

**COVERAGE OF THE CONSUMPTION OF *NYAOPE* IN TWO SOUTH AFRICAN  
TABLOIDS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE  
*SOWETAN* AND *DAILY SUN* NEWSPAPERS**

by

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree**

**MASTER OF ARTS IN MEDIA STUDIES**

in the

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

**(School of Languages & Communication Studies)**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO**

**2018**

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## DECLARATION

“I Khutso Eunice Mabokela, declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Master of Arts in Media Studies has not previously been submitted for any degree purposes at the university or other universities; that it is my own work in design and execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged by means of complete references.”

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.....

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## ABSTRACT

This is a comparative study on the coverage of the consumption of *nyaope* in two South African tabloid newspapers, namely the *Sowetan* and the *Daily Sun*. The study examines how the tabloids understudy reported on the consumption of the street drug; *nyaope*, by determining the frequency and nature of news reports, assessing the quality of the news reports and comparing the news reporting styles adopted by both newspapers. The research report draws from media effects theoretical propositions, namely the agenda setting and framing theories. Detailed literature review on tabloids and coverage of illicit drugs particularly *nyaope* is discussed in this study. The study adopted quantitative-qualitative as the research approach through the use of descriptive design. In addition, data were collected through quantitative-qualitative content analysis. The study used the check list as a method of collecting data. Subsequently, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was adopted for the data analysis process. The study noted that the quality of any tabloid newspaper is centred on the manner in which it reports on societal issues like drug use and abuse, crime, health issues, politics, et cetera. The study results revealed that both tabloids' frequency on the coverage of the consumption of *nyaope* was minimal as part of the requisite contribution towards combating drug use among young people. Furthermore, the study noted that the quality of news reports in both newspapers was truthful, accurate, fair, and balanced. The styles of news reporting indicated that the two newspapers made conscious efforts to avoid deliberate derogatory or discriminating references discriminatory towards *nyaope* users. In conclusion, the study examined the employment of mechanisms by the South African print media (tabloids) to ensure frequent, non-sensational, informed and detailed reporting, regarding issues on the consumption of illicit drugs particularly *nyaope*.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank my creator, the Almighty God for the strength, wisdom and guidance that enabled me to complete this research project. The journey was not smooth-sailing, but He saw me through every hurdle that I encountered. Your grace and mercy certainly rewrote my life.

I also wish to extend my sincere and heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Dr Thabiso Muswede for his time, effort, patience, and encouragement throughout the research project. You are amazing and may the good God continue blessing your resilient soul. Dr Christopher Mbajourgu, thank you for the fatherly love, and your teachings about the importance of a relationship with God. You are a true inspiration and a God send.

To my wonderful mother, Ms Elizabeth Mabokela and my younger sister Sedibu, I am eternally grateful for the love, unwavering support and guidance. I love you exceedingly and Thank you! Last but definitely not least, a pillar of my strength, my late grandmother Hhole; thank you for always watching over me.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>AIDS:</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>ARV:</b>	Anti-Retro Viral
<b>COGTA:</b>	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
<b>CONTRALESA:</b>	Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa
<b>HIV:</b>	Human Immune Deficiency Virus
<b>LSD:</b>	Lysergic Acid Diethylamide
<b>NAIL:</b>	New African Investment Limited
<b>SACP:</b>	South African Press Code
<b>SANCA:</b>	South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence
<b>SAPS:</b>	South African Police Services
<b>UN:</b>	United Nations
<b>USA:</b>	United States of America
<b>WHO:</b>	World Health Organisation

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Studying mass media coverage of drug issues represents an important step in understanding public perceptions of drugs, drug use, public concern regarding drugs, and the shape of drug policy. Even though changes in behaviour resulting from media coverage of legal and illegal drugs have not been proven, the media provide a narrative by their portrayal of drugs and drug use, and serve as a guide for interpreting various situations by means of particular framing (Brosius & Weimann, 2009:561). Daily news reports in the media alert us to the latest events about the larger environments beyond our immediate experiences. This includes the tightly edited pages of our tabloid newspapers which serve as channels that highlight major events and issues. Through specific news selection criteria, editors and news directors focus people's attention and influence their perceptions on what the most important issues of the day are. Subsequently, exaggeration, distortion, inaccuracy and sensationalism become common labels that are consistently applied to the reporting of illicit drugs (McCombs, 2013:2). In addition, McCombs (2013) observed that newspapers communicate a host of cues about the relative salience of topics on their daily agendas. The lead story on the first page, front page versus the inside page, the size of the headline and even the length of a story, all communicate salient topics on the news agenda. For example, in all the news media, the repetition of a topic day after day carries one of the most powerful messages about its importance to the readers.

According to the Department of Social Development (2013:8), the following are the most commonly used drugs in South Africa: alcohol, cannabis or dagga, cocaine and ecstasy. The report indicates that between 7.5% and 31.5% of South Africans have huge drug consumption problems. While the total global production of dagga is estimated at 40 000 metric tons, the same report maintains that South Africa produces 3 000 metric tons of it. Nonetheless, cannabis remains the country's most consumed and abused substance after alcohol. In the recent past, South Africa has seen a new drug on the market known as "*nyaope*", mostly abused by young people (ibid). *Nyaope*, which is a highly addictive and dangerous street drug, is the main

subject of investigation in this study. The drug comprises anti-retroviral drugs, cheap heroin, and is usually mixed with cannabis (dagga). It can also be made of lethal combinations of substances such as rat poison and detergent powder. The mixture has different names such as *kataza*, *pinch*, *whoonga* and *ungu* but *nyaope* thus far remains the drug's infamous name (Slater, 2010:3).

The uniqueness of *nyaope* lies in its demographic popularity in that it is used almost exclusively by black people (Ghosh, 2013; Ho, 2013). Furthermore, the extent of its addiction is difficult to understand. It is relatively cheap to buy, with an average price of R25 to R30 a joint, and has thus become easily accessible even to primary school children. However, the social cost paid by the users, their families and their communities is very high due to the severity of the addiction and the intensity of the withdrawal symptoms (Masombuka, 2013).

Hosken (2009:3) claims that the most popular way of using this drug, in South Africa is through smoking it, an act traditionally called 'chasing the dragon'. The drug is either put on a foil to heat and the smoke is then inhaled with a straw, or can be mixed with dagga and then smoked. As a highly addictive drug, many people who have tried it out for fun, have reportedly found themselves helplessly addicted to it years down the line. In addition, Hosken (2009) maintains that many people who are addicted to the drug tend to lead chaotic lives that revolve around getting hold of the drug and various ways of getting money to buy it, which could include prostitution and stealing. Therefore, the drug has become a major concern and serious problem in both urban and rural South African communities. Although the patterns of substance abuse in South Africa have extensively been reported on, there is a dearth of formal studies on *nyaope*, its wide use and accompanying consequences. Subsequently, the scarcity of such studies motivated this comparative study on the consumption of the *nyaope* in the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* tabloid newspapers. Subsequently, the aim of this study is to examine the coverage of the consumption of *nyaope* in the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* newspapers during the period from 01 February 2015 to 31 July 2015.

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The study focuses on the coverage of the consumption of *nyaope* in two South African tabloid newspapers, namely the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun*. Like any other media, newspapers play an important role of reporting about daily issues affecting communities locally and internationally. The abuse of *nyaope* is an issue that affects the majority of South Africans irrespective of race, gender and economic status; hence it should be thoroughly addressed and reported on rationally. However, this occurs in a multi-media environment where daily newspapers often carry stories including screaming headlines on consequences of the abuse of *nyaope*. Crimes such as statutory rape, house breaking, robbery, murder and domestic violence are reportedly committed by people who are under the influence of *nyaope*. Often these crimes are committed due to the desperate need by users to get another “fix” because of the drug’s addictive nature (South African Crime Statistics, 2014).

The above is supported by crime statistics from the South African Police Services (SAPS), which also show that 60% of crimes in South Africa are related to substance abuse and *nyaope* users form a significant portion of drug users (SA Crime Statistics, 2014). This prompted the need to investigate how *nyaope* use continues unabated whereas there are popular dailies that supposedly cover its consumption and effects as an illicit drug in South Africa. Thus, the study attempts to determine the frequency and nature of news reports, to assess quality of information and the styles of reporting adopted by the two tabloids to address coverage of the consumption of *nyaope* among young South Africans.

## 1.3 MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

The motivation of this study was based on the preliminary observations on the manner in which the majority of youth often abuse *nyaope*. The study also observed numerous coverage of the use and abuse of *nyaope* in tabloids newspapers, such as *Sowetan*, *The Citizen* and *Daily Sun*. In addition, other media reports, such as *The Star*, *Mail and Guardian*, *Pretoria News* and *The Times* also noted the abuse of *nyaope*. The reports mentioned that the consumption of *nyaope* was rife, particularly in Gauteng and then spread to other areas around South Africa, including Kwazulu-

Natal, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and the Western Cape. Subsequently, the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence's Castle Carey Clinic in Pretoria released a report highlighting its concerns about rampant drug abuse among the youth and the growing use of *nyaope* (Maughan & Eliseev, 2007).

Despite these concerns, there were research reports that analysed how print media journalists in particular those from tabloid newspapers, reported on the consumption of *nyaope*. This is despite the fact that the *Daily Sun* is a mass market tabloid newspaper which has grown in readership, becoming the country's biggest daily to a working class readership (Harber, 2008:162). The area identified by Maughan & Eliseev (2007) and many other communities, are the same populations where these two newspapers enjoy increasing circulation and readership.

Sparks (2009) noted that the two newspapers are very popular among the black communities, where cases of *nyaope* abuse have been reported in places such as Mamelodi, Soshanguve, Delmas, Polokwane, Tembisa, Etwatwa and Thokoza. The two newspapers focus more on stories which directly affect the lives of its readers. The *Daily Sun* offers more local news and gossip; focusing on events in ordinary people's lives rather than national and international news. However, the *Sowetan*, the *Daily Sun's* main competitor, is also aimed at an English-literate black readership, selling about 300,000 copies daily in South Africa, where the consumption of *nyaope* among youth was reported. Therefore, the concerns from the media reports prompted the researcher to conduct the study by examining coverage of news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* in the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* newspapers.

## **1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

### **1.4.1 Aim of the study**

The aim of this study is to examine the coverage of the consumption of *nyaope* in two South African tabloid newspapers.

### **1.4.2 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are:

- To determine the frequency and nature of news reports on *nyaope* in the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun* newspapers.
- To assess the quality of news reports on *nyaope* coverage in the two tabloid newspapers.
- To compare the news reporting styles adopted by both newspapers in covering the consumption of *nyaope*.

## **1.5 SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON ILLICIT DRUGS**

The use or abuse of illicit drugs has a negative impact on the users, their families and communities. Illicit drugs damage the health of users and are linked to rises in the acquisition of non-communicable diseases including HIV and AIDS, cancer, heart diseases, and psychological disorders (National Drug Master Plan, 2013). Users also get exposed to violent crime, either as perpetrators or victims and are also at the risk of long-term unemployment due to school dropout and being in conflict with the law. Subsequently, the National Drug Master Plan of South Africa was formulated by the Central Drug Authority in terms of the Prevention and Treatment of Drug Dependency Act (20 of 1992) as well as the Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Act (70 of 2008), as amended, and approved by the South African Parliament to meet the requirements of the international bodies concerned. This was intended to also meet the specific needs of South African communities, which sometimes differ from those of other countries (National Drug Master Plan, 2013).

### **1.5.1 The role of the National Drug Master Plan and Central Drug Authority**

The National Drug Master Plan (NDMP) is designed to bring together government departments and other stakeholders in the field of substance abuse to combat the use and abuse of dependence-forming substances and related problems. It sets out the contribution and role of various government departments at the national and provincial levels in fighting the scourge of substance abuse. It also recognises the



need for a significant contribution to be made by other stakeholders in the country. NDMP also ensures effective and efficient services for the combating of substance abuse through the elimination of drug trafficking and related crimes. The plan promotes national, regional and international cooperation to reduce the supply of drugs and other substances of abuse in South Africa (National Drug Master Plan, 2013).

The Central Drug Authority (CDA) advises the Minister of Social Development, who is the Chairperson of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Substance Abuse, on any matter associated with such abuse. The CDA's role also requires it to co-ordinate the efforts of all departments (at the national and provincial levels) to combat substance abuse and report to Parliament on the outcomes of the NDMP about the output achieved by the CDA's institutional support framework that is; the national and provincial departments, Provincial Substance Abuse Forums (PSAFs) and Local Drug Action Committees (LDACs), as well as striving to achieve a society free from substance abuse (National Drug Master Plan, 2013).

### **1.5.2 Consumption of illicit drugs in South Africa**

According to UN Profile (2012), South Africa is by far the largest market for illicit drugs entering southern Africa. Drug trafficking and abuse have escalated in recent years, with the point of escalation traceable to the liberalisation of most aspects of society in the years immediately after the country's first democratic elections in 1994. This recent period also has witnessed a concomitant relaxation of strict controls of land, air and sea borders, the enhancement of international trade and commerce, and the influx of new cultural trends among the more affluent segments of the population (ibid).

A national Rapid Participatory Assessment (RPA) was conducted in the country in 2008 in an effort to determine communities' needs regarding the substance abuse problems confronting them (RSA: Department of Social Development, 2012). The RPA was designed along the lines of the World Health Organisation (2002), based on information provided by the Directorate of Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI) of the South African Police Service (SAPS), data published in the *World Drug Report 2009* (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009) and the UNODC's global assessment of Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS) (United Nations Office on

Drugs and Crime, 2009). The following section discusses the cultivation and production of illicit drugs in South Africa:

- *Nyaope*

According to the South African Police Service (SAPS) 2014 statistics, 60 percent of crimes committed nationally are related to substance abuse, and *nyaope* users constitute a substantial number of abusers. After the bold and extremely criminalisation of *nyaope* in March 2014, the use has grown exponentially (National Drug Master Plan, 2013). The street drug is usually a concoction of cannabis, heroin, rat poison, and anti-retroviral drugs. For instance, the Gauteng Agriculture, Rural and Social Development, Member of the Executive Council (MEC), Nandi Mayathula-Khoza, convened a two-day stakeholders' summit to address the issues associated with *nyaope* consumption, which continues to pose a complex challenge for many government institutions and most importantly, families around Gauteng and other provinces in the country (Lekalakala, 2013).

### ***Abuse of nyaope by young people***

Although the patterns of substance abuse in South Africa have been reported on, there is a dearth of formal studies on *nyaope*, despite its wide use. *Nyaope* use and its consequences on the social lives of the users, their families, their communities and the country have been reported mainly by the media, including television documentaries and newspapers in South Africa. There are even views that *nyaope* may be South Africa's worst drug (Health 24, 2014). The uniqueness of *nyaope* lies in its demographic popularity in that it is used almost exclusively by black people (Ghosh & Ho, 2013).

Maughan & Eliseev (2007:1) postulate that drug syndicates have been targeting schools as they seek to grow a market of young *nyaope* addicts. The study states that, in Gauteng and Pretoria alone, hundreds of *nyaope* addicts, some as young as 9 years old were reportedly dying from overdose. Desperate school children were prepared to do anything for their next "hit" of the drug. School children were reportedly forming criminal *nyaope* "clubs" to beg or steal money in order to sustain their addiction. Narcotics experts cited in the study believed that the local drug market is being deliberately flooded to encourage addiction among youngsters.

Furthermore, it is believed that one “fix” is often enough to trap a child into addiction, with withdrawal symptoms including skin sores, excruciating muscle and bone pain, vomiting, and insomnia (Maughan & Eliseev, 2007:2).

Masemola (2006:5) reported that the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence’s Castle Carey Clinic in Pretoria released a report highlighting its concerns about rampant drug abuse among the youth and the growing use of *nyaope*. However, in response to this, the study observed that parents of the children who are addicted to *nyaope* usually reach out for help to curb drug use among their children. The parents who reach out for help are usually from different socio-economic backgrounds, with some being single parents and others being unemployed couples. Therefore, it is imperative to find out how the press has been reporting the consumption of *nyaope* in the two tabloid newspapers.

- *Factors that contribute to nyaope use*

Studies conducted by Ephraim (2014) and Ho (2013) postulate the factors identified as contributing to drug use as including unfavourable social conditions such as poverty, unemployment and a lack of recreational facilities. These factors are said to have been fuelling the current use of *nyaope*, particularly in black communities (Ghosh, 2013). *Nyaope* is reported to be very addictive and addicts encounter extreme difficulty when attempting to cease using it. The above studies have also highlighted that lack of drug rehabilitation services in the public sector coupled with the high rate of unemployment have resulted in the available private services being unaffordable. Ultimately, this leaves most of the young drug users including addicts without adequate access to rehabilitation services.

- *Consequences of nyaope use*

*Nyaope* users are easily identified by their poor personal hygiene, their slowness of movement and their half-dazed looks (Mbanjwa, 2014). In some South African townships, they are often referred to as “*nyaope* boys” and are known for resorting to theft in order to sustain their habit. In addition, high relapse rates of those who have accessed some form of rehabilitation have been reported (Ghosh, 2013; Venter, 2014).

Continued use of illicit drugs is associated with the development of tolerance, and addicts therefore resort to using increasingly greater and more frequent amounts of the drug to achieve the same “high”. Once addicts are dependent upon the drug, they experience physical pain if they attempt to cease its use. This is complicated by the fact that most of the addicts in the black townships do not have access to rehabilitation treatment due to their socio-economic situation (Ghosh, 2013).

Public rehabilitation centres for substance abuse conditions are scarce, and the waiting lists to be admitted to rehabilitation centres are often long (Myers, Louw, & Fakier, 2008). The health consequences of *nyaope* use are however, not widely known, but Thomas and Velaphi (2014) recently reported the case of two neonates who were born to mothers addicted to *nyaope*. The babies’ health was associated with growth restriction and other signs of neonatal abstinence syndrome, which the authors attribute to *nyaope* use.

- *Cannabis/ Marijuana/ Dagga*

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2012) cannabis is the most prevalent illicit drug used in South Africa whereas “mandrax” (methaqualone) is the second most commonly used. Altogether 22% of the world's harvest of cannabis comes from Africa, where it is produced in almost every country on the African continent. The largest producer is South Africa with about 2 500 metric tons of the total of 8 900 metric tons produced, that is; 28% of the African production and 7% of the world production. Despite large-scale domestic cultivation of herbal cannabis, the latest vogue is hydroponic cannabis. Growing cannabis hydroponically means that the plants are grown in an inert, sterile growing medium instead of in the soil. Several hydroponic cannabis production facilities have been dismantled in Gauteng province in the last couple of years (ibid).

Overall levels of crime began to increase in the mid-1980s and continued throughout the 1990s due to the increased use of these drugs. Although the use of heroin, cocaine and ecstasy is less prevalent, this has increased notably since the mid-1990s. There are some indications, however, that the steep increase in crime has been abated in the last year or two; nevertheless, South Africa remains among the most crime-ridden and crime-concerned societies in the world (United Nations Office

on Drugs and Crime (2012). Since 2000, heroin use has also increased significantly in major urban areas, particularly in Gauteng (which includes Johannesburg and Pretoria) and Cape Town (ibid).

UN Drug Profile points out that in 2009, among treatment patients reporting heroin as their primary drug of abuse, evidence points to 51% of such patients in Cape Town reporting some injecting (or 'intravenous') use and 36% doing so in the Gauteng province. One risk associated with injecting heroin is the spread of HIV/AIDS. The second half of 2009 also witnessed the appearance of heroin users among the impoverished Black/African communities in South Africa's urban and semi-urban areas (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2012).

UN Drug Profile (2012) further emphasises that South Africa is a society in transition whereby drug use correlates strongly with the pressures placed upon social capital by rapid modernization and the decline in traditional social relationships and forms of family structure. This is particularly the case with respect to children. Another factor contributing to the increased prominence of illicit drug use in South African society is high unemployment (ibid).

Among the non-white population, social injustice and the weakened family bonds which resulted from decades of apartheid policies have created an environment in which temporary escape from the harsh reality of everyday life is often sought through the consumption of psychoactive substances. To this end, anecdotal evidence also supports a connection between increased substance abuse and both increased availability of drugs and the psychological consequences of adjusting to life in the "new" South Africa (UN Drug Profile, 2012).

- *ATS: Amphetamine-Type Stimulants*

Methamphetamine is a stimulant drug usually used as a white, bitter-tasting powder or pill. It can be made by using a variety of licit precursor chemicals and simple processes. Its manufacturing takes place in mega and super laboratories, but more commonly in small kitchen laboratories (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012).

This convenience of manufacturing makes ATS the most widespread illicit drug but also the most difficult to determine the total amount produced. The detection of ATS laboratories is also becoming more difficult, as they are run in hard-to-detect spots. During the last estimate there were 35 such laboratories still functioning in South Africa. The number of such laboratories that were dismantled by the South African Police Services (SAPS) increased by 55% between 2005 and 2006, and increased by another 15 in 2007/8. The manufacture of ATS is exacerbated by the fact that South Africa is one of the world's largest importers of licit ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, two of the precursor chemicals used to manufacture methamphetamine (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012).

### **1.5.3 Economic costs and effects of drug use**

The health and socio-economic consequences of substance use and abuse may undermine democratic values, good governance and have a negative impact on the entire country. Although the socio-economic cost of smoking in general is staggering, statistics provided by the SA Revenue Service (SARS) indicate that the known direct cost of illicit drugs use in 2005 was roughly R101 000 million. Based on international data, the social and economic costs of illicit drugs and alcohol abuse can be estimated at approximately 6, 4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or about R136 380 million per year. As in the case of illicit drugs, it is important to bear in mind that the emotional, social and financial costs arising from the abuse of drugs other than alcohol affect not only the abusers themselves, but also other members of their (immediate) families (National Drug Master Plan, 2013:38).

Substance abuse has a negative impact on the social and economic status of the country. This includes a range of problems such as inefficiency, impaired work performance, accidents and absenteeism by drug addicts as a considerable cost to both industry and society, as a result work productivity declines (Parrott, Morinan, Moss & Scholey, 2004). For example, 2.5 million workdays are lost due to absenteeism arising from substance-related illnesses (RSA: Department of Social Development, 2006). Furthermore, the use of substances has a negative impact on the health care system including the depletion of scarce resources available to improve the health of all citizens (RSA: Department of Health, 2007). As such, medical resources usually get wasted with lives being lost in substance-related

accidents. This has led to high amounts of money being spent in hospitals, on prevention campaigns and in treatment centres of substance dependents (Alloy, Acocella & Richard, 1996; Plüddermann, Parry & Bhana, 2007 & United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012).

#### **1.5.4 Social effects of drug abuse**

The South African government has observed that substance abuse does not only affect the individual, it also affects the family, friends, teachers at school and other members of the community. This arises from the fact that some adolescents abusing substances have become withdrawn, moody, irritable or aggressive. This often leads to deterioration in family, peer group, and school relationships (Parrott, Morinan, Moss & Scholey, 2004). These adolescents' academic performances drop and truancy often increases (Berk, 2007; Burger, 2008; Donald, Lazarus & Peliwe, 2007; Flisher, 2006; Papalia, 2004; Pressley & McCormick, 2007) and they end up being expelled from school due to their behaviour (South African Council of Ministers of Education, 2003; Donald et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the substance and obtaining it becomes the centre of the abuser's existence, governing all activities and social relationships. The effect of these substances on the general inhibition of impulses and social judgement is often distorted. Involvement in other social problems such as impulsive violence, casual or exploitative sex, racial and other forms of intolerance or abuse may result. It is believed that over half of all murders are committed under the influence of substances; as are rape, assault and family violence (Davison, Neale, & Kring, 2004; Parrott et al., 2004; Zastrow, 2004).

- *The link between drug use and HIV/AIDS*

The prevalence of injecting drug use (IDU) varies considerably around the world, both between and within countries. An estimated 15, 9 million people worldwide are injecting drugs and up to 3 million of them are infected with HIV (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2010). Although South Africa has one of the highest levels of HIV and AIDS infections in the world, the extent of IDU and its relationship to the epidemic have not been researched adequately (Davison et al., 2004; Parrott et al., 2004; Zastrow, 2004).

The increased probability of engaging in high-risk sexual behaviours, places the drug user at risk for both unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including; Human Immune Deficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) (Rice & Dolgin, 2008). This is because of the addictive and intoxicating effects of many substances, which can alter judgement and inhibition that lead users to engage in impulsive and unsafe behaviours (Carson, Butcher & Mineka, 2000; Donald et al., 2007). While Intravenous Drug Use (IDU) is well known in this regard, less recognised is the role that substance abuse plays more generally in the spread of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, by increasing the likelihood of high-risk sex with infected partners. Substance abuse and dependence can also worsen the progression of HIV and its consequences, especially in the brain. Injecting drug users are at great risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, since anyone under the influence of an intoxicating substance, including alcohol is at heightened risk (ibid).

- *Community responses to illicit drugs issues*

Regarding the level of awareness/knowledge of substance abuse problem and related issues, a United Nations study shows that 58% of South African community members indicated that they were aware of the problem; 65% reported that they had a substance user/abuser in their homes; and 40% were aware of the support services available to substance users and abusers (World Health Organization, 2009). In addition, the opinion of the surveyed community members in line with a public health understanding of substance abuse stated that a combination of environmental and individual oriented factors need to be dealt with in order to combat substance abuse. These factors included better parenting or the development and application of parenting skills and competencies that will enable community members to deal with substance abuse; recreation or providing facilities and opportunities for especially the youth so as to occupy the time and resources that might otherwise be devoted to substance abuse (World Health Organization, 2009). Subsequently, knowledge of the process of identifying and dealing with the problems of prevention, treatment, aftercare and re-integration within the community of those affected by substance abuse; law enforcement or the application of policies, laws, protocols and practices designed to reduce the threat of substance abuse is important (National Drug Master Plan, 2013:39).



### 1.5.5 South Africa's drug prevention experience

According to the report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2012:9), drug abuse prevention in South Africa has witnessed different approaches. In its earliest form, prevention was based on opinions rather than evidence. Scare tactics were often used to reinforce the message that drugs were dangerous. A later approach involved information dissemination. This was based on the assumption that once people knew the negative consequences of drug abuse, they would choose not to use drugs. In recent years, a greater emphasis has been placed on information-based programmes complemented with the life skills approach. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2012:10), the following are the main elements of such approaches:

- *The shock-horror approach- fear arousal and scare tactics*

Fear tactics involve exaggeration or focusing purely on the extreme negative effects of drug use. The use of a poster depicting a body lying in the gutter with a needle in the arm would be an example of a scare tactic. Such approaches are now generally seen to have been unhelpful as they rarely influence behaviour positively. However, fear arousal still forms the basis for the work done in the field of prevention of drug use in South Africa (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012:10).

- *Information-based programmes*

This approach is based on the premise that young people take drugs because they are unaware of the consequences. The reasoning is that once they are provided with relevant information they will refrain from using drugs. Excessively information-based programmes have, in some cases, actually resulted in an increase in drug use for the following reasons;

- *Increased allure of experimentation-* by overly emphasising the risk of addiction, while failing to deal with any perceived positive aspects of drug use, the programmes have lacked credibility with at-risk youth. They may also make drug use appear interesting and exciting.
- *Too focused on the adult perspective-* they tend to be delve into account the 'lived experience' of young people, for example; the possibility that smoking

may be seen by young people as a route to a slimmer body may be far more persuasive than the fact that they have a greater risk of contracting lung cancer in later years.

Programmes based on information alone do not always work because they often misunderstand the causes of drug abuse. They tend to assume that young people take drugs because they are unaware of the risks involved. However, as stated above, the reasons why many young people use drugs are more complicated. They include reasons not addressed by this approach, for example; relief of boredom, anxiety or stress, to show maturity, to relieve stress, or for enjoyment (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012:10).

- *The life skills approach*

This strategy seeks to have an impact by dealing with a range of social skills. The underlying assumption is that drug use is at least partly due to poor social coping strategies, undeveloped decision-making skills, low self-esteem, inadequate peer pressure resistance skills, et cetera. When applied sensibly, these strategies have yielded positive results in the South African experience (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012:10).

### **1.5.6 South Africa's vision of a substance free country**

In analysing the substance abuse challenges facing South Africa, the Central Drug Authority (CDA) identified a country free of substance abuse as the ultimate goal. The delegates at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennial Anti-Substance Abuse Summit adopted this goal as the vision for NDMP 2013-2017. This vision was also endorsed by all the high-level political figures attending the summit. The CDA resolved to direct and co-ordinate the implementation of holistic and cost-effective strategies to combat the substance abuse problems in South Africa (National Drug Master Plan, 2013:72).

As part of Cabinet's planning and decision-making, a new planning cycle has been introduced. This is based on the *Basic Concepts of Monitoring and Evaluation* guide produced by the Public Service Commission in February 2008 (RSA: Public Service Commission, 2008). The process requires that all planning take into account the logic model that requires planners to apply an analytical method to break down a programme into logical components to facilitate its evaluation. This model includes

the promotion of good monitoring and evaluation practices by government as guided by the Presidency and the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (ibid).

## **1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The research report is primarily to examine the coverage of the consumption of *nyaope* in tabloid newspapers, namely the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan*. The report further attempts to determine the frequency and nature of news reports on *nyaope* in the newspapers under study. Furthermore, the study seeks to assess the quality of news reports on *nyaope* coverage in both publications and also to compare the news reporting styles adopted of news reports in both newspapers. To achieve this, the research report analyses news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* during the period from 01 February to 31 July 2015 excluding columns, editorials, feature stories and letters to the editor.

## **1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

### **Drug**

The concept drug is a term of varied usage; in medicine it refers to any substance with the potential to prevent or cure disease or enhance physical or mental well-being, and in pharmacology it refers to any chemical agent that alters the biochemical or physiological processes of tissues or organisms. Lastly, in common usage, the term refers to psychoactive or dependence-producing substances and often, more specifically, to those that are illicit. There are two main variations of drugs; legal and illegal drugs which are commonly termed illicit drugs (Collett, 2011). For the purpose of this study, the researcher is concerned with the consumption of illegal drugs mainly, the street drug *nyaope*.

## **Drug abuse**

In the context of this study, drug abuse is discussed in references to the abuse of illicit drugs. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines drug abuse as “a state, psychic and sometimes also physical, resulting from interaction between a living organism and a drug, characterized by behavioural and other responses that always include a compulsion to take the drug on a continuous or periodic basis in order to experience its psychic effects, and sometimes to avoid the discomfort of its absence”. These drugs are used for perceived beneficial effects on perception, consciousness, personality and behaviour. These chemical substances, both medicinal and recreational, can be administered in a number of ways; orally, inhaled, injected and rectally (Butcher, Mineka, Hooley, & Carson, 2004; Carson, Butcher, & Mineka, 2000). Furthermore, in this study drug abuse refers to the abuse of an illicit substance called *nyaope* by South African youth. The street drug is not used for medicinal purposes and has negative effects on the thinking, perceptions, and behaviours of the abusers.

## **Drug abuse and preventive interventions**

The above concept refers to a pro-active process that empowers individuals and systems to meet the challenges of life's events and transitions by creating and reinforcing conditions that promote healthy behaviour and lifestyles. It generally requires three levels of action: primary prevention (altering the individual and the environment so as to reduce the initial risk of substance use/abuse); secondary prevention (early identification of persons who are at risk of substance abuse and intervening to arrest progress); and tertiary prevention (treatment of the person who has developed substance/drug dependence) (National Drug Master Plan, 2013).

## **Drug addiction**

According to Colett (2011:23), drug addiction is a chronic, often relapsing brain disease that causes compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences to the addicted individual and to those around him or her. Over time, a user may become hooked on the mental or physical effects of the drug. This leads to the user needing more of the substance to get the same effects. Without help, a person with an illicit drug addiction will often put their health and safety in danger. It

is important to remember that addiction is not a weakness or choice, but is a chronic disease that causes people to seek reward or relief through substances or other behaviours (ibid). Those dependent on substances are often unable to quit on their own and need treatment to help them to stop using the substances (Alexander, 2001; Cicchetti, 2007; Jaffe & Kring, 2007). For the purpose of this study, drug addiction refers to continuous use of *nyaope* by youth, irrespective of its physical and psychological harmful effects.

### **Drug control**

Drug control refers to the regulation, by a system of laws and agencies, of the production, distribution, sale and use of specific psychoactive drugs (controlled substances) locally, nationally or internationally; alternatively, as an equivalent to drug policy in the context of psychoactive drugs, the aggregate of policies designed to affect the supply of and/or the demand for such drugs, locally or nationally, including education, treatment, control and other programmes and policies. Moreover, a number of psychoactive substances such as cannabis, cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines have been defined as illegal by the vast majority of countries around the world. As such, they are subject to a varying degree of legal control (United Nations on Drugs and Crime, 2009). In the context of this study, drug control looks into the manner in which South African government responds to the production and distribution of *nyaope*.

### **Drug dependence**

In view of the context of this study, drug dependence is an adaptive state that develops from repeated drug administration, and which results in withdrawal upon cessation of drug use. A person is dependent on a substance when it becomes very difficult or even impossible for him/her to refrain from taking the substance without help, after having taken it regularly for a period of time. The dependence may be physical or psychological (Kring, Davison, Neale, & Johnson, 2007). Subsequently, for the purpose of this study substance dependence refers to the dependency of youth on the illicit drug termed *nyaope*.

## **Drug use**

The use of drugs is one of the terms that is insufficiently outlined especially in newspapers. Drug use refers to chronic or habitual use of any chemical substance to alter states of the body or mind, other than medically warranted purposes leading to effects that are detrimental to the individual's physical or mental health or the welfare of others (Kring et al., 2007, Rice & Dolgin, 2008; Drug Addiction and Drug Abuse, 2008). In this study, drug use refers to the use of *nyaope* as an illegal drug which is detrimental to the well-being of youth and the welfare of society.

## **Illicit drugs**

"Illicit drugs" is a term typically used to indicate the sale of illegal drugs apart from legal drugs, or pharmaceuticals. These drugs are highly addictive and pose serious risks and their use usually begins as an experiment or because of curiosity. Other times, it may start from using prescription pain medication meant to treat an illness or injury. Although the legality of specific set of drugs categories is not universal, however, any drug that is forbidden by law in South Africa is considered as illicit. In this study, illicit drugs such as *nyaope*, cannabis, heroine, amphetamines, heroin, hallucinogens, are considered illegal. Subsequently, illicit drugs are under international control (and which may or may not have licit medical purposes) but are produced, trafficked and/or consumed illicitly (Cole, 2003:3). In the context of this study, illicit drug refers to *nyaope* because its consumption is considered illegal.

## **Media representation**

By definition, all media texts are re-presentations of reality. This means that they are intentionally composed, lit, written, framed, cropped, captioned, branded, targeted and censored by their producers, and that they are entirely artificial versions of the reality we perceive around us (McCombs, 2004). However, it is also important to note that without the media, our perception of reality would be very limited, and that we, as an audience, need these artificial texts to mediate our view of the world, in other words we need the media to make sense of reality. Therefore, representation is a fluid, two-way process where producers position a text somewhere in relation to reality and audiences assess a text on its relationship to reality (ibid). For the

purpose of this study, media representation refers to the portrayal of the news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* in the newspapers.

### ***Nyaope***

The concept *nyaope* bears several area specific meanings in South Africa and possibly beyond the borders of South Africa. However, for the purpose of this study, *nyaope* is considered as a highly addictive drug used by youths in South Africa and is often called by different street names which are area specific. Some popular names include “*sugars*” in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal; “*ungah*” in the Western Cape; “*pinch*” in Mpumalanga; and “*nyaope*” in Tshwane, Gauteng. The street drug is usually a mixture of dagga and heroin; it can at times be mixed with rat poison and HIV/AIDS anti-retroviral drugs. The drug is sold in tiny brown packets for about R30 a packet. Furthermore, it was until 2013 that this relatively new drug was not classified as illegal (Hosken, 2009:3). In this context, it is the consequences of the drug’s use that have prompted the need for comparison into coverage of its use in daily newspapers.

### **Tabloids**

This concept can be described as a ‘storytelling’ news style, which focuses on personal narratives about individuals that gives predominance to visual images and the sensational over analysis and rational description. It also entails a growing use of dramatic techniques, such as photo enhancement and re-enactments. Furthermore, when the word “tabloid” is mentioned, the average person thinks of sensational, splashy, entertainment journalism and big headlines, gaudy and often lurid pictures, minimum of text and a maximum of photographs and colour. This is generally associated with bizarre stories, sexy women, scandal and gossip (Bird, 2000:215). For the purpose of this study, tabloids refer to the more serious face of news reporting that exudes quality, a news emphasis, a minimum of pictures, thoughtful analysis, and in-depth reportage of the consumption of *nyaope*.

### **Tabloid journalism**

In view of the study, tabloid journalism involves the practice of sifting and editing information, comments and events in tabloid newspapers. The information is edited into a form that is recognizably different from the pure form in which they first

occurred. Tabloid journalism's main activities include stating who, what, when, where, why and how, and stating the significance and effects of certain events or trends (Conboy, 2008). For the purpose of this study, the subject matter of tabloid journalism focuses on the reportage of the consumption of *nyaope* in tabloids.

### **Target audience**

The above concept refers to the intended audience or readership of a publication, advertisement, or other message. Moreover, in marketing and advertising, it is a particular group of consumers within the predetermined target market, identified as the targets or recipients for a particular advertisement or message through the use of media. However, just because a target audience is specialized does not mean the message being delivered will not be of interest and received by those outside the intended demographic. Failures, however, of targeting a specific audience are also possible, and occur when information is incorrectly conveyed (Sherlock, 2014). In this study, target audience refers to readership of tabloids such as the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan*. The target audience of the tabloid newspapers comprises black middle class citizens who live in and around the urban major centres in South Africa (Wasserman, 2010).

## **1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The media can influence audiences in a number of ways, by setting the agenda and defining public interests, and by framing issues through selection and salience. By these mechanisms the media influences attitudes toward risks and norms. It must be noted that mechanisms rarely operate in a simple cause and effect manner and that media effects often work synergistically or may indeed result in no effect at all. This study is premised on two theoretical proportions, namely agenda setting and framing theories which are discussed below.

### **1.8.1 Agenda setting theory**

The agenda setting role of the news media is observed in their influence on the salience of a particular issue. The influence is based on whether any significant numbers of people really regard the subject in question is worthwhile to hold an



opinion about. While many other topical issues compete for public attention, only a few succeed in doing so. The news media exert significant influence on our perceptions of what the most important issues of the day are. In other words, the news media can set the agenda for public thought and discussion on topical issues such as illicit drugs use. The agenda of the news media becomes, to a considerable degree, the agenda of the public. In other words, the news media set the public agenda and this makes newspapers an interesting area to study since their editorial content is usually predetermined by editors (McCombs, 2013). The agenda can be set according to the following aspects:

- *Influencing the pictures in readers' heads*

The agenda-setting influence of the news media is not limited to the initial step of focusing public attention on the use of illicit drugs. The media also influence the next step in the communication process, an understanding and perspective on the topic in the news, specifically news reports of the consumption of *nyaope*. The thought of the agenda in abstract terms makes the potential for a broader view of media influence on public opinion to become very clear (McQuail, 2013).

Subsequently, for each topical issue there is an agenda of attributes because when the media practitioners and the public think and talk about a particular issue, some attributes are emphasised, others are given less attention, and many receive no attention at all. This agenda of attributes is another aspect of the agenda setting role of the news media. To borrow Walter Lippmann's phrase, "the pictures in heads," the agenda of issues or other objects presented by the news media influence what the pictures in our heads are about. The agenda of attributes presented for each of these issues, public figures, or other objects literally influences the pictures themselves that we hold in mind (McQuail, 2013). For instance, the more coverage of news reports on *nyaope*, the more it sets the agenda and influence the perception of readers about the drug.

- *Influencing the public agenda*

Although the influence of the media agenda can be substantial, it alone does not determine the public agenda. Information and cues about the consumption of drugs and attributes of salience provided by the news media are far from the only

determinants of the public agenda. This substantial influence of the news media has no way overturned or nullified the basic assumption of drug use and how the people at large have sufficient wisdom to determine the causes of abuse, the state of addicts, and their local communities. In particular, readers are quite able to determine the basic relevance to themselves and to the larger public arena of the topics and attributes advanced by the news media (McCombs, 2004).

It is also worth noting that the media set the agenda only when citizens perceive their news stories as relevant. The presence or absence of agenda setting effects by the news media can be explained by a basic psychological trait, and a need for orientation. Innate within each one of the public is the need to understand the environment around them. Whenever the public find itself in a new situation, there is an uncomfortable psychological feeling, until they explore and mentally grasp at least the outlines of that setting (ibid).

- *Consequences of agenda setting*

According to McCombs (2013), attitudes and behaviour are usually governed by cognitions, what a person knows, thinks, and believes. Hence, the agenda setting function of the mass media implies a potentially massive influence on which full dimensions and consequences have yet to be investigated and appreciated. Initially, the salience of news reports of illicit drugs in the mass media is linked to the formation of opinions by the audience. With the increasing salience of the consumption of *nyaope* in the news, for example, more people move away from a neutral position and form their opinion about the illicit drug (ibid).

In addition, a study on the use of heroin and cocaine in the United States of America found exceedingly strong correlations between the pattern of media emphasis, which varied widely across these illicit drugs, and the number of citizens who expressed ambivalent opinions about the drugs by checking the mid-point of various rating scales. The comparison between the drugs was significant as it produced high prominence of news stories reported which resulted in mixed opinions by readers (McCombs, 2013).

- *Shaping public opinion*

The agenda setting function of the media not only defines salient issues, but also captures the attention of the public and shapes public opinion. McQuail (2010:513) argues that there is a correlation between how much emphasis the media place on a problem, and how significant the audience perceive that issue. For example, the scholar states that research has shown that the media can more greatly influence public concern about social control issues such as crime and drug use than changes in the actual reported incidence of the problem. The nature of media production means that a limited number of issues can remain newsworthy at a particular time, and the choice of what is included (or excluded) sets the agenda and defines public interest and opinion (ibid). Therefore, the agenda setting process builds consensus about what issues are most important within the community (McCombs, 2004:128). Thus, the theory explains and supports the techniques in which tabloids' agenda setting processes influence the manner of coverage of *nyaope* in the South African tabloids.

In relation to this study, the above argument refers to how concentrated media attention to illicit drugs particularly a lack of focus on the consumption of *nyaope* could lead to the trivialisation of the dire effects of drugs. This theory explains that the public is only aware of the news, which the media deal with and adopt the order of priority assigned to different issues covered. For instance, if the media focus their attention on topical issues such as drug trafficking and continuously play down the horrendous consequences of illicit drugs specifically the use of *nyaope*, the public may regard the consumption of such drugs as insignificant.

### **1.8.2 Framing theory**

The concept of framing is commonly used in communication literature, but rarely structurally defined as an approach to the effects of the media. It generally denotes the idea that the media deal with certain issues in different ways and therefore report them to the public in different frames and perspectives (Kamalipour, 2010). News media tend to frame issues in various ways; hence media scholars have found the concept of framing useful in examining media coverage of news. Research has shown that media framing can have an effect in the way audiences end up interpreting an issue or an event. A media constructed frame is therefore a central

organising idea for news content that provides a contextualised meaning through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration (ibid). Framing theory in this study is used to examine the coverage of news reports on *nyaope* in the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* newspapers.

- *Frames in mass communication*

Over the past decade, the identification of frames in communication have become the key considerations emphasized in a speech act as a virtual cottage industry. Scholars track frames to identify trends in issue definitions, compare coverage across media outlets, and examine variations across types of media (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Although uniform measurement standards do not exist, the most compelling studies tend to take the following steps:

A frame in communication can be defined only in relation to a specific issue, event, or political actor. For example, the frames for social issues differ from the frames for social security reform. Even the same issue at different times may invoke alternative frames (Entman, 2004:23). If the goal is to understand how frames in communication affect public opinion, then the communicator needs to isolate a specific attitude. For example, one could focus on overall attitudes toward illicit drug use or, alternatively, on attributions of reasons why people use drugs. Different frames may underlie each of these attitudes. The frame defining attitudes toward drug use may include considerations of health and social effects, economic costs, and individualism (Feldman & Zaller, 2002).

Furthermore, it is integral to examine the frames produced by various drug users and organizations on both sides of the issue in editorial writings, and the publications of interest groups or social movements. This provides the set of “culturally available frames” in public discourse. These sources can be complemented by asking samples of individuals to record the considerations that come to mind on the issue of drug use, using open-ended questions (Brewer, 2003). These may include the aforementioned advocacy communications (for example; from social movements), but more typically, scholars analyse mass media sources including major newspapers, magazines, web sites, and television broadcasts. The choice of specific news outlets depends on the researcher’s intent, for example, to capture general trends in coverage or to compare specific types of coverage across media. Coders

then analyse a sample, identifying the presence or absence of one of the predefined frames in the story or article.

- *Effects of framing on individuals*

The effects of framing can be seen in many journalism applications. The "frame" surrounding an issue can change the reader's perception without having to alter the actual facts. In the context of drug use or mass-media communication, a frame defines the packaging of an element of rhetoric in such a way as to encourage certain interpretations and to discourage others. For illicit drugs purposes, framing often presents facts in such a way that implicates a problem that is in need of a solution. Members of media organisations are often perceived as attempting to frame drug related issues in a way that makes a solution to favour their own agenda and appear as the most appropriate course of action for that situation at hand (Kamalipour, 2010).

In addition, the bulk of attention in the representation of illicit drugs and communications literature, however, has been on how frames in the communication of elites (for example, drugs, media outlets, and interest groups) influence citizens' frames and attitudes. This process is typically called a framing effect. There is disagreement about the best measure to gauge the magnitude of framing effects. One standard is the variance in preferences produced by alternative frames on an issue. For example, in assessing tolerance of a hate group rally, a comparison would be drawn between respondents who received a free speech frame and those who received a public safety frame. A second standard is the variation in the correlation between alternative framed preferences and personal values relevant to the issue, such as freedom versus law and order on the hate group issue (Sniderman & Theriault, 2004).

- *Framing public attitudes*

Framing is important because media portrayals are there to guide the audience's interpretations and to influence the formation of new opinions. For example, Fan's time series analysis of illicit drugs press coverage in the USA between 1985 and 1994 found that by framing drugs as a crisis, the media significantly contributed to shifts in public attitudes with 60% of the public regarding drugs as the United States'

most important problem (Clegg-Smith, Wakefield, Terry- McElrath, Chaloupka, Flay & Saba, 2008:17). Based on principles of selection and salience there are many ways in which newsmakers have the power to shape the way a story is presented through framing (Clegg-Smith et al., 2002). The power is demonstrated through strategic ideological framing of not only the facts of the story itself but of the actors, leaders, affected communities, relevant arguments and proposed solutions.

For example, the selection and omission of particular sources contributes to the framing of an issue, with official sources such as politicians and government figures often dominating drug stories in the media (Teece & Makkai, 2000) whereas 'alternative voices' tend to be marginalised. In the same way, choice of language is important in framing problems and solutions. For example, the 'drug war' metaphor used in the United States drug media coverage suggests strong intervention of a military or law enforcement nature as the logical solution to a war-like problem, rather than suggesting health or economic interventions (McLeod, 2011).

## **1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Firstly, it is hoped that the study will create awareness on the role that print media could play in informing and educating the public on critical issues affecting society, particularly drug use and abuse. The study intends to highlight the effect of the coverage of *nyaope* and possibly deconstruct the manner in which drugs are represented in the media through examining the quality of reportage. In addition, the study hopes to benefit the South African government departments by providing information on the socio-economic and health effects that *nyaope* consumption has on society and the country in general. News editorial teams could also benefit from the findings, by going through the extensive measure of text analysis of the news reports undertaken in the study from which they could derive alternative ways of news coverage. While the study may subsequently help in creating new knowledge in the discipline, it could also serve as a building block upon which future research on the consumption of *nyaope* could be based; to curb forthcoming use of the drug.

## **1.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

The chapter presented the background and orientation to the study, which included the problem statement, the rationale and purpose of the study, and definition of key concepts. Furthermore, the chapter outlined the South African government's position on illicit drugs, South Africa's drug prevention experiences, and vision of a substance free country. Illicit drugs problems and community needs, community responses on illicit drugs and the link between drug use and HIV/AIDS were also discussed. In addition, a theoretical framework which discussed agenda setting and framing theories, and also the significance of the study were provided. The next chapter presents literature about tabloids and the consumption of illicit drugs.

## **1.11 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS**

This research report is divided into the following chapters:

*Chapter 1* provides an introduction and orientation to the study with specific focus on the following: problem statement, and rationale of the study. The chapter outlines the research aim and objectives. It also discusses the significance of the study, and takes into consideration the contextual background. In addition, *chapter 1* highlights the definition of key concepts, South African government's position on illicit drugs, and theoretical framework of the study.

*Chapter 2* presents literature review on tabloids and the consumption of illicit drugs, and the role of media reporting on *nyaope* specifically. The chapter outlines the following; tracing South African tabloids, the nature and classification of tabloids, the South African role of tabloids, tabloid culture and journalism, approaches, and influences of tabloids. In addition, the chapter presents the South African Press Code (SAPC), newspaper campaigns and drug prevention experiences as well as readers' perceptions of tabloid newspapers.

*Chapter 3* describes the research process. The chapter explains the research methodological techniques used for data collection and analysis. Within the methodology, the chapter outlines the research approach, the area of study, population and sampling procedures.

*Chapter 4* discusses the results of the study. The chapter presents the frequency and nature of news reports in the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* newspapers. The chapter further outlines the variables and themes evident in the data collected for the study. It also focuses on the quality and styles of news reporting adopted by both newspapers. Finally, the formulated results are presented and interpreted through the aid of illustrative graphs and discursive narratives.

*Chapter 5* presents a summary of the research findings, the conclusions and recommendations of the study.



## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2. TABLOIDS AND THE CONSUMPTION OF ILLICIT DRUGS**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reviews the existing literature pertaining to tabloids and the consumption of illicit drugs. Since knowledge about tabloids and illicit drugs is indisputably limited, the researcher reviews the main research traditions that have explored the nexus between tabloids and the coverage of illicit drugs. Furthermore, the chapter provides a description of the nature of tabloids; language used in tabloids, the role of tabloids, readers' perceptions of news and newspapers campaigns on illicit drug prevention experience. The chapter also reviews literature that focuses on the quality and styles of tabloids reporting. Particular attention is also given to the discussion of the South African Press Code (SAPC); which oversees the manner in which print publications report on topical issues. In addition, the chapter presents an overview of what influences tabloid newspapers to provide information about events and conditions in society and the world through explaining, interpreting and commenting on the meaning of events and information.

#### **2.2 TRACING SOUTH AFRICAN TABLOID NEWSPAPERS**

This section on South African tabloid newspapers is discussed according to the following aspects: alternative tabloid newspapers towards democracy; post-apartheid tabloids, economic shifts and political pressures, race, ethnicity and class dynamics in relation to news consumption. Moreover, the comparison of popular versus trash journalism and transformation of tabloids in South Africa is also discussed. Sparks (2003:25) observes that the rationale for tracing the historical and contemporary trends begins with the assumption that newspapers mirror and act against (at times) the socio-economic, political values and ideals of their societies and audiences. To fully understand the ideological leanings of any newspaper, it is essential to understand the socio-economic as well as the political and historical contexts in which they were established and function, including the target audiences that the publications seek to address (ibid).

### **2.2.1 Alternative tabloid newspapers towards democracy**

The early 1990's saw radical changes on the South African political landscape as the government was moving towards granting political, social and economic rights to the majority of the black population towards the 1994 democratic elections. Institutions of society, including the media, were expected to undergo transformation to reflect the new landscape and to be representative of the general population of the country. Beside mainstream newspapers, a group of newspapers constituted the alternative press (Sparks, 2003:26).

Firstly, these newspapers were termed alternative because they were not owned by the 'mainstream' newspaper owners. Secondly, their content and their target audience were different from that of the 'mainstream' newspapers. The alternative press was the outcome of proposals by those who sympathised with the liberation movements and found it necessary to establish the media system that would reveal the pain and distress of the black people under apartheid and tell their aspirations and stories to the world. In the broader sense, transition in South Africa implied rebuilding (transforming) the society from a racist past to a non-racial 'rainbow' society based on multi-party democracy, where all South Africans of all races would have access to political, economic and social rights (Sparks, 2003).

- *Post-apartheid tabloids and economic shifts*

According to Wasserman (2008), the arrival of formal democracy in the country in 1994, saw the public sphere broadened in major ways and freedom of speech was guaranteed in the Constitution. Race was no longer a formal preclusion to participation in public debate and political processes, the media were revitalised as apartheid era restrictions were lifted and replaced by self-regulation, and the media achieved wider legitimacy as the demography of newsrooms changed to better represent the country's ethnic and racial profile (ibid). In addition, tabloids were seen as stepping into the gap left by the demise of alternative media (although referring to the South African tabloids as alternative media in and of themselves would certainly be stretching this definition too far). The dominance of commercial media in the post-apartheid era meant that the logic of selling lucrative audiences to advertisers held sway over newspapers, and the working class and unemployed majority in the country did not count among these readerships (Wasserman, 2008:2).

Post-apartheid tabloid reporting saw major newspapers catering for a black readership, such as the *Sowetan* and the *Mail and Guardian*, which had their places of interest focused on the middle class and elites. A number of free “knock- and-drop” newspapers had been circulating in black townships, but these were small operations, mostly vehicles for local advertising. These small publications did not influence the mainstream news agenda, nor did they have a significant impact on debates about the media industry or journalism in the country in the way that the tabloids started doing. This climate made it possible for the tabloids to become a false community or alternative press (Wasserman, 2008:3).

Unlike the state censored press of the apartheid era, the post-apartheid South African society has had to adapt to a new, dramatic and unsanctioned form of press which has largely contributed to an irrevocable revolution in the local media industry. This “newspaper revolution” has had an impact on the structure, products and audiences of the media business (Hadland, 2010; Knox, 2014). Since their introduction in South Africa, tabloids have ruffled and irked the entire media fraternity including the political establishment and civic society due to their unique “undercut” approach to issues. As the largest category of the print media in South Africa, they have prompted criticism and complaints from many quarters of civil society through their invasion of privacy and sensationalised reporting.

- *Post- apartheid tabloids and political pressures*

Referring to research done by (Horwitz, 2001:36), if the mediated public sphere contracted as a result of economic forces, it has also been subject to political pressures. As with many other aspects of the media in contemporary South Africa, the political dimension of tabloid newspapers are best understood against a particular historical background. Under apartheid, the white press was a “pivotal institution in the racially and ethnically based struggles for economic and political power” (Wasserman, 2008).

In addition, Howzit (2001) postulates that the mainstream commercial print media were broadly divided along ideological lines that corresponded with ethnic and linguistic differences in the white community. They made only limited attempts to cater for black or “coloured” (mixed-race) audiences (for example, in separate, “extra” editions). The apartheid regime put an extensive set of legal measures in

place to control the media and limit criticism of itself. For instance, it was forbidden to quote or publish photographs of certain leaders in the freedom struggle (like Nelson Mandela) or to publish information that could be perceived as threatening the security of the state. Critical journalists and editors from the anti-apartheid press were censored, banished, harassed, and imprisoned (Wasserman & De Beer, 2008).

- *Post-apartheid tabloids and race, ethnicity and class*

The roles of race, ethnicity, and class in shaping the post-apartheid media sphere are a noble consideration in studying the significance of tabloids. The relationship between race, ethnicity, class, and media markets has not yet been adequately studied in the South African context (Wasserman, 2010). The emergence of tabloids has made it clear that South African media audiences remain marked by race, ethnicity, and class, and that this segmentation continues to shape debates about what the post-apartheid mediated public sphere should look like. But although tabloids have succeeded in creating a new, largely racially defined market that had previously not been catered to by the mainstream print media, they are worth studying for more than merely market reasons, but on their primary role of disseminating newsworthy events such as the consumption of illicit drugs, crime and politics (Wasserman, 2010:7).

Subsequently, the rise of mass-circulating tabloids such as the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan*, and their popularity with the poor and working class, black majority, for most of whom broadsheets are irrelevant, elusive and oppressive, is indicative of a post-apartheid South Africa. This is typical of a country determined to renegotiate skewed professional assumptions and practices in the interest of an ethic of effective inclusion and common humanity in journalism (Wasserman, 2010). Hence, the study is based on the premise of examining the coverage of news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* in the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* tabloids.

- *Popular vs “trash” journalism*

Wasserman (2010:18) holds the view that newspapers form part of people's everyday routines and habits, providing entertainment and diversion at the same time as they contribute to the way readers view the world, forge their relationships with others, and fill their places as citizens in society. While a critical perspective on

tabloid media should certainly include the very important larger structural factors of markets, political shifts, and professional/industry norms, a full picture of tabloid newspapers as a social phenomenon can only emerge when the relationship between the tabloids and their readers is understood (ibid).

In much of the debate around tabloid newspapers, critics have however condemned them after judging only what they saw on the page in front of them assuming that meaning is either intrinsic in the textual representation or over-determined by journalists and editors located in big exploitative conglomerates, with readers as passive recipients or even victims of tabloid messages. A critical reading of tabloid content and genre is no doubt important, as is an interrogation of the political economy within which these papers are located. But the cultural dimension of tabloid journalism, the “web of meanings, rituals, conventions and symbol systems” is often lost from sight in these analyses (Zelizer, 2008:88).

Instead of disregarding tabloids as ‘trash’ Jone, Vanderhaeghen & Viney (2008:56) argue that they should be regarded as an “immensely popular form of media which carries alternative world views” that broadsheets often fail to address. Arguably, this accounts for their popularity and influence as demonstrated by the tangible evidence in terms of their circular figures. Therefore, they are seen as a cultural articulation of the often contradictory and shifting processes of transition and serve as platforms of popular culture, mediated politics and citizenship in the country (ibid).

Furthermore, their perceived deviancy from the journalistic orthodoxy has served as a podium to demonstrate their functionality “in the light of the plurality of worldviews that constitute the fabric of South Africa” (Jone, Vanderhaeghen & Viney 2008:58). Hence, through their simplistic form and content characterised by numerous pictures, boxes and bold ink, and visual appeals, they draw more on social skills signifying that tabloids do not speak to the people or for the people, but from the people (Steenveld, 2010:167). If there’s one thing that can be concluded from the various debates on tabloids is that while their ethics have been brought into question, tabloids cannot be labelled as ‘trash journalism’ as they can contribute positively to the journalism profession by rejuvenating the relationship with the audiences. It is however, this lay ‘narrowcast’ approach to news coverage that arguably lends tabloids to the sensationalist paradigm.

- *Transformation of tabloids in South Africa*

Research done by Jone, Vanderhaeghen & Viney (2008:59) points out that due to complexity of South Africa's contemporary political, socio-economic and legal environment, the media industry operates in a profoundly negative public sphere, with tabloids not being an exception. The transformational ability of tabloid journalism is associated with the manner in which they offer a platform for the South African public to comment on topical issues through letters to the editor, opinionated columns and community based stories. Previous studies done on the role of tabloids on the coverage of politics, drugs, crime and other societal issues have presented valuable arguments on the constructive and reflective roles of tabloids when compared to their mainstream counterparts (Wasserman, 2010).

Rooney (2000) argues that these non-serious newspapers have 'abandoned the public sphere'. As a popular style of journalism, the tabloids departed from an emphasis on political coverage and a predominant engagement with broadly public issues of the day a long time ago (Rooney, 2000:101). The tabloids are very selective in their inclusion of political or wider public information and include it only when it fits in with the wider patterns of their coverage or when it concerns major issues which can be covered in sensational fashion. Politically, they might describe the contours of a journalistic lowest common denominator. However, the campaigns which they do pursue serve to maintain a relationship with a particular readership articulated within the accepted public idiom of the tabloids. People might then see the rest of their coverage as a social conversation which at best borders reality in the country. Therefore, tabloids and their extensive coverage of drug use and abuse somewhat influence the readers. This implies that tabloids also contribute towards other spheres of life such as socio-economic issues (ibid).

In addition, Rooney has proposed an explanation for this retreat which shifts responsibility from the newspapers themselves to the political institutions. He also postulates that tabloids readers probably do not have any interest in the workings of the establishment or establishment organisations and do not wish to monitor them. This is probably because they feel that they have no way of enforcing change in the organisations (Rooney, 2000:107). Although targeted at a mass audience, the

tabloids nevertheless in their expression have a consistent appeal couched within a close textual display of intimacy with idealised individual readers.

## **2.3 QUALITY OF SOUTH AFRICAN TABLOIDS NEWS REPORTING**

In this study, the quality of news reporting in tabloids is discussed in terms of the nature and characteristics of tabloids, and the language approach of tabloids.

### **2.3.1 The nature and characteristics of tabloids**

Sparks (2009:11) points out that the nature of tabloids devotes relatively little attention to politics, economics and society and relatively much to diversions like sports, scandal and popular entertainment. Sparks (2009) further states that tabloids devote relatively much attention to the personal and private lives of people, both celebrities and ordinary people, and relatively little to political processes, economic developments and social changes. Their presentation style is not very serious even though it is news. Nonetheless, the qualities of features that guide the tabloids' relevance include structure and iconic phrases. In either contrast or support of Sparks' view, literature on the nature of tabloid journalism is reviewed and described according to the sentence structure, headlines, captions, white space, colour, pictorial reporting, the masthead, and setting up and sensationalising photographs.

- *Sentence structure*

Conboy (2006:6) postulates that equally important is the structure/composition of news articles within tabloid newspapers. The use of short sense units or paragraphs is considered regardless that they are often only three and four sentences long. The language structure of tabloids is observed by the use of fewer sub-clauses and, more simple sentences and also the number of quotations used. The news articles have a simple structure and sometimes consider the use of slang. The articles are sometimes considered to be of low standard because of these characteristics. Moreover, the choice of words is also a significant feature in tabloids. Tabloids use words that attract the readers' interests such as signal words (e.g. gay, fat) and colloquial English, with few difficult words. The choice of words is also an emotive style and has a large number of qualifiers.

- *Headlines*

According to Rudin & Ibbotson (2002:75), tabloid headlines consist of grammatical omissions, with many eye-catching elements such as; alliteration, emotive verbs/adjectives, capital letters, and sub-headings. Tabloids have a target group and appeal that is written for the less demanding reader, who is not interested in detailed news reports. They also target the so-called “human interest” reader who wants to know about personal aspects of people. Moreover, headlines signify the importance of the text to which they relate and the orders in which they appear on the page and their size have a message for the reader. Headlines fall into the following categories:

- *Banner*

This is the big and bold headline for the front page splash that will sell the newspaper. Tabloids with large one or two-word banner headlines leap out from news-stands and command the attention of the passing public. There is no upper limit to the size of the banner and in practice some are set at 60 points but the lower limit should not be less than 12 points to contrast with the average body text size of 8 to 10 points. Most banner headlines are emboldened for emphasis and can be justified as detailed above to suit the style and purpose of the publication. Some banner headlines are in upper case throughout such as: *NYAOPE USE RIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA*. Others use upper and lower case: *Nyaope use rife in South Africa*. What should be avoided is starting every word in upper case, as in *Nyaope Use Rife in South Africa* (Rudin & Ibbotson, 2002:76).

- *Strap line*

Strap line is used in conjunction with the banner headline or other main headings. The single line strap runs above or below the banner and provides a short subsidiary summary, thought or angle on the main headline and story. They are normally set in a smaller point size and often in a different typeface from the banner. For example: “The South African Police Service warned citizens of heinous crimes reportedly committed by youth under the influence of the street drug termed *nyaope*”.



- *Tag line*

A tag line is used below the main headline to signify either the place, type of story or source as in 'SAPA' (South African Press Association).

- *Sub-headings*

Sub-headings can either be 'side heads' or 'crossheads' and are important in relating the headline to the body text. Side heads, as the term implies, is set flush left to the margin and is more common in magazines than newspapers. They may be accompanied by asterisks or bullet points for added emphasis. Crossheads are widely used in newspapers and magazines as a means of breaking up the monotony of large chunks of text and maintaining the interest of the reader. This is of particular importance in long feature news articles (Rudin & Ibbotson, 2002:78).

In addition, they are centred in the column of text and frequently emboldened. The number and placing of the sub-headings depend on the style and content of the article. Too many sub-headings will irritate the reader, and too few will make the reader lose interest. Some are placed in visible text boxes and others are underlined for emphasis. The crosshead may be a direct quotation from the text or a one or two word signpost of the main points within the ensuing paragraph or paragraphs of the news report (ibid).

- *By-lines and date lines*

It is every journalist's dream to get their first by-line; which is their name above the story. The relative anonymity of the titles 'Correspondent' or 'Staff reporter' is replaced by the actual name and sometimes the role of the author of the piece. Thus, by-lines such as 'John Smith, Court reporter' or 'Alan Brown, Chief football writer' give due attribution to the writer. Indeed many national newspapers and magazines also print e-mail addresses of the writer at the bottom of the news articles (Rudin & Ibbotson, 2002:79).

- *The masthead*

The masthead or flag, although not strictly a headline, is one of the most important characteristics of a newspaper or magazine. The masthead can also be termed the title and is the defining feature for recognition by the target readership. In recent

years, South Africa's *Mail and Guardian* has twice changed the textual style of its masthead to reflect the old and the new by using serif and sans serif in the title (Conboy, 2006).

- *Captions*

Rudin & Ibbotson (2002:82) states that captions are used to link visual images with the text and should provide short, yet additional information. A caption under a picture of a person that accompanies a story may just state the name of the person. A caption placed under a picture that is located some way from the story should give a brief resume of what the picture is about and its links to the story, but it should not tell the whole story so as to tease the reader into reading the story. Sometimes a single word in upper case and emboldened is used followed by a short phrase in regular lower case. Pictures that stand alone by not being linked to a story have longer captions of say 20–30 words that act as a mini report of what is happening, where it is happening and why.

- *White space*

Framing pages with white space strengthens the message by focusing the readers' attention on words and ideas. Equally, the amount of white between and around paragraphs of text facilitates easy reading and can emphasise the importance of the text. As previously noted, leading is an important part of textual layout. Different publications require different amounts of white space and certainly magazines have proportionately more white space than newspapers. It should be noted that too little white space will result in a cluttered appearance especially if clashing styles, sizes and weights of fonts are used. Conversely, too much white space can detract from the textual message and make it appear lightweight (Rudin & Ibbotson, 2002:83).

- *Colour*

The judicious use of colour can reflect the message that is being communicated. Bright colours indicate excitement whereas subdued colours add dignity. However, the layout designer should try to overcome the tendency to use too many colours on one page. Boxes filled with colour as a background to the text can be very eye catching and, whilst this is common in magazines, there is an increasing use of this

technique in newspapers. Of course, white text on a black background is equally effective if used sparingly (Rudin & Ibbotson, 2002).

- *Pictorial/ Image reporting*

Photographic representations have become an important field for scholarly research to address in the ‘visual age, in particular the ways in which news images play an ideological role as expressions of a collective historical consciousness (Tomanić Trivundža, 2004). Scholars concerned specifically with media coverage of human suffering have been interested in the ways in which drug use and wars are represented visually in the news. While some have argued that such news imagery is increasingly graphic and leads to compassion fatigue, others point to the relative scarcity of gruesome images, as ‘photo editors of newspapers tend to select photographs for publication that hide rather than transcribe the body’ (Fishman, 2003:55).

- *Setting up photographs*

Setting up photographs is another important issue in tabloid reporting. It is often difficult to detect a set-up photograph by looking at it, and many photographers have resorted to this practice as an “easy” way to get the photograph that they want but cannot find naturally thereby, resort to recreate a picture they have missed. The term “set-up photographs” as used here does not include photographs that are obviously set up such as an attractive woman sitting in a field of flowers, or a politician grinning and shaking the hand of a sports hero. It is used to describe staged photographs that are passed off or presented as genuine reportage (Nel, 2007: 367).

There are a number of cases in tabloids that can be used to describe the setting up of photographs phenomenon. It has been the practice of some photographers to throw coins into a dustbin to encourage children to dig through the contents and then pass the photograph off as starving children looking for food. Other photographers have encouraged children to hold automatic weapons and then use the pictures to suggest that they are combatants in a civil war situation. There is really no valid excuse for setting up photographs. The role of photography in journalism is about recording reality as it happens with this little intrusion by the photographer as possible. Setting up a photograph goes directly against this and can only be

described as unethical, particularly on the reportage of pivotal and sensitive issues such as the consumption of illicit drugs in societies (Nel, 2007).

- *Sensational photographs*

Debates over the extent of graphic imagery of death and drug addicts in newspapers often suffer from generalised assertions that are based on inadequate or incomplete empirical evidence. Newspapers are believed to display death in very graphic ways, with particularly the tabloid press assumedly leading a race to the bottom. News coverage of death and dying has found increased attention in academic research in recent years (Fahmy & Kim, 2008). While much emphasis was originally on written content, the focus has shifted to visual representations. Such studies have mainly been concerned with whether death is present in newspaper images, contradicting popular expectations that death is omnipresent (Keith, Fishman & Smith, 2006; Taylor, 1998).

- *Influencing pictures on readers*

The reader that is first attracted to a page by a picture may, if time is short, scan only the main items. With time the reader may read the whole page. A picture with a suitable caption acts as a teaser so that the reader is drawn in to read the juxtaposed text to gain further insight into the story. Other pictures may be stand-alone and contain in the caption a brief explanation of the image. Colour pictures are now prevalent in all newspapers and magazines and these draw potential readers to magazine and newspaper racks at retail outlets; if the face on the cover is instantly recognisable, the bait is taken (Rudin & Ibboston, 2002:87). For instance, a *Daily Sun* or *Sowetan* news report with a picture of a grieving *nyaope* addict with the caption: "The repercussion of substances abuse" may draw potential readers to the newspapers.

Other examples of pictures may include the images of addicts' family members solemn due to their child's drug use, the plight of HIV/AIDS dying victims and victims of mob justice by South African communities. These images serve as powerful reminders of the power of the picture in news reporting. Photographs can be cropped, scaled and re-touched for a variety of reasons but their use in any publication adds another dimension to the textual message. In addition, digital

technology has revolutionised the acquisition of images either from camera, scanner or the internet, and the manipulation of those images for inclusion in hard copy or web-based publications (ibid).

### **2.3.2 Language approach of tabloids**

The use of a range of language specific to a particular newspaper is an editorial strategy, among many others, which enables a readership to be targeted. The language of the popular tabloid press is as accurate a prediction of the assumed social class and income of its readership as the advertisements and news content. Language is employed across the tabloid paper in a systematic way to build a composite version of the vocabulary and style of their ideal average reader; a sort of vernacular ventriloquism (Conboy, 2002:162). Some tabloids use clever language that sounds good but insincere, and without real meaning. This type of systematic language approach can be referred to as rhetoric (ibid).

- *Rhetoric patterns of tabloid language*

This is not a high-flown, abstract style but a set of language devices used with the deliberate and consistent aim of confirming the existence of a national tabloid readership. It is a range of language use by tabloids to effectively inscribe a readership within its pages through the use of metaphor, irony, alliteration, rhyme or parallelism. This rhetoric gains its coherence by being repeated across the various sections of the tabloid newspaper. This sees a narrowing of the approaches to sport and politics, celebrity and disaster as the language tends to be drawn more towards a common approach than in traditional serious newspapers. This is an important point to stress, as it is not simply that the tabloids have an extreme version of traditional news values (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001:277).

In addition, this type of language is also a marketing strategy which supports the matching of advertising to the income level of the readership. This identification of a common language, targeted at an idealised reader of lower socio-economic status, combines into serving a broader normative function. This style of language forms an essential part of an ideological pact with the readership. For this reason, it may be said that, it is in the two-way process between language and the reader that 'ideology is inscribed in social practice' (Hodge & Kress, 2003:210).

- *Word play*

Humour is never far from the top of the tabloids' list of priorities. Even though far from being the sole preserve of the tabloids, they take word play into areas of irreverence and mockery inconceivable for the more serious-minded newspapers. Playing with words features strongly in their armoury and therefore witticisms are prominent among the rhetorical devices used. It is important to stress that humour calls upon a very active involvement from their readers which is very much in keeping with the traditional irreverence of popular culture through the ages (Hodge & Kress, 2003:210).

- *Letters and interaction with readers*

The language of the letters' pages is one of the most explicit sites for the celebration of the assumed community of the tabloids, providing an ideological link between the newspaper institution and the readership. This language is centred on a nationally specific set of priorities. For example, in the *Daily Sun*, the letters to the editor feature is not only where readers air their opinions, but also provide a forum which the newspaper claims as its own version of a blunt catchword. Each of the main tabloids has its own way of locating the identity of their ideal reader on their letters' page. They each portray a tone and a set of semiotic triggers which locate the attention of their own community of readers. The letters' pages can be used to explicitly support the views and campaigns of their main tabloid on national issues (Conboy, 2002).

- *Familiar names*

Familiar names and nicknames are used in the tabloids as a bridge of familiarity, connecting readers to a world outside the confines of their lived experience. Yet in media terms, they are familiar with these people because of their presence in the news and other media. Such language reinforces the linkage between the tabloid news agenda and broader aspects of popular culture including television, film and popular music. Such intertextuality is what assists in the broad 'cultural discourse' (Dahlgren, 1988:51). The framing of such characters in the language of familiarity helps to establish the 'naturalness' of the presence of these people and their affairs in the pages of the newspaper while at the same time helping the popular press

justify how it side-lines more serious issues about the contemporary world in favour of what it claims its readers want (Conboy, 2002).

- *The politics of slang*

One of the more obvious ways in which the tabloids attempt to reinforce their relationship with their readership is by employing colloquial expressionism and slang. This strategy appears to allow the newspapers to talk to a readership in its own, informal manner and further extends the explicit appeal of these papers to be on the side of the people, leading discussions in an editorial version of the language of the people. The implication of this language is that the tabloids are on the side of the people as readers and opposed to the interests of the power block (Fiske, 1994). For example, the *Daily Sun* newspaper uses simple language that resonates with the majority of its readership. The paper uses colloquial words such as “*tsotsi*” (thug), “*gogo*” (old lady), “*madala*” (old man) et cetera, which is language that most of its readers associate with.

- *Noun phrases and scripts*

Because of their ability to compress information, noun phrases are frequently used in newspapers. They have the added advantage of having a discrete ideological function as they can also be linked to provide simple references to certain categories which reinforce established preferences on particular newspapers. An example is from *Daily Sun*'s, 06 June 2016 news report titled “*Nyaope* addicts given lifeline”. This provides short semantic or visual signals to readers which are drawn from an archive of preferred meanings which consciously or unconsciously predispose the reader to a particular range of interpretations of the information before them. They provide semantic and syntactic short cuts to the accumulated views of the newspaper on certain issues. They provide the nudge and the wink of abbreviated opinion or ideological pact in that they assume that we share the same view of the world as them (Entman, 2003).

- *Metaphors and politics*

Politics is often depicted in metaphorical terms in newspaper language in general. It is a tendency which calls into question the objective and neutral claims of newspaper language, given the emotive nature of much metaphorical association. Some linguists claim that non-literal language, including metaphors, is the rule not the exception. Lycan (2000) considers metaphorical language as having the structure of a bridge between the factual world and ideological persuasion, and according to this hypothesis, metaphors have an important role in establishing common associations within newspaper texts. Tabloids draw upon a range of metaphors which is very much in keeping with the other popular references of their coverage.

- *Use of stereotype*

Representation through language, in some contexts and to a certain format, can make use of stereotypes. According to Barrat (1986:42), “the concept of stereotype, as a kind of ‘blinkered’ mental attitude, is a notion imported into media studies from psychology. The stereotype notion is clearly linked in some ways to the sociological notion of deviant labels. Deviant labels are descriptions or versions of behaviour that undermine and devalue that behaviour. By contrast, stereotypes frequently attempt to validate certain roles and behaviour of readers. Far from being necessarily negative (though some are), they often present positive models of behaviour to emulate” (Conboy, 2002:173). With reference to this understanding, and with regard to tabloid representation through language used or in use, deviant labels are always negative and stereotypes can be positive or negative and this depends on the social and cultural contexts of stereotyping (ibid). In the context of this research, the representation is not about the physical images of *nyaope* addicts but about the textual representation of *nyaope* consumption in the two South African newspapers.

## **2.4 CONTEXTUAL ROLE OF TABLOIDS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY**

The primary role of print media in all its forms; newspapers, magazines, brochure, etc. is the reporting of news events (McQuail, 2000). The role of tabloids is hereby discussed with regard to freedom of expression, entertainment, shaping social



institutions, instrument for social transformation and information dissemination about multiple social issues. The roles are discussed below.

#### **2.4.1 Freedom of expression**

Tabloids assist readers to express their ideas widely because without them, most ordinary people's expressions would be limited to people within earshot. In addition, most of the historic news known to the world today is because of the pervasive role of newspapers and other media. In this study, the role of tabloid newspapers is essential to disseminate the message about the consumption of *nyaope* generally. Vivian (2003:18) further states that tabloids serve as the platform for freedom of readers to express issues believed to be worth addressing in society.

In addition, the most important democratic roles that tabloids are expected to serve include the surveillance of socio-political developments and identifying the most relevant issues. They also provide a platform for debate across a diverse range of views, hold officials to account for the way they exercise power, provide incentives for citizens to learn, choose, and become involved in the political process, and resist efforts of forces outside the media to subvert their independence (Vivian, 2003).

However, there is a growing concern that tabloids are not fulfilling these roles properly. Media critics claim that tabloid journalism controlled by a few multi-national conglomerates has become an anti-democratic force supporting the status quo (Kellner, 2004). The news is more entertaining than informing, supplying mostly gossip, scandals, sex, and violence and the news is more about personalities than about ideologies.

#### **2.4.2 Entertainment**

The role of tabloids is to keep people entertained on a variety of news events. People like to hear about the scandals, heartaches, and joys of celebrities, politicians, and other high-profile figures in society. These aspects of everyday life normalise people who appear untouchable. Thus, tabloidism is a very profitable terrain that helps fuel the economy, and it gives ordinary people the opportunity to gain fame and fortune. Tabloids also provide amusement, diversion and the means of relaxation and reduce social tension among its readers (Williams, 2005:30).

### **2.4.3 Shaping social institutions**

The daily happenings of societies are expressed and shaped in the stories told in the media, particularly tabloids. In addition, the tabloids serve as important tools for social institutions. They are crucial presenters of culture, politics and social life, shaping as well as reflecting how these are formed and expressed” (Tester, 2001:25). Furthermore, Tester (2001:25) further states that “the concern to be ‘accurate and fair’ is legitimized by the side of the field of journalistic practice which associates news with objectivity and at most, a commentary which is clearly based in the ‘facts’ of the case”. Journalists need to have accurate and fair reportage of societal issues in order to shape social institutions.

However, Bell (1998) argues that it is not easy to find a journalistic exercise or practice which maintains the values of accuracy and fairness. The standards of impartiality do not really exist in the field of the mass media as the media themselves are significant social organisations. For this reason, objective and impartial journalism is of declining implication because of the social institutions that the media represent. Bell and Garrett (1998:64) explain that “stories are central to human nature. The stories people tell are a core part of their social identity, and the construction of a life story is crucial to self-identity. The ideas of the stories are also central to news media. The story ideas may be about drugs, health, or crime. This is not only owed to journalists’ ability to write articles, but to present stories with structure, order, viewpoint and value” (ibid).

### **2.4.4 Instrument for social transformation**

According to Tester (2001), in a contemporary society, tabloids and other mass media play a crucial role. They have become one of the most powerful and important social organisations. Tabloids can also be considered as a crucial means of social transformation, and consequently, an instrument for social development. An understanding of social transformation entails ways in which individuals and organisations or collectives go through in order for them to develop by facing social challenges and difficulties to achieve their objectives and goals. The role played by tabloids in the society can be positive or negative.

In addition, Tester (2001:37) postulates that, “the journalistic character has to be transformed”. The journalist has to stop claiming to be the objective enquirer after the truth but instead, to be one who is able to manipulate the audience and other scarce resources so that their availability is maximised. Consequently, even though the field of journalistic production is split between two opposing camps, “broader contextual issues tend to influence the emergence of a narrow range of journalistic productions and practices, around the concern of manipulating access to resources rather than in the name of any ostensibly greater value” (ibid).

#### **2.4.5 Information on societal issues**

South African tabloids focus on issues of importance to a section of a large majority of the country’s population, who have been neglected by mainstream commercial media because they had not been seen as a lucrative audience (Harber, 2005). The tabloid editors are explicit in identifying their audience as the working class. Tabloids should be seen to fulfil a pivotal role in the broader sense not only by providing information of the formal political kind, but also through their contribution to social and cultural shifts that have implications for post-apartheid democracy. As such, they provide a structured framework for our continued and important discussions and reviews of the significant tasks they play as key socialisation and ideological instruments in society (ibid).

#### **2.4.6 Watchdogs of democracy**

McQuail (2004) describes tabloid newspapers as the watchdog of democracy. It has also been argued that tabloid newspapers, specifically their editorials, ‘evaluate the importance of the discussions, arguments, and decisions uttered in the main arenas of society. The tabloids make an assessment of discussions and situations, and motivate decision-makers, authorities, or citizens to act against the problems they have identified’ (ibid). The way in which political actions and motives are portrayed in the media ‘news framing’, influences the audience’s interpretation and evaluation of, and judgements on political issues.

In addition, the way in which a single issue is framed may vary considerably between media, such as the difference between newspapers operating from different political perspectives or addressing different audiences. The effect of such news framing is

mediated by the audience's pre-existing knowledge and beliefs on the particular issue. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the media have a greater potential influence where people have a limited knowledge of the relevant issues (such as, for example, what 'harm-minimisation' actually means). Furthermore, where an issue is open to different interpretations, there are a number of textual features of print media coverage which narrow the range of likely interpretation (McQuail, 2004). It is through these roles that the study aims to analyse the manner in which the two newspapers under study cover the consumption of *nyaope*. The relevant roles of tabloids in relation to this study are that, they provide information about events and conditions happening in society and the world.

## **2.5 NEWS SELECTION CRITERIA IN TABLOIDS**

A study conducted by Shoemaker & Cohen (2006:182) postulates that everyday journalists have to choose from numerous items to decide which events qualify for inclusion in tabloids, as the events cannot all fit the available space. The media act as 'gatekeepers', who control and moderate the access to news and information. In today's society, the amount and flow of information and communication has increased dramatically. In addition, readers become involved as creators and distributors of content. The abundance of information makes it difficult for journalists to manage and assess the events in terms of their alleged newsworthiness. The selection of news by tabloids is said to be influenced by a range of factors. The criteria to determine the factors used to assess news values were derived from sociological and technical perspectives and journalism's organisational criteria and standards as discussed below.

### **2.5.1 Sociological perspective**

Shoemaker & Cohen (2006:185) state that sociological research on the process of news selection in newsrooms has resulted in various overviews of 'news values' or 'news selection criteria'. The concept of newsworthiness is built on the assumption that certain events get selected by tabloids above others based on the attributes or 'news values' they possess. The more of these news values are satisfied, the more likely an event will be selected. If an event lacks one news value, it can compensate

by possessing another. Hence, journalists' criteria for selecting the news are cumulative, making stories to be significant based on their overall level of newsworthiness. Events that occur suddenly and fit well with the news organisation' schedule are more likely to be reported than those that occur gradually or at inconvenient times of the day or night. For example, long term trends are not likely to receive much coverage (ibid).

The earliest attempt for a systematic approach of determining newsworthiness by news values was the taxonomy by Galtung & Ruge (1969) that triggered both scholars and practitioners in examining aspects of events that make them more likely to receive coverage. For analytical purposes, the concept of news values is valuable to understand that news selection is more than just the outcome of journalists' 'gut feeling'. To decide on what news is and what is not, journalists consciously and unconsciously use a set of selection criteria that help them assess the newsworthiness of a story or an event.

In the 1960's Galtung & Ruge published a theory of news selection, which provided taxonomy of 12 news values that define how events become news. More specifically, they discerned the frequency: the time-span of the event to unfold itself; threshold: the impact or intensity of an event; unambiguity: the clarity of the event; meaningfulness: the relevance of the event, often in terms of geographical proximity and cultural similarity; and consonance: the way the event fits with the expectations about the state of the world. Furthermore, the theory focused on unexpectedness: the unusualness of the event; continuity: further development of a previous newsworthy story and composition: a mixture of different kind of news. Lastly, reference to elite nations, and reference to elite persons; events that can be made personal, and refer to something negative. The value of facticity was added to the theory as a good story needs facts for example; names, locations, numbers and figures (Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006).

### **2.5.2 Technical perspective**

While the aspects of news as described in the sociological perspective provide valuable guidelines for the theoretical analysis of news, this remains a task for specialists, labour intensive and prone to human error. However, recent advances in semantic web technologies have made new tools and services available on the Web

to automatically analyse the content of an article. These technologies mapped to the news values can be used to detect the technical perspective of an article through the use of a computer software programme (McGregor, 2002:98).

### **2.5.3 Organisational criteria and standards of journalism**

News values are often tied to organisational criteria or journalists' perceptions and assessments. An example of this is Schulz (1982:147), who offers six dimensions of news selection which are measured by frequency, position, length and presentation. He examines the correlation between political reporting on television in a south-western German town and the 'image of politics' held by viewers and concludes that 'news factors' may be conceptualised as 'organizational criteria of collective perception which govern the media's as well as the individual's construction of reality' (Schulz, 1982:149). An example is of research applied to Schulz's higher order dimensions of news selection. These include the dimensions (and associated news factors) of: status, valence, relevance, identification, consonance and dynamics (Maier & Ruhrmann, 2008).

Drawing on cognitive psychology, Eilders (2006:6) tackles the 'status of news factors as either events or news characteristics' for both journalists and audiences. She regards news factors as 'efficient selection criteria in both media use and the retention of news items by the audience' (ibid p10). She explains her positions on the epistemological status of 'reality' as 'always representing an individual's specific perception' and since journalists are 'the most important selective agents, their perception should be critical to the definition of news factors'. Thus, news factors may be regarded as 'journalistic hypotheses' or as 'perceived event characteristics' (Eilders, 2006:11). Eilders suggests that news factors establish a 'relevance schema and thus guide selective attention and information processing in the audience'.

## **2.6 TABLOID CULTURE IN SOUTH AFRICAN NEWS INDUSTRY**

Narsee (2012:5) holds the view that tabloid culture has traditionally often been associated with sensationalist headlines, sexy, trashy, and opinionated rather than fact-based, and far-fetched stories, which go against the traditional journalistic standards of objectivity, neutrality and truth telling. The two main objections against

tabloids are the assumed and snobbish view of “low quality” of journalism practiced by tabloids and the view that there is a lack of ethical standards applied by journalists. Tabloids, such as the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan*, act as a voice for a large segment of the working class, which have previously been excluded from coverage and voicing their views and concerns (Wasserman, 2010:64). Literature on tabloid culture in South Africa is hereby discussed regarding, tabloid culture and journalism, influences and approaches of tabloids on popular culture.

### **2.6.1 Tabloids in the realm of journalism**

In her capacity as then Chair of South African National Editors Forum (SANEF), (Haffajee, 2007:06), was positive about the potential rejuvenation that tabloids could bring to the country’s journalism, by saying:

*“Tabloids have been on the SANEF agenda for the last couple of years because it is most interesting what is happening in SA journalism. There has been a complete shakeup. Tabloids are the big media story...They encourage a reading public, they act as a watchdog, and they keep power on its toes. We in the mainstream media have a lot to learn! Maybe they can also learn from our codes and ethics et cetera”.*

Berger (2010) seems less amenable to tabloid influence, and maintains that the dominant paradigm is the one to be followed by popular newspapers. He holds up the example of the *Sowetan* as a paper that wants to follow a popular approach but remained “at root...factual.” The *Sowetan* has been the one paper in the country that has been most clearly deserted by its readers in favour of the new tabloid, the *Daily Sun* because it had turned its attention away from “the grassroots” to the “more affluent readers” (Berger, 2010:34). Berger further invokes the democratic role of journalism in South Africa when he slams tabloids as being “a country away from credible journalism.” For him, tabloid writing is “the stuff of cheap fiction,” its “crass archetypal narratives” falling short of “at least some of the basics of journalism” (Wasserman, 2010:68).

### **2.6.2 Tabloid culture and popular journalism**

The concept of tabloid culture is observed by Gripsrud (2000:285) as the umbrella phrase beneath which a range of debates, theories and analyses of contemporary popular news and entertainment-based media can be drawn together. The tabloidisation of the media has been an on-going preoccupation not only for media

scholars but also for the media industries themselves. Where public debate takes place about the media, its role and function, concerns about tabloid content are never far away. 'Tabloidisation' is a tabloid term, a media industry expression rather than a scholarly concept, denoting a dumbing down of media content and a weakening of the ideal functions of mass media in liberal democracies (Wasserman, 2010:68).

Furthermore, Gripsrud (2000) explains that although the term tabloidization was originally deployed to describe a decline in journalistic standards, it is now increasingly applied to all forms of popular mainstream media content including talk shows and radio phone-ins, reality television, gross-out comedy, celebrity magazines and even documentary. 'Tabloid culture' then rather than denoting a particular market, medium, format or content (although it necessarily includes all of these) refers to a changing media landscape or 'media sphere' and signals the contemporary emphasis of this collection, focusing on tabloid media as both currently culturally significant and as part of the content and flow of everyday life (ibid).

Gripsrud (2000:297) further observed that tabloid journalism is, 'a relative expansion of certain forms of popular journalism that affects cultural, political, and public life in general. It is important, therefore, to consider tabloid forms in the context of this broader cultural field. Consequently, many of the variables in this study provide a narrative text analysis of news reports regarding the coverage of *nyaope* in the newspapers. The variables include; objectivity in reportage, types of sources consulted, expert knowledge reportage, the use of headlines et cetera.

- *Effects of tabloids on mainstream journalism*

Since the take-off of South African tabloids in the early 2000s, there have been a number of debates and critiques surrounding the tabloid market. The mainstream press were quick to point fingers at the tabloids for their lack of ethical practices. However, as tabloids have gained such notoriety over the years, it may be time for the mainstream press to acknowledge that there is much that can be learned from the tabloid press (Narsee, 2012).



While mainstream press has always been quick to judge tabloids, tabloids have their own critiques of the mainstreams, which have largely been used to propel their success. Mainstream press is criticised for its elitist reporting that often excludes the poor masses. Journalists in mainstream newsrooms are often reliant on press releases and the telephone to get their stories rather than 'getting out there' to gather news. A common view amongst tabloids is that mainstream journalism has failed in their duties towards the community and therefore tabloids have taken it upon themselves to rekindle this relationship with the community (Narsee, 2012:8).

Berger (2010) argues that a central question in examining the effect of the emergence of new tabloids on South Africa's mainstream journalistic paradigm is whether the acknowledgement of tabloids as legitimate newspapers succeeds in turning the mainstream press's gaze upon itself. The (albeit reluctant) acceptance of tabloids into the journalistic fold by the establishment might suggest a certain openness to different journalistic styles and approaches. At the same time, such acceptance could serve to reaffirm that the dominant journalistic paradigm is the most suitable for meeting the challenges of journalism in the young democracy. This could also banish tabloids into a popular journalism ghetto without taking seriously the challenge they pose to mainstream journalism in the country.

### **2.6.3 Influence of tabloids on popular culture**

A popular view about tabloids is that they pander to the lowest common denominator of public taste, they simplify complex issues, and they generally fail to provide information that citizens need in order to make informed judgments. The latter being the reason for the existence of serious newspapers (Ornerbring & Jonson, 2004:283). A different view is taken by critical media scholars. Sparks (1991:64), for example, suggests that there is a need to treat tabloid newspapers as extremely important cultural phenomena, "as objects of study in their own right rather than exemplars of the lamentable debasement of popular taste compared with that shown by intellectuals".

Nelson et al. (1991:64) emphasise that "all forms of cultural production need to be studied in relation to other cultural practices and to social and historical structures." Essentially, these views provide a useful starting point in the attempts to make sense of the rapid growth and influences of tabloid newspapers in South Africa.

- *Tabloids and development of the linguistic community*

The development of local languages enhances the feeling that each linguistic community had its own specific attributes and political interests, which are directly linked to the communicative power of these languages to draw in a wider community of speakers and listeners as active participants in the nation. Anderson (1987:15) emphasizes the linguistic basis of the evolution of nationalism and demonstrates how it was given textual coherence by the emergence of novels and most importantly, newspapers. The latter enabled an 'imagined political community' to be able to picture itself as moving through history as one body with common interests and a common language, reflecting on that process on a regular basis. Barker (1998) has also pointed out how this community of readers began to broaden out and perceive itself as a national public, articulating its own set of identifiable opinions (Conboy, 2008:2).

#### **2.6.4 Approaches of tabloids on popular culture**

The approaches of tabloids on popular culture always carry demanding responsibilities. The tasks are to "transcend the futile moralism" (Grisrud, 2000:267) that characterises much of the local debate and to account historically and sociologically for their emergence, particularly their emergence on the reportage of illicit drugs. Three main approaches are suggested namely, the textual examination of the tabloids; tabloids on alternative sphere; and finally, a political economy approach to the production and circulation of meanings.

- *Textual approach to the examination of tabloids*

The textual approach helps us understand what constitutes 'news' in a tabloid, their sources, their linguistic style, the textual mix they favour and the visual elements they use in their communication with target audiences (use of photographs, graphics, typography, colour). In other words, a textual analysis may help us understand the affective appeal of tabloids.

- *Production and circulation of meaning in tabloids*

There are pointers from international research that provide insight into the workings of local tabloids. For example, Grisrud (2000) has argued that well-known features

of the tabloid press, such as sensationalism, personalisation and the focus on private concerns, parallel the main components of melodrama, which developed in the last century and have attained a prominent position in tabloids and their production of meaning.

Grisprud (2000:273) further argues that these elements of the press are popular precisely because they provide ways of understanding the world which are different from the idealised notion of how the mainstream press works. However, as is well known, the mainstream press are increasingly using these same techniques in order to deal with the challenge of television news, and so the lines between some tabloids and some of the mainstream press are becoming increasingly blurred (ibid).

- *Tabloids as an alternative sphere*

Some scholars have argued that popular journalism can contribute to an alternative public sphere even while engaging in a sensationalist and emotional mode of address when they provide ordinary people with the opportunity to tell their story and bring the struggles of their everyday life into the public arena (Örnebring & Jönsson 2004; Örnebring, 2006:862). This view is in line with a more cultural understanding of the audience appeal than the dominant view of the news media as “democracy’s watchdog” (Hermes, 2006:29). However, this study examines the manner in which both the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan* tabloid newspapers reported on the consumption of the illicit drug called *nyaope*.

## **2.7 TABLOID JOURNALISM AND SOCIETY**

Tabloid journalism has been seen as liberating in some contexts, through making news accessible to a larger number of people, an argument also brought up in the analysis of their role in the developing countries. Yet, following the two arguments in the discussion of the public sphere, a more illustrious and clearly articulated ‘defence’ for tabloid journalism states that the perception of this as a negative social force simply rests on unhelpful assumptions. These include the idea that personalisation and a stress on emotion and experience would necessarily be inferior to abstract analysis and rational thinking for providing an understanding of the world (Bird, 2001:135). The concept of tabloid journalism and society seeks to

discuss tabloid journalism and the public sphere, as factors that entice readers to tabloids, perceptions of readers on tabloids and the impact of dailies on public opinion.

### **2.7.1 Tabloid journalism and the public sphere**

According to Gripsrud (2000:279), South African tabloids, with their focus on social welfare issues and the relationship of trust established with their readers, have created a platform where readers can vent their opinions on disregarded issues. This articulation of disillusionment will whether translate into political mobilisation or instead act to defuse mounting pressure on tabloids to report about issues that affect the public sphere. These issues range from, drug use and abuse among youth, high rate of crime in communities and health related issues among others.

In addition, Gripsrud further states that providing the citizens of a democratic society with accurate and unbiased information is an enduring journalistic value. This may explain why critics of journalism have, since the development of the Penny Press, focused on the information function of journalism to argue publicly for the distinction between “proper” reporting and sensational tabloid attempts to inform the public. The verdict is that proper journalism serves as society’s overseer by focusing primarily on substantive and timely political and economic issues while tabloid journalists openly favour coverage of scandal, crime, human tragedy, and other disruptions of everyday life. Consequently, the content of tabloid news has been dismissed as trivial “infotainment,” while standard news practices are commended for their focus on important information, such as drug use and abuse, crime and health issues in South African communities (Gripsrud, 2000).

### **2.7.2 The impact of tabloids on public opinion**

McCombs (2004:1) holds the view that daily newspapers are considered the principal sources of information about public affairs. Newspapers communicate a host of cues about the relative salience of topics on their daily agenda. People have opinions on many things, but only a few topics really matter to them. While many issues compete for public attention, only a few are successful in doing so, and the news media exert significant influence on their audiences’ perceptions of what the most important issues of the day are.

As such, newspaper content indirectly prescribes societal discourse and influences opinions regarding matters of importance including the manner in which people should behave and how they respond to socio- economic challenges such as drug abuse, crime, racism and xenophobia, et cetera. The dailies capably provide information about events and social conditions to society in the world through explaining, interpreting and commenting on the meaning of those events and information (McCombs, 2004). Furthermore, Rosen (2012:34) classifies the media as public opinion shapers as they bring issues to public attention, affect how the issues are framed, and give voice to selected opinion holders.

Public opinion can be broadly defined as the collective consensus about topical matters reached by groups within larger communities. These groups can vary from very small entities to vast international groups within larger communities (Harber, 2005). Subsequently, public opinion can revolve around specific issues of the moment or can be thought of as the collective will of a society or a nation. Opinions may be both internally and externally constructed (ibid).

- *Facilitation of dialogue among readers*

A particularly relevant dichotomy for public opinion is a process of focus versus the process of outcomes. Perspectives on public opinion as a process stress the role of dialogue and deliberation as core elements in the description and evaluation of public opinion (McCombs, Hubert, Kiousis & Wanta, 2011). In this regard, newspapers play an important role within the broad mass media environment to facilitate dialogue among citizens and therefore remain a central element in interrogating the media and social behaviour on critical issues like the abuse of illicit drugs such as *nyaope*, heroin, cocaine and others. Thus, such discourses create awareness among tabloid readers and society on various topical issues affecting society (ibid).

- *Behavioural changes among readers*

The salience of issues and other topics on the media agenda also influences observable behaviour among readers. Tabloids attempt to captivate or persuade the masses with their colours and headlines about wonderful, amazing, and even shocking stories. Persuasion is a deliberate attempt by one individual or a group of

individuals to modify the attitude, beliefs, or behaviours of another individual or group members through the transmission of particular messages. Thus, the readers' behaviour is largely influenced by the content of the news they read in tabloids (Conboy, 2006:68).

Furthermore, readers trust the tabloids to provide them with information that keeps them informed, but also make them feel connected to the larger society and enable them to perform their roles as citizens in the social compact. Tabloids, with their focus on societal issues and the relationship of trust that they establish with their readers, create a platform where readers can vent their feelings of marginalization. Whether this articulation of disillusionment will translate into mobilisation or instead act to defuse mounting pressure on tabloids to report more on societal issues is debatable (Conboy, 2006).

### **2.7.3 Factors that entice readers to tabloids**

Tabloids have become popular amongst audiences as they appeal to the everyday, ordinary person on the street (Narsee, 2012:8). The coverage in tabloids relates to occurrences in their readers' lives and issues that affect them, in a humorous manner and in a language that is understood by them. The focus is not on political elites and leadership battles. The tabloids win their readers over by dealing with issues that are important to them and challenge authorities on behalf of the readers. As a result, millions readers purchase tabloids at affordable prices and the majority of these readers have previously never purchased a newspaper before (Narsee, 2012:10).

A study conducted on the impact of tabloids on readers from peri-urban and rural areas observed that: for instance, in Gauteng province, two focus-group sessions were conducted with readers of the *Daily Sun*, one with farm workers in a peri-urban area of Tshwane and another with Black urban professionals working for a media-analysis company in the City of Tshwane. The aim in constructing these two different groups was to obtain responses from the two ends of the class spectrum that the tabloid attempts to address. On the one hand were the poor, unemployed, or working class, and on the other were young, socially mobile readers (Wasserman, 2010:56).

The results in the above mentioned study illustrated that it was the visual impact of the tabloid medium that made it stand out and initiate discourse, as in the case of a group of farm workers who indicated that while they also read the *Sowetan* and *Sunday Sun*, they prefer the *Daily Sun* because “it has more pictures than the *Sowetan*.” For some Afrikaans readers, reading the news in their own language seemed to be the deciding factor in choosing to consume tabloids, more than the style used in these papers (ibid).

- *Companionship and trust*

It is companionship and trust that tabloids have created which invite readers to turn to tabloids for help and thus a relationship is built with tabloid journalists. Editors of tabloids say that on a daily basis people who have been disappointed by issues that affect them come to tabloids because they believe that someone is listening and will re-tell their story. Tabloid newsrooms are reintroducing traditional journalistic practices by speaking to the people first and the officials last; in a bottom-up style. Another practice, which sets tabloids apart from the mainstream press, is that tabloid journalists go out to communities that were previously neglected and build contacts within those communities. Rather than focusing on the ‘big stories’, tabloids are doing what journalists were traditionally meant to do and that is “giving a voice to the voiceless” (Narsee, 2012:11).

In addition, newspapers such as the *Daily Sun*, *The Star Africa*, and *Sowetan* editions tend to extensively cover stories that emerge from the readers’ communities that deal with issues such as drugs, crime and social issues. Coverage is often provided from a personalised style rather than the focus from a racial, economic, and political or class point of view. Tabloids have been praised for facilitating trust for public discussion and debate, which is important in post- apartheid South Africa as it shows a shift from previously neglecting the majority to allowing them access to the public sphere. While it is important to acknowledge the lessons that can be learned from tabloids, it cannot be forgotten that tabloids could make use of some mainstream media’s more ethical practices (Wasserman, 2010). Authors maintain that three factors have attracted readers to tabloids. Tabloids are worthy as they offer their readers ‘companionship, guidance and validation’. As such, tabloids are

powerful as a brand due to building a relationship of trust, longevity and providing intrinsic value (ibid).

- *Provision of existential and moral help*

Tabloid journalism “provides the audience with existential and moral help, and support in the daily struggles to cope with an everyday life marked by the uncertainties characteristic of modernity” (Gripsrud, 2000:297). Equally important is that South African tabloids focus on issues of importance to a section of its population, the majority who have been neglected by mainstream commercial media because they were not viewed as a lucrative audience (Harber, 2005).

Tabloid editors are explicit in identifying their audience as the working class. Although this has the effect of drawing a neglected section of society into the mediated public sphere, it is done with commercial rather than political objectives in mind. Deon du Plessis, publisher of the *Daily Sun*, is forthright about the reason for this tabloid’s focus on the man in the blue overall as he somewhat patronisingly calls their typical reader Wasserman (2008):

*“It’s a very desirable market, and we are dominating it by far. More and more big time advertisers ranging from cell phones to money loans to cars want to be there, because this is where the money is. So it’s a very happy confluence”.*

Hallin (1992) and van Zoonen (1998b:67) identify the tabloid as the prime example of a popular medium where one cannot draw a meaningful distinction between ‘information’ and ‘entertainment’. Connell (1998) also argues that the news discourse in broadsheet and tabloid media is largely similar. Bird (2000) explained how journalists working for supermarket tabloids in the United States can be considered as the same (kind of) people who work for mainstream newspapers.

- *Readers’ perceptions of tabloid newspapers*

It is imperative to take note that, whatever a journalist writes or says always has an influence on the public at large and “this influence exists, because the media is so pervasive and ubiquitous, and it confronts people at every turn” (Retief, 2002:4). For these reasons, journalists have to carefully weigh the *pros* and *cons* of what they do or do not publish. This also applies in the case of newspapers reporting about issues



that affect the society daily such as reporting about the use of illicit drugs like *nyaope*.

While the popular press internationally is often associated with “laughter and the lighter side of life” (Conboy, 2008:113), South African tabloids are for the most part taken very seriously by their readers. When Wasserman (2010) spoke to tabloid readers in focus groups (in urban and rural settings in different provinces), the overwhelming response from South African tabloid readers was their trust that tabloids bring them reliable information, up-to-date news that enable them to negotiate the sometimes harsh and precarious conditions of everyday life (Wasserman, 2010:15).

Subsequently, the study conducted on the Western Cape’s *Daily Voice* and the *Son* tabloid newspapers on the perception of readers’ outlined positive impacts of tabloids. Some of the readers of the Cape Town tabloids’ the *Daily Voice* and *Son* said the following:

*“We read (in the tabloids) about murders, drugs, baby rapes – things that happen every day. The other newspapers don’t give enough attention to those problems. Drugs are a big problem here on the Cape Flats. The small newspapers (tabloids - HW) spell it out for you: this is the problem, what is the government doing about it? The big newspapers don’t have many stories about it”* (Cape Flats Respondent, 2010).

According to Wasserman (2010), readers trust tabloids to provide them with information that keep them informed, but also make them feel connected to the larger society and enable them to perform their roles as citizens in the country. These responses indicate that the citizens’ level of trust invested in the tabloids may be extended to public institutions such as the police, the courts and the other governments sectors. The claims by readers that they would phone the tabloids with matters concerning crime or social problems, confirms the remarks by tabloid editors (Koopman & Brophy, 2007) that readers would call them before they would call the police, resulting in tabloid reporters often arriving on crime scenes well before the authorities would (ibid).

- *Critique of tabloid newspapers by readers*

Research by McChesney (1999) has shown that a common criticism against tabloids newspapers by the readers is that they peddle sensationalism and entertainment

rather than providing the type of information that could contribute to democratic citizenship. By effectively depoliticising their readers to the role of consumers, they prevent them from being citizens. An alternative perspective has been offered by cultural studies scholars who argue that tabloid media articulate the politics of the everyday life for those readers for whom formal politics is often far removed from their lived experiences. Since media culture and popular culture are increasingly becoming difficult to classify; the on-going blurring of boundaries between information and entertainment has come to be termed 'infotainment' and this is generally attributed to market forces, commercialisation and commodification of media content (Koopman & Brophy, 2007).

When a range of new tabloid newspapers emerged almost a decade into post-apartheid South Africa, aimed at the poor black and coloured working class, but were subjected to similar criticism. Another critic, Froneman (2005) saw the world created by tabloids as one where "everything is allowed", where half-truths are more than enough. Yet Berger (2005) accused tabloids of not being really newspapers because they play in the entertainment market rather than prosecute the business of information. Berger pointed out that tabloids often ignored important political news, for instance the 2005 elections in Zimbabwe where tabloids failed to focus on the outcomes of the supposedly rigged elections. This kind of moral panic in reaction to tabloidisation is by no means specific to the South African situation. Although such alarmist responses, have been voiced against tabloids' insensitive approach to important news ever since the birth of the modern press (Gripsrud, 2000).

- *Credibility*

Credibility of news reporting is another important dimension of the journalistic goal to inform the citizens of a democratic society. Critics refer to tabloid news as incredible "sleaze" and "trash for cash" (Salerno, 1995). Yet, there have been few, if any, systematic inquiries into the credibility or believability of tabloid versus standard news. There is reason to argue that just as a flamboyant production format may cue viewers to how informative news stories are, whereas the relative believability of news may also be influenced by the news packaging styles (Bernstein, 1992:24). Tabloids should in this regard adhere to their ethical policy of ensuring reportage of credible news to avoid inquisitions of their credibility.

## **2.8 COMMON STYLES IN TABLOID NEWS REPORTING**

Tabloids are able to provide a narrative, sensational and pictorial representation of news about drugs and drug use, that serves as a guide for the audience's interpretation of topical events (Sparks, 2000:35). The literature on the styles of news reporting in tabloids particularly describes their sensationalist and narrative styles of reportage.

### **2.8.1 Sensationalist reporting**

According to Sparks (2000:37), sensationalism, simply put, is hype news or topics that are meant to appeal to the readers' senses and not necessarily their intellect. If the public like that type of news, they should then read on. But if they crave authentic, serious, multi-source journalism, then they need to look elsewhere. Tabloid newspapers like the *Daily Sun*, *Sowetan*, *National Enquirer*, *Star Magazine*, *The Mirror* and *The Sun* use sensationalism to attract readers and increase sales (Sparks, 2000). Other news outlets also feature sensationalistic headlines and news articles for much the same reasons. In addition, when the word "tabloid" is mentioned, the average person thinks of sensational, splashy, entertainment journalism and big headlines, gaudy and often lurid pictures, minimum of text and a maximum of photographs and colour. The average person also thinks of bizarre stories about sexy women, scandals, gossip and sensationalistic reporting (ibid).

#### ***Content and features of sensationalism***

In early studies, sensationalism in the news was conceived mostly in terms of story content, such as stories about crime, drugs, violence, natural disasters, accidents, and fires (Adams, 1978). A few researches have suggested that only looking at the subject of a story is an incomplete measure for determining the concept of sensation. Thus, in spite of content, form features also play a huge roll (Grabe, Zhou & Barnett, 2001:69). Sensational features can be sub-divided into three different categories:

- *Arousing content*

The arousing content category consists of stories that include information with survival value, like stories about natural disasters, accidents et cetera. Grabe et al. (2001) have tried to determine the content and form features, of what is called an

objective and sensational news programme. They operationalised content by taking together several definitions. Nine categories were distinguished, including four non-sensational subjects (politics, economics, education, and health) and five sensational news subjects (crime, disasters/accidents, news about celebrities, scandals and sex). From the sensational subjects was presumed that they amuse, attract or startle.

- *Tabloid packaging*

The category of tabloid packaging refers to the degree to which news stories present the readers with sudden or unexpected changes of information (camera and editing techniques et cetera). Grabe et al. (2001) distinguished two categories of form features: video manoeuvres and decorative effects, whereby video manoeuvres refer to the use of the camera. Decorative effects are inserted after the production and can be described as elements that attract the attention of readers. Decorative effects refer to short elements that attract the attention and are added to the news articles. The use of such style of tabloid packaging attracts the attention of readers because of its decorative effects.

- *Vivid Storytelling*

This last category includes ways of storytelling that increase concreteness or proximity. Vettehen (2005) derived the indicators for sensationalism from two other categories, in spite of content and form, namely concreteness (a) and proximity (b). Exemplification is seen as more concrete and therefore more sensational than general information. Two different types of exemplification can be distinguished: personification and lay person speaking. A report about the personal situation of individuals heightens the concreteness of the listeners' report. Furthermore, a distinction can be made between comments made by politicians or experts on one hand and a layperson on the other hand. Comments made by a layperson are more concrete and therefore more sensational. Proximity refers to sensational techniques like close-ups and zoom-in movements (Vettehen, 2005). Thus, in the current society, sensational news attracts the attention and is characterised as content that entertains, amuses and realises higher viewer ratings (Nuijten, 2007:114).

## **2.8.2 Narrative style of reporting**

Tabloids are often considered to carry a narrative form of journalism. Unlike straight news stories which offer readers the basic who, what, where, when and why of a story, narrative news pieces are longer and allow the writer to employ more elements of prose writing. Stories that are considered narrative journalism often appear in magazines and allow a reporter to approach a subject in different ways. The famed journalist Tom Wolfe is among those credited with pioneering the use of narrative journalism. Moreover, as an immersive style of storytelling, narrative journalism is used to captivate readers by drawing them into a story with greater detail than is found in traditional news stories (Rudin & Ibbotson, 2002:67).

Furthermore, generations ago narrative journalism was the rule in reporting and not the exception. Stories (sometimes rather subjectively reported and quite long by today's standards) in newspapers and magazines led the readers through a gripping tale told entirely from the view and experiences of the author. However, times have definitely changed. Today, narrative journalism is not commonly used by most mainstream media outlets. In fact, many journalists stick with very basic formulas or utilise the "inverted pyramid" style of reporting in an effort to keep their writing concise and easy to edit. Some may even be unfamiliar with the technique, having never learned it throughout their careers as "beat" reporters (Rudin & Ibbotson, 2002).

### **Factors that define narrative journalism**

There is much discussion among professional writers as to what actually defines the factors of narrative journalism and how useful it is. It is a fine line between storytelling and the truth. Newspaper narratives are also entirely true and factual in every detail. The factors of narrative journalism are presented below:

- *Accurate reporting*

The narrative story needs to have all of the accuracy and facts of any news story. Many writers have stretched this boundary and have been called out for their exaggerations. The articles should have the names of the reliable sources, people or documents. Moreover, the journalists should check that all the key facts and quotes are present in the context. The emotional language should be backed up by a

powerful story and irrefutable evidence. It is imperative that the pictures represent the event accurately. The leads, headlines, captions, cross heads, etc. should reflect the content accurately (Rudin & Ibbotson, 2002:70).

- *Story telling*

Narratives are often written in the manner of storytelling with as much detail as a novelist may include in a book, just in a shorter, non-fiction piece. They include the character of a person, place or thing and use descriptive prose to bring the reader into the story, often with the intent of provoking a feeling. Just because journalists are reaching into the realm of storytelling does not mean that they can fabricate the truth. They are ethically obliged to report the news story objectively and avoid the use of sensationalism in order to lure the reader to the news report (ibid).

- *Journalistic concerns about narrative reporting*

One of the biggest worries editors and publishers have about narrative journalism is that because it is a blend of facts and feelings, problems can occur. Many authors have been nabbed for stating mistruths in their pieces. Though some of the journalists accused of making up details were in fact guilty, others claimed to have simply misinterpreted situations. Because narrative journalism makes fact-checking challenging, it is still considered taboo in most news rooms (Caffrey, 2008).

Thus, if journalists are planning on trying out narrative journalism, they should talk to their editor first (if applicable). The journalists should find out if the editors have any concerns regarding the technique. In addition, the journalists should also try to hash out a plan so that they may both be comfortable with the outcome. That way, the journalist will face the ramifications when they turn in an assignment that is not acceptable to the standards of the editor's publication (Caffrey, 2008).

## **2.9 REPRESENTATION OF ILLICIT DRUGS IN TABLOIDS**

The representation of illicit drugs in tabloids is presented in terms of the evolution of tabloid reports on illicit drugs, the representation of *nyaope* in South African tabloids, discourse and the "drug wars" ideology and the representation of illicit drugs mortality in international tabloids.

### **2.9.1 Analysis of tabloid reports on illicit drugs**

An analysis by Hughes, Lancaster & Spicer (2011:285) of print media reporting across and between the depiction of illicit drug issues stipulates that media reporting on illicit drugs is heavily distorted towards crime and deviance framings, but may be less overtly sensationalised, biased and narrowly framed than previously suggested. Critcher (2003:183) highlights that there has been differential reporting of certain drugs over time. Initial reports of 'new' drugs seem to be based on intrigue, but they quickly transformed into a more condemning tone. It has been argued that this process has been evident with marijuana and with lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD). In some societies, however, it can be argued that all 'mainstream' illegal drugs have been through this process already and are firmly fixed in the negative reporting of illicit drugs mould (Mooddley, Matjila & Moosa, 2012:3).

Some authors have however, questioned the very 'truth' and 'fact' of the tabloid's reporting of drugs issues, whilst Orcutt and Turner (1993:204) note in their US-based study that they found 'ample grounds for the claim that the media would "lie"'. This is crucially important since it was highlighted during studies of drugs in the Brazilian press that 'the print media is one of the key factors for defining public opinion and setting public policies regarding drugs'. According to Moore, Guarino & Marsch, (2014) the more the print media publish stories that prefer the words 'drugs' and 'crisis' the more public opinion would regard drugs as one of the country's major problems. Therefore, the continual coverage of drug users committing further crime as a consequence of their use and belonging to specific demographic backgrounds came to be seen as the 'norm' (ibid).

Research done by Chan (1995) has shown that reporting on drugs and crime, as on other aspects of social deviance, has been widely criticised, in both academic and popular discourse, as a limited and distorting representation of its subjects. It is believed that tabloids depend largely on limited, easily accessible sources often "authorities" that "own" an issue and, therefore, present a one-sided picture. However, there have been few systematic empirical studies of the media's portrayal of drugs and crime. Two detailed studies by Bell (1983; 1985) examined the construction of a normative discourse on drugs in the media. Bell argues that media coverage of drugs "educates audiences to a resigned, alienated passivity",

systematically ignoring the broader social context of drug use and “focusing on the individual victim as a publicly confessing example of the consequences of drug consumption” (Oldfield & Grimshaw, 2008:74). In the context of this research, the factor worth considering is that not all illicit drugs are depicted the same way in tabloids. Hence, the study seeks to examine the manner in which the consumption of *nyaope* is portrayed in the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* newspapers.

### **2.9.2 Representation of *nyaope* in South African tabloids**

Studies conducted by Lewis, Hamilton & Franklin (2008:107) observed that tabloids can provide information about events and conditions in society and the world through explaining, interpreting and commenting on the meaning of events. On the contrary, knowledge about tabloids and illicit drugs is indisputably limited, yet illicit drugs such as cannabis, heroin, cocaine, ecstasy and amphetamines feature in thousands of news stories and remain some of the most popular motifs in films, television, magazines and online chat rooms. While news outlets such as tabloids, have limited space to dedicate to such issues, illicit drugs are clearly newsworthy. Therefore, tabloids’ portrayals of illicit drugs influence youth attitudes towards drug abuse.

In addition, good tabloid stories also draw images and words together with picture complements that draw the reader in a way that mainstream press do not always get right. It is not just the use of big or many images, it is how the images tell the story. All graphical elements; sidebars, pictures and multiple stories on the page often blend seamlessly into the overall narrative. This newer form of news writing breaks up big chunks of text to keep the reader engaged (Lewis, Hamilton & Franklin, 2008).

- *Representation of nyaope in Pretoria News*

According to Manning (2007:151), tabloids are seen to comprehensively misrepresent drugs, their effects, typical users and sellers and indeed the whole nature of the drug market and the enforcement response to it. In many ways the media may even define what is ‘seen’ as drugs because it concentrates on solvents, *nyaope*, heroin, crack, ecstasy, et cetera thereby conditioning public attitudes about the ‘drug problem’ and what the response to it should be.

In the context of this study, a news report titled “Alarm over *nyaope* addiction” in *Pretoria News*, Moatshe (2016), stated that despite the several efforts to tackle



*nyaope* abuse, thousands of young people in Soshanguve were increasingly getting hooked on the drug. The report further stated that Soshanguve police station Head, Colonel Khumbulani Mbatha postulated that the use of *nyaope* was on the increase and threatening the lives of young people. Mbatha told the *Pretoria News* during an anti-drug march organised by the Democratic Alliance (DA) that the phenomenon seemed to have infiltrated the schools, but police were doing all they could to combat further use of the drug. It was further reported that once a week, police embarked on unannounced raid at schools where they conducted stop-and-search operations as part of the anti-drug crusade. Pupils were in some cases targeted by drug-dealers as potential buyers, but police were on course to tackle the problem (Moatshe, 2016).

The reportage of such news is evidence that tabloids are integral in informing the public of serious issues such as substance abuse, because such issues do not only affect users but the society and government. This view is supported by Bell and Garrett's (1984:107) research that points out that the daily happenings of our societies are expressed in the stories we are told in the media. In addition, as important social institutions, they are crucial presenters of culture, politics and social life, shaping as well as reflecting how these are formed and expressed.

- *Representation of nyaope in the Mail and Guardian*

A survey conducted by Manning & McCandless (2009) found out that tabloids focus predominantly on the criminal aspects of drugs and drug use. The research on tabloids coverage of illicit drugs has further shown that roughly 50% of the overall coverage of news reports is represented by criminal stories about illicit drug production, trafficking and sales, or secondary crime. Additionally, deaths related to illicit drugs gain significantly more attention than deaths attributable to prescribed or regulated substances, notwithstanding the underlying incidences. Overall, drug issues are considered to 'sell' the media to the public.

For example, a news report extracted from 04 July 2014's *Mail and Guardian* newspaper edition, Ephraim (2014) titled: "*Nyaope's deadly and addictive mix*" is one of the many news reports in South African tabloids that represents the consumption of *nyaope*. The news report addressed the fact that *nyaope* is more often than not ingested in such desperate; poverty stricken surrounds and outlined the consequences of using the drug. In a world where employment status determines

the kind of white powder you consume, it is *nyaope* that finds itself at the bottom of the pile- making it a cheaper drug thus far. The news report documented the life story of Fire, a *nyaope* addict, residing in Snake Park, Gauteng. The pictorial reporting in the news article displayed a slender and distraught *nyaope* addict and reads:

*“Just before the other addicts sat down to smoke; Fire was fast approaching his breaking point. It was almost 11am and he had not had his drug yet. His mouth was dry. He was edgy, snapping at those around him. The pain from cramps in his stomach had become unbearable. His face was distorted and his winning smile was nowhere to be seen. But a drag of nyaope changed all of that. “That’s the heroin withdrawal,” (Ephraim, 2014).*

According to Vos (2012), the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence is too familiar with the signs of drug abuse: Vos explains that a scene from the movie *Basketball Diaries*, where a character played by a young Leonardo DiCaprio is kept in a room and forced to stay clean in order to kick the habit is replica to the effects of *nyaope* consumption. That is what heroin does, and this is what is contained in *nyaope*. It is these withdrawals; the cramps, nausea, mood swings and aggression that make *nyaope* so addictive. In addition, a user is terrified of having to deal with the feelings of anxiety and physical pain, so the only possible cure available is another fix, and then another one, and another one after that (Ephraim, 2014).

Subsequently, the above news report is evidence that the abuse of *nyaope* is a social problem with consequences attached to its use. The reportage of such information indicates that tabloids provide information on the conditions affecting the South African society.

- *Representation of nyaope in The Citizen*

A study conducted by Hughes (2010) points out that news media ought to be recognised as one of the factors that can affect attitudes towards and demand for illicit drugs and there is an opportunity to expand use of news media to shape youth attitudes towards drugs.

Nonetheless, a news report in *The Citizen’s* 03 April 2014 edition titled “The scourge of *nyaope*” (Venter, 2014) highlights the life of Moses Letoalo, a rehabilitated addict who runs Sechaba, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Tshwane which helps

youths who struggle with drug problems. In the news report, Letoalo explains that his attitude towards quitting *nyaope* and starting the rehabilitation centre was evoked by continuous reportage of the consequences of *nyaope* in the media. “The last straw was a news story of a family from Mamelodi who lost two children to the drug. The mother had three children. A twin boy and girl aged 15 and an older son aged 17. They were all addicted to *nyaope* and the older brother killed the younger brother in an argument about the drug” Letoalo (Venter, 2014).

The discourse and actual words used in the news report by the journalist from *The Citizen*, and the connotations and denotations, contribute towards understanding and explaining the phenomenon of the consumption of *nyaope* in the newspapers understudy. The study subsequently, used three tabloids namely: *The Citizen*, *The Mail and Guardian* and *Pretoria News* because the newspapers target the black middle class who were affected by drug use and abuse (Maughan & Eliseev, 2007).

### **2.9.3 Representation of illicit drugs mortality in international tabloids**

Tabloids play a critical role in shaping perceptions about the risks of substance use. Increases in substance use among youth between the early 1990s and 1996 were linked to a decline in the prevalence of warning and antidrug messages from the media, parents, and schools; the proliferation of pro-use messages from the entertainment industry; and high levels of tobacco and alcohol product advertising and promotion. Media research shows that in the 200 most popular movie rentals in 1996 and 1997, alcohol appeared in 93%, tobacco in 89%, and illicit drugs in 22% with marijuana and cocaine depicted most often (Newton, 2014:184).

For example, a review of mortality-related copy in US print media found that, in comparison to actual causes of death, illicit drugs were over-represented by 40%, motor vehicles by 80%, toxic agents by 70% and homicide by 33%; whereas tobacco use achieved only 23% of expected copy, heart disease only 33% and cerebrovascular disease only 31%. This has the effect of increasing the general public’s concern and outrage about illicit drug issues, often at the cost of reducing the focus on issues which have a greater impact on morbidity and mortality, such as alcohol consumption among young people. It has been proven that community concerns about drug use are more related to increased mass media coverage than increased drug-related problems (Newton, 2014).

Furthermore, the share of media articles focusing on drug supply reduction and other criminal aspects was shown to be rather high in the recent years. Out of all drug-related media articles in 2004 and 2005, 64% focused on drugs and criminality (Newton, 2006). With respect to cannabis, 52% of all articles were dedicated to supply and possession (Sivek, Miovska, & Miovsky, 2004), and concerning stimulants and opioids, 77% of the related articles targeted criminal issues. Nevertheless, the share of crime-oriented drug articles declined between the years 1996 (65% of all drug-related articles) and 2007 (49%) in the main serious newspapers. A similar trend of a declining representation of criminal aspects in drug-related mass media coverage was witnessed by National Focal Points in the United Nations on Drugs and Crime (ibid).

#### **2.9.4 Representation of drugs and crime news in international tabloids**

Research in the USA print media has found that although the media may not change opinions, they set the agenda and the parameters of the discussion and debate. For this reason, the way in which the media depict drugs and crime has serious policy ramifications. Tabloid coverage of drugs also represents an important source for public perceptions of illicit drugs, which shape national drug policies. Furthermore, the media is one of the principal sources of information on subjects outside the bounds of people's direct experience. Drug-related crime, as a kind of serious and exceptional behaviour makes it to the news agenda due to its threshold (Bell, 1985).

Considering illicit drug issues, an example of the U.S. newspaper coverage at times has tended to slant toward a framework of moral panic (Fan, 1996; Leiber, Jamieson, & Krohn, 1993; Weidner, 2009). By either suggesting or reinforcing the belief that leaders should take action in light of drug related news stories, newspapers often enflame panic through citing "official" governmental sources of information (Beckett, 1995; Denham, 2008). In particular, drugs like cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin have been cited in analyses invoking moral panic (Agar & Reisinger 2000; Cobbina, 2008; Denham, 2008; Fan & Holway, 1994; Golub, 1999; Weidner, 2009).

Eversman (2013:284) reiterated that by linking drugs with crime, some supporters of "*Harm reduction*" a concept that is aimed at opposing United States of America's government policies on drugs wars and drug prevention, claimed that drug abuse is

best managed as a public health problem that decriminalizes handling “otherwise law-abiding” drug offenders. Commonly invoking societal problems related to mandatory prison terms and criticizing efforts that target “non-violent,” “low level street dealers” over “real criminals,” “Harm reduction” was hailed as a remedy for existing “draconian” policies and their destructive effects. Supporters also claimed “Harm reduction” would help redress racial discrimination inherent to and stemming from current policies which are “unfair” and have a “disproportionate,” “more severe” impact on some populations in the U.S.A, but particularly people of colour:

*“Harm reduction” requires governments to keep public health precepts and objectives a priority in its drug control policies, and to banish the racist and xenophobic impulses that stirred prohibitionist sentiments and laws earlier this century...Similar sentiments can be detected beneath the surface of contemporary drug wars (Rodman, November 5, 1999)”.*

### **2.9.5 Drug discourse and the ‘drug wars’ ideology**

Newspaper reporting on drug use and on many other forms of deviance is often accused of exaggerating, using inaccurate information and looking for the sensational news. For example, research has shown that the British print media employ almost no quality control mechanisms to eliminate such distortions (Coomber et al., 2000). Looking back at the 1970s and the work of Stuart Hall, Stanley Cohen, Jock Young and the Glasgow Media Group on the ‘manufacturing of news’, Fowler (1991) writes:

*“News is not a natural phenomenon emerging straight from ‘reality’, but a product. It is produced by an industry, by the relations between the media and other industries and, most importantly, by relations with government and with other political organizations. From a broader perspective, it reflect, and in return shape, the prevailing values of a society in a particular historical context” (Fowler, 1991:210).*

Manning (2007:149) shows how significantly different symbolic frameworks are discriminately applied to represent ‘problems’ associated with different drugs and how this selection is made in accordance with the cultural assumptions and the inferential frameworks that underpin processes of news production. News source activity and the marketing strategies of newspapers also hold a significant role in shaping content. News is thus complex and unpredictable. On more general lines, Taylor (2008) argues that media coverage and policy usually adopt a vision of users as risk-bearing outsiders and presumed offenders, with specific stereotypes and

simplified notions usually casting aside more complex and holistic discourses on drugs and their impact. Media coverage is not just misleading, it can also actually be harmful because it is implicated in the triggering of drug scares and moral panics which lead to 'knee jerk' drug crackdowns and punitive responses (Manning, 2007:151).

In addition, Manning (2007) goes on to contend that these accounts are aimed at 'debunking' the tabloid media's representations of drugs in order to replace it with a more accurate and less sensationalist and realistic alternative. He also argues that such 'counter reactions' are often equally as unfounded and biased in nature and tone as the original 'debunking'. There is, however, still some mileage left in 'debunking' which displays the tabloids' portrayal of drugs as insignificant. Drug use bridges all social demographics, yet the images that are generated from the mainstream news media and criminal justice policy do not adequately represent this and instead focus on convenient stereotypes.

Contrary to other scholars, Critcher (2003) has highlighted the way in which rave culture, heroin and ecstasy use were responded to and the media's influence on this process in the creation of a possibly unique (or even hybrid) 'moral panic'. Murji (1998:49) persuasively argues that many of these accounts follow a similar line. The dominant, conventional approach has seen the media as a key force in the demonization and marginalisation of drug users, as presenting lurid, hysterical images and as a provider of an un-critical platform from which politicians and other moral entrepreneurs are able to launch and wage drug 'wars'.

Therefore, it is critical to highlight and illustrate why tabloids' representations of drugs, drug users and drug-related crime is disproportionately engineered towards specific groups and stereotypes and determine that this has considerable ramifications within both criminal justice and wider socio-political landscapes. Subsequently, this will assist the study to call for a more enlightened and realistic debate with regards to comparing coverage of the consumption of *nyaope* in both the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan* newspapers.

- *Framework of news production on war in drugs discourses*

As Chomsky (cited in Veit, 2013:138) points out, drug wars are also a means of controlling what the news of the elite define as the 'dangerous' classes or minorities or those who do not contribute to mainstream meaning-making and affluence. One of the most relevant examples comes from the United States, where black drug offenders are up to ten times more likely to be imprisoned on drug-related charges than whites (ibid). The following fear-inducing characteristics of discourses are tools that identify polarisation and power consolidation on drug use:

- Fear inducing discourses help construct and disseminate a central narrative of harm that is often seen to spread as a highly contagious disease which target the very order and moral health of social universes. In the 1930s marijuana users were said to lose their minds and become violent; in the 1960s lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) was thought to cause chromosome damage and make users stare at the sun for long hours until they went blind; and in the 1990s crack cocaine was believed to cause irreversible damage to fetuses and new-borns if consumed by pregnant mothers and to cause 'instant addiction', literally 'sweeping the US' and 'invading any community' (white upper-middle-class included) (Goode, 2008).
- These discourses also associate the source of evil with a foreign parasitic force that wants to destabilise its host body. Different social groups (such as ethnic minorities) were portrayed as 'others', thus, targeted and scapegoated. Chinese opium addicts were thought to seduce middle-class white women in the late 1800s. Cocaine was believed to make Afro-Americans violent, especially towards the white population, and to give them superhuman strength which also made them invulnerable to bullets, in the early 1900s (Goode, 2008). In addition, heroin addicted Vietnam veterans were seen as the bearers of an anti-modern and highly dangerous sickness that was threatening the American spirit itself, in the 1970s (Weimer, 2013).
- Fear inducing discourses help create a sense of panic and emphasise the need for immediate action to be taken at any cost against the deviants and the deviant condition: 'the bottom line of all ideological discourse is the use of reports, whether they distort reality or not to mobilize popular support *to do*

something in the public arena, because they employ rhetoric like “epidemic”, “firestorm”, “rising tide” and “plague” with the urgency of swift and serious action explicitly justified’ (Chiricos, 2000:117).

Such reports draw on the authority of specific expertise (‘an inquest heard/was told’) concentrated in the law enforcement sector (that of police agents or coroners, for example) to legitimise assumptions and interpretations made by the journalists themselves. To augment their rhetorical force, these accounts are constructed on a semantic scaffold of contrast. Thus, it is equally important to represent the framework of news production on the consumption of *nyaope*.

### **2.9.6 Newspaper campaigns and drug prevention experience**

Since there is limited literature pertaining to campaigns initiated by tabloids to create awareness on the consumption of illicit drugs; the study uses general newspapers to discuss campaigns. Newspaper campaigns and drug prevention experience are outlined according to the information based programmes, raising awareness on illicit drug use, prevention on health issues, public service campaigns and the selection of target audiences.

- *Information based programmes*

According to a research done by Wakefield, Loken, & Hornik (2010:104), the use of print media campaigns to reduce health problems in society gained momentum in the 1970’s with an initial focus on improving cardiovascular health. From the 1970’s onwards, media campaigns were increasingly used in the prevention of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug use. The potential of print media campaigns through newspapers lie in their ability to repeatedly propagate simple and focused messages to a large audience over time at a low cost per capita. It is also assumed that print media are able to reach a large and heterogeneous proportion of the population simultaneously (ibid).

In recent years, a greater emphasis has been placed on information-based programmes complemented with life skills approach. The dissemination of information approach is pivotal as it creates awareness about the horrendous effects of drug use and abuse. This information has been sent through both broadcast and print media such as newspapers and magazines. The main focus of this study is to



examine the manner in which newspapers, particularly tabloids report on *nyaope* as an illicit drug in South Africa. In addition, a campaign from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) anti-drugs campaign launched on 26 June 2007, the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The campaign focused on different aspects of drug control: drug abuse, drug cultivation and production, and illicit drug trafficking. UNODC observed that the percentage of drug abuse among users, decreased due to the interventions of such anti-drugs campaigns.

- *Raising awareness on illicit drug use*

Wakefield et al. (2010:106) postulate that newspaper campaigns have been successfully applied in the reduction of tobacco use and the promotion of road safety, and have shown moderately positive results in a number of areas. These campaigns have also been widely used for the prevention of illicit drugs in young people. They often address specific substances with the aim of reducing the use of drugs, and raising awareness of associated problems. The types of campaigns mainly typically target young people because evidence shows that drug use often starts during adolescence, a time in life where young people may experiment with cigarettes, alcohol and illicit drugs (ibid).

Subsequently, the newspaper campaign needs to raise consciousness of the problem of illicit drug use, prompt re-evaluation of personal risk and encourage consideration of individual or collective action. The campaign must bring about a change in beliefs and attitudes about the behaviour being promoted. It is critical to anticipate and address the audiences' points of resistance (Wakefield et al., 2010).

- *Prevention of drug abuse on health issues*

Newspaper campaigns have become a common way of delivering preventive health messages to the general population. The goal of these campaigns is to reach a large number of people, including those who may be difficult to access through traditional approaches; to change health related behaviours and attitudes. Although anti-drug newspaper campaigns can be seen by almost anyone in the general population who is exposed to the message, the campaigns usually concentrate on preventing, reducing, or stopping the illicit drug use by young people (which generally includes individuals 26 years and younger), because initiation of substance use typically begins during adolescence or young adulthood (Ferri, 2013). Subsequently, this

approach is relevant to this study because it examines the coverage of the consumption of *nyaope* by mostly young people in South African tabloids.

- *Public service campaigns*

According to Hammond (2007:57), public service campaign planning often begins with the wish to “do something” about a problem using any form of media. What often ensues is a review of how other campaigns have used the media, with the assumption that their methods can be imitated or adapted for new campaigns. For example, the value of television public service announcements seems to be regarded as self-evident, leading even small organisations with limited means to spend valuable time and resources in developing them and then pushing them in front of media gatekeepers, who have an ever-shrinking store of free advertising slots to dispense.

- *Selection of target audience*

Determining the type of audience that should be targeted for a public service campaign or how narrowly or broadly that audience should be defined depends heavily on the nature of the problem, the lessons learned from past work to address it and the availability of resources. Ideally, members of a target audience should share similar knowledge, concerns and motivations that affect their behaviour, and they should be reachable through similar media, organisational or interpersonal channels. In this study, the target audience is the readers and are targeted through the use of tabloid newspapers as communication tools (Job, 2008:169). In addition, representatives of the target audience are an excellent source of information, but not everything they say should be accepted at face value. For example, focus groups almost always endorse fear messages; but, as discussed above, research suggests that fear-based messages work under only extremely limited circumstances (Job, 2008). Therefore, it is essential that formative research include consultation with experts who can provide an experience-based and analytical perspective.

## **2.10 REGULATION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN PRINT MEDIA**

After the new democratic dispensation, a new press code was adopted in 1997, and adopted again in 2007. The latter had seven clauses dealing with a range of issues from fairness in news reporting, advocacy, comment or criticism, to dealing with confidential sources, paying for articles and reporting violence. Contrary to the Press Code of the apartheid regime which was used by the government as a tool for controlling the press, the new code embraces the freedom of expression as indicated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). It also indicates that news should be “published without fear or favour” (SAPC, 2007:1). In addition, the Press Code of 2007 was reviewed in 2011, and the revised Press Code became effective in February 2013. The implications of the code are discussed in detail in the section below.

### **2.10.1 South African Press Code**

The Press Council of South Africa has adopted the South African Press Code (2011) to guide journalists in their daily practice of gathering and distributing news. It was adopted in order to guide the Ombudsman and the Appeals Panel to reach decisions on complaints from the public. Its latest review was in 2011. According to Berger (2009:14), “more than 640 publications, mainly members of print media in South Africa, subscribe to the code.” Berger further indicates that in 1962, newspaper owners reached a consensus on self-regulation for fear of statutory regulation, and therefore, drew the first voluntary code of conduct (Berger 2009:15). This code is similar to those in other countries with press councils, such as: the Danish Media Council, the Botswana Press Council, and the Zambia Media Council.

In relation to the reporting of illicit drugs, the South African Press Code (2011:11) states that “the press shall be obliged to report news truthfully, accurately and fairly”. Section 1.2 adds to this by indicating that “news shall be presented in context and in balanced manner, without any intentional or negligent departure from the facts whether by distortion, exaggeration or mis-representation, material omission, or summarisation”. The Press Code (South African Press Code, 2011) takes particular note of what constitutes factual accuracy. This is defined in section 3.1, which states that “only what may reasonably be true, having regard to the sources of the news, may be presented as fact, and such facts shall be published fairly with due regard to

context and importance". Therefore, one can state at this point that, questions of what constitutes "truth, accurate and balanced news, objective and discriminatory references to people's views on *nyaope*" (South African Press Code, 2011:13) are the moral issues that this study concerns itself with, by examining the coverage of the consumption of *nyaope* in the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun* newspapers.

The South African Press Code is against departure of news from the facts through distortion, significant omissions or summarisations (Hachten & Giffard, 2011). The code further stipulates that comment should be clearly distinguishable from news and should be based on facts truly stated, free from malice, and not actuated by dishonest motives. Hachten & Giffard (2011) also indicate that the code requires the press to take account of the complex racial problems of South Africa, and the general good, and safety of the country, and its people. Oosthuizen (2002:83) adds that, the stipulation referring to racial issues was a reflection of government's expectations regarding the press reporting on the controversial racial policies of apartheid.

### **2.10.2 Ethical reporting in tabloid journalism**

Day (2006:61) provides the following explanation for ethics as the "branch of philosophy that deals with the moral component of human life. It reflects a society's notion about the rightness or wrongness of an act and the distinctions between virtue and vice". If ethics is indeed part of human life, then journalists need to be rational and logical in their decision making. An empirical approach to journalism is noted by Retif, who compares the study of ethics to science. According to his study, "ethics uses a systematic, reasoned or rational approach based on a set of principles to determine what is good (that is ethical), and what is bad (that is unethical) in human conduct" (Retif, 2000:24).

- *Challenges of ethical reporting in tabloid journalism*

The one crucial challenge to journalism ethics is how to promote, and develop excellence in journalistic practice, while adhering to the specific standards of practice, and ethics required by journalists and media organisations (South African Press Code, 2011:37). Froneman & De Beer (2005:4) state that the ethical decisions in the media determine what the public may read, hear and see. Ajibola (2009:71)

adds that “ethics may not always be obvious to the audience, but implicitly, ethics are always at the core of the decisions that each journalist makes” while in the field, or in what the editor does at his/her desk in the newsroom.

In her research, Ajibola (2009) further states that the increasing presence and influence of the media throughout the world has raised many ethical and social questions that need to be addressed, both by the media practitioners and the public. According to Ronning (2002), the media are accused of bias, cynicism, manipulations and distortion of news which has resulted in an increasingly serious public debate about ethics in the media. For example, in recent years, the ruling party in South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) has openly criticised the conduct of the print media in terms of objective and accurate reporting of news (South African Press Code, 2011:23).

These criticisms have led to one of the resolutions at the ANC Polokwane conference in 2007 to investigate the possibility of creating a statutory Media Appeals Tribunal. This led to the Protection of State Information Bill, commonly referred to as the Secrecy Bill that was passed, without participation of opposition parties, on 27 November 2012 by the National Council of Provinces (Sutherland, 2012:1). The Bill was referred to the South African President, Mr Jacob Zuma to sign into law, but on Thursday September 10, 2013, the president returned the Bill to the National Assembly for further consideration. One can state that if the Bill becomes law in its current form, it will negatively impact on journalistic roles and how they report news.

- *Regulation of the Protection of State Information Bill*

According to the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), the regulation of the media is necessary, in order to curb unethical media practices. One cannot talk about unethical behaviour, either as a government or as media practitioners, without examining definition of ethics. In addition, journalism can be described as a self-governing occupation that requires ethical codes to set standards for behaviours at all times (Stos, 2009:10).

Such ethical codes are: “supposed to act as the conscience of the professional, of the organisation of the enterprise. The strength of an ethics code is a function not

only of its various principles and mandates, but of its legitimacy and power in the eyes of those for whom it is written. The code will be obeyed because individuals willingly subject themselves to ethical standards above and beyond their own beliefs or because the code has provisions for enforcement which they fear should they violate it" (Black, Steel & Barney, 2005:14).

Richard (2002:8) states that professional ethics should focus on the moral judgements of ethical issues related to the journalism profession, and this must be done according to professional standards. In order to ensure the success of a code, it must be a certain amount of 'buy in' from the group for whom the code is meant (Stos, 2009). It must have legitimacy and power in the eyes of its practitioners (Black Steele, & Barney, 1995:13). Stos (2009) further adds that, if all journalists willingly adhere to the media codes, it will not be difficult for them to report truthfully and accurately because this behaviour will provide guidance at all times.

The South African Press Code mandate (2007:1) encourages the pursuit of truth and accuracy without fear or favour from all its practitioners. McNair (1998) notes that a journalistic code would legitimise the profession, and provide guidance to journalists on a daily basis. McNair quickly cautions that, if care is not taken "such codes may just be a statement of ideals," (McNair, 1998:65) and it may conveniently be ignored during the reportage of the use of illicit drugs specifically *nyaope*.

## **2.11 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

The chapter discussed tabloids and how they represent the consumption of illicit drugs. The context for a discussion of the academic debate about tabloid journalism and an understanding of their roles on reporting about the consumption of *nyaope* were provided. In addition, the chapter outlined the nature and culture of tabloids, regulation of the print media and journalism ethics. Newspaper campaigns on drug prevention experiences were also highlighted. Finally, the chapter discussed the styles of news reporting in tabloids and the regulation of South African print media. The following chapter is a discussion of the research methodology adopted for the study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher addresses the methodology and research design adopted for the study and discusses the methods used to collect data from news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* in the *Sowetan* and the *Daily Sun* newspapers. The researcher adopted quantitative-qualitative research approach to examine the coverage of the news reports in the selected tabloids within the stipulated period of the study. In addition, the chapter discusses the population and sampling procedures, outlines the area of study, and justifies the choice of data collection methods, and data analysis. Finally, the researcher presents a discussion of the quality criteria, ethical considerations, limitations of the study, and the summary of the chapter.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The researcher used descriptive design within the quantitative-qualitative approach for conducting the study. In addition, the researcher adopted Creswell's (2009:06) proposition that, mixed methods research is a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analysing and integrating quantitative and qualitative research designs (and data) in a single study.

##### 3.2.1 Descriptive quantitative research design

The researcher employed descriptive quantitative research design for its empirical aspects that include the provision of numerical data. The design was important in assisting the researcher to describe and explain quantitative information collected in the research process. Furthermore, the design enabled the researcher to arrive at findings that emanated from data gathered on the news reports from the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* newspapers. Quantitative means that the analysis should give precise and accurate results. Hence, quantitative data are always either numerical values or frequencies. For the purpose of this study, the researcher quantified the data by

determining the frequency of news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* from the newspapers within the prescribed period of the study.

### **3.2.2 Descriptive qualitative research design**

In a descriptive qualitative design, the researcher gathers data and then describes what is observed. The study adopted Engel and Schutt's (2010:9) observation that, descriptive research typically involves the gathering of facts through a descriptive strategy. In this case, the researcher identified, assessed and compared news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* in both the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun* tabloid newspapers. In addition, the researcher espoused descriptive qualitative research design because it is suitable for the description of areas where limited or no prior information exists.

The choice of the design enabled the researcher to examine the news reports under study by collecting detailed information through a qualitative content analysis data collection procedure. Descriptive qualitative design was deemed necessary for it is mostly associated with describing words, language, rather than measurements, statistics and numerical figures. The design was also essential for its ability to produce (descriptive non-numerical) information appropriate in the description and the analysis of the quality of news reports adopted in both newspapers.

## **3.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES**

### **3.3.1 Population**

In this study, population refers to the number of editions/daily issues from the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun* and the number of news reports identified in both newspapers for the study. This is supported by White's (2005:113) notion that, population is a collection of objects, events or individuals having some common characteristics that the researcher is interested in studying. Population can also be pronounced as the total sum of all cases that meet the researcher's definition of the unit of analysis. News reports written on the consumption of *nyaope* were selected in order to determine the frequency and nature of news reports, assess the quality of messages by checking objectivity, the nature of sources consulted, application of



pictorial and expert knowledge, and use of technical elements such as headlines. In addition, the news reports were selected to compare the styles of reporting such as; choice of language, narrative reportage, in depth journalism and constructive news; during a period when *nyaope* related stories were rife and making headlines in both publications as elaborated in section 3.3.2 below.

### **3.3.2 Sampling procedures**

The researcher purposively selected the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun* newspapers for their generic appeal to ordinary readers as demonstrated in Table 1 (Audit Bureau of Circulations South Africa, 2015). The above publications also belong to the largest daily newspaper category with the highest circulation figures in South Africa (Wasserman, 2008), since they retail at affordable prices of below five rand (R5) per copy. The purposive sample procedure was obtained on the basis of the researcher's knowledge and familiarity with the relevant patterns and characteristics of the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan* tabloid newspapers. The sample comprised elements that contained the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population. As espoused by McMillan & Schumacher (2001:85), the technique enables the researcher to select information-rich cases for in depth study in an attempt to understand the manner of tabloid reportage on *nyaope* without having to generalise the study to all cases.

Purposive sampling was also deemed necessary to select the news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* in the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* newspapers. This was asserted by Shoemaker & Cohen (2006:182)'s notion that everyday journalists have to choose from numerous items to decide which events qualify for inclusion in tabloids, as the events cannot all fit the available space. The researcher used the method according to the objectives of the study. Subsequently, purposive sample was based on comparing the representativeness and balance of the objectives of this study namely; to determine the frequency and nature of news reports, assess the quality and compare the news reporting styles adopted by both newspapers in covering the consumption of *nyaope*.

- *Sampling stages*

In this study the sampling procedures comprised three stages. The first stage involved selecting sample editions of the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun* newspapers that fell within the specified time frame of this study, from the accessible population of the hard copies made available to the researcher. The second stage involved the selection of the news reports from the selected newspaper editions. Particular news reports were selected, because it was impossible to collect all the newspaper reports and editorials from the hard copies available for analysis. The news reports were selected through a preliminary analysis of news reports published on the consumption of *nyaope* in the newspapers understudy. Hence, this prompted the researcher to compare the reportage of the consumption of *nyaope* from the newspapers. The last stage involved the selection of the time frame of the study.

**Stage 1: Rationale for selecting the newspapers:**

- The researcher selected 240 newspapers editions from 01 February to 31 July 2015. Both are daily newspapers with a daily circulation of 100 000 readership and more (Wasserman, 2008). The researcher gathered that the coverage in newspapers with small circulation figures would be more limited in scope.
- Both are English medium newspapers. The rationale was that newspapers in languages other than English would be difficult considering the diverse ethnicity of the segmented audience.
- Only news reports published in the two newspapers from 01 February to 31 July 2015 were included in the sample population. The researcher observed that columns, editorials, feature stories and letters to the editor on the consumption of *nyaope* are opinionated and this may affect the objectivity and balance of the news stories.

Table 1 Audit Bureau Circulation figures (2015) of the selected newspapers

<b>Newspaper Name</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Readership</b>	<b>Circulation Figures</b>
<b>Daily Sun</b>	RSA	5 500 000	295 000
<b>Sowetan</b>	RSA	1,722,000	98,156

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa, (2015)

### **Stage 2: The selection of the news reports:**

Once the tabloid newspapers were selected, the news reports for the study were determined. The news reports were selected based on a preliminary analysis of the number of published news reports on the consumption of *nyaope*. The researcher used news selection criteria to identify 240 newspaper editions to focus on news reports within the period of the study. It was necessary for the news reports to include coverage of all *nyaope* related stories such as; health effects, crime, social welfare, economic effects, interventions, et cetera.

### **Stage 3: Selection of time frame**

The rationale behind the selection of the time frame was based on the continuous debates and heightened news reports on the use of *nyaope* during the preliminary observation period. This informed the researcher choice of the time frame within which the study was conducted.

Table 2 Time frame for the selected newspapers

<b>Name of newspaper</b>	<b>Selected time frame for analyses</b>
<b>Daily Sun</b>	01 February – 31 July 2015
<b>Sowetan</b>	01 February – 31 July 2015

### 3.4 AREA OF STUDY

The study focused on examining the coverage of news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* in the *Sowetan* and the *Daily Sun* newspapers. Although there are several tabloid newspapers in the country, the researcher only opted to conduct a study on the above publications. Therefore, it was within these tabloids that the researcher sought to determine the frequency, assess the quality of news reports and compare the news reporting styles on *nyaope* use.

A synopsis of the newspapers' profiles and mandate is outlined below:

#### 3.4.1 *Sowetan*

- *Historical background*

*Sowetan* is a South African daily newspaper that is published in English. It takes the format of a tabloid and is aimed at an English literate Black readership. It was established in 1981 as a liberation struggle newspaper and filled the void left by the *Post*, which was deregistered by the apartheid government. Initially, the *Sowetan* was a weekly free sheet which was distributed in the Soweto Township of South Africa. According to Hadland, Louw, Sesanti & Wasserman (2011:172):

*“The Sowetan styled itself as a paper that articulated the opinions of the Black intelligentsia, as it was both psychologically and politically necessary, implicitly or explicitly, to rebut the White supremacist idea of blacks as stupid primitives, and one way of doing this was to engage at the level of ideas”.*

It is from the township Soweto that the newspaper, *Sowetan* took its name. Based on the title of the publication and initial audience, it can be assumed that the content was tailored to appeal to Soweto residents and their circumstances. Furthermore, according to the Centre for Civil Society (2015), the *Sowetan* was a struggle newspaper in its early days and it represented the lives and viewpoints of Black people under the yoke of apartheid. In this vein, the *Sowetan*, the oppressed people as well as the struggle were seen to be one phenomenon. It is in this light that the *Sowetan* became a unique paper (Centre for Civil Society, 2015) where anyone who wanted an understanding of what Black people thought or were doing at the time.

- *Nature of content and target market*

*Sowetan* is not only known to be a fearless advocate of political truth and national development, but also a proud promoter of personal liberation, a champion of lifestyle development, a doyen of enhanced entertainment options and an inspired innovator of information exchange reaching out to a mass of 1,722,000 readers nationwide (Wasserman, 2011). The *Sowetan* is one of the largest national newspapers in South Africa, circulating 98,156 copies a day. *Sowetan* engages with a proudly South African readership that has come to a place where they have truly earned the right to be 'in the know and on the move (ibid).

- *Ownership and retail trading zone*

The *Sowetan* is currently owned by Times Media. Initially distributed as a weekly free sheet in Soweto, the paper was transformed into a daily in 1981 to fill the void left by the Post, which was deregistered by the apartheid government (Audit Bureau Circulation of South Africa, 2015). The *Sowetan* retails for below five rand (R5) per copy and its areas of trading are in and around the urban areas of South Africa (ibid).

### **3.4.2 Daily Sun**

- *Historical background*

*Daily Sun* is South Africa's largest daily newspaper and was launched on 1 July 2002 by the Naspers group. It was the brainchild of veteran journalist, Deon du Plessis; who remained its publisher and minority shareholder until 11 September 2011. The newspaper is based at Media Park in Auckland Park, Johannesburg, but is printed countrywide. It is now overseen by Publisher Jeremy Gordin, who took up the role in 2013.

- *Nature of content and target audience*

As a tabloid aimed at the working class, the *Daily Sun* offers local news and gossip, focusing on events in ordinary people's lives Harber (2008). It reaches out to a mass of 5 500 000 readers nationwide. According to Audit Bureau Circulation of South Africa (2015) the *Daily Sun* circulates 295 000 copies a day. The *Daily Sun* is a mass market tabloid newspapers which has grown in readership in the last few years to become the country's biggest daily, mostly to a working class readership (Harber,

2008:162). It is believed to offer more local news and gossip; focusing on events in ordinary people's lives rather than national and international news.

- *Retail trading zone*

The *Daily Sun* is a national newspaper which is distributed on a daily basis. The paper targets readers in and around the major urban centres of South Africa and has a large, dynamic community of active readers. The *Daily Sun* retails at an affordable price of below five rand (R5) per copy (Centre for Civil Society, 2015). According to Audit Bureau of Circulation of South Africa (ABC, 2015), the newspaper is the highest selling paper in black communities in South Africa currently. It is also noted that this newspaper is very popular among the black communities, where most of the readers are affected by topical issues such crime, substance abuse, health issues, unemployment et cetera and its circulation and readership numbers continue to increase, almost on a daily basis. The black communities indicated above, and many others, believe that the newspaper focuses more on stories which directly affect the lives of its readers (Wasserman, 2011).

### **3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

In this study, data were collected through quantitative-qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis involved examining what was written in the news reports relating to the consumption of *nyaope*, whereas quantitative content analysis involved quantifying data based on the news reports. The researcher used the check list as a method of collecting the data. A prerequisite for successful content analysis is that data can be reduced to concepts that describe the research phenomenon, by creating categories, concepts, a model, conceptual system, or conceptual map. The approach is popular with mass media researchers because it is an efficient way to investigate the content of the media (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011:156). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the methods sought to examine the coverage of news reports of the consumption of *nyaope* in the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* newspapers.

### 3.5.1 Quantitative-qualitative content analysis

For the process of coding in quantitative-qualitative content analysis, the researcher used the inductive category development to code the variables of the news reports and decided whether the level of analysis would be one specific word, a key phrase or a string of words. As espoused by Mayring (2000), inductive category development is oriented to the reductive processes formulated within the psychology of text processing. The main idea of the procedure is, to formulate a criterion of definition, derived from theoretical background and research question and/ or objectives, which determine the aspects of the textual material taken into account. Following this criterion, the material is worked through and categories are tentative and step by step deduced. Within a feedback loop those categories are revised, eventually reduced to main categories and checked in respect to their reliability.

Furthermore, the researcher formulated the text of the news reports in the newspapers, according to the themes derived from the objectives (See section 1.4.2). Therefore, the textual content derived from the variables was taken into account. In addition, once this was done the researcher needed to decide how many concepts to code. This was because conceptual analysis usually required to decide beforehand what the code set should look like, by determining important, relevant key terms or codes beforehand, after looking at the relevant literature on a subject (Kelle, 2005).

In addition, coding the data required the researcher to choose whether to indicate that certain codes did in fact occur (coding for existence) or whether to code each part of the news reports data where a certain code occurs (coding for frequency). When the researcher was coding for existence, only the variables of the news reports on consumption of *nyaope* that occurred were indicated. For example, the researcher wanted to know whether there was coverage of *nyaope* in the newspapers. When coding for frequency of news reports, the researcher noted that each time the newspapers reported on *nyaope*, it was once or several times during the sampled period. This eventually displayed a frequency of the news reports (Kelle, 2005).

Another step in the coding process required the researcher to decide whether only code instances of the data appeared exactly as the code, or whether the researcher was prepared to generalise around the content of the data to include all meaningful instances for a specific code's data. In this study, the researcher, for example only coded health effects of *nyaope* when she read a news report of the health effects of *nyaope*. The advantage of doing so was that the researcher stood a less chance of "subjectively biasing data". The researcher bore in mind that qualitative research is predominantly about understanding the meaning of data collected for the study.

### **3.5.2 Check list**

The researcher personally collected data through the use of a check list as a data collection tool. The check list helped to note the data through readily described variables such as objectivity in reportage, nature of sources consulted, expert analysis and pictorial reportage, the focus of news reports, structure of headlines, choice of language, in-depth journalism, constructive news, and narrative reportage from the news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* in the tabloid newspapers. Furthermore, the researcher used the checklist to determine themes to be discussed from news reports in relation to key concepts, editorial angles and other journalistic principles associated with standard reporting.

The checklist was also used to guide the researcher in determining when qualitative and quantitative methods were appropriate for a comparative inquiry. The researcher drafted questions based on ideas and information discussed in the relevant literature as well as information that came up from the preliminary observations of the study. In addition, the check list as an observatory tool for research involved observing and systematically recording the results as guided by the research objectives. Therefore the information was conscious and planned. They differed from casual everyday interpretations of behaviour which are often casual, selective, and inaccurate. This is in agreement with Wurtzel's (2005) notion that this analytic synthesis should be systematically recorded in the check list.



### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was a method used for the systematic search of themes collected within quantitative-qualitative the data analysis process. The themes took the form of words, sentences or groups of sentences in the story texts. By reading through the news reports, it was possible to highlight the relevant information and then formulate discursive interpretations. In addition, frequency distribution with numerical display showing the number and percentage of news reports corresponding to each value were used where necessary. The percentages were then presented in the form of graphic illustrative data into general statements or understandings based on the re-statement of the objectives of the study. Overall, the study generate descriptive thematic analyses of news narratives which were formulated into readable results, further formulated into findings and conclusions on the subject understudy.

#### **3.6.1 Interpretive thematic analysis**

The data were examined in depth to provide detailed descriptions of texts, following which they were categorically coded into grouped themes. The researcher used the thematic analysis technique to establish and compare the themes of the news reports on *nyaope* in both the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* newspapers. This is in agreement with Braun & Clarke's (2006:79) view that, thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes data set in (rich) detail. However, it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic understudy.

The researcher adopted thematic analysis because of its advantage of usefully summarising key features of a large body of data and offer thick description of the data set of the news reports. It also highlights similarities and differences across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, the method allowed for social as well as psychological interpretations of data on the news reports about *nyaope* from the newspapers.

### 3.6.2 Phases in conducting thematic analysis

It is for the purpose of this study that the researcher familiarised with the phases involved in conducting thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest a 6-phase step-by-step guide in conducting a thematic analysis. Below follows a summary of these 6 steps.

- *Phase 1: Familiarising with data*

Essentially, this initial phase revolved around the researcher becoming immersed in the news reports on the consumption of *nyaope*. Braun and Clarke (2006:16) assert that such type of, “immersion usually involves repeated reading of the data and reading the data in an active way searching for meanings, patterns and so on”. During this familiarising phase, the researcher jotted down initial ideas for coding.

- *Phase 2: Generating initial codes*

Following the researcher’s in-depth acquaintance with the data, was the production of initial codes from the data. As cited in Braun and Clarke (2006:18), “codes identify a feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst, and refer to “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon”. Braun and Clarke (2006) further acknowledge numerous ways for generating codes but state that the most important aspect during this phase is to ensure that all the data is coded and collated. For the purpose of this study, the codes were generated according to the threshold of the news reports on *nyaope*.

- *Phase 3: Searching for themes*

This phase signifies the beginning of identifying themes from the codes generated in the previous phase. In this study the phase involved the use of visual representations (tables, mind-maps) to assist in sorting the different codes into themes. At the end of this phase, the researcher had a collection of candidate themes, and sub-themes and all extracts of data that had been coded in relation to the texts (Braun & Clarke, 2006:20). The themes were searched according to the codes of the news reports on *nyaope* generated in the previous phase. In the end, the researcher had a collection of themes from the news reports.

- *Phase 4: Reviewing themes*

The searched themes from the news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* were reviewed. During this phase the researcher refined the set of candidate themes and sub-themes. This is in agreement with Braun and Clarke's (2006) perception that, throughout this refinement stage, the researcher will notice that certain candidate themes are not really themes and that other themes might need to be broken down into separate themes.

- *Phase 5: Defining and naming themes*

The reviewed themes of the news reports were defined and named. This phase consisted of the researcher's defining and refining themes that were presented for analysis. Defining and refining is explained as identifying the essence of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures (Braun & Clarke, 2006:22).

- *Phase 6: Producing the report*

The last stage was the final analysis and write-up of the report. The task of the write-up of a thematic analysis was to tell the story of the news reports in a way which convinced the reader of the merit and validity of the analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006:23) argue that the researcher's write-up must be "concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and it must provide sufficient evidence of the themes within the data" (through data extracts). In the case of this study, the researcher followed these analysis procedures to arrive at the interpretative findings of the study.

### **3.7 QUALITY CRITERIA**

The purpose of this section of the study is to ensure that all methods used in the research process are plausible, credible and trustworthy. Hence, the following strategies were used to guarantee a satisfactory level of trustworthiness.

### **3.7.1 Credibility**

Credibility addresses the issue of truth value. This study used documents (newspapers) as the main source of study data upon which content analysis was based. It made use of a verification checklist applied on both sample newspapers in order to produce detailed interpretations, findings and recommendations that may be bench-marked against other research reports and literature on the subject matter under study.

### **3.7.2 Transferability**

Transferability addresses the issue of generalisability or external validity of the research findings in terms of whether they are applicable to other environments or groups. For this study, the discussion of the research data was complimented by a rigorous literature review to qualify the study outcomes. Since the study used newspapers as study records, any successive attempt to establish the applicability of the study using the same documents and research instruments should generate similar outcomes if applied to tabloid newspapers. However, the findings may not be generalisable to other print media genres.

### **3.7.3 Dependability**

Dependability has to do with the trustworthiness of the report and the consistency with which the study outcomes can be tracked and be accounted for. In this regard, the study maintained a clear audit trail where desk research notes and other research documents were properly acknowledged, listed and archived. This entailed compiling a clear record or file on how the data were collected, analysed and interpreted into study findings following the appropriate research procedures. The researcher administered these aspects and monitored all research assistants and other participants who were involved in the study.

### **3.7.4 Conformability**

Confirmability addresses the issue of neutrality as it seeks to establish the extent to which the research is free from subjectivity and bias. The focus of this study was mainly on the news reports and the subsequent interpretations rather than on the researcher. This entailed an assurance that the research procedures and interpretations were objective so that the research findings can be confirmed by

other independent researchers if they were to study the same phenomenon. This study maintained a clear audit trail where field notes and all research documents were properly acknowledged, listed and archived. Study records also show the detail which the research procedures followed within the research process.

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In this study, the researcher sought permission from the University of Limpopo's Research Ethics Committee to get authorisation to conduct the study. Data for the study was collected through desk research methods and did not involve human participants. Tabloid newspapers were accessed from the University's Newspaper Resource Library based in the programme of Media Studies. The researcher recorded the research data by way of content analysis of the newspaper content.

### **3.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

To perform a study of this nature is not without challenges. Content analysis alone cannot serve as the basis for making statements about the effects of content on an audience. Hence, the challenge experienced in the study was in accessing all the hard copies of newspaper editions in order to review the appropriate stories published from 01 February to 31 July 2015. An intensive case study of all the tabloid newspapers in the country would have been the most appropriate approach to present a generalised report on media coverage of the consumption of *nyaope*. However, the study did not cover all the newspapers in the country and saved for the strategic two, mentioned in the background to the study. In addition, the population of the newspaper fraternity is extensive; and to access hard copies of newspapers, proved to be difficult, time consuming and costly. It was therefore decided to narrow the scope of this study to two tabloid newspapers, a genre that may not represent all categories of the print media industry.

### **3.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter described and justified the choice of the research design used in the study. The researcher outlined the scope of the research which was intended and premised around examining the coverage of the consumption of *nyaope* in the two sampled tabloid newspapers, namely the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan*. A brief historical background and mission of each sampled newspaper was presented. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the population and sampling procedures, data collection and analysis techniques which the researcher deemed appropriate for the study. Finally, the chapter outlined quality criteria, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. The next chapter addresses data presentation and analysis.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of data which the researcher collected through quantitative-qualitative content analysis methods. Data were collected to determine the frequency and nature of news reports, assess the quality of news on *nyaope* consumption and to compare the styles of news reporting adopted by the two sampled tabloid newspapers. In the first instance, data on the frequency and nature of news reports were presented in tabular and graphic formats that enabled the study to generate themes namely; *nyaope* consumption and crime rate, availability of rehabilitation centres, and the social, economic, health effects of *nyaope* consumption. The analysis on successive objectives was based on the interpretative phenomenological method to generate discursive themes. To assess the quality of the news reports, the following sub-themes were used; objectivity of reportage, types of sources consulted, expert analyses, pictorial representation, focus of news reports, and the nature of headlines. Furthermore, to compare the styles of news reporting on the coverage of *nyaope* the analysis was based on the choice of language, in-depth coverage, news construction and narrative reportage. This is followed by a summary of the chapter and provision of linking remarks towards the final chapter covering summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

#### 4.2 FREQUENCY AND NATURE OF NEWS REPORTS ON NYAOPE

This aspect is addressed with reference to how both tabloids considered prominence of the coverage of *Nyaope* as part of their news agenda. This is the context with which the researcher established the frequency and nature of news reports on *nyaope* in the newspapers. This is in line with observations by Shoemaker & Cohen (2006) who view the concept of newsworthiness as a facet built on the assumption that certain events get selected by tabloid editors above others based on the attributes or 'news values' they possess. For example, events that occur suddenly and fit well with the news organisation's schedule are more likely to be reported than

those that occur gradually or at inconvenient times of day or night In as much as long term trends are not likely to receive much coverage.

#### 4.2.1 Frequency and nature of news on *nyaope* consumption

This sub-section was based on themes and the content of news reports which were discussed in the form of *nyaope* consumption and crime rate, availability of rehabilitation centres, and the social, economic, health effects of *nyaope* consumption. An analysis of the themes recorded in the tabloid newspapers per month is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: A presentation of the frequency of news reports

Themes	February		March		April		May		June		July		Total
	Daily Sun	Sowetan	Daily Sun	Sowetan	Daily Sun	Sowetan	Daily Sun	Sowetan	Daily Sun	Sowetan	Daily Sun	Sowetan	
<i>Nyaope</i> Consumption & Crime Rate	2	1	2	3	1	-	1	1	3	3	2	2	21
Availability of Rehabilitation Centres	1	3	-	-	1	2	1	-	1	-	-	1	10
Social Effects	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	9
Health Effects	1	1	2	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	10
Economic Effects	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	3
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>53</b>

- ***Nyaope* consumption and crime rate**

The coverage on the above theme was premised on event-based news reports on *nyaope* consumption. The study's objective was to establish the frequency of news reports that included storylines on house-breaking, theft, rape and homicide. Data gathered on *nyaope* consumption and crime rate show that there were two (n-2) news reports in the *Daily Sun* as well as one (n-1) report in the *Sowetan* in the month of February 2015 which highlighted problems associated with house-breaking, where



*nyaope* addicts stole water pipes and plasma televisions to produce a cocktail sustain their habits. In the month of March and July 2015, the *Daily Sun* published four (n-4) reports where communities expressed their concerns over theft occurrences by *nyaope* addicts. Two (n-2) news reports were also published in the months of April and May 2015 respectively, and three (n-3) reports in June 2015. However, the *Sowetan* published a total of six (n-6) news reports in the months of March and June 2015 which were also premised on high crime events due to *nyaope* consumption. In addition, the *Sowetan* had another (n-2) news reports in the period between April and May, whereas two (n-2) were covered in July 2015.

A total of twenty one (n-21) news reports were recorded from both tabloid newspapers in the six months coverage. Despite the presence of additional coverage of *nyaope* consumption and crime rate on the other sections of the newspapers such as; editorials, letters to the editors, columns, and sport features, an average of two (n-2) news reports per month falls short of portraying *nyaope* consumption as a prominent issue in the news agenda. This contradicts the preliminary observations of this study that noted the widespread and overt abuse of the drug among young people in South Africa which needs heightened reporting (Hosken, 2010). Furthermore, the limited coverage does not seem to confirm the sense of urgency with which *nyaope* abuse should be treated by the media as agenda-setters. Therefore, the results show that despite its effects on young people and communities at large, the two tabloids did not put *nyaope* consumption high on their news agenda.

- ***Availability of rehabilitation centres***

The availability of rehabilitation centres was also discussed with regard to the coverage of event-based news reports on *nyaope* consumption. The study noted that there was one (n-1) news report published in the *Daily Sun* and three (n-3) news reports in the *Sowetan* in the month of February 2015 which emphasised the lack of rehabilitation centres for *nyaope* addicts. No news reports were published in both tabloid newspapers in the month of March. In addition, data gathered show that in the months of April, May and June 2015 the *Daily Sun* published three (n-3) news reports, whereas the *Sowetan* published two (n-2) in the month of April and one (n-1) in July 2015. The news reports indicated the necessity for the South African

government to provide professional help for *nyaope* addicts within their respective communities. The study further observed that, news report was covered in the *Sowetan* in the months of May and June 2015 respectively.

Subsequently, a total of ten (n-10) news reports were recorded in both tabloid newspapers in the sampled period. The study noted that the coverage of ten (n-10) news reports is inadequate to report on the availability of rehabilitation centres for *nyaope* addicts, considering the dire effects and the increase in *nyaope* use among young people. Consistent coverage of rehabilitation could have been highly prioritised because most of the addicts in the black townships do not have access to rehabilitation treatment due to various reasons including poor socio-economic situation (Ghosh, 2013). Therefore, both tabloid newspapers ineffectively considered news stories on the availability of rehabilitation centres as newsworthy despite the several challenges faced by the addicts who needed rehabilitation.

### ***Reports on effects of nyaope consumption on users***

This sub-section was discussed based on the following stated sub-themes; health, social and economic effects of the consumption of *nyaope on users*.

- **Social effects on *nyaope* users**

Under this sub-section, the study intended to determine the number of news reports with content on the negative social effect on users as a result of *nyaope* consumption. This included storylines such as dropping out from school, domestic violence, and delinquent behaviour. The study noted that both the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan* reported three (n-3) news reports in the months of February, March and July 2015 respectively. Nonetheless, in the months of April and June 2015 the *Daily Sun* published two (n-2) reports, as compared to one (n-1) report in the *Sowetan* in May 2015. A total of nine (n-9) news reports were recorded on the social effects of *nyaope* in both newspapers. In view of the above, a monthly average of less than one (n-1) news report in both tabloid newspapers falls short of portraying the social effects of *nyaope* use among young people as a topical issue. This is despite the South African government's observations that substance abuse does not only affect the individual, but also affects the family, friends, teachers at school and other members of the community. These observations have also noted how often

substance abuse leads to deterioration in family, peer group, and school relationships (Parrott, Morinan, Moss & Scholey, 2004). Therefore, these results indicate that both tabloid newspapers understudy overlooked the degree to which *nyaope* consumption affects the majority of South African young people and therefore needed.

- ***Health effects of nyaope consumption on users***

The study confirmed the number of news reports in relation to the negative health effects of the consumption of *nyaope*, which comprised sub-themes related to HIV/AIDS, depression, and memory-loss. The coverage of the above theme was also premised on event-based news stories on *nyaope* consumption. Data collected in the sample tabloids show that the *Sowetan* and the *Daily Sun* published two (n-2) news reports in the months of February and July 2015. Furthermore, in the month of March, the *Daily Sun* recorded two (n-2) reports and an additional one (n-1) in April 2015. In the *Sowetan*, a total of three (n-3) news reports were published in the months of March, May, and June 2015.

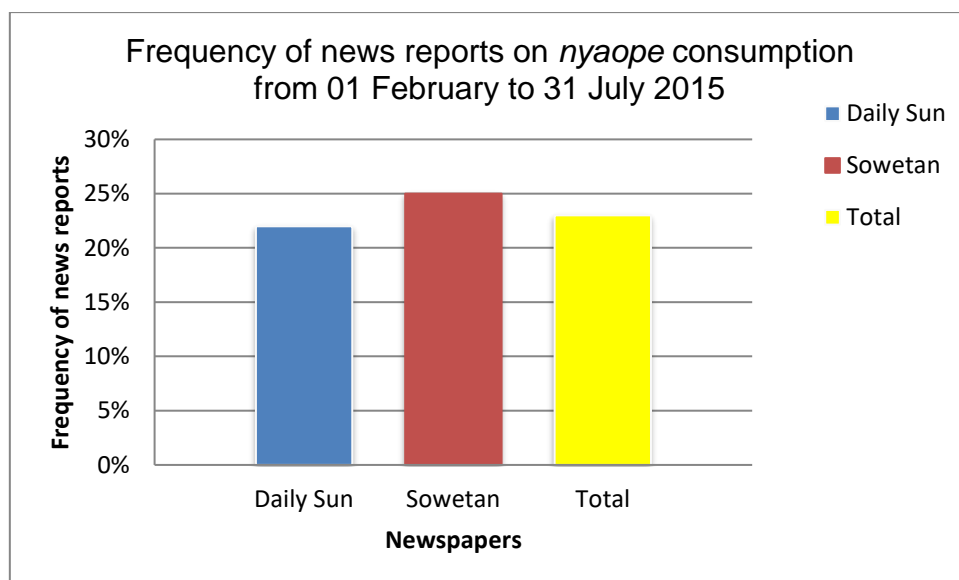
A total of ten (n-10) news reports were recorded on the health effects of *nyaope* consumption in both tabloid newspapers for the period of the study. The study argues that an overall of ten (n-10) news reports are an unsatisfactory quantity of news reports to create adequate awareness on the health effects of the consumption of *nyaope*. This is regardless of the fact that, substance abuse has a negative impact on the health care system including the depletion of scarce resources available to improve the health of all citizens, where medical resources are wasted and lives are lost in substance-related accidents (RSA: Department of Health, 2007). As a result, the insignificant quantity of the news reports illustrates that both tabloid newspapers were lethargic on their function of devoting attention to the detrimental health issues that affect their target readers.

- ***Economic effects***

This sub-section presents results regarding the negative economic effects of *nyaope* consumption on users. The sub-themes of the news reports encompassed unemployment, job-loss, shop-lifting and related acts of delinquency. Data gathered on the economic effects of *nyaope* show that there was one (n-1) news report in April

2015 and two (n-2) news reports recorded for the month of July 2015 in the *Sowetan*, whereas there was no coverage recorded in the *Daily Sun* within the sample period. A total of three (n-3) reports were published on the economic effects of *nyaope* consumption in the entire period of the study. The study subsequently noted that there was less coverage of the economic effects on the consumption of *nyaope* in both tabloid newspapers, regardless of the negative impact illicit drugs including *nyaope* have on the South African economy. This is irrespective of the figures provided by the South African Revenue Services (SARS) which indicate that the known direct cost of illicit drugs use in 2005-2012 were roughly R101 000 million. Based on international data, the economic costs of illicit drugs and alcohol abuse can be estimated at approximately 6, 4% of gross domestic product (GDP) or about R136 380 million per year (National Drug Master Plan, 2013:38). The results therefore show that regardless of the direct costs of illicit drugs including *nyaope* use on the South African economy, coverage of the economic effects of *nyaope* in both tabloid newspapers was insufficient to place *nyaope* consumption high on the news agenda.

Figure 1 below represents the summary of results discussed above:



**Fig. 1** is a graphic presentation of the number of news reports on *nyaope* consumption from the two tabloid newspapers

Based on the above graphic presentation of news stories on *nyaope* consumption, the study noted that the *Sowetan* published 28 (25%) of news reports from the 114 sampled newspaper editions as compared to the 25 (22%) noted from the 112 editions published in the *Daily Sun* per sampled period. Furthermore, the study noted that a total of 53 (23%) news reports from the 226 sampled newspaper editions were recorded in both tabloid newspapers.

Subsequently, the study noted that prominence of coverage of news stories on the consumption of *nyaope* was low on the news agenda of both the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun* newspapers. This contradicts the preliminary observations of this study, whereby numerous news reports were published and does not seem to confirm that prominent topics such as drug use and abuse are salient for the press to publicise their effects, as the press need comments on them to make stories to sell newspapers (Greer, 2008). Therefore, the inadequate frequency such news reports is clear indication that both tabloid newspapers treated the consumption of *nyaope* as an ineffective reality that required intense and frequent coverage. In addition, the nature of the news stories was balanced and objective, and focused on the ramifications of consuming *nyaope*.

#### **4.3 QUALITY OF NEWS REPORTS ON THE CONSUMPTION OF NYAOPE**

The quality of news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* in the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun* tabloid newspapers is presented and analysed with respect to objectivity of reportage, types of sources consulted, expert analyses, pictorial representation, focus of the news reports, and the nature of headlines.

##### **4.3.1 Objectivity of reportage**

The discussion of the results under this section is presented in line with the South African Press Code (2007) which implores journalists to report news accurately, impartially and truthfully.

- *Accuracy (Factuality)*

Accuracy of reporting was premised on event-based stories on *nyaope* consumption. In terms of the basic principles of news writing, data gathered show that all fifty three

(n-53) news reports recorded in the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan* tabloid newspapers used evidence of reporting the events factually in their six months coverage. This was evident in the news reports' precision of providing the full details of the events on *nyaope* consumption. The names and addresses of *nyaope* addicts, communities and families of the addicts were correctly indicated where possible, numbers were accurate, and reliable sources were used in the news reports. For example, the *Sowetan's* 29<sup>th</sup> of July 2015 edition, a news report titled "*Nyaope addiction killed my HIV nephew*", and 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2015 titled "*Trade easy for addicts*" as well as the *Daily Sun's* 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2015 news report titled "*Rage against thugs*" and 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2015 "*Nyaope a deadly cocktail*", provided the names of the crime victims and the types of crimes committed by *nyaope* addicts namely, stealing church bells, copper metals, steel pipes, cell-phones, plasma televisions, et cetera. The news reports also highlighted health, social and economic effects of using *nyaope*, such as HIV/AIDS, dementia, unemployment, et cetera. This agrees with Howard (2009)'s view that professional journalists do not set out to reduce conflict, but to seek the evidence, and describe it objectively supported by a balanced view. Therefore, the news reports were well crafted as they adhered to the code of practice by ensuring that the stories were accurately presented.

- *Balance*

The above sub-theme was also based on news reports on the consumption of *nyaope*. Data gathered show that twenty two (n-22) news reports in the *Daily Sun* as compared to twenty three (n-23) in the *Sowetan* were balanced. The journalists ensured that all sides of the stories were reported on truthfully without fear or favour. A total of forty five (n-45) news reports were recorded in both tabloid newspapers. Balanced reporting was evident in a news report from the *Sowetan's* 16 May titled "*Nyaope junkies in the Vaal*". The journalists ensured that all sides of the respective views of the sources were given. The newspaper explained and also backed up the story with facts in order to preserve the reports' authenticity. The journalists obtained facts from the spokesperson of the organisation, the hospital, and family members affected by *nyaope* consumption. Although in the *Daily Sun's* 21<sup>st</sup> of July 2015 news report titled "*Fire ate my bad boy*", the journalist did not interview the addict because he was dead, the news report is somewhat balanced because residents of the area confirmed that the deceased *nyaope* addict consistently distressed his mother. The

reporter indicated where the incident took place, and also interviewed neighbours and family members. Nonetheless, among the newspapers were eight (n-8) news reports which were negligent where journalists failed to subscribe to principles enshrined in the press code of ethics. Every code of 'good' journalism unambiguously emphasises the importance of objective and balanced news reports at all times (SAPC, 2007:10). Such a news report titled "*Nyaope addict moered*" was observed in the *Daily Sun's* 12<sup>th</sup> February 2015 edition, where the journalist did not interview the crime victims but the eye witnesses. According to the South African Press Code "news shall be presented in context and in a balanced manner, without any intentional or negligent departure from the facts, whether by distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation" (SAPC, 2007:10). Therefore, the majority of journalists from both tabloid newspapers gave equal opportunity for everyone reported on to express themselves, and such people were quoted accurately by the journalists in a majority of the sampled stories.

- *Impartiality*

Through the aspect of impartiality, the study sought to assess the quality of news reports on *nyaope* consumption in both tabloid newspapers. Data show that a majority of the news reports (n-47) in both papers were impartial in their reporting. The *Sowetan* published twenty five (n-25) news reports, whereas the *Daily Sun* noted twenty two (n-22). An example is from a news report in the *Daily Sun's* "*Stop smoking this nyaope or else*". The story started with the following lead: "These *nyaope* addicts have been warned to kick their habit or risk death! Both the addicts and community members were given a fair chance to comment. Another example was noted in the edition of *Sowetan's* 03<sup>rd</sup> of February 2015 entitled, "*Nyaope blamed for increasing rapes in villages*". The news report highlighted the appeals of the resentful Nongoma, KwaZulu-Natal community on the high rate of rapes committed by *nyaope* addicts in the area. The news reports were presented fairly and all content was contextualised so that readers could fully comprehend the content.

The results agree with the South African Press Code (SAPC 2007:11), which highlights that only what may reasonably be true, with regard to the sources of the news may be presented as fact, and such facts shall be published fairly with due

regard to context and importance. The news reports did not take sides and confirmed that all sources were given fair chances to respond. As a result, there was no doubt created in the minds of the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun* readers, because the journalists ensured that the news reports were as impartial as possible.

#### **4.3.2 Types of sources consulted**

The discussion on the types of sources consulted in the news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* are presented in relation to the South African Police Services (SAPS), Department of Social Development, Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, community, family members and *nyaope* addicts.

- *South African Police Services (SAPS)*

On assessing the quality of news reports, the South African Police Services (SAPS) was referred to in fifteen (n-15) of the news reports in both newspapers. The *Daily Sun* recorded nine (n-9) instances whereas the *Sowetan* generated six (n-6) in the six months period. One of the SAPS source was spokesman captain, Manyadza Ralidzhivha in the *Sowetan*'s 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015 publication, a news report titled "*Trade easy for addicts*" who said he was aware that addicts stole metals and sold them to scrap metal dealers in order to buy *nyaope*. He further reiterated that SAPS was working together with communities to apprehend the perpetrators. A related news report appeared in the edition of *Daily Sun*'s 13<sup>th</sup> February 2015 entitled "*Nyaope blamed for increasing rapes in village*". In the news report KwaZulu-Natal police spokesman Major Thulani Zwane said the suspect handed himself over to the police and offered to take them to the crime scene. As a result, the use of fifteen (n-15) sources from the South African Police Services in both tabloid newspapers is minimal to report on the effects or involvement of the SAPS in drug control, thereby lending credibility to the news reports.

- *Department of Social Development*

The *Sowetan* used three (n-3) sources from the Department of Social Development (DSD), whereas there were no sources referred to in the *Daily Sun* in the six months coverage. This is evident in the *Sowetan*'s 10 February 2015 news report titled "*No place to seek help*" where Lumka Olifant, a spokesperson from the department spoke about the insufficient rehabilitations centres for addicts. Another source used



was in the *Sowetan*'s 06<sup>th</sup> of June 2015 edition titled "*I am tired of nyaope*" where a social worker Ms Martha Ncube expressed concerns over the dire effects of *nyaope* on the addicts' families. The limited number of sources from the Department of Social Development is an indication that both tabloid newspapers did not adequately refer to the experts in the Department of Social Development on their contribution towards addressing the social and economic effects of *nyaope* in the society. The department is significant because it deals with issues of drug abuse daily, and acquires in-depth qualified knowledge on the socio-economic effects of consuming *nyaope* (RSA: Department of Social Development, 2013).

- *Community, family members and nyaope addicts.*

Data collected from both tabloid newspapers show that the *Sowetan* used thirteen (n-13) community sources, as compared to the *Daily Sun* which noted sixteen (n-16) sources in the six months coverage. This was evident in the *Daily Sun*'s news reports; entitled "*Stop smoking nyaope or else*", in its edition of the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2015 and 25<sup>th</sup> May 2015 "*Rage against thugs*", where communities mentioned the high crime rates committed by *nyaope* addicts. The study noted that nine (n-9) of the news reports used family members as sources in the *Daily Sun* and eight (n-8) in the *Sowetan*. The use of such sources was noted in the *Sowetan*'s 25<sup>th</sup> March 2015 edition a news report entitled "*Dad kills baby over mini-skirt*", which is about a mother who pressed criminal charges on her husband for killing their child while high on *nyaope*. The *Daily Sun*'s story entitled "*Fire ate my bad boy*" in the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 2015 edition is another news report where a mother mentioned that she was tired of her *nyaope* addict son; killed by a fire in his shack.

Data further indicate that eleven (n-11) *nyaope* addicts were mentioned as sources in both tabloid newspapers in the six months coverage. This was noted in the *Sowetan*'s 13<sup>th</sup> July 2015 edition, a news report titled "*Bontle's nyaope hell*" and the *Daily Sun*'s 07<sup>th</sup> May 2015 news report titled "*I'm ready to quit nyaope*". The addicts mentioned that they were faced with the challenge of the lack of rehabilitation centres in their communities, when they wanted to permanently quit using the drug. Although there were no sources used from the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, the journalists in both newspapers strived to include other credible sources to the news reports. According to the South African Press

Code (SAPC, 2007:10) what may reasonably be true, with regards to the sources of the news may be presented as fact, and such facts shall be published fairly with due regard to context and importance. In the case of these news reports, different categories of people are the most important sources for journalists. Therefore, it was important for journalists to obtain information from a variety of legitimate and authoritative sources to form the basis of news gathering on *nyaope* consumption.

#### **4.3.3 Expert analyses**

The study noted that of all fifty three (n=53) news reports in both tabloid newspapers, the *Daily Sun* did not consider the use of expert analyses in their coverage. This was important as an attempt to provide readers with a comprehensive picture of the consumption of *nyaope* discourse. In its news reports, there was lack of in-depth knowledge that could have been provided by medical doctors, professional social workers and psychologists on the effects of consumption of *nyaope*. The reports in the *Daily Sun* mainly focused on interviewing communities and *nyaope* addicts meanwhile disregarding expert analyses.

Nonetheless, six (n=6) news reports identified for analyses in the *Sowetan* newspaper used expert analysis in the six months coverage. The news reports were accompanied by views from professional clinical psychologists and social workers. The use of such professionals was observed in the *Sowetan*'s 29 July 2015 news report titled "*Nyaope addiction killed my HIV-positive nephew*". The news report highlights the journey of an HIV positive *Soweto* youth who died after seeking an escape in the highly addictive drug called *nyaope*. A senior lecturer from the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria, Dr. Stephen Geyer was cited as saying; "the effects of *nyaope* increase the pulse or blood pressure, euphoria and could make a person vulnerable to HIV. For example, while having unprotected sex, *nyaope* can interfere with the functioning of the Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ARV) should a person be on the treatment". Another source was a clinical psychologist at the University of Pretoria, Dr. Anne Gloria Moleko who said research on young addicts showed that families were emotionally and financially destabilised when one of them is addicted to drugs.

Subsequently, the study noted that the reports in the *Sowetan* conducted proper research while covering the news events to authenticate the discourse on *nyaope*.

Furthermore, the involvement of expert interviews ensured that the reports contained relevant information on the social, health and economic ramifications of *nyaope* consumption. Lack of such knowledge in the *Daily Sun* news reports somewhat posed a challenge on the credibility of the information delivered. Therefore, coverage that involves expert analyses is usually appreciated for its ability to provide in-depth information on the topic of coverage of the consumption of *nyaope*.

#### **4.3.4 Pictorial representation**

Data gathered on pictorial representation show that twelve (n-12) news reports in the *Daily Sun* were accompanied by images in the six months. The pictures were often presented on the cover page or in the next 2-5 inside pages of the papers, a good sign that the newspaper somewhat regarded the subject as prominent in their news agenda. In addition, the *Daily Sun's* pictorial representation of the news reports was compounded by the use of grisly images of distraught *nyaope* addicts who had been subjected to mob justice. Notably, an example of such coverage was presented in *Daily Sun* edition of the 12 February 2015, titled "*Nyaope addict moered*" where the image displayed a *nyaope* addict lying on the ground in a pool of blood. However, there was a twist to the portrayal of the image because the addict's eyes were "censored". This form of censorship presented the eyes of the victim shaded with black ink. The picture was captioned: "The badly injured *nyaope* suspect after he was assaulted by an angry crowd". Another example is from the *Daily Sun's* 25 May 2015 front page news report titled "*Rage against thugs*". The image is of two injured thugs, who were attacked and necklaced by an angry mob. Therefore, the use of grisly images can somewhat be coined as sensational because the pictures may be perceived as a misrepresentative strategy used to lure the readers into buying the tabloid newspapers.

In the *Sowetan*, the study showed that fifteen (n-15) news reports used images of family members and victims of *nyaope* addicts. The pictures enhanced the reportage and were a genuine representation of the occurrences and were also supported by captions and the use of striking sources. There was no valid excuse for the photo-journalists to set up the pictures because they (pictures) matched with the content of the news reports. This is clearly evident in the *Sowetan's* 10 February 2015 news report which featured an image of a makeshift recreational centre on a farm. The

image includes a dad of an ex-addict and other recovering addicts. However, none of the images featured in the news reports of the newspaper were graphic in the sample period. Subsequently, the study noted that there was minimal use of graphic images in news reports from both tabloid newspapers. It was quite evident that the newspapers strived to avoid set-up photography, which is a type of photography used to manipulate photographs (Nel, 2007).

#### **4.3.5 Focus of news reports**

The discussion on the focus of the news reports is based on the use of positive and negative portrayal of the consumption of *nyaope*. This is an important aspect of style in news reporting because it indicates how the newspapers view “news values” of certain issues. Data gathered show that all fifty three (n=53) news reports recorded in both the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan* newspaper portrayed *nyaope* consumption negatively. This was evident in the *Sowetan* as it effectively presented news reports based on complaints from family members on the manner in which the *nyaope* addicts would attack them whenever under the influence of *nyaope*. This was also noted in the news reports from the *Daily Sun* on the 21 July 2015 titled “*Fire ate my bad boy*”, *Sowetan*’s 10 March 2015 titled, “*Kill my addict son and dump him at the gate*”, “*Stop smoking nyaope or else*” and “*How gogo beats nyaope*” et cetera.

Subsequently, high crime rate, unemployment and HIV/AIDS infections were some of the factors presented in the news reports as effects of the consumption of *nyaope*. Following this, it was evident that the representation of effects about *nyaope* consumption in the news reports was imperative to create awareness of its harmful effects on users. In addition, the negative portrayal indicated how the sources from the news reports viewed the subject. Each newspaper had its own focus of interviewing and gathering content from the sources, yet the majority of the news reports were negative in both the newspapers. The reporters ensured that different focuses were used to avoid manipulating the news reports.

Nonetheless, the study noted that there were no news reports that portrayed *nyaope* positively in both tabloid newspapers. The study further noted that in all the news reports, *nyaope* was not only negatively portrayed, but its consumption was also condemned by the community, SAPS and family members of the addicts. It was reported that the consumption of the drug had a negative impact not only on the

users but also on their families and communities, (Ephraim, 2014). The scourge of *nyaope* use and the violent nature of the addicts on their relatives were both given detailed attention in the tabloids under study, particularly in the *Daily Sun*'s edition of 10 February 2015 on page 7, 10 April 2015 on page 8, 21 May 2015 on page 5, and the *Sowetan*'s editions of 03 February 2015 on page 06, and 16 May 2015 on page 05.

#### 4.3.6 Nature of headlines

Another variable identified was the structure of headlines in the news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* in the tabloid newspapers. The study compared the news reports according to the structure of headlines in the front and odd pages of the papers. Data gathered on the above-theme illustrate that fifty three (n-53) headlines of the news reports were presented in bold, uppercase for banners (headlines written in bold and a column) and written in "catchy" and poignant style that made it easy for the readers to understand. This was noted in headlines from the *Daily Sun* such as: "*I sell sex for nyaope*", "*How gogo beats nyaope*", "*Stop using nyaope or else*". Similarly the *Sowetan*'s, "*Nyaope burdens grannies*", "*Nyaope initiate dies in hospital*" headlines made it easy for its black middle class target audience to comprehend the content of the news reports. The use of such colloquial words is to effectively resonate with the majority of the tabloids' readership (Conboy, 2006).

In addition, the *Daily Sun* documented seventeen (n-17) news reports in odd pages that made use of large fonts in their headlines. The first news report was published in 25 May 2015 and another in 21 July 2015. The news story on the front page of *Daily Sun* newspaper edition of the 25<sup>th</sup> May read, "*Rage against thugs*", and the 21<sup>st</sup> July one read, "*Fire ate my bad boy*", are examples where both the headlines applied the use of banners; upper case; bold typography and the use of metaphors. Readers, who are not familiar with this type of reporting, might think that the fire literally ate the boy.

The study further noted that in the *Sowetan*, headlines of three (n-3) front page news reports' typography were banners. The headlines were big and in upper case, in order to grab the reader's attention. Subsequently, the majority of odd pages in the *Sowetan*'s typography were also in bold upper case with the use of large fonts. An example includes, a news report titled "*Nyaope burdens grannies*". Other news

reports used bold, lower case typography. Such examples were noticed in the *Sowetan* of the 17 February 2015 headline entitled “*Dad kills baby over mini skirt*”, the 21 March’s edition entitled “*Nyaope addicts terrorise churches*”, and the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 2015’s headline on “*Nyaope and HIV a deadly cocktail*”. Essentially, these headings were simple to digest for ordinary readers even if they were not explained.

According to Clear & Weideman (2007)’s view the use of such bold and upper case letters can be regarded as an emphasis on the news threshold. Tabloids with such large one- or two-word banner headlines leap out from news-stands and command the attention of the passing public. Furthermore, it is imperative to note that the front page carries the most important news stories (headline news) (ibid). Therefore, using such bold and upper cases for news stories on the consumption of *nyaope* will “sell” the newspaper and also invite and/or lure the reader to buy the newspaper by indicating that the stories can be read inside.

#### **4.4 STYLES OF REPORTING ON THE CONSUMPTION OF NYAOPE**

Tabloids are able to provide narratives, sensationalistic and constructive news by their style of the portrayal of drugs and drug use, and serve as a guide for the audience’s life interpretation of topical events (Sparks, 2009). In this section, the styles of reporting on the consumption of *nyaope* in the tabloid newspapers are addressed based on the choice of language, in-depth journalism, constructive news and narrative reportage.

##### **4.4.1 Choice of language**

The choice of language is discussed in relation to sensationalism, sensitivity and discriminatory language of news reports on the consumption of *nyaope*. Choice of language used in the news reports formed a critical component of the reportage in comparing the styles of reporting in the tabloid newspapers.

- *Sensationalism*

The South African Press Council Code states that news should be presented in context without distortion, avoiding discriminatory or denigrating references to people’s race, colour, ethnicity, et cetera. During the period of this investigation, all of

the fifty three (n-53) news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* on the sensationalism theme were presented in both the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* newspapers. The study noted that the news reports' intention in both newspapers was presumably to amuse, attract and startle the readers. The stories were personified into a lay person speaking manner through the use of words such as "gogo", "moered", "junkies" and "fire ate" et cetera. Furthermore, the news reports over-emphasised the news events and used emotional language, which normally tends to complicate what is supposed to be a precise story.

An example of such sensationalist news story was noted in the *Daily Sun's* "I sell sex for *nyaope*" with the lead "I won't hide it. I sleep with men to get money for *nyaope*. That is the only way girls who smoke *nyaope* get money, it's by sleeping with men," said the teenage girl. The sensationalist aspect of the news report was observed by the use of emotional language in the reporting. Furthermore, the use of an image of the teenager wiping what appears to be "tears" is also clear testimony of how the tabloids' sensationalistic style was applied. Another example was observed in the *Sowetan's* publication of 10 February 2015 entitled "No place to seek help and drug abuse". The story starts with a lead: "When a tearful teenager arrived on the doorstep of what used to be a community-run rehabilitation centre for *nyaope* addicts". The teenager was described as "tearful", which is an over-emphasis of the situation. The use of such emotional language is regarded as sensational.

The above scenario is in agreement with Sparks (2000)'s view that sensationalism simply put, is hype news that is played up to appeal to senses and not the intellect. The use of sensationalism is to attract readers and increase sales. This is plausible for getting people to talk about the consumption of *nyaope*. Subsequently, the study notes that there were numerous sensational news reports presented in both the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan* newspapers about *nyaope* consumption.

- *Use of insensitive language*

Language is a critical component of tabloid journalism in determining how the press not only presents but also mainstreams particular issues in society. The study noted that news reports on consumption of *nyaope* were adequately problematised, with eight (n-8) news reports recorded in the *Daily Sun* and three (n-3) in the *Sowetan* in the six months coverage.

In both cases there is evidence that the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun* newspapers, demonstrated the use of insensitive language in their news reports. The use of such language was noted from a news report published in the *Sowetan's* 23 June 2015 edition, which applied the use of words like “*bitches* and *whores*”. These were some of the offensive words reiterated by the *nyaope* addicts towards their family members whenever approached with regards to their outsized consumption of *nyaope*. The use of insensitive phrases such as “ancestors were punishing him” regarding an addict who died after his shack was burnt to ashes are incomprehensible. The news story was published in the *Daily Sun's* 21 July 2015 titled “*Fire ate my bad boy*”. The neighbours stated that Siphso deserved death because he was the reason why numerous community members including his mother did not have peace. It is clear in the article that the addict was often disrespectful and would be extremely stubborn at times.

Another example was observed from the *Daily Sun's* 07 February 2015 titled “*I sell sex for nyaope*”, which consisted use of insensitive language. In the news report the addict confesses that she engaged in transactional sex for *nyaope* and was often called by demeaning names such as “bitch” or “prostitute” by her costumers. The underage teenage girl said: “When I demand my money for sex, the guys call me a “*magosha*” and cheap bitch. It really hurts”. The teenager said she had sex with men to maintain her *nyaope* smoking habit. Subsequently, the study noted that the coverage of was qualitatively not good because the reports must treat *nyaope* addicts’ with sensitivity.

- *Discriminatory language*

Data gathered on the above theme on the consumption of *nyaope* in both newspapers in the six months coverage indicate that two (n-2) news reports in the *Sowetan* included discriminatory reportage, whereas there were no discriminatory news reports noted in the *Daily Sun* newspaper. A news report from 29 July 2015 *Sowetan's* edition titled “*Nyaope addiction killed my HIV positive nephew*”, it was unnecessary for the reporter to disclose the health status of the *nyaope* addict because he was deceased. This is contrary to the South African Press Code (SAPC 2007:11) Section 2.1, which state that “the press should avoid discriminatory references to people’s race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or



preference, physical or mental disability or illness, or age.” In Section 2.2, it further states that, “the press should not refer to a person’s race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental illness in a prejudicial or pejorative context except where it is strictly relevant to the matter reported or adds significantly to readers’ understanding of that matter.”

Subsequently, the study noted that the *Sowetan* newspaper violated the South African Press Code (2007) Discriminatory Reference Act. This is reinforced in the SAPC (2007:1) which encourages all media practitioners to avoid discriminatory remarks to peoples’ illness, race, colour or age. More importantly for this study, news reports that contain discriminatory language have the potential to perpetuate and promote stereotypes about drug users, a tendency that may further marginalise them as people who need assistance from society.

#### **4.4.2 In-depth reporting and constructive news**

The researcher analysed data based on the comparison of the styles of reporting about consumption of *nyaope* in relation to in depth reporting and constructive news. The use of in-depth reporting and constructive news styles are important in tabloids, because they provide readers with in-depth and significant information that presents problems and solutions associated with the consumption of *nyaope*.

- *In-depth reporting*

The study noted that there were no reports based on in depth reporting in the news reports from both the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun* newspapers in the six months coverage. In addition, there were no editorials, feature stories and opinion letters recorded on the consumption of *nyaope*. The lack of such coverage had a challenge of failing to provide background information and context to the news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* thereby limiting readers to a surface meaning with the potential for misinterpretation of the said information. However, the results do reveal that more rigorous effort of providing the readers with detailed, holistic discourses and impacts of *nyaope* use need to be executed in both publications.

According to Swanepoel (2007), the lack of in-depth coverage trivialises the news being reported on by making readers to think that the story is less important since it is not fully developed. In tabloid journalism, news stories are introduced before they

can progress into other forms of reporting such as editorials or in depth journalism. As the basis of all news writing, the limitation is that tabloids focus mainly on timeliness, novelty and human interest aspects with lesser demands for interrogation. Nonetheless, little usage of in depth coverage and other forms of news reviews in both newspapers understudy had limitations of not fully empowering readers to understand the consumption of *nyaope*.

- *Constructive news*

Overall, both the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan* newspapers demonstrated evidence of fewer news reports of constructive news in the six months coverage. The study established that the *Sowetan* had a significant portion (n-4) of positive reporting unlike its counterpart *Daily Sun* which recorded two (n-2) news reports. A news report published in the *Sowetan's* 23 February 2015, with a headline "*Community up in arms*" is one of the representation of constructive news as it narrates about an initiative called "Vimba" by a community in KwaMashu, KwaZulu Natal to combat *nyaope* use. Another example includes the *Sowetan* story, titled "*Nyaope, a deadly cocktail*", which narrates the plight of Gauteng high-school principals on the high use of *nyaope* in township schools. The newspaper's narrative comprised the views of Mr Mkhize, a concerned principal who is working with South African Police Services (SAPS) on an operation of searching learners' for drugs. The constructive focus of the news reports in the *Sowetan* featured the positive role that various communities played to ensure that there was rehabilitation of *nyaope* addicts. The study further observed that the news reports were constructive because they focused on the concept of ensuring that initiatives were taken in order to curb the consumption of *nyaope* in the communities. The initiatives include searching the learners' for drugs before they enter school premises, and the establishment of Community Police Forum (CPF) that patrol the community at night ensuring safety of residents. These reports highlighted on the campaigns coordinated by family members of the addicts and good Samaritans from the affected communities to minimise drug abuse.

Another constructive reporting was demonstrated in the *Daily Sun's* 04 May 2015 edition entitled "*How gogo beats nyaope*", which presented the case of a resident who turned her house into a rehabilitation centre. This was complemented by another *Daily Sun's* "*I'm ready to quit nyaope*" which portrays the willingness of

some of the *nyaope* addicts to change their habits. The limited evidence of constructive news representation indicates that both tabloids need to employ positive news stories for delivering prevention of *nyaope* use in the South African youth. This concurs with Wakefield (2010)'s view that newspaper campaigns need to raise consciousness of the problem of illicit drug use, and encourage consideration of individual or collective action.

#### **4.4.3 Narrative style of reporting**

The study noted that none of the news reports sampled from both the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan* used the narrative style of reporting. Instead, the inverted pyramid style whereby the news reports offered readers the basic who, what, where, when and why of a story was used. This is unlike the narrative news pieces, which are usually longer and allow the writer to employ more elements of prose writing. Stories that are considered as narratives often appear in magazines and allow a reporter to approach a subject in different ways (Rubin & Ibbotson, 2002).

The lack of narrative style of reportage was observed through news reports keeping it simple, using headlines with appropriate words, crisp sentences, short paragraphs, and concise writing. Furthermore, this was observed by avoiding the use of superlatives and jargon in reporting the news reports. This kind of coverage had a challenge of failing to provide background information and the context to the news reports on the origin of *nyaope* sales thereby limiting readers to a surface meaning with the potential for misinterpretation of the said information

However, this style of reportage contains some real wisdom: whatever is important in the story and likely to grab the readers' attention belongs at the top (Nel, 2007). This was evident in most of the news reports as the lead provided the background information and context of the story. Like any other news theme, reportage of the consumption of *nyaope* should be benchmarked against the South African Press Council Code (SAPC, 2007), which obligates all media houses to report news truthfully, accurately and fairly. Despite the lack of narrative reportage in both tabloid newspapers in the six months coverage, the news reports adhered to the pyramid style which encompasses the basic requirements of reporting. The adoption of the narrative style of reporting on *nyaope* use is that it would have provided readers with a gripping tale told entirely from the view and experience of the reporter. This

immerse style of storytelling was going to captivate readers by drawing them into a story with greater detail than is found in traditional news stories (Rudin & Ibbotson, 2002).

#### **4.5 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter provided data presentation and analysis of news reports on the consumption of *nyaope*. The chapter focused on a thematic discussion and analysis of data gathered in response to specific themes. The themes were discussed in the light of the objectives highlighted in purpose of the study. The chapter highlighted themes on frequency and nature of news reports, the quality of news reports and the styles of reporting on the consumption of *nyaope*. The information facilitated a comparative discussion about specific variables as well as an in-depth coverage of outlying issues raised in the news reports. Data were presented in both narrative and graphic formats. Chapter five (5) is a presentation of the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter data concerning the coverage of the consumption of *nyaope* in the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan* newspapers were presented and the results of the research were discussed. Following the analysis process, this chapter is a summative presentation of the findings and conclusion of the study. Furthermore, it presents the recommendations of the study and highlights areas for further research.

#### 5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The study compared the manner in which two South African tabloid newspapers, namely the *Sowetan* and the *Daily Sun* reported on the consumption of *nyaope* for a period of six months from the 01 February to the 31 July 2015. The focus of the study was to determine the frequency and nature of news reports, assess the quality of news reports and to compare the news reporting styles adopted by both newspapers in covering the consumption of *nyaope*. The summary of the findings of the study is outlined below:

##### 5.2 1 Frequency and nature of news reports on *nyaope*

Coverage of the consumption of *nyaope* in the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* newspapers is hereby presented acknowledging that the frequency of news reports in both tabloids was not adequate on the subject in question. The study noted that the *Sowetan* published (25%) of news reports on *nyaope* as compared to the (22%) of news reports published on the consumption of *nyaope* in the *Daily Sun* newspaper from 01 February to 31 July 2015. A total average of (23%) of news reports on *nyaope* in the six months coverage was recorded in both tabloid newspapers. The other (77%) of news represented stories on natural disasters, accidents, witch-craft, populist politics, world news, feature stories, letters to the editor, advertorials, tips on lifestyles, horoscopes, classified section and sport which did not form part of the study.

In order to determine the nature of news reports, the study noted the following sub-themes: *nyaope* consumption and crime rate, availability of rehabilitation centres, and the social, health and economic effects of *nyaope*. The study noted that there was limited coverage of *nyaope* consumption and the crime rate in the six months period from both the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun* newspapers. This falls short of confirming the sense of urgency with which *nyaope* use should be treated in South African communities. On the availability of rehabilitation centres, the study noted that the news reports in both tabloids were inadequate considering the hardships endured by addicts when seeking rehabilitation. News reports on the social effects of *nyaope* on users showed that, both tabloids overlooked the threshold of *nyaope* use and related issues affecting the majority of South Africans in the context of economic hardships and poverty dynamics. In addition, news reports on the health and economic effects of *nyaope* use were also scant with a few of the existing reports falling short of highlighting the impact of scarce medical and human capital resources available in the communities to assist drug victims. In addition, news reports from both tabloids did not make reference to the direct costs of *nyaope* consumption on the South African economy in general, a gesture that could assist in the advocacy for policy reform regarding drugs control in the country.

### **5.2.2 Quality of news reports on *nyaope***

The summary of findings on the quality of news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* in both the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* is presented as follows:

- ***Objectivity of reportage and types of sources consulted***

From the findings, the study observed that the majority of the published news reports in the *Sowetan* and the *Daily Sun* newspapers were accurate, balanced, and impartial in their reporting. The results also show that in the majority of their reports on *nyaope*, both tabloid newspapers avoided violating the SAPC (2007), section 4.3 which states that “comments by the press shall be an honest expression of opinion, without malice or dishonest motives, and shall take fair account of all available facts which are material to the matter commented upon”.

The study also based the findings on the type of sources consulted within the news reports namely: South African Police Services (SAPS), Department of Social

Development, and Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, community members, family members, and *nyaope* addicts. The study noted that community members, South African Police Services (SAPS), Department of Social Development spokespersons, family members and *nyaope* addicts were the majority of sources recorded in both tabloid newspaper reports. All of the observed sources cited the negative effects of the consumption of *nyaope* which such as the high crime rate as characterised by house-breaking, rape, theft, and homicide. Issues identified on the health effects of consumption of *nyaope* revolved around poor hygiene, psychological consequences and poor medical conditions of the drug users. The economic effects of *nyaope* consumption were associated with impaired work performance and absenteeism from work. However, news reports did not cite the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DJCD) as sources of their news. Coverage of the role of this department would have ensured that the readers of the news reports on the consumption of *nyaope* would be familiarised to the legal implications of using illicit drugs including trading or selling them.

Based on the aforementioned, the news reports in both newspapers were somewhat balanced as there was reference to multiple sources relevant to the subject matter on drugs. To enhance the objectivity of reporting, the reporters could have reported on the intervention plans by the Department of Health to facilitate buy-in from the communities as a way of supporting the existing campaigns (see Section 1.5).

- ***Use of expert analyses and pictorial representation***

The results indicate that few news reports in the *Sowetan* newspaper included views from professionals or experts unlike those in the *Daily Sun* which consulted none. The coverage of expert analyses in the *Sowetan* involved professional psychologists and social workers. The experts' views were mainly on the analysis of the psychological and social effects of consumption of *nyaope*. Going by the findings, the study noted that the news reports' lack of expert analyses in the *Daily Sun* somewhat compromised the quality of coverage on the consumption of *nyaope* and its effects on both the users and communities. This is so because expert analyses usually lend credibility and authenticity to news reports, which both drug addicts and communities must trust to develop positive attitudes towards existing interventions (Narsee, 2012). In view of the *Sowetan*'s use of expert analyses, since readers

usually believe in experts, this could enhance the knowledge with which news reports could influence behavioural change among drug users.

Pictorial representation of news about *nyaope* shows that the majority of *Daily Sun* reports used grisly images of injured or dead *nyaope* addicts, compared to the *Sowetan* that largely used images of community members and recovering addicts. This concurs with Fahmy & Kim's (2008) notion that newspapers are believed to display death in very graphic ways, with particularly the tabloid press assumedly leading the race. While much emphasis could have been on the originally written content about news, this shows that the focus of some tabloids has shifted to visual representations of societal challenges with little or no constructive input towards addressing them.

- ***Structure of headlines***

The researcher compared the number of news reports published on the consumption of *nyaope* in both tabloid newspapers according to the structure of headlines. From the findings, it was clear that the news reports from the *Daily Sun* front page's typography were mostly in upper case as compared to the *Sowetan's* use of bold lower case style. However, the odd pages from both the *Sowetan* and *Daily Sun's* headlines were documented in upper case. Kress and van Leeuwen (1998:187) have pointed out that this is an element of importance to the examination of news "when we write, our message is expressed not only linguistically, but also through a visual arrangement of the use of headlines, page location and marks on a page". As a common feature within the tabloids, this style is useful in creating an audience for *nyaope* related messages since the typologies have both an appealing and attractive composition that sits well with tabloids readers.

- ***Focus of news reports***

During the research process, it emerged that news reports published from the both newspapers mostly contributed toward the negative focus of the consumption of *nyaope*. From the findings, the study further observed that the news report portrayals were on the negative effects of *nyaope* on users, family members and the community at large. This approach enhanced constructive coverage of drug use in that, readers were made aware of the heinous effects of *nyaope* use and were



implored to consider behavioural change. In both cases, there was undoubted evidence in news reports from the newspapers that *nyaope* reports were adequately problematised. This was noted from the negative views of communities and family members on the high levels of crime allegedly committed by *nyaope* addicts to maintain their habitual behaviour.

### **5.2.3 Styles of reporting on *nyaope***

The summary of findings presented in this section is based on the comparison of styles of reporting used in the news reports on the consumption of *nyaope*. These are discussed with respect to choice of language, in-depth coverage and constructive reporting, and narrative reporting.

- ***Choice of language***

The study findings show the use of sensationalism, insensitive phrases and discriminatory wording in some of the news reports from both the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* newspapers. The study noted that the news reports in the *Daily Sun* in particular, focused more on the events rather than the context and further used emotional language. This amounted to sensational coverage of news on *nyaope*, usually appealing to the senses and attracting readers to the content which is devoid of behavioural change elements.

Both tabloids used insensitive phrases to describe the *nyaope* addicts. The study observed that words such as “*whores, bitches and useless*” were hurled at the *nyaope* addicts. The study noted some news reports in the *Sowetan* that used discriminatory wording which led to disclosing the health status of addicts, which is a breach of the journalistic code. Thus, journalists from the *Sowetan* newspaper violated the South African Press Code’s Section 2.1- 2.3’s Discriminatory Act, which states that “the press should avoid discriminatory references to people’s race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental illness or age”.

- ***In-depth journalism and constructive news***

The findings show that in-depth journalism was scarcely used in both the *Daily Sun* and *Sowetan* newspapers in their reports about *nyaope* consumption. According to

Swanepoel (2007), the lack of in-depth reportage trivialises the news being reporting on by making the readers to think that the story is less important since it is not fully developed. Although, there was limited constructive news reportage in both the tabloids understudy, the few constructive news reports were mainly on initiatives taken by communities to rehabilitate *nyaope* users. This concurs with Wasserman's (2008) view that previous studies done on the role of tabloids on the coverage of politics, drugs, crime and other topical issues have presented valuable arguments on the constructive and reflective role of tabloids when compared to their mainstream counterparts. This implies that, if both tabloids had adopted this approach more elaborately, readers would have benefitted from the broader alternate angles and in-depth coverage associated with the style of reportage.

- ***Narrative reporting***

The study findings show that narrative reporting was not used in both newspapers in their news reports on the consumption of *nyaope*. The news reporters kept the styles of writing simple, using headlines with catchy words, and maintaining short paragraphs. While this kind of coverage did address the 5Ws and H news reporting criteria, it failed to provide background information necessary for target readers to contextualise *nyaope* consumption dynamics in South African communities.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

The study observed that despite a growing awareness of the consequences of *nyaope* consumption of reportage in tabloids, coverage of news reports on the drug and its use is still inadequate. This is in the context of extensive literature that demonstrates that crimes such as rape, robbery, murder and domestic violence are reportedly committed by people who are under the influence of *nyaope* (SA Crime Statistics, 2014). Furthermore, it is worth noting that most news reports in the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan* newspapers failed to explore broader alternative news angles aimed at changing or influencing positive attitudes towards the effects of drugs among the youth, particularly the consumption of *nyaope*. The study highlighted the lack of narrative reportage and in depth journalism as important styles of reporting about illicit drugs and related issues. This has a limiting effect on the intensive

coverage of *nyaope* use in society since the tabloids approach tends to report issues on the surface without providing detail. Meanwhile, this style has a tendency of excluding critical aspects of *nyaope* use that border around the psychology, economics and sociology of substance abuse in South Africa communities. Given the immense power of tabloids as narrators of daily realities with the capacity to sway public opinion (Sparks, 2003), it is essential that they cover issues in a manner that can influence positive attitudes towards the consumption of *nyaope*. Hence, tabloids have the potential to champion a discourse on illicit drugs by providing informative and educative reporting on the consumption of illicit drugs due to their 'class dimension' style that is inclined towards the ordinary citizens of South Africa. Subsequently, as part of a responsible press, tabloids should continue to strive to report news on the consumption of *nyaope* in an objective and contextualised manner to empower readers with knowledge about drugs as well creating awareness about the effects associated with using *nyaope* as an illicit drug.

#### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Following the preceding sections on the analysis, summary of findings and the conclusive remarks about the coverage on the consumption of *nyaope*, the following recommendations are made:

- Although the study revealed that tabloid newspapers by their nature struggle to report adequately about news stories on the consumption of *nyaope*, the drug remains a topical issue that affects a vast majority of South African citizens. Subsequently, there is dire need for more rigorous reporting on *nyaope* use to improve the frequency of reporting about illicit drugs. The degree of variance in the tabloids' coverage of *nyaope* use revealed that insufficient stories are published in the newspapers and this remains a challenge. The editors of the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan* could consider increasing the frequency by at least dedicating a weekly full page of *nyaope* related news in their publications.
- It is the recommendation of the study that the tabloids improve on their quality of reporting by avoiding a display of sensational photographs. For tabloid newspapers to remain the central focus of reporting on how the consumption

of illicit drugs, particularly *nyaope* affects readers, it is important that they avoid reporting sensationalised news to their audiences. In fact they should focus on creating widespread consciousness and soliciting sympathy for drug users through the production of news reports about how *nyaope* affects not only the addicts' lives but even those of their communities.

- The study recommends the use of diverse or alternative styles of reporting news about *nyaope* to make the subject more engaging to the readers. Furthermore, the tabloids need to be more sensitive and careful with their choice of language in the news reports to avoid misinformation or misrepresentation of facts that often accompanies sensationalised reporting.

## **7. FURTHER RESEARCH**

Notwithstanding the findings and recommendations made in this work, the researcher hereby highlights the need for further research to explore the relationship between *nyaope* coverage and its continued use particularly among young people in other South African media platforms. Following this, researchers in the field of Media Studies could do further studies involving broadsheets and digital media with specific reference to South Africa, to see how their coverage addresses issues of illicit drug use.

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**APPENDIX**



**DATA COLLECTION TOOL 2017**

**COVERAGE OF THE CONSUMPTION OF *NYAOPE* BY TWO SOUTH AFRICAN TABLOID NEWSPAPERS:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF *DAILY SUN* AND *SOWETAN***

**QUANTITY (FREQUENCY) OF NEWS REPORTS ON *NYAOPE***

ARTICLES	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	TOTAL
Daily Sun							
Sowetan							
Overall Total							

TABLE 1

**THE OBJECTIVITY OF REPORTAGE**

TABLOID	OBJECTIVITY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
Daily Sun	Accuracy						
	Balance						
	Impartiality						
Sowetan	Accuracy						
	Balance						
	Impartiality						

TABLE 2

### TYPES OF SOURCES CONSULTED

TABLOID	SOURCES	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
<b>Daily Sun</b>	Dept. of Social Dev						
	Dept. of Justice						
	Community						
	Family Members						
	<i>Nyaope Addicts</i>						
<b>Sowetan</b>	Dep. Of Social Dev						
	Dept. of Justice						
	Community						
	Family Members						
	<i>Nyaope Addicts</i>						

TABLE 3

### EXPERT ANALYSES

TABLOID	EXPERT ANALYSES	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
<b>Daily Sun</b>							
<b>Sowetan</b>							

TABLE 4

### PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION

TABLOID	PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
<b>Daily Sun</b>							
<b>Sowetan</b>							

TABLE 5

### FOCUS OF NEWS REPORTS

TABLOIDS	FOCUS	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
Daily Sun	Positive						
	Negative						
Sowetan	Positive						
	Negative						

TABLE 6

### NATURE OF HEADLINES

TABLOIDS	NATURE OF HEADLINES	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
Daily Sun							
Sowetan							

TABLE 7

### CHOICE OF LANGUAGE

TABLOID	LANGUAGE CHOICE	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
Daily Sun	Sensationalism						
	Insensitive						
	Discriminatory						
Sowetan	Sensationalism						
	Insensitive						
	Discriminatory						

TABLE 8

### STORY TYPES

TABLOID	STORY TYPE	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
Daily Sun	Narrative						
	In depth Journalism						
	Constructive News						
Sowetan	Narrative						
	In depth Journalism						
	Constructive News						

TABLE 9