



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Adapting to Twitter: the entanglement of journalistic values and online personas

Baftiu, D.; Dodds Rojas, T.

Citation

Baftiu, D., & Dodds Rojas, T. (2023). Adapting to Twitter: the entanglement of journalistic values and online personas. *Journalism Studies*, 24(10), 1295-1315. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2023.2209812

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3631525>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



Adapting to Twitter: The Entanglement of Journalistic Values and Online Personas

Doruntina Baftiu & Tomás Dodds

To cite this article: Doruntina Baftiu & Tomás Dodds (2023): Adapting to Twitter: The Entanglement of Journalistic Values and Online Personas, Journalism Studies, DOI: [10.1080/1461670X.2023.2209812](https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2023.2209812)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2023.2209812>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 10 May 2023.



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



Article views: 661



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Adapting to Twitter: The Entanglement of Journalistic Values and Online Personas

Doruntina Baftiu^a and Tomás Dodds^b

^aAmsterdam School of Communication Research, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands;

^bLeiden University Centre for Linguistics (LUCL), Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

As more journalists rely on social media platforms like Twitter to gather information and report the news, scholars have identified an increasing tension between traditional journalistic values and reporters' construction of online personas. Moreover, networked journalists build these mediated personas—following platforms' affordances—to better engage with fellow journalists and algorithmic audiences. Drawing on data from 15 in-depth interviews with Kosovar Albanian political journalists and editors, this article offers a unique perspective by examining the negotiation process between professional standards and journalists' online personas on Twitter. Via their online personas, influenced by the audience and the platforms' affordances and logic, journalists and editors have given rise to new role conceptions and standards in local political journalism. The results show that political journalists and editors in Kosovo view Twitter as a platform where they can display both professional and personal layers of their identity. Furthermore, they feel unrestricted by journalistic standards, taking on roles outside the traditional scope of journalism: as good citizens, they express opinions on political issues; as activists, they advocate for personally meaningful causes; but they also see themselves as mordant critics of political figures.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 9 August 2022

Accepted 26 April 2023

KEYWORDS

Kosovo; online personas; journalistic values; political journalism; social media; Twitter

Introduction

Understanding how journalists use digital platforms to report the news is ever more relevant as traditional journalistic norms and values are challenged by social media's algorithmic logic (Hedman 2015; Nielsen, Cornia, and Kalogeropoulos 2016).

One platform that requires special attention is Twitter. Data show that journalists and news media accounts make up almost 25% of Twitter's verified users (Kamps 2019). Twitter itself reported that 55% of its users get their news from this platform, while journalists between the ages of 18–29 report that "Twitter is the social media site they use most or second most in their job" (Twitter News 2022). Today, Twitter provides a platform

CONTACT Tomás Dodds  t.dodds.rojas@hum.leidenuniv.nl

© 2023 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 terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

for journalists to “find content, contact new sources and confirm facts” (Hernández-Fuentes and Monnier 2022, 2) while also allowing journalists in non-democratic contexts to circumvent press restrictions and bypass state-sponsored censorship (Peko, Meyer, and Myssayeva 2019). Indeed, this platform has afforded journalists new possibilities for gathering and reporting information (Djerf-Pierre, Ghersetti, and Hedman 2016). However, Twitter has also fostered a growing interdependency between itself and journalists that use the platform (Helberger 2020; Molyneux and McGregor 2021). By doing so, Twitter has introduced a conflict between reporters’ professional values and online personas (Mellado and Hermida 2021).

The nature of journalists’ online personas—the identities they consciously create and present on social media (Mellado and Alfaro 2020; Molyneux, Holton, and Lewis 2018)—depends on the platform’s logic (Hermida and Mellado 2020). For example, journalists are compelled on Twitter to disseminate information in concise messages and engage in the platform’s “opinionated ambience” (Coddington, Molyneux, and Lawrence 2014, 392).

Previous research has shed light on the relationship between journalism and digital platforms by showing how journalists either adjust their traditional norms to fit social media logic (Hermida and Mellado 2020) or adapt social media to serve their traditional norms (Hanusch 2018; Simon 2019). However, these studies have been mainly limited to content analyses of journalists’ social media activity (Homoláč and Mrázková 2019), thus missing the critical process of rationalization and the narratives that journalists tell regarding their use of social media platforms, specifically Twitter. In addition, surveys and interviews have been conducted (Djerf-Pierre, Ghersetti, and Hedman 2016; Weaver and Willnat 2016), but while most have focused on how journalists use these platforms, this article aims to add to the current literature by showing why they do so and how they understand their actions. Moreover, this article also sheds light on the tensions between journalistic values and social media behavior that reporters experience while using Twitter and how this process impacts how they construct online personas.

Lewis and Molyneux (2018) identify another critical problem with the current literature: a need for more diverse perspectives. Studies on journalists’ social media use have mainly focused on newsrooms across the Global North. By developing theories based on the experiences of Western journalists, scholars have largely ignored salient issues and different practices in other parts of the world (Hanitzsch 2019). This article provides new perspectives by analyzing the case of Kosovo. Although Kosovo is considered part of the Western Balkans, the context in which journalists enact their roles differs from that in more dominant Western countries. Kosovo, for example, is the only country in Europe that no longer has any published print newspapers (Hertel and Kliever 2021). However, it boasts a higher rate of internet access than the EU average, illustrating the importance of online news media and platforms for disseminating information.

Nevertheless, this heavy reliance on digital media has negatively affected the Kosovar news media industry. Previous local research on this issue has shown that social media threatens journalism’s ethical and professional values as Kosovar reporters sacrifice accuracy for prompt reporting (Sabedini 2019). Furthermore, the journalistic culture in Kosovo presents a unique opportunity for this research. After the end of the civil conflict in the late 1990s, Kosovo’s newly democratic society is characterized by a high degree of political cynicism and distrust towards executive institutions (Camaj 2014). As Johnson argues, although Kosovar society has unrestricted access to a diverse range of media, the country

is still dealing with problems “relating to the implementation and enforcement of laws, self-censorship that results from a fear of political backlash or threats, a heavily saturated market in which outlets rely on alternate revenue streams, and [...] heavily politicized reporting” (Johnson 2012, 154). Indeed, for Sorge (2012), Kosovo’s media system presents some underperforming qualities because the international development strategy put in place by intergovernmental organizations failed to secure economic sustainability and political autonomy for the media system.

Nevertheless, research on the Kosovo context has only investigated social media’s effects on Kosovar journalists’ reporting, overlooking their behavior on social media platforms. This article addresses these gaps in the literature by investigating the following questions: (RQ1) How do Kosovar Albanian political journalists and editors negotiate professional standards and practices on Twitter? (RQ2) What type of online personas do Kosovar Albanian political journalists and editors express on Twitter? And (RQ3) How do Twitter characteristics interfere with Kosovar Albanian political journalists’ online personas? We explore these questions by interviewing 15 Kosovar Albanian political journalists and editors.

Literature Review

The rise of social media has brought concerns about its impact on journalism, not only on the profession’s practice but also on its meaning (Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013; Hermida 2012). Linked with an intensification of the de-professionalization process (Splichal and Dahlgren 2016), social media usage has made journalism’s vague boundaries “increasingly fluid and contingent” (Ottovordemgentschenfelde 2017, 65). Journalists’ identities are part of these changes, as platforms such as Twitter enable them to shape their online personas (Hermida and Mellado 2020; Robinson 2006).

In this article, online personas are defined as the identities journalists construct on a given platform. They are often “organized around profile photos, status updates, and short but carefully crafted biographical statements, among other things” (Molyneux, Holton, and Lewis 2018, 1386). The use of online personas on social media platforms has revealed tensions between the personal and the professional as they coexist in journalists’ online activities (Mellado and Alfaro 2020).

The increasing number of journalists creating profiles on social media sites has further exacerbated the entanglement of journalistic values and online personas. Values in journalism are constantly challenged and disputed because they depend on the situational context in which they occur (Hanitzsch et al. 2011). Indeed, reporters’ roles are far from static. They are “situational, dynamic, and fluid” (Mellado 2020), and their definitions must be understood and studied within their particular context. This idea reinforces Hanitzsch and Vos (2018) argument that journalistic roles are negotiated within newsrooms rather than being identical across different organizations.

However, this negotiation process has been disrupted as new digital technologies made their way into news media, bringing new economic demands or creating the need to hire different professional backgrounds. As a result, according to Carlson and Lewis (2015), we can now observe “blurring boundaries” in the newsmaking processes. At the core of questions about appropriate journalistic behavior, or even what counts as journalism, is the battle over symbolic boundaries that define practices, knowledge,

methods, and, perhaps most important, values. According to Ryfe, this is essential because these values often influence journalists' decision-making processes about "what a journalist's role is, what her or his obligations are, [and] what values and commitments are appropriate" (2006, 205): Are journalists supposed to give their personal opinion online? Are they allowed to criticize a politician they disagree on a personal level? Would doing so affect their professional credibility?

The current adoption of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google has, at times, weakened the negotiation of professional values inside the newsroom since third-party platforms "have evolved beyond their role as distribution channels and now control what audiences see and who gets paid for their attention, and even what format and type of journalism flourished" (Bell and Owen 2017). Moreover, the control over audience attention has allowed these platforms to influence the way information is produced since it created a need inside the newsroom to use digital reporters that feed the algorithm as constructed by the platform to reach audiences (Dodds et al. 2023). In this regard, Schjøtt Hansen and Hartley (2021) note that this negotiation of professional values signals an imbalance of power inside the newsroom, now also influenced by external third-party platforms.

As journalists' personal and professional lives mingle on social media, traditional norms and practices are increasingly questioned (Canter 2015). Twitter, in particular, has challenged the standards of impartiality and neutrality as journalists online prefer to tell the truth as they observe it (Agarwal and Barthel 2015) and give value-laden statements (Hagemeyer 2011). Previous research has shown that such humorous and opinionated content is favored on Twitter (Lawrence et al. 2014; Mourão 2015). As the algorithm running platforms like Twitter favors this type of content, some reporters have decided to alienate themselves from the traditional norm of objectivity in journalism or the idea that their judgment is not influenced by personal feelings (Agarwal and Barthel 2015; Robinson 2006), preferring instead to highlight transparency in the methodology of their work and their personal opinions. In turn, transparency allows for more connection with the audience, thus building trusting relationships and increasing engagement metrics between reporters and the public (Diehl, Ardèvol-Abreu, and Gil de Zúñiga 2019).

The Adaptation Process

Despite the research on evolving journalistic norms and practices, scholars and journalists have differing views on the pervasiveness of Twitter's logic for journalism practice. The discussion of traditional values and platform logics' adaptation to each other has brought forward three main approaches.

First, the group defined as skeptical (Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013; Mellado and Alfaro 2020) or traditional (Reich 2005) consists of those media workers resisting the influences of the platform and maintaining traditional norms and practices. As age and type of work have been shown to impact how journalists perceive and use Twitter significantly, older print journalists mainly belong to this first group, which remains a minority (Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013). They disagree that journalism must be redefined and its role in society reconsidered (Hedman 2015). However, they may still be active on Twitter due to pressure from their news organizations or colleagues (Duffy and Knight 2019) or for personal rather than professional output (Mellado and Alfaro 2020).

Second, the adapted (Mellado and Alfaro 2020) or pragmatic conformists (Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013) consist of journalists who integrate social media into their work but do so while maintaining most traditional values. Most journalists support this approach, which has been embraced by journalists of all age groups and workplaces (Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013). This approach has been termed “normalizing,” a description first applied in the field of political communication (Davis 1999) and later introduced to journalism studies by Singer (2005). It states that journalists generally adapt their social media use to fit existing norms and practices, regardless of some deviations, such as sharing humorous and opinionated content (Bentivegna and Marchetti 2018). Such variations are inevitable as journalists adapt to social media logic. Thus, normalization is considered a two-way process (Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013). Research has also shown that this phenomenon is not as significant in political journalists and editors’ activity on Twitter (Parmelee 2013). Political journalists are more reluctant to give up their gatekeeping role and embrace transparency (Lawrence et al. 2014), and humor is mainly expressed through retweets rather than original tweets (Molyneux 2015; Mourão, Diehl, and Vasudevan 2016).

Finally, the group of “redefiners” (Mellado and Alfaro 2020) consists of those redefining journalistic norms and practices through social media. Younger journalists, those working in digital media, and those more active online are likelier to embrace this approach (Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013). The adaptation to Twitter’s “informal, conversational, opinionated—and, yes, often witty and satirical too” (Holton and Lewis 2011, 14) logic from younger journalists suggests that the redefiners will shape the future of journalism rather than the skeptics. While this may cause concern for journalists and scholars who attach great significance to traditional norms, Mourão (2015) argues that the public can benefit from journalists’ sharing their opinions and deconstructing political messages. Thus, our first research question aims to answer how Kosovar Albanian political journalists and editors negotiate their professional standards and practices on Twitter.

Nevertheless, new journalistic roles, defined as “the purposes of the profession that journalists conceive as more important at the individual level” (Mellado, Hellmueller, and Donsbach 2016, 6), have emerged regardless of the approach certain journalists subscribe to. To understand what roles surface in Kosovar Albanian political journalists’ and editors’ narratives, this article will also examine our second research question: What type of online personas do Kosovar Albanian political journalists and editors express on Twitter?

The identities self-expressed by journalists on social media are influenced by environmental and social-psychological factors (Molyneux, Lewis, and Holton 2019). Social media logics and affordances restrict and push journalists to work in a specific way, thus functioning as a middleman between journalists, their ideals, and the audience (Carlson 2018). Affordances in social media platforms are defined as “features that make certain action possible” (Graves 2007, 332). For instance, Twitter has given journalists a platform to share information about current events, especially after its tagline changed from “What are you doing?” to “What’s happening?” (Reisinger 2009). Hermida and Mellado (2020) observe that, due to the conversational, informal nature of tweets, journalists’ tweets in times of breaking news are more personal and emotional and have more grammatical errors than would be allowed in traditional media. Furthermore, the Twitter audience prefers humorous and opinionated content (Holton and Lewis 2011).

On the other hand, Social Media Policies (SMPs), guidelines from news organizations for journalists on social media, seek to balance the pressure from social media logic and audiences. Duffy and Knight (2019) observe that SMP's concern is controlling how social media is integrated into journalists' practice rather than whether it should be used. SMPs encourage journalists to use their social media accounts to promote their work and their news organization as a form of branding while expecting them to abide by traditional norms such as impartiality and neutrality. As these norms go against the nature of tweets, SMPs also provide a basis for news organizations to discipline journalists that do not comply with them (Tobitt 2021).

Social media guidelines, platform affordances, and logics are not the only decisive factors shaping journalists' online activity. Journalists' professional values and opinions on the role of journalism also impact their online behavior (Mellado and Alfaro 2020). The platforms' logics have varying effects on journalists—women tend to have unique content (Hedman 2016), and veteran “tweeters” indulge more in opinion-sharing and humorous content (Holton and Lewis 2011; Mourão, Diehl, and Vasudevan 2016). This inconsistent use of Twitter by journalists suggests that not all will conform to the platform's logic or the guidelines provided by their organizations. Journalists are considered “by nature, witty writers who love a turn of phrase, keen observers with an often cynical eye” (Molyneux 2015, 930). Thus, their activity on Twitter—a platform that motivates informal, opinionated, and satirical content (Holton and Lewis 2011)—challenges traditional journalistic norms and practices. These deviations can come from journalists' attempts to connect with the audience or tell the truth in ways that journalistic standards do not allow (Agarwal and Barthel 2015; Coddington, Molyneux, and Lawrence 2014). Thus, we aim to explore our third research question: How do Twitter characteristics interfere with Kosovar Albanian political journalists' online personas?

Methodology

To understand how journalists perceive the relationship between their professional norms and their online personas on Twitter, the lead author for this article conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 Kosovar Albanian political journalists and editors from ten news media companies during April and May of 2022. The interviews were conducted in Albanian and were, on average, 31 min long. They took place either inside newsrooms or public places. The semi-structured interview form, the one most used in qualitative studies (Kitchin and Tate 2013), was chosen because it provides the best of both worlds: the interviewer can guide the conversation, but the participant also has the opportunity to raise important issues that were not anticipated (Braun and Clarke 2013). Face-to-face interviews were chosen as the answers given in such interviews are usually of a higher quality and less prone to a social desirability bias than surveys (Bryman 2012). The interview guide (see Appendix A) was prepared before the interviews, which were then recorded and transcribed. Keeping recordings of the interviews raised ethical considerations, but we ensured that the recordings were anonymized and remained confidential.

Political journalists and editors had to fulfill two further criteria for the sample selection. First, they had to have a Twitter account with original tweets, proving they were

at least somewhat active on the platform. On the other hand, the sample also included journalists who were more skeptical of the platform than enthusiastic daily tweeters, thus encapsulating a broader range of the negotiation process between professional standards and online personas. To check for this, we looked at journalists' and editors' profiles before contacting them to participate in the study.

Additionally, potential participants had to work for a relatively popular organization. Hermida (2012) argues that even when journalists try to build their personal identities online, the public perceives them as representatives of the news organization for which they work. Since journalists working for more popular news media companies are more likely to be recognized by the audience, their activity on Twitter is more consequential for their news media's reputation and credibility, presenting another conflict. Thus, all political journalists and editors selected for this article worked for news media organizations with 90 thousand or more likes on Facebook. Facebook, rather than Twitter, was chosen as the criteria considering that it is the leading platform news media organizations in Kosovo use for publishing content. This was made evident during the interviews by the lack of Twitter accounts for three of the ten news media companies represented in the sample and the difference in the Twitter followings of the other seven companies. Although news organizations seem to prioritize the use of Facebook for audience engagement, not all the journalists interviewed here have active, open Facebook accounts, which we believe tells of journalists' perceptions about using these platforms.

The sample comprised ten men and five women, ten working for digital media companies and five for broadcast media companies, as seen in Table 1. All participants were political journalists and editors. Political journalists were chosen because they are more likely to be pressured by their employees to keep their personal opinions private (Molyneux and Mourão 2019), while users on Twitter are encouraged to speak their minds—thus making political journalists on Twitter an interesting case to study. Furthermore, journalists share their political opinions on their personal Twitter accounts. This has more implications for political journalists, who then must report on the same issues in their day jobs (Tandoc and Vos 2016).

In a similar method to the one used by Agarwal and Barthel (2015), this article's lead author started by reaching out to journalists she had had prior contact with, as she is a

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample.

Participant code	Gender	Occupation	Media type
P1	Female	Editor	Broadcast
P2	Male	Journalist	Digital
P3	Male	Editor	Broadcast
P4	Male	Journalist	Digital
P5	Male	Journalist	Digital
P6	Female	Editor	Digital
P7	Female	Editor	Broadcast
P8	Male	Editor	Broadcast
P9	Female	Journalist	Digital
P10	Male	Editor	Digital
P11	Male	Editor	Digital
P12	Male	Editor	Digital
P13	Female	Journalist	Broadcast
P14	Male	Journalists	Digital
P15	Male	Journalists	Digital

journalist herself, and continued with a snowball sampling technique: asking them to suggest other journalists. Participants were contacted via email and direct messages on Twitter. Afterward, and drawing from Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory approach, the most salient themes were identified through three consecutive steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Bryman 2012; Corbin and Strauss 1990). This approach allowed us to break up the textual data from the interviews into codifiable parts. Then, during the axial coding, we connected the codes we obtained during step one and created categories that tie the codes together. Afterward, with selective coding, we tied up those different categories into three main new role conceptions (good citizens, activists, and mordant critics). The coding (see Appendix B) was done manually as the interviews were conducted and transcribed in Albanian. No software was found to process the Albanian dialect used in Kosovo and by the participants in this study. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, we followed the suggestion of Bryman (2012) and used respondent validation. Two member checks were conducted with participants. They were sent a draft of the article and a short summary of the results. They confirmed no notable discrepancies between the findings and their statements. However, some participants remarked that some of the themes were more characteristic of them than others. We address this when presenting the results by noting differences between participants. As those themes are presented in the next section, participants will be referred to anonymously as P1 to P15 to safeguard journalists' and editors' privacy.

Results

This article explores the negotiation process between professional standards and online personas in Kosovar Albanian political journalists' and editors' Twitter profiles. It does so by investigating how journalists treat professional norms in their Twitter profiles, what roles they assume, and what considerations they keep in mind when they tweet. The first subsection addresses RQ1, showing that journalists and editors use their Twitter accounts to promote their professional careers. They do not believe that their content should be dictated by professional norms as these are their personal accounts. In this sense, they feel free to build personas online, through which they take on other roles atypical of traditional political journalists—roles detailed in the following subsection, which answers RQ2. The final subsection shows that journalists and editors mainly consider the audience, Twitter's ambiance, and their media organizations when considering what to tweet. How Twitter characteristics help to shape these practices answers RQ3.

The Symbiosis Between the Personal and the Professional

The tension between the personal and the professional, as the literature terms it, is not evident in political journalists' and editors' minds. Rather than perceiving tension, they consider their Twitter accounts and the personas they have created as the perfect habitats for symbiosis between the personal and the professional. This was made evident by statements such as that made by P14, who said, "Twitter can be used in a strictly professional way, but it can also be used in a very personal way. Maybe we can only call it a personal-professional platform" (4 May 2022), and that made by P7: "I can only describe it as 'alive'; it is a mix of everything: my thoughts when I am feeling down, but also a place to promote

articles” (4 May 2022). Regarding RQ1, one journalist described being “denuded of my journalistic career” (P13, 9 May 2022). Participants maintained that they respect professional norms and values while reporting but that moral values guide their Twitter activity. These moral values included not being offensive, not mentioning names, not mocking users that are not public figures, and not engaging in discrimination and hate speech. Most journalists maintained that even though they use the platform to promote their careers and for information gathering, their Twitter accounts remain personal—though they keep in mind that they are journalists. As stated by P10:

Discrimination should never be allowed. A journalist shouldn’t be allowed to express sexist, racist, or homophobic opinions. A journalist shouldn’t be allowed to make fun of people who aren’t part of the public sphere. But it’s different when it comes to politicians who are public figures. There should be no restrictions when it comes to them. (3 May 2022)

Journalists’ and editors’ narratives illustrate how Twitter has made the symbiosis between the personal and the professional possible: they gain audiences for their personal profiles through their careers and simultaneously promote their journalistic profiles through closer connections to readers. All journalists and editors mentioned not only the opportunities to promote their work on the platform but also the chance to promote themselves as people—Twitter was referred to as a “window of opportunity to get to know people and to show them a reflection of who I am” (P6, 7 May 2022). While all journalists and editors agreed that the professional aspect consists of promoting their work and themselves as journalists and editors, there was a broader range of uses they described as personal. Some defined the personal aspect of their account as tweets expressing their opinions on political issues and events. However, others were focused on tweets showing their personal lives with partners, family members, hobbies, and passions. All are part of the Twitter personas they have created on the platform, as described by P11, who said, “One glance at your Twitter profile is all that a person needs to know who you are, through looking at what you post” (6 May 2022).

Regardless of which group journalists and editors belonged to, they did not consider the personal parts of their profiles damaging their professional careers. On the contrary, political journalists and editors in Kosovo seem to have embraced the perspective of redefiners (Mellado and Alfaro 2020) as they believe that it is beneficial for the audience to know what the person behind an article thinks and what standpoint they come from when they report, as expressed by P4:

Every citizen has the right to know who is the person that is reporting and what they think about the issue they are reporting on because they are the most credible person to give an opinion about an issue that they have been following so closely. (29 April 2022)

As journalists embrace this approach, new role conceptions—described in the following subsection—emerge from our grounded theory approach to the interviews conducted.

New Journalistic Roles

Three leading roles were identified as predominant during the coding process: ordinary citizens, activists, and mordant critics. Of course, journalists and editors knew the risks they took when shedding their journalistic profiles and assuming these roles on their Twitter accounts, as their audience might use the accounts to discredit them. Still,

interestingly, some of them explicitly mentioned that they are more careful to safeguard the reputation of the news media companies they represent while reporting and through their profiles than to preserve their credibility.

Additionally, the three roles identified were not perceived as mutually exclusive—journalists and editors indicated that they assume these roles interchangeably and understand them as roles they can enact on Twitter due to the freedom that a more personal platform gives them. Moreover, these roles were selected from various roles that journalists and editors mentioned or hinted at during the interviews. Finally, they were chosen due to the novelty of the ideas and the specificity of their appearance only on social media platforms—compared to, for example, the watchdog role and the disseminator role that journalists and editors also mentioned as parts of their journalistic careers. However, since journalists and editors expressed that they “have a life outside the news office and a personality outside the photo and name that appears under the news media logo” (P11, 6 May 2022), and considering the focus of this article on journalists’ and editors’ Twitter personas, the three themes described below were selected.

One of the leading roles journalists assume on their Twitter accounts is that of ordinary citizens. Thus, they can express their opinions on political issues, which they see as part of their civic duties. P3 stressed that journalists, just like all other citizens, should be able to enjoy the right of free speech (5 May 2022), while P10 also stated, “We are just ordinary citizens. We do not have any political power, so we should be treated like any other citizen” (3 May 2022). Identifying as ordinary citizens “who should have an opinion on issues that the country is dealing with” (P7, 4 May 2022) allows journalists and editors to ignore the limitations that professional norms and values present. This leads to, as previous research has indicated, sharing opinions and humor in ways that neutrality and impartiality would not allow. This is clear in the narratives of P4, who said, “I often want to say something I cannot write in an article. That is the difference: in tweets, I can add something that I was not able to write in my article since Twitter gives you that freedom” (29 April 2022).

Secondly, taking civic duty to a more extreme measure, journalists and editors act as activists through their Twitter personas. They described putting initiatives in motion, organizing petitions, and bringing awareness to personally essential topics and issues through their Twitter profiles. As discussed earlier, this was also observed in the stress they placed on human rights and moral issues as criteria for their tweets. Two main themes were detected in their narratives when discussing their motivation for assuming this role: orienting audiences and influencing political leaders. Participants mentioned that cases where journalists’ discussions had directly impacted politics had appeared on their social media profiles. One such case was that of stray dogs, mentioned by P2:

The issue of stray dogs in the city has been discussed by journalists on social media way more than it has been reported on mainstream media, but still, it has become an issue that is now being taken seriously by the city council. (29 April 2022)

Conversely, journalists and editors also keep their audience in mind when assuming this role: they want to emancipate and educate their audiences, developing their critical thinking. When discussing this role, P10 said,

I believe in the profile of a politically active activist journalist who cares about solving citizens' problems and who is not just the middleman between the public and the politicians. I believe journalists have a critical role in shaping public debates. (3 May 2022)

Finally, the role of the mordant critic encapsulates journalists' satirical and antagonistic, sometimes even hostile, tweets toward political figures. This role is similar to the traditional role of journalists reporting on the wrongdoings of political elites. However, it is taken one step further by the increase in perceived freedom on journalists' and editors' Twitter accounts. Journalists and editors attack politicians regardless of any potential professional damage. They target their subjects to "tell the truth, exposing politicians for who they truly are, for what they have said and promised before and what they are doing now" (P8, 10 May 2022). P4 encapsulated the spirit of the mordant critic in stating, "I will taunt these people because they deserve it. Because they are constantly taunting us as a public" (29 April 2022).

Even though interviewees shared that Twitter allows them to be more hostile toward politicians, they still preferred to express their opposition through humor and satirical content. Journalists and editors mentioned two main reasons that pushed them toward satirical content. First, they stated that they use it to protect their credibility when sharing more extreme opinions, as expressed by P1: "I try to avoid giving direct commentary on political issues as it could hurt my reputation, so I prefer to make satirical comments as then no one can accuse me of taking sides" (8 May 2022). Second, journalists pointed out the power of satire to influence public opinion. P3 stated:

Nothing cuts so deeply into society as satire. You can reveal the truth and simultaneously reveal a way to think about that truth. If I just say something a politician does is wrong, that can be perceived as bias. But if I satirize about it, I am hitting more directly at the problem and making people see the problem for what it really is. (5 May 2022)

To understand what shapes this perspective of journalists and editors, the following subsection looks at the considerations that appeared in their narratives.

(Lack of) Restrictions on the Island of Free Thoughts

The idea that Twitter presents a platform where journalists and editors are free to shed their journalistic personas and assume new identities has already been introduced in prior sections of this article. However, what is it about Twitter that creates a greater sense of freedom for journalists and editors? Why is it considered "an island where you do not have to worry about how people perceive you" (P3, 5 May 2022) and where "you can present the best sides of you, and you can do that freely" (P6, 7 May 2022)? During the interviews, three primary considerations were identified as playing a role in journalists' and editors' Twitter personas: the audience on Twitter and its characteristics, the platform's logic and affordances, and participants' media organizations.

First, all journalists and editors interviewed emphasized the role of the Twitter audience—whose characteristics were considered specific to the platform—as the main reason for the freedom they enjoy there, as expressed by P2: "The audience determines how a journalist can behave" (29 April 2022). Journalists and editors in Kosovo perceive the Twitter audience as more politically engaged and active, as well as more intellectual and interested in understanding news issues. While this perception could be because, as

the interviewees admitted, they primarily interact with colleagues and public figures rather than the general public, they also stated that, in general, the audience is “of a higher quality because they are interested in political events, they will read an article until the last sentence, and then they will discuss it on their account” (P12, 5 May 2022). The idea that the audience has a higher capacity for understanding and discussing political issues was one of the reasons mentioned as to why journalists and editors choose to use Twitter as a platform for their more critical content.

Another reason mentioned was the audience size: while perceived to be of higher quality, the audience on Twitter is smaller than on Facebook. A smaller audience makes the journalists and editors feel more at ease when sharing their personal opinions on divisive issues, as they are less likely to suffer negative consequences. Discussing this, P15 said,

The audience has a decisive role. Facebook is used way more, at least in Kosovo, so I hesitate to post personal opinions there. I feel freer doing it on Twitter because of the size of the audience, but also because of its mentality. (4 May 2022)

In addition to its quality and quantity, some journalists and editors consider the Twitter audience less hostile. On this point, not all journalists agreed; some mentioned having been victims of organized smear campaigns on the platform. Still, one participant stated, “while the audience might not be ideal, at least it is better, less hostile than other social media platforms” (P6, 7 May 2022).

While audience characteristics may differ in other contexts and locations, the second theme consists of more universal attributes resulting from the platform’s features. P15 shared that “tweets usually have a hint of sarcasm or trolling” (4 May 2022), and P12 stated that they try to use sarcasm in their tweets as “on Twitter, even if you want to speak earnestly, you are limited to a small number of characters, so you have to strike at the issue more directly than you initially wanted” (5 May 2022). The character limit, as one of the affordances of the platform, was a trend observed in most interviews, as even P3 emphasized:

Twitter has this characteristic of being less serious because the character limit does not allow you to indulge the public in a long analysis of an issue, you can only serve the judgment part of your position to the audience. (5 May 2022)

While the character limit was more often described negatively, another affordance of the platform was popular with the interviewees: the distribution and searchability of tweets. Journalists and editors mentioned appreciating the ease of finding a tweet or searching a topic, either by a keyword or through a “hashtag,” especially compared to other social media they use. P9 cited this characteristic as the main reason for Twitter’s utility in promotional aims, considering that “even if you do not have a great number of followers, you can still reach a big audience as you reach a new audience through every like, retweet and reply” (10 May 2022). Since journalists are aware of this advantage, there is an opportunity for news media organizations in Kosovo to use the platform more.

Discussion

While existing research emphasizes a tension between professionalism and journalists’ online personas (Mellado and Hermida 2021; Molyneux, Holton, and Lewis 2018), the

results of this article show that journalists and editors in Kosovo do not conceptualize these personas as a source of tension but rather as an opportunity to show both sides of themselves—personal and professional. This suggests that alienation from journalistic standards is quite simple for journalists who see themselves as more than just media workers. Political journalists and editors, familiar with society's critical issues, are no longer happy with merely reporting on those issues but are searching for a more active, influential role in the public sphere. Researchers have already reported such changes (Agarwal and Barthel 2015), but this article gives a more detailed account by investigating the various reasons that motivate journalists to embrace these shifts in standards.

Researchers have mainly referred to these shifts in standards as challenges to journalistic professionalism (Parmelee 2013), but political journalists and editors in Kosovo are embracing their online personas, giving rise to a new form of journalistic professionalism. The embrace of new standards in online personas signifies that political journalism is changing. These changes have been appropriately labeled as the “twitterization of news” by Revers (2014). While journalists justify their behavior online by arguing that their profiles are personal, their accounts are nonetheless public and identifiable by the audience as media workers, as Hermida (2012) has warned. Whether these profiles can be considered part of the news media landscape is debatable. However, researchers studying boundary work should determine if they present a new form of journalistic professionalism or are merely an individual output of journalists outside the journalistic sphere. This article embraces the former point of view as it does not treat the shift in standards as damaging to or outside the field of journalism but explores the occurring negotiation process as vital to modern-day journalism.

Concerning RQ1, the results show that journalists partake in a negotiation process as they consider their accounts both professional and personal. However, the negotiation process is less tense than existing research suggests. The results also reveal the considerations in journalists' and editors' minds: audience characteristics, platforms' affordances, and the ethical departure from media organizations. These two motivate journalists and editors to embrace the approach of the redefiners (Mellado and Alfaro 2020). The influence of news media companies' social media policies on journalists' behavior online has been shown by other researchers (Duffy and Knight 2019). However, in the case of Kosovo, it is less straightforward. In a country where both informal and formal censure is present (Bislimi 2021), journalists are not sure what their news media companies expect of them. News media organizations' indifference to the platform offers a potential explanation for this uncertainty. As mentioned, news media companies in the country use Facebook to distribute their content, and some of the organizations for which the interviewees work do not have accounts on Twitter. This could lead to journalists and editors being more unrestrained on the platform as their news media does not pay attention to Twitter.

Nevertheless, the narratives emerging from Kosovar Albanian political journalists agree with Mourão's (2015) findings on the benefits of journalists' sharing opinions on political issues. The embrace of this perspective among Kosovar Albanian political journalists and editors could be because most journalists work for digital media, followed by broadcast media, because of the lack of print newspapers. As the literature has shown that journalists working in print media are the most skeptical of social media platforms (Hedman and

Djerf-Pierre 2013), the situation in Kosovo—journalists' views on online personas and professional norms—can be seen as an indication of the future of political journalism as we move toward digital options and away from traditional forms of journalism.

This change in journalistic professionalism has implications for the future of reporters, as the literature has shown that journalists' credibility rises in the eyes of the audience with more extensive engagement and fewer boundaries between the two (Diehl, Ardèvol-Abreu, and Gil de Zúñiga 2019). This indicates that the online persona could serve as an option to counter the lack of trust in mainstream media (Meek 2021). Additionally, Kosovar Albanian journalists referenced countering the manipulations and wrongdoings of politicians through satire on their Twitter profiles. A similar view of political satire as an opportunity to call out politicians for their wrongdoings and lies has been posited in previous research (Richmond and Porpora 2019), and satire has even been identified as a reinvention of political journalism (Baym 2005). This further proves that political journalism might have a future away from neutrality and impartiality.

As political journalism is reinvented due to the introduction of new technologies, the impact of these developments expands beyond just media workers and experts in the field of journalism. Social media platforms are becoming the primary source of information for an ever-increasing audience (Bergström and Jervelycke Belfrage 2018); therefore, new forms of online political journalism impact public opinion regardless of whether researchers view them as outside the media landscape. Moreover, the audience is being subjected to more value-laden journalistic content, especially in a country like Kosovo, where there are no longer any print newspapers, and the infrastructure enables a higher consumption of online news.

Conclusion

As ample research has studied social media's role in the professionalism of journalists online, this article goes a step further. It examines the narratives of political journalists and editors, explaining how they view their identities online and why. The results show that political journalists and editors in Kosovo view Twitter as a platform to show their identity's professional and personal layers. Furthermore, they feel unrestricted by journalistic standards, which leads to their taking on roles outside their traditional duties as journalists—as good citizens, they express opinions on political issues; as activists, they put initiatives in motion for personally essential topics; and as mordant critics, they are ruthless toward political figures (RQ2). Finally, in line with the results of previous research, this article also illustrates how Twitter's affordances and atmosphere, as well as the audience and its characteristics, play a role in shaping journalists' and editors' online personas (RQ3).

Political journalists working in other countries may be more relaxed in their detachment from traditional norms than those sampled for this article. The media landscape in Kosovo is precisely what Hedman and Djerf-Pierre (2013) describe as ideal for the redefiners' approach: it mainly comprises younger journalists working for digital media. Nevertheless, the number of interviews conducted for this research prevents any generalization. The bias in snowballing sampling also needs to be recognized. Initial participants must recruit the next ones, and those must refer to more. We found that female journalists were less likely to participate in the study, even when referred to us by a

colleague. Other methods can ensure a balanced representation of male and female journalists. Nevertheless, while the situation may not be identical now, it shows the direction of the trends as we move toward more digital environments.

The uncertain quality of the interview answers represents another limitation of this article. Journalists' and editors' contradictory answers regarding SMPs call the quality of their answers into question, especially since, at times, they seemed unsure of their explanations. This could be because they had not considered the reasons behind their behavior on Twitter. This exposes the findings to a bias as the first answers that came to the interviewees' minds may not reflect the most crucial aspects of their Twitter persona. Nonetheless, their initial thoughts are part of their rationalization process, the article's focus.

The extent to which these limitations affect the findings of this article can only be determined by future research, which should test the themes detected in this article and explore new themes in different global contexts. As all participants in this article were Kosovar Albanians, future research should also focus on the experiences of journalists that belong to minority groups. More research is also needed to determine if and how the atmosphere on Twitter affects how journalism is practiced on the platform and how it affects citizens' knowledge and opinion formation.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

References

- Agarwal, S. D., and M. L. Barthel. 2015. "The Friendly Barbarians: Professional Norms and Work Routines of Online Journalists in the United States." *Journalism* 16 (3): 376–391. doi:10.1177/1464884913511565.
- Baym, G. 2005. "The Daily Show: Discursive Integration and the Reinvention of Political Journalism." *Political Communication* 22 (3): 259–276. doi:10.1080/10584600591006492.
- Bell, E., and T. Owen. 2017, March 9. "The Platform Press: How Silicon Valley Reengineered Journalism." *Columbia Journalism Review*. https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/platform-press-how-silicon-valley-reengineered-journalism.php/.
- Bentivegna, S., and R. Marchetti. 2018. "Journalists at a Crossroads: Are Traditional Norms and Practices Challenged by Twitter?" *Journalism* 19 (2): 270–290. doi:10.1177/1464884917716594.
- Bergström, A., and M. Jervelycke Belfrage. 2018. "News in Social Media." *Digital Journalism* 6 (5): 583–598. doi:10.1080/21670811.2018.1423625.
- Bislimi, B. 2021. "Censurë dhe Vetcensurë në Mediat e Kosovës." *Radio Evropa e Lirë*. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/censure-dhe-vetcensure-ne-mediat-kosoves/31183995.html>.
- Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2013. *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners*. New York, NY: SAGE Publications.
- Bryman, A. 2012. *Social Research Methods. 4th Edition* (4th edition). Oxford: Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Camaj, L. 2014. "Media Use and Political Trust in an Emerging Democracy: Setting the Institutional Trust Agenda in Kosovo." *International Journal of Communication* 8: 187–209.
- Canter, L. 2015. "Personalised Tweeting." *Digital Journalism* 3 (6): 888–907. doi:10.1080/21670811.2014.973148.
- Carlson, M. 2018. "Confronting Measurable Journalism." *Digital Journalism* 6 (4): 406–417. doi:10.1080/21670811.2018.1445003.
- Carlson, M., and S. C. Lewis. 2015. *Boundaries of Journalism: Professionalism, Practices and Participation*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Coddington, M., L. Molyneux, and R. G. Lawrence. 2014. "Fact Checking the Campaign: How Political Reporters Use Twitter to Set the Record Straight (or Not)." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 19 (4): 391–409. doi:[10.1177/1940161214540942](https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161214540942).
- Corbin, J., and A. Strauss. 1990. "Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons and Evaluative Criteria." *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 19 (6): 418–427. doi:[10.1515/zfsoz-1990-0602](https://doi.org/10.1515/zfsoz-1990-0602).
- Davis, R. 1999. *The Web of Politics: The Internet's Impact on the American Political System*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Diehl, T., A. Ardèvol-Abreu, and H. Gil de Zúñiga. 2019. "How Engagement with Journalists on Twitter Reduces Public Perceptions of Media Bias." *Journalism Practice* 13 (8): 971–975. doi:[10.1080/17512786.2019.1646160](https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1646160).
- Djerf-Pierre, M., M. Ghersetti, and U. Hedman. 2016. "Appropriating Social Media." *Digital Journalism* 4 (7): 849–860. doi:[10.1080/21670811.2016.1152557](https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2016.1152557).
- Dodds, T., C. de Vreese, N. Helberger, V. Resendez, and T. Seipp. 2023. "Popularity-driven Metrics: Audience Analytics and Shifting Opinion Power to Digital Platforms." *Journalism Studies* 24 (3): 403–421. doi:[10.1080/1461670X.2023.2167104](https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2023.2167104).
- Duffy, A., and M. Knight. 2019. "'Don't Be Stupid.' The Role of Social Media Policies in Journalistic Boundary-Setting." *Journalism Practice* 13 (8): 961–965. doi:[10.1080/17512786.2019.1647113](https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1647113).
- Graves, L. 2007. "The Affordances of Blogging: A Case Study in Culture and Technological Effects." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 31 (4): 331–346. doi:[10.1177/0196859907305446](https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859907305446).
- Hagemeyer, D. A. 2011. Twitter and the Question of Objectivity: How Social Network Sites Influence a Journalistic Norm. 2010, 12.
- Hanitzsch, T. 2019. "Journalism Studies Still Needs to Fix Western Bias." *Journalism* 20 (1): 214–217. doi:[10.1177/1464884918807353](https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918807353).
- Hanitzsch, T., F. Hanusch, C. Mellado, M. Anikina, R. Berganza, I. Cangoz, M. Coman, et al. 2011. "Mapping Journalism Cultures Across Nations: A Comparative Study of 18 Countries." *Journalism Studies* 12 (3): 273–293. doi:[10.1080/1461670X.2010.512502](https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2010.512502).
- Hanitzsch, T., and T. P. Vos. 2018. "Journalism Beyond Democracy: A New Look Into Journalistic Roles in Political and Everyday Life." *Journalism* 19 (2): 146–164. doi:[10.1177/1464884916673386](https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916673386).
- Hanusch, F. 2018. "Political Journalists' Corporate and Personal Identities on Twitter Profile Pages: A Comparative Analysis in Four Westminster Democracies." *New Media & Society* 20 (4): 1488–1505. doi:[10.1177/1461444817698479](https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817698479).
- Hedman, U. 2015. "J-Tweeters." *Digital Journalism* 3 (2): 279–297. doi:[10.1080/21670811.2014.897833](https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.897833).
- Hedman, U. 2016. "When Journalists Tweet: Disclosure, Participatory, and Personal Transparency." *Social Media + Society* 2 (1): 205630511562452. doi:[10.1177/2056305115624528](https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115624528).
- Hedman, U., and M. Djerf-Pierre. 2013. "THE SOCIAL JOURNALIST: Embracing the Social Media Life or Creating a New Digital Divide?" *Digital Journalism* 1 (3): 368–385. doi:[10.1080/21670811.2013.776804](https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2013.776804).
- Helberger, N. 2020. "The Political Power of Platforms: How Current Attempts to Regulate Misinformation Amplify Opinion Power." *Digital Journalism* 8 (6): 842–854. doi:[10.1080/21670811.2020.1773888](https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1773888).
- Hermida, A. 2012. "Social Journalism: Exploring How Social Media Is Shaping Journalism." In *The Handbook of Global Online Journalism*. 1st ed., edited by E. Siapera, and A. Veglis, 309–328. Chichester: Wiley.
- Hermida, A., and C. Mellado. 2020. "Dimensions of Social Media Logics: Mapping Forms of Journalistic Norms and Practices on Twitter and Instagram." *Digital Journalism* 8 (7): 864–884. doi:[10.1080/21670811.2020.1805779](https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1805779).
- Hernández-Fuentes, A., and A. Monnier. 2022. "Twitter as a Source of Information? Practices of Journalists Working for the French National Press." *Journalism Practice* 16 (5): 920–937. doi:[10.1080/17512786.2020.1824585](https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1824585).
- Hertel, A., and D. Kliewer. 2021. "Kosovo, Europas erstes Land ohne gedruckte Tageszeitungen [Kosovo, Europe's first country without printed daily newspapers]." MDR. <https://www.mdr.de/nachrichten/welt/osteuropa/land-leute/kosovo-tageszeitungen-digital-100.html>.

- Holton, A. E., and S. C. Lewis. 2011. "Journalists, Social Media, and the Use of Humor on Twitter." *The Electronic Journal of Communication / La Revue Electronique de Communication* 21: 1–2.
- Homoláč, J., and K. Mrázková. 2019. "'S dovolením si na svém soukromém Twitteru budu dál psát, co chci': Míšení diskurzních praktik a identit v twitterových účtech českých novinářů a vyjednávání jejich soukromého charakteru." *Slovo a Slovesnost* 80 (4): 243–264.
- Johnson, H. M. 2012. *Model Interventions: The Evolution of Media Development Strategies in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia from 2000 to 2007* [Columbia University]. doi:10.7916/D8WD46NR.
- Kamps, H. J. 2019, October 13. "Who Are Twitter's Verified Users?" *Medium*. <https://haje.medium.com/who-are-twitter-s-verified-users-af976fc1b032>.
- Kitchin, R., and N. Tate. 2013. *Conducting Research in Human Geography: Theory, Methodology and Practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lawrence, R. G., L. Molyneux, M. Coddington, and A. Holton. 2014. "Tweeting Conventions: Political Journalists' Use of Twitter to Cover the 2012 Presidential Campaign." *Journalism Studies* 15 (6): 789–806. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2013.836378.
- Lewis, S. C., and L. Molyneux. 2018. "A Decade of Research on Social Media and Journalism: Assumptions, Blind Spots, and a Way Forward." *Media and Communication* 6 (4): 11–23. doi:10.17645/mac.v6i4.1562.
- Meek, A. 2021. "Fewer Americans Than Ever Before Trust The Mainstream Media." *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andymeek/2021/02/20/fewer-americans-than-ever-before-trust-the-mainstream-media/>.
- Mellado, C. 2020. *Beyond Journalistic Norms: Role Performance and News in Comparative Perspective*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mellado, C., and A. Alfaro. 2020. "Platforms, Journalists and Their Digital Selves." *Digital Journalism* 8 (10): 1258–1279. doi:10.1080/21670811.2020.1817763.
- Mellado, C., L. Hellmueller, and W. Donsbach, eds. 2016. *Journalistic Role Performance: Concepts, Contexts, and Methods*. 1st edition. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mellado, C., and A. Hermida. 2021. "The Promoter, Celebrity, and Joker Roles in Journalists' Social Media Performance." *Social Media + Society* 7 (1): 205630512199064. doi:10.1177/2056305121990643.
- Molyneux, L. 2015. "What Journalists Retweet: Opinion, Humor, and Brand Development on Twitter." *Journalism* 16 (7): 920–935. doi:10.1177/1464884914550135.
- Molyneux, L., A. Holton, and S. C. Lewis. 2018. "How Journalists Engage in Branding on Twitter: Individual, Organizational, and Institutional Levels." *Information, Communication & Society* 21 (10): 1386–1401. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2017.1314532.
- Molyneux, L., S. C. Lewis, and A. E. Holton. 2019. "Media Work, Identity, and the Motivations that Shape Branding Practices among Journalists: An Explanatory Framework." *New Media & Society* 21 (4): 836–855. doi:10.1177/1461444818809392.
- Molyneux, L., and S. C. McGregor. 2021. "Legitimizing a Platform: Evidence of Journalists' Role in Transferring Authority to Twitter." *Information, Communication & Society* 25 (11): 1577–1595. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2021.1874037.
- Molyneux, L., and R. R. Mourão. 2019. "Political Journalists' Normalization of Twitter." *Journalism Studies* 20 (2): 248–266. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2017.1370978.
- Mourão, R. R. 2015. "The Boys on the Timeline: Political Journalists' Use of Twitter for Building Interpretive Communities." *Journalism* 16 (8): 1107–1123. doi:10.1177/1464884914552268.
- Mourão, R., T. Diehl, and K. Vasudevan. 2016. "I Love Big Bird: How Journalists Tweeted Humor during the 2012 Presidential Debates." *Digital Journalism* 4 (2): 211–228. doi:10.1080/21670811.2015.1006861.
- Nielsen, R. K., A. Cornia, and A. Kalogeropoulos. 2016. *Challenges and Opportunities for News Media and Journalism in an Increasingly Digital, Mobile, and Social Media Environment* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 2879383). <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2879383>.
- Ottovordemgentschenfelde, S. 2017. "'Organizational, Professional, Personal': An Exploratory Study of Political Journalists and Their Hybrid Brand on Twitter." *Journalism* 18 (1): 64–80. doi:10.1177/1464884916657524.

- Parmelee, J. H. 2013. "Political Journalists and Twitter: Influences on Norms and Practices." *Journal of Media Practice* 14 (4): 291–305. doi:10.1386/jmpr.14.4.291_1.
- Peko, S., H. Meyer, and K. Myssayeva. 2019. "You Can't Censor Live: Technology Acceptance Drives Central Asian Journalists to Mobile and Helps Them Overcome Press Restrictions." *Media Asia* 46 (3–4): 63–77. doi:10.1080/01296612.2020.1774038.
- Reich, Z. 2005. "New Technologies, Old Practices: The Conservative Revolution in Communication Between Reporters and News Sources in the Israeli Press." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 82 (3): 552–570. doi:10.1177/107769900508200305.
- Reisinger, D. 2009. Twitter Now Asks, 'What's happening?' CNET. <https://www.cnet.com/tech/services-and-software/twitter-now-asks-whats-happening/>.
- Revers, M. 2014. "The Twitterization of News Making: Transparency and Journalistic Professionalism." *Journal of Communication* 64 (5): 806–826. doi:10.1111/jcom.12111.
- Richmond, J. C., and D. V. Porpora. 2019. "Entertainment Politics as a Modernist Project in a Baudrillard World." *Communication Theory* 29 (4): 421–440. doi:10.1093/ct/qty036.
- Robinson, S. 2006. "The Mission of the j-Blog: Recapturing Journalistic Authority Online." *Journalism* 7 (1): 65–83. doi:10.1177/1464884906059428.
- Ryfe, D. M. 2006. "The Nature of News Rules." *Political Communication* 23 (2): 203–214. doi:10.1080/10584600600629810.
- Sabedini, M. 2019, June 5. "Rrjetet sociale, gazetaria online dhe sfidat e profesionistëve [Social Media, Online Journalism and Challenges Faced by Professionals]." *Observatori European i Gazetarisë*. <https://al.ejo-online.eu/etika-dhe-cilesia/kur-gazetaria-online-viktimizohet-nga-rrjetet-sociale-cilat-jane-sfidat-e-profesionisteve>.
- Schjøtt Hansen, A., and J. M. Hartley. 2021. "Designing What's News: An Ethnography of a Personalization Algorithm and the Data-Driven (Re)Assembling of the News." *Digital Journalism*, 1–19. doi:10.1080/21670811.2021.1988861.
- Simon, F. M. 2019. "What Determines a Journalist's Popularity on Twitter?" *Journalism Studies* 20 (8): 1200–1220. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2018.1500491.
- Singer, J. B. 2005. "The Political j-Blogger: 'Normalizing' a New Media Form to Fit Old Norms and Practices." *Journalism* 6 (2): 173–198. doi:10.1177/1464884905051009.
- Sorge, P. 2012. "Media in Kosovo – Long Walk to Modernity." *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen* 4: 32–47.
- Splichal, S., and P. Dahlgren. 2016. "Journalism Between De-professionalisation and Democratisation." *European Journal of Communication* 31 (1): 5–18. doi:10.1177/0267323115614196.
- Tandoc, E. C., and T. P. Vos. 2016. "The Journalist Is Marketing the News." *Journalism Practice* 10 (8): 950–966. doi:10.1080/17512786.2015.1087811.
- Tobitt, C. 2021, October 6. "Four BBC Journalists Disciplined Over Social Media Guidelines." *Press Gazette*. <https://pressgazette.co.uk/bbc-social-media-guidelines-ban-virtue-signalling-criticism-of-colleagues-and-breaking-stories-on-your-own-accounts/>.
- Twitter News. 2022, September. "How many people come to Twitter for news? As it turns out, a LOT." *Twitter Blog*. https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/insights/2022/how-many-people-come-twitter-for-news.
- Weaver, D. H., and L. Willnat. 2016. "Changes in U.S. Journalism: How Do Journalists Think about Social Media?" *Journalism Practice* 10 (7): 844–855. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2016.1171162>.

Appendix

Appendix A – Interview Guide

The tension between the professional and personal	• How would you describe your profile on Twitter? • What are the characteristics of your tweets? • How active are you? • What do you mainly use your Twitter account for? • Do you use Twitter for branding purposes? How?
Role conceptions	• What do you aim to achieve through your tweets? • How would you describe your role on Twitter? • What are the differences between your role as a journalist and your persona on Twitter? • How do you approach norms such as neutrality and impartiality on Twitter?
Considerations	• What criteria do you have for your tweets? • How would you compare your profile on Twitter with your profiles on other social media? • What are the characteristics of your audience on Twitter? • How does your news media organisation approach journalists' behaviour on social media? • Do you feel limited in what you can tweet? Why?

Appendix B – Codebook

Code	Coded when	Examples
Personal and professional platform	Journalists and editors talk about Twitter as a platform that encourages both personal and professional use.	P14: "Twitter can be used in a strictly professional way, but it can also be used in a very personal way. Maybe we can only call it a personal-professional platform". P1: "I think of Twitter as a platform that is a mix of professional and personal use. You can often see super personal stuff on my tweets, but I also share links to my work". P10: "The way I have conceptualised Twitter is a combination between my professional portfolio and my personal profile. So, it's a profile of me as XY and me as a journalist of XY".
Moral values as criteria	Journalists and editors talk about moral values being the criteria for their tweets, in comparison to journalistic standards in their profession.	P7: "I never post something which can be offensive towards someone, I am very careful about that. There are also lots of issues that are talked about during the day and which I choose to ignore on my account as I consider them sensitive topics". P10: "Discrimination should never be allowed. A journalist shouldn't be allowed to express sexist, racist, homophobic opinions. A journalist shouldn't be allowed to make fun of people who aren't part of the public sphere. But, it's different when it comes to politicians who are public figures, there should be no restrictions when it comes to them". P8: "In contrast to my articles, I can't really say I have specific criteria on what to tweet and what not. I would say that I just apply the more universal norms of good civil behaviour".
Online persona	Journalists and editors talk about their profile on Twitter as a presentation of themselves; creating a character within the platform.	P3: "You create a personality online and then people get to know you through that personality and form their opinion on you based on what you present". P6: "I see Twitter as a window of opportunity to get to know people and to show them a reflection of who I am". P2: "It's almost as if I have two different personalities on Twitter and Facebook. Maybe I post about similar topics, but there is still a big difference in how I approach them".
Ordinary citizens	Journalists and editors talk of themselves on Twitter as citizens who express opinions on political issues.	P11: "Maybe writing in an article what I tweet wouldn't be considered professional. But, I have a life outside the news offices and away from the computer I use there. I am a human and I have opinions on different issues. Just because I am a journalist doesn't mean I don't have an opinion because I express that opinion anyway when I am out for a drink with my friends". P10: "We are just ordinary citizens. We do not have any political power, so we should be treated like any other citizen". P7: "My profile is my personal account. At the end of the day, I am just a citizen of this country and I also should have an opinion on issues that the country is dealing with. Am I not a citizen just because of what I do for a job?"
Activists	Journalists and editors talk of themselves on Twitter as activists who put initiatives in motion for topics personally close to them.	P7: "I started a petition about ... and afterwards that case was sent to the Supreme Court. The support I got on Twitter was incredible, I couldn't believe it!" (part of the statement was cut out to safeguard the interviewee's identity). P8: "One of the main reasons I use Twitter is to promote Kosovo. When people search the word Kosovo or through a hashtag, they'll see my tweets. This is not part of my journalistic duties, but I do it as a patriotic duty because it's a passion of mine

(Continued)

Appendix B – Codebook Continued.

Code	Coded when	Examples
Mordant critics	Journalists and editors talk of themselves on Twitter as critics of political figures and issues, through ruthless opinion expressing and political satire.	to tell the world about this small country and its achievements in sports and arts mainly". P2: "The issue of stray dogs in the city has been discussed by journalists on social media way more than it has been reported on mainstream media, but still it became an issue that is now being taken seriously by the city council". P4: "I don't feel the need to show mercy towards political figures. I will taunt these people because they deserve it. Because they are constantly taunting us as a public". P15: "When you're satirising an issue or something, no one can accuse you of offending someone. Politicians are public figures, they live their life in the public sphere. I don't feel like I have to spare them, especially when it's something about human rights or any other topic where I don't accept compromises". P8: "There is no need for you to always stay neutral. What you need to do is tell the truth. If you stay neutral in a conflict, then you are helping the aggressor".
Social media policies (SMP)	Journalists and editors talk about the (lack of) limitations brought by social media policies. The confusion that is referred to in the thesis comes from the contradictory answers between interviewees working in the same media.	P8: "There is no such thing. I can't talk about all the media in the country, but I really don't believe that any media here has social media policies and guidelines". P14: "Yes! The news media organisation where I work now has a policy. All journalists have to respect it. I think it's very normal for journalists because we're used to having to remain a bit more neutral". P15: "No, I don't have any limitations, guidelines or advice on what to post and what not to post. We're totally free in this aspect".
Twitter's unique audience	Journalists and editors talk about the audience on Twitter as different from other social media.	P15: "The audience is quite influential. I would say it's an audience you don't see on other social media platforms. Maybe it's not a politically correct thing to say, but the audience on Twitter is made up of people that belong to a privileged class, people with higher educational levels". P7: "Twitter, at least until recently, has been used mainly by more open-minded people. The audience there is able to accept criticism, participate in a civil discussion and understand that no one thinks the same as them". P12: "The audience is of a higher quality because they are interested in political events, they will read an article until the last sentence, and then they will discuss it on their account".
Twitter's affordances and ambience	Journalists and editors talk about the reasons why Twitter as a platform allows them to behave the way they do.	P3: "Twitter has this characteristic of being less serious because the character limit does not allow you to indulge the public in a long analysis of an issue, you can only serve the judgement part of your position to the audience". P12: "On Twitter, even if you want to speak in an earnest manner, you are limited to a small number of characters, so you have to strike at the issue more directly than you initially wanted". P2: "Hashtags have played such an important role, even when it comes to gaining a bigger audience for an issue. For example, (...) which afterwards has influenced even political leaders". (part of the statement, where the interviewee explains a case that they were involved in, was cut out to safeguard their identity).