

Authenticity Trumps Facticity: The Manipulation of Informative Narrative Strategies in Journalism

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Abstract

Much recent research has focused on disinformative or conspiratorial narratives. However, what defines in-formative narration that should be firmly rooted in a truthful representation of actual events? This paper, there-fore, discusses informative narrative strategies in journalism. Journalists employ narratives to convey information and capture readers' attention, two objectives that aren't easily harmonized. The paper explores how narratives about recent events can both engage their audience and maintain a truthful foundation in the facts. The analysis draws on concepts such as the truth claims of media (Gunning, 2004) and truthfulness in communication (Elleström, 2018). Rather than pitting facts against fiction or information against narration, this analysis explores how facts, narration, and audience engagement integrate within different news items. The analysis of informative narrative strategies enables us to describe the characteristics of truthful and engaging journalistic narration while identifying patterns that threaten this delicate balance. The analytical method highlights recurring patterns of informative narration in journalism, where narrative and rhetorical patterns are firmly grounded in a combination of sensory, specific, and verifiable details. However, the interplay of facts, narration, and audience engagement looks significantly different in the manipulated features of former *Spiegel* reporter Claas Relotius. In Relotius's features, the interplay of different forms of details is missing, presenting another set of narrative and rhetorical patterns that enhance cohesion and plausibility rather than factuality. The presentation specifically focuses on the narrative strategies that enable Relotius to replace the journalistic claim of factuality with a diverse set of truth and authenticity claims. These claims may be valid in fictive, biographical, testimonial, or even legal narratives but can be irrelevant or misleading in the context of informative journalism. A closer examination of the misinformative, authenticating narrative strategies in Claas

Relotius's features contributes to a better understanding of factuality and authenticity as competing claims to truth in the digital public sphere.

Keywords

narratives, journalism, intermediality, truthfulness, authenticity

Bio

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