

**T.C.
SAKARYA UNIVERSITY
SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION DESIGN AND MEDIA**

**JOURNALISM ETHICS BREITBART AND POST-TRUTH
JOURNALISM**

Ahmet Alphan SABANCI

MASTER'S DEGREE THESIS

Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Melih Zafer ARICAN

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**Institute Department : Communication Design and Media
Institute Discipline : Media and Communication Studies (English)**

**“This thesis was defended online on 20/09/2022 and was unanimously
accepted/not accepted by the jury members whose names are listed below.”**

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Ahmet Alphan SABANCI

20/09/2022

PREFACE

Working on post-truth and journalism during a global pandemic proved itself much more challenging in different ways. Not only the effects of COVID-19 in our lives made working harder but also the social and political dynamics of post-truth, and its effects on the journalism has been accelerated by this event. All these developments between 2020 and 2022 made this work more urgent in my personal view.

During this challenging process, my advisor Prof. Dr. Melih Zafer Arıcan has supported and motivated me to complete my thesis and I'm thankful for all of this.

I also want to thank my family and especially my wife Gökçen Öçalan Sabancı for the support they provided during this process. This work wouldn't be possible by her support.

Ahmet Alphan SABANCI

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ABBREVIATIONS

IFCN : International Fact-Checking Network

US / USA : United States of America

USD : United States Dollar

SEO : Search Engine Optimization

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ABSTRACT	
Title of Thesis: Journalism Ethics, Breitbart and Post-Truth Journalism	
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<p>Post-truth as a term has been used to define many issues we experience in our social and political experiences related to misinformation, and these issues are prevalent in many aspects of our lives, including journalism. This term is widely used and issues about misinformation, internet and journalism has been discussed and researched from many different perspectives. Yet when it comes to one of the main issues about journalism and post-truth, the news-like publications spreading misinformation, we don't have a framework to define and detect these publications, which can be used globally.</p> <p>This research proposes to call these publications' work post-truth journalism and proposes a framework to detect these publications. Since this type of work has been made possible by the certain issues inherent to journalism practice, the work provides necessary background to each criterion selected for the framework and the definition. The findings and the framework has also been discussed with the experts in the field through written interviews. Finally, US-based online publication Breitbart is analyzed with the framework to provide an example of the use of the framework.</p> <p>The framework proves itself useful to detect these types of publications and it's also clear that it's not limited with a certain country, language, or context. The framework in its current state carries further development potential with practical use. The fast evolution of the digital technologies, and its impact on digital journalism, may also require further updates to the framework.</p>	
Keywords: Journalism, Journalism Ethics, Breitbart, Post-truth, Fake News	

ÖZET	
Başlık: Gazetecilik Etiği, Breitbart ve Post-Truth Gazetecilik	
Yazar: Ahmet Alphan SABANCI	
Danışman: Prof. Dr. Melih Zafer ARICAN	
Kabul Tarihi: 20/09/2022	Sayfa Sayısı: vii (ön kısım) + 88 (ana kısım) + 4 (ek)
<p>Hakikat sonrası kavramı toplumsal ve politik hayatımızda yanlış bilgi sebebiyle yaşadığımız sorunları tanımlamak için kullanılan bir kavram ve bu sorunların etkisini gazetecilik de dahil olmak üzere hayatımızın birçok noktasında tecrübe ediyoruz. Bu kavram yaygın bir şekilde kullanılmakta ve yanlış bilgi, internet ve gazeteciliğe dair sorunlar birçok perspektiften tartışılmaya ve araştırılmaya devam etmektedir. Ancak gazetecilik ve hakikat sonrasına dair en önemli sorunlardan birisi olan gazete gibi görünüp yanlış bilgi yayan yayınları küresel bir şekilde tanımlamamıza ve tespit etmemize yardımcı olacak bir çerçevenin eksikliği söz konusu.</p> <p>Bu çalışma, bu türdeki yayınların yaptığı işi "hakikat sonrası gazetecilik" olarak adlandırmayı öneriyor ve bunların tespiti için kullanılabilecek bir çerçeve öne sürüyor. Bu türün ortaya çıkmasında gazeteciliğe ıckın sorunların da payı olduğu için, çalışma tanım ve çerçevenin inşasında kullanılan arka plan bilgileri de sağlamaktadır. Çalışmanın bulguları ve çerçeve aynı zamanda alanın uzmanları ile yazılı söyleşi yoluyla da tartışıldı. Son olarak tanım ve çerçevenin nasıl kullanılabileceğini örneklemek için de ABD merkezli yaygın organı Breitbart'ı bir örnek vaka olarak incelemektedir.</p> <p>Çerçeve bu türde yayınları tespit etmekte kullanışlı olduğunu ve herhangi bir ülke, dil veya bağlam ile kısıtlı olmadığını göstermektedir. Çerçeve şu anki hâli ile pratikte kullanıldıkça daha da gelişme potansiyeli taşımaktadır. Ayrıca dijital teknolojilerin hızlı evrimi ve bu teknolojilerin dijital gazetecilik üzerindeki etkisi, ilerleyen dönemlerde çerçevenin güncellenmesini gerektirebilir.</p>	
Anahtar Kelimeler: Gazetecilik, Gazetecilik Etiği, Post-truth, Breitbart, Fake News	

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history, journalism has evolved and adapted to changes around it. Whether it's politics, society or technology, journalism always found a way to adapt as a profession and continued pursuing its mission. But the effects and disruption created by the digital technologies and internet was one of the most unexpected one in many ways.

This disruption through internet and digital technologies happened because those technologies changed not just how journalism operates, but every aspect of society and business. These changes, for example, radically altered how people access information, communicate, shop and work. These changes also had serious impacts on politics and society and still does.

It was inevitable for journalism to be affected by these changes. But many newsrooms were slow to adapt and understand these ongoing transformations. They were either slow to adapt or in total denial for a long time. Many early attempts from older newsrooms to start publishing online was quite limited and people had to wait for digital-native journalism ventures to fully understand the potentials of digital publishing.

Although the internet was seriously underestimated as a place for publishing in the early days, in the late-2000s and early 2010s its full potential was visible to everyone. Disruption created by the internet, widespread computer and smartphone usage created radical changes for all of the media sector, including journalism. This wave of disruption not only forced journalists to start publishing online but also change how they're operating as an organization, how they're going to create an income, how to research and so on. In many ways, journalism has been forced to rethink and reimagine itself.

Another major issue for journalism was the fact that they were not the gatekeepers anymore. With digital publishing tools getting easier to access and use, everyone is now able to publish their ideas, articles, videos, and any kind of creation online. This also created a space for new kinds of publications to emerge, like blogs, newsletters, and podcasts.

In the late 2000s, new kinds of platforms also started to emerge, called social media. All these platforms created a space for public to share anything they want with their friends and anyone else using the same platform. All these platforms were not taken seriously back then, but now they're staples of our daily lives and has the power to shape journalism and bargain with them.

All of these and more drove journalism into a never-ending crisis, which only gotten worse with 2008 global economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic (Nic Newman et al., 2021). Today, journalism not only works to do what it must but also tries to reinvent itself and fights what I'm calling "post-truth journalism" in this work.

Subject of the Study

One major problem journalism faced while moving online was how to adapt their economic models. Advertising has always been one of the main income sources for journalism, especially in print but advertising works differently online. Although some outlets kept their old models or focused mainly on that, automated advertisement was one of the shiny tools offered to journalists. With these tools, newsrooms didn't need an independent department to receive advertisement, they could just add couple lines of code into their website and Google and Facebook will deliver special advertisements based on what the organizations want and what these companies think the reader wants. This model is called "targeted advertisement" and relies on companies like Google, Facebook, and other data brokers for collecting information about users, in journalism's case, the readers.

Even though it seemed like a good way to use technology to make earning money easier, problems started to show itself quickly. One major issue was click-rates. To earn advertisement money from these systems, organizations needed more readers, meaning more clicks. To achieve that, they had to write in a way that will capture people's attention and make them click those article links. This created a phenomenon we now call "clickbait", news articles and headlines focused on attention grabbing and not informing.

Discovery of clickbait opened a space for a new kind of websites. These were focused solely on earning money through automated advertisement and used clickbait newswriting as a tool

to grab attention online. There are two major groups in these types of websites: first ones are not focused on the content they're publishing; it can be copied from somewhere else or just has couple sentences people search through search engines like Google a lot.

The second group not only aims to grab attention, but they also want specific kind of attention, generally defined in an ideological sense. Noticing that political content, especially divisive and provocative grabs people's attention more easily, these websites and people behind them defines a specific target audience to aim.

In time, the success rate of this method inspired a new kind of usage: clickbait and provocative publishing for political propaganda. This is also the time when post-truth journalism was born. Journalism not focused on informing public in a responsible way but focusing on propaganda for one political group and using every method they have in their toolbox.

This kind of journalism has always been around, but digital technologies and internet gave them a toolbox to amplify their reach and power and shaking the trust for journalism from its roots. Organizations using these methods grew and grabbed global attention. Today, post-truth journalism organizations are everywhere and some even supported by the governments for political ends; not just helping them to spread their propaganda but also weaken the public's trust for journalism in general.

To understand how these organizations operate and what kind of weaknesses they manipulate is necessary to save journalism's future. There are many entrenched problems journalism deal with right now and looking at post-truth journalism can help understanding these problems in a more fundamental way. Because most of their toolbox is based on these problems.

If one were to understand how post-truth journalism operates, there's no better option than US based publication Breitbart, founded in 2007 by the conservative commentator Andrew Breitbart. Breitbart explains the motivation behind founding the publication with these words: "I really believe and I'm committed to the destruction of the old media guard . . . and it's a very good business model." Since the foundation of Breitbart and following the rise of

the publication in 2016, their models and tactics proved successful to shake the ground beneath the “old media” and accelerated the crisis journalism was already facing.

Today, we see that Breitbart’s ambition and success influenced a global phenomenon. All around the globe, many different organizations are either directly using or adapting their tactics for their own benefit (Lees, 2018). We are observing publications with similar toolset aiming to advance a political position or media organizations changing their style to compete with them, causing more ethical problems during the process.

Aim of the Study

Since the rise of misinformation and fake news discourse in the second half of 2010s, there has been many research and study done to understand, analyze and solve this problem. These works has contributed to better understand this problem and even provide some solutions to test in real life. But most of the work has been motivated by certain goals or aims or limited by academics’ area of expertise. This caused some parts of this area of study stay weaker while other parts being overfocused.

One of the areas that’s been undervalued is the construction of a clear framework to define certain actors in this area. Even though we can find multiple definitions of post-truth, fake news and other terms in the field, these definitions continuously challenged and new ones offered in their places. Some of these definitions coming with politically loaded backgrounds or limitations to certain fields made them even less useful. Without a clear definition of the problems on the table, coming up with solutions becomes even harder than before.

Therefore, the goal of this work is to propose a clear and theory-based definition and a framework to discuss one of the most important problems we’re facing in the post-truth discourse: publications pretending like news organizations to spread misinformation and propaganda. With a clear definition of the problem at hand, we can better understand it and come up with solutions that are more appropriate to the problem itself.

Importance of the Study

To develop this definition and the framework, one of the most important steps is to develop a theoretical and historical understanding of the field we're working inside, namely the journalism studies. This is why the work starts with the history and theory of journalism to both understand the field and to notice the roots of the problem we're going to work with. History and ethics of the journalism, and its historical relationship with digital technologies provides us the necessary theoretical tools to better understand our problem. Especially how it was able to find a fertile ground in journalism to flourish.

Same approach applies for the post-truth and fake news discourse as well. Limiting ourselves solely with current events and the most recent works in media theory won't be enough if the goal is to develop a framework. Therefore a critical approach to the recent works, based on the related fields of philosophy and sociology, is crucial to have a deeper understanding of the problem. When examined with this approach, we can see the limits and weaknesses of the current discussions.

Methodology of the Study

When we approach our field with a critical and theoretical approach like this, the need for clear definitions and theory-based frameworks becomes clear. Without these, the field opens itself to bias, outside influence and instrumentalization.

What this work proposes with the term post-truth journalism, its definition and the framework is a way to build a clear structure to define and study these publications pushing out non-stop misinformation and propaganda. One of the main reasons why this framework is built mainly on theoretical grounds is to minimize the influence of the current discourse which is heavily based on data and Western media landscape. Even though the problem is universal, most of the discussions are happening with a limited understanding of the global media landscape. Theory-based approach makes it easier building a framework that's potentially more global and more useful.

The results of the theoretical work, the definition of post-truth journalism and the proposed framework, has also been discussed with the experts in the field, including media scholars, journalists, and fact-checkers. These written interviews with the experts were helpful to both

gather additional proof to the thesis of this work, and to make necessary adjustments and refinements to the building blocks of the framework.

To explain how this framework can be used in practice, US-based post-truth journalism publication Breitbart is selected as the case study. Since Breitbart is one of the oldest and most famous publication in the field, and most of the publication tactics were made famous by them, explaining each part of the framework with examples from their archives clearly shows how theory works in practice, and helps going deeper into each part of the framework.

The aim of this study is to provide a framework and a definition to start a deeper discussion about post-truth journalism work and push for more interdisciplinary and critical theoretical work in the field. Although we believe that the work has achieved its goal, we don't claim to this framework is fully completed but clearly aware the need for further practical use and critical development it needs.

CHAPTER 1: EVOLUTION OF THE JOURNALISM AND ITS ROLE IN THE SOCIETY

1.1. Why Societies Need Journalism?

One of the most important discussions in journalism studies is about the role journalism has in the society. Even though for many people journalism and news are important to navigate their daily lives or understand what's happening around them, when we want to describe what role journalism plays in a more descriptive way, or why it is important for a healthy society, it can be hard to find the exact frameworks to work with.

1.1.1. Journalism as the Fourth Estate

Since the earliest discussions during the 18th century, freedom of the press has been defended by many different groups for reasons varying from theological to political ones (Keane, 2010). These early discussions paved the way for journalism to become strongly related with democracy.

One of the reasons journalism has become closely tied with democracy is the fact that people usually think about politics when they think about journalism, in a sense that “journalism’s relationship to democracy serves as a constitutive background against which people make sense of the practice” (Ryfe, 2019, p. 294). People turn to news to learn about what policymakers are doing and whether they need to take any action about it. Since democracy and politics become synonymous for most of the world, journalism is seen as a part of this democratic process.

This is where the term “fourth estate” comes from. Fourth estate used to describe journalism both in positive and negative ways since 18th century and the meanings of the other three estates changed based on the country and its political system through time (Schultz, 1998). Today, it’s used to describe journalism’s position to other three estates or branches in democratic political systems: legislative, executive and judiciary. Even though in today’s political systems those estates are generally called branches, it’s not preferred to describe

journalism because term estate means it's independent from the political power but branch means that it's part of and under the political power (M. A. Lee & Solomon, 1991).

This is one of the reasons why there are new terms used to describe the journalism's role in the society, such as watchdog journalism or accountable journalism. Both terms focus on the journalism's role to keep powerful people, political figures and institutions in check and make them accountable to the society. Nieman Foundation for Journalism defines watchdog press as "a surrogate for the public, asking probing, penetrating questions at every level" (Nieman Foundation, 2010). Accountable journalism also comes from similar motivations and describe journalism's role as keeping power accountable.

This approach positions journalism as an important part of the democratic systems, a tool for citizens to keep powerful in check and know when they need to use their democratic rights to intervene. This understanding is heavily influenced by the powerful effects paradigm in communications theory (Özçetin et al., 2018).

This is one of the most widespread understandings of the journalism's importance for the public. In the eyes of the public, journalism is usually imagined as big investigations, scandals or revealing a major secret kept by the powerful. Even in popular culture, depiction of journalists is always based on this idea. Either it's a movie like *Spotlight* which portrays an idealist journalist fighting his way to do his job, or a movie like *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*, uses a journalist falling far away from this ideal for satirical purposes.

We can see the influence of this understanding in the works of Jürgen Habermas and his study of public sphere as well (Habermas, 2011). Habermas's arguments on the development of the public sphere in Europe during the 18th century puts newspapers at the center and the way Habermas defines newspapers is strongly resembles the understanding them as watchdogs for the public. Even though we now know that newspapers of the time was nowhere close to what Habermas thought of them (Schudson, 2018), this idea of journalism strongly influenced his work and the works on public sphere following him.

1.1.2. Journalism as the Gatekeeper

Similar to watchdog journalism approach, definition of journalism's role as the gatekeeper also takes interest in the power of journalism in relation with citizens and news consumers. But in this approach, the focus is on the journalism's power as a curator and amplifier.

In its most basic definition, journalist as the gatekeeper "selectively gather, sort, write, edit, position, schedule, repeat, and otherwise massage information to become news" (Vos, 2019, p. 90). People are exposed to so much information every day, so having a gatekeeper to curate and select the most important ones for the public becomes an important role for people to navigate this information overload.

In a sense, gatekeeper journalism is a tool for people to navigate the changes around them and understand where they're standing. This is why "journalists are supposed to be keenly attuned to the shifting cultural and political, social and economic tone of the times, sensitive to slight perturbations in the cultural air, and a little ahead of the rest of us in giving linguistic form to something stirring" (Schudson, 2022, p. 54). Journalism to become gatekeepers, it needs to be ahead of the curve and help people to manage what's ahead of them.

Another important role journalism takes in relation with its gatekeeper status, is being the memory of a country or a society. In many important news events, journalism not only records what has happened but also shape how it's going to be understood and remembered. For example, during the Watergate scandal, "[journalists] were also one of the main agents to preserve and shape the scandal in public discourse, determining what would be remembered and serve as the takeaway from the event and what would be omitted from these recollections" (Tenenboim-Weinblatt & Neiger, 2019, p. 422).

Journalism can also shape our memories with the way it works with past events and how it creates relationship with today's events. Journalism, in a sense, works with reversed memory, working its way from present to the past. When it comes to reversed memory, "the past is not merely narrated in the service of current objectives; rather, the past is commemorated by means of the narration of the present" (Neiger et al., 2014, p. 114). The way journalism works with the past, can also shape and reshape the collective memory of a society and how it's remembered in the future.

One reason some newspapers like New York Times are called as the “newspaper of record (by reputation)” is because they proved their journalism plays an important role to record what’s important for the country in their news making process. When a journalistic publication proves itself as a reputable gatekeeper, public will perceive its journalism on a different level and expect higher journalistic standards from them.

But this doesn’t mean that journalism and its role as the gatekeeper of our social memory is a clear subject. Although journalism has been called ‘the first draft of history’, it “has typically exhibited a reticence to move beyond the topical, novel, instantaneous and timely” (Zelizer & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014, p. 2). This approach of journalism complicates its relationship with memory.

1.1.3. Critical Approaches to Journalism’s Role in the Society

Even though both gatekeeper and watchdog journalism approaches generally take a more positive stance on the power journalism and media has, there’s also a criticism and risks born from these definitions of the journalism.

Journalism’s power as a gatekeeper, as we mentioned earlier, also gives journalists a power to help people to understand the world around them and what’s more important. Agenda setting theory takes a critical approach to this power and focuses on how it can set the agenda for the society and influence what they should care about and what they should ignore (Özçetin et al., 2018, pp. 117–120).

Another critical approach called framing theory also looks at how media and journalists select the information and details for their news stories. In one sense, according to the framing theory, journalists tell people “how to think about on a subject” (Özçetin et al., 2018, p. 121). This influence can also show its effects on the journalism’s role as the memory of a society. When a news story framed in a certain way, it also shapes how that event is going to be remembered.

These critical approaches shows us that journalism’s powerful role in the society can be used for goals other than democratic ones. Herman and Chomsky’s book *Manufacturing Consent* (2011), is one of the most important works on how people in power can use media and

journalism's power to influence citizens. Today, many people who doesn't trust journalism and news media also claims, most of the time with limited to no proof, that media uses this power maliciously (Palmer et al., 2020).

There are also more recent works done on journalism's relationship with memory and how it can be an influential tool on it, both individual and social level (Tenenboim-Weinblatt & Neiger, 2019). These types of studies help us develop a better understanding of journalism and its role in a way that's not limited in communications or journalism studies. Considering the interdisciplinary nature of journalism, this is a welcome development.

1.2. History and the Evolution of Journalism

Throughout the history, people always recorded important events and shared that information with people around them. Even though we can call these news from where we look back, the term news goes back only around 400 years (Schudson, 2018). The professionalization of the news making and journalism becoming a recognized profession is even younger than the term news itself.

Although not directly related with journalism, we can find a definition of reporting made in 1730s in Boston, United States of America as “the gathering of current information of public interest in a more or less formal, systematic way,” made by a physician to describe his efforts to collect and record information about an ongoing epidemic (Nord, 2011). Yet there still were not real examples of what we call journalism today.

First examples of newspapers started to appear in Europe during the 19th century, but these were quite different from the newspapers we have today. Some of them, like the ones in France, were focused on spreading political ideas and usually printed by single person (Chapman, 2019). Others were dense collections of all kinds of information and announcement received by the newspaper publishers with minimum editorial process and not included any news reporting (Schudson, 2022). None of these newspapers had an editorial process, reporters or not even a newsroom.

Journalism's evolution to become a profession started with the influence of the newspapers in United States and their innovative approach. Instead of simply collecting announcements

and information from other sources and printing it, some of them started to write news articles and report on important events. One major change came from United States was using interviews to gather information (Schudson, 2022). Even though it was found disrespectful by European newspapers at first, they quickly learned how effective it could be and started adopting this format.

Around the end of the 19th century, journalism was finding its voice and style and trying to develop it even further to become an important profession. Attempts in the United States by important figures such as Joseph Pulitzer to turn journalism into a respected profession and an important resource for the public by actions like funding a school which teaches journalism (Pulitzer, 1904), shaped this era's approach to journalism.

1.2.1. Yellow Journalism

One of the major developments in journalism during the end of the 19th century and early 20th century was the evolution of newspapers and journalism into a business. This meant newspapers needed to make profits to keep publishing and they needed to sell more newspapers to make it happen.

Certain developments in the USA journalism sector during these times also fueled certain trends. Freedom of the press has been solidified with multiple court cases and this gave journalists more freedom when it comes what or how they can publish (Spencer, 2007). This freedom, combined with the economic pressures from the journalism marketplace, created a dynamic that newspapers were eager to publish anything that will sell more newspapers. Spencer explains how this dynamic works as:

“when editors, publishers, and commentators no longer feared that a stint in prison could follow a damaging article, they began to explore the limits of public tolerance, all in a desire to accumulate readership that in turn would result in higher circulations and thus higher financial returns.” (Spencer, 2007, p. 22)

Another important development during this period was the advance of graphic journalism and use of images in the print. Being able to use illustrations and drawings on the newspaper meant they can be more creative about how they present the news, and use this to attract more

attention, meaning selling more newspapers (Spencer, 2007). We can trace back most of today's graphical journalism approaches and trends to the early experiments done in this period.

This business approach and developments in journalistic practice created many different publishing tactics and advertisement tricks to make people buy newspapers regularly. This brought a way of doing journalism that's more focused on sensational topics, not giving the facts enough importance and preferring a more aggressive style. Led by William Randolph Hearst and his newspaper New York Journal, this style of journalism is called yellow journalism (Campbell, 2019).

According to W. Joseph Campbell, in its most developed form, yellow journalism's defining characteristics were:

- “the frequent use of multicolumn headlines that sometimes were stretched across the front page.
- the presentation of a variety of topics on the front page, including news of politics, war, diplomacy, sport, crime, and society.
- the generous and imaginative use of illustrations, including sketches and eventually photographs, as well as other treatments such as locator maps.
- bold and experimental layouts, including those in which a single article and illustration would occasionally dominate the front page.
- the tendency to rely on anonymous sources, particularly in dispatches of leading reporters.
- a penchant for self-promotion, to call attention eagerly to the paper's accomplishments. This tendency was notably evident in crusades against monopolies and municipal corruption” (Campbell, 2003, locs. 153–157).

Even though this tendency to grow business with the help of yellow journalism tactics fell out of fashion, its influence, and impact is still visible in today's journalism ecosystem. From tabloid press (Wasserman, 2019) to television news channels' over-use of “Breaking News”,

to the fake news and post-truth discourse we're having today, we can see how yellow journalism impacted the field.

1.2.2. “New Journalism” and Gonzo Journalism

In today's journalism, news is not considered simple reporting of the facts and events but also seen as a way of telling stories. This way of writing news stories is considered important because most of the time, readers and/or news consumers are bored with simple retelling of what happened. They look for something to keep them interested or something to create a connection between the news story and themselves (Schudson, 2022).

Yet during the 1960s and 1970s, this way of reporting considered an attack to journalism and caused major discussions especially in American newsrooms. Terms New Journalism and Gonzo Journalism has born during this period when journalists were experimenting with new ways of reporting the news (Wolfe, 1972).

New Journalism was more focused on the ways journalists telling their news stories and wanted to fight back against the established objectivity approach of their times. Their style can be distinguished from others with its “immersive reporting; participatory point of view, often first-person or a subjective third-person; scene-by-scene construction and reconstruction; status, telling details; sense of place; character; dialogue; and distinctive voice” (Hudson, 2019, p. 1).

Gonzo journalism took the goals of New Journalism one step further and was also heavily influenced by the subcultures of its period. Its hallmarks were similar to New Journalism but also included “experiential; self-referential; profane; abrupt transitions; aided, abetted, and compounded by illegal drugs and alcohol” (Hudson, 2019, p. 1). Journalist Hunter S. Thompson is seen as the creator of the Gonzo journalism and has become an important figure not just in journalism but also American culture as well.

Today's long form journalism and using personal stories to deliver news can be traced back to the influence of New Journalism and Gonzo Journalism. These two experiments in journalistic storytelling opened new doors for journalism to further evolve and develop its style.

1.2.3. Different Paths in Different Geographies

Although most of the journalism's early history can be traced back to certain European countries and the United States of America, and these developments influenced journalism globally, different parts of the world also developed different types of media systems and journalism models.

One of the most important frameworks developed to understand how media and journalism can evolve differently based on the different political and economic situations in specific countries was Hallin and Mancini's 2004 book *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Hallin and Mancini proposes three different models, namely Polarized Pluralist model for Mediterranean countries, Democratic Corporatist model for Northern and Central European countries, and Liberal model for North Atlantic countries (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

This framework has strongly influenced media studies to better understand how different dynamics in different countries can shape the media and journalism ecosystems of their own. It shows how different developments in the journalism's past is applied or adapted in different countries in the Western world, based on their unique political conditions (Curran et al., 2009). Because the three models was developed with only the countries in the Western world in mind, it also inspired other scholars to use this as a starting point to study media systems in other countries (Dobek-Ostrowska et al., 2010), including Hallin and Mancini themselves working on a follow-up study to expand their models (Hallin & Mancini, 2011).

These diverse developments in journalism around the globe means that, although we have a profession that's history and main influences can be traced back to certain events and places, we'll face with different interpretations and applications of these main parts of journalism based on where we are. Therefore, any description of the history and the evolution of journalism should keep this diversity in mind.

1.2.4. Professional Journalism of Today

Throughout the 20th century, journalism has become professionalized with developments in the field. This professionalization happened through the combination of four different

components: journalism becoming a distinct profession by defining itself as writing for a periodical publication, claiming core knowledge and set of skills unique to journalism, development of professional norms which are widely accepted, and being able to independently control who can enter the profession (Örnebring, 2019).

All these organic processes helped journalism become a unique profession and made it recognizable all around the world. Before the 20th century, journalism was not something people can agree on its definition, and it made recognizing what is journalism and what is not harder for both readers and writers. We came from newspapers publishing anything that comes into their ways to newspapers printed with a design and editorial policy in mind, made with rules and norms widely agreed upon.

Many sociologists differentiate between jobs and professions (Greenwood, 1957), mainly claiming that a profession with its properties can place itself in the society more clearly. Journalism's evolution from a job to profession also opened the way for it to claim a place and legitimacy in the society (Hanitzsch & Örnebring, 2019). This development also started the discussion for what kind of a role journalism plays in the society and people's lives as we discussed earlier in this chapter. What it also meant that journalists had to think about the ethical rules of their profession.

CHAPTER 2: DIGITAL REVOLUTION IN JOURNALISM

Journalism as a profession has a deep relationship with technology and developments in the communication technologies always influenced how it's produced and published. Through the history of journalism, we can see the influence of telegraph (Chapman, 2019), radio, and television (Liseblad, 2019) on journalism and how it's evolved with the help of these technologies.

Similar developments can be observed with the invention of computers and the internet. The main difference between the older technologies and what it's generally called the digital revolution is the capabilities of these technologies and the density of its impact on media and journalism.

Although there are many aspects of this developments, some of them has become more influential and impactful, namely new ways of publishing, social media platforms, rise of citizen journalism and the use of data in journalism.

2.1. New Ways to Publish

When computers and the internet became available for everyone to use, it also opened the door for everyone to publish what they're doing online with everyone. Anyone with enough coding knowledge could build a website for themselves and publish anything they wanted. On July 1, 1980 The Columbus Dispatch has become the first newspaper the go online, followed by other major newspapers like New York Times and Washington Post (Shedden, 2004).

Even though building a website required technical knowledge and resources, new technologies and platforms came around and made online publishing more accessible. Now defunct platforms like Geocities made building a website simple enough for everyone and followed by many other examples around the world. Blogging platforms and Content Management Systems also made website creation and design accessible for people and become one of the most important technologies on the internet. One of the pioneers of this

technology, Wordpress, has published its first version on May 27, 2003, and currently used by 43% of the top 10 million websites around the world (W3Techs, 2022).

Developments on new publishing technologies were not limited with text-based publishing and websites. New technologies and platforms also made easier to publish audio and video content online easier for everyone. Video sharing platform YouTube, started as a place for everyone to upload their videos to share in 2005, has become both a place for new creators to build a career online and become the most important video resource and publishing platform for journalists (Journalism & Staff, 2012).

On audio-based publishing, podcasting has become a major publishing method globally, with the help of the development of the new platforms making easier to publish audio content online. According to the data from Spotify, there are more than 5.2 million podcasts available online for everyone to listen (*There Are Now 5.2m Podcasts*, 2022). Many newspapers and journalism organizations now publish their work as podcasts on a regular basis and there are many journalism projects starting as podcasts.

2.2. Social Media Platforms

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, communicating with new people online was limited with emails, message boards and forums. This meant that you could either communicate with the people you already know, or communities online were generally small and closed groups.

The most important change brought by social media platforms is the possibility of finding new people to communicate and being able to reach people all around the world. This made communication more horizontal and gave media a potential to build two-way communication with their consumers. Even though old communication methods are disrupted by the social media platforms, it's also influenced and shaped by the old hierarchical habits (Schudson, 2022).

Two main reasons behind the changes in social media's turn from horizontal communication to reinforcing hierarchical models are their reliance on algorithmic tools and the way they moderate content on their platforms. Use of algorithms to organize people's timelines and recommend content shared on their platforms either reinforces what's already well known or

popular, making discovery of new people and media harder, or because it uses the data gathered on the platform irresponsibly (Tufekci, 2014), recommends people and content that are designed to game their systems by creating artificial interaction (Bradshaw, 2019).

Content moderation on social media platforms is the other reason behind this turn. Extremely fast growth faced by all the major platforms caught them unprepared to deal with moderation issues they will face in other countries. Many platforms claimed to make and enforce their rules based on participatory processes; according to Jillian C. York, this is not the case:

“Ultimately, Facebook and its counterparts operate more like churches than courts; they are subject to influence by states and the wealthy, and all too content with disregarding the needs of their subjects in favor of those with power. When you peel back the façade of participatory governance, there is no case law, no record of decision making to allow for comparisons, and—until recently—no due process. Instead, there is a patchwork of dogma and oxymoronic canon that, when scaled, results in a unique cultural colonialism of myopic morality and deeply suspect values.” (York, 2021, loc. 2650)

These changing dynamics turned social media platforms more and more similar to hierarchical traditional media platforms. Therefore, we should be careful about not falling into the romanticism of the old perspectives on the horizontal social media and think of them as what they have become today.

2.3. Citizen Journalism Trend

During 2000s and early 2010s, horizontal communication and more accessible publication tools brought a wave of journalism like projects, ideas, and attempts, which can be discussed under the term citizen journalism.

In its most basic form, citizen journalism was an attempt to use these new communication tools to gather information from people who are at the center of news event and create a more participatory news making process (Allan & Hintz, 2019). From online organizations like Indymedia and Wikileaks, to news publications requesting and collecting information from social media platforms, many people celebrated this development as the start of a new era for the journalism and activism (Moon & Patrick, 2013).

These celebrations usually ignored the need for journalists to collect, organize, verify, and publish the news in an accessible way, or how this uncritical approach can cause other issues in the long run. But what's more important is the changes on the digital infrastructures and policies governing them are also making it harder to enjoy the improvements came with participatory media. If we decide to enable citizen journalism to develop in a more beneficial way, we must start with the “digital citizenship” idea and how it fits today’s conditions. Because “the notion of “digital citizenship” which has underpinned much citizen journalism requires a new understanding as digital infrastructures have come to both enable and restrict citizen activities” (Allan & Hintz, 2019, p. 445).

2.4. Computational Journalism

Computational journalism is “the advanced application of computing, algorithms, and automation to the gathering, evaluation, composition, presentation, and distribution of news” (Thurman, 2019, p. 180). Term includes the use of computers and other digital technologies in information gathering, news writing, research and publication.

On the news publication side, computers and data used to personalize websites and applications for the reader or choose between multiple headlines to attract more readers to the article (Kuiken et al., 2017). These applications of digital technologies are more related to the business side of journalism and it had negative impacts like clickbait and other deceiving methods to attract more attention from news readers (Y. Chen et al., 2015).

More importantly, use of computers and digital technologies made research and investigative journalism easier and more effective. Being able to analyze documents that are impossible to go through manually or automating the data gathering process for research using simple scraping tools helped investigative journalists to focus on the more important parts of their projects. With the help of these tools, exponentially growing online data became useful for journalists (Thurman, 2019). USA based non-profit news organization ProPublica’s use of data scraping and analysis tools to work on public records is an example of this kind of investigative journalism work (De-Lima-Santos, 2022).

One major example of the impact of this development is the work done by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalism. The organization works with 140 different news organizations from all around the world and their most impactful investigations required going through enormous amounts of documents. “The Panama Papers” investigation, published in 2016, included more than 11.5 million files (ICIJ, 2017); while their next investigation in 2017, titled “Paradise Papers”, had more than 13.4 million records and documents (Díaz-Struck, 2017). In 2021, their investigation “Pandora Papers” included 11.9 million records, with total file size 2.94 terabyte (Díaz-Struck, 2021). Without the advance of computational journalism, most of these documents would be impossible to work with or bring a group of international journalists together to work on them.

Another impact of computational journalism is making safer and easier to work with whistleblowers. Digitization of the important data made things easier for whistleblowers when they feel the need to inform public, as we learned from ex-NSA worker Edward Snowden, being able to take all the important files he wanted to leak to the journalists with him (MacAskill et al., 2013).

Developments in whistleblower journalism also created a positive impact on journalism’s understanding as a watchdog for society. Making whistleblowing safer and easier for people and journalists with tools like SecureDrop (M. Lee & Heinrichs, 2019), and being able to work on the data more effectively meant journalists can fulfill their purpose of keeping power in check with more impact (Bazzichelli, 2021).

CHAPTER 3: JOURNALISM ETHICS IN OUR TIMES

3.1. Introduction to Ethics

Ethics and being ethical is something that's used in our daily lives a lot but when it comes to the philosophical field of ethics, we must start with defining with what ethics is not. We have many wrong assumptions about ethics that comes from our daily use of the word: it's mainly about sexuality or criminal activity, it's based on religion or the society one lives in or it's something totally personal (Singer, 2011). All of these are incorrect assumptions about ethics and makes it harder to discuss ethical issues in a productive way.

Ethics is one of the oldest issues philosophy have been dealing with. From the early dialogues of Socrates and writings of Plato and Aristotle, philosophers were always interested in defining the good and what makes someone a good person. Although Socrates was mainly interested in trying to come up with definitions and standards about virtue (Frede, 2017), it's safe to say that Aristotle was the first philosopher who dealt with ethics in a more systemic way.

From the earliest examples like Aristotle (Aristotle et al., 2009) to today's philosophers dealing with ethics (Wong, 2006), we can see that there are several themes and issues that define what ethics is and the issues it tries to solve. Generally, ethics is divided into two main branches: meta-ethics and normative ethics, and normative ethics is divided into normative theory and applied ethics (Frey & Heath Wellman, 2005, p.17). While meta-ethics generally deals with the methods and approaches of the ethics itself, normative ethics is the branch that deals with the issues when we think about ethics and ethical problems.

In normative ethics, we generally see three different approaches: virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism. Virtue ethics can be summarized as focusing on the moral character, while deontology focuses rules and consequentialism emphasizes the results of the actions (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018). Although all of these three approaches and philosophies based on them says something about all of these different aspects of one action, each takes one side to the front. And all these normative ethics approaches tries to answer one question: what makes an action moral?

Normative ethical theories aim to build an ethical system based on this question which can be applied any ethical question one can face. This mainly comes from these ethical concepts' one feature called "reason or warrant-dependence" (Frey & Heath Wellman, 2005, p.18). When one needs to make an ethical decision, they need to justify that with an ethical concept. These normative ethical theories provide exactly that. This is why most normative ethical theories aim to be all encompassing, because they claim to provide help for ethical reasoning in any possible scenario.

3.2. The Need for Applied Ethics

Even though normative ethical theories try to answer every possible question one might face, there are times ethicists need to focus on specific cases or environments to deal with ethical issues or provide ethical concepts to deal with issues specific to that area. As Singer (2011, p. 11) said, "the universal aspect of ethics ... does provide a ground for at least starting with a broadly utilitarian position. If we are going to move beyond utilitarianism, we need to be given good reasons why we should do so." This is the problem that gave rise to applied ethics.

It's easy to find examples of applied ethics even in the earliest dialogues of Socrates, yet as a field of study it only gains recognition in 1960s and 1970s, partly because more philosophers were becoming part of the discussions about the issues concerning the public. "Philosophers who entered these debates as concerned citizens gradually realized that they were discussing ethical questions which were part of the philosophical tradition in which they had been educated." (Singer, 1986, p. 3)

Philosophers in the past generally claimed normative ethical theories are here to answer any and all ethical problems yet today we know that it's generally hard to come up with a practical judgement from just using these theories (Frey & Heath Wellman, 2005, p.2). This is also why it'll be a mistake to define applied ethics only as a field in which general theories are applied to real world cases. Instead, applied ethics studies and develops normative ethical theories based on the real-world issues and the applications of these theories. This approach not only makes ethics more useful for people outside the academic philosophy but also helps

philosophers to develop ethical theories that are not just “good in theory but not in practice” (Singer, 2011, p.2).

One of the most well-known example of applied ethics is bioethics, “where new developments in medicine and the biological sciences throw up ethical questions which have few precedents” (Singer, 1986, p. 4). Similar events also kickstarted new applied ethics fields in the late 20th century and early 21st century. Especially with the rapid rise of technological development and its disruptive effects on the social life, importance of the applied ethics has been accepted. Today we have applied ethics studies on many different fields and areas, including health related issues like abortion and euthanasia, or technological innovations like data privacy and Artificial Intelligence.

3.3. Journalism Ethics

As a sub-field of applied ethics, journalism ethics is focused on the journalism and ethical questions arising during the practice of it. Because of the work done by the journalists and how it's perceived by the public, ethical considerations are important for the profession. According to Bob Steele, “Journalism has a special role in society, serving the public good like no other business or profession. Journalism has an obligation to support the democratic process by informing and educating” (McBride & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 10). This makes ethical questions of the field much more important.

It's also important to know what kind of ethical issues a journalist can face during their practice. To that end, we need to define journalism practice in a way that's useful for ethical inquiry. Looking at journalism from a different perspective can be helpful.

For example, we can look at journalism from the perspective of the end results of the journalistic work and end up with this definition: “Journalists make choices that cause emotional, physical, financial, or reputational harm; such harm is built into journalistic functions. Another way of thinking of this is to note that, since journalism fulfills a vital social function, journalists have a duty to cause harm” (Elliott & Ozar, 2010, p. 10). This is a definition of journalistic work that's widely accepted by many of the journalists too.

Journalist Talia Lavin says, “Essentially, journalism is the business of bothering people in power” (Lenz, 2021).

We can think that it’s ethical to not to harm anyone and believe doing one’s job in the best way possible is the ethical thing to do. But sometimes a good work of journalism can harm a businessperson by making their corruption public or exposes a political scandal and causes citizens to riot. Sometimes telling the truth as a journalist can harm and upset people. For a more extensive look at these scenarios, Faruk Bildirici’s book *Günahlarımızda Yıkandık* is a comprehensive collection of real world examples of ethical issues a journalist can face while doing their job (Bildirici, 2018).

This example alone shows us that we can’t simply apply normative ethical theories to journalism. Journalism’s role in the public, the effects of the work and the journalism as a business requires a more specific ethical inquiry. This is where journalism ethics enters the scene.

3.4. Main Issues of Journalism Ethics

Although journalism as an ever-evolving field always forces us to think about new problems and ethical issues, we can analyze these ethical issues under four main topics: Truth and Objectivity, Transparency, Community and Business.

3.4.1. Truth and Objectivity

One of the most accepted definition of journalism is informing the public about the events happening around the world and “telling the truth has always been the simplest and most complicated function of journalism” (McBride & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 23). Public expects journalists to tell the truth and consumes the news with this assumption, at least that’s how it was until the recent years (Otto & Köhler, 2018). But most of the time, even the definition of “truth” itself becomes problematic. “We often consider truth a stable commodity: it doesn’t change much for us on a day-to-day basis, nor does it vary greatly among members of a community. However, the concept of truth has changed throughout history” (Patterson et al., 2019, p. 24).

From a philosophical perspective, we know that definition of truth is one of the biggest epistemological problems we have, even the most accepted definitions of the truth has been shown problematic (Gettier, 1963). The problem of defining what truth means for journalism is even more complex, considering the different influences over the journalistic work. Of course, there are facts which are undeniable and verifiable but news just reporting these facts and numbers are usually falls short to be counted as journalism.

In a sense, journalists report their stories by going out in the world and finding information out. “In general, they are skeptics who prefer a world of things to a world of ideas and theories, or at least they act as if they do. At their best, they engage the world as it is, rather than as they wish it would be.” (McBride & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 45) But in most of the cases, it’s impossible for a journalist to have all of the information about a single event. Sometimes the important pieces are lost in the archives or hidden by the actors of the event. Journalist can try to find everything but most of the time, they must tell their stories based on what they have.

This brings us the question of objectivity in journalism. Journalists are usually expected to act as objective observers of the events and reporting them without any subjectivity. Even though it might sound noble, we have to remember that this doctrine is a historical invention (Ward, 2010) that is impossible in practice. Reporting an event as a news itself is subjective act. “To categorize a set of happenings as an “event” is to interpret it as having a certain status, due either to its perceived importance or to how one cognitively organizes its disparate elements.” (Meyers, 2020, p. 9) What journalist does to inform the public itself inherently subjective because they must decide what’s worth reporting and which parts of the events are most important.

This also means that journalists will act based on their worldviews and beliefs whether consciously or not. Sometimes their political positions, professional egos or pressure from above can affect how they decide to report an event (Lau, 2004). Forcing journalists to be objective with political pressure like the Fairness Doctrine also showed us how dangerous its side effects can be (Pickard, 2015). Instead of claiming an objectivity that isn’t there (Figgdr,

2010), journalists should strive for being open about this and building editorial mechanisms to minimize its effects on the stories they publish.

3.4.2. Transparency

One of the most important issues journalism faces is to make sure the public has a trust in them and their work. Especially with the events of the recent years, which we'll discuss more in-depth at the Chapter 2, trust in journalism has become a serious issue that has ethical sides. Transparency is one of those parts of this problem.

Transparency in journalism can mean multiple things (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2019). Making sure public knows how journalists are doing their work, how a source or information has been acquired and if the business side of the news publication works in a transparent way. Most of the time being transparent includes disclosure of the conflict of interests, having an ombudsman to communicate with readers and running the business in a way that is not affecting how journalism is done. But making sure all works in an ethical way is hard.

For example, connecting with the objectivity issue, being transparent means if a news outlet has a political position, it should be open about their ideological position (Kelsey, 2019). It might mean having a publication policy open to all readers or publishing a regular editorial that explains specific positions supported by the editors of the publication. Yet having all of these doesn't guarantee all of your readers will be aware of it, especially when it's online and people only visit the digital publication for a single article. The publication might think they're open about this, but readers will disagree because they're not aware of the effort.

Same can be said about the article-based conflict of interest disclosures. It's an important transparency practice yet it's not enough most of the time. As McBride and Rosenstiel (2014, p. 124) said, "true transparency is more than disclosure. It also requires producing the news in ways that can be explained and even defended." Rise of the digital media and social media platforms' importance in the journalism also makes transparency an even more complex ethical issue before (Revers, 2014).

3.4.3. Business

Most of the approaches to journalism ethics are either based on or influenced by the social responsibility theory of the press, and this is one of the main reasons why business aspects of the journalism have been the focal point of the many ethics discussions about journalism. Because profit being the focus of any business, this usually ends up journalism outlets taking actions that are problematic for an ethics approach based on social responsibility theory. This is mainly because “the social responsibility theory does not deal with the realities of concentrated economic power, particularly in an era when information has become a valuable commodity”. (Patterson et al., 2019, p. 212)

The value of information as a commodity has only increased since the social responsibility theory first developed in 1940s. Today, information has become an asset, both politically and economically. This puts additional pressure on journalism and its relationship with the job’s business aspect.

These ethical issues are most visible in two main areas: media ownership and advertisement. On the media ownership problem, we usually face two major problems. One of them are media conglomerates, which are major corporations controlling diverse and vast groups of media organizations. (Anup Shah, 2009) The centralization of the ownership brings important discussions, starting with the problem of diversity in media. (Gamson & Latteier, 2004)

Another ownership based ethical issues area is the media ownership of the different business companies or conglomerates. Whether it’s a single newspaper ownership such as Jeff Bezos’s purchase of the Washington Post (Kennedy, 2016), or owning a major media group while conducting businesses in different areas like the case of Demirören Group’s takeover of the Doğan Media and becoming a major media actor in Turkey. (Yanardağoğlu, 2021) In these cases, and in media ownership issues in general, “the chief concerns are the influence of media ownership on what journalists report and how they report, bias in reporting due to commercial pressures to attract large audiences, and the editorial influence of advertisers and political elites.” (Ward, 2019, p. 315)

Advertisement is another area which regularly gives birth to new ethical problems. According to Pew Research, newspaper industry earned \$9.6 billion in 2020 from advertisement and its

%39 percent comes from digital advertisement. (Barthel & Worden, 2021) Even though we're observing a departure from heavy reliance to advertisement in journalism business models (Nic Newman et al., 2021), revenue gained from advertisement is still an important source for sustainable newsrooms.

This makes ethically questionable advertisement practices an important problem. Sponsored editorial contents, also known as advertorials, are a good example for this. This type of advertisement content “is material with similar qualities and format to content that is typically published on a platform or by a content provider, but which is paid for by a third party.” (Hardy, 2021, p. 865) Even though we see many different styles and formats for this type of content, according to Hardy (2021, p. 865), there are two different versions of sponsored editorial content:

“The first is advertising, where brand-controlled content and storytelling extends into formats that resemble editorial and where so-called native advertising builds on earlier integrations of advertising and editorial, such as advertorials. The second is sponsorship, where a sponsor pays for but does not control the journalistic output, formally at least: underwriting but not writing the content.”

Even though there are regulations and legal guidance in all of the countries about how this type of content must be served to the audiences, there are many examples of journalism outlets not following these guidelines (Bildirici, 2018; Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2020). This kind of practices are not only illegal but also causes readers to start questioning their trust in journalism. Even though native advertisement models like sponsored editorial content provides much needed revenues for the newsrooms (Newman, 2020), journalists pay with their trustworthiness and gives people a reason to question their integrity (Vargo & Amazeen, 2021).

3.4.4. New Media, Enhanced Problems

Rise of the digital media technologies brought new and unique ethical problems into our lives (Binark & Bayraktutan, 2013). Use of these technologies in journalism also meant that these problems has become a part of journalism ethics. Whether it's the use of computation

technologies in journalism (Thurman, 2019) or the use of social media platforms (Domingo, 2019), these new technologies usually meant new ethical problems for journalists and scholars to consider.

These technological developments also enhanced the ethical issues already present in journalism. Ethical issues present in the targeted advertisement technologies (Massey & Antón, 2011) also meant that digital publications now has to consider these issues as a part of their business ethics. Similar problems also showed itself in the technological infrastructure of the publications (Fang, 2022).

This should not come as a surprise. Following the recent developments in media technologies and adapting it to their practices has been an integral part of the journalism (Pavlik, 2000). And the major changes, such as internet and digital publishing, requires an adaptation period; both to the good parts and the problems that comes with it.

CHAPTER 4: FAKE NEWS AND POST-TRUTH ERA

4.1. What Truth Means

Definition of truth and what makes something true has been one of the most important questions for the philosophy. Many philosophers have come up with different answers to this question yet most of them either fell short to provide an encompassing theory of truth or brought new questions to the discussion (Glanzberg, 2021).

4.1.1. Different Theories of Truth

One of the main theories of the truth in philosophy is called the correspondence theory of truth. Although it has both metaphysical and semantic versions of this theory, its main argument is that “truth is correspondence to, or with, a fact” (David, 2022). Object-based version of this theory focuses on the correspondence with outside world, while fact-based version takes a more logic based approach and it’s most well-known version is formulated by Bertrand Russell as “Thus a belief is true when there is a corresponding fact, and is false when there is no corresponding fact” (Russell, 1997, p. 129).

Even though the correspondence theory is one of the most well-known and generally accepted definition of the truth, there are many philosophical criticisms of this theory, focusing on its limitations, obscurity, and more. These discussions led to many different theories of truth to emerge, but the two most influential ones are coherence theory and Tarski’s theory of truth.

Coherence theory of truth defines truth in relation to the consistency or the entailment with the other set of propositions any truth-bearer (a sentence or a logical argument) in relation to. Simply, the coherence theory claims that “the truth of any (true) proposition consists in its coherence with some specified set of propositions” (Young, 2018).

Another influential but less known definitions of truth came from logician Tarski in 1933 and further developed by Tarski and his colleague Robert Vaught in 1956 (Hodges, 2018). Tarski’s definitions are based in mathematical logic, which took the truth discussion outside

the metaphysical arguments and made model theory and its many uses in different philosophical projects possible.

4.1.2. Social Epistemology

A major issue faced with older epistemological theories about truth and knowledge is that they strongly focus on the individual aspects of the issues and ignore the social sides of them. Most epistemological theories usually investigate how a single person seeks truth by themselves. This focus on individual limits the use of epistemological theories when it comes to social issues related to its problems. To resolve this problem, social epistemology started as “an enterprise concerned with how people can best pursue the truth (whichever truth is in question) with the help of, or in the face of, others” (A. Goldman & O’Connor, 2021).

Social epistemology’s concern “to provide directions for the improvement of our collective epistemic practices and institutions” (Collin, 2019, p. 21) provides us with useful theoretical tools to understand the issues related to knowledge and truth in the society. On the one hand, social epistemology philosophers fill an important gap in the epistemological theory and at the same time, their work helps us better understand and turn a critical eye to social dynamics and systems founded on top of epistemological systems (A. I. Goldman, 2010).

Social epistemology’s focus on the truth and knowledge issues in relation with social problems also proved useful in recent times. Rise of the conspiracy theories and the conspiratorial reasoning around the world (Marasco, 2016) requires the analysis and the understanding of social knowledge formation. Creation of the notions such as “epistemic injustice” also helps us better understand the social dynamics of access and creation of knowledge.

4.1.3. Epistemology and Journalism

Journalism, both as a practice and its output, has a deep and complex relationship with epistemology (Ekström & Westlund, 2019). This is mainly because both the input and the output of journalism practice is information.

As a practice, journalism is informed by both individual and social epistemological dynamics and systems. Journalist's approach to and selection of information, their understanding of truth informs their practice. In a similar fashion, how a newsroom develops epistemological systems to inform their practices also shape their output.

Journalism as the output also plays an important part in the social epistemological systems. As we discussed in the Chapter 1, journalism's role in the society is based on their importance as an information source. Their role can make them a strengthening factor in group knowledge creation but can also clash with people's beliefs and their work can become a disruptive factor.

Understanding and being aware of the journalism's epistemological dynamics is important to understand the current discourse about misinformation and post-truth it's part of.

4.2. Fake News and Fact-Checking

4.2.1. Rise of Fake News and It's Many Uses

Political and social events of 2015 and 2016; Donald Trump's election in the United States of America and the rise of the leaders with similar characteristics in countries like Brazil and Hungary, referendum to leave European Union in the United Kingdom, rise of the conspiracy theories about vaccines and climate crisis, and more, caused a global reckoning (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Experts and scholars were trying to define what is the driving force behind all these events. The focus of this search has been the media, specifically the internet and journalism. Both journalists and the academic experts were looking for answers to understand whether media had a role in these events, and if so, how?

First concept used to explain was fake news. Since the early days of the public access to the internet, it has been a fertile ground for fake or misleading information. Some of those were published for advertisement or propaganda purposes, such as astroturfing (Kovic et al., 2018), others were simple jokes and satire (C. Chen, 2012). Because of this situation, fake information online was not seen as something dangerous until 2016.

What happened during this period changed the perception of these innocent jokes or fringe conspiracy theories. It was now influencing elections, social health, and many other aspects of the daily life. This phenomenon required a name and fake news became the most popular one during the early days.

Most well-known definition of the fake news is “false or misleading information presented as news” (“Fake News,” 2022). Although there has been a wide range of studies done on the concept, from how it’s used as a political tool (Giusti & Piras, 2021) to analyzing how it’s spreading online (Ognyanova et al., 2020), fake news is not a well-defined concept. Because of media’s overenthusiastic use of the term during its popular times (Egelhofer et al., 2020) and politicians such as Donald Trump using the term to describe any media organization critical to his presidency (Sullivan, 2020) fake news has become a poisoned concept.

Even though there has been valuable attempts to define the concept in a way that can be still useful, like Gelfert’s (2018, pp. 85–86) definition of fake news as “the deliberate presentation of (typically) false or misleading claims as news, where the claims are misleading by design”, scholars mostly decided to use mis- and disinformation as the concepts defining this issue’s symptoms (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017) and started using post-truth to describe the social and political problem in a more general way.

4.2.2. Birth of Independent Fact-Checking

Fact checking and verification of the information is one of the most important parts of the journalistic practice. This is because trust and credibility are one of the most important things for journalists to play their roles in the society. Trusting the media “means to expect that we will be able to rely on the information which the media provide, even though we cannot keep an eye on all the decisions and choices made in the news-making process” (Dalen, 2019, p. 357).

But the rise of misinformation online happened in a speed that journalists and news organizations can’t catch up with them. This problem required an alternative solution, which appeared as fact-checking websites. These websites are focused on the information widely shared online and attempts to fact-check as many of these as possible to help internet users

avoid misinformation but most of them also aims to teach people how they can learn to become critical readers in the process, or help developing new tools or methods to improve the online knowledge ecosystem (Teyit, 2022).

According to the data gathered by Duke Reporters' Lab, there were 341 active fact-checking organizations in 2021 (Stencel, 2021). Rise of the new fact-checking organizations during mid 2010s (IFCN, 2022) also brought malicious groups pretending like fact-checking organizations to spread misinformation and political propaganda. As a counter measure, a group of fact-checking organizations came together and launched International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) in 2015. IFCN provided a regulatory mechanism and Code of Principles, signed by 105 fact-checking organization, to help fact-checking organizations better self-regulate themselves.

4.3. Post-Truth Era

Early signs of the post-truth concept can be seen in the works on Hannah Arendt's work, especially in her essay titled "Lying in Politics". In this work, Arendt discussed the Pentagon Papers and what it means for American politics and describes it as "the ... nonrelation, between facts and decision" and calls it defactualization (Arendt, 1972). Arendt's conceptualization of defactualization can be counted as one of the precursors of the post-truth.

Term post-truth defined the way we currently use by Ralph Keyes, in his 2004 book "The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life". Keyes's book, including many historical and current to its date examples, defines post-truth as the "rationales for tampering with truth so we can dissemble guilt-free" (Keyes, 2013). One of Keyes's early examples for the post-truth is Donald Trump and his book "Trump: The Art of Deal".

In the book The Post-Truth Era, Keyes also uses examples from journalism too. Keyes especially focuses on the New Journalism school of the 1960s and 1970s, a style of journalism which differs from the traditional style by letting the journalist's perspective become visible in the work (Wolfe, 1972). According to Keyes, this is how post-truth has started taking over the journalism (Keyes, 2013, p. 149).

Another book that approaches post-truth in a similar way but with examples mainly focusing on 2010s and especially the events of 2015 and 2016 is Lee McIntyre's *Post-Truth* (2018). McIntyre's book has important observations about the current dynamics of how manipulative tactics on the media works and how it takes advantage of the human psychology. McIntyre (2018, p. 62) uses people's cognitive biases as an example and says "our inherent cognitive biases make us ripe for manipulation and exploitation by those who have an agenda to push, especially if they can discredit all other sources of information."

Yet McIntyre, like Keyes, also falls into the pitfalls of the blame game while trying to find a source for this issue. McIntyre dedicates a full chapter in his book to blame left-leaning scholars and post-modernism and openly declares post-modernism as "the godfather of post-truth" (McIntyre, 2018, p. 150). But McIntyre's justifications are clearly shows he doesn't fully understands post-modernist scholars' work and his use of the Sokal affair, which is an amateur attempt to create a fake event to discredit postmodernism by publishing a made-up article in an academic journal without a peer-review process and a really poor editorial one (Derrida, 2005, p. 70), proves that he doesn't intended to.

Unfortunately, this blame approach to post-truth analysis is widespread and postmodernism is a very popular choice in this kind of analysis. Scholars like Keyes and McIntyre might assume postmodernism caused all these problems but an honest reading of the works of postmodernists will show that they were not paving the way but warning the world not to take it.

Baudrillard and his theory of simulacrum and simulacra is one of the most used examples of this undeserved blame. Looking at the events described as post-truth from Baudrillard's progression of the image theory, we can easily see that we're at the final phase he warned us.

"... [this is the final phase] where the image bears no direct relation to reality and has become its own pure simulacrum. The logic of political messaging via news media is no longer about "the economy, stupid," i.e. actual material wealth, or whether crime really is worse than it used to be. It's about how those messages fit with a pre-existing idealised world view, or how they provoke an emotional response from those who engage with them. This is the only way human beings have found that they can cope with the deluge

of information they are met with every day—by focusing on what fits with how they imagine the world to be, or how they want it to be.” (Morris, 2021, p. 4)

Similar misreading of the many philosophers’ work can be found in these poorly articulated arguments blaming them for the post-truth. Whether it’s Nietzsche’s perspectivism (Alloa, 2017) or Foucault’s work on how social and political conditions created by the modern power dynamics influence the knowledge creation (Flatscher & Seitz, 2020), one can easily see that these works were early warning signs of what we today call the post-truth.

Although there are important works such as James Ball’s Post-Truth: How Bullshit Conquered the World (2017), it’s an exception when it comes to mainstream literature on post-truth. This situation causes the problems like the ones pointed earlier spread further and turns post-truth a loaded term. Therefore, we need to define post-truth and post-truth journalism without the errors and problems carried by the earlier works.

4.4. Redefining Post-Truth

One important point to recognize in the post-truth discourse is that the main problem is more about the trust than the truth or lies. Ethan Zuckerman’s most recent book Mistrust (2021) investigates this issue in-depth and provides important pointers to understand the reasons behind the events we name as post-truth.

According to Zuckerman, the loss of trust is the main problem almost all institutions around the world faces and the trigger behind the events and trends of the post-truth era. Zuckerman refers many historical events from US, such as Watergate and Pentagon Papers, and creates a timeline for the point where we reach the crisis of trust and the start of post-truth. Zuckerman’s description of our current environment is an important one:

“Our contemporary political and media environment is designed to activate fear. Commercial news media need attention to survive, and stories about crime, terrorism, and violence feature disproportionately, as these problems generate fear, and fear generates views. Those views keep advertising dollars flowing.” (Zuckerman, 2021, loc. 1180)

In an environment like this, Zuckerman claims, people will lose their trust and become more open to insurrectionist ideas and political positions. Once this loss creates an open space for anything else to claim, we'll start to have competing ideas and worldviews racing to fill this gap. This is the environment of the post-truth, where multiple stories competing to replace the old one.

The approach against this problem is also a defining aspect of the post-truth era. The approach usually defended and promoted by more politically center-aligned and the ones who prefer the old status quo is the one that tries to rebuild this trust by putting it all back to the institutions itself. But Zuckerman opposes this idea and instead claims we need new approaches to tackle these problems. According to Zuckerman, consequences of the mistrust made clear that “we need a new toolkit for some very old problems” (Zuckerman, 2021, loc. 1301).

Another approach to this problem is to profit from the gap that's been created. James Ball calls this ‘the approach of the autocrat’ and defines it as:

“... by a campaign of attrition, trust in institutions such as the state, the judiciary and the media are undermined, until public discourse is simply a clash of competing narratives: a contest which can then be won by the side willing to make the boldest plays towards emotion and mass-appeal – often, history has taught us, through the demonisation of minority groups.” (Ball, 2017, p. 247)

This approach is what usually called post-truth and we're observing different versions of it almost daily basis. Based on these two important definitions, loss of trust and autocratic approach to post-truth, we can define post-truth as the clash between different groups to fill the social and political gap created by the loss of trust to the institutions which organize our lives.

This definition is helpful and objective to understand how it affects journalism and how it can be combatted. Defining the post-truth journalism based on this definition would also provide a much better roadmap to solve journalism's current problems, ethical or otherwise.

CHAPTER 5: POST-TRUTH JOURNALISM

5.1. Defining Post-Truth Journalism

As we described in the previous chapter, there are three main approaches against the post-truth conditions: returning the status quo, finding new solutions and the autocratic approach. These three approaches can also be observed in the media and journalism ecosystem.

If we look at US media ecosystem, we can easily find examples to all of three. First one, returning the status quo, is usually represented by the major mainstream media actors such as the New York Times, Washington Post and CNN. These media organizations concentrate on the traditional way the journalism perceived: gatekeepers of the truth and the main source of information. Washington Post's change of their motto to "Democracy Dies in Darkness" is a perfect example of this approach (Bat, 2017).

Finding new solutions as the second approach can be seen in different formats and examples because there are so many different solutions offered. One of these solutions are the rise of fact-checking publications and their expansion around the globe. The International Fact-Checking Network, an international organization which brings fact-checkers around the world and certifies them based on set of their set of rules, founded in 2015 and currently has more than 100 organization as their members globally ("International Fact-Checking Network").

Third approach, the autocratic one, is the one we call post-truth journalism. People and organizations who embrace this approach are aiming to profit from this gap created by the loss of trust in the institutions by any means necessary. At times, this focus on profit might be a solely financial one (Subramanian, 2017). But the most dangerous and ambitious ones are always politically motivated.

The publications who embrace the third approach and called post-truth journalism outlets has perfected the ways of manipulating and tricking online news readers and making them to trust what they're publishing. And even though their motivations and goals might differ from one another, their methods and tools are generally similar, and they learn from each other.

Therefore, we've decided to choose one of the most well-known and major outlets which embraced and popularized this approach to build our classification for post-truth journalism.

5.2. Defining Qualities of Post-Truth Journalism

There has been many studies and research published focusing on different outlets and publications which embraces post-truth journalism approach and although there are specific details unique to each publication, the research shows that all of them can be classified under four main qualities. Each of these qualities are also either observable or popularized by Breitbart.

These four qualities are:

1. Relationship with Political Power
2. Weaponizing design
3. Weaponizing language
4. Mastering the algorithms

Each of these qualities are also observable on the non-media people and organizations who embraces the autocratic approach to post-truth but it's most effective and widespread in the media organizations and, in a sense, became their signature.

To support the findings of the research about the defining qualities of the post-truth journalism, we also discussed each of these qualities with scholars in media and journalism field and professional journalists and fact-checkers through in-depth interviews. These in-depth interviews provided a wider perspective and important details to deepen the definitions of each of the qualities forming the post-truth journalism definition.

5.2.1. Relationship with Political Power

Journalism and its relationship with political power has always been a sensitive subject. Both the role journalism plays in the society and its ethical position forced journalists to keep a distance to stay objective and professional (Anderson & Schudson, 2019). As we discussed in the Chapter 2, this relationship with political power and the limits of it is an important

journalism ethics issue, mainly because of the journalists and organizations who wants to push these limits.

We also discussed how this relationship is important when it comes to journalism's perception in the society. People has certain expectation from journalism, especially when it comes to people in power. This makes the relationship between journalism and politics an even more sensitive subject.

The exact opposite goes for the post-truth journalism organizations. Because the role they want to play is more politically motivated then journalism, they don't consider having close relationship with political groups or personalities a negative or an issue. For these kinds of organizations, this is one of the most normal relationships to have.

They even benefit from this relationship because they use the political power to reach more people or make more profit. They might receive funding or direct support from them. Even in some cases, their founders can be these political groups or personalities themselves (Bengani, 2020). In return, the political groups used these organizations for propaganda and framing purposes.

In addition to these advantages, being openly political and taking sides in almost every news event possible, creates an advantage in the current political climate. As we discussed earlier, one of the main underlying issues behind the post-truth is general mistrust and polarization in the society (Zuckerman, 2021). This open relationship with a certain political ideology makes these publications more attractive to the members of those political groups.

All of this makes the open and deep relationship with political groups and politicians one of the main qualities of post-truth journalism. It both shows the political motivation behind the work and their reluctance to adhere to the basic journalism ethics.

All interview respondents agreed this relationship is an important quality for the media organizations included in this definition.

ERKAN SAKA: "There seems to be a direct relationship between them. I observed that disinformation is usually effective if it is supported by a political movement. Even if the

origins of disinformation may be obscure, it will become effective when it is adopted by a political group.”

Some respondents also added that the fact that similar relationships between politics and journalism can be observed in other media organizations and this should not be counted as a unique qualifier.

SUNCEM KOÇER: “My point is journalism has always had embed relations with the power centers, political entities, and such. Of course, there is an ideal of independence and there are organizations who enliven this ideal in our current time. But we can’t just say that political relationships are unique to our era or to a set of post-truth journalism organizations.”

This is an important distinction to include in our definition. Just as we discussed in the previous chapters, relationship between politics and journalism has a long history. This qualifier should not be considered as a sole differentiator, but an important qualifier evolved with their approach and practice.

5.2.2. Weaponizing Design

Design is one of the most important practices that shapes our relationship with many things in our lives (Armstrong, 2012). From the tools we use to ways we communicate, their design can influence all of this relationship in many ways and even manipulate us, like the way many online platforms has done (Orlowski-Yang, 2020).

For journalism, the presentation of the work matters, meaning it needs to be designed in the best way possible to convey the information provided. This is why for journalism, and media in general, editorial design has become an important topic (Caldwell et al., 2014). Whether it’s newspaper or magazine, having a strong design language gives more strength to the work published with that design. This is something we can trace back to yellow journalism tactics, such as more visual use, which we discussed in the first chapter.

On digital media, appearance can be the most important factor when it comes to first time visitors. Having an editorial design perspective can help a publication stand out from the others and also signal additional messages to the audience (Caldwell et al., 2014). Not having

a quality design or using ready-made templates like many others online can hurt an outlet's credibility. This is why web design has been continuously evolving since the early days of the internet (Engholm, 2002), and continues to evolve with each new technology developed on the internet.

This also means that using a design language that mimics trusted, or mainstream media organizations can help an outlet gain unearned legitimacy through it (Billard & Moran, 2022). Especially in the eyes of the first-time visitors of the website, presenting the publication akin to well-known ones can help the outlet keep the attention of the visitor.

A low effort example of this tactic can be seen at the *Ekstra Bladet* case from Denmark, in which a group of people used newspaper's open to everyone letters to editor section to distribute xenophobic conspiracy theories mostly because it was designed to make it look like it's an article published by the paper itself (Farkas & Neumayer, 2020).

Respondents for our in-depth interview agreed with this quality and its uniqueness to post-truth journalism.

EMRE İLKAN SAKLICA: "This change seems more like the product of the new age. This age, where making design is easier, produces technologically high-quality news organizations who wants to spread misinformation."

SUNCEM KOÇER: "As far as I observe, I say yes. Not because their design ideas are unique, but they are utilizing the conventions of the genre (journalistic design) skillfully."

Some respondents also noted that this quality also spreads into the mainstream news organizations, which is a curious development that might provide more insight.

SARPHAN UZUNOĞLU: "Of course there are some design templates that are common among these organizations. However, social media use patterns that are mostly affiliated with these organizations are somehow becoming the industrial norm for many organizations."

5.2.3. Weaponizing Language

How articles are written and styled can play an important role on reader's perception of the content included in the article and how seriously it's taken. For post-truth journalism, this can become another tool just like visual design.

For post-truth journalism, as we explained with the autocratic approach, news and journalism is just a platform to promote their ideas and achieve their goals. Therefore, the main goal of any post-truth journalism work is to deliver the non-physical news content, their personal opinions and sentiments, efficiently. Because "non-physical content is the main kernel of the fake news, since it contains all the important ideas, feelings and views that the authors want to pass to the readers." (Zhang & Ghorbani, 2020, p. 6)

When a story's language and style is crafted to look journalistic enough, it unfortunately has a good chance to make most of the readers to believe what's been told in the article. Researches shows that news readers are generally prefer skimming headlines and articles, instead of a deep and critical read (Boczkowski et al., 2018). This makes using language and style, or additional tactics such as the use of sources that are either factually false or problematic in nature, to earn legitimacy a more successful tactic than it should be.

At times, use of language can also become a tool for influence over the audience consuming their content. One of the ways most post-truth journalism organization uses language in this way is using moral framing to make their articles more impactful (Xu et al., 2020). Using words that will create a moral frame over the story makes it more interesting for the audience, and motivates them to spread these articles online, and contribute their virality.

As we mentioned earlier, delivery of the non-physical news content is the main goal of the post-truth journalism. This is why researchers note the prevalence of the emotional aspects of the fake news stories or conspiracy theories (Juez & Mackenzie, 2019) or notes the importance of "emotional truth" in the post-truth discourse (Harsin, 2018). For post-truth journalism receiving an emotional reaction is one of the main goals.

It's political motivation aside, economics of the digital media also makes this tactic a profitable one. Most of the digital media, including the post-truth journalism outlets, rely on programmatic advertisement incomes. This model of income grows based on the number of

visitors you can make the advertisement visible, meaning more website clicks equals more money (Hwang, 2020). Therefore, post-truth journalism outlets have become one of the main beneficiaries of this model.

All these developments can be traced back to older trends like yellow journalism or the development of new styles like gonzo journalism, but changes happened during early digital publishing developments and especially citizen journalism and adjacent trends are also important in this process. Alongside their positive impact, these developments also blurred the lines between journalism and other kinds of publishing online (Eldridge II, 2019). When this impact combined with the journalism's attempt to develop a style more fitting to internet, it has become harder for people to put a wall between these. This evolution period created a gap that can be easily manipulated by the malicious actors like post-truth journalism outlets and journalists.

Interview respondents generally agree that post-truth journalism created a unique language and rhetoric for themselves, and the problems of journalism provided a fertile ground for this.

MERTCAN YILMAZ: "Post-truth era created major changes in this aspect. We can also say that problems intrinsic to journalism made it possible. Post-truth structures, which doesn't have a really high standards compared to the major newsrooms who deals with income problems, created a new language. And this created a discussion unique to our times."

Other respondents also added valuable insight about this development's relationship with the mainstream media's issues.

SARPHAN UZUNOĞLU: "I think the best answer to this question can be found in Laura Basu's work named News Amnesia. The patterns she pointed regarding news value and selection is key to understand all discourse related problems of media industry those post-truth outlets make advantage of due to lack of accountability among even credible media organizations."

Another respondent also noted the importance of this language quality to develop audiences for post-truth journalism organizations.

ERKAN SAKA: “There is always a long-term investment on building and perfecting a rhetoric before it penetrates into the public sphere. Initially, the language used is a specific jargon that aims to consolidate a core audience and, in that sense, inevitably exclusive. However, if the core group expands the rhetoric is gradually adopted by a wider public.”

5.2.4. Mastering the Algorithm

The final quality of post-truth journalism is the one which focuses on technology and manipulating it to become more visible. Unfortunately, our current online ecosystem is built on technologies that are easy to manipulate and game.

Use of the term algorithm to define this quality based on the two main technologies which defines our daily online experiences: search engines and social media platforms. Both technologies rely heavily on algorithms designed to automatically decide which content to show users when they interact with the platform. Search engine algorithms focus on finding the most relevant and popular results for the requests, while social media algorithms focus on finding the content, they think we’re interested the most based on the data it collects about us.

This algorithmically curated online experience means that whoever has the most data about the people they want to target, their chances are higher to become successful. Therefore, most post-truth journalism outlets use all kinds of technologies to track their visitors and gather as much data about them as possible. This is especially something actively done by more right-leaning post-truth journalism websites but it can be observed in almost all of them (Agarwal et al., 2020).

When it comes to the manipulation of search engine algorithms, use of SEO becomes an important tool. Optimizing websites for search engine algorithms and learning how to make those algorithms prioritize a website is something heavily used by almost every publisher, but post-truth journalism outlets’ usage is heavier than the rest (Bradshaw, 2019).

In the case of social media algorithms, post-truth journalism organizations start with a strong advantage. It’s a well observed fact that their style of politics is favored by those algorithms

in many cases (Huszár et al., 2022). Their use of language and provocative style also makes sure that all of their content will receive emotional reactions from the audience (Xu et al., 2020). This means their posts will be amplified even more because research shows that this kind of content receives more visibility from social media algorithms (Rice, 2020). This is why manufacturing outrage on the social media has become a business model for many post-truth journalism outlets (Parks, 2021).

In this quality, respondents felt the need to note that this is an important quality but not a unique one, just like the first quality about political relationships.

SARPHAN UZUNOĞLU: “I think these outlets can be best understood through operations of Murdoch in UK since early 1990s and how his media empire made use of technology and what investments they had. Especially right-wing conspiracists have benefited a lot from their promotion and visibility strategies.”

ERKAN SAKA: “I believe commercial organizations are also doing optimization. But these organizations imitated the commercial ones and then perfected the process. Since there are not ethical and regulatory boundaries for them, they could use it more efficiently for the purposes.”

Another respondent noted that post-truth journalism’s use of algorithms and manipulation also pushed mainstream journalism further into this kind of use.

EMRE İLKAN SAKLICA: “Post-truth newsrooms heavily influenced mainstream in this issue. We can see the troubling situation of the information ecosystem caused by the trash created through the attempts to use SEO to benefit from algorithms. All major platforms bear responsibility in this problem.”

CHAPTER 6: BREITBART: A POST-TRUTH JOURNALISM CASE STUDY

6.1. History of Breitbart

Breitbart originally launched in 2005 by Andrew Breitbart as a news aggregator, mainly featuring direct links to news stories from Fox News, TMZ, Associated Press, Reuters and more. But in later years, Andrew Breitbart and Larry Solov wanted to expand from the original version and decided to take a new route. This change brought Breitbart known by people today to life.

In 2010, the new version of the Breitbart.com has been launched and it's goal was, according to Steve Bannon, the executive chairman of the publication at the time, "to become the Huffington Post of the right" (Rainey, 2012). Andrew Breitbart was even more open about the goal of Breitbart, he told Associated Press that he's "committed to the destruction of the old media guard" (Rosen, 2010). Breitbart has been a politically motivated publication since day one, and they never felt the need to hide this.

This blunt approach and using any means necessary to achieve their goals helped Breitbart to gain popularity each day. Their embrace and promotion of right-wing conspiracy theories like Pizzagate, climate change denial; promoting misinformation and conspiracy theories about US Democrats such as Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton helped their online visibility and become a household news publication for Donald Trump supporters and the radical right politics in USA. Many Republican politicians in office, and even Donald Trump himself shared these articles on their social media profiles or used them as references (Yochai Benkler et al., 2017).

During the 2016 US elections and immediately following period, Breitbart has gained big reader numbers and was earning a lot of revenue from online advertisement. But in the following years, more extreme publications launched to profit from this trend, and they've started to lose readers. Major brands also received pressure from the public to remove their advertisement from Breitbart, costing them advertisement revenue. In July 2019, their

monthly visitor numbers dropped from 17.3 million in early 2017 to 4.6 million. They've also lost 90 percent of their annual 8 million USD ad revenue (Farhi, 2019).

During this period, Breitbart also lost many of its prominent figures. Longtime executive editor Stephen Bannon first left his position to become an advisor for Donald Trump presidency and returned after disagreements. But his return only lasted for a short period of time and left his position as the executive chairman on January 2018. Another well-known editor of the website, Ben Shapiro, left his position in 2016 and started focusing on his personal podcast The Ben Shapiro Show and the news website The Daily Wire which he founded.

After all this fallout, Breitbart and its influence is still visible on the media. According to Similarweb data, their website still receives more than 45 million visitors each month and their articles heavily shared and interacted on Facebook. The tactics and methods developed by them are now become the defining qualities of the post-truth journalism approach and developed even further by people like Ben Shapiro and others influenced by the Breitbart.

6.2. Analyzing Breitbart Through the Defining Qualities of the Post-Truth Journalism

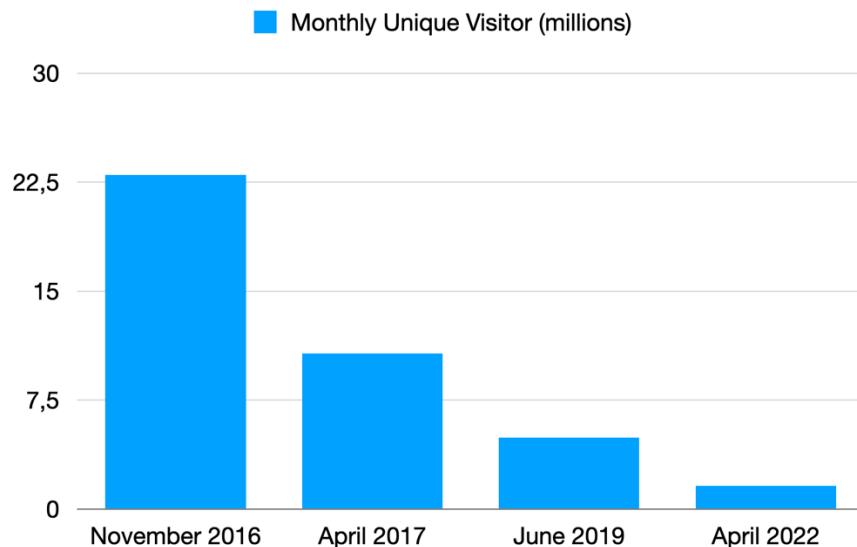
To test our framework of post-truth journalism, we'll take each of the defining qualities forming the framework and will look at Breitbart's body of work for the examples of these qualities. The goal is by using this framework, we can observe how central these qualities to the organizations' work and whether this publication would still be the same if the examples of these qualities removed.

Breitbart, as one of the most famous examples of this type of publications, is the ideal example case of our framework. The analysis of the publication based on this framework, we can both test the framework's power in practice and better understand how post-truth journalism operates in the real world. Since Breitbart also had an influence over the post-truth journalism trend following their fame, we can also detect some of the examples which can be observed in many other post-truth journalism outlets.

6.2.1. Relationship with Political Power

From the early days of their foundation, Breitbart had relationships with powerful figures and right-wing political groups through their founders. Robert Mercer, a major funder of the Breitbart, was also considered one of the top 10 most influential billionaires in USA politics (Amber Phillips, 2015). This helped Breitbart to gain the attention of certain politicians who were funded by Mercer.

This relationship took another turn with Donald Trump and his relationship with both Robert Mercer and one of the founders, Steve Bannon. Trump was already open to develop relationships with post-truth journalism outlets like Breitbart and InfoWars, a conspiracy focused outlet run by Alex Jones, and Trump was using these outlets to frame his politics and use their help to set the agenda for his supporters. This was one of the main reasons why Trump tweeted news articles from Breitbart multiple times, and in return, Breitbart has created a section on their website devoted to Donald Trump's tweets (Pollak, 2020). The chart below shows how the reach of Breitbart impacted by its political connections.



Graph 1: Selected Monthly Unique Visitor Data of Breitbart.com.

Source: Created by the author.

The relationship between co-founder Steve Bannon and Donald Trump also became useful for Breitbart. When Donald Trump appointed Steve Bannon as chief executive officer in 2016, it brought Breitbart to the main stage. Even though Bannon left his job at Breitbart for this role and the role only lasted for eight months, it was enough to make both Breitbart and their politics a mainstay in the American politics.

Even though they lost the influence they had with Trump losing the elections in 2020, they are still pursuing this political influence and relationship goal and trying to develop new relationships in USA politics. It's highly likely that we will see them trying to return to the main stage with the help of Trump or another politician they think they can work together.

All these examples show us that without their political relationship, especially with Trump presidency, Breitbart wouldn't grow as much as we've seen during 2015-2018 period. Their growth, both their audiences and finances, were heavily reliant on the political group they're connected to staying in power. When the opposite started happening, Breitbart also started losing power.

6.2.2. Weaponizing Design

Breitbart has always been aware of the power of editorial design, and this is one of the main reasons why their website and identity design has always been similar to mainstream media organizations. Below, in Image 1, we can see their homepage design in 2012.

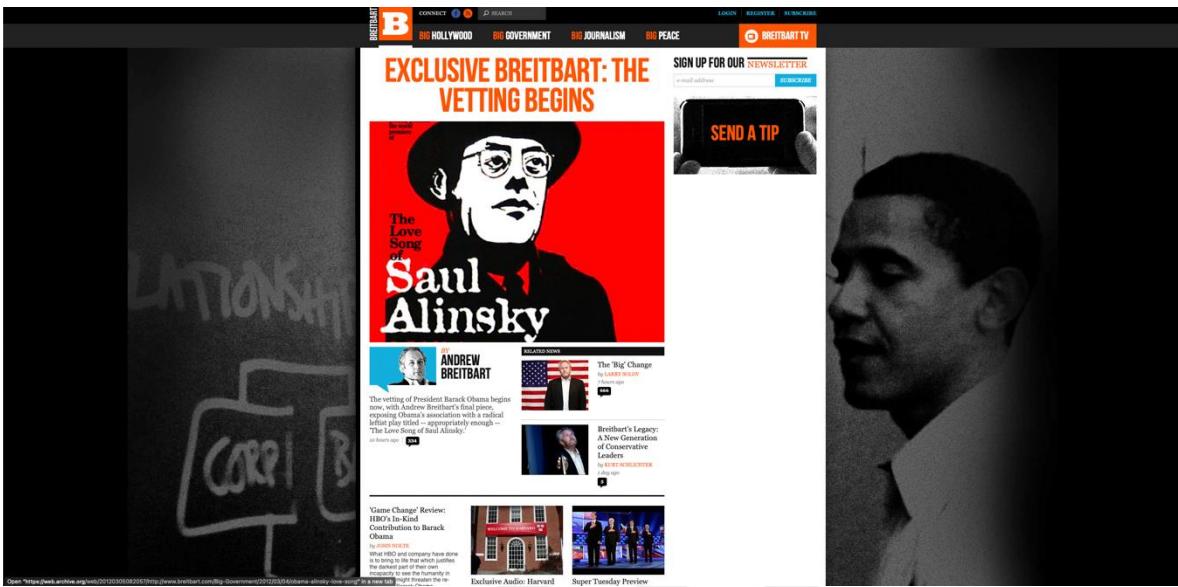


Image 1: Screenshot of Breitbart.com Homepage from 05/03/2012.

Source: Created by the author. Date of Access: 14/03/2022.

Their design choices are distinct –the color and font selections and placement of the articles makes it unique enough. But at the same time, it's design quality and the way website present itself comparable to the other major players in the US news ecosystem.

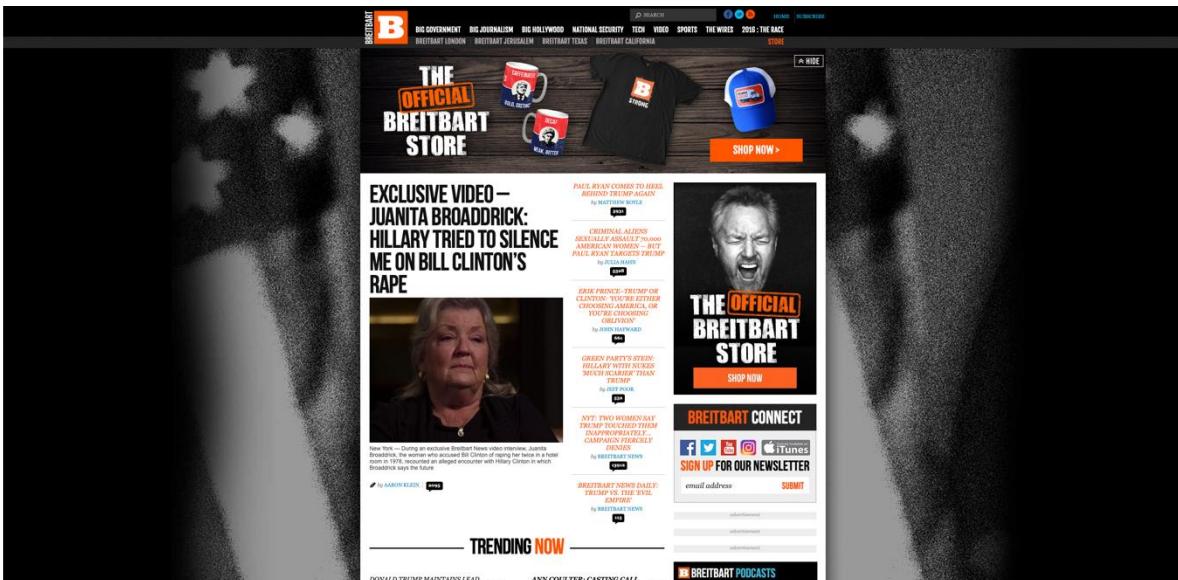


Image 2: Screenshot of Breitbart.com Homepage from 13.10.2016.

Source: Created by the author. Date of Access: 14/03/2022.

Breitbart team is also aware that good digital design means it always needs updating and keeping up with the current trends. As we can see in Image 2, they also keep their website design updated regularly while keeping what makes their digital design identity unique in place. One important change, which is a sign of keeping track of website design trends, is the change of the font used in the body text from a serif one to sans-serif one.

When we compare the design with the homepage design of the two most popular websites in 2016, we can better understand their design language.

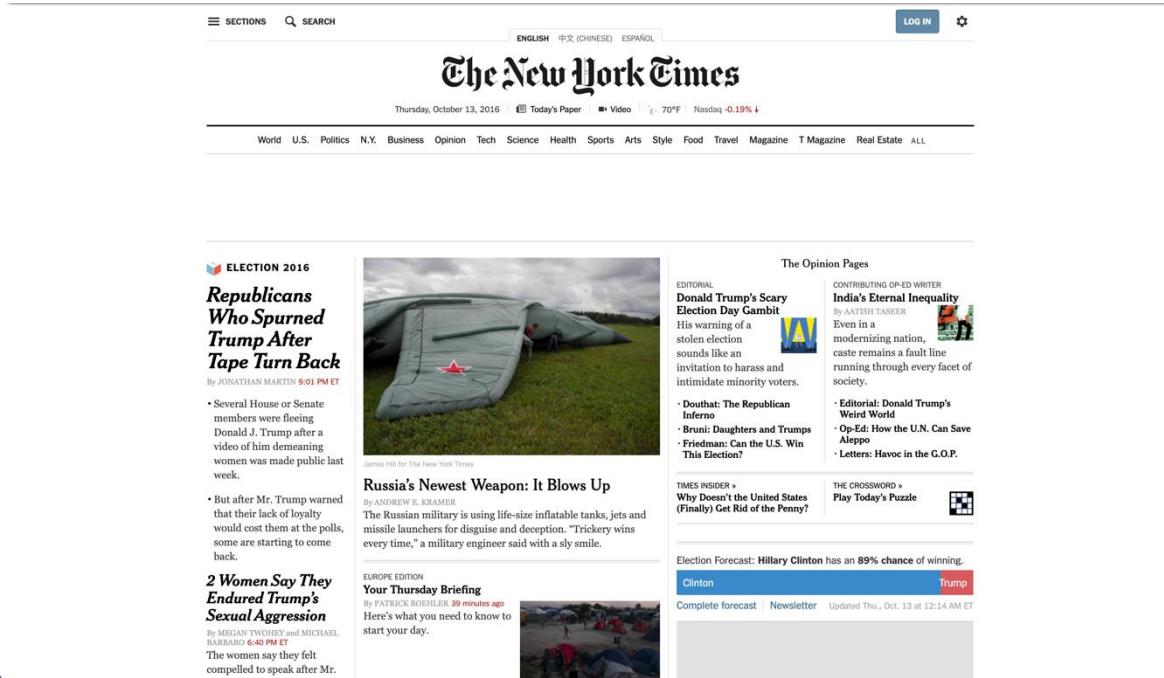


Image 3: Screenshot of NYTimes.com Homepage from 13/10/2016.

Source: Created by the author. Date of Access: 14/08/2022.

New York Times's website design in the same day, which hasn't changed since then, is an attempt to create a similar feeling to their print newspaper. It's page layout, font selection and use of images strongly resembles their newspaper-like design also influenced many other online news outlets in varying degrees.

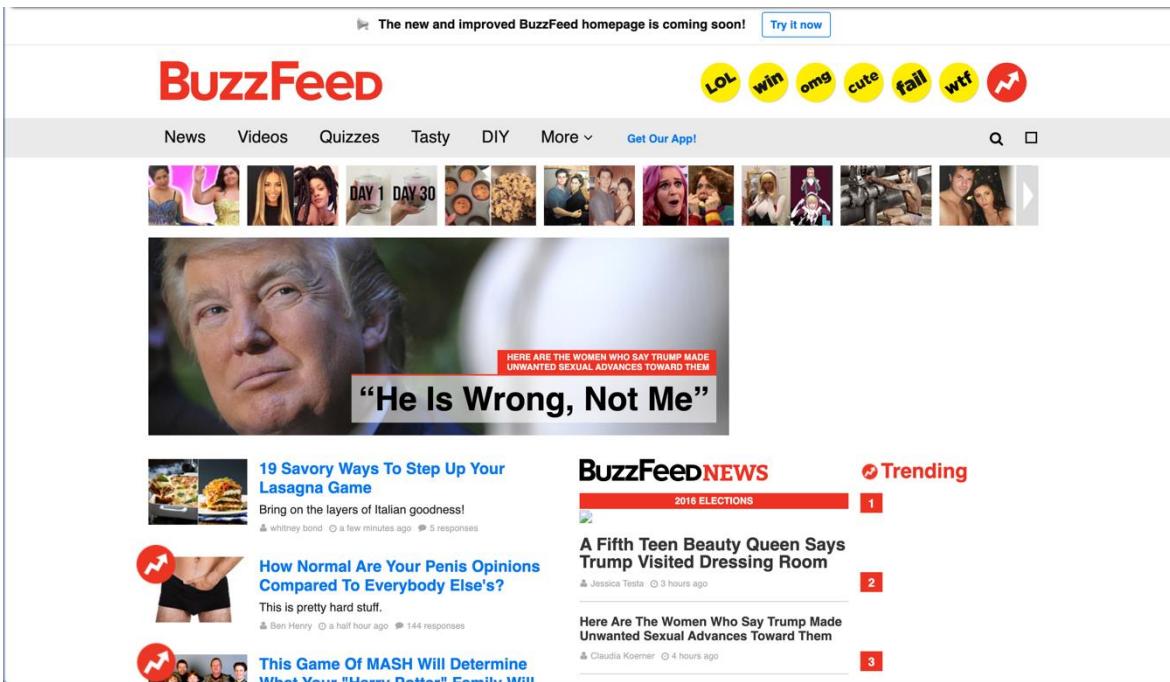


Image 4: Screenshot of Buzzfeed.com Homepage from 13/10/2016.

Source: Created by the author. Date of Access: 15/08/2022.

On the other side of the spectrum, we have a homepage example from one of the most popular websites of this time, Buzzfeed. Buzzfeed, being a digital-native publication, has a design language that's more influenced by the online design trends and theories. Their use of image and color are strongly informed by the user experience and design approaches developed in their times (Almeida & Monteiro, 2017).

When we go back to Breitbart's example, we can see that they're aiming for the mix of these two different approaches to web design. On the one hand, they want to have a resemblance of more newspaper-like design language like New York Times but at the same time they want to benefit from the most recent research done on user experience to attract as much attention as possible, just like BuzzFeed does.

Another detail to note, they now present more headlines at the beginning of the page, which was also another website design trend gained traction during these years.

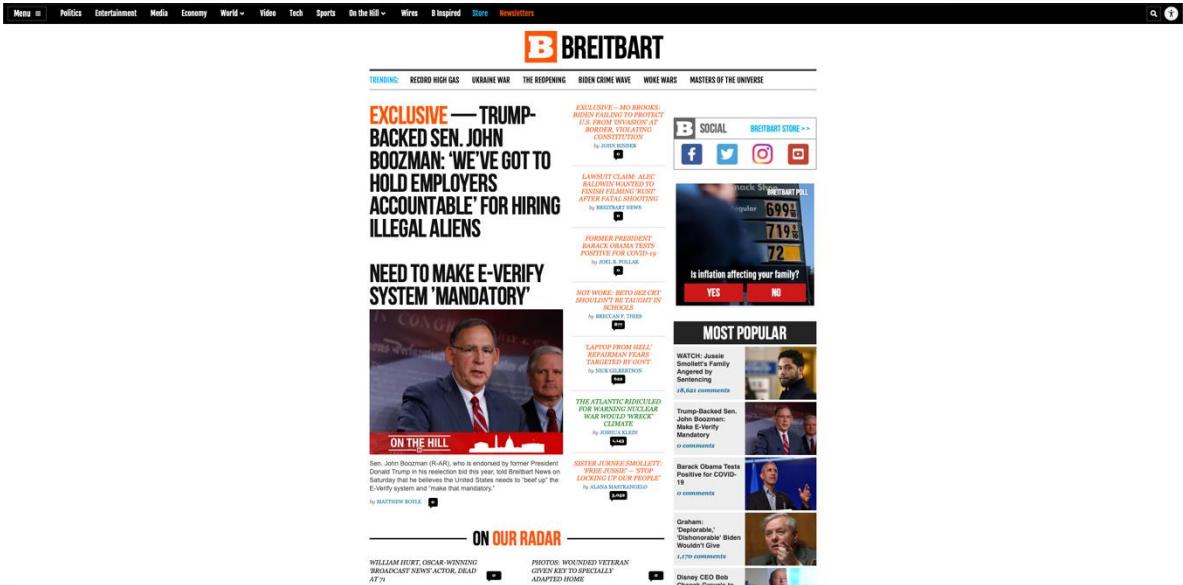


Image 5: Screenshot of Breitbart.com Homepage from 14.03.2022.

Source: Created by the author. Date of Access: 14/03/2022.

In 2022, we can see that Breitbart keeps following the trends of the web design and now moved to a cleaner homepage design. Instead of using background images, which is now considered a dated style, they use a clear, white background. Their website also uses images and fonts that are easy to read on both desktop and mobile.

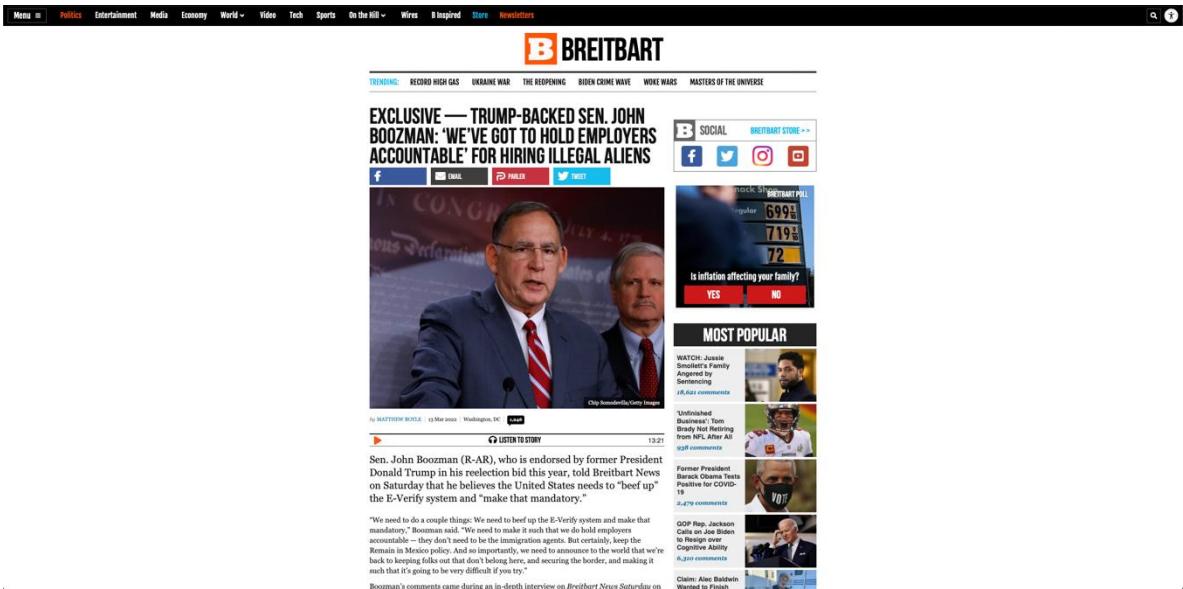


Image 6: Screenshot of a News Article Published on Breitbart.com on 13.03.2022.

Source: Created by the author. Date of Access: 14/03/2022.

This approach to design is visible throughout the website, as we can see in Image 4. This unified and professional looking design helps Breitbart to present itself as a serious and professional news publication and makes their articles perceived in this way. Their approach and use of the online design principles for manipulation is now used by almost every post-truth journalism outlet around the globe.

If Breitbart was not putting enough resources into their design, it'd be hard for them to reach the wider audience they had during their prime time. Although most of the post-truth journalism outlets prefer going with the bare minimum when it comes to design of their websites or other media, such as purchasing a basic Wordpress theme with a news preset, Breitbart shows that when a publication puts more resources into it, they can benefit even further from this quality.

6.2.3. Weaponizing Language

Language and its use play an important role to achieve Breitbart's goal. Since anyone can learn how to write in the style of journalism, it's deployed by post-truth journalism outlets, and Breitbart is not an exception. Even though many leaks from the management side of Breitbart shows how their stories are motivated by political goals and journalistic interests (Bernstein, 2017), they're making sure that those stories look as journalistic as possible. Below is an example quote taken from an article published on 17.10.2017, titled "ICE Detainer Issued for Suspected Wine Country Arsonist in Sonoma Jail":

"Breitbart News reported earlier this week that Sonoma County Sheriffs had arrested Jesus Fabian Gonzalez, 29, at Maxwell Regional Park in Sonoma County after a series of reports of ongoing fires in the region. Mr. Gonzalez was observed around 3:00 p.m. PDT wearing a jacket and walking "out of the creek area and a plume of smoke behind him," according to the Santa Rosa Press Democrat."

From a journalistic perspective, this is a well written lede for a news story. But there's a problem with this lede: it's misinformation (Ansari & Sacks, 2017). For anyone who reads the story before it's proven incorrect and Breitbart forced to add an update at the beginning of the story, it's a convincing story that claims an immigrant started a deadly wildfire.

Because of the success of this method, the story received 743 comments from readers, most of them discussing racist conspiracy theories based on this misinformation.

And in many other articles Breitbart published, we can see selection of words and terms used in a way that gives the impression of a professional journalistic style while signaling their political beliefs and ideas. This is a method called dog whistling, using terms that are easily refutable in front of the public but signals a specific message to people who share similar far-right beliefs (Haney-López, 2014), is heavily used by Breitbart in most of their published articles. It's used is also observed in other far-right groups in different countries as well (Åkerlund, 2021).

Another part of this quality is active use of provocative language and style. Being provocative online is a net positive for post-truth journalism because it brings attention from all sides of the political spectrum. On Breitbart's case, their provocative style made people who share similar political worldviews happy and motivated them to share their articles on social media and their friends more. On the other side of the spectrum, people shared these articles because they were motivated by outrage and wanted to criticize and disprove them. In both cases, Breitbart articles shared widely and helped them to grow.

Breitbart is known for its aggressive style and aiming for provocation with each article for a long time. In many occasion Steve Bannon called what they're doing is "fighting to save Western Civilization" and used the analogy of war (Bernstein, 2017). This approach paved the path for Breitbart's provocative, rhetoric filled language and clickbait-friendly style on social media.

An example of the Breitbart's provocative style can be seen in their Breitbart California launch ads published in April 2014. In those ads, they used Miley Cyrus's twerking photo from music awards show and superimposed Democratic Party politician Nancy Pelosi's face instead of Cyrus's and another one with Mark Zuckerberg's face superimposed onto a naked woman's body. This advertisement (Image 5) caused a lot of backlash but also helped Breitbart gain the attention they were looking for.



Image 7: A Photo of Breitbart California Launch Advertisement.

Source: (Shire, 2014)

Breitbart's provocative rhetoric and manipulative language can also be observed in many of their stories. Most of their news stories either deploy emotional or opinionated language when describing the events or use obvious fallacies to defend their positions.

An article promoting climate change denialism titled “Nolte: Scientists Prove Man-Made Global Warming Is a Hoax”, published in 09.04.2019 is an impeccable example of this. Article takes an historic data comparing the CO2 levels between the past and today and tries to use it as a proof that climate change is a hoax.

“Yes, you read that correctly, three million — million — years ago CO2 levels on Earth were the same as they are today, but there is one major difference between three million years ago and today...

Three million years ago, we humans were not driving cars or eating the meat that requires cow farts; we weren't barbecuing or refusing to recycle or building factories; there was no Industrial Age, no plastic, no air conditioning, no electricity, no lumber mills, no consumerism, no aerosols.

In fact, three million years ago, there were probably no human beings on Earth, at least not human in the way we use that term today. And yet...

CO2 levels were the same then as they are now...

Hmmm...?

But I thought humans warmed the planet? That's the hustle we've been sold for three decades now — you know, that WE are the problem."

As we can see from the quote above, instead of building an argument based on facts or data, it takes a historic comparison and starts building an emotional rhetoric to claim climate change is not something caused by human actions, without providing any proof. Use of rhetorical language and the presence of fallacies is a prevailing quality of post-truth journalism's writing style.

We can see how effective this style for this specific case by looking at the engagement numbers available on the website. In May 2022, the article we analyzed had 3127 comments on the website and the engagement tracker on Breitbart website, which includes not only the comments but all engagement this article received on social media platforms, shows the total number of 11,580. This makes it, by any standard, a popular news article.

One important difference of Breitbart's language use from some other post-truth journalism publications is the way they're acting more strategically and making sure they're not going for extreme levels. One reason for this is they want to stay online as long as possible. Some other post-truth journalism outlets using extremely offensive language and direct attacks, such as The Daily Stormer, taken offline because of this (Conger, 2017); and some others who directly promoted conspiracy theories, like InfoWars, are dealing with court cases against them (BBC News, 2022).

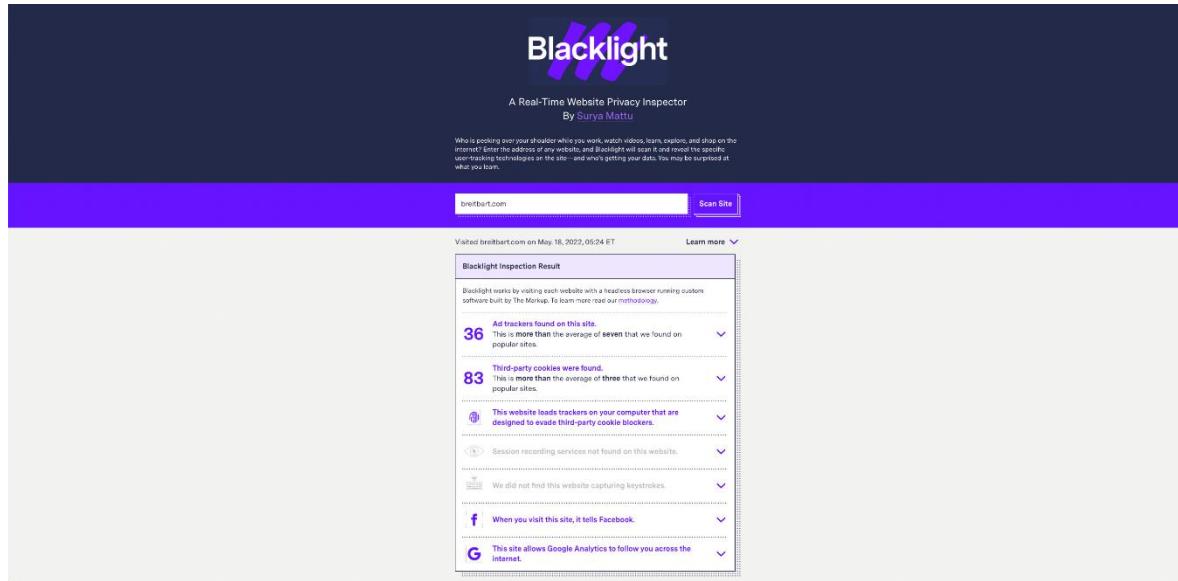
6.2.4. Mastering the Algorithm

In the second half of the 2010s, we're made aware of how these algorithms can be manipulated for political purposes. Leaks from the company Cambridge Analytica showed us that there are businesses selling this manipulation to political parties around the world as a service (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018). What makes Cambridge Analytica even

more relevant to our work is the people who ran the company. Cambridge Analytica was owned by one of the co-owners of Breitbart, Robert Mercer, and Steve Bannon, one of the co-founders of the Breitbart, was running the company's activities.

It's hard to say which side helped to develop their tactics the other in the relationship between Breitbart and Cambridge Analytica, but it's clear that Breitbart has been using these tactics to become visible online. The quality we mentioned before, provocative style and rhetoric, is the one that we see Cambridge Analytica used for their clients to promote their political ideas on social media platform such as Facebook. Research shows that algorithms on social media mainly focuses on engagement without taking context into account (Howard et al., 2018), and Twitter's own research proved that right-wing politicians and media benefits from that most (Huszár et al., 2022). That's because they deploy the provocation for their rhetoric more often.

For that purpose, Breitbart heavily uses the tracking technologies on their website. A tool called Blacklight, developed by technologist Surya Mattu, shows how many user-tracking technologies used on a website. Below, on Image 6, we can see the results for Breitbart.com:



The screenshot shows the Blacklight website interface. At the top, it says "Blacklight" with a purple logo, "A Real-Time Website Privacy Inspector By Surya Mattu". Below that is a sub-headline: "Who is eavesdropping on your shoulder while you work, watch videos, learn, explore, and shop on the Internet? Enter the address of any website, and Blacklight will scan it and reveal the specific user-tracking technologies on the site – and who's getting your data. You may be surprised at what you learn." A search bar contains "breitbart.com" and a "Scan Site" button. Below the search bar, it says "Visited Breitbart.com on May 18, 2022, 05:04 ET" and a "Learn more" link. The main content area is titled "Blacklight Inspection Result". It lists several findings with counts: "36 Ad trackers found on this site", "83 Third-party cookies were found", "This website loads trackers on your computer that are designed to evade third-party cookie blockers", "Session recording services not found on this website", "We did not find this website capturing keystrokes", "When you visit this site, it tells Facebook", and "This site allows Google Analytics to follow you across the internet". Each finding has a small icon to its left.

Image 8: Blacklight Analysis Results for Breitbart.com.

Source: Created by the author. Date of Access: 10/05/2022.

As we can see at the results above, in addition to 36 different advertisement trackers on the website, Breitbart.com also has 83 third-party cookies that are used to collect information about the website visitors. They also benefit from recently developed technologies to evade blockers and privacy-enhancers to make sure they can track people who want to protect their privacy.

Another method that's been actively used by many post-truth journalism outlets is to deploy multiple accounts, pages and groups on social media platforms that seem independent from them at first glance but controlled by them or their contractors. Facebook is the platform of choice for this kind of manipulation the most, because of the different ways people can share links on it. On platforms such as Twitter, each account is technically the same but on Facebook, in addition to personal accounts one can manage professional accounts, groups and multiple pages, and share links from all of them. This is why, data from Similarweb shows that 60.48% of social media traffic for Breitbart.com comes from Facebook, compared to only 23.69% from Twitter (*Breitbart.Com Traffic Analytics & Market Share*).

We can see how this method has been deployed and become a big success from ex-Breitbart and current The Daily Wire journalist Ben Shapiro. The Daily Wire has been ranked one of the most popular websites on the Facebook (Parks, 2021), even though it's articles are low-quality journalism and it doesn't seem to have too many direct followers of their page. But the research on their popularity found out that Ben Shapiro has an agreement with a media group which owns multiple politically right-wing Facebook pages sharing The Daily Wire content in sync (Zekeria, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Journalism might seem old and has been around for a long time, but its history goes back to only couple of centuries and the professional journalism as we know it developed mainly in the 20th century alone. It's a young field and still growing and evolving in many ways, and we can see the results of this in the current problems the profession is facing.

Current problems journalism field is dealing with, whether it's the post-truth, digital transformation, or ethical ones, are generally the result of the earlier problems we see in the history of the field and in some sense, can be described as the growing pains of the profession. When we look at the issues we're discussing in the journalism studies, most can be traced back the earlier issues journalists has dealt in the past. This makes understanding the history of journalism and its past problems important to understand the issues we're dealing with today.

Throughout the study, the aim was the show how these issues evolved and impacted the journalism, while drawing a map to the journalism's current situation. This understanding is very helpful to contextualize the post-truth journalism and have a clear picture of its roots inside it. It's very important to understand the fact that post-truth is not an external problem for journalism, but it was made possible by the issues it already has. Whether it's yellow journalism or the impact of digital technologies, this problem has internal roots inside the field that needs to be included in the discussion of it.

Therefore, post-truth journalism, or the results of the post-truth problem in journalism, should be analyzed as the result of these unresolved problems in the history of journalism coming together with new problems unique to our time and conditions.

Similar issues can also be observed in the general post-truth discourse as well. Many works on this problem has serious limitation resulting with factual or theoretical errors derailing the discussion. Ignorance to the root causes of the problem, excluding—and sometimes even blaming—the earlier scholars' work which points out the early signs of this problem, and limiting the scope to certain periods of times or certain people or groups are just some of the examples of this problem we discussed.

The reason why this study comes up with a new definition of the post-truth problem is to make sure the work on post-truth journalism doesn't fall into these theoretical traps. Explaining the complexity and the history of the problem, starting with a philosophical approach, and looking at the social and political roots of the post-truth problem provides us a definition fitting to the issue in front of us.

This is why this study was focused on the theoretical aspect of the problem and aims to develop a theoretical framework to study this problem. Without a theoretical framework to approach this complex problem, practical side has many pitfalls that can derail the work and limit our success.

Post-Truth Journalism Framework

The main goal and the result of this study is to create a definition for the outlets born as the result of the post-truth problem's impact on the journalism and design a framework that would work as a starting point to study these outlets. Our aim with these results is to start a deeper discourse about the theoretical side of these problems.

The definition was an important aspect of this study because the terms used to describe these kinds of journalism works were either overused or very strictly applied. To develop a framework to study these outlets, we first needed a definition that takes all the background and theoretical work into account. When we had a clear definition, we could then start designing our framework.

When we analyzed the output of the outlets fitting into this description, certain aspects related with the problems we diagnosed started to form a pattern. How they wrote, how they published, their use of technology, relationships they formed, and more were all similar in all of them, only changing how successful they were or how much resource put into these different aspects. Combining these aspects with the problems, we ended up with four main categories of qualities to form our framework on top of it.

While designing the framework and describing the qualities forming it, we especially looked at how vital these qualities and practices are for these outlets. Parts of these qualities can be seen in many different media outlets, or their use can be more intense than others. But the

way to look at these qualities is whether the outlet would dramatically change or stop functioning when these qualities are removed from its practice. These qualities should be the defining parts of their identities.

In-depth interviews conducted with the experts in the field provided important insights and information to develop an even detailed perspective in these qualities forming the framework of post-truth journalism. Respondents found the main framework especially useful to better study and understand these organizations and mentioned potential areas in the specific qualities that can be deepened with the further practical use of the framework.

One topic most respondents mentioned during the interviews was the relationship of these qualities with the similar problems journalism deals with, and how some of these were made possible with the problems in the history of journalism itself. These replies further proved the importance of our approach to the post-truth journalism issue from the journalism history and journalism ethics perspective. It also gave potential research questions which can be used to further develop this framework.

Most respondents also noted the importance of the digital technology and how its development helped some of these qualities to become possible. Expert approval for this aspect of the framework was also important. These replies further solidified the importance of the internet and digital publishing for journalism's current issues and our post-truth journalism framework.

This framework shows two important things about these outlets and post-truth journalism. First one is that even though the definition of professional journalism excludes these outlets, we can clearly see how they're part of journalism itself. Framework shows where their roots are and how journalism's internal issues created the space for them. At the same time, framework helps us to put a strict distinction between post-truth journalism outlets and professional journalism outlets as well.

Results of the Breitbart Case Study

Breitbart was already a well-known outlet in the post-truth discourse, and we wanted to take them as our case study to provide an example of our framework in practice. When we applied our framework to Breitbart, we have seen couple of important results.

First result of the case study was how all of these qualities forming our framework feeds each other in different ways. Each quality gives other one additional material to use or makes its impact stronger. For example, their use of language and provocation makes sure they can perform better on social media platforms because of how algorithms work. This makes them more visible, which opens the door for further political connections to benefit from this visibility.

This result is important mainly because how our framework is designed. As we said earlier, this framework should be used as a whole, because these qualities are forming a structure which defines these outlets. Breitbart case study proves our theory behind this approach was correct by showing us the relationship between these parts.

Another important result was observing the importance of the application of these qualities in practice. Each quality can potentially be applied in different levels or intensity. One result we got from Breitbart case study was how vital it was to apply these qualities in the best way possible to their success.

We can see this result more clearly with comparing it to another post-truth journalism outlet, called The Daily Stormer. What makes these two outlets different is their approach to the application of these qualities. While Breitbart was more focused on long-term success and more professional look, The Daily Stormer focused on provocative style and chose siding with a smaller but more radical political group. Their language was more offensive and openly racist, they were building relationship with neo-Nazis in US and only did the bare minimum about the rest of the qualities. This resulted with financial issues and finally being forced to close their website because none of the service providers wanted them as customers (Conger, 2017). On the other hand, Breitbart is still online, and even though it has financial issues, continues publishing.

Result of the case study was about the dependencies of these outlets. Post-truth journalism outlets has a strategy that works really well with the current conditions of the internet and the technologies we use to find information. But Breitbart example shows us that when one or several of these qualities forming their strategy starts weakening, it can severely impact their work.

We see the example of this problem at Breitbart through their political relationships. Breitbart's reliance on Trump and its political power, they started to have seriously problems when Trump started losing power. It also had further direct impact on them because they took this relationship further and one of their co-founders, Steve Bannon, took part of Trump's government, which resulted by him getting arrested in the end.

We can also see examples of this problem in other post-truth journalism outlets for other qualities as well. This is a critical but unavoidable weakness of the post-truth journalism outlets because their strategy strictly relies on exploiting the weaknesses of the things around them; it can be journalism, social media algorithms or political relationships.

This makes it an especially important result to the case study because it provides us a way to solve the problems they're causing. As the framework shows, post-truth journalism mainly works by exploiting weaknesses and loses its power when those weaknesses disappear. Further works on understanding these weaknesses and finding ways to fix them should be the way to follow.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study shows us that we need more interdisciplinary research on both journalism and post-truth problem. When this approach taken, we can avoid potential pitfalls and biases that can impact our work.

Even though this theoretical work provides a framework that can be used to analyze post-truth journalism outlets and their strategies, it's hard to claim that this framework is complete. Further theoretical and practical works on this framework and approach might show where it falls short and where it needs further improvements and updates. Also, the developments

in the fields directly or indirectly related to the qualities forming this framework can cause the need for further updates and discussions about the framework as well.

Breitbart case study also showed that how these qualities forming the framework applied can impact the output of the outlet and their chances of success. This aspect of the framework certainly requires further testing in practice and how this can be included in the framework's further development.

Even though the framework can be used as it is, it has a rich potential to be used as a part of other works about post-truth, journalism, and media, which we couldn't investigated in our work. This type of interdisciplinary applications of the framework can open the door for new potential approaches in the field.

Finally, the framework gives us important insights about the way post-truth journalism outlets work and the weaknesses they exploit. These insights should be collected and studied carefully and used to develop strategies to strengthen the journalism against these exploitation attempts. Since journalism is still developing and growing, kinds of exploitation attempt we see in post-truth journalism won't be the last ones and there will always be new ones waiting in the future.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: List of News Stories from Breitbart Used in Analysis

TITLE	DATE	LINK
Nolte: Scientists Prove Man-Made Global Warming Is a Hoax	09.04.2019	https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2019/04/09/nolte-scientists-prove-man-made-global-warming-is-a-hoax/
ICE Detainer Issued for Suspected Wine Country Arsonist in Sonoma Jail	17.10.2017	https://www.breitbart.com/local/2017/10/17/ice-detainer-issued-for-suspected-wine-country-arsonist-in-sonoma-jail/
Exclusive — Trump-Backed Sen. John Boozman: ‘We’ve Got to Hold Employers Accountable’ for Hiring Illegal Aliens	13.03.2022	https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2022/03/13/exclusive-trump-backed-sen-john-boozman-hold-employers-accountable-hiring-illegal-aliens/
Homepage	05.03.2012	https://web.archive.org/web/20120305082057/http://www.breitbart.com/
Homepage	13.10.2016	https://web.archive.org/web/20161013112824/http://www.breitbart.com/
Homepage	14.03.2022	https://web.archive.org/web/20220314030752/https://www.breitbart.com/

Appendix 2: In-Depth Interview Questions

- **Question 1:** Do you think the relationship between political groups and post-truth journalism organizations is a unique quality to be used to define these organizations?
- **Question 2:** Do you think their use of design and digital design and publishing technologies is a unique quality to be used to define these organizations?
- **Question 3:** Do you think their use of language and rhetoric is a unique quality to be used to define these organizations?
- **Question 4:** Do you think the way algorithmic optimization deployed by these organizations is a unique quality to be used to define these organizations?
- **Question 5:** Do you want to recommend any other qualities we didn't consider in this definition but should be included?

Appendix 3: List of In-Depth Interview Respondents

DATE	FULL NAME	AFFILIATION
09.11.2022	Dr. Sarphan Uzunoğlu	NewsLabTurkey / İstanbul Bilgi University
07.11.2022	Emre İlkan Saklıca	Editor-in-Chief, Teyit
31.10.2022	Dr. Suncem Koçer	Koç University
03.11.2022	Dr. Erkan Saka	İstanbul Bilgi University
07.11.2022	Mertcan Yılmaz	Researcher, Teyit

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name Surname: Ahmet Alphan SABANCI	
Education Information	
Undergraduate	
University	Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University
Faculty	Faculty of Natural Sciences and Literature
Department	Philosophy
Papers and Articles	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sabancı, A. A. (2015). Robotun Gözü: Yeni Medyada Göz, Görme ve Görünmezlik. Yeni Medya Çalışmaları II. Ulusal Kongre, 264–273.2. Uzunoğlu, S., & Sabancı, A. A. (2020). From Useful Idiots to Useful Facts: What Is Behind the Fake News Debate? In <i>Information Nightmare: Fake News, Manipulation and Post-Truth Politics in the Digital Age</i> (pp. 49–63). Peter Lang Publishing.3. Sabancı, A. A. (2021). Videokonferans Teknolojileri. In İ. Küçükparlak & H. Karaş (Eds.), Telesağlık Temel Başvuru Kitabı (Paperback). Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık.4. Sabancı, A. A. (2021, November). Kendi Estetiğini Bulmak: Dijital Kültürler Bağlamında Estetik Kavramının Dönüşümü. Yeni Medya Çalışmaları V. Ulusal Kongre, Adana.	