Perceptions of Journalism in a Cross-National Perspective

An Assessment of News Users in Three European Countries

Javier Serrano-Puche,* Aurken Sierra,** Jordi Rodríguez-Virgili***

*   School of Communication of the University of Navarra, Spain
     E-mail: jserrano[at]unav.es
** Political Communication at the School of Communication of the University of Navarra, Spain
     E-mail: aurken[at]unav.es
*** Political Communication at the School of Communication of the University of Navarra, Spain
     E-mail: jrvirgili[at]unav.es

This study compares news users' perceptions of journalism in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. Two cross-national surveys were conducted, each with over 2,000 participants in the respective countries. The surveys examined users' evaluations of journalism's relevance to society and its fulfilment of three key functions: holding the powerful to account, rapidly disseminating information to the public and providing analysis of current affairs. The findings highlight a gap between the social importance attributed to journalism and satisfaction with media performance. Information dissemination is perceived as the most effectively achieved function, while functions requiring more watchdog or analytical efforts receive less recognition in media activity. Age and education level are influential socio-demographic variables in news users' perceptions. Older respondents and those with higher education levels view journalism as more relevant. Finally, Germany places a higher importance on journalism compared to Spain, with the United Kingdom occupying an intermediate position.

Keywords: journalism, media performance, professional roles, news users, comparative analysis

Introduction

The responsibility of rigorously informing society has made the media a key agent in the development of democracy, and their efforts have traditionally contributed to the generation of an educated and informed citizenry. In other words, the paths of journalism and democracy are closely linked (McNair, 2008) since from a normative perspective, the democratic epitome is that the choices made by citizens are reasoned and rational (Chambers & Costain, 2001), something to which the outputs of the media are pivotal contributors. However, the changes brought about by digital technology to the way in which information is produced, distributed and consumed, together with the emergence of other actors in the public sphere, raise the question of whether this paradigm is still commonly accepted.

In that sense, there are numerous studies that focus either on analysing the profiles of news consumers (Artero et al., 2020; Castro et al., 2022; Rodríguez-Virgili et al., 2022) or on how structural factors shape said media use (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017a; Majó-Vázquez et al., 2018; Steppat et al., 2020). The news repertoire approach has been very fruitful in shedding light on media consumption in this new media ecosystem (Peters & Schröder, 2018; Swart et al., 2018). However, there is little research that examines the characteristics of individuals who are more supportive of news media and of journalistic work, and it tends to be national in scope (Vos et al., 2019; Willnat et al., 2019). The present study distinguishes itself by focusing on individual conditions that may influence perceptions of journalism's relevance to society and satisfaction with the performance of some journalistic tasks through a comparative lens that considers different media environments. In particular, this study analyses *news users'* perceptions of journalism in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. The aim of the research is to analyse how these users assess the performance of three journalistic functions: holding the powerful to account (the *adversarial role*), disseminating information quickly to the public (the *disseminator role*), and providing analysis of current affairs (the *interpreter role*).

The correspondence between perceived social relevance of journalism and the citizens' assessment of the actual performance of the media is significant because it can, in turn, affect the level of trust placed in the media (Moran & Nechushtai, 2023). Therefore, when the public perceives that journalism is fulfilling its social role effectively, they are more likely to trust the media and its reporting. Conversely, when the public views the media as falling short of its social responsibilities, their trust in the media may be eroded. In sum, given the fragile and relational nature of media trust and its susceptibility to social, cultural and technological shifts, the exploration of public perceptions of journalism (Serrano-Puche et al., 2023) is of paramount importance. The findings from such explorations can serve as valuable starting points for both media practitioners and policymakers seeking to navigate the ever-evolving media landscape and foster a society with a well-informed, engaged and trustful citizenry.

The societal role of journalism

According to Lasswell (1948), the press has three functions in relation to the social system: 1. *monitoring* the environment; 2. *correlating* the parts of society in their response to the environment; 3. *transmitting* the social heritage from one generation to the next. While all three are important, the first refers more directly to journalistic activity and constitutes what other authors call the *watchdog role* (Christians et al., 2009; McQuail, 2013). This task consists of discovering and reporting relevant information about current events, personalities, trends or risks to a democratic society. In the words of Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001, p. 12), "the purpose of journalism is to provide people with the information they need to be free and self-governing". This includes a commitment to truth (coupled with the discipline of verification), loyalty to citizens, independence from those it covers, providing understandable and appropriate news, and serving as an "independent check on power" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 112).

The watchdog role stems from the classical liberal conception of the power relationship between government and society as a mechanism to strengthen accountability (Norris, 2014). This mission to scrutinise institutions and elites to expose irregularities (Schultz, 1998; Waisbord, 2000) goes hand in hand with the characterisation of the press as the *fourth estate*. According to this metaphor – historically attributed to Edmund Burke (Donohue et al., 1995) – the media, although not formally recognised in any constitution, constitutes a source of power similar to that of other branches of government. From this perspective, reporting demands a response from public authorities, for "by publicizing corruption, scandal in high places, or the government's simple inattention to the needs of the people, the press could ensure that a nominally democratic government met its obligations to its constituents" (Hampton, 2009, p. 10). The idea of journalism as a watchdog is therefore based on three premises:

> "First, the news media are essentially autonomous; second, journalism acts in the public interest, looking after the welfare of the general public rather than that of society's dominant groups; and third, that the power of the news media is such that they are able to influence dominant social groups to the benefit of the public" (Franklin et al., 2005, p. 274).

This notion has permeated the profession of journalism worldwide. Among journalists, the watchdog or adversarial role is perceived as a central function to be performed, as shown in the academic literature on professional roles (Canel et al., 2000; Donsbach & Patterson, 2004; Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Weaver, 1999; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). However, as journalism is a social practice in which socio-political, cultural and organisational contexts converge, this normative standard and journalistic ideal is determined by multiple factors in daily practice. There is a gap between how journalists understand their role and how they behave (Mellado, 2019), particularly influenced by the external and internal pressures journalists have to face (Márquez-Ramírez et al., 2020).

These tensions also manifest themselves in another basic function that can be ascribed to the media: keeping citizens abreast of events, the *disseminator role,* in which journalists act simply as rapid disseminators of information who avoid unverifiable facts

(Cassidy, 2005; Prager & Hameleers, 2021). In the words of Johnstone et al. (1976, p. 114), some journalists see themselves as "an impartial conduit of information to the public" and feel that they can do their job better by maintaining a neutral position, adhering to the norms of objectivity and reporting accurate, factual and verifiable content.

However, technological advances and changes in the way information is produced, distributed and consumed as a result of digitalisation have led to a reconsideration of the validity of this paradigm (Peters & Broersma, 2013, 2017). Digital platforms are transforming information, creating a new hybrid environment in which two concepts associated with digital media on the one hand and with the mainstream media system on the other, sometimes coexist harmoniously, generating cooperation and synergy, and at other times clash, creating conflict and tension (Chadwick, 2017). Journalists are forced to adopt new techniques not only in the production and distribution of information, but also in the management of their relationship with their audience. With the rise of the digital age, news information traverses the vast landscape of the internet with ease. Following Kristensen and Bro (2024), there are three platform types through which legacy media news *meets* its audience: *intra-media* (news site), *inter-media* (social media profiles) and *extra-media* platforms (aggregation and search). Thus, audiences increasingly turn to digital platforms to satisfy their news consumption needs (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018). Moreover, the digital environment encourages the proliferation of new actors across borders and themes that have traditionally been the focus of journalism studies. These include the new digital opinion leaders or influencers, who are able to accumulate a high symbolic capital that allows them to effectively influence the flow of information (Casero-Ripollés, 2018). All this leads to a questioning, or at least a rethinking of the legitimacy of journalistic authority in this new media environment (Carlson, 2017; Tong, 2018).

Perhaps the most influential changes in the social relevance that citizens ascribe to journalism are related to new ways of consuming information. First and foremost, access to information is rapid and uninterrupted, occurring at any time and in any place (Boczkowski et al., 2018). This creates an endless cycle of information consumption in which periodicity has been definitively overcome (Martín Algarra et al., 2010). Moreover, a key practice that the digital environment has imposed on access to political information is that of incidental consumption (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017b; Serrano-Puche et al., 2018). Second, the perception that 'the information is out there' has taken hold in the digital environment (Toff & Nielsen, 2018). Furthermore, in a context of information abundance, social media introduces the perception that news seeks out users. This is the "news finds me" perception (Gil de Zúñiga & Zicheng, 2021). The implications of these shifts in information consumption patterns can create ambivalence in journalism's perceived social value. On the one hand, the rise of digitalisation and constant user connectivity could dilute journalism's unique role amidst a relentless stream of other media content. This content is often of uneven quality, with *soft news* and entertainment increasingly dominating (Cunningham & Craig, 2019; Hanusch, 2012). Despite that the digital age also presents opportunities for journalism to reaffirm its importance and relevance, the overabundance of information highlights the need for reliable, trustworthy sources that can provide accurate, fact-checked reporting and in-depth analysis of complex issues,

especially in the face of events of social, political, or health impact (Ariel et al., 2023; Casero-Ripollés, 2020).

Along with the work of policing the powerful and informing citizens about what is happening, journalism has traditionally been regarded as "the primary sense-making practice of modernity" (Hartley, 1996, p. 12). Its institutional status is linked to its social function of satisfying the citizenry's need to understand current events. It can, therefore, be said that it also plays a role in interpreting reality. It must provide "a truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the events of the day in a context which gives them meaning" (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947, p. 21), as proposed by the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press in the late 1940s.

The media thus becomes a marketplace of ideas, representing all relevant issues and voices within a society (Jandura & Friedrich, 2014). This analytical task is meaningless if it is not accompanied by the informative function itself, but it goes beyond the mere transmission of current events and is linked to a ritualistic vision of communication (Carey, 1989). It frames journalism in a dimension of social responsibility (Peterson, 1956), the fulfilment of which is related to what McQuail (1992) defines as media performance, that is, an indicator of how well the media serve the public interest.

The idea that journalistic work is of paramount importance for a healthy democracy is widely accepted among scholars at the normative level (Schudson, 2008). However, with all the changes mentioned above, the question remains of whether journalistic work is still present in the everyday lives of citizens or whether the new digital environment has rather eroded its traditional societal role of informing the public, providing analysis of current affairs and holding those in power to account.

The exercise of journalistic functions is largely influenced by the professional roles of journalists. The idea of the journalist's role is not static, as it is sensitive to both the professional and technological context of journalism (Mellado, 2019; Mellado et al., 2017; Novoa Jaso et al., 2019). Therefore, it is understandable that, when comparing the roles attributed to and performed by journalists from different times and places, some ideas about journalistic work may have changed. There are different concepts that influence the conception of these roles, from the assumption of certain functions by journalists as their own, to the limitations of the context, to the perceptions of the public (Mellado et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, there is a common ideal, albeit mutable over time and context, which underpins the understanding of journalists' roles and has much to do with their news mission. As Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) point out, the identification of the journalist as a purveyor of information (disseminator role) and a check on authority (adversarial role) remained largely unchanged in the 1980s and 1990s, a sign of stability. At the same time, Starck and Soloski (1977) and Kepplinger et al. (1991) found that the perception of these journalistic roles, as well as the identification of journalists with them, showed a predisposition of professionals that influenced their reporting. In this sense, studies such as Deuze (2002) have shown that journalists' perceptions of their own roles are not one-dimensional, but tend to be composed of several roles at once, and indeed "many journalists see themselves as a combination of informer, interpreter and advocate" (Ward 2009, p. 299).

Media environments and perceptions of news media performance

Typologies have proved to be a powerful comparative tool for finding possible commonalities between different countries (Blumler et al., 1992). These models are based on the existence of national journalistic cultures, press circulation, political parallelisms and social relevance. Among the various existing models that relate politics and the media, Hallin and Mancini's has become a prominent reference in the international sphere (Brüggemann et al., 2014; Strömbäck et al., 2008; Strömbäck & Luengo, 2008).

The relevance of adopting this comparative framework is also justified by the influence that the media system can have on the social view of journalistic institutions. According to Steppat et al. (2020, p. 321), "'news users' perceptions of news media performance are shaped by their individual media choices as well as by the composition of the news media environment that surrounds them".

For example, the more the structure of a country's media system parallels that of its political parties, the more the population of that country is dominated by exposure to like-minded views through mass media (Goldman & Muntz, 2011). Steppat et al. (2021) take this idea further, emphasising the importance of the political information environment when analysing news exposure. According to these authors, both media market fragmentation and polarisation have a relevant effect on like-minded news consumption. In another study conducted in five countries, they also found that the higher the level of fragmentation and polarisation, the worse the perceived news performance was, particularly in terms of journalistic independence and objectivity (Steppat et al., 2020). This is important because what people think of and expect from their country's media has an impact on patterns of media use (Wolling, 2009) and thus on the media's ability to contribute to an informed public and engaged citizenship in that country (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996).

With this in mind, the aim of this study is to explore and compare the perceptions of journalism among news users in three countries: Germany, Spain and the U.K. Each of these countries corresponds to different media systems categorised by Hallin and Mancini (2004): the *North/Central European* or *democratic corporatist model* (Germany), *the Mediterranean* or *polarised pluralist model* (Spain) and the *North Atlantic* or *liberal model* (the U.K.).

Germany is classified within the democratic corporatist model, a system also found in Austria, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Nations typically associated with this model are demonstrably characterised by a rich cultural tradition, as evidenced by the press's historically high print runs. Moreover, the model also entails a strong development of journalistic professionalism and an active, albeit limited, role for the state.

Spain exhibits most of the features Hallin and Mancini ascribe to the polarised pluralist model. This system corresponds to countries located in the Mediterranean region, such as Greece, Italy, France and Portugal, the defining features of this model are high political parallelism between media and politics, strong state intervention in the media system, a historical focus of commercial media on the ruling elite, small print runs and a low level of professionalisation of journalism.

The United Kingdom fits the liberal model, predominant in Ireland, the USA and Canada, characterised by the relative prevalence of market mechanisms, the hegemony of commercial media companies and consolidated professionalism. There is little state intervention in the media system and a limited political parallelism. However, the U.K. is different from the liberal model in two dimensions, as Hallin and Mancini point out (Hallin & Mancini, 2017). Firstly, while there is a clear tendency for political parallelism to decrease in the British quality press, it remains strong in the tabloid press. Secondly, the strong presence and influence of the BBC tempers the hegemony of commercial media companies.

Given the above, the following questions arise:

RQ1: How do news consumers in Germany, Spain and the U.K. perceive the relevance of journalism to the proper functioning of society?

RQ2: How do news users' perceptions of journalistic relevance and journalistic roles vary according to socio-demographic factors?

RQ3: How do news users rate journalists' fulfilment of the roles of *adversary, interpreter* and *disseminator?*

RQ4: Are there notable differences between the three countries studied in terms of perceptions of the social function of journalism and assessments of media performance, given that they have different media environments?

Method

Design and procedure

This study is based on the survey conducted by YouGov for the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (DNR), an international study on the consumption of digital information promoted in 2012 by the University of Oxford, which has been published in Spain since 2014 by the University of Navarra.

The fieldwork was carried out between the end of January and the beginning of February 2019 and 2020. The YouGov organisation selected around 2,000 users in each country to compose national panels to survey digital news consumption. DNR participants are adult internet users who have consumed news in the last month and are representative of the online population according to socio-demographic and geographic criteria. The data were weighted according to official census and industry-accepted majority data for age, gender, region, news reading and education level, in order to reflect the population of the countries analysed.

Sample

For this research, the 2019 and 2020 surveys were consulted in order to cover all questions related to the object of study, as the questionnaire has some variations from one year to the next. Specifically, samples of Internet users from Germany

(2019: n = 2,022; 2020: n = 2,011), Spain (2019: n = 2,005; 2020: n = 2,006) and the United Kingdom (2019: n = 2,023; 2020: n = 2,011) were used.

First, we identified the DNR questions related to the two aspects we wanted to measure: the social relevance of journalism and the satisfaction with the roles fulfilled by journalists. As the DNR is a more general study than the one presented in this article, we selected some DNR variables in order to limit the responses to the specificity of our research. However, it is worth noting that the Digital News Report seeks to understand how news is consumed in different countries and meets a number of requirements to ensure a representative sample. Specifically, the samples from Germany, Spain and the U.K. were subject to several conditions to ensure their representativeness. For example, in addition to appropriate representation in terms of age, gender and origin, the users surveyed in the three countries met quotas to ensure that the educational and political diversity of the three countries was represented. The responses to these variables were subjected to various statistical tests in order to test the relationship between the variables analysed (Table 1) and the socio-demographic variables.

Questionnaire and variables

The online questionnaire covers a wide range of questions about news consumption. In particular, this research has conducted a fine-grained descriptive analysis of the main characteristics of individuals who are more or less supportive of journalism and their perceived journalistic roles in different countries. In particular, the following survey questions were analysed in relation to the socio-demographic variables of age, gender and level of education:

Table 1:
Main Variables An

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Journalism relevance[1]	1.93	0.96
Adversarial role[2]	3.21	0.97
Disseminator role[3]	3.75	0.93
Interpretative role[4]	3.47	0.93

[1] How important, if at all, do you think independent journalism is for the proper functioning of society (to be answered according to a Likert rating scale: Extremely important (1) / Very important / Somewhat important / Not very important / Not at all important (5).

[2] Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: The news media monitors and scrutinises powerful people and businesses.

[3] Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: The news media keeps me up to date with what's going on.

[4] Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: The news media helps me understand the news of the day.

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Results

This section is structured as follows: first, citizens' perceptions of the social relevance of journalism is presented, both at a general level and in the performance of some of its main functions (RQ1 & RQ3). Both questions are examined from a comparative perspective, across the three countries, to see whether membership of different media systems is significant for the issues observed (RQ4) or if they are influenced by socio-demographic variables (RQ2).

As one would expect, although digital users in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom agreed on the importance of journalism for the proper functioning of society, national differences do exist. Overall, about 72% of the digital users who answered the survey identified journalism as relevant. National figures range from 83% in Germany who think that journalism is either extremely or very important for society to 59% in Spain. Respondents under the age of 45 accord journalism less public relevance, with only 34% identifying journalism as extremely important for society. Broadly speaking, the typical supporter of journalism would be over 45 years old, with tertiary education. However, a closer look shows national differences.

Table 2:
Journalism relevance and socio-demographic variables correlation

	Journalism relevance[a]				
	Extremely important	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
Age[b]					
Under 45	34%	29.9%	27.2%	6.7%	2.2%
Over 45	46.6%	30.6%	19.5%	2.3%	1%
Gender[c]					
Male	45.2%	29.1%	20.2%	3.8%	1.8%
Female	38.3%	31.5%	24.8%	4.2%	1.2%
Education[d]					
Low	26.2%	23.4%	35.5%	8.9%	6%
Middle	38.8%	30.8%	24.1%	4.7%	1.7%
High	49.3%	30.5%	17.7%	2.1%	0.4%
Country[e]					
Germany	53.9%	30%	12%	3.3%	0.7%
Spain	32.1%	27.8%	32%	5.8%	2.4%
United Kingdom	38.9%	33.2%	23.7%	2.9%	1.3%

[a] Question: How important, if at all, do you think independent journalism is for the proper functioning of society? (To be answered according to a Likert rating scale.)
[b] Cramer's V: 0.17, p-value < .000
[c] Cramer's V: 0.08, p-value < .000
[d] Cramer's V: 0.13, p-value < .000
[e] Cramer's V: 0.17, p-value < .000

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Perceptions of the social function of journalism

According to the 2020 DNR data, a majority of news users in the three countries state that independent journalism is relevant to ensure the proper functioning of society. Of the three countries, the social relevance of journalism seems to be more established in Germany, where 83.9% say they are in favour and 4% against. The situation is very different from Spain, where 59.9% recognise it as extremely or very relevant, while 8.2% of the surveyed do not, with the United Kingdom being at an intermediate level (72.1% of support, 4.2% against).

When analysing the influence of socio-demographic factors such as age, gender or level of education, there are differences between countries. In Germany, the correlation between age and the importance given to journalism is statistically significant ($p < .001$). The same is true for age and level of education in Spain, or for the level of education in the U.K., so some patterns are evident in the responses. In all three countries, young people aged 18–24 disagree with the need for independent journalism to ensure the proper functioning of society, but with large differences. In case of Spain, more than half of respondents in this age group consider the work of journalism to be not very relevant, 20 percentage points more than in Germany (30.4%) or the United Kingdom (32.8%). Spain is the only country where a majority of respondents aged 18–44 disagree with the need for independent journalism.

Respondents' level of education also plays a role. Respondents with lower levels of education most frequently do not attribute a relevant role to independent journalism (44.4% in Germany, 45.4% in Spain and 29.4% in the U.K.).
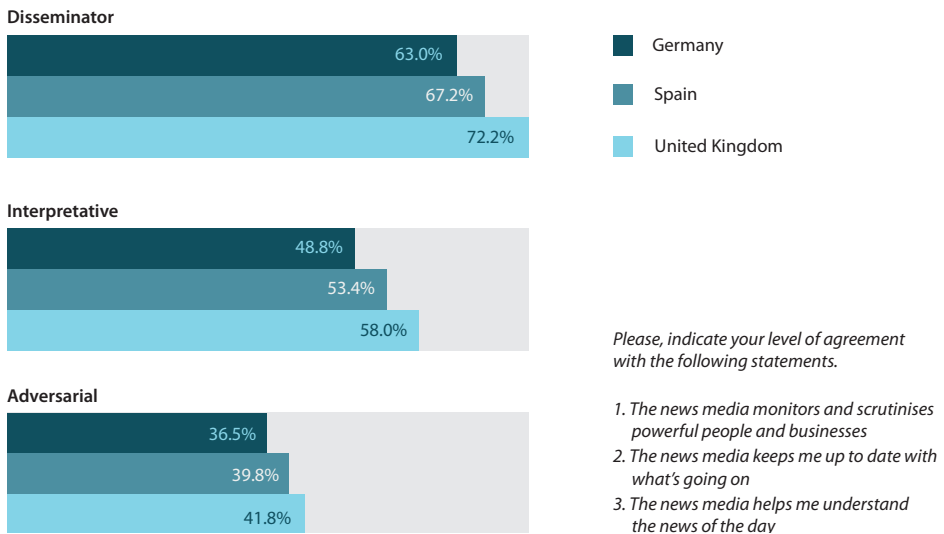
Disseminator

Germany: 63.0%
Spain: 67.2%
United Kingdom: 72.2%

Interpretative

Germany: 48.8%
Spain: 53.4%
United Kingdom: 58.0%

Adversarial

Germany: 36.5%
Spain: 39.8%
United Kingdom: 41.8%

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

1. The news media monitors and scrutinises powerful people and businesses
2. The news media keeps me up to date with what's going on
3. The news media helps me understand the news of the day

Figure 1:
News users' evaluation of journalistic roles by country
Source: Adapted from the Reuters Institute DNR survey 2020, conducted by YouGov.

There are significant differences in how news users rate the fulfilment of the three journalistic roles analysed in the survey. The role of disseminator is the one that generates the most consensus: 63% of Germans, 67.2% of Spaniards and 73.2% of British respondents think that journalists fulfil this role correctly. In other words, the vast majority of those surveyed believe that journalists and the media keep them informed about what's going on. In case of the interpretative role, a slight majority of Spaniards (53.4%) and Britons (58%) believe that journalists and the media help them to understand the reality around them. This is not the case for German respondents, among whom a minority (48.8%) are of the opinion that journalism is an aid to their understanding of reality. In all three countries, respondents ranked fulfilling the confrontational function last. In all three countries, only a minority are satisfied with the way the media monitor and scrutinise powerful individuals and companies (36.5% in Germany, 39.8% in Spain and 41.8% in the U.K.).

When correlated with socio-demographic variables, some changes emerge. In terms of age (Table 3), in both Germany and the U.K., the older the user, the higher the level of agreement with fulfilment of the adversarial role. Of the three countries analysed, in Spain alone is the p-value greater than 0.5 and therefore not statistically significant. When analysing the change in support for the adversarial role, age does not seem to affect Spanish respondents. When it comes to the disseminator role, Germany and Spain are the only two countries where the results are statistically significant. Whoever it is, in the Spanish case, age seems to have the greatest impact when analysing the evaluation of this particular journalistic role. The older they get, the more Spaniards recognise this function in media performance. Finally, the perception of the role of interpreter does not seem to change much with age. In all three countries analysed, the support received is always around 50%, whether or not the correlation is statistically significant.

Table 3:
Functions of journalism by age

	Germany						Spain						United Kingdom					
	18–24 N = 161	25–34 N = 289	35–44 N = 295	45–54 N = 414	55+ N = 863	* p	18–24 N = 181	25–34 N = 303	35–44 N = 411	45–54 N = 421	55+ N = 689	* p	18–24 N = 135	25–34 N = 278	35–44 N = 304	45–54 N = 323	55+ N = 983	* p
The news media monitors and scrutinises powerful people and businesses *Adversarial role*	26.1%	31.5%	31.9%	35.5%	41.6%	< .001	40.9%	38.9%	39.9%	41.3%	40.8%	0.688	34.8%	36.7%	39.5%	39.0%	47%	< .001
The news media keeps me up to date with what's going on *Disseminator role*	62.7%	60.9%	56.6%	61.4%	66.3%	0.015	53.6%	62.7%	64.2%	69.8%	72.9%	< .001	73.3%	70.1%	76.6%	69.0%	72.7%	0.939
The news media helps me understand the news of the day *Interpretative role*	51.6%	41.5%	47.8%	47.6%	51.2%	0.052	48.1%	52.5%	49.9%	53.9%	56.6%	0.017	57%	54.3%	58.9%	52.6%	58.4%	0.328

Note: Question "We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:" * p-value of the Spearman correlation between each type of concern and age (within each country).

Source: Adapted from the Reuters Institute DNR survey 2019, conducted by YouGov.

The respondents' level of education does not seem to have much impact on their answers when asked about the functions of journalism (Table 4). The U.K. is the only one of the countries in which the correlation is statistically significant (p < .001), but only for two of the three questions. It is also here that a clearer correlation can be observed, whereby the higher the level of education, the greater the support for the functions of dissemination and understanding.

Table 4:
Functions of journalism by education level

	Germany				Spain				United Kingdom			
	Low N = 46	Middle N = 1334	High N = 642	p *	Low N = 273	Middle N = 1002	High N = 730	p *	Low N = 77	Middle N = 1107	High N = 839	p *
The news media monitors and scrutinises powerful people and businesses *Adversarial role*	30.4%	37.4%	34.3%	0.303	33%	41.1%	42.3%	0.031	37.7%	41.5%	44%	0.176
The news media keeps me up to date with what's going on *Disseminator role*	47.8%	62.1%	65.3%	0.052	58.6%	67.9%	69.5%	0.008	57.1%	68.9%	78.4%	< .001
The news media helps me to understand the news of the day *Interpretative role*	39.1%	48.7%	49.2%	0.527	49.8%	53.2%	54.7%	0.208	40.3%	54.4%	61.7%	< .001

Note: Question "We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:" * p-value of the Spearman correlation between each type of concern and education (within each country).

Source: Adapted from the Reuters Institute DNR survey 2019, conducted by YouGov.

The situation is similar with regard to gender (Table 5). There are no relevant gender differences in satisfaction with fulfilling journalistic roles. Thus, the fulfilment of the three roles analysed in this article receives similar support among men and women. The only statistically insignificant correlation between gender and satisfaction with performance in the role of disseminator is found in the U.K. Elsewhere, the relationship is statistically significant, albeit to varying degrees.

Table 5:
Functions of journalism by gender

	Germany			Spain			United Kingdom		
	Male	Female	* p	Male	Female	* p	Male	Female	* p
The news media monitors and scrutinises powerful people and businesses *Adversarial role*	75.4%	77.8%	0.003	81.1%	85.8%	0.008	78.2%	83.4%	< .001
The news media keeps me up to date with what's going on *Disseminator role*	88.5%	90.8%	0.01	88.4%	91.6%	0.02	92.8%	93.9%	0.29
The news media helps me understand the news of the day *Interpretative role*	84.3%	87.4%	0.001	84.1%	89.5%	0.001	87.5%	90.7%	0.05

Note: Question "We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:" * p-value of the Spearman correlation between each type of concern and gender (within each country).

Source: Adapted from the Reuters Institute DNR survey 2019, conducted by YouGov.

Discussion and conclusion

In this study, we examined perceptions of the journalistic functions of holding the powerful to account (adversarial role), disseminating information quickly to the public (disseminator role), and providing analysis of current events (interpretative role) among news users in three different media systems.

Although the importance attached to the role of journalism is high (RQ1), there are differences between the three countries analysed. The Germans are similarly supportive of the roles of adversary, interpreter and disseminator, but their assessment of the social relevance of journalism is quite a lot higher than their satisfaction with the fulfilment of their basic functions. This gap between the normative conception and the realistic description of journalistic work is in line with Broersma and Peters (2017, p. 5), who point out that "when we look at many intended functions or desirable social outcomes of journalism, the construction of these seems to be centered on cultural expectations rather than everyday consequences". Therefore, it is important to look at citizens' evaluations of news media performance, as this research has done, because "an audience-centered, or at least audience-inclusive, perspective on the (democratic and societal) functions of journalism is crucial if we want a theory that is not only internally consistent, but also in line with, and testable against, people's lived experiences" (Peters & Witschge, 2015, p. 20).

As noted in the introduction, these findings can also shed light on the state of media trust in each of the analysed countries. For instance, according to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023, in Spain (where, as we have seen, 6 out of 10 users consider journalism to be extremely or very important for society) only 33% say they trust most news most of the time (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2023). The United Kingdom exhibits a level of trust similar to that of Spain. Conversely, in Germany – where 8 out of 10 users think that journalism is either extremely or very important for society – the percentage of trust rises to 43%. A potential explanation for this observation lies in Germany's adherence to the corporate democratic model, which fosters a higher degree of professionalisation within the journalistic field. While definitive conclusions cannot be drawn nor a causal relationship established between these two trends, we can surmise that individuals who perceive journalism to be fulfilling a societal function tend to place greater trust in the media. Viewed from another angle, the pursuit of regaining public trust – fundamental to the editorial and economic sustainability of media outlets – also entails reclaiming its relevance in citizens' daily lives.

Age and education emerge as the two primary socio-demographic variables that significantly influence news users' perceptions of journalistic relevance (RQ2). In both cases, respondents' age and level of education showed notable shifts in the attributed importance of journalism for societal functioning. Specifically, older respondents tended to perceive journalism as more relevant, a finding that differs from the findings of Vos et al. (2019), who observed the opposite correlation, indicating a higher importance attributed to journalistic roles among younger respondents. However, it is understandable that younger generations, with a prevalent consumption of news on social networks (Casero-Ripollés, 2018; Martínez-Costa et al., 2019), may have a less established belief

in the societal importance of journalism, despite tending to show lower levels of trust in news, as they are more aware of the challenges of digital information environments (Sierra et al., 2023). Furthermore, it is worth noting that the mode of access, whether digital or traditional, significantly influences the perceived relevance of journalism for societal functioning (Sierra et al., 2023), with age playing a clear role in this regard.

The same was true of the respondents' level of education. As the level of education increased, so did the perceived relevance of journalism. However, this does not apply to the analysis of journalistic roles. The correlation between education and journalistic role satisfaction is only statistically significant for British respondents, but not for German and Spanish respondents. Again, these results differ from some previous research that found that higher levels of formal education are negatively associated with the perceived importance of journalistic functions (Willnat et al., 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to continue investigating the socio-demographic factors in their relationship with the expectations and evaluation of journalism.

In all three countries, the role of disseminator is much more recognised than that of either adversarial or interpreter (RQ3). The primacy of the disseminator role at the expense of analytical or watchdog functions calls for a reflection on the practical implications of these findings for media practitioners. This perception of the neglect of some of the functions of journalism could indicate that the media are, in the words of James W. Carey (1989), in fact operating from a vision of "communication as transmission" rather than "communication as ritual". However, it would be a misguided strategy to prioritise the achievement of the logistical aspects of communication, since in the current technological context other actors can equally fulfil this function of moving information quickly from one place to another. Rather, the epistemological authority of the journalist (Torregrosa & Gutiérrez, 2009) is based on a mediation that fulfils a deeper social and cultural function than the mere transmission of messages, and that leads to community building through the endowment of meaning and the control of power from a vision of the common good. In a communicative landscape teeming with actors capable of disseminating information in the public sphere, the distinguishing value of journalism lies precisely in its commitment to those more difficult-to-replace functions of power monitoring and interpretative insight into current affairs. By prioritising the fulfilment of these roles, media outlets can lay the groundwork for regaining public trust and ultimately securing social recognition of journalism as a cornerstone of democracy (Scheuer, 2008).

Although the role of disseminator is the one that best fits the perceptions of users in the three countries, a closer look at the data reveals some peculiarities (RQ4). The assessment of the fulfilment of each of the three roles may be due to the fact that these national contexts are governed by particular journalistic cultures, understood as "a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists, consciously or unconsciously, legitimize their role in society and make their work meaningful to themselves and others" (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 369). Even if the general framework of the journalistic ideology of Western democratic societies applies in all three countries, i.e. neutral and factual reporting, critical distance to power and adherence to professional ethical rules (Deuze, 2005; Hanitzsch, 2011), the journalistic cultures of the U.K., Germany and Spain have

their own nuances, as they emphasise the functions examined here in different ways. The journalistic cultures of the U.K. and Germany have been analysed comparatively in previous studies (Esser, 1999, 2008; Donsbach & Patterson, 2004). Henkel et al. (2019) found that British journalists see their professional role as more confrontational with those in power than their German counterparts, while they see it as more important to provide context and analysis. Other studies have also shown that British journalists define the information function as their primary professional task (Donsbach, 1983).

Assuming that role conceptions influence the work of journalists, that is, that what journalists consider to be the principles of their profession can have an impact on what they produce (Albæk et al., 2014), it is to be expected that this journalistic culture will ultimately also shape the public's expectations. This is shown by the results of this research, where the evaluation of the roles of adversary, disseminator and interpreter have different weights in each of the countries analysed. From the prism of media systems, the data show that the country that most closely matches the models described by Hallin and Mancini (2004) is Spain. In their seminal work, Hallin and Mancini argued that journalism in countries belonging to the polarised pluralist system is characterised by a more literary and elite approach. This has traditionally resulted in journalism whose sophistication has contributed to a more distant perception by the general population. In our case, some of the data seem to be in line with this thesis.

Limitations and future lines of research

All academic research is inherently subject to limitations, and this study is no exception. In this case, it is worth noting the limitations of the research set out in the samples used. It should be remembered that the Digital News Report is an online sample, so as Newman et al. (2021, p. 6) state: It "will tend to under-represent the news consumption habits of people who are older and less affluent, meaning that online use will typically be over-represented and traditional offline use under-represented".

Another limitation of this study is the potential influence of confounding variables, particularly given the use of cross-sectional data. While our analysis provides valuable insights into the relationships between demographics and the variables of interest, it is important to recognise that cross-sectional designs inherently limit our ability to establish causality or fully account for confounding factors. Therefore, caution should be exercised in interpreting observed associations between demographics and outcomes of interest, as these relationships may be confounded by unmeasured or incompletely controlled variables.

In short, this paper has explored citizens' perceptions of the social relevance of journalism in Germany, Spain and the U.K. and their evaluation of media performance around three basic functions. The perceived predominance of the disseminating function of journalism over those that require a more analytical or interpretative work raises new questions about the possible threats that this situation could generate. It seems relevant to continue researching along these lines and to introduce new variables such as, for example, whether there is a difference in the phenomena analysed here

between citizens who prefer to consume information through digital media and those who get their information through traditional media. Employing longitudinal designs or experimental methods could provide a more robust understanding of the causal mechanisms underlying these associations.

References

Albæk, E., van Dalen, A., Jebril, N. & de Vreese, C. H. (2014). *Political Journalism in Comparative Perspective.* Cambridge University Press.

Artero, J. P., Orive, V. & Latorre, P. (2020). Composición y predictores sociodemográficos de los consumidores de noticias [Socio-demographic profiles and predictors of news consumers]. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social,* (77), 55–72. Online: www.doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2020-1449

Ariel, Y., Unkel, J., Weimann Saks, D. & Malka, V. E. (2023). Far away but close at heart? German and Israeli consumption of news concerning the 2022 Russian–Ukrainian war. *Media, War & Conflict.* Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/17506352231212415

Blumler, J. G., McLeod, J. M. & Rosengren, K. E. (1992). *Comparatively Speaking. Communication and Culture Across Space and Time.* Sage.

Boczkowski, P., Mitchelstein, E. & Matassi, M. (2018). "News comes across when I'm in a moment of leisure": Understanding the practices of incidental news consumption on social media. *New Media & Society, 20*(10), 3523–3539. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817750396

Broersma, M. & Peters, C. (2017). Introduction. Towards a Functional Perspective on Journalism's Role and Relevance. In C. Peters & M. Broersma (Eds.), *Rethinking Journalism Again. Societal Role and Public Relevance in a Digital Age* (pp. 1–17). Routledge.

Brüggemann, M., Engesser, S., Büchel, F., Humprecht, E. & Castro, L. (2014). Hallin and Mancini Revisited: Four Empirical Types of Western Media Systems. *Journal of Communication, 64*(6), 1037–1065. Online: https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12127

Canel, M. J., Rodríguez, R. & Sánchez Aranda, J. J. (2000). *Periodistas al descubierto. Retrato de los profesionales de la información.* CIS.

Carey, J. W. (1989). *Communication as Culture. Essays on Media and Society.* Routledge.

Carlson, M. (2017). *Journalistic Authority. Legitimating News in the Digital Era.* Columbia University Press.

Casero-Ripollés, A. (2018). Research on political information and social media: Key points and challenges for the future. *Profesional de la información, 27*(5), 964–974. Online: https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2018.sep.01

Casero-Ripollés, A. (2020). Impact of Covid-19 on the media system. Communicative and democratic consequences of news consumption during the outbreak. *Profesional de la información, 29*(2). Online: https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.mar.23

Cassidy, W. P. (2005). Variations on a Theme: Professional Role Conceptions of Print and Online Newspaper Journalists. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 82*(2), 264–280. Online: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/107769900508200203

Castro, L., Strömbäck, J., Esser, F., Van Aelst, P., de Vreese, C. H. & Aalberg, T. (2022). Navigating high-choice European political information environments: A comparative analysis of news user profiles and political knowledge. *The International Journal of Press/Politics, 27*(4), 827–859. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612211012572

Chadwick, A. (2017). *The Hybrid Media System. Politics and Power.* Oxford University Press.

Chambers, S. & Costain, A. (Eds.). (2001). *Deliberation, Democracy and the Media.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Christians, C., Glasser, T., McQuail, D., Nordenstreng, K. & White, R. (2009). *Normative Theories of the Press. Journalism in Democratic Societies.* University of Illinois Press.

Commission on Freedom of the Press (1947). *A Free and Responsible Press.* University of Chicago Press.

Cunningham, S. & Craig, D. (2019). *Social Media Entertainment. The New Intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley.* NYU Press.

Deuze, M. (2002). *Journalists in the Netherlands.* Aksant Academic.

Deuze, M. (2005). What is Journalism? Professional Identity and Ideology of Journalists Reconsidered. *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism, 6*(4), 442–464. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884905056815

Delli Carpini, M. X. & Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters.* Yale University Press.

Donohue, G. A., Tichenor, P. J. & Olien, C. N. (1995). A Guard Dog Perspective on the Role of the Media. *Journal of Communication, 45*(2), 115–132. Online: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1995.tb00732.x

Donsbach, W. (1983). Journalists' Conceptions of their Audience: Comparative Indicators for the Way British and German Journalists Define their Relations to the Public. *International Communication Gazette, 32*(1), 19–36. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/001654928303200102

Donsbach, W. & Patterson, T. (2004). Political News Journalists: Partisanship, Professionalism, and Political Roles in Five Countries. In F. Esser & B. Pfetsch (Eds.), *Comparing Political Communication. Theories, Cases, and Challenges* (pp. 251–270). Cambridge University Press.

Esser, F. (1999). "Tabloidization" of News: A Comparative Analysis of Anglo-American and German Press Journalism. *European Journal of Communication, 14*(3), 291–324. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323199014003001

Esser, F. (2008). Dimensions of Political News Cultures: Sound Bite and Image Bite News in France, Germany, Great Britain and the United States. *The International Journal of Press/Politics, 13*(4), 401–428. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161208323691

Fletcher, R. & Nielsen, R. K. (2017a). Are News Audiences Increasingly Fragmented? A Cross-National Comparative Analysis of Cross-Platform News Audience Fragmentation and Duplication. *Journal of Communication, 67*(4), 476–498. Online: https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12315

Fletcher, R. & Nielsen, R. K. (2017b). Are People Incidentally Exposed to News on Social Media? A Comparative Analysis. *New Media & Society, 20*(7), 2450–2468. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817724170

Franklin, B., Hamer, M., Hanna, M., Kinsey, M. & Richardson, J. E. (2005). Watchdog Journalism. In *Key Concepts in Journalism Studies* (pp. 274–274). Sage. Online: www.doi.org/10.4135/9781446215821

Gil de Zúñiga, H. & Zicheng, C. (2021). Origin and evolution of the News Finds Me perception: Review of theory and effects. *El Profesional de la información, 30*(3). Online: https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2021.may.21

Goldman, S. & Mutz, D. (2011). The Friendly Media Phenomenon: A Cross-National Analysis of Cross-Cutting Exposure. *Political Communication, 28*(1), 42–66. Online: https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2010.544280

Hallin, D. C. & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing Media Systems. Three Models of Media and Politics.* Cambridge University Press.

Hallin, D. C. & Mancini, P. (2012). Comparing Media Systems: A Response to Critics. In J. Hardy (Ed.), *Handbook of Comparative Communication Research* (pp. 207–220). Routledge.

Hallin, D. C. & Mancini, P. (2017). Ten Years After Comparing Media Systems: What Have We Learned? *Political Communication, 34*(2), 155–171. Online: https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2016.1233158

Hampton, M. (2009). The Fourth Estate Ideal in Journalism History. In S. Allan (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism* (pp. 3–12). Routledge.

Hanitzsch, T. (2007). Deconstructing Journalism Culture: Toward a Universal Theory. *Communication Theory, 17*(4), 367–385. Online: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2007.00303.x

Hanitzsch, T. (2011). Populist Disseminators, Detached Watchdogs, Critical Change Agents and Opportunist Facilitators: Professional Milieus, the Journalistic Field and Autonomy in 18 Countries. *International Communication Gazette, 73*(6), 477–494. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048511412279

Hanitzsch, T., Hanusch, F., Mellado, C., Anikina, M., Berganza, R., Cangoz, I., Coman, M., Hamada, B., Hernández, M. E., Karadjov, C. D., Moreira, S. V., Mwesige, P. G., Lee Plaisance, P., Reich, Z., Seethaler, J., Skewes, E. A., Vardiansyah Noor, D. & Kee Wang Yuen, E. (2011). Mapping Journalism Cultures across Nations: A Comparative Study of 18 Countries. *Journalism Studies, 12*(3), 273–293. Online: https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2010.512502

Hanusch, F. (2012). Broadening the Focus: The case for lifestyle journalism as a field of scholarly inquiry. *Journalism Practice, 6*(1), 2–11. Online: https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2011.622895

Hartley, J. (1996). *Popular Reality. Journalism, Modernity and Popular Culture.* Arnold.

Henkel, I., Thurman, N. & Deffner, V. (2019). Comparing Journalism Cultures in Britain and Germany: Confrontation, Contextualization, Conformity. *Journalism Studies, 20*(14), 1995–2013. Online: https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1551067

Jandura, O. & Friedrich, K. (2014). The Quality of Media Coverage. In C. Reinemann (Ed.), *Handbooks of Communication Science. Political Communication* (pp. 351–373). De Gruyter Mouton.

Johnstone, J., Slawski, E. & Bowman, W. (1976). *The News People. A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and Their Work.* University of Illinois Press.

Kepplinger, H. M., Brosius, H. B. & Staab, J. F. (1991). Instrumental Actualization: A Theory of Mediated Conflicts. *European Journal of Communication, 6*(3), 263–290. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323191006003002

Kovach, B. & Rosenstiel, T. (2001). *The Elements of Journalism. What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect.* Crown Publishers.

Kristensen, L. M. & Bro, P. (2024). News values in a digital age – Intra-media, inter-media, and extra-media platforms. *Journalism, 25*(4), 819–836. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849231165855

Lasswell, H. D. (1948). The Structure and Function of Communication in Society. In L. Bryson (Ed.), *The Communication of Ideas* (pp. 37–51). Harper and Row.

Lee, T. (2010). Why They Don't Trust the Media: An Examination of Factors Predicting Trust. *American Behavioral Scientist, 54*(1), 8–21. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764210376308

Majó-Vázquez, S., Nielsen, R. K. & González-Bailón, S. (2018). The Backbone Structure of Audience Networks: A New Approach to Comparing Online News Consumption across Countries. *Political Communication, 36*(2), 227–240. Online: https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2018.1546244

Martínez-Costa, M. P., Serrano-Puche, J., Portilla Manjón, I. & Sánchez-Blanco, C. (2019). Young adults' interaction with online news and advertising. *Comunicar,* (59), 19–28. Online: https://doi.org/10.3916/C59-2019-02

Márquez-Ramírez, M., Mellado, C., Humanes, M. L., Amado, A., Beck, D., Davydov, S., Mick, J., Mothes, C., Olivera, D., Panagiotu, N., Roses, S., Silke, H., Sparks, C., Stępińska, A., Szabó, G., Tandoc, E. & Wang, H. (2020). Detached or Interventionist? Comparing the Performance of Watchdog Journalism in Transitional, Advanced and Non-democratic Countries. *The International Journal of Press/Politics, 25*(1), 53–75. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161219872155

Martín Algarra, M., Torregrosa, M. & Serrano-Puche, J. (2010). Un periodismo sin periodos: actualidad y tiempo en la era digital. In *Periodística y web 2.0: hacia la construcción de un nuevo modelo*. Sociedad Española de Periodística.

McNair, B. (2008). Journalism and Democracy. In K. Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch (Eds.), *The Handbook of Journalism Studies* (pp. 257–269). Routledge.

McQuail, D. (1992). *Media Performance. Mass Communication and the Public Interest.* Sage.

McQuail, D. (2013). *Journalism and Society.* Sage.

Mellado, C. (2019). Journalists' Professional Roles and Role Performance. In J. F. Nussbaum (Ed.), *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication* (pp. 1–23). Oxford University Press. Online: https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.832

Mellado, C., Hellmueller, L. & Donsbach, W. (Eds.). (2016). *Journalistic Role Performance. Concepts, Contexts, and Methods.* Taylor & Francis.

Mellado, C., Hellmueller, L. & Weaver, D. (2016). Revisiting Journalists' Role Conceptions Research. In C. Mellado, L. Hellmueller & D. Weaver (Eds.), *Journalistic Role Performance* (pp. 39–58). Routledge.

Moran, R. E. & Nechushtai, E. (2023). Before reception: Trust in the news as infrastructure. *Journalism, 24*(3), 457–474. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211048961

Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Schulz, A., Andi S., Robertson, C. & Nielsen, R. K. (2021). *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2021.* Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

Nielsen, R. K. & Ganter, S. A. (2018). Dealing with digital intermediaries: A case study of the relations between publishers and platforms. *New Media & Society, 20*(4), 1600–1617. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817701318

Norris, P. (2014). Watchdog Journalism. In M. Bovens, R. Goodie & T. Schillemans (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Accountability* (pp. 525–541). Oxford University Press.

Novoa Jaso, M. F., Sánchez-Aranda, J. J. & Serrano-Puche, J. (2019). De la Redacción a la (gran) pantalla: roles profesionales del periodismo y su representación en la ficción audiovisual [From the newsroom to the big screen: Professional roles of journalism and their representation in audiovisual fiction]. *ICONO 14, 17*(2), 32–58. Online: https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v17i2.1368

Pateman, C. (1970). *Participation and democratic theory.* Cambridge University Press.

Peters, C. & Broersma, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Rethinking Journalism. Trust and Participation in a Transformed News Landscape.* Routledge.

Peters, C. & Broersma, M. (Eds.). (2017). *Rethinking Journalism Again. Societal Role and Public Relevance in a Digital Age.* Routledge.

Peters, C. & Schrøder, K. C. (2018). Beyond the Here and Now of News Audiences: A Process-Based Framework for Investigating News Repertoires. *Journal of Communication, 68*(6), 1079–1103. Online: https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqy060

Peters, C. & Witschge, T. (2015). From Grand Narratives of Democracy to Small Expectations of Participation. *Journalism Practice, 9*(1), 19–34. Online: https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2014.928455

Peterson, T. (1956). The Social Responsibility Theory of the Press. In F. Siebert, T. Peterson & W. Schramm (Eds.), *Four Theories of the Press* (pp. 73–103). University of Illinois Press.

Prager, A. & Hameleers, M. (2021). Disseminating information or advocating peace? Journalists' role perceptions in the face of conflict. *Journalism, 22*(2), 395–413. Oxford. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918791788

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2023). *Digital News Report 2023.* University of Oxford. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2023

Rodríguez-Virgili, J., Sierra, A. & Serrano-Puche, J. (2022). Motivations for News Exposure in Different Media Systems: A Comparative Study of Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. *Communication Today, 13*(1), 60–73.

Scheuer, J. (2008). *The Big Picture. Why Democracies Need Journalistic Excellence.* Routledge.

Schudson, M. (2008). *Why Democracies Need an Unlovable Press.* Polity.

Schultz, J. (1998). *Reviving the Fourth Estate. Democracy, Accountability and the Media.* Cambridge University Press. Online: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511597138

Serrano-Puche, J., Fernández, C. B. & Rodríguez-Virgili, J. (2018). Información política y exposición incidental en las redes sociales: un análisis de Argentina, Chile, España y México [Political information and incidental exposure in social media: the cases of Argentina, Chile, Spain and Mexico]. *Doxa Comunicación,* (27), 19–42. Online: https://doi.org/10.31921/doxacom.n27a1

Serrano-Puche, J., Rodríguez-Salcedo, N. & Martínez-Costa, M.-P. (2023). Trust, disinformation, and digital media: Perceptions and expectations about news in a polarized environment. *Profesional de la información, 32*(5). Online: https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2023.sep.18

Sierra, A., Serrano-Puche, J. & Rodríguez-Virgili, J. (2023). Perceptions of journalism and trust in news among traditionalist and digitalist media users: A comparative analysis of Denmark, Spain and USA. *Anàlisi: Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura, 68,* 7–25. Online: https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/analisi.3585

Starck, K. & Soloski, J. (1977). Effect of Reporter Predisposition in Covering Controversial Stories. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 54*(1), 120–125. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/107769907705400117

Steppat, D., Castro Herrero, L. & Esser, F. (2020). News Media Performance Evaluated by National Audiences: How Media Environments and User Preferences Matter. *Media and Communication, 8*(3), 321–334. Online: https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i3.3091

Steppat, D., Castro Herrero, L. & Esser, F. (2021). Selective exposure in different political information environments – How media fragmentation and polarization shape congruent news use. *European Journal of Communication, 37*(1), 82–102. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/02673231211012141

Stier, S., Kirkizh, N., Froio, C. & Schroeder, R. (2020). Populist Attitudes and Selective Exposure to Online News: A Cross-Country Analysis Combining Web Tracking and Surveys. *The International Journal of Press/Politics, 25*(3), 426–446. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161220907018

Strömbäck, J. & Luengo, O. G. (2008). Polarized Pluralist and Democratic Corporatist Models: A Comparison of Election News Coverage in Spain and Sweden. *International Communication Gazette, 70*(6), 547–562. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048508096398

Strömbäck, J., Ørsten, M. & Aalberg, T. (2008). *Communicating Politics. Political Communication in the Nordic Countries.* University of Gothenburg.

Swart, J., Peters, C. & Broersma, M. (2018): Shedding light on the dark social: The connective role of news and journalism in social media communities. *New Media & Society,* 20(11), 4329–4345. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818772063

Toff, B. & Nielsen, R. K. (2018). "I Just Google It": Folk Theories of Distributed Discovery. *Journal of Communication, 68*(3), 636–657. Online: https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqy009

Tong, J. (2018). Journalistic Legitimacy Revisited: Collapse or revival in the digital age? *Digital Journalism, 6*(2), 256–273. Online: https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1360785

Torregrosa, M. & Gutiérrez, R. (2009). Saber y poder en los profesionales de la comunicación. Una aproximación al concepto de autoridad desde la epistemología de la comunicación. *Palabra Clave, 12*(2), 287–299. Online: https://palabraclave.unisabana.edu.co/index.php/palabraclave/article/view/1566

Vos, T. P., Eichholz, M. & Karaliova, T. (2019). Audiences and Journalistic Capital. Roles of Journalism. *Journalism Studies, 20*(7), 1009–1027. Online: https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1477551

Waisbord, S. (2000). *Watchdog Journalism in South America.* Columbia University Press.

Ward, S. J. (2009). Journalism Ethics. In K. Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch (Eds.), *The Handbook of Journalism Studies* (pp. 295–309). Routledge.

Weaver, D. (1999). Las actitudes profesionales de los periodistas en un contexto global. *Communication & Society, 12*(2), 33–45.

Weaver, D. H. & Willnat, L. (2012). *The Global Journalist in the 21st Century.* Routledge.

Weaver, D. H. & Wilhoit, G. C. (1996). *The American Journalist in the 1990s. U.S. News People at the End of an Era.* Psychology Press.

Willnat, L., Weaver, D. H. & Wilhoit, G. C. (2019). The American Journalist in the Digital Age. How Journalists and the Public Think about Journalism in the United States. *Journalism Studies, 20*(3), 423–441. Online: https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1387071

Wolling, J. (2009). The Effect of Subjective Quality Assessment on Media Selection. In T. Hartmann (Ed.), *Media Choice* (pp. 84–101). Routledge.

This page intentionally left blank.