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This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

ABSTRACT
The shifting role of journalism in a digital age has affected long-standing journalistic norms across media platforms. This has reinvigorated discussion on how work in online newsrooms compares to other platforms that differ in media affordances and forms. Still, more studies are needed on whether those differences translate into distinct practices, especially when examining cross-national studies. Based on the second wave of the Journalistic Role Performance (JRP) project, this article reports the findings of a content analysis of 148,474 stories produced by 365 media organizations from 37 countries, comparing the performance of journalistic roles in online newsrooms to three other types of media—TV, radio, and print. The paper analyzes if journalistic roles present themselves differently across platforms, and if these differences are constant or they vary across countries. Results show that there are measurable differences in role performance in online journalism compared to other platforms. Platform had a significant impact, particularly in terms of service and infotainment orientation, while the implementation of roles oriented toward public service was more similar. Additionally, country differences in the relationship between role performance and platforms mainly emerged for roles that enable political influence on news coverage, with differences in the relationship between online vs. traditional platforms appearing to be distinct features of the specific political system.

Introduction

For the last quarter of a century, news professionals around the world have adopted digital media platforms for news production (Boczkowski 2010; Quandt et al. 2006; Reich 2011, 2016; Singer 2008; Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Neiger 2015) and news consumers have steadily shifted to online and mobile consumption of content (Castro et al. 2021; Newman et al. 2022). This has reinvigorated discussion on how digital technology affects the content and format of news (Walther, Gay, and Hancock 2005) and journalistic autonomy (Simon 2022), building upon earlier examinations of competing or conflicting news values (Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman 1972). While there is a growing number of studies on how digital transformations in the media influence newsroom practice and how "traditional" media work may be compared to digital news production (Zamith and Braun 2019), what is still lacking is a comprehensive look at how these transformations affect the performance of specific journalistic roles in the news, and whether these differences are consistent across news platforms. Within the context of this article, the term platform refers to a specific mode or channel of delivery for news content—print, television, radio, or online—as opposed to an algorithmic news platform (ANP), or "the integration of algorithmic platforms and news services" (Shin et al. 2022) such as recommender systems into journalistic production, more broadly described as news platformization.

So far, research on role performance has focused primarily on legacy media, such as print press or television (Hallin and Mellado 2018; Mellado et al. 2017; Mellado 2021; Stępińska et al. 2016; Wang, Sparks, and Huang 2018). Furthermore, attempts

to investigate journalistic roles on digital platforms primarily analyze specific national realities (Mellado et al. 2021), or only journalists' perceptions of their work as opposed to their actual practice (Hanitzsch et al. 2019). This article aims to fill this gap by comparing how journalistic role performance manifests in online news production, compared to three other types of media—TV, radio, and print—in 37 nations.

The research applies an established framework of analysis of journalistic role performance to compare online media to other platforms, operationalizing six role dimensions related to three main domains. The first domain is associated with the journalistic voice in the news and refers to the interventionist role. In this role the journalist is present in the story, taking sides, interpreting events, or promoting action. Power relations are the next domain encompassing both the watchdog and loyal-facilitator roles. In the watchdog role the journalist holds the government to account, while in the loyal-facilitator role the journalist supports government narratives or the nation-state. The final three roles are framed under an audience approach domain. When journalists, for example, share consumer tips or provide recommendations that people can use in their everyday life, they are acting in the service role. Content that is geared to entertain and thrill the public would indicate the infotainment role, while in the civic role the journalists put citizens, including their voices and actions, at the forefront of coverage, and educate them about complex topics to help them make political decisions (Mellado 2015). All of these roles are considered to be non-mutually exclusive and can co-exist, offering the potential to be performed simultaneously, and also generating intermediate roles (Mellado 2021).

We will explore how journalistic role performance in online news compares to more traditional media platforms and whether these differences are stable across countries or shift based on the differences in their political systems. Our findings provide an important next step in the analysis of how the performance of different journalistic roles in the news might be shaped, or not, by standardized practice related to a specific platform; whether such findings remain consistent across countries; and the potential increase of homogeneity in journalistic practices.

What Role Do Platforms Play in News Production?

Contemporary comparative cross-platform studies seeking to determine medium differences are not only scarce but also exhibit conflicting results (for research overview see Reich 2016). These contradicting results add fuel to a long-lasting theoretical dispute regarding the distinctiveness of reporting patterns across media platforms between two camps: the generalists and the particularists. While the former sees the media as "packaging houses of similarly obtained raw materials," the latter claims that different media are "unique factories of news" (Reich 2011, 295).

According to the generic camp, journalists across media platforms report their news rather similarly (Benson 2006; Gans 2004; Ryfe 2006). The similarity between media is nourished, according to scholars representing this perspective, by traditional factors, such as sharing of the same "field" (Bourdieu 2005), the influence of extra-media level factors (Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman 1972; Shoemaker and Reese 1996), and also by newer factors that homogenize different media, such as convergence, cross-media production, cross-media monitoring, mimicry, and plagiarism (Bødker and

Bechmann-Petersen 2007; Matheson 2008; Phillips 2012). Hoffman (2006, 67) found "the relative similarity between print and online versions of the newspaper—even accounting for value-added items such as links to archived content, audio/video links, and discussion boards—is startling." In an extensive study carried out in the U.S., Maier (2010) observed that mainstream print and network television news outlets "covered the same story lines almost in identical proportion with each other as with online media" (554). Even though online news offered greater breadth of coverage, they "not only often reported the same stories as legacy media, but when they did, they provided a similar degree of attention in terms of frequency and depth of coverage" (555). As the study focused primarily on story selection, Maier noted there was a need for further examination of "how" stories were reported.

More recently, newsroom convergence and the growing adoption of the use of digital technology—for every single step in the news production process, from sourcing (Van Leuven et al. 2018) to news writing (Wu, Tandoc, and Salmon 2019) to promoting stories (Blanchett Neheli 2018)—has augmented support for the generalist perspective. The ubiquitous use of web metrics (Tandoc 2019) is impacting editorial decision-making globally (Lamot and Van Aelst 2020; Moyo, Mare, and Matsilele 2019), including the ways in which stories are formatted (Blanchett 2021). An online story's value can be measured based on metrics such as "shareability" (Harcup and O'Neill 2017) and the influence of audience data is felt across platforms. For example, newspaper editors use online audience data, in varying degrees, when developing print stories (Blanchett Neheli 2019) and "TV organizations are now measuring success in terms of social media metrics" (Wang 2021, 11).

From an economic perspective, pressure to increase revenue, attract eyeballs, and appease advertisers can lead to "traffic whoring" (Petre 2021) and the amplification of sensational content (Tandoc 2014). Bourdieu (1998) believed that news practice with a primary goal to attract an audience led to the prioritization of "headlines" and "empty air" over "information that all citizens ought to have to exercise their democratic rights" (18), and denounced news organizations—particularly television—for creating content with a goal to entertain rather than to inform. However, facing declining rates of newspaper readership and a shift in advertising spending toward digital media outlets, print outlets may also feel compelled to attract a larger audience including more elements of the infotainment and service roles in their performance (Mellado et al. 2021).

According to the particularistic position, in contrast, reporters in each type of medium employ distinct practices of newsgathering, selection and presentation, embodying a unique "media logic" that situates events within "both visual and temporal parameters" (Altheide and Snow 1979,100; see also Altheide 2020; Dahlgren 1996; Deuze 2008; Machill and Beiler 2009) that engender unique production methods (Boczkowski 2005; Domingo 2008). As Reich (2016, 14) noted, while referring to print, television, radio and online news,

> … even if reporters in different media cover similar topics based on similar worldviews, they employ different methods and means, face distinct conditions, constraints and time regimes, varying levels of proximity to the actual occurrences, and depend on different mixes of actors, representing different interests, biases and levels of trustworthiness that may eventually lead to distinct news products.

Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Neiger (2015) also argue that media platforms, despite the digitalization process, continue to differ regarding their affordances. Liveness, for example, has been thoroughly investigated as one of the unique qualities of broadcast media (television in particular; see Scannell 2014). According to Walters (2021, 5), even on social media, "the characteristics and affordances of platforms come into play when journalists decide what to publish where."

From the perspective of journalists, early work on online media role conceptions found digital journalists in the Netherlands focused more on interactive relationships with audiences, rather than democratic role fulfillment (Deuze and Dimoudi 2002). Benson et al. (2012) aimed to identify changes in content and the structure of the news in the United States, Denmark, and France when moving from the print to the digital version and found that digital media had softer content and were more sensationalist than their print counterparts. The results of a comparison of role performance in the news between Chilean print and digital platforms (Mellado et al. 2021) provide only partial support to the expectations of differences arising from distinct features of the media platforms. Data showed a higher presence of the interventionist, civic, and service roles in print media. However, behaving in line with print journalists in terms of reporting, digital journalists did not take advantage of technological tools available to them, such as interactivity, to perform the civic role, for example, or of multimedia tools to perform the infotainment role. Studies conducted by Harmer and Southern (2020) and Kiesow, Zhou, and Guo (2021) arrived at similar conclusions when investigating how online media in the United Kingdom and the United States use their affordances when reporting the news.

An Exploratory Approach

As the literature shows, one may expect some level of homogeneity in role performance across media platforms since technology continues to shape standardized formats and practice, particularly in converged newsrooms delivering to multiple platforms. Media platforms may differ, however, in role performance due to temporal affordances and audience expectations since "each provide distinctly different channels and present information often in distinct ways to distinct audiences" (Vos and Heinderyckx 2015, 9). There are multifarious impacts of media logic—from streamlined production that could lead to more similarities to visual and temporal constraints that demand unique practice. This, combined with the complex and sometimes contradictory findings of previous research that is usually limited to specific country case-studies, suggests that an exploratory approach towards the differences and similarities in online media compared to other platforms is warranted from a cross-national perspective.

While encouraging the undertaking of comparative studies, Weaver and Willnat (2012, 5) noted that "patterns of similarities and differences that emerge from these cross-national comparisons are not easily explained by conventional political, economic, and cultural categories, or by existing theories of mass communication, but they are striking and intriguing in their variety." Although there is a growing body of research on the perception of journalistic roles from a global perspective (for example, Weaver

1998; Hanitzsch et al. 2019), there is still a dearth of research that analyses whether significant differences exist in the performance of such roles in online environments compared to other platforms, and whether cross-platform differences in journalistic performance are constant or vary across newsroom cultures.

Some literature suggests that in digital newsrooms "professional definitions of journalistic value" (Christin 2018, 1405) differ based on geographic location. However, there is also evidence of hybridity and differences in journalistic work within individual media systems (Hallin and Mancini 2012; Mellado et al. 2021). There are also commonalities in newsroom practice that are not distinguishable by media system or platform, with similarities more congruent to the habitus of an individual newsworker and differences more related to organizational-level factors (Blanchett 2021).

The framework of affordances, as it was developed by Hutchby (2001) for the study of technologies, avoids traps of both technological determinism and strong social constructivism. Rice et al. (2017, 4) define media affordances as "relationships among action possibilities to which agents perceive they could apply a medium, within its potential features/capabilities/constraints, relative to the agent's needs or purposes, within a given context," while Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Neiger (2015) view technology as framing rather than determining possibilities for actions. Therefore, the outcome of news production, including professional role performance, can be influenced by media logic and media affordances, as well as being shaped by technology and political, cultural, social, and economic factors (Shoemaker and Vos 2009).

Against this backdrop, we formulate the following research questions:

RQ1: How are journalistic roles performed online compared to other platforms across countries?

RQ2: How stable is the relationship between platforms and the performance of journalistic roles across countries?

Method

This paper is based on the second wave of the Journalistic Role Performance (JRP) project (www.journalisticperformance.org). To answer our research questions, we conducted a content analysis of news stories published during 2020 in 365 newspapers, websites, radio, and TV news programs in 37 advanced, transitional, and non-democratic countries.

Our study selected countries representing full democracies, transitional democracies, and authoritarian regimes, varying media systems classifications, as well as nations from different regions, including North America, Latin America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Oceania.

Two to four outlets per platform were selected in each participating country. Given that the structure and format of media systems differ in many ways across countries, including size, audience orientation, ownership, political leaning, and the presence of more than one language in a territory, researchers were asked to ensure that the selected outlets represented as best as possible the diversity of each country's media system.[1] The number of news items analyzed in all countries, as well as the breakdown of news stories by platform is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of items by country and platform.

Country	Online	Print	Television	Radio	Total
Argentina	2249	2029	590	500	5368
Australia	540	582	416	427	1965
Austria	1714	2576	226	305	4821
Belgium	399	1185	301	526	2411
Brazil	1235	1627	587	230	3679
Canada	1676	976	834	241	3727
Chile	3657	1216	1532	1107	7512
Colombia	2282	1073	859	924	5138
Ecuador	928	922	685	357	2892
Egypt	629	1655	859	341	3484
United Kingdom	1518	1777	506	384	4185
Estonia	1525	380	348	156	2409
Ethiopia	160	465	454	321	1400
France	2245	1728	402	286	4661
Germany	3538	799	302	138	4777
Hungary	739	1551	730	338	3358
Ireland	764	1255	220	182	2421
Israel	835	639	527	447	2448
Italy	1669	1748	700	377	4494
Japan	1174	1863	530	190	3757
Kuwait	471	933	325	139	1868
Lebanon	1112	648	1404	501	3665
Mexico	2737	3761	471	936	7905
Poland	3051	1593	541	1045	6230
Qatar	326	619	614	0*	1559
Russia	4703	1069	290	893	6955
Rwanda	1222	1105	157	160	2644
Serbia	2771	2150	832	314	6067
South Korea	1716	1300	741	202	3959
Spain	2729	1855	1093	412	6089
Switzerland	2209	865	236	245	3555
Taiwan	3442	2269	831	248	6790
United Arab Emirates	796	1463	328	139	2726
United States	1266	1828	460	438	3992
Venezuela	1065	386	818	174	2443
Cuba	1326	386	653	469	2834
Paraguay	1252	1856	374	804	4286
Total	61,670	50,132	21,776	14,896	148,474

*In Qatar, two radio stations were originally included, but they had to be eliminated because it was found after data collection to be more closely aligned with a talk show than a news show, which violated our sampling criteria.

Using the constructed week method, a stratified-systematic sample of two weeks was selected for each media outlet in each country from January 2 to December 31, 2020. This procedure allowed us to include seven days in each six-month period for a total sample of 14 days during the year. The same days were analyzed in all countries of the study.

The sampling unit was the *most watched* newscast within each selected television channel, the *most listened-to news program* within each selected radio channel, the full issue of the selected newspapers for print media, and the entire homepage of the selected news websites (including its respective links) for online news media. The unit of analysis was the news item. A news item was defined as a set of contiguous verbal, and, if applicable, audio and/or visual elements that refer to the same event/issue/person. All current news content in the sampled outlets was coded on those days, excluding opinion articles, reviews, and stories not produced by the journalists of that news outlet, e.g., wire service stories.

Our sample consisted of a total of 148,474 news stories from 102 newspapers, 96 TV newscasts, 74 radio news programs, and 93 news websites.

Measurements

We relied on the operationalization proposed by Mellado (2015) and subsequently validated (Mellado et al. 2017, 2021; Mellado and van Dalen 2017) to measure the performance of the watchdog, interventionist, loyal-facilitator, service, infotainment, and civic roles in news content, based on the relationship between journalism and the *de facto* power, the presence of the journalistic voice in the story, and the way the journalists address the audience.

Each of these roles is characterized by different measures of professional practices, reporting styles, and narrative schemes. Five indicators were used to measure the presence of the "interventionist" role; nine indicators measured the "watchdog" role; eight indicators measured the "loyal-facilitator" role; five indicators measured the "service" role; five indicators measured the "infotainment" role; and nine indicators measured the "civic" role (see individual indicators in Table 2).[2]

The original indicators, which were designed for the analysis of print media, were adjusted by our team to the special modalities of radio, television, and online media, including audio-visual resources of these platforms, such as sound manipulation, non-verbal expressions, video motion, image frames, and editing (Hallin and Mellado 2018).

The codebook was applied by all national teams in its original language (English). Each indicator was measured on a presence (1) or absence (0) basis. Based on the theoretical rationale of role performance literature, measures were treated as non-mutually exclusive.

Prior to conducting our main analyses, we performed confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) for each role domain to assess the scale consistency of the respective roles. Based on the CFA results, the individual indicators comprising each dimension were combined to generate a final role score. For descriptive purposes, we calculated raw scores (total points divided by the total items for each role). A higher score expressed a higher presence of each journalistic role in the news, and vice versa. Meanwhile, we used factor scores to test for differences in the performance of the roles analyzed.

Data Collection

The sample search process, as well as the news item coding was done by native speakers in each country. National teams received extensive training during 2019 and 2020 to ensure a good understanding of the codebook that included operational definitions for each variable.

Coders in each country coded each story directly into an online interface designed for that purpose or entered the data manually into an SPSS file. Based on Krippendorff's alpha (Ka), the final global intercoder reliability was .79. The variation of intercoder reliability across roles ranged from .76 to .86, while the variation across countries ranged from .72 to .91.

Table 2. Role performance indicators.

Role	Indicator
Interventionist	Journalist's point of view
	Interpretation
	Call to action
	Qualifying adjectives
	First person
Watchdog	Information on judicial/administrative processes
	Questioning by the journalist
	Questioning by others
	Criticism offered by the journalist
	Criticism offered by others
	Uncovering performed by the journalist
	Uncovering performed by others
	Reporting on external investigation
	Investigative reporting
Loyal-Facilitator	Defend/support activities
	Defend/support policies
	Positive image of the elite
	Progress/success
	Comparison to other countries
	National triumphs
	Promotion of the country
	Patriotism
Service	Impact on everyday life
	Tips and advice (grievances)
	Tips and advice (individual risks)
	Consumer information
	Consumer advice
Infotainment	Personalization
	Private life
	Sensationalism
	Emotions
	Morbidity
Civic	Citizen reactions
	Citizen demands
	Credibility of citizens
	Education on duties and rights
	Local impact
	Social community impact
	Citizen questions
	Information on citizen activities
	Support of citizen movements

Mellado (2021).

The content analysis also included data related to the type of media platform in which the news story was published, the specific outlet, the item's topic, and other potential influential factors at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. For the purpose of this study, a key control variable will be newsroom convergence. This variable was particularly important to consider, as platform distinctions may be less likely to be found in converged media spaces, where the same journalists develop stories for different platforms (Hanusch 2017). Newsworkers now "atomize" content from one story to serve multiple purposes (Jones and Jones 2019), and there is "an unprecedented splintering of news distribution across a seemingly limitless number of devices, feeds, apps, and social contexts" (Nechushtai and Lewis 2019, 300). Converged newsrooms come with unique time constraints and endless news cycles (Boczkowski 2010; Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Neiger 2015), multi-layered digital gate-keeping and more gatekeepers (Wallace 2018), and even greater pressures to meet

audience demands that are often identified through audience data (Hendrickx 2022; Quandt et al. 2006; Singer 2008).

However, although much has changed in newsrooms in over a decade, particularly regarding the eruption of digital news production, there remain widely varying ranges of "processes and products" (Singer 2004, 838). Jenkins (2006, 15) argued that "convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres, and audiences." Yet, he also pointed out that "printed words did not kill spoken words … Television did not kill radio. Each old medium was forced to coexist with the emerging media" (Jenkins 2006, 14). Similarly, Singer noted that "newsroom structures and approaches to informing the public will contribute to preserving distinctions among various news products and the journalists who create them" (2004, 852). Hence, to validly capture platform differences on role performance, independent of newsroom convergence, our analyses controlled for different levels of newsroom convergence.

To capture newsroom convergence, understood as "some combination of news staffs, technologies, products, and geography" in news production (Singer 2004, 838), we differentiated between three levels: (1) full integration (the infrastructures for multi-channel productions are combined in one newsroom, often controlled by a central news/workflow management that distributes content on different platforms); (2) cross-media (journalists work in different newsrooms for different platforms, but are connected through multimedia-coordinators and/or -routines; the management coordinates cooperation and communication between the outlets), and (3) coordination of isolated platforms (newsrooms are autonomous, without any systematic cooperation or integration regarding news gathering, news production, or news distribution from other outlets).

Findings

Comparing Role Performance Between Online, Print, Radio and TV News

To analyze whether journalistic roles perform differently in online media in comparison to other platforms (*RQ1*), we first examined which professional roles were most prominent in online content compared to TV, radio, and print outlets (see Table 3). Overall, analyses of variance and subsequent post-hoc tests with Bonferroni-correction comparing online media against the rest of the platforms showed that journalists in online media outlets performed the service role significantly more than journalists working in print and television ($F = 55.304$; $df = 3$; $p = .001$; $\eta = .034$; post-hoc tests: $ps < .001$); online journalism ranked significantly higher in the performance of the infotainment role than radio and print ($F = 1.147.772$; $df = 3$;

Table 3. Mean and SD of journalistic roles across media platforms.

Platform/Roles	Print	Television	Radio	Online	Total
Interventionist	.185 (.219)	.206 (.231)	.156 (.219)	.176 (.210)	.181 (.220)
Watchdog	.055 (.115)	.057 (.114)	.052 (.103)	.051 (.107)	.054 (.110)
Loyal	.032 (.097)	.031 (.097)	.027 (.089)	.028 (.090)	.030 (.093)
Service	.057 (.136)	.059 (.132)	.064 (.143)	.070 (.149)	.063 (.140)
Infotainment	.110 (.189)	.129 (.206)	.059 (.139)	.128 (.204)	.107 (.189)
Civic	.046 (.108)	.072 (.137)	.056 (.114)	.045 (.109)	.055 (.118)

$p = .001$; $\eta = .151$; post-hoc tests: $ps < .001$); and online media ranked significantly lower in the performance of the watchdog in comparison to print and television ($F = 14.004$; $df = 3$; $p = .001$; $\eta = .017$; post-hoc tests: $ps < .001$), as well as in the performance of the loyal role ($F = 21.923$; $df = 3$; $p = .001$; $\eta = .021$; post-hoc tests: $ps < .001$). For the civic role, online and print showed a very similar performance—lower than radio—with TV performing far above in this role ($F = 432.466$; $df = 3$; $p = .001$; $\eta = .107$; post-hoc tests: $ps < .001$). Meanwhile, online media sat more or less in a middle position for the interventionist role, closest to print, with TV journalism showing significantly higher performance of this role and radio significantly lower ($F = 356.179$; $df = 3$; $p = .001$; $\eta = .085$; post-hoc tests: $ps < .001$).

In order to examine which roles were more influenced by TV, radio, or print media platforms in comparison to online platforms and to account for the hierarchical structure of our data, where individual news items are nested in organizations, which in turn are nested in countries, we performed different multilevel analyses (MLM) (Table 4).

The multilevel analyses revealed that media platform has a significant influence on the performance of the interventionist role, as well as on the roles that describe how journalism approaches the audience, even when additionally controlling for

Table 4. News platform effects on the performance of professional roles in the news (multilevel models).

	Interventionist	Watchdog	Loyal	Service	Infotainment	Civic
Fixed Effects						
Intercept	−.165***	−.088***	.020	.019	−.035	−.087**
	(.043)	(.026)	(.028)	(.019)	(.035)	(.033)
News Platform (0 = online)						
Print	.042	.021	.017	**−.031****	.013	.014
	(.032)	(.018)	(.026)	**(.011)**	(.024)	(.022)
				(ß = −.03)		
Television	**.086***	.004	−.008	**−.029****	**.053***	**.105****
	(.037)	(.018)	(.023)	**(.014)**	**(.026)**	**(.030)**
	(ß = .08)			(ß = −.03)	(ß = .05)	(ß = .08)
Radio	−.027	−.013	.001	−.002	**−.106****	.001
	(.041)	(.019)	(.029)	(.022)	**(.022)**	(.033)
					(ß = −.09)	
Newsroom Convergence (0 = Full integration)						
Cross media	.038	.017	−.013	−.004 (.011)	.005	−.035
	(.025)	(.015)	(.017)		(.020)	(.018)
Isolated Platform	−.001	−.003	.033	**.038** (.013)**	−.002	.005
	(.029)	(.018)	(.020)	(ß = .04)	(.023)	(.022)
Covariance Parameters (ID)						
Residual	.223***	.143***	.164***	.093***	.190***	.278***
Intercept Country	.013**	.004**	.003*	.002**	.006**	.009**
Intercept TV * Country	.023*	.002	.007	.002	.007	.017**
Intercept Radio * Country	.032**	.003	.017**	.011***	.001	.021**
Intercept Print * Country	.012*	.002	.011*	.001	.004	.002
Intercept News Outlet	.016***	.007***	.014***	.003***	.012***	.008***
-2LL	197109.50	131773.99	152392.29	68457.82	173949.29	245198.87
AIC	197177.50	131841.99	152460.29	68525.82	174017.29	245264.87
BIC	197513.95	132178.44	152796.74	68862.27	174353.74	245593.87

Note. The table displays the unstandardized regression coefficients of fixed effects with standard errors in parentheses, and the standardized coefficients (ß) for significant relationships (*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$). As "news platform" and "newsroom convergence" are categorical variables, both variables were recoded into dummy variables before inclusion in the analyses, with "online platform" and "full integration" respectively representing the two baseline groups (0) to which the remaining categories of platforms and convergence types can be compared. The table reports final models, controlling for story-level, organizational-level, and societal-level factors. *** = .001; ** = .01; * = .05.

convergence. Comparing news on TV, radio, and print platforms to online news as the baseline group of news items in our analyses, findings indicated that the performance of the interventionist role (b = .086, p = .024, β = .08), the infotainment role (b = .053, p = .046, β = .05), and the civic role (b = .105, p = .001, β = .08) was more pronounced in TV news than in online news. Meanwhile, radio news provided less infotainment than online news (b = −.106, p = .001, β = .09), and both TV (b = −.029, p = .042, β = .03) and print stories (b = −.031, p = .009, β = .03) provided less service than online media. In contrast, while the performance of the watchdog and loyal role was higher in both print and television news than in online and radio, those differences were not statistically significant when controlling for country and news outlet levels.

Cross-Platform Differences in Journalistic Performance across Countries

As a second step, we also analyzed the extent to which the relationship between news platforms and role performance remains stable or varies across countries (RQ2).

Random effect analyses of our MLM models showed that while the relationship between news platforms and journalistic performance across countries was more stable for some roles, it varied for others. In other words, some associations between journalistic performance and news platforms were moderated by the country-level (see Table 4).

More specifically, our results revealed that the relationship between news media platform and the performance of the watchdog and infotainment roles was different, but these differences in performance tended to be stable across countries: While there was no significant variation in performance of the watchdog role across platforms, and the relationship remained stable at the country level, there was significant variation in the performance of the infotainment role across platforms, that also remained consistent across countries. In contrast, the relationship between platform and the other roles, especially interventionism, slightly but significantly varied across countries. Regarding these roles (i.e., interventionism, loyal, civic, service), countries differed most with respect to role performance in online news vs. radio news, while countries differed less in terms of role performance in online news compared to television and print news.

With respect to the interventionist role, country-specific differences in platform performance are due to the fact that in some countries, the performance of this role was higher in online news than in news provided on other platforms (e.g., in Australia, Spain, Cuba), while in other countries—mostly politically not free or partly free according to Freedom House (2021)—the interventionist orientation in online news performance was lower than on most of the other platforms (e. g., in Ecuador, Hungary, Russia). However, in the majority of countries investigated, online news performance fell in between the levels of interventionist performance shown on other platforms (e. g., Brazil, Colombia, UK, Venezuela; see Figure 1).

When grouping the countries by their level of political freedom, overall, journalists in free countries more frequently performed the interventionist role online, somewhat more than radio, TV, and print news. In partly free and not free countries, there was less but more equal performance of this role online (with the exception of Cuba). Journalists in partly free countries tended to perform this role more through TV and radio news, and journalists in politically not free countries relied more on print news to perform this role (see Figure 2). However, caution is warranted when interpreting
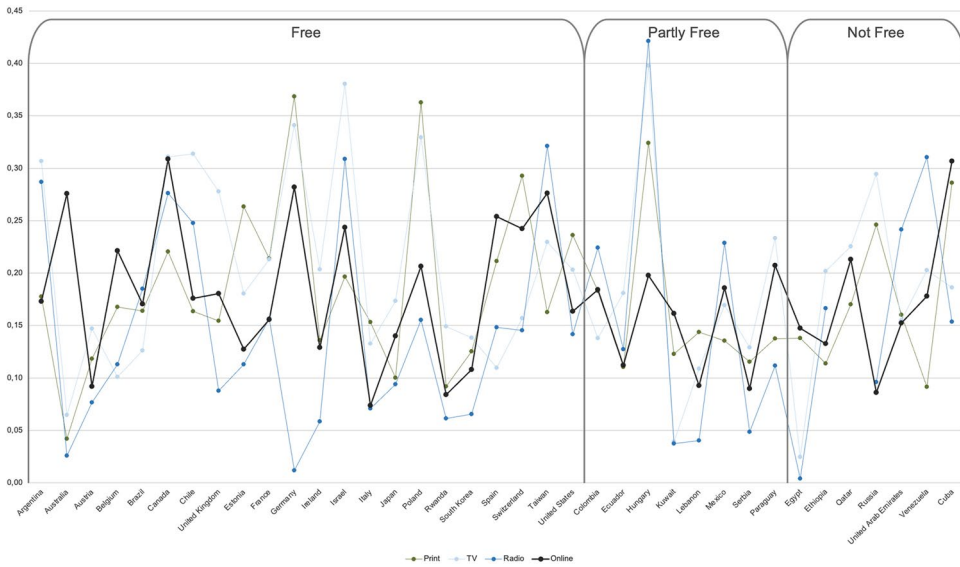
Figure 1. Interventionist role performance across platforms and countries. *Note.* Mean values of interventionist role performance across platforms and countries. Platform-country interaction was small but significant, $F(107, 148327) = 73.96$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$. The differentiation of countries according to their level of political freedom is based on Freedom House (2021).
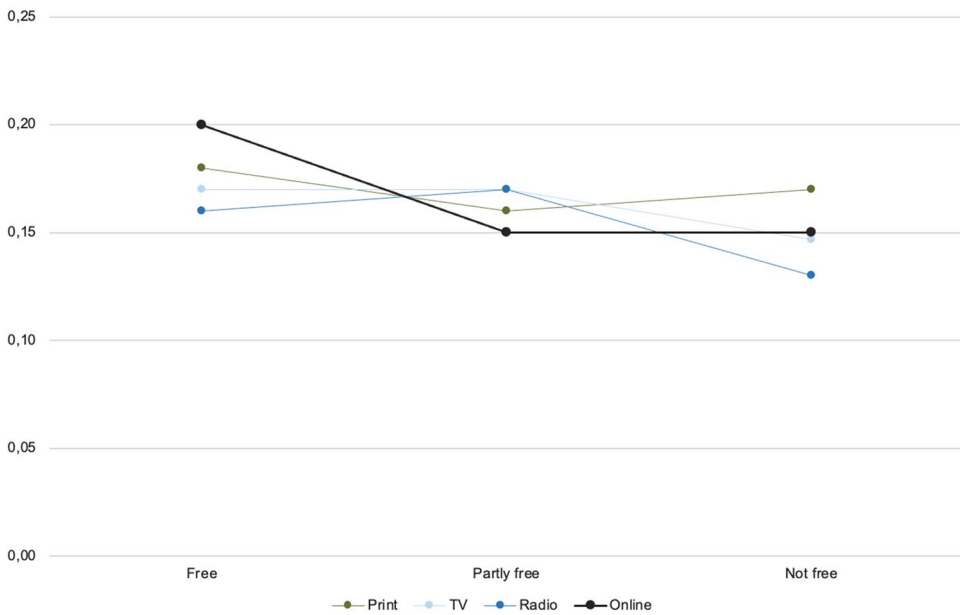

Figure 2. Interventionist role performance across platforms and political systems. *Note.* Mean values of interventionist role performance across platforms and political systems according to Freedom House (2021). The interaction between platform and political system was very small but significant, $F(6, 148462) = 43.76$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .002$.

these results, as countries within the same type of political system nevertheless differed considerably in this respect.

While our multilevel analyses showed small but significant differences across countries in the relationship between all three platform comparisons considered (i.e., online vs. print, online vs. radio, online vs. TV) and the performance of the interventionist role, countries differed on only two of these platform comparisons in terms of loyal and civic role performance. Regarding the loyal role—although no significant differences were found across news platforms overall—country differences occurred for online media in comparison to print and radio outlets (see Table 4, column 4). Still, online news performance of the loyal role did not substantially differ from print and radio news in free and partly free countries (with slight exceptions of Canada, Poland, Taiwan, and Kuwait) but clearly differed in politically not free countries, where online news provided loyal support for national policies or elites either to a particularly high degree in comparison to print and radio news outlets (i.e., Egypt, Ethiopia, and Qatar) or to a rather low degree, mainly when compared to print news (i.e., Russia and Venezuela; see Figure 3).

For the civic role, country differences in online role performance occurred primarily in comparison to radio and television news performance (see Table 4, column 7). These differences can be explained by a higher performance of this role in radio and/ or TV journalism than online journalism in most countries, while online news provided more civic-oriented journalism than radio and TV news channels in only a minority of countries (see Figure 4).

For the service role—the last role to show significant interaction effects between country and platform on role performance—country differences emerged only in online role performance compared to radio news performance (see Table 4, column 5).
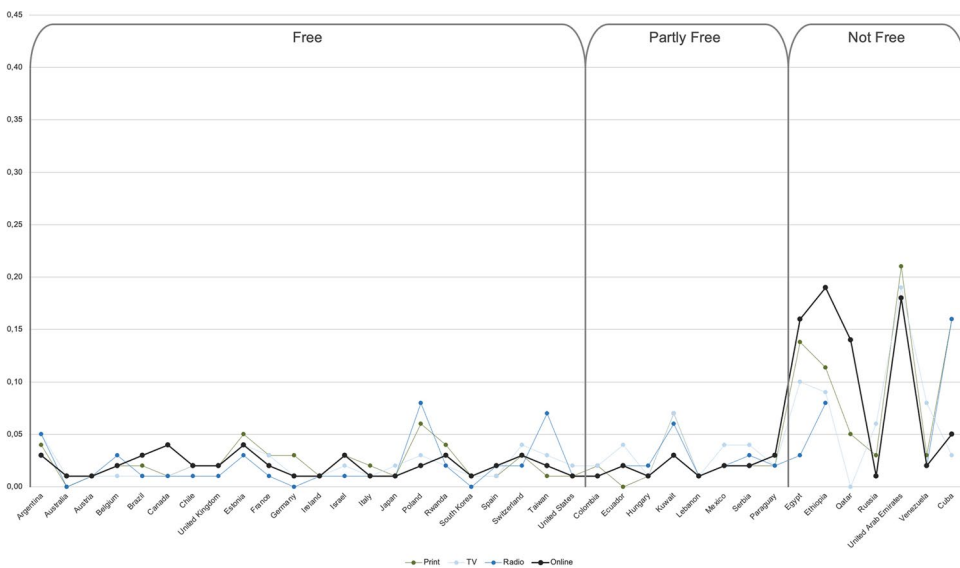

Figure 3. Loyal role performance across platforms and countries. *Note*. Mean values of loyal role performance across platforms and countries. Platform-country interaction was small but significant, $F(107, 148327) = 49.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$. The differentiation of countries according to their level of political freedom is based on Freedom House (2021).
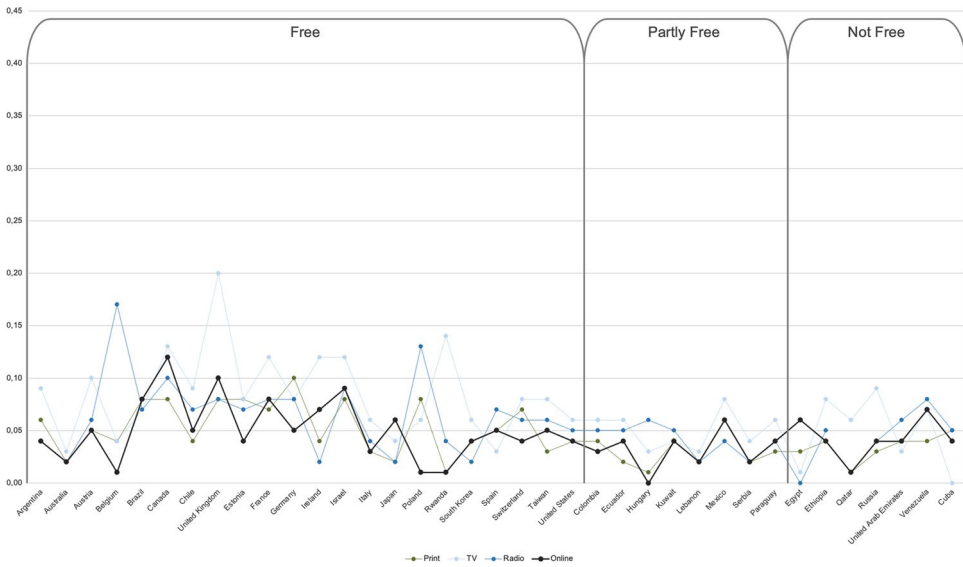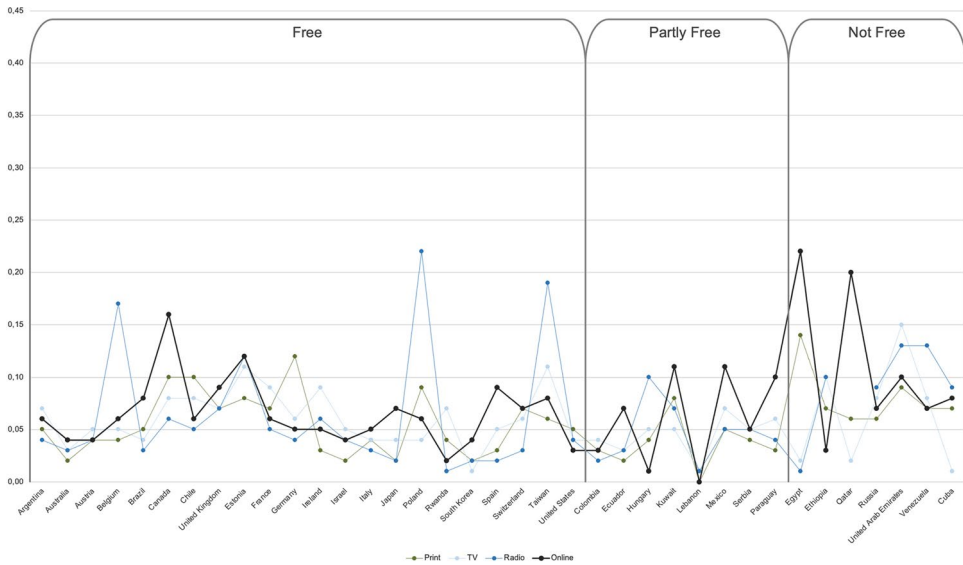
Figure 4. Civic role performance across platforms and countries. *Note.* Mean values of civic role performance across platforms and countries. Platform-country interaction was small but significant, $F(107, 148327) = 33.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .02$. The differentiation of countries according to their level of political freedom is based on Freedom House (2021).

Figure 5. Service role performance across platforms and countries. *Note.* Mean values of service role performance across platforms and countries. Platform-country interaction was small but significant, $F(107, 148327) = 48.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .03$. The differentiation of countries according to their level of political freedom is based on Freedom House (2021).

Unlike the civic role, online news performance of service journalism was higher than the level of service provided by radio news outlets in the majority of countries, while it appeared below radio role performance in only a minority of them. More often,

this minority included partly free or not free countries (e. g., Ethiopia, Hungary, UAE), but if occurring in free countries, the magnitude of the difference was often more pronounced (e. g., Belgium, Poland, Taiwan; see Figure 5).

Discussion

In this article we have explored differences in online journalistic role performance compared to newspaper, radio, and television, and examined if such differences were stable across countries. To contextualize the results of our findings, it is necessary to acknowledge convergence as an important factor in the development of news practice (Singer 2008; Maier 2010). However, whether converged or not, through the use of audience data (Tandoc 2019) and AI in journalistic work (Wu, Tandoc, and Salmon 2019), and the general increase in the required hybridity and fluidity of journalistic practice to create multiplatform content, all journalism is becoming more intertwined and streamlined, an expected influence of media logic that demands efficiencies of process (Blanchett 2021). Certain stories, though, also influenced by media logic (Altheide 2020) and affordances (Rice et al. 2017), must be produced in a certain way to meet visual and temporal parameters of the mode of delivery. Platform parting (Hanusch 2017), atomization (Jones and Jones 2019), and the need to engage and attract the audience through a variety of social media (Walters 2021), still support the creation of distinctive end-products. But are online media significantly different from more traditional platforms when it comes to journalistic role performance that is measurable within those stories?

Overall, the results of this study show that online media stood out from journalism offered on other platforms primarily in terms of the infotainment and service dimensions of role performance. Only television news showed a slightly higher level of infotainment overall than online news. Even after controlling for newsroom convergence, online media appeared to use entertaining and service-oriented reporting styles somewhat more—most likely because these styles are particularly suited to attracting and/or retaining audiences in times of increasing news avoidance in digital news environments (García-Perdomo et al. 2018). The noticeable pattern of an often more entertaining presentation of information and a higher proportion of service information on everyday topics in online news could thus be understood as a reaction of online media to the high-choice information and communication environment in which they have evolved and in which they are particularly forced to compete for user attention.

As Petre notes (2021, 117), "the wall between advertising and editorial has come to seem to many in the industry like an unsustainable luxury in the fiercely competitive digital 'attention economy'." Compared to other platforms, the pattern towards more infotainment and service in online news may also reflect the many affordances digital environments provide for online media, particularly the many ways in which online news can be more directly linked to audience metrics and more immediately respond to audience behavior, sometimes "without human curation" (Hendrickx 2022, 5), for example, by personalizing the content displayed (e. g. Bodó 2019). The way in which these technical and social factors of digital media landscapes determine how online journalism utilizes infotainment and service to prevail in fiercely competitive

communication markets appears to be a largely universal phenomenon: We found no (in the case of infotainment) or hardly any (in the case of service) differences between countries in this respect.

Newsroom convergence showed only one significant effect across the considered roles: When news is produced in isolated newsrooms, compared to fully integrated newsrooms, service orientation is higher. This could imply that online news—already showing the overall highest level of service performance—may provide an even higher level of service if it is produced by strictly online outlets, compared to online news that is produced in converged newsrooms.

In contrast to how online media stood out somewhat from other platforms in terms of the inclusion of infotainment and service elements, online media appeared to be neither more nor substantially less oriented toward their public service function, which in our study is particularly reflected in the watchdog and civic role. On the one hand, the relatively stable performance of these roles across platforms—yet, with TV news showing overall highest levels of watchdog and civic performance than other platforms—suggests that online journalism's focus on more infotainment and service does not necessarily come at the expense of journalisms' core professional responsibilities of holding societal elites accountable, enabling civic orientation, and promoting public opinion formation and discourse—rather, it is a "broadening of the 'menu'" (Blanchett 2021, 786). Online news even took some aspects of these basic journalistic functions into account somewhat more than TV news, which otherwise often shows similarities with online media, especially with regards to the emphasis on infotainment.

On the other hand, by not distinguishing itself significantly from radio and print journalism, our findings also suggest that online journalism may not (yet) fully exploit the abundant opportunities that digital media environments offer for journalists to fulfill these roles (e. g., Harmer and Southern 2020; Mellado et al. 2021; Kiesow, Zhou, and Guo 2021). Further advantage could be taken of the elimination of space and time constraints to report and comment in detail on complex political developments and/or reaching out to users in online environments to address citizens' needs at eye level, as suggested by innovative concepts such as constructive journalism (e. g., Mast, Coesemans, and Temmerman 2019). Such initiatives facilitated by digital technology already exist across platforms, especially in terms of digital tools that journalists use as gate-watchers to expose and debunk online disinformation (e. g. Himma-Kadakas and Ojamets 2022). Many of these online applications have become universal tools used across platforms and thus not limited to online journalism. However, given the opportunities that the Internet offers specifically for online journalism, and given the small actual differences we found between online news and more traditional news in terms of fulfilling the civic and especially the watchdog role, our findings suggest that online journalism may not yet have fully realized its potential to provide unique orientation value to online users beyond more infotainment and service information.

Interestingly, though online news competes with a plethora of alternative user options, online outlets were not more geared toward content that expressed a journalist's viewpoint and/or political activism, which in this study would be reflected in either the interventionist role—in which journalists bring their own voices to news reports—or the loyal role in which journalists support the political agendas of incumbent governments. Although digital societies may increase the risk, especially for

online media, of driving journalism toward greater subjectivity and bias for economic reasons in times of intensified affective polarization (e. g., Garz, Sood, and Stone 2019), the present study could not find overall consistent patterns confirming this trend at the level of media platforms. Instead, such patterns in interventionist and loyal role performance in online media came into play only for certain countries— depending on their political system.

In particular, our study showed that online journalism in politically free countries had a stronger interventionist character than in politically less free countries. In the latter, online platforms tended to be even more restricted than other media platforms in expressing individual journalistic views, likely due to the great potential of online environments to bring about political change (e. g., Poell and van Dijck 2018). It is therefore probably not without reason that these limitations of journalistic interventionism in online media are particularly evident in countries where the authoritarian exercise of power by the political leadership is increasingly being extended, as can be seen clearly in the case of Hungary.

Accordingly, differences in the relationship between online media platforms and role performance across political systems also came to bear on the loyal role, which showed a tendency of the opposite pattern: While online platforms in free and partially free countries, similar to other media platforms, were used minimally to loyally support national governments, journalism in not free countries tended to use online media even more to support national politics, which could possibly be seen as a counter-movement to the free flow of information in the digital age and its potential to create counter-publics (e. g. Chunly 2020). Hence, although we did not find overall platform differences regarding the loyal role after controlling for country and news outlet levels, they did occur when clustering our sample into different groups, with platform performance of this role being substantially different across political systems.

Taken together, our findings suggest that platform differences matter more for some journalistic roles than others, and, for some roles, additionally differ by country. Differences between online outlets and more traditional media were most pronounced with regard to roles that address audiences as consumers, by adding either service information or entertainment to the coverage of news topics. In this regard, online media showed a somewhat higher service and infotainment orientation across countries than most other platforms. Meaningful differences between online and more traditional outlets also occurred for journalistic roles that allow the news to be influenced by political viewpoints—especially from within the newsroom (i.e., the interventionist role) or from outside through influences of the political system on news coverage (i.e., the loyal-facilitator role). In contrast to more consumer-oriented roles, however, these political influence-oriented roles did not show similar differences across platforms in all countries. While politically free countries had a slightly higher interventionist orientation in their online media, politically not free countries showed a slightly higher performance of the loyal role in online media. Finally, the differences between online and the other news platforms were overall least pronounced when it came to roles related to the core function of journalism as a public service, as reflected in the civic, and especially the watchdog role. Thus, the online media's implementation of public service-oriented roles was roughly in line with the level of role fulfillment on most other platforms—except for TV—suggesting that online media

are in no way inferior to more traditional newsrooms when it comes to performing core journalistic functions but also do not make additional efforts to provide particular guidance for users in increasingly digitalized information societies.

As measuring levels of convergence have limited utility in terms of unpacking where the root of differences in role performance lies in newsrooms creating multi-platform content, there is a need for more research that investigates the influence of additional factors, such as ownership and other organizational structures on journalistic role performance. It could prove useful to examine in more detail the types of online media that are contained within the samples of different countries—including how many are described as alternative or oppositional media. From a Bourdieusian perspective, a news organization's position in the journalistic field, or, in other words, the extent to which it adheres to both the spoken and unspoken "rules of the game" could be incorporated as a contingent condition or a moderator.

It is also important to consider the movement of journalists across organizations. With so many "traditional" journalists now working in online newsrooms, and so many newsworkers with varying specialties outside of journalism working in newsrooms, in general, how do such permutations in the field impact the performance of journalistic roles? In addition, research should be conducted comparing journalistic roles on different platforms over time, to allow for the exploration of the evolution of journalistic work in rapidly shifting news environments.

As news environments shift, so does the relationship of journalists with their audience. Although this study provides insight into the types of journalism that news professionals are performing across platforms, there is room to examine the effect of the different journalistic roles on audiences' evaluations of news quality, news credibility, and news avoidance. For example, could significant use of interventionism in online reporting be related to a documented increase in news avoidance and mistrust (Newman et al. 2022)? This is an area for future inquiry.

In terms of the limitations of this study, the complex coding methodology makes it time-consuming to replicate; however, the authors are exploring how this process, or at least parts of the process specific to certain platforms of delivery, might be automated to allow for more frequent and diverse studies of journalistic role performance. Furthermore, the large number of countries in this study makes it impossible to offer more detailed comparisons and to further explain the existing differences in findings. Future studies will be able to provide more insight on this issue, observing other potentially explanatory factors beyond differences in democracy levels, as well as studying specific national or regional cases.

Notes

1. To control for the potential overrepresentation and/or underrepresentation of specific types of media in the sample, resulting from some media including more stories in the sample than others, we weighted the data by medium for each country. In other words, and within each country, each media type—TV, radio, online news, and newspapers—was assigned to have an equivalent weight in the results.
2. More detailed information on the JRP methodology, including the full codebook can be found in Mellado (2021) and in the Appendices in the Methodology section of the JRP website at www.journalisticperformance.org.

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