Journal of Media Business Studies

News website personalization: the co-creation of content, audiences and services by online journalists and marketers

--Manuscript Draft--

Full Title:	News website personalization: the co-creation of content, audiences and services by online journalists and marketers
Manuscript Number:	ROMB-2018-0046R3
Article Type:	Special Issue
Keywords:	Personalization; Journalism; Marketing; Economy of qualities; Media products; Audiences
Abstract:	<p>This paper investigates news website personalization from a socio-economic perspective to help understand the role of journalists and marketers in online service provision. It focuses on a Belgian company that publishes the two major financial and economic newspapers in the country. Debates and day-to-day practices regarding personalization in the company show that two professional groups are involved in the qualification of media products (content and audiences) into media goods and audience segments. In a context where media organizations explore alternative forms of service provision, this study makes an original contribution by pointing out the increase shared roles between online journalists and marketers, especially regarding gatekeeping and audience segmentation practices.</p>
Order of Authors:	Sylvain Malcorps
Response to Reviewers:	<p>Dear members of the Editorial board, Dear reviewers,</p> <p>Thank you again for your patience and your valuable feedbacks. Here is my response to your comments.</p> <p>--</p> <p>Comment: "I would like to ask you to rethink and rewrite your text on gatekeeping in the bottom paragraph on page 6 ("For long now the gatekeeping theory has been...."). Please, be more clear when explaining how it has been re-adjusted - how the gatekeeping role has changed and why. You don't need to erase the current text totally but I would recommend that you would read that section and make it more coherent and clear".</p> <p>Response: The text about the evolution of the gatekeeping role provides now insights on the evolution of this role both for online journalists and marketers.</p> <p>Comment: "Before the article is publishable, the whole text requires a profound proofreading by a professional. There are quite many errors, grammatical mistakes, and structural problems. Sometimes a right word or expression is missing".</p> <p>Response: This final version of my paper has been corrected by a professional proofreader.</p> <p>Comment about the references:</p> <p>Response: The references are now corrected in accordance with the guidelines of the journal.</p>

1
2
3 **News website personalization: the co-creation of content, audiences and**
4
5 **services by online journalists and marketers**
6
7

8
9
10
11
12 Sylvain Malcorps
13

14
15 Département des Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication, Université Libre de
16 Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium
17

18
19 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6596-2831>
20
21

22
23
24
25 *Sylvain Malcorps
26

27 sylvain.malcorps@ulb.ac.be | Avenue Antoine Depage n°30, 1050 Bruxelles.
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

News website personalization: the co-creation of content, audiences and services by online journalists and marketers

This paper investigates news website personalization from a socio-economic perspective to help understand the role of journalists and marketers in online service provision. It focuses on a Belgian company that publishes the two major financial and economic newspapers in the country. Debates and day-to-day practices regarding personalization in the company show that two professional groups are involved in the qualification of media products (content and audiences) into media goods and audience segments. In a context where media organizations explore alternative forms of service provision, this study makes an original contribution by pointing out the increase shared roles between online journalists and marketers, especially regarding gatekeeping and audience segmentation practices.

Keywords: Personalization; Journalism, Marketing, Economy of qualities, Media products

Introduction

In the field of online journalism, news personalization has been considered one of “the more contemporary trends” (Zelizer, 2009, p. 36) reflecting the reality that, “we are now more and more entering into the news personalization era¹,” as expressed by the CEO of the Belgian media group IPM.

Previous academic works (e.g. Deuze, 2003; Domingo, 2008) address this recurring issue and detail the different types of technological features that render online news

¹ Unknown. (2017, April 18). La Libre lance ses chatbots. *La Libre Belgique*. Retrieved from <http://www.lalibre.be/culture/medias-tele/la-libre-lance-ses-chatbots-58f5bc9bcd70e80512ebc0cf>

personalization possible². Amongst them, dedicated algorithms play a central role and tend to be at the core of most debates (Kitchin, 2017), mainly because they remain largely non-transparent although they are developed to make “atomic decisions [...] including prioritization, classification, association and filtering [of contents]” (Diakopoulos, 2014).

Existing literature linking personalization and journalism focuses mainly either on the technical, ethical, legal or societal challenges related to automated news delivery based on users’ profile (e.g. Rouvroy & Berns, 2013; Sackmann, Strücker, & Accorsi, 2006; Liu, Dolan, & Pedersen, 2010; Sundar & Marathe, 2010). Some researchers suggest that personalization sharply reduces serendipitous discoveries and could lead to the disappearance of common experiences (Sunstein, 2009), while others raise doubts about the relevance of personalization features from the users’ perspective (Kormelink & Costera Meijer, 2014). Nevertheless, media organizations remain keen to test different types of personalization, partly because of the influence of the economics of online (and targeted) advertising (Lewis & Westlund, 2015).

Although personalization at media organizations makes it possible to address important issues such as news consumption, content diversity and socio-economic issues (Thurman, 2011), much less is known about the latter. In an online context, the *attention economy* has a significant impact on cultural industries and radically modifies interactions and workplace behavior (Tirole, 2016). Content is available at any time and new forms of value creation can arise from recommendation mechanisms. Therefore, personalization features could be an alternative form of service provision provided by news websites in order to influence customer retention.

² The term “personalization” is preferred in this paper to other related notions such as “individualization” or “customization”. This choice is motivated by the lack of consensus in the literature on the differences between these concepts and to what they refer. Also, its “relatively frequent use in the context of news has given it a degree of familiarity” (Thurman, 2011, p. 413).

1 But the implementation of personalization features predicates structurally
2 interrelating two distinct products: content and audiences, which requires the reestablishment
3 of the characteristics, the “qualities,” to make the two products match and answer the
4 question: “To whom should we distribute what content?” (and vice versa). The theoretical
5 framework of “The economy of qualities” (Callon, Méadel & Rabeharisoa, 2004) affords an
6 understanding of how products can have different lives and be turned temporarily into
7 tradable goods thanks to the interactions between economic agents. And in the case of media
8 organizations, online journalists and marketers are two types of economic agents at the
9 forefront of content and audience creation.

10 Online journalists create, adapt, publish and share content on the online platforms of
11 their media organizations. In parallel, marketers create categories or segments of audiences to
12 whom they aim to sell and/or promote media content. In this context, the goal of this paper is
13 to investigate how these two professional groups take part in the creation of personalization
14 features and in the qualification of content and audiences into goods. This investigation takes
15 the form of a case-study of the Belgian media organization Mediafin. The results presented in
16 this paper come from an action-research project on the use of audience data in journalism and
17 marketing that I carried out within the company.

18 **Conceptual framework**

19 ***Personalization and audience data collection***

20 Due to its wide scope of applications, the notion of personalization remains vague and
21 polysemous (Salerno, 2001). At least from an economic perspective, a personalization
22 strategy is based on “the knowledge of customer needs” and implies a customization of
23 “products, services, content, communication etc. to the needs of single customers or customer
24 groups” (Riemer & Totz, 2003, p. 35). From this perspective, personalization strategies are

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

mainly driven by the will to enhance customer relationships, boost customer satisfaction and create “lock-in” effects (i.e., customer retention effects) (Sackmann et al., 2006).

The development of customer knowledge appears to be one of the cornerstones of personalization strategies. Internet — understood as an information system—and the web have facilitated the construction of such knowledge by providing access to certain types of user data, progressively turned into “consumer data” by web actors with the rise of the commercial web. In the case of the online media industry for instance, audience-measurement software and ad-serving technologies have played a central role in this process by providing the image of the internet user as a consumer through audience measurements (Jouët, 2004).

To link personalization and online distribution of information, Collet (2011) distinguishes three major personalization strategies currently deployed by web actors. The first is the semantic web: a World Wide Web extension that makes possible the adoption of a native language while using a web browser. The second consists in giving users the ability to customize to some extent the web interface on which they are navigating. And the last one arises from attempts to give meaning to the behavioral patterns of web users: algorithms are therefore conceived to serve personalized information based on audience data cross-referencing (socio-demographic, contextual and online-behavioral data).

Thurman’s observations on the use of personalization strategies at news websites are similar. He defines personalization as: “a form of user-to-system interactivity that uses a set of technological features to adapt the content, delivery, and arrangement of a communication to individual users’ explicitly registered and/or implicitly determined preferences” (Thurman, 2011, p. 397). He also characterizes two forms of personalization depending on how users’ preferences are determined: “Explicit personalization uses direct user inputs [and] implicit personalization infers preferences from data collected for example, via a registration process or via the use of software that monitors user activity” (Thurman & Schifferes, 2012: 776).

1 These approaches clearly show the importance of audience data collection and
2 interpretation in the personalization process. Audience data has been harvested for decades
3 by media organizations because they are a political instrument believed to measure popularity
4 or support (Méadel, 2010). In the case of the print industry, the regular two-sided business
5 model of newspaper companies (Evans and Schmalensee, 2007; Sonnac, 2013) contributed to
6 this process (Bermejo, 2009): information about audiences allows media organizations and
7 media workers to create actionable representations of a public. They use them in a wide
8 variety of activities, such as building strategies to reach their two main consumer groups:
9 audiences and advertisers.
10

11 Commercial media organizations that simultaneously operate on the reader and on the
12 advertising markets “can be conceived as platforms of interaction between audiences
13 (“eyeballs”) and advertisers” (Gabszewicz, Resende, & Sonnac 2015, p. 7). Napoli (2003,
14 2011) argues these organizations are unique in that they “offer simultaneously two distinct
15 but interrelated products to two distinct sets of consumers” (Napoli, 2003, p. 2). One of these
16 two products is content that is distributed sometimes for free, sometimes for a price, to an
17 audience. The other is audiences that they sell to advertisers. Another particularity of these
18 products is that they are in both cases abstract and intangible entities (Kessous, Mellet &
19 Zouinar, 2010) that need to be qualified in order to be exchanged on one of the markets.
20

21 *The economy of qualities at news websites*

22 Personalization at news websites highlights the point that products such as content and
23 audiences can take the form of different constructs simultaneously. Thus, there’s a need to
24 adopt a conceptual approach that examines how such a process can occur.
25

1 In “The economy of qualities,” Michel Callon et al. (2004) provide food for thought
2 on this issue. First, they refer to the good as a specific moment, point or somewhat stabilized
3 state of a product. On the other hand, the product itself refers to the goods seen in a
4 processual way, as the compilation of all the metamorphoses of the article: the product
5 contains all that the item has been, is and will be *in potentia*. The link between the two can be
6 found in a continuous “process of qualification of goods” through which economic agents
7 interact to establish “a constellation of characteristics, stabilized at least for a while, which
8 are attached to the product and transform it temporarily into a tradable good in the market”
9 (Callon et al., 2004, p. 199). Economic agents (either on the demand side or the supply side)
10 play a central role in this dynamic process because their interactions construct the
11 “singularities and substituabilities” of the goods: “[t]he challenge which they share and which
12 divides them is to establish this difficult adjustment between a supply and a demand that is
13 formed around a list of qualities – an adjustment that is temporary and constantly threatened
14 [...]” (Callon et al., 2004, p. 201).

15 From this perspective, these authors argue that the main nuance between the diverse
16 forms of goods and services provision can be traced mainly to the “key importance [service
17 provision] gives to the relationship between the socio-technical capacity (in the seller’s
18 hands) and the customer (who uses it)” (Callon et al., 2004, p. 209). They refer here to
19 Gadrey’s work on service provision that specifically implies the access to “technical and
20 human capacity” (Gadrey, 2000, p. 383) that consists of “means for the performing
21 diagnostics, maintenance or repair to produce the desired effects on an object owned by the
22 purchaser of the service” (Araujo & Spring, 2006, p. 800).

23 In the print industry, an increasing number of news websites opt for “a mixed user
24 payment/advertising revenue model” in response to loss in advertising revenue and the
25 tensions (and somewhat transition) between “print versus digital channel interests, and
26

advertising versus user market interests” (Olsen & Solvoll, 2018, p. 24). The introduction of hard or softer paywalls enables the monetization of online media products thanks to the use of subscribers’ personal data (Evens & Van Damme, 2016). This situation impacts conditions of production, and therefore the dynamic nature of products that media organizations and their employees create (Malcorps, 2017).

The elements presented thus far invite a look at the relationships between products, goods and services at news websites as follows: On one hand, the content as product can be turned into “media goods” (Guibert, Rebillard, & Rochelandet, 2016) with different qualities depending on the qualification process. For instance, some can be qualified as *hot news*, others as *archives* with different forms of monetization potential in the audiences they target. On the other hand, audiences as product can be turned into *an audience* as a good with different qualities on the advertising market. Similarly, within media organizations, media workers co-define the qualities of *an audience* to develop commercial and editorial strategies on the readers market.

News website personalization can be understood as a form of service provision because it involves human and technical capacities to create and boost customer retention (i.e., effects). It necessitates the interrelationship of content with audiences and/or audiences with content. And amongst media workers active on the reader market, online journalists and marketers are the most involved in the creation of such goods and services.

Gatekeeping and the connection between marketers, online journalists and audiences

Online personalization is at the crossroads of editorial and economic concerns because it focuses on the online consumption patterns of the audience. Nowadays, most online journalists access online audience data continuously — mainly web metrics — to serve editorial and strategic ends (Petre, 2015; Tandoc & Thomas, 2014). These metrics also incite

1 online news staffers to adjust their perceptions of the audience as a group of active and
2 creative individuals (Anderson, 2011; Domingo, 2008).
3

4 Historically, marketing departments have been media organizations' division
5 dedicated to the collection and exploitation of information about the readership (Benson,
6 2002; Pradié, 2004). Over the last 40 years, marketing practices and spending have increased
7 in European media organizations as a response to market maturity effects: in a highly
8 competitive environment, one of the only opportunities to grow resides in attracting clients
9 (consumers and/or advertisers) from the competition (Picard, 2006). And marketers exploit
10 audience data on the reader market to create and evaluate communication and commercial
11 strategies. This data and other survey results become audience measurements and circulate to
12 a certain degree within other autonomous units of the organization, including the newsroom,
13 mainly through the editor-in-chief's voice. Damian (1995) or Montanola and Souanef (2012)
14 have shown that this audience data makes the connection between the newsroom and the
15 marketing department, potentially connecting online journalists and marketers even more.
16
17

18 Indeed, both online journalists and marketers have interests in exploring reader
19 expectations and preferences (about when and/or what information to pass along) through the
20 lens of these numbers (Christin, 2017). Research into the use of audience analytics and
21 analytics platforms at news organizations found that both can have an impact on news
22 content, journalistic values and on "editorial decision-making and gatekeeping" (Petre, 2018,
23 p. 511). In fact, (online) audiences not only impact the gatekeeping process at media
24 organizations (e.g. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Vu, 2014), they also operate as gatekeepers in
25 their own right. In addition, Thurman (2015) showed how personalization features allow not
26 only audiences to act as gatekeepers, but give computer programs gatekeeping
27 responsibilities, as well. Humans, organizations, algorithms: there can be "multiple
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

gatekeepers, each of whom plays a role in selecting and shaping information into news stories and posts” (Shoemaker & Riccio, 2016, p. 2).

In parallel, the digitalization of communication and the Internet as a telecommunications network influence the conceptualization and the self-perception of the gatekeeping role (Barzilai-Nahon, 2009; Heinderyckx, 2015). In the news ecosystem, the gatekeeping role refers to how agents “see it as their duty or responsibility to pass along some information and not other forms of information” (Heinderyckx and Vos, 2016, p. 21). Furthermore, the authors argue that the gatekeeping role can be an expression of marketing concerns when it “seek[s] to target a particular market demographic” (p. 22). Gatekeeping has long been a defining role of professional journalists (Tandoc & Vos, 2014). But it has been suggested by journalists that this role is changin from editorial direction and control to vetting of information (Vos & Thomas, 2019). On the other hand, marketers are concerned by issues related to media brand coherence, the acquisition and retention of customers, etc. As a result, they aspire to interact with the newsroom to promote specific sections or to take part in the organization and diffusion of journalistic content (Attaway-Fink, 2004; Moreira, Malcorps, & Vitorino, 2019).

Despite the fluidity of the gatekeeping role and its potential connection with marketing considerations, little has been made of the understanding of the relationship between online journalists and marketers. And from another perspective, little is known about how they work together in the qualification of the media products they create. Debates, reflections and practices around personalization at a Belgian news website, however, reveal that some of the components of personalization features are likely to be shaped by online journalists and marketers. Given these elements, this article explores the following research questions:

1 RQ1: How do personalization features at a news website affect the interactions
2 between online journalists and marketers?
3

4 RQ2: How do personalization features at a news website affect the qualification
5 process of content and audiences into goods by online journalists and marketers?
6
7
8
9

10 11 12 **Methods** 13 14 15

16 The results presented in this paper derive from ethnography material collected over a three
17 year period at the Belgian media company Mediafin. Mediafin publishes two economic and
18 financial newspapers in Belgium (*De Tijd*, in Dutch and *L'Echo*, in French), as well as two
19 websites (tijd.be and lecho.be) and mobile/tablet apps³. Situated in Brussels, the company
20 employed around 230 people in 2017⁴, with an annual revenue of 58,37 million EUR and a
21 profit of 12,02 million EUR⁵. The two media brands cover a wide range of topics (from
22 politics and finance to sports and culture) from an economic perspective. Indeed, both have
23 gradually broadened their editorial lines in recent years to include more mainstream topics
24 and increase their audience. However, economics and business remain the characteristic
25 DNA of both media brands.
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39

40 Mediafin is an interesting study-case regarding the use of audience data at news
41 websites because it was the first Belgian news organization to introduce in 2010 a soft
42 paywall on its websites. Soon after, management decided to work on new user data
43 management procedures and recruit new profiles from the marketing department to manage
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51

52 ³ These online platforms provide users with various forms of content such as: up-to-date newsfeeds, a
53 digital version of the newspaper, one section dedicated to stock market prices, a “personal finance”
54 section and access to 14 curated newsletters.

55 ⁴ Mediafin’s annual financial statement for 2017. (2018, April 26). *Comptes annuels et autres*
56 *documents à déposer en vertu du code des sociétés*. Retrieved from [https://www.nbb.be/en/central-](https://www.nbb.be/en/central-balance-sheet-office)
57 [balance-sheet-office](https://www.nbb.be/en/central-balance-sheet-office). This number does not include freelancers.

58 ⁵ Unknown. (2018). Mediafin enregistre une croissance de 10% grâce à la hausse du nombre de
59 lecteurs et d’annonceurs. Document retrieved from <https://www.mediafin.be/fr/chiffres-cles/>
60
61
62
63
64
65

1 online and offline subscriptions. Regarding the co-creation of media products in the context
2 of news websites based on advertising and subscription revenues, Mediafin offers thereby a
3 unique research environment in Belgium owing to the historicity of such practices.
4
5

6
7 The ethnographic data for this paper was gathered in the context of an action-research
8 project within the company centered on the challenges faced by the online journalists of
9
10 lecho.be regarding their uses and needs of audience data⁶. From October 2015 until July
11
12 2018, I spent an average of one to two days a week at the company observing and compiling
13 data on this specific topic. I chose to work with the online journalists of lecho.be (instead of
14
15 tijd.be) because we share the same mother tongue (French). Yet, the bilingual nature of the
16
17 company required the occasional use of Dutch: for instance, the marketing department at
18
19 Mediafin works for the two media brands but $\frac{3}{4}$ of the team is Flemish (i.e., Dutch speaking).
20
21
22
23
24
25

26 Action-research is a qualitative research approach that produces knowledge thanks to
27 and within the action of social groups (Rhéaume, 1982): “Action research offers a framework
28
29 for research collaborations between scholars and practitioners, generating holistic and
30
31 solution-oriented outcomes of value for science and practice” (Grubenmann, 2016, p. 160). In
32
33 such an approach, the researcher and a specific social group collaborate with each other on an
34
35 issue of common interest in order to bring change to an existing and somewhat problematic
36
37 situation according to the actors’ perspective. At Mediafin for instance, online journalists at
38
39 lecho.be pointed out their will to gain a greater access to audience data that the marketing
40
41 department collects.
42
43
44
45
46
47

48 Action-research is an inductive and iterative process made up of several steps and
49
50 different types of actions (Susman & Evered, 1978). Liu (1997) describes how action-
51
52 research consists of one or more cycles where actions and social experiments take place. The
53
54
55
56
57
58

59 ⁶ The researcher is funded by a grant that is independent from the media company. Likewise, he has
60 never been employed or paid by the organization.
61
62
63
64
65

first cycle is the most important and includes (1) diagnosis of the situation, (2) wording of the issue and hypothesis related to it, (3) implementation of social experiments in order to change the situation, (4) and diagnosis of the effects of such experiments. If needed, the cycle can be repeated.

This process requires the researcher to focus both on the action — practical dimension — and on the production of scientific knowledge connected to the action — theoretical dimension — (Jouison-Laffitte, 2009). To achieve such goals several research tools and methods adapted to the environment are necessary: observation sessions, formal interviews, informal discussions, workshops, etc. In the context of this research and starting from the online news desk, an application of the snowball method (Bijker, 1995) permitted first “to identify the set of relevant social groups” (Klein & Kleinman, 2002, p. 32) related to the online journalist’s uses and needs of audience data, followed by an identification of the issues related to it.

This action-research has therefore a double ambition. On one hand, it seeks to understand the challenges at stake in the exchange of audience-related data between the online journalists of lecho.be and the marketing department of Mediafin. On the other hand, it aims at testing new communication tools dedicated to potentially increasing the circulation of this information between the two departments. The following table (Table 1) summarizes the general research design of this action-research project:

Table 1: General Research Design

Topic investigated	Methods	Dates
Why and how did audience metrics become strategic at lecho.be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observation sessions - Interviews/informal discussions with online journalists and 	October 2015 – June 2016

	media planners	
How do users' personal data circulate within the company?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observation sessions - Interviews/informal discussions with management 	October 2016 – February 2017
Problem definition: the journalists' access to audience data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethnographic data analysis 	July 2016 – April 2017
Identification of solution ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop involving marketers and online journalists 	July 2017
Experiment and diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testing the implementation of new communication tools between the two departments - Observation sessions - Interviews with marketers and online journalists 	November 2017 – July 2018

The topic of personalization came into play in July 2017 during a workshop — organized by the researcher — involving the marketing manager, the vice editor-in-chief, the online news desk manager and five online journalists. The one-hour workshop was recorded and comprises the first part of the ethnographic materials analyzed below. Another part comes from five semi-structured interviews on the topic conducted between January and March 2018 with all the full-time marketers of the marketing department. The interviews lasted between 47 and 94 minutes and provided an opportunity to compensate for the absence of most of the marketers during the workshop. Depending on the person's mother tongue, I conducted the interviews and the workshop either in French or in Dutch. The relevant quotes regarding this paper have then been translated in English. This discursive material (Table 2) is coupled with elements gathered from October 2015 during multiple observation sessions.

Table 2: Codes and description of the interviewees

Code	Identity	Data collection method
M1	Marketer	Interview
M2	Marketer	Interview
M3	Marketer	Interview
M4	Marketer	Interview
M5	Marketer	Interview
M6	Marketer (management position)	Workshop
J1	Online journalist (management position)	Workshop
J2	Journalist (management position)	Workshop
J3	Online journalist	Workshop
J4	Online journalist	Workshop
J5	Online journalist	Workshop
J6	Online journalist	Workshop
J7	Online journalist	Workshop

In both the workshop and the interviews, I began the discussion with broader questions about the respective uses and practices of audience data in the online newsroom and the marketing department. Then I moved to more specific questions about personalization (e.g., “How do you talk about personalization within the company [and] in your department?”, “When do you carry out personalization?”, “How are you involved in the examples you’re giving?”, “What do you think about personalization?”). Open questions allowed me to not frame beforehand the actor’s perception on personalization and to discuss accurate practices rather than abstractions.

1 The workshop and interviews were then transcribed to facilitate the analysis of the
2 material. The transcripts allowed the researcher to organize the material and arrange the
3 online personalization features mentioned by the agents. This was followed by the coding
4 process that allowed the pinpointing of ideas and notions used by the agents to explain the
5 very existence of these features in the organization. As recommended by Van Maanen
6 (1979), I paid careful attention to the linguistic categories (such as verbs, adjectives, etc.)
7 used by online journalists and marketers when talking about personalization. And finally, the
8 use of relevant literature and field notes contributed to the writing of the findings section.
9

10 **Findings**

11 Two broad themes emerged from the analysis. The first is the range of personalization
12 features that marketers and online journalists are involved in. The second is the link they
13 make between those features and service provision.
14

15 ***A. Types of personalization features***

16 *1. Personalization of commercial offers*

17 The personalization of commercial offers is already a reality in the company. Even if this
18 personalization strategy is not systematically applied to all users and remains limited at this
19 stage, it remains one of the company's most advanced personalization attempts. Based on the
20 users' age or on the users' topic interests, the marketing department has created tailored
21 online subscription offers:
22

1 We've noticed that subscribers younger than 26 years old, with a full subscription
2 well... they tend far more cancel their subscription in comparison with subscribers
3 around 45 years old. [...]
4

5
6
7 So, we made a specific commercial offer and campaign: 'Look, you can... if you're
8 up to 27 years old, you can have a subscription at a better price' (M1)
9
10
11

12
13
14 These commercial personalization attempts reveal that strategic reflections and
15 actions regarding personalization are partly shaped by the company's revenue model. From
16 2010, Mediafin started implementing a paywall on its news websites. This decision was taken
17 by the board of directors after noticing the dramatic shift in audience reach from newspapers
18 to online news sites. While online advertising revenues remained far too low in comparison
19 with the economic performance of printed ads, they rebalance the company's revenue model
20 from advertising to (online) subscription revenues. One of the main missions of the marketing
21 department now is therefore to stabilize and increase the number of subscriptions. Marketers
22 use commercial personalization as a strategy to gain and/or retain subscribers.
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

36 They also try to adapt their commercial offers to the users' topic interests:
37
38
39
40

41 Not so long ago, we tried to identify users interested in the topics of investment and
42 stock exchange. We then targeted them with a commercial offer for *The Investor*, one
43 of our side-publications. (M2)
44
45
46
47
48
49
50

51 But this personalization of commercial offers is limited by how the news packages
52 (i.e., editorial units) are sold: it is not a question at the moment of offering *à la carte*
53 subscriptions. Rather than fragmenting the content in order to sell it, the idea at this stage is
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

1 to sell the content in a different way — at different prices — to different groups of potential
2 customers (people under 27 years old, teachers, B2B, etc.).
3
4
5
6

7 2. *Personalization of communication* 8 9

10
11 The marketing department also works on more personalized forms of communication. Soon
12 new systems will allow marketers to increase the personalization of online banners and
13 newsletters:
14
15
16
17

18 We will do it in “one-on-one” marketing. [...] Depending on your profile, we want
19 you to see another banner than what your neighbor sees.
20

21 And depending on your... on your surfing behavior... We could identify different
22 [reader] segments and send you a newsletter with a specific content. (M3)
23
24
25
26

27 For now, marketers can only differentiate their communication between registered
28 and unregistered users. Another team member addresses the need to be more “personal” in
29 the way they speak to the readers: “I think our ‘tone of voice’ to the reader could be a little bit
30 more personal” (M4). The goal here is to provide an environment where the reader would feel
31 welcomed in a personal way. We find similar motivation patterns when marketers talk about
32 why they work with a call-center — an external partner — to manage complaints and queries
33 from their customers. Marketers highlight how they want their clients to feel heard and that
34 the media organization is taking care of them.
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52

53 Only one marketer mentioned the “personalization of advertising” as it was connected
54 in her mind with the personalization of communication. This can be explained by the fact that
55 neither marketers nor online journalists are directly involved with advertising tasks: Mediafin
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

owns its own advertising agency that takes care of it. The marketing department, on the other hand, only produces promotional materials about editorial projects, the brands or temporary commercial offers.

3. *News personalization delivery*

In this section, “news personalization”⁷ is understood as the somewhat automated personalization of the news content delivery or arrangement. This is the only form of news personalization discussed by online journalists during the workshop. Since the launch of a new lecho.be website in March 2018, registered users can now record explicit keywords in order to receive a tailored newsfeed to their personal page account.

Interestingly, neither online journalists nor the marketing team were involved in the development of such a feature: “It comes from... the I.T. [department], I think.” (M1). Marketers see it as a first attempt in the personalization of news content delivery: “But I think it’s not daring enough, you see? You first have to find it [the personal page account] and I’m not sure that many people will do it” (M2). Online journalists also perceive the feature as a first step in a more global strategy: “It’s embryonic at this stage. But I think we’ll do much more in the future” (J1).

During the discussion about personalization, journalists have mainly expressed how “implicit personalization” (Thurman & Schifferes, 2012) should work in their company. They all agreed on the need to protect their gatekeeping role to complete one of their tasks:

We can imagine... There would be a ‘basic tour’, universal news that all the readers would see. This would be the news selected by the editorial board because it is

⁷ “Personnalisation de l’information” in French and “Nieuws personalisatie” in Dutch.

1 indispensable... Because we have a task of providing news to the reader: he must
2 know that, even if it's information he does not want to know. (J2)
3
4
5
6

7 But they also reconsider their gatekeeping role according to the company's trend
8 toward personalization. Online journalists seem to be keen to tailor news conforming to the
9 media editorial line, at least to some extent:
10
11
12
13

14 Well we could make one version [of the "digital journal"] for the readers interested in
15 stock markets, and another for those who are not. And we could do the same for the
16 home page, the mobile app, etc. (J2)
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

26 Marketers' discourses on the company's future developments of implicit
27 personalization features agree with the journalists':
28
29
30
31
32
33

34 I believe an editorial filter must exist. We can't just let people read what they want to
35 read. If we don't, what will they read? Showbiz stories and that's it. [...] But at the
36 same time, you have also to give the reader what he wants to read. (M4)
37
38
39
40
41
42
43

44 In other words, marketers recognize the need to respect journalists' gatekeeping role
45 in the news personalization process. They agree with online journalists on the need for the
46 newsroom to maintain its control over what content is worth publishing. But still, a balance
47 needs to be found with the idea of "giving the reader what he wants". One of the interviewees
48 stated that a potential answer to this dilemma could be found in a mixed algorithmic and
49 journalistic personalization model.
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

B. Motivations and Challenges

1. Personalization features as forms of service provision

The diversity of approaches concerning personalization at Mediafin must be understood within the context of the motivations of its workers, as well as how they justify their practices. Doing so, these “indigenous interpretations” (Weber, 2015, p. 109) allow to better understand how workers shape and perceive their tasks.

Marketers justify online personalization features as a way to gain and/or retain (potential) subscribers and to improve the advertising-based revenue model of the website. As that marketer explained: “Our journalism is really expensive [to produce]. We should limit the number of ads [...] but the ads have to be personalized” (M4). For this marketer, personalized ads are more enjoyable than those that are not. In either case, a common view amongst marketers was that personalization features provide readers with a more pleasant and welcoming environment to experiment with the content. Similarly, online journalists at Lecho.be also link personalization features with user retention: “We need to make more hyperlinks, we have to improve the readers’ circulation between our articles. Because it’s our task to bring the reader to stay longer [on the website]” (J3). They understand online personalization as a way to reach such a goal without losing allegiance to the editorial line of *L’Echo*.

If online journalists and marketers think and test different forms of personalization features, it is partly because management appears to promote this activity: “[The implementation of personalization features] is a difficult task. But managers want to increase news personalization in order to offer personalized services [...]” (J1). Both marketers and online journalists discursively present online personalization features as forms of service

1 provision: “Such service [personalization] could be a way to... gain more readership. We
2 could turn more readers into subscribers if we ever manage to provide a better service thanks
3 to this data” (J4). Another journalist stated that “I don’t think that personalization is a threat!
4 I think it’s a service we can provide to the readers” (J2). Some others in the marketing
5 department say that relevant personalization features “can increase the user experience” (M2)
6 the company provides.
7

8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
These results suggest that personalization features bring those professionals to think
about themselves as service providers. Consequently, and under the action of management,
they contribute to position Mediafin not only as a news provider enterprise, but also as an
(online) service company focused on the distribution of financial and economic news. With
such a model, readers are likely to become the primary customers (Sullivan, 2006). Online
journalists and marketers at Mediafin indeed focus their attention on readers when talking
and working on personalization features. They explain that online personalization features
must go hand in hand with a relevant segmentation of their readership.

2. *Personalization features and the qualification of audiences*

41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
The company’s strategy regarding online personalization seems to promote a group-based (or
segment-based) approach rather than an individual-based one. According to this journalist,
this is not surprising: “News personalization is... Basically, it is nothing revolutionary
because you first have to segment your audience” (J1).

51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
The need for relevant audience segments is demonstrated by the diversity of
personalization features: “What are our readers interested in? Not everything in our
newsletters... so we’ll have to, yes, segment and find what’s relevant for different groups of
readers” (M5). But the creation of these segments remains a great challenge for the company

1 and its workers. They partly plan to do it — and they already do it to some extent — thanks
2 to audience data cross-referencing (socio-demographic, contextual and online-behavioral
3 data). In other words, they aim for the fragmentation of their global audience in order to offer
4 specialized services or offers to different reader groups. For instance, marketers show an
5 interest in their B2B clients and in the group of “registered-but-not-subscriber” users. From
6 an economic perspective, it illustrates the company’s position as a provider of intermediation
7 services “by acting as intermediaries between multiple customer groups” (Evans, 2003, p.
8 374).

9
10 The quality and accuracy of the available data is crucial in this process. However, I
11 argue that the newsroom may also play an important role in the segmentation process. This is
12 mainly because journalists oversee news production and decide what to write about according
13 to the organizational context they are in. As this marketer points out:

14
15 We have to create categories: people interested in tech news, stock exchange news,
16 cultural news... And based on an initiative of the newsroom, we can offer more
17 personalized content to the different groups. (M2)

18
19 Journalists’ gatekeeping role can have an impact on the segmentation process and
20 therefore on personalization strategies. It limits marketers’ desires and ambitions:

21
22 It would be amazing if we could make a newsletter targeted for business starters. It
23 would be a great way to bring them to our products. But we can’t do it from the
24 marketing! We need journalistic productions to fill it in. So, we can try to make the
25 newsroom enthusiastic about it. But we can’t do it alone. (M6)

Personalization features as forms of service provision questions the level of interactions between the newsroom and the marketing department. On one hand, the marketing department can take initiatives concerning audience segmentation and personalization attempts. However, the way marketers do it will depend on the organizational context, the content produced by the group of journalists or the degree of interaction with the newsroom. Their appreciation of the importance of editorial autonomy (Deuze, 2005) also appears to frame personalization attempts. On the other hand, online journalists take part consciously and unconsciously in the segmentation process by deciding what topics to talk about and what deserves to be published and when. This role will be constrained by hierarchical incentives, the interpretation of the editorial line, the influence of the company's revenue model and the degree of interaction with the marketing department.

Conclusion and discussions

This paper offers a unique viewpoint on the reciprocal influence of two groups of media professionals and the online personalization features they deal with. On either side of “that wall between the journalistic and business-oriented functions of a news organization” (Coddington, 2015, p. 72), online journalists and marketers investigate the personalization of different aspects of Mediafin's relationship with readers.

One interesting finding is the relationship between online personalization features and the transition to a “mixed user payment/advertising revenue model” of the websites. Some authors refer to personalization in the media sector as a response to the importance of online consumption patterns and the economics of online advertising: “targeted advertising based on data mining leads to pressures on media companies (including news organizations) to personalize content in response” (Lewis & Westlund, 2015, p. 457). Others argue that there

seems to be “a correlation between above-average deployment of personalization and sites’ ability to charge a subscription” (Thurman & Schifferes, 2012, p. 787).

This case study complements these analyses and shows that personalization is also perceived as an accurate strategy when a media organization modifies its user-market activities. The intense competition between online news media for “consumer attention, consumer spending, and advertising budgets” (Kleis Nielsen, 2016, p. 58) is likely to drive the management at Mediafin to redesign the relationship with its customers. Almost a decade after the introduction of a paywall, the two professional groups stress personalization features as forms of service provision that can lead to greater retention effects on news consumers and/or news readers. Mediafin’s value proposition on the reader market is therefore changing and personalization features are associated with more and more personalized customer relationships. These elements show the organization positioning itself as a service-oriented company, with the delivery of financial and economic news as its core business.

The topic of personalization challenges the interactions between marketers and online journalists because it highlights their shared roles in the qualification process of media products (content and audiences). If they want to adapt the content and communication to specific audience segments (and vice versa), they must shape and transform these media products. Therefore, the qualification of media goods and specific audience segments is the result of “a progressive ‘profiling’ of products that, through successive adjustment and iteration, ends up profiling both the demand and the consumer” (Callon et al., 2004, p. 210). Amongst others, online journalists and marketers are actors of this process: they are economic agents that take part in the social construction of the user and — to some extent — the advertising markets.

The ethnographic material shows that marketers and online journalists refer to audience data, when making editorial choices, creating audience segments or thinking about

1 personalization features. It can thus be suggested that this information intervenes in the
2 qualification process. In the case of personalization features, audience data is a way to
3 integrate the consumer into the conception of the service. Audience data is a form of
4 consumer resource that shows how he/she “determines the time and space for consumption of
5 the service while also selecting the most suitable method of access (or device)” (Cestino &
6 Berndt, 2017, p. 191). At Mediafin, these resources fuel and result from the socio-technical
7 device “with which [consumers] interact and evolve” (Callon et al., 2004, p. 210). This
8 interconnection between online journalists, marketers and consumers shows that media
9 products “move from one hand to another” (Foster, 2011, p. 48) during the qualification
10 process.
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23

24 One of the issues that emerges from these findings is the increasing shared roles
25 between online journalists and marketers regarding gatekeeping mechanisms and audience
26 segmentation. If gatekeeping mechanisms explain how news is selected (Tandoc, 2014),
27 discussions concerning online personalization at Mediafin indicate that in the future
28 marketers could play a greater role in this process. There is a need to better understand the
29 dynamic nature of gatekeeping in “an environment where the interests and goals of the
30 stakeholders constantly change, as do their gatekeeping and gated roles” (Barzilai-Nahon,
31 2009, p. 62). Similarly, journalists are likely to be increasingly associated with the
32 segmentation of online audiences. Their access to information about users and their online
33 consumption patterns also affect such a practice.
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48

49 Despite these results, questions remain. One of the limitations of this case study is that
50 a part of the discussion about the personalization of online news in the company is potential
51 future discourse. There is, therefore, a need to follow further developments on this topic
52 within the organization. There is also a need to better understand the involvement of the I.T.
53 team in the creation of online personalization features. More broadly, future research into
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

1 personalization at news website should address the topic of the shared roles between online
2 journalists and marketers. Likewise, future research is needed to understand the complex
3 interactions between journalists and marketers (or other professional groups) during the
4 qualification process of media products within media organizations. More empirical studies
5 could help to bridge the “competing conceptions of journalism as both a social good and an
6 economic one” (Carlson, 2018, p. 407).
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14

15 **Acknowledgments**

16
17 The author would like to thank the reviewers and the editor for their guidance in improving
18 this article.
19
20
21
22
23
24

25 **References**

- 26
27 Anderson, C. W. (2011). Between creative and quantified audiences: Web metrics and
28 changing patterns of newswork in local US newsrooms. *Journalism*, 12(5), 550–566.
29
30
31
32
33 Araujo, L., & Spring, M. (2006). Services, products and the institutional structure of
34 production. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 35(7), 797–805.
35
36
37
38 Attaway-Fink, B. (2005). Market-driven journalism: Creating special sections to meet reader
39 interests. *Journal of Communication Management*, 9(2), 145-154.
40
41
42
43 Benson, R. (2002). Journalisme et marketing: L'enjeu de la diversité. *Quaderni*, 47(1), 85–
44 100.
45
46
47
48
49 Bermejo, F. (2009). Audience manufacture in historical perspective: From broadcasting to
50 Google. *New Media & Society*, 11(1–2), 133–154.
51
52
53
54
55 Bijker, W. (1995), *Of bicycles, bakelites, and bulbs: toward a theory of sociotechnical*
56 *change*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

Boullier, D. (2009). Les industries de l'attention: Fidélisation, alerte ou immersion. *Réseaux*, 154(2), 231–246.

Barzilai-Nahon, K. (2009). Gatekeeping: A critical review. *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, 1(43), 1–79.

Callon, M., Méadel, C., & Rabeharisoa, V. (2002). The economy of qualities. *Economy and society*, 31(2), 194–217.

Cestino, J., & Berndt, A. (2017). Institutional limits to service dominant logic and servitisation in innovation efforts in newspapers. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 14(3), 188–216.

Christin, A. (2017). Algorithms in practice: Comparing web journalism and criminal justice. *Big Data & Society*, 4(2), 1–14.

Coddington, M. (2015). The wall becomes a curtain: Revisiting journalism's news–business boundary. In M. Carlson & S.C. Lewis (Eds), *Boundaries of journalism: Professionalism, practices and participation*, London: Routledge, 67–82.

Collet, L. (2011). La presse écrite sur le web et ses lecteurs comme limites aux techniques de personnalisation de l'information. *Document Numérique*, 14(3), 81–102.

Damian, B. (1995), *Les dames du temps présent. Places et fonctions des études de marketing dans la conception des discours de la presse féminine généraliste*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Université Grenoble 3: Grenoble.

Deuze, M. (2003), The web and its journalisms: Considering the consequences of different types of newsmedia online, *New Media & Society*, 5(2): 203–230.

Deuze, M. (2005). What is journalism? Professional identity and ideology of journalists reconsidered. *Journalism*, 6(4), 442–464.

1 Diakopoulos, N. (2014). Algorithmic-Accountability: the investigation of Black Boxes. *Tow*
2 *Center for Digital Journalism*. Advance online publication. [Retrieved from:
3 <https://doi.org/10.7916/D8ZK5TW2>]
4
5

6
7 Domingo, D. (2008). Interactivity in the daily routines of online newsrooms: Dealing with an
8 uncomfortable myth. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(3), 680–704.
9

10
11
12 Evans, D. S. (2003). The Antitrust Economics of Multi-Sided Platform Markets. *Yale Journal*
13 *on Regulation*, 20(2), 327-379
14
15

16
17
18 Evans, D.S., & Schmalensee, R. (2007). The Industrial Organization of Markets with Two-
19 Sided Platforms. *Competition Policy International*, 3(1), 151-179.
20
21

22
23 Evens, T., & Van Damme, K. (2016). Consumers' willingness to share personal data:
24 Implications for newspapers' business models. *International Journal on Media Management*,
25 18(1), 25-41.
26
27
28

29
30
31 Foster, R. J. (2011). The uses of use value: Marketing, value creation, and the exigencies of
32 consumption work. In D. Zwick & J. Cayla (Eds), *Inside marketing: Practices, ideologies,*
33 *devices*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 42-57.
34
35
36

37
38 Gabszewicz, J., Resende, J., & Sonnac, N. (2015). Media as multi-sided platforms. In R.G.
39 Picard & S.S. Wildman (Eds), *Handbook on the Economics of the Media*. Cheltenham: EE
40 Publishing, 3-35.
41
42
43

44
45 Gadrey, J. (2000). The characterization of goods and services: An alternative approach.
46 *Review of Income and Wealth*, 46(3), 369-387.
47
48
49

50
51 Grubenmann, S. (2016). Action research: collaborative research for the improvement of
52 digital journalism practice. *Digital Journalism*, 4(1), 160–176.
53
54
55

56
57 Guibert, G., Rebillard, F., & Rochelandet, F. (2016). *Médias, culture et numérique:*
58 *approches socioéconomiques*. Paris: Armand Colin.
59
60
61

1 Heinderyckx, F. (2015). Gatekeeping Theory Redux. In T. P. Vos & F. Heinderyckx (Eds.),
2 *Gatekeeping in Transition*. New York: Routledge. 253–267.

3
4
5 Heinderyckx, F., & Vos, T. P. (2016). Reformed gatekeeping. *CM: Communication and*
6 *Media*, 11(36), 29–46.

7
8
9
10
11 Jouët, J. (2004). Les dispositifs de construction de l'internaute par les mesures d'audience. *Le*
12 *Temps Des Médias*, 2(3), 160–174.

13
14
15
16 Jouison-Laffitte, E. (2009). La recherche action: oubliée de la recherche dans le domaine de
17 l'entrepreneuriat. *Revue de l'Entrepreneuriat*, 8(1), 1-35.

18
19
20
21 Kessous, E., Mellet, K., & Zouinar, M. (2010). L'économie de l'attention: entre protection
22 des ressources cognitives et extraction de la valeur. *Sociologie du travail*, 52(3), 359-373.

23
24
25
26
27 Kitchin, R. (2017). Thinking critically about and researching algorithms. *Information,*
28 *Communication & Society*, 20(1), 14–29.

29
30
31
32 Klein, H. K., & Kleinman, D. L. (2002). The social construction of technology: structural
33 considerations. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 27(1), 28–52.

34
35
36
37 Kormelink, T. G., & Meijer, I. C. (2014). Tailor-made news. Meeting the demands of news
38 users on mobile and social media. *Journalism Studies*, 15(5), 632–641.

39
40
41
42 Lewis, S. C., & Westlund, O. (2015). Big Data and journalism: Epistemology, expertise,
43 economics, and ethics. *Digital Journalism*, 3(3), 447–466.

44
45
46
47
48 Liu, M. (1997). La validation des connaissances au cours de la recherche-action. *Etudes et*
49 *Recherches sur les Systèmes Agraires et le Développement*, 30, 183-196

50
51
52
53 Liu, J., Dolan, P., & Pedersen, E. R. (2010). *Personalized news recommendation based on*
54 *click behavior. Proceedings of the 15th international conference on Intelligent user*
55 *interfaces*, Mountain View, USA. Mountain View: Google Inc.

- 1 Malcorps, S. (2017). L'entreprise de presse et son audience en ligne. *Réseaux*, 5(205), 145-
2 173.
3
4
- 5 Méadel, C. (2010). *Quantifier le public*. Paris : Economica.
6
7
8
- 9 Montanola, S., & Souanef, K. (2012). Les études de lectorat et leurs discours : entre outil de
10 gestion, mythe journalistique et instrumentalisation. *Sciences de La Société*, (84-85), 152-
11 169.
12
13
14
15
- 16 Moreira, D. A., Malcorps, S., & Vitorino, M. M. (2019). When Journalists and Marketers
17 Negotiate: A Competency-Based Analysis of Negotiation Processes in Brazilian and Belgian
18 Media Organizations. *Brazilian Journalism Research*, 15(2), 310-337.
19
20
21
22
- 23 Napoli, P. M. (2003). *Audience economics: Media institutions and the audience marketplace*.
24 New York : Columbia University Press.
25
26
27
28
- 29 Napoli, P. M. (2011). *Audience evolution: New technologies and the transformation of media*
30 *audiences*. New York: Columbia University Press.
31
32
33
34
- 35 Olsen, R. K., & Solvoll, M. K. (2018). Reinventing the business model for local newspapers
36 by building walls. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 15(1), 24-41.
37
38
39
- 40 Ouakrat, A. (2012). Le ciblage comportemental, une perte de contrôle des éditeurs sur les
41 données de l'audience. *Tic&société*, 6(1), 33-55.
42
43
44
- 45 Petre, C. (2015). Managing metrics: the containment, disclosure, and sanctioning of audience
46 data at the New York Times. In *The Tow Center for Digital Journalism*. 1-35.
47
48
49
50
- 51 Petre, C. (2018). Engineering consent: How the design and marketing of newsroom analytics
52 tools rationalize journalists' labor. *Digital Journalism*, 6(4), 509-527.
53
54
55
- 56 Picard, R. G. (2006). Les médias au risque du management et du marketing. *Le Temps Des*
57 *Médias*, 1(6), 165-174.
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

1 Pradié, C. (2004). L'irrésistible montée des études de marché dans la presse française (1920-
2 1990). *Le Temps Des Médias*, 3(2), 126–137.

3
4
5 Rhéaume, J. (1982). La recherche-action : un nouveau mode de savoir? *Sociologie et*
6 *Sociétés*, 14(1), 43–51.

7
8
9
10 Riemer, K. & Totz, C. (2003) The many faces of personalization. In M.M. Tseng & F.T.
11 Piller (Eds), *The Customer Centric Enterprise*. Berlin: Springer, 35-50.

12
13
14
15
16 Rouvroy, A. & Berns, T. (2013). Gouvernamentalité algorithmique et perspectives
17 d'émancipation. *Réseaux*, 177(1), 163-196

18
19
20
21 Sackmann, S., Strüker, J., & Accorsi, R. (2006). Personalization in privacy-aware highly
22 dynamic systems. *Communications of the ACM*, 49(9), 32-38.

23
24
25
26
27 Salerno, A. (2001). Une étude empirique des relations entre personnalisation, proximité
28 dyadique et identité de clientèle. *Recherche et Applications en Marketing (French Edition)*,
29 16(4), 25-46.

30
31
32
33
34 Shoemaker, P. J. & Reese, S. D. (1996). *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on*
35 *Mass Media Content (2nd ed.)*, White Plains, NY: Longman.

36
37
38
39
40 Sonnac, N. (2013). L'écosystème des médias. Les enjeux socio-économiques d'une
41 interaction entre deux marchés. *Communication [En Ligne]*, 32(2), 1–40.

42
43
44
45 Sullivan, D. (2006). Business service model promotes better newspapers. *Newspaper*
46 *Research Journal*, 27(4), 66–79.

47
48
49
50
51 Sundar, S. S., & Marathe, S. S. (2010). Personalization versus customization: The importance
52 of agency, privacy, and power usage. *Human Communication Research*, 36(3), 298-322.

53
54
55
56
57 Sunstein, C. R. (2009) *Republic 2.0*. Princeton University Press, 272p.

- 1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
- Susman, G.I. & Evered, R.D. (1978), An assessment of scientific merits of action research, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 23(4), 582-603
- Tandoc, E. C., & Thomas, R. J. (2014). The Ethics of Web Analytics. *Digital Journalism*, 3(2),1–16.
- Tandoc, E. C. (2014). Journalism is twerking? How web analytics is changing the process of gatekeeping. *New Media & Society*, 16(4), 559–575.
- Tandoc E. C., & Vos T. P. (2016). The journalist is marketing the news: Social media in the gatekeeping process. *Journalism Practice*, 10(8), 950–966.
- Thurman, N. (2011). Making “The Daily Me”: Technology, economics and habit in the mainstream assimilation of personalized news. *Journalism*, 12(4), 395–415.
- Thurman, N. (2015). Journalism, Gatekeeping, and Interactivity. In S. Coleman & D. Freelon (Eds.), *A Handbook of Digital Politics*, 357–374.
- Thurman, N., & Schifferes, S. (2012). The future of personalization at news websites. *Journalism Studies*, 13(5–6), 775–790.
- Tirole, J. (2016). *Économie du bien commun*. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France.
- Van Maanen, J. (1979). The fact of fiction in organizational ethnography. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24(4), 539-550.
- Vos, T. P., & Thomas, R. J. (2019). The Discursive (Re) construction of Journalism’s Gatekeeping Role. *Journalism Practice*, 13(4), 396-412.
- Vu, H.T. (2014). The online audience as gatekeeper: The influence of reader metrics on news editorial selection. *Journalism*, 15(8), 1094–1110.
- Weber, F. (2015). *Brève histoire de l'anthropologie*. Paris: Flammarion.

Zelizer B. (2009), Journalism and the Academy. In K. Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch (eds),
The Handbook of Journalism Studies. New York: Routledge, 29–41.

News website personalization: the co-creation of content, audiences and services by online journalists and marketers

This paper investigates news website personalization from a socio-economic perspective to help understand the role of journalists and marketers in online service provision. It focuses on a Belgian company that publishes the two major financial and economic newspapers in the country. Debates and day-to-day practices regarding personalization in the company show that two professional groups are involved in the qualification of media products (content and audiences) into media goods and audience segments. In a context where media organizations explore alternative forms of service provision, this study makes an original contribution by pointing out the increase shared roles between online journalists and marketers, especially regarding gatekeeping and audience segmentation practices.

Keywords: Personalization; Journalism, Marketing, Economy of qualities, Media products

Introduction

In the field of online journalism, news personalization has been considered one of “the more contemporary trends” (Zelizer, 2009, p. 36) reflecting the reality that, “we are now more and more entering into the news personalization era¹,” as expressed by the CEO of the Belgian media group IPM.

Previous academic works (e.g. Deuze, 2003; Domingo, 2008) address this recurring issue and detail the different types of technological features that render online news

¹ Unknown. (2017, April 18). La Libre lance ses chatbots. *La Libre Belgique*. Retrieved from <http://www.lalibre.be/culture/medias-tele/la-libre-lance-ses-chatbots-58f5bc9bcd70e80512ebc0cf>

personalization possible². Amongst them, dedicated algorithms play a central role and tend to be at the core of most debates (Kitchin, 2017), mainly because they remain largely non-transparent although they are developed to make “atomic decisions [...] including prioritization, classification, association and filtering [of contents]” (Diakopoulos, 2014).

Existing literature linking personalization and journalism focuses mainly either on the technical, ethical, legal or societal challenges related to automated news delivery based on users’ profile (e.g. Rouvroy & Berns, 2013; Sackmann, Strücker, & Accorsi, 2006; Liu, Dolan, & Pedersen, 2010; Sundar & Marathe, 2010). Some researchers suggest that personalization sharply reduces serendipitous discoveries and could lead to the disappearance of common experiences (Sunstein, 2009), while others raise doubts about the relevance of personalization features from the users’ perspective (Kormelink & Costera Meijer, 2014). Nevertheless, media organizations remain keen to test different types of personalization, partly because of the influence of the economics of online (and targeted) advertising (Lewis & Westlund, 2015).

Although personalization at media organizations makes it possible to address important issues such as news consumption, content diversity and socio-economic issues (Thurman, 2011), much less is known about the latter. In an online context, the *attention economy* has a significant impact on cultural industries and radically modifies interactions and workplace behavior (Tirole, 2016). Content is available at any time and new forms of value creation can arise from recommendation mechanisms. Therefore, personalization features could be an alternative form of service provision provided by news websites in order to influence customer retention.

² The term “personalization” is preferred in this paper to other related notions such as “individualization” or “customization”. This choice is motivated by the lack of consensus in the literature on the differences between these concepts and to what they refer. Also, its “relatively frequent use in the context of news has given it a degree of familiarity” (Thurman, 2011, p. 413).

But the implementation of personalization features predicates structurally interrelating two distinct products: content and audiences, which requires the reestablishment of the characteristics, the “qualities,” to make the two products match and answer the question: “To whom should we distribute what content?” (and vice versa). The theoretical framework of “The economy of qualities” (Callon, Méadel & Rabeharisoa, 2004) affords an understanding of how products can have different lives and be turned temporarily into tradable goods thanks to the interactions between economic agents. And in the case of media organizations, online journalists and marketers are two types of economic agents at the forefront of content and audience creation.

Online journalists create, adapt, publish and share content on the online platforms of their media organizations. In parallel, marketers create categories or segments of audiences to whom they aim to sell and/or promote media content. In this context, the goal of this paper is to investigate how these two professional groups take part in the creation of personalization features and in the qualification of content and audiences into goods. This investigation takes the form of a case-study of the Belgian media organization Mediafin. The results presented in this paper come from an action-research project on the use of audience data in journalism and marketing that I carried out within the company.

Conceptual framework

Personalization and audience data collection

Due to its wide scope of applications, the notion of personalization remains vague and polysemous (Salerno, 2001). At least from an economic perspective, a personalization strategy is based on “the knowledge of customer needs” and implies a customization of “products, services, content, communication etc. to the needs of single customers or customer groups” (Riemer & Totz, 2003, p. 35). From this perspective, personalization strategies are

mainly driven by the will to enhance customer relationships, boost customer satisfaction and create “lock-in” effects (i.e., customer retention effects) (Sackmann et al., 2006).

The development of customer knowledge appears to be one of the cornerstones of personalization strategies. Internet — understood as an information system—and the web have facilitated the construction of such knowledge by providing access to certain types of user data, progressively turned into “consumer data” by web actors with the rise of the commercial web. In the case of the online media industry for instance, audience-measurement software and ad-serving technologies have played a central role in this process by providing the image of the internet user as a consumer through audience measurements (Jouët, 2004).

To link personalization and online distribution of information, Collet (2011) distinguishes three major personalization strategies currently deployed by web actors. The first is the semantic web: a World Wide Web extension that makes possible the adoption of a native language while using a web browser. The second consists in giving users the ability to customize to some extent the web interface on which they are navigating. And the last one arises from attempts to give meaning to the behavioral patterns of web users: algorithms are therefore conceived to serve personalized information based on audience data cross-referencing (socio-demographic, contextual and online-behavioral data).

Thurman’s observations on the use of personalization strategies at news websites are similar. He defines personalization as: “a form of user-to-system interactivity that uses a set of technological features to adapt the content, delivery, and arrangement of a communication to individual users’ explicitly registered and/or implicitly determined preferences” (Thurman, 2011, p. 397). He also characterizes two forms of personalization depending on how users’ preferences are determined: “Explicit personalization uses direct user inputs [and] implicit personalization infers preferences from data collected for example, via a registration process or via the use of software that monitors user activity” (Thurman & Schifferes, 2012: 776).

These approaches clearly show the importance of audience data collection and interpretation in the personalization process. Audience data has been harvested for decades by media organizations because they are a political instrument believed to measure popularity or support (Méadel, 2010). In the case of the print industry, the regular two-sided business model of newspaper companies (Evans and Schmalensee, 2007; Sonnac, 2013) contributed to this process (Bermejo, 2009): information about audiences allows media organizations and media workers to create actionable representations of a public. They use them in a wide variety of activities, such as building strategies to reach their two main consumer groups: audiences and advertisers.

Commercial media organizations that simultaneously operate on the reader and on the advertising markets “can be conceived as platforms of interaction between audiences (“eyeballs”) and advertisers” (Gabszewicz, Resende, & Sonnac 2015, p. 7). Napoli (2003, 2011) argues these organizations are unique in that they “offer simultaneously two distinct but interrelated products to two distinct sets of consumers” (Napoli, 2003, p. 2). One of these two products is content that is distributed sometimes for free, sometimes for a price, to an audience. The other is audiences that they sell to advertisers. Another particularity of these products is that they are in both cases abstract and intangible entities (Kessous, Mellet & Zouinar, 2010) that need to be qualified in order to be exchanged on one of the markets.

The economy of qualities at news websites

Personalization at news websites highlights the point that products such as content and audiences can take the form of different constructs simultaneously. Thus, there’s a need to adopt a conceptual approach that examines how such a process can occur.

In “The economy of qualities,” Michel Callon et al. (2004) provide food for thought on this issue. First, they refer to the good as a specific moment, point or somewhat stabilized state of a product. On the other hand, the product itself refers to the goods seen in a processual way, as the compilation of all the metamorphoses of the article: the product contains all that the item has been, is and will be *in potentia*. The link between the two can be found in a continuous “process of qualification of goods” through which economic agents interact to establish “a constellation of characteristics, stabilized at least for a while, which are attached to the product and transform it temporarily into a tradable good in the market” (Callon et al., 2004, p. 199). Economic agents (either on the demand side or the supply side) play a central role in this dynamic process because their interactions construct the “singularities and substituabilities” of the goods: “[t]he challenge which they share and which divides them is to establish this difficult adjustment between a supply and a demand that is formed around a list of qualities – an adjustment that is temporary and constantly threatened [...]” (Callon et al., 2004, p. 201).

From this perspective, these authors argue that the main nuance between the diverse forms of goods and services provision can be traced mainly to the “key importance [service provision] gives to the relationship between the socio-technical capacity (in the seller’s hands) and the customer (who uses it)” (Callon et al., 2004, p. 209). They refer here to Gadrey’s work on service provision that specifically implies the access to “technical and human capacity” (Gadrey, 2000, p. 383) that consists of “means for the performing diagnostics, maintenance or repair to produce the desired effects on an object owned by the purchaser of the service” (Araujo & Spring, 2006, p. 800).

In the print industry, an increasing number of news websites opt for “a mixed user payment/advertising revenue model” in response to loss in advertising revenue and the tensions (and somewhat transition) between “print versus digital channel interests, and

advertising versus user market interests” (Olsen & Solvoll, 2018, p. 24). The introduction of hard or softer paywalls enables the monetization of online media products thanks to the use of subscribers’ personal data (Evens & Van Damme, 2016). This situation impacts conditions of production, and therefore the dynamic nature of products that media organizations and their employees create (Malcorps, 2017).

The elements presented thus far invite a look at the relationships between products, goods and services at news websites as follows: On one hand, the content as product can be turned into “media goods” (Guibert, Rebillard, & Rochelandet, 2016) with different qualities depending on the qualification process. For instance, some can be qualified as *hot news*, others as *archives* with different forms of monetization potential in the audiences they target. On the other hand, audiences as product can be turned into *an audience* as a good with different qualities on the advertising market. Similarly, within media organizations, media workers co-define the qualities of *an audience* to develop commercial and editorial strategies on the readers market.

News website personalization can be understood as a form of service provision because it involves human and technical capacities to create and boost customer retention (i.e., effects). It necessitates the interrelationship of content with audiences and/or audiences with content. And amongst media workers active on the reader market, online journalists and marketers are the most involved in the creation of such goods and services.

Gatekeeping and the connection between marketers, online journalists and audiences

Online personalization is at the crossroads of editorial and economic concerns because it focuses on the online consumption patterns of the audience. Nowadays, most online journalists access online audience data continuously — mainly web metrics — to serve editorial and strategic ends (Petre, 2015; Tandoc & Thomas, 2014). These metrics also incite

online news staffers to adjust their perceptions of the audience as a group of active and creative individuals (Anderson, 2011; Domingo, 2008).

Historically, marketing departments have been media organizations' division dedicated to the collection and exploitation of information about the readership (Benson, 2002; Pradié, 2004). Over the last 40 years, marketing practices and spending have increased in European media organizations as a response to market maturity effects: in a highly competitive environment, one of the only opportunities to grow resides in attracting clients (consumers and/or advertisers) from the competition (Picard, 2006). And marketers exploit audience data on the reader market to create and evaluate communication and commercial strategies. This data and other survey results become audience measurements and circulate to a certain degree within other autonomous units of the organization, including the newsroom, mainly through the editor-in-chief's voice. Damian (1995) or Montanola and Souanef (2012) have shown that this audience data makes the connection between the newsroom and the marketing department, potentially connecting online journalists and marketers even more.

Indeed, both online journalists and marketers have interests in exploring reader expectations and preferences (about when and/or what information to pass along) through the lens of these numbers (Christin, 2017). Research into the use of audience analytics and analytics platforms at news organizations found that both can have an impact on news content, journalistic values and on "editorial decision-making and gatekeeping" (Petre, 2018, p. 511). In fact, (online) audiences not only impact the gatekeeping process at media organizations (e.g. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Vu, 2014), they also operate as gatekeepers in their own right. In addition, Thurman (2015) showed how personalization features allow not only audiences to act as gatekeepers, but give computer programs gatekeeping responsibilities, as well. Humans, organizations, algorithms: there can be "multiple

gatekeepers, each of whom plays a role in selecting and shaping information into news stories and posts” (Shoemaker & Riccio, 2016, p. 2).

In parallel, the digitalization of communication and the Internet as a telecommunications network influence the conceptualization and the self-perception of the gatekeeping role (Barzilai-Nahon, 2009; Heinderyckx, 2015). In the news ecosystem, the gatekeeping role refers to how agents “see it as their duty or responsibility to pass along some information and not other forms of information” (Heinderyckx and Vos, 2016, p. 21). Furthermore, the authors argue that the gatekeeping role can be an expression of marketing concerns when it “seek[s] to target a particular market demographic” (p. 22). Gatekeeping has long been a defining role of professional journalists (Tandoc & Vos, 2014). But it has been suggested by journalists that this role is changin from editorial direction and control to vetting of information (Vos & Thomas, 2019). On the other hand, marketers are concerned by issues related to media brand coherence, the acquisition and retention of customers, etc. As a result, they aspire to interact with the newsroom to promote specific sections or to take part in the organization and diffusion of journalistic content (Attaway-Fink, 2004; Moreira, Malcorps, & Vitorino, 2019).

Despite the fluidity of the gatekeeping role and its potential connection with marketing considerations, little has been made of the understanding of the relationship between online journalists and marketers. And from another perspective, little is known about how they work together in the qualification of the media products they create. Debates, reflections and practices around personalization at a Belgian news website, however, reveal that some of the components of personalization features are likely to be shaped by online journalists and marketers. Given these elements, this article explores the following research questions:

RQ1: How do personalization features at a news website affect the interactions between online journalists and marketers?

RQ2: How do personalization features at a news website affect the qualification process of content and audiences into goods by online journalists and marketers?

Methods

The results presented in this paper derive from ethnography material collected over a three year period at the Belgian media company Mediafin. Mediafin publishes two economic and financial newspapers in Belgium (*De Tijd*, in Dutch and *L'Echo*, in French), as well as two websites (tijd.be and lecho.be) and mobile/tablet apps³. Situated in Brussels, the company employed around 230 people in 2017⁴, with an annual revenue of 58,37 million EUR and a profit of 12,02 million EUR⁵. The two media brands cover a wide range of topics (from politics and finance to sports and culture) from an economic perspective. Indeed, both have gradually broadened their editorial lines in recent years to include more mainstream topics and increase their audience. However, economics and business remain the characteristic DNA of both media brands.

Mediafin is an interesting study-case regarding the use of audience data at news websites because it was the first Belgian news organization to introduce in 2010 a soft paywall on its websites. Soon after, management decided to work on new user data management procedures and recruit new profiles from the marketing department to manage

³ These online platforms provide users with various forms of content such as: up-to-date newsfeeds, a digital version of the newspaper, one section dedicated to stock market prices, a “personal finance” section and access to 14 curated newsletters.

⁴ Mediafin’s annual financial statement for 2017. (2018, April 26). *Comptes annuels et autres documents à déposer en vertu du code des sociétés*. Retrieved from <https://www.nbb.be/en/central-balance-sheet-office>. This number does not include freelancers.

⁵ Unknown. (2018). Mediafin enregistre une croissance de 10% grâce à la hausse du nombre de lecteurs et d’annonceurs. Document retrieved from <https://www.mediafin.be/fr/chiffres-cles/>

online and offline subscriptions. Regarding the co-creation of media products in the context of news websites based on advertising and subscription revenues, Mediafin offers thereby a unique research environment in Belgium owing to the historicity of such practices.

The ethnographic data for this paper was gathered in the context of an action-research project within the company centered on the challenges faced by the online journalists of lecho.be regarding their uses and needs of audience data⁶. From October 2015 until July 2018, I spent an average of one to two days a week at the company observing and compiling data on this specific topic. I chose to work with the online journalists of lecho.be (instead of tijd.be) because we share the same mother tongue (French). Yet, the bilingual nature of the company required the occasional use of Dutch: for instance, the marketing department at Mediafin works for the two media brands but $\frac{3}{4}$ of the team is Flemish (i.e., Dutch speaking).

Action-research is a qualitative research approach that produces knowledge thanks to and within the action of social groups (Rhéaume, 1982): “Action research offers a framework for research collaborations between scholars and practitioners, generating holistic and solution-oriented outcomes of value for science and practice” (Grubenmann, 2016, p. 160). In such an approach, the researcher and a specific social group collaborate with each other on an issue of common interest in order to bring change to an existing and somewhat problematic situation according to the actors’ perspective. At Mediafin for instance, online journalists at lecho.be pointed out their will to gain a greater access to audience data that the marketing department collects.

Action-research is an inductive and iterative process made up of several steps and different types of actions (Susman & Evered, 1978). Liu (1997) describes how action-research consists of one or more cycles where actions and social experiments take place. The

⁶ The researcher is funded by a grant that is independent from the media company. Likewise, he has never been employed or paid by the organization.

first cycle is the most important and includes (1) diagnosis of the situation, (2) wording of the issue and hypothesis related to it, (3) implementation of social experiments in order to change the situation, (4) and diagnosis of the effects of such experiments. If needed, the cycle can be repeated.

This process requires the researcher to focus both on the action — practical dimension — and on the production of scientific knowledge connected to the action — theoretical dimension — (Jouison-Laffitte, 2009). To achieve such goals several research tools and methods adapted to the environment are necessary: observation sessions, formal interviews, informal discussions, workshops, etc. In the context of this research and starting from the online news desk, an application of the snowball method (Bijker, 1995) permitted first “to identify the set of relevant social groups” (Klein & Kleinman, 2002, p. 32) related to the online journalist’s uses and needs of audience data, followed by an identification of the issues related to it.

This action-research has therefore a double ambition. On one hand, it seeks to understand the challenges at stake in the exchange of audience-related data between the online journalists of lecho.be and the marketing department of Mediafin. On the other hand, it aims at testing new communication tools dedicated to potentially increasing the circulation of this information between the two departments. The following table (Table 1) summarizes the general research design of this action-research project:

Table 1: General Research Design

Topic investigated	Methods	Dates
Why and how did audience metrics become strategic at lecho.be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observation sessions - Interviews/informal discussions with online journalists and 	October 2015 – June 2016

	media planners	
How do users' personal data circulate within the company?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observation sessions - Interviews/informal discussions with management 	October 2016 – February 2017
Problem definition: the journalists' access to audience data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethnographic data analysis 	July 2016 – April 2017
Identification of solution ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop involving marketers and online journalists 	July 2017
Experiment and diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testing the implementation of new communication tools between the two departments - Observation sessions - Interviews with marketers and online journalists 	November 2017 – July 2018

The topic of personalization came into play in July 2017 during a workshop — organized by the researcher — involving the marketing manager, the vice editor-in-chief, the online news desk manager and five online journalists. The one-hour workshop was recorded and comprises the first part of the ethnographic materials analyzed below. Another part comes from five semi-structured interviews on the topic conducted between January and March 2018 with all the full-time marketers of the marketing department. The interviews lasted between 47 and 94 minutes and provided an opportunity to compensate for the absence of most of the marketers during the workshop. Depending on the person's mother tongue, I conducted the interviews and the workshop either in French or in Dutch. The relevant quotes regarding this paper have then been translated in English. This discursive material (Table 2) is coupled with elements gathered from October 2015 during multiple observation sessions.

Table 2: Codes and description of the interviewees

Code	Identity	Data collection method
M1	Marketer	Interview
M2	Marketer	Interview
M3	Marketer	Interview
M4	Marketer	Interview
M5	Marketer	Interview
M6	Marketer (management position)	Workshop
J1	Online journalist (management position)	Workshop
J2	Journalist (management position)	Workshop
J3	Online journalist	Workshop
J4	Online journalist	Workshop
J5	Online journalist	Workshop
J6	Online journalist	Workshop
J7	Online journalist	Workshop

In both the workshop and the interviews, I began the discussion with broader questions about the respective uses and practices of audience data in the online newsroom and the marketing department. Then I moved to more specific questions about personalization (e.g., “How do you talk about personalization within the company [and] in your department?”, “When do you carry out personalization?”, “How are you involved in the examples you’re giving?”, “What do you think about personalization?”). Open questions allowed me to not frame beforehand the actor’s perception on personalization and to discuss accurate practices rather than abstractions.

The workshop and interviews were then transcribed to facilitate the analysis of the material. The transcripts allowed the researcher to organize the material and arrange the online personalization features mentioned by the agents. This was followed by the coding process that allowed the pinpointing of ideas and notions used by the agents to explain the very existence of these features in the organization. As recommended by Van Maanen (1979), I paid careful attention to the linguistic categories (such as verbs, adjectives, etc.) used by online journalists and marketers when talking about personalization. And finally, the use of relevant literature and field notes contributed to the writing of the findings section.

Findings

Two broad themes emerged from the analysis. The first is the range of personalization features that marketers and online journalists are involved in. The second is the link they make between those features and service provision.

A. Types of personalization features

1. Personalization of commercial offers

The personalization of commercial offers is already a reality in the company. Even if this personalization strategy is not systematically applied to all users and remains limited at this stage, it remains one of the company's most advanced personalization attempts. Based on the users' age or on the users' topic interests, the marketing department has created tailored online subscription offers:

We've noticed that subscribers younger than 26 years old, with a full subscription well... they tend far more cancel their subscription in comparison with subscribers around 45 years old. [...]

So, we made a specific commercial offer and campaign: 'Look, you can... if you're up to 27 years old, you can have a subscription at a better price' (M1)

These commercial personalization attempts reveal that strategic reflections and actions regarding personalization are partly shaped by the company's revenue model. From 2010, Mediafin started implementing a paywall on its news websites. This decision was taken by the board of directors after noticing the dramatic shift in audience reach from newspapers to online news sites. While online advertising revenues remained far too low in comparison with the economic performance of printed ads, they rebalance the company's revenue model from advertising to (online) subscription revenues. One of the main missions of the marketing department now is therefore to stabilize and increase the number of subscriptions. Marketers use commercial personalization as a strategy to gain and/or retain subscribers.

They also try to adapt their commercial offers to the users' topic interests:

Not so long ago, we tried to identify users interested in the topics of investment and stock exchange. We then targeted them with a commercial offer for *The Investor*, one of our side-publications. (M2)

But this personalization of commercial offers is limited by how the news packages (i.e., editorial units) are sold: it is not a question at the moment of offering *à la carte* subscriptions. Rather than fragmenting the content in order to sell it, the idea at this stage is

to sell the content in a different way — at different prices — to different groups of potential customers (people under 27 years old, teachers, B2B, etc.).

2. Personalization of communication

The marketing department also works on more personalized forms of communication. Soon new systems will allow marketers to increase the personalization of online banners and newsletters:

We will do it in “one-on-one” marketing. [...] Depending on your profile, we want you to see another banner than what your neighbor sees.

And depending on your... on your surfing behavior... We could identify different [reader] segments and send you a newsletter with a specific content. (M3)

For now, marketers can only differentiate their communication between registered and unregistered users. Another team member addresses the need to be more “personal” in the way they speak to the readers: “I think our ‘tone of voice’ to the reader could be a little bit more personal” (M4). The goal here is to provide an environment where the reader would feel welcomed in a personal way. We find similar motivation patterns when marketers talk about why they work with a call-center — an external partner — to manage complaints and queries from their customers. Marketers highlight how they want their clients to feel heard and that the media organization is taking care of them.

Only one marketer mentioned the “personalization of advertising” as it was connected in her mind with the personalization of communication. This can be explained by the fact that neither marketers nor online journalists are directly involved with advertising tasks: Mediafin

owns its own advertising agency that takes care of it. The marketing department, on the other hand, only produces promotional materials about editorial projects, the brands or temporary commercial offers.

3. News personalization delivery

In this section, “news personalization”⁷ is understood as the somewhat automated personalization of the news content delivery or arrangement. This is the only form of news personalization discussed by online journalists during the workshop. Since the launch of a new lecho.be website in March 2018, registered users can now record explicit keywords in order to receive a tailored newsfeed to their personal page account.

Interestingly, neither online journalists nor the marketing team were involved in the development of such a feature: “It comes from... the I.T. [department], I think.” (M1). Marketers see it as a first attempt in the personalization of news content delivery: “But I think it’s not daring enough, you see? You first have to find it [the personal page account] and I’m not sure that many people will do it” (M2). Online journalists also perceive the feature as a first step in a more global strategy: “It’s embryonic at this stage. But I think we’ll do much more in the future” (J1).

During the discussion about personalization, journalists have mainly expressed how “implicit personalization” (Thurman & Schifferes, 2012) should work in their company. They all agreed on the need to protect their gatekeeping role to complete one of their tasks:

We can imagine... There would be a ‘basic tour’, universal news that all the readers would see. This would be the news selected by the editorial board because it is

⁷ “Personnalisation de l’information” in French and “Nieuws personalisatie” in Dutch.

indispensable... Because we have a task of providing news to the reader: he must know that, even if it's information he does not want to know. (J2)

But they also reconsider their gatekeeping role according to the company's trend toward personalization. Online journalists seem to be keen to tailor news conforming to the media editorial line, at least to some extent:

Well we could make one version [of the "digital journal"] for the readers interested in stock markets, and another for those who are not. And we could do the same for the home page, the mobile app, etc. (J2)

Marketers' discourses on the company's future developments of implicit personalization features agree with the journalists':

I believe an editorial filter must exist. We can't just let people read what they want to read. If we don't, what will they read? Showbiz stories and that's it. [...] But at the same time, you have also to give the reader what he wants to read. (M4)

In other words, marketers recognize the need to respect journalists' gatekeeping role in the news personalization process. They agree with online journalists on the need for the newsroom to maintain its control over what content is worth publishing. But still, a balance needs to be found with the idea of "giving the reader what he wants". One of the interviewees stated that a potential answer to this dilemma could be found in a mixed algorithmic and journalistic personalization model.

B. Motivations and Challenges

1. Personalization features as forms of service provision

The diversity of approaches concerning personalization at Mediafin must be understood within the context of the motivations of its workers, as well as how they justify their practices. Doing so, these “indigenous interpretations” (Weber, 2015, p. 109) allow to better understand how workers shape and perceive their tasks.

Marketers justify online personalization features as a way to gain and/or retain (potential) subscribers and to improve the advertising-based revenue model of the website. As that marketer explained: “Our journalism is really expensive [to produce]. We should limit the number of ads [...] but the ads have to be personalized” (M4). For this marketer, personalized ads are more enjoyable than those that are not. In either case, a common view amongst marketers was that personalization features provide readers with a more pleasant and welcoming environment to experiment with the content. Similarly, online journalists at Lecho.be also link personalization features with user retention: “We need to make more hyperlinks, we have to improve the readers’ circulation between our articles. Because it’s our task to bring the reader to stay longer [on the website]” (J3). They understand online personalization as a way to reach such a goal without losing allegiance to the editorial line of *L’Echo*.

If online journalists and marketers think and test different forms of personalization features, it is partly because management appears to promote this activity: “[The implementation of personalization features] is a difficult task. But managers want to increase news personalization in order to offer personalized services [...]” (J1). Both marketers and online journalists discursively present online personalization features as forms of service

provision: “Such service [personalization] could be a way to... gain more readership. We could turn more readers into subscribers if we ever manage to provide a better service thanks to this data” (J4). Another journalist stated that “I don’t think that personalization is a threat! I think it’s a service we can provide to the readers” (J2). Some others in the marketing department say that relevant personalization features “can increase the user experience” (M2) the company provides.

These results suggest that personalization features bring those professionals to think about themselves as service providers. Consequently, and under the action of management, they contribute to position Mediafin not only as a news provider enterprise, but also as an (online) service company focused on the distribution of financial and economic news. With such a model, readers are likely to become the primary customers (Sullivan, 2006). Online journalists and marketers at Mediafin indeed focus their attention on readers when talking and working on personalization features. They explain that online personalization features must go hand in hand with a relevant segmentation of their readership.

2. Personalization features and the qualification of audiences

The company’s strategy regarding online personalization seems to promote a group-based (or segment-based) approach rather than an individual-based one. According to this journalist, this is not surprising: “News personalization is... Basically, it is nothing revolutionary because you first have to segment your audience” (J1).

The need for relevant audience segments is demonstrated by the diversity of personalization features: “What are our readers interested in? Not everything in our newsletters... so we’ll have to, yes, segment and find what’s relevant for different groups of readers” (M5). But the creation of these segments remains a great challenge for the company

and its workers. They partly plan to do it — and they already do it to some extent — thanks to audience data cross-referencing (socio-demographic, contextual and online-behavioral data). In other words, they aim for the fragmentation of their global audience in order to offer specialized services or offers to different reader groups. For instance, marketers show an interest in their B2B clients and in the group of “registered-but-not-subscriber” users. From an economic perspective, it illustrates the company’s position as a provider of intermediation services “by acting as intermediaries between multiple customer groups” (Evans, 2003, p. 374).

The quality and accuracy of the available data is crucial in this process. However, I argue that the newsroom may also play an important role in the segmentation process. This is mainly because journalists oversee news production and decide what to write about according to the organizational context they are in. As this marketer points out:

We have to create categories: people interested in tech news, stock exchange news, cultural news... And based on an initiative of the newsroom, we can offer more personalized content to the different groups. (M2)

Journalists’ gatekeeping role can have an impact on the segmentation process and therefore on personalization strategies. It limits marketers’ desires and ambitions:

It would be amazing if we could make a newsletter targeted for business starters. It would be a great way to bring them to our products. But we can’t do it from the marketing! We need journalistic productions to fill it in. So, we can try to make the newsroom enthusiastic about it. But we can’t do it alone. (M6)

Personalization features as forms of service provision questions the level of interactions between the newsroom and the marketing department. On one hand, the marketing department can take initiatives concerning audience segmentation and personalization attempts. However, the way marketers do it will depend on the organizational context, the content produced by the group of journalists or the degree of interaction with the newsroom. Their appreciation of the importance of editorial autonomy (Deuze, 2005) also appears to frame personalization attempts. On the other hand, online journalists take part consciously and unconsciously in the segmentation process by deciding what topics to talk about and what deserves to be published and when. This role will be constrained by hierarchical incentives, the interpretation of the editorial line, the influence of the company's revenue model and the degree of interaction with the marketing department.

Conclusion and discussions

This paper offers a unique viewpoint on the reciprocal influence of two groups of media professionals and the online personalization features they deal with. On either side of “that wall between the journalistic and business-oriented functions of a news organization” (Coddington, 2015, p. 72), online journalists and marketers investigate the personalization of different aspects of Mediafin's relationship with readers.

One interesting finding is the relationship between online personalization features and the transition to a “mixed user payment/advertising revenue model” of the websites. Some authors refer to personalization in the media sector as a response to the importance of online consumption patterns and the economics of online advertising: “targeted advertising based on data mining leads to pressures on media companies (including news organizations) to personalize content in response” (Lewis & Westlund, 2015, p. 457). Others argue that there

seems to be “a correlation between above-average deployment of personalization and sites’ ability to charge a subscription” (Thurman & Schifferes, 2012, p. 787).

This case study complements these analyses and shows that personalization is also perceived as an accurate strategy when a media organization modifies its user-market activities. The intense competition between online news media for “consumer attention, consumer spending, and advertising budgets” (Kleis Nielsen, 2016, p. 58) is likely to drive the management at Mediafin to redesign the relationship with its customers. Almost a decade after the introduction of a paywall, the two professional groups stress personalization features as forms of service provision that can lead to greater retention effects on news consumers and/or news readers. Mediafin’s value proposition on the reader market is therefore changing and personalization features are associated with more and more personalized customer relationships. These elements show the organization positioning itself as a service-oriented company, with the delivery of financial and economic news as its core business.

The topic of personalization challenges the interactions between marketers and online journalists because it highlights their shared roles in the qualification process of media products (content and audiences). If they want to adapt the content and communication to specific audience segments (and vice versa), they must shape and transform these media products. Therefore, the qualification of media goods and specific audience segments is the result of “a progressive ‘profiling’ of products that, through successive adjustment and iteration, ends up profiling both the demand and the consumer” (Callon et al., 2004, p. 210). Amongst others, online journalists and marketers are actors of this process: they are economic agents that take part in the social construction of the user and — to some extent — the advertising markets.

The ethnographic material shows that marketers and online journalists refer to audience data, when making editorial choices, creating audience segments or thinking about

personalization features. It can thus be suggested that this information intervenes in the qualification process. In the case of personalization features, audience data is a way to integrate the consumer into the conception of the service. Audience data is a form of consumer resource that shows how he/she “determines the time and space for consumption of the service while also selecting the most suitable method of access (or device)” (Cestino & Berndt, 2017, p. 191). At Mediafin, these resources fuel and result from the socio-technical device “with which [consumers] interact and evolve” (Callon et al., 2004, p. 210). This interconnection between online journalists, marketers and consumers shows that media products “move from one hand to another” (Foster, 2011, p. 48) during the qualification process.

One of the issues that emerges from these findings is the increasing shared roles between online journalists and marketers regarding gatekeeping mechanisms and audience segmentation. If gatekeeping mechanisms explain how news is selected (Tandoc, 2014), discussions concerning online personalization at Mediafin indicate that in the future marketers could play a greater role in this process. There is a need to better understand the dynamic nature of gatekeeping in “an environment where the interests and goals of the stakeholders constantly change, as do their gatekeeping and gated roles” (Barzilai-Nahon, 2009, p. 62). Similarly, journalists are likely to be increasingly associated with the segmentation of online audiences. Their access to information about users and their online consumption patterns also affect such a practice.

Despite these results, questions remain. One of the limitations of this case study is that a part of the discussion about the personalization of online news in the company is potential future discourse. There is, therefore, a need to follow further developments on this topic within the organization. There is also a need to better understand the involvement of the I.T. team in the creation of online personalization features. More broadly, future research into

personalization at news website should address the topic of the shared roles between online journalists and marketers. Likewise, future research is needed to understand the complex interactions between journalists and marketers (or other professional groups) during the qualification process of media products within media organizations. More empirical studies could help to bridge the “competing conceptions of journalism as both a social good and an economic one” (Carlson, 2018, p. 407).

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the reviewers and the editor for their guidance in improving this article.

References

- Anderson, C. W. (2011). Between creative and quantified audiences: Web metrics and changing patterns of newswork in local US newsrooms. *Journalism*, 12(5), 550–566.
- Araujo, L., & Spring, M. (2006). Services, products and the institutional structure of production. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 35(7), 797–805.
- Attaway-Fink, B. (2005). Market-driven journalism: Creating special sections to meet reader interests. *Journal of Communication Management*, 9(2), 145–154.
- Benson, R. (2002). Journalisme et marketing: L’enjeu de la diversité. *Quaderni*, 47(1), 85–100.
- Bermejo, F. (2009). Audience manufacture in historical perspective: From broadcasting to Google. *New Media & Society*, 11(1–2), 133–154.
- Bijker, W. (1995), *Of bicycles, bakelites, and bulbs: toward a theory of sociotechnical change*, Cambridge: MIT Press.

Boullier, D. (2009). Les industries de l'attention: Fidélisation, alerte ou immersion. *Réseaux*, 154(2), 231–246.

Barzilai-Nahon, K. (2009). Gatekeeping: A critical review. *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, 1(43), 1–79.

Callon, M., Méadel, C., & Rabeharisoa, V. (2002). The economy of qualities. *Economy and society*, 31(2), 194–217.

Cestino, J., & Berndt, A. (2017). Institutional limits to service dominant logic and servitisation in innovation efforts in newspapers. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 14(3), 188–216.

Christin, A. (2017). Algorithms in practice: Comparing web journalism and criminal justice. *Big Data & Society*, 4(2), 1–14.

Coddington, M. (2015). The wall becomes a curtain: Revisiting journalism's news–business boundary. In M. Carlson & S.C. Lewis (Eds), *Boundaries of journalism: Professionalism, practices and participation*, London: Routledge, 67–82.

Collet, L. (2011). La presse écrite sur le web et ses lecteurs comme limites aux techniques de personnalisation de l'information. *Document Numérique*, 14(3), 81–102.

Damian, B. (1995), *Les dames du temps présent. Places et fonctions des études de marketing dans la conception des discours de la presse féminine généraliste*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Université Grenoble 3: Grenoble.

Deuze, M. (2003), The web and its journalisms: Considering the consequences of different types of newsmedia online, *New Media & Society*, 5(2): 203–230.

Deuze, M. (2005). What is journalism? Professional identity and ideology of journalists reconsidered. *Journalism*, 6(4), 442–464.

- Diakopoulos, N. (2014). Algorithmic-Accountability: the investigation of Black Boxes. *Tow Center for Digital Journalism*. Advance online publication. [Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.7916/D8ZK5TW2>]
- Domingo, D. (2008). Interactivity in the daily routines of online newsrooms: Dealing with an uncomfortable myth. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(3), 680–704.
- Evans, D. S. (2003). The Antitrust Economics of Multi-Sided Platform Markets. *Yale Journal on Regulation*, 20(2), 327-379
- Evans, D.S., & Schmalensee, R. (2007). The Industrial Organization of Markets with Two-Sided Platforms. *Competition Policy International*, 3(1), 151-179.
- Evens, T., & Van Damme, K. (2016). Consumers' willingness to share personal data: Implications for newspapers' business models. *International Journal on Media Management*, 18(1), 25-41.
- Foster, R. J. (2011). The uses of use value: Marketing, value creation, and the exigencies of consumption work. In D. Zwick & J. Cayla (Eds), *Inside marketing: Practices, ideologies, devices*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 42-57.
- Gabszewicz, J., Resende, J., & Sonnac, N. (2015). Media as multi-sided platforms. In R.G. Picard & S.S. Wildman (Eds), *Handbook on the Economics of the Media*. Cheltenham: EE Publishing, 3-35.
- Gadrey, J. (2000). The characterization of goods and services: An alternative approach. *Review of Income and Wealth*, 46(3), 369-387.
- Grubenmann, S. (2016). Action research: collaborative research for the improvement of digital journalism practice. *Digital Journalism*, 4(1), 160–176.
- Guibert, G., Rebillard, F., & Rochelandet, F. (2016). *Médias, culture et numérique: approches socioéconomiques*. Paris: Armand Colin.

- Heinderyckx, F. (2015). Gatekeeping Theory Redux. In T. P. Vos & F. Heinderyckx (Eds.), *Gatekeeping in Transition*. New York: Routledge. 253–267.
- Heinderyckx, F., & Vos, T. P. (2016). Reformed gatekeeping. *CM: Communication and Media*, 11(36), 29–46.
- Jouët, J. (2004). Les dispositifs de construction de l'internaute par les mesures d'audience. *Le Temps Des Médias*, 2(3), 160–174.
- Jouison-Laffitte, E. (2009). La recherche action: oubliée de la recherche dans le domaine de l'entrepreneuriat. *Revue de l'Entrepreneuriat*, 8(1), 1-35.
- Kessous, E., Mellet, K., & Zouinar, M. (2010). L'économie de l'attention: entre protection des ressources cognitives et extraction de la valeur. *Sociologie du travail*, 52(3), 359-373.
- Kitchin, R. (2017). Thinking critically about and researching algorithms. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(1), 14–29.
- Klein, H. K., & Kleinman, D. L. (2002). The social construction of technology: structural considerations. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 27(1), 28–52.
- Kormelink, T. G., & Meijer, I. C. (2014). Tailor-made news. Meeting the demands of news users on mobile and social media. *Journalism Studies*, 15(5), 632–641.
- Lewis, S. C., & Westlund, O. (2015). Big Data and journalism: Epistemology, expertise, economics, and ethics. *Digital Journalism*, 3(3), 447–466.
- Liu, M. (1997). La validation des connaissances au cours de la recherche-action. *Etudes et Recherches sur les Systèmes Agraires et le Développement*, 30, 183-196
- Liu, J., Dolan, P., & Pedersen, E. R. (2010). *Personalized news recommendation based on click behavior. Proceedings of the 15th international conference on Intelligent user interfaces*, Mountain View, USA. Mountain View: Google Inc.

Malcorps, S. (2017). L'entreprise de presse et son audience en ligne. *Réseaux*, 5(205), 145-173.

Méadel, C. (2010). *Quantifier le public*. Paris : Economica.

Montanola, S., & Souanef, K. (2012). Les études de lectorat et leurs discours : entre outil de gestion, mythe journalistique et instrumentalisation. *Sciences de La Société*, (84-85), 152-169.

Moreira, D. A., Malcorps, S., & Vitorino, M. M. (2019). When Journalists and Marketers Negotiate: A Competency-Based Analysis of Negotiation Processes in Brazilian and Belgian Media Organizations. *Brazilian Journalism Research*, 15(2), 310-337.

Napoli, P. M. (2003). *Audience economics: Media institutions and the audience marketplace*. New York : Columbia University Press.

Napoli, P. M. (2011). *Audience evolution: New technologies and the transformation of media audiences*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Olsen, R. K., & Solvoll, M. K. (2018). Reinventing the business model for local newspapers by building walls. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 15(1), 24-41.

Ouakrat, A. (2012). Le ciblage comportemental, une perte de contrôle des éditeurs sur les données de l'audience. *Tic&société*, 6(1), 33-55.

Petre, C. (2015). Managing metrics: the containment, disclosure, and sanctioning of audience data at the New York Times. In *The Tow Center for Digital Journalism*. 1-35.

Petre, C. (2018). Engineering consent: How the design and marketing of newsroom analytics tools rationalize journalists' labor. *Digital Journalism*, 6(4), 509-527.

Picard, R. G. (2006). Les médias au risque du management et du marketing. *Le Temps Des Médias*, 1(6), 165-174.

Pradié, C. (2004). L'irrésistible montée des études de marché dans la presse française (1920-1990). *Le Temps Des Médias*, 3(2), 126–137.

Rhéaume, J. (1982). La recherche-action : un nouveau mode de savoir? *Sociologie et Sociétés*, 14(1), 43–51.

Riemer, K. & Totz, C. (2003) The many faces of personalization. In M.M. Tseng & F.T. Piller (Eds), *The Customer Centric Enterprise*. Berlin: Springer, 35-50.

Rouvroy, A. & Berns, T. (2013). Gouvernamentalité algorithmique et perspectives d'émancipation. *Réseaux*, 177(1), 163-196

Sackmann, S., Strüker, J., & Accorsi, R. (2006). Personalization in privacy-aware highly dynamic systems. *Communications of the ACM*, 49(9), 32-38.

Salerno, A. (2001). Une étude empirique des relations entre personnalisation, proximité dyadique et identité de clientèle. *Recherche et Applications en Marketing (French Edition)*, 16(4), 25-46.

Shoemaker, P. J. & Reese, S. D. (1996). *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content (2nd ed.)*, White Plains, NY: Longman.

Sonnac, N. (2013). L'écosystème des médias. Les enjeux socio-économiques d'une interaction entre deux marchés. *Communication [En Ligne]*, 32(2), 1–40.

Sullivan, D. (2006). Business service model promotes better newspapers. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 27(4), 66–79.

Sundar, S. S., & Marathe, S. S. (2010). Personalization versus customization: The importance of agency, privacy, and power usage. *Human Communication Research*, 36(3), 298-322.

Sunstein, C. R. (2009) *Republic 2.0*. Princeton University Press, 272p.

- Susman, G.I. & Evered, R.D. (1978), An assessment of scientific merits of action research, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 23(4), 582-603
- Tandoc, E. C., & Thomas, R. J. (2014). The Ethics of Web Analytics. *Digital Journalism*, 3(2), 1–16.
- Tandoc, E. C. (2014). Journalism is twerking? How web analytics is changing the process of gatekeeping. *New Media & Society*, 16(4), 559–575.
- Tandoc E. C., & Vos T. P. (2016). The journalist is marketing the news: Social media in the gatekeeping process. *Journalism Practice*, 10(8), 950–966.
- Thurman, N. (2011). Making “The Daily Me”: Technology, economics and habit in the mainstream assimilation of personalized news. *Journalism*, 12(4), 395–415.
- Thurman, N. (2015). Journalism, Gatekeeping, and Interactivity. In S. Coleman & D. Freelon (Eds.), *A Handbook of Digital Politics*, 357–374.
- Thurman, N., & Schifferes, S. (2012). The future of personalization at news websites. *Journalism Studies*, 13(5–6), 775–790.
- Tirole, J. (2016). *Économie du bien commun*. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France.
- Van Maanen, J. (1979). The fact of fiction in organizational ethnography. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24(4), 539-550.
- Vos, T. P., & Thomas, R. J. (2019). The Discursive (Re) construction of Journalism’s Gatekeeping Role. *Journalism Practice*, 13(4), 396-412.
- Vu, H.T. (2014). The online audience as gatekeeper: The influence of reader metrics on news editorial selection. *Journalism*, 15(8), 1094–1110.
- Weber, F. (2015). *Brève histoire de l'anthropologie*. Paris: Flammarion.

Zelizer B. (2009), Journalism and the Academy. In K. Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch (eds), *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*. New York: Routledge, 29–41.