

IN SEARCH OF LOST CREDIBILITY: REFLECTIONS ON THE RECONFIGURATIONS OF JOURNALISTIC PRAXIS IN THE AGE OF MEDIATISATION

Marcio Martins Calil

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Informação e Comunicação em Saúde, Instituto de Comunicação e Informação Científica e Tecnológica em Saúde, Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Conceptualisation, investigation, methodology, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing

Kátia Lerner

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Informação e Comunicação em Saúde, Instituto de Comunicação e Informação Científica e Tecnológica em Saúde, Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Conceptualisation, methodology, project administration, supervision, writing – review & editing

Fábio Castro Gouveia

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciência da Informação, Instituto Brasileiro de Informação em Ciência e Tecnologia & Escola de Comunicação, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Project administration, supervision, writing – review & editing

ABSTRACT

This paper reflects on the reconfiguration processes that have reshaped journalistic praxis in newsrooms, particularly in response to the growing competition from new social actors who produce, circulate, and consume news on social media platforms within the context of a mediatized society. These transformations present significant theoretical, epistemological, ethical, and professional challenges for journalism researchers as they intersect with issues such as the fight against disinformation, the concepts of truth and post-truth, discursive symbolic power struggles, and the evolving dynamics of journalistic production and the circulation of information in the digital public sphere. To guide our reflections and explore the strategies journalism must adopt in today's media ecosystem to preserve its authority, credibility, and role as a public truth-teller, we contextualise the historical evolution of newsroom news production processes and perspectives on the influence of mediatization. This is complemented by insights from interviews with journalists working at leading Brazilian print and online newspapers, examining the physical and cultural changes in newsroom routines over the past few decades.

KEYWORDS

journalism, mediatization, disinformation, symbolic power, gatekeeping

EM BUSCA DA CREDIBILIDADE PERDIDA: REFLEXÕES SOBRE AS RECONFIGURAÇÕES DA PRÁXIS JORNALÍSTICA NA ÉRA DA MIDIATIZAÇÃO

RESUMO

Este trabalho busca refletir sobre os processos de reconfiguração pelos quais a prática de produção jornalística da notícia nas redações vem passando diante da concorrência com novos atores sociais que produzem, fazem circular e consomem notícias das plataformas sociais, no contexto da sociedade contemporânea midiaticizada. Essas transformações trazem desafios

teóricos, epistemológicos, éticos e profissionais para os pesquisadores do campo do jornalismo, pois são atravessadas por questões como o combate à desinformação, a verdade, a pós-verdade, as disputas do poder simbólico discursivo e as novas dinâmicas de produção jornalística e da circulação dos enunciados na esfera pública digital. Para conduzir as reflexões e auxiliar no entendimento de possíveis estratégias que o jornalismo precisa lançar mão no atual ecossistema midiático para manter sua autoridade, credibilidade e protagonismo de enunciador público da verdade, contextualizamos as transformações históricas nos processos de produção da notícia na redação jornalística e perspectivas sobre a influência do fenômeno da midiatização, complementando com resultados de entrevistas com jornalistas que trabalham em alguns dos principais jornais impressos/online do Brasil sobre as mudanças físicas e culturais da rotina das redações nas últimas décadas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

jornalismo, midiatização, desinformação, poder simbólico, *gatekeeping*

1. INTRODUCTION

Journalism has historically been a subject of scholarly research and is widely recognised as a significant agent in producing meaning, building trust (or distrust) in social institutions, and positioning itself as an advocate of public interest and the “eyes and ears” of society. It has been portrayed as the fourth estate and a political representative of the citizenry. Among the social institutions that assert hegemonic discourse in the public sphere regarding truth in modern times, journalism stands out. It has achieved legitimacy as a key institution for interpreting and explaining events in the world.

In recent years, the practice of journalistic production has undergone significant reconfiguration, driven by competition with social actors who produce, disseminate, and consume news on digital platforms at an unprecedented scale, speed, and reach, and by the cultural shifts brought about by the mediatisation of society. This evolving landscape is marked by the vast amount of information circulating on the internet and journalism’s intensifying efforts to reclaim its prominence and hegemony as a key arbiter in defining and articulating the truth.

These transformations have posed theoretical, epistemological, ethical, and professional challenges for journalism researchers. To address these issues, the first part of this article examines the role of journalism in contemporary debates surrounding disinformation, truth, post-truth, and struggles over discursive symbolic power, highlighting central concepts such as “authority”, “credibility”, and “trust”. The article then delves into theoretical discussions on the historical transformations of news production processes, with a focus on Western contexts in general and Brazil in particular. It concludes by exploring the reconfigurations of newsroom practices shaped by the evolving dynamics of journalistic production and the circulation of statements within the digital public sphere.

Finally, we explore Latin American and European perspectives on the theory of mediatisation, enriched by insights from interviews conducted with journalists from some of Brazil’s leading print and online newspapers. These interviews shed light on the transition

of newsroom routines over recent decades, moulded by the phenomenon of mediatisation. Through this analysis, we aim to contribute to an understanding of the strategies journalism employs in the contemporary media ecosystem to sustain its central role as a public enunciator of truth.

2. JOURNALISM, TRUST AND TRUTH

To legitimise its values, practices, and discourses surrounding truth, Albuquerque (2013) argues that journalism assumes an explicitly political role as an agent committed to defending freedom of expression and serving as a tool for citizenship. It holds government authorities accountable for their actions, aligning with the notion of the “fourth estate” as the “eyes and ears” of society. According to the author, this model predominates in Brazilian journalism, with a unique feature: it also functions as a moderator of the other three independent branches of government — the executive, legislative, and judiciary — a role that gained prominence following the end of Brazil’s military regime in 1985.

Implicitly, journalism can be understood as mediating communication processes while asserting an inherently technical role through the concept of “journalistic objectivity and impartiality”, which “identifies journalists’ emotional and political detachment from the events they cover is essential for producing reliable information” (Albuquerque, 2013, p. 6). However, this “distance” has gradually diminished, as seen prominently during Brazil’s coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, journalism has sought to establish a closer emotional and political connection with its audience by adopting more humanised approaches. Reporters and anchors increasingly express opinions, emotions, and reactions in their storytelling and live event coverage. These shifts are particularly evident in television journalism but can also be observed in the headlines and content of print and online newspapers.

Regarding trust and truth, Waisbord (2018) observes that journalism employs specific rules and norms inherent to the field as a strategy to validate its information as truthful. However, despite these ongoing efforts to present the truth of events, the author highlights that truth in journalism is not an inherent or unilateral attribute but rather a collectively constructed process. In other words, the concepts of “truth” and “news” are influenced by how news is used, not only by journalism but also by alternative sources accessible to consumers. These sources may bypass the filtering, selection, and decision-making processes traditionally associated with journalistic standards.

In the contemporary context, various authors describe the current era as “post-modernity” (Lyotard, 1979/2009), the “post-truth era” (Harsin, 2018), or “late modernity” (Giddens, 1991). Harsin (2018) underlines that journalism is one of the institutions increasingly questioned regarding its authority to define and distinguish the truth, as well as its institutional trust, credibility, and the presumed impartiality and objectivity it claims. This situation has become even more pronounced since 2015 and 2016, events marked by the Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump, respectively.

According to Harsin (2018), the epistemological fiduciary crisis, defined by a growing distrust in socially and historically authorised truth-tellers, is one of the public issues of the post-truth era. He defines post-truth as a socio-political condition that encompasses both dishonesty and a crisis regarding reliable authorities. Harsin identifies two key public problems of post-truth: epistemic, which involves false knowledge and competing truth claims, and ethical-moral, which refers to the conscious disregard of factual evidence or the intentional, strategic use of lies.

In other words, as Cesarino (2021) points out, “post-truth is an epistemic condition where any statement can potentially be contested by anyone, at a very low cost” (p. 77), primarily impacting the scientific community and other expert systems. This issue is further exacerbated by the current communication landscape, characterised by an overwhelming abundance of information, which complicates the process of accessing reliable sources to guide actions. The World Health Organization has described this phenomenon as an “infodemic”.

To address the competition for attention with the thousands of new digital actors on the internet and reclaim discursive prominence over the truth, we are discussing the necessity for journalistic media to reconfigure itself not only structurally — resulting in issues such as job insecurity, work overload, and a decrease in the number of professionals in newsrooms — but also culturally. This reconfiguration involves a shift in strategies in response to the speed, reach, and dynamism of social media in today’s mediatised society.

3. HISTORICAL TRAJECTORIES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEWS

Journalism has undergone transformative processes before, both in terms of praxis and concept. Like any social practice, journalism can be analysed as part of a historical construction shaped by the interactions and contextual shifts of each era. Examining the periodisation of the transformations in journalistic news production processes and the institution of journalism itself provides valuable insights, such as understanding the loss of credibility and public recognition that journalism faces today.

Academic studies on the history of journalism reveal that, throughout the 19th century and into the early 20th century, the Western press was typically characterised by opinionated content, close ties with politics, and a journalistic style that resembled literary expression — passionate, pamphleteering and often biased in favour of the institutional groups that funded the newspapers (Hjarvard, 2012; Pereira & Adghirni, 2011; Ribeiro, 2000).

Before evolving into independent business entities, newspapers served as communication and dissemination tools for various social institutions, such as trade unions, associations, and, particularly, political parties from the 19th century onwards. This period, described by Danish researcher Stig Hjarvard (2012) as the “system of the party press” (p. 71), saw newspapers, despite having a news-oriented presentation, format, and content, often lacking independent journalistic editorial boards.

For Hjarvard (2012), the press’s first step toward gaining autonomy as an institution — and the ensuing professionalisation of journalistic activity, which led to its primarily

commercial development — was its transformation into a cultural institution. This shift occurred when newspapers adopted the *omnibus* concept of collective readership (i.e., for everyone) and began covering topics from various social spheres, extending beyond political interests to include areas such as art, family, health, and more.

This association between the press and advertising, which began in the 19th century in both the United States and Europe, facilitated the popularisation of the print media and the development of corporate newspapers, aligning with the growth of the market economy, particularly in the United States. This process contributed to the transformation of the printed press, giving rise to the so-called “penny papers” (Schudson, 1981). These newspapers adopted a neutral and impartial tone, shifting from an opinionated profile to a more informative and objective one, characterised by textual and graphic reformulation, rationalisation, and standardisation, all driven by an industrial logic of cost optimisation.

In Brazil, these transformations towards corporate journalism began to gain significant momentum only in the 1950s. Prior to this, the press remained closely tied to political groups and reliant on State funding. Ribeiro (2000) notes that by adopting American models and techniques for structuring news — such as the use of the lead and the concept of the “inverted pyramid” — the press aimed to present itself as favouring “objective” and “impartial” information, distancing itself from the personal and opinionated commentary that had previously prevailed. This shift implied that the application of these editorial techniques would ensure neutrality in the reporting of facts.

Ribeiro (2000) also identifies a crisis in the Brazilian press during this period, driven by the concentration of newspaper companies and the closure of numerous newspapers and magazines, once again influenced by political and economic factors. Politically, much of this crisis stemmed from the rise of conservative forces in Brazil, a situation exacerbated by the military dictatorship in the 1960s, which imposed censorship on newspapers and manipulated advertising funds to favour newspaper companies that were aligned with the regime.

Driven by a new market logic but still subject to censorship controls and restrictions, this emerging newspaper model endured through the military dictatorship. One significant innovation in newsrooms during this period was the specialisation of editorials — a process that, according to Silva (2017), unfolded throughout the 1970s and became more pronounced in the 1980s, aligning with civil society’s redemocratisation movements and strengthening coverage of health and education issues.

The process of redemocratisation marked a new chapter for Brazilian journalism, with professionals adopting a distinct role as guarantors of democracy. They began to provide public utility services, addressing readers’ and consumers’ complaints and demands on topics such as employment, housing, security, education, health, and quality of life. Journalism now asserted its leading role in articulating the truth and advocating for citizens’ rights.

4. RECONFIGURATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES ON JOURNALISTIC PRAXIS

Following this brief overview of journalism's historical transformations, we now shift our focus to structural changes in journalistic practice. This involves examining the influences and transitions brought about by digital convergence in newsrooms, as well as its repercussions on journalistic praxis and the job market for journalism professionals, which began to consolidate and raise critical questions from the 1990s onwards.

Pereira and Adghirni (2011) provide a chronological account of the four types of journalism proposed by Brin et al. (2004)¹ and suggest that we are currently experiencing the effects of the fourth type: "communication journalism" (1970s/1980s). This type is characterised by the diversification and subordination of information based on the preferences of the target audience, which is evident in the present-day "hunt" for clicks and likes, influenced by trending topics on social media. Changes in the socio-economic landscape, the increased concentration of content within a few media companies, precarious working conditions for professionals, and a reduction in newsroom jobs characterise these effects.

For Deuze and Witschge (2016), there is a new journalistic system in which, in principle, journalists have more autonomy and individuality to negotiate their employment contracts in newsrooms. However, there are fewer salary offers, generally lower, and job instability, which reflects the deterioration of working conditions in traditional media companies. This scenario is made explicit through interviews with journalists, which we will present below.

Although the authors recognise the social relevance of the role of journalistic work in newsrooms, they highlight the need to move beyond the centrality of newsrooms, extending to other paid fronts of the profession. They argue that journalists do not necessarily have to be employed by a traditional news organisation to be recognised as part of the journalistic system.

This movement away from newsrooms, along with the instability and precariousness of newsroom jobs, can be analysed both as a cause and a consequence of some of the new scenarios and perspectives shaping the reconfiguration of journalistic praxis. Despite the reconfiguration of new spaces for reorganising journalistic work due to the development of information and communication technologies in contemporary media-tised society, the traditional journalistic market continues to grapple with the concentration and monopoly of large media companies. These companies are "connected in large conglomerates of platforms that monopolise the circulation of information worldwide" (Figaro, 2021, p. 24), which continue to attract advertising resources from the internet and monetising data collection, all under the logic of capitalist exploitation and neoliberal precepts (Figaro, 2021; Figaro & Silva, 2020).

¹ The other three are: (a) broadcast journalism in the 17th century, "with the aim of transmitting information from sources directly to their audience" (p. 43); (b) opinion journalism in the early 19th century, serving political struggles; and (c) information journalism in the late 19th century, following the "model of collecting news on current affairs" (p. 44).

The current climate of insecurity and instability in newsroom jobs is one of the outcomes of the new scenarios and perspectives that have emerged from transformations within the newsroom environment. One such transformation is that various public and private organisations, which for decades served as sources and provided characters for traditional journalism stories, have started to create and manage their own communication channels with society, primarily using new digital technologies. By either hiring directly from their staff or outsourcing communication consultancies, professionals who once worked for these companies now create content that is directly disseminated and shared by the organisations. This shift eliminates the need for the traditional press release and the anxiety associated with the expectation that newsrooms will filter (gatekeeping) and circulate information from these organisations through conventional media outlets.

In other words, outside newsrooms, traditional journalistic sources — companies and individuals — have become the primary subjects of their information, driven by the emergence and widespread use of new information technologies, particularly the popularisation of social media platforms. With these new digital technologies, ordinary citizens can search for information more quickly online and navigate through news websites without being confined to them for consumption. As a result, they can access specialised sources directly, bypassing the need for mediation by the press (Robalinho et al., 2020).

Emphasising the media's diminishing unquestioned status as an inherent aspect of society, Couldry (2010) cautions that this once immutable position will face growing scrutiny from various social actors in the emerging media landscape. Here, the conflict between competing forces — media corporations, commercial interests, governments, and civil society — will intensify, reshaping and dividing the producer-consumer dynamic in the digital realm.

This new digital media space brings with it not only shifts in media consumption and circulation patterns, new communication tools, and discursive clashes between traditional and emerging actors but also becomes a defining feature of our contemporary social reality, where almost everything, at all times, is influenced by digital technologies. This is the concept and phenomenon of mediatisation processes.

5. MEDIATISATION

Contemporary researchers in mediatisation studies agree on the phenomenon's dynamic, process-driven nature, focusing on new forms of mediation and social interactions that extend beyond technical communication devices to shape social life.

The phenomenon permeates our daily lives, with the ubiquitous presence of media in the so-called “mediatised society”. This presence manifests in various forms and across different times, spreading territorially and shaping new social geographies. It impacts most social institutions — such as justice, politics, education, the family, and the press — and transforms citizens' everyday lives, altering relationships, values, and the culture of the social web. Mediatisation studies aim to reflect on the extent to which the

media influences society and vice versa. These reciprocal effects frame the concept of “mediatisation” as an ongoing process rather than a closed, finished concept.

França (2020) views both the phenomenon and the concept of “mediatisation” as a new socio-cultural environment that introduces novel patterns of mediation and interaction, thereby enabling new forms of perception and cognition:

the phenomenon refers to the changes in the technical-communicative landscape that have been unfolding since the final decades of the 20th century and, notably, in the early years of the 21st century. The concept, on the other hand, pertains to the various approaches and interpretations of these changes and is inherently plural, as the treatments are diverse and not always convergent. (p. 25)

The researcher makes a theoretical distinction between the definitions of “mediation” and “mediatisation”, drawing on the perspective presented by Muniz Sodré (2002) in his book *Antropológica do Espelho* (Anthropology of the Mirror). In this work, the author describes the concept of “medium” (mediatisation) as the fourth bios of a new era, one that is not only cultural but existential. In other words, beyond the instrumental dimension of communication (bridging) and the circulation of information (technomediation), mediatisation is characterised by “a new way of the subject’s presence in the world, an *ethos* of its own, new forms of interaction between individuals, with the media serving as the shaper of perceptions and cognitions; new forms of socialisation” (França, 2020, p. 28). In this sense, (techno)mediations and the emphasis on communication studies from a technological perspective tend to shape, and even reinforce, a “media-centric” viewpoint embedded within the traditional field of study known as “media theory”, “with a focus on authors specifically addressing the development of communication technologies” (França, 2020, p. 36). In contrast, theories of mediatisation highlight the relationship between “technical media and culture/society”. Hepp (2014) assists in this distinction by differentiating “mediation” as a concept that theorises the communication process as a whole, while mediatisation focuses on theorising media-related change.

Research and theoretical perspectives on the concept of “mediatisation”, trans-media interactional relationships, and the transformations in communicational media and their social and cultural influences can be approached from both institutionalist and socio-constructivist traditions (Hepp, 2014). In this context, the media may be seen either as a semi-independent institution that exerts influence over other institutions or as being shaped by them while simultaneously providing “a common arena for public discussion” (Hjarvard, 2014, p. 42). This space enables institutions to advocate for their interests and allows their members to engage in debates and make decisions on matters of shared concern (Hjarvard, 2014).

The institutional tradition examines the interrelations and influences exerted by media institutions — traditionally mass media — as an autonomous (or semi-autonomous) social institution on other social institutions (Hepp, 2014). Meanwhile, the socio-constructivist tradition, “rooted in symbolic interactionism and the sociology of

knowledge”, is more interested in everyday communication practices, “especially related to digital media and personal communication – and focuses on the changing communicative construction of culture and society” (Hepp, 2014, pp. 47–48).

European approaches to mediatisation generally aim to recover the historical dimensions of the concept, exploring its role in the domains of politics, science, and religion, as well as its effects on individuals and society (Carvalho, 2017). Particular attention is given to the transformations in traditional mass media models, especially following the exponential rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s and the shift from public communication frameworks to private commercial models. This focus reflects an effort to integrate both diachronic and synchronic perspectives on the mediatisation of societies (Hepp, 2014).

European studies also focus on the mediatisation of society, characterised by the pervasive presence of media in everyday life, and how it becomes reliant on a so-called “media logic”², especially within mass media, shaping a new communication landscape and influencing, for instance, journalistic news production processes — the subject of this article.

From this perspective, the mediatisation of culture and society is a process defined by duality: the media become “integrated into the operations of other social institutions” (Hjarvard, 2014, p. 36) while simultaneously consolidating their status as a semi-autonomous institution. The author challenges concerns raised by some researchers regarding the over-reliance of institutions on the media — whether negative or positive — arguing that any analysis must take into account the specific contexts of the media-institution relationship.

Mediatisation is not a universal process that characterises all societies. It is primarily a development that has accelerated particularly in the *last years of the 20th century in modern, highly industrialised societies* — such as those in Europe, the USA, Japan, and Australia, and so forth. As globalisation progresses, more and more regions and cultures will be affected by mediatisation, but there may be considerable differences in the influence mediatisation exerts. (Hjarvard, 2012, p. 65)

Hepp (2014) emphasises the significance of investigating the mediatisation of everyday life, focusing on areas such as consumption, religion, politics, and education. He explores how the evolution and transformation of communicative practices in society contribute to a changing communicative construction of reality, encompassing both classical mass media and new media of the internet and mobile communication.

Because it implies quantitative as well as qualitative aspects, Hepp (2014) suggests the two traditions — the institutionalist and the socio-constructivist — are open to each other for further development of the mediatisation approach from a transmedial perspective. “In times of the increasing ‘mediation of everything’, different media are in

² “The term *media logic* is used to recognise that the media have particular *modus operandi* and characteristics (specificities of media) that come to influence other institutions and culture and society in general, as they become dependent on the resources that the media both control and make available to them” (Hjarvard, 2014, p. 36). The definition proposed by Hjarvard was later critiqued in the debate surrounding the concept, and the author sought to clarify in subsequent works that he was not working from a homogenising logic, instead recognising the distinctiveness of the media.

their entirety involved in our changing communicative construction of culture and society. This is the point we should focus on” (Hepp, 2014, p. 61).

The “mediation of everything” (Livingstone, 2009) refers to a phase in which media pervade every aspect of life, shaping interactions both among individuals and between individuals and society. Hepp (2020) highlights that this pervasive influence, whether beneficial or detrimental, is more prominent than ever in human history. This is particularly evident in the role of digital media, which has evolved beyond a mere communication tool to become a continuous, omnipresent, and expanding source of data generation involving both objects and people. Hepp asserts that we are now experiencing the era of *deep mediatisation* — the advanced stage in the digitalisation of mediatisation — in which “all elements of our social world are intricately related to digital media and their underlying infrastructures” (Hepp, 2020, p. 5).

Considering the effects of algorithms and the contemporary digital media ecosystem, Carlón (2022) calls for a research focus on the dynamics of meaning and product circulation, which he identifies as a new paradigm. He also emphasises the heterogeneity of media bodies and the emergence of new enunciators. The Argentinian scholar underscores the importance of studying the autonomy of circulation — whether private, public, or intimate — of digitalised discourses and meanings, which now operate in non-linear ways and are structured within a hypermediated and hyperlinked network.

To support his analysis, Carlón graphically distinguishes three key layers of mediatisation: (a) *traditional mass media* (television, radio, cinema, and newspapers), which maintain control over their programming, editorial policies, time, space, and voices; (b) *internet-based social networking platforms* (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, blogs, and news portals), which enable content sharing and host new enunciators — many of them non-institutional — reshaping public spaces and influencing symbolic power relations and configurations, while also redirecting the circulation of meanings; and (c) the *underground* layer (platforms like WhatsApp, Zoom, and Skype), which facilitates the private and intimate exchange of meanings.

Traditional journalism is positioned within the first zone of mediatisation identified by Carlón (2022) — the *mass media*. To preserve its enunciative prominence and enable the multidirectional circulation of its meanings and products within the ecosystem of the new digital public sphere, it is undergoing significant structural and cultural reconfigurations. The following sections present some of the outcomes and aspects of this evolving scenario, drawn from interviews conducted with journalists working in mass media newsrooms.

6. INVESTIGATING NEWSROOM RECONFIGURATIONS: METHODOLOGY, TESTIMONIES, AND DISCUSSION

We conducted eight semi-structured interviews³ with journalists — five men and three women — from some of the leading print and online media outlets across Brazil’s

³ Approved by the National Research Ethics Committee (CONEP) - CAAE: 64944322.0.0000.5241.

five regions. Seven interviews were conducted via Google Meet and one via WhatsApp. Six of the participants have been working in newsrooms since before 2004, a pivotal year marked by the creation of Facebook, widely recognised as one of the first major social networking platforms to significantly impact the media ecosystem. The remaining two interviewees are young professionals under the age of 30, representing a generation inherently familiar with new digital communication technologies.

The interviews explored various aspects of the newsroom environment, infrastructure, and news production processes, focusing on everyday contexts and realities. Topics included meetings, methods of story prospecting, relationships with sources, the timing of news gathering, conducting interviews, writing stories, and other related activities.

We aimed to understand how these processes have been reconfigured and adapted in response to competition from new players on digital platforms and the contemporary mediatised context. An adaptation that takes place within a scenario where media outlets' online formats are increasingly pressured to gain prominence and visibility, driven by the immediate access to and circulation of news via mobile devices (smartphones, tablets, etc.). We also examined the transformations in news production brought about by the integration of new information and communication technology tools into the newsroom workflow, particularly social networking platforms. These changes were analysed through the lens of mediatisation, considering its influence on newsroom practices and dynamics.

The *time-space* dynamic is a recurring theme in the testimonies of all the journalists interviewed, particularly concerning the simultaneous scarcity and acceleration of time. This phenomenon, driven by the prioritisation of online journalistic content, has significant implications for various aspects of the profession. It affects the capacity for thorough discussion and in-depth analysis of topics, the processes of investigating and researching news, dialogue with sources and interviewees, as well as the evolving narrative structures and grammar of stories. As a result — an opinion widely shared among newsroom professionals — this accelerated and constrained context has a direct impact on the quality of journalistic output. This decline is further exacerbated by existing challenges, such as precarious working conditions, reductions in newsroom staff, and the increasing workload imposed on journalists.

Newsrooms today have significantly fewer professionals. I remember when I started, the newspaper office was bustling with people. Over time, there's been substantial downsizing, and the teams have become much smaller. Things have changed a lot. Back then, I was solely a reporter for one outlet. Now, with the introduction of integrated newsrooms, I produce content for four different outlets. Essentially, I'm doing the work of four people — if you'll excuse the expression — while being paid for just one. (Journalist 8, October 12, 2023)

In my department, we've had to stop doing agenda meetings because they didn't fit into our production routine. Today, we produce 90% of our

content for the website, and we have a very high audience target — 300,000 pageviews a day — which is extremely high. Sometimes, we even have to sacrifice better-quality research because we need to publish things on the site that will generate clicks. This whole process of listening to everyone, going through two people for reviews, proofreading for errors and everything else is something that's falling by the wayside. This directly affects the quality of the content, doesn't it? (Journalist 5, July 20, 2023)

The compression and disconnection of time and space in journalistic work have significantly impacted newsroom professionals, particularly in relation to their work schedules. In many of the newsrooms where the interviewed professionals work — spanning print and/or online media — traditional agenda meetings, previously characterised by fixed start and end times and in-person discussions, have transformed into ongoing, virtual interactions throughout the day. This shift is driven by the continuous influx of story demands and updates through internal online communication platforms, such as Google Docs, which all newsroom journalists are required to access. Additionally, for media outlets with online portals, the expectation from superiors to investigate and publish news can arise at any moment, thanks to mobile communication.

On the other hand, time is compressed both for research and for writing and posting stories. There is less opportunity for contact and information exchange with sources over time, a practice that has been common for decades and built mutual trust between journalists and their sources. The so-called “exclusive information”, which could generate more in-depth stories by consulting various individuals, is increasingly replaced by the online journalistic “scoop” at any cost, driven by a “headline criterion” (Signates, 2011). This prioritises publishing first-hand, immediately, and ahead of competitors, often without proper verification, allowing for corrections and updates throughout the day if necessary or convenient.

The journalistic criterion of periodicity — the concept of the periodical — is re-configured internally within the newsroom's news production process, where the notion of deadlines and the closing of the newspaper edition is literally dissolved in time and space. Externally, this reconfiguration is reflected in changing social habits and temporalities, such as the practice of going to the newsagent's early in the morning to buy the usual newspaper or waiting for copies to be delivered to subscribers at a specific time, often while reading the day's edition over breakfast before heading to work.

It's not a matter of right or wrong, but rather because communication has changed. Back in 2003, when we received a story, we had ample time to conduct thorough research. It was a detailed investigation. The key difference now is that, as reporters, we used to go out onto the streets every day. We would leave the newsroom and head into the field. The interviews I conduct nowadays are done via Google Meet, over the phone, or even just through WhatsApp or email. (Journalist 3, July 31, 2023)

Production, for example, is brutal for those working on websites. It's brutal because there's a strict timeframe to complete a story. People are monitoring how many stories each reporter has written in the five hours they've been there: "oh, so-and-so? They've only written two stories? But so-and-so wrote eight, that's not right". There's the morning editor, the afternoon editor, the editor-in-chief, and the area editors, but it's the owner who's closest to the area editor, and they keep an eye on all the websites. So, if they spot something on a competitor's website that's not on theirs, they call or visit the newsroom to apply pressure. "What's going on? Haven't you seen this yet?". This creates a stir and puts reporters under immense pressure, almost causing a sense of desperation. (Journalist 2, August 20, 2023)

It wasn't as easy to communicate before; we didn't have video calls to hold [agenda] meetings. Today, we have WhatsApp, and each newsroom has its own groups so that we can talk early on. The schedule has also changed. In the past, the first agenda meeting was at 11 am. Now, when I wake up at six in the morning, the executive editor is already there talking about what's on the agenda. And why so early? Because we realise that people want to consume first thing in the morning, so if we miss that timing, if we don't act quickly, we won't reach those people. (Journalist 3, July 31, 2023)

The issue of *subject roles* also comes up in the interviews, highlighting that specific traditional roles that once existed in newsrooms, such as the copy editor and agenda setter, are no longer present. Even the role of the layout artist is now quite limited, as modern software allows reporters to edit and post the text and photos of their stories themselves, from anywhere, directly onto the media outlet's online platforms. Nowadays, everyone in the newsroom — editors, bureau chiefs, reporters, and social media teams — has become a potential agenda-setter and gatekeeper, as they are required to monitor the social media profiles of digital actors, such as politicians, artists, influencers, or current internet trends on a daily basis.

On the other hand, despite the "downsizing" of newsroom staff and the resulting work overload for journalists, the incorporation of new professionals into social media teams — now an almost indispensable element of contemporary newsroom dynamics — has become part of journalistic production practices. However, this addition does not compensate, in terms of job numbers, for the bustling newsrooms of the past, which were once "crammed" with professionals working across two or even three shifts a day.

Over the past few decades of transformations and transitions in traditional news media newsrooms, the most experienced journalists have been compelled to adapt their practices to the advent of the internet, emerging technologies, new communication tools, the proliferation of social media platforms, and the pervasive influence of algorithmic logic in contemporary mediated society. Conversely, younger professionals, particularly those from generations Y and Z, enter newsrooms with this digital logic of

mediatisation and technological advancements already embedded in their personal and professional practices.

So, I add the title and the subtitle, write the text, select the photo, write the photo caption, and insert links within the text that reference the topic. I handle everything related to the subject. It's all the reporter's responsibility. Now, imagine this: we upload four or five stories a day to the portal alone. Just think about all the details we have to manage. (Journalist 8, October 12, 2023)

Writing for print is one thing, and writing for digital is another, so it's important to adapt in order to convey information effectively while also ranking well on Google. For me, adapting to these changes is relatively easy because I recognise this as the future. I started at the newspaper with more of a print-focused mindset, but then it transitioned to digital. I can adjust more easily, but perhaps it's harder for older colleagues, right? (Journalist 5, July 20 2023)

I think we were better prepared [before social media]. But I'm not the type to say, "oh, things were so much better in my day". I don't even like that, you know? I don't want to claim that things were better back then. I believe we're adapting to the changes inherent in our profession. (...) The internet is such a profound revolution. If we don't embrace it, radio and traditional media will disappear. But they won't because they'll inevitably exist on the internet. (Journalist 7, October 02, 2023)

Amid the infodemic circulating within the digital public sphere of the internet, one of the central objectives in the symbolic contest of journalistic narratives is to capture attention, publish quickly, and be read first. To keep pace with the dynamism and speed of new digital social actors — and in response to competition among media outlets — online journalism, shaped by algorithmic logic and platformisation, has begun to loosen some of the traditional standards of news structuring. This shift impacts the historical framework of journalistic professionalism, objectivity, and impartiality. A notable indicator of this ongoing relaxation is the transformation of the journalistic lead.

The traditional lead serves the purpose of introducing and capturing the reader's attention from the very first paragraph of a story. In its formal structure, writing guides (Folha de S. Paulo, 1992; Martins, 1997) and scholars (Wolf, 1985/2005) promote, among other principles, a style that values direct speech, avoids redundancy, and incorporates the traditional five "w's": *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*. However, with the emergence of new algorithmic logic and data-driven marketing intelligence in news circulation, the editorial framework governing the lead — and news in general — has taken on new dimensions.

We have to adapt everything because sometimes, online, in order to do SEO [search engine optimisation] properly, as I mentioned earlier, to reach the

reader, we end up repeating a lot of words in digital content. We really have to because if you don't, we won't appear on Google. (Journalist 3, July 31, 2023)

You have to create a title that's eye-catching but not overly sensational because Google uses keywords that help make the content more discoverable. So, it's a series of details we need to consider when publishing a story on the web. (Journalist 8, October 12, 2023)

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is a strategy managed by social media professionals and monitored through audience metrics systems on social media platforms and news portals. Its goal is to optimise a page's (or story's) content for search engines, ensuring it ranks on the first pages of search results and is easily retrievable by readers. This increases the likelihood of clicks and encourages readers to remain on the website for longer, ultimately generating higher monetisation. Google Analytics and Chartbeat are examples of website and social media platform monitoring software used by newsrooms. These tools provide real-time reports on user behaviour and traffic patterns.

Among these optimisation strategies are the use of links, hashtags, and the repetition of keywords. To some extent, this contradicts certain aspects of the traditional news structuring model and established criteria for newsworthiness. Real-time delivery has become prioritised, often at the expense of accuracy and thorough verification. The primary focus shifts to "chasing" click-through rates and likes, aiming to keep the reader engaged on the media outlet's page for as long as possible.

7. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As a result of the interviews, we inferred that the shift in the time-space relationship within the newsroom, along with changes in the praxis of news production, has led to significant implications for traditional journalistic criteria such as newsworthiness, the grammatical structuring of stories, the elimination of certain jobs, and the relationship with journalistic sources. These shifts are particularly pronounced due to the prioritisation of online journalistic content, which, according to the interviewees, has compromised the quality of journalism.

To adapt to the new era of platformisation in journalism (van Dijck et al., 2018), day-to-day editorial decisions in traditional newsrooms are now increasingly influenced by data provided by metrics software. This data often dictates the suitability and updating of headlines and online news based on user tracking and monitoring information, as well as trending topics on the platforms. As a result, newsroom professionals, under constant pressure from the immediacy and real-time demands of information, have gradually relinquished their editorial autonomy. Previously guided by journalistic canons of news selection and traditional newsworthiness criteria, this shift has led to the emergence of a hybrid newsroom model: one that blends traditional journalism with platformisation (van Dijck et al., 2018).

This scenario within the contemporary media ecosystem of a mediatised society has significant consequences for the mediating role of traditional news media and the routine of news production in the newsroom. As information — whose enunciation and dissemination had previously been controlled and monopolised by the newsroom — begins to spread rapidly and exponentially across social media platforms, it does so without the traditional barriers, filters, or editorial canons and protocols of journalistic practice. New digital social actors and algorithmic functions increasingly influence this shift.

Translation: Anabela Delgado

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel - Brazil (CAPES) - Funding Code 001, through the CAPES PRINT Programme - Institutional Internationalisation Programme, in the form of a Sandwich Doctorate, conducted at the University of Minho, in Braga, Portugal.

REFERENCES

- Albuquerque, A. de. (2013). Em nome do público: Jornalismo e política nas entrevistas dos presidentes ao Jornal Nacional. *E-Compós*, 16(2), 1–21.
- Brin, C., Charron, J., & De Bonville, J. (2004). *Nature et transformations du journalisme. Théorie et recherches empiriques*. Les Presses de l'Université de Laval.
- Carlón, M. (2022). ¿El fin de la invisibilidad de la circulación del sentido de la mediatización contemporánea? *DeSignis*, (37), 245–253. <https://doi.org/10.35659/designis.i37p245-253>
- Carvalho, C. A. de. (2017). *Midiatização e textualidades: Dimensões teóricas e aplicações empíricas*. PPGCOM UFMG.
- Cesarino, L. (2021). Pós-verdade e a crise do sistema de peritos: Uma explicação cibernética. *Ilha: Revista de Antropologia*, 23(1), 73–96. <https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8034.2021.e75630>
- Couldry, N. A. (2010). Mídia tem futuro? *Matrizes*, 4(1), 51–64. <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1982-8160.v4i1p51-64>
- Deuze, M., & Witschge, T. O. (2016). Que o jornalismo está se tornando. *Parágrafo*, 4(2), 6–21.
- Figaro, R. (Ed.). (2021). *Discurso jornalístico e condições de produção em arranjos econômicos alternativos às corporações de mídia*. Centro de Pesquisa em Comunicação e Trabalho.
- Figaro, R., & Silva, A. F. M. (2020). A comunicação como trabalho no capitalismo de plataforma: O caso das mudanças no jornalismo. *Contracampo*, 39(1), 101–115. <https://doi.org/10.22409/contracampo.v39i1.38566>
- Folha de S. Paulo. (1992). *Novo manual de redação*. Folha de S. Paulo.
- França, V. (2020). Alcance e variações do conceito de midiática. In J. Ferreira, P. G. Gomes, A. F. Neto, J. L. Braga, & A. P. da Rosa (Eds.), *Redes, sociedade e pólis: Recortes epistemológicos na midiática* (pp. 23–44). FACOS-UFMS.

- Giddens, A. (1991). *As consequências da modernidade* (R. Filker, Trans.). Editora UNESP. (Original work published 1991)
- Harsin, J. (2018). *Post-truth and critical communication studies*. Oxford Research Encyclopedias.
- Hepp, A. (2014). As configurações comunicativas de mundos mediatizados: Pesquisa da mediação na era da “mediação de tudo”. *Matrizes*, 8(1), 45–64.
- Hepp, A. (2020). *Deep mediatization*. Routledge.
- Hjarvard, S. (2012). Mediatização: Teorizando a mídia como agente de mudança social e cultural. *Matrizes*, 5(2), 53–91. <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1982-8160.v5i2p53-91>
- Hjarvard, S. (2014). *A mediatização da cultura e da sociedade*. Editora Unisinos.
- Livingstone, S. (2009). On the mediation of everything: ICA presidential address 2008. *Journal of Communication*, 59(1), 1–18.
- Lyotard, J. (2009). *A condição pós-moderna* (R. C. Barbosa, Trans.). José Olympio. (Original work published 1979)
- Martins, E. (1997). *Manual de redação e estilo*. O Estado de S. Paulo.
- Pereira, F. H., & Adghirni, Z. L. (2011). O jornalismo em tempo de mudanças estruturais. *Intexto*, 1(24), 38–57.
- Ribeiro, A. P. G. (2000). *Imprensa e história no Rio de Janeiro dos anos 50* [Doctoral dissertation, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro].
- Robalinho, M., Borges, S., & Pádua, A. (2020). Dráuzio Varella e Atila Iamarino: Uma análise dos canais do YouTube dos influenciadores digitais como fontes de informação na pandemia da Covid-19. *Comunicação & Inovação*, 21(47), 22–38. <https://doi.org/10.13037/ci.vol21n47.7298>
- Schudson, M. (1981). *Discovering the news: A social history of American newspapers*. Basic Books.
- Signates, L. (2011). As fontes assumem o furo: Fraturas e alternativas na prática jornalística ante as redes sociais. In J. F. Maia (Ed.), *Gêneros e formatos em jornalismo* (pp. 181–186). Editora PUC Goiás.
- Silva, T R. N. (2017). *Jornalistas e fontes: Uma relação em movimento. Temas, vozes e silêncios na Saúde de O Globo (1987-2015)* [Doctoral dissertation, Instituto de Comunicação e Informação Científica e Tecnológica em Saúde].
- Sodré, M. (2002). *Antropológica do espelho: Uma teoria da comunicação linear e em rede*. Vozes.
- van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & De Waal, M. (2018). *The platform society*. Oxford University Press.
- Waisbord, S. (2018). Truth is what happens to news, on journalism, fake news, and post-truth. *Journalism Studies*, 19(13), 1866–1878. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1492881>
- Wolf, M. (2005). *Teoria das comunicações de massa* (K. Jannini, Trans.). Martins Fontes. (Original work published 1985)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Marcio Martins Calil holds a PhD in Health Information and Communication from the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation's Institute of Scientific and Technological Communication

and Information in Health, a master's degree in Communication and Territorialities from the Federal University of Espírito Santo, and is a civil servant at the Federal Institute of Espírito Santo.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5938-9642>

Email: marciomcalil@gmail.com

Address: PPGICS - Programa de Pós-Graduação em Informação e Comunicação em Saúde Expansão do Campus: Av. Brasil, 4036 - sala 210 - Manguinhos, Rio de Janeiro - Brasil CEP: 21040-360

Kátia Lerner has a PhD in Sociology and Anthropology (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) and is a researcher at the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation's Institute of Scientific and Technological Communication and Information in Health.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3655-9677>

Email: katia.lerner@icict.fiocruz.br

Address: PPGICS - Programa de Pós-Graduação em Informação e Comunicação em Saúde Expansão do Campus: Av. Brasil, 4036 - sala 210 - Manguinhos, Rio de Janeiro - Brasil CEP: 21040-360

Fábio Castro Gouveia holds a PhD in Biological Chemistry (Education, Management, and Dissemination of Biosciences) from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and is a technologist at the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, on loan to the Brazilian Institute of Information in Science and Technology, Brazil.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0082-2392>

Email: fgouveia@gmail.com

Address: PPGCI - Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciência da Informação do convênio Ibict/Eco-UFRJ: Rua Lauro Muller, 455 - 4º andar - Botafogo, Rio de Janeiro - Brasil CEP: 22290-160

Submitted: 30/11/2023 | Accepted: 13/12/2024



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.