



## **EROSION OF JOURNALISTIC STANDARDS BY SOCIAL MEDIA: A THREAT TO JOURNALISM**

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### **Abstract**

The emergence of social media has radically altered journalism, presenting both benefits and considerable hazards. Although social media facilitates rapid news distribution, extensive audience interaction, and the democratisation of information, it simultaneously compromises conventional journalistic norms. The fast proliferation of disinformation, sensationalism, and the indistinction between professional journalists and amateur content makers significantly jeopardises the credibility and integrity of journalism. This article examines the influence of social media on journalistic ethics, focussing on responsibility, accuracy, and the erosion of public confidence. The article contends that the proliferation of false news, political manipulation, and the competitive dynamics of social media, while providing avenues for innovation, also poses problems that may undermine the principles of responsible journalism. The article advocates for a balanced strategy in adapting to the digital age, emphasising the preservation of fundamental ethical standards while harnessing the advantages of social media.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Journalism, Misinformation, Fake News, Ethical Standards, Public Trust, Political Manipulation, Journalism Ethics

### **1. Introduction**

In recent years, social media has drastically altered the realm of journalism. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become influential instruments for news distribution, giving instant access to breaking news and facilitating unparalleled chances for citizen journalism and crowd-sourced information. These platforms allow anyone with internet access to disseminate their viewpoints, often circumventing conventional editorial controls and gatekeeping systems that have characterised journalism. Consequently, news is now more accessible than ever, with articles disseminating to global audiences at unprecedented speed. Nonetheless, while social media provides several advantages, it also presents a multitude of substantial obstacles, especially with journalistic standards and ethics.

The ascendance of social media as a primary medium for news consumption has resulted in a significant transformation in journalistic practices, where the fast dissemination of information often supersedes accuracy and verification. Historically, journalism was based on ideals like impartiality, fairness, and accuracy, with professional journalists educated to follow stringent standards of fact-checking and ethical reporting. In contrast, social media functions inside a fiercely competitive, rapid atmosphere where the need to be first often outweighs the necessity for accuracy. This transition has resulted in the degradation of journalistic standards, with sensationalism, clickbait, and partial reporting becoming more widespread in both conventional news organisations and social media platforms (Hamada, 2018).

Furthermore, social media has been associated with a deterioration in the trustworthiness of journalism. The proliferation of user-generated material and algorithm-driven "news" has rendered many news consumers increasingly unable of distinguishing between credible journalistic sources and disinformation or false news. The erosion of borders has compromised public confidence in the media, leading to a credibility crisis that hampers conventional news organisations' ability to maintain their status as reliable information providers (Mosco, 2019). The proliferation of disinformation on social media, sometimes exacerbated by algorithms that favour spectacular material, has elicited apprehensions over the public's capacity to get accurate and trustworthy news, resulting in a fragmentation of the media landscape.

Alongside the issues of disinformation, social media platforms have also facilitated a transformation in the professional identity of journalists. The need to maintain a continuous presence on social media, engage with followers, and provide material intended for virality has transformed the essence of journalistic practice. Numerous



journalists are now anticipated to assume the roles of content producers and influencers, reconciling their professional obligations with the requirements of digital engagement. The current reality has resulted in ethical concessions, as journalists may choose stories that are more likely to attract attention and interaction above those that conform to established criteria of fairness and impartiality (Herzog, 2022).

The emergence of social media has profound consequences for democracy. Journalism has historically been seen as a cornerstone of democratic society, acting as a sentinel to ensure accountability of authority and supplying individuals with essential information for informed decision-making. Nonetheless, as social media platforms have gained prominence in influencing public debate, they have also fostered a novel media ecosystem characterised by diminished transparency, increased fragmentation, and heightened susceptibility to manipulation. The proliferation of misinformation and the emergence of echo chambers, when individuals encounter just material that corroborates their established convictions, have further diminished journalism's capacity to cultivate educated and reflective public discourse. The decline of journalistic ethics on social media poses a danger not just to the profession but also to the integrity of democracy itself (Fuchs, 2018).

This article will examine these dangers in depth, scrutinising how social media erodes journalistic standards, compromises the trustworthiness of news outlets, and ultimately jeopardises the democratic process. This conversation will analyse the potential and problems presented by social media, aiming to provide a comprehensive knowledge of how these platforms are transforming journalism and identifying strategies to alleviate their adverse impacts on the profession and society.

## **2. The Rise of Social Media and its Influence on Journalism**

The emergence of social media has significantly altered the journalism environment, radically altering the methods of news dissemination, consumption, and production. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have democratised information transmission, allowing anybody with internet access to engage in the distribution of news. This transition has significantly impacted conventional journalism by blurring the formerly distinct lines between professional journalists and amateur content makers. This transformation introduces new possibilities but also poses considerable obstacles that impact the quality and integrity of the disseminated news.

A prominent advantage of the proliferation of social media is its capacity to democratise knowledge. Historically, news dissemination was controlled by a limited number of media organisations, each with distinct editing procedures, gatekeepers, and corporate agendas. Nonetheless, social media has dismantled this monopolistic dominance, enabling people from many backgrounds to engage in the production and distribution of news. This has allowed previously marginalised or excluded voices in mainstream media to be heard, offering a forum for a varied range of opinions. During significant worldwide occurrences, such as political demonstrations, natural catastrophes, or social movements like Black Lives Matter, social media has often functioned as an essential instrument for real-time event documentation. Common people, journalists, and activists may disseminate photographs, films, and firsthand narratives, often addressing deficiencies left by conventional media organisations that may possess restricted access or resources to report on specific events. This crowdsourcing methodology may reveal concealed narratives, provide diverse perspectives, and foster a more inclusive media environment (Hamada, 2018). Moreover, social media networks provide real-time updates, allowing journalists to track breaking events and get eyewitness accounts more efficiently. By broadening the range of available sources, journalists may often provide more comprehensive and timely coverage of events, so enhancing the entire media landscape.

The open-access characteristic of social media poses considerable concerns, especially with the authenticity and trustworthiness of the disseminated information. In contrast to conventional journalism, which adheres to a stringent process of verification, fact-checking, and editing, social media material lacks equivalent scrutiny. The absence of editorial supervision allows anybody to submit content, facilitating the dissemination of disinformation and false news, sometimes resulting in catastrophic outcomes (Mosco, 2019). During election cycles or periods of political turmoil, deceptive or inaccurate information may proliferate swiftly on social media, swaying public opinion and affecting political results. The rapidity and virulence of social media facilitate the dissemination of misinformation, often beyond the reach of rectifications, so inflicting enduring harm on public confidence in the media. This problem is exacerbated by algorithms that favour sensational or emotionally charged information over nuanced, accurate reporting. Information that validates preexisting prejudices or evokes strong emotions often proliferates, irrespective of its truthfulness. Moreover, the emergence of "deepfakes" and other sophisticated technology has exacerbated the challenge of distinguishing reality from fabrication. These advancements undermine the conventional function of journalism as a custodian of truth and precision. Journalists now contend not just with social media platforms for



audience engagement but also with disinformation that is often more captivating, contentious, and accessible (Hamada, 2018).

A significant concern arising from the proliferation of social media is the temptation it exerts on journalists and news organisations to prioritise expediency and interaction at the expense of accuracy and depth. Social media flourishes on viral content—narratives that swiftly attract attention and disseminate broadly across networks. This dynamic has prompted a transformation in editorial methods, when the need to "go viral" often supersedes the aspiration to provide comprehensive, well researched content. This transition has resulted in the proliferation of sensationalism and clickbait, when narratives are presented in exaggerated or deceptive ways to get clicks and shares. Instead of concentrating on thorough analysis and inquiry, journalists may feel pressured to provide news that provokes intense emotional reactions or guarantees entertainment value. This tendency compromises the fundamental principles of journalism, including the provision of accurate, impartial, and comprehensive coverage of intricate subjects (Bell, 2016). It exerts pressure on journalists to be perpetually active on social media, interacting with followers and disseminating news fragments, often to the detriment of time allocated for comprehensive reporting. In this context, journalistic integrity is jeopardised. The focus on virality and interaction often undermines the function of editors and fact-checkers, who have traditionally served as gatekeepers to maintain quality control. In the absence of these conventional safeguards, journalism becomes more fragmented, exhibiting disparate levels of professionalism contingent upon the platform, the journalist, and the editorial standards adhered to.

Although social media has broadened journalism's reach, offering novel channels for information and democratising news dissemination, it also presents considerable threats to the integrity and credibility of the field. The rapid dissemination of disinformation, along with the need to prioritise viral content above factual accuracy, has created a challenging atmosphere in which the principles of responsible journalism are ever harder to uphold. As social media increasingly influences the media landscape, it is imperative for both journalists and news consumers to exercise more discernment about the origins and veracity of the information they receive. Reconciling the advantages of social media with the need for stringent journalistic standards is essential for maintaining the integrity of the news business in the digital era.

### **3. Impact on Journalistic Ethics and Professional Identity**

Journalistic ethics have historically been grounded on the ideals of impartiality, fairness, accuracy, and accountability. These principles have directed professional journalists in their endeavour to provide the public with trustworthy, well researched news. The rapid ascent of social media has created a novel dynamic within the media ecosystem, necessitating a reevaluation of the definition of journalism. As social media platforms have become as significant news sources, the competitive pressures they generate have compelled several journalists to modify their approaches. This transition has often compromised established journalistic standards. The pursuit of audience attraction and engagement is rapidly compromising the fundamental principles of journalism, resulting in a profound alteration of its practice and character.

A significant issue about social media's impact on journalism is the diminished accountability associated with the fast dissemination of news. Conventional journalism relies on meticulous editing procedures, fact verification, and validation prior to publication. Conversely, social media platforms emphasise immediacy, often necessitating that news organisations and journalists respond to events almost instantaneously. The need to publish expeditiously may lead to the dissemination of inaccuracies without adequate verification. During breaking news events or crises, journalists may depend on user-generated information, such as tweets or videos, that remain unverified. This may improve the timeliness of reporting, but it also exposes news outlets to the risk of disseminating disinformation. The proliferation of disinformation is exacerbated by the rapid dissemination of news on social media. In a conventional news cycle, inaccuracies might be rectified by follow-up reporting. Nevertheless, on social media, disinformation may proliferate more rapidly than rectifications can be disseminated. Consequently, inaccurate or deceptive information may persist in the public sphere, resulting in considerable reputational harm for journalists and media organisations. This phenomena has been notably apparent in contexts such as political events, demonstrations, or natural catastrophes, when erroneous or sensationalised news disseminate rapidly, subsequently being rectified hours or days later. At that point, the original inaccuracies have indelibly influenced public image, and the retraction or correction is often far less conspicuous. The problem of "fake news" or disinformation profoundly affects public faith in media organisations. When journalists and news organisations neglect the accountability norm integral to the profession, they jeopardise the erosion of public confidence. Research by Anderson, Bell, and Shirky (2014) demonstrates that the proliferation of disinformation on social media fosters a fragmented media environment, whereby individuals often find it difficult to differentiate between credible news and dubious sources. This erosion



of accountability poses a risk not just to journalistic ethics but also to the media's democratic roles, since it compromises the public's capacity to make informed choices based on accurate and true information.

A notable consequence of social media on journalistic ethics is the increasing prevalence of "newsjacking," when journalists and media entities exploit trending subjects without enough study or context. Newsjacking transpires when journalists or news organisations promptly capitalise on a popular subject or event, often producing sensationalised narratives aimed at optimising clicks and social media interaction. The immediacy of social media platforms facilitates this technique, allowing trends to arise and dissipate within hours. Although newsjacking might enhance traffic and prominence for news organisations, it often compromises ethical journalism. In their haste to be the first to publish a news, journalists may overlook the meticulous, nuanced reporting essential for providing context and a comprehensive knowledge of the problem at hand. The absence of comprehensive inquiry undermines journalistic quality by favouring expediency and sensationalism at the expense of truth and thoroughness. The ramifications of this transition are especially apparent in the reporting of intricate matters, such as political scandals or public health emergencies, when the need for trustworthy information is paramount. Newsjacking may skew the public's comprehension of these topics, hindering individuals' ability to interact with the facts and develop educated views. The emergence of newsjacking signifies a wider transformation in the professional standards of journalism. Historically, journalists received training to explore narratives, pursue many sources, and authenticate facts prior to publishing. Currently, the need to be the first to report and to seize public attention often supersedes the tenets of meticulous and reflective journalism. This transformation is especially apparent in the how journalists engage with social media platforms. Instead of using social media to enhance well researched narratives, several journalists create tales especially tailored to get attention on platforms such as Twitter or Facebook. In doing so, they may unintentionally compromise the credibility and integrity of the profession.

The degradation of journalistic ethics resulting from social media's impact has precipitated a professional identity crisis for some journalists. Journalists have historically defined their work via their allegiance to objective reporting, ethical standards, and a devotion to truthfulness. Nonetheless, since social media has become a fundamental component of the news ecosystem, established norms and ethical standards are increasingly being contested. Numerous journalists now traverse a convoluted and sometimes paradoxical environment, whereby the need to maintain competitiveness on social media clashes with the entrenched principles of their vocation. This transition has incited discussions on the definition of journalism in the digital era. Deuze (2005) observes that the professional identity of journalists is undergoing transformation due to the emergence of digital platforms, compelling journalists to reassess their duties and obligations. Historically, journalists were seen as autonomous censors tasked with fact-checking and delivering impartial narratives. Currently, journalists are required to balance many roles: content makers, social media influencers, and real-time reporters. The need to perpetually interact with social media and develop a personal brand has prompted some journalists to reconsider their ability to uphold the ethical standards that previously characterised their job. Furthermore, the heightened dependence on social media has engendered a competitive atmosphere among journalists, who now contend not just with their peers but also with non-professional content providers, including bloggers and social media influencers. This rivalry has heightened the need to prioritise expediency, sensationalism, and engagement at the expense of conventional journalistic principles. Consequently, several journalists are grappling with the challenge of balancing their aspiration for relevance and competitiveness with their dedication to delivering high-quality, ethical news.

The emergence of social media has profoundly influenced journalistic ethics and professional identity, generating a conflict between the conventional principles of the profession and the contemporary requirements of the digital era. The need for rapidity, interaction, and viral material has resulted in less responsibility, causing disinformation to proliferate more swiftly than rectifications can be made. The emergence of newsjacking and the need to emphasise sensationalism have further compromised journalistic ethics, while the relentless fight for relevance on social media has resulted in a professional identity crisis for several journalists. As the media environment evolves, it is imperative for journalists to address these problems and uphold the ethical norms that have historically defined the profession. Neglecting to do so jeopardises the integrity of public faith in the media and, therefore, the democratic processes that journalism undergirds.

#### **4. The Spread of Misinformation and "Fake News"**

A major challenge to journalism in the era of social media is the fast dissemination of disinformation and the occurrence of "fake news." Social media platforms have democratised knowledge and allowed users to exchange varied opinions; nevertheless, they have also fostered circumstances conducive to the unrestrained proliferation of false information. The emergence of populism and political polarisation has become social media a potent instrument



for disseminating intentional disinformation, often aimed at manipulating public sentiment and affecting political results (Fuchs, 2018). This novel media environment poses a significant threat to journalism by eroding the press's credibility and obscuring the distinction between truth and fiction.

A major issue contributing to the proliferation of disinformation on social media is the nature of the algorithms that govern these sites. Social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, use algorithms to tailor information according to user preferences and behaviours. Although these algorithms aim to augment user involvement, they often favour material that corresponds with users' preexisting opinions and interests. This engenders "echo chambers" – settings where individuals encounter primarily ideas and information that validate their pre-existing beliefs, while dissenting perspectives are marginalised or entirely omitted. Within these echo chambers, disinformation proliferates more readily since users are less likely to encounter fact-checks or other perspectives that contest erroneous narratives. Carlson (2018) contends that insufficient exposure to varied information sources diminishes social media's capacity to function as a dependable public platform for discourse and debate. Consequently, these environments transform into incubators for prejudiced perspectives and conspiracy theories, prioritising the reinforcement of party or ideological goals above truth or accuracy. This issue is especially detrimental to journalism since it undermines the press's function as an impartial adjudicator of facts. The consumption of news and information via echo chambers significantly undermines journalism's role as a reliable source of impartial and authoritative information. Rather of consulting journalists for accurate reporting, many individuals choose to seek news that conforms to their perspectives, therefore deepening divides and sustaining disinformation.

The use of social media as a tool for political manipulation has emerged as a concerning trend in recent years, especially during electoral processes. A prominent instance of this occurred during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, when social media platforms were used by numerous political entities to disseminate false and misleading information. Napoli (2019) asserts that the absence of regulation and monitoring on social media platforms facilitated their use as instruments of political manipulation. This manipulation manifested in several ways, such as the propagation of false information, the deployment of bots and fraudulent accounts to enhance misleading narratives, and focused misinformation efforts aimed at influencing voters. The 2016 election is often seen as a pivotal moment in the public's recognition of the potential risks posed by social media in politics. During this era, misinformation disseminated via social media included inaccurate narratives about voting equipment, counterfeit endorsements, and conspiratorial claims about political candidates. These lies were disseminated not just by fringe organisations but also reinforced by important political personalities and media sources, complicating the public's ability to identify the truth. The proliferation of misinformation during the election significantly heightened worries over the integrity of democratic processes and the influence of social media on public opinion. In reaction to the increasing apprehension of social media's contribution to the dissemination of disinformation, several social media corporations have initiated strategies to counteract fake news, including the identification of erroneous material and collaboration with independent fact-checking entities. Nonetheless, as Napoli (2019) indicates, these initiatives are often insufficient, and the absence of control allows the proliferation of disinformation to persist unrestrained in several instances. Furthermore, the large quantity of material disseminated on social media platforms renders it almost unfeasible for organisations to efficiently monitor any falsehoods in real-time. Misinformation persists in disseminating swiftly, often resulting in significant repercussions for political dialogue and public confidence in the media.

The proliferation of disinformation intensifies the significance of conventional media in addressing these concerns. Journalists are equipped to authenticate facts, scrutinise assertions, and contextualise narratives, so positioning them uniquely to combat the proliferation of misinformation. Nonetheless, the demands of social media and the need for rapid, attention-capturing information have hindered journalists' ability to uphold these standards. According to Bell (2016), the need for viral material has resulted in a landscape where sensationalism often overshadows factual reporting, complicating the pursuit of truth. To counter disinformation, journalists must intensify their dedication to truth, fairness, and impartiality. This entails use social media platforms to authenticate material before to publication, refuting false narratives, and delivering honest, well researched news. Furthermore, journalists must be attentive to detecting misinformation sources and monitoring the dissemination of false narratives on social media to tackle the underlying reasons of disinformation operations. Although this is a challenging endeavour, it is crucial for the media to maintain its credibility and sustain its significant function in a democratic society. Moreover, the emergence of social media necessitates a reevaluation of journalism ethics in the digital era. Journalists must modify their techniques to align with the new dynamics of social media, while maintaining adherence to fundamental principles of responsible journalism. This may include using social media platforms not just for distribution but also as instruments for audience interaction, fact-checking, and promoting media literacy. By adopting these innovative tactics, journalists may endeavour to rebuild public confidence in the media and mitigate the detrimental impacts of



disinformation.

## **5. The Crisis of Trust in Journalism**

The fast dissemination of disinformation, together with the unregulated characteristics of social media, has led to a significant crisis of confidence in journalism. For decades, conventional media platforms, including newspapers, television, and radio, have functioned as the principal providers of news for the public. As social media platforms have become more embedded in everyday life, many individuals have transitioned their news consumption to these digital mediums, often circumventing conventional journalism entirely. This change has incurred considerable costs, since social media, albeit providing quick access to news, lacks the professional control and editorial standards characteristic of respected journalism. The decline of faith in journalism is not only a transient phenomenon; it has significant consequences for public debate, democracy, and the press's function in scrutinising authority.

A notable effect of the digital era has been the significant reduction in public trust in journalism. Studies conducted by institutions such as the Pew Research Centre indicate that confidence in the media has reached a historical nadir. This tendency is especially evident in Western democracies, where public scepticism about conventional media channels has markedly increased over the last decade. Pew Research indicates that just 41% of Americans express a significant level of confidence in the media (Pew Research Centre, 2020). The growth of sensationalised and deceptive internet information has significantly contributed to the loss of trust, especially as people have become more aware of the biases influencing both conventional and new media. Social media platforms, characterised by user-generated material and algorithmically curated feeds, are often seen as more accessible and quick news sources. Nonetheless, they also exacerbate disinformation, resulting in a skewed perception of reality for several users. In contrast to conventional journalists who adhere to ethical standards, anyone with internet access may publish information on social media platforms, irrespective of its veracity. The absence of control complicates the public's ability to differentiate between legitimate news sources and inaccurate or potentially harmful disinformation. Continual exposure to erroneous or misleading information has resulted in a widespread normalisation of scepticism towards all media, not alone those accountable for disseminating fake news. The erosion of trust is especially significant among younger demographics. Research by Lee et al. (2017) indicates that younger generations are much more inclined to use social media platforms for news compared to older generations, who are more familiar with conventional news sources such as television and print newspapers. This transition has created a generational rift over faith in journalism, with younger persons often seeing conventional media channels as antiquated, biased, or less relevant. As younger persons emerge as the principal consumers of news, the deterioration of faith in journalism becomes further established.

The emergence of social media as a primary news source has profoundly impacted journalistic methods. Journalists and news organisations are now compelled to adjust to the rapid dynamics of social media, where breaking news disseminates instantaneously, and the pursuit of clicks and engagement has become a primary objective. According to Bell (2016), the need to "go viral" often results in the preference for spectacular narratives over comprehensive reporting and evidence-based analysis. Stories that elicit intense emotional responses or include spectacular headlines are more prone to being spread, frequently resulting in the neglect of significant but less captivating narratives. This change in emphasis from stringent reporting has exacerbated the trust issue. When media organisations choose expediency above precision, they are more prone to errors, which are then magnified via social media. Moreover, the need to get clicks sometimes results in the use of dramatic or deceptive headlines, commonly termed "clickbait." The outcome is a loop whereby media organisations, striving for financial viability in a digital economy, unintentionally erode their credibility and exacerbate the public's increasing distrust of journalism. Conventional media organisations are not the only entities confronting these difficulties. The internet age has fostered new journalism forms, including citizen journalism and "alternative media," which may sometimes exhibit less accountability than conventional news organisations. While these novel forms of journalism provide significant insights, they are deficient in editorial supervision and the professional standards that define conventional media. As a result, this fosters the belief that all news, regardless of its source, is equally untrustworthy, exacerbating the trust issue.

The erosion of faith in journalism is associated with the ascendance of populism and political polarisation, which has altered the media environment in recent years. Politicians, especially those aligned with populism, often see the media as an enemy. This has resulted in a continuous campaign of media criticism, with political leaders often alleging prejudice and disinformation among journalists. This atmosphere has made it more difficult for the public to differentiate between trustworthy and non-credible information sources. The discourse of populist politicians, who often depict the media as "the enemy of the people," has intensified popular scepticism against conventional



journalism. According to Panievsky (2021), this transition is not only a critique of individual journalists but is a wider effort to undermine the legitimacy of the press in democratic nations. Populist leaders exploit media scepticism by disseminating their narratives via social media, enabling direct engagement with their supporters while circumventing conventional news platforms. This has intensified the erosion of faith in mainstream media and cultivated a climate conducive to the proliferation of disinformation. Social media platforms have emerged as a conducive environment for populist discourse, enabling political leaders to directly communicate with their constituents, often circumventing conventional journalistic filters. By positioning themselves as outsiders against a corrupt media establishment, populist individuals use the increasing scepticism towards conventional journalism, offering their own unmediated narratives as the "truth." This has resulted in a scenario where the concept of objective reporting is challenged, leaving the public to traverse a convoluted and often inconsistent media environment.

The erosion of faith in media significantly affects democracy. In democratic nations, journalism is essential for accountability, public enlightenment, and the cultivation of an educated populace. If the public loses faith in journalists to provide accurate and impartial information, the integrity of democracy is jeopardised. An educated electorate is crucial for making societal choices, including voting in elections and participating in civic debate. When individuals lose faith in the media, they are less inclined to believe the information essential for making judgements. The proliferation of disinformation, coupled with the growing challenge of distinguishing reality from fiction, undermines the basis of democratic engagement. In such an atmosphere, individuals may grow disenchanted or apathetic, uncertain of which sources to believe, or, more detrimentally, they may resort to extreme or biased sources that exacerbate societal polarisation. The erosion of faith in journalism is a challenge not just for the media sector but also for democracy as a whole.

The erosion of faith in journalism is a complicated and diverse problem that requires immediate action. The decline of public trust in conventional media is fuelled by the proliferation of disinformation, sensationalism, and the politicisation of the media environment. To re-establish confidence, journalists must reassert their dedication to truth, impartiality, and accountability. Media organisations must adopt openness, fact-checking, and ethical reporting, while acknowledging the evolving dynamics of the digital media landscape. Restoring faith in journalism is vital for maintaining the media's fundamental role in democracy, acting as a cornerstone of accountability, a platform for public discourse, and a dependable source of information.

## **6. Social Media as a Double-Edged Sword for Journalism**

The emergence of social media has significantly transformed the field of journalism. Although technology has created new opportunities for journalists to connect with audiences, interact with communities, and swiftly distribute information, it has concurrently presented considerable problems. Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram enable journalists to disseminate breaking news instantaneously and communicate directly with their viewers, cultivating a novel degree of interaction. Nonetheless, these platforms often exert significant pressure on journalists to prioritise expediency over precision, undermine journalistic ethics for the sake of participation, and contend with the increasing impact of non-professional content providers. In this perspective, social media serves as both a significant asset and a possible hazard to the fundamental tenets of journalism.

A fundamental advantage that social media provides to journalism is the capacity to crowdsource information. Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook enable individuals to submit news instantaneously, becoming them essential sources for breaking stories. During crises or conflicts, eyewitness testimonies may provide prompt insights, often preceding the ability of conventional news organisations to deploy resources for event coverage. During the Arab Spring, social media played a significant role in recording and disseminating information on political turmoil in the Middle East, enabling narratives to originate directly from those impacted, circumventing conventional media filters (Tufekci, 2017). Nonetheless, this democratisation of news has significant hazards. Crowdsourced news often remains unconfirmed and may be devoid of the context, analysis, and fact-checking inherent to professional journalism. Journalists that depend on social media as their main information source may hastily report news, risking the dissemination of disinformation or incomplete narratives. In some instances, the inherent characteristics of social media exacerbate the proliferation of rumours and unconfirmed assertions, which are difficult to verify promptly, particularly when journalists under pressure to write rapidly. This jeopardises the trust of reported news, since disinformation may spread as rapidly, if not more so, than the truth. Moreover, the algorithmic bias of social media, which elevates popular narratives and spectacular content, might exacerbate the verification process. When algorithms favour information that elicits engagement—such as emotionally charged, sensational, or controversial material—journalists may be compelled to pursue viral content instead of concentrating on accurate and comprehensive reporting (Fuchs, 2018). This compromises the essential journalistic tenets of truth and impartiality.



A notable advancement driven by social media is the emergence of influencer journalism, whereby influencers, bloggers, and content creators—often without traditional journalistic education—assume the role of news disseminators. These people, often with substantial and devoted followings, are progressively regarded as alternative news sources. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are populated with influencers who address current events, politics, and social concerns, often infusing their commentary with a personal touch or distinctive viewpoint that conventional journalists may not use. The allure of influencer journalism is in its apparent genuineness. Influencers sometimes portray themselves as "relatable" or "authentic," in stark contrast to the apparent aloofness and detachment of conventional journalists. This has led to a decrease in confidence for conventional media channels, particularly among younger demographics who choose the casual, personalised approach of influencers over the professional standards upheld by journalists. Influencers often interact with their audience in a more personal and direct way, making them more trustworthy and approachable than the typically formal tone of traditional news channels (Pavlik, 2013). The emergence of influencer journalism prompts significant questions about journalistic ethics. A multitude of influencers possess insufficient formal expertise in research methodologies, fact verification, and ethical principles, sometimes prioritising entertainment or sensationalism at the expense of factual accuracy. In contrast to professional journalists, influencers are not constrained by ethical standards or editorial supervision. Their produced information may be inaccurate, simplistic, or altogether untrue, particularly about complicated matters like as politics, science, or international affairs. This obscures the distinction between entertainment, opinion, and factual reporting, potentially misleading consumers who find it challenging to discern reliable news from opinion-driven material. Moreover, the monetisation of social media has motivated influencers to emphasise engagement and virality at the expense of veracity. A multitude of influencers get revenue via commercial agreements, sponsorships, and affiliate marketing, all of which may engender conflicts of interest in news reporting. The emphasis on profit-oriented content may result in biased or distorted representations of events, hence undermining the trustworthiness of the information offered (Tandoc et al., 2018). In this context, the deficiency of journalistic integrity becomes more evident as influencers prioritise attention-grabbing information, often compromising accuracy.

Alongside the emergence of non-professional content makers, journalists are seeing heightened pressure to maintain a social media presence. Social media has evolved from a mere news dissemination medium to a crucial instrument for journalists to cultivate personal brands, engage with audiences, and increase their exposure. The prominence of platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn has enabled journalists to interact directly with their audience, providing behind-the-scenes insights, addressing enquiries, and engaging in discussions on current events. Although these interactions may enhance transparency and audience involvement, they also introduce new obstacles. The incessant desire for social media participation may divert journalists from their fundamental duties of comprehensive reporting, research, and fact-checking. The need to publish often and interact with followers may compel journalists to prioritise hot themes or viral stories, despite inadequate time for thorough investigation. Consequently, the quality of reporting may decline, and journalists may resort to "newsjacking"—capitalizing on a trending issue without doing enough investigation or offering a balanced viewpoint (Herzog, 2022). Furthermore, the culture of immediacy fostered by social media and its algorithmic emphasis on dramatic narratives compels journalists to prioritise expediency above precision. The incessant desire for immediate updates has diminished the significance of comprehensive investigative reporting, which may take days, weeks, or even months to finalise. Many journalists today prioritise following viral trends above producing well-researched, in-depth pieces, leading to a compromised type of journalism that forfeits critical thought and analysis for immediate satisfaction.

Social media is unequivocally a double-edged sword for journalism. It equips journalists with robust instruments for accessing global audiences, interacting with communities, and discovering significant narratives via crowdsourcing. Conversely, it presents considerable obstacles, such as the proliferation of disinformation, the emergence of influencer journalism, and the need to maintain an active presence at the expense of professional standards. Journalists must adeptly traverse this novel digital landscape, combining the advantages of social media with the fundamental tenets of ethical journalism. The future of journalism hinges on its capacity to adapt to the changing digital environment while maintaining ethical norms that guarantee truth, impartiality, and accountability.

## **7. Conclusion**

Social media has unequivocally transformed journalism, presenting substantial potential and considerable problems. It democratises news delivery, facilitating rapid and extensive access to information, enabling users to express their viewpoints and participate in global discussions. The emergence of social media has resulted in the deterioration of conventional journalistic norms, including accuracy, objectivity, and accountability. The need to produce viral content and the ubiquity of disinformation erode the credibility of news sources, fostering public scepticism towards the media. The influence of social media on journalism has been especially detrimental regarding political





polarisation, since the quick dissemination of false news and misinformation exacerbates societal differences. Nonetheless, journalism is not devoid of optimism. The future depends on media organisations and journalists' capacity to adapt to the digital age while maintaining fundamental journalistic principles. Should journalists capitalise on the possibilities presented by social media while adhering to stringent fact-checking, ethical reporting, and openness, they may regain public confidence and restore the profession's reputation. The difficulty is to achieve a balance between technical advancement and the need to provide accurate, dependable, and significant news to the public.

### **Future Directions for Journalism**

The future of journalism in the digital age depends on finding a balance between embracing new technology and preserving traditional ethical standards. Some experts argue that social media can enhance journalism by enabling greater interactivity and access to diverse voices. However, this requires a commitment to journalistic integrity and the development of new strategies for verifying and presenting news.

- **Collaborative Efforts:** Journalists and social media platforms must collaborate to develop better systems for combating misinformation and promoting credible sources (Bradshaw & Rohumaa, 2017).
- **Reinforcing Ethical Standards:** Journalism schools and professional organizations must emphasize the importance of ethics in digital reporting. By prioritizing accuracy, transparency, and accountability, journalists can help rebuild public trust and maintain the credibility of the profession (Ferrucci, 2017).

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