

Meeting a Digital Demand: Advancing Methodological Knowledge in Journalism Studies

Be it due to new technologies, changing business models, or a profession in turmoil: The continued disruption of the field of journalism has given rise to a range of new scholarly questions concerning the study of the production and consumption of media. However, these novel questions in the field also demand a critical look at the methodological approaches currently used, and give rise to the question:

Are our tried and tested methods still able to answer new issues at stake?

Therefore, this special issue will serve scholars who are interested in developing, testing, and debating the value of novel methodological approaches in journalism studies. Scholarship within the special issue will offer problem definitions as well as solutions for common as well as emerging challenges of journalism inquiry.

Background

The field of journalism studies is thriving, bringing with it a growing knowledge of how journalists work, produce, and how they and their journalistic products are perceived in modern information societies. However, while there is a lively debate regarding the normative and/or theoretical frameworks necessary to understand contemporary journalism, there is only a limited discussion when it comes to the advancement of methodological thinking within our field.

This is surprising as journalism as an academic field of inquiry is being challenged by technological and societal changes that drastically influence the production and consumption of journalism.

Particularly, a rise in use of new devices, online media sources, and digital platforms and intermediaries changing news consumption patterns has demanded scholars to reconsider current scholarly methods.

Also, a shift from news organization to news networks has posed issues of sampling. Moreover, these developments in the (digital) media landscape, together with societal challenges, such as the issue of trust in the media and the rise of populism, encourage journalism scholars to develop and improve more contemporary approaches to examine the consumption and implications of news.

What are we looking for?

- First, we must ask whether *currently used methods* of data collection – such as interviews, survey, and content analysis – are sufficient to study all contemporary questions within the field. If not, how can these methods be adapted, or should they even be replaced by other methods?

For instance, within the field of journalism, research using qualitative approaches has

remained strong and successful. But, could they be improved by multi-method approaches, combining quantitative and qualitative methods? And what are the challenges when adapting quantitative methods?

- Second, what can journalism studies learn from adapting methods currently in use in *other scholarly fields*?

For example, how useful are experimental research designs for studying journalists? Or, how can we use the shift to qualitative data collection in online environments, such as online focus groups or online video-observations? Also, how will big data, as well as developments in methods of computational social science and beyond, influence the field?

- Third, are there completely *novel methodological approaches* that could be pioneered within our field?

For instance, the use of digital data that traces internet users and journalist on their computers offers a new avenue for journalism scholars.

- Fourth, and going beyond data collection, how will our field change regarding *data management strategies* (e.g., data archiving), as well as data analysis (e.g., questions regarding the value of significance testing)?

For this special issue, we encourage scholars to engage with the above topics with both theoretical and empirical contributions. We are also interested in review and/or meta-analytical papers.

Submission Information

This is a call for full paper submissions. Submissions follow the author specifications for Journalism Studies, and are submitted through the journal website.

Timeline

Publication call: September 2018

Deadline submission full papers: 1 April 2019

First decisions: June 2019

Revised articles: September 2019

First final decisions: November 2019

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