Scope of study

Weblogs as online platforms of news professionals who work in offline/traditional media

Examine the online discourse as it formed and developed in their blogs

How is the popular blog format adopted by journalists affiliated with mainstream media outlets?

Is there a distinction between the discourse of news professionals who work in the traditional, mainstream media and of their discourse as bloggers?
Drawing on normative theory we move towards a more open and autonomous approach of journalism
Our approach

Do news professionals challenge their professional standard values & practices when they are engaged into blogging?

Are journalists ‘normalizing’ the blog as a component/enhancement, of traditional journalistic norms and practices?

Do they use it as an opportunity to form an online platform deliberation with citizens?

What linking patterns do they follow?
What Is a BLOG?
Blogs

Forms of websites that feature hyperlinked, journal-kind posts and entries

Users get involved into online discussion and deliberation

Can be frequently updated, are multilinked and interactive
Revolutionary features

- Hypertext links to websites and online documents the author refers to in the text resulting to a level of accountability not found in traditional media.

- Dialogical nature of weblogs is what makes them an appropriate tool with which to develop new kinds of participatory journalism projects.

- Transforms the blog into a debate arena in which the author initiates a conversation with an informative or an opinion text that the readers can comment on and follow up actively.
they also have certain distinctive cultural and behavioral features

personality or intimacy, communality, and specific style are key aspects of blogging

blogs are a set of socially defined habits

bloggers perceive themselves as part of a community that shares values, rituals and language
represent a newly collaborative news product that hosts both the journalist and his/her audience in a sharing platform for possible online deliberation
Blog typology

- Weblogs produced by the public outside media companies (citizen blogs)
- Weblogs the audience can produce on platforms provided by the media (audience blogs)
- Weblogs that journalists maintain outside their companies (journalist blogs)
- Weblogs that are part of media content and produced by professional staff journalists (media blogs)
Our focus...
journalistic weblogs written by journalists outside media institutions

they become extremely appealing to news professionals as they offer uncontrolled and unlimited self-publishing space

allow complete editorial freedom and adoption of critical and opinionated position in comparison to the standards of mainstream media
Levels of influence between weblogs & journalism

- Journalism’s privilege in agenda-setting is being challenged as the blogosphere is developing alternative agendas.
- Newcomers are performing largely the same routines as professional journalists.
- Unlike institutional journalism, weblogs are essentially participatory.
weblogs have not been something outside institutional media and its journalism. Several news media have included various kinds of weblogs in their online sites.

In this way, weblogs are also internally affecting the re-shaping of online journalism, thus offering examples of new available genres.
Major challenges

Gatekeeper role

Non-partisanship
Our research

Methods: discourse and content analysis

10 blogs whose creator is a journalist associated with a print or broadcasting media outlet

The blogs were purposively chosen as widely cited and visited j-blogs

Unit of our analysis: individual blog item
Further classification of the variables

Opinion

Links

User-generated content
Archived web journals of journalists

9 out of 10 blogs are a combination of expressions of personal opinions and articles related to the journalists’ work.

Mainly used as a collective online platform, an archived web journal of journalists sporadically enhanced by original material produced for the blog.

It is also notable that blogs provided by columnists were more likely to contain opinions.
Anonymity rules…

Journalists share their blog space with unedited input from users.

The blogging format is, however, not evolved into a truly participatory experience.

When it comes to user-generated items, the majority of them (87%) are made either under a pseudonym (65%) or anonymously (22%).
Mainstream & alternative linking patterns

The majority (7 out of 10) offered links to other j-bloggers, while 9 out of 10 provided links to users-bloggers.

Few j-bloggers sent users directly to government or institutional sites.

Blogs provide links to alternative media (6 out of 10), while the linkage patterns to mainstream news media are limited (4 out of 10).

Not surprisingly, the pattern shows that the mainstream media mentioned are the ones the j-bloggers work for.
Research shows that weblog writers do not challenge mainstream news media’s narrow range of topics…

…however, this is not supported in our study.

There are cases where blogs set the agenda for neglected or omitted by the mainstream media stories, which attract the attention of the audience and thus serve as pressure tools towards the mainstream news outlets to deal with them.
Inter-weblog agenda-setters

A small number of bloggers have become highly influential within the blogosphere, a phenomenon commonly referred to as “intermedia agenda-setting” (inter-weblog agenda-setters).

To the extent that these weblog writers take their cues from mainstream news media coverage rather than vice versa, they serve as intermediaries or “opinion leaders,” channeling information from the mainstream news media to the blogosphere at large.
Perspectives for research

The j-weblog phenomenon marks an excellent subject for additional research.

Conduct personal interviews with j-bloggers in order to understand the processes and their rationales at which a content and discourse analysis can only on a first level indicate.

Comparisons: blogs of journalists/users-bloggers with journalistic activity, j-blogs with what the same journalists write as ‘offline’ columnists or reporters.
The value of such studies...

- further our knowledge of the extent to which journalistic norms and practices are being applied to j-blogs
- study the extent to which j-bloggers are adapting nontraditional approaches and the extent to which journalistic practices are used by bloggers who do not belong in a newsroom
- ‘who is a journalist’ online? = roles, norms and practices become increasingly fluid and blur
Thank you for your attention!

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