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# JOURNALISTIC ROLES AND EVERYDAY LIFE

## An empirical account of lifestyle journalists' professional views

Folker Hanusch 

*Having been neglected by journalism scholars in the past, recent years have seen renewed interest in journalism's role in everyday life, in addition to the traditional focus on journalism's relationship with politics. In particular, a growing body of work is concerned with the practices, content and distribution of lifestyle journalism. Yet, there are still large gaps in our knowledge of the field in terms of how lifestyle journalists themselves think about their work and their role in society. Based on an online survey of more than 600 Australian lifestyle journalists, this article identifies four key roles that these journalists see themselves as fulfilling: service providers, life coaches, community advocates and inspiring entertainers. These dimensions tie into recent theorizations about journalistic roles and everyday life, and not only enhance our understanding of lifestyle journalism, but more importantly contribute to a better recognition of journalism's role in society. Further, the article explores some key determinants for differences in the way journalists value the four roles, identifying economic aspects on the organizational level, as well as specializations within lifestyle journalism as key areas of influence.*

**KEYWORDS** competition; everyday life; fashion; journalism; lifestyle; role; service; travel

### Introduction

Scholarship on journalism has long been concerned with examining journalism's role in society through the eyes of its practitioners. Going back more than 50 years to Cohen's (1963) seminal work categorizing journalists as performing "neutral" or "participant" roles, the field of journalistic role conceptions has—through studying journalists in an increasingly diverse number of countries—developed an impressive body of knowledge about how journalists view their work (see, e.g. Hanitzsch et al. 2011; Weaver 1998; Weaver and Willnat 2012). However, conceptually and empirically such work has predominantly tended to focus on journalism's function in a democratic context, or at least its relationship with the political realm (Hanitzsch and Vos 2016). A strong focus has been on normative expectations of journalism's role in society, privileging certain kinds of journalism at the expense of others. Indeed, these other fields of journalism—such as service, lifestyle, entertainment or sports journalism—have "become denigrated, relativized, and reduced in value alongside aspirations for something better" (Zelizer 2011, 9).

Increasingly, however, scholars are becoming more aware and accepting of the need to enquire into journalism's role beyond politics, not least due to important economic,

cultural and social changes in many Western democracies. Societal shifts towards individualization, de-traditionalization and value change particularly in prosperous economies have resulted in many people increasingly relying on the media to provide guidance and advice on how to live their lives (Hanusch and Hanitzsch 2013). Through its popularity among audiences, lifestyle journalism has become an important and profitable area of journalism (Bell and Hollows 2005), giving it enormous economic and cultural significance. Responding to the growth of lifestyle journalism and its sub-genres such as travel, fashion and food journalism, a number of recent studies have therefore engaged more deeply with the phenomenon, exploring its production, content and distribution (see, e.g. Bradford 2015; Craig 2016; Eide and Knight 1999; Hanusch 2013a; Kristensen and From 2012). Scholarship on journalistic roles, however, has made relatively little progress in this regard. While a small number of studies have explored lifestyle journalists' role conceptions (e.g. Hanusch 2012a; Hanusch and Hanitzsch 2013), these are few and far between and much research on journalistic roles continues to focus predominantly on traditional notions of journalism's relationship with political life. The result has been that roles addressing everyday life remain under-articulated (Hanitzsch and Vos 2016).

This article aims to contribute to a broadening of our understanding of journalistic roles by inquiring into the ways in which actors in the field of lifestyle journalism conceive of their roles. Building on the emerging literature on journalism in the context of everyday life, it reports the results of an online survey of 616 Australian lifestyle journalists, identifying four major role dimensions, which tie into previously theorized dimensions in the field that not only enhance our understanding of lifestyle journalism, but more broadly contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of journalism's roles in society.

## Background

In recent years, lifestyle journalism has become recognized as a very successful area of journalism, both in terms of its economic success, broadening journalism's financial base, and its cultural impact on people's lives (Bell and Hollows 2005; Cole 2005; Hanusch 2012b; Chaney 2002). As Taylor (2002, 479), discussing gardening shows on British television, has noted: "The media, culture and leisure industries have a vested economic interest in encouraging the transition to lifestyle". Publishers are very much aware of this financial necessity. In 2006, for example, the global media company Reuters launched a wire service devoted to lifestyle journalism. Managing director Monique Villa noted:

We have to cover the hard news always, but we have to cover the soft news to meet demand... Clients are evolving. They need more lifestyle news, more entertainment and more pictures. Newsrooms are evolving and Reuters is evolving with our clients. (cited in Brook 2006)

The growth in demand for lifestyle journalism can be attributed to three key developments, which have occurred predominantly in economically advanced Western societies over the past few decades (Hanusch and Hanitzsch 2013). First, processes of individualization have led to a decline in the role of traditional social institutions and the need for individuals to articulate their own identities, in line with what Giddens (1991) refers to as "detraditionalization". Second, scholars have identified in industrial societies a shift away from survival values towards an emphasis on self-expression, which focuses on subjective well-being and quality of life (Inglehart 1997). This has resulted in increased options to

shape one's own lifestyles in a development that is "inextricably linked to consumption" (Hanusch and Hanitzsch 2013, 946). Third, media industries have taken on roles that had previously been filled by other social institutions like the family, education systems and religion (Hjarvard 2008). Hence, the media now increasingly provide guidance in a range of ways for individuals to shape their own identity and lifestyles. Lifestyle media content therefore has important consequences for audiences.

Increasingly, scholars are beginning to inquire more deeply into these consequences (Delli Carpini and Williams 2001; Hanusch and Fürsich 2014; Jones 2005; McNair et al. 2017; Turner 2014). One key consideration here is the challenge of defining what actually counts as lifestyle journalism. Perhaps because of the relatively short history of scholarly interest in the field—as well as the typically low esteem within which it is held among journalists (Groundwater 2009)—there is little common agreement even about the term lifestyle journalism, which has been grouped under "service journalism" (Eide and Knight 1999), or included in the broader term "infotainment" (McNair 2006), while it can also be regarded within the rubric of journalism and everyday life and the private sphere, as opposed to journalism and the political domain (Hanitzsch and Vos 2016). Certainly, issues of guidance, advice, review, consumerism and entertainment appear to be key aspects for any such definition (Fürsich 2012; Hanusch 2012b). Journalists themselves typically think of lifestyle in terms of beats, such as entertainment, leisure, food, music or arts (Brook 2006).

One recent proposal for defining lifestyle journalism was made by Hanusch and Hanitzsch (2013), who noted that lifestyle itself is a contested term in different fields. They draw on Featherstone's (1987) argument that lifestyle needs to be understood particularly in relation to consumption, connoting individuality, self-expression and stylistic self-consciousness. Building on the work on lifestyles and lifestyle media, Hanusch and Hanitzsch (2013) propose a three-dimensional structure which should be reflected in a definition of lifestyle journalism. The first, the formative dimension, focuses on lifestyles as providing orientation for the management of self and everyday life, the second relates to the performative aspects of lifestyle, while the third is about the articulate dimension of lifestyle, i.e. the expression of identity. They therefore propose that lifestyle journalism can be defined as "the journalistic coverage of the expressive values and practices that help create and signify a specific identity within the realm of consumption and everyday life" (Hanusch and Hanitzsch 2013, 947). Typical sub-genres of lifestyle journalism that could therefore be studied include: travel; fashion and beauty; health, wellness and fitness; food, cuisine and cooking; living and gardening; parenting and family; people and celebrity; and personal technology (Hanusch and Hanitzsch 2013).

Already some time ago, Hartley (2000, 40) had argued that soft news formats could "extend the reach of the media, who teach audiences the pleasures of staying tuned, who popularize knowledge", and in fact, a range of literature in the recent past has demonstrated the relevance of various types of lifestyle media content for societal processes. Broadly, we can identify four key themes in the emerging scholarship on lifestyle journalism. The first examines lifestyle journalism from a cultural studies perspective that is concerned with aspects of representation and identity formation, such as the analysis of orientalist discourses in travel reporting (Cocking 2009; Hamid-Turksoy, Kuipers, and Van Zoonen 2014) or the promotion of certain identity templates in women's magazines (Madsen and Ytre-Arne 2012) or in food journalism (Johnston and Baumann 2007; Duffy and Ashley 2012). The second line of inquiry is concerned with political and critical aspects of a field that is often derided as being devoid of critical components. However,

some studies have pointed to the inclusion of critical discourses in travel journalism (Fürsich 2002; McGaurr 2012), green lifestyle reporting (Craig 2016) or technology reporting (Usher 2012). Third, scholarship has been interested in commercial and consumerist aspects of lifestyle journalism, such as Chinese lifestyle magazine content that promotes identities about consumer capitalism (Li 2012), or the increasing inclusion of consumerist approaches in cultural (Kristensen and From 2012) and arts journalism (Verboord and Janssen 2015). Finally, a fourth theme in lifestyle journalism studies is concerned with the impact of the digital age and the resulting “democratization” of the field through participatory technologies. Here, studies have been concerned with the impact of, for example, fashion blogs (Boyd 2015; Rocamora 2012) or the opening up of new practices in travel journalism (Pirulli 2014; Raman and Choudary 2014).

### Lifestyle Journalists’ Role Perceptions

Of growing concern in the study of lifestyle journalism is a consideration of how its practitioners actually conceive of their role in society. Due to the largely dismissive stance towards lifestyle journalism from both fellow journalists as well as journalism and communication scholars in the past, relatively little work has engaged with the field. While the scholarship on journalistic roles has a tradition extending back more than 50 years, past work has been predominantly oriented to journalists’ role *vis-à-vis* notions of democracy and citizenship (Hanitzsch and Vos 2016). Certainly, the literature in this field has expanded considerably with a multitude of increasingly complex and comparative studies which have highlighted important variations of how journalists across the globe conceive of their roles (Hanitzsch et al. 2011; Weaver and Willnat 2012). At the same time, this work has rarely fed back into conceptualizations of journalistic roles, ostensibly limiting the field’s development beyond journalism’s role in relation to political life (Hanitzsch and Vos 2016).

Still, existing scholarship has not entirely ignored fields such as lifestyle journalism, which tend to be more entertainment-focused than traditional political journalism. Thus, when aiming to situate lifestyle journalism in the literature on role conceptions, a useful point of departure is Hanitzsch’s (2007) model of journalism culture and his three role dimensions: interventionism, power distance and market orientation. Due to lifestyle journalism’s close entanglement with consumerism, it would seem logical to therefore locate its practitioners within the market orientation dimension, which Hanitzsch outlined as moving on a continuum between two extremes: a citizen-oriented and a consumer-oriented pole. Often, the literature has regarded these as polar opposites or as mutually exclusive (Lewis, Inthorn, and Wahl-Jorgensen 2005; Reinemann et al. 2012), with journalists either producing news aimed at citizens or consumers, but not both. Recent evidence, however, suggests that the two ought to be distinct categories, as journalists also aim to produce, for example, entertaining news about political life (Mellado and van Dalen 2017), including the increasingly popular format of political satire on television (Baym 2005). While scholars therefore typically talk about journalists wanting to address their audiences as “citizens or consumers” (Deuze 2005, 447), it may be just as likely that they actually see them as “citizens and consumers”, particularly in a world increasingly affected by consumption cultures more generally (Hanusch and Hanitzsch 2013).

This distinction is also important in the context of lifestyle journalism, as locating this journalistic field as purely consumer-oriented may be misleading. Granted, the vast majority of lifestyle journalism may be classified within the realm of consumption. But there are also

critical dimensions to its practice which contribute to public quality (Fürsich 2012), a notion based on Costera Meijer's (2001) aim to overcome the duality of "popular" and "quality" journalism. This aspect was also highlighted in a study of travel journalists' role conceptions, which identified five dimensions (Hanusch 2012a). While the survey of 85 Australian travel journalists found they conceived of themselves as information providers, entertainers and travellers, there was also evidence of more critical roles inspired by traditional journalistic functions related to concepts such as monitoring powerful institutions and investigation. For example, travel journalists also saw their role as being cultural mediators who brought foreign cultures closer to the audience, educating them about distant locations, and even promoting cross-cultural understanding (Hanusch 2012a). Further, the role of critics included the questioning of tourism practices and keeping audiences informed about new developments in the tourism industry.

On a broader theoretical level, recent scholarship has therefore suggested expanding the study of role conceptions beyond the focus on the political to include those related to everyday life. Here, Hanitzsch and Vos (2016) articulated six dimensions of political roles, but they also mapped roles of journalism in everyday life onto three interrelated spaces: consumption, identity and emotion. They argue that across these spaces one could differentiate between seven ideal-typical roles, which they identified as: marketer (promoting lifestyles and products, potentially serving advertisers); service provider (offering practical information and advice on services and products, but more independent than the marketer with audiences as constituents); friend (helping audiences navigate the task of identity work); connector (providing a sense of belonging and contributing to shared consciousness and identity); mood manager (contributing to emotional well-being as a provider of positive experiences); inspirator (providing inspiration for new products and lifestyles); and guide (combining the three key spaces by providing orientation for daily life, such as presenting exemplars of desired lifestyles).

Some of these suggestions relate to an earlier empirical study of lifestyle journalists, which, based on in-depth interviews with 89 lifestyle journalists in Australia and Germany, articulated five dimensions of roles specific to this field (Hanusch and Hanitzsch 2013). These include the provision of: entertainment and relaxation; service, advice and news-you-can-use; orientation; exemplars of lifestyles; and inspiration. Hanusch and Hanitzsch (2013) noted it appeared from the interviews that providing entertainment as well as service and advice were the two dominant roles. All of these together fulfilled lifestyle journalism's function of self-expression, signification of identity and consumption.

This review of the literature identifies two key limitations of our current understanding of journalists' role perceptions in the realm of everyday life. First, relatively little large-scale empirical work has been undertaken to examine whether the role dimensions identified in in-depth interviews can be broadened to a population of journalists. Second, qualitative studies can only speculate about the relative dominance of certain role perceptions. Hence, more quantitative approaches through surveys are desirable to inquire into any hierarchies of roles that may exist. Third, while some work has been undertaken in the wider literature on journalistic roles to explain key determinants for specific role conceptions (e.g. Weaver et al. 2007), we still know very little about these aspects when it comes to lifestyle journalists. Based on these considerations and the literature reviewed here, the following research questions were therefore developed:

**RQ1:** How do lifestyle journalists conceptualize their role in society, and which role perceptions are the most dominant?

**RQ2:** What are the key determinants of lifestyle journalists' role perceptions?

## Methodology

To examine the research questions, a comprehensive online survey of Australian lifestyle journalists was conducted between 19 April and 30 June 2016. Lifestyle journalists were defined as anyone who had some editorial responsibility over the production of lifestyle content—a definition guided by one typically used for mainstream journalists (Weaver and Wilhoit 1986). In recognition of the varying practical realities in the field discussed earlier, as well as the shifting boundaries of what constitutes journalism in the digital age (Carlson and Lewis 2015), the definition applied here includes journalists employed in established media, such as newspapers, magazines, broadcast or websites, as well as freelancers and independent bloggers. Freelancers were considered important to survey due to the ongoing precarization of journalistic labour (Elefante and Deuze 2012), particularly in a field such as lifestyle journalism which is arguably more susceptible to economic influences than news journalism (Hanusch 2012b). Much like in news journalism, bloggers have also had an important impact on lifestyle journalism (Pirulli 2014), which made it necessary to include this group.

Respondents for the survey were drawn from a publicly available database (AAP Media-Net), using search criteria specific to the lifestyle journalism beats noted earlier. An extensive search of the database resulted in a list of 5314 email accounts. These accounts were first contacted via an email invitation on 19 April 2016, with four reminder emails sent over the ensuing 10 weeks. A total of 458 emails were undeliverable, with respondents either no longer working at the address or out of the office during the research time-frame. By the end of the study time-frame on 30 June 2016, a total of 751 responses had been received, of which 616 were completed sufficiently to warrant inclusion in the analysis. This constitutes a response rate of 12.7 per cent, which is low, but, when compared with previous online survey studies of journalists (Vu 2013; Wigley and Meirick 2008), can be considered acceptable.

## Measures

The survey from which this analysis is drawn included a wide range of questions related to lifestyle journalism and took on average 20 minutes to complete. For this analysis of role perceptions, we draw mainly on the question that asked: "Please indicate how important each of the following things are in your work as a lifestyle journalist." On a scale of 1 (unimportant) to 5 (extremely important), respondents were asked to rate each of 21 items. Items were developed specifically in order to test the five key functions identified in Hanusch and Hanitzsch's (2013) in-depth interviews with Australian and German lifestyle journalists, as well as Hanitzsch and Vos's (2016) recent conceptualization of such roles. Some items also drew on other existing survey studies of journalists (e.g. Hanusch 2012a; Heise et al. 2014). Further, we asked journalists to report their age, gender, work experience in journalism and in lifestyle journalism specifically, employment conditions (full-time, part-time, freelancer, blogger), salary, level of education and whether they had studied journalism at university. For subsequent regression analyses, age, gender, salary, as well as whether respondents held a



journalism degree and whether they were employed in an organization were used as controls. On the organizational level, respondents were asked to identify for which of five platforms (newspaper, magazine, online, television, radio) they worked, with multiple mentions possible. They were also asked to rate, on five-point scales, the level of competition (1 = no competition; 5 = very high competition), the financial situation of the organization for which they mainly worked (1 = very negative; 5 = very positive) and their main organization's dependence on advertising (1 = entirely independent; 5 = entirely dependent). These three items were drawn from Obermaier, Koch, and Riesmeyer's (2015) study in order to assess the economic context on the organizational level. Economic context and platforms have been considered important considerations in differences among lifestyle journalists (Hanusch, Hanitzsch, and Lauerer 2017). Finally, to examine the influence of the specific beats that lifestyle journalists worked for—a potentially important criterion for influencing role perceptions (Hanusch and Hanitzsch 2013)—respondents were asked to identify which of the following 11 areas of lifestyle journalism they normally worked in: travel; fashion and beauty; health, wellness and fitness; food, cuisine and cooking; living and gardening; parenting and family; people and celebrity; personal technology; personal finance; property and real estate; and music and movies. Multiple mentions were possible, in recognition of the varied nature of lifestyle journalism which means that many journalists work across more than one of these sub-beats.

### *Sample Parameters*

Compared with all journalists in Australia, the sample parameters demonstrate that those working in lifestyle journalism are on average five years older and are more likely to be female, with two-thirds of lifestyle journalists women, compared with just over half of all journalists (Hanusch 2013b) (Table 1).

At the same time, their work experience in journalism is similar, and the results show that typically lifestyle journalists have worked for an average of five years as journalists before entering the lifestyle field. Lifestyle journalists are similarly well-educated, although just under half of them specialized in journalism during their degree, compared with 66 per cent of all journalists. The precarity of the field is demonstrated by the fact that only just over half are employed full-time, compared with 88 per cent of all journalists. Around one-quarter work as freelancers, and a further 7.5 per cent as bloggers. As a result, average salaries are also significantly lower than those of Australian journalists more broadly.

Travel is the most commonly represented beat, with just under half of the respondents saying they work in this area. This is followed by food, cuisine and cooking, as well as health, wellness and fitness, at around 40 per cent each. Least popular beats are personal finance, property and real estate, as well as personal technology, with less than one in five respondents working in each of these areas. The most common platform on which lifestyle journalists work is online, with 8 of 10 producing digital content. The special role played by magazines is demonstrated by the fact that more than half say they work in this platform, while newspapers are considerably less popular at only one-third. Least popular, however, are television and radio. Lifestyle journalism appears to be a quite competitive environment, with 57.1 per cent saying the organization they work for operates in a highly or very highly competitive environment. A similar number (60.1 per cent) say their main organization is somewhat or entirely dependent on advertising. Still, 45.3 per cent of respondent say their main organization's financial situation is positive or very positive.



**TABLE 1**  
Sample characteristics

Individual level	
Age (mean)	42.9
Female (%)	66.1
Full-time employed (%)	54.4
Part-time employed (%)	11.4
Freelancer (%)	26.5
Blogger (%)	7.5
Work experience in journalism (mean years)	16.2 (SD = 11.6)
Work experience in lifestyle journalism (mean years)	11.2 (SD = 8.72)
Completed university degree (%)	78.4
Specialized in journalism at university (%)	46.7
Salary (A\$, median, yearly after taxes)	36,400–45,400
Specializations	
Travel	46.1
Food, cuisine, cooking	40.6
Health, wellness, fitness	38.8
Music, movies	30.5
Fashion, beauty	28.2
People, celebrity	26.6
Living, gardening, design	26.1
Parenting, family	21.9
Personal technology	17
Property, real estate	14.9
Personal finance	10.9
Organizational level	
Newspaper	33.8
Magazine	54.9
Online	83.4
Television	9.4
Radio	18.2
Competition (mean)	3.63 (SD = 1.11)
Financial situation (mean)	3.31 (SD = 1.06)
Dependence on advertising (mean)	3.29 (SD = 1.55)

## Results

The analysis of individual items measuring their role perceptions shows that lifestyle journalists predominantly see their role as providing content that is fun, and which inspires and entertains audiences. More than half also think it is important or very important to focus on positive stories. Other prominent roles focus on audiences, such as wanting to tell audiences about new trends and ideas, as well as taking a service and advice approach (Table 2).

A Principal Components Analysis (PCA) of the individual role items was conducted in order to identify any underlying dimensions. A preliminary PCA identified one item ("focus on positive stories") that did not load clearly on any of the components, and which was excluded from further analysis. The main PCA was conducted with the remaining 20 items with orthogonal rotation (Varimax). Sampling adequacy was a meritorious Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO)=0.868, with Bartlett's test of sphericity,  $\chi^2 = 3493.27$ ,  $df = 190$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , sufficiently large for conducting PCA. Four components had eigenvalues over

Kaiser's criterion of 1, and combined accounted for 54.94 per cent of variance. Each of the components contributed between 12.8 and 14.5 per cent of variance.

The four underlying dimensions identified here can be characterized in the following:

1. Service Provider (Cronach's  $\alpha = 0.764$ ): journalists who score highly on this dimension want to inform audiences and provide reviews of new products and services, report on new trends and ideas, promote the lifestyle industries and, more generally, provide advice to audiences.
2. Life Coach ( $\alpha = 0.783$ ): this dimension is about motivating people to change their lifestyle, offering examples of how people can live their lives, as well as to help people navigate through their lives and to focus on content audiences can use in their daily lives.
3. Community Advocate ( $\alpha = 0.692$ ): this dimension focuses very much on audience-related aspects, such as wanting to provide a forum for readers to ask questions, helping to create communities of audiences, providing a service to audiences, but also more critical roles such as advocating for audiences' interests, telling audiences about ethical and moral dimensions of certain lifestyles and experiences, and monitoring and scrutinizing businesses involved in the lifestyle industries.
4. Inspiring Entertainer ( $\alpha = 0.766$ ): the fourth dimension relates to journalists who want to focus on content that entertains and inspires audiences, that is fun to consume, lets audiences relax and which provides ideas on how audiences can spend their leisure time.

**TABLE 2**

Lifestyle journalists' role conceptions

	<i>N</i>	Mean	SD	% very/extremely important
Provide content that is fun to read/view/listen to	608	4.24	0.86	82.7
Provide content that inspires audiences	607	4.2	0.94	80.9
Provide content that entertains audiences	612	4.19	0.92	81.7
Tell audiences about new trends and highlight new ideas	610	3.95	0.98	72.2
Focus on content that audiences can use in their daily lives	608	3.86	0.97	68
Provide a service to audiences	606	3.84	1.09	67
Provide advice to audiences	603	3.56	1.16	57
Focus on positive stories	609	3.55	1.15	55.5
Inform audiences about new products and services	608	3.51	1.19	54.7
Help create communities of audiences	608	3.51	1.18	54.5
Advocate for audiences' interests	607	3.49	1.12	54
Provide ideas on how audiences can spend their leisure time	608	3.38	1.22	51.2
Provide content that lets audiences relax	602	3.25	1.18	43.2
Help people navigate through their lives	604	3.23	1.19	43.3
Provide reviews of products and services	609	3.22	1.26	43.5
Tell audiences about ethical and moral dimensions of certain lifestyles or experiences	608	3.17	1.20	42.2
Offer examples of how people can live their lives	604	3.15	1.23	41.1
Provide a forum for audiences to ask questions	606	3	1.19	35.5
Motivate people to change their lifestyle	610	2.97	1.21	33.7
Promote the lifestyle industries	604	2.72	1.25	28.5
Monitor and scrutinize businesses involved in lifestyle industries	605	2.63	1.23	24.8

A comparison of these four dimensions shows that, overall, the most popular role among respondents is that of the Inspiring Entertainer (mean = 3.85, SD = 0.75). This is followed by the Service Provider (mean = 3.39, SD = 0.84), while the roles of being a Life Coach (mean = 3.30, SD = 0.90) and a Community Advocate (mean = 3.27, SD = 0.74) are least popular across the sample.

To better understand how support for these roles may vary across different individual, organizational and professional characteristics, a multiple regression analysis was conducted (Table 3).

The analysis shows some important aspects that influence how lifestyle journalists view their roles, with particular emphasis on organizational characteristics as well as the sub-genre of lifestyle journalism in which the respondents engage. It is important to point out that the coefficients for multiple determination in the regression models are relatively low, and results therefore to some extent are tentative. Still, they offer some key insights.

In relation to Service Providers, i.e. those who want to provide information, reviews and advice about new products, services, trends and ideas, as well as promote the lifestyle industries more generally, the analysis shows the most substantial predictors on the organizational level. First, the more competitive an environment the publishing organization finds itself in, the more likely it is that respondents value this role. Second, if journalists work for newspapers, they are actually significantly less likely to value the role of Service Providers. Some significant predictors also exist on the level of lifestyle journalists' specialization. Those working in the area of fashion and beauty are significantly more likely than others to value the role, while those working in the area of people and celebrity are more likely to be averse to it.

Specializations are the most significant predicting level of analysis in the case of the role of Life Coach, i.e. those who want to motivate people to change their lifestyle and help them navigate through their lives. The most significant predictor in this regard relates to journalists working in health, wellness and fitness. However, the analysis also finds that working in the area of personal technology is positively related to wanting to be a life coach. An additional influence here is the gender of a journalist, with women significantly more likely to want to provide direction to people's lives than their male counterparts. Importantly, this is the only instance where we find any individual-level variables as being significantly related to any of the four identified role dimensions.

In terms of the third role dimension—wanting to be a Community Advocate by creating communities of audiences and pursuing more critical roles—it is important to note that overall the explanatory power of the regression model is the lowest of the four. The only significant predictor is the level of competition an organization finds itself in, with high competition associated with stronger support for this role. The only significant predictor on the level of specializations relates to journalists working in food, cuisine and cooking. These journalists, it appears, are significantly less likely than others to support the role of Community Advocates.

As noted already, being an Inspiring Entertainer was overall considered the most important role by the respondents. Yet, we still find some important differences even among this group of journalists who value relaxing and fun content that entertains and inspires. The most important level of analysis by only a slim margin is a journalists' area of specialization. The analysis shows that both travel as well as fashion and beauty

**TABLE 3**  
Key determinants of lifestyle journalists' role perceptions

	Service Provider			Life Coach			Community Advocate			Inspiring Entertainer		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Individual												
Age	-0.013	-0.002	0.026	-0.05	-0.05	-0.009	0.013	0.007	0.002	-0.061	-0.059	-0.045
Salary	0.06	0.016	0.018	0.051	0.034	0.024	0.089	0.044	0.046	0.091	0.02	0.018
Journalism degree	-0.071	-0.069	-0.031	0.096	0.097	0.09	0.043	0.041	0.011	0.086	0.086	0.071
Employed	0.019	0.031	0.035	-0.044	-0.036	-0.04	0.023	0.039	0.033	-0.003	0.001	-0.025
Gender (1 = female)	-0.067	-0.071	-0.075	0.186***	0.184***	0.157**	0.037	0.04	0.04	0.085	0.078	0.044
Organizational												
Competition		0.13**	0.131**		0.033	0.013		0.127*	0.124*		0.153**	0.142**
Financial situation		0.086	0.083		0.062	0.062		0.084	0.084		0.115*	0.117*
Dependence on advertising		0.08	0.083		-0.005	-0.005		-0.004	-0.019		0.112*	0.115*
Online		0.038	0.015		-0.01	-0.002		-0.005	-0.008		-0.012	0.003
Newspaper		-0.17**	-0.18***		-0.088	-0.046		-0.085	-0.074		-0.117*	-0.083
Magazine		0.11	0.089		0.025	0.071		-0.062	-0.049		0.061	0.092
Specialization												
Travel			-0.045			0.024			-0.089			0.147*
Fashion, beauty			0.181**			-0.018			0.068			0.125*
Health, wellness, fitness			0.07			0.277***			0.036			-0.018

(Continued)

TABLE 3  
(Continued)

	Service Provider			Life Coach			Community Advocate			Inspiring Entertainer		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Food, cuisine, cooking			−0.058			−0.102			−0.132*			0.046
Living, gardening			−0.022			0.031			0.061			0.052
Parenting, family			−0.04			0.014			0.015			0.022
People, celebrity			−0.134*			−0.034			0.034			−0.079
Personal technology			0.025			0.144*			0.095			−0.037
Personal finance			−0.105			−0.002			0.003			−0.024
Property, real estate			0.024			−0.032			0.089			0.012
Music, movies			0.028			−0.021			−0.058			0.072
Variance explained ( $R^2$ )	0.016	0.1	0.14	0.061	0.076	0.168	0.014	0.046	0.089	0.033	0.102	0.179
Change in $R^2$		0.084***	0.04		0.015	0.092***		0.033*	0.043		0.07***	0.077***

The table shows multiple regression models predicting role dimensions (standardized beta values).  
\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

journalists are the most likely to express strong support for this role. On the organizational level, we also find a number of significant predictors. As was the case for the Service Provider and Community Advocate roles, the level of competition is a very important influence on whether journalists want to be an Inspiring Entertainer. Of further importance, however, were other economic factors on the level of the organization. The more organizations depend on advertising, and the worse their financial situation, the more likely that journalists will support the role of being inspiring entertainers.

Thus, economic aspects on the organizational level as well as specializations within lifestyle journalism appear to be the most important predictors for any differences in journalists' role perceptions. The area of specializations—or sub-genres—deserves further attention in the context of these results to provide a deeper insight into the results. Importantly, it needs to be pointed out that even though travel and fashion and beauty journalists are significantly more likely than other journalists to support the role of Inspiring Entertainer, this dimension is still ranked first among each of the 11 sub-genres examined. Yet, prioritizations differ across the other dimensions. For example, travel and fashion and beauty journalists (as well as their colleagues working in food and cuisine, living and gardening, property and real estate, as well as music and movies) rank the role of being a Life Coach last, while journalists in health, wellness and fitness, personal technology and personal finance rank it second. Being a Service Provider is ranked second by travel, fashion and beauty, as well as food and cuisine journalists, while it is ranked last by journalists in health, wellness and fitness, parenting and family, people and celebrity, personal technology and personal finance. Finally, the role of Community Advocate is ranked second among journalists working in living and gardening, parenting and family, people and celebrity, personal finance, but ranked third by journalists in the other specializations.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This analysis contributes empirical evidence to recent theories on journalism's role in addressing everyday life. Increasingly, lifestyle journalism is of important economic consequence for media industries, as well as of societal relevance as audiences look to the media to provide guidance and advice on how to live their lives. Recent research proposed a range of different roles which could be hypothesized in this regard, but so far there has been a lack of empirical evidence on how lifestyle journalists themselves may actually view their roles in society. Perhaps even more importantly, there has been little knowledge about which roles these journalists may prioritize, or which kinds of determinants may influence differences across the relatively broad and diverse field of lifestyle journalism. Importantly, this study has found considerable support for some of the roles theorized in recent scholarship through the identification of four key dimensions.

First, service providers aim to provide information, advice and reviews of new products, services and trends. This role is the same as Hanitzsch and Vos's (2016) theorized role by the same name, which they saw as catering to a hybrid social identity of a mix of citizen, consumer and client. Service providers are not merely uncritical supporters of lifestyle industries, even though promoting lifestyle industries more generally is a part of this role. Rather, the acknowledgement of a review function does point to an awareness among lifestyle journalists that they need to try to be independent and "act on behalf of their 'clients', that is, the members of their audience" (Hanitzsch and Vos 2016, 14). The fact that this is the second-most supported role of the four identified here means that this

function is considered not insignificant by the respondents, even if it is not as popular as that of the inspiring entertainer.

Second, lifestyle journalists also see a role for themselves as life coaches, a term that describes a desire to help audiences navigate through their lives by providing motivational and practical advice and examples. There is much overlap between this role and the previously theorized role of being a guide, which saw journalists providing “orientation in an increasingly multi-optional world in daily life” (Hanitzsch and Vos 2016, 14). This dimension relates perhaps most directly to the previous arguments about the central task that lifestyle journalism fulfils in many Western societies, in that the role of traditional institutions has been eroded and it is now the media to which many people look for guidance in their day-to-day lives. Compared with the other roles, however, lifestyle journalists do not necessarily see this as their priority, as they rank the roles of service providers and inspiring entertainers more highly.

Third, community advocates fulfil a role perhaps most closely associated with traditional journalistic ideals. The community advocate role encapsulates a desire to create communities of audiences and advocate for their own interests. This even goes as far as investigating moral and ethical aspects of lifestyles, as well as fulfilling a watchdog role through scrutinizing lifestyle businesses. This demonstrates that lifestyle journalism does not have to be merely about “fluff” pieces or uncritical reporting, a finding which further builds on a previous study of travel journalists, who were also found to value a somewhat similar role as critics (Hanusch 2012a). Much like in that study, however, being community advocates is the least supported role, demonstrating that such critical functions are not a priority for lifestyle journalists generally, even though they are not completely irrelevant. Conceptually, the role lends some support to Hanitzsch and Vos’s (2016, 14) connector role, which they saw as connecting members of the audience to their communities by “providing a sense of belonging, and by contributing to shared consciousness and identity”.

The fourth dimension, which is also the most strongly supported, refers to lifestyle journalists as inspiring entertainers. Related most closely to the traditional consumer orientation often noted in the literature, and perhaps a key aspect of lifestyle journalism that has led to it being criticized as unworthy of the term journalism, this dimension sees journalists placing strong emphasis on providing entertaining, fun and inspiring content that lets audiences relax. There is little consideration of providing critical voices, but rather the focus is on entertaining and inspiring. In terms of a conceptual link, this dimension ties into Hanitzsch and Vos’s (2016, 14) proposed roles of “inspirator” and “mood manager”, with the former mostly concerned with the areas of consumption and emotion, while the latter “contributes to the management and regulation of emotional well-being” through providing positive experiences.

Overall, then, this study contributes to a continuing expansion of our understanding of journalistic roles that is grounded in the experiences of working practitioners, rather than normative expectations on what roles journalism should fulfil. It appears that lifestyle journalism does have some capacity for contributing to notions of “public quality” (Fürsich 2012), both through the service provider and community advocate functions. These roles perhaps also bear some semblance to established roles in the literature on journalism and political life, such as the conceptualization of the disseminator role of Weaver et al. (2007), or what Hanitzsch and Vos (2016) identify as the analytical-deliberative dimension. Nevertheless, the prioritization of roles demonstrates the preference for roles that are focused more towards managing audiences’ moods and the area of consumption, which have been theorized far less.



While this analysis of journalistic roles related to everyday life complicates our understanding of journalistic roles more broadly, the regression analysis has further shown important distinctions that need to be made even within the lifestyle journalism field, an aspect which Hanusch, Hanitzsch, and Lauerer (2017) had already noted based on in-depth interviews. Key criteria here are the level of competition that journalistic organizations find themselves in, with higher competition resulting in stronger support for all roles except that of the life coach. Equally important, however, is a consideration of the various sub-genres of the field, where it appears that travel journalists are the strongest supporters of the arguably softest approach to journalism in the inspiring entertainer role, followed by fashion and beauty journalists, who are also more likely than others to support the service provider role. Health and wellness journalists are more likely to support the role of being a life coach in providing useful advice to audiences on how to live their lives, a role that is also valued by journalists working in the area of personal technology. Practical advice on how to change or more generally live one's life appears to be a particularly strong hallmark of these sub-genres. In contrast, media platforms (such as newspaper, magazine or online), were, with one minor exception, found to have little influence on any differences in role perceptions.

This analysis, in conjunction with the results showing slightly different prioritizations across the various sub-genres, demonstrates that it would be a mistake to tar all lifestyle journalists with the same brush. While we find an overall domination of economic influences and a preference for providing entertainment and inspiration, there do exist slightly different and at times competing logics in the field of lifestyle journalism, an aspect already noted in earlier qualitative work (Hanusch and Hanitzsch 2013; Hanusch, Hanitzsch, and Lauerer 2017). Importantly, too, this study found that individual-level variables played only a minor role in impacting the extent to which respondents support certain roles. The only significant result was that women are more likely to support the life coach role. Whether this is because of a general inclination among women journalists to want to provide advice on how to live one's life is something that will require further examination in future studies. So far, the scholarship on lifestyle journalism has not yet sufficiently inquired into such gender aspects. Considering that it did not play a role in explaining the other three roles, it would seem that overall gender is not an important determinant, reflecting recent research on journalists more broadly (Hanitzsch and Hanusch 2012).

This study also contributes to the wider research on journalistic roles by outlining some key considerations and specific roles for such research to take into account. As a number of scholars have noted in recent years, a disproportionate amount of scholarship is focused on journalism's roles in political life, which has to some degree resulted in a narrow vision of what journalism is (see, e.g. Hanitzsch and Vos 2016; Josephi 2013; Zelizer 2013). Scholarship that goes beyond such narrow definitions of journalism can therefore contribute to a more comprehensive, even holistic, understanding of journalism today. As noted earlier, this is crucial given the economic and cultural importance of areas such as lifestyle journalism in the media ecology today. In particular, the research presented here may contribute to an improved understanding of journalism's citizen and consumer orientations, which have in the past been seen as incompatible. Recent developments, however, have shown that journalists may increasingly see a need to combine such approaches in communicating news to audiences. Hence, scholarship on the roles of lifestyle journalism should not be seen as a separate strand of its own, but rather integral to broadening our horizons about the range of facets that exist in journalism.

Naturally, this study suffers from some limitations. First, as with all survey-based work, it relies on journalists' self-reports about their role, and as recent studies have shown, what journalists say they do, is not always what they do (Tandoc, Hellmüller, and Vos 2013; Mellado and van Dalen 2014). Yet, the work here presents evidence of how norms, ideas and practices in lifestyle journalism are legitimized and delegitimized among journalists (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017), which does ultimately have some consequences for journalistic practice. Second, as noted, the power of the regression analyses is relatively low. Future studies will need to examine the aspects discussed in relation to differences in economic conditions and sub-beats in more detail. Third, the study is based on lifestyle journalists in only one country, which has implications for the results' generalizability. Thus, it is important that future work explore the field across a variety of countries, perhaps employing comparative strategies that would enable researchers to identify certain societal factors influencing lifestyle journalism work. Clearly, research in this field is still in its early stages, yet it is hoped that the work presented here may contribute to future theoretical and empirical developments.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.


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