



National Science and Technology Forum

S.E.T. for socio-economic growth

## The changing world of science communication

### NSTF Share 'n Dare activities, August 2019

Ms Shirona Patel, Head of Communications at the University of the Witwatersrand delivered a public talk titled 'How does science become news?' on 29 August at [Sci-Bono Discovery Centre](#), Johannesburg. Shirona and her team [won](#) the 2018/2019 [NSTF-South32 Award](#) for [Communications: for outreach and creating awareness](#) of science, engineering and technology (SET) and innovation in South Africa. This public talk was an outreach event in partnership with the National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF) under the [Share 'n Dare programme](#).

Ms Shirona Patel mentioned that the top 10 science themes that feature in the media are environment & ecology, health science, science and technology, zoology, Astronomy, energy, anthropology & archeology, engineering sciences, the palaeosciences and the food and nutrition sciences. Science news is written by science journalists who source their material from international newspapers, news wires and media houses.

She explained that there is a decline in science journalism and science content in the media, which results in an increase in the growth of own communities using social media for this information. Scientists are seeking alternative avenues to communicate by increasingly employing science communicators and generating multimedia content that can be adapted for use across multiple platforms for multiple constituencies. The number of people accessing traditional media in South Africa, including TV news and the print dailies, is declining, while radio audiences are increasing in numbers, or are stable, with a third of listeners listening on their cellphones.



In conclusion Ms Patel mentioned that if the universities and scientists want to make an impact on science news they need to adapt to the changing ways of communicating science, new creative technologies and platforms and the changing media environment.

The NSTF's Share 'n Dare programme is sponsored by the [Carl & Emily Fuchs Foundation](#).

*Shirona Patel, Head of Communications at the University of the Witwatersrand addressing the audience on the changing world of science communication.*