

Journalist, Influencer – Infoencer. More than just a Term? Blurring Boundaries of Journalism on the Example of TikTok

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Abstract

In the war for attention journalists' attempts to gain particularly young people's attention require new strategies almost on a day-to-day basis. The most demanding challenge is not to trade professional journalistic standards to the quest for market share and clicks, particularly on the platform that changes news consumption with an alarming speed: TikTok.

In Germany almost 60 percent 12-19 year old people use TikTok daily or several times a week – and on TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram the game is fundamentally different from older social networks: Here celebrities and influencers play a significant higher role for news and information than journalists do (Reuters Digital News Report 2023). For journalism, the question to which extent influencers are about to become the new journalists, is crucial – particularly when this means: To which extent do journalists adopt successful strategies and presentation patterns of influencers to attract followership? This leads to new wordings, such as 'infoencer', 'influencer' or 'journalist-influencer'. Will the new term soon lead to new job descriptions?

The adaption strategies of journalists on the example of the platform TikTok is in the focus of the current research project. On a theoretical level the research is based upon and aims to mould Chadwick's theory of hybrid media systems, assuming that different types of media form a system that evolves through mutual interactions and evolving, versatile relationships among older and newer media logics.

The study aims to answer three interlinked research questions:

- Which strategies being successful with influencers are adopted by journalists?
- What does this mean for professional journalistic standards and journalistic quality?
- And how does this change journalism's role in society?

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With the help of a content analysis and semi-structured interviews, the emerging study analyses the publications of successful journalistic providers on TikTok and compares them with classic successful influencer accounts.

Keywords

Journalism, Influencing, Infoencer, TikTok

Bio

Prof. Dr. **Katja Schupp** is a professor for audiovisual journalism at the School of Journalism, Department of Media and Communication Science, Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz. Her areas of interest include innovation in audiovisual journalism, change processes in public service media, the changing environment and working conditions for audiovisual journalists, the development of journalism and its role in society, transnational dimensions and aspects of journalistic work and the practical training of audiovisual journalists. She holds a Ph.D. in modern history, a masters' degree of the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, worked as a fulltime audiovisual journalist for ten years and still does long-format documentaries on selected topics.

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