

# Understanding the Audience Turn in Journalism: From Quality Discourse to Innovation Discourse as Anchoring Practices 1995–2020

Irene Costera Meijer

To cite this article: Irene Costera Meijer (2020) Understanding the Audience Turn in Journalism: From Quality Discourse to Innovation Discourse as Anchoring Practices 1995–2020, *Journalism Studies*, 21:16, 2326–2342, DOI: [10.1080/1461670X.2020.1847681](https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1847681)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1847681>



© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 26 Nov 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1064



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

# Understanding the Audience Turn in Journalism: From Quality Discourse to Innovation Discourse as Anchoring Practices 1995–2020

Irene Costera Meijer

Department of Literature, Language and Communication, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Department of Information Science and Media Studies, University of Bergen, Norway

## ABSTRACT

Paying close attention to news users has become fully integrated in professional journalism. Even though this practice may still meet with resistance, becoming more audience responsive is no longer automatically condemned as the highway to popularization and sensationalism. What has changed in journalism's ecosystem to account for this turnaround? This paper explains how journalists' attitude towards audiences changed from keeping them at a distance to constantly monitoring their movements. It is based on longitudinal participatory observation of key moments (editorial meetings, public debates) in Dutch journalism, as well as on informal talks and formal interviews with more than one hundred journalists and editors during the last twenty years. It traces four tipping points between 1995 and 2020 regarding the audience turn in commercial news and public service journalism: (1) Quality news as "not having to reckon with your audience". (2) Increasing professional awareness of "informed citizenship" as quality journalism's remit; (3) digitalization of journalism; and (4) increasing relevance of "audience engagement". Ann Swidler's concept of "anchoring practice" (2001) will be used as a lens to understand the gradual shift from quality discourse to innovation discourse as anchoring practices in journalism and journalism studies.

## KEYWORDS

Audience studies; boundary work; quality discourse; anchoring practice; innovation discourse; historical analysis

## Introduction

Many journalists and journalism scholars will remember key moments in the recent history of journalism involving editorial meetings or public debates about major professional changes, in particular when such changes were suspected to be motivated by a desire to please the audience. There would always come a moment in heated discussions when someone stood up to raise the question: "And what about quality?" As soon as the Q-word was mentioned, the energy in the room evaporated. Those attending such meetings seemed to be aware that introducing the argument of quality would open up more fiery debate. This would rarely raise the level of discussion, however. A case in point is the public meeting organized after Dutch columnist Bas Heijne (2013) critiqued

**CONTACT** Irene Costera Meijer  [icostera.meijer@vu.nl](mailto:icostera.meijer@vu.nl)

© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group  
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

the way the public newscaster NOS News presented an item on a political scandal, involving the director of the CIA by mixing footage of David Petraeus with clips from *Skyfall*, the 2012 James Bond movie. Heijne's column gave rise to a live debate involving the editors-in-chief of four major Dutch news organizations. In front of an audience of two hundred journalists, NOS News editor-in-chief defended his policy against, in the words of Heijne, "the Paris Hiltonification of serious news" and "sitting on your haunches in the name of accessibility and pimping serious news items for an audience as wide as possible." The editor-in-chief explained his popularizing approach as an attempt to capture the audience's attention through form without sacrificing content, which prompted Heijne to accuse them of burying their heads in the sand (see Groot Kormelink and Costera Meijer 2015). However much the attendees of such meetings might have agreed that the identified or proposed changes in journalism deserved more credit, the almost ritualist practice of invoking "quality" closed off further reflection. This discussion and similar debates usually ended by all participants publicly claiming that quality should not be put at risk, implicitly admitting that taking into account audiences' preferences would do just that.

In this "formal essay" (see Harmon and Holman 2003) I will use different "voices" - personal, anecdotal, analytical - to argue how reckoning with audiences and users of news changed from a threat to a condition for the survival of journalism over the last quarter century. The paper consists of six parts. First, it analyses the cornerstones of quality discourse in journalism practice and journalism studies. Then it uses the Dutch situation as a case study to trace four tipping points between 1995 and 2020 regarding the audience turn in commercial news and public service journalism. Approaching quality journalism as anchoring practice and discourse seems useful as a lens to make sense of both the obduracy of the resistance against taking audiences' preferences seriously as well as its final acceptance. The final part will analyze how quality gradually made place for innovation as anchoring discourse and practice.

### **The Cornerstones of Quality Discourse**

For a long time, quality journalism functioned not only as a practice, a standard of excellence or a particular genre of public interest news; as a discourse it could be mobilized as a strong and effective argument against unwelcome changes in journalism. A synoptic quote from then famous BBC anchor Jeremy Paxman (2007):

*"Television journalism's justification should be the justification of journalism through the ages: to inquire, to explain and to hold to account. The news may have been dull, but it was respected because it made sense of the day. That involved people assessing, filtering, separating the froth from what mattered. It was, in short, the exercise of clear judgement. And in return, it demanded – and got – the trust of the audience. (...) There is a fight going on for the survival of quality television right across this industry. (...) As an industry we need to lay out much more clearly what we're doing and why. Let's spend less time measuring audiences and more time enlightening them."*

This quote sums up the main dimensions of journalism's quality discourse up to and including this century's first decade. It provided the remit (to inquire, to explain and to hold to account), the consequences (dull but respected), the work involved (assessing, filtering, separating the froth from what mattered) and what

these varied efforts yielded: the trust of the audience. After discussing some examples of popularization in BBC journalism programs, Paxman's final chord is a call for the survival of quality. This requires two things: more transparency about what journalists are doing and why, and secondly, making audiences wiser, instead of paying attention to their preferences.

While the discourse on quality is a driving force behind innovation in many other professional activities – from inventing better washing machines and improving medicine to refining food technology – and will usually involve consumer research, the above quotation exemplifies how quality discourse in journalism functioned as a barrier to change. Paxman's use of the word "survival" illustrates how quality discourse in journalism has been used to keep things as they are, in particular when change seems to be motivated by the desire to please the public. Evoking the discourse of quality appeared to steer journalists' attention automatically to the risks of change, such as the concern that news selection would become motivated by an item's popularity, that its tone of voice or rhetoric would be geared to overstatement if not sensationalism and that the working conditions for journalists would be bound to deteriorate.

Although scholars have continued to voice their worries about a decline of news quality due to the growing attention for audiences (Batsell 2015; Nguyen 2013; Tandoc and Thomas 2015), today's increasing consideration of people's news preferences suggests that over the last 25 years the discourse of quality may have lost some of its power. It no longer works as an effective shield to keep audiences at a distance and thus to prevent the installation of practices that are expected to have a deteriorating impact on the content, selection and presentation of journalism. Clearly, journalists have broadly accepted the need to pay attention to news users as a common part of their professional practice (Cohen 2019; Cornia, Sehl, and Nielsen 2020; Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc 2018; Nelson 2019). A comment by Colin van Hoek (LinkedIn, January 18, 2020), deputy editor-in-chief of NU.nl, the most popular news site of the Netherlands, illustrates this development well. Discussing the difference between his site and the explicitly quality-oriented news site *De Correspondent*, he explained: "But we have at least one common belief: that journalism gets better the more the visitor / reader / viewer is involved."

This article, which uses the Dutch situation as an exemplary case study, presents an analysis of the changes in everyday journalism practice and news discourse which have contributed to the present audience turn in journalism. Why is such turn happening today, rather than, say, ten or fifteen years ago? And does it mark a definitive farewell to the premise that giving in to audiences automatically coincides with giving up on excellence?

### **Analytical Approach**

Quality is at the heart of what Carlson (2016) names "metajournalistic discourse", providing the conceptual frame for "boundary work" (Carlson and Lewis 2015, 2020). Boundary work involves the acceptance or rejection of the participants, the practices, and the norms and beliefs as journalistic, including the question which actors, actions, or norms and beliefs are perceived as threats (Carlson and Lewis 2020). To engage in boundary work, according to Carlson and Lewis (2020, 127), is "to seek power to define social reality;

the shape of news as knowledge; and the distribution of access, funding, attention and other material elements." This framework helps to understand why audiences and users only marginally feature as subjects or agents in discussions about quality. Unless they act as citizen journalists or cultural critics, they seem to be actively rejected from having a voice in discussing the boundaries of journalism. Meier (2019, 5), in his encyclopedic lemma about "quality journalism", explicitly states that quality is first of all a professional matter: "the value and quality of information stand and fall with the quality of the production process." Secondly, even when audiences are invited by researchers to offer an opinion about quality discourse, their role seems to be limited to commenting on the performance of journalism, usually not in their own terms but in terms of pre-given quality dimensions: facticity, relevance and independence (Meier 2019). An additional reason why audiences are barely involved in boundary work could be that individuals tend to agree with the professionals on their norms and values and thus on what *counts* as good journalism, even though they may not like or consume it (Gil de Zúñiga and Hinsley 2013; Kunelius 2006; Van Der Wurff and Schoenbach 2014; Wendelin, Engelmann, and Neubarth 2017).

While journalism as a profession is apparently in a state of disruption, the (often implicit) meaning and limits of quality remained fairly constant over the years (cf. Ahva and Steensen 2020; Karlsson and Clerwall 2019; Lacy and Rosenstiel 2015). In short, the question may not be why the boundaries of journalism discourse are shifting or getting blurred (cf. Loosen 2015), but rather: what kept particular boundaries intact? How can we as scholars understand why quality journalism – unlike quality discourse in other professions – did not involve the active consultation of users, consumers or audiences? Even more, how was it possible that for a long time, and almost by definition, honoring quality meant excluding audiences from having a say about quality? Boundary work as a conceptual frame does not help us explain the initial incompatibility of quality journalism and reckoning with audiences, nor does it allow us to account for the ultimate compatibility. I suggest journalism studies may be in need of an additional concept to analyze the particular dynamics of quality discourse. Specifically, I propose to take the concept of anchoring – anchoring discourse and anchoring practice – as a supplementary perspective (Swidler 2001).

Cultural sociologist Ann Swidler (2001) has studied what it is that makes some practices more influential and more enduring than other practices. Anchoring practices acquire their power to control or organize related discourses and patterns of activity because "they implicitly define the basic entities or agents in the relevant domain of social action." In other words, "anchoring practices operate as enactments of "constitutive rules"" (Swidler 2001, 95). The implicitness is relevant here, because contrary to the work involved in setting the boundaries of journalism, the constitutive rules of quality journalism become perceivable only when they are broken, as argued by Picard (2000, 97): "The quality concept is problematic when applied to journalism because it is nearly impossible to articulate what elements make up the concept. As a result, quality tends to be defined not by its presence but its absence and observers are in the position of saying "we can't define good quality, but we know bad quality when we see it."

Swidler suggests that "practices are more persistent and more likely to structure other domains of thought and action when they constitute social relationships (...)

than when they are simply habits or assumptions held by individual actors" (2001, 95). To investigate quality journalism as an anchoring practice and discourse, it should be discussed as more than a set of organizational or professional values (cf. Strömbäck 2005). Employing Swidler's dimensions as an exploratory frame to understand the audience turn in journalism, the anchoring force of quality journalism could be explained by (1) being a publicly observable, symbolic and ritual practice, which (2) guards the distribution of sufficient financial resources and reasonable working conditions and (3) works as the distinctive mark of professional status. Practices may also be more firmly anchored when they are at the center of antagonistic social relationships (4). Finally, the anchoring power of quality journalism might increase or decrease not as a result of time or changing habits. Instead, (5) the precondition for an anchoring practice to change is the publicly visible enactment of this change, "so that "everyone can see" that everyone else has seen that things have changed" (Swidler 2001, 95, 96).

I expected these dimensions to be useful for making sense of the audience turn in journalism practice and journalism studies: from paying attention to audiences as problematic for journalism's role in democracy to reckoning with audiences as fundamental to keeping journalism alive as constructive force in democracy. First, I used them as a lens to review my own scholarly involvement with the changes in Dutch journalism (see Costera Meijer 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2013a, 2013b; Costera Meijer and Bijleveld 2016; Costera Meijer 2020). Since I have been in a privileged position to observe up close a range of key moments in the development of journalism studies and Dutch journalism over the last two decades, it was possible for me to make field notes of public and academic debates and editorial meetings. Secondly, these dimensions inspired me to revisit a reservoir of transcripts of formal interviews about audiences and journalism with over one hundred journalists and editors working for various local, regional and national, commercial and public news organizations and their respective editors-in-chief. By also taking into account a range of new materials (including memoirs of former editors-in-chief, journalistic essays, academic and non-academic books), I managed to identify three tipping points in the gradual transformation of the discourse and practice of Dutch journalism, culminating in a fourth "point of no return".

The first tipping point, roughly coinciding with the transition to the new millennium, was the growing popularity of commercial TV news at the expense of public news media. The second moment pertains to the realization by journalists themselves of "informed citizenship" as quality journalism's main aim, as well as the changing news interest among segments of the population as a challenge for this societal mission. The digitalization of journalism and, in its wake the growing importance of audiences for the business model of commercial journalism (Webster 2014) and as justification of public service media (Cushion 2012) can be described as the third tipping point. The final and apparent point of no return is informed by the increasing relevance of audience engagement figures – e.g., clicks, time spent, shares, comments – for the survival and legitimacy of news organizations. These tipping points may not be unique for the Netherlands. In other countries, in particular the ones with strong public broadcasting media, similar changes may be identified (cf. Born 2005; Hanitzsch et al. 2019; Kristensen and Riegert 2017; Ytreberg 2001).

## 1) “News is News”: Making Quality News Means that you do not Have to Reckon with Your Audience

The first attempt at putting into perspective the contrast between making quality news and paying attention to your viewers illustrates how quality discourse as an anchoring force involved professional rituals, status, working conditions and social relationships. In the course of the eighties and nineties commercial television turned into a formidable competitor for public broadcasters in terms of market shares and ratings (Born 2005; Lowe and Bardoel 2009; Ytreberg 2001). This motivated the editor-in-chief of the Dutch public NOS News, Nico Haasbroek, to make its news broadcasts more appealing to watch. He favored, as he put it, “less (political) agenda news, more original items and scoops, a broader range of topics, more attention for the public’s sphere of interests, more items that attest to a daring and original editorial attitude, visual images rather than talking heads, and fewer mistakes” (Haasbroek 2000, 2004).

Although Haasbroek claimed to introduce a higher quality standard for NOS News – by providing more citizens with information that interests them – the response to these proposed changes in the selection, size and framing of news items was mixed. Initially his editors appeared to embrace them as original and as drawing in more viewers. Gradually these changes were rejected by more and more journalists and most journalism critics as a popularization and thus trivialization of journalism.

Two examples illustrate how paying attention to the interests of audiences caused antagonism. At the time (1999), the first reality soap on Dutch commercial TV, *Big Brother*, managed to attract as many as four million viewers for its final episode, or more than one third of the adult Dutch population. This was a rather extraordinary event, motivating the editor-in-chief of NOS News to invite a member of the production team in the prime time, eight o’clock newscast. In the same year there were first signs of a relationship between the Dutch heir to the throne, Prince Willem Alexander, and Maxima Zorreguieta, prompting NOS News to devote as many as 14 min, or more than half of its prime-time edition, to this topic. Both items clearly reflected a changed policy. By paying so much attention to popular topics - “talker news” - Haasbroek apparently violated the fundamental standards and values of what counted as appropriate news. One of his eight o’clock anchors in fact refused to impair her professional status by having to present “non-news” and eventually resigned. The warning bell was sounded by the director of the public broadcaster, the editorial staff and journalism critics. If he continued to pay attention on the main national newscast to popular conversation topics, the quality of journalism was in jeopardy.

Eventually, this first attempt to organize an audience turn in journalism by a broader take on news selection – *too* popular, according to this newscast’s editorial team – triggered a request for academic research. The editor-in-chief asked me whether it would be possible to invent a new quality concept beyond standard news beats and news approaches. Subsequently I was invited to attend staff meetings and the daily evaluative lunch meetings, and encouraged to interview the more open-minded, innovative journalists in the newsroom.

After studying documents from the NOS Policy Department I discovered a clear civic remit, linking up NOS’ societal purpose to providing viewers with the information they need to make important decisions: informed citizenship. Initially the NOS News



Department was unaware of this objective: “We don’t have a remit”, as the editor-in-chief responded when I inquired, “news is news”. Proudly pointing to independence as a fundamental value of public service news, NOS journalists felt privileged that they - unlike their colleagues at the commercial channel - could focus solely on the quality of the news without having to reckon with audiences. In other words, ignoring the preferences of audiences was at the heart of quality discourse.

The interviews I held with NOS News journalists led to a better understanding of the obduracy and ritual dynamics behind “news is news” (Costera Meijer 2001, 2003). As some reporters experienced, working on a potentially “popular” item was indeed encouraged by the main editor, but such items seldom made it into the main newscast. And when they did cross the news threshold, this editorial decision was bound to be questioned at the daily lunch meeting attended by everyone involved in making the main news: Wasn’t there more important news? As one of them explained, sticking your neck out required a lot of courage and prompted most editors to select the conventional news items. If it was possible to be more inventive, this was mostly reserved for the high-status journalists. Their artful, documentary approach was seen as a sign of their professionalism, rather than being interpreted as an attempt to please viewers.

Only a few journalists, all of them working or having worked for the (lower status) youth news channel, were able to match attention for their specific audience with providing quality news. This audience attentiveness was expressed in different working routines: making news for young people was seen as a team effort, while their colleagues working for the main newscast saw making news as an individual performance, at most supported by a desk editor. Likewise, the selection and most appropriate and attractive approach of youth news was routinely discussed in a team meeting *before* it was made, while the eight o’clock news was evaluated the day *after* at the lunch meeting.

Following some more unconventional interventions – also interpreted as attempts to destabilize working conditions – and in spite of the introduction of a more inclusive and multi-dimensional quality discourse grounded in the concept of “informed citizenship” (Costera Meijer 2003, 2006), the editor-in-chief of NOS News was asked to resign. News remained news for the time being.

## ***2) Increasing Professional Awareness of “Informed Citizenship” as Quality Journalism’s Remit: Capturing Young People’s News Interest as a Challenge for News Media***

In the early years of the new millennium, two events in fact contributed to sparking an interest in the remit of “informed citizenship” which changed the distribution of staff and financial resources: the attacks on the Twin Towers (2001) and the unexpected rise of “populist” politician Pim Fortuyn and his subsequent murder in 2002. The new NOS News editor-in-chief realized that if they did not want to miss the next populist revolt, institutional news should make way for better and more elaborate coverage on what was going on among “ordinary” citizens (Laroes 2002; 2005). What happened hereafter can be summarized as a second attempt to establish an audience turn in Dutch journalism. According to the new editor-in-chief: “not the will, but the world of the viewer should become the starting point for making news” (Laroes 2005, 36). Using the new, more inclusive quality discourse, he argued that a public broadcaster should become more



relevant to all people, including younger viewers, viewers with a minority background and right-wing viewers. Although this new policy – which involved, among other things, the appointment of correspondents in Rotterdam (where Fortuyn had the largest following) and Cairo (to get to know the Arab and Muslim world better) – also triggered resistance, the new editor-in-chief took great care to avoid any associations with popularizing the news. He did not rebel against the apparently fundamental characteristics and values of news; on the contrary, in his view, the quality of the news needed to be improved: “NOS News too often mixes facts, atmosphere and opinion, is not alert enough, must urgently reintroduce the discipline of check and double check, is sloppy, does not explain sufficiently and neglects hearing both sides” (Laroës 2002).

While the anchor of the commercial RTL news explained how actually reaching commercially interesting *target* groups, guaranteed their independence (Nieman 2007), the new quality discourse developed for the public broadcaster highlighted the importance of reaching *all* citizens. Consequently, the apparent *exclusion* of younger generations became an issue for both RTL news and NOS News (Costera Meijer 2003). Unlike viewers with a minority background and right-wing viewers, who complained about the news but nevertheless kept on using it, young people less and less developed the habit of watching news, not even when they grew older (Buckingham 2000; Mindich 2005).

Fortuyn’s murder, the terrorist attacks in the US - a “shock to the system”, according to the new editor-in-chief of NOS News Laroës (2005, 34)- and the more inclusive quality discourse apparently enabled a shift in the anchoring force of quality journalism. This became even more evident when Laroës asked me in 2004 to study the issue of how news might become more relevant and more important for young people again. Although commercial TV news stations were also interested in young people as a commercially attractive target group, editors of commercial newspapers remained unconcerned. With their advertising-based business models delivering profit margins exceeding 20%, they did not regard a diminishing interest among younger readers as problematic.

The study commissioned by NOS News resulted in a unique, multi-method, large-scale qualitative audience research project involving more than 450 young people between ages 15 and 25 living in different regions and from different cultural backgrounds in several parallel research projects (see Costera Meijer 2006, 2007, 2008).

After having analyzed their media habits, it turned out that the anchoring function of quality journalism did not only pan out in a professional context. Remarkably, the youngsters basically endorsed it. They valued NOS News as a sound and solid quality brand and associated it with covering public interest news and a particular objective and distant approach. The problem was, however, that although young people considered news important – “it’s good for you, even healthy” – they also found it boring. But when asked whether and how news could become more interesting for them, young adults were very much opposed to any change in either news selection or news presentation. If “real” news became more entertaining, how would they know whether it could be trusted? In their words – and perfectly in line with Jeremy Paxman (see quotation above) – quality news *should* be boring and grey. The second paradox was that many of them did watch popular “newsy” programming when they wanted a good laugh or to relax (Costera Meijer 2006, 2007, 2008). Although young adults shared the anchoring *discourse* of quality journalism with the professionals, they often avoided its *practice*.

This double viewing paradox turned out to be a barrier when it came to find out whether excellent news still had a future. To open up the discursive space to discuss quality journalism, we decided to focus on what young people *experienced* as really informative – irrespective of genre – instead of on their *views* on quality information. Eventually we were able to bridge the gap between highly appreciated but seldom used quality journalism, and less important but often used popular journalism (sports, human interest, reality TV).

The results of this and previous research were reported in a book on the “future of journalism” (Costera Meijer 2006), which was enthusiastically received by the editors-in-chief of both public and commercial news broadcasters, as well as – surprisingly – by several quality newspapers. The discussions, seminars and training sessions following the publication of the book prompted a rethinking of the opposition between quality and popularity, and the core values of quality journalism: “objectivity”, “factuality” and “keeping one’s distance”. First, how should news organizations deal with the majority of young informants that did not consider becoming informed a goal in its own right? They either stated a need for information to avoid falling out of line with their friends (communication), or a desire for truly wanting to understand a news event, to feel what it meant to the people involved. Secondly, young people underlined the narrative quality of good journalism and experienced as inspiring and informative the multi-perspectival storylines of popular drama and reality series. Thirdly, they preferred the direct approach and upbeat tone of voice used in gameshows, sports programming and some activist current affairs shows. In short, they suggested a more inclusive definition of quality journalism, involving a broader range of news selection (including human interest, life reports, talker news *and* public interest news) surpassing conventional distinctions between communication and information, good news and bad news, and extraordinary events and everyday trials. By also wondering why emotions would be less informative than reasons, why good news would be automatically considered trivial and why bad news self-evidently counted as serious news, young people opened up the discursive space of quality discourse (Costera Meijer 2006, 2007, 2008).

In the second half of the millennium’s first decade, quality journalism seemed to lose more of its anchoring force. While it was still common for journalists to look down upon their audience, in particular younger generations, young adults’ news experiences increasingly resonated with their own preferences. Yet the lack of publicly visible enactment of change illustrated how visibility was a precondition for changing the anchoring forces in journalism. While younger or female journalists would confess in private conversations after a workshop or a lecture that they recognized the experiences of young news users in their own life, the established journalists screamed bloody murder in public debates. Publicly to acknowledge that paying attention to the world of audiences as well as to their preferences apparently required a revision of what quality journalism was *not*: informing the audience about emotions, positive news, issues linked to the private sphere and using particular imagery. An extra argument to slow down any change was tied to the ritual function of journalism for most news users, which caused complaints about every adjustment (even minor ones) because it disturbed their news habit, and thus their peace of mind (cf. Berelson 1949). Changes in news selection and presentation, in particular when justified by “the will of the audiences”, remained marginal (vox pops and cross conversations in TV and radio news) or were presented as

extra supplements (newspapers). Phrased differently, in the words of Swidler (2001), for quality journalism to loosen its anchoring function, additional constitutive rules had to be affected.

### **3) The Digitalization of Journalism: Recognition of the Importance of Audiences for the Survival of Print Journalism**

The pressure to become more attentive to the interests and preferences of news audiences intensified at the end of the first decade for newspapers as well. Due to the increasing distribution of information via search engines such as Google and the introduction of social media such as Facebook and YouTube, advertising revenues moved from print to the digital world. As a result, newspapers lost substantial income and came to depend more and more on reader subscriptions. In 2000, for instance, advertisers were responsible for more than 80% of the earnings of Dutch newspapers, whereas by 2016 the situation was reversed: the percentage of revenues coming from subscribers had gone up to 78% (Stand van de Nieuwsmedia 2017). According to Reuters Trend Report (Newman 2018, 23), for the majority of the “publishers, subscription (...) is now the main priority for the year ahead.” Keeping their readers satisfied became crucial for the survival of newspapers. A parallel development was the growing influence of audience engagement figures (clicks, time spent, comments, shares etc.) in the course of the second decennium as the new heart of newspapers’ digital business model.

While the eventual recognition of “informed citizenship” as remit of quality journalism may count as the first condition for change in the constitutional rules of quality journalism, the availability of a more inclusive news discourse - also answering to the interests of a younger audience - may be seen as the second condition for change. The digitalization of news served as background for a third sign of change: the shifting *status* of young people. They moved from marginal or irrelevant (or at most the responsibility of marketers) towards being uniquely positioned at the forefront - as digital natives or “millennials” and ahead of all other audience groups. By claiming that young people’s preferences and changing news use provided a window to the future of news, editors succeeded in avoiding the (loathed) marketing discourse. Millennials were not to be *reached* as a particular target group; journalists could learn from them which new skills, routines and habits had to be acquired in order for their news to be *found*.

The constitutive rule being questioned here was the assumption that schooling and experience marked your expertise as journalist. The radical change of status of trainees and interns well illustrated the discarding of this rule. While these young people used to be put in charge of the coffee or other serviceable work, their assumed exclusive sensibilities as digital savvy millennials were increasingly employed as representative of future news generations and thus as indicative of the survival of journalism. In order to discover how to find and attract an increasingly digital audience, newsrooms gave them a main role in experiments with new forms of distribution (also via social media), presentation (less formal, humor) and storytelling (interactive, immersive), as well as a broader news selection.

A fourth occurrence instrumental in the opening up of the discourse and practices of quality journalism pertains to the *material* impact of the digitalization of the profession. As discussed in the first section limited space was a constitutive practice in analogue, TV,

print and radio journalism. To get your item across the threshold of the evening news or a major newspaper, journalists should not be thinking too much out of the box. The seemingly unlimited space of a news site – compared to a newspaper or a news show – lowered the news threshold, even though being selected for the front page or the eight o'clock evening news was still seen as more prestigious than being published on the website.

#### **4) The Point of no Return: From Quality to Innovation as Anchoring Discourse**

The most important material condition for bridging the contradiction between quality journalism and audience responsiveness was the large-scale installation of audience metrics. Nowadays almost every news organization tracks in detail how much time audiences spent on which news and what they do with it: click, share, comment etc. Audiences and users have become central figures – be it abstract – in everyday news discourse and news production practices. The introduction of audience engagement beyond the domain of marketers as integral part of professional journalism discourse and practice had a huge impact (Anderson 2011; Belair-Gagnon and Holton 2018; Cherubini and Nielsen 2016; Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc 2018; Tandoc 2019). While limited space used to ground the editorial decision to select a certain item for publication as the distinctive moment of professional appreciation, the unlimited digital space enabled an alternative performative standard for doing a good job: the audiences' decision to actually use it. Even more, web metrics enabled journalists to rank among themselves their professional performance (Mellado and Van Dalen 2014). Instead of a *danger* to journalists' independence (a conditional rule for quality journalism) and thus best to be ignored, digital audience feedback gradually became *part of*, if not *indicative of*, their professional status (Blanchett Neheli 2018; Nelson 2019). In our more recent interviews, journalists proudly provide examples of their most popular news items (Boesman and Costera Meijer 2018), while a mere ten years ago many would still consider popularity a sign of absence of quality (cf. Harrington 2008).

During this process of becoming more audience responsive, the range and formats of what counts as relevant and important news significantly expanded. Originally, most news organizations had separate news desks for print, TV, radio and digital platforms. While digital platforms experimented with a more popular presentation and selection of news, the news selection of TV, radio and print output initially remained more or less anchored by the rules of quality journalism. This changed after editors adopted a "digital first" policy. This new professional routine no longer divided news among the different outlets; news was first published on digital platforms (news site, news app and social media). User metrics pointed out that people apparently shared, clicked and commented more on "popular" news than on public interest news (Boczkowski and Mitchelstein 2013; Welbers et al. 2016). Because clicks, comments and time spent became increasingly important for news organizations' advertising revenues, news channels and newspapers started to experiment with a more inclusive news selection. Quality newspapers created ever more space for lifestyle supplements and what used to be called "service news" and public service media introduced a looser, more direct and personal presentation and opened up their digital and social platforms for the "talk of the day" and celebrity journalism and tried out new narrative formats and immersive journalism (Van Damme et al. 2019).

The broader news selection and less distanced approach no longer triggered the kind of resistance occasioned by previous changes, let alone that they invoked the automatic

accusation of squandering the fundamental norms and values of journalism. As a concept, audience engagement had become part of a new discourse revolving around journalism's survival: "innovation" appeared to have replaced "quality" as key term in boundary work. Consequently, the discourse around journalism and its relation to audiences shifted, yet not in a straightforward way. An analysis of the process of innovation at the first online newspaper in Norway by Steensen (2009) suggests how it involved initially an active perception of the audience as producers rather than consumers: "When dagbladet.no relaxed the gatekeeping work culture, they did so because they wanted the audience to participate on the production side." Two years later audiences apparently did not care about the growing possibilities for user participation (Steensen 2011). Carlson and Usher (2016) revealed how audiences may well be addressed as more equal (as "you"), but instead of as potential partners in producing information they tend to be seen as commercial targets whose "user experience" should be improved (Carlson and Usher 2016: 573). Vos and Singer (2016) and Wagemans, Witschge, and Harbers (2019) arrived at a similar conclusion, illustrating that the growing impact of innovation discourse in journalism showed an increased attention for audiences as targets, but not as interlocutors.

Although Creech and Nadler (2018, 182) argued that innovation discourse threatened the quality of journalism, as it "marginalizes normative concerns about journalism's democratic purpose and rests on an entrepreneurial logic that seeks to dictate digital journalism's broader public virtues", innovation discourse had become so powerful that it appeared to overrule any resistance to reckon with audiences.

A second sign of the shifting anchoring power from quality discourse towards innovation discourse was the redistribution of resources. While quality journalism had always prioritized particular genres (e.g., investigating journalism) and approaches (thorough, looking for truth instead of attention, hearing both sides, etc.), innovative or "entrepreneurial journalism" invested in technology, in artificial intelligence and better algorithms, instead of in extra manpower for journalism (cf. Newman 2018, 2019).

A third sign in this respect pertains to the newly created jobs such as community managers, engagement editors, social media editors, heads of audience engagement, web designers, graphic designers and data-analysts, which aim at strengthening news organizations' ties with news users. Instead of aiming to provide users with a better service and better content, these jobs were meant to increase "engagement figures" such as clicks and time spent and loyalty (Costera Meijer and Groot Kormelink 2021; Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc 2018; Newman 2018).

The fourth sign of shifting anchoring power from quality journalism towards a discourse of innovation is the increasing importance of web metrics as a major source of feedback, which goes at the expense of learning from peers or one's editor. Research shows how news organizations and journalists tend to interpret audience metrics as a sign of people's news interests (Welbers et al. 2016; Lee, Lewis, and Powers 2014; Lee and Tandoc 2017). Although journalistic independence is still highly regarded and many journalists will try to resist the temptation to adapt their professional choices on account of audience metrics, they reluctantly admit that user metrics influence what they write and how they write (Tandoc 2015).

The final sign of shifting anchoring power towards a discourse of innovation may be the most important one: *the public character of the change*, in particular the publicness of the developments involved in measuring audience engagement (cf. Tandoc 2019).

Although ratings, shares and reading figures have always been noticed by journalists, they checked them in private. Since user metrics can be followed by everyone involved, often live on big screens in the newsroom, the *public* character of this ritual practice appears to be able “to create and then anchor new constitutive rules” (Swidler 2001, p. 99). After all, for an anchoring practice to change, public recognition of the change is required, so that, in the words of Ann Swidler (2001, 96), “everyone can see” that everyone else has seen that things have changed. The public display of audience metrics in newsrooms and elsewhere appears to be the straw that broke the camel’s back. Although scholars remain concerned about increasing responsiveness towards audiences, their criticism addresses the uncritical employment of audience metrics (Groot Kormelink and Costera Meijer 2018, 2020), rather than the metrics themselves (Zamith 2018; Belair-Gagnon, Zamith, and Holton 2020).

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

In today’s world, innovation appears to have replaced quality as the dominant concept in metajournalistic discourse. Innovation guards the distribution of financial resources - more investments in technology - and working conditions –more freelance journalists as a flexible workforce. Innovation also works as a distinctive mark of professional status and is at the center of antagonistic labor relations – e.g., the introduction of robot journalism.

The shift from quality discourse to innovation discourse involved an audience turn in journalism which will not be reversed anytime soon, if ever. This shift may have removed particular barriers for communicating with audiences on a more equal basis, but does this also guarantee that they will actually benefit? In the past decades, the perception of audiences has changed from being irrelevant (if not a negative concern) to being main targets. Although the question of how to *reach* audiences seems to be still dominant, news organizations appear to become more open and sensitive towards finding out how to be of *service* to audiences, how to open up their minds, how to broaden their horizon, and how to provide them with a quality experience that will enlighten them with reliable information considered worthwhile. If as scholars we want to keep excellent journalism alive, we should support these initiatives and improve our understanding of the *experience* of quality by news users – when do they actually *feel* informed – and how such experience changes in relation to time, place, need, habit, mood, device, medium and platform. After all, this knowledge will provide important clues for sustaining a vital democracy and supplying a service people will pay for in money and/or attention (see Costera Meijer 2021).

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the constructive and valuable feedback received from two anonymous reviewers. I’m also grateful for the helpful comments of Ton Brouwers, Tim Groot Kormelink and Constanza Gajardo on a previous version of this manuscript.

### **Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).



## References

- Ahva, L., and S. Steensen. 2020. "Theory in Journalism Studies." In *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, edited by Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch, 71–103. London: Routledge.
- Anderson, C. W. 2011. "Between Creative and Quantified Audiences: Web Metrics and Changing Patterns of Newswork in Local US Newsrooms." *Journalism* 12 (5): 550–566.
- Batsell, J. 2015. *Engaged Journalism: Connecting with Digitally Empowered News Audiences*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Belair-Gagnon, V., and A. E. Holton. 2018. "Boundary Work, Interloper Media, and Analytics in Newsrooms: An Analysis of the Roles of web Analytics Companies in News Production." *Digital Journalism* 6 (4): 492–508.
- Belair-Gagnon, V., R. Zamith, and A. E. Holton. 2020. "Role Orientations and Audience Metrics in Newsrooms: An Examination of Journalistic Perceptions and Their Drivers." *Digital Journalism* 8 (3): 347–366.
- Berelson, B. 1949. "What 'Missing the Newspaper' Means." In *Communication Research 1948–1949*, edited by P. F. Lazarsfeld, and F. N. Stanton, 111–129. New York: Harper.
- Blanchett Neheli, N. 2018. "News by Numbers." *Digital Journalism* 6 (8): 1041–1051. DOI: [10.1080/21670811.2018.1504626](https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1504626).
- Boczkowski, P. J., and E. Mitchelstein. 2013. *The News Gap: When the Information Preferences of the Media and the Public Diverge*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Boesman, J., and I. Costera Meijer. 2018. "Nothing but the Facts? Exploring the Discursive Space for Storytelling and Truth-Seeking in Journalism." *Journalism Practice* 12 (8): 997–1007.
- Born, G. 2005. *Uncertain vision: Birt, Dyke and the reinvention of the BBC*. London: Vintage
- Buckingham, D. 2000. *The Making of Citizens: Young People, News and Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Carlson, M. (2016). Metajournalistic Discourse and the Meanings of Journalism: Definitional Control, Boundary Work, and Legitimation. *Communication Theory* 26 (4): 349–368.
- Carlson, M. and Lewis, S.C. (eds.) (2015). *Boundaries of Journalism: Professionalism, Practices and Participation*. London: Routledge.
- Carlson, M., and Lewis, S.C. (2020). "Boundary Work." In *Handbook of Journalism Studies*, 2nd ed., edited by K. Wahl-Jorgensen and T. Hanitzsch, 123–136. London: Routledge.
- Carlson, M., and N. Usher. 2016. "News Startups as Agents of Innovation: For-Profit Digital News Startup Manifestos as Metajournalistic Discourse." *Digital Journalism* 4 (5): 563–581.
- Cherubini, F., and R. K. Nielsen. 2016. Editorial analytics: How news media are developing and using audience data and metrics. Available at SSRN 2739328.
- Cohen, N. S. 2019. "At Work in the Digital Newsroom." *Digital Journalism* 7 (5): 571–591.
- Cornia, A., A. Sehl, and R. K. Nielsen. 2020. "'We no Longer Live in a Time of Separation': A Comparative Analysis of how Editorial and Commercial Integration Became a Norm." *Journalism* 21 (2): 172–190.
- Costera Meijer, I. 2001. "The Public Quality of Popular Journalism: Developing a Normative Framework." *Journalism Studies* 2 (2): 189–205.
- Costera Meijer, I. 2003. "What is Quality Television News? A Plea for Extending the Professional Repertoire of Newsmakers." *Journalism Studies* 4 (1): 15–29.
- Costera Meijer, I. 2005. "Impact or Content? Ratings Versus Quality in Public Broadcasting." *European Journal of Communication* 20 (1): 27–53.
- Costera Meijer, I. 2006. *De toekomst van het nieuws: hoe kunnen journalisten en programmamakers tegemoetkomen aan de wensen en verlangens van tieners en twintigers op het gebied van onafhankelijke en pluriforme informatievoorziening?* Amsterdam: Otto Cramwinckel.
- Costera Meijer, I. 2007. "The Paradox of Popularity: how Young People Experience the News." *Journalism Studies* 8 (1): 96–116.
- Costera Meijer, I. 2008. "Checking, Snacking and Bodysnatching: How Young People Use the News and Implications for Public Service Media Journalism." In *From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Media*, edited by Gregory Ferrell Lowe and Jo Bardoel, 167–186. Gøthenborg: Nordicom.



- Costera Meijer, I. 2010a. "Democratizing Journalism? Realizing the Citizen's Agenda for Local News Media." *Journalism Studies* 11 (3): 327–342.
- Costera Meijer, I. 2010b. "Quality Taste or Tasting Quality? Excellence In Public Service Media from an Audience Perspective", in *The Public in Public Service Media (RIPE, 4)* edited by Gregory Ferrell Lowe, 189–210. Göteborg: Nordicom
- Costera Meijer, I. 2013a. "Valuable Journalism: The Search for Quality from the Vantage Point of the User." *Journalism* 14 (6): 754–770. DOI: [10.1177/1464884912455899](https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884912455899).
- Costera Meijer, I. 2013b. "When News Hurts. The Promise of Participatory Storytelling for Urban Problem Neighbourhoods." *Journalism Studies* 14 (1): 13–28. [10.1080/1461670X.2012.662398](https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2012.662398).
- Costera Meijer, I. 2020. "Journalism, Audiences and News Experience." In *Handbook of Journalism Studies* 2nd ed., edited by Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, and Thomas Hanitzsch, 730–761. London: Routledge.
- Costera Meijer, I. 2021. What is Valuable Journalism? Three Key Experiences. *forthcoming*.
- Costera Meijer, I., and H. P. Bijleveld. 2016. "Valuable Journalism: Measuring News Quality from a User's Perspective." *Journalism Studies* 17 (7): 827–839.
- Costera Meijer, I., and T. Groot Kormelink. 2021. *Changing News Use*. London: Routledge.
- Creech, Brian, and Anthony M. Nadler. 2018. "Post-industrial fog: Reconsidering Innovation in Visions of Journalism's Future." *Journalism* 19 (2): 182–199.
- Cushion, S. 2012. *The Democratic Value of News: Why Public Service Media Matter*. London, NY: Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Ferrer-Conill, R., and E. C. Tandoc Jr. 2018. "The Audience-Oriented Editor: Making Sense of the Audience in the Newsroom." *Digital Journalism* 6 (4): 436–453.
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., and A. Hinsley. 2013. "The Press Versus the Public: What is "Good Journalism?"" *Journalism Studies* 14 (6): 926–942.
- Groot Kormelink, T., and I. Costera Meijer. 2015. "Truthful or Engaging?" *Surpassing the Dilemma of Reality Versus Storytelling in Journalism. Digital Journalism* 3 (2): 158–174. [10.1080/21670811.2014.1002514](https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.1002514).
- Groot Kormelink, T., and I. Costera Meijer. 2018. "What Clicks Actually Mean: Exploring Digital News User Practices." *Journalism* 19 (5): 668–683. doi:[10.1177/1464884916688290](https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916688290).
- Groot Kormelink, T., and I. Costera Meijer. 2020. "A User Perspective on Time Spent: Temporal Experiences of Everyday News Use." *Journalism Studies* 21 (2): 271–286.
- Haasbroek, N.. 2000. "Journaalplan." *Internal Memorandum*, February 2000.
- Haasbroek, N. 2004. *Journaaljaren*. Vassallucci: Amsterdam.
- Hanitzsch, T., F. Hanusch, J. Ramaprasad, and A. S. de Beer, eds. 2019. *Worlds of Journalism: Journalistic Cultures Around the Globe*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Harmon, W., and C. H. Holman. 2003. *A Handbook to Literature*. 9th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Harrington, S. 2008. "Popular News in the Twenty-First Century. Time for a new Critical Approach?" *Journalism* 9 (3): 266–284.
- Heijne, B. 2013. "Geef ons feiten [Give us facts]". Debate, January 29, Studio 21, Mediapark, Hilversum, the Netherlands.
- Karlsson, M., and C. Clerwall. 2019. "Cornerstones in Journalism." *Journalism Studies* 20 (8): 1184–1199. DOI: [10.1080/1461670X.2018.1499436](https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1499436).
- Kristensen, N. N., and K. Riegert. 2017. *Why Cultural Journalism in the Nordic Countries?* Gothenburg: Nordicom.
- Kunelius, R. 2006. "Good Journalism." *Journalism Studies* 7 (5): 671–690. DOI: [10.1080/14616700600890323](https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700600890323).
- Lacy, S., and T. Rosenstiel. 2015. *Defining and measuring quality journalism*. Rutgers School of Communication and Information.
- Laroes, H. 2005. "Het NOS-Journaal en de wereld van de kijker." In *Op zoek naar vertrouwen in de pers*, edited by T. Jansen, and N. Drok, 32–38. Amsterdam: Boom.
- Laroes, H. October, 2002. Ten Aanval. Discussienota NOS-Journaal. (in: NOS archive).
- Lee, A. M., S. C. Lewis, and M. Powers. 2014. "Audience Clicks and News Placement: A Study of Time-Lagged Influence in Online Journalism." *Communication Research* 41 (4): 505–530.

- Lee, E. J., and E. C. Tandoc Jr. 2017. "When News Meets the Audience: How Audience Feedback Online Affects News Production and Consumption." *Human Communication Research* 43 (4): 436–449.
- LinkedIn. 2020. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/colinvanhoek/?originalSubdomain=nl>.
- Loosen, W. 2015. "The Notion of the "Blurring Boundaries" Journalism as a (de-) Differentiated Phenomenon." *Digital Journalism* 3 (1): 68–84.
- Lowe, G. F., and J. Bardoel, eds. 2009. *From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Media*. Gotenburg: Nordicom.
- Meier, K. 2019. "Quality in Journalism." In Vos, T. P., Hanusch, F. (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of journalism studies*, 1–8. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Mellado, C., and A. Van Dalen. 2014. "Between Rhetoric and Practice: Explaining the gap Between Role Conception and Performance in Journalism." *Journalism Studies* 15 (6): 859–878.
- Mindich, D. T. Z. 2005. *Tuned Out: Why Americans Under 40 Don't Follow the News*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nelson, J. L. 2019. "The next media regime: The pursuit of 'audience engagement' in journalism." *Journalism* 1464884919862375.
- Newman, N. 2018. *Journalism, Media and Technology Trends and Predictions 2018*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, pp. 1–50.
- Newman, N. 2019. *Journalism, Media, and Technology Trends and Predictions 2019*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, pp. 1–46.
- Newman, N., R. Fletcher, A. Kalogeropoulos, and R. Nielsen. 2019. *Reuters Institute Digital News Report (Vol. 2019)*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.
- Nguyen, A. 2013. "Online News Audiences: The Challenges of web Metrics." In *Journalism: New Challenges*, edited by S. Allan, and K. Fowler-Watt, 146–161. Poole: CJCR: Centre for Journalism & Communication Research, Bournemouth University.
- Nieman, R. 2007. *Is er nog Nieuws? Verhalen Vanachter de Schermen*. Amsterdam: NWA Amsterdam.
- Paxman, J. 2007. The James MacTaggart Memorial Lecture. *The Guardian*, August 24.
- Picard, R. G., ed. 2000. Measuring media content, quality, and diversity approaches and issues in content research. Turku: Media Economics, Content and Diversity Project and Media Group, Business Research and Development Centre, Turku School of Economics and Business Administration.
- Stand van de Nieuwsmedia. 2017. <https://www.svdj.nl/nieuws/meer-bereik-digitale-kanalen-stand-van-nieuwsmedia-2017/>.
- Steensen, S. 2009. "What's Stopping Them? Towards a Grounded Theory of Innovation in Online Journalism." *Journalism Studies* 10 (6): 821–836.
- Steensen, S. 2011. "Online Journalism and the Promises of new Technology: A Critical Review and Look Ahead." *Journalism Studies* 12 (3): 311–327.
- Strömbäck, J. 2005. "In Search of a Standard: Four Models of Democracy and Their Normative Implications for Journalism." *Journalism Studies* 6 (3): 331–345. doi:10.1080/14616700500131950.
- Swidler, A. 2001. "What Anchors Cultural Practices." In *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, edited by T. S. Schatzki, K. Knorr Cetina, and E. Von Savigny, 83–101. London: Routledge.
- Tandoc Jr, E. C. 2015. "Why web Analytics Click: Factors Affecting the Ways Journalists use Audience Metrics." *Journalism Studies* 16 (6): 782–799.
- Tandoc Jr, E. C. 2019. *Analyzing Analytics: Disrupting Journalism One Click at a Time*. London: Routledge.
- Tandoc Jr, E. C., and R. J. Thomas. 2015. "The Ethics of web Analytics: Implications of Using Audience Metrics in News Construction." *Digital Journalism* 3 (2): 243–258.
- Van Damme, K., A. All, L. De Marez, and S. Van Leuven. 2019. "360° Video Journalism: An Experimental Study on the Effect of 360° Video Journalism on Presence and Distant Suffering." *Journalism Studies* 20 (14): 2053–2076. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2018.1561208.
- Van Der Wurff, R., and K. Schoenbach. 2014. "Civic and Citizen Demands of News Media and Journalists: What Does the Audience Expect from Good Journalism?" *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 91 (3): 433–451.

- Vos, T. P., and J. Singer. 2016. "Media Discourse About Entrepreneurial Journalism: Implications for Journalistic Capital." *Journalism Practice* 10: 143–159. doi:[10.1080/17512786.2015.1124730](https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2015.1124730).
- Wagemans, A., T. Witschge, and F. Harbers. 2019. "Impact as Driving Force of Journalistic and Social Change." *Journalism* 20 (4): 552–567.
- Webster, J. G. 2014. *The Marketplace of Attention: How Audiences Take Shape in a Digital age*. Boston: MIT Press.
- Welbers, K., W. Van Atteveldt, J. Kleinnijenhuis, N. Ruigrok, and J. Schaper. 2016. "News Selection Criteria in the Digital age: Professional Norms Versus Online Audience Metrics." *Journalism* 17 (8): 1037–1053.
- Wendelin, M., I. Engelmann, and J. Neubarth. 2017. "User Rankings and Journalistic News Selection: Comparing News Values and Topics." *Journalism Studies* 18 (2): 135–153.
- Ytreberg, E. 2001. "Moving out of the Inverted Pyramid: Narratives and Descriptions in Television News." *Journalism Studies* 2 (3): 357–371.
- Zamith, R. 2018. "Quantified Audiences in News Production: A Synthesis and Research Agenda." *Digital Journalism* 6 (4): 418–435.