing her to provide advice in detail due to her own experiences. However, as a public figure in general she would be regarded as polymorphic due to her position in society. Although public figures can be used widely across all magazines to provide advice, create awareness or just contribute to sales, one can question whether these celebrities are equipped enough to be providing advice to the public on various issues that affect it.

Another example of weight problems on the other extreme, is that magazines generally only focus on issues of weight gain among the public, particularly among celebrities. It is rather rare to obtain any advice from magazines or any other source providing ways in which one can increase one's weight for those who struggle to do so. However, it is a challenge that many women are faced with; it is just rarely spoken off. Although, when it is a Hollywood celebrity that is battling weight issues by constantly losing weight, the media thrives on this type of information and perceives it as celebrity gossip. It therefore becomes a strategically placed insert in magazines as this information will be seen as celebrity gossip, forgetting about prying into the personal life of the celebrity. Instead, this insight is used to increase magazine sales and to provide advice to those who find themselves in this situation, furthermore contributing to the creation of a media driven world.

The following magazine cover is an example of *Heat* magazine.

Figure 2.7.2: *Heat* Magazine cover



Source: Heat Magazine cover, May 2007

The magazine cover above is a celebrity gossip magazine, which showcases celebrities from around the world in their most flattering moments, but also thrives on publishing images of them in their most embarrassing moments. Women's gossip magazines generally tend to focus on the negative things that celebrities engage in or seek aspects of their everyday lives that can be passed off as celebrity gossip. Images of celebrities without makeup, or with bad skin conditions or even if they are just out shopping and are dressed in a way that society has labelled 'not suitable' for the everyday lives of celebrities, are captured and published as a means to generate gossip. Generally, overweight celebrities are guaranteed a spot in a latest monthly or weekly gossip magazine portraying images of them in rather unflattering ways.

This magazine however, has depicted a well known celebrity figure that has battled anorexia for years, who has now gained weight. Once again keeping all the focus and attention of the media on weight control similar to the previous magazine covers above, regardless of whether it is weight gain or weight loss. This cover only examines extreme diets that have been tried and tested by celebrities, revealing all the details for readers to view and possibly participate in for dealing with their own weight dissatisfactions.

These images support the Agenda-Setting Theory by indicating that this theory has the ability to highlight a particular aspect and neglect others, drawing the attention of the public into believing a message by using the real life stories of popular celebrities. This theory has proved to be influential in persuading the public and adjusting their mindsets, changing their beliefs, values and overall image of themselves, creating a new identity that is driven by society and information portrayed by the media. As a media-audience relationship is fostered, readers become more reliant on magazine content as their personal source of guidance which introduces the uses and gratifications theory once again.

Studies have indicated that audience gratification can be derived from three distinct sources: media content, exposure to the media and social context that typifies the situation of exposure to different media. The audience utilises the media in various ways. The Uses and Gratifications approach has five basic assumptions according to Katz, Blumler and Gurevith [as cited by Spring, (2002:1)]

- The audience is perceived as active, based on the assumption that they are goal oriented and wish to achieve their goals through a media source. This directly responds to the needs of the audience in obtaining the media source.
- In the mass communication process the initiative to link needs gratification and media choice lies entirely with the members of the audience. This encompasses the idea that people use the media to their advantage more often than the media uses them. The receiver determines what is going to be absorbed and does not allow the media to influence them otherwise as individual opinion is more powerful than the message that the media is portraying.
- The third basic assumption is that the media competes with other sources of need satisfaction. This focuses on the idea that each individual has several needs and has a wide range of choices that will meet these needs. One of the strongest rivals to media based sources is face to face communication as this method can often assist individuals to cope with circumstances surrounding them in the most effective way. As a result of this, mass communication must compete strongly with non-media related sources and assist to create a need for itself as well as a proper balance between them.

- The fourth basic assumption is that many of the goals that media uses can be derived from data supplied by the individual audience members themselves. This idea indicates that people are very aware of their motives and choices and are able to verbalise them if necessary. There have been several studies worldwide that have sampled viewers and come to conclusions about the type of media used as well as the content explored. Furthermore, it was discovered that audience members use these media forms to shape their own identities.
- The final basic assumption is that value judgments about cultural significance of mass communication should be suspended while audience operations are explored on their own terms. The theorists believe that the audience is only capable of determining the value of media content. Individual audience members make the decision to view media content therefore they place a certain level of value on it by their individual decision to view it.

These basic assumptions provide a framework for understanding the correlation between the media and the viewers as a media-audience relationship is developed through the use of topics that have proven to have a significant impact on readers. In addition, it provides a distinction as to how the audience is more or less active when receiving media content as they respond in ways that are most useful to their own personal situations. Furthermore, the consequences of the readers involvement in the media develops new understandings of their roles as females within society, eventually leading to an identity shift.

## **2.8 Feminist Media theory**

The Feminist Media Theory relates to the study as it assists in exploring the roles of females within society as portrayed by women's magazines.

The Feminist Theory according to Kramarae, [as cited by Seiler, (2006:8)] and Minic, (2007:282) is a label for a group of theories that explores the meaning of gender concepts. Feminist theorists argue that almost all aspects of life can be understood in terms of gender qualities. A fundamental aim of the feminist critique is to expose the powers and the limits of the gendered division of the world. Ropers-Huilman and Winters, (2011:668-669) indicate that the Feminist Media Theory began as an analysis of the ways in which women were discriminated against. It helped to develop and perpetuate the harms done to women, both conceptually and materially.

The Feminist Theory has increasingly developed over the past few decades. It began by assuming that gender is a pervasive category for understanding human experience. It is commonly argued that gender is a socially constructed system of values, identities, and activities. The Feminist Theory according to Silius (2010:279), Seiler (2006:8) and Ropers-Huilman and Winters (2011:669) focuses on issues and related theories of gender and sexuality, and aims to challenge the prevailing gender assumptions of society as well as to create more liberating ways for women and men to exist in the world.

Feminist theories acknowledge that the world can be understood in a variety of ways; however, the concept of feminism is not a single theory or a single system of thought, but rather a movement. Seiler, (2006:10-11) identifies four different feminisms that have emerged from this movement:

1. **Liberal Feminism:** deals primarily with the public image and the rights of women. It is the foundation of the women's movement and is based on the idea that justice involves the assurance of equal rights for all individuals.
2. **Radical Feminism:** is the reaction against liberal feminism. It states that within a liberal democracy the oppression of women runs much deeper than public rights.
3. **Marxist Feminism:** focuses on capitalism as the source of oppression. It argues that the domination of women by men is a consequence of capital's domination over labour.
4. **Dual Systems Theory:** represents the coming together of Marxist and radical feminism with the belief that the oppression of women results from a complex articulation of patriarchy and capitalism.

For the purpose of the study, an in depth examination into the Liberal Feminist Theory will be explored in the section that follows.

Numerous authors, Grosz (2010:49), Van Zoonen [as cited by Govender, (2009:10)], Jigsy (2009:3), Ropers-Huilman and Winters (2011:671) and Colman (2010:544) postulate that the Feminist Media Theory emerged through the recognition of the inadequacy of existing models to explain the position of women in the past and their potential for change in the present and in the future. The media has always been at the centre of feminist critique and

has been thought to act as a socialization agent which claims that the media fails to reflect change within society, including the role of women within it.

Nevertheless women's magazines play significant roles in contributing to the roles of women in society as they are shaped according to the changes that occur within society. However, according to Raphaely, (2012:144 – 145) in the 1930's and 1940's women's jobs were restricted and controlled by males. Majority of the women's magazines were edited by males who focused primarily on magazine sales and profits and did not fully understand the needs of the audiences. Raphaely (2012:241) states that by the year 1970 women's magazines in South Africa were predominantly run by males. Cosmopolitan magazine for example was the only magazine that was edited by women in the United States at this time. When female editors took over the magazine editorial role, they covered controversially feminist topics ranging from abortion rights to equal pay. They focused on issues that demanded that women receive fair treatment in society which allowed women to pull away from the characteristics of the Spiral of Silence Theory, where women had to remain silent on most aspects of their lives and had to obey the male figure with regards to the entire decision making process between them. The views and opinions of women were in opposition to the majority vote causing them to fall under the control of men, leaving women without a voice, identity or individuality. However, since then the adoption of a new and independent role of women was initiated.

Changes in career patterns among women took place, where women entered into more dominating roles in the workplace contributing to the development of women. As their potential and positions were increased women became more independent and relied a lot less on men for support allowing women to become their own 'opinion leaders'. The content broadcast by the media, particularly the print media, contributed to the overall independence and creation of one's character. However, the media does tend to openly represent women creating a false image and representation of women which can be offensive and inaccurate.

Tuchman, [as cited by Jigsy, (2009:4)], Seiler, (2006:8), Coleman and Ferreday, (2010:314), indicate that there are numerous problems regarding the ways in which women are represented in the media, saying that they are misrepresented causing huge social setbacks creating a widespread misunderstanding of the roles that women play at home, within the workplace and in society. All these misunderstandings in turn create a false impression of the role of the women.

Women's magazines in South Africa showcase features of public interest, or what is perceived to be of public interest by magazine editors, including images portraying women in particular appearances and stances. Magazines focus a great deal of their content on

image, fashion trends, beauty tips, weight control, dating advice, celebrity gossip, career advice and many other tips that women find handy to have and need to be aware of. However, one could question, whether these topics are the only ones that interest women today. They provide detailed information about life aspects impacting on readers leaving them entertained by these stories of interest. However, most of these stories are socially inclined.

Although it is very rare that one would question the impact or the effect that these magazine articles would have on the lives of readers, whether they would leave it completely persuaded, and influenced by media content, thus in turn creating a materialistic lifestyle based on a false society perception created by television and Hollywood.

Dalke and Blankenship, (2009:2) believe that due to the content that is related to fashion, beauty and ways of developing sexual skills, magazines directed at women and adolescent girls will present women as sex objects more so than magazines that concentrate on broader social issues. However, there are very few women's magazines that do focus on issues of a more general inclination, rather than image and beauty.

The following magazine cover is an example of a popular worldwide magazine that concentrates primarily on high fashion trends.

**Figure 2.8.1: *Elle* magazine cover**





Source: Elle Magazine cover, September 2009

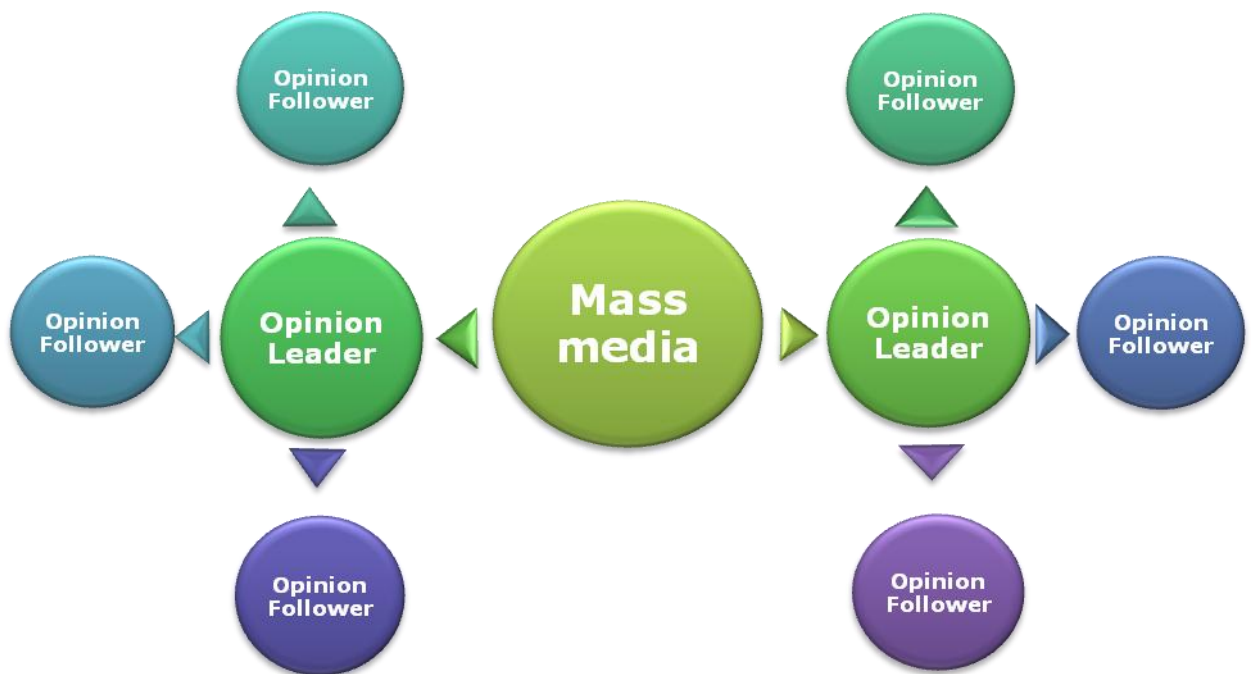
This magazine cover primarily highlights fashion related topics, from the latest and best shopping guides to shoes, eye make-up and skin care products. The cover is also sported by one of Hollywood's A-list celebrities, actress Jennifer Aniston, who is known for having a figure that women dream of having along with the perfect look, personality and lifestyle. These celebrity attributes draw the readership of the public as readers' desire to look and feel as perfect as this celebrity. However, not every woman has the ability to do so. Magazines once again make use of the celebrity figures to gain readership and popularity among the audience as celebrities possess a personal influence over the public that can easily affect the thinking, attitudes and beliefs of many.

Personal influence is the intervention between the media's direct message and the audience's reaction to the message. Celebrities who are seen as opinion leaders play quite

a significant role in changing the attitudes and behaviour of people therefore being in control of the public to quite a large extent. The theory has assisted in the understanding of how the media influences decisions as well as refines the ability to predict the effects of the media's messages on audience behaviour.

The following figure is an illustration of the Two-Step Flow Approach.

**Figure 2.8.2 The Two-Step Flow Approach in the context of feminism**



The Two-Step Flow Model above describes the way in which the mass media operates in two stages. The media is at the centre of all communication means and transmits messages to various individuals or 'opinion leaders' who are seen as influential in society. On the magazine cover above, the influential opinion leader is the Hollywood actress Jennifer Aniston. As a popular celebrity she is regarded as an influential role player in society due to her career, popularity and her likeable qualities. From the opinion leader the message then flows to the opinion followers or the public, in this case the magazine readers. Elle magazine has used Jennifer Aniston as a celebrity feature to obtain the interest of readers by offering advice to them based on her personal life experiences. Here, readers are easily persuaded

into believing the strong views and opinions of this celebrity as they become the 'opinion followers' illustrated in the figure above.

However, Dalke and Blankenship, (2009:3) criticise the media stating that over-sexualised women in advertisements cause issues of self esteem with adolescent girls as well as women. The use of celebrity figures further enhances this statement by show casing women in various garments in provocative positions portraying them in a very over-sexualised way which displays inappropriate images of women. This image is then accepted by the audience leaving the overall impression and lasting effect to be determined by the reader who may or may not misinterpret this representation. Many women around the world suffer with complexes about their bodies and their figures and are subject to developing eating disorders, depression, low self esteem, and negative feelings about their sexuality. Ironically this magazine cover also provides tips on dealing with depression and anxiety, failing to see that a significant cause of this depression and anxiety could very well be the content and images contained within the magazine as it supports a stereotype that can negatively impact its readers.

All these aspects are significant in creating a negative impact on women who view this content as readers are bound to accept information and apply it to their own personal lives. Through this interaction with the media personal identities of women are affected and are soon adapted to integrate all the characteristics of the content consumed. These aspects include beauty, fashion trends, and the importance of one's image which eventually force readers to oversee their true identity and personality.

After viewing this particular magazine cover, one would wonder, whether these aspects are the only ones that readers want to read and whether such materialistic and superficial aspects add any real value and substance to their lives. Sexton (2006:1-2) indicates that print advertising is probably one of the most unrealistic forms of media representations of one's image and society has an unhealthy obsession with images and lifestyle for the public to buy in to. This ultimately stirs up a false development of identity and lifestyle for the public to adopt which does not resemble reality in the least. Readers seem to pay limited attention to the more important activities, events and social issues taking place around them which affect them in some way or the other.

Silius (2010:279) suggests that the Feminist Media Theory also focuses on other theories relating to gender issues and sexuality. One of these theories is the Liberal Feminist Theory.

## 2.9 The Liberal Feminist Theory

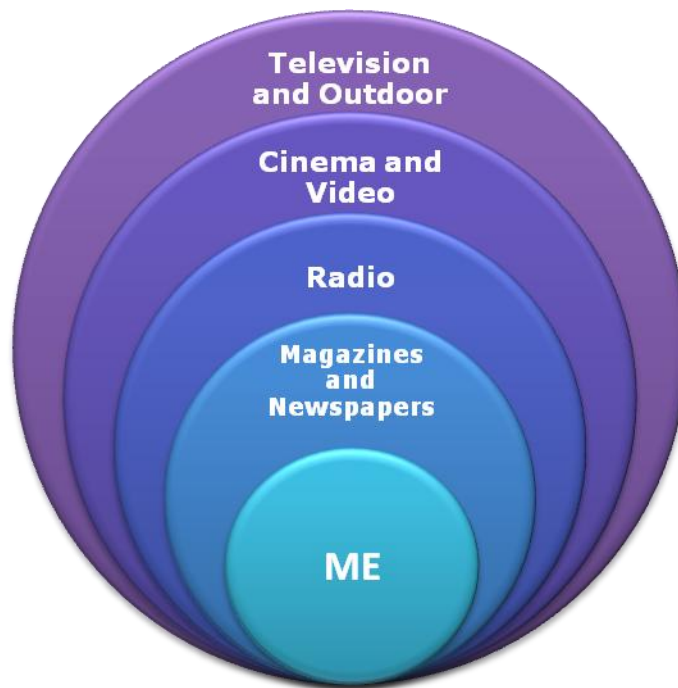
The Liberal Feminist Theory according to Jigsy (2009:3), Tong (2009:2) and Grosz (2010:49) indicate that there are numerous problems with the ways in which women are represented by the media, as it fails to reflect change within society including the role of women.

Several studies conducted of print media, Tong (2009:65) and Grosz (2010:49) with regard to women have found the print media guilty of sexism, by distortion of the image of women and propagation of sex stereotypes: mothers, dependant and passive housewives. The other side of such misinterpretation is that in most popular print media women are seldom shown as working women and capable professionals. Rather the predominant image is that of the self-sacrificing housewife. Chopra (2008:3) claims that the way in which women are being projected in the print and electronic media is a reflection on the whole society. However, more recent media publications revealed that women are becoming more inclined to obtain careers that are equivalent to men, opting to drive their own careers and placing the duty as a housewife in second place. Similarly Raphaely (2012:134-135) points out that during the 1960's she gave birth to her first three children whilst running various women's magazines. Through this time it was almost a given that she would resign from her job to stay at home to look after her children however she refused to be forced to sacrifice her career simply for being a woman and being expected to fulfil the role of a housewife and a mother. In spite of this new found position of women, society has still managed to create an incorrect image of women through the mass media and popular magazine content as the public still buys into the media driven images and representations portrayed.

Media content can be said to be positively harmful to the development of women as they are conscious individuals who are aware of themselves and aware of the society around them. Chopra, (2008:6-7) postulates that magazines are not merely reflecting the female role in society; they are also supplying one source of definitions of and socialization into that role. Indecent posters or images displayed everywhere are the crude reminders of distorted images and attitudes towards women creating an alarming effect in the mindsets of women all around South Africa. Chopra (2008:6-7) further mentions that the advertising world continues to use women to peddle its products and to present women as sexual objects, leaving one to question yet again, whether magazine content adds any value to society by conveying such messages to the public and creating a false image and portrayal of women.

The following figure has been adapted from “How Magazine Advertising works”, Consterdine, (2005:11).

**Figure 2.9.1: The Reader Relationship**



The figure above highlights the relationship between the general public and the media. In this case the public is represented by the readers of magazines, which are predominantly female, or 'Me'. The media consists firstly of the print media, being magazines and newspapers which are the most persuasive media sources. Radio is the second most influential form of media, cinema and video the third most significant and television and the outside world, the fourth considerable source.

The figure indicates that the readers are at the centre of all aspects of media as each diverse form of media finds its way to attract the attention of the public. In this case the public refers to the reader, implying that the print media, (magazines and newspapers) are the immediate and most highly influential form of media as they have the most substantial influence over readers and they are easily accessible to the public at their convenience. Readers are easily persuaded into believing written media content regardless of the topic being discussed due to the convenience and the visual images that accompany the articles. Radio, cinema and

television are also prominently persuasive over the public. However, the print media is valued as the most effective and useful form by the public. Magazines tend to angle their content around the lives and lifestyles of Hollywood celebrities which attract the attention of readers and therefore create a demand for constant printed media. These continuous updates outline part of the media content that women thrive on, basing their own lives and personalities on the qualities and characteristics portrayed in magazines.

Similarly as stated in the Two-Step Flow Theory, the media makes use of an 'opinion leader' to transfer a message to the audience. However, the Reader Relationship illustrates the centre of gathering information is done by the 'Me' component. This indicates that the individual is entirely responsible for acquiring media content and is quite capable of determining for themselves which source of the media is the most effective or which source is the most persuasive over them.

### **2.9.1 Audiences in persuasion theory**

Kumar (2010:2) states that there are 4 psychological factors of audiences that can be identified:

- The audience is interested in getting information.
- To reach a bigger audience, the message has to be designed to capture people's attention.
- Selective exposure: people are more interested in a message if it supports the same opinions and ideas that people already have.
- Selective perception: Audiences select information that is right for them. The message can be voluntarily misunderstood.

Women's magazines confer status on women as a group and make womanly things a serious business. Such features include, fashion and beauty tips and trends, advice pertaining to dating, sexual relationships, health, well being and career advice just to name a few. Magazines utilise these topics to obtain a larger audience and to provide public platforms which consistently offer women cheap and accessible sources of evaluation alongside practical directions for fulfilling their potential in society. However, the print media moulds the opinion, thinking and attitudes of women based on the content produced as at certain times the position of women portrayed in articles is similar to their own personal situation, leaving them vulnerable to fall for the media's portrayal of the female figure.

The print media presents a world that is not an accurate reflection of society in terms of women's magazines. Print advertising in particular suggested by Sexton (2006:4) provides not only an unrealistic, but an unhealthy ideal of what it means to be physically attractive. By continuously presenting false images of females, the media has created an ideology of attractiveness. Such beliefs are that better looking people are more successful compared to less attractive people are forced into the minds of young readers who are still trying to find their place and identity in society, causing individual insecurities leading to social discrimination.

Such assumptions are generalised leading to immense difficulties faced by women in terms of their appearance and their need to fit in with society. The messages understood from women's magazines eventually foster new identities, personalities and cultures to be adopted or adapted by women especially younger women who are further driven by the attributes of the media. Therefore creating a generation that is fostered by a false society.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a synthesis of the various media theories and persuasion theories. It has discussed the ways in which these theories apply to the every-day lives of women. Through these hypotheses the media provides ways in which the public is easily targeted and filled with information through the print media especially through magazine content. By using diverse means of drawing their attention the print media provides readers with information that cannot be resisted containing infotainment that is in some way or the other relevant to the everyday lives of the reader.

Women across the world are persuaded by the media on a daily basis. All women are susceptible to media images and content believing that personal attributes should be shaped and modified as their existing ones are not acceptable. In most cases many women are unaware that they are adapting their personal traits to integrate features portrayed in the print media.

This chapter has provided an understanding into the role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa. Magazine covers were analysed in this chapter to gain a deeper evaluation of magazine content and its representation of women. It provided an examination into whether the popular representation of women is perpetuated by the media. Chapter three provides a description of the methodology that is employed for the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In chapter two, a detailed analysis of the media, persuasion theories and various magazine covers were discussed providing the key elements relating to the influence of women's magazines in South Africa. It addressed the ways in which women's identities, attitudes and beliefs are manipulated through various combinations of persuasion and communication.

Chapter three outlines the methodology utilised for conducting this study. It provides a background to the steps and procedures that are required to gather the necessary data from the respondents for the completion of the study. This chapter focuses on the design of the research, the sample population and the size of the sample. It also addresses the scientific method of analysis, the methods of data collection that will be used for the study as well as the analysis of data once the data has been gathered.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

According to Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:6) there are two main techniques that are utilised for conducting research and analysing research findings. These techniques are quantitative and qualitative analysis. Leedy and Ormrod, (2001:101) postulate that quantitative research is used to answer questions about relationships among measured variables with the purpose of explaining, predicting and controlling phenomena. They also state that qualitative research on the other hand is used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the diverse view points of participants.

Ereaut (2007:22) further indicates that qualitative research is used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviours, value systems, concerns, motivations, cultures and lifestyles. Willis, (2009:1) suggests that qualitative research also known as the interpretative approach identifies and understands the motivations and feelings of the research audience. According to Willis, (2009:3) qualitative research is described as a flexible, dynamic and open-ended approach that is employed for providing an in depth understanding of various aspects. It provides speedier results and rationalised responses consisting of creative ideas that can be



easily evaluated. However, results are not always measured statistically as a result of the versatile nature of qualitative research.

Leedy and Ormrod, (2001:148) assume that qualitative studies can serve one or more of the following purposes:

- Description: They can reveal the nature of certain situations, settings, processes, relationships, systems or people.
- Interpretation: They enable the researcher to gain insights about the nature of a particular phenomenon and possibly discover the problems that exist within the phenomenon.
- Verification: They allow the researcher to test the validity of certain assumptions, claims, theories or generalizations within real world contexts.

The primary purpose of the study is to determine the role that magazine content plays in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa, and aims to evaluate whether this role impacts on the lives of the readers or not. Additionally the study aims to assess the ways in which magazine content is determined. Due to the nature of the study's aims and objectives and the content analysis applied for the study, a combination of a qualitative and a quantitative research design was selected to conduct the research study. The qualitative approach highlights aspects of the participant's responses in ways that provide researchers with the most valuable results by using a flexible and dynamic approach drawing an in depth understanding for the completion of the study.

### **3.3. Content Analysis**

Whitehead and Saville (2008:2), Stambor (2005:1) and Berelson [as cited by Palmquist (1980:1)] define content analysis as a research tool used to study the content of communication. It is a technique for the objective, systematic description of written, spoken or visual communication. According to Merten [as cited by Tench and Yeomans (2009:211)] content analysis allows researchers to analyse media reality, verbal and visual output (content of newspapers, magazines, radio, television and web) which lead to inferences about the communicators and audience of these contents. The study focuses on the role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa. Therefore the influence of magazine content on readers will be analysed based on the features that magazines portray.

### **3.4 Media Content Analysis**

Bryant (2012:1) states that media content analysis is the deconstruction of pieces of media with tendency towards quantitative or qualitative research methods.

Quantitative methods within media content analysis involve a structured form of gathering information through media clips. Qualitative methods involve viewing of a clip accompanied by open discussions and debate on the themes and effects of the clip. Media content analysis according to Lasswell [as cited by Bryant (2012:1)] was introduced as a systematic method to study mass media and propaganda. These aspects were discussed in detail under the literature review in chapter two. This method assists in defining and understanding the media profile by evaluating issues, messages, critics, media and journalists by giving qualitative ratings to print broadcast.

Bryant (2012:1-2) lists various advantages and disadvantages of media content analysis. They are as follows:

#### **3.4.1 Advantages of Media Content Analysis**

- Some parts of mass media may provide sociologists with useful information to see how society reacts to the media.
- Media content analysis can be used to analyse the ideologies of those who produce them and how they try to spread this ideology.
- Media content analysis looks directly at communication through texts or transcripts and therefore generates a central aspect of social interaction.
- It can allow for both quantitative and qualitative operations.
- It can allow closeness to the text which can alternate between specific categories and relationships and also statistically analyses the coded form of the text.
- It can be used to interpret texts for the purposes such as the development of expert systems.
- Media content analysis is an unobtrusive means of analysing interactions and it provides an insight into complex models of human thought and language use.
- When carried out correctly, media content analysis is considered as a relatively 'exact' research method based on facts.

### **3.4.2 Disadvantages of Media Content Analysis**

- Media content analysis relies heavily on the interpretation of the researcher.
- It may not always correspond to the interpretation of other researchers.
- There is an assumption that the audience is simply a passive consumer of the message supplied by the mass media, and that there is no attempt made to examine how they actually interpret the message.
- Media content analysis may produce a distorted image of society which may mislead the public.
- Media content analysis can be time consuming.
- Media content analysis is often devoid of a theoretical base or attempts to draw meaningful inferences about the relationships and impacts implied in the study.

Bryant, (2012:2) further states that when looking at media content analysis it helps to consider two questions:

- What is the subliminal message in the media?
- How is this influencing the way one thinks?

Bryant (2012:2-3) indicates that Marxists may think that media content analysis allows individuals to see how the media controls people to prevent them from questioning what is going on; that the media is used to distract people from bigger issues of the day; and that mass media is a social constraint that the media alienates people from society making them feel inadequate. He further suggests that a functionalist may view mass media analysis as instilling norms and values that society can relate to; that it helps promote businesses and meritocracy and that it shows how well society is functioning and helps to keep you feel motivated. Herring (2004:48) maintains that the approach used seeks to apply traditional content analysis methods as literally as possible for new media content.

### **3.4.3 The Traditional Approach:**

Numerous authors, Herring (2004:8), Wimmer and Dominick [as cited by Tench and Yeomans (2009:211)] and McQuail (2010:362) provide a set of procedures that should be followed. These procedures are traditionally involved in content analysis. They are summarised as follows:

1. Formulate the research question
2. Define the population
3. Select a sample from the population
4. Select and define a unit of analysis
5. Construct the categories of content to be analysed
6. Establish a quantification system
7. Train coders and conduct a pilot study
8. Code the content according to established definitions

### **3.5 Sampling**

Sampling design is one of the most significant steps in a research study. Since it is impossible to cover each and every unit of the population, a sample of units is selected from the population. Aggarwal (2001:169-170) maintains that the sample is a subgroup of individuals who represent the population of a study. Researchers make use of a sample to select the research participants who will represent the entire research population.

Aggarwal, (2001:170) states that there are numerous sampling techniques that can be utilised for any research study such as:

- Simple random sampling
- Probability proportional to size (PPS)
- Stratified random sampling
- Cluster sampling
- Systematic sampling
- Inverse sampling
- Snowball sampling
- Lot quality assurance sampling (LQAS)

For the study a stratified random sampling method is adopted. Stratified random sampling according to Jacobs, (2011:29), is the process of selecting a sample that allows identified subgroups in the defined population to be represented in the same proportion that they exist within the population.

### **3.5.1 Steps in the Stratified Sampling Process:**

1. Identify and define the population
2. Determine the desired sample size
3. Identify the variable and subgroups for which you want to guarantee appropriate, equal representation
4. Classify all members of the population as members of one identified subgroup
5. Randomly select an 'appropriate' or equal number of individuals from each of the subgroups

### **3.5.2 Advantages of Stratified Random Sampling:**

- More precise sample is obtained
- Can be used for both proportions and stratification sampling
- The sample represents the desired subgroups

### **3.5.3 Disadvantages of Stratified Random Sampling:**

- Requires the names of all population members
- There can be difficulty in reaching all selected in the sample
- Researcher must have the names of all populations

The study examines the ways in which women's magazines impact on the lives of young women in South Africa. It pin points the extent to which magazine content contributes to the development of identities and personalities which stem from the media. Within the diverse and rapidly growing magazine industry in South Africa popular women's magazines were selected as the sample for the study as they generate immense publicity and attraction among female readers.

## **3.6 Population and Sample Size**

The target population defined by Welman *et al*, (2005:52), is the study object which consists of individuals, groups and organisations. The target population for the study comprises popular women's magazines in South Africa which are based primarily in Johannesburg and Cape Town as these two cities are central locations of magazine houses.

Magazines encompass characteristics such as health and fitness awareness drives, beauty and make up tips, fashion do's and don'ts, relationship and career advice, which all contribute to the formation of one's identity. Therefore, magazines represent the ideal instruments for the study.

Jacobs, (2011:2) suggests that a sample is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in a way that the individuals selected represent a larger number from which they were selected. The print media in South Africa consists of various forms which are made available to the public to utilise. Magazines were selected for the study; however women's fashion and gossip magazines were the predominant sample. For this study a sample of ten editors of the popular women's magazines were selected to represent the print media. The participation of ten editors assists in providing an insight into the world of magazine features indicating where magazine content stems from and how it fulfils the role of an advisor, entertainer and confidant for women to attain.

The magazines selected are listed below. These magazines have been selected due to their content and features as well as their wide spread readership and high circulation rates in South Africa.

<b>Magazine</b>	<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Position at magazine</b>
O Magazine	Samantha Page	Editor
Marie Claire	Kelda Lund	Deputy Editor
Move	Noluthando Gweba	Editor
True Love	Melinda Ferguson	Editor
Cosmopolitan	Ann Ellis Brown	Deputy Editor
Seventeen	Janine Jellars	Editor
Fairlady	Robyn MacLarty	Features Editor
Grazia	Cheska Stark	Digital Editor
Glamour	Pnina Fenster	Editor
You	Jessica Levitt	Editor

### **3.7 Data Collection Methods**

Qualitative research methods assist to analyse data and draw conclusions. Rytel (2007:138) suggests that data collection methods include focus group surveys, questionnaire surveys and individual interviews. With the use of a qualitative approach, the study concentrated on

understanding the ways in which readers and respondents perceived the influence of the media and determined the extent to which the media controlled their attitudes, beliefs, value systems and identities and eventually lead to the creation of new values and beliefs.

### **3.7.1 Data Collection Instrument**

According to Naidoo (2007:67) researchers make use of questionnaires as they are valuable data collection methods for gathering a wide range of information from respondents. Rytel (2007:143) states that questionnaires are drawn up based on various themes or theories that the researcher utilises to establish the aims of the study. Questionnaires can employ the following types of questions:

**Open-ended questions:** consist of questions to which the respondent provides his or her answer without being constrained by a fixed set of possible answers.

**Closed-ended questions:** consist of dichotomous questions, to which the answers are limited to a fixed set of responses, such as 'yes' or 'no'.

The aim of individual questionnaires is to gain detailed insight from the respondents who are magazine editors. According to Leedy and Ormrod, (2001:159), questions can be based on facts, feeling, motives, beliefs, present and past behaviours, standards of behaviours and reasons for actions and beliefs. Questionnaires surveyed under qualitative methods are usually a combination of open and closed ended and allow for in depth responses to be gathered as opposed to quantitative methods which are far more structured and require closed ended and statistical responses.

### **3.7.2 Administration of Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were distributed electronically to all ten magazine editors. The questions asked in the questionnaires were drawn up by the researcher and were based on the key elements that were highlighted in chapter two: literature review. The questionnaires consisted of open and closed ended questions and were aimed at evaluating the criteria in determining the magazine content that is to be produced. The questions formed were based on the characteristics of the media and persuasion theories that were discussed in chapter two and focused on the extent to which women are influenced by magazine content. The information gathered enabled the research study to estimate a general opinion of magazine

editors on the influence of their magazine's content on the lives of women in shaping their identities.

### **3.7.3 Coordination of Data Collection**

The completed questionnaires were distributed and collected electronically by the researcher from all the participants.

However, only a sample of six questionnaires were completed and returned to the researcher. The questionnaires received by the researcher did not yield results that were substantial enough for the study and were therefore used as a pilot study. Furthermore telephonic interviews were conducted with all the respondents thereafter.

### **3.7.4 Pilot Study**

Welman *et al* (2005:148) maintain that a pilot study is the process of administering an instrument to a limited number of subjects from the same population selected for the eventual study. A questionnaire was designed and a pilot test was administered to six magazine editors.

### **3.7.5 Results of the Pilot Study**

- Respondents felt that some questions were too repetitive which resulted in one-word responses which lacked an in-depth understanding.
- Respondents indicated that closed-end questions were easier to answer as they were less time consuming.

The researcher therefore ensured that the suggestions above were considered and included in the interview schedule that was formulated.

### **3.7.6 Interviews**

Interviews are useful for gathering information as the researcher is able to ask questions relating to any of the following aspects according to Leedy and Ormrod (2001:159):



- Facts (e.g. biographical information)
- People's beliefs about the facts
- Feelings
- Motives
- Past and present behaviour
- Standards for behaviour (i.e. what people think should be done in a particular situation)
- Conscious reasons for actions or feeling (e.g. why people think that engaging in a particular behaviour is desirable or undesirable)

Interviews in qualitative studies are either open-ended or semi structured and revolve around a few central questions and themes. Leedy & Ormrod (2001: 159) state that unstructured interviews are more flexible and are more likely to yield information that the researcher had not planned to ask.

Johnson and Christensen (2003:184) identify three types of qualitative interviews:

- Informal conversational: that is spontaneous and loosely structured.
- Interview guide approach: an approach that is a more structured type of interview including an interview protocol listing the open-ended questions, the questions can be asked in any order by the interviewer and the wording and order of questions can be changed by the interviewer if necessary.
- Standardised open-ended: these questions are written on an interview protocol, and are asked in the exact order, and the wording of the questions cannot be changed.

Reasons for conducting individual interviews and collective interviews are categorised by Wolowik [as cited by Rytel, (2007:138)] and are reflected below:

**Table 3.7.6.1 Reasons for conducting individual interviews and collective interviews**

	<b>Individual interviews</b>	<b>Collective interviews</b>
<b>Role of the interviewer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major role, influences the progress of the interview, greater possibility of observing non-verbal forms of behaviour.</li> <li>• Closer relation with respondent in discussing the problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor role, average influence on the progress of interview,</li> <li>• Less control over the group for moderator</li> <li>• More unstructured relation with participants</li> </ul>
<b>Interactions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only between two individuals: researcher and respondent</li> <li>• High degree of concentration on the problem being investigated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The group dynamics stimulate participant behaviour</li> <li>• Mutual and strong influence on statements and reactions of respondents</li> <li>• Possibility of deviating from main theme of discussion</li> </ul>
<b>Ways of conducting an interview</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easier initiation of questions included in the interview script</li> <li>• Engaged attitudes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More difficult initiation of questions included in an interview script</li> <li>• Neutral and passive researcher outside the group</li> </ul>
<b>Respondents feelings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite initial discomfort on the part of the respondent, overall greater confidence in answering questions</li> <li>• An atmosphere conducive to the establishment of confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initially greater comfort in the presence of the researcher than in the presence of other participants.</li> </ul>

The advantages and disadvantages of conducting interviews are listed below:

#### **3.7.6.1 Advantages of Interviews, Whorton (2009:3-5):**

- Built-in flexibility
- Allows for clarification
- Allows for information about the context in which the respondent answered
- Provides candour and a more intimate discussion
- High response rate

#### **3.7.6.2 Disadvantages of Interviews, Whorton (2009:3-5):**

- Time consuming and expensive
- Necessity of training of interviewers
- Difficult to tabulate responses
- Respondents have less anonymity

Interviews with ten respondents were conducted telephonically and were recorded for research purposes. The interview schedule used to conduct these interviews is as follows:

1. Name of magazine:
2. Respondent:
3. Race:
4. Age group:
5. Gender:
6. Position at company:
7. Contact number:
8. Who is your magazine targeted at? (age group, race, earning capacity, etc)
9. What media content (article, images, features) does this magazine focus on?
10. How is the content in this magazine generated? Explain.
11. What aspects of your magazine are highly valued by your readership?
12. What type of content do readers want to read about in this magazine? How do you know this?
13. What input do your readers make to the content of this magazine?
14. What forms of market research do you conduct to determine what readers want to read? When do you do this?

15. What type of questions do you ask your readers when conducting market research?
16. What are the features that make the ideal women according to this magazine?  
Please list and describe.
17. Do teenagers read this magazine? If yes, what are they drawn to?
18. What type of lifestyle does this magazine depict? Please list and explain.
19. How much of the content focuses on sexuality?
20. What are the areas of sexuality commonly covered?
21. Does this magazine assist in creating platforms for discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race?
22. If yes, how so?
23. How is the role of women in society represented in this magazine?
24. Who is the right 'cover person' for your magazine? Please explain.
25. How do you determine which celebrity and which feature stories to display on the magazine cover? What is the selection process?
26. Why do magazines sometimes use celebrities to provide advice to readers on various topics based on their own personal experiences?
27. What characteristics put these celebrities and public figures in the right position to offer objective advice to the public?
28. What role do the media have to play in society?
29. How does this magazine feature in this role?

### **3.8 Analysis of Data**

The data analysis presents the results of the study and the conclusions that will be drawn from the study. It further presents the recommendations that are based on the interpretation of the results. Walonick, (2004: 11), states that the use of pre-notification letters are essential to establish the legitimacy of a study, affirming the trust of the respondent. Therefore, letters of confirmation were emailed to the ten respondents stating the necessary elements of the study and a background of the researcher before the respondents participated in the study, (see Appendix A). These letters were followed by telephonic interviews conducted by the researcher with the respondents.

### **3.9 Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are two fundamental characteristics of any measurement procedure. Welman, *et al* (2005:145) and Miller, (2009:1) state that, the reliability of a study refers to the

extent to which an interview, a questionnaire or a test or procedure, and its findings, produce credible results repeatedly.

Validity, according to Miller, (2009:3), is defined as the extent to which the instrument measures what it purports to measure. To ensure the reliability and the validity of the study the questions drawn up for the interviews were based on the literature and theories which explore the role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa.

In order to establish the validity the following questions were asked:

- Does the research evaluate the role played by magazine content in the creation of young women's identities?
- Do the findings of the research study agree with the research aims and objectives set out in chapter one?

The answers to these questions will be provided in chapter four with the research findings.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided the details of the research tools that were employed to gather the primary data from the telephonic interviews and questionnaires that were conducted with the magazine editors. The data gathered from these interviews and questionnaires will be analysed using the scientific methods stated above and will be used to offer conclusions for the study. The conclusions of the findings will constitute the fifth and final chapter of the study once the data has been analysed and presented in chapter four which follows.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter three provided a description of the methodology that was used for the completion of the study. The aims and objectives of the study are to evaluate how magazine content is determined, who it is determined by, and to establish whether the representation of women in the media contributes to the identities of readers. To meet these aims and objectives, chapter four will present the most salient qualitative findings and analyses of the study. These findings will be based on the responses received during the telephonic interviews that were conducted by the researcher with magazine editors as indicated in the previous chapter.

This chapter comprises presentations and summaries of the analyses of the telephonic interviews which are discussed in detail. The key objective of the study is to determine the role that magazine content plays in creating identities of young South African women.

#### **4.2 Report and analysis of interview responses**

The respondents of the study were asked a series of questions regarding feature stories, readership demographics and the selection process of content featured in the magazine and on its cover. They were also asked to describe the role of their magazine within the media. The interviews highlighted the content that readers find most valuable and discussed the content that focused on sexuality and an overall representation of women in the media. It gained a further understanding of the content that teenagers look for in women's magazines and provided an understanding of how magazine content is structured to cater for readers of all age groups. The following discussion outlines the responses to the telephonic interviews that were conducted with the respondents. The responses were analysed according to the following themes: Editorial demographics, magazine profile; readership demographics, market research, content generation, the role of celebrities in magazines and the role of the media.

#### 4.2.1 Editorial Demographics

Magazine	Respondent	Race	Age Group	Gender	Position at magazine
Oprah Magazine	Samantha Page	Coloured	35 - 40	Female	Editor
Marie Claire	Kelda Lund	White	35 - 40	Female	Deputy Editor
Move	Noluthando Gweba	Black	35 - 40	Female	Editor
True Love	Melinda Ferguson	White	40 - 45	Female	Deputy Editor
Cosmopolitan	Ann Ellis Brown	White	35 - 40	Female	Deputy Editor
Seventeen	Janine Jellars	Coloured	25 - 30	Female	Editor
Fairlady	Robyn MacLarty	White	30 - 35	Female	Feature Writer
Grazia	Cheska Stark	White	25 - 30	Female	Digital Editor
Glamour	Pnina Fenster	White	40 - 45	Female	Editor
You	Jessica Levitt	White	25 - 30	Female	News Editor

The table above provides the demographics of the magazine editors who were interviewed. Telephonic interviews were conducted with seven of the respondents, while the remaining three respondents were unavailable for a telephonic interview and therefore responded via email.

As indicated in that table above 70 % of the magazine editors are white, 20 % are coloured, and 10 % are black. All the editors, deputy editors or feature writers are female and constitute an average age group of 35.

## 4.2.2 Magazine Profile

### Question 3.9: What media content do these magazines focus on?

The magazines selected for examination in the study are all largely targeted at women. When publishing a read for young women to enjoy the topics of common interest pertain to fashion, beauty, health, lifestyle, relationship advice, career guidance and financial advice just to name a few. Therefore magazines focus their content on the aspects that every woman faces on a daily basis of her life.

The respondents indicated that their main aim is to expose their readers to positive content and to provide an uplifting effect through every aspect of their magazines. A large percentage of magazine content focuses on the importance of self-acceptance as a young woman today. Each magazine is an established unique brand which exploits the timeless message of empowerment and self worth which each reader should acknowledge and embrace. As women become more aware of their self worth and their diverse roles in society, magazines add value to their personal development by providing them with inspiring real life feature stories that they can relate to. Schneider (2009:1) states that the identity theory relates to the relationship between the mind and the body. Women's magazines aim to enhance a woman's identity through the informative features that magazines publish.

Apart from a personal identity, magazines contribute to a social identity in which readers are able to engage with one another around the world as they discover other individuals who can relate to the same challenges that women face. By engaging with a magazine on a social level, women are able to take the content that they read and apply it to their individual situations within their peer groups, at home or in their working environments. As the uses and gratifications theory implies, people make use of media content for their own personal benefit, women use magazines as a form of empowerment to strengthen, uplift and inspire them as they carry out their daily duties.

As a largely popular form of media for women, magazine editors believe that there is a responsibility owed to the public, and that is to provide them with an escape in which readers can take the time to focus on themselves. Whether it is through career guides, financial advice, relationship do's and don'ts or even beauty and pampering tips, magazines are highly influential and therefore provide informative content on these aspects as a way to enhance reader's lives.



### **Question 3.18: What type of lifestyle do these magazines depict?**

Magazines play a widely significant and influential role in society. The social responsibility of the media according to Ravi (2012:2) is to provide protection, security, continuity, and an identity for its members. It is therefore the role of the media to ensure that society's interests are at top priority at all times. Magazines aim to provide fulfilling content that can contribute to a purpose driven life where a person's well being is determined by a good mind, body and soul. By focusing on all types of feature stories, magazines aim to appeal to women and to encourage happiness, optimism and hope. Magazines are socially aware of what's happening in the world around readers and they are not afraid to face certain issues for women.

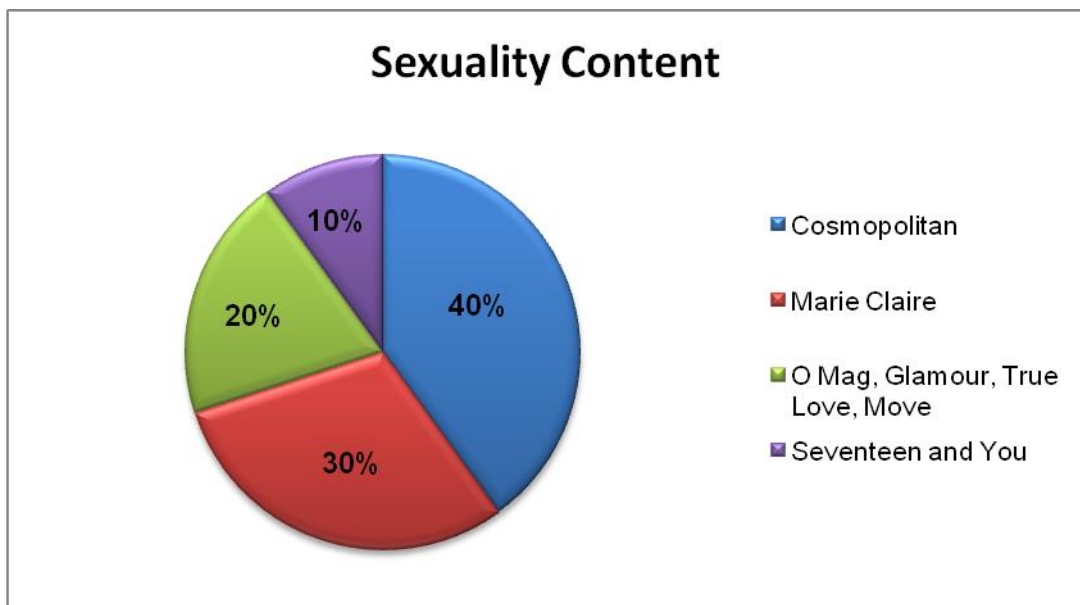
Magazines cater for women with an eye for style, who are ready to go out and explore the possibilities of the world around them. They therefore create an image of fun and positive lifestyle where one is persuaded to make do with the resources that are available to them. In doing so readers are influenced to embrace their natural attributes and to accept themselves for who they are. A significant element of the Identity Theory is that communication is necessary for maintaining an identity. Apart from a personal identity, women are advised to connect with those around them by forming a social identity. Through the communicative aspects of magazines, readers can engage with those around them regarding various topics as magazines wish to depict a lifestyle of women who are active, stylish, expressive and individualistic.

In this instance the facets of the Hypodermic Needle Theory, the persuasion theory, the feminist media theory and the Liberal Feminist Theory are all coupled as they indicate the ways in which women are influenced through magazine content to live a life that embraces deeper meaning, value and independence. Women are constantly encouraged to live lives that can be inspirational to all those around them by embracing their own personal attributes without needing to adapt or change who they are. This message is constantly portrayed through magazine content and through the application of the Hypodermic Needle Theory and the persuasion theory as women soon adapt to it as they are persuaded to create a well balanced lifestyle for themselves. The Feminist Media Theory examines the roles of women in society and highlights the need for gender equality in society today. Women in the past were forced to stay at home and care for children while carrying out household chores, without being able to obtain a job or a career. Nowadays, magazines provide platforms for women to be individual, feel liberated and independent by obtaining their desired careers and jobs.

**Question 3.19: How much of the content focuses on sexuality?**

Within women’s magazines it is impossible to publish a read without dealing with issues of sexuality. Some magazines choose to touch on this topic in a subtle way and focus on other general aspects while others highlight topics pertaining to sexuality in a very overt and explicit manor. The following figure illustrates how much of the magazines content focus on sexuality as indicated by the magazine editors.

**Figure 4.2.2.1. Magazine Profile: Sexuality Content**



As illustrated in the figure above *Cosmopolitan* magazine mentioned that at least 40 % of their content deals with sexuality on a regular basis. This magazine supports the characteristics of the Libertarian Theory by liberally publishing information that presents the truth. It believes that women have a right to be aware of the truth and therefore does not shy away from it. Women who read this magazine are able beings who are capable of distinguishing how much of this content they wish to apply to their individual lives and how much to discard. This magazine sets an agenda through content focused on sexuality as it fulfils the media’s powerful influence over the public where month after month new aspects on sexuality are published, gaining the desired readership. As the readership rates of this magazine increase, women are able to see that *Cosmopolitan* magazine supports liberal

feminism by encouraging women to speak freely and act in ways that were not previously allowed.

*Marie Claire* magazine indicated that it does not shy away from topics of a sexual nature and they don't concentrate on traditional features around sexuality. They choose to provide an informative editorial mix for its readers. On average there is one supplement per publication that focuses on sexuality and discusses various aspects such as new toys, technology and trends entering the scene.

*O Magazine*, *Glamour Magazine*, *True Love Magazine* and *Move Magazine* mentioned that they do not shy away from sexuality related topics. However only 20 % of their magazines content deals with issues of sexuality. If there is a relevant topic that people are talking about then it is discussed in the publication as editors consider the editorial mix of content and the readers as well. There is a stronger focus on other topics. However, they do occasionally carry one story of a sexual nature per publication.

*Seventeen Magazine* and *You Magazine* indicated that a relatively small percentage of their content examines sexuality. These magazines set an agenda in their featured content whereby only 10 % of their content approaches sexuality but does so through less evasive issues relating to dating and relationships. If a topic is relevant and it has the attention of the public then it will be featured in the publication.

*Fairlady Magazine* and *Grazia Magazine* indicated that their content does not cover issues on sexuality. The editorial teams believe that their readers are well aware of their own personal sexual orientations and therefore their content is focused on general interest and other women's magazine related themes. Female readers of these magazines are in some way silenced on topics pertaining to sexuality as these platforms do not cater for such content to be examined. The majority of content in these magazines is based on general interest features and sets an agenda by featuring other social aspects of a woman's life.

**Question 3.20: What are the areas of sexuality commonly covered?**

*Cosmopolitan Magazine* covers all aspects that are appropriate for its target market. It publishes a three to five page editorial focused on sex which includes questions from readers which are published and also provides answers from a qualified sexologist. There is also a sex supplement once a year that can be up to sixteen pages long.

Previous stories published by *Marie Claire* have discussed topics such as 'My Lover, My Robot' which discussed the introduction of robots that are designed to replace women in a man's life. It is something that could be real in the future. Another topic focussed on nudity and female health, women having babies and why issues of the womb should be anyone's business.

*O Magazine* stated sexuality is an integral part of the magazine. Body image is a large part of their content and sex in a women's life is dealt with on a practical level in terms of health stories highlighting the importance of contraception and having a healthy sexual life. These issues are covered in this manor to relate to real women and the emotions they encounter at different life stages. The magazine always tries to portray women in a positive light and in a non judgemental way so women are given all the possible choices available to them.

*Glamour Magazine* runs a segment on relationships and sex which is between two and five pages long.

*True Love Magazine* suggests that there is always a sex story. Through the use of a feature entitled Miss Candy, ten questions are chosen to ask her along a specific sex theme like sex toys or office romance and she provides readers with all the answers. This feature has a humorous twist which adds more entertainment for the readers in a naughty but spicy way to deal with issues of sexuality in the magazine.

Features on sexuality and gender are covered in *Move Magazine* on a once in three month basis. It is not the main focus of the magazine. However previous related content has discussed issues such as lesbian women being killed in certain areas in Cape Town due to women being discriminated against. However, readers face greater issues like financial difficulties and raising families and adapting to motherhood so we deal with those first.

*Seventeen* magazine looks at dating and sex education as opposed to the more explicit content in a magazine like *Cosmopolitan*. They discuss issues of a more educational perspective for young teenagers.

*You* magazine focuses on more general interest feature's so, if a topic focusing on sexuality is making headlines, it will be covered.

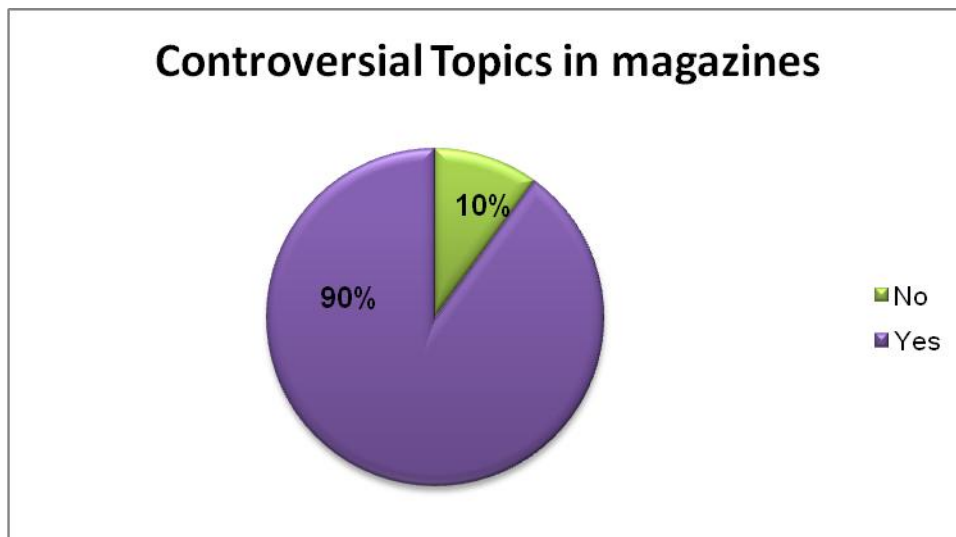
*Fairlady* magazine and *Grazia* magazine indicated that they do not cover subjects of sexuality in their publications. However, if they do cover these issues, they approach them

from a long term relationship perspective rather than the single person. Their content around these topics are centred on contemporary aspects such as internet pornography.

**Question 3.21: Does this magazine assist in creating platforms for discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race?**

**Question 3.22: If yes, how?**

**Figure 4.2.2.2 Magazine Profile: Controversial Topics**



Indicated in the figure above is the percentage of magazine content that encourages debates and discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race.

Of the respondents 90 % firmly believe that this is an important magazine feature as they are able to gain an insight into the challenges or difficulties women face around South Africa. All respondents mentioned that they have encouraged reader discussions and will continue to do so. Magazine editors feel that their magazines should create a platform for their readers on which readers can feel comfortable and free to openly discuss any topic that is rife in society today. The media aims at meeting the social responsibility owed to the public by providing an environment for readers to interact with one another and liberally engage in discussions on various aspects.

Of the respondents 10 % stated that they prefer to cover news worthy topics based on current affairs, so there is very little opportunity for readers to interact and raise discussions on specific subjects. As a result of this there is very little or no public interaction between readers and the magazine. Readers are silenced on the topics they read in these magazines and are not at liberty to request a change in magazine content. Readers are forced to accept the content portrayed in these magazines and are forced to follow the content style of the magazine.

Of the respondents 90 % did state that they encourage discussion platforms through the magazines. Their magazines have been known to set an agenda and push the boundaries to generate debates and allow readers to openly engage in discussion and social interaction through a public forum. Readers are very open with regards to controversial topics and they are very vocal about their views and opinions and this is due to the reader relationship that readers develop with their favourite magazines. The Libertarian Theory once again applies to this as readers feel comfortable enough to engage and to speak freely and openly on subjects that are often not liberally published. This is due to the evolution of the media and it shows the level of involvement between magazines and their readers.

Magazines have mentioned that their publications are reader driven, therefore hundreds of letters are received weekly by magazines in response to the topics showcased in magazines and this feedback is a strong indication of the emotional reaction of the passionate readers of these magazines. Issues pertaining to race are specifically delicate and affect readers enormously and this leads them to apply these aspects to their own personal lives which then results in readers giving feedback to the magazine speaking of ways in which their lives have been touched or affected by the content they have read.

Other issues of gender and sexuality, sexual harassment, feminism, trans-sexuality and homosexuality have also been a focal point for magazines to highlight as with these aspects can come numerous controversies among families and peer groups. These subjects can affect teenagers in negative ways. It is therefore vital that readers, especially younger readers engage with the magazines on topics like these so that magazines can play an advisory role in the lives of younger readers.

Issues of racism, homeschooling, euthanasia, feminism and gay parenting are often discussed through these platforms which are created through magazine content. Through the dawn of social and online media nowadays readers are also able to be more vocal on social networks, Facebook, Twitter and magazine websites, where they can participate in online polls and surveys relating to various discussion topics. Magazines provide a segment

in the publication for the letters received and comments on social platforms regarding reader feedback and opinion polls.

Within women's magazines, the main agenda is to drive women to examine situations that place women in difficult positions, such as being discriminated against in the workplace, inequality and the rights of women for example. Magazines aim to assist women to overcome challenges such as these which can hinder them in life. They target situations where women's voices are not heard in a hurry so they create a platform such as this to offer advice and solutions to the problems that women face. Women are encouraged to embrace the characteristics of the Liberal Feminist Theory which deal with a public image and the rights of women.

Additionally, more serious and life threatening topics are also dealt with in great detail such as rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment and the responsibilities that come with women's rights. Magazines also assist as platforms to provide a guide to mothers on raising daughters, and how mothers should empower their daughters from young ages. Women are encouraged to dominate their positions in all aspects, their careers, at home, and in society. Once again, this aspect relates to the feminist media theory. A fundamental aim of this theory is to expose the harms done to women both conceptually and materially. Through this theory issues of gender equality and discrimination against women are dealt with and magazines aim to offer the perfect podium for these aspects to be uncovered.

Magazines also use their social networks sites to publish the articles online as well in order to generate comments and conversations which allow readers to participate and to become vocal and to contribute to the magazines features as these magazines are there for the readers to enjoy.

### 4.2.3 Readership demographics

#### Question 3.8: Who is your magazine targeted at? (age, race, earning capacity)

MAGAZINE	AGE GROUP	PREDOMINANT RACE GROUP
Oprah Magazine	25 - 35	72 % black
Marie Claire	25 - 40	45 % black
Move	15 – 40	Black
True Love	20 - 35	Black
Cosmopolitan	25	All
Seventeen	15 - 25	All
Fairlady	35 +	All
Grazia	25 - 40	All
Glamour	16 - 34	54 % black
You	15 – 24 and 35 - 49	Largely black and coloured

As indicated in the table above, 40 % of the respondents mentioned that their magazine is targeted at all women across all race groups. Of the respondents 60 % did state that they do have a larger percentage of their readership that is black, these magazines were the *O Magazine, Marie Claire, Move, True Love, Glamour* and *You Magazine*.

Respondents also indicated that the overall average age group of their readers is 25.

Overall the selected magazines are targeted at women who are ambitious, fashion conscious and well read. These readers fall into the medium to high income bracket.

#### Question 2.11: What aspects of your magazine are highly valued by your readership?

Women’s magazines are more than just about diets, sex and celebrity gossip. Readers migrate to specific women’s magazines because they are uplifting and are not superficial. Readers appreciate the news content that is provided in magazines amidst the fashion and beauty content. All the respondents stated that readers are quite vocal about their favourite magazines and the components that they comprise. Apart from providing readers with general interest magazine content, readers identify strongly with the social campaigns that



magazine houses work on as they feel welcomed to participate in campaigns aimed at empowering women.

Readers also value magazines for their immediacy and convenience in that it is so easily accessible and they can effortlessly share the content with their friends as a large percentage of readers view magazines as their personal shopping guides.

Magazines have always put their readers first, their needs, interests, concerns, careers, health, fashion, beauty, relationships wellness and well being have always been at the forefront of a magazine's agenda. Each magazine brand has a distinct formula that is highly valued by readers across the country. Through this, a firm long lasting relationship is formed between the reader and the magazine and readers eventually feel at liberty to comment and commend their favourite magazines on various topics discussed in a publication. The libertarian theory indicates that there should be free will in society and the feminist media theory explores the roles that women play in society. Together, these theories with the use of magazines create a platform for women to freely participate and air their views on the magazines and the content they consume.

**Question 2.17: Do teenagers read these magazines? If yes, what are they drawn to?**

While the majority of the magazines specified that they are targeted at women of an average age of 25+ all the respondents stated that teenagers do indeed read their magazines.

Readers are drawn to magazines due to their promise of authenticity. Women's magazines showcase women who are seen as role models in society who young readers can look up to. Magazines give advice that is career focused and that is one of the areas that young women are grappling with. They also provide informative features that appeal to younger women who are searching for a greater meaning in their lives beyond fashion, boys and social lives.

Readers appreciate the forthright manner in which magazines portray certain topics as readers find it easily relatable to their own personal lives. Magazines discuss issues that are school related, conflictive, emotional advice or even career guidance. Magazines provide a wide range of topics that are suitable for all age groups and categories where a mother can purchase a magazine and after reading it can pass it on to her daughter and even her own mother.

Reader feedback has shown that teenagers find interesting resources in magazine content that they can apply to their own personal situations such as, being a single successful young woman. As a result of this, most magazines have included a specific teenage page or section that is dedicated specifically to teenagers and it contains content that appeals to them on a greater level. Such content relates to career advice, applying to universities and managing their bank accounts. However, on the lighter side, topics such as shopping guides, celebrity gossip, blockbusters, beauty tips and social networking are also frequently highlighted features.

#### **4.2.4 Market Research**

**Question 3.14: What forms of market research do you conduct to determine what readers want to read? When do you do this?**

In order for magazine content to remain up to date with the reader's interests and dynamics, magazines conduct market research on a regular basis. This market research enables magazines to maintain constant interaction with their readers.

Of the respondents 90 % indicated that they conduct market research on a regular basis to gain an in-depth understanding of consumer interests. Magazines conduct focus groups, online surveys, online polls and ratings. However, the use of social media platforms and magazine websites has created a more immediate response and form of feedback to what readers find interesting. In doing this, magazines aim to determine the behaviour of their readers and they enquire about readers who have lapsed and why they have lapsed.

All market research with regards to the content of the magazines is done with specific marketing objectives in mind so the research differs from time to time. Most magazines employ media strategists to focus on this and research does not only pertain to content. Researchers enquire about pricing of magazine brands as well as the brands message that is portrayed. At the same time the uptake of social media has helped to stay in constant contact with the overall target market of a magazine so editors are able to engage in daily interaction with their readers as they believe that crowd sources are very important.

Other forms of market research are conducted through reader feedback sessions, where small groups of readers gather and the editorial teams find out who their true readers are on a face to face basis. Of the respondents 10 % mentioned that they form partnerships with key community radio stations and host live events and campaigns to promote the magazine.

They build partnerships with community television stations as well and use these networks and public relations platforms to encourage readers to participate and become well acquainted with the magazines. Through this interaction editorial teams are able to gauge who their readers are and what they want out of the magazine.

However, 10 % of the respondents stated that they do not believe in conducting market research for their magazine as they feel that readers are not honest about the content they would like to read about.

### **Question 3.15: What type of questions do you ask readers when conducting market research?**

When magazines interact with their readers they ask questions based on their marketing objectives at that specific time. Questions may pertain to a fashion aspect of the magazine relating to the fashion trends that are being introduced for that particular season. Questions can relate to readers' purchasing decisions, consumer behaviour, education systems or financial aspects, and how readers spend their income and what their views are on saving for the future. Questions such as these are based on the readers own personal lives and how these aspects of the magazine affect them. Other questions that are asked inter alia, deal with the look, feel and features of the magazine itself, such as who do readers want to see on the cover? What type of stories do readers want to read about? Which type of cover stories grab their attention? How much time do they take to read the magazine? Readers are also asked about their likes and dislikes about the magazines.

#### **4.2.5 Content Generation**

### **Question 3.10: How is the content in this magazine generated?**

The respondents stated that their content is primarily generated by their editorial teams. The content produced is a combination of locally and internationally generated feature stories.

Of the respondents 40 % stated that their magazines are established international magazine brands which have been brought to South Africa. Therefore, a certain amount of their content is bought from the international publications while all the local features are written by journalists and editorial teams in relevance to our South African market.

Of the respondents 30 % stated that they do bring in certain pieces which are bought internationally. While the remaining 30 % stated that their content focuses primarily on the South African market so the majority of their content relates to issues dealt with in South Africa first and thereafter they might include an international feature which is written by their local editorial teams.

Feature stories on fashion and beauty segments for example are a combination of locally produced and internationally purchased features. However, other topics relating to real life challenges or difficulties or current affairs which are more in-depth require some input from the readers themselves. Of the respondents 10 % emphasized that their publication is a primarily reader driven publication which seeks readers in the townships where the majority of their readership is based. By building a personal relationship with the readers the editorial teams are able to gain a closer understanding of the issues that affect their readers. Readers provide an insight as to what content they would want to read in the magazine, for example, the latest current affairs that readers are talking about is the increase in the petrol price, which affects their bus fares which then affects their spending and that eventually has an impact on their financial status which they have to adapt and budget towards. The respondent also stated that 90 % of their staff employed at *Move* magazine constitutes a large number of their readership. Therefore editorial teams have a greater understanding of the opinions and the interests of the readers. From there the feature stories are based on suitable real life challenges that readers request that will impact their lives in a positive way.

**Question 3.12: What type of content do readers want to read about in this magazine?  
How do you know this?**

Of the respondents 50 % indicated that readers who read their magazines are in search of something. The magazines targeted at middle aged to older women indicated that their readers are in search of purpose and a deeper meaning in their lives. Most of the articles provide them with the tools to design a more fulfilling life as they search for a personal identity for themselves. Women want features that focus on their interests and concerns, their health and careers, their relationships, their beauty and their well being.

Articles in these magazines are more solution driven, heart-felt and inspiring and readers enjoy articles that are based on real women who are facing real challenges. They look for local and international content to gain a world-wide view on various discussion topics and they prefer to read content that will have some impact on their personal lives. Some of these aspects include, women balancing their careers and their roles at home, raising families,

teenagers dealing with motherhood or how to control their finances as a single parent. All these aspects coincide with the dynamics of the Uses and Gratifications Theory which highlights the use of media content for one's own personal benefit and gain. Likewise, women are in search of topics in magazine content that will affect them in ways that can improve their lifestyles and have a greater impact on their social interactions with those around them.

All the respondents are targeted are at an average age of women in their 20's to mid 30's. However 50 % of the respondents indicated that they do have a large percentage of a younger age category starting from teenagers who comprise their readers and they maintain that their readers are searching for celebrity gossip, beauty tips and they regard the magazine as their personal shopping guide. The content in these magazines focuses on young women entering into their careers and provides them with tips to enhance their interview skills, and to improve their curriculum vitae to stand out from the rest of their fellow opponents. It includes topics that are informative and are placed there to assist young women in being successful apart from just providing them with celebrity entertainment and gossip.

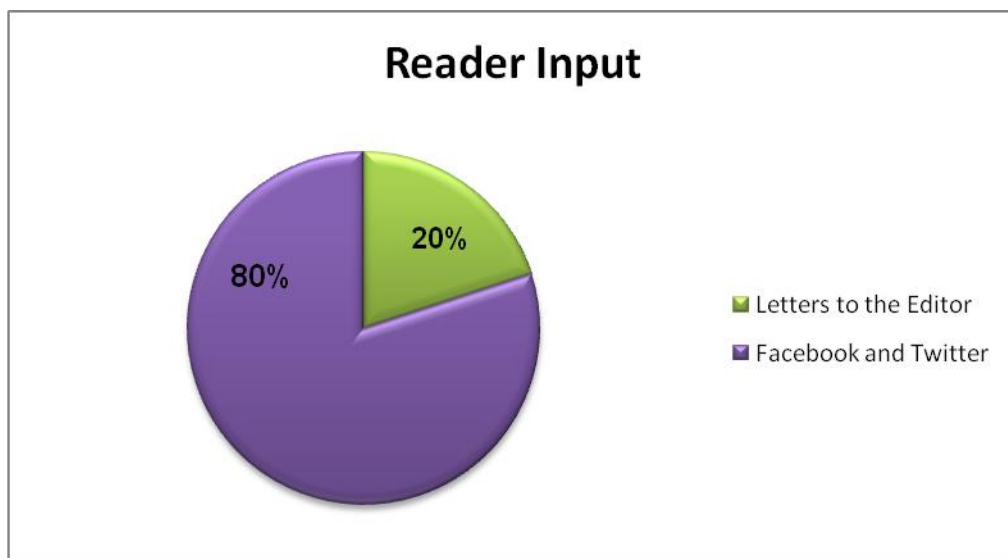
Of the respondents 20 % stated that their publications are more of a general interest magazine so they provide a range of various aspects in each publication. They base their content on news and events that are current and celebrities that are in the headlines at that specific time. This content differs from the other magazines in that it focuses on more general aspects compared to the typical women's magazine which highlights issues that affect and attract women.

Magazine editors are able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the interests of readers through their largely utilised social network platforms nowadays. All the respondents make use of social media sites, their personal magazine websites, Facebook and Twitter on which they are able to chat with their readers. Through these platforms readers have the opportunity to freely voice their opinions and interact with the magazine and indicate which feature stories and content they wish to see in their favourite publications. Magazine brands also establish a relationship with other media forms and conduct live events and campaigns to promote their magazines brand in which they engage with the public and encourage readers to build a face to face relationship with the magazine. Through these campaigns readers are at liberty to express their interests and favourite aspects of the magazine.

**Question 3.13: What input do your readers make to the content of this magazine?**

The dawn of social and online media has made it easier for readers to interact with magazine houses and to provide their input on the magazine content that they read daily. Editors engage with their readers on a regular basis through social media platforms and other social media portals. The figure below provides the statistics of reader input to magazine content.

**Figure 4.2.5.1 Content Generation: Reader Input**



As illustrated in the figure above 80 % of the respondents regularly interact with their readership through social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter. Here readers are at liberty to leave their comments and opinions on the magazines regarding content and features that they want to see in the magazine without feeling restricted or unable to air their views. Readers are aware that their comments and responses are valuable to editorial teams since they have built a strong reader relationship with their favourite magazines. These media platforms are easily accessible to readers across the country and therefore enable readers to participate in ways that they no longer have to remain silent on as they did in the past.

Of the respondents 20 % indicated that they still receive large amounts of written letters to the editors on a weekly basis, and they incorporate these letters into their monthly or weekly magazine publications. Some magazines have a featured column in every issue entitled 'My Story' or 'Letters to the editor' in which the readers' opinions are displayed.

The spiral of silence theory indicates that the public is usually susceptible to consuming media content and remaining silent on it regardless of what their views might be. However, as indicated above, through the use of social media, the print media has developed a platform that enables readers to freely engage and interact with them without feeling as though their views are in the minority. Through this constant interaction readers do not have to feel as though magazines are published by editorial teams based on their content that is chosen by the magazine itself. Rather that the magazines are designed to suit the reader's personal needs and interests. Through the development of the feminist media theory over the years, the media has created a way for women to participate in the magazines they choose to read as women no longer have to be lead by media content that is produced primarily to increase sales figures. Women are more independent nowadays and are at liberty to state what they believe in.

#### **4.2.6 The role of celebrities in magazines**

##### **Question 3.23: How is the role of women in society represented in these magazines?**

The role of the media in society is extremely significant. As a form of mass communication the media has a widely influential responsibility to fulfil. Magazines are highly influential over readers therefore women need to be portrayed in ways that will lead to a better development and self acceptance of women across South Africa.

Magazines encourage the empowerment of women without being judgmental to the choices that women make to their everyday lives and situations. They do not wish for women to feel that they have lost their power or ability to take control of their lives, but instead they play a highly persuasive role to push women to be happy with the choices they make. By constantly producing content aimed at the encouraging and life changing features, women are constantly being reminded of their worth and their contributions to society. Magazines are in full support of the feminist media theory and Liberal Feminist Theory which highlight the ways in which women were discriminated against in the past. They use these aspects to draw attention to the need for women to feel empowered and free to live their own lives without any restrictions imposed on them by men.

Through confidence, a high self esteem, independence and a powerful and positive image, women are persuaded to represent ideal role models for themselves and to those around them. They are to be seen as respected individuals who have the abilities to conquer any challenge that they may face.

Magazines often confront issues of pain and suffering such as rape, domestic violence, emotional abuse, health difficulties such as breast cancer in order to prevent women from always being seen as passive individuals but rather independent and strong and powerful women. All these topical issues are necessary for the protection and empowerment of women today and are driven through campaigns aimed at encouraging women to embrace their roles in society.

In our society today, women play multi functional roles in their home environments, work environments and social groups. The main aim of magazines is to take these roles seriously and to nurture the values of women in ways that women can feel respected, loved and valued.

Magazines aim to show the public that women possess the ability to develop our society as a whole due to the strength, intelligence and drive that women possess. Women have been created to be different and should therefore be seen as role models and should be treated carefully.

**Question 3.24: Who is the right ‘cover person’ for these magazines?**

The respondents suggested that it is vital for the cover person to represent the brand philosophy of the magazines. So whether brand philosophy is ‘Think Smart, Look Amazing’ as it is for *Marie Claire*, the reader must feel inspired by the person on the cover. The right cover person must be a woman so whether they are inspired by her looks and wardrobe selections or by her outlook on life or successful career, there needs to be some attributes that readers resonate with. She has to be an individual that readers can identify with on some level as they seek their own personal identity.

The core function of these magazines is to generate a topical and stylish representation of a woman who embodies the features of the magazine. However, it differs from time to time with celebrities on the cover as it differs from one magazine to another. Generally, if a celebrity has a new movie being released, or a new album being published, that can increase the celebrity’s popularity therefore leading to a cover feature. There is no specific age group for which cover celebrities are selected. However Hollywood celebrities are seen on magazine covers more than local South African celebrities. This is due to the fact that most of the selected magazines stem from international brands which feature South African celebrities on a more irregular basis.



The cover girls for magazines generally have a story about their personal lives that is worth sharing with millions of female readers across the country. Some feature stories may include celebrities who are in full support of organ donation in South Africa, or a celebrity who was just an ordinary individual who became a successful business woman through numerous struggles and is now seen as an icon in the business world. Celebrities who are willing to openly discuss their difficulties that they have faced such as addictions and have worked hard to improve their lives are featured. Readers are in search of feature stories about prominent public figures who have faced the same situations as them as they can relate to their experiences. Young celebrities who talk about balancing their careers while adjusting to motherhood is an example of a cover story that would make the reader want to purchase a magazine.

Most magazines have an international brand identity that is used to engage the readers therefore international celebrities are the prime cover features. Magazines also consider the messages and feedback they receive from readers indicating their interests and who and what they want to see in the magazine.

The *O Magazine* on the other hand features Miss Oprah Winfrey herself on each magazine cover as this magazine is based primarily on her philosophy. It is based around her and her projects and her school so it needs to showcase her attributes on the cover. This concept helps the magazine to stand out on the shelves apart from the others, and for now it works well by having Oprah on the cover. If the time comes for this cover feature to change, then the magazine would be seen as another one in a thousand magazines available on the shelves today.

Some magazines are celebrity driven especially since a large percentage of magazine readers are younger women starting from teenagers to those in their mid to late 20's, therefore celebrity gossip is the prime focus of their content.

**Question 3.25: How do you determine which celebrity and which feature stories to display on the magazine covers? What is the selection process?**

All the respondents indicated that this decision is very much a commercial one. It depends on the time, and what is relevant in the market place so if there is a big movie being released then generally some of the cover stories and the celebrity will be from that movie. However, the celebrity on the cover must embody the characteristics of the

magazines as well. The magazines that are established international brands take into consideration the dynamics of current events that are happening in the international edition but also ensure that the local magazine covers are relevant to our South African market.

When determining cover stories, editorial teams work closely together to select the stories that would create the strongest cover lines and will resonate with the readers on the highest level. The editors look at themselves as well and ask themselves whether they would purchase a magazine if they showed a certain topic on the cover. Magazine editors also form part of the readership, so content aimed at women will appeal to them as well.

Magazines tend to use international celebrities because they are less specific than local celebrities therefore international cover stars are broader in their appeal. Magazines therefore look for an interesting individual who has a story to share and is more than just a pretty face. She must also be appropriate and appealing to the target market.

In terms of the cover stories, editors look at the aesthetic values, the colours, the clothes that the star is wearing, and whether they all correlate. Magazines also focus on newsworthiness so the star must also coincide with the current topic selections and product lines.

Of the magazines 30 % do use local stars on their covers, and their selection process includes success stories that are inspiring to readers. Public figure's who have slightly sensational personalities who can draw the attention of the public with a story that is worth sharing, are suitable for the cover.

However, 10 % of the magazines do focus their content on general interest information so feature stories are not always based on uplifting and inspiring content. If there is a well known Hollywood celebrity that is battling substance abuse and has returned to rehab and has a career that is falling apart, magazines thrive on this type of gossip and because this story is guaranteed to make headlines, the magazine will feature the details and the celebrity on the cover. Stories must be able to engage readers at all times so whether it revolves around celebrity gossip or inspiring celebrities, the audience will still be interested.

*O Magazine* is slightly different in that on every issue, the cover person is Miss Oprah Winfrey herself. The cover formula is quite different compared to other magazines. At

least one Oprah feature is displayed on the cover, so for example if she is interviewing someone, then that will be on the cover. Oprah features a few contributors like Suzy Orman who provides financial advice, Dr Phil who gives marriage counselling or even Dr Oz who provides medical advice; these contributors supply features that will make up the cover stories. These are some of the unique features of the O Magazine that are enhanced by these experts. Some kind of heart story that is inspiring to readers and stories bringing about some controversy make desirable must read stories which are featured on the magazine cover. Generally the content is unique and exclusive, and on the lighter side, articles on travel, food or books constitute the remainder of the features.

**Question 3.26: Why do magazines sometimes use celebrities to provide advice to readers on various topics based on their own personal experiences?**

The respondents were of different views to this question in that each magazine places different levels of importance on celebrities as some magazines are celebrity driven while others are more reader driven.

Of the respondents 30 % believe that readers always identify with celebrities. Celebrities seem to be living a life that is untouchable where they are not affected by human dramas. People therefore relate to the experiences of celebrities when they openly discuss the problems they have with alcohol abuse or weight gain for example. As a result, celebrities do play an integral part in our culture because they are more accessible and more in touch with the public due to the evolution of social media. Readers find it easier and associate more with an individual who is accessible where readers can see that these celebrities are of the same opinion or have experienced the same daily challenges as them. People are interested in celebrities because their opinions carry weight, for example the Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie who recently had a double mastectomy provoked endless discussions among readers as many readers face the same medical predicaments and can resonate with her situation.

Of the respondents 30 % rely heavily on celebrity content as they are celebrity driven and their readership love celebrity news and gossip. For these readers, celebrities are seen as role models and readers aspire to be more like them. They adjust their lifestyles and achievements according to those of celebrities who inspire them. These readers are within a younger age group and are in search of a personal identity and therefore turn to their favourite celebrities and role models as a way to discover who they are and who they wish to be like. Celebrities are often regarded as experts on topics such as fashion,

beauty and confidence and younger readers thrive on these types of pieces. This relates to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, whereby models are employed to entice women into buying the magazines due to their fashion related trends. In this case celebrities and public figures are also used to gain the attention of the public, leading to the two step flow approach. This approach highlights the effect or the influence that people have on other people in society. This theory is evident in the case of magazines and their readers whereby celebrities are used to generate media coverage through certain aspects of their personal lives. The Two-Step Flow Theory was initially aimed at proving that the media has a direct influence over the public; however it was proved that personal and informal contact between individuals actually has a greater effect on the people.

However, 30 % of the respondents mentioned that they do not have segments in their magazines that allow for celebrity advice to be given to readers. They prefer to seek the advice of qualified experts to provide the best advice to their readers. They generally try to obtain at least three experts for a given topic and incorporate all their views into one piece. Readers are interested in celebrities, and successful people can always teach readers a lesson or two especially if they have experienced aspects that readers can relate to. If a celebrity has experienced a particular situation that readers also face, the celebrity would be asked to discuss her experience although the experience and thoughts of the celebrity would not be regarded as professional or objective advice. However, if topics pertain to a celebrity marketing his or her own personal brand for example, then that celebrity can have a wide range of useful information to share on that subject. *Move* magazine for example, presents a health segment where they generate professional advice from a qualified expert who can offer expert medical advice. Real life stories are written about celebrities and these can be used to support the medical advice offered from the medical expert and celebrities can be asked for their views on solutions that have worked for them in the past in various circumstances.

The remaining 10 % of respondents stated that they are not a celebrity driven magazine. The biggest celebrity featured in the magazine is Oprah Winfrey as she is on each monthly cover. When other celebrities are featured in the *O Magazine*, they are connected to Oprah in some way. If celebrities are used, they must be able to contribute with first-hand experience. Readers respond to endorsements by celebrities and through *O Magazine*, celebrities are portrayed with a real face so readers don't feel like they're alone in the challenges they're facing.

**Question 3.27: What characteristics put these celebrities and public figures in the right positions to offer objective advice to the public?**

Of the respondents 20 % believe that readers seem to be following that current trend of identifying with celebrities because they are famous. Most of the younger magazine readers regard fame as a measure of success. So through the fact that someone has managed to differentiate themselves to a point where they have a public persona, is something that younger readers aspire to and therefore value the advice of celebrities. They may not be in the best position to offer advice but young girls look for their advice.

Of the respondents 30 % feel that celebrities aren't fit to offer advice in their magazines. They feature celebrities in other ways and means and prefer to seek professional experts to offer the best solutions to readers.

Readers want to read content about public figures that indicate that celebrities are also human beings just like everyone around them. They go through the same difficulties and challenges as normal people do, they make mistakes, fall from grace, encounter hurdles in life but because they are public figures the world hears of these hurdles and challenges. People still admire the talents and achievements of their favourite actresses and stars because they look up to them as role models who have a strong and valued opinion on any given topic. They may not be the best advisors but they have faced enough of life's difficulties having to live a life in the spotlight on a constant basis, placing them in a position to offer a comment on living a life in the public eye. Their advice may not be regarded as objective but is based on their own personal experiences. In an ideal world characteristics would be morally sound and admirable. However, as celebrities, they have more exposure to more life experiences, people and products than normal people do. If celebrities have encountered an aspect that editors feel are newsworthy and topical for their readers then celebrities are featured to showcase that information.

The first stage of the Two-Step Flow Theory indicates that opinion leaders exist in all groups and that they are the most influential of the group. Leadership qualities may differ from person to person. In relation to this aspect of the study, celebrities are regarded as polymorphic implying that they are influential on a variety of topics pertaining to the content portrayed in women's magazines. The second stage of the two step flow approach indicates that opinion leaders utilise their own interpretations of information as well as actual media content to the opinion receivers, in this case, the readers.

Magazines explore people's struggles and these aspects are ones that readers resonate

with. Editors carefully portray celebrities in ways that can expose what celebrities have to say. Celebrities are not just represented for being famous, but rather for carrying a successful journey behind them that has resulted in them becoming famous.

#### **4.2.7 Role of the media**

##### **Question 3.16: What are the features that make the ideal women according to this magazine?**

Of the respondents 40 % were specific about the features of an ideal woman that their magazine portrays. The ideal woman described is someone who has a social conscience who is delving into the layers of her life to get the best possible experience out of it. She is intelligent and sophisticated and is not so driven by fashion and trends. She is successful due to the generation that we live in where readers place a lot of emphasis on financial success. She is a confident, bold and outspoken woman who has an interest in all aspects of life and not just fashion. She is also professional and ambitious and is driven to empower and better her life, her family and those around her. She is a woman who is not held back or discriminated against in the way that women were in the past, because she feels liberated to speak her mind and stand firm for what she believes.

Of the respondents 60 % stated that they prefer not to generalise and put forward an idea of an ideal woman. They embrace all women and do not highlight any specific features of an ideal woman. They aim to inspire through the fashion trends and encapsulate a woman as someone who exudes intelligence and confidence in all that she does. These magazines cater for the contemporary South African women who focus on the future and aim their lives at appreciating and accepting themselves as individuals with their own unique qualities. These magazines aim to create an identity of their magazine that is accepting of all women, regardless of who they are, where they are from, or what they have been through. As women gain an insight to their personal identities through magazine content, women are then influenced to embrace their personal attributes without adapting to the social demographics of society.

The feature stories are real life stories and articles about women who have come from ordinary backgrounds and have achieved extraordinary things. They inspire and motivate other readers to achieve their goals without being restricted or restrained by the daily obstacles in their lives. As most magazine markets are so diverse the readership rates indicate that there is no ideal woman as people have various opinions and the person who

might seem ideal to one individual will not be seen as ideal by another individual so magazines cannot identify an ideal woman because of such a broad and diversified audience. Instead, magazines are tailored to represent their readership and who they are and what they stand for.

### **Question 3.28: What role do the media have to play in society?**

The media in South Africa plays an extremely enormous and significant role in society. As a widely influential communication tool the media encompasses numerous aspects that reach the public through diverse communication platforms. The print media in particular is able to relate to readers on a daily basis by portraying stories of real life situations and challenges that many people face on a daily basis. The media has a social responsibility to fulfil in society that provides solution driven informative content for the public to consume as a way of assisting them in their daily decision making processes.

The media's role is crucial as it acts as a watchdog in society. The main role is to inform, entertain and educate readers. Therefore content has to be considered, measured and responsible but at the same time at liberty to express and to question what is reflected in society. The role played by the media is also an educational one. Magazines provide a great deal of basic education pieces for readers informing them on a variety of topics and agenda's along with some entertainment thrown in. One of the social responsibilities of the media is to ensure the safe keeping of the audience. A vital aspect that is dealt with in great detail is violence against women which is on the increase in our country, and magazines aim to expose the dangers to women by supplying them with the safety, security and protection type articles.

The media also endeavours to inform and inspire the public with relevant and useful perspectives on different topical issues and can sometimes provide readers with a form of escapism from the world around them. The media can provide amazing vehicles to explore subjects that readers need to be conscious of such as knowledge, self empowerment, self improvement, and self acceptance. As part of serving the public, the media plays a role in shaping the minds of the public into being aware of their powerful abilities to accomplish their goals. The qualities of the Spiral of Silence Theory highlight the ways in which public opinion is formed. Magazine content aims to create a public forum for readers to communicate and make their opinions heard. Discussions and debates are encouraged so that readers do not have to remain silent and lead by content that is media driven.

However, there can be irresponsible media in South Africa at times, the media that does not always comply with the principles of the Social Responsibility Theory. Whereby there is sensational media that is inaccurate, some media that thrives on scandal, rumours and having good headlines rather than substance and food for thought.

### **Question 3.29: How do magazines feature in this role?**

Magazines are always trying to create a transformational journey for readers to embark upon through fun concepts and features in the magazines but also by leaving readers with a lesson learnt that has improved their lives leaving them as better people by the time they have completed reading the magazine.

Some women's magazines try to play a 'best-friend-big-sister' role to their readers by celebrating, entertaining and informing readers on topics that are valuable to the readers overall outlook on life. The role of journalists is to thoroughly research interesting topics and to find the best and most current information on that topic and to collate the different perspectives into a well written piece that readers will find engaging enough to reflect on. Magazines are the forefront of raising causes and campaigns that encourage readers to think of features that affect them and their self esteem.

All the magazine editors were of one opinion that they are placed in society to act as a watchdog, informer, entertainer and educator to look after the well being of women. By communicating with women and representing their current and future prospects, magazines aim to reinforce the confidence of women. They aim to shape the minds and perceptions of readers. Magazines hold high ratings in terms of their interactions with the public and through the longevity of local and international success of these brands, demonstrates that the role of magazines in society is extremely effective and highly valued by the readers.

## **4.3 Conclusion**

Chapter four has provided the data analysis for the study based on the responses gathered from the selected magazine editors. These responses were gathered through telephonic interviews that were conducted individually between the researcher and each respondent.

The questions posed to magazine editors were aimed at determining the aims and objectives of the study. These were: to evaluate how magazine content is determined, who it is



determined by and to evaluate whether the representation of women in the media contributes to the identities of readers in any way.

The key objective of the study is to identify the role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa. Chapter five will provide the conclusions to this key objective based on the findings that were analysed in chapter four.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter four has provided an analysis and interpretation of the responses from the telephonic interviews that were conducted with the magazine editors across South Africa. Women's magazines were selected firstly to gain an insight to determining the way in which magazine content influences readers. Secondly, women's magazines were selected to assess the role that magazine content plays in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa as this was one of the primary objectives of the study.

Chapter five provides the conclusions for the completion of the study which are reflective of the qualitative findings that were produced in chapter four. Furthermore, it provides an overview of the outcomes of the overall aims and objectives of the study.

#### **5.2 Summary of the study**

The study is centred on various combinations of infotainment which are communicated to the public in diverse forms. As a vital aspect of human life, communication is a way in which people express themselves through verbal and non verbal means allowing individuals to create their own understandings of the world around them. The media utilises several forms of communication to reach the public through advertisements, portrayal of news stories and general entertainment. However, for the study the print media was highlighted as an area of interest as the print media contributes endlessly to our daily lives.

By examining the print media and its popularity among readers, specific reference was made to magazines and the particular audiences with which they target. In this case, women's magazines were emphasized as the focal point. Through the observation of various roles of the media, the study has focused on the identity that is created stemming from the influence of magazine content on young women. This observation included the multiple roles that the media ought to play in society when contributing to the lives of young women in South Africa.

The study has done so by reviewing the way in which magazine content is determined and by evaluating the power that this selected content yields over readers. The study aimed at evaluating the means of determining the type of features to cover in magazines and questioned whether or not these decisions were based on the interests of the readers. It

also aspired to research the extent to which the public is able to contribute to the content matter to suit their individual and varied tastes and requirements. Media content can sometimes be interpreted as harmful to the public creating imbalanced lifestyles. However, through the detailed analyses displayed in chapter four, magazine editors indicated that magazine content is primarily aimed at contributing to the positive development and evolution of readers. Magazines aim to draw the attention away from features that can harmfully affect readers.

After analysing the selected magazine covers in the literature review in chapter two and the responses of telephonic interviews in the data analysis in chapter four, the study has explored the representation of women in the print media in conjunction with the various normative theories of the press. These theories were the Social Responsibility, Libertarian, Agenda-Setting, Feminist and Liberal Feminist theories. Visual content in the print media is one of the most attractive features of a magazine and it can be highly influential over readers. Therefore, the study further assessed the images that were created in magazines and examined the ways in which the public is affected and influenced by these images.

Constant communication between magazine readers and editorial teams is a vital component in the successful publication of any magazine and it is necessary for a strong relationship to be built and maintained on behalf of the magazine and the reader. Magazines create an identity in the minds of their readers and through printed media this identity is maintained. Identity focuses on the relationship between the mind and the body and through magazine content readers are able to embrace their personal identities apart from developing a social identity.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

The following section presents the conclusions drawn from the study based on the objectives that were established in chapter 1.

In the first chapter it was indicated that magazines gained immense popularity among millions of female readers around the world as they appealed to women by offering them advice on every aspect of their lives. Through this close interaction with this printed media, the public became reliant on the content produced as it affected readers in some way or the other. Magazines promoted solutions to every challenge encountered by a young woman at some time in her life if not on a daily basis.

However, the research problem in chapter one indicated that previous studies have shown that women were found to be inappropriately represented by the print media. This portrayal of women created a negative image of women in a way that could have led to harmful outcomes in the development of a young women's identity in South Africa. This was becoming a societal norm until the findings of the study revealed that women's magazines do play largely influential roles over readers and they do contribute significantly to the identities of many women. However, magazines do not supply content that is degrading or harmful to women but rather offer content that steers away from discrimination against women and other topics that cause insecurities among female identities. Magazines focus on contributing to the positive overall development and mind set of the roles that women have to play in society.

The research question for the study is what is the role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa. In chapter two, the literature provided was based on the assumption that the media displays a negative role of women by portraying them as glamorous models with perfect appearances who were only interested in shopping and fashion. However, after the research findings were analysed it was established that magazines are more inclined to a positive outlook on life in general rather than images and beauty products. Magazines aim to influence readers in ways that can benefit and encourage them to progress, achieve their goals and be successful in life.

The significance of the study was aimed at determining whether the role of the selected magazines impacted the reader's personal images, lifestyles, identities and development. The study revealed that magazines do impact the lives of the reader's significantly; however this impact differs from the attributes that were mentioned in the literature review. Magazines nowadays promote self acceptance, well being and a good self esteem among readers and encourage readers to steer away from focusing on image, beauty and glamour.

Magazines published today have drifted away from the restrictions imposed over them in the past whereby the print media focused on issues that were decided on by male figures based topics that would increase magazine sales. Nowadays readers are able to decide and contribute to a large percentage of the magazines content due to the use of new developments in technology today.

The study was aimed at establishing the following objectives:

- **How magazine content is determined?**

The research findings indicate that magazine readers have become quite vocal about their favourite magazines and their components. It has been established that women's magazines allow and encourage customer feedback to the extent that this feedback and public interaction has developed into an entire platform on its own. Customer feedback through social media and social interactive networks, have emerged creating a largely digital fore-front for magazines to conduct business and to obtain a greater understanding of the interests and tastes of readers. Apart from following the trends and lifestyles of international brands, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, online surveys and blogs, have all contributed to the advertising and marketing tactics of magazines, making customer feedback much easier for the public to participate in. Therefore allowing readers to comment and engage in discussions on topics being discussed in magazines and also to indicate topics that they would like to read.

The readers of these women's magazines are in search of a purpose and a deeper meaning in their lives and the articles assist them by providing personal identities and features that resonate with them. Articles are solution driven and inspiring and help women to face their challenges in balancing their careers, roles in the work place, at home, and in their social groups. The uses and gratifications theory described in chapter two, applies to this finding as it is revealed that women make use of magazine content for their own personal benefit to improve their lifestyles. Apart from consuming general interest information readers enjoy the celebrity gossip and shopping guides that are featured in women's magazines.

Additionally a great deal of market research is conducted on a regular basis, not only online, but at social events and within focus groups where editorial team members meet to discuss the changes in new trends that emerge within social, technological, and developmental aspects. A series of questions pertaining to the marketing objectives of the magazine are posed to the readers. These questions focus on their purchasing decisions, consumer behaviour, income, the look and feel of the magazine, feature stories, cover features, types of stories readers would like to read about and their likes and dislikes about the magazines.

All these efforts are carried out for the purpose gaining an in-depth understanding of consumer interests, producing a read that is fulfilling and meaningful to the lives of thousands of readers across South Africa. Magazines provide general interest content for

women and the findings reveal that readers value the immediacy, convenience and accessibility of their magazines. Magazine editors always put the needs of the reader's at their top priority and each magazine brand has a distinct formula that is highly valued by the readers which therefore creates a long lasting relationship between readers and magazines. The Libertarian Theory and the Feminist Media Theory together with magazines create a platform for women to freely participate in the discussions generating topical information for magazine publications contributing to the formation of magazine content.

- **Who is magazine content determined by?**

All the respondents of the study were unanimous in stating that all their magazine content is determined by their editors and feature editors. However, all content is ultimately determined and approved by the editor personally or by the editorial team consisting of editors and deputy editors. For the South African magazines that are born out of international brands, continuous communication is vital between the editorial teams abroad and locally when determining monthly features. However, for the locally developed magazine houses, all editors hold the final decision regarding the selection of content that is to be featured for a publication.

However all the respondents were unanimous once again by specifying that their readership plays a largely vital role in contributing to the magazine content as mentioned in the above objective of the study. As previously mentioned in the data analysis in chapter four, the selected women's magazines comprise publications that are primarily reader driven, therefore the readers play a highly significant role in providing feedback on magazines websites, Facebook pages, Twitter sites and other online social networking sites. Through this feedback editors are able to determine the interests and trends that affect readers and can therefore adapt the magazines content to suit these needs of the public.

- **How does the representation of women in the media contribute to the identity of women?**

The study has shown that women's magazines promote positive images and representations of all women as they believe that women should feel free to express themselves when and in whichever way they desire. Magazines indicate that they do not generalise and create stereotypes of women in the public eye. They promote positive self esteem and self acceptance attributes for all women to feel proud of themselves without having to adapt or

adjust their personal characteristics to fit in with a particular group in society. Through these magazines women are encouraged to stand out as individuals and to not remain sheltered behind the male figure, as this will therefore create and shape a positive and strong identity of women. Identity comprises a sense of belonging and self respect. It provides an understanding in an individual's mind of where people are and where they would like to be. Self concept encompasses beliefs about a person's own attributes and through the representation of women in the media, individuals and their identities change over time as people will place different levels of value on different aspects. Women are now in a position to behave and interact freely in liberated ways that were not allowed in the past. Magazines have played an instrumental role in contributing to the positive development of women today by improving their well being and outlook on life.

Media plays a widely influential role in South Africa. An important function of the media mentioned in the Propaganda Model is to amuse, entertain, inform and inspire. Magazines fulfil this role and are therefore highly valued among readers. It is vital that women be represented in positive ways that will enhance their personal development. The Feminist Media Theory, the Liberal Feminist Theory and the Libertarian Theory highlight ways in which women were discriminated against in the past and through magazines, draw attention to the need for women to break away from those restrictions and to develop a high self esteem and be independent.

- **Is the popular representation of women perpetuated by the media?**

The representation of women is perpetuated by the media. The role of the media is enormous and is a widely influential communication tool. Readers are able to relate to various aspects through the media which fulfils the role of an informer, educator and entertainer. Magazines provide basic education on a variety of topics fulfilling the main aims of the Social Responsibility Theory. By providing a safe keeping of the audience, magazines inspire the public with relevant and useful information on different issues and events taking place. The Spiral of Silence Theory examines the ways in which public opinion is formed and magazines aim to create and maintain a public platform on which readers can interact and air their views as well.

To a certain extent images of women featured in magazines are perpetuated by the media as all women's magazines have a trade mark of an A list celebrity on their cover every month. This celebrity figure is the most attractive magazine feature that captures the attention of the readers and therefore contributes to the high readership levels of the magazine. It is also the

duty of the media to draw readers by show casing features or public figures that appeal to them in many different ways. Not only do readers look up to celebrities as role models and inspiring public figures but they also create desires within readers to live lifestyles of their favourite Hollywood stars. This development stemming from society's portrayal of public figures is perpetuated by the media in efforts to encourage and promote the sales and readership figures of female magazines worldwide. The media always need to provide content that is new and in keeping with trends and content that readers request, therefore there is an ongoing communication channel between readers and magazine editorial teams. However, the images portrayed are all aimed at the fulfilment and encouragement, dedicated to the self acceptance of women. Content is not provided to affect readers in a negative way that can affect them in a harmful way. The print media through magazine content aims to meet the social responsibilities stipulated which are intended to take care of the well being of the public and to provide an on-going cycle of positive representations of women.

#### **5.4 Limitations**

The following limitations were encountered during the study:

- The study was limited to women's magazines in South Africa only, specifically within Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban.
- Seven out of ten respondents were available for telephonic interviews, while the remaining three editors were unavailable and responded via email to a questionnaire.
- *Longevity, Elle, Heat, Salt Water Girl* and *Women's Health* magazines were unable to participate in the study.

#### **5.5 Concluding Remarks**

Television, radio and the print media all play a central role in contributing to our knowledge, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards the world around us. The content we consume through these means of mass media is communicated to individuals in numerous ways as it shapes the ways in which we view various aspects. Due to the persuasive function of the media the public is at liberty to engage in conversation, discussions and social interactions based on the news provided by the media on various topics.

As a result of the media occupying such a prominent position in society it can and should undertake the responsibility of raising the public profile of women especially within the print media, particularly the magazine industry. This platform is one that women find to be the



most appealing as a source of guidance and advice. The media also has numerous functions and obligations to fulfil in society by providing the public with infotainment, in ways that would stir up public discussion. This is the media's way of meeting the requirements and objectives of the Social Responsibility Theory, by supplying the public with the information that they should be aware of, and in this case women's health and lifestyle aspects, career and financial guidance among other topics.

Based on the Normative Theories discussed in the literature review in chapter two, the media should fulfil several roles within society, including, the obligations to supply true information to the public. The public is also seen as fit to determine for themselves which content is suitable for them and which is not, however, the content portrayed through the media is highly influential and can sometimes be harmful to readers.

Magazine content was examined in great detail in chapter four in conjunction with the responses of the telephonic interviews that were conducted with the editors of selected top selling women's magazines. These responses indicated that the print media through magazines endeavour to fulfil the roles and obligations of their responsibility owed to the public in the best way possible. By providing platforms for the public to voice their opinions and to generate media content, the media creates publications that aim to provide true and informative content to the public. The media also does supply content that can be controversial but in fulfilling its societal duty, the media grants the liberty to the public to determine whether content is suitable for them or not and whether to purchase the magazine or not.

However, as a result of the high and increasing readership rates of the selected magazines, women are still drawn to their favourite magazines because of their content matter and because these magazines are bold enough to cover controversial everyday issues that face a large percentage of our population. Women of today have proved to be confident, mature and wise enough to express themselves in ways that are not overshadowed by the media and by magazine images. Women have broken the barriers of the Feminist Media Theory and the Liberal Feminist Theory by proving that they are independent, successful and should not be discriminated against.

Furthermore the study has indicated that magazines do influence the identities of women and they do affect their thinking, attitudes and behaviour patterns. However, magazines do not publish content that can harm readers and create negative effects on them but rather promotes aspects that have proved to uplift readers in ways that can improve their lifestyles and well being. Magazines aspire to portray roles and features of women that will generate a greater sense of freedom, independence and self esteem among women. The study has

concluded that the media has a powerful influence over young girls and women worldwide. For this reason it is vital that the media and through magazine content, showcase images that yield constructive influences and trends to promote self acceptance among women.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: LETTER OF CONFIRMATION

90 Battersea Avenue  
Reservoir Hills  
Durban  
4091

Cell: 082 754 3815  
Email: jagovender@gmail.com

26 September 2012

Dear Sir / Madam

#### RE: MTECH: PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT

I am conducting a study in the field of Public Relations. The study is entitled 'The Role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa'. The research will explore the representation of women in leading women's magazines, and the impact that the media through magazines, has on women in South Africa.

The study will be specifically targeted at young women as well as editors of selected women's magazines. This study will be submitted in fulfilment of a Masters Degree in the field of Public Relations Management at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Please note that your identity will remain anonymous if you so wish. My supervisor for this study is Professor Nirvana Bechan of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. She can be contacted at [BechanN@cput.ac.za](mailto:BechanN@cput.ac.za) or on 021 – 460 3872, should you require any further information. The outcomes of the research can be made available to you if you require it.

I thank you in advance and look forward to a favourable response.

Jerusha Govender  
(Student number: 212262300)

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### The role of magazine content in the creation of young women's identities in South Africa

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1. Name of magazine:
2. Respondent:
3. Race:
4. Age group:
5. Gender:
6. Position at magazine:
7. Contact number:
8. Who is your magazine targeted at? (age group, race, earning capacity, etc)
9. What media content (article, images, features) does this magazine focus on?
10. How is the content in this magazine generated? Explain.
11. What aspects of your magazine are highly valued by your readership?
12. What type of content do readers want to read about in this magazine? How do you know this?
13. What input do your readers make to the content of this magazine?
14. What forms of market research do you conduct to determine what readers want to read? When do you do this?
15. What type of questions do you ask your readers when conducting market research?
16. What are the features that make the ideal women according to this magazine? Please list and describe.
17. Do teenagers read this magazine? If yes, what are they drawn to?
18. What type of lifestyle does this magazine depict? Please list and explain.
19. How much of the content focuses on sexuality?
20. What are the areas of sexuality commonly covered?
21. Does this magazine assist in creating platforms for discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race?
22. If yes, how so?
23. How is the role of women in society represented in this magazine?
24. Who is the right 'cover person' for your magazine? Please explain.
25. How do you determine which celebrity and which feature stories to display on the magazine cover? What is the selection process?
26. Why do magazines sometimes use celebrities to provide advice to readers on various topics based on their own personal experiences?



27. What characteristics put these celebrities and public figures in the right position to offer objective advice to the public?
28. What role do the media have to play in society?
29. How does this magazine feature in this role?

## APPENDIX C: RESPONSES

**1. Name of magazine:** O, The Oprah Magazine South Africa

**2. Who is your magazine targeted at? (age group, race, earning capacity, etc)**

The average age of our reader is 30, but our magazine is targeted at women between the ages of 25 and 35. While we have a 72 % black readership, we don't market ourselves as a magazine suited to a specific race but rather a mind-set.

**3. What media content (article, images, features) does this magazine focus on?**

With our magazine we aim to expose our readers to uplifting, positive content in every aspect of our magazine – features, images and design. We are focused on self-acceptance and the best way to move forward to the best version of you.

**4. How is the content in this magazine generated? Explain.**

We have a monthly planning meeting during which the features team proposes features. Our final booklist is usually a combination of locally generated content, pieces we buy in from other media streams and articles we pick up from our sister publication in the US.

**5. What aspects of your magazine are highly valued by your readership?**

Our magazine is more than just about diets and sex and celebrities. I think that people migrate to the magazine because it's not superficial, it's an uplifting read and the reader feels better after she's engaged with the content.

**6. What type of content do readers want to read about in this magazine? How do you know this?**

Our readership is searching for purpose and a deeper meaning in their lives so many of the articles that give them the tools to design a more fulfilling life for themselves is highly valued by them. I also think that the articles that do well for us are the one's that are solution driven that are heart-felt and inspiring and I think that judging from just chatting to our readers, they enjoy articles about real women who are facing real challenges and they don't get to see that so often in other magazines.

**7. What input do your readers make to the content of this magazine?**

The dawn of social media and online media, has made it easier for readers to give input and I engage quite regularly with the readers on Facebook and other various social media portals. Sometimes the readers are part of our fashion shoots and some of our feature stories. We ask them for comments online as they are the kind of reads who love to give input, they do that whether they're asked to or not. So there lots of up and downs there as well. We have started designing a lot of features around a question that's posed maybe online and we use that information or the case studies themselves or the feedback that readers have given on a particular issue that we've asked about online. So I think for us at the moment social media is one of our main ways of getting input and getting story ideas and comments from readers.

**8. What forms of market research do you conduct to determine what readers want to read? When do you do this?**

We conduct focus groups, our last focus group was in 2010 in Cape Town and Johannesburg. It was a very small sample, but the aim of that was to determine.....we had different groups. We had lapsed readers, new readers, readers in a certain age group. All market research is done with a specific marketing objective in mind, so this particular focus group was not so much about the content but was more about whether readers have lapsed and why they have lapsed and also why new readers have come on board, those who were readers, then lapsed and came back again, whether that was because of content or life stage or whatever. But a lot of the research is determined by the objectives of the marketing department and it's not always just specifically about the content. We looked at pricing and for our brand specifically but whether our brand message was still relevant. But the marketing department also do their surveys using survey monkey. We have a data base of our readers based on people that subscribe to our newsletters, and the company has just recently taken on a media strategist who focuses on this area.

**9. What type of questions do you ask your readers when conducting market research?**

These questions asked are determined by whatever the marketing objective is for a specific exercise.

**10. What are the features that make the ideal women according to this magazine?  
Please list and describe.**

The ideal reader is somebody who has a social conscience, I would say that she is a seeker, she is examining her life in a way that is not superficial. She is really delving into the layers of her life and what she wants to get out of this experience. She is intelligent and sophisticated and is not so driven by trends and fashion. I think she wants to know about those things but she is seeking information about a variety of different aspects that make up her whole life.

**11. Do teenagers read this magazine? If yes, what are they drawn to?**

Yes, we have a number of young readers. They are drawn to the promise of authenticity. We also showcase women we feel are role models in society and give advice that is career focused, which are all areas young women are grappling with. Our magazine also appeals to a young woman who is searching for meaning in her life – beyond boys, parties and fashion.

**12. What type of lifestyle does this magazine depict? Please list and explain.**

In everything we do, I think a happy, fulfilling, purpose driven life where the person's well being is determined by a good mind, body, soul balance, so everything that we do is to encourage happiness, optimism, hope and general well being.

**13. How much of the content focuses on sexuality?**

If you are editing a women's magazines there's no way that you cannot deal with sexuality. The way in which we deal with it is not as overt as Cosmo or FHM or one of those magazines where sex is a pillar of their magazine. But you cannot talk to women about them without focusing on sexuality, it's a given, it's so integral. In terms of sexuality and how it is portrayed in the magazine we always try to portray women's choices in a positive light, so we are non judgemental, we are not saying you should chose a specific lifestyle. We put out all the possible choices.

**14. What are the areas of sexuality commonly covered?**

Body image is a very big part of O Magazine and sex as part of a women's life, we deal with it on a practical level so in terms of health stories about contraception and having a healthy sexual life and all of that so in terms of features we cannot talk to women without looking at the 21<sup>st</sup> century issues that are related to sexuality or

choices. I think the way that we cover it, is that because we cover real women and women go through a range of emotions and life stages, sexuality is covered in all of those areas in a features context as opposed to it being one of the pillars of our magazine.

**15. Does this magazine assist in creating platforms for discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race?**

Yes.

**16. If yes, how?**

We have never shied away from difficult issues. The challenge for us is presenting these topics in a fresh, positive and non-polarised way.

**17. How is the role of women in society represented in this magazine?**

We encourage the empowerment of women, we are not judgemental in the choices that women make. But we encourage women to take back their power if they feel that they've lost it in some way and we encourage them to strive to find their place and be happy with the choices that they've made so if they have chosen to be a stay at home mother then we try to help them be happy with that choice and to see it as being just as vital as being in a board room. The aim is to help each person to live their best life, whatever that may be. Part of that is not exercising any kind of judgement but to just be happy with the choices that they've made.

**18. Who is the right 'cover person' for your magazine? Please explain.**

For O magazine its Oprah, and we've debated this question a lot because as Oprah gets older, is she still the right person for the cover? As long as it is called the Oprah Magazine and it is based on her philosophy she would need to feature on the cover in some way. Perhaps at some point she wouldn't want to be at centre stage but for now I don't think that there is anyone else that could be on the cover of our magazine. It is so based around her and her philosophy and her projects and her school and something that is about her. I think for our UST it's the one thing that helps us to stand out on shelves. If we decided that Oprah wasn't going to be on the cover any more, or if she decided that, because it's not really my choice then we would be just one in another thousand magazines with Cameron Diaz on the cover.

**19. How do you determine which celebrity and which feature stories to display on the magazine cover? What is the selection process?**

Oprah magazine is a bit different to other magazine's, our cover formula is quite different magazines so in determining which feature stories to put on the cover we always chose at least one Oprah feature from something that is in the magazine. So if there is a specific Oprah feature like Oprah interviewing somebody or Oprah's home make over or Oprah cooking for Stedman that will be on the cover. We then also try to put one of the Oprah contributors in some way, shape or form. So Suzy Orman, or Dr Phil or Dr Oz because that is something unique to our magazine and no other magazine can say that they have Dr Oz as an expert. So that is a unique selling point. We always try to put some kind of heart story on there so people buy the magazine for inspiration so there's some kind of story that has tugged at the heart strings maybe. Sometimes it is something that may have some controversy around it that makes it a desirable must read story or an exclusive which works very well on a magazine cover. Something that nobody else has got and then something lifestyle related like food or books or travel or a win. The US magazine doesn't do it as much because they are more subscriber driven but for SA our model is news stand driven it always helps to have a compelling win on the cover or a give-away of some kind or something that will make the reader want to pick it up.

**20. Why do magazines sometimes use celebrities to provide advice to readers on various topics based on their own personal experiences?**

In O Mag our angle is not really a celebrity driven magazine. Oprah is the biggest celebrity we have in the magazine so when we do feature celebrities they are in some way connected to her, like if she has interviewed somebody. Also in our magazine if we're going to use a celebrity they must be able to contribute with first hand experience or an opinion on a particular issue that we're covering. Readers still respond to endorsements by celebrities even though I think that, that is getting to a point where it is less so because so many celebrities have fallen from grace in the last year or two that it seems like people don't really want to put their faith in celebrities but in South Africa there is still a certain appeal on having a celebrity weigh in on a particular topic. But for O Magazine we try to give the celebrity a real face so the reader feels like they're not alone in the challenges they're facing. So if a celebrity has all the opportunities and can get a personal trainer and can go on the latest diet and can get a one year gym membership and says that she's still struggling with her weight then that says something to our readers. It makes that persons struggle something that is accessible and resonates with the readers. So we are very careful about how we portray celebrities we wouldn't just cover celebrities for the sake of

covering them, they must have something to say. If there is a particular challenge or issue that they're going through that our readers will be able to benefit and draw a lesson from their story but we wouldn't just put Victoria Beckham in the magazine for now reason. We would put her there because her story is an amazing success story, she didn't excel at school, she was told that she was not very smart yet she became a very successful business women with a thriving fashion business and she came from humble beginnings which appeals to the readers. Readers then feel that well if she can do then I can do it too.

**21. What characteristics put these celebrities and public figures in the right position to offer objective advice to the public?**

See above response.

**22. What role do the media have to play in society?**

Media plays a powerful role in helping society image itself

**23. How does this magazine feature in this role?**

I think this is so true for our magazine since there is an inherent desire in each of us to be better, do better and think smarter about reimagining our lives.

**1. Name of magazine:** Marie Claire

**2. Who is your magazine targeted at? (age group, race, earning capacity, etc)**

Marie Claire is for the intelligent, fashion-conscious woman as encapsulated in our tagline: Think Smart, Look Amazing. Marie Claire is a premium mix of award-winning journalism and directional international and local fashion and beauty. The Marie Claire woman is educated, curious and caring. Well-dressed and well-read, our reader is fascinated by Marie Claire's famous and thought-provoking international reports, amused by its sense of humour and mischief, informed by its newsy coverage and inspired by its fashion, beauty and lifestyle spreads. To carry a Marie Claire under your arm is a universal symbol of stylishness, yet with intelligence and empathy as well. The magazine has always held a special place in the hearts of its readers and speaks to them with authority, wit and directness. The Marie Claire reader wants to be the smartest woman at the dinner table.

**\*AMPS 2011AB breaks Marie Claire down as follows:**

- Female readership 83 %
- Black readers 45 %
- White readers 37 %
- Coloured and Indian readers 18 %
- Readers between LSM 7 -10 70 %

To us it is a mind set, appealing to a very specific reader who loves and understands the Marie Claire brand.

**3. What media content (article, images, features) does this magazine focus on?**

Marie Claire both internationally and locally has a strong mix of reportage-based features, combined with fashion and beauty. It is a premium mix of award-winning journalism and directional international and local fashion and beauty. We pride ourselves in being a South African brand with an international pedigree. Our Prix D'Excellence de la Beaute remains the prestige award in the South African beauty industry. A provocative read with a compelling mix of investigative reporting, real-life drama and social commitment and high-end fashion and beauty in a stylish package. We believe in the power of the picture – our photojournalism is a showcase of the best local and international talent.



**4. How is the content in this magazine generated? Explain.**

Content is generated differently for each department. Features comprise of a combination of locally produced stories through the editorial team and external writers and contributors, as well as the purchasing of international features where relevant to our editorial vision and the South African market. With regards to our fashion offering, the fashion team produce their pages, comprising of upfront trend pages and two large fashion features. Beauty editorial is a combination of stories that we know specifically fit in with our considered editorial mix across various pillars and sections and is produced in-house or bought-in from international publications.

**5. What aspects of your magazine are highly valued by your readership?**

It comes so strongly from the feedback we get from specifically focusing on the level of journalism in Marie Claire as well as the feedback we get on our strong photo essay. Readers appreciate that news aspect amidst the traditional fashion and beauty content and people are quite vocal about it. They say that they really love Marie Claire because it comprises all these components and often we focus on that journalist aspect which is what sets Marie Claire apart in the female general interest magazine sphere. That is the one component of it. The second component is that they strongly identify with the social campaigns that we work on so be it the naked issue that people wait for almost on an annual basis to see which cause we've partnered with to see who's taking part in it and with the campaigns that we work on, we tend to get a lot of feedback from readers around those.

**6. What type of content do readers want to read about in this magazine? How do you know this?**

The Marie Claire reader from our perspective is incredibly loyal so they're looking to the magazine to get that specific content mix that Marie Claire is known for so in general our readers set almost a world view and they want think pieces and we end up being the curators of those pieces for both local and international content spheres and that's also what sets us apart is that we've got a very strong mix between local and international content and we get constant feedback on that from readers in terms of writing to us via email and also through our online platforms so when you look our site and our social media, (Facebook and twitter), they mirror what we do in the actual magazine even though they've got a social media voice attached to it. So that's where nowadays, we get a lot of feedback in terms of seeing what resonates well with readers, what they want to read about and more what they expect from the magazines, they come to magazines and to Marie Claire because they've got a wide

choice out there but ultimately they choosing Marie Claire for those specific reasons and because we are so true to that core editorial mix we evolve with the times but we are very focused on what we do.

#### **7. What input do your readers make to the content of this magazine?**

We are the custodians of that Marie Claire content offering but we stay true to the voice of the magazine as we go and Marie Claire is very localised in terms of the respective countries that they're in but there are communal voices that run through Marie Claire around the world and it is that 'think smart, look amazing' image that we put forward in the magazine. Yet we are evolving to address issues that are very relevant for the times that we are living in so we are that voice to look at what's happening out there to say lets do a reportage feature on that. Somebody may have written to us saying this is a cause that they believe strongly in and looking into to that separately as a story overall we tie in that readers view in the feature if it is relevant so that is the level of input that we do get from readers and often that kind of interaction does lead to a story later on we may meet someone whose got an interesting story that we later on bring into the magazine or reference back to once we focus on something that is of a relevant nature.

#### **8. What forms of market research do you conduct to determine what readers want to read? When do you do this?**

We have in the past conducted surveys, but currently, through our on line and social media interaction have a much more immediate finger on the pulse of what our readers like, react to and find interesting. We do conduct polls on line, which is a great platform for us to gauge a quick and direct response to a specific question or topic.

We don't do the traditional market research that we would have done in the past like a focus group or a get together because we interact quite strongly with our readers and I think the big evolution lies in the uptake of social media. So we are now, instead of before where we just had the magazine platform and opportunities for workshops and events to interact, we've got all of those together so Marie Claire does host events throughout the year which are centred around specific themes or projects that we're working on so that is a brave platform for that, constantly being aware of who that reader is. At the same time social media and all of the feedback we get on those platforms are very important to us and that would be from social interaction with us as well as from the magazine perspective and just having that complete finger on the

pulse of what it is that is happening in the market overall so we engage in that daily from the readers rather than having a big annual research programme.

**9. What type of questions do you ask your readers when conducting market research?**

We will often pose questions on line to encourage interaction – these will range from sharing an opinion on a general issue, liking a particular look in the fashion sphere, asking for their opinion on specific features or responding to a poll conducted on line. From the magazine itself; we drive readers on line for further interaction by inviting them to share their thoughts on a particular subject through various social media.

**10. What are the features that make the ideal women according to this magazine? Please list and describe.**

We don't have the specific features of an ideal woman in accordance with Marie Claire. Marie Claire embraces all women but it brings to the fore relevant topics that we think are important for our readers to read about. Marie Claire's voice is to say look have you thought about this, this is happening out there in the world, take a look at in this way so we don't ascribe to that specific ideal women. We aim to inspire readers with a fashion trends that are so core to that Marie Claire message. On one hand you have that journalist message that we encourage women to think about but on the other we do aim to inspire through the fashion and trends but if we encapsulate it a Marie Claire women is someone who exudes intelligent confidence which is what we want our readers to feel like when consuming the content of the magazine.

**11. Do teenagers read this magazine? If yes, what are they drawn to?**

Marie Claire is a women's magazine, aimed at a female market. We do not aim to direct the magazine at teenagers editorially, but through the number of requests we receive for internships, can gauge that a younger market identify and would like to interact with the brand on a personal level. Through spending time with young women in our office, we can gauge that there is a respect for our features and often an admiration for how we have portrayed certain key topics in a forthright manner.

**12. What type of lifestyle does this magazine depict? Please list and explain.**

It focuses on the type of stories that we feature and that is our point of departure. All the features that we focus on, so we feature stories that appeal to women. Women who are socially aware, they know what's happening out there, they're not afraid to

look at issues and comment on them and it has that unabashedly fashion and beauty element that we embrace and it very much is the core of the Marie Claire message. Secondly its a women of substance with an eye for style, so somebody who is fascinated by what the world has to offer but also what she can offer in return and that's something that we put in our message and it is important to understand that she it is someone who is very socially aware and knows what's going on in the world around her but also can enjoy the fashion and beauty aspects that we do portray. But it also does always comprise that international and local component so we look at it across travel and fashion there is always a mix of that bringing it back into a South African context but also saying, "this is what's happening internationally".

### **13. How much of the content focuses on sexuality?**

We don't shy away from controversial topics so when you look at our editorial mix and our readers, you get that sense that we don't focus on traditional sexuality or traditional features around sexuality. We have a much stronger focus on a more than likely a reportage element centred around topics of a sexual nature, on average we carry one story of a sexual nature per issue. But recently we had a reportage feature talking about "My lover, my robot". We discussed robots that are coming in and replacing women in certain men's lives in the future and that's something that could be real in the future. We did do a story recently about meeting the new sex toys but again it won't be in a traditional sense because its a very fascinating piece because it talks about the absolute new technology and the fact that there's such a design element coming through and the people behind the making of these sex toys. So instead of saying what's being offered and why you should choose this, it may be a different magazine approach Marie Claire had that take on it and in general in terms of nudity and female health, we focus on debates such as "Is my womb any of your business". For those people who feel that they have a right to ask other when they're having a baby. A separate case was getting people to pose nude for an art class and how that actually made them feel and photographing that and also bringing stuff that's out there that we may not know about until we decided to do the story and when we read about it like would you try a vagacial (a facial for your vagina), so we want to say to readers, here's something you may not have heard about and would you actually try it. Another piece is, "my parents are nudists and get the child's take on how it was growing up and all these stories are so core to that Marie Claire message.

### **14. What are the areas of sexuality commonly covered?**

See above response.

**15. Does this magazine assist in creating platforms for discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race?**

Yes.

**16. If yes, how?**

Marie Claire is known for its reportage and stories that push boundaries – these generate discussions around controversial topics – and we don't shrink from difficult or uncomfortable conversations. These topics are further pushed on line where we will ask readers to engage. The fact that we often receive letters in response to these topics indicates how passionate readers are about communicating with us on those. A recent letter indicated an initial strong emotional reaction to a story on race, which led the reader to further think about her reaction and what this meant to her and ultimately how she was able to define her subsequent thoughts through writing to us.

**17. How is the role of women in society represented in this magazine?**

We play an important role in raising the portrayal of women in society within the magazine across spheres and in respective features. We have our debates, we've got international and local reports. We focused on topical news, recently released books so its almost that voice taking what's happening in society back to our readers across various spectrums. Recently we had a reportage on what we call the hip hop honeys in some of the hip hop videos so rather than saying this is how women need to be represented in Marie Claire, we're saying this is what is happening with women around the world using Marie Claire as a filter to put that back through to the readers.

**18. Who is the right 'cover person' for your magazine? Please explain.**

In terms of our cover styles its very important that they represent the brand philosophy and they must come back to "think smart, look amazing". For us its simple, forward but very core to everything we do on the magazine so someone who readers can look to for inspiration but at the same time set an example and someone we admire so when you look back at the range of women that we've feature from January to date there would be a communal trait of someone who's very gentle but has a defined inner strength but that is not the basis that we would chose them on. But those are the people we feel embody the magazine. We've had Jennifer Lawrence, Jessica Biel, Candace Boucher locally, who tied in very strongly our March naked issue but a very strong feature related back to our naked feature and that was in support of organ donation in South Africa.

**19. How do you determine which celebrity and which feature stories to display on the magazine cover? What is the selection process?**

It depends on the time, we work very closely together on selecting a cover style and it could be based on a number of factors, what is relevant in the market place at the moment in terms of someone who maybe a big star at present who we feel embodies the magazine, we also always know what's happening on the international edition but we make sure that our covers are relevant for the South African market as well and we do try to shoot at least one local cover a year if not more. In terms of our cover line, we work very closely as a team, we sit with 4 to 5 people to select stories within that issue that we feel would create the strongest cover lines and will resonate with our readers and those are then worked on by the editor. We also look at ourselves are ask whether we would buy a magazine if it showed a certain topic or if it appealed to everyone to the same extent. So it's about striking a chord with what is the right thing to say on the cover.

**20. Why do magazines sometimes use celebrities to provide advice to readers on various topics based on their own personal experiences?**

We don't look at it specifically and say that's what they need to do. Celebrities are an integral part of our culture because they have become more accessible to us due to social media again, you can now follow someone you admire even on Instagram so these patterns have made them more accessible on Twitter so we simultaneously admire and look up to them but I think it has also become quite an interesting trend that we can really identify with the press that makes them really real to us and you feel you can identify more strongly to someone who is accessible where you realise that they also share the same opinion as you but obviously they are stars in their own right and they have those special qualities that we all enjoy looking up to and feeling inspired by.

**21. What characteristics put these celebrities and public figures in the right position to offer objective advice to the public?**

There is that current trend of identifying with celebrities who are real to us. A good example of that would be Jennifer Lawrence and we did have her on the cover and we did do a subsequent feature with almost why people like her so much because she is a girl who tripped on the stairs and she is the girl that we feel could be a friend and we want to identify with people in that way but at the same time we want to be able to admire their talents and look at her and see a really great actress and she is

good at her craft but yet we feel like we know her and there are still celebrities who are up there and who are role models especially to younger women in the market place.

**22. What role do the media have to play in society?**

The media plays a crucial role in society. One that has to be considered, measured and responsible, but free to express and question what society is reflecting.

**23. How does this magazine feature in this role?**

Marie Claire is able to raise issues, causes and campaigns in a format that encourages readers to think about issues, topics and stories. As an example, our Body Bill of Rights takes the topic of body acceptance and transforms it through Marie Claire's vision to challenge perceptions.

**1. Name of magazine:** Move Magazine

**2. Who is your magazine targeted at? (age group, race, earning capacity, etc)**

LSM 5 -7. Ages 15 – 24 with 95% black readership.

Our magazine is targeted at the bread winner of the family or single mothers who have struggled through life to take care of a family. Women from townships who have struggled to succeed in life, young women and teenagers as well.

**3. What media content (article, images, features) does this magazine focus on?**

We have 5 editorial pillars, firstly we focus on advice. We advise women on how to manage their lives, and deal with life's challenges. We advise them on issues of education, finance, legal issues, health and beauty, spiritual issues, our gospel segment is also one of our categories. 50 % of our magazine focuses on entertainment so it focuses on celebrities. Other than that we also focus on lifestyle, cooking recipes and other aspects that women find interesting.

**4. How is the content in this magazine generated? Explain.**

We go to the townships where our readers are and we create conversations with them. We find out what is affecting them, what are they talking about, for example at the moment readers are talking about the petrol price that has increased and this affects readers as their bus fares have increased and that then affects their budgets. So when we generate content we go to them and find out what they would like to see in the magazine and we choose suitable content to write about.

**5. What aspects of your magazine are highly valued by your readership?**

All our content is reader driven so we have a group of journalists who are part of our target market so they are able to understand the trends and what people are talking about so the articles that we write are all real life stories that affect our readers. Its not just stories like blockbusters or quizzes from international magazines most of them are real life inspirational stories that affect the attitudes of our readers.

**6. What type of content do readers want to read about in this magazine? How do you know this?**

Our readers are very open about what they want to read in Move magazine. They want to read about something that is going to have an impact on their lives in some way or the other. The majority of our readers are affected by various issues or they



face numerous challenges on daily basis. Some of these challenges are, teenagers dealing with motherhood, or women balancing their careers with their roles at home, or even financial advice which they seek through the magazine.

Readers tell us these things when we travel out to the townships for campaigns and we talk to them face to face to gain a deeper understanding of who they are and what interests them.

**7. What input do your readers make to the content of this magazine?**

We also expect our readers to come write about things that affect them and we ask them to give us an opinion on how they would solve certain problems. For example we ask them about managing a relationship of polygamy, and what are their views etc. So we encourage readers to give us input because it is all reader driven.

**8. What forms of market research do you conduct to determine what readers want to read? When do you do this?**

We have created strategy partnerships with key community radio stations and we have recently launched a Move website so I would go onto the radio station in a live broadcast of a breakfast show for example and will profile the magazine and promote the website as our readers also listen to the content on radio so radios allow me to speak about the things that we publish and the things that we do. We also build partnerships with community tv stations like Soweto tv or Kzn tv. We also use social networks as PR platforms such as Facebook and Twitter where we post press releases and we also do a lot of reader events where we sometimes get the opportunity to speak to more than 1000 readers. Sometimes there are opportunities for Move to become a media sponsor for them where we participate in media promotions as well. Some of these promotions take place in Kzn or the Eastern Cape, we travel alot to promote our magazine and to gain publicity and to increase our target market.

**9. What type of questions do you ask your readers when conducting market research?**

We employ a marketing company who works as our own marketing department and they would ask questions such as:

In terms of their income, how do they spend their income? The things that they spend on will determine the things that affect them the most, for instance if they

spend on school fees, or a bond or groceries, it also gives us information in terms of what kind of articles to provide.

Where do they get their magazine from?

Do they buy it themselves?

So it also helps us to determine who our readers are.

We also ask them how do they rate the magazine?

Do they pass it onto friends and family members who also read it ?

What are the age groups of the people that they give it to?

How much time do they spend reading it?

How long does it take for them to read it?

**10. What are the features that make the ideal women according to this magazine?**

**Please list and describe.**

Our stories are real life stories, the articles about women come from a woman who has an ordinary background and has achieved extra ordinary things. For example, a woman that was a domestic worker who is now opening a truck business or who owns a constructions company, that is an inspirational story that also motivates other women to achieve their goals without letting obstacles stand in their way so that is the life of this magazine, we address aspects that can be inspirational in terms of how women can be encouraged by them. We achieve topics on health and beauty, the fashion component, the inspirational component and advice because at the end of the article we then give the reader tips on how to achieve the things discussed in the article in their own personal lives.

**11. Do teenagers read this magazine? If yes, what are they drawn to?**

Yes, we have a large teenage following between the ages of 15 to 24 and as a result of that we came to a point where the majority of our readers are young. As a result of this teenage following we have introduced a teen page where we publish content on celebrity gossip, blockbusters, fashion and beauty trends.

**12. What type of lifestyle does this magazine depict? Please list and explain.**

We depict a lifestyle of someone who can live with-in their means. Someone who is able to live a life that can be inspirational and can be inspired by the things around you. We believe that you don't really have to earn a lot of money to be able to live like a celebrity. For example if readers have a house in a township, they can always take good care of that house and shop at many of our local stores and be able to

furnish that house like a celebrity and at the core of it all is the ability and accessibility and convenience is at the centre of the publication.

**13. How much of the content focuses on sexuality?**

Basically we write for women so we do at times write about sexuality but it is not a lot. Sexuality is at the bottom of the challenges that our readers are faced with. Most of them are from rural areas so their challenges are centred around raising kids and taking good care of their families, sending their children to school, and their education so sexuality is not really at the top of our content list. We do cover something on sexuality and gender issues maybe once in 3 months.

**14. What are the areas of sexuality commonly covered?**

We do cover something on sexuality and gender issues maybe once in 3 months. We did once cover lesbian women being killed in Cape Town, showing that there are women out there who are being discriminated against. However our readers face greater issues like financial difficulties and raising families and adapting to motherhood etc.

**15. Does this magazine assist in creating platforms for discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race?**

Yes

**16. If yes, how?**

We are the voice for black women, we are a magazine that is a one stop shop that discusses issues that affects them and the agenda of the magazine is to drive the agenda's of women and discuss areas that are still putting women in positions where they are discriminated against, where there are jobs that are regarded as things that women cannot do because men don't see it fit. For example women cannot be mine workers. We address other serious issues like polygamy as well and we encourage women to determine which choices are important to them in their lives. We address issues where women are in situations where their voices are not heard, like being forced to get married because they have reached a certain age. So we create a platform for things like this because topics such as these are not openly discussed in the presence of men and through the magazine women are able to challenge some stereo types and some criticisms that put women in difficult struggles. This allows women to be free. However majority of women are still being raped and our

publication challenges what our government says about these issues. So we use our publication as a voice for women to address their needs and other issues like domestic abuse, domestic violence, rape, gender inequality, discrimination in the work place, sexual harassment, the rights of women and the responsibility that comes with those rights. But we also talk about raising daughters and how mothers need to empower their daughters from a very young age and especially in their teen years where you emphasize that being a women does not only include being in the kitchen and cooking and washing dishes, there's more to a woman than just getting married and cooking, cleaning and raising kids. We as a publication believe that women must be able to dominate their positions in various aspects, politics, their careers, at home and in society. That is the agenda that we address as a publication.

**17. How is the role of women in society represented in this magazine?**

As a publication we believe that women are multi-dimensional, multi-functional, we believe that you educate a women and you educate the entire village. We believe that women, as much as they are multi functional and multi dimensional, society must realise the strength that women possess is able to develop our society as a whole and as a country we can go very far. We try by all means to highlight that women have much bigger roles to play now than just house hold chores. There is nothing that a man can do that a woman cannot do. We don't try to bash men, but we try to get a message across that women should be treated as equal to men and at the same time we need to appreciate that women are the flowers of society. They need to be treated likes flowers, carefully and delicately. A women needs to be treated like a queen of the heart of any man that promises to love her. We are not removing the fact that the women is smart and soft but she is also very strong but we try to teach women that we are at equal levels with men. We are created to be different and to do that same things as men but at different levels through different measures. God has created us like this and we are not trying to replace the role of men.

**18. Who is the right 'cover person' for your magazine? Please explain.**

The right cover person is a person who's life is not easy. The readers need to see her as a person who's achieved a lot. They need to see her having grown up in the townships but is now a tv star. She has hard struggles in life but she has achieved alot now and is able to relate to the readers. She has a story to tell which is one of rags to riches, a story that is inspirational and positive. It is a story like a book with different chapters which tells of how she has faced challenges as a women and how she has managed to remain on top of her game.

**19. How do you determine which celebrity and which feature stories to display on the magazine cover? What is the selection process?**

It depends on the celebrity that is topical at that time. Firstly the cover person needs to be a woman, and one that has a story to tell. She needs to be very open about her life. If your voice is always heard on tv and radio it has a lot to say about your life, you're living your life in public and readers do consider you as a role model then you do deserve to be on the cover of the magazine.

**20. Why do magazines sometimes use celebrities to provide advice to readers on various topics based on their own personal experiences?**

We don't use celebrities to provide advice we use experts. Maybe other magazines do it where they use celebrities to offer advice but we don't do that. For us we prefer to go to an expert and get expert advice. For instance if we write about health we'd go to a medical expert, who can give suitable and objective advice. However, with celebrities we write real life stories about them but we don't ask them for advice we ask them what has worked for them personally but it does not mean that what worked for them will work for another person, so we write about celebrities and entertainment and for advice we go to experts.

**21. What characteristics put these celebrities and public figures in the right position to offer objective advice to the public?**

See above response.

**22. What role do the media have to play in society?**

The media is the watchdog of society and is the engine of the democratic society. It is responsible for informing the public, shaping the minds of the readers and the media plays a responsible role in society. As members of the media you must understand the power that you have to shape people's minds and behaviours, the power to bring people who are politicians, to keep them on track and to show them that they are important to the people. So the responsibility of the media is very vast and very big. But it is our role to shape perceptions, give information, we are information gatherers because what readers take from us is what they see as the truth. It is our job to provide factual information and to educate the public.

**23. How does this magazine feature in this role?**

See above response.

Watchdog of society, information gatherers, aim to shape the mind and perception of readers, of the black woman that stays in the town ships

**1. Name of magazine:** True Love Magazine

**2. Who is your magazine targeted at? (age group, race, earning capacity, etc)**

Young black women between the ages of 20 and 35 but we've also get readers between 12 to 19 and readers, but its specifically targeted at young 20 to 35 year olds.

**3. What media content (article, images, features) does this magazine focus on?**

Content that would be of interest to young black women, topics like careers, relationships, celebrity stories, inspirational stories, stories that are informative. There is alot of fashion and beauty in the magazine so it really looks at the overall read that a woman would need at every level of her life.

**4. How is the content in this magazine generated? Explain.**

Through our editorial team who meets monthly to discuss new events and features.

**5. What aspects of your magazine are highly valued by your readership?**

All our aspects featured are ones that women face all the time. We cover topics that appeal to them such as fashion, lifestyle, careers, health and wellbeing. We also discuss relationships and cover inspirational stories.

**6. What type of content do readers want to read about in this magazine? How do you know this?**

See answer above...Relationships, love, inspiration, careers that is what they want to read.

**7. What input do your readers make to the content of this magazine?**

We get a lot of correspondence and stacks and stacks of letters where readers say they would like to see certain topics, they write us emails as well. We obviously got our own strategy but now and then we do get a good idea from our readers and we get a lot of feedback and input and they say that they don't like the cover style, they'll say who they would like to see on the cover etc. We also have an active website which readers use to communicate and also through Facebook and Twitter as well.

**8. What forms of market research do you conduct to determine what readers want to read? When do you do this?**

We've always had reader feedback sessions where we had market research doing stuff with sample groups of readers where we find the typical True Love reader who's been invited to do research where they sit in rooms where their responses are recorded. We also use on a more informal level, Facebook and Twitter and our website where we ask readers questions and they give us feedback. So there is a constant research process going on, and also the majority of the people who work at this magazine are the readers. We have 90 % black female staff here so they are the reader so its not like people are out of touch with our readers, the readers are very present within the office and with who we mix.

**9. What type of questions do you ask your readers when conducting market research?**

Who they want on the cover?

What kind of stories they want to read?

What stories didn't they like?

What stories they page through?

Which stories they go to straight away?

**10. What are the features that make the ideal women according to this magazine? Please list and describe.**

I suppose a woman who is ambitious, a woman who is driven to empower and better her life, a woman who is curious, who is probably family orientated, a woman who cares for her community, a woman who is looking for a better life and to also empower those around her.

**11. Do teenagers read this magazine? If yes, what are they drawn to?**

Yes. Celebrity content, relationship advice and definitely fashion and beauty stories.

**12. What type of lifestyle does this magazine depict? Please list and explain.**

Over the years it has changed. True Love magazine is 42 this year and it has shown a lot of changes over the years. Initially it was brought out during the apartheid era and it had a different franchise, it was made for men who were migrant labourers and it was a little girly kind of magazine and it changed over the years to become focused



on a female market and it has also changed as politically in terms of those people in our country who got emancipated and got empowered, its changed along with their needs so its quite amazing to see how it has changed from 1994 even to 2013 where now the readers are empowered. They're not looking to better themselves, a lot of them are in bettered already.

**13. How much of the content focuses on sexuality?**

Not huge amounts but we always have a sex story. We've managed to find vehicle now where we have a woman called Miss Candy speaking where we choose ten questions that we ask her along a specific sex theme like sex toys or office romance or sex in strange places so we choose a theme and then she answers those. Its more humorous, more tongue and cheek, more naughty in a spicy way of dealing with the sex in the magazine. However it is not the majority of the content at all.

**14. What are the areas of sexuality commonly covered?**

See above

**15. Does this magazine assist in creating platforms for discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race?**

Yes

**16. If yes, how?**

Online it does, we've got a letter page but the magazine is a monthly so our content can't be that current because its 3 months after we've been out so that's the lean time for the magazine. Now that we have a website and Facebook and all those social platforms issues are often introduced on our website or those social media platforms.

**17. How is the role of women in society represented in this magazine?**

They're represented in an extremely positive light with a very strong attitude towards women and protecting women really. We talk about issues like rape, domestic violence, abuse and all those kinds of topics, so those topics are at the forefront of our concern. We support issues like breast cancer and all the things that are necessary for the protection, empowerment and embitterment for women today. We definitely take those issues incredibly seriously and we never try to do anything that is gratuitous and scandalous that is going to break or in any way belittle the cause for women today.

**18. Who is the right 'cover person' for your magazine? Please explain.**

For example, we recently had Carol Bower on the cover who is a very successful business woman with quite an inspiring story, but then we've had Kelly Khumalo whos a bit of a sensational person but she had a story that was necessary to put on the cover because she had fought her demons with addiction and she had a good story to tell because she was trying to improve herself and better her life. Some of the other people that have been typical True Love reader types of people are someone like Judith Sephuma whos a great singer, or Kerry Petter who's on our cover at the moment, she such a great role model because she's been able to invent herself on an international front as a beautiful women. We also try to have people that are aesthetically pleasing.

**19. How do you determine which celebrity and which feature stories to display on the magazine cover? What is the selection process?**

See above

**20. Why do magazines sometimes use celebrities to provide advice to readers on various topics based on their own personal experiences?**

We don't. We don't have advice sets of celebrities telling readers anything.

**21. What characteristics put these celebrities and public figures in the right position to offer objective advice to the public?**

We don't do that at all.

**22. What role do the media have to play in society?**

The media can be a blessing or a curse for society. I think that there is irresponsible media in South Africa and i do think that there is sensational media that's inaccurate, there's some that thrive on scandal, rumours and having good headlines but not very much substance or in any way any food for thought. I think in the other hand, the media can provide amazing vehicles for people to explore those subjects that they need to be conscious of. It can be an amazing machine to put people in places of knowledge, self empowerment, self improvement and all those kinds of things. I think True Love fits in the second instance, it is definitely always trying to provide a transformational journey for readers to embark upon. There are fun things in the magazine but at the end of the experience a reader should feel like they've learnt something that has improved them, leaving them as a better person. \

**23. How does this magazine feature in this role?**

See above

- 1. Name of magazine:** Cosmopolitan
- 2. Who is your magazine targeted at? (age group, race, earning capacity, etc)**  
South Africa's ambitious, high-spending young women in their 20's. All races. This information and more can be found at [www.assocmedia.co.za](http://www.assocmedia.co.za)
- 3. What media content (article, images, features) does this magazine focus on?**  
'The brands unique and timeless message of empowerment, sexiness and fun is as relevant today as it has ever been. The magazine's content pillars are sex, relationships, fashion, beauty, health and self-worth – also from the website.
- 4. How is the content in this magazine generated? Explain.**  
We commission copy from our own writers and from other South Africa writers. A small amount of copy is syndicated from international editions of cosmopolitan.
- 5. What aspects of your magazine are highly valued by your readership?**  
The massive success of Cosmo internationally is due to the fact that Cosmo has always put the readers first: her interests, her concerns, her career, her health, her relationships, her fashion and beauty, her wellness and wellbeing. The brand has a distinct formula and the mix itself is valued by readers.
- 6. What type of content do readers want to read about in this magazine? How do you know this?**  
The Cosmo reader wants feature that focus on her interest, her concerns, her career, her health, her relationship, her fashion and beauty, her wellness and wellbeing. We see this corroborated on a daily basis on our conversations with our readers on Facebook and twitter, and in the letter we receive.
- 7. What input do your readers make to the content of this magazine?**  
A massive amount. We get their opinions and input on everything, from who to put on the cover to feature ideas.
- 8. What forms of market research do you conduct to determine what readers want to read? When do you do this?**  
See above. In addition to this, we do market research as and when required.

**9. What type of questions do you ask your readers when conducting market research?**

We ask them what they like and don't like about the magazine, and what is anything they feel is missing.

**10. What are the features that make the ideal women according to this magazine? Please list and describe.**

What a terrible thought: That there is an 'ideal' woman out there! Part of Cosmo's success internationally is that we celebrate our readers, the 'Fun Fearless Females'. The whole thrust of our editorials is 'You're great!' so, for example, our editorial director is vehemently against the overuse of airbrushing / photoshop; we insist that annually six of our fashion shoots feature 'normal sized' models (we loathe the term 'Plus -sized), and we make sure our pages are representative of our readership.

**11. Do teenagers read this magazine? If yes, what are they drawn to?**

While the content of Cosmo is aimed at a 25 year old reader, the actual readership average is older than 25. Some older teenagers probably read the magazine, but its not aimed at them.

**12. What type of lifestyle does this magazine depict? Please list and explain.**

A fun, fearless lifestyle. Our readers are young and ambitious. They want to do well, look their best and be their best.

**13. How much of the content focuses on sexuality?**

On a regular basis, we run three to five pages of editorial focused on sex, and a page where we publish questions from readers and answers from a sexologist. Sometimes (once a year) we run a sex supplement that may be up to 16 pages long.

**14. What are the areas of sexuality commonly covered?**

All topics appropriate to our market.

**15. Does this magazine assist in creating platforms for discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race?**

Yes. We have always done and will continue to do so.

**16. If yes, how?**

In full length features. For example, in the August 2013 edition we have an article on sexual harassment of students- this has generated a phenomenal level of discussion; in the September edition we have an article on whether our parents' racist attitudes affect how we interact with other, and a first-person account entitled 'My first year as a woman'; in the issue we're busy with now (October) we have a discussion on whether it's abuse if your partner shoves and pushes but never hits you (of course it is!)

**17. How is the role of women in society represented in this magazine?**

That they can be whoever and whatever they want to be.

**18. Who is the right 'cover person' for your magazine? Please explain.**

Someone in line with our international brand identity who engages our reader and makes her want to pick up the magazine: our cover is our packaging and we are a business after all. We are an international brand and are therefore expected to feature international actresses, singers or models. We have in the last year featured two South Africans on our cover (Melinda Bam and Bonang Matheba). We also take into account the messages we get from readers based on the number of issues sold, and the cover-star requests we receive from readers.

**19. How do you determine which celebrity and which feature stories to display on the magazine cover? What is the selection process?**

Whatever stories and whoever engages our readers most at the time. So, the 'Barkers' will announce the most provocative and engaging features that we're running in the magazine, and the cover star will be someone who is top of mind for our audience, or has a story to tell that our readership is interested in.

**20. Why do magazines sometimes use celebrities to provide advice to readers on various topics based on their own personal experiences?**

I can't speak for other magazines but we never use celebrities to provide advice to readers. We always go to qualified experts (an average of three per feature if it's an advice piece). Our readers are interested in celebrities, and successful people can always be learnt from. And if they've been through an experience our readers can learn from, of course we would ask them to talk about that experience, but we would not present their thoughts as professional or objective advice. However there are topics a celebrity may well be an authority on (eg, marketing your personal brand – an articulate celebrity could have a lot of useful information on that topic.

**21. What characteristics put these celebrities and public figures in the right position to offer objective advice to the public?**

See above.

**22. What role do the media have to play in society?**

Different publications in the media have different roles. We see ours as playing a best-friend-big-sister role to our readers. As such we celebrate, entertain and inform them on topics they tell us they value as important. The role of our journalists is to research thoroughly a topic that is of interest to our readership, find the best, most current sources of information on that topic, to interview those sources, and then to collate all the facts and perspectives into a well-written piece that is engaging, will make the reader think and is reflective of the brand in terms of voice and tone.

**23. How does this magazine feature in this role?**

Few female-focused media brands can equal Cosmo's relationship with its passionate and loyal 'Tribe' across all platforms – Cosmo South Africa holds the #1 position in digital and social media interaction with young South African women. The longevity and international success of the brand, not to mention our readers' daily engagement with us, demonstrates that we play our role in a way that is effective and welcomed by our readership.

**1. Name of magazine:** Seventeen Magazine

**2. Who is your magazine targeted at? (age group, race, earning capacity, etc)**

We are targeted at teenage girls. We target anyone with regards to race and earning capacity. It targets any teenage girl who has access to the magazine.

Who reads the magazine? Our research finds that our target market is girls between the age of 14 and 25 so all young women. The majority of our readers are black, in terms of earning capacity our readers fall in to a very high LSM and earning or rather high house hold income bracket.

**3. What media content (article, images, features) does this magazine focus on?**

Our magazine features different pillars, we discuss different topics so anything from fashion and beauty to real life stories of other teen girls and their experiences and life's advice and entertainment.

**4. How is the content in this magazine generated? Explain.**

We're a licensee from the American magazine company Hirst, so we do get a portion of our content from the international pool of content that is available to us and the majority of our content is generated locally by our own journalists and fashion and beauty care.

**5. What aspects of your magazine are highly valued by your readership?**

It depends, our girls love fashion and beauty but they value the fact that the magazine reflects issues that they deal with on a daily basis.

**6. What type of content do readers want to read about in this magazine? How do you know this?**

We do a lot of crowd sourcing when it comes to their topics on our social media platforms and also those who write to us and send us emails to let us know what's on their minds at that point in time. A lot of content that is generated locally is done by a very young team of writers who also fall into the target market of the magazine.

**7. What input do your readers make to the content of this magazine?**

See above response.

**8. What forms of market research do you conduct to determine what readers want to read? When do you do this?**

We do surveys with our readers based on various topics that we'd like to explore and we derive a lot of our content from those surveys. We used to conduct these



surveys on a month to month basis but we do it less regularly now. From a social media perspective, crowd sources are very important.

**9. What type of questions do you ask your readers when conducting market research?**

It depends on what topic we want to explore with the readers so some of it can be consumer behaviour related when it comes to how to they make purchasing decisions, what things do they buy, which store do they frequent, where are they more likely to spend money on in terms of fashion, to questions about their relationships with their peers and family members, how do they feel about education services.

**10. What are the features that make the ideal women according to this magazine? Please list and describe.**

This depends on what our readers also value so for us firstly is success, she has to be successful the generation that reads our magazine definitely puts a lot of value on financial success as a measure of success. Someone who is confident, bold, outspoken and definitely also fashionable because fashion plays a big part in our readers lives.

**11. Do teenagers read this magazine? If yes, what are they drawn to?**

Yes, they are drawn to the ability to relate to our magazine and the fact that we discuss issues that they deal with on a daily basis whether its school related or conflictive issues with their parents or dealing with specific issues that they deal with among their peers. This is an age group that is thinking about applying to university so we do provide a lot of career guidance content.

**12. What type of lifestyle does this magazine depict? Please list and explain.**

A fun and connected lifestyle because our girls are very literate so their relationships are important our magazine is very positive and optimistic so it has an element of that. Its not a fitness magazine so it doesn't have anything super-active but we do have health content in the magazine.

**13. How much of the content focuses on sexuality?**

We do a lot of dating advice for our readers. Between 8 and 10 % of the magazines content has to do with dating.

**14. What are the areas of sexuality commonly covered?**

We look at dating and sex education we don't do articles on sex positions and things like that. We discuss what sex is about, how to protect yourself, how to know when you're ready so its generally more from an educational perspective.

**15. Does this magazine assist in creating platforms for discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race?**

Yes

**16. If yes, how?**

We often discuss gender and sexuality. It is more of a mixed relations question for us because its not where our generation is at. When it comes to issues around gender, we've done articles on sexual harassment, feminism, trans sexuality and we are also planning a story on homosexuality.

**17. How is the role of women in society represented in this magazine?**

Its a positive image, confidence and self esteem are huge issues that we deal with in the magazine and making girls aware of the possibilities that are out there for them to help them in their decision making process.

**18. Who is the right 'cover person' for your magazine? Please explain.**

We are very celeb driven when it comes to the cover so we always have a celebrity. It is always someone who is within the age group that we're looking at so generally our cover star would be under 25, and she would be an international celebrity at that. She should be relevant to the content in the magazine for the month so if someone is starring in a big movie that's released in the months or if they're releasing a cd in that month then we'll place that person on the cover so it has to have a certain level of buzz surrounding that person.

**19. How do you determine which celebrity and which feature stories to display on the magazine cover? What is the selection process?**

It is a commercial decision, so it would be what is the most commercially attractive cover line, what will get the readers attention when they're looking at the magazine at the news stand. So we have about 70 stories to choose from so its really a case of what stands out the most that girls would react to.

**20. Why do magazines sometimes use celebrities to provide advice to readers on various topics based on their own personal experiences?**

Our girls love celebrities they are people who girls see as role models and they definitely aspire to their lifestyles and to their achievements so that's why we chose celebs to give advice.

**21. What characteristics put these celebrities and public figures in the right position to offer objective advice to the public?**

For me personally they're not the most interesting people out there but our readers and especially the generation that I deal with sees fame as a measure of success. So the fact that someone has managed to differentiate themselves to a point where they have a public persona that's something that the girls aspire to and that's why they feel they want to listen to their advice. Its not whether they're in a position to offer great and objective advice its just that the girls want to read that advice.

**22. What role do the media have to play in society?**

The role that we play is educating because we do a lot of basic educational type pieces for our readers, informing readers about what is available to them, but entertaining them is also a huge part of what we do, we cant bore people in this day and age so we see ourselves as a means of entertainment.

**23. How does this magazine feature in this role?**

See above response.

- 1. Name of magazine:** Fairlady
- 2. Who is your magazine targeted at? (age group, race, earning capacity, etc)**  
Fairlady magazine is targeted at modern South African woman aged at 35+. We target women who are rainbow-coloured, urban, smart, warm, real and who believe in South Africa and aspire to create a future for themselves here.
- 3. What media content (article, images, features) does this magazine focus on?**  
Seven Pillars: Strong & thought-provoking features, health, fashion, beauty, food, home, Test House
- 4. How is the content in this magazine generated? Explain.**  
Primarily in-house writers, some freelance writers, occasionally bought-in pieces.
- 5. What aspects of your magazine are highly valued by your readership?**  
All of them. It is a general interest magazine.
- 6. What type of content do readers want to read about in this magazine? How do you know this?**  
All readers probably have their own particular favourites, but it is the fact that the content has such a range that really appeals: it is a general interest magazine, not a niche title, and that is its appeal.  
We know this because of reader-feedback and interaction
- 7. What input do your readers make to the content of this magazine?**  
They are often asked for input on stories online, and we publish their feedback. The 'My Story' feature each month is usually written by a reader. Occasionally, manuscripts they submit on spec are published in the magazine. The readers are very interactive on social media platforms like Facebook, twitter and Pinterest.
- 8. What forms of market research do you conduct to determine what readers want to read? When do you do this?**  
None. We don't believe in it: readers lie about what they want. For example, readers may say they want to see more 'real' (i.e. not necessarily celebrities or glamorous famous people) women on the cover, but sales do not reflect this.
- 9. What type of questions do you ask your readers when conducting market research?**  
N/A

**10. What are the features that make the ideal women according to this magazine?**

**Please list and describe.**

We are not trying to make - or even appeal to - the ideal woman, if such a concept even exists. We are a magazine for all contemporary South African women whose focus is future-based. Our aim is to showcase the best that is available here, in terms of both people and products, and to stand by her and help our reader as she navigates her sometimes challenging life.

**11. Do teenagers read this magazine? If yes, what are they drawn to?**

They do. FAIRLADY is a cross-generational title; a rite of passage. Next year it will be 50 years old, and the tradition of reading the magazine has been passed down from mother to daughter over the generations. Like their mothers, they are drawn to the variety of content offered in the magazine.

**12. What type of lifestyle does this magazine depict? Please list and explain.**

The magazine is a broad reflection of the South African experience. So in the same issue, we may showcase a beautiful upper middle-class home, or a meal one would expect to eat in that environment, and we would also feature the story of the principle of an impoverished school in Limpopo, or a local initiative on the Cape Flats.

**13. How much of the content focuses on sexuality?**

We don't focus on sexual orientation: we assume that at 35 our readers will probably have come to terms with that.

**14. What are the areas of sexuality commonly covered?**

If we deal with sex itself, the focus is probably more focused on sex in a longer-term relationship than it is on sex as a single person: it is more focused on contemporary issues around sex (internet porn; sexting etc) than it is on technique.

**15. Does this magazine assist in creating platforms for discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race?**

Yes

**16. If yes, how?**

We cover controversial topics – is there a future for white people in SA; are you a racist; homeschooling, euthanasia, feminism, gay parenting and so on - and ask our readers to comment, discuss and share on Facebook – and they do.

**17. How is the role of women in society represented in this magazine?**

Women are represented as engaged (as in involved), complex, interested participants in the world. They are never represented as passive observers.

**18. Who is the right 'cover person' for your magazine? Please explain.**

There is no 'right' face for our magazine. Meryl Streep sold very well, so did Lira. It depends on what our readers are interested in at that precise moment.

**19. How do you determine which celebrity and which feature stories to display on the magazine cover? What is the selection process?**

We tend to use international stars simply because they are less specific than local soapie stars and therefore broader in appeal. For example, the Isidingo audience is not the same as the Generations audience or the Sewende Laan audience, and so on. We try to choose someone who has just done something interesting – in other words someone with a story the reader will find interesting, someone who is more than just a pretty face.

**20. Why do magazines sometimes use celebrities to provide advice to readers on various topics based on their own personal experiences?**

People are interested in celebrities, and their opinions and actions carry weight– the response to Angelina Jolie's elective mastectomy is a case in point. It provoked discussion, and in some cases, action. All of that is to the good.

**21. What characteristics put these celebrities and public figures in the right position to offer objective advice to the public?**

Well, they're famous. People confer credibility on them.

**22. What role do the media have to play in society?**

Different media play different roles in society.

**23. How does this magazine feature in this role?**

Women's magazines are watchdog, informer, inspirer, cheerleader, comrade and sister.

**1. Name of magazine:** Grazia

**2. Who is your magazine targeted at? (age group, race, earning capacity, etc)**

Grazia is targeted at 25 – 40 year old women of all race groups. Earning with a disposable income.

**3. What media content (article, images, features) does this magazine focus on?**

Fashion, celebrity news and beauty.

**4. How is the content in this magazine generated? Explain.**

Majority of the content is generated in house by our editorial team.

**5. What aspects of your magazine are highly valued by your readership?**

The immediacy and our shopping guide.

**6. What type of content do readers want to read about in this magazine? How do you know this?**

Our readers use our magazine as a shopping guide and as a quick read that they can use to be up to date on all celebrity news. We know this through market research.

**7. What input do your readers make to the content of this magazine?**

We have a strong Twitter and social media preference and listen to what our readers say and ask for.

**8. What forms of market research do you conduct to determine what readers want to read? When do you do this?**

We are in constant contact with our readers through social media. We also conducted market research through focus groups twice a year and we have recently run a readers survey – both in the magazine and online to find out more about our reader.

**9. What type of questions do you ask your readers when conducting market research?**

Questions range from their lifestyle, shopping habits to who they would like to see on our covers.

**10. What are the features that make the ideal women according to this magazine?  
Please list and describe.**

Professional women, love, shopping, and interest in celebrity news.

**11. Do teenagers read this magazine? If yes, what are they drawn to?**

We have a small teenage readership – they read it for the fashion and shopping advice.

**12. What type of lifestyle does this magazine depict? Please list and explain.**

We cover celebrity news, shopping, beauty as well as Decor and things we do in the city. This is an active woman, who enjoys the above.

**13. How much of the content focuses on sexuality?**

None – we do not have a regular sex feature.

**14. What are the areas of sexuality commonly covered?**

If we do cover sexuality it is in the context of relationships.

**15. Does this magazine assist in creating platforms for discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race?**

We have regular columns which discuss news worthy topics each week.

**16. If yes, how?**

N/A

**17. How is the role of women in society represented in this magazine?**

We promote strong independent women, and usually take the woman's side in any situation.

**18. Who is the right 'cover person' for your magazine? Please explain.**

Glamorous, fashion forward, well known female celebrities.



**19. How do you determine which celebrity and which feature stories to display on the magazine cover? What is the selection process?**

We focus on newsworthiness

**20. Why do magazines sometimes use celebrities to provide advice to readers on various topics based on their own personal experiences?**

People value the opinions of celebrities and celebrities are people that races, ages, genders have in common.

**21. What characteristics put these celebrities and public figures in the right position to offer objective advice to the public?**

The advice is not usually objective but rather based on personal experiences. In an ideal world characteristics would be morally sound and admirable. As celebrities they have more exposure to life experiences, people and products than normal people.

**22. What role do the media have to play in society?**

Educate, inform, inspire, be relevant and useful and some escapism.

**23. How does this magazine feature in this role?**

We aim to educate, inform and inspire our readers with relevant and useful content each week.

- 1. Name of magazine:** Glamour Magazine
- 2. Who is your magazine targeted at? (age group, race, earning capacity, etc)**  
Women between the ages of 16 and 34.
- 3. What media content (article, images, features) does this magazine focus on?**  
Fashion trends, glamour, relationships, career advice, financial advice.
- 4. How is the content in this magazine generated? Explain.**  
Stories are written by the editorial staff members, commissioned from freelancers and bought in from other editions of Glamour and international Condé Nast publications such as Allure and Vogue.
- 5. What aspects of your magazine are highly valued by your readership?**  
Our core areas are fashion, beauty, celebrities and relationships.
- 6. What type of content do readers want to read about in this magazine? How do you know this?**  
We conduct research, and obtain feedback and of course the fact that readers buy the magazine.
- 7. What input do your readers make to the content of this magazine?**
- 8. What forms of market research do you conduct to determine what readers want to read? When do you do this?**  
We conduct online surveys and focus groups
- 9. What type of questions do you ask your readers when conducting market research?**  
A range of questions covering their responses to different aspects of the magazine, from covers to the different editorial features.
- 10. What are the features that make the ideal women according to this magazine? Please list and describe.**  
We don't have an 'ideal woman'. The ethos of Glamour is to encourage women to appreciate themselves as individuals, with their own unique qualities.
- 11. Do teenagers read this magazine? If yes, what are they drawn to?**  
Yes, teenagers are drawn to a range of content matter from fashion and beauty to emotional advice.

**12. What type of lifestyle does this magazine depict? Please list and explain.**

Glamour portrays a positive image which is reinforcing, stylish, expressive and individualistic

**13. How much of the content focuses on sexuality?**

A relatively small amount of content is based on sexuality

**14. What are the areas of sexuality commonly covered?**

We run a feature about sex and relationships in an issue, and this runs to between 2 and 5 pages.

**15. Does this magazine assist in creating platforms for discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race?**

Yes

**16. If yes, how?**

It is a form of mass communication and forum for discussion.

**17. How is the role of women in society represented in this magazine?**

Positively

**18. Who is the right 'cover person' for your magazine? Please explain.**

A range of celebrities works on the cover. Our ideal women is someone who is topical, stylish and grabs the public's imagination so it could be anybody from Rihanna to Emma stone. As a general rule, we feature an international celebrity.

**19. How do you determine which celebrity and which feature stories to display on the magazine cover? What is the selection process?**

Firstly we look at whether the person is appropriate and appealing for our target market. We also look at the quality of the image, how inviting it is and whether it has warmth, which is a key factor for Glamour. How are the aesthetic values, the colours and the clothes the person is wearing? And does she stand for something positive, interesting and current. For example, our recent Jessica Alba cover coincided with the launch of her eco-conscious product line and our current issue features Zoe Saldana, who has a big movie breaking at the moment.

**20. Why do magazines sometimes use celebrities to provide advice to readers on various topics based on their own personal experiences?**

Celebrities know what they're talking about when it comes to certain topics. For example, Diane Kruger, who is constantly voted one of the world's best-dressed women, is in a very good position to talk about style. Celebrities are often experts in areas like confidence, fashion and beauty.

**21. What characteristics put these celebrities and public figures in the right position to offer objective advice to the public?**

These are areas in which celebrities have access, experiences and expertise. In the case of style, for example, Diane Kruger is famous for her personal style, she interacts constantly with top designers and stylists and she attends the big fashion shows, so she is in a very good position to talk about fashion.

**22. What role do the media have to play in society?**

An enormous role

**23. How does this magazine feature in this role?**

We are communicating with women who are obviously crucial to the wellbeing of society. Young women, in particular, represent not only our current prospects but our future prospects as well and we aim to reinforce the confidence and self-esteem of our readers.

**1. Name of magazine:** You Magazine

**2. Who is your magazine targeted at? (age group, race, earning capacity, etc)**

You magazine is a general interest magazine so we have a very broad readership it covers everybody. We have a huge following among black males and females, and coloured males and females. With certain groups it is higher and the age groups are very broad so a lot of them are on the same levels so it is very hard to say that there is a specific target market. The age group does vary but the highest group here (in jhb) is 35 – 49 then there is a 15 – 24 age group and then after that its 50 plus and obviously we're a weekly magazine so these figures vary all the time.

**3. What media content (article, images, features) does this magazine focus on?**

The great thing about You magazine is that it doesn't focus on anything specific, its not a niche magazine its a general interest magazine, so we cover everything that is relevant, that is, news, entertainment, lifestyle, education. It really is any general interest story that is our focus.

**4. How is the content in this magazine generated? Explain.**

We have a huge team of journalists in Cape Town and in Johannesburg that are responsible for the stories and I cant stress enough once again that if people are talking about a topic then that would make the content relevant and that is where our stories are generated from.

**5. What aspects of your magazine are highly valued by your readership?**

We are the biggest English selling magazine in the country and we have a readership of over 2 million per week and that just goes to show that we print all the relevant information and it is your general interest, it is what everybody is talking about and that is our main focus.

**6. What type of content do readers want to read about in this magazine? How do you know this?**

Content varies from person to person that's why we don't like to make those generalisations. If somebody is interested in entertainment then they will be able to find it in You magazine, if they're interested in hard news stories, in-depth interviews with politicians, decision makers, we've got that, we've got it all.

**7. What input do your readers make to the content of this magazine?**

They really make a huge impact, we have a massive social networking operation with Twitter and Facebook where our readers are constantly interacting with us and they give us feedback and ideas and opinions. We're very interactive with our readers, we have a letters page where we print letters received from readers. We receive hundreds of letters on a weekly basis and of course our website is very interactive where readers can comment on articles and give us ideas and feedback. Very often we will pose questions to readers, say for instance 'Have you been brought up by your grandparents?' that could be a possible story that we would like to look into on a lifestyle page, then we'll make a decision from the feedback whether to go with the story or not.

**8. What forms of market research do you conduct to determine what readers want to read? When do you do this?**

We do have focus groups which we conduct on a regular basis. We also have ratings and nielsons and amps and all those kind of research methods that tell us what our readers are enjoying, what they're watching, what they're interested in and we base our content around that. There is no specific time for our research to be conducted, it is an on-going process as we believe that our magazine adds something extra to what everybody is talking about so there is always something that needs to be discussed and we are always wanting to improve and there is always a focus groups to check to see if we are on the right track. So there is a constant flow of interaction between readers and the team.

**9. What type of questions do you ask your readers when conducting market research?**

That is something specific in terms of the decision of the focus groups as questions would differ all the time.

**10. What are the features that make the ideal women according to this magazine? Please list and describe.**

We cannot generalise. We don't believe in generalising, our market is so diverse and we can tell by the fact that they buy the amps and our readership is so diverse that we can never say what the ideal woman is. There isn't an ideal woman because somebody that is an ideal women to me is someone who is an ideal woman to you is completely different and we prefer to cater for a broad audience and everybody who will be able to identify with their ideal woman in the magazine.

**11. Do teenagers read this magazine? If yes, what are they drawn to?**

Yes they do, there is a specific section of the magazine that is dedicated to teenagers so it would be advice, specific fashion related stories that are for the younger audience so that's exactly what they would be drawn to. We also get lots of feedback from teenagers and as mentioned earlier, one of our biggest groups of the magazine are aged between 15-24 so they would fall into that bracket. You will find that parents buy the magazine and thereafter the teen would take it and read it. They are often writing to us and they are more interactive on our social platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

**12. What type of lifestyle does this magazine depict? Please list and explain.**

There is no specific lifestyle that we depict, we have such a broad audience that is hard to narrow it down. We cater for everybody so the lifestyle is representative of all of the cultures, and races and ages in South Africa.

**13. How much of the content focuses on sexuality?**

If sexuality is a topic that we would like to cover then there are no barriers that we hold back on. So if it is a relevant topic that people are talking about then we will discuss it.

**14. What are the areas of sexuality commonly covered?**

If its in the news and people are talking about, if its making headlines then its something that we'd cover.

**15. Does this magazine assist in creating platforms for discussions on controversial topics such as gender, sexuality and race?**

Yes we encourage debates it is the media's job to encourage debates and open platforms for discussion. So all the feedback in that discussion and debate is welcome.

**16. If yes, how?**

Every article that is printed in our magazine is publicised on our social network sites online, so that seems to get a lot of comments as well as our letters page that we have and it may seem old school to a lot of people but a lot of our readers are older so they will send us an email or a hand written letter saying 'write this up' and that really is the debate that we open the forum up to.

**17. How is the role of women in society represented in this magazine?**

Any issues that affect women in society is what we will print and discuss. We see our job as to empower women and if its a story where women are being discriminated against then if its in the news we will definitely talk about it.

**18. Who is the right 'cover person' for your magazine? Please explain.**

If you know then let us know!

**19. How do you determine which celebrity and which feature stories to display on the magazine cover? What is the selection process?**

Anything that is in the public interest and is the biggest and the most talked about and most relevant story that is dominating headlines, it goes on the cover. If Lindsay Lohan is in rehab and her career has just broken then that will go to print over a week old story. It is a weekly magazine so it is immediate we have to have the latest information so anybody who is relevant and topical.

**20. Why do magazines sometimes use celebrities to provide advice to readers on various topics based on their own personal experiences?**

Readers always identify with people especially with celebrities we find. Celebrities seem to be living this life that is untouchable and they aren't affected by human drama's and human issues and people will relate when celebrities come forward and say they they've got a drinking problem, or that they've had weight problems their whole lives so these emotional features are what readers identify with.

**21. What characteristics put these celebrities and public figures in the right position to offer objective advice to the public?**

At the end of the day anybody will give objective advice while somebody else will say its subjective so we have such a broad market and we don't concentrate on specific celebrities so if they are news worthy and topical in that moment then we will put their story in and because we are such a big magazine we have such variety so while somebody might be able to relate to a South African model and actress Boity Thule confessing that she can never find love compared to Leeanne Liebenburg who says shes battling to lose her baby weight since she gave birth, we cater for all those aspects.



**22. What role do the media have to play in society?**

Our role at You magazine is to inform, educate, entertain and be a watchdog.

**23. How does this magazine feature in this role?**

We believe that we are a watchdog, we don't shy away from controversial stories. We believe that we inform and educate the readers of the magazine, we often have informative and educational pieces and of course the entertainment that people love.