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Slow Journalism As an Alternative Economic Model in New Media

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Abstract

In an era of rapid and instant journalism, where concerns about the negative impacts of speed are prevalent, it is easy to overlook other forms of journalism with different production timelines. Scholarly work on slow journalism is sparse, so the primary aim of this article is to describe some key characteristics of what slow journalism might entail. The article will examine how the term has been used in blogs, websites, public forums, and the limited scholarly literature available. It will also explore examples from producers who identify with slow journalism to illustrate its practical application. The rise of independent journalism that embraces the concept of "Slow" in its production process suggests the emergence of a new alternative in the media landscape.Slow journalism appears as a response to the information overload generated by the acceleration of the news production cycle in a digital era marked by the emergence of new operators (social networks, news aggregators).

Key words: digital environment, journalism, media landscape

In today's digital environment, a new information framework is emerging, characterized by news generated by various operators, not all of which are traditional media. Since the advent of the 24-hour news cycle in the early 2000s, the production, distribution, and consumption of information have accelerated to dizzying speeds. This rapid pace has led to information overload for digital audiences, manifesting in continuous updates, fewer sources being consulted, insufficiently verified facts, and standardized journalistic narratives.

For over a decade, experts and seasoned journalists have been calling for more time to be dedicated to the production of publishable information. Slowing down the news production cycle is believed to enhance the quality of information products and improve the conditions under which audiences receive this information.

Ananny adds a temporal dimension to Roger Silverstone's argument that the media can create "proper distance" (configurations of space and meaning that are "distinctive, correct, and ethically or socially appropriate;" Silverstone 2003, 473) with the idea of "proper time." Benjamin Ball (2016), in his contribution "Multimedia, Slow Journalism as Process and the Possibility of Proper Time," also builds on Silverstone (Digital Journalism 4.4). "Proper time" for Ball refers not to "perfect duration, pace, tempo or length, but— instead—it is about reflexive consideration, on the part of journalists, for how understanding can be achieved in, and through, journalism." Slow journalism describes the "moral tenor of the communicative process" rather than its duration, tempo or formal characteristics. While communication may be increasingly faster and easier, Ball argues "understanding one another in media is a task that requires time."

Matthew Ricketson (2015), in his essay "When Slow News is Good News," also explores the value of longer-form slow journalism, but here as book-length journalism about historic news events, the atomic bomb in Hiroshima in 1945 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Journalism Practice 10.4). He draws on James Carey's (1986) argument that journalism needs to be understood as a corpus, rather than a set of isolated immediate stories. "The obsessive identification of journalism with a thirst to be first with the news has drastically narrowed public understanding of it as a democratic social practice," writes Ricketson. He explores how the immediate news, especially in the context of war, cannot provide the detail, depth and perspective that can turn limited pieces of information into understanding and knowledge.

In recent decades, we have witnessed a proliferation of adjectival journalisms: public, civic, citizen, new new, wisdom, knowledge, ethnographic, etc. These adjectives suggest that if there ever was a dominant singular version of journalism—a notion historians of journalism have clearly refuted (see Conboy 2004)—it is no longer the case. For a long time, the study of journalism was fixated on journalism as news,Journalism practitioners and scholars have entered a period of high experimentation and theorisation. Whether slow journalism continues to be a useful way of conceptualising and gathering together many of the diverse experiments against and in response to fast journalism remains to be seen. A number of contributors have referred to slow journalism as a "movement." It is hoped that this double special issue will provoke journalism researchers and practitioners to further debate on this and other trajectories.

Journalism is a field that is constantly evolving alongside the transformation of the societies it serves. Despite these changes, certain aspects remain constant, shaping its fundamental characteristics. It remains an industry where professionals are driven by a sense of restlessness, observation, passion, and curiosity. The nature of journalism, which involves public exposure, carries with it an obligation to transparency and a responsibility to society.

In a democratic society, individuals have a right to information, and it is the responsibility of journalists to provide this information rigorously and truthfully. Society, through its legal mechanisms, must guarantee total freedom for the practice of journalism, albeit within the boundaries of journalistic ethics and professional codes of conduct. It is essential to investigate, verify, and report

with accuracy and truthfulness in order to fulfill society's right to information, which it entrusts to journalists.

Journalism then, as I am using the term, refers to more than the news of the day (be it hard or soft), more than breaking news, in fact, not just “the news” but also “the new,” and sometimes “the old.” This is easy to forget, as “news” is often used interchangeably with “journalism.” Mitchell Stephens (2009, 6) observes, “It is almost impossible to speak of journalism today without using the word ‘news’… Yet, it may be time to begin disentangling journalism from news.” To do so would involve disentangling our association of news and journalism with speed and instantaneity.

Journalism practitioners and scholars are currently engaged in a period of intense experimentation and theorization. The question of whether slow journalism remains a useful framework for conceptualizing and bringing together diverse experiments that counter and respond to fast journalism is still open. Some contributors have described slow journalism as a "movement." This double special issue aims to stimulate further debate among journalism researchers and practitioners on this and other emerging trajectories in journalism.

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