

Spurring or Blurring Professional Standards? The Role of Digital Technology in Implementing Journalistic Role Ideals in Contemporary Newsrooms

Cornelia Mothes¹ , Claudia Mellado²,
Sandrine Boudana³, Marju Himma⁴,
David Nolan⁵, Karen McIntyre⁶, Claudia Kozman⁷ ,
Daniel C. Hallin⁸ , Pauline Amiel⁹, Colette Brin¹⁰,
Yi-Ning Katherine Chen¹¹, Sergey Davydov¹²,
Mariana De Maio¹³, Filip Dingerkus¹⁴, Rasha El-Ibiary¹⁵ ,
Maximiliano Frías Vázquez¹⁶, Antje Glück¹⁷,
Miguel Garcés-Prettel¹⁸, María Luisa Humanes¹⁹,
Sophie Lecheler²⁰, Misook Lee²¹, Christi I-Hsuan Lin²²,
Mireya Márquez-Ramírez²³, Jorge Maza-Córdova²⁴ ,
Marco Mazzoni²⁵, Jacques Mick²⁶, Ana Milojevic²⁷,
Cristina Navarro²⁸ , Dasniel Olivera Pérez²⁹,
Marcela Pizarro³⁰, Fergal Quinn³¹, Gonzalo Sarasqueta³²,
Terje Skjerdal³³, Agnieszka Stępińska³⁴,
Gabriella Szabó³⁵, and Sarah Van Leuven³⁶

Abstract

This study examines the perceived relevance and implementation of competing normative ideals in journalism in times of increasing use of digital technology in newsrooms. Based on survey and content analysis data from 37 countries, we found a small positive relationship between the use of *digital research tools* and “watchdog” performance. However, a stronger and negative relationship emerged between the use of *digital audience analytics* and the performance of “watchdog” and “civic” roles, leading to an overall increase in conception–performance gaps on both roles.

Moreover, journalists' use of *digital community tools* was more strongly and positively associated with "infotainment" and "interventionism."

Keywords

news quality, role conception, role performance, audience metrics, social media

¹Macromedia University of Applied Sciences, Leipzig, Germany

²Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile

³Tel Aviv University, Israel

⁴University of Tartu, Estonia

⁵University of Canberra, Australia

⁶Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, USA

⁷Northwestern University Qatar, Doha, Qatar

⁸University of California San Diego, La Jolla, USA

⁹Aix-Marseille University, France

¹⁰Université Laval, Quebec, Canada

¹¹National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan

¹²HSE University, Moscow, Russia

¹³Lehigh University, Bethlehem (PA), USA

¹⁴Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland

¹⁵Future University in Egypt, New Cairo, Egypt

¹⁶University of Salamanca, Spain

¹⁷Bournemouth University, Poole, UK

¹⁸Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar, Cartagena, Colombia

¹⁹Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid, Spain

²⁰University of Vienna, Austria

²¹Otsuma Women's University, Tokyo, Japan

²²Rikkyo University, Tokyo, Japan

²³Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City, Mexico

²⁴Universidad Técnica de Machala, Ecuador

²⁵Università degli Studi di Perugia, Italy

²⁶Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, Brazil

²⁷University of Belgrade, Serbia

²⁸Gulf University for Science and Technology, Hawally, Kuwait

²⁹Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Mexico

³⁰University of London, UK

³¹University of Limerick, Ireland

³²Camilo José Cela University, Madrid, Spain

³³NLA University College, Kristiansand, Norway

³⁴Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

³⁵HUN-REN Center for Social Sciences, Budapest, Hungary

³⁶Universiteit Gent, Belgium

Corresponding Author:

Cornelia Mothes, Faculty of Culture, Media, Psychology, Macromedia University of Applied Sciences, Nordstraße 3-15, 04105 Leipzig, Germany.

Email: c.moths@macromedia.de

Translated Abstracts

المخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في الأهمية الملحوظة لتطبيق المثل المعيارية الخاصة بالدور الصحفي في أوقات الاستخدام المتزايد للتكنولوجيا الرقمية في غرف الأخبار. استنادًا إلى بيانات المسح وتحليل المحتوى من 37 دولة، وجدت الدراسة علاقة إيجابية محدودة بين استخدام أدوات البحث الرقمية وبين أداء الصحافة الرقابي للمجتمع. ولكن مع ذلك، ظهرت علاقة سلبية أقوى بين استخدام تحليلات الجمهور الرقمي والدور الرقابي والمدني للصحافة، مما أدى إلى زيادة إجمالية في فجوات المفهوم والأداء في كلا الدورين. علاوة على ذلك، كان استخدام الصحفيين لأدوات المجتمع الرقمي مرتبطًا بشكل أقوى وإيجابي بنشر المعلومات والترفيه.

كلمات مفتاحية

اجودة الأخبار، تصور الدور، أداء الدور، مقاييس الجمهور، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي

摘要

本研究考察了在新闻编辑室越来越多地使用数字技术的时代，新闻业中相互矛盾的规范理想被感知的相关性和实施情况。基于来自37个国家的调查和内容分析数据，我们发现数字研究工具的使用与“看门狗”表现之间存在微小的正相关关系。然而，数字受众分析的使用与“看门狗”和“公民”角色的表现之间出现了更强的负相关关系，导致这两个角色的概念-表现差距总体上增加了。此外，记者对数字社区工具的使用与“信息娱乐”和“干预主义”有着更强的正相关关系。

关键词

新闻质量，角色概念，角色表现，受众指标，社交媒体

Résumé

Cette étude examine les perceptions de la pertinence et de la mise en œuvre d'idéaux normatifs concurrents dans le journalisme à une époque où la technologie numérique est de plus en plus utilisée dans les salles de rédaction. Sur la base de données d'enquête et d'analyse de contenu provenant de 37 pays, nous avons constaté une légère relation positive entre l'utilisation d'outils de recherche numériques et la performance des rôles de «surveillant». Cependant, une relation plus forte et négative est apparue entre l'utilisation d'outils d'analyse de l'audience numérique et la performance des rôles de «surveillant» et de «citoyen», ce qui a conduit à une augmentation globale des écarts entre la conception et la performance pour les deux rôles. En outre, l'utilisation par les journalistes d'outils collectifs numériques est plus fortement et positivement associée à l'«infotainment» et à l'«interventionnisme».

Mots clés

qualité de l'information, conception du rôle, performance du rôle, métriques d'audience, réseaux sociaux

Абстракт

В данном исследовании рассматривается восприятие актуальности и реализация конкурирующих нормативных идеалов в журналистике в условиях все более широкого использования цифровых технологий в редакциях. На основе данных опросов и контент-анализа, проведенных в 37 странах, мы обнаружили небольшую положительную связь между использованием цифровых инструментов исследования и эффективностью работы “сторожевого пса.” Однако между использованием цифровых средств анализа аудитории и выполнением ролей “сторожевого пса” и “гражданской” возникла более сильная и негативная связь, что привело к общему увеличению разрыва между концепцией и исполнением обеих ролей. Более того, использование журналистами инструментов цифровых сообществ было сильнее и позитивнее связано с “информационно-развлекательной” и “интервенционистской” ролями.

Ключевые слова

качество новостей, концепция роли, исполнение роли, метрики аудитории, социальные сети

Resumen

Este estudio examina la relevancia percibida y la aplicación de ideales normativos contrapuestos en el periodismo en los tiempos del creciente uso de la tecnología digital en las salas de redacción. Basándonos en datos de encuesta y análisis de contenido de 37 países, encontramos una pequeña relación positiva entre el uso de herramientas de investigación digitales y el desempeño de los “perros guardianes”. Sin embargo, surgió una relación más fuerte y negativa entre el uso de análisis de audiencia digital y el desempeño de roles de “perro guardián” y “cívico”, llevando a un aumento general en las brechas concepción-desempeño en ambos roles. Además, el uso de herramientas de la comunidad digital por parte de los periodistas estaba más fuerte y positivamente asociado con el “infoentretenimiento” y el “intervencionismo”.

Palabras clave

calidad de las noticias, concepción de roles, desempeño de roles, métricas de audiencia, redes sociales

Today's newsrooms have access to a wealth of digital applications that play an increasingly important role in journalists' daily practice and transform the relationship between journalists and audiences in many ways (Costera Meijer, 2020). Newsrooms incorporate digital tools into their traditional set of journalistic routines by, for example, engaging in social media activities (Humayun & Ferrucci, 2022), relying on audience analytics (Lamot & Paulussen, 2020), or using digital technology for journalistic research and verification (Moreno-Gil et al., 2022). These trends likely have profound implications not only for the way journalists reflect on their professional roles in digital societies (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018) but also for how they make news decisions and implement role ideals in times of increasing data abundance and pressing questions about "audience engagement" (Nelson, 2021).

Traditionally, the roles that journalists strive to fulfill in their profession and the implementation of these role ideals in actual news decisions are not necessarily congruent. Previous research indicates that there are gaps between journalists' role conceptions and their performance of these roles (Mellado et al., 2020). These gaps are of particular importance in light of the more and more critically evaluated public performance of journalism in digital societies. In many cases, it is precisely the perception of such discrepancies between what journalists claim to follow as normative principles and what their reporting reflects that have been mentioned as the main causes of media distrust and news avoidance in "high-choice" and "post-truth" societies (Fawzi & Mothes, 2020; Skovsgaard & Andersen, 2020). Discrepancies between what journalists describe as their ideals (role perceptions) and how their reporting implements those ideals (role behaviors) are thus closely related to broader questions about how contemporary journalism can remain credible and relevant to its audiences. Against the backdrop of an increasing proliferation of "alternative media" as competitors to journalism and—in parts—to factual, evidence-based communication in general (Strömbäck, 2023), these questions have become increasingly pressing in journalism and political communication research (Nelson, 2021), since the credibility and relevance of journalism ascribed by news audiences may significantly determine the quality of public discourse and public opinion formation in the years to come (Schulz et al., 2020).

Digital technology, as it is used in newsrooms today, might play an important role in this context, as it does not only create a multitude of new reference points between journalists and their audiences; it is also likely to touch on key normative orientations and actual practices in professional journalism (Costera Meijer, 2020; Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018). So far, however, little is known about how digital tools—with their growing pervasiveness in daily journalistic practice—might play into the sensitive relationship between self-reported role ideals and actual role performance to serve news audiences.

To better understand the interplay between digital technology and professional roles in journalism, this study examines the relationship between three basic (and not mutually exclusive) approaches to the use of digital tools in modern newsrooms (i.e., *digital research tools*, *digital audience analytics*, and *digital community tools*) and conception–performance gaps in two main (again not mutually exclusive) journalistic role orientations (i.e., *news quality-* and *news industry-oriented* roles). The study is based on content analysis and survey data from 37 countries and yields initial insights

into the meaning of digital tools for journalists' professional roles in times of fragmented and polarized high-choice media environments.

Conception–Performance Gaps in News Quality- and News Industry-Oriented Roles

The question of how well journalistic role ideals correspond to actual journalistic practice has been of concern to journalism researchers for many years (see Mellado & Mothes, 2020). While some studies surveyed journalists' perceptions of their roles and compared them with the content these same journalists produced (Tandoc et al., 2013; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996), others combined individual-level survey data with aggregate data of news media content analyses (Mellado et al., 2020; Mellado & Mothes, 2020). Although differing in their methodological approaches, both strands of research found similar patterns indicating a rather loose relationship between journalists' role conceptions and their performance, which specifically applied to roles related to key news quality standards. For example, based on a cross-national comparison, Mellado and Mothes (2020) found the most pronounced conception–performance gaps for roles related to journalists' core function of providing a public service, either by holding political and economic elites accountable (watchdog role) or by helping citizens participate competently in political life (civic role). As the study suggests, these discrepancies appear to arise from the fact that journalists across countries and media systems consider these roles to be particularly important for their work—as reflected in often highest levels of role conceptions (Mellado, 2020; Weaver et al., 2019)—but simultaneously struggle implementing these roles in news reporting to a particularly high degree (Mellado and Mothes, 2020). Hence, when it comes to *news quality*-oriented roles as “intrinsic” characteristics of the journalistic profession (Flegel & Chaffee, 1971), journalists' role conceptions are often considerably higher than the actual implementation of these roles in journalistic newsrooms.

In contrast, news media seem to experience less difficulty in implementing ideals that have less normative relevance to journalists, but more performative relevance for media organizations as news industries. In the study by Mellado and Mothes (2020), for instance, this mainly applied to roles that allowed economic or political factors to affect news reporting—either by enriching political news with entertainment elements to maintain audience attention in high-choice media environments (infotainment role), or by journalistic media including their own opinions into news coverage and thus actively influencing political discourse (interventionist role). In times of increasing market competition and simultaneously growing “affective polarization” and “moral indignation” in societal debates (Hwang et al., 2018; Wagner, 2021), both roles additionally appear to become increasingly interwoven, in that such roles address important emotional needs of news audiences and thereby simultaneously fulfill important functions for media organizations to ensure economic viability. While “infotainment” is often used to emotionally engage less news-interested users (Mothes et al., 2019; Otto et al., 2016), “interventionism” addresses the increasing number of users who are affectively involved in societal debates and particularly appreciate the news that supports their own—or their

ingroup's—points of view (Edgerly & Vraga, 2019; Wojcieszak & Garrett, 2018). As economic analyses show (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010; Merkley, 2018), media companies are therefore increasingly inclined to accommodate user preferences not only by providing entertainment but also by expressing opinions for commercial reasons.

Findings by Mellado and Mothes (2020) corroborate this perspective by showing that these rather (although not exclusively) *news industry*-oriented roles achieved the highest newsroom performance scores, while the normative desirability of both roles was rated lowest by the journalists working in these newsrooms. As a result, “infotainment” and “interventionist” roles showed the overall smallest conception–performance gaps. In contrast to *news quality*-oriented roles, such roles were thus easier to implement by newsrooms to a degree that corresponded to the (overall low) normative value that journalists assign to them. Based on these findings, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): *News quality*-oriented roles (watchdog, civic) show larger conception–performance gaps than *news industry*-oriented roles (infotainment, interventionist).

Conception–Performance Gaps and Newsroom Approaches to Digital Tool Use

Since conception–performance gaps are determined by the extent to which professional standards are fulfilled in newsroom performance, these gaps likely depend on additional factors that shape the work of today's newsrooms to a particular degree. One of these factors is the way in which digital technology is used in contemporary journalism. Today's newsrooms have access to an increasing number of digital applications that can be utilized for a variety of purposes in the editorial process (Cohen, 2019; Hayes, 2024; Moran & Shaik, 2022), with tools that redefine the relationship of journalists to their audiences being among the most widespread and most evolved (Costera Meijer, 2020; Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018).

Some of these digital applications are particularly well suited to performing *news quality*-oriented roles by enabling journalists to search for and verify information, debunk fake news, and gather contextual information at a whole new level—thereby facilitating journalistic investigation and verification as main elements of the professional journalistic skill set (Himma-Kadakas & Ojamets, 2022). In doing so, such *digital research tools* help newsrooms provide a key public service to society in times of increasing information overload and disinformation spread. For instance, previous studies revealed the potential of social networking sites in this regard, with such tools helping journalists find additional sources and background information, cross-check information, or collaborate in global professional networks (Bjerknes, 2022; Carson & Farhall, 2018; Zhang & Li, 2020). Other studies show the relevance of more specific computational tools—such as map verification, video and image verification, or reverse search tools—for investigative journalism to extract and link data from diverse sources, clarify the accuracy of information, and debunk disinformation (Kunert et al.,

2022; Moreno-Gil et al., 2021, 2022). It can therefore be assumed that newsrooms' use of *digital research tools* to facilitate journalistic investigation should increase news quality and thereby shift the relationship between journalists' traditionally high role expectations for *news quality*-oriented roles and the performance of these roles by narrowing the gap between the two:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Greater newsroom use of *digital research tools* will be associated with smaller conception–performance gaps in *news quality*-oriented roles (watchdog, civic).

In addition to applying digital technology for research purposes, digital tools can also be used by newsrooms to learn more about user preferences—mainly via *digital audience analytics*—and to utilize this information for editorial decisions on which stories to cover in what way (Blanchett, 2021; Lamot & Paulussen, 2020). Today's elaborate measures of audience metrics offer meticulous analytical insights into user preferences and are becoming increasingly indispensable for newsrooms to remain visible to users in highly competitive information markets (Ferrucci, 2020; Nelson & Tandoc, 2019). This approach to digital tool use can therefore be seen as primarily (although not exclusively) accommodating the business interests of newsrooms and thus tending to follow a news industry logic. Relying on audience metrics may thereby substantially interfere with professional quality standards (for an overview, see Fürst, 2020). An ethnographic analysis by Nelson and Tandoc (2019), for instance, showed that audience analytics are likely to cause an explicit clash between “doing well and doing good” (p. 1971) as mutually exclusive pursuits in today's newsrooms. Research involving countries outside the United States supports this claim by indicating that newsrooms often use audience analytics to justify news decisions that substantially interfere with professional standards (Bunce, 2019; Christin, 2018). Tandoc and Thomas (2015) therefore argued early on for a more nuanced understanding of the differences between the normative concept of “public interest” and audience metrics' insights into what the “public may be interested in.” Based on these findings, we can assume that *digital audience analytics* likely widen the gap between *news quality*-oriented role conceptions among journalists and the performance of these roles in journalistic newsrooms by shifting the focus of newsroom performance from quality considerations to business imperatives:

Hypothesis 3a (H3a): Greater newsroom use of *digital audience analytics* will be associated with larger conception–performance gaps in *news quality*-oriented roles (watchdog, civic).

Moreover, audience metrics may not only determine how newsrooms today address news quality standards, but they may also—and perhaps even more so—increase the relevance of *news industry*-oriented roles in today's newsrooms. Earlier work suggested that the extent to which newsrooms rely on web analytics depends largely on the extent to which editors conceive of audiences as a form of “economic

capital” (Tandoc, 2015). However, more recent studies suggest that audience metrics have become widely established as daily routines in newsrooms and are used more or less independently of normative journalistic conceptions—presumably in part because the economic uncertainty, often assumed to underlie these processes (see Lowrey & Woo, 2010), has increased substantially in recent years. An analysis of Dutch newspapers by Welbers et al. (2016), for instance, revealed that information about the most viewed articles significantly influenced subsequent editorial news decisions, even though editors were mostly unaware of—or reluctant to see—their newsrooms’ adaption to users’ story interests based on audience metrics, especially when it came to entertaining stories. Similarly, qualitative interviews by Chua and Westlund (2019) with journalists from Singapore found that, over the course of 3 years, newsrooms increasingly opted to use metrics but simultaneously remained critical of such analytics as benchmarks for determining newsworthiness. Hence, the news industry-oriented use of digital tools as most prominently reflected in audience metrics often appears to affect journalistic behavior to a substantial degree, without leading to an increase in journalistic approval of these business standards. Consequently, it can be assumed that newsrooms’ use of *digital audience analytics* affects the relationship between *news industry*-oriented role conceptions and role performance by widening the gap between the two:

Hypothesis 3b (H3b): Greater newsroom use of *digital audience analytics* will be associated with larger conception–performance gaps in *news industry*-oriented roles (infotainment, interventionist).

A third prominent approach to using digital tools in contemporary newsrooms pertains to the wide range of digital interaction opportunities. Interactions between journalists and users can be established through various means, the most common of which today is social media (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2019), as social media has become a main way for media users to engage with journalistic content in the first place (Newman et al., 2023). The community tools offered in social media environments help journalists get in touch and stay connected with users on a whole new level (Humayun & Ferrucci, 2022). As research in the area suggests, such *digital community tools* may be utilized for both *news quality*- and *news industry*-oriented journalistic roles.

On the one hand, newsrooms are using social media to retain audiences and grow new readerships in high-choice media environments by promoting their stories and building their brands across main social media platforms in times of an increasing “platformization of news” (Hase et al., 2023). As social media have become one of the most important sources of news for audiences around the world (Newman et al., 2023), the presence of journalistic media on these platforms is crucial for ensuring news outlets’ economic viability, with potentially detrimental effects on society (Mosco, 2019; Van Aelst et al., 2017). A content analysis of Chilean journalists’ posts on Twitter and Instagram, for instance, showed that the mainly brand- and advertising-oriented “promoter” role was by far the most common role performed by journalists on social media (Mellado & Hermida, 2023). When journalists themselves are

asked about the potential effects of social media on their work, it is again mainly economic factors that are mentioned first—such as faster reporting, better self-promotion, or promotion of the news organization as a whole (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018; Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2018; Weaver et al., 2019). Hence, *digital community tools* have become an indispensable tool for newsrooms when it comes to journalism's economic performance, with the use of social media in this context seeming to follow a similar logic to that underlying *news industry*-oriented “infotainment” and “interventionist” roles.

On the other hand, *digital community tools* are also used in newsrooms to engage with users in a more direct, interactive way. Social media help journalists learn more about their users' stories and perspectives and facilitate discussions with them about social issues and the perceived quality of journalists' reporting (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2019; Lawrence et al., 2018). In this way, social media can contribute substantially to strengthening a trust-based relationship between journalists and their communities. Surveys from various countries show that a substantial share of journalists appreciate these opportunities by using social media to find inspiration for news, engage with audiences, and discuss the quality of their outlet's content with users (Neuberger et al., 2019; Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2018; Weaver et al., 2019). According to Belair-Gagnon et al. (2019), this reciprocity between journalists and users can be seen as a form of community contact that is often used in addition to more traditional modes of communication and largely without any strategic motives being pursued: “journalists engage in these online conversations with the hope that they benefit their readers and perhaps improve the quality of the coverage” (p. 566). Not surprisingly, these emerging trends in the interaction between journalists and users in the sense of an exchange of ideas are becoming increasingly important in current revisions of the concept of “journalistic quality.” According to recent initiatives such as “constructive journalism” or “solutions journalism” (e.g., Mäder & Rinsdorf, 2023), both journalists' interest in their users' views and the exchange of ideas with them about what good journalism looks like have become essential foundations for future journalism to demonstrate its public value.

Hence, *digital community tools* may not primarily—or not only—serve the needs of the news industry but may also contribute decisively to rethinking the news quality of journalistic products and thereby potentially contribute to new journalistic routines. Nevertheless, there is considerable concern that the “audience turn” in journalism will lead to the core journalistic concept of “quality” being reinterpreted from a more commercial perspective and replaced by a rather business-driven concept of “innovation” (Costera Meijer, 2020). Given the resulting ambivalence in newsrooms' use of *digital community tools* for economic versus quality purposes, we therefore pose the following research question:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How will newsroom use of *digital community tools* be related to conception–performance gaps in *news quality*- and *news industry*-oriented roles?

Method

Overview

To address our hypotheses and research question, the present paper reports findings from the second wave of the international *Journalistic Role Performance* (JRP) project, conducted in 2020 and involving 37 countries from a variety of geographic regions, political regimes, and media systems. Our research uses a “most different systems” design based on a comparative study of advanced, transitional, and non-democratic countries. Journalistic practice is embedded in routines and performed within a social system that serves as the context in which media content is produced (e.g., Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Therefore, we can most profoundly assess role performance by studying how different societal and cultural contexts explain variations in JRP across media platforms and topics.

In an effort to obtain a heterogeneous sample, we selected the countries in our sample to collectively represent a variety of political regimes, geographic regions, and classifications of media systems (for an overview, see Supplemental Appendix 1). Our study includes countries from North America, Latin America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Oceania. Following Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) Western media systems models, we included countries that represent the liberal, democratic corporatist, and polarized pluralist models. We also drew from democracy indices and freedom of the press reports (e.g., Freedom House Global Freedom Score) to sample transitional democracies and non-democratic countries from different parts of the world. Based on these considerations, the data were gathered by national teams in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, United Kingdom, Estonia, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mexico, Paraguay, Poland, Qatar, Russia, Rwanda, Serbia, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Arab Emirates, the United States, and Venezuela.

For the measurement of conception–performance gaps and potential factors determining the size of these gaps, our study used a mixed-method design. Based on standardized operationalizations of rather *news quality*-oriented (i.e., watchdog, civic) and rather *news industry*-oriented (i.e., infotainment, interventionist) roles in journalism, among others, we first measured role performance based on the presence or absence of indicators of each journalistic role in a sample of news published by the news outlets with the widest reach per country via content analysis. Next, to link these data on newsroom performance with the evaluative level of role conceptions among journalists, we conducted a survey among the journalists who worked at that time in the newsrooms whose reporting was subject to our content analysis.

Our final dataset thus contains merged content analysis and survey data on the average performance of journalistic roles in the news published by each newsroom (role performance) and the perceived relevance of each role by the journalists working in these newsrooms (role conceptions). Based on these two sets of indicators, four conception–performance gap variables—one per journalistic role—were computed at the

individual level of journalists by subtracting a newsroom's performance score for a particular role from the conception score assigned to that role by each journalist in the given newsroom. The four resulting gap variables were examined for their relative magnitude as well as their relationship to newsrooms' digital tool use.

Content Analysis on JRP

In the content analysis, we analyzed a sample of news stories published by national newspapers, websites, radio stations, and TV news programs with the widest reach in the participating countries. To represent the diversity of each country's media system on a national level, the media sample per country was selected to not only include the most important national media outlets—as indicated by their audience size—but also to reflect the media systems' variety in terms of their media's audience orientation (popular, elite), ownership type (private, publicly traded, public service, civic society, State-run), and political leaning (center, left, right). Based on these criteria, researchers in each of the participating countries selected two to four news media outlets per platform (see Supplemental Appendix 1). All outlets per country were national in scope; regional and local outlets were included in the sample only in countries where national teams considered them to be important to the national media landscape.

Given that the structure and format of media systems differ in many ways across countries—including size, audience orientation, ownership, and political leaning, but also in terms of the number of national languages spoken in a given territory—researchers were asked to ensure that the selected outlets represented the diversity of each country's media system as best as possible. Team members had to consider the fact that the number of media outlets included may vary from country to country and that greater heterogeneity within a media system would lead researchers to include more outlets.¹

Using a constructed week method, a 2-week stratified-systematic sample was selected for all outlets from January 2 to December 31, 2020. The same days were analyzed in all of the countries included in the study. Because daily and monthly variations are important factors to consider when conducting a news content analysis, we divided the year into two 6-month periods: from January to June and from July to December. For each 6-month period, we created a constructed week, randomly selecting starting dates on a Monday in January and a Monday in July. Then, using 3–4 week skip intervals, we selected each of the subsequent 6 days: a Tuesday, a Wednesday, a Thursday, a Friday, a Saturday, and a Sunday. This procedure allowed us to include 7 days in each 6-month period for a total sample of 14 days during the year.² This involved ensuring that one issue/edition/program from each of the 7 days of the week was selected for each half-year and that every month of the year was represented by at least 1 day, avoiding over-representation of any one period.

The sampling unit was the newscast with the greatest reach within the selected TV and radio stations, the full issue of the selected print newspapers, and the entire homepage of the selected online websites. Whereas our selected television and radio news programs and newspapers are “static” in the sense that they are unique and appear at

fixed times, website news are dynamic and change constantly. We therefore captured the homepages of the websites at two fixed points during the sampled days: once at 11:00 a.m. and once at 11:00 p.m. This 12-hour interval between the two captures was chosen to ensure that the variability of content was adequately recorded throughout the sampling day. The homepages and all their respective links were opened in real time and saved. TV and radio programs were recorded in real time or accessed via archives and saved, while newspapers were bought and scanned, downloaded in their digital paper version, or tracked back using software like LexisNexis.

The unit of analysis for our content analysis was the news item. All news content in the sampled outlets was coded on the selected days, excluding op-ed articles, reviews, and stories not produced by the journalists of the respective news outlet. Our total sample consisted of 148,474 news stories from 365 news organizations (for an overview, see Supplemental Appendix 1).

News monitoring, archiving, and coding were performed by native speakers in each participating country. The coding and the collection of additional meta-data on organizational characteristics of newsrooms and system-specific characteristics of each country were conducted between 2020 and 2021. In each country, independent coders were extensively trained in the application of a common codebook. For matters of consistency, the news codebook was not translated into different languages but used in its English master version in all countries. Hence, all coders in the 37 countries were trained using the English version of the codebook. However, each national team added national examples to the English master codebook to ensure high reliability and validity. Each journalistic role was measured by several indicators that have been adapted from and validated in previous studies (see Mellado, 2020; for an overview of operational definitions and descriptive statistics per role, see Supplemental Appendix 2). The news corpus in each country was randomly divided among coders to avoid bias and prevent one coder from coding an entire source.

We used a three-step strategy to test intercoder reliability within and across countries. First, we conducted a pretest among the principal investigators from all countries to ensure that they understood the codebook in the same way. Second, each national team conducted pilot tests based on news reports that were not included in the final sample until coders achieved acceptable intercoder reliability scores. During fieldwork, the progress of each team, their coding quality, and agreement between coders were closely monitored on a monthly basis. Upon completion of the coding procedure, each country conducted a posttest based on 100 additional news reports to ensure sufficiently high intercoder reliability until the end of the coding process.

Based on Krippendorff's alpha, the final global intercoder reliability across all four roles and all countries reached an acceptable value of $\alpha = .77$ (for an overview of reliability scores per role, see Supplemental Appendix 2). The variation in intercoder reliability across roles ranged from .76 to .79, while the variation across countries ranged from .71 to .91. Each indicator was measured in terms of its presence or absence in a given news story. Based on the results obtained via confirmatory factor analyses, the indicators best representing each role were averaged to form a final mean index score for each role, ranging from 0 to 1. A higher score expressed a higher performance of a

news item regarding the specific journalistic role, and vice versa. For the subsequent gap analyses, the mean indices for each role were averaged across all news items published by a given newsroom to obtain an aggregate score per role for each newsroom. The four aggregate scores, one per role, for each newsroom were then compared with the respective role conceptions of each journalist working in that newsroom.

Survey on Journalistic Role Conceptions

To measure role conceptions, we surveyed the journalists who worked in the same newsrooms whose news reports were analyzed in our content analysis. The goal was for the national teams to capture the diversity of each newsroom in their sampling of journalists by representing various editorial responsibilities (e.g., reporters, producers, editors, anchors) and news beats. Journalists were contacted through their personal or work emails, by phone, through their social media accounts, or through their editorial offices to be invited to participate in the study. The questionnaire was translated and back-translated from English (see Supplemental Appendix 3) into Spanish, German, Italian, French, Arabic, Korean, Japanese, Polish, Hungarian, Russian, Portuguese, Serbian, Estonian, Hebrew, Chinese, Dutch, and Kinyarwanda. Regions speaking the same language used the same instrument. Back-translation was performed to identify and correct any inconsistencies in the translation. In addition, given that some concepts are inevitably culturally bound, the questions and item batteries included in our survey were discussed with all local researchers to ensure that they were going to be understood correctly in the respective national context.

The national surveys were conducted via web-based questionnaires, telephone interviews, or face-to-face/Zoom interviews. The first method proved least successful in some countries, as survey reminders were sent repeatedly but were ignored by potential respondents. A total of 2,886 journalists from 326 out of the overall 365 content-analyzed news outlets completed the survey. Before matching journalists' responses with their newsrooms' average role performance, we calculated the minimum number of responses required per newsroom, based on its size. This was necessary, as the examined newsrooms substantially differed in terms of their number of journalists. Some outlets were small (<50 journalists), some medium-sized (50–200 journalists), and some large (>200 journalists). Using the "WebPower" package in R, we therefore performed a power analysis for multilevel models with three levels (i.e., individual journalists nested within news organizations nested within countries), as these models represent the most complex analytical approaches we would potentially apply. Assuming small effect sizes ($f = 0.2$) and small intraclass correlations ($ICC = .2$), the analysis suggested including only newsrooms for which data were collected from at least four journalists. We applied this calculated minimum sample size to small newsrooms; for medium-sized and larger newsrooms, however, we decided to even double or triple, respectively, this minimum number across the board to better reflect the greater variety in medium and large newsrooms. We thus took a more conservative approach than the power analysis alone would have suggested. Hence, in the case of small newsrooms, all outlets with at least four cases (i.e., journalists) were included in

the analyses, while medium-sized and large newsrooms were only included if they were represented by at least 8 or 12 journalists, respectively. Consequently, we excluded a total of 113 news outlets that did not provide the minimum number of journalist responses required to make valid calculations. There were important differences in the achievement of the minimum required number of responses per outlet across countries. While all quotas were achieved in more than 65% of the participating countries—meaning that all media outlets were included in the final analyses—in the remaining 35% of countries, we had to exclude responses from one to five outlets that did not meet the minimum required number of responses.

Our final sample consisted of 2,615 survey responses from 252 news outlets (for an overview of responses per country and included newsrooms, see Supplemental Appendix 1). The average number of eligible responses from journalists per country was at 71 responses, with journalists who were approached but declined to participate giving a variety of reasons for their non-participation. In several countries, journalists reported suffering from survey fatigue. Others said they had been instructed by their newsrooms not to answer surveys of any kind. Still, others indicated issues with the length of the survey. The percentage of those who refused or ignored contact efforts ranges between 15% and 40% across countries.

To capture the role conceptions of the interviewed journalists, the questionnaire measured the importance that journalists give to each professional role through several individual statements (1 = *not important at all* to 5 = *extremely important*). All role indicators were adapted from previous research (Mellado, 2020) and developed in accordance with the indicators measured in the content analysis. The indicators for each role were averaged to obtain a reliable mean index per role for each individual journalist (for an overview of operational definitions, internal consistency, and descriptive statistics per role, see Supplemental Appendix 4).

Dependent Variables: Conception–Performance Gaps

To analyze the relative magnitude of the discrepancy between journalists' role conceptions and the role performance of their newsrooms with respect to *news quality*- (watchdog, civic) and *news industry*-oriented roles (infotainment, interventionist), we compared individual journalists' role conceptions for each role (see Supplemental Appendix 4) with the average performance of that role in the news published by their respective newsrooms in the period under consideration (see Supplemental Appendix 2). Since the scales measuring role conceptions were different from the scales measuring role performance, we first recoded journalists' role conception scores—originally ranging from 1 to 5—into ranges from 0 to 1 (for descriptive statistics on the original and transformed scales, see Supplemental Appendix 4). Based on these transformed scales for journalists' role conceptions, we calculated the conception–performance gap (CPG) for each journalist individually by subtracting their individual newsroom's aggregate role performance score (*RP*; min = 0; max = 1) from the transformed role conception score of the given journalist (*RC*; min = 0; max = 1), resulting in four conception–performance gap variables—one per examined role—at the individual

level of the journalists (min = 0; max = 1). Hence, for each journalist, we apply the following formula per role:

RC (role conception per journalist) — RP (aggregate role performance per newsroom) = CPG (conception — performance gap per journalist)

Independent Variables: Digital Tool Use in Newsrooms

To capture journalists' use of digital tools in their newsrooms, journalists were asked to indicate how important several activities are for their daily work in their newsrooms. To address the use of *digital research tools*, journalists' use of digital tools for investigation and verification of information was captured by a single-item measure in the survey (1 = *not important at all*, 5 = *extremely important*): "Using digital tools to search for story sources and information" ($M = 4.4$, $SD = 0.8$).

The use of *digital audience analytics* was measured by two items (1 = *not important at all*, 5 = *extremely important*): "Using metrics and analytics, such as pageviews and time spent, to inform the selection, development, and promotion of stories" and "Using ratings, circulation numbers, or traffic metrics to measure the relevance/value of a story." Both items were averaged to form a reliable index of journalists' use of digital audience analytics ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 1.1$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$).

To capture the use of *digital community tools*, that is, mainly social media to increase audience engagement and interaction with users, two additional measures were included (1 = *not important at all*, 5 = *extremely important*): "Using social media to promote stories" and "Using social media to connect with the audience." The two items were again averaged to represent an index of digital community tool use ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 1.1$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$).

The main analyses additionally controlled for various factors potentially influencing the relationship between journalists' digital tool use and conception–performance gaps on different levels (see Supplemental Appendix 5).

Findings

Conception–Performance Gaps in Roles Oriented Toward News Quality and News Industry

In H1, we expected conception–performance gaps in *news quality*-oriented roles (watchdog, civic) to be larger than in *news industry*-oriented roles (infotainment, interventionist). To address this hypothesis, a within-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the four conception–performance gaps, one per journalistic role, at the individual level of journalists (see Figure 1). Supporting H1, the analysis revealed substantially larger gaps for *news quality*-oriented roles ($M_{\text{watchdog}} = 0.76$, $SD = 0.17$; $M_{\text{civic}} = 0.73$, $SD = 0.16$) than *news industry*-oriented roles ($M_{\text{infotainment}} = 0.27$, $SD = 0.20$; $M_{\text{interventionist}} = 0.22$, $SD = 0.25$), $F(3, 7,761) = 7,186.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.74$.

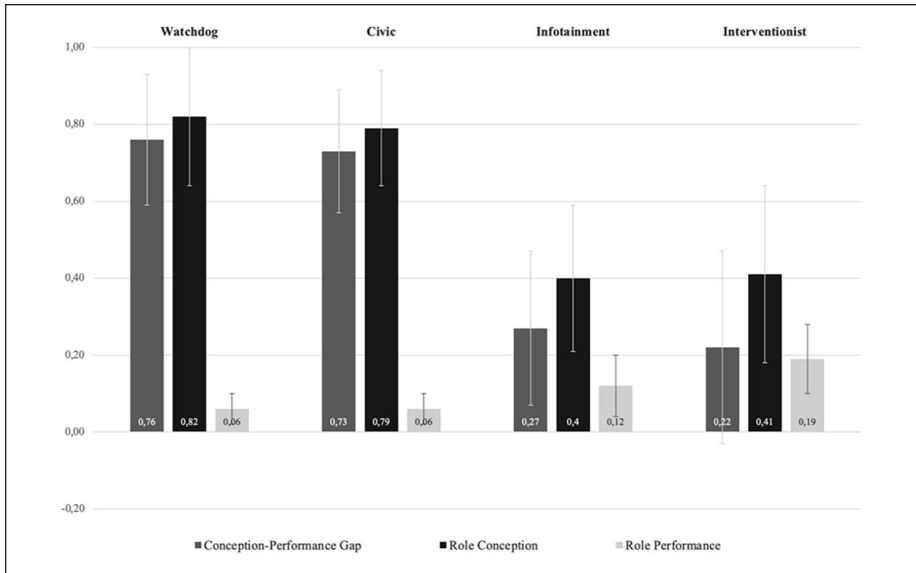


Figure 1. Conception–performance gap, role conception, and role performance across journalistic roles.

Note. Displayed are the mean values and standard deviations of conception–performance gap, role conception, and role performance across journalistic roles. All mean values differed significantly in within-subjects ANOVAs, $F_{gap}(3, 7,761) = 7,186.15, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.74, F_{conception}(3, 7,761) = 5,112.56, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.66, F_{performance}(3, 7,842) = 3,566.26, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.58,$ and subsequent pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction ($ps < .01$).

To better understand potential factors that may increase or decrease conception–performance gaps in times of progressing digitalization in newsrooms, we additionally examined the relationship between the size of conception–performance gaps and journalists’ use of digital tools in their newsrooms. To account for the nested structure of our data, we conducted multilevel analyses for conception–performance gaps as dependent variables. Each “gap” model contained three levels, with journalists nested in newsrooms, nested in countries. Each “gap” analysis started with an intercept-only model (null model) and subsequently added the three newsroom approaches to digital tool use as fixed effects, along with all control variables. A similar procedure was repeated twice, for journalists’ role conceptions and the average role performance of their newsrooms as individual dependent variables. These additional models were computed to allow for a deeper understanding of the origins of potential increases or decreases of gaps after the inclusion of predictors.

When looking at the models with conception–performance gaps as dependent variables, our analyses corroborate the descriptive findings obtained based on the ANOVA (see Tables 1 and 2, second and third column). Reconfirming H1, the highest intercepts were found for *news quality*-oriented roles, and the smallest intercepts occurred

Table 1. Relationship Between News Quality Roles and Newsroom Approaches in Using Digital Tools.

Model parameters	Watchdog gap		Watchdog conception		Watchdog performance	
	Null model	Final Model	Null model	Final Model	Null model	Final Model
<i>Fixed effects</i>						
Intercept	0.751*** (0.012)	0.787*** (0.002)	0.806*** (0.014)	0.827*** (0.016)	0.056*** (0.004)	0.033*** (0.004)
Digital research tools	—	0.022*** (0.003)	—	0.023*** (0.004)	—	0.001* (0.001)
Digital audience analytics	—	0.015*** (0.004)	—	0.013** (0.004)	—	-0.002** (0.001)
Digital community tools	—	-0.005 (0.004)	—	-0.006 (0.004)	—	-0.000 (0.001)
<i>Random intercepts</i>						
Intercept outlet within country	0.003 (0.005)	0.002 (0.047)	—	—	—	—
Intercept country	0.005 (0.067)	0.002 (0.044)	0.007 (0.081)	0.003 (0.053)	0.001 (0.023)	0.000 (0.019)
Residual	0.024 (0.154)	0.023 (0.151)	0.026 (0.160)	0.024 (0.156)	0.001 (0.028)	0.001 (0.027)
ICC	.234	.155	.201	.102	.407	.346
AIC	-2,080.542	-1,927.345	-2,022.190	-1,896.653	-11,198.480	-10,411.110
R ² (marg.)	.00	.10	.00	.12	.00	.23
<hr/>						
Model parameters	Civic gap		Civic conception		Civic performance	
	Null MODEL	Final Model	Null model	Final Model	Null model	Final Model
<i>Fixed effects</i>						
Intercept	0.727*** (0.010)	0.755*** (0.019)	0.784*** (0.009)	0.794*** (0.014)	0.058*** (0.004)	0.036*** (0.005)
Digital research tools	—	0.027*** (0.003)	—	0.027*** (0.003)	—	0.000 (0.001)
Digital audience analytics	—	0.015*** (0.004)	—	0.011** (0.004)	—	-0.003** (0.001)
Digital community tools	—	-0.001 (0.004)	—	-0.000 (0.004)	—	0.001 (0.001)
<i>Random intercepts</i>						
Intercept outlet within country	0.002 (0.049)	0.002 (0.045)	—	—	—	—
Intercept country	0.003 (0.054)	0.002 (0.047)	0.003 (0.052)	0.002 (0.043)	0.001 (0.024)	0.001 (0.024)
Residual	0.019 (0.139)	0.018 (0.134)	0.021 (0.144)	0.019 (0.139)	0.001 (0.032)	0.001 (0.028)
ICC	.214	.193	.115	.087	.355	.423
AIC	-2,604.284	-2,459.419	-2,589.330	-2,443.191	-10,430.945	-10,418.663
R ² (marg.)	.00	.10	.00	.09	.00	.23

Note. Displayed are the unstandardized coefficients of multilevel models with standard errors (for fixed effects) and standard deviation (for random intercepts and residuals) in parentheses, *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. All multilevel models were calculated including all control variables at the individual, organizational, and societal levels (see Supplemental Appendix 5). The three-level approach used for analyzing conception–performance gaps could not reliably be applied to models that used role performance as the dependent variable, since performance was measured at the aggregate newsroom level. Consequently, performance analyses are based on models with only two levels (i.e., organizations nested in countries). To compare the coefficients determined for role performance with those for role conceptions, we also applied this two-level approach to the models that used conception as the dependent variable. However, there were no substantial differences in the conception-related results between a three-level model and a two-level model.

Table 2. Relationship Between News Industry Roles and Newsroom Approaches in Using Digital Tools.

Model parameters	Infotainment gap		Infotainment conception		Infotainment performance	
	<i>Null model</i>	<i>Final model</i>	<i>Null model</i>	<i>Final model</i>	<i>Null model</i>	<i>Final model</i>
<i>Fixed effects</i>						
Intercept	0.296*** (0.016)	0.304*** (0.024)	0.401*** (0.014)	0.446*** (0.019)	0.108*** (0.009)	0.135*** (0.010)
Digital research tools	—	0.002 (0.004)	—	−0.001 (0.004)	—	−0.001 (0.001)
Digital audience analytics	—	0.024*** (0.004)	—	0.026*** (0.004)	—	0.001 (0.001)
Digital community tools	—	0.007 (0.004)	—	0.009* (0.004)	—	0.003* (0.002)
<i>Random intercepts</i>						
Intercept outlet within country	0.005 (0.067)	0.004 (0.060)	—	—	—	—
Intercept country	0.008 (0.089)	0.004 (0.060)	0.006 (0.079)	0.005 (0.069)	0.003 (0.057)	0.003 (0.054)
Residual	0.026 (0.161)	0.025 (0.159)	0.030 (0.171)	0.027 (0.165)	0.003 (0.056)	0.003 (0.050)
ICC	.324	.222	.176	.149	.511	.539
AIC	−1,806.502	−1,624.779	−1,707.535	−1,606.275	−7,532.317	−7,357.696
R ² (marg.)	.00	.10	.00	.10	.00	.18
Model parameters	Interventionist gap		Interventionist conception		Interventionist performance	
	<i>Null model</i>	<i>Final model</i>	<i>Null model</i>	<i>Final model</i>	<i>Null model</i>	<i>Final model</i>
<i>Fixed effects</i>						
Intercept	0.237*** (0.026)	0.228*** (0.037)	0.416*** (0.021)	0.428*** (0.024)	0.185*** (0.011)	0.189*** (0.013)
Digital research tools	—	0.002 (0.004)	—	0.000 (0.004)	—	−0.001 (0.001)
Digital audience analytics	—	0.020*** (0.005)	—	0.021*** (0.005)	—	−0.003 (0.002)
Digital community tools	—	0.010* (0.005)	—	0.012* (0.005)	—	0.005** (0.002)
<i>Random Intercepts</i>						
Intercept outlet within country	0.010 (0.097)	0.008 (0.091)	—	—	—	—
Intercept country	0.022 (0.149)	0.013 (0.114)	0.015 (0.124)	0.009 (0.097)	0.004 (0.065)	0.004 (0.066)
Residual	0.033 (0.180)	0.032 (0.178)	0.037 (0.191)	0.034 (0.185)	0.004 (0.064)	0.004 (0.062)
ICC	.495	.401	.297	.215	.507	.532
AIC	−1,101.608	−973.602	−1,096.973	−1,026.224	−6,766.474	−6,279.945
R ² (marg.)	.00	.10	.00	.11	.00	.07

Note. Displayed are the unstandardized coefficients of multilevel models with standard errors (for fixed effects) and standard deviation (for random intercepts and residuals) in parentheses, *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. All multilevel models were calculated including all control variables at the individual, organizational, and societal levels (see Supplemental Appendix 5). The three-level approach used for analyzing conception–performance gaps could not reliably be applied to models that used role performance as the dependent variable, since performance was measured at the aggregate newsroom level. Consequently, performance analyses are based on models with only two levels (i.e., organizations nested in countries). To compare the coefficients determined for role performance with those for role conceptions, we also applied this two-level approach to the models that used conception as the dependent variable. However, there were no substantial differences in the conception-related results between a three-level model and a two-level model.

for *news industry*-oriented roles, even after including all additional predictors and control variables.

News Quality Gaps and the Use of Digital Research Tools and Digital Audience Analytics

With respect to gaps in *news quality*-oriented roles (watchdog, civic), the multilevel models with fixed effects included revealed that both gaps were most closely associated with the use of *digital research tools*: “Watchdog” and “civic” gaps were more strongly related to journalists’ use of digital tools for research and investigation than to their use of audience metrics or community-related tools (see Table 1, third column). However, both relationships were positive. Hence, in contrast to what was expected in H2, conception–performance gaps in “watchdog” and “civic” journalism did not decrease but increase with increasing use of *digital research tools* ($b_{\text{watchdog}} = .022, p < .001, \beta = .13$; $b_{\text{civic}} = .027, p < .001, \beta = .19$). Both gaps resulted from the fact that the use of digital tools for journalistic research and investigation was more positively related to journalists’ perceived importance of the “watchdog” and “civic” roles ($b_{\text{watchdog}} = .023, p < .001, \beta = .13$; $b_{\text{civic}} = .027, p < .001, \beta = .20$; see Table 1, fifth column) than to actual “watchdog” and “civic” role performance ($b_{\text{watchdog}} = .001, p < .05, \beta = .04$; $b_{\text{civic}} = .000, p > .10$; see Table 1, seventh column).

Moreover, while performance of the “watchdog” and “civic” roles was—if at all—only slightly positively related to newsrooms’ use of digital tools for journalistic research, it was more strongly but negatively related to the use of *digital audience analytics*: The more journalists made use of audience metrics, the lower was the performance of *news quality*-oriented roles of “watchdog” and “civic” journalism ($b_{\text{watchdog}} = -.002, p < .01, \beta = -.06$; $b_{\text{civic}} = -.003, p < .01, \beta = -.09$; see Table 1, seventh column). At the same time, the perceived relevance of the “watchdog” and “civic” roles increased with higher use of audience metrics ($b_{\text{watchdog}} = .013, p < .01, \beta = .08$; $b_{\text{civic}} = .011, p < .01, \beta = .08$; see Table 1, fifth column). Consequently, and in line with H3a, the use of *digital audience analytics* was overall positively related to increasing conception–performance gaps in *news quality*-compliant roles ($b_{\text{watchdog}} = .015, p < .001, \beta = .10$; $b_{\text{civic}} = .015, p < .001, \beta = .11$; see Table 1, third column).

News Industry Gaps and the Use of Digital Audience Analytics

Regarding the gaps in *news industry*-oriented roles (infotainment, interventionist), analyses showed that both gaps were most strongly associated with the use of *digital audience analytics*. “Infotainment” and “interventionist” gaps were, thus, mainly related to journalists’ use of metrics to track audience behavior (see Table 2, third column). In line with H3b, the relationships were positive, so that conception–performance gaps in “infotainment” and “interventionist” journalism increased with higher use of audience metrics ($b_{\text{infotainment}} = .024, p < .001, \beta = .11$; $b_{\text{interventionist}} = .020, p < .001, \beta = .08$). In both cases, however, the gaps originated from stronger associations between the use of audience metrics and *news industry*-oriented role conception than

role performance. Hence, the use of *digital audience analytics* was positively related to journalists' perceived importance of the "infotainment" and "interventionist" roles ($b_{\text{infotainment}} = .026, p < .001, \beta = .18$; $b_{\text{interventionist}} = .021, p < .001, \beta = .10$; see Table 2, fifth column), but more intense use of such tools did not correspond with higher performance of these roles ($ps > .10$; see Table 2, seventh column).

Conception–Performance Gaps and the Use of Digital Community Tools

Finally, our RQ1 addressed the somewhat ambiguous nature of *digital community tools* with respect to journalistic roles. Interestingly, community-related social media use was in no way related to *news quality*-oriented roles (see Table 1)—neither in terms of "watchdog" and "civic" conception–performance gaps ($ps > .20$) nor when considering the dimensions of "watchdog" and "civic" conception ($ps > .15$) and performance individually ($ps > .15$). A greater relevance of community-related digital tools occurred with respect to *news industry*-oriented roles. Although community-related social media use was not consistently related to "infotainment" and "interventionist" conception–performance gaps (see Table 2, third column), it showed a consistent positive relationship to the perceived relevance of "infotainment" and "interventionist" roles among journalists ($b_{\text{infotainment}} = .009, p < .05, \beta = .05$; $b_{\text{interventionist}} = .012, p < .05, \beta = .06$; see Table 2, fifth column). Thus, when journalists used social media to engage with the public, they also attested higher relevance to the *news industry*-oriented roles of "infotainment" and "interventionism." Moreover, digital tool use for community-related reasons additionally showed the only significant relationship to newsroom performance of the two *news industry* roles: The use of digital tools to engage and interact with audiences on social media was reflected in a slightly higher level of "infotainment" and "interventionism" in media coverage ($b_{\text{infotainment}} = .003, p < .05, \beta = .04$; $b_{\text{interventionist}} = .005, p < .01, \beta = .06$; see Table 2, seventh column). Thus, overall, the use *digital community tools* was more strongly (positively) associated with *news industry* roles than *news quality*-oriented roles.

Discussion

Contemporary journalism is going through a fundamental process of reinvention and re-legitimization, mainly driven by hyper-competition in digital information environments and challenges posed by news avoidance and media distrust in digital societies. Against the backdrop of these contextual factors shaping today's journalism, this study aimed to examine the perceived relevance and implementation of competing normative ideals in journalism (*news quality* vs. *news industry*-oriented roles) through an analysis of conception–performance gaps and to advance our understanding of how these ideals might interact with the challenges journalism faces in changing digital news environments. Based on survey and content analysis data from 37 countries, our study yields three key findings.

First, our analyses indicate a further consolidation of a certain disconnect between role ideals and their implementation in news reporting, as shown in previous research (Mellado & Mothes, 2020; Tandoc et al., 2013; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996), especially for *news quality*-oriented roles (watchdog, civic) and, thus, for roles most essential to the journalistic profession as a public service. In contrast, conception–performance gaps for *news industry*-oriented roles (infotainment, interventionism) are much smaller. Although these roles continue to have considerably less normative relevance to journalists, they are increasingly gaining practical relevance in today’s newsrooms in their battle for user attention. Although the resulting gaps cannot be interpreted in absolute terms, since the individual normative ideals of journalists in a newsroom do not translate one-to-one into the media coverage of the newsroom as a whole, comparing the magnitude of the gaps between diverging role orientations can provide important insights into the applicability of different role ideals. From this comparative perspective, our analyses suggest that journalists attach much higher importance to *news quality*- than *news industry*-oriented roles—even after controlling for various individual, organizational, and country-level factors—while at the same time the performance of *news quality* roles in newsrooms is much lower than that of *news industry* roles. Hence, in line with H1, “intrinsic” professional orientations (Flegel & Chaffee, 1971) appear to be consistently less feasible for journalists to implement in their newsrooms than more subordinate journalistic role orientations that prioritize more structural, “extrinsic” factors, which today are often economically driven.

A second key finding of our study relates to the question of how new digital dynamics in journalism may play into the fragile relationship between journalists’ *news quality*-related role ideals and the implementation of these roles in newsrooms. According to our findings, digital tools used for research purposes of journalistic investigation and verification are indeed slightly positively related to the newsroom performance of the “watchdog” role. Given the correlational nature of our study, this finding could either imply that newsrooms with a stronger focus on digital tools for quality purposes can effectively improve the quality of their reporting, or that newsrooms with an already strong focus on “watchdog” journalism are more likely to use digital tools for journalistic research in the first place. Interestingly, however, there are two drawbacks associated with this finding: On the one hand, there are even stronger relationships between the use of *digital research tools* and journalists’ role conceptions—this time regarding both the “watchdog” and the “civic” role. This suggests that either journalists who place higher importance on *news quality*-oriented roles use digital tools that help them implement these roles more intensively, or that the use of these tools alone makes journalists perceive themselves more as “watchdogs” or “civic”-oriented. In both cases, the strength of these relationships lies clearly above the magnitude of the link between *digital research tool* use and the actual performance of *news quality* roles in the newsroom and is expressed in overall increasing conception–performance gaps for *news quality* roles (rejecting H2). On the other hand, the newsroom performance of the “watchdog” and “civic” roles was significantly less positively related to the use of *digital research tools* than it was

negatively related to the use of *digital audience analytics*. Both “watchdog” and “civic” role performance was lower in newsrooms where audience metrics were employed, confirming suggestions from earlier research (Fürst, 2020; Nelson & Tandoc, 2019). Although audience metrics were again positively related to journalists’ role conceptions as “watchdog” and “civic” journalists, newsrooms were less likely to actually perform both roles when relying on audience metrics. Hence, supporting H3a, the use of *digital audience analytics* appears to correspond to an overall increase in *news quality*-related conception–performance gaps.

The third key finding of our study pertains to the relevance of digital tool use for journalistic role orientations that relate to more “extrinsic” economic factors by accommodating users’ needs for “infotainment” and opinionated “interventionism.” Surprisingly, newsroom performance of both *news industry*-oriented roles was not significantly related to the use of *digital audience analytics*, but instead positively related to *digital community tools* for audience engagement on social media (RQ1). Still, in support of H3b, *digital audience analytics* appear to resonate in journalism in that journalists who rely more on audience metrics demonstrated a stronger commitment to “infotainment” and “interventionism.” A similar pattern occurred for *digital community tools*, confirming suggestions from earlier research (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018; Mellado & Hermida, 2023). Consequently, either journalists who acknowledge these role orientations as professional ideals see a greater need to use audience metrics for monitoring their own performance and/or to be present on social media to promote their news stories, or monitoring tools and interaction with users on social media increase the perceived importance for journalists to provide entertainment and opinion to their audiences.

Several limitations must be considered in our study. Above all, the comparison between role conception and role performance must be interpreted with caution, as both measures refer to different levels of analysis (individual journalist vs. newsroom). Although there are good reasons to collect data on both concepts at the individual level of journalists, doing so in the context of the present research interest would neglect the fact that journalists do not work in isolation; instead, their role performance is a collective outcome of individual decisions and journalistic reporting styles within a newsroom (Mellado, 2020). This approach follows earlier conceptualizations of “the news” as being manufactured by organizations acting within complex structures and settings, which eventually affects how journalists perform certain roles (Schudson, 2011; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; van Dalen et al., 2012). However, given the different methodological approaches to capturing role conception and performance, resulting gap sizes are not meaningful on their own, but only when compared across roles.

A second caveat is that we measured the use of digital tools by soliciting only rough estimates of journalists’ daily practice. The information provided by the journalists on a limited number of indicators used to capture digital tool use in today’s newsrooms can therefore only serve as proxies for much more complex work routines that will need to be further differentiated in future studies, ideally in combination with observational data. Future research should particularly capture in much greater detail how immersive

trends of artificial intelligence affect the work of journalists and characteristics of media products (Lin & Lewis, 2022).

Despite these limitations, our study yields some initial insights into the complex and changing relationship between quality and industry orientations in journalism and their interplay with digital tools used to redefine or refine the relationship between journalists and their audiences. Our study suggests that *news quality* orientation in journalism can partially benefit from the use of digital tools if these are specifically geared toward an improvement of reporting through providing additional research opportunities. However, quality journalism appears to suffer from the use of digital tools if they are used to achieve business goals, which especially applies to audience metrics but also to the use of social media to engage (with) the audience. Based on our findings, social media so far more clearly benefit *news industry* than *news quality* aspirations in journalism, substantiating earlier concerns raised about the downsides of an “audience turn” in journalism (Costera Meijer, 2020).

With the business logic thus tentatively permeating and reshaping essential role orientations in journalism, newsrooms should not lose sight on the unique characteristics of journalism for citizens in an era of political polarization and post-truth uncertainties (Singer et al., 2023). Not only if journalism is understood as a socially responsible agent, but also from a long-term economic perspective on the public visibility of journalism, it should be important for newsrooms to think about how digital technology can be used to preserve and strengthen journalism’s intrinsic values, rather than weakening them—inadvertently or intentionally—by overriding quality orientations with user-centric approaches to digital business innovation.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This study was funded in Brazil by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development/Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq, 316093/2021-1 and 422609/2021-8) and Santa Catarina State Research and Innovation Support Foundation/Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa e Inovação do Estado de Santa Catarina (FAPESC, 2023TR000392), in Canada by Mitacs, Centre d’études sur les médias, The Journalism Research Centre at Toronto Metropolitan University, The Creative School at Toronto Metropolitan University, and Toronto Metropolitan University, in Chile by the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso and the Fondecyt Grant n° 1220698, in Hungary by the National Research Development and Innovation Office under agreement No. 131990, in Mexico by the Division of Research and Postgraduate Studies, Universidad Iberoamericana Mexico City (Excepcional Standard Grant 2019–2022, in Qatar by the Northwestern University in Qatar, in Rwanda by the VCU College of Humanities and Sciences (SEED Award), in Spain by the Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry, and Competitiveness (CSO2017-82816-P), and in Switzerland by the Institute of Applied Media Studies (IAM) at the Zurich University of Applied Studies (ZHAW).

ORCID iDs

Cornelia Mothes  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7268-1664>

Claudia Kozman  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2447-8485>

Daniel C. Hallin  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8531-832X>

Rasha El-Ibiary  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9902-0316>

Jorge Maza-Córdova  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8074-9529>

Cristina Navarro  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0522-4428>

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. Some examples may be helpful to clarify the variations among the countries that guided national researchers' decisions: (a) While popular-oriented news outlets are not present in some countries, they are highly prevalent in others and needed to be included in the sample. (b) In some countries, all media outlets are private/commercial, while others have both private and public (mostly broadcast) media. (c) In some of the countries included in the study, there are only state-owned media, so there was no opportunity for these countries to consider a wide range of media in terms of ownership. (d) Researchers tried to include media outlets that reflect all dominant languages in multilingual countries in which language is an important feature of the media system.
2. Some news outlets do not report the news on weekends or present the news on weekends by using formats and/or time slots that differ from those used on weekdays. The most important days off are Sundays, Saturdays, and Fridays. Thus, in some countries, there were no newspapers published or no news programs broadcasted on television and/or radio on weekends or certain weekend days. Those cases were considered "missing data." However, if only the time of a news program on television and/or radio on weekends differed from the weekdays (e.g., in the case of sports events), the newscast was still included and coded using the actual time slot.

References

- Belair-Gagnon, V., Nelson, J. L., & Lewis, S. C. (2019). Audience engagement, reciprocity, and the pursuit of community connectedness in public media journalism. *Journalism Practice*, 13(5), 558–575. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2018.1542975>
- Bjerknes, F. (2022). Images of transgressions: Visuals as reconstructed evidence in digital investigative journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 23(8), 951–973. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2022.2061574>
- Blanchett, N. (2021). Participative gatekeeping: The intersection of news, audience data, newsworkers, and economics. *Digital Journalism*, 9(6), 773–791. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1869053>
- Bunce, M. (2019). Management and resistance in the digital newsroom. *Journalism*, 20(7), 890–905. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916688963>
- Carson, A., & Farhall, K. (2018). Understanding collaborative investigative journalism in a "post-truth" age. *Journalism Studies*, 19(13), 1899–1911. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1494515>

- Christin, A. (2018). Counting clicks: Quantification and variation in web journalism in the United States and France. *American Journal of Sociology*, 123(5), 1382–1415. <https://doi.org/10.1086/696137>
- Chua, S., & Westlund, O. (2019). Audience-centric engagement, collaboration culture and platform counterbalancing. *Media and Communication*, 7(1), 153–165. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v7i1.1760>
- Cohen, N. S. (2019). At work in the digital newsroom. *Digital Journalism*, 7(5), 571–591. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1419821>
- Costera Meijer, I. (2020). Understanding the audience turn in journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 21(16), 2326–2342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1847681>
- Ederly, S., & Vraga, E. (2019). News, entertainment, or both? Exploring audience perceptions of media genre in a hybrid media environment. *Journalism*, 20(6), 807–826. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917730>
- Fawzi, N., & Mothes, C. (2020). Perceptions of media performance: Expectation-evaluation discrepancies and their relationship with media-related and populist attitudes. *Media and Communication*, 8(3), 335–347. <https://dx.doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i3.3142>
- Ferrer-Conill, R., & Tandoc, E. C. (2018). The audience-oriented editor. *Digital Journalism*, 6(4), 436–453. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1440972>
- Ferrucci, P. (2020). It is in the numbers: How market orientation impacts journalists' use of news metrics. *Journalism*, 21(2), 244–261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918807056>
- Flegel, R. C., & Chaffee, S. H. (1971). Influences of editors, readers, and personal opinions on reporters. *Journalism Quarterly*, 48(4), 645–651. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769907104800404>
- Fürst, S. (2020). In the service of good journalism and audience interests? How audience metrics affect news quality. *Media and Communication*, 8(3), 270–280. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i3.3228>
- Gentzkow, M., & Shapiro, J. M. (2010). What drives media slant? Evidence from U.S. daily newspapers. *Econometrica*, 78(1), 35–71. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25621396>
- Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hase, V., Boczek, K., & Scharkow, M. (2023). Adapting to affordances and audiences? A cross-platform, multi-modal analysis of the platformization of news on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. *Digital Journalism* 11(8), 1499–1520. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2128389>
- Hayes, K. (2024). The networked newsroom: Navigating news boundaries of work. *Journalism Practice* 18(4), 803–817. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1949627>
- Himma-Kadakas, M., & Ojaments, I. (2022). Debunking false information: Investigating journalists' fact-checking skills. *Digital Journalism*, 10(5), 866–887. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2043173>
- Humayun, M. F., & Ferrucci, P. (2022). Understanding social media in journalism practice: A typology. *Digital Journalism*, 10(9), 1502–1525. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2086594>
- Hwang, H., Kim, Y., & Kim, Y. (2018). Influence of discussion incivility on deliberation: An examination of the mediating role of moral indignation. *Communication Research*, 45(2), 213–240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650215616861>
- Kunert, J., Frech, J., Brüggemann, M., Lilienthal, V., & Loosen, W. (2022). How investigative journalists around the world adopt innovative digital practices. *Journalism Studies*, 23(7), 761–780. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2022.2033636>
- Lamot, K., & Paulussen, S. (2020). Six uses of analytics: Digital editors' perceptions of audience analytics in the newsroom. *Journalism Practice*, 14(3), 358–373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1617043>

- Lawrence, R. G., Radcliffe, D., & Schmidt, T. R. (2018). Practicing engagement: Participatory journalism in the Web 2.0 era. *Journalism Practice*, 12(10), 1220–1240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2017.1391712>
- Lin, B., & Lewis, S. C. (2022). The one thing journalistic AI just might do for democracy. *Digital Journalism*, 10(10), 1627–1649. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2084131>
- Lowrey, W., & Woo, C. W. (2010). The news organization in uncertain times: Business or institution? *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 87(1), 41–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769901008700103>
- Mäder, A., & Rinsdorf, L. (2023). Constructive journalism as an adaptation to a changing media environment. *Journalism Studies*, 24(3), 329–346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2022.2159859>
- Mellado, C. (Ed.). (2020). *Beyond journalistic norms: Role performance and news in comparative perspective*. Routledge.
- Mellado, C., & Hermida, A. (2023). The journalist on social media: Mapping the promoter, celebrity and joker roles on Twitter and Instagram. *Digital Journalism*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2151484>
- Mellado, C., & Mothes, C. (2020). Measuring the link between professional role conceptions, perceived role enactment, and journalistic role performance across countries. In C. Mellado (Ed.), *Beyond journalistic norms: Role performance and news in comparative perspective* (pp. 147–166). Routledge.
- Mellado, C., Mothes, C., Hallin, D. C., Humanes, M. L., Lauber, M., Mick, J., Silke, H., Sparks, C., Amado, A., Davydov, S., & Olivera, D. (2020). Investigating the gap between newspaper journalists' role conceptions and role performance in nine European, Asian, and Latin American countries. *The International Journal of Press/politics*, 25(4), 552–575. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161220910106>
- Merkley, E. (2018). Partisan bias in economic news content: New evidence. *American Politics Research*, 47(6), 1303–1323. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X18821954>
- Moran, R. E., & Shaik, S. J. (2022). Robots in the news and newsrooms: Unpacking meta-journalistic discourse on the use of artificial intelligence in journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 10(10), 1756–1774. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2085129>
- Moreno-Gil, V., Ramon, X., & Rodríguez-Martínez, M. (2021). Fact-checking interventions as counteroffensives to disinformation growth: Standards, values, and practices in Latin America and Spain. *Media and Communication*, 9(1), 251–263. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v9i1.3443>
- Moreno-Gil, V., Ramos-Vegas, X., & Mauri-Ríos, M. (2022). Bringing journalism back to its roots: Examining fact-checking practices, methods, and challenges in the Mediterranean context. *Profesional de la información*, 31(2), Article e310215. <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2022.mar.15>
- Mosco, V. (2019). Social media versus journalism and democracy. *Journalism*, 20(1), 181–184. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918807611>
- Mothes, C., Knobloch-Westerwick, S., & Pearson, G. (2019). The PFAD-HEC model: Impacts of news attributes and use motivations on selective news exposure. *Communication Theory*, 29(3), 251–271. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qty033>
- Nelson, J. L. (2021). The next media regime: The pursuit of “audience engagement” in journalism. *Journalism*, 22(9), 2350–2367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884919862375>
- Nelson, J. L., & Tandoc, E. C., Jr. (2019). Doing “well” or doing “good”: What audience analytics reveal about journalism’s competing goals. *Journalism Studies*, 20(13), 1960–1976. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1547122>

- Neuberger, C., Nuernbergk, C., & Langenohl, S. (2019). Journalism as multichannel communication. *Journalism Studies*, 20(9), 1260–1280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1507685>
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Eddy, K., Robertson, C. T., & Nielsen, R. K. (2023). *Digital news report 2023*. Reuters Institute. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Digital_News_Report_2023.pdf
- Otto, L., Glogger, I., & Boukes, M. (2016). The softening of journalistic political communication. *Communication Theory*, 27(2), 136–155. <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12102>
- Powers, M., & Vera-Zambrano, S. (2018). How journalists use social media in France and the United States. *New Media & Society*, 20(8), 2728–2744. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817731566>
- Schudson, M. (2011). *The sociology of news* (2nd ed.). W.W. Norton & Co.
- Schulz, A., Wirth, W., & Müller, P. (2020). We are the people and you are fake news: A social identity approach to populist citizens' false consensus and hostile media perceptions. *Communication Research*, 47(2), 201–226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650218794854>
- Shoemaker, P., & Reese, S. (2014). *Mediating the message in the 21st century: A media sociology perspective* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Singer, J., Lewis, S. C., & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2023). Journalism in the Quarterly: A century of change in the industry and the academy. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 100(4), 773–792. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10776990231189455>
- Skovsgaard, M., & Andersen, K. (2020). Conceptualizing news avoidance: Towards a shared understanding of different causes and potential solutions. *Journalism Studies*, 21(4), 459–476. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2019.1686410>
- Strömbäck, J. (2023). Political alternative media as a democratic challenge. *Digital Journalism*, 11(5), 880–887. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2023.2178947>
- Tandoc, E. C., Jr. (2015). Why web analytics click: Factors affecting the ways journalists use audience metrics. *Journalism Studies*, 16(6), 782–799. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.946309>
- Tandoc, E. C., Jr., Hellmueller, L., & Vos, T. (2013). Mind the gap: Between role conception and role enactment. *Journalism Practice*, 7(5), 539–554. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2012.726503>
- Tandoc, E. C., Jr., & Thomas, R. J. (2015). The ethics of web analytics. *Digital Journalism*, 3(2), 243–258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.909122>
- Van Aelst, P., Strömbäck, J., Aalberg, T., Esser, F., de Vreese, C., Matthes, J., Hopmann, D., Salgado, S., Hube, N., Stepińska, A., Papathanassopoulos, S., Berganza, R., Legnante, G., Reinemann, C., Sheaffer, T., & Stanyer, J. (2017). Political communication in a high-choice media environment: A challenge for democracy? *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 41(1), 3–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2017.1288551>
- van Dalen, A., de Vreese, C., & Albæk, E. (2012). Different roles, different content? A four-country comparison of the role conceptions and reporting styles of political journalists. *Journalism*, 13(7), 903–922. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884911431538>
- Wagner, M. (2021). Affective polarization in multiparty systems. *Electoral Studies*, 69(2), 102199. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2020.102199>
- Weaver, D. H., & Wilhoit, G. C. (1996). *The American journalist in the 1990s: U.S. news people at the end of an era*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Weaver, D. H., Willnat, L., & Wilhoit, G. C. (2019). The American journalist in the digital age: Another look at U.S. news people. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 96(1), 101–130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018778242>

- Welbers, K., van Atteveldt, W., Kleinnijenhuis, J., Ruigrok, N., & Schaper, J. (2016). News selection criteria in the digital age: Professional norms versus online audience metrics. *Journalism, 17*(8), 1037–1053. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884915595474>
- Wojcieszak, M., & Garrett, R. K. (2018). Social identity, selective exposure, and affective polarization: How priming national identity shapes attitudes toward immigrants via news selection. *Human Communication Research, 44*(3), 247–273. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqx010>
- Zhang, X., & Li, W. (2020). From social media with news: Journalists' social media use for sourcing and verification. *Journalism Practice, 14*(10), 1193–1210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1689372>

Author Biographies

Cornelia Mothes is Professor of Journalism and Media Management at Macromedia University of Applied Sciences in Leipzig, Germany, and serves as Germany's national representative in the "World Association for Public Opinion Research" (WAPOR). Her main research interests lie in the fields of political communication, journalism studies, and media psychology, with a special focus on the challenges that information environments in postmodern, digital democracies pose for social cohesion, civic orientation, and deliberation.

Claudia Mellado is Professor of Journalism in the School of Journalism at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile. She is the principal investigator of the JRP Project. Her work has been extensively published in journals such as *Journal of Communication*, *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *Digital Journalism*, *Journalism*, *JMCQ*, *Journalism Studies*, and *Journalism Practice*, among others. Her last edited book is *Beyond Journalistic Norm: Role Performance and News in Comparative Perspective* (Routledge, 2021).

Sandrine Boudana is Senior Lecturer and Chair of the DAN Department of Communication at Tel Aviv University. She specializes in news media norms and standards in a cross-national comparative perspective. She has published extensively on journalistic objectivity, news bias, the ritual function of news, and iconic news photographs.

Marju Himma is an Associate Professor in Journalism studies at the University of Tartu, Estonia. Her research combines studies on news work, information disorders, and media and information literacy of different generations.

David Nolan is Associate Professor in the News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra. He researches how journalism is shaped by and contributes to the politics of race, belonging and inequality, in the context of broader social, economic, technological and political influences. A former President of AANZCA (Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand Communication Association), he leads the Australian team on the Journalistic Role Performance project.

Karen McIntyre, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Multimedia Journalism and the Director of Graduate Studies in the Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture at Virginia Commonwealth University. She studies socially responsible forms of journalism, such as constructive and solutions journalism, as well as press freedom and journalism practice in East Africa.

Claudia Kozman (PhD, Indiana University) is an Assistant Professor in residence at Northwestern University in Qatar. Her research examines the news and public perceptions of

the news from a comparative perspective. Integrating communication theories within a broad media systems approach, she focuses on the contexts of conflict and sports to analyze news content as a product of the intersection of journalistic norms and external influences in a given media system.

Daniel C. Hallin is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of California, San Diego. His books include *The "Uncensored War": The Media and Vietnam*, *We Keep America on Top of the World: Television Journalism and the Public Sphere*, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*, and *Making Health Public*. His most recent work has focused on the mediatization of the COVID pandemic and on media and politics in Latin America.

Pauline Amiel is Associate Professor in Journalism Studies at Mediterranean Institute of Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication, Aix-Marseille University, France. Her research focuses on local journalism, solutions journalism and journalistic roles.

Colette Brin is Professor in the Department of Information and Communication at Université Laval and Director of the Centre d'études sur les médias. In her research career spanning almost 30 years, she has studied a range of contemporary media issues, from newsroom convergence and declining journalistic staffing levels to online public information practices and misinformation. Her most recent book is a collection of studies on AI, culture, and media at Presses de l'Université Laval, co-edited with Véronique Guèvremont.

Yi-Ning Katherine Chen, PhD from The University of Texas at Austin, serves as Distinguished Professor and Dean at National Chengchi University's Communication College in Taiwan. Additionally, she is a Board Member of Oversight Board for Meta and a former Commissioner of Taiwan's National Communications Commission. Her expertise includes media regulations, political communication, and science communication.

Sergey Davydov is an Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, Senior Researcher at the International Laboratory for Social Integration Research and analyst at the International Laboratory for Applied Network Research, HSE University in Moscow, Russian Federation. He is the editor of the books *Internet in Russia: A Study of the Runet and Its Impact on Social Life (2020)* and *Internet in the Post-Soviet Area: Technological, Economic and Political Aspects (2023)*.

Mariana De Maio is Assistant Professor in the Department of Journalism and Communication at Lehigh University. She received her PhD from the University of Florida in 2015. Her teaching and research interests lie in agenda-setting, political communication, journalistic cultures, media influence on political attitudes and behavior, online and multimedia journalism.

Filip Dingerkus is a research associate since 2014 at the Institute of Applied Media Studies (IAM) at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences Winterthur (ZHAW). His professional interests include journalism research and international comparative media research. He studied Media & Communication at the Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research at the University of Zurich and has worked as an editor for film and culture in several media outlets.

Rasha El-Ibiary (PhD, Newcastle University, 2006) is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Political Mass Media Department, Future University in Egypt. She is also an Educational Consultant at DW Akademie, Vice Chair for ICA's Activism, Communication and Social Justice interest group, among other roles. Her work on media and politics includes journalists' utilization of media, mediated gendered identities, imagery and memory, the politics of fear, and public diplomacy, among others.

Maximiliano Frías Vázquez is a PhD student of the doctoral program Knowledge Society at the University of Salamanca (Spain) and pre-doctoral researcher at the Observatory of Audiovisual Content at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Salamanca.

Antje Glück teaches Multimedia Journalism and Media Studies at Bournemouth University (UK). She holds a PhD from the University of Leeds, in which she examined the role of emotions in journalistic work practices and deontology in India and the United Kingdom. Her studies of Journalism, Arabic and Indology and her work of over a decade as freelance journalist led her to spend considerable time abroad in Egypt, Spain, France, and India. Her research centres currently on solutions-oriented journalism as well as social injustice and inequalities.

Miguel Garcés-Prettel (PhD in Communication) is Associate Professor at the Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar (Colombia). His research interests are focused on the fields of journalism, technological changes, and health communication.

María Luisa Humanes is a Full Professor in Journalism at University Rey Juan Carlos, Spain. She holds a PhD in communication from the Complutense University of Madrid, 1997, and a postgraduate specialization in social research and data analysis techniques, 2009. She has taught at the Complutense University (1996–1997) and the University of Salamanca (1997–2003). She leads the Spanish team within the project Journalistic Role Performance.

Sophie Lecheler is Professor of Political Communication at the Department of Communication Science at the University of Vienna. Her research focuses on political journalism, digitalisation of news, emotions, and experiments.

Misook Lee is an Associate Professor at the Department of Communication and Culture at Otsma Women's University. Her research interests are in media discourse analysis on social minorities, comparative journalism studies, and social movement studies.

Christi I-Hsuan Lin, PhD, is Professor at the College of Sociology at Rikkyo University in Tokyo, Japan. Her main areas of research are mass media and journalism studies, mainly focused on alternative media and investigative journalism in the East Asia region.

Mireya Márquez-Ramírez is Professor of Journalism Studies and Media Theory at the Department of Communications, Universidad Iberoamericana, in Mexico City. She has a PhD in Media and Communications from Goldsmiths, University of London, U.K. (2012) and an MA in Journalism Studies from Cardiff University, U.K. (2006). She is the principal investigator of the Journalistic Role Performance study in Mexico and the Worlds of Journalism study in Bolivia.

Jorge Maza-Córdova is a Professor at Universidad Técnica de Machala, Ecuador. Jorge does research in communication and media, graphic design and communication design.

Marco Mazzoni is a Professor of Sociology of Communication at the Department of Political Science, University of Perugia. He teaches courses on “Mass Communication” and “Lobbying and Public Relations” as part of the Communication Sciences program. His primary research interests include journalism, mass media systems, political communication, corruption, and theories of lobbying and public relations.

Jacques Mick is Vice-President for Research and Innovation and Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology and Political Science, Federal University of Santa Catarina, and researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, Brazil.

Ana Milojevic is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Journalism and Communication, Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade. Before, she was a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Department of Information Science and Media Studies, University of Bergen, Norway (2020-22), funded by Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowship.

Cristina Navarro is an Associate Professor in the Mass Communication and Media Department at Gulf University for Science and Technology in Kuwait. Her research interests encompass journalism practices, social media communication, professionalism, leadership, PR competencies, knowledge, and skills.

Dasniel Olivera Pérez is a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Mexico. His lines of research are media systems and journalistic cultures, Trust in the media and political participation, and Social research methods.

Marcela Pizarro, PhD, is Lecturer at the Department of Media, Communications & Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths College, University of London. She worked as a journalist for 20 years, most notably on the media critique show at Al Jazeera English where she covered the political economy, history and culture of media around the world. Her main areas of research and practice focus on journalism and theory in the Global South. She was lead investigator in Qatar for the Journalistic Role Performance project.

Fergal Quinn is an Associate Professor in Journalism with University of Limerick. Prior to joining UL in 2014, he worked for over a decade as a print and multimedia journalist with RTÉ, The Cambodia Daily and others. He recently co-authored *How to Read Economic News: A Critical Approach to Economic Journalism* (2023) and leads the Professional Diploma in Data Communications in UL.

Gonzalo Sarasqueta holds a Doctorate with Cum Laude in Political Science from the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM), Spain. He is the Director and Professor of the Official Master's Degree in Political and Corporate Communication at Camilo José Cela University. He also teaches undergraduate courses in communication at the same institution.

Terje Skjerdal (PhD) is Professor of Journalism at NLA University College, Kristiansand, Norway. His research focuses on media and democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. He is an Executive Committee member of the Journalistic Role Performance Project and coordinates the African region in the study.

Agnieszka Stępińska, PhD habil., is Professor at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. She is a member of the Journalistic Role Performance project and the Network of European Political Communication Scholars. She serves as an executive editor of the Central European Journal of Communication. Currently, she acts as a chair of the WG1 in COST ACTION CA211129- "What are Opinions? Integrating Theory and Methods for Automatically Analyzing Opinionated Communication."

Gabriella Szabó is a senior research fellow at HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest, Hungary. Her research interests lie in the area of political communication and expressivity, emotions and moral rhetoric.

Sarah Van Leuven is Associate Professor at the Department of Communication Sciences at Ghent University. She is the Head of the research group Center for Journalism Studies, and Head of the Journalism Division of NeFCA (Netherlands-Flanders Communication Association). She leads the five-yearly survey research of Belgian journalists and participates in international projects on journalistic roles, news beats, and journalism ethics.