HOWARD JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATIONS
https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2023.2233096

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Journalistic Verification Practices From the BBC World News and Al Jazeera English

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ABSTRACT

News media organizations are a part of the institution of public knowledge. Through journalism, news media organizations inform and educate the public on matters of public concern. However, the digitalization of news media and new affordances brought forth by digital technology have challenged the journalistic field. Complexity in the news media landscape, particularly with the proliferation of fake news, has pushed greater demand for news organizations to ensure that news produced is correctly and accurately verified, especially in newsrooms' adoption of user-generated content (UGC). Breaking news reports are more prone to the utilization of UGC as newsrooms compete for immediacy. For 24-hour news channels, its credible image is vital for future sustainability in a challenging media landscape. This study adopts the gatekeeping theory as it identifies the verification process by two 24-hour news channels—BBC World News and Al Jazeera English—as part of daily news operations. Based on in-depth interviews conducted with news media practitioners from both news channels, five methods of verification are adopted.

KEYWORDS

Verification; user-generated content; BBC World News; Al Jazeera English; gatekeeping

Introduction

In the current journalistic environment, social media and the adoption of content from users into news narratives have become commonplace. Social media users share the content of a breaking news nature with other audiences, including journalists (Tandoc, 2019). This content-sharing of breaking news nature is usually referenced as user-generated content (UGC). The adoption of UGC into news production has become common and is highly valued (Rauchfleisch et al., 2017). For instance, the BBC created the BBC Hub to cater to its audience's growing influx of material (Harrison, 2010). As news organizations continue to obtain materials from audiences, the verification process must be conducted efficiently and holistically to ensure the accuracy of the news produced. This article explores the verification strategies employed by two 24-hour television news organizations—BBC World News (BBCWN) and Al Jazeera English (AJE).

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UGC and journalistic verification

The UGC definitions are broad and can be conceptualized depending on many perspectives from journalism and media to the creative industries. UGC has been defined generically as a term that encompasses a wide range of media and creative content types created by contributors working outside of conventional professional environments (Bruns, 2016). UGC is also defined lengthily as follows: "'as any kind of text, data or action performed by online digital systems users, published and disseminated by the same user through independent channels, that incur an expressive or communicative effect either on an individual manner or combined with other contributions from the same or other sources'" (Santos, 2022). Whichever definition one holds, UGC is a double-edged sword for journalists because it provides the opportunity to diversify their news reporting through various perspectives but also challenges verification as a core function of journalism (Rauchfleisch et al., 2017). UGC is argued to affect news quality and simultaneously provide the audience with a voice (Harrison, 2010) in the news narrative.

Meanwhile, Heinderyckx and Vos (2016) argue that gatekeeping is a means for accounting for the reality that not all information is equally available to all persons. The gatekeeping process involves a two-way process where reporters, editors, and consumers become active actors in news production (Erzikova, 2018). Additionally, gatekeeping is questioned because legacy media are seen as fading institutions (Heinderyckx & Vos, 2016). Verification of UGC is a vital gatekeeping process to ensure the sustainability of legacy media such as the BBCWN and AJE. Thus, source verification is vital in journalistic practice (Rauchfleisch et al., 2017) as UGC adoption in newsrooms is normalized.

Gatekeeping is one of the most studied areas of communication research (Boberg et al., 2018). Gatekeeping, first coined by Kurt Lewin, explains a way to examine how objective problems, such as the movement of goods and people, are affected by subjective states and cultural values (Deiuliis, 2015). The concept of gatekeeping, which was further developed into a mass media perspective by David Manning White, argued that the media gatekeeper has the power to construct social reality, as gatekeepers determine not only what events the public knows about but also how the public thinks about events based on the gatekeeper's own experiences, attitudes, and expectations (Deiuliis, 2015). Therefore, gatekeeping is the overall process through which the social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed and involves variables that either facilitate or constrain their passage through the gatekeeping process (Shoemaker et al., 2001). In other words, the gatekeeping theory describes the process where some information is filtered or covered by the media (Shoemaker et al., 2010). One study suggests that the handling of UGC and interacting with users are becoming more important journalistic tasks as journalists observed a rise in a user input (Paulussen & Ugille, 2008) in news production. In light of new media technologies, Barzilai-Nahon (2009) expanded the theory of gatekeeping and developed the concept of "'network gatekeeping,'" involving the construction of social reality through the process of controlling information by various aspects such as the selection of news, withholding, channeling, manipulation, repetition, and deletion (Deiuliis, 2015). Channeling, manipulation, and repetition are important elements in conceptualizing gatekeeping in social networks

(Deiuliis, 2015). These three elements can be found in UGC outputs whereby some-manipulated UGC contents are channeled via various platforms that are repeatedly watched by the mass audience. Therefore, the adoption of UGC into news productionis commonplace; nevertheless, it brings consequences to the output produced.

The work of network gatekeepers goes through a similar process to traditional gatekeeping to edit, create, and disseminate content (Deiuliis, 2015). Therefore, when a newsroom adopts UGC into a news piece, they are also adopting the creation of content from non-journalists who have had their gatekeeping process conducted on the content piece before disseminating it to the public. The creation of a UGC piece may have gone through the process of editing and manipulation of content before it is disseminated, the consequences of which could be detrimental to the public. Ergo, since the gatekeeper has the power to construct social reality, the adoption of UGC in newsrooms demands a higher need for content accuracy through verification. This research discusses verification steps taken by news organizations to ensure the accuracy of news produced in light of the increasing adoption of UGC in news production while guided by the gatekeeping theory.

News and verification

Advancement in technology and its affordances have pushed for the speedy distribution of information and has added new challenges to news organizations. Social media is argued to question the top-down ideology of traditional journalism by undermining the power and authority of journalism's claim to the monopolization of provision to public knowledge (Hermida, 2012). The ability of social media for quick dissemination of information and interactive process between its users to share and comment on any issue uploaded to mass recipients have assisted in the proliferation of incorrect information to be widely disseminated. As a result, the sharing of disinformation tends to outdo the sharing of fact checks (Humprecht, 2020). It is the duty of news organizations to supply accurate and correct news to the public or face the consequences of tarnishing its image and credibility as a news source. The credibility and trustworthiness of news organizations depend to a certain extent on the practice of verification conducted (Brandtzaeg et al., 2016). Thus, the task of verifying information is ever more crucial and much more challenging than before. Verification is not an uncommon step in news-making. It is argued to be a necessary process within the social functions of journalism (Tandoc, 2019). However, advancements in technology and the challenges brought forth by social media through UGC require journalists to pay more attention to ensure the authenticity of their sources. Nevertheless, the role of non-journalists via social media and UGC as contributing entrants in news narrative is unavoidable and ultimately intensifies a greater need for authenticity and accuracy in news produced. Therefore, verification has become a commonplace practice among reporters and thus knowledge of various methods of verification is crucial in journalistic practice.

In verifying the information obtained, news organizations need to focus on two aspects: the content of the news and the source of the content itself. The process of verification is an important aspect of reporting and editing before the construction of news, and it is a process that is a central task for journalists (Shapiro et al., 2013).

The pressure on rolling news channels to provide breaking news reports makes the verification process even more crucial (Rauchfleisch et al., 2017), particularly because rolling news channels such as renowned ones like the BBCWN are usually seen as credible news sources. Some news organizations may ease down their effort in verification if big news organizations such as rolling news channels have verified the news first, as they (the big news organizations) are seen as more trustworthy (Kordopatis-Zilos et al., 2019). Strong competition among news organizations has made immediacy and exclusivity two highly sought factors in news production and delivery. The inclusion of UGC via social media results in the intensification of the need for gatekeeping practices by news organizations to ensure that content is properly verified. News organizations lack formal guidelines on methods to validate content (Backholm et al., 2017), although more news organizations have started to produce guidelines for verifying content. Increased false information, especially via an online platform, forces news consumers to conduct self-verification (Edgerly & Vraga, 2020).

Yet, the task of verifying the authenticity and accuracy of information lies not only with news consumers but mainly with news providers as disseminators of information. Journalists will increasingly have to share their control over the news production process with their users through the adoption of UGC into newsrooms (Paulussen & Ugille, 2008). UGC adoption has created tensions and problems for journalists as they struggle to find a balance between values of quality impartiality and audience engagement (Harrison, 2010). As news organizations incorporate UGC into their news production, questions of accuracy and credibility remain significant (Ahmad, 2017). A previous study analyzed the verification process conducted on UGC obtained by Twitter texts (Rauchfleisch et al., 2017). Yet, more studies are needed to analyze the verification process in newsrooms such as rolling news channels. Therefore, this research aims to answer the following question: How is verification conducted in rolling news channels of BBCWN and AJE?

Methodology

This research aims to identify the method of verification conducted by two renowned rolling news stations: BBCWN and AJE. The BBC is a historically established, renowned rolling news channel. Meanwhile, AJE is comparatively new, with a counterhegemonic view (Henery, 2010). Therefore, the BBCWN is selected to represent the mainstream group of international media traffic, while the selection of AJE is to represent the contra-flow category in the global news media (Kasmani, 2013). Interviews were conducted with 17 journalists from the BBC and AJE, with 10 journalists from the BBC and 7 from the latter. The BBCWN is under the bigger umbrella of the BBC, and the situation is similar with AJE, which is part of Al Jazeera Media Network. Therefore, interviews were conducted with journalists from both news organizations who either work for the bigger arm or both arms. This research employed semi-structured and in-depth interviews with journalists from different backgrounds. For example, broadcast journalists, editors, social media producers, news producers, and various others. Questions asked to the informants include how verification of UGC contents is conducted, bearing in mind their role as gatekeepers for the organization.

Snowball sampling was chosen as a method for the selection of journalists to be interviewed. Snowball sampling is a form of non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher recruits several initial subjects. The initial subjects will then nominate other individuals to be interviewed. It is widely known that journalists have tight schedules, and thus adopting the snowball sampling method is beneficial because it enables the researcher to identify subjects who are difficult to be interviewed through the researcher's initial contact. Interviews were manually transcribed by the researcher and analyzed accordingly. Discourse analysis was adopted as the method of analysis. Discourse analysis is an analysis method that focuses on texts and verbal language concerning the social context. Interviews conducted with respondents from both news organizations were analyzed to draw meaning to the study. The purpose of discourse analysis is to investigate the functions of language and understand how meaning is constructed in different contexts from social, cultural, and political to historical backgrounds of the discourse (Crosley, 2021). It involves analyzing large chunks of language as it is presented (Discourse Analysis—What Speakers Do in Conversation, 2022). This includes identifying discourse markers as part of analyzing interviews conducted with respondents from both news organizations. The themes that emerged during the interviews conducted were grouped accordingly.

Results

Five methods of verification are practiced by selected news channels. These methods of verification are further grouped into two broader categories. The first category of verification relies more on technological application, whereas the second group of verification category places greater emphasis on journalistic skills and experience in newsrooms. The results section will first address the category of technological application through two verification methods: reverse search and online verification services. The second part of the result section will address three other verification methods obtained from this study.

Reverse search

The problem of verifying multimedia content (i.e., images, video) that is contributed by users of social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook are of increasing interest given the pervasive use of these platforms and the modern technological capabilities for real-time capturing and sharing of rich multimedia content (Kordopatis-Zilos et al., 2019). Through technologies, news organizations can determine the difference between fake and genuine news content (Conroy et al., 2015). Findings from this research suggest the second type of verification conducted by news channels is the reverse search method.

It is suggested that reverse search is the first step that should be taken by journalists when dealing with photos shared on social media networks (Trewinnard, 2017). One BBC YouTube editor mentioned that reverse search is conducted to double-check whether an image is new or old since there are occasions when images or videos are uploaded under a different name, time, or language. Therefore, a similar image is

searched for authentication before it is presented to the public. Meanwhile, journalists working for AJE verify its content by looking into objects within a video to ensure that the elements are in the correct context as described. Reverse search also includes analyzing the footage of the scene, the weather, the location, certain landmarks, and the positions of shots taken. Additionally, journalists also ensure that information follows a logical sequence.

While advancement in new media technology has benefited journalists by easing news production to a certain extent, it has also brought challenges to journalists through various possibilities of video manipulation or duplication. These videos may also be re-labeled and distributed on various other platforms. Thus, objects in each footage are cross-checked through reverse search. Findings suggest that images are searched across the digital sphere using identified online applications to ensure that similar recorded footage does not exist elsewhere. Google Images and TinEye (Trewinnard, 2017) are examples of online applications used by journalists as part of their reverse search practice. Reverse search enables journalists to check whether an image is recent or outdated. One news producer for AJE explained how technology has changed news practice in speeding up the process of news production:

> We can rely on other technologies like social media for example, because people would have posted videos of their flooding, of their family or if it was the shooting, maybe the shooting itself, because of the likes of social media but it makes it trickier because it also means there's a lot more stuff we have to verify because again the keyword now is fake news and a lot of made-up things so we have tools to find out what's fake and what's not. … Also, recently I saw, there was a Russian plane that had been shot out of the sky in Syria, so we were able to use the website, if you reverse the image which was supposed to be the alleged Russian place when it reverses it, you'll see that it was posted online three years ago. So, there's evidence that it was a fake picture. So that's how technology has changed things for us, especially with the newsgathering and also makes things get to us quicker (AJE News Output Producer).

Fake news is not a new phenomenon; rather, the difference is in the massive proliferation and consumption due to social media (Waisbord, 2018), which has given it a new name. One respondent from the BBC described verification methods practiced:

> For verification we have a really, really long process for it, it's like a couple of things. It's not one thing. Probably UGC Hub might tell you more about it but it's because they use their own ways and they don't really discuss much but we do the first step for it. Which is well, the footage itself, the weather, the timing, so somebody claims this was shot in London today. Was London raining today or was it sunny? You check the forecast and you compare it to the weather. Then you compare it to the footage. You check the area, mostly if we know someone from the area, we'll ask them if is this Aleppo, is this Raqqa, is this Damascus? This picture cannot be new. Somebody is using an old picture. So those are the measures that you can do. And then we do a reverse search for our videos. This is to double-check whether it's new or not because sometimes it's uploaded under a different name, at a different time, or uploaded in a different language. So, you search their images. So, if you do a reverse search whether it was Russian, Arabic, Kurdish, or whatever language, it will appear. This is because you are comparing images, you are not comparing languages. So sometimes you get something let's say like Russia is shelling in Syria and it turns out to be some military show in Russia back in like whatever [period] (BBC YouTube Editor).

Findings from interviews with both news organizations suggest that newsrooms cannot avoid using UGC via social media as a source. However, findings also suggest that verification conducted in newsrooms is thorough as many aspects of reverse search are conducted before taking the source into news content. Interviews conducted with both news organizations suggest reverse search practice is similarly conducted by both news organizations as part of verification. This includes identifying the originality of the photo, source, location, and time of photo capture and the reason for capture (Urbani, 2019). The next verification method identified from this study is online verification services.

Online verification services

It is argued that there are numerous online tools utilized by journalists as part of their verification process (Brandtzaeg et al., 2016). Subscribing to online verification apps provides convenience and time savings for journalists. Journalists utilize various online verification tools to help ensure accuracy in the news reported. Social Mention, PolitiFact, Fastfact, and TinEye are some of the many types of services that journalists subscribe to for social media and verification (Brandtzaeg et al., 2016; Trewinnard, 2017; Urbani, 2019). Drawing from interviews conducted, one online verification tool identified to be commonly used by journalists is Storyful, which is a social media news agency that provides journalists with verification services, mainly in the format of videos and images. Storyful has a verification team responsible for verifying any videos received. It aids journalists by mentioning the relevancy of the content to suit certain platforms—for example, to be used either online or on television. Additionally, teams in Storyful will inform journalists of the current status of a video, whether it is yet to be verified or whether it is going through their internal verification process. The use of Storyful is illustrated by one AJE social media producer:

> They (journalists) have the training to verify the content. … So Storyful is one of the ways that we know whether this video is verified or not. … They (Storyful) have their team who are responsible to verify the videos. That's the actual reason Storyful is there. That's their actual job. They verify videos online and provide news organizations who are registered or signed up for their service. So, what they do is whenever they get a video, they post it and they would say if it's not yet verified, they would say something that refers that they are investigating this video to make sure. So, in this case, we won't ever use it until we see the word "cleared" which means that they have contacted whoever posted this video and they did their investigations and they cleared the video and they would say it can be used for online, for television … (AJE Social Media Producer).

The adoption of new technology has shaped how news is gathered, produced, and delivered to the public. Technical innovations supporting journalistic verification practices are needed to aid journalists in speedy news delivery, particularly relating to breaking news events (Backholm et al., 2017). Nevertheless, various online applications that are used by journalists are machinery tools with limited capability and thus may be confined and rigid in their functionality. Therefore, the need for verification should be balanced between human subjectivity and the need for overwhelming technical know-how.

Double-source policy

The double-source policy is commonly practiced among journalists to ensure that news to be reported has been thoroughly vetted before broadcast. News organizations subscribe to international news agencies such as AP, AFP, and Reuters, all of which are renowned for their credibility as sources of news. These news agencies are usually treated as the first point of verified sources. According to a respondent from the BBCWN:

> Everything is second-sourced. Nothing is ever run until we get at least two sources and everything goes through a line of people before it goes on air, somebody will find a story and it will go to a senior journalist, an assistant producer, an assistant editor, and it'll go to the editor, it'll go through a line of people so you don't go to just one person and it goes to air and I think facts are always key. Sometimes it's interesting to watch a story play out with narratives but a fact's a fact (BBC Producer and Presenter).

The organization's emphasis on double-sourcing to ensure accuracy is reflected in its image as a credible news outlet. The BBCWN, similar to its main channel, the BBC, remains a globally reputable news channel due to its editorial accuracy (Henery, 2010). The practice of double-sourcing in the BBC is echoed by a respondent from AJE:

> Yes, if we are reporting something there would have to be two sources for it. We might report something from one of the sources like Reuters or the Associated Press. We might quote them and say Reuters is reporting that but once we have two sources, we would go with it (AJE News Producer).

Similar to the practices at BBCWN, interviews conducted with journalists working for AJE suggest that the double-source policy is important to the newsroom. In addition to using content from news agencies such as AP, Reuters, AFP and various others, journalists may also utilize sources obtained from UGC. However, when identifying and verifying sources from UGC, journalists conduct checks on the authenticity of footage through the name, time, and language of the uploader. The two-source rule, also called the double-source policy, is widely adopted across various news organizations and has become a common practice among journalists. The next verification method identified in this study emphasizes the aspect of the human role in verification through what is called cross-departmental collaboration.

Cross-departmental collaboration

Interviews with BBCWN journalists suggest that the BBC has a UGC team that specializes in verifying contents obtained from the public. The team is called UGC Hub. The Hub is described as a dedicated desk for the discovery, verification, and rights clearance of user-generated content (A Futuristic Walkie Talkie and Timeless Journalism, 2015). Additionally, journalists working with the UGC Hub work collaboratively with other teams such as the BBC Monitoring and also the Social Media team to verify the information received. Findings further suggest heavy reliance on and trust toward the BBC UGC team to ensure that information is correctly verified. This finding is supported by a previous study in which it is argued that the BBC UGC professionals

are described as "'masters'" in verifying content from social media (Reid, 2015). However, non–BBC UGC team journalists lack detailed knowledge of the verification process conducted by the UGC team. Nevertheless, the non-BBC UGC team are confident that verification carried out by the designated BBC UGC team, as well as its outsourced data analysts, is reliable, impartial and credible. One respondent from the BBC explained:

> For verification we have a really, really long process for it, it's like a couple of things. It's not one thing. Probably UGC Hub might tell you more about it but it's because they use their own ways and they don't really discuss much about it but we do the first step for it (BBC YouTube Editor).

The practice of cross-departmental collaboration is not as significant in AJE as in the BBC. This is partly reflected in the existence of the BBC UGC Hub, which specializes in the verification of UGC content on the BBC. However, the practice of cross-checking resources among colleagues is conducted in AJE. One AJE senior picture editor mentioned the importance of accuracy in news reports through verification:

> There's a lot that goes on into actually verifying information and making sure what you convey is the absolute truth [and] if you don't know that is the absolute truth you absolutely say it. There are many ways. Checking with other media sources, cross-check as much as you can. Speaking to voices on the ground, there are all sorts of ways. Again, I'm not exactly in that box doing that on a daily basis but I'm sitting next to the person doing that. Often, I challenge. I say "Do we know that this is Aleppo, do we know that this is today? How do we know? How do we know this person is the attacker?" (AJE Senior Picture Editor).

Comments by the AJE journalist above explain the type of verification conducted on AJE. They also indicate the underlying verification method that is needed by all journalists: editorial judgment.

Editorial judgment

Journalists cannot only rely on verification tools and automation. Therefore, it is imperative for journalists to have ample editorial experience. Editorial experience, journalistic flair, and an investigative mind are important criteria for a journalist (Manning, 2001). It is contended that journalistic authority is constructed by what journalists do and how they do it, rather than simply by what they know (Hermida, 2012). Therefore, editorial knowledge and fair judgment are vital prerequisites for a journalist. The number of years of experience, as with other professions, is vital to enhance one's skill. The importance of grasping key journalistic skills which come from years of experience in the field is elaborated by one respondent below:

> We have two ways to verify this. There is a technical or automatic way to check on the video or the photos. And the other process is the human process. We put editorial judgement to decide if it's correct or not. We can't say it is 100 percent correct, what we are doing in Al Jazeera is how 50–50, 60–40, right or wrong, we are trying to make a balance and then we have to take a decision. Sometimes we make a mistake and we'll say it if it's our mistake. If you want to work with social media and news from social media, sometimes you have to make a mistake. You have to be brave otherwise you will ignore all these

> important sources. Citizen journalists or sources from social media sometimes they are faster and better than journalists [and] you have thousands and millions of cameras and mobiles everywhere on the streets. You can't settle with 70 reporters in Al Jazeera. So, we have to take the risk and we have to take editorial judgment (Al Jazeera Media Institute, Media Development Manager).

Similarly, one respondent from the BBC explains the importance of having editorial knowledge and experience:

> I don't think that's a new issue. You use your judgement. If you think it's credible then you do. You always attribute it. If you think that it's not credible or the person who told you has an ulterior motive or that they're not in the position to judge or that for them is secondhand or thirdhand, then you wouldn't run with it. But if several people have told you the same thing and you think there might be something to it, then, of course, you would but you use the same journalistic judgement as you would have used 30 or 40 years ago. Even now I mean the medium has changed but the ways and methods of verifying and checking, having a sense of what could be correct and what's not, that hasn't changed. It's the principle that says (BBC Video and Broadcast Journalist).

As mentioned previously, there is no specific fact-checking UGC team in AJE as compared to the BBC. No social media unit that specializes in social media exists in the channel (Barkho, 2021), and journalists working for AJE are given full autonomy to conduct their verification. Meanwhile, the BBC journalist interviewed echoed a similar message as AJE. As much as there are tools to aid verification, the right judgment comes from years of experience being a journalist. Verification requires journalists to skillfully identify the accuracy of the source obtained (Brandtzaeg et al., 2016), and journalists will become better skilled as experience accumulates over years.

Discussion

The practice of verification bestows journalistic communication with its credibility and believability (Hermida, 2012). A comparison of two news channels suggests some similarities in the verification methods utilized, but each news organization has its areas of emphasis. Both news channels utilize online verification apps and services for reverse search; implement a double-source policy for all sources obtained; and believe in the importance of having the right knowledge and journalistic experience to verify information obtained. One method of verification adopted by journalists as suggested in a previous study is editorial judgment (Shapiro et al., 2013), and findings from this study expand the previous in identifying four additional factors. They are cross-departmental collaboration, double-source policy, reverse search using online tools, and subscription to online verification services. This research has also identified differences in verification approaches by both news organizations. AJE journalists tend to take more risks in their news verification process than journalists working for the BBCWN. The channel does not have a specific department that verifies the information obtained but conducts its own verification to ensure that its reported news is correct. Unlike in the BBCWN, journalists at AJE are given more autonomy to decide whether to use unverified content, and these differences are based on a journalist's knowledge and experience of working in the field. Since journalists sometimes make mistakes, AJE journalists are made accountable for their actions by admitting any mistake, which is then rectified. Further, AJE

journalists compete and are more flexible in adopting developments in new media technology such as the adoption of sources from UGC and social media. Journalists are more transparent to reveal specific verification strategies as compared to journalists working for the BBCWN. This could be due to different organizational policies that restrict access to information or that the journalists interviewed are cautious to reveal information about their news processes to the researcher.

The BBC presents itself as a reputable news brand (Horrocks et al., 2009; Wright, 2014), and findings from this study suggest that journalists working for the BBCWN are careful and stringent about verifying information to ensure that news reported is error-free. This is partly because journalists are aware of the need to maintain the news organization's image as a credible news brand. Findings further suggest that journalists may not be aware of the specific details of the verification checks conducted by the UGC team but place confidence and trust in other colleagues to ensure that the news is verified correctly. This may subconsciously be due to reasons, as suggested in a previous study, whereby organizations perceived as highly credible are able to reduce the efforts put into scrutinizing their messages for errors because when a credible organization makes a mistake, people may accept the organization's apology more easily (Kim & Park, 2017). Additionally, limited knowledge exists of structural characteristics that shape the practices of fact-checking outlets (Humprecht, 2020). Editorial knowledge and judgment from many years of experience in the field are important requirements to become good journalists. It is a task for those within journalism to establish and verify the most worthwhile, interesting, and important facts, as presented by others and themselves and to communicate these interestingly to gain public interest (Floyd, 2019). Although there are automated tools to ease journalistic verification processes, having a critical mind and sheer editorial knowledge and experience are vital skills required for journalists to ensure the accuracy of information remains in all journalistic works. Skilled editorial judgment is vital to maneuver complexity from content contributions created by non-journalists into the making of a news piece from news gathering, production, and delivery.

This study has revealed five methods of verification techniques applied in 24-hour television newsrooms. Verification conducted at the BBCWN is stringent and meticulous. The channel emphasizes collaboration and trusts other journalists working in specialized departments such as its UGC Hub, whereby its journalists have experience and knowledge in detailed methods of verification. Even though employees acknowledge the importance of delivering accurate news, AJE relies more on journalistic knowledge and experience and is given autonomy to make reporting decisions from partially verified sources in special circumstances. This, however, does not mean that the channel is lacking in its verification. Merely, Al Jazeera embraces the challenges of new media technology positively by emphasizing the importance of sound editorial judgement and ample journalistic experience when dealing with social media sources and verification. Similarly to the BBC, AJE too places importance on truthful reporting. The fact that the news channel has had numerous attacks to close down its operations by various governments in which it operates indicates the organization's continuous effort in providing truthful stories to the public at large (Najjar, 2021).

The gatekeeping theory will remain relevant pending journalistic reform due to changes in media technology (Heinderyckx & Vos, 2016). As new technologies emerge in

journalistic practices, the role of the gatekeeper in news production will evolve in its complexity. Increasing attention has been paid to social and technological factors that transform gatekeeping practices (Savolainen, 2020) and, as findings from this study suggest, reverse search and online verification services are examples of technological factors through the development of new media technologies that are transforming gatekeeping practices in newsrooms. Meanwhile, social factors such as the practice of double-source policy, cross-departmental collaboration, and editorial judgment ensure that the gatekeeping theory will continue to be relevant in both news organizations as they utilize various means of UGC verification to adapt to the changing demands of news media. The theory of gatekeeping will continue to evolve as it has been from Lewin's and White's seminal studies. It will continue to be relevant in the networked and social media environment, as continuous reformation takes place in light of the changing world in which familiar gatekeeping processes continue to exist (Heinderyckx & Vos, 2016).

This research compares the news organizations mentioned but does not intend to highlight which of the two use better practices. Rather, this study aims to identify different verification methods applied by both news organizations. Future studies may look into verification techniques adopted by other news organizations to build on this research.

Consent

The research was approved by the University of Glasgow, College of Arts Research Ethics Committee. Consent to the use of data was provided to respondents to select their preference (to have their names cited or to remain anonymous). Names of interviewed respondents have been concealed for anonymity purposes in this research.

Disclosure statement

There is no potential conflict of interest by the author.

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