
Miscellaneous

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Integrating Communication Strategies for Influencer-Journalists: A Systematic Literature Review

Abstract

Using the PRISMA method, this systematic review investigates how journalists acting in different roles adopt communication strategies to promote their image and content, as well as engage and expand their audiences. The analysis focuses on three specific questions: the use of marketing strategies to expand audience reach, branding approaches to establish a notorious presence, and advertising techniques to endorse products. The review of 68 articles demonstrates that journalists are progressively embracing digital influencer roles, using native advertising, personal branding, and influencer marketing to enhance their exposure and credibility in a highly competitive media landscape. These methods are essential for effectively reaching and connecting with various audiences. The results emphasize the crucial equilibrium between implementing inventive communication strategies and upholding journalistic integrity to safeguard credibility and public confidence. The study's limitations include the processes of article selection and codification, which may not adequately correspond to the range of journalistic practices. Future research should broaden its scope to encompass empirical investigations in social media and examine ethical principles in different contexts. Finally, this study highlights

the importance of influencer-journalists adapting responsibly to the ever-changing media environment by striking a balance between embracing new possibilities and upholding journalistic integrity standards in their work.

Keywords

Marketing, Branding, Advertising, Digital Strategies, Media, Journalism.

1. Introduction

Digital technology is significantly transforming and influencing journalism in today's media landscape. A notable shift towards digital and platform-dominated media environments is reshaping the production and consumption of journalistic content, as well as the interactions between journalists, media platforms, and their consumers. Social media plays an important role in introducing both challenges and opportunities, as well as changing journalism practices and business models.

The Reuters Institute's Digital News Report 2023 underscores a growing trend of avoiding traditional news platforms (Newman et al., 2023). Only about 22% of respondents started their news journeys on websites or apps, down from 32% in 2018. Moreover, the report notes that younger audiences are more likely to pay attention to influencers and celebrities than journalists on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, underscoring the growing influence of social media.

This requires a reevaluation of communication strategies in the journalism sector. In this evolving digital environment, journalists are more than just reporters; they have also begun to embody the role of influencers. They now need to engage with audiences and deal with the complexities of digital media to maintain audience trust and engagement.

The convergence of their journalistic credibility with the persuasive power of social media platforms enables these professionals to cultivate a unique type of influence. They engage with audiences directly and personally, often blurring the lines between news reporting and personal branding. This dual role as content creators and influential figures necessitates an examination of how they use various communication strategies to maintain and expand their influence.

Thus, for the exploration of the communication strategies employed in journalism in the digital era, particularly focusing on the emerging role of journalists as influencers, content creators and others, the main question guiding this research is **(RQ1): How do journalists who play different roles adopt communication strategies to promote their image and content, as well as engage and expand their audiences?** Given the growing prominence of social media networks as key communication platforms, it is critical to investigate how these new dynamics are transforming the media ecosystem.

This study intends to investigate this topic, critically evaluate existing approaches, and build a consolidated theoretical basis on the topic using a systematic review methodology following the PRISMA method. It is expected that the results contribute to academic and professional discussion and that the findings will enhance the understanding of the relationship between journalism and digital impact, offering insights that can guide future journalism practices and policymaking.

The structure of the study includes this introduction, which presents the research question. The subsequent theoretical background section will discuss sub-questions. The methodology section will describe the systematic review process, and the results section will present the findings. Finally, the discussion and conclusions will synthesize the implications of these findings for the field of digital journalism.

2. Theoretical Background

The Internet and social media have reduced barriers between content producers and consumers, and the digitization and popularization of mobile devices have significantly changed journalistic practice (Silva-Rodríguez et al., 2023). This has allowed journalists to act as curators and facilitators of dialogue and transformed the power dynamics in communication, encouraging a model of gatewatching where users can create and disseminate narratives (Schwalbe et al., 2015). Social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram reinforce this model by enriching the informative experience and facilitating interactions between journalists and the public (Bowd, 2020; Thurman, 2018).

Consequently, journalists are progressively gaining recognition as digital influencers, acting as content creators, leaders, ambassadors, advocates, and celebrities (Vos & Ferrucci, 2018; Mellado & Hermida, 2021; Pérez-Serrano & García-Santamaría, 2021; Usher, 2021). This development reflects their ability to use social media platforms to influence opinions, mobilize audiences, and foster social activism (Bruns & Nuernbergk, 2019). These different roles have

transformed the structures and practices of journalism, expanding their relevance as influencer-journalists, and challenging them to maintain the distinction between factual reporting and personal influence (Karhawi & Camargo, 2023).

The application of theoretical approaches to influencer-journalist settings offers a crucial foundation for comprehending this transition. Fidler (1997) introduces the concept of “mediamorphosis”, which describes how the media evolves naturally due to technological and social factors, resulting in new modes of communication. The Theory of Agenda-Setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) highlights the ability of the media to shape public perception, while the approaches Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969) and MAIN Model (Sundar & Shyam, 2008) discuss the importance of information credibility and the construction of meanings through social interactions, like those that establish connections between journalists and their audiences. Additionally, the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers, 1962) makes it possible to reflect on how journalists embrace new technologies and strategies, helping to disseminate these innovations in the field of journalism (e.g., Ekdale et al., 2015; Holman & Perreault, 2023).

Therefore, journalists who innovate have greater influence over their audiences when using social platforms to highlight relevant topics (Swasy, 2016). They can promote confidence and closeness through bidirectional dialogue, allowing for more personal interaction (Koliska et al., 2023). Thus, the application of communication strategies becomes critical for understanding the process of news dissemination to the public, as well as the dynamics between journalists, journalistic organizations, and their audiences (Kramp & Loosen, 2018). These strategies include techniques and tools that optimize the influence and efficacy of messages, effectively engage, and expand audience attention, and enhance credibility and authority in a highly competitive and saturated information landscape (Atad & Cohen, 2024).

Among those strategies, marketing, branding, and advertising fulfill crucial roles (Jenkins, 2023). Marketing is responsible for promoting content to attract more readers and subscribers (Luyckx & Paulussen, 2022; Edgerly & Thorson, 2023; Vos et al., 2023). Meanwhile, branding focuses on developing a unique brand image that fosters audience loyalty and distinguishes the company in the market (Holton & Molyneux, 2017; Molyneux & Holton, 2015). Advertising generates income and promotes companies or services by creating content that helps fund journalistic operations (Beckert, 2023; Ryfe, 2023). The implementation of these strategies is relevant, considering the recent shifts in consumer behavior, indicating a decline in the consumption of news on websites or apps by 2023 (Newman et al., 2023).

The adoption of marketing practices, such as market segmentation, collaboration with influencers, marketing campaigns, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), and other visibility optimization techniques, has allowed journalists to effectively disseminate their work and establish a closer and more direct relationship with their audience (Edgerly & Thorson, 2023; Giomelakis, 2023; Haapanen, 2021; Perreault & Hanusch, 2022). They have tailored their content to meet the specific needs and behaviors of their audience, including content marketing and data-driven marketing (Haapanen, 2021; Martin et al., 2024).

Journalists are developing and communicating their personal branding to establish credibility and authenticity with the audience (Brems et al., 2017; Molyneux et al., 2018). They use social media platforms to showcase their specialized knowledge, advertise their projects, and actively communicate with their audience, aiming to improve their online presence and impact in the online domain (Molyneux et al., 2018). This strategy entails the construction of a personal brand, the crafting of a compelling storyline, and the establishment of a strong reputation and influence (Holton & Molyneux, 2017). This aligns with the transition towards a more collaborative approach to journalism, involving active engagement and communication

between journalists and their audience (Schmidt et al., 2022). In this situation, qualities such as visual image and style are equally important in creating a remarkable visual identity (Lough et al., 2018; Martín-Sanromán et al., 2022).

Journalists and media companies are actively applying different advertising strategies to earn income and monetize their content (Fernández & Vallvey, 2022). These strategies encompass native advertising, cross-platform advertising, social media ads, brand partnerships, and the use of paywalls to maintain both financial viability and journalistic integrity (Beckert, 2023; Komissarov, 2022; Daun & Schäfer, 2020; Olsen & Solvoll, 2018). The Reuters Report indicates that the percentage of individuals who subscribe to internet news is 17% across 20 countries, underscoring the significance of this balance (Newman et al., 2023).

Journalists face challenges when implementing and using these techniques and tools, as there is a delicate distinction between editorial and promotional content (Palau-Sampio, 2021). The lack of transparency can affect public confidence and journalistic reputation (Karlsson, 2020). Disinformation dissemination can influence the efficacy of communication strategies, necessitating increased vigilance in fact-checking prior to the fast publication of content to avoid fake news or inaccurate information (Míguez-González et al., 2023).

The provided background demonstrates a convergence between journalism, entertainment, and personal promotion, with substantial effects on the media outlet sector and mass communication. The advent of digital technology has brought about significant changes in journalism, presenting both new obstacles and possibilities for exerting influence on journalists. Their specific communication strategies are critical for engaging and expanding their audiences, promoting their images and content, and implementing advertising approaches.

In order to explore these specific strategies and answer RQ₁ holistically, three research subquestions were constructed, considering the role of journalists as influencers: (RQ_{1a}) How do journalists employ marketing strategies to expand their audience and enhance their interaction with the public?; (RQ_{1b}) How do journalists create and communicate their brand to distinguish themselves and establish a notable presence?; and (RQ_{1c}) How do journalists use advertising approaches to endorse specific products, services, or initiatives?

The purpose of these questions is to explore the techniques and tools employed by influencer-journalists independent or integrated of media organizations to achieve better results in a highly competitive market. They aim to explore the crucial role of marketing, branding, and advertising strategies, taking into consideration ethics and integrity in journalism. This analysis is essential for comprehending how journalists manage the complexities of a business model that necessitates ongoing innovation and adaptation to meet audience expectations in the age of personalized media.

Given the discussion, it is evident that these notions are crucial for comprehending the evolving nature of contemporary journalism. They highlight present practices and provide a foundation for further exploration of these phenomena. Consequently, this study will adopt a methodology that is shaped by the literature reviewed. Its aim is to offer strong and practical knowledge for journalist-influencers, emphasizing the impact on journalistic practice, the sustainability of the profession, and the formulation of digital media policy.

3. Materials and Methods

The research methodology adopted, considering the aim of this study, followed the systematic review guidelines set by the PRISMA protocol. This option is based on its acknowledgment in the literature and its applicability, reproducibility, and methodological rigor, which guarantee a thorough and transparent approach in identifying, selecting, and critically analyzing the

papers (Moher et al., 2009; Page et al., 2021). The research was carried out in the renowned Web of Science and Scopus databases, utilizing a search approach that included “Title”, “Abstract” and “Keywords” to identify the relations between marketing, branding, advertising strategies, and influencers in journalism.

The research terms used were “marketing”, “branding”, and “advertising”, which are comprehensive communication strategies used in journalism to engage audiences and promote content. Additionally, the terms “content creator” “leader” “influencer” “ambassador”, “advocate” and “celebrity” were used to investigate how journalists are assuming roles that go beyond traditional reporting, acting as influential figures who shape public opinion. The term “journalist*” was included with an asterisk to encompass various forms of the word “journalist,” such as “journalist”, “journalists,” and “journalism,” ensuring a comprehensive search of literature on the role of journalists.

The inclusion criteria have been established in line with the research's main goal. Restricted to publications up to 2023, to focus on recent and pertinent contributions to contemporary journalistic practices in the context in which the role of journalists as digital influencers is emergent. Only articles written in “English” were included because of their extensive availability and their representation as a well-established foundation in the global academic literature. While acknowledging the significance of works in other languages, the selection was driven by practical feasibility and enhanced methodological consistency. Additionally, “Article” documents were chosen to maintain a focus on top-tier research and conclusive findings.

The studies were chosen using a collaborative and independent approach by the authors, starting by reviewing titles and summaries and then proceeding to analyze the entire texts of the selected articles in detail. Methodological differences were resolved through debate and consensus to strengthen the integrity and objectivity of the selection process. The possibility of bias in the analysis of results was acknowledged, entailing evaluating the methodological limitations, including potential publication bias, data collection quality, and result-presenting objectivity.

Key information from each study, including authors, title, source, publication year, and summary, was gathered. Quantitative insights were provided into the empirical findings, geographical context, and applied methodologies, as well as the contributions and conclusions of each study. To analyze the included articles, a qualitative analysis method was used to allow a narrative and thematic synthesis.

A coding process, unfolded in three stages, was also adopted, enabling a comprehensive focus on the research questions: i) definition of codes: based on the theoretical background, codes were established iteratively, adjusted to the scope of the study, encompassing central categories related to marketing (e.g. content marketing), branding (e.g. brand narrative) and advertising (e.g. social media ads); ii) application of codes: the codes were applied to each article to identify patterns and relevant themes for the research questions; iii) review and adjustments: after coding, a review was conducted to ensure consistency and make necessary adjustments to the codes in order to maintain coherence in the analysis. The codes are detailed in the sequence of the study, along with the frequency that they were identified in the sample. This process allowed the identification of prevailing patterns, themes, and strategies.

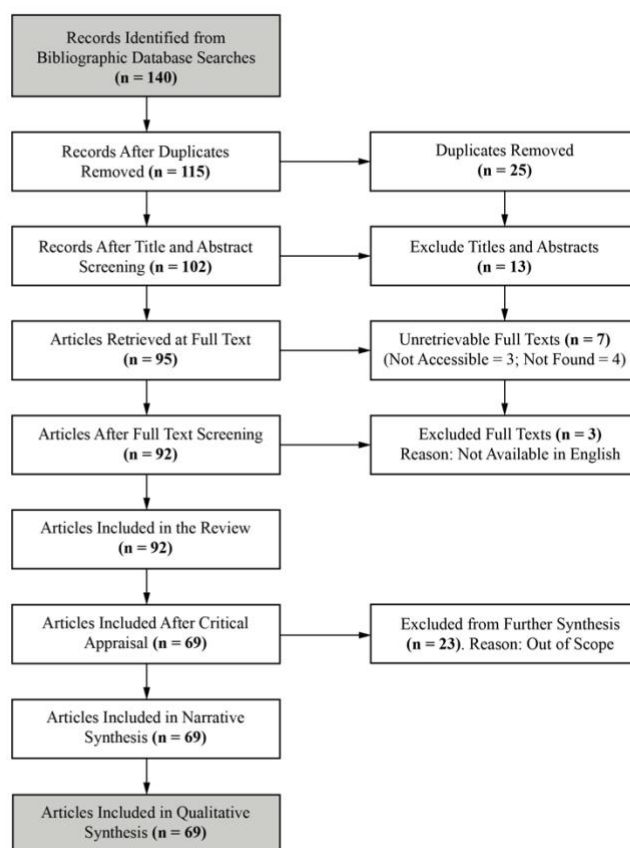
The results will be presented using the PRISMA flow diagram to illustrate the selection process for the articles. The essential characteristics will be presented, providing an overview of the selected studies. The findings are going to be narratively discussed, considering the

assumptions of the study, to provide an integrated perspective of the communication strategies applicable to influencer-journalists.

4. Results

Journalists who play different roles in the digital landscape are in focus, and it is needed to comprehend how they adopt communication strategies to promote their image and content, as well as engage and expand their audiences. Following the research question, this section presents the findings of the literature review. Initially, to provide a systematic and visual representation of the selection process of articles, the PRISMA flow diagram was utilized (Figure 1) to describe the adopted methodological procedure, from identifying records in the databases to including articles in the analysis.

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram



Source: Author's own elaboration.

The first systematic search in the databases found a total of 140 publications (85 in Web of Science and 55 in Scopus). After the initial phase, 26 duplicate records were removed to ensure the uniqueness of each study in the analysis. Furthermore, 13 documents were excluded in the title and abstract reviews, 3 items were removed due to unavailability, 3 for being non-English, and 4 records were not located after an extensive search.

After removing those entries, 91 documents underwent eligibility reviews. After a detailed analysis, 23 publications deemed irrelevant to the study were excluded. This stage guaranteed that only articles directly connected to the study objective were included for analysis. Therefore, 68 papers met the criteria and were included in the final review of the systematic review. No

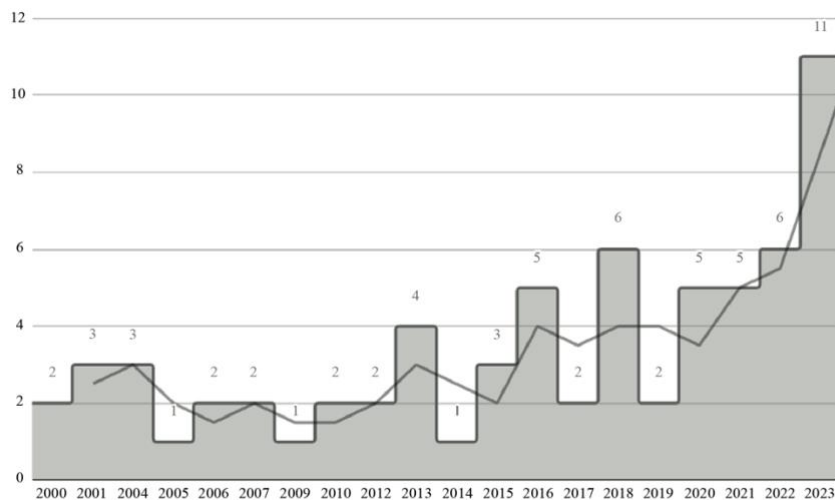
other sources were consulted. Only articles that could be accessed in the chosen databases were considered.

The systematic review analyzed 68 papers that covered various perspectives. The studies diverge in source, geographical contexts, methodological approach, and publication periods, showcasing the field's growth over the past two decades. A total of 53 journals were identified, with "International Journal of Communication" and "Journalism" being the main, each having four publications. The journals "Digital Journalism", "Journalism Practice" and "Journalism Studies" appear with three articles each.

From the base, 15 (22.1%) studies did not specify a geographic context, reflecting the global nature of the Internet and digital journalism's audience. The remaining articles showed this geographical distribution: 3 (4.4%) were international, covering multiple regions without focusing on one specific area; 46 (67.6%) focused on national contexts by continent: Europe (16); North America (16); Asia (13); Oceania (1), reflecting practices and strategies within specific borders; and 4 (5.9%) were regional, in Australia (1), Canada (1) and the United States (2), exploring local dynamics within specific countries or communities. Most studies (18; 26.5%) involve the United States context, with two at an international level and two at a regional level.

The documents provided cover the period from 2000 to 2023, demonstrating an increasing and diverse interest in the issue over time. In 2023, there were 11 (16.2%) articles published, marking the peak in research and publications (Figure 2). Furthermore, between 2014 and 2023, a total of 46 publications were recorded, accounting for 67.6% of the total.

Figure 2. Distribution by year of publication.



Source: Author's own elaboration.

The articles included in the analysis exhibit methodological diversity, with 32 (47%) utilizing a qualitative approach, 16 (23.6%) employing a quantitative approach, 11 (16.2%) combining qualitative and quantitative methods, and 9 (13.2%) concentrating on theoretical studies and literature reviews. This diversity emphasizes the subject's complexity and the need to employ various methods to understand the nuances of digital strategies in journalism. No specific populations or professional profiles were found in the studies, indicating a comprehensive strategy aimed at a global perspective.

The study's key features emphasize the diverse geography, extensive publication range over the years, different sources, and many methodology approaches that provide a solid

foundation for this analysis. This highlights the importance and complexity of the topic, underscoring the necessity to further investigate these dynamics. Given this, a qualitative analysis was performed on the 68 articles, considering the code list and its subgroups that resulted from the coding process described in the methodology section. Table 1 displays the frequency of occurrences. It is noteworthy that 43 articles recorded more than one code.

Table 1. Frequency of coding by subgroup and code.

Marketing		36
Content Marketing	Contents to promotion and audience engagement	26
Marketing Campaign	Specific campaigns to increase reach	19
Collaboration with Influencers	Influencer collaborations to reach more audience	12
Market segmentation	Segmenting the audience for effective strategies	10
Data-Driven Marketing	Marketing decision-making with data	9
SEO and Visibility	Optimization techniques for online visibility	5
Branding		51
Reputation and Influence	Create and maintain a strong reputation to increase digital influence	34
Authenticity and Credibility	Establish and maintain a trustworthy image	32
Interaction and Engagement	Relationship-building audience interaction strategies	30
Personal Brand Development	Strategies to create a unique brand identity	27
Brand Narrative	Developing a personal brand narrative	16
Visual Image and Style	Logo, color, and presentation strategies to create a visual identity	7
Advertising		38
Editorial/Advertising Balance	Mix commercial and editorial content with compromising journalism	22
Advertising Approaches	Native and sponsored advertising	20
Content Monetization	Content income strategies like paywalls, sponsorships, and others	20
Social Media Ads	For Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, X and other social media ads	9
Cross-Platform Advertising	Advertising across platforms or media for broader reach	5

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Out of the 68 articles, 36 contained codes related to the subgroup “Marketing”, which accounted for 52.9% of the total. In the subgroup “Branding”, 51 articles were found, accounting for 75% of the total. Finally, the “Advertising” subgroup collected 38 articles, representing 55.9% of the total number of articles included. The following findings were analyzed to answer RQ1a, RQ1b and RQ1c, considering the subgroup categorization with their associated codes and the total number of articles registered in each. Because many papers refer to more than one subgroup and code, the presentation of the findings will emphasize the important findings related to the research topics and study scope.

4.1. How do journalists employ marketing strategies to expand their audience and enhance their interaction with the public?

The results answering RQ1a were derived from the examination of diverse techniques and tools employed in content marketing, organizing marketing campaigns, partnering with influencers, implementing market segmentation, utilizing data-driven marketing, and SEO strategies.

For authors in general, influencer-journalists employ content marketing as a crucial strategy to captivate audiences by endorsing companies, services, or campaigns through persuasive narratives that integrate their personal experiences. The personalization of content, as explained by Roncarolo (2004), is essential in creating genuine storylines that really connect with viewers. Stoltzfus (2004) has highlighted the evolution of these strategies, showing a shift

towards prioritizing active listening to readers. Nelson (2019) has identified active listening as a crucial element for effectively engaging the audience. Chase (2020) demonstrates the use of content marketing strategies to subtly address environmental issues, creating awareness without controversy. Dellarocas et al. (2013) investigate the commercial opportunities presented by content aggregation in terms of increasing website visitors and earning income. They highlight the significance of disseminating valuable information. In addition, Nee (2014) and Veseli-Kurtishi (2018) emphasize the crucial importance of social media in promoting content and attracting readers, hence increasing the visibility and impact of journalistic efforts.

Marketing campaigns, especially those executed through events and press releases, were identified as having a crucial role in expanding the audience and advertising products or services. Roxworthy (2016), Zeng and Li (2013) and Baron (2005) analyze the efficacy of strategically crafted advertisements in increasing media awareness and fostering brand loyalty. Pompper and Ertem-Eray (2023) demonstrate the effectiveness of contextually appropriate strategies, such as those employed in COVID-19 awareness campaigns, in promoting meaningful audience involvement.

Collaborating with other influencers appeared to be an essential component of the influencer-journalist's repertoire. According to Hardy (2017), these collaborations with influential figures are significant in the digital world. Borchers and Enke (2022) and Asquith and Fraser (2020) examine how these partnerships increase campaign involvement and exposure while also imitating native advertising and influencer marketing by incorporating content into social media platforms. Gursen (2021) emphasizes the importance of targeting specific audiences to improve partnership success, making them more relevant and powerful.

It was perceived that efficient market segmentation guarantees the distribution of customized content to demographics, maximizing the influence and efficiency of marketing campaigns. Chase (2020), Jaffery et al. (2006), Masduki and D'Haenens (2022) and Muela-Molina et al. (2020) emphasize the significance of comprehending audience demographics and preferences to enhance targeting effectiveness. Gursen (2022) examines the accuracy of this strategy in reaching specific and specialized markets, while Chaney (2001) proposes that focusing on influential individuals within segmented markets can result in increased influence and more market penetration.

Although less expressive, data-driven marketing is the foundation for all these techniques because it relies on analytics to improve targeting accuracy and engagement strategies' effectiveness. Trepte and Scherer (2010), for example, emphasize the need to use data to improve content marketing and market segmentation. Meanwhile, Singh et al. (2016) discuss how to use machine learning and data analysis techniques to understand traders' actions in the market of Twitter followers.

Finally, the findings demonstrate that the visibility and implementation of SEO strategies are essential for promoting journalistic content effectively. Pavlik (2013) investigates the possibility of using data analysis and strategic mobile device utilization to improve online visibility. Sedeke and Payal (2013) highlight the significance of optimizing blogs for search engines, a strategy that can improve the reliability of information. Vijaykumar et al. (2021) emphasizes the significance of using viral marketing strategies to spread information through social media, whereas Zorin (2023) emphasizes the strategic benefit of segmenting the audience when creating influential communication.

The findings show that various authors address a combination of traditional marketing campaigns and innovative digital strategies that could create a dynamic environment focused on content that maximizes visibility, authenticity, engagement, and customized experiences.

4.2. How do journalists create and communicate their brand to distinguish themselves and establish a notable presence?

Regarding question RQ1b, the results explore the complex and strategic processes involved in building reputation and influence, establishing authenticity and credibility, enhancing interaction and engagement, developing a personal brand, crafting a compelling brand narrative, and defining a visual image and style.

The analysis of the studies suggests that journalists enhance their reputation and impact by participating in activities that resonate with their audiences, often reflecting shared beliefs and ideals. Chapman (2015) and Nelson and Kim (2021) noted that trust is pivotal in establishing a strong journalistic presence in the digital space. The establishment of trust serves as the basis for the journalist's credibility, as emphasized by Merino and Kinnvall (2023) and Ragas and Tran (2015), who suggest it is critical for creating a memorable and influential presence. Khan et al. (2023) propose that journalists based in major urban areas have a higher likelihood of gaining greater awareness and building a more influential reputation on Twitter compared to journalists from more remote regions. Riedl et al. (2020) and Prinkey (2023) examine the ways in which these interactions go beyond conventional limits, exerting a substantial impact on public perception and increasing the exposure of journalists' personal brand.

The core of a journalist's personal brand, which is quite clearly identified, relies on authenticity and trustworthiness, which are indispensable for resonating impartiality. According to McPherson (2012) and Martín-Barbero (2006), these traits are crucial, although considered abstract but tangible assets. However, Carr and Bard (2017) argue that the public perceives credibility based on the principles of fairness and veracity in reporting. Rodgunphai and Kheokao (2020) underscore the need for authenticity in maintaining journalistic integrity. The coherence and clarity of communications, as examined by Vogan and Dowling (2016) and Kuhn (2007), are also crucial in shaping the audience's perception of journalists' credibility.

Establishing a strong personal brand appeared to be an essential element of interactivity and audience involvement. According to Kalika and Ferrucci (2019), including readers in the news is a novel possibility on various social media platforms, while Miller and Nelson (2022) examine the phenomenon of journalists encountering both those who are pressured to engage with audiences online but also face hostility from those same audiences. Lachover and Fogiel-Bijaoui (2022) argue that celebrities, including journalists, play a crucial role in engaging with the public, particularly through social media platforms like Twitter. Egbert and Rudeloff (2023) and Pavlik (2013) emphasize the importance of adapting to new technology and strategically utilizing digital platforms to ensure continued relevance and engagement.

According to Marcos-García et al. (2020), the success of the interactions on digital platforms, where engagement can occur quickly and reach a large audience, is commonly assessed by examining the continuous discussion between journalists and their communities.

Developing a personal brand in journalism, as perceived in the findings, involves employing multiple techniques and tools to create a distinct and easily recognizable identity. The utilization of social capital for the purpose of influencing public opinion is examined by Asquith and Fraser (2020) and King (2018), whereas the significance of maintaining a coherent and genuine online presence is emphasized by Trepte and Scherer (2010). In media contexts, Han (2000) emphasizes the importance of visibility and public recognition in brand development. Vandendaele (2018) highlights that the public must recognize rigorous standards of quality.

The construction of a journalist's narrative was shown to be an essential component of the personal brand. An integrated and persuasive brand story, as discussed by Bainbridge and Bestwick (2010) and Olausson (2018), is crucial for effectively conveying a consistent image and

establishing the journalist as a prominent figure in the digital scenario. The effective utilization of social media platforms, demonstrated through instances such as Twitter and Twitch (McEnnis, 2023; Miller & Lewis (2022); Kristina & Payal, 2013), highlights the significance of a clearly defined storyline in broadening audience reach and improving interaction.

Despite appearing smaller, the results demonstrate that a journalist's visual identity plays an important role in brand development. According to Usher (2020), Swenson and Olsen (2018), King (2018), Mercille (2017), and Chase (2020), maintaining high editorial standards and strategically employing visual components such as logos and color schemes is critical in establishing this brand.

The analyzed studies demonstrate that the integration of multifaceted strategies encompassing authenticity, a coherent narrative, active engagement, and visual distinctiveness could distinguish influencer-journalists through the development of their personal brand & reputation.

4.3. How do journalists use advertising approaches to endorse specific products, services, or initiatives?

Regarding RQ1c, the findings reveal planned approaches to balance editorial and advertising, including different advertising techniques and tools, content monetization, social media ads, and cross-platform advertising.

The examined articles debate the incorporation of advertising strategies in the editorial content as a complex dilemma that requires equilibrium. Asquith and Fraser (2020), Hardy (2017) and Hawley et al. (2023) studied the integration of native advertising and influencer marketing by journalists, and they reinforced that the distinction between advertising and editorial content is becoming less clear. Simon (2004) asserts that maintaining these balances is crucial for journalism. Nerone (2001) mentions the prevalent presence of promotion and advertising in online newspaper editions, which often overshadows the editorial content. The ethical dilemmas stemming from these strategies necessitate transparency to avoid misinforming the audience and safeguarding journalistic integrity, as underscored by Laursen and Trapp (2021) and Swenson and Olsen (2018).

In advertising approaches, the results highlight the need for maintaining a balanced equilibrium while suggesting that the inclusion of celebrities and events can greatly improve the success of promotional efforts. Evans (2000), Zeng and Li (2013), and Loeb (2015) explore how utilizing famous individuals and strategically coordinating media coverage during important events can captivate viewers, enhance audience engagement, and foster emotional connection. Das et al. (2023) and Pierce and Gilpin (2001) emphasize the complex nature of the ethical difficulties associated with these practices, whereas Borchers and Enke (2022) stress the significance of transparency in sponsored or paid collaborations.

Financially, content monetization appeared as a priority for the journalistic institutions to achieve economic sustainability. Nee (2014) underscores the dependence of non-profit media on financial support from national foundations and local benefactors, while Arrese (2016), Trepte and Scherer (2010) and Chase (2020) stress the significance of cultivating specific target audiences and instituting paywalls or “freemium” models. An important problem is how these strategies for making money affect how the public perceives things, which could potentially undermine the impartiality of journalism, as discussed by Jun and Lee (2012), Martin and Deuze (2009) and Neilson and Heylen (2023). Durham (2007), for example, presents a detailed analysis of a case study that examines how the Financial Times strategically used its editorial material to quietly promote its own financial interests.

The significance of social media in advertising proved to be relevant, as platforms such as Instagram and Facebook have become crucial in modern advertising techniques. The studies conducted by Gonzalez et al. (2021) and King (2018) emphasize the widespread occurrence of paid postings, which have become a fundamental component of digital strategies. According to Hawley et al. (2023) and Huan (2016), precise targeting of commercials allows for the creation of highly customized advertising experiences that, while they can be a good way to make money, pose privacy risks and the chance of being manipulated. This shows the need for strict regulatory action to protect consumer rights.

Finally, cross-platform campaigns emerge as an alternative to reach a wider audience. Vogan and Dowling (2016) and McEnnis (2023) demonstrate that expanding the range of media channels can significantly improve the effectiveness of advertising efforts. Additionally, Riedl (2023) emphasizes the crucial role of integrating diverse digital platforms to expand the scope and optimize the effectiveness and impact of advertising campaigns on various demographics and digital contexts.

The results emphasize a combination of conventional techniques and innovative digital strategies that create a journalism dynamic that integrates ethical considerations, transparency regulations, and advertising for building public trust and adjusting to the changing demands of contemporary society while aiming for financial sustainability.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This systematic literature review, which used the PRISMA method, examined how journalists who play different roles adopt communication strategies to promote their image and content, as well as engage and expand their audiences. The analysis of 68 articles, following the sub-questions RQ1a, RQ1b, and RQ1c, revealed a significant transformation in the roles of journalists, who are assuming the functions of digital influencers and expanding the reach and relevance of their professional practices.

The findings validate that communication strategies exert a significant influence on the reputation and engagement of journalists with the public. The recent studies conducted by Karhawi and Camargo (2023) and Holman and Perreault (2023) demonstrate how journalism has been adapting to the new digital reality. This adaptation aligns with the theory of “mediamorphosis” proposed by Fidler (1997), which suggests that journalism is continuously evolving due to technological and social factors.

This evolution leads to the emergence of new forms of interaction and information dissemination. Specific strategies, such as SEO and content marketing techniques, emphasized the practical implementation of those theoretical approaches, as discussed by Swasy (2016) and Dellarocas et al. (2013), who address the significance of these strategies in effectively reaching and engaging audiences.

Based on the conducted review, Table 2 emerges as a contribution, providing an overview and an analysis of the benefits and challenges related to each communication strategy: marketing, branding, and advertising. The techniques encompass native advertising, based on the insights of Beckert (2023) and Ryfe (2023), to achieve monetization and expand audience reach. This approach was also noticed in the findings of the analyzed articles, where research such as that conducted by Asquith and Fraser (2020) and Muela-Molina et al. (2020) showcased the efficacy of well-designed advertisements in fostering brand loyalty and enhancing media visibility.

Edgerly and Thorson (2023) and Giomelakis (2023) emphasized the extensive utilization of social media for direct interaction and audience targeting, as well as the effectiveness of real-time engagement and targeted advertising. Studies such as Marcos-García et al. (2020) and

Miller and Nelson (2022) demonstrate the significant influence of social media in facilitating the dissemination of content and captivating readers, thus enhancing the prominence and effectiveness of journalistic endeavors.

Every strategy is evaluated based on its advantages, such as generating revenue, expanding audience and visibility. Additionally, ethical dilemmas and the importance of upholding transparency and editorial integrity are considered. These concerns align with the issues highlighted by Karlsson (2020) and Jenkins (2023) regarding the preservation of credibility while facing the ethical challenge of native advertising and personal image management on digital platforms.

Table 2. Specific communication strategies: benefits and challenges.

Strategy	Description	Benefits	Challenges
Native Advertising	Seamlessly integrates commercial content within journalistic production.	Monetization, increased reach, and visibility.	Ethical issues, maintenance of transparency.
Personal Branding	Creates and promotes a consistent personal image across several platforms.	Establishes trust, fosters audience loyalty.	Demand consistent effort and identity management.
Influencer Marketing	Collaborates with influencers to expand reach and effect.	Enhances visibility, boosts credibility.	Risk of overcommercialization.
SEO-Optimized Content	Utilizes search engine optimization to enhance the visibility.	Improved search rankings and expanded reach.	Continuous need to stay updated with SEO trends.
Social Media Utilization	Utilizes platforms for content distribution and direct interaction with the audience.	Real-time engagement, targeted advertising.	Platform dependency, feedback management.
Visual Narratives	Utilizes immersive visuals and interactive media with narrative techniques.	Engages the audience, enhances message delivery.	Demand multimedia skills and resources.
Audience Segmentation	Utilizes data analytics to tailor content to the specific interests of the audience.	Enhances the relevance and impact of the content.	Requires access to strong data analytics.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

These strategies have proven effective in increasing online visibility, as highlighted by Edgerly and Thorson (2023), involving the creation of SEO-optimized content, strategic use of social media, paid advertising, and collaborations with influencers. In the current competitive digital economy, improving visual tales and storytelling is critical to attracting attention, as suggested by Giomelakis (2023). By utilizing these techniques and tools, as well as segmentation and data analysis to understand audience habits, journalists can customize material to align with specific audience interests, corroborating Perreault and Hanusch (2022) and Karhawi and Camargo (2023) about maximizing the efficacy of those communication strategies in journalism.

The adaptation of personal branding strategies and collaborations with influencers, as evidenced by Vos and Ferrucci (2018) and Molyneux et al. (2018), exemplify the transformation of journalists into influential and trusted content curators. These strategies, aligned with McCombs and Shaw's Agenda-Setting Theory (1972), illustrate how journalists can shape the public agenda through personalized interactions and strategically optimized content.

Content monetization and the influence of digital marketing strategies are increasingly challenging journalism's integrity. It is crucial that journalists, as digital influencers, avoid ethical conflicts and maintain the fundamental principles of journalism, despite the pressures

to monetize content and expand engagement that, as advocated by Fernández and Vallvey (2022) and Olsen and Solvoll (2018), can compromise journalistic objectivity and credibility. This relates directly to the ability of journalists to balance personal promotion and editorial integrity, and how they face ethical challenges, highlighted by Pérez-Serrano and García-Santamaría (2021), reflects the central dilemma in the practice of digital journalism.

Finally, the ethical dilemmas associated with journalists' communication strategies, including the integration of commercial and journalistic content, emphasize the necessity of maintaining transparency to uphold journalist credibility. Agreeing with Pérez-Serrano and García-Santamaría (2021) and Jenkins (2023) studies, the process of integration frequently threatens the essential impartiality in journalism, and transparency is an increasing demand from the public who are searching for trustworthy sources of information in an oversaturated media environment.

These factors emphasize the crucial necessity for journalists to explicitly delineate the editorial substance of sponsored content, guaranteeing that editorial integrity remains uncompromised by commercial influence. This balance is essential in addressing RQ1, demonstrating how journalists might broaden their viewership without compromising journalistic ethics. Successfully combining communication strategies with adherence to journalistic integrity is crucial for the long-term viability of the profession in today's media landscape.

The study admits the presence of potential biases in the selection of articles, which may not accurately represent the whole spectrum of current journalistic practices. The employed methodology, specifically the coding process, might have limited the possibilities under analysis. Furthermore, the lack of temporal and geographical distinction in the analysis of findings represents an additional limitation. The findings indicate the necessity of empirical studies being able to provide specific evidence, as the conclusions are mostly based on a comprehensive analysis of recent literature.

To overcome these limitations, future studies could broaden the databases or use empirical and qualitative inquiries, such as conducting interviews with journalists and experts, as well as analyzing social media data using both qualitative and quantitative methods. These approaches can offer a deeper comprehension of the impact of communication strategies on influencer-journalists, while also exploring the practices, tools, and techniques utilized in diverse contexts. Gaining this knowledge is essential for overcoming obstacles and promoting advancements in journalism, which encompass both journalistic practice and the sector's long-term viability.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of journalists adjusting to the always-evolving media environment, being creative and upholding a dedication to accuracy and impartiality. The findings emphasize the significance of maintaining a balance between adopting new communication strategies and preserving journalistic integrity and impartiality. This highlights the complex nature and difficulties encountered by contemporary journalism. Preserving those values is essential for maintaining public confidence and ensuring the sustainability of journalism as a determinant pillar of a democratic society.

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