

Fierce and fearless, Lifestyling.co.za launches in lockdown

 By [Sam Swaine](#)

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Covid hasn't spared any consumer offering an easy-breezy new normal to traverse as we emerge from a heavily-regulated lockdown; whether you are a brand, a service or a media offering, everyone has had to pivot with the grace of the Bolshoi Ballet to secure their chances of success in a volatile and fragile socio-economic climate.



Jean-Pierre de la Chaumette, Editor-at-Large at Lifestyling.co.za

2020 has seen the South African publishing landscape undergo radical transformation with this year alone seeing the demise of Caxton's Magazine Division, Media24 announcing a number of closures and restructuring in its newspaper and magazine portfolios and Associated Media Publishing closing their doors permanently.

When [lifestyling.co.za](#) crossed my radar, I was unable to fathom how a publication could not only launch during the single most unprecedented event of our lifetime, but compound that with a year that has had South African media on its knees.

When you arrive at the [Lifestyling.co.za](#) page, their mission statement is clear, I immediately understood why there was space for their voice; their opinions are independent, they are championing South Africa's creative talent and their well-researched, carefully curated content speaks to the dialect of their target audience.

Curiosity got the better of me, so I went straight to the source, who was it that had the steely determination and resolution to launch a publication in such wild times? Enter publisher and editor-at-large, Jean-Pierre de la Chaumette who took the time to unpack his brainchild, [Lifestyling.co.za](#).

■ **When did you first have the idea for 'Lifestyling'?**

I've been in creative content production for about 20 years, both in London and here in South Africa. So, in a way, 'Lifestyling' has always been brewing. Having said that, the recent (and regrettable) corona-related casualties in local design publishing opened up a gap – and created the final impetus to make it happen.

I must admit that, for some time, I'd noticed that there was not a smartly curated South African online platform that touched on all facets of the stylish life. So, I thought: why not? Considered and considerate, opinionated and inspirational, I hope 'Lifestyling' will become a benchmark publication.

■ **What was the main driving factor in launching during South Africa's most challenging economic landscape?**

From a purely economic point of view, this doesn't seem to be the best time to launch anything! But, if you look at it from a broader perspective, and think about how people have been reconsidering so many things, what is more important than what surrounds us every day? The people in our lives, what we do with our time, our spaces. The Zeitgeist feels open to the 'Lifestyling' offering.

“ Perhaps more practically, research shows that good design has an intrinsic and measurable impact on society – both in terms of its values and its finances. We want to showcase local businesses. ”

We'd love it if people thought a bit more about how they purchase – less throwaway, more long-term. I think we're well positioned to appeal to the more careful consumer...this platform is intended to have a positive impact on the cultural landscape.

The idea was also made concrete by the formidable team I managed to put together, with Mila Crewe-Brown as editor-in-chief, Martin Jacobs as deputy editor and Sarah Jayne Fell as head of digital. Every member of the 'Lifestyling' team is entrenched in the local creative scene in one way or another. We have all worked, and continue to work, in the design, publishing and style realms and are, collectively and individually, very much invested in it.

■ **What were your most challenging stumbling blocks during the launch process?**

I think those first conversations were the most daunting, especially as we were all feeling our way. Despite the team's enthusiasm, we weren't always convinced...but that kind of challenge is useful. After long discussions and debate, we all realised that the time we're investing to create 'Lifestyling' is worthwhile!

The whole Lifestyling team are multi-hyphenated creatives so convincing them that adding this to an already frenetic schedule of work commitments, despite the Covid situation, wasn't easy. It wasn't long before we all saw the value of Lifestyling.co.za and we know that this has some serious potential.

■ **How did you effectively manage to build your audience?**

I've been a publicist specialising in décor and design in South Africa for the last 15 years, so I have access to an amazing network in the interior design and architectural community. A little black book means little, though, if you can't get those horses to drink the water!

We've also used a combination of online marketing tools including daily Instagram and Facebook posts and a fortnightly email newsletter. The key to our strategy is sharing high-quality content with beautiful imagery and smart copy to keep our audience engaged and interested. Having a tapped-in team with industry contacts has certainly assisted in building our brand audience.

■ **How are you connecting your audience with content?**

Our online publishing channels include foremost our website, lifestyling.co.za. This is where you'll find articles and image galleries that focus on interior design and architectural tours, decorating, and lifestyle topics. We tell the stories of creative people, and we invite opinion pieces from the community. Our social media channels publish highlights of this content. We're also looking at exploring other mediums (such as video), and talk-based content (such as IGTV live).

■ **How would you negate subscription fatigue?**

We don't intend on putting up a paywall, which is something publications are increasingly doing, especially overseas. So we're hoping we'll win our readers over by offering a higher standard of free content than they're used to without the push to sign up or subscribe. If anything, we might offer a value-add section for subscribers down the line – but probably not a

paywall.

■ ***What are the next steps for 'Lifestyling'?***

Right now, we're focused on growing our readership with a steady flow of new content. Once we've found our rhythm, and as the brand becomes more familiar, we look forward to being able to invest even more in that content. We want to commission stories and shoots that you haven't seen anywhere else. There are many talented photographers, stylists and content creators we're longing to work with. There is so much good stuff out there.

Lifestyling.co.za is the perfect platform for aesthetes to feed their souls, from the sensitively written articles that take the reader on a visceral journey to the thoughtfully curated images, it provides its audience with a 360 design immersion and a necessary escape from the onslaught that has been 2020.

Visit www.lifestyling.co.za

ABOUT SAM SWAINE

Sam Swaine is a freelance consultant with over 20-year's experience in marketing and PR. She also specialises in social media and digital marketing trends. Sam is a journalist for business, marketing and consumer publications.

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