
The Need for Good Journalism

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19/09/2024



The influence of the media in this complex and volatile framework which is public opinion is still essential. We emphasize "still" because some people claim to recognize new social communication schemes that ignore or minimize traditional media and their journalists.

Confusing the scope and implications of so-called citizen journalism, there are those who think that conventional journalism can be left aside, accusing it of always being mediated by hegemonic interests.

There's a crucial condition that can establish distinctions: the media must assume an ethical responsibility before society. It's not just about "informing," but doing so truthfully, fostering an environment of trust.

The goal is that the public can form opinions based on facts... and not on assumptions or misinformation.

However, the growing dependence on social media as a primary source of information is challenging these principles.

Social media has democratized access to information and its socialization, allowing anyone to consider themselves an independent "reporter."

And these "reporters," better or worse, have their audience.

Certainly, spaces have been opened for voices that were previously silenced... but the spread of rumors, fake news and frankly manipulated content has also been facilitated.

Often, users share news without verifying its veracity or source, contributing to the creation of bubbles that reinforce their previous beliefs. This can lead to extreme polarization, in which each person "consumes" only the information that is similar to them.

The possibility of a consensus is then undermined.

Traditional media —guaranteeing their presence on emerging platforms— have to continue setting references, based on the consolidation of verification, contrast and contextualization patterns.

Recognizing information hierarchies is essential in this regard: not all news has the same weight, regardless of bias and sensationalism.

For the public, the key could be to diversify and strengthen its sources, to check their reliability. Relying exclusively on social networks should not be the way.

Media education is an essential tool for citizens of the 21st century. Learning to distinguish between a reliable source and a dubious one, understanding the interests that can influence the coverage of a media outlet and developing critical thinking while reading or hearing are necessary skills in this digital age.

Of course, the issue goes beyond the competencies and possibilities of the media and its journalists.

Digital platforms hosting information content —many of them from or forming part of hegemonic power centers— would have to implement more effective mechanisms to combat disinformation.

The tyranny of algorithms is not a fairy tale, or the obsession of those who believe in conspiracy theories.

The market is shaping the way in which millions of people perceive reality, often in a distorted way. What matters is profit, not values. Junk news sells more. Certain information schemes respond to schemes of frank economic, political and cultural domination.

In the face of ethical missteps, professional shortcomings, incoherence and mercenarism, rigor must be positioned in daily practice.

The journalist has to be a public servant; never a provocateur, an intriguer or a deceiver.

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