



Participants engage with the GMPS findings at the consultative workshop.

Photo: Scelo Zwane

# MEDIA PRACTICE

This chapter examines journalism practise in the Swazi media. The chapter covers questions such as what topics are covered by the media; what is the break-down of coverage with regard to genres; origin; geographic scope; primary and secondary sources; anonymity; single versus multiple sources.

Media practise is a new addition to the study. It seeks to contextualise missing voices within the broader context of media practise. For example, if the majority of stories are based on secondary sources, or if there is only one primary source, the chances of this being a male view or voice is high. The evidence gathered in this chapter reinforces the argument that gender aware reporting is not only good for gender equality but also good for media practise and vice versa.

### Topics

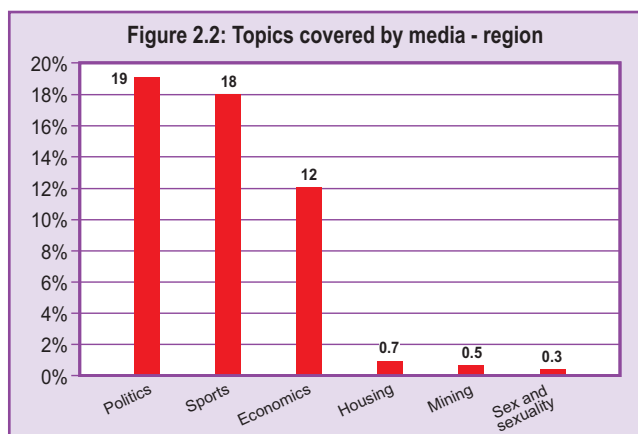
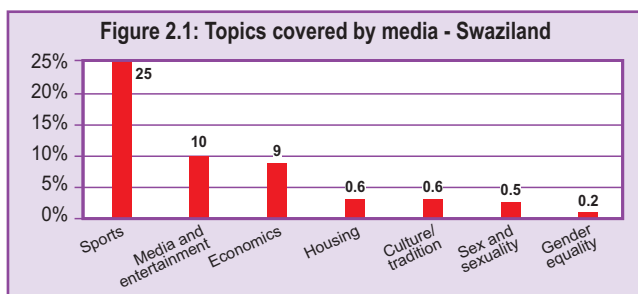


Figure 2.1 shows topics covered by the media in Swaziland while figure 2.2 does the same for the region. In Swaziland, sports received the highest proportion of coverage, accounting for 25% of all stories covered during the monitoring period. This was followed by media and entertainment (10%) and economics (9%). The lowest proportion of coverage was on gender equality (0.2%), sex and sexuality (0.5%), and gender violence at 1.3%. In

the region politics accounted for 19%, sport (18%) and economics (12). The lowest proportion of coverage in the region was on sex and sexuality (0.3%) which was slightly lower than Swaziland's 0.5%.

### Genre

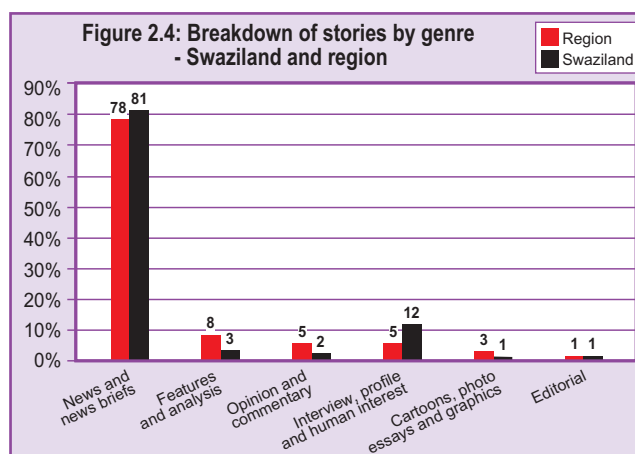
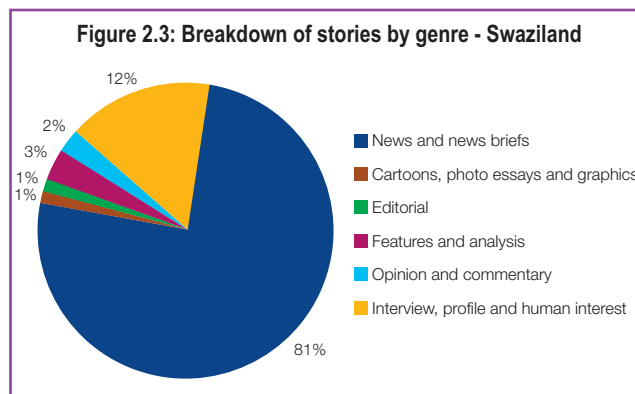


Figure 2.3 illustrates the breakdown of genres in Swaziland and figure 2.4 compares this with the region reflecting a similar spread. Most stories in the media in Swaziland are news and news briefs which account for 81%, slightly higher than the regional average of 78%. Other genres share the remaining 19%, cartoons, photo essays and graphics (1%), editorial (1%), interview, profile and human interest (12%), features and analysis (3%) and opinion and commentary (7%).

The breakdown of stories covered by the media in Swaziland is almost similar to that in the region. News and news briefs for the SADC media are 3% lower than in Swaziland. There are more interview, profile and human interest stories in Swaziland (12%) than in the region (5%).

## Origin

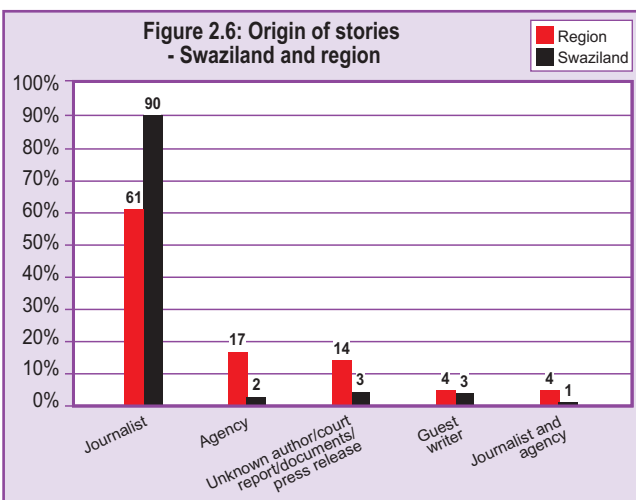
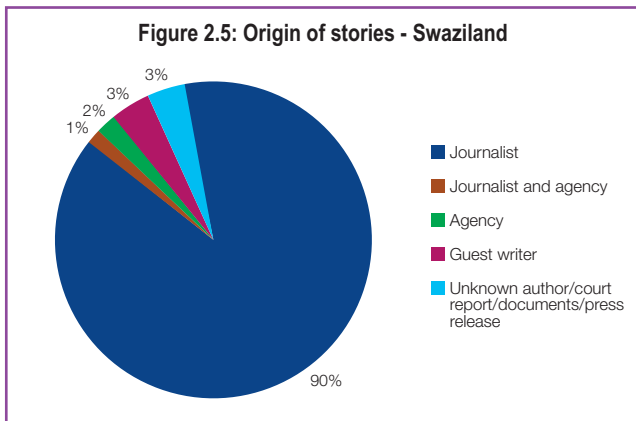
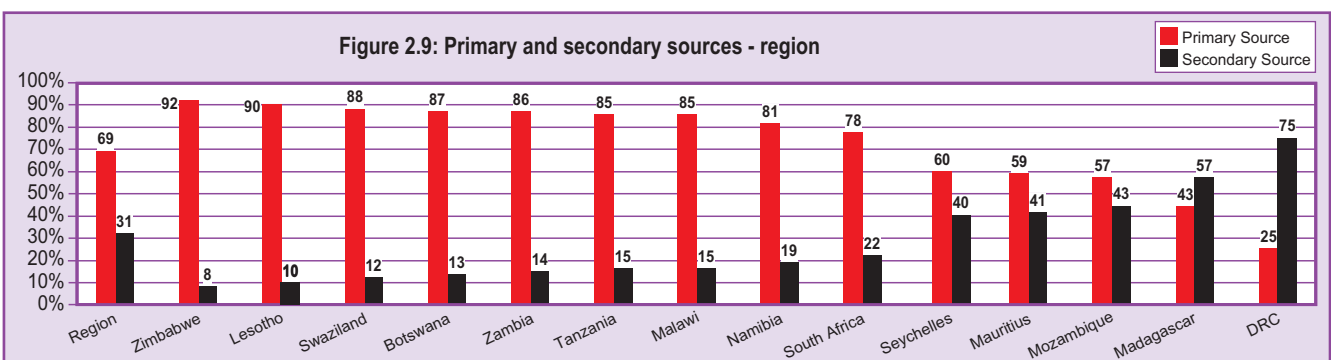


Figure 2.5 illustrates the origin of stories in Swaziland while figure 2.6 compares these figures with the rest of the region. Coverage by own reporters accounted for 90% of the stories in Swaziland and 61% of stories in the region. News agencies contribute only 2% in Swaziland, lower than the region's 17%. Unknown author/court report/documents come in third with 3% in Swaziland and 14% in the region. Compared to the region, Swaziland media actively look for stories rather

## Type of sources



than going for easily solutions such as news agencies and secondary sources like documents.

## Geographic scope

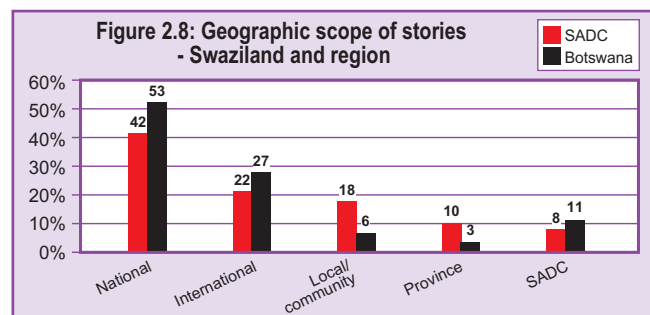
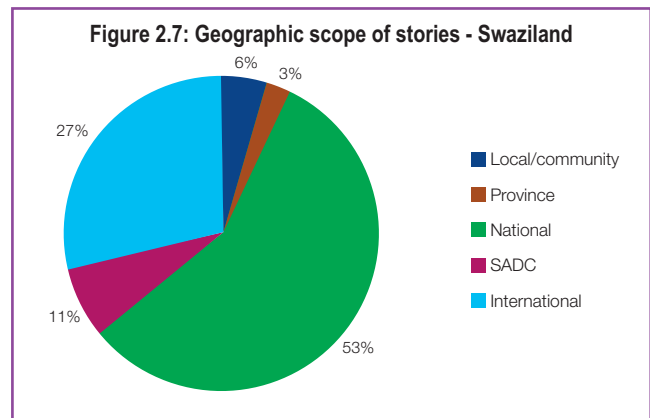


Figure 2.7 reflects the geographical scope of stories in Swaziland while figure 2.8 compares this with the region. National stories make up 53% of news reports followed by international news at 27% (both higher than the region). Local/community news is lower in Swaziland (6%) compared to the region (18%).

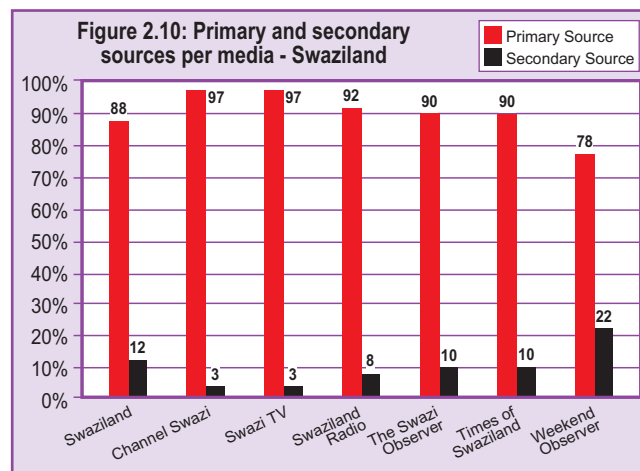
It is a cause for concern that the media in the country have a low proportion of local/community stories than international news. Stories from SADC make up 11% of stories in Swaziland and 8% in the region.

A primary source is one in which a subject is interviewed whereas a secondary source is a report or hearsay. Reliance on the latter is a symptom of weak journalistic practise. In principle every story should have primary sources, even if it is based on a secondary source. For example if a story is about a report that has just been released, it should quote those affected. If it is about a rumour, it should seek verification from a variety of sources.

Figure 2.9 shows that with 88% of stories based on primary sources, Swaziland has the third highest proportion of primary sources in the region after Zimbabwe and Lesotho. This is much higher than the regional average of 69%. The lowest proportions of primary sources are in DRC (25%) and Madagascar (43%).

Figure 2.10 shows the usage of primary and secondary sources by media house in Swaziland. *Channel Swazi* and *Swazi TV* have the highest proportions of primary sources at 97%, followed

by *Swaziland Radio* at 92% and *Swazi Observer* at 90%. *Times of Swaziland* at 78% has the lowest proportion of primary sources. The findings show that generally the media in the country relies on primary sources as all of them perform higher than the regional average of 69%.



## Anonymity

Anonymity refers to the use of sources who are not known or who are not willing to reveal their identities. Although sometimes it is necessary particularly for sensitive or investigative reporting, where sources fear victimisation it should be the exception rather than the rule. Making use of identified sources gives stories credibility.

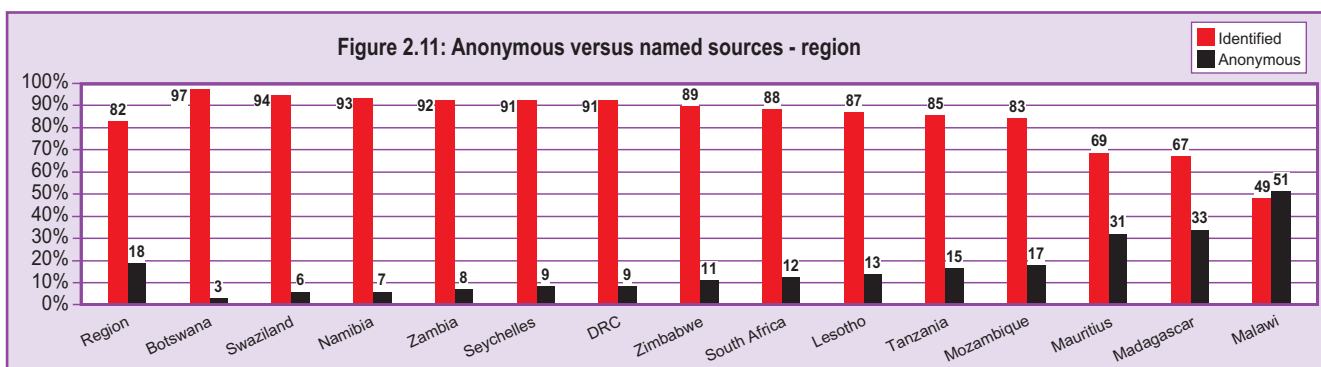


Figure 2.11 shows that there are higher proportions of identified sources than anonymous sources in Swaziland and the region. At 94%, Swaziland is the second highest country in the region after Botswana in identifying its sources. It also falls above the regional average of identified sources of 82%. The lowest country is Malawi whose identified sources account for 49% compared to 51% of anonymous sources.

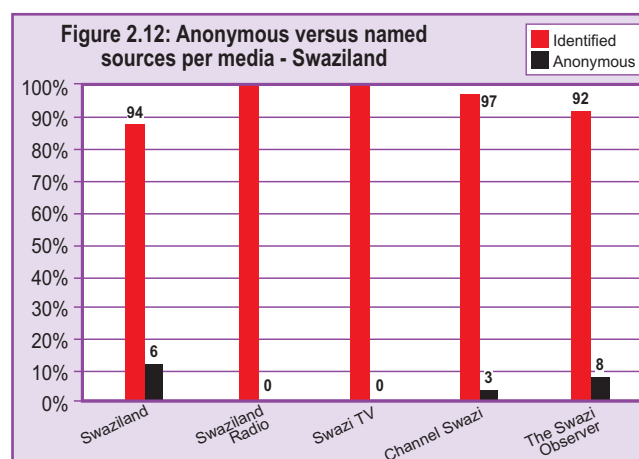


Figure 2.12 shows that there are variations between media houses in Swaziland in terms of the proportion of anonymous versus identified sources. The high performing media houses were *Swaziland Radio* (100%), *Swazi TV* (100%) and *Channel Swazi* (97%). The *Swazi Observer* has the highest proportion of anonymous sources at 8%. However, its proportion of identified sources is lower than the country average of 94%. Generally, the media in the country identifies its sources.

### Single versus multiple source stories

Reliance on single is a reflection of lack of professionalism that has gender dimensions. In a male dominated society, if only one source is consulted there is a strong likelihood that the source will be a man. Single source stories usually lack balance as they do not allow for a diversity of opinions. Only one point of view is given. With the exception of very short news briefs, every story in the media should have more than one source.

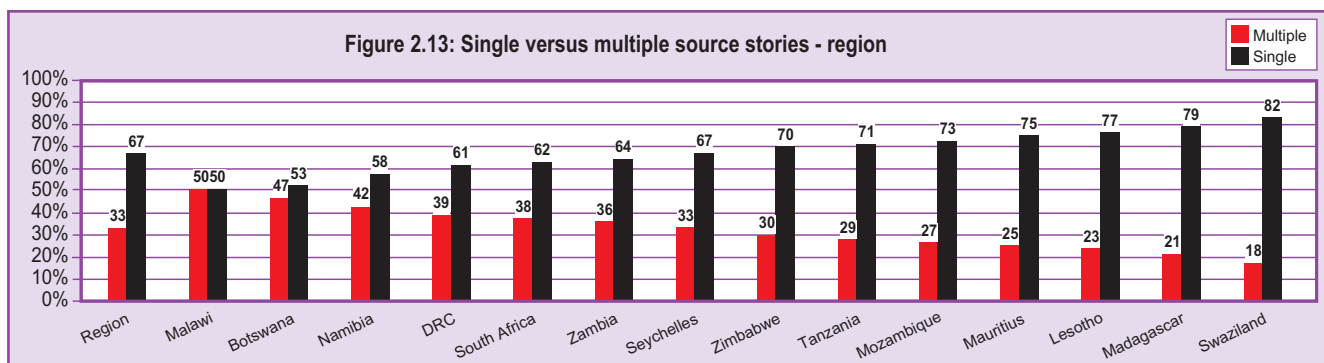


Figure 2.13 shows that at 18%, Swaziland has the lowest proportion of multiple source stories in the region. It falls below the regional average of 33%. Only six of the countries fall above the regional average but none of them exceed 50%. The 82% margin of single sources in Swaziland is a cause for concern as it shows that stories are still not balanced in terms of accessing both female and male sources. The results are worrying across the region where single source stories dominate.

contributing 99%. This could be attributed to the short news bulletins compared to television and print which have more space and longer bulletins. Overall, the figures indicate the lack of diversity of sources in the media in Swaziland.

### Function

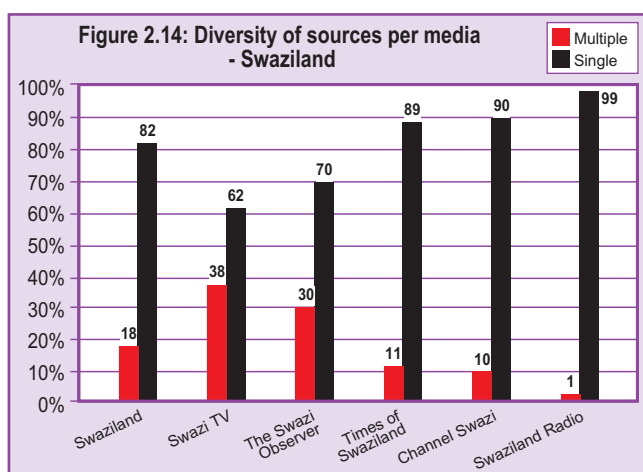


Figure 2.14 shows that *Swazi TV* (38%) has the highest proportion of multiple source stories in the country followed by *The Swazi Observer* (30%). *Swaziland Radio* has the lowest proportion of multiple source stories with single source stories

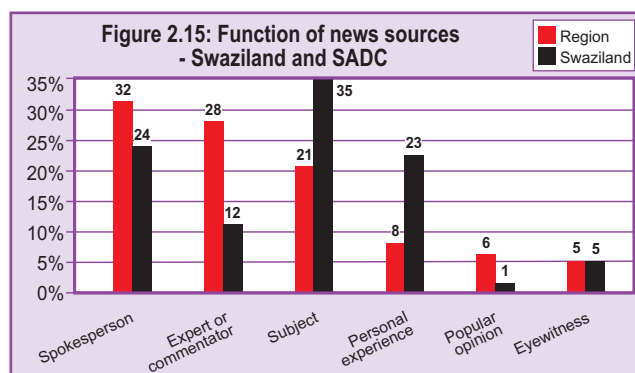


Figure 2.15 shows the function of news sources in Swaziland and the SADC region. In Swaziland subjects contribute the highest proportion of sources (35%) compared to 21% in the region. SADC media tend to rely more on spokespersons (32%). In Swaziland, spokespersons make up 24% and personal experience 23% of sources. The categories where ordinary people are likely to be heard are personal experience 23% in Swaziland and 8% in the region.

## Conclusion

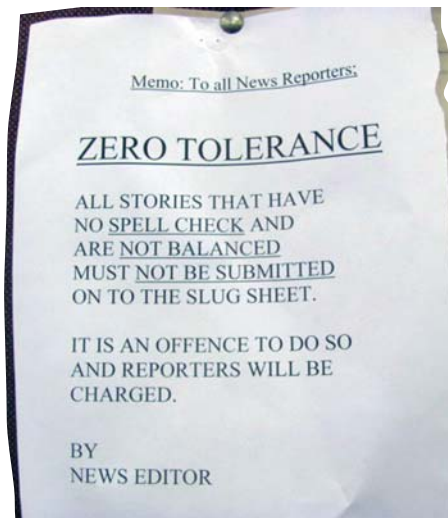
Participants agreed that in Swaziland gender equality is not a key consideration in the media. This was attributed to the Swazi culture which is still largely patriarchal. As such women and men have clearly defined roles and responsibilities in their daily lives. The media likewise follows this trend where gender equality is not an issue.

Participants were aware that this is in stark contrast with the paradigm shift that is evident in the evolving country's culture. Culture is not constant, something which the media is not capturing.

Calsile Masilela of *Swazi Observer* decried media's overreliance on events for stories. She said media has a responsibility to go out into communities and bring real issues that capture people's daily struggles. She also noted that most of these issues have gender dimensions which can help enrich media content.

Aleck Lushaba Editor of the *Weekend Observer* highlighted the fact that although there is still room for improvement in media practice, the country was growing at the same pace as the region. He

however emphasised that media should strive to put gender issues at the fore of all operations.



Scelo Zwane, a freelance journalist says that the problem of single source stories and reliance on secondary sources points to the new breed of journalists who lack passion for their job. He said as one enters the profession, they should be clear what they want. He also made the link between poor journalistic practice and media training. He said as students undergo their training, emphasis should be placed on the importance of securing a diversity of sources, which will ensure that all constituent

groups in a society are covered.

Andrew Moyo, a theatre artist also deplored the low standards of journalism in the country where journalists come to meetings, take photos and collect speeches from keynote speakers and presenters. He said they do not even sit and follow proceedings for in-depth understanding of issues. He said that journalists therefore still to news and news briefs which are largely event oriented.