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The Role of Social Media Journalists in TV News:

Their Effects on the Profession and Identity of TV Journalism, the Quality of News, and the Audience Engagement

by

Yousuf Humaid AL Yousufi

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
The Zimmerman School of Advertising and Mass Communications
College of Arts & Sciences
University of South Florida

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ABSTRACT

Spurred by the rapid influence of social media in the news industry, an increased number of TV news stations have started assigning dedicated social media journalists (SMJ) in newsrooms to monitor, gather, verify, share news, and engage with audiences on the streams of social media. Consequently, drawing on the diffusion of innovation theory, the present study probes into TV journalists' perceptions of the implications of the role of this new type of TV professionals in the identity and profession of journalism, the quality of news pertaining to the verification of misinformation, and the news audiences' attractions and viewership by capitalizing on audience engagement affordances.

Moreover, based on an online survey delivered primarily via LinkedIn to a broad spectrum of TV journalists consisting of broadcast, website, and social media journalists in three varied regions of the world—the U.S, Western Europe, and the Middle East—the study demonstrates some concerns about the effects on the code of ethics of journalism. However, most of the surveyed journalists believed that the role of social media journalists SMJ is consistent with the general principles tethered to the professional identity of journalists. Additionally, the study underlines the weight of this role to verify information gleaned from social media before being used in TV news and asserts the significance of engaging with TV audiences to increase the news viewership and enhance their attractions. Accordingly, the study argues that espousing the role of SMJ has become an inevitable fashion in social media-embedded newsrooms. However, the research documents that many TV news channels have

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broadcast misinformation spread on social media. Furthermore, it unfolds that far less attention has been paid in many TV newsrooms to the potentially positive and beneficial utility of the role of SMJ concerning audience engagement. It signals that a lack of time, tools, strategy, and

training causes the dilution of the role quality of SMJ, thereby suggesting that news channels can aggressively tap into this role if these obstacles are conquered.

Finally, since research on this concern is still scant at its initial stage, the study shows some venues for future studies in this direction.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Rather than distributing news on a single media platform, an immense number of TV news organizations are opting for more than one platform of production, including live broadcasting, online websites, and social media platforms. The rationale behind this shift is that the time when people used to rush to television to watch the news has relatively passed. Today the number of people who consume news on their personal devices has been increasing rapidly. Mobile media devices, and in particular smartphones, have influenced the news-seeking audience's behaviors. People who need to check for news about various events constantly refresh browsers on their devices to follow breaking news live and to look for the news update. Thus, the revolution of media technology has immensely affected the de facto status of traditional media, and social media has transformed news production and consumption. Consequently, while ratings of news viewership on TV has been on a gradual decrease recently, consuming news on social media platforms has been gaining more popularity (Boczkowski, Mitchelstein, & Matassi, 2017).

To tackle these challenges and stay relevant, many TV news providers have begun disseminating news on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube. Since people have become more fascinated by social media, TV news outlets, like other traditional news organizations, have jumped on social networks sites considering that therein lie unprecedented opportunities for efficient approaches to maintain the news audience's

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attraction. They have been investing tireless efforts in capitalizing on social media as effectual tools for gathering, producing, and delivering the news. Hermida et al. (2012) assert that news organizations are rushing into digital platforms services owing to the fact that these mediums have become efficacious mechanisms that market and distribute content, especially that social media are "becoming central to the way people experience news" (p. 815). Consequently, an increasing number of TV news stations have started adapting to the use of social media, accompanied with dramatic changes in TV newsrooms. Noticeably, today, the number of TV news stations that have largely embraced social media platforms has been rising (Adornato, 2016). This tendency has significantly accelerated amid various news establishments worldwide, not only in TV news outlets, owing to how much inbound traffic is coming to news institutions through tapping into the power of social media.

A considerable body of studies has asserted that social media are a substantial stream for consuming news for an immense number of people worldwide. For instance, a recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center (2018) demonstrates that about two-thirds (68%) of adults in the U.S. occasionally visit social media platforms to receive news; one in five frequently receives news there. However, the results reveal a slow growth in social media news consumption since 2017 (67%), growing from (62%) in 2016, coinciding with people's concerns about the accuracy of news on social media, even though American news consumers cite different benefits of experiencing news on social media such as the convenience of using these platforms, the suitability of interacting with others, and the speed of delivering the news via a variety of sources (Matsa & Shearer, 2018). Hence, not surprisingly, the Pew Research Center reveals that "Americans are relying less on television for their news. Just (50%) of U.S. adults

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get news regularly from television, down from (57%) a year prior in early 2016" (Matsa, 2018, p.1).

On the other hand, based on a YouGov survey (2017) in which approximately 70,000 consumers from 36 countries participated, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism Research reports some reductions in news consumption on social media in some countries such as Australia, Italy, Portugal, and Brazil. In addition, the study found that two-thirds of social media news users constantly consume news from television newscasts (67%), and from websites or apps (66%), and even those "relying more on social media would have found much of the news in their feed came from traditional media outlets" (Newman, 2017, p. 3).

Regardless of this variation, it is safe to say that, since social media sites are no longer considered as subsidiary channels for traditional media organizations, news outlets have become more preoccupied with applying new approaches to stay engaged with their viewers on social media platforms. Consequently, there has been a gradual adoption of social media in TV newsrooms and this varies from one TV station to the next. Some media outlets add additional tasks to the existing newsroom staff to tap into social media sites, while others occasionally devolve these tasks to a few traditional journalists. More strikingly, leading news organizations have started assigning a dedicated group of journalists to deal with social media platforms. Gathering news information and sources, releasing news and engaging with audiences on social media streams can be deemed fundamental tasks of social media journalists in TV newsrooms.

Today, the ongoing mutation of this trend in TV newsrooms has driven researchers to examine the tumult caused by social media effects on reinventing various aspects of news production. As these influential tools become an integral part of the media sphere, "it raises a series of editorial and ethical questions about evferyday work routines and practices, as well as

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time-honored tenets of journalism" (Hermida, 2012, p. 319). Olausson (2016) asserts that the advent of social media has brought about fundamental transformations in the ecosystem of the traditional media on the subject of crafting news. Alejandro (2010) suggests that these changes have extended to impact different levels of the work environment in TV newsrooms. It certainly has influenced the conventional structure of news production. However, one of the requisite inquiries in this domain is about the impact of these new professional practices of social media journalists on the identity of journalists, the quality of TV news, and the opportunities to increase news viewership by engaging with audiences on these mediums.

Little research has been conducted to examine these concerns. Thus, the current study endeavors to explore the implications of the new position of social media journalists on TV journalism norms and practices that have been highly harmonious. It aims to answer such inquiries, particularly how journalists themselves perceive these effects. Specifically, the study seeks to fill the gap of research concerning journalists' perspectives of the impact of social media roles on the journalistic profession and identity, the quality of TV news pertaining to the spread of fake news, and the weight of the role of social media journalists to maintain the viewership of TV news through interacting with the audience via social media. Importantly, the study accommodates more than one TV channel from the West and the Arab region to draw comparisons between perceptions of TV journalists from diverse areas of the world.

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CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media Convergence

Newsroom convergence has been considered a prominent phenomenon of cultural changes in news organizations resulting from the diffusion of new technologies. Early, in 1983, Pool Ithiel de Sola, a pioneer in the development of social science who coined the term "convergence of modes," foretold that the line between traditional media organizations would become blurry due to new technological developments. Pool predicted the probability of collapsing the traditional detachment and demolishing the conventional boundaries between the media mediums such as newspapers, radio, and televisions as a consequence of increased adoption of digital mediums. Years later, as Pool expected, an enormous number of new technologies have accelerated the lowering of organizational barriers, and increased knowledge sharing among different journalists under one roof. Singer (2004) defines convergence in the media context as some combination of technological tools, artifacts, and media workers in different media spheres.

According to Deuze (2008), there are two interconnected parts of the convergence of media. The first is the media industries convergence, which dates back to the mid-1990s, when some news companies began integrating processes between separate staffers, newsrooms, and departments. Deuze (2008) articulates that the pioneering example was in March 2000, "The News Center" in Tampa (Florida, US) which gathers "U.S.-based Tampa Bay Online (TBO), a

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convergent news operation combining WFLA-TV (an NBC affiliate station), The Tampa Tribune, and a news website that provides original content plus material from print and television" (p. 106). The second convergent type is the media production and consumption convergence, which is related to using citizen-consumers in the TV news production. Historically, many professional news organizations started adopting the so-called "citizen journalists" in the mid-2000s. They allow amateur newsmakers to submit their own news on their websites including text, audio, and video. The BBC implemented a user-generated content (UGC) for its websites in 2005, and Time magazine in 2006 (Deuze, 2008). Undoubtedly, the diffusion of citizen journalism has affected the TV news industry, in particular, the modality of news gathering and engaging with news audiences.

On the other hand, newsrooms convergence has caused considerable controversies among journalists. A mixed group of journalists—traditionally competitors addressing their duties under the same roof—has been thoroughly observed by many scholars. Accordingly, scholarly studies and the media research literature have disclosed several challenges in convergent newsrooms. Some journalists remain doubtful about the consequences of this practice. Singer (2004), in his study of convergence in four news organizations, found that ''cultural clashes remain a major stumbling block to convergence'' (p.16), as a result of different workplace systems, values, and ways to cover and craft stories in daily routines of each team of journalists (Silcock & Keith, 2006). Hence, while a flock of journalists with optimistic stances consider cross-platform consolidation as an inevitable trend that could drive a new modality of newsrooms and eventually help news industry flourish further, other journalists have manifested a pessimistic perspective of the media convergence consequences on the profession of journalism, the culture of newsrooms, and the quality of news (Dupagne & Garrison, 2006). Seemingly, such journalists

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are reluctant to adapt to the alterations of multimedia in convergent newsrooms, adhering to the traditional norms of journalism and the conventional modalities of news production instead (Gade & Raviola, 2009).

Media convergence today refers to the practice of crafting news for multiple media platforms such as TV, radio, the Internet, and newspaper. Studies reveal various reasons behind hesitant attitudes of journalists toward producing news in a multimedia newsroom for multiple media platforms. For instance, Silcock and Keith (2006) cite that crafting news in multimedia newsrooms compels journalists "to scatter their efforts unacceptably or do more work for no more pay" (p. 611). Likewise, Quinn (2005) notes that, although in converged newsrooms it is possible to generate a new way of storytelling and "consequently do better journalism," producing news for multi-platforms could place pressure on journalists who become so busy, and then "simply do not have the time to reflect or analyze" (p. 37). Hence, some journalists merely do a cloning practice, or republish other team's products with little editing. On the contrary, in leading news organizations, journalists produce news as one team whereby they share news content and reproduce another teams' content. Harmoniously, they cooperate with each other in order to gather, craft, and disseminate news for multiple platforms (Silcock & Keith, 2006).

Today, as novel news media, social media platforms are considered a new form of convergence in newsrooms. These tools have become part of the daily routines in multimedia newsrooms to gather, filter, and disseminate the news. At the same time, the affordance of these powerful mediums is influencing how journalists are crafting the news and "leading to discussions on key principles such as impartiality, verification, and professional behavior" (Hermida, 2012, p. 324). Employing digital platforms comes with several liabilities that impact the profession, newsroom culture, and the quality of news, ending up with assigning a group of

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journalists to deal with social media in newsrooms. However, there still has been little research conducted to investigate the effects resulting from embracing social media journalists in converged TV newsrooms. Such concerns will be addressed in the present study.

Adopting Social Media in TV Newsrooms

Today, many TV newsrooms are tailored as multimedia newsrooms that embrace different kinds of journalists, which includes broadcast journalists, online journalists, and recently, social media journalists, in order to deliver news for multi-platforms. In this regard, indeed, the role of social media in the news industry has consistently gained more significance over the past few years since social media have been influencing every aspect of TV news production. Since social media has become a remarkably imperative mechanism for news gathering, distribution, and audience engagement, TV news outlets have clung more to social media and, accordingly, the role of social media journalists has grown rapidly. Thus, today, there is a rapid increase in TV news organizations that have been preoccupied with assigning a number of journalists to social media journalism, hoping to attract, engage, and grow their audiences.

However, adopting social media in TV newsrooms has been a matter of relative dispute and remained a controversial issue in the context of professionalism. The idea behind these contentions is that many journalists consider the transformation in the media landscape to be fraught with peril, as it may jeopardize the fundamental principles of journalism. Hence, several studies revealed two divergent groups of journalists. The first perceive embracing new modalities of media as an inevitable trend even though it may lead to readjusting the profession and the identity of journalism, in response to ongoing changes in the media, while the second group regards the profound shifts as a real threat to the core of journalism as a profession (Grubenmann & Meckel, 2017) in which their professional identity, role, and the ways they craft

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news in the work field might be subverted. Additionally, those journalists feel that the quality of news has been declining (Witschge & Nygren, 2009), and consequently, the trust in the professional news organization has become endangered. Scholars ascribe such ramifications to the fact that "the tension between being first and being right is not new" (Hermida, 2012, p. 320), seeking “the right balance between speed and accuracy, between being comprehensive and being merely interesting” (Meyer, 2009, p. 11) or addressing the conflict between the immediacy and the quality of TV news, which may result in the spread of fake news gathered from social media.

On the other hand, a brief look at the current journalistic practices of social media journalists bolsters the claim that social media sites remain largely untapped and not firmly entrenched as a typical practice in many convergent TV newsrooms. Hermida (2012) cites that researchers found many news organizations “have yet to tap into the full potential of the social aspect of social media technologies” (p. 317). Although its merits are pursued assiduously by many news outlets, there have been less bold attempts to fastidiously harness social media in numerous TV newsrooms for several accounts. For instance, according to a survey conducted by the American Press Institute (API), Elizabeth (2017) articulates that many social media journalists carry out other tasks that are far irrelevant to their inherent responsibilities, and others address their duties without a pronounced strategy that aims to capitalize on social media successfully. Furthermore, the study points out that the role of social media has been parceled out to some news staff owing to a decline in staffing in some TV newsrooms, while some TV journalists regard the duties of social media teams as frivolous jobs in TV newsrooms.

Social Media Journalist (SMJ)

The social media journalist is considered the newest position in the profession (Wasike, 2013), arising out of the change of the interaction modality between news organizations and

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audiences on the heels of recent media advancements and the emergence of social media. In the infantile stage of this novel journalistic post, there are different monikers of social media teams in newsrooms. Wasike (2013) reports different titles such as "social media editor, social media strategist, digital editor, social media manager, social media producer, digital news editor" (p. 6). Haslanger (2015) named this new kind of journalism social journalism, and considers social journalists as "a broad-ranging label" that may include all journalists practicing different roles connected to social media and audience engagement such as journalists with titles such as "social media editor", "community manager," "audience engagement editor," "community engagement strategist", etc. In her study, she focuses more on the roles that social media journalists practice in the community to involve people in conversation with journalists in newsrooms, describing this sort of journalistic practice as a "breed of journalism that involves working more closely with… audience through a variety of techniques: crowdsourcing, events, interactions on social media, just to name a few" (p. 1).

In a slightly different vein, Wasike (2013) concentrates only on required skills and properties of a social media editor. He defines those journalists as "tech savvy journalists appointed by news agencies to act as the newsroom liaisons to the digital world, also called the social media sphere" (p. 6). This definition has a finite interpretation since it only focuses on the technological skills that those journalists need to carry out their job. Certainly, this skill is indispensable for social media journalists since their duties require possessing solid knowledge of using social media and new media technology. However, the fundamental skills of the journalistic profession are more pivotal for social media journalists in order to professionally deal with the news.

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The current study uses the term “social media journalists” to define journalists in TV newsrooms who deal exclusively with social networking sites as sources of gathering information disseminating news, and interacting with audiences, who master the fundamental skills of the profession of journalism through these sites, and who enjoy competence in harnessing the technology of social media to serve journalism. These journalists are the front lines of both functions in editorial and digital tasks, and on an equal footing with other journalists in newsrooms. Thus, undoubtedly, their roles should not be solely tethered to the technical tasks that are pertinent to posting links for TV news stories, for example. In early studies on social media journalists, Wasike (2013) determines four main functions of those journalists in newsrooms, starting with monitoring different platforms of social media to pursue latest trends in current affairs, and seeking relevant material for editors in the newsrooms desk. Additionally, they maintain the organization’s presence in the digital media sphere, and finally, they interact with the audience and post news stories digitally.

According to the American Press Institute, in conjunction with a fellowship awarded by the Knight Visiting Nieman Fellowship program, Elizabeth (2017) cites three urgent issues impacting today’s media that social media journalists should deal with. The first is related to the threat of misinformation spreading in professional media streams. The second is associated with effective tactics required to increase audiences’ engagement and their trust in professional news outlets. The third is linked to participating as full co-workers in the newsroom’s responsibility. Bullard (2015) points out that the central idea of employing social media teams as a profession in TV news stations is to handle social media platforms as a channel of two-way communication, which uses a conversational tone and interaction mechanisms in this space. Although there are small, but crucial, steps in order to increase social media effectiveness and to better benefit from

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their growth, Bullard's study reveals that not all TV newsrooms are addressing all tasks of the social media team owing to the fact that the number of journalists who are dealing with social media varies from one newsroom to another. It might consist of one or more full-time person or could be some journalists who are concurrently in charge of other newsroom duties.

Furthermore, the API study reveals that the adoption of social media team has been a matter of debate among journalists. While some journalists regard social media tasks as essential functions in today's news industry, others do not perceive the role of social media team as a part of the profession of journalism. They still consider their jobs as "entry level", or they have deemed social media journalists as "digital paperboys" or "distribution system-son," as their roles are seen as merely in conjunction with posting links on social media platforms. Moreover, others are concerned about the traditional norms of the profession of journalism and the quality of news as a consequence of embracing unprecedented ways of gathering, producing, and publishing news on social media platforms. Hence, unsurprisingly, in some news organizations, several stumbling blocks still have impeded social media journalists' endeavors to be fully integrated into the news production in newsrooms. Consequently, the study found that some social media journalists feel relatively disconnected from the rest of the editorial team. For instance, they cited that some reporters and editors are seemingly reluctant to work for social media teams.

Unequivocally, there is a long way to go to achieve better practices of social media journalists in many newsrooms. Elizabeth (2017) articulates that many social media journalists find themselves bearing responsibilities irrelevant to their fundamental duties, such as publishing newsletters and producing online news. Besides, they encounter occupational pressures such as a lack of time, staff, and specialization and consequently, posting links to news stories on social

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media platforms manifests as a prominent practice that social media journalists merely carry out on a daily basis.

However, that is not always the case. In leading news organizations, in particular, where the adoption of social media has been placed in a high priority on the news outlet's strategy, those journalists have been fully integrated into newsrooms desks, and are dedicated to addressing their substantial duties. They are effectively involved in daily newsroom meetings, discussing daily editorial topics and digital elements of producing news stories. Even more, news stories for social media streams are produced in conformity with the properties of each single social media platform. For example, some stories may be posted on Twitter, but they are not suitable to be published on Facebook since each medium has different characteristics.

In this regard, for instance, CNN has a vast presence on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram upheld by a global team of social media journalists, whose aim is to enhance the ubiquity of CNN on every stream in which audiences are engaging. The crew of the social media team is mainly divided into three global units, coordinating their duties jointly with each other. The social publishing team is the first team responsible for disseminating CNN's content, like the CNN and CNN International pages on social media sites and messaging apps. This group consists of journalists from several regions ranging from New York, Atlanta, and London in the West to the East in Hong Kong. The social discovery is the second team, based in the Atlanta CNN center, and it is regarded as the news-gathering hub. The role of this team is bound and determined to gather and verify information concerning news stories. Here, social media journalists primarily seek favorite stories that trend on the social media domain, and diligently trace whatever people are interested in, and then, they feed all of CNN's content. The third unit is the social TV team or US-centric team. This team is mainly

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dedicated to the second screen activities. They feed pivotal flashes on TV based on social media and select essential stories on TV to distribute them across social media sites (Corcoran, 2016).

SMJ and Professional Identity

The conceptualization of journalism as a profession can be drawn from the literature on journalism studies. Hence, there are five ideal and typical values that could be applied to define the professional identity of journalists, which are public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics. Each one of these values is described as a key characteristic that refers to professional self-definition of journalists. Simultaneously, it bolsters the legitimacy and credibility of the central roles that journalists play in societies (Deuze, 2005).

Public service is the first value of the profession of journalism, and it is deemed as a powerful characteristic of its role. Deuze (2005) and others state that in the name of the people, journalists are obliged to serve as a watchdog over the public good. However, the concept of public service of journalism has somewhat been altered owing to the fact that journalists practice their profession under different circumstances caused by the diffusion of social media in public life. Significant shifts have been occurring in media practice in the digital age on account of the increased influential participation of social media users in gathering and disseminating news. A new bottom-up of spreading and flowing news and information even without a professional means enables individuals to assume the role of newshounds. Web 2.0 technologies have readjusted the structure of relationships between professional journalism and audiences in which it has moved away "from a one-way, asymmetric model of communication to a more participatory and collective media ecosystem" (Hermida, 2012, p. 312). Today, ordinary people are active in sharing texts, photos, and videos widely, and are more involved in the process of collecting and disseminating news of public interest, which is directly linked to this value of

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professional journalists. Thus, it is safe to say that participatory journalism, or citizen journalism has influenced the work routines in mainstream news outlets in favor of actively engaging with diverse people in the public life. In fact, the increased spreading of content by individuals on the streams of social media has authorized people to enjoy the fourth estate status for themselves. This change posits some questions about the extent to which the ongoing shifts in media today have enhanced or diminished the role of journalists as watchdogs of public interests, and how journalists are performing this traditional role of public service in the new environment of social media.

The value of objectivity entails essential principles in order to practice journalism professionally. Journalists should consider only facts and should not be drawn by personal feelings or opinions to uphold or stand by one side and against another. To be professional, they have to be impartial, detached, unbiased, and fair by "treating people equally" in order to gain credibility. Objectivity may not be possible but that does not mean one should not strive for it" (Duez, 2005, p. 448). In this era of social media, however, the core value of objectivity could be influenced by new media technologies that allow more interactivity with audiences. To what extent does social media make this value more complicated in the decision-making of journalists about the stories? How do journalists maintain objectivity to present only the facts, without being affected by the flow of information from people sharing their stories via social platforms, and portray issues only from professional standpoints?

Autonomy is the value of the freedom of journalism by which journalists can perform their profession without suppression from any sort of authority. They can tell the story they want independently, and cling to the credo of journalism. Hence, autonomy is considered to be the cornerstone of the journalistic profession. In some organizations, some situational factors may

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interfere with the journalist's professional independence. For instance, journalists may be subjected to particular political or financial factors in their news organizations that disrupt the level of their autonomy. Thus, transparency of information and the elimination of censorship are key to maintaining the autonomy of journalists. Journalism "can only thrive and flourish in a society that protects its media from censorship" (Duez, 2005, p. 448). Today, social media enhances the rate of transparency of information that stems from its sources without censorship, constraints, or barriers in this vacuum. In such circumstances, to what extent may the idea of professional autonomy flourish? How may these factors prompt editorial independence or diminish the functions of journalism in societies since journalists have to, at least, share autonomy with other users who can post their stories freely on social media streams?

Immediacy is an inherent trait of the journalistic profession related to the novelty of information and the notion of speed which are both considered the mechanisms for journalism to stay relevant to people's daily life. Throughout the history of news organizations, this value has triggered the competition between media streams and journalists themselves. Each entity diligently endeavors to scoop all their rivals by being the first to provide the public with the latest information and breaking news. Therefore, the work of journalism entails "fast decision-making, hastiness, and working in accelerated real-time." (Deuze, 2005, P. 449).

However, in the wake of the evolution of the social media, immediacy is no longer monopolized by organizations of journalism, since the instantaneity of information can be accomplished by a single user tapping into social media to reach the public and publish a new story whenever he or she wants. Besides, immediacy can mean that "different provisory, incomplete and sometimes dubious news drafts are published" (Karlsson, 2011, p. 279). Thus, social media puts more stress on journalists, and raises critical questions about its effect on

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journalists to address the tenet of immediacy in their work, alongside the value of the quality of news. In this environment, to what extent is traditional journalism challenged by immediacy to tell stories first and to maintain the quality which is considered the most essential component of journalism? How do journalists actualize the immediacy of publishing journalistic storytelling that, in parallel, may require more depth or a new angle that reveals breaking news stories or current-trend news on social media? Such concerns necessitate time-consuming, more elaborate efforts and specialization to present accurate and instant news through multiplatform of media outlets such as TV, radio, online news, and social media channels.

Ethics in the profession of journalism acts as a defense to "commercial, audience-driven or managerial encroachments" (Dueze, 2005, p. 458). Although journalists serve in various political and social systems over the world, the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) Code of Ethics reflects a broad consensus on certain key principles that journalists generally agree on. Hafez (2002), for instance, points out this wide consent through a comparison of ethics codes in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Muslim Asia. However, the new media ecology is considered a chaotic landscape. "Professional journalists share the journalistic sphere with tweeters, bloggers, citizen journalists, and social media users" (Ward & Wasserman, 2010). It is fundamental to examine how the ongoing changes of social media have challenged the eternal principles of media ethics. Thus, it is requisite to lay questions concerning the effects of the practice of journalism on media ethics under the challenges that threaten the (SPJ) Code of Ethics. For instance, today, news organizations confront an increased commercialization of news, the dire financial straits, the proliferation of fake news, and the gradual competition of new rivals of citizen journalists.

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SMJ and Quality of News

Proliferation of Misinformation on Social Media

The time has gone when news organizations were the main news sources. The sources of news stories are countless, even average people are now able to participate and influence the process of news production. This dramatic change is owing to the advent of Web 2.0, which bestows on people the ability to rapidly gain access to unrestricted information and to generate their own content and share it with others worldwide. Consequently, this unprecedented media environment has accelerated the convergence of news organizations and audiences, and the "blurring of lines between professional authority and amateur citizen" (Canter, 2014, p.1). Parallel to this, journalists in newsrooms are massively bombarded by more information than ever before, which leads to many challenges resulting from the proliferation of misinformation. The abundance of information sources on social media has overwhelmed journalists who should verify false information posted on social media to strive for accuracy.

In the wake of the U.S. presidential elections in 2016, a growing debate on false information and fake news on social media has been tremendously accentuated. Recently, according to the Pew Research Center (2018), many of the news consumers in the U.S. are skeptical of information inbound from social media, and the majority (57%) realize that information received from social media sites might be inaccurate. "This is consistent with the low trust in news from social media seen in past surveys" (Matsa & Shearer, 2018, p. 5). The survey by the Pew Research Center conducted in 2016 found that most Americans believe fake news is having an impact on them, and almost two in three American adults (64%) experienced fabricated news as a source of confusion (Barthel, Mitchell, & Holcomb, 2016). In parallel, in the U.K., the fake news issue came to the forefront in 2016 on the heels of its effects on the

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Brexit referendum. According to a report by Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Newman (2017) reported that "only a quarter (24%) of our respondents think social media do a good job in separating fact from fiction, compared to (40%) for the news media" (p.1). Hence, unsurprisingly, the Oxford English Dictionary named "post-truth" the 2016 word of the year to stress this critical issue (Shin et al., 2018).

Consequently, the debate over fake news spreads wider among the public, and the issue of trust in media news has become more critical. The copiousness of content on the internet where information and misinformation are blended has played a greater role to create the crisis of confidence in the media in this era. Hence, many scholars deemed the internet and social media streams as fertile spheres where the seeds of fake news have been planted and have flourished. An immense number of incidents of false information, fake photographs, or edited videos are disseminated on social media platforms, and they go viral in just a matter of a few hours (Fitzpatrick, 2018). This can be perilous, especially since not every user is acquainted with tools-checking of sources' credibility as professional journalists do. Therefore, a tremendous number of news consumers still stream from traditional media and attribute the quick spread of low quality and fake news to the lack of rules and viral algorithms on social media according to the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism research based on a YouGov survey (2017).

A persistent necessity of such services has catalyzed famed firms of new technologies and social media to fight the phenomenon of misinformation spreading via social network sites. For instance, Google News' "fact-check tag" is an application built by Google to help people examine the quality of information. Likewise, Facebook in 2017, announced new approaches in the fight against false news. One approach is "Related Articles" that help users reach more context about the story to identify false news instead of applying "Disputed Flags". The other is

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by launching a new initiative to better understand how users evaluate the accuracy of information based on news sources they rely on. Hopefully, this would sustain the quality of information coming via Facebook over time (Lyons, 2017).

SMJ and Verification of News in Newsrooms

From the beginning, there have been broad concerns about adopting social media in newsrooms with regard to credibility, "accuracy, the need for verification and the loss of control over the information" (Alejandro, 2010, p. 24). As more concerns increase about the propagation of misinformation on social media streams, more pressure is placed on the shoulders of journalists to verify and fact-check information coming through these platforms. Undoubtedly, today, journalists in traditional media perform a pivotal role in the fight against fake news proliferation on social media either positively or negatively. Therefore, refocusing on the quality of news is considerably requisite for journalists to deal with these challenges.

Consequently, since the quality of news has recently been raised as an urgent issue in the new media discussion, an increased body of studies has investigated this concern in the news industry. Canter (2014) found that journalists realize that their role is no longer key to the gatekeeper of news sources, "instead they believe that their role as verifiers of information who can spread quality, analytical content to a wide audience" (p. 7). The study asserts that acting as verifiers of mass information means journalists should strive to "maintain some editorial control and act as gatekeepers of accurate, quality information" (Canter, p. 2). In doing so, certainly, mastering the specific skills that are related to dealing with social media and detecting inbound fake news from these digital channels is requisite, along with the fundamental skills of the profession of journalism. In addition, cohesive strategy and plans that address these goals are crucial in news organizations. Brandtzaeg et al. (2015) found that journalists were forced in a

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“direction of greater awareness and standardized verification routines” (p. 338). This steering is due to the fast spreading of rumors and false information with a lack of time to verify news sources through social media. Additionally, the study, which included interviews with 24 journalists working for news organizations with social media in seven different countries in Europe, revealed that the most challenging modalities to verify are fake videos and photos on social media.

However, while some journalists resort to verifying tools to pursue the authenticity of information, others barely do so. Based on some studies, verifying information on social media sporadically or quite rarely occurs in many news organizations. According to a study conducted by American Press Institute (API) (2017), about one-third of respondents attempt to correct misinformation or fake news on a regular basis, and two-thirds have never or occasionally tried to do so. Additionally, the study reports that approximately (87%) of respondents admitted that fewer than half of their colleagues in their teams studied social media in college. Even more, strikingly, only 37 percent claim that all social media staff have a degree in journalism, and one-third of respondents stated that team members of social media in their news organization had little experience in journalistic practice, with only two or fewer years. As a result, many professional news outlets have fallen prey to the dissemination of fake news gathered from social media, in the sense that it has threatened the trust in professional media. Brandtzaeg et al. (2017) suggest that young journalists were reluctant to rely on such services for fact-checking and verification, and many of those journalists were considerably unfamiliar with, or had ambivalent perspectives toward applying these techniques in newsrooms. Besides, the study points to various obstacles to optimally employing fact-checking and verifying services for news purposes

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such as fast-paced news publishing, insufficient time and a lack of the knowledge and skills required to efficiently tap into the tools for fighting fake news.

Undoubtedly, the verification of information on social media is deemed as a substantial task for social media teams in newsrooms. Subsequently, this group of journalists who deal with social media on a daily basis of their work routine is unlike amateur journalists or so-called citizen journalists of social media, who are "not professional journalists, are not trained, and do not have the researching, reporting, interviewing, writing and editing skills of the professionals" (Cole & Harcup, 2010, p.189). Professionally, social media journalists without concrete skills and experiences are unable to address this function as it should be since the challenges of verifying sources and content on social media sites require a lot of experience and specific skills to deal with. Consequently, it is considered an arduous task and "complex, due to large amounts of user-generated content, real-time information flow, and various forms of sources and content modalities, such as video and images" (Brandtzaeg et al., 2015, p. 324).

There are essentially two sorts of categories of technological services that help users identify and correct misinformation: fact-checking services and verification services. The first category, such as FactCheck.org, snopes.com, stopfake.org and hoaxy.iuni.iu.edu., can be employed even by an average user to examine the accuracy and the credibility of information sources. Comparatively, there are verification services that are more serviceable for specialized users such are professional journalists to pursue the authentication of the content whether it is text, images, or videos. These services such as tineye.com often "apply algorithms to make the verification process more efficient and accurate" (Brandtzaeg et al., 2017, p. 2). Another example is Botometer, formerly known (BotOrNot), which examines the content of Twitter accounts, especially whether the account is run by a bot. Such accounts of social bots, which are

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automated, execute fundamental functions at the early stage of spreading false information by targeting influential users who have many followers in order to amplify and repeat the fake content. Shao et al. (2017) analyzed 14 million content spreading 400,000 claims on Twitter, and they found evidence of the major role of these entities in spreading fake news widely during the U.S. presidential campaign and election in 2016.

Some scholars, such as Newman (2017), consider the crisis of fake news on social media as it "could be the best thing that has happened to journalism" (p. 57). This stance is conclusively fitting as long as journalists who deal with information flowing from social media streams professionally address their responsibilities before they rush to use that information. It is safe to say that with an increased practice of adopting social media as a primary news source in newsrooms, the success to address new media challenges is certainly through adhering to the ethical profession of journalism such as the accuracy of news. These principles are the guidelines for social media journalists on a par with other journalists. Hence, since there are many reasons behind the crisis of misinformation such as the priority of speed publishing, many pressing questions are posed about the extent to which TV journalists perceive this matter as imperative, and how they consider the path to effectively fight against the proliferation of fake news through social media in connection with the role of social media in newsrooms. To what extent do they consider that this mission by social media journalists is effective and should be the top priority of their roles in TV newsrooms, and to what degree does that make them firmly cling to the traditional norms of the quality of news or would they accept some new standards stemming from the new practice of journalism on social media streams.?

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SMJ and Audience Engagement

What do audiences expect from journalism in the age of social media? Unarguably, journalism has always been about the audience. However, the latter is no longer playing a passive and subordinate role in the relationship between the two, as it has become a maker of the news itself. Current technological developments, in particular social media technologies, have established a new agora for research to re-discover the audience (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018; Loosen & Schmidt, 2012). This change has radically modified the relationship between journalism and its audiences with more consequences for journalistic practice that have occurred in daily newsroom routines.

Unequivocally, the integration of TV news organizations into social media platforms facilitates the interaction between these organizations and their audiences and prompts the engagement with a wide body of audiences. Although many studies suggested that audience engagement is a key predictor for attracting more people, this approach is efficiently harnessed by a few media news outlets that place significant efforts to enhance engagement with viewers via social platforms.

Instinctively, people are inclined to share their stories with others as a sort of social practice and natural trait in their community. This propensity has been investigated by researchers who have been studying peoples' behavior for ages. Today, it has driven media scholars' attention to explore its ramifications on the news industry pertaining to the use of social media. Lee et al. (2011) articulate that socializing is regarded as a focal factor to stimulate Internet users to share news in virtual communities. Through this manner, people may fulfill their natural passion for making contributions to the group or community they are affiliated with. Consequently, in the age of social media, it is imperative for news organizations to consider this

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behavior of people as a paramount social function in which social network sites are deemed as vital avenues that help users do so widely and quickly. Considering these results, Hermida et al. (2012) exhibited in their study the key role of social networks platforms to aid users in sharing news and disseminating information socially. The study reflects the affordance of these technologies to promote the capabilities of users to produce, receive, and reframe the news in a way that evolves the relationship between audiences and journalists in newsrooms.

According to ample research conducted recently in various communities, people consider the civic engagement as a crucial role of journalists in this age of social media. Chung (2009) found that audiences' estimation of the prominent role of journalists is slightly different from previous studies that examined the roles of professional journalists. The news audience apparently endorses civic engagement and expects journalists to attract people by providing them with a better opportunity for self-expression in the news. The findings suggest that in regard to news audiences, it is important for people to be included "in the process of news delivery and presentation." (p. 78). In a similar vein, Wasike (2013) asserts that interaction is imperative in the relation between the news organizations and audiences since it brings the news outlet closer to those it serves. Hence, many scholars such as Mayer (2011) invite news providers to rethink the ramifications of distancing themselves from their audiences or making the audience feel disconnected from news organizations. She argues that in today's media landscape, journalists have an obligation to connect with the people who are interested in their content news. Indeed, an increased value of audience engagement in many media outlets has placed this task as primarily assigned to particular team members of social media journalists in newsrooms.

In this regard, Haslanger (2015) elucidates the necessity of the social media team in newsrooms to be involved in duties that are closer to audiences of news outlets compared to

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other traditional journalistic tasks. She defines three concepts fundamentally related to the responsibilities of social media journalists, which are: share, find, and connect. The first function is that social media journalists have the responsibility to share news stories produced in newsrooms on various social media platforms. However, sharing socially requires specific characteristics; for instance, the language used for social media channel can be less formal than the one crafted for traditional media streams, and obviously, a targeted audience should be identified to deliver the message effectively. The second task is to find news stories by capitalizing on social media sources whether from community events or people who are engaged enthusiastically with the social media team. This task demands unique traits such as the ability to analyze traffic on social media streams, and the data of their audiences in order to predict topics of people's interests. Finally, purposeful connection with the audiences is an imperative mission in pursuing the development of this interaction for it to be meaningful to the community. This responsibility necessitates creating stories that stir up community members' interests and stimulate the audience to enthusiastically engage in stories disseminated from news organizations' platforms on social media.

Nevertheless, for many news organizations, the primary purpose of adopting social media is still solely limited to posting links to news stories on social platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, in particular, as Burzynski Bullard (2015) reports, "far fewer use social media to interact with audiences by posing questions and responding to comments" (p. 170), according to a study carried out among senior editors of U.S. print, broadcast, and online news outlets. The study asserts that creating a presence on social media networks by only posting stories published for broadcast channels is not enough. Attracting more consumers requires enhancement of audience engagement on digital platforms, otherwise news organizations may face loss of ratings. Hence,

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news TV stations should find ways to efficiently interact with their audiences and to trigger them to be involved with the content. Rather than binding social media team's duties to a one-track mission of post and click, Elizabeth (2017) affirms that there are still much efforts needed to be made for the sake of employing the affordance of social media to promote audience engagement. Tapping into sources of social media efficiently entails understanding characteristics of communities and evaluating the best practices that bring audiences into news provider services, along with an evident long-term strategy for this aim.

Likewise, a survey of American Press Institute (API) (2017) reveals that posting links still remains considerably the common activity of social media teams throughout 59 newsrooms in the U.S. It discloses that posting links to stories, photos, and videos is the paramount function of social media journalists, followed subsequently by monitoring traffic on social media, responding to questions and commentaries, and searching for story ideas. Noteworthy, this study finds that creating engagement opportunities for audiences is one of the least frequent activities of social media teams apart from dealing with fake news or misinformation. Additionally, according to this survey, there is little time for journalists to yield audience engagement owing to a number of hurdles that impede the fundamental roles of social media journalists such as an increased workload, a lack of staff, and fractured responsibilities. On a similar vein, the study by Haslanger (2015) demonstrates that the majority of self-identified social journalists do not engage in interacting with their community. Those journalists spend less time and energy interacting with their audiences due to performing other duties in the newsrooms.

Such challenges reflect a need for rethinking the best practices of social media teams in many news organizations that crave to maintain their audiences for today and tomorrow. The present study probes into journalists' perspectives to address substantial questions about the

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extent that TV journalists consider audience engagement as a critical purpose for maintaining TV viewership. Furthermore, it investigates the extent to which the role of social media journalists is deemed influential in TV newsrooms by employing audience engagement to enhance audience's attraction. Additionally, it explores the factors that are considered imperative for the successful roles of social media journalists to do these tasks.

Theoretical Framework

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Social media journalism is considered a new genre of journalistic practice that can be investigated through the lens of diffusion of innovation theory. Several scholars have suggested that the adoption of technological innovations such as social media in newsrooms have thoroughly affected the ways journalists craft their jobs, and produced conflicting perspectives among journalists. While some journalists are opposed or reluctant, others accept this adoption with open arms. However, today, indeed, the diffusion of social media technologies has become an inevitable fashion as Canter (2014) notes that "Web 2.0 is impacting on journalists by forcing them to adapt in order to survive, compete economically, and to reconsider how to best maintain a relevant, reliable service for the public" (p.13). Thus, many studies that apply this theory pursue explaining various responses among members of communities concerning the adoption of new ideas; while some people in the same communities are enthusiastically opting for the new practice, other are reluctant or they reject it entirely.

Historically, some scholars claim that Diffusion of Innovation theory can be traced back to 1903 in the masterpiece titled *The Laws of Imitation* by the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde. However, the theory became well known by Everett M. Rogers when the first edition of his book *Diffusion of Innovation* was published in 1962. Roger states that one reason why there is so

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much interest in this theory is “because getting a new idea adopted, even when it has obvious advantages, is often very difficult” (p. 1). He considers an innovation as “an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption’’ (p. 5). Several years later, in 1995, Rogers defines “diffusion’’ as ‘‘the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system’’ (p. 5).

Many scholars have become interested in this theory. For instance, Murray (2009) notes that Rogers was the most prominent developer of diffusion of innovation, and she refers to this theory in many examples of innovations in the counseling profession that include new and revised “techniques, theories, practice materials, assessment instruments, and technologies” (p. 110). In the context of the news industry, a lot of researchers have employed Diffusion of Innovation to examine technological changes in newsrooms. Likewise, this study examines the innovations of social media, which have been utilized by a broad range of TV newsrooms, in order to measure journalists’ stances on social network sites in crafting the news.

As Adornato (2016) notes, Rogers asserts that “as the rate of awareness of an innovation increases among people, there is an increased rate of adoption” (p. 93). Therefore, applying the Diffusion of Innovation theory helps this study seek better understanding of journalists’ responses towards tapping into social media platforms for TV news purposes, and assigning a team of staff called a “social media team” to address particular duties of using social media in newsrooms.

Research Questions

Spurred by the increasingly pivotal role of social media in the editorial news production in TV news, the current study contributes to the growing research that endeavors to examine the

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effects of social media on the TV news industry, and the extent of this role in the practice of TV journalism. However, studies that have been conducted to probe the impact of embracing social media journalists in TV newsrooms are still few, especially studies that explore how TV journalists themselves perceive the effects of this newest position in journalism. Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the journalists' perspectives on the impact that social media roles have had on the identity of the journalistic profession, and the quality of TV news pertaining to the spread of fake news on social media. Additionally, it seeks to explore journalists' stances toward the importance of social media team engagement with audiences for maintaining TV viewership of TV news. The present study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How do TV news journalists perceive the effects of the adoption of social media journalists on the identity of the profession of journalism?

RQ2: To what extent do TV journalists consider that the role of social media journalists in verifying misinformation inbound from social media is effective in maintaining the quality of TV news?

RQ3: How do TV news journalists regard the role of social media journalists by employing audience engagement as an influential factor in increasing audiences' attraction and TV news viewership?

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CHAPTER 3:

METHOD

This section presents the method applied for collecting the data and elaborates the study's sample and the research design including the items employed to measure respondents' perceptions.

Data Collection

To collect data, this study applied a quantitative online survey, which is the most frequently used method by social science researchers and notably suited for collecting information about attitudes and behaviors (Neuman, 2011). The online software employed in this research was Qualtrics, a privately-owned American research software company.

Survey Design

A self-administered questionnaire was designed in English only, consisting of three sections (see Appendix). The first section began with informed consent to participate in the survey. It included an introduction to identify the purpose of this study as well as essential details to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of responses and confirm that all participants will be recruited on a strictly voluntary basis, implying that respondents willingly accepted taking part in this research, while being free to move forward or leave the questionnaire at any time with no penalty for refusal to participate or complete the survey.

The second section consisted of a screening, which was tailored based on certain characteristics to identify qualified respondents to participate in the study. This section included

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two questions, and those who did not address these questions were considered ineligible and dismissed from the survey. The first question aimed to ensure that potential respondents still worked in TV newsrooms with social media journalists. The second question was to guarantee that all surveyed TV journalists were from the list of the target sample research of news professionals in newsrooms, who met the criteria of the survey sample. Both questions were prerequisites for proceeding to the other items of the questionnaire.

Measures

The third section included a list of 30 close-ended questions, designed by the researcher and split into three parts pertinent to the research questions of this study (see Appendix). All these questions were measured by a five-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree). In addition, the respondents were asked a few demographic questions. In order to increase the convenience of the survey questionnaire for surveyed respondents, it was important to structure the items of the questionnaire in a way that would make it possible for them to complete the survey shortly. The estimated time to fill in the survey was between 5 to 10 minutes.

Part one, Regarding the first research question, the questionnaire consisted of ten statements to measure respondents' perceptions of journalists in TV newsrooms and the effects of the adoption of social media journalists on reinventing the identity of the profession of journalism. The elements were primarily drawn from the fundamental values defining the professional identity of journalists, which are public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and, ethics (Deuze, 2005). These statements are as follows:

1-The role of the social media team is consistent with the general principles of journalism.

2-The social media team helps TV journalism to do more watchdog reporting.

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3-The social media team helps the news desk to produce objective and balanced news stories.

4-The role of the social media team reinforces the editorial independence in the TV newsroom.

5-The role of the social media team aids in presenting news stories with transparency.

6-Having a social media team promotes the capability to present news stories freely.

7-Having a social media team strengthens the ability to seek out the truth of news stories.

8-Having a social media team increases the opportunities to broadcast the latest information and breaking news.

9-Having a social media team enhances the capability to get accurate stories.

10-The new environment of social media does not impact the professional code of ethics of journalism

Part two, the second research question, how journalists in TV newsrooms considered that the role of social media journalists to verify misinformation inbound from social media was effective to maintain the quality of TV news, was measured by the following list of ten statements:

1-The social media team checks information gathered from social media.

2-The social media team is well-qualified to find out misinformation on social media.

3-The social media team has efficient tools to detect fake digital accounts.

4-The social media team has available time to verify information found on social media.

5-The social media team can reach out to reliable sources to correct misinformation.

6-The social media team has adequate training in verifying information on digital media.

7-The social media team is well acquainted with principles of news and news writing.

8-Verifying information on social media takes place before broadcasting it as breaking news.

9-The news desk has never broadcast misinformation gathered by the social media team.

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10-There are binding policies to verify information on social media before it is used.

Part three, for the last research question pertaining to how journalists in TV newsrooms regarded audience engagement as an essential and influential element of social media journalists' roles to increase audience's attraction and TV news viewership, the following ten elements were used to measure the surveyed journalists' perceptions:

1-The social media team should engage with TV news viewers on social media.

2-Audience engagement is a key mission of the daily work routine of the social media team.

3-Audience engagement by the social media team helps find stories that attract viewers' interests.

4-Audience engagement by the social media team helps the news desk prioritize news topics.

5-Sharing stories on social media to stir up engagement with the audience is a crucial task of the social media team.

6-Posting questions on social media to stimulate audience engagement is a critical practice of the social media team.

7-Responding to audience comments on social media is an essential duty of the social media team.

8-There is enough time for the social media team to make audience engagement fruitful.

9-There is a strategy to encourage the social media team to interact with the audience efficiently.

10-Audience engagement by the social media team can enhance viewers' loyalty to a TV station.

At the end of the survey, the respondents were asked to provide some demographic and additional information, including (1) the period that they had been working in a TV newsroom, (2) the name of the TV news station they worked for (optional), (3) the region they were from, (4) level of education, (5) gender, and (6) age. Such questions are considered vital for survey

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researchers when examining certain factors that could influence journalists' responses. In addition, collecting such demographic information makes it possible for them to design subgroups and explore possible variations between groups.

Research Sample

This study employed the non-probability sampling approach as a sampling technique, in which all respondents are not "systematically selected from a population using conventional sampling methods" (Yeager et al., 2011, p. 710). In particular, non-probability convenience sampling will be applied, "in which individuals who fit the criteria of a study are identified in any way possible" (Emerson, 2015, p. 166). This sampling technique is most commonly used in quantitative research because of the convenient accessibility of potential subjects. Moreover, several scholars state that the rationale behind utilizing this sampling technique is that although it is not possible to reach out to every subject, a researcher can target members of the population who meet certain practical criteria. Accordingly, Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) cited that the main assumption behind adapting this method is that "the members of the target population are homogeneous" (p. 2) and that there would be no distinction between the sampling technique and the results of a random sample. However, importantly, a sample in a study based on such method cannot be considered representative of the entire population. Despite that, Suen, Huang, and Lee (2014) pointed out that in all quantitative studies, "increasing the sample size increases the statistical power of the convenience sample" (p. 105).

Since the study focuses on TV journalists, its sample was limited to English-speaking TV news journalists working for TV news channels that have employed social media journalists in their newsrooms. It is important to note here that when researchers decide to seek journalists' perspectives, they may face challenges owing to a lack of accurate lists that include nearly all

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journalists from various countries. As Blankenship (2017) noted, conducting surveys targeting journalists is challenging since there is no "comprehensive sampling frame of individual journalists from which to draw" (p. 38). Therefore, current social media platforms are indeed helpful tools to communicate with TV journalists willing to participate in surveys. These network sites can be starting steps to contact a vast number of TV journalists. Accordingly, this research primarily employed LinkedIn, "the world largest professional network with more than 546 million users in more than 200 countries and territories worldwide" (LinkedIn, 2018). The mission of this business-oriented social network site is to connect the world's professionals. In parallel, another approach to reach out to potential participants for the study was by searching TV news outlets websites and contacting TV newsrooms.

In order to approach the survey sample on LinkedIn, the researcher randomly sent LinkedIn invites to news TV journalists working at various TV news channels in three regions of the world, which are the United States, Western Europe, and the Middle East. Popular TV news channels in these diverse areas were the study's preferred target, particularly CNN, Fox News, MSNBC and NBC News, ABC News, CNBC, Sky News, the BBC, ITV News, Aljazeera, Al Arabiya, Sky News Arabia, France 24 English and France 24 Arabic, RT America and RT Arabic (for a Russian international television network), TRT World and TRT Arabic (for The Turkish Radio and Television Corporation), DW Arabic (Deutsche Welle), CGTN America (for China Global Television Network), and Alhurra (a United States-based public Arabic language satellite). In addition, some local and national news TV channels were broadcast in these regions. Several of the aforementioned news outlets were selected because they are considered as the most-watched news channels broadcasting more than one kind of news worldwide. Since the

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study sought to include the largest possible number of participants, it accommodated more than one TV networks.

All suggested respondents' profiles, who accepted the researcher's LinkedIn invites, were reviewed in order to guarantee that the sample size would embrace actual journalists still working for TV news channels. This was produced to ensure the authenticity of the research sample and protect the researcher from having to deal with fake participants. Admittedly, compiling a sample of news professionals for this study was not an easy task. The population size of TV journalists on the researcher's LinkedIn profile totaled at 1,259 (as of March 9, 2019), which was considered as the population size of the study. The web survey link was sent first to said TV journalists via LinkedIn since January 21, 2019, including information about the worthiness of this study and the importance of participation to examine the research topic. Simultaneously, the researcher emailed 111 TV journalists of this population, out of whom 40 were news directors in the United States. Additionally, the researcher emailed many news channels via the email address provided on their website to pass on the survey to journalists who fit the sample requirements. Subsequently, messages via LinkedIn as well as email reminders were sent twice for nonresponses in the population size.

The data collection was designed to be completed within 45 days (from January 21 to March 9, 2019). Ultimately, out of the survey population size, 190 responded and accommodated the sample size of this study. Additionally, the sample size consisted of nearly (15%) of the population size. "The marketing industry standard for acceptable percentage of survey respondents is 4 percent of the population size" (Alejandro, 2010, p 28). Hence, this survey was above the minimum, which would have been 51 participants. Consequently, respondents who

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completed the online survey were 77 from the United States, 51 from Western Europe, and 62 from the Middle East (see Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents' Regions

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	United States	77	40.5	40.5	40.5
	Western Europe	51	26.8	26.8	67.4
	Middle East	62	32.6	32.6	100.0
	Total	190	100.0	100.0	

Moreover, TV news channels from different regions were chosen since the study strove to examine a broad range of perceptions of TV journalists exposed to advanced practices of social media journalists in their daily work. As a result, such an approach may produce more informed results by gathering a comprehensive range of journalists' perspectives. Therefore, a wide spectrum of journalists working in different regions (the Western and the Arab regions) enables a researcher to create subgroups of surveyed respondents and examine the correlations between multiple variables.

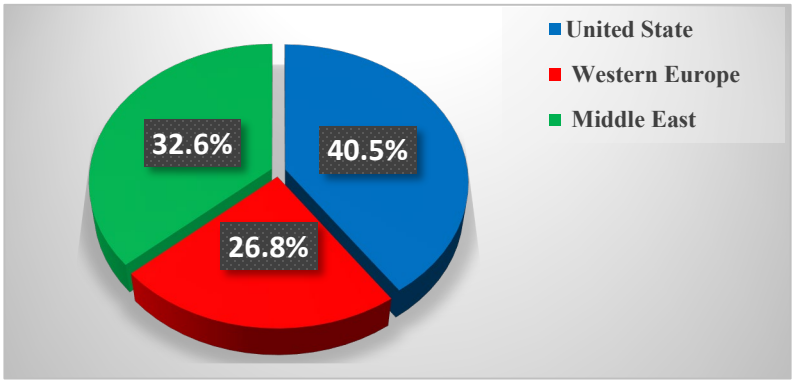

Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents' Regions

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As regards the respondents' gender, approximately (52%) of the survey sample were male and (46.3%) were female (see Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents' Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	99	52.1	52.1	52.1
	Female	88	46.3	46.3	98.4
	(Others)	3	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	190	100.0	100.0	

The study was not restricted on the subject of the range of ages by a certain age bracket. It endeavored to reach a vast scope of journalists aged 22 and older. Resultantly, the diversity of journalists allows researchers to garner various stands of perspectives, from young journalists, who enthusiastically enjoy multi-skills in multimedia TV newsrooms to veterans, who adhere to traditional norms of journalism and are less likely to adapt to new technology. Of the surveyed journalists, (61%) were between 30 and 49 years old, (23.2%) were under the age of 30 and (15.8%) of the participants aged 50 years and older (see Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents' Ages

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	under age 30	44	23.2	23.2	23.2
	30-39	59	31.1	31.1	54.2
	40-49	57	30.0	30.0	84.2
	50 and older	30	15.8	15.8	100.0
	Total	190	100.0	100.0	

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In terms of education, more than half of the surveyed respondents (55.8%) had completed bachelor's degrees while (38.9%) had received a graduate education. Further, other respondents, who had finished only high school degrees, received some years of college, or completed associate's degrees, comprised quite minimal portions of the sample size: (1.1%), (2,1%) and (2.1%) respectively (see Table 4).

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents' Levels of Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)	2	1.1	1.1	1.1
	Some college but no degree	4	2.1	2.1	3.2
	Associate's degree	4	2.1	2.1	5.3
	Bachelor's degree	106	55.8	55.8	61.1
	Graduate degree	74	38.9	38.9	100.0
	Total	190	100.0	100.0	

The sample of the study included relevant news professionals such as news producers (30%), news anchors (23.2%), reporters (21.1%), news writers/editors and assignment editors (8.9%), news directors and assistant news directors (4.2%), web journalists (4.2%) and social media journalists (8.4%) working in TV newsrooms alongside other TV journalists (see Table 5). Accordingly, Grewal (2018) referred to news professionals as "non-management and non-clerical news staff" (p. 88). However, this study excluded broadcast technicians of news staff such as camera operators, designers, and audio engineers, among others.

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Table 5. Distribution of Respondents' Jobs in TV Newsrooms

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Social Media Journalist (editor, producer, strategist, manager etc.)	16	8.4	8.4	8.4
	News Producer (executive producer, senior producer, associate producer, content producer etc.)	57	30.0	30.0	38.4
	News Writer (Editor)/ Assignment Editor	17	8.9	8.9	47.4
	News Anchor	44	23.2	23.2	70.5
	Reporter	40	21.1	21.1	91.6
	Web Journalist	8	4.2	4.2	95.8
	News Director/Assistant News Director.	8	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	190	100.0	100.0	

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CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS

In this section, the results of the study have been organized and presented in the context of the questions proposed earlier. All analytical processes delivering the final results were performed using SPSS 24.0, which is widely used by researchers to solve research problems, such as hypothesis testing, descriptive, and predictive analytics. All subjects' responses in the study's survey were recorded and scored first in this statistical software in order to be analyzed.

Reliability Testing

The reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, which is a common practice in the research realm to test the internal consistency of measures under the same conditions. Lee Cronbach, who developed the Alpha test in 1951, outlined this measure as a number from 0 to 1 (Cronbach, 1951). Hence, a higher number indicates more internal consistency of items measuring the same concept. As shown in Tables 6, 7 and 8, the tests of Cronbach's Alphas for the first, second and third research questions items (each one has ten items) have high reliability of $\alpha = .842$, $\alpha = .860$, and $\alpha = .832$, respectively.

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Table 6. Reliability Statistics of the First Research Question

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.841	.842	10

Table 7. Reliability Statistics of the Second Research Question

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.859	.860	10

Table 8. Reliability Statistics of the Third Research Question

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.826	.832	10

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Effects of SMJ on the Identity of the Profession of Journalism

The first research question explored the extent to which the role of social media journalists could affect the identity of the profession of journalism. Accordingly, the surveyed subjects were asked a cluster of ten statements to measure their perceptions of the possible effects of assigning a team of social media journalists in newsrooms. The sum of the central tendency of the items consisted of measuring the first research question produced (M = 3.70, SD =.61) (see Table 9). Furthermore, the distribution of subjects' responses to the statements is presented in Table 10. These items refer to certain values that are strongly tethered to the professional identity of journalists such as public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics (Deuze, 2015).

Table 9. Central Tendency of the First Research Question

N	**Valid**	190
	Missing	0
Mean		3.7046
Median		3.7000
Mode		3.70
Std. Deviation		.61087

First and foremost, when the surveyed journalists were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed that the role of social media teams is consistent with the general principles of journalism, it was noticeable that most of the respondents (81%) had concurred with this assessment (mean = 4.07, SD = .897). Importantly, this item could be seen as an indicator of positive attitudes amid a broad range of the surveyed TV journalists about the implications of

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having social media journalists on this matter. Very few respondents (7.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

However, a more remarkable figure revealed that the majority of respondents (95.8%) either strongly agreed or agreed that the role of social media journalists increases the opportunities of broadcasting the latest information and breaking news. This statement gauged the subjects' opinions on the impact of the role of social media journalists pertaining to the value of immediacy to find, produce, and disseminate TV news (mean = 4.57, SD = .645). Only (2.1%) of respondents disagreed with this item, and remarkably, no respondents cited that they strongly disagreed with it. Subsequently, the consensus on this statement gained the highest mean value in the distribution of the results of the mean values shown in Figure 2.

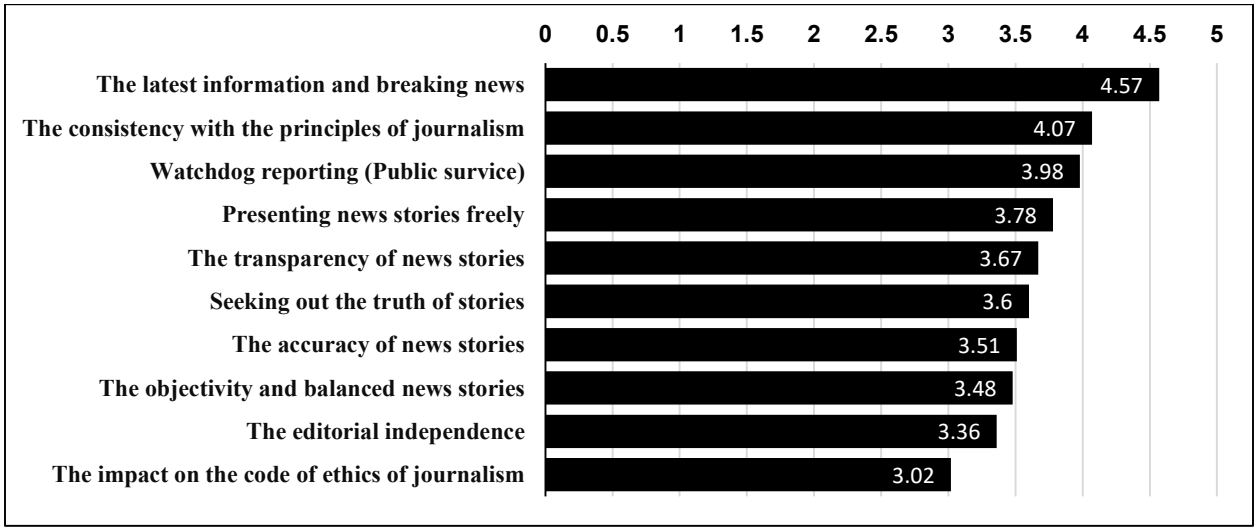

Figure 2. Distribution of the Mean Values of the First Research Question

**Note: Each statement is on a 5-point scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).*

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Table 10. Distribution of Responses to the First Research Question

The Measure Items	Strongly disagree %	disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Mean	Sat. Dev.
The latest information and breaking news	0	2.1	2.1	32.6	63.2	4.57	.645
The consistency with the principles of journalism	1.1	6.3	11.6	46.8	34.2	4.07	.897
Watchdog reporting (Public service)	1.1	6.8	13.7	49.5	28.9	3.98	.894
Presenting news stories freely	.5	11.1	22.6	41.6	24.2	3.78	.956
The transparency of news stories	1.6	10.0	25.3	46.3	16.3	3.67	.926
Seeking out the truth of stories	1.1	12.6	30.0	37.9	18.4	3.60	.964
The accuracy of news stories	2.1	10.5	34.7	38.4	13.7	3.51	.932
The objectivity and balanced news stories	3.2	11.6	33.2	37.9	14.9	3.48	.980
The editorial independence	2.6	16.3	36.3	32.1	12.6	3.36	.986
The impact on the code of ethics of journalism	10.0	33.2	15.8	26.8	14.2	3.02	1.255

**Note: N=190, Not all respondents answered every question. Respondents were asked to respond to each statement on a 5-point scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).*

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Concerning the effects of the role of social media journalists on the value of public service journalism, it is noticeable that the most subjects in the survey (78.4%) believed that social media journalists help TV journalism conduct more watchdog reporting in which journalists investigate and report issues of common concern (mean = 3.98, SD = .894). Fewer respondents disagreed (6.8%) or strongly disagreed (1.1%) with the effectiveness of these teams to help news desks attain this value in newsrooms. In addition, about two-thirds of respondents (65.8%) believed that having social media journalists promotes the capability of news desks to present news stories freely (mean = 3.78, SD = .956). Very few respondents (11.1%) rejected this statement and only (0.5%) of them strongly disagreed. Similarly, of the surveyed TV journalists, (62.6%) considered that having a social media team in newsrooms would support presenting news stories with transparency (mean = 3.67, SD = .926). Subsequently, both statements were tailored to vet the extent to which the impact of the role of social media journalists is associated with journalistic freedom and autonomy.

On the other hand, when the respondents were asked to evaluate the effects of the role of social media journalists referring to the values of veracity, accuracy, and objectivity in TV journalism, first, only more than half of the surveyed subjects (56.3%) concurred that having this team strengthens the ability of news staff to seek the truth of news stories (mean = 3.60 SD = .964). Second, a little more than half of the subjects (52.1%) believed that the role of this team enhances the capability of TV news desks to broadcast accurate news stories (mean = 3.51 SD = .932). A little more than one-third (34.7%) opted for the neutral level. Third, (52.8%) of the surveyed journalists considered that social media journalists helped the news desk to produce objective and balanced news stories (mean = 3.48, SD = .980). Moreover, almost one-third of respondents (33.2%) neither agreed nor disagreed with this item, and fewer (14.8%) rejected it.

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By contrast, out of less than half of the respondents (44.7%), (12.6%) strongly agreed and (32.1%) agreed that the role of social media journalists reinforces editorial independence in TV newsrooms. This item refers to the effectiveness of the role of social media journalists concerning the value of autonomy as well (mean = 3,36, SD = .986). Furthermore, the result indicates that more than one-third of subjects (36.3%) fell at the neutral level where they neither agreed nor disagreed, and very few respondents (16.3%) disagreed and only (2.6%) strongly disagreed. The result, in some way, exhibits a disparity of journalists' perceptions toward this item. Similarly, the result presents a broad discrepancy of opinions amid respondents when they were asked to determine the extent to which the news media ecology, where TV journalists in newsrooms deal with social media on a daily basis, has a possible impact on journalism ethics.

Of the surveyed subjects (43%), less than one-third (33.2%) disagreed and (10%) strongly disagreed with the statement suggesting that the new environment of social media does not impact the professional code of ethics of journalism. By contrast, (41%) of the surveyed journalists did not concur with this concern. As the results show, (26.8%) of the subjects strongly agreed and (14.2%) agreed with this statement, while (15.8%) of respondents chose to be neutral. Given the weight of the mean value of this item (mean = 3.02, SD= 1.255) and a mean of (60.4%), the result of gauging this item is still in favor of the group that agreed with the statement.

It is, however, important to assume that the construct of measuring the impact on journalism ethics is not attributed directly to one group of journalists in news organizations since the ethics in any social, cultural, or professional setting are considered an integrated system of a set of principles that are performed and protected by all groups. Accordingly, this item was constructed to assess the journalist's perceptions of the impact of the new media ecology on the

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professional code of ethics of journalism pertaining to dealing with social media in newsrooms by assigning a team of social media journalists.

Effectiveness of SMJ to Verify the Misinformation of Social Media

The second research question examined journalists' perceptions of the effectiveness of the role of social media journalists to maintain the quality of TV news, specifically by verifying misinformation diffused on social media. The central tendency of the items designed to gauge this question yielded the following values: mean = 3.70 and SD = 0.68 (see Table 11). Moreover, Table 12 presents the distribution of subjects' responses to the flock of ten statements oriented to the surveyed respondents for measuring the second research question.

Table 11. Central Tendency of the Second Research Question

N	**Valid**	186
	Missing	4
Mean		3.7281
Median		3.8000
Mode		3.80
Std. Deviation		.68052

Overall, according to the survey's results, the study reveals that most respondents (74.4% of the mean) perceived that the role of social media journalists is critical today in terms of the verification of information gathered from social media sites. Consequently, it can be more effective to pursue the accuracy of the information and the authenticity of news sources on these digital mediums if the obstacles—especially pertaining to a lack of time and available effectual tools—would be conquered.

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Table 12. Distribution of Responses to the Second Research Question

The Measure Items	Strongly disagree %	disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Mean	Sat. Dev.
Verifying info. before broadcasting it as breaking news	2.1	5.3	16.8	30.5	42.6	4.09	1.009
They check information gathered from social media	1.1	6.3	14.2	45.3	30.0	4.00	.905
They have reliable sources to correct misinformation	0.5	5.3	17.4	50.5	24.2	3.95	.830
There are binding policies to verify information	2.6	6.8	21.6	36.8	29.5	3.86	1.017
They are well-qualified to find out misinformation	3.2	15.8	12.6	42.6	22.6	3.68	1.102
The have adequate training in verifying info.	2.1	11.6	21.6	46.3	16.3	3.65	.966
They are well acquainted with principles of news	3.7	13.2	18.9	42.6	18.9	3.62	1.063
Thy have enough time to verify information	2.6	16.3	21.6	40.0	16.3	3.53	1.045
They have efficient tools to detect fake accounts	4.2	13.7	25.3	40.0	14.2	3.48	1.043
The news desk has never broadcast misinformation	3.2	20.5	24.7	29.5	19.5	3.43	1.126

**Note: N=190, Not all respondents answered every question. Respondents were asked to respond to each statement on a 5-point scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).*

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According to the results, the responses of TV journalists were more positive when asked about their perceptions of whether or not verifying information on social media takes place before broadcasting the content as breaking news on air. The findings reveal that most of the surveyed respondents (73.1%) strongly agreed (42.6%) and agreed (30.5%) with this statement (mean = 4.9, SD = 1.009), which points to the necessity of the role of social media journalists in the news industry today.

As shown in Figure 3, the mean value of the item above hit the highest level over all other elements illustrated in the distribution of the mean values of the constituent items to examine the second research question.

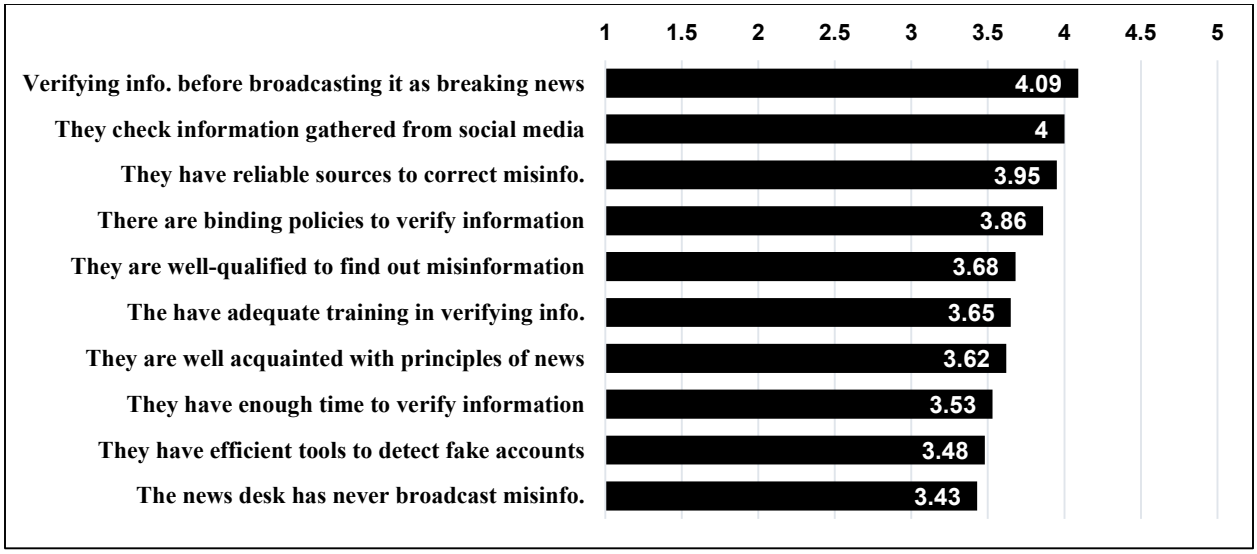

Figure 3. Distribution of the Mean Values of the Second Research Question

**Note: Each statement is on a 5-point scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).*

Likewise, a little more than three-fourths of respondents (75.3%) either strongly agreed (30%) or agreed (45.3%) that social media journalists check information garnered from social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook as a crucial task on a daily basis (mean = 4.00,

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SD = .905). Similarly, of these respondents, close to three-quarters (74.7%) were more positive in their attitudes when asked if social media teams can reach out to reliable sources to correct misinformation before they were used to broadcast in the newscast (mean = 3.95, SD = .830). Interestingly, more than half of the subjects (50.5%) responded that they agreed with this statement and nearly a quarter (24.2%) answered that they strongly agreed, while only (5.3%) disagreed and (0.5%) strongly disagreed.

On the other hand, the survey's results disclose some challenges that need to be addressed by TV news management in order to enhance the effectiveness of the role of social media journalists in many TV news channels. The surveyed journalists indicated that not all newsrooms have restrictive policies on the verification of information on social media before it can be used for news stories on TV and other media platforms according to the surveyed journalists. Approximately two-thirds (66.3%) of the respondents believed that they had relevant policies in news television channels, while (21.6%) of respondents preferred to stay neutral, and (9.4%) reported that they disagreed or strongly disagreed (mean = 3.86, SD = 1.017). In a similar vein, a little less than two-thirds of respondents (65.2%) strongly agreed (22.6%) and agreed (42.6%) with the statement that a social media team is well-qualified in terms of detecting misinformation on social media (mean = 3.68, SD = 1.102). Likewise, (62.6%) of surveyed journalists believed that social media journalists had been trained adequately in order to improve their abilities in verifying information on digital media (mean = 3.65, SD = .966). Similarly, (61.5%) concurred that a social media team is well acquainted with principles of news and news writing, and very few respondents (16.8%) rejected that statement (mean = 3.62, SD = 1.063).

By contrast, importantly, only a little more than half (56.3%) believed that social media journalists have enough time to verify information cascading from social media. Less than one-

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fourth chose to be neutral, while (16.3%) disagreed and (2.6%) strongly disagreed with this statement (mean = 3.53, SD = .1045). Similarly, a little more than half (54.2%) answered that social media journalists have efficient tools to detect fake digital accounts. Approximately one-quarter of them (25.3%) fell at the neutral level, whereas (18.9%) of respondents rejected this statement; out of them (16.3%) disagreed and (2.6%) strongly disagreed (mean=3.48, SD=1.043).

Additionally, when the surveyed journalists were asked to respond to the statement that examined whether news staff has never broadcast misinformation gathered from social media, less than half of respondents (49%) strongly agreed (19.5%) or agreed (29.5%). By contrast, close to a quarter of other surveyed journalists (24.7%) answered that they neither agreed nor disagreed, while nearly a little less than one-fourth (23.7%) of them disagreed (20.5%) and strongly disagreed (3.2%) with this statement (mean = 3.43, SD = .1126).

Effectiveness of SMJ to Increase Audiences' Attraction and Viewership

The third research question was constructed to probe into TV news journalists' perceptions of the role of social media journalists pertaining to the utilization of audience engagement as a vital venue to promote the capabilities of TV news channels to increase audiences' attraction and the viewership of news on TV. The central tendency of these items, measuring this question, made mean = 3.93 and SD = .55 (see Table 13).

Furthermore, Table 14 demonstrates the distribution of surveyed TV journalists' responses to the set of items for answering this research question. It is important to note that two of these elements gauged the subjects' perceptions on this topic in general. While the other items examined the extent to which certain relevant tasks of social media journalists affected

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audience's attractions and loyalty to TV news channels besides investigating the factors leading to conducting these tasks successfully.

Table 13. Central Tendency of the Third Research Question

N	**Valid**	176
	Missing	14
Mean		3.9355
Median		4.0000
Mode		4.00
Std. Deviation		.55280

According to the survey's results, the study reveals that most respondents (78.7% of the mean) perceived that audience engagement employed by social media journalists is essential today to increase the audience's attraction and viewership of news on TV channels. Further, it can be more influential if these channels maximize the utility of the role of SMJ in this regard. First and foremost, when the surveyed journalists were asked to respond to the statement suggesting that social media teams should engage with TV news viewers on social media, most of the surveyed respondents (83.5%) strongly agreed (40.9%) and agreed (42.6%) with this item (mean = 4.20, SD = .835). Similarly, when they asked to report whether audience engagement is considered as a key mission in the daily work routine of the social media journalists in TV newsrooms, almost the same percentage, (85.2%) of respondents, responded positively to this item (mean = 4.23, SD = .819).

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Table 14. Distribution of Responses to the Third Research Question

The Measure Items	Strongly disagree %	disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Mean	Sat. Dev.
Engagement helps find stories that attract viewers	0.6	1.1	8.0	43.4	46.9	4.35	.726
It is a key mission in the daily work routine of SMJ	0.6	3.4	10.8	42.6	42.6	4.23	.819
Social media teams should engage with viewers	1.1	2.3	13.1	42.6	40.9	4.20	.835
Sharing stories on social media is a crucial task	0	4.0	12.1	50.3	33.5	4.13	.777
Aud. engagement enhances viewers' loyalty	0.6	5.1	18.8	44.3	31.3	4.01	.872
Posting questions is a critical practice	0.6	7.4	18.8	42.6	30.7	3.95	.918
Responding to audience is an essential duty	3.4	11.9	18.8	39.2	26.7	3.74	1.085
There is a strategy to engage efficiently	1.1	10.8	25.6	44.9	17.6	3.67	.929
Aud. engagement helps prioritize news topics	1.1	14.3	24.6	40.6	19.4	3.63	991
There is enough time to engage fruitfully	1.7	13.6	34.7	37.5	12.5	3.45	.937

**Note: N=190, Not all respondents answered every question. Respondents were asked to respond to each statement on a 5-point scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).*

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Remarkably, the results show that the majority of the TV journalist respondents (90.3%) either strongly agree (46.9%) and agree (43.4%) that audience engagement by social media teams helps journalists in news desks find stories that trigger viewers' interests (mean = 4.35, SD = 726). As shown in Figure 4, the mean value of this item is highest on the record of the distribution of the mean values in the third research question' items. This result points to the most popular function performed by social media journalists with reference to the set of the test items of the most frequent tasks pertaining to audience engagement in newsrooms.

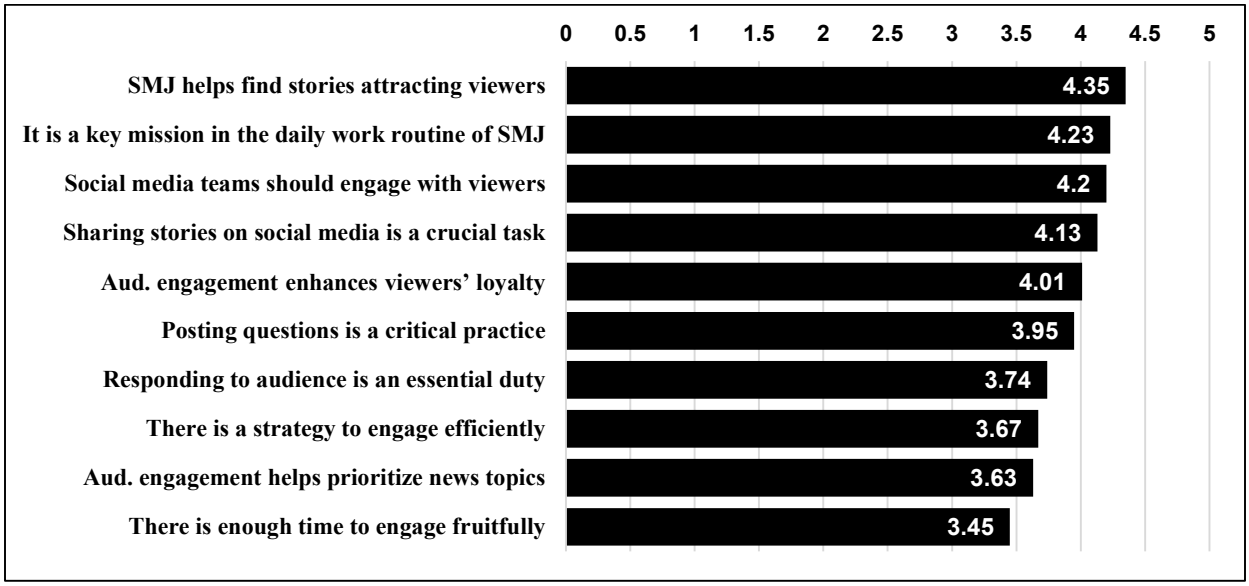

Figure 4. Distribution of the Mean Values of the Third Research Question

**Note: Each statement is on a 5-point scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).*

Additionally, the findings reveal that sharing stories on social media sites to stir up engagement with news audience is deemed a second prominent task carried out by social media journalists. Of the surveyed respondents, (83.8%) regarded this task as a crucial function of this team in TV newsrooms. A little more than half (50.3%) of respondents agreed and about a third

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(33.5%) strongly agreed with this item, while, remarkably, none of the respondents with strongly disagreed and fewer respondents (4%) answered that they disagreed (mean=4.13, SD=.777).

By contrast, just under three-fourths of respondents (70.9%) either strongly agreed (30.7%) or agreed (42.6%) that posting questions on social media is a critical practice conducted by social media journalists to stimulate audience engagement (mean = 3.95, SD = .918). By contrast, about two-thirds of the respondents (65.9%) believed that responding to audience comments on social media is deemed to be an essential duty of the social media team (mean = 3.74, SD = 1.085). It is also noticeable that when the surveyed journalists were asked whether social media journalists can help news desks prioritize news topics, just under two-thirds (60%) of them responded positively, while only about one-fourth (24.6%) preferred to remain neutral, and (15.4 %) rejected this item (mean = 3.63, SD = 991).

On the other hand, certainly, having sufficient time and an explicit strategy for audience engagement, which outlines the goals of this function and the ways to perform related tasks properly and interact with audience efficiently, is crucial in newsrooms. However, the survey's results illustrate that only half of the respondents (50%) believed that there is enough time for social media journalists to fruitfully perform required functions of audience engagement during their daily work. Of the other half of respondents, a little more than one-third (34.7%) fell at the neutral level where they neither agreed nor disagreed, while (13.6%) disagreed and (1.7%) strongly disagreed with this statement (mean = 3.45, SD = .937).

Concerning having a strategy of audience engagement in newsrooms, (62.5%) of respondents concurred that there is a strategy of audience engagement in TV news channels to stimulate this sort of interaction with news audiences by social media journalists. Of the other respondents, one-fourth (25.6%) opted to neither agree nor disagree with this item, while very

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few of them (10.8%) responded that they disagreed and only (1.1%) answered that they strongly disagreed (mean = 3.67, SD = .929)

Finally, another essential part of this research question was to investigate the subjects' perceptions of the possible effects of audience engagement activates to increase TV news viewership and entrench the audience's loyalty to news TV channels. A little more than three-fourths of respondents (75.6%) believed that audience engagement by the social media team could enhance viewers' loyalty to news TV channels. Moreover, very few respondents (18.8%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and only (5.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (mean = 4.01, SD = .872).

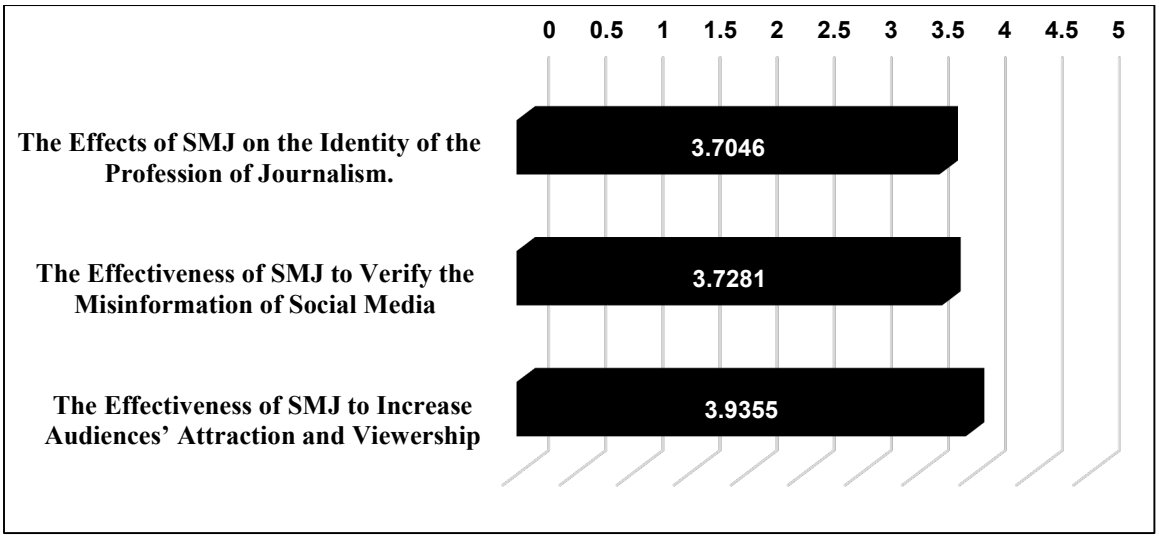

Figure 5. Distribution of the Mean Values of all Research Questions

**Note: All research questions were measured by a 5-point scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).*

Additional Analyses

The study sought to target respondents from three regions–the United States, Western Europe, and the Middle East. Hence, regardless of their nationalities, the study accommodated

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various English-speaking TV journalists of a variety of TV channels broadcast from these regions of the world. In this part, considering the region as an independent factor, the study examines the extent to which the perceptions of the three groups of journalists were similar, drawing from gauging the weight of the mean values of each group pertaining to each research question.

First, the results show that there was no significant discrepancy between the three groups' perceptions with respect to the effects of the role of social media journalists in TV newsrooms on the identity of the profession of journalism (see Table 15). The sum of the central tendency of the perceptions of the three groups produced nearly identical stances as follows: the mean value of the respondents of the United States was (3.71), the mean value of the surveyed journalists of Western Europe generated a mean of (3.73), and the mean value of Middle East's respondents yielded a mean of (3.69).

Table 15. Distribution of Responses to the First Research Question by Groups

United States	N	Valid	77
		Missing	0
	Mean		3.7144
	Std. Deviation		.66575
Western Europe	N	Valid	51
		Missing	0
	Mean		3.7341
	Std. Deviation		.63938
Middle East	N	Valid	62
		Missing	0
	Mean		3.6949
	Std. Deviation		.48009

**Note: Respondents were asked to respond to each statement on a 5-point scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).*

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Similarly, given the mean values of the three groups concerning their perceptions of the effectiveness of the role of social media journalists in verifying misinformation flowing from social media, the result did not reveal noticeable divergence between the attitudes of the three groups (see Table 16). Moreover, the sum of the central tendency of the perceptions of surveyed TV journalists working in the United States led to a mean of (3.69). Additionally, respondents belonging to news TV channels in Western Europe produced a mean of (3.86). For Middle East's respondents, the findings yielded a mean of (3.69).

Table 16. Distribution of Responses to the Second Research Question by Groups

United States	N	Valid	77
		Missing	3
	Mean		3.6942
	Std. Deviation		.72394
Western Europe	N	Valid	51
		Missing	1
	Mean		3.8679
	Std. Deviation		.70848
Middle East	N	Valid	62
		Missing	2
	Mean		3.6198
	Std. Deviation		.58482

**Note: Respondents were asked to respond to each statement on a 5-point scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).*

In a similar vein, the findings show that the three groups expressed almost identical positive perceptions regarding the capability of using audience engagement to increase audience's attraction to and viewership of news on TV (see Table 17). Of the surveyed journalists in the United States, the sum of the central tendency of the mean value of their

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perceptions was (3.99). Likewise, the surveyed journalists working in news TV channels in Western Europe yielded a mean of (3.92), and their peers from the Middle East produced a mean value of (3.87).

Table 17: Distribution of Responses to the Third Research Question by Groups

United States	N	Valid	77
		Missing	4
	Mean		3.9918
	Std. Deviation		.54090
Europe	N	Valid	51
		Missing	7
	Mean		3.9250
	Std. Deviation		.61270
Middle East	N	Valid	62
		Missing	5
	Mean		3.8736
	Std. Deviation		.52207

**Note: Respondents were asked to respond to each statement on a 5-point scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).*

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CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION

The study endeavored to examine the perspective of media professionals in TV news channels and provide profound insight into an insufficiently researched topic concerning the consequences of assigning journalists dedicated to deal with social media platforms in TV newsrooms. It strived to explore whether the role of social media journalists (SMJ) is considered a rescue for TV news channels or a cause of concern for contemporary journalism in the era of social media. The research specifically investigated how far the role of this team could impact the identity and profession of journalism, the quality of news pertaining to the verification of misinformation, and the capability of increasing news audiences' attractions and TV news viewership through audience engagement on social media. To this end, TV journalists from three distinct regions of the world—the United States, Western Europe, and the Middle East—were surveyed to gauge their perceptions of three relevant research questions.

The first research question explored the effects of the role of social media journalists on the identity of the profession of journalism. Drowning from the literature on journalism studies, certain key principles of the professional identity of journalists were applied to answer this question such as public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics (Deuze, 2005). The findings elucidated concern about the effects on the code of ethics of journalism in the new environment of social media. However, most of the surveyed journalists consider adding social media journalists to their teams as a new type of media workers in newsrooms has neither had

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impacts on the core of the inherent values and norms of the identity and profession of journalism nor led to the mutation of the identity of the profession. Conversely, their role does not only facilitate TV news channels' efforts to capitalize on social media, but it is also considered a pillar of the fundamental principles in the profession of journalism in this age. This is in line with a study by Hamada (2018) who documents that assigning professional journalists as web journalists in media organizations for online versions of news constitutes a part of the professional body of journalism as "they have an adequate body of knowledge and training, committed to the code of ethics..." (p. 39). The status of social media journalists can be comparable to web journalists wherein they meet the substantial requirements of professionalism itself. Accordingly, it can be suggested from the study's results that this team has the sense of identity that exists amid other members of the profession of journalism as most of the surveyed journalists believed that the role of SMJ is consistent with the key principles tethered to the professional identity of journalists.

The study revealed that the majority of surveyed journalists (95.8%) perceived that the role of social media journalists significantly contributes to increasing the capacity of news staff to broadcast latest information of news stories and breaking news. Since social media has become a significant medium for scoops, exclusive news stories, and breaking news, TV news channels have experienced severe competition in this vacuum. Thus, adding social media journalists to news staff is likely to bolster the ability of TV news channels to compete with other sources as being the first to break the news or disseminating latest information as reliable sources on multimedia platforms. Hence, this finding underlines the importance of the role of this group to help news staff attain the immediacy of broadcasting news, which is a substantial and deep-

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seated value of the identity of this profession since it involves immediately providing the audience with the latest information, breaking news, and scoop before all rival newsrooms.

Likewise, it can be inferred from the respondents' answers that social media journalists address a significant role in terms of public services, a value that resides at the core of journalism and refers to reporting about issues of common concerns of audiences. Most of the surveyed journalists (78.4%) believed that one of the essential advantages of having this team in TV news organizations is to promote the level of accountability regarding more watchdog reporting, in time, within investigative journalism on public concerns. Consequently, regardless of the extent to which this principle can be implemented differently between areas–as it can be ideal in one region but contested in another–TV news channels are forced today by social media platforms into a new reality of communicating with viewers. Here, the affordance of new technologies in the media landscape especially enables users to virally disseminate any type of information, and despite having a sensitive nature, it is just one click away from going viral around the world. Consequently, the role of social media journalists has become vital to monitor current-trend news on these streams, gather information, analyze content, and find stories of public concerns for news coverage. Hence, it can be interpreted that this role is deemed a pillar of the principles of journalism that give voice to the voiceless about matters of shared interests and put loyalty to citizens and the public interest first.

Thus, an important related matter raised by this research question is discussing the subject of autonomy and examining the impact of ongoing changes in TV newsrooms on professional independence in the era of social media, wherein journalists may feel they have the freedom they want to make their decision concerning the content they produce. Subsequently, based on the study's findings, most surveyed respondents considered having social media teams

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at this juncture of the working environment supports, in one way or another, the professional independence of journalism in which journalists may feel more freedom to make independent decisions and present news stories freely with transparency. In this regard, it is contextually important to underscore the argument made by Hamada (2018) on the shift of freedom to all people from the news media institutions and journalists. Subsequently, it is easy enough to notice that freedom of expression today is within unconventional boundaries. In the same sense, based on the findings, the study suggests that many of the surveyed journalists found themselves to be freer than before from the institutional constraints in news organizations, thereby feeling that professional independence is currently in a better position than decades ago.

However, it is important to note that the change on this point is still a mild and controversial matter. Thus, the study exhibited a disparity of journalists' perceptions toward the impact of the role of social media journalists to reinforce editorial independence in TV newsrooms on several grounds. Apparently, several factors, such as "state security, editorial policy, advertising considerations, media owners, media laws and regulations, editorial supervisors" (Abdul Siraj & Hussain, 2017, p. 106) have continued to disrupt the level of media autonomy. Consequently, the role of social media journalists might be less significant in news establishments operating in countries fearing the free press, owned by political parties, or affected by commercial factors, where political and financial concerns impair the professional autonomy of journalists. By contrast, this role can be more influential in democratic and civil societies where mainstream news outlets retain more autonomy and journalists maintain better professional independence and free of censorship.

On the other hand, regarding the value of truth and accuracy, the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ)—the oldest organization representing journalists in the US—asserts that the

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pursuit of truth and accuracy of news are fundamental principles in the profession of journalism. However, when it comes to pursuing the truth of stories and accurate information on social media, the challenges are heightened. Albright (2017), in his article, titled "Welcome to the Era of Fake News," cited several complicated grounds that drive these challenges to continually grow in the new media ecosystem due to the absence of the groundworks that enable journalists to pursue facts on social media. Accordingly, social media journalists may follow trends and deceptive statements across social media sites. Hence, it comes as no surprise that slightly more than half of the surveyed journalists perceived that the role of social media journalists is instrumental in this function. Therefore, developing the tools employed by this team to seek truth and find trustworthy sources in the arena is an imperative aspect for meeting these challenges owing to the fact that social media is considered a fruitful ground for the enormous diffusion of misinformation. In addition, it is equally important that providing skillful training is crucial to elevate their competency in attaining accuracy and veracity of information on social media sites.

Concerning the value of objectivity, it can be inferred from the study's findings that many surveyed journalists (52.8%) perceived that the effect of having social media, in some way, helps news desks produce objective and balanced news stories. Thus, it can be assumed that, more often than not, social media journalists, by reaching out to diverse sources situated in social media, enable news desks to present stories from various angles, which certainly adds credit to such news. About a third of surveyed journalists, who opted to be neutral (33.2%), may discern that social media journalists have nothing to do with the challenge of objectivity in news organizations, as the issue of the objectivity of journalists to produce unbiased news stories can be considered by a range of journalists as a type of the old prevalent narrative.

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On the other end of the spectrum, it can be inferred from other respondents, who rejected this claim (14.8%), that communication with biased content or sources trending in the social media vacuum could lead to a partial interpretation of reality. Accordingly, Meyrowitz (1998) stated that "each medium is a type of setting or environment that has relatively fixed characteristics that influence communication in a particular manner" (p. 103). This concern highlights a need to research the apprehensions and implications to journalism objectivity arising out of assigning a team of social media journalists since social media has distinct features that facilitate more direct interactivity with a variety of untrustworthy entities.

In response to the extent to which the new social media environment can impact the professional code of ethics of journalism, the study illustrates a broad discrepancy in respondents' perceptions regarding this matter. As per the aforementioned, the construct of measuring this impact was not precisely ascribed to journalists appointed to deal with social media. Instead, it was for evaluating the journalists' perceptions of the impact on the ethics of journalism caused by the new media ecology pertaining to the adoption of social media in TV newsrooms. Therefore, journalists' concern about this issue can be interpreted as ethical challenges to journalism practice in the new era of digital media where developing digital media guidelines to maintain professionalism in media practice is requisite. Such pervasive concerns among journalists bolstered the claim by Ward (2010), who stated that "a central question is to what extent existing media ethics is suitable for today's and tomorrow's news media that is immediate, interactive and always on" (p. 1). Thus, it seems sensible that more studies should examine this matter for further investigations. Moreover, Hamada (2018) raised the question of whether we need a new suite of an ethics model that suits the new communication technologies

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and weeds out the current ethics. However, he concluded that "ethics are the same irrespective of the channels of communication, be it off or online" (p. 49).

The second part of this study on the effectiveness of the role of social media journalists in verifying misinformation inbound from social media was investigated in terms of maintaining the quality of TV news. The study indicates that most respondents believed that this role is considerably crucial to vet the accuracy of the information and the authenticity of news sources on social network sites. However, importantly, this role can be more effective if the obstacles—especially pertaining to a lack of time and available efficient tools—would be conquered in TV newsrooms.

At the outset, it is important to document that most surveyed journalists underscore the priority to verify information driven by untrustworthy sources on social media before it can be broadcast as breaking news on TV. This finding itself demonstrates evidence of raising journalists' awareness of the threat of misinformation spreading in professional media streams and the perils of undermining the credibility of professional journalism on account of falling prey to malicious sources that intentionally spread fake news on social media. Moreover, since more people reported that information circulated on social media turned out to be false compared to sources of news media (Newman, 2017), it is worthwhile for TV news channels to emphasize the notion that these reasons deliver an opportunity to underpin the credibility of professional journalism in the age of social media. Therefore, it can be speculated that, although news TV channels have monopolized the market for the latest breaking news for decades, more journalists today have no longer been considering that this value comes at the expense of the verification of information gleaned from social media. Additionally, it is expected in the coming years that

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combating fake news in newsrooms by social media journalists would be a pressing matter as long as it threatens the viewers' trust in mainstream media.

Subsequently, it does not come as a surprise that most surveyed TV journalists in this study candidly cited that social media journalists in TV newsrooms check the information gathered from social media to maintain the quality of news and protect the integrity and credibility of a news organization. By contrast, interestingly, this finding is inconsistent with the results of the survey of 59 U.S. newsrooms conducted by the American Press Institute (API), which demonstrated that "the majority of newsrooms only 'sometimes' or 'very rarely' address misinformation on social media and comment platforms" (Elizabeth, 2017, p. 1). It can be inferred from this discrepancy that while some news organizations have become more vigilant than before regarding adopting content flowing on the platforms of social media, far less attention has been paid to vet fake news in other newsrooms. Unequivocally, the relative absence of checking information contradicts the basic principles of the journalistic practices. Consequently, this argument not only substantiates the need for having dedicated teams in TV newsrooms to tackle editorial issues connected to social media platforms, but it necessitates a reevaluation of the priorities of social media journalists' duties in newsrooms.

At the same time, the discussion around the verification of the content of social media necessarily delves into the extent to which social media journalists can identify and reach out to reliable sources of information. Importantly, about three-quarters of respondents reported that the social media staff can track reliable sources to correct misinformation. Accordingly, these sources are various, as Zubiaga (2018) stated that they "can be eyewitnesses on the ground, local people who know the area where the news is developing, experts in the topic, etc." (p. 6). Such sources–especially firsthand–are valuable for the news desks to track breaking news or latest

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information taking from the horse's mouth or, for instance, to secure guests for exclusive TV interviews.

On the other hand, evidently, the study asserts that much work still needs to be conducted to enhance social media staffers' skills and efficiency in many TV newsrooms. Interestingly, the findings demonstrated that many TV news channels have broadcast misinformation gathered by social media journalists. According to the relevant results of the study, the spectrum of the survey sample's viewpoints was approximately divided into the three camps. The result is, about a quarter of respondents admitted that such incidents had occurred recently, and about a similar size of the sample survey preferred to remain neutral, while less than half said they had never broadcast such misinformation. As a matter of fact, the dissemination of fake news stories by many news establishments has been cited by other researchers. For instance, Schifferes and Newman (2013) reported many incidents of untrue news stories spread via social media, which had been distributed by professional media streams. Their study drew attention to the necessity of journalists, who use social media for gathering news, to employ essential tools of a multi-faceted approach to measure trust and reliability of the various forms of news circulate on social media. In particular, verifying content on social media is an arduous and complicated function. It includes filtering a copious amount of information flowing in various forms of sources and content modalities that contain images and videos besides texts. Consequently, the challenge of questioning the veracity of various content of social media has intensified, particularly during unexpected and breaking stories, wherein social media journalists rush to vetting information for scoops, exclusive news stories, and breaking news. However, "without tackling the thorny problem of verification, the use of social media as a source of news will be problematic" (Schifferes & Newman, 2013, p. 875).

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Furthermore, certainly, breaking news and the novelty of information are considered vital mechanisms for professional media streams to stay relevant to people's daily life. Accordingly, constantly verifying information to quickly beat other competitors has become a key function for social media journalists. This mission requires specific skills and efficient tools in a world where journalists' concerns are growing due the volume and complexity of fake news on social media (Schifferes et al., 2014). However, according to the study's results, only about half of the surveyed respondents stated that social media journalists have competent tools to perform this task successfully. Thus, it can be inferred from this result that many newsrooms are not equipped yet to fill the lacuna around the verification process. Providing efficient tools for this group alleviates their onerous tasks and enhances their proficiency to make quick and accurate judgments of information derived from social media. This, in turn, directs the attention to an urgent need in many TV newsrooms–to be provided with efficient fact-checking tools to identify misinformation and quickly detect fake digital accounts on social media. In order to enable journalists to move into a higher gear to perform this task, Schifferes et al. (2014) pointed to automated tools of fact-checking, suggesting that such gears are essential to journalism practice for being able to deal with the massive scale of social media output efficiently and in a timely fashion. Meanwhile, in their study, Castillo et al. (2011) emphasized the importance of tapping into employing news bots in newsrooms to help journalists better perform their duties of information gathering, fact-checking and verification.

Additionally, the current study accentuated that social media journalists should have enough time for their roles of verifying information on social media to become enormously fruitful. It is noticeable that (43.7%) of surveyed journalists did not consider that social media journalists have sufficient time to perform this critical mission efficiently. Having this concern

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dilutes the quality implementing this responsibility, especially for journalists who become overwhelmed by the copiousness of information cascading through social media, which makes sourcing and verifying information a laborious process. Accordingly, the survey of the (API) (2017) indicated several factors behind this challenge. For instance, it documented that many social media journalists, who are supposedly devoted to work with social media, performed irrelevant duties in newsrooms, such as working as web producers and helping with video production, among others. In addition, the study cited that the members of social media teams could have more workload due to the small team sizes, and further, it would unfold such that social media responsibilities would be parceled out to the entire staff in newsrooms of organizations without a social media team operated by full- or part-time journalists.

In a similar vein, the current study raised awareness on the need for continually providing adequate training for social media journalists, especially in news organizations where far less attention is paid around this overarching aspect. The study reveals that more than one-third of the respondents (37.4%) did not maintain that social media journalists had been trained adequately to properly verify information on digital media. Certainly, in the workplace, since the relative absence of training can severely impact a team's performance, the study underlined the necessity for social media journalists to receive specific training for gearing toward the battle of fake news. Hence, it bolstered research suggestions by the API (2017) regarding the necessity to continue providing sufficient training for social media members to promote the effectiveness of their role.

Likewise, less than two-thirds of the surveyed journalists (61.5%) believed that social media journalists are well-qualified to unfold misinformation on social media, and it can also be understood that not all social media staffers are highly competent or skilled to meet their job requirements. Similarly, the API survey (2017) documented that some news institutions hired

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less-experienced people for social media teams and that those journalists who worked in unprepared newsrooms to perform their duties, as it should be, made matters worse. This result directed the attention to some underlying issues that bond with the requirements of assigning social media journalists in TV newsrooms. This study suggests that mainstream news outlets should carefully consider including highly skilled members when assigning social media teams with an emphasis on developing their proficiencies continuously. Similarly, TV news channels should employ journalists with a solid knowledge of news editing on this team. In this regard, the study showed that respondents were more positive, with close to two-thirds of them believing that social media journalists are well acquainted with principles of news and news writing.

On the other hand, two-thirds of the surveyed respondents reported that they had newsroom social media policies including guidelines of the standards and practices on using social media content in a newscast. This result is in line with the research findings by Adornato and Lysak (2017), drawn from a nationwide survey of local television in the United States, including ABC, CBS, NBC, and FOX network affiliates. Their study found that only about a third (30%) of social media policies did not include guidelines on how to confirm and verify information before broadcasting. Bossio (2017) defines social media policy or guidelines as "the formalization of organizational jurisdiction over the conduct of journalists and other editorial staff in the use of social media for news production, dissemination and promotion" (p. 81). In this sense, implementing binding policies in TV newsrooms that map out clear procedures pertaining to verifying information spread on social media is substantial for social media journalists to correctly conduct their work. Particularly, because of the phenomenon of misinformation spreading via social media, when unexpected events arise, the lack of such

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guidelines would probably result in the broadcast of information that may later emerge as fake news.

As regards their role of audience engagement, most surveyed journalists believed that the role of social media journalists is essential today in terms of attracting viewers and increasing audience's viewership of news on TV. However, the study indicated that this role can be more influential, suggesting that many TV news channels have not aggressively capitalized on the capabilities of audience engagement due to lack of time and the absence of a strategy that gives more weight to all ranges of the techniques required to fruitfully perform this function.

First, it is important to note that the respondents considered engaging with new audiences by social media journalists is an indispensable task in current TV news channels as it could influence the audience to tune-in to TV news. Additionally, the study reveals that most respondents believed that social media journalists should engage with viewers regularly as a key mission of their daily work routine, which delivers the interpretation that an increasing amount of attention is being directed to the significant benefits of audience engagement on social media platforms for TV news organizations. Hence, it can be interpreted that this gradual interest is due to the ongoing change in viewing habits of the news audience in the wake of the advent of social media. This result aligns with an increasing body of research, which has reported that most people are inclined to use their devices to engage with others about TV content, during or after newscasts on air, by delving into conversations taking place in social media spaces. For instance, the study by Hermida et al. (2012) reflects how sharing news among social media users has become a key pattern of news experience in disseminating stories. Moreover, they found that close to two-thirds of users valued being able to share news with others easily. Similarly, Tandoc and Vos (2015) cited that news audiences via social media have become a focal factor in

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providing journalists with tips, opinions, and content for stories as well as disseminating news stories and sharing them through their social accounts.

Thus, considering that the social media sphere has become an active agora for people to interact with each other, capitalizing on this tool is of paramount importance for TV channels to market and distribute their news as it can be shared widely in this vacuum by users themselves. This mutation of the news industry presents a solid point of departure for TV news channels to stay relevant and respond to changes in TV viewing habits in a similar fashion. Consequently, creating a strong social media presence wherein social media journalists can build deeper relationships with TV news audience is considered a vital vehicle to maintain TV news viewership. Therein lies the opportunities for news outlets to heavily harness the affordance of social media platforms to obtain the pulse of news audiences to produce news stories keyed to the community they represent and, accordingly, take full advantage of audience engagement. Consequently, one of the crucial tasks of social media journalists in newsrooms is finding attractive news stories from social media mediums. The study revealed that seeking stories for news that attract viewers' interests on TV newscast is being perceived by the majority of the study's respondents (90.3%) as a very fundamental task of social media journalists in newsrooms. Since social media sites are considered spaces for a vast number of users to exchange information and interact with others, social media journalists can considerably invest the power in the hands of their audience to find the most compelling news stories by pursuing the latest trends in current affairs, tracking relevant material for editors in newsrooms desks, and predicting topics of viewers' interests.

However, among the questions directed to surveyed journalists, this study found that sharing stories on social media is still the most prevalent function of social media journalists in

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newsrooms compared to other related activities. This result is consistent with a study by media researcher Bullard (2015), who found that most respondents (69%) said they primarily used social media to post links to stories on Facebook and Twitter. Likewise, the study by API (2017) concluded that posting links, by far, was at the top of the frequent tasks on the list's functions of social media teams who were asked to rank the most and the least everyday activities they performed in 59 newsrooms around the United States. As a result, apparently, the modalities of utilizing audience engagement in many news TV channels should be rethought. As a matter of fact, since the advent of the Internet, news audiences have no longer been regarded as passive recipients. Thus, improving audience engagement modalities is well-worth considering as it embodies an essential means of the reciprocity of the relationship between news organizations and consumers whereby both participate in a two-way discourse. TV news channels should put forth more significant efforts in this vacuum by social media journalists, considering news audiences on social media are a source of news production, dissemination, and active engagement with the content in these platforms. They should profoundly consider social media mediums as space to readjust the structure of relationships with their audiences and establish a channel of two-way communication. Therefore, since an asymmetric model of communication between professional journalism and audiences is deemed an outdated system in the media ecosystem, a conversational tone and interaction mechanisms with news consumers would be the prevalent modalities in this space.

Consequently, to play a more effective role, there is a lot more that social media journalists can do than merely posting links of news stories on social media. More efforts need to be made by engaging with news' audiences to help news desks produce news that broadly resonates with audiences. Thus, monitoring posts on social media is a naïve approach in the

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pursuit of fetching stories for news, albeit, admittedly, it is somehow useful and considered as the most common task in newsrooms. For instance, in their study, Tandoc and Vos (2015) elaborated that editors use social media to monitor news and comments about stories from a variety of sources, as well as trending topics, which are sometimes considered as planning stories. However, TV news channels should place more weight on bolder techniques for reaching out to a wide range of news consumers who are willing to contribute to newsrooms by suggesting ideas that might be deemed as intriguing stories.

Accordingly, it can be stated with certainty that posting questions by social media journalists to provoke news audiences into responding to issues of their interests on social media eagerly is a considerably efficacious mechanism to finding new stories. Moreover, this tactic is also pivotal to probe into angles that are not yet representative of important stories running on the current-trend news. Therefore, about three-quarters of respondents in this study believed that such interactions with the news audience is a vital instrument in the news industry. However, Bullard (2015) found that only (30%) of news staffs frequently post questions via social media to interact with audiences. Thus, the results of the current study can be translated into increasing attention over this technique in many TV newsrooms to provide journalists with more information about their audiences' interests or deliver missing details needing to be processed for broadcasting compelling news stories.

Similarly, this study reveals that nearly two-thirds of the surveyed journalists perceived that responding to audience's comments on social media is an essential duty of social media journalists in TV newsrooms. However, Bullard (2015) concluded that only (29%) of news staff very frequently responded to Facebook comments and only (22%) did so in tweets. Furthermore, the survey of API (2017) showed that responding to questions and commentaries of audiences

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ranked third in the frequent missions of social media teams. Thus, as it appears, this tool has not greatly been harnessed by a broad range of news TV channels. However, it is easy enough to notice that it gradually has gained increasing attention in the leading news channels that exert tireless efforts to capitalize on this approach to broadly marketing their news work. Tandoc and Vos (2015) documented that in newsrooms, social media staff use this task on Twitter, for instance, by responding to tweets and mentions and "actively soliciting information about news events from social media users" (p. 957). On the other end of the spectrum, Steiner (2015) maintains that responding to commenters is likely to bring out favorable results compared to having no response. However, she articulates that audience comments cause quite a conundrum, and place extra pressure on news journalists, especially when audiences' comments "turn uncivil, and news organizations often do not have the resources or manpower to constantly moderate their comments" (p. 1).

On the other hand, the study signified the importance of audience engagement by social media journalists to provide editorial teams with overarching insight that can help them make decisions about the priority of news topics based on most stories that intrigue news viewers. Thus, almost two-thirds of respondents believed that the role of social media journalists is helpful in this matter. Hence, it can be suggested from the obtained results that with increased momentum on the role of audience engagement created by social media journalists, news audience can interfere further with the daily decisions of journalists in newsrooms. This claim represents a solid point in the debate where journalists, in the era of social media, are no longer the sole decision-makers in newsrooms. Therefore, Deuze (2005) documented that this change in the new media environment caused "a further blurring of the hierarchical relationships between producers and users" (p. 454). Further, Harper (2010) underscored that today, most audiences

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believe they should be able to contribute to the content of news since they can choose what they consume. Accordingly, Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc (2018) pointed to the increased role of audience metrics in the editorial process, indicating the vital role of social media to help journalists "negotiate between the information obtained by their metrics and their journalistic intuition to make editorial decisions" (p. 436).

Since several studies have elaborated that this approach can be a key source of traffic for news media, more research is certainly needed to explore the reasons behind the reluctance that prevails in many news TV channels to energetically collaborate with their communities and engage with their audiences on social media. The current study suggests that the lack of time is an impediment to tapping into audience engagement as it should be. It revealed a divergence in the respondents' perceptions of social media journalists having enough time to engage with news audiences fruitfully. As the results displayed, half of those respondents disagreed that there has been ample time for social media journalists to adequately engage with news audiences. In addition, equally important, the study elaborates that a lack of strategy regarding audience engagement in TV newsrooms is manifestly a key factor that causes underperformance in the role of social media in this arena. According to the findings, more than one-third of the study's respondents (37.5%) reported that a clear strategy of encouraging these teams to interact with the audience did not exist. Parallel to this, Elizabeth (2017) cited that shrinking newsroom staff due to budget cuts in many newsrooms is a primary cause of poor performance and frustration amid social media journalists. Since research on this concern has been scant, further studies need to be undertaken around this lacuna in the extant media literature.

Another essential part of investigating journalists' perceptions on the role of social media as a key to audience engagement is examining its possible effects on the increasing TV news

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viewership and entrenching loyalty to news TV channels. Most surveyed journalists (75.6%) contended that audience engagement by social media journalists is likely to enhance viewers' loyalty to a news TV station. Thus, this study underscores, again, the importance of engaging with news audiences, for instance, by responding to their comments and questions, posting some questions, highlighting their significant contributions to maintain their loyalty. This result bolsters the claim that TV news viewers tend to stay faithful to a news channel as long as it responds to their values and presents their concerns, and in return, they communicate with the channel's content positively. This is in line with a study by Krebs and Lischka (2017), which aims to examine the value of audience engagement for online news brands. The researchers underlined that "sharing and liking news are associated with a stronger perceived brand quality, loyalty, and associations"(p. 1). Accordingly, it is vital to note that this venue is ideal for targeting news audience of new generations in pursuit of building brand loyalty and thereby increasing their viewership. Therefore, Fiene (2017) highlighted that news channels need to understand that millennials are very different as compared to older generations. Hence, merely posting news content on these mediums will not be a differentiator, and it could be deemed irrelevant to this audience. As a result, this study accentuates the necessity of involvement with millennials to share their values to entrench their loyalty to a news brand, besides, importantly, the inherent values of journalism such as the accuracy, accountability, credibility, objectivity of content and the quality of news.

In collaboration with the above, unequivocally, the new environment of mass communication readjusts the conventional structure of relationships between news providers and their audiences, where the latter has become increasingly active and energetic in this new media ecosystem. Consequently, news management in TV news channels should thoroughly consider

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the fruitful consequences of employing audience engagement to increment the viewership of their news. They need to heavily harness to all ranges of vital mechanisms of audience engagements, particularly the tasks that have still been neglected in several TV newsrooms to considerably tap into this source for attracting a sheer size of viewers. Additionally, fostering brand loyalty and driving traffic to TV news channels is increasingly tethered to the competency of social media journalists to galvanize news audience for eagerly interacting with the content. Therefore, the need for a strategy of audience engagement determining the target audience and main goals of building relationships with TV viewers on social media platforms exists. A strategy that maps out how social media journalists can effectively capitalize on these sites, comprehend the influential tasks of audience engagement and aggressively maximize the value of social media teams' role in TV newsrooms.

For all the reasons enumerated above, it becomes obvious that espousing the role of social media journalists has become an inevitable fashion in social media-embedded newsrooms as they are deemed a part of the profession of journalism and their role has become critical to deal with the current challenges in the news industry. Accordingly, they should be fully integrated into news production in newsrooms.

Finally, it is important to note that the study found that geography cannot be considered as an independent factor likely to influence TV journalists' perceptions concerning the role of social media journalists over the possible effects of their role on the identity of the profession of journalism, the effectiveness to verify misinformation inbound from social media, or the capability of using audience engagement to increase audiences' attraction and their viewership of TV news. This result strengthens the claim by Weaver (1998) that in this era, journalists worldwide share largely common characteristics. Similarly, Deuze (2005) stated that across the

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globe, “the professionalization of journalism can be typified by the consolidation of a consensual occupational ideology among journalists” (p. 444), referring to the interface between multiculturalism and contemporary journalism.

Research Limitations

Research on the implications of appointing social media journalists as new types of media workers in journalism is still scant at its initial stage. As a result, noticeably, media scholars have added nuance to this debate so far. Thus, the present study endeavored to contribute to the body of research and add pivotal insights into this niche. It highlighted important features of the effects of having social media journalists in TV newsrooms. Additionally, it showed some venues for future studies and raised further imperative questions needing to be addressed while bearing some limitations.

The study strived to target a wide spectrum of journalists in different regions of the world. However, the survey was only available in English. It is therefore proposed for such future research to consider providing a survey in various languages to be vastly responded by more journalists. Additionally, the researcher primarily communicated with TV journalists via LinkedIn, striving to recruit a large number of TV journalists. However, contrary to expectations, the sample size fell short of the desired objectives. Thus, it is suggested for such future studies not to rely only on a single medium to deliver surveys. More importantly, considering the sample size, the study’s aim was not to present a generalizable description of the research’s topic but to explore new perspectives of TV professionals. However, it is noteworthy that very few studies have investigated the perceptions of TV journalists themselves based on the study’s concerns.

Furthermore, the study’s sample assimilated various journalists of broadcast, website, or social media, who work together in convergent newsrooms for the same TV news channels. Out

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of the surveyed respondents, (8.4%) were social media journalists, which is deemed a reasonable portion considering their position is still novel in TV journalism. Therefore, the study has proposed conducting future research targeting only social media journalists and applying different research methods, such as focus groups in conjunction with interviews to gain more depth into journalists' responses. In addition, it can be considered a bold attempt to concurrently examine three varying concerns preoccupying media scholars and professionals alike nowadays. It is therefore recommended for future research to probe into each part of the study's topics separately and in distinct arrays: local, national, regional or global news TV channels. Moreover, more studies need to be carried out to examine further the perceptions of TV journalists from different regions, considering the impact of societal, political or economic variables on the performance of social media journalists in each setting for comparison between groups.

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APPENDICES

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Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire and Informed Consent

Survey Questionnaire

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study
Pro # 00037802

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. This form tells you about this research study. We are asking you to take part in a research study that is called: "The Role of Social Media Teams in TV newsrooms: Their effects on the profession and identity of TV journalism, the quality of news, and the audience engagement". The person who is in charge of this research study is "Yousuf Humaid Taib AL Yousufi". This person is called the Principal Investigator.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to find out how journalists perceive the roles of social media teams (journalists) in TV journalism. The research aims to investigate the journalists' perspectives of the impact of the roles of social media teams on the profession and identity of journalism, the quality of TV news pertaining to the spread of fake news on social media, and the audience engagement to increase TV news viewership. The research will be carried out by using an online survey, and the results will help to understand the new environment of media.

Why are you being asked to take part?
We are asking you to take part in this research because your perspective is valuable based on your experience and practice in the TV newsroom. It is important today to study perspectives of journalists themselves regarding the ongoing changes in TV journalism because of adopting social media in TV newsrooms. Such studies are necessary to understand the factors that may reinvent our career and impact the future of the profession of TV journalism.

Study Procedures
If you take part in this study, you will be asked to answer a group of questions in this online survey through an electronic website. The survey consists of three sections related to the research questions of this study. All these questions will be measured by seven Likert-scale (7= strongly agree; 1= strongly disagree). In addition, in the end, there are a few demographic questions. The questionnaire will take roughly 10 to 15 minutes to complete. All data collected will be analyzed, and respondents will not be identified by name or by demographic data collected.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal
You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study. You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer; you are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your job status, employment record, employee evaluations, or advancement opportunities.

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Benefits and Risks
You will receive no direct benefit from this study. The only potential benefit of participating in this research study is to provide valuable knowledge that may help people who are interested in understanding the ongoing changes in TV journalism in order to benefit from opportunities and overcome challenges in the TV news industry in this age. This research is considered to be minimal risk to those who take part in this study.

Compensation
We will not pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality
We will do our best to keep your records private and confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. It is possible, although unlikely, that unauthorized individuals could gain access to your responses because you are responding online.
Certain people may need to see your study records. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are: the principal investigator, the research team, the advising professor, the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB).
It is possible, although unlikely, that unauthorized individuals could gain access to your responses. Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet. However, your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet. If you complete and submit an anonymous survey and later request your data be withdrawn, this may or may not be possible as the researcher may be unable to extract anonymous data from the database.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

Data collected for this research will be stored at the College of Arts and Sciences: The Zimmerman School of Advertising and Mass Communications, located at the University of South Florida in the United States.

Your personal information collected for this research will be kept as long as it is needed to conduct this research. Once
your participation in the research is over, your information will be stored in accordance with applicable policies and regulations. Your permission to use your personal data will not expire unless you withdraw it in writing. You may withdraw or take away your permission to use and disclose your information at any time. You do this by sending written notice to the Principal Investigator at the following address:

While we are conducting the research study, we cannot let you see or copy the research information we have about you. After the research is completed, you have a right to see the information about you, as allowed by USF policies.
If you have concerns about the use or storage of your personal information, you have a right to lodge a complaint with the data supervisory authority in your country.

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Contact Information
If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu. If you have questions regarding the research, please contact the Principal Investigator at [alyousufi@mail.usf.edu].

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not let anyone know your name. We will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are. You can print a copy of this consent form for your records.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by proceeding with this survey that I am agreeing to take part in research and I am 18 years of age or older.

I agree to participate:

o Yes
o No

Do you currently work in a TV newsroom or a news organization where there are social media journalists?

o Yes
o No

What exactly is your job in the TV newsroom?

o Social Media Journalist (editor, producer, strategist, manager etc.)
o News Producer (executive producer, senior producer, associate producer, content producer etc.)
o News Writer (Editor)/ Assignment Editor
o News Anchor
o Reporter
o Web Journalist
o News Director/Assistant News Director
o Newsroom Manager/Assignment Manager
o General Manager
o None of the above

The First Research Question
In the first section, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to your perspective on the effects of the social media team on the identity of the profession of journalism.

1-The role of the social media team is consistent with the general principles of journalism.
o Strongly agree o Agree o Neither agree nor disagree o Agree o Strongly disagree

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2-The social media team helps TV journalism to do more watchdog reporting.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

3-The social media team helps the news desk to produce objective and balanced news stories.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

4-The role of the social media team reinforces the editorial independence in the TV newsroom.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

5-The role of the social media team aids in presenting news stories with transparency.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

6-Having a social media team promotes the capability to present news stories freely.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

7-Having a social media team strengthens the ability to seek out the truth of news stories.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

8-Having a social media team increases the opportunities to broadcast the latest information and breaking news.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

9-Having a social media team enhances the capability to get accurate stories.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

10-The new environment of social media does not impact the professional code of ethics of journalism.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

The Second Research Question

Now please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements about your perspective on the role of social media teams in verifying misinformation found on social media.

1-The social media team checks information gathered from social media.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

2-The social media team is well-qualified to find out misinformation on social media.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

3-The social media team has efficient tools to detect fake digital accounts.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

4-The social media team has available time to verify information found on social media.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

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5-The social media team can reach out to reliable sources to correct misinformation.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

6-The social media team has adequate training in verifying information on digital media.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

7-The social media team is well acquainted with principles of news and news writing.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

8-Verifying information on social media takes place before broadcasting it as breaking news.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

9-The news desk has never broadcast misinformation gathered by the social media team.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

10-There are binding policies to verify information on social media before it is used.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

The Third Research Question

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the use of audience engagement by the social media team in order to increase audiences' attraction and TV news viewership.

1-The Social media team should engage with TV news viewers on social media.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

2-Audience engagement is a key mission of the daily work routine of the social media team.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

3-Audience engagement by the social media team helps find stories that attract viewers' interests.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

4-Audience engagement by the social media team helps the news desk prioritize news topics.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

5-Sharing stories on social media to stir up engagement with the audience is a crucial task of the social media team.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

6-Posting questions on social media to stimulate audience engagement is a critical practice of the social media team.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

7-Responding to audience comments on social media is an essential duty of the social media team.

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○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

8-There is enough time for the social media team to make audience engagement fruitful.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

9-There is a strategy to encourage the social media team to interact with the audience efficiently.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

10-Audience engagement by the social media team can enhance viewers' loyalty to a TV station.
○ Strongly agree ○ Agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly disagree

The demographic questions
The survey is almost done. With an emphasis on the confidentiality of all your responses, now there are a few more questions about yourself. These questions are used to group your answers with others like yourself.

What is your gender?
- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Other (please specify)
- ○ Prefer not to answer

What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
- ○ Less than high school degree
- ○ High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- ○ Some college but no degree
- ○ Associate's degree
- ○ Bachelor's degree
- ○ Graduate degree

What is the name of the TV news station you work for?
(Optional)_____

How long have you been working in TV news?
- ○ Less than 1 year
- ○ 1-5 years
- ○ 6-10 years
- ○ 11-20 years
- ○ 21-30 years
- ○ More than 30 years

Please check your age group
- ○ under age 30
- ○ 30-39

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- 40-49
- 50 and older

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Appendix B: Letter of IRB Approval

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

12/10/2018

Yousuf Al Yousufi

School of Advertising and Mass Communications

3950 Rock Circle - 4050 Lofts B-313A Tampa,
FL 33613

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**
IRB#: Pro00037802
Title: The Role of Social Media Team in TV news:

Their effects on the profession and identity of TV journalism, the quality of news, and audience engagement.

Study Approval Period: 12/9/2018 to 12/9/2019

Dear Dr. Al Yousufi:

On 12/9/2018, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):
STUDY PROTOCOL.docx

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:
Online Survey Consent Form.docx**

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent documents are valid until the consent document is amended and approved. ****Online survey coversheets are not stamped.**

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research

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through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your study qualifies for a waiver of the requirements for the documentation of informed consent for this online survey as outlined in the federal regulations at 45CFR46.117(c) which states that an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it finds either: (1) That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or (2) That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) business days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

Melissa Sloan, PhD, Vice Chairperson

USF Institutional Review Board

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