



universität
wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

**“WEB-ANALYTICS IN AUSTRIAN JOURNALISM
A Quantitative Analysis on Journalists' Appraisal of Digitized
Audience Feedback in the Newsroom”**

verfasst von / submitted by
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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science (MSc)

Wien, 2022 / Vienna 2022

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
Degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 066 550

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
Degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium Communication Science

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Folker Hanusch, BA (Hons) PhD

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WEB ANALYTICS IN AUSTRIAN JOURNALISM

A Quantitative Analysis on Journalists' Appraisal of Digitized Audience Feedback in the Newsroom

Introduction

The journalistic landscape is changing at an unprecedented pace. Technological innovations and economic implications drastically impact journalists' relationship with their audience and force the field to innovate and adapt to an increasingly quantified public sphere (Nielsen et al., 2016). Audiences are no longer passive consumers of news since technological advancements such as social media and audience metrics were introduced. These enable previously homogenous mass audiences to actively participate in the news construction process and influence journalists' role conceptions and work processes directly (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2020; Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019; Tandoc, 2014).

Today's audience is known to figure into news production through contributing, disseminating, and tailoring content to their needs (Tandoc & Vos, 2016) either directly through their own social media posts (Hermida, 2012) and blog entries (Bruns & Highfield, 2012), or indirectly through metrics such as page views, comments, share, and retweets, quantified in the form of digitized audience feedback ultimately making journalism's impact on society measurable (Carlson, 2018). Audience metrics - "quantified and aggregated measures of audience preferences and behaviours generated by passive, unobtrusive data collection, and processing systems" (Zamith, 2018, p. 442) - empower journalists to gain detailed knowledge about their audiences' preferences and desires in hopes to drive up web traffic (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018; Lamot & Paulussen, 2020). This is particularly important as "the online audience translates into advertising revenues that translate into paychecks" (Tandoc, 2014, p. 569) or in other words, audiences serve as the economic as well as symbolic capital in the journalistic field, by financing and legitimizing the news organizations' existence (Tandoc, 2015; Bourdieu, 1986). Hesitant at first, journalists tried to dismiss the possible influences of the aggregated audience feedback on their journalistic values. Still, the increasingly "precarious financial situation, seems to be driving journalists to become more consumer-oriented, producing news that people want to know, rather than sticking to traditional citizen orientations, which have understood journalism's role as providing news that people need to know" (Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019, p. 696). While several studies inquired about changing role perceptions of journalists embracing the potential of new digital technologies (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2020; Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019), other scholars focussed on web analytics reshaping news production processes and editorial

decisions (Lamot & Paulussen, 2020; Lee et al., 2014; Moyo et al., 2020; Tandoc, 2014) including the ethical and ideological implications of web analytics (Dollah & Tandoc, 2020; Tandoc & Thomas, 2015). Despite the vast scholarly attention with more than 100 studies (Fürst, 2020) taking a closer look at these new technological opportunities for audience feedback, the journalist's overall appraisal, particularly in regards to their emotional well-being, the degree of autonomy they experience throughout the adaptation process and its impact on their overall job satisfaction, remains understudied. All three concepts are important factors to guarantee the continued success of the field, as they enhance employees' productivity and happiness (Singh, 2013) significantly. Additionally, this study chose to especially focus on Austrian journalists handling technological innovations, as the country tends to belong to the *late majority* when it comes to the adaptation and implementation of technology into society (Rogers, 1962; Seethaler & Beaufort, 2020).

Therefore, this article empirically explores journalists' appraisal of quantified audience feedback and subsequently links it to their overall job satisfaction in the newsroom through an online survey of 180 Austrian journalists and a variety of different newsrooms. The study operationalizes the constructs through the theoretical lens of the *Coping Model of User Adaptation* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005), derived from cognitive psychology and research on information technology. It closely inspects journalists' handling of audience feedback and its potential to disrupt their longstanding and traditionally unidirectional relationship with their audience (Loosen & Schmidt, 2012; Napoli, 2011) along the initial stage of the model encompassing the processes of *primary* and *secondary appraisal*. After building a solid theoretical foundation, this article discusses the findings, before reevaluating and consequently adapting the original model to be applicable to the journalistic field.

Audience Metrics in Journalism

New communication technologies are changing journalism's relationships with their audience and questioning the journalistic field's core principles (Loosen & Schmidt, 2012; Napoli, 2011). Traditionally, journalists were considered to be detached watchdogs assigned to filter through every possibly newsworthy event and to curate and publish the most relevant and pressing issues for society in the areas of politics, economics, sports, science, and lifestyle, while striving to balance the audience's needs and wills (Hanusch, 2017; Tandoc, 2015). The process of gatekeeping (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) - minimizing the vast amount of messages to a manageable amount of relevant news along with traditional news values (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017) - was embedded into the

heart of journalism's identity and legitimized the necessity of the profession. However, the recent technological innovations begin to question journalism's once unimpeachable position in society by enabling the former audience to not only produce, publish and distribute news content themselves through smartphones and social media but to actively influence the news production process through digitized audience feedback in the form of quantified audience metrics (Hanusch, 2017; Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019; Hendrickx et al., 2021; Tandoc, 2014, 2015, 2019; Vu, 2014).

The general application of audience feedback to the news construction process is not a new phenomenon since “as long as the news has been an industrialized product, it has been a measured one” (Carlson, 2018, p. 407). Historically, journalists perceived their audience as a homogenous mass, resulting in rather abstract knowledge about their consumers (Hanusch, 2017) and their preferences derived from phone calls, letters to the editor, readership surveys, or television ratings (Gans, 1979; Schlesinger, 1979). The subsequent results were carefully curated to justify funding models, attract advertisers and subscribers, and allow for comparisons among peers and other media organizations (Carlson, 2018), emphasizing “the economic backbone of the news industry” (Carlson, 2018, p. 408). While this rather superficial and abstract knowledge was once sufficient for the economic success of the field, an increasingly precarious financial situation and the decreasing advertisement revenues of traditional print media, which continue to be unrivaled by the gradual increase in digital revenues, demand for “greater levels of granularity and comprehensiveness in relation to certain dimensions of audience information” (Napoli, 2008, p. 14). This is necessary for news organizations to be able to remain competitive and to secure journalism's presence and important position in today's society as the ‘Fourth Estate’. Journalism's subsequently increasing need for subsidy and new economic approaches to the news construction process fuelled several digital innovations of the past decade allowing for measurable journalism characterized by precise real-time audience analytics enabling journalists to track, monitor, and interact with their audiences (Carlson, 2018; Napoli, 2011). While reluctant at first to put more emphasis on the audience feedback, today's journalists are becoming increasingly more considerate of their recipients and strive to include them in the news construction process by interacting with them and incorporating the audience's feedback into their journalistic work (Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019).

The introduction of digital audience metrics through web analytics tools roughly 15 years ago marked a turning point in journalists' relationship with their audience. Audience analytics create a wealth of information enabling journalists to track their recipients' responses to their news content in real-time. Audience analytics provided through tools such as Google Analytics, Chartbeat, Newsbeat and Parse.ly allow news

organizations to monitor, measure and analyze the behavior of their audience and to adapt their journalistic practice accordingly (Hanusch, 2017; Hendrickx et al., 2021; Lamot & Paulussen, 2020; Lee et al., 2014; Lee & Tandoc, 2017; Tandoc, 2014).

The immediacy of the aggregated data empowers journalists to measure the impact of a story (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018; Powers, 2018) and to select topics likely to entice the audience's interest (Anderson, 2011; Blanchett Neheli, 2018; Bunce, 2019; Ferrucci, 2020; Giomelakis et al., 2019; Hanusch, 2017; Tandoc, 2019). Audience metrics allow journalists to track their audiences' interaction with the news organization's websites, mobile apps, and social media channels and reveal who accesses which stories, when they access them and from which device. Popular metrics include the number of unique visitors, page views, time spent on an article as well as the degree of user engagement in the form of likes, comments, retweets, and shares (Blanchett Neheli, 2018; Christin, 2018; Nelson & Tandoc, 2019; Vu, 2014; Wang, 2018). The *logic of the click* (Hanusch, 2017) enables a journalist to apply methods of day-, and platform-parting to their practice allowing them to publish their stories at the best-suited time of the day and to the most fitting platform to reach the majority of their readers easily (Hanusch, 2017). Furthermore, these metrics enable editors to monitor the generated traffic by new stories and instantly react by either placing a popular story more prominently on the webpage or by de-selecting news stories with little quantifiable impact (Tandoc, 2014). Additionally, metrics help editors to decide on future topics, headings, images, and news angles (Lamot & Paulussen, 2020; Tandoc, 2014).

Apart from the changes in journalistic practice and work routines (Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2017; Zamith et al., 2020), web analytics majorly impact the overall culture in newsrooms (Hanusch, 2017; Powers, 2018). It is now a common practice in many newsrooms to regularly review audience metrics in meetings, salary negotiations, and employee appraisals (Anderson, 2011; Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018; Ferrucci, 2020; Karlsson & Clerwall, 2013; Moyo et al., 2020) to judge the editors' (Ferrer-Conill, 2017; Moyo et al., 2020) and journalists' overall work performance (Bunce, 2019; Lamot & Paulussen, 2020; Nelson & Tandoc, 2019).

However, this practice also comes with a variety of significant implications for the profession and its ideology itself. Belair-Gagnon et al. (2020) argue that the "metaphorical 'wall' separating the editorial and business parts of news organizations has become more of a 'curtain'" (p. 351) through the increased usage of audience analytics to drive up web traffic and advertising revenues. Fürst (2020) points to the newsroom's shifting focus in producing large amounts of 'quick hit' stories, leading to a new focus on lifestyle journalism or soft news in opposition to topics that sever public interest and a loss in the overall journalistic quality. Additionally, scholars emphasize the

potential threat of increased tabloidization and ‘dumbing-down’ of news (Hanusch, 2017; Lamot & Paulussen, 2020; Nguyen, 2013) to generate higher numbers of clicks through measures such as sensationalism (Molek-Kozakowska, 2013; Otto et al., 2017), click-baiting (Fürst, 2020), and the emotional arousal of the audience (Beckett & Deuze, 2016; Pengnate, 2019). Thus, fewer resources are being allocated to the proper research and verification of information (Fürst, 2020), threatening journalism’s credibility, autonomy (Dollah & Tandoc, 2020; Pickard, 2019; Tandoc et al., 2019), and its overall role in democracy (Nguyen, 2013). However, the proper verification is especially crucial in today’s world where misinformation and fake news pose one of the biggest threats to journalism (Tandoc et al., 2019; Waisbord, 2018, 2018). In their study, Tandoc and Thomas (2015) particularly expressed serious concern regarding the ethical implications of the usage of metrics in digital newsrooms, as the individualization of news may result in content choices merely targeted at the interests and preferences of the audience whereas journalism’s “role should be about understanding what the audience wants and [... to] take that information and balance this against what the audience needs” (Tandoc & Thomas, 2015, p. 253) in order to preserve journalism’s autonomy, its ‘Fourth Estate’ mentality and its ideal to encourage and train responsible citizens (Entman, 1989).

With today’s journalism continually moving further away from its traditional standards, several studies showed journalists experiencing a feeling of abandonment of professional standards and ideologies (Bunce, 2019; Fürst, 2020; Usher, 2013). Notably, as newsrooms begin to legitimize editorial decisions through numbers as a response to increasing economic pressures and to optimize web traffic (Fürst, 2020), even when these decisions lead to a clash between their professional intuition or journalistic role perception as well as the expectations of the audience when it comes to the thorough coverage of relevant issues (Anderson, 2011; Fürst, 2020; Hanusch, 2017; MacGregor, 2007; Tandoc, 2014; Usher, 2013). Particularly the influence of audience metrics on journalistic role perceptions received scholarly attention in the past years with studies notably focussing on the changing market orientation from a citizen focus towards an increasingly consumer-driven approach (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2020; Ferrucci, 2020; Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019). In their study from 2019, Tandoc and Hanusch characterize the consumer orientation by emphasizing its goal of producing stories highlighting news the audience wants to know by particularly focusing on entertainment stories and general life advice. In contrast, the citizen-orientation aims at holding the powerful to account and to help citizens engage with political processes. Overall, the study revealed that the consumer-orientation continually gained more importance throughout the past years in comparison to its counterpart. The authors explain the divergence between the two by the means of the ubiquitous pressures of the market forcing journalists to increasingly

adapt to the preferences of the audience expressed through audience analytics to remain competitive amongst other news organizations (Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019).

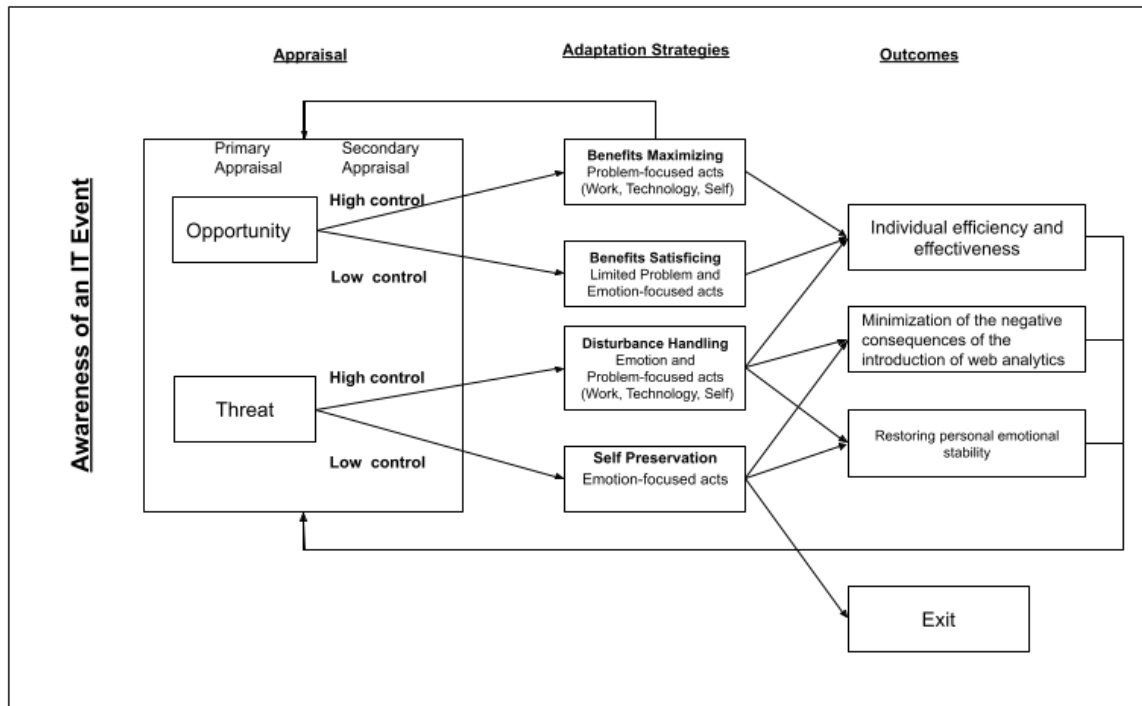
Despite the growing scholarly focus on the reorientation of the journalistic field towards a more consumer-focused stance partly triggered by the rise of web analytics and the overall fast pace of technological innovations, most studies continue to investigate the practical implications of the introduction of web analytics in regard to journalistic practices and professional ideologies (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2020; Blanchett Neheli, 2018; Dollah & Tandoc, 2020; Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018; Ferrucci, 2020; Hanusch, 2017; Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019; Lamot & Paulussen, 2020; Nelson & Tandoc, 2019; Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2017), while the individual coping and adaptation process of the journalists faced with new information technology in their work environment remains mostly understudied. Particularly in regards to journalists' appraisal of those technologies on an emotional but also practical level and the impact of journalists' autonomy in the newsroom on journalists' adaptation processes of web analytics received scarce scholarly attention. The topic of emotions is hereby of special interest, as the journalistic profession is often associated with the ideal of objectivity, but in reality, journalism and emotion are strongly entangled, even beyond the purely narrative dimension (Kotisova, 2019a). Additionally, journalism research is missing an in-depth investigation of audience metrics' possible implications for journalists' job satisfaction, which would be highly beneficial as past studies in different fields attest the uprise of technology a potential negative influence on employees job satisfaction (Beam et al., 2003; Beam, 2006).

The Coping Model of User Adaptation

While the disruptions in the newsroom caused by technological advancements, such as increasingly digitized audience analytics, have been discussed in a vast amount of studies (Pavlik, 2000; Spyridou et al., 2013; Steensen, 2011), the field of journalism research lacks a theoretical framework conceptualizing journalists' adaptation and coping strategies to those disruptions. Thus, the *Coping Model of User Adaptation* (see figure 1) (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005), originating from the field of cognitive psychology and economics, will serve as a point of departure for the investigations of this study. The *Coping Model of User Adaptation*, originally introduced by Beaudry and Pinsonneault in 2005, strives to investigate users' adaptation to technological innovations, defined by the authors as “the cognitive and behavioral efforts exerted by users to manage specific consequences associated with a significant IT event that occurs in their work environment” (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005, p. 496). While *cognitive efforts* refer to efforts such as “acceptance, distancing, and escaping aim at

altering the subjective meaning of the event, *behavioral efforts* [emphasis in the original], which include activities such as seeking additional information and evidence and confronting individuals, aim at altering the situation” (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005, p. 495; see also Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Overall, the model investigates different coping strategies of individuals to disruptive technological events by splitting the coping process into two continuous rather than dichotomous constructs - *appraisal* and *adaptation efforts*. It is essential to point out that coping mechanisms and the included adaptation strategies to technological advancements do not follow a systematic pattern. Users are likely to adapt to innovations in an asymmetrical pattern, as they synthesize information differently and adapt at different speeds (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005), previously synthesized in Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation Theory. Rogers uses the probability model of a normal distribution to visualize his five established adopter categories: *innovators*, *early adopters*, *early majority*, *late majority*, and *laggards*, all characterized by different adaptation patterns (1962).

Overall, the *Coping Model of User Adaptation* encompasses three different stages of innovation adaptation: *appraisal*, *adaptation strategies*, and *outcomes*. Following the initial introduction of the user to the new information technology, users typically enter the *appraisal stage*, which consists of two subprocesses - *primary* and *secondary appraisal* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005). At first, users enter the subprocess of primary appraisal, where they gain awareness of the new technology and strive to assess the possible consequences on their personal and professional life. Typically, the consequences can be categorized into threats or opportunities (see figure 1). Regardless of personal awareness, the process of *primary appraisal* also depends on a variety of different social and institutional factors including the coping mechanisms and resulting adaptation strategies of peers and superiors in regard to the new technology (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005; Lewis et al., 2003; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Figure 1*The Coping Model of User Adaptation*

Notes: *Coping Model of User Adaptation* adapted from Beaudry & Pinsonneault (2005)

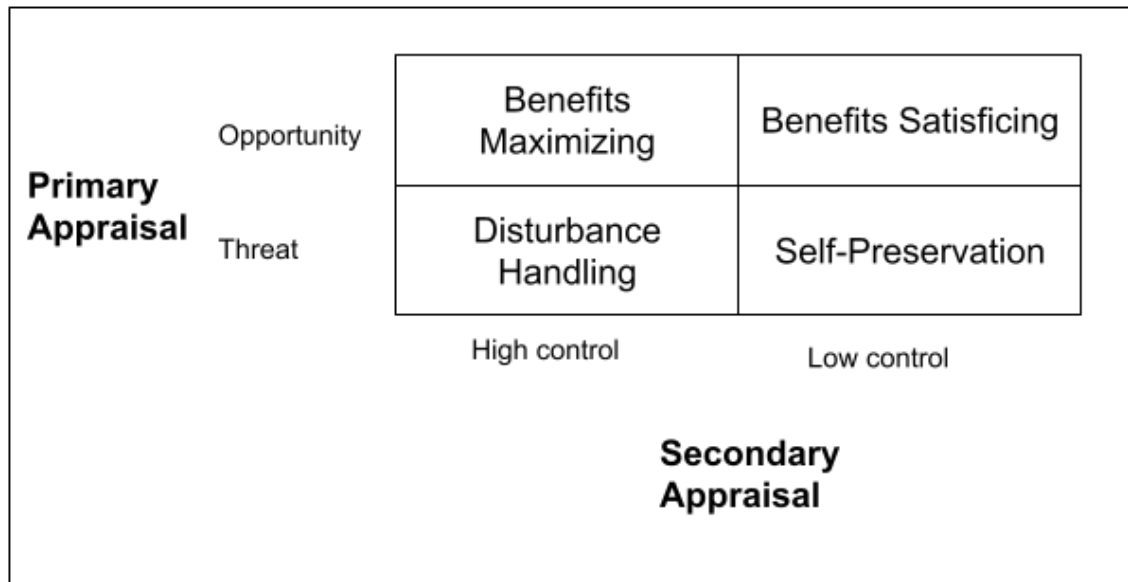
Secondary Appraisal refers to the subprocess, where users assess the degree of control they have over the new technological innovation and what possible adaptation strategies they can apply. This is typically separated into three main components: *work*, *self*, and *technology*. The *work* component refers to users' perception of control and autonomy over their work in relation to their adaptation and whether they feel like they have the possibility to modify their work according to the new information technology (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). *Self* assesses the users' feeling of being able to personally adapt to the changes initiated by the innovation and the resulting new environment, and lastly, *technology* refers to the users' perception of personal influence on the modalities and functionalities of the new technology (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The stage of *adaptation* follows *appraisal* which can either be emotion- or problem-focused. While individuals with an emotion-focused adaptation cope with a wide variety of different emotional processes such as self-deception, avoidance, comparison, passive acceptance, and minimization of the consequences of the new technology, individuals with a problem-focused strategy strive to manage the issues by adapting their personal habits, work routines, the learning of new skills and the adaptation to new functionalities (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005). Most users rely on both types of

adaptation efforts, as most technological innovations are too complex to only rely on just one of them. The authors identify four different adaptation strategies (*benefits maximizing, benefits satisficing, disturbance handling, and self-preservation*) (see figure 2).

Figure 2

User Adaptation Strategies



Notes: *User Adaptation Strategies* adapted from (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005)

The first proposed adaptation strategy is *Benefits Maximizing*, which presupposes users categorizing the new technological innovation as an opportunity for themselves, which they are able to control. This results in the user's adaptation efforts mainly being problem-focused with the overall goal to “take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the IT event and maximize personal benefits” (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005, p. 500), which will likely result in performance improvements.

Similarly to *Benefits Maximizing*, the *Benefits Satisficing* strategy also assumes that users view the new technology as an opportunity but do not perceive themselves having control over its implementation in their work environment. Therefore, users will strive to move away from the technology as much as possible in the limited scope available to them (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005).

Opposed to opportunity based adaptation strategies, the *Disturbance Handling* strategy sets in, when the user appraises the new technology as a threat but feels to have some control, therefore a problem-focused adaptation will most likely be used to

manage the situation, whereas an emotion-based adaptation will be used to minimize its negative effects (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005).

Lastly, the *Self-Preservation Strategy* also anticipates the users to view the new technology as a threat and as being confronted with little control over the situation. Therefore, the emotion-focused adaptation efforts will be used to restore emotional stability and the reduction of tension in regard to the new technology (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It is important to note that the appraisal and adaptation constantly influence each other and can be viewed as being constantly trapped in a feedback loop, as the outcomes of adaptation processes are likely to lead to a reappraisal of the situation, possibly triggering different adaptation processes (see figure 1). The last stage of the model predicts possible outcomes of the different adaptation strategies, including improving personal efficiency and effectiveness, minimizing the IT event's consequences, or restoring emotional stability. However, users may also choose to emotionally disengage from the IT event and completely exit the situation (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005).

The Coping Model of User Adaptation Applied to the Journalistic Field

Under the elaborated theoretical prism of the *Coping Model of User Adaptation* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005), this article seeks to further investigate the application and adaptation of journalists to the introduction of web analytics in newsrooms. Hereby, the study will primarily focus on the initial stage of the *Coping Model of User Adaptation* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005), encompassing *primary and secondary appraisal*, and investigate journalists' assessment of the new technology and their perceived level of control over the application of digitized audience feedback to their respective work environment.

Primary appraisal

The phase of *primary appraisal* will hereby be characterized by the journalists' judgment of the consequences experienced due to the rise of digitized audience feedback with a particular focus on the emotional appraisal of the innovation. The subject of emotions in journalism initially received scarce scholarly attention, as the prospect of emotions influencing the news production process would contrast "journalism's allegiance to the model of liberal democracy" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020, p. 176) and would therefore threaten journalism's societal role of being an objective watchdog holding the powerful accountable. Yet, the rapid technological advancements radically altered journalism's ecology, attributing emotion an ever-growing importance in the newsroom and initiating an 'emotional turn' (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019, 2020) in journalism research.

While initially many scholars investigated the impact of emotion on journalistic storytelling (Beckett & Deuze, 2016; Goutier et al., 2021; Kotisova, 2019; Orgeret, 2020), others began to explore the increasing emotional labor (Ikhida et al., 2022; Thomson, 2018), psychological impairments (Idås et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2018), and occupational stress (Dworznik-Hoak, 2020; Hughes et al., 2021; Monteiro et al., 2016) associated with being a journalist in today's society. However, a majority of studies investigating journalists' emotions focus on journalists covering war, trauma events, homicides, and disasters particularly focusing on the resulting mental health issues such as anxiety, insomnia, panic attacks, PTSD, and depression (Dworznik-Hoak, 2020; Kotisova, 2019; MacDonald et al., 2021; Šimunjak, 2022). Only a few studies elaborate on organizational stressors such as low pay, media competition, pressure in the newsroom, and the implementation of new technology (Kotisova, 2019; Monteiro et al., 2016).

Thus, this article strives to investigate journalists' evaluation of digitized audience metrics on an emotional level and assess its potential opportunities and threats to their journalistic practice. Possible opportunities might encompass journalists sensing the possibility to learn new skills, reshape their relationship with their audience (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018; Kristensen, 2021), and use the knowledge gained from the metrics to adopt their working routines, topic selection, and publishing strategies (Hanusch, 2017; Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019; Lamot & Paulussen, 2020; Lee & Tandoc, 2017; Tandoc, 2019). In contrast, others might feel watched, stressed, or judged due to the application of audience metrics in their work environment (Bunce, 2019; Moyo et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2013; Petre, 2015). In pursuance of deepening the scholarly understanding of journalists' emotional response to quantified audience feedback, the following research question leads the investigation of journalists' *primary appraisal* of digitized audience metrics:

RQ1: *How do Austrian journalists assess the emotional opportunities and threats of audience analytics in their primary appraisal of the introduction of digitized audience feedback in the newsroom?*

Secondary appraisal

Complementary to the initial emotional appraisal of digitized audience feedback in the newsroom, journalists' adaptation strategies also depend on their perceived level of control over the introduced technology, assessed in the stage of *secondary appraisal* in the *Coping Model of User Adaptation* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005). The model hereby differentiates between high and low levels of control asserted to the user in regards to their adaptation processes of the new technology. In the framework of quantified audience feedback, this study operationalizes the contrasting levels of control

by differentiating between the various acquisition patterns of audience metrics for the news construction process. A higher level of control over the influence of web analytics on journalists is attributed to journalists' ability to individually control the impact of audience metrics on their news work while a low level of control is defined as journalists being required to use the feedback through organizational or institutional structures embedded in their respective newsroom and enforced by their superiors. This differentiation in levels of control is deeply connected with the concept of autonomy in journalism, particularly in the context of audience metrics (Anderson, 2011; Dollah & Tandoc, 2020).

Historically, journalists' autonomy is rooted in the Western normative discourse of journalism's principles of independence, legitimacy, and democratic function in society as the 'Fourth Estate' (Hanitzsch et al., 2019), all of whom portray key aspects of journalists' professional ideology and underlying code of ethics (Deuze, 2005). Nonetheless, according to Reich and Hanitzsch (2013), journalistic autonomy can be restricted on two discursive levels throughout the news production process including journalists' relationship with their audience - the internal and the external level (also see: Nygren, 2012; Sjøvaag, 2013). External restrictions are mostly imposed on the field through outside factors such as legislatures, censorship, and politics. Especially in Austria, the media pluralism report shows a high risk for journalistic autonomy in the past years, as there are "no regulatory safeguards in place to prevent political influence over the appointments and dismissals of editors-in-chief" (Seethaler & Beaufort, 2020, p. 13). Meanwhile, internal restrictions refer to restraints posed upon individual journalists and their work through the management of their respective newsrooms as well as commercial pressures (Sjøvaag, 2013; Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013). While the external influences increased over the past decade, journalists in Austria proclaim internal factors and restrictions, such as editorial policies, financial pressures, and digital audience feedback, to be significantly more influential on their autonomy than factors originating from outside of their newsroom (Lohmann & Seethaler, 2016). While the Worlds of Journalism Study (Hanitzsch et al., 2019) identified audience feedback as a key influence in journalistic autonomy, this article strives to differentiate between different levels of autonomy amongst journalists' adaptation to audience metrics throughout their *secondary appraisal* of the introduction of web analytics in the newsroom:

RQ2: *How do Austrian journalists perceive their level of control over audience metrics in their secondary appraisal of the introduction of digitized audience analytics in the newsroom?*

Job satisfaction

Additionally, past studies showed that the degree of journalists' autonomy is often closely connected to journalists' overall job satisfaction (Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Liu & Lo, 2018; Paulussen, 2012; Weaver et al., 2019). Therefore, this study goes beyond the original *Coping Model of User Adaptation* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005) and additionally strives to shed light on the relationship between the different appraisals of audience metrics and the journalists' overall job satisfaction, generally defined as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from an appraisal of one’s job or job experience” (Cavanaugh et al., 2000, p. 66). Several scholars attribute a declining overall job satisfaction of journalists to the rise of technology, online responsibilities, and a more profit-oriented approach (Beam et al., 2003; Beam, 2006; Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Ternes et al., 2018), as well as the increasing emotionally loaded audience feedback, online and offline, particularly in the forms of hate speech (Charitidis et al., 2020; Obermaier et al., 2018), online harassment (Posetti et al., 2020; Waisbord, 2020) or physical attacks (Miller, 2021). Hence this study also inquires:

RQ3: *How does the primary and secondary appraisal of digitized audience analytics by Austrian journalists affect their overall job satisfaction?*

Methodology

Turning to the methodological considerations of this study, its design relied on a quantitative data collection approach, initially designed in the context of a research seminar at the Department of Communication at the University of Vienna in 2018. An online survey was developed to capture Austrian journalists' perceptions, emotional adaptation processes, and job satisfaction regarding the significantly increased usage of audience feedback tools in Austrian newsrooms with the overarching goal to embed those into the different stages of the *Coping Model of User Adaptation* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005). The methodological approach was chosen as the most suitable option to explore this study's objectives, as online surveys allow for anonymity of the respondents, particularly vital in examinations of personal feelings and adaptation processes to limit the probabilities of a social-desirability bias (Nederhof, 1985).

The database of the media intelligence company *Cision* was used to identify a total of 1,824 Austrian journalists working for print, online, and broadcasting newsrooms across the country eligible to participate in the study. The survey was distributed through personalized emails. Data collection began on May 23rd, 2018. Two participation reminders were sent on 29/05/2018 and 06/06/2018 to increase the response rate

(Deutschens et al., 2004). This procedure resulted in 180 recorded responses with an overall response rate of roughly 10%, which is a common number compared to previous quantitative survey studies involving journalists (Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019; Vu, 2014).

The sample consists of 58.1% men, and the average age of the respondents was 46 years (SD = 11.95). On average, the participants have been working in journalism for 19.4 years (SD = 10.58), and 68.3% of the respondents hold a university degree. About two-thirds (64.4%) of the surveyed journalists have a full-time contract. These demographics are congruent with previous studies of Austrian journalists (Kaltenbrunner et al., 2020; Lohmann & Seethaler, 2016) in the past decade and indicate the sample's representativeness. The respondents are equally distributed among newspapers (47.2%), online media (46.1%), and magazines (46.7%), except for broadcast, which is underrepresented in the sample (7.2%). Multiple answers were possible. Most journalists worked for media with national reach (72.2%), and a little more than half of the respondents had non-management positions within the newsroom (52.2%). The sample also represents a wide variety of different newsroom sizes, from newsrooms with less than five employees (26.1%) up to newsrooms with more than 50 employed journalists (27.2%).

Study questionnaire

The respondents received a link via E-mail to the online questionnaire. The survey consisted of 27 questions regarding the participants' demographics, their usage of web analytics, their job satisfaction, their motivation to use web analytics, and their emotional assessment of qualified audience feedback. Following the data collection, the results were analyzed using the statistical software SPSS.

Journalists' emotions concerning web analytics

To examine the journalists' emotions regarding the usage of web analytics in the journalistic field, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree to ten items: *I feel good when my click numbers are high, I am more motivated when my click numbers are higher, I receive support from my colleagues to interpret the metrics, high click numbers serve as an indication for my good journalistic work, I receive support from my supervisors to interpret the metric, web metrics are an additional stress factor for me, in my newsroom, the metrics of colleagues are often compared with each other, when my click numbers are low, I often doubt my journalistic abilities, web analytics pressure me and web analytics make me feel watched in my work.*

After conducting a PCA factor analysis with a varimax rotation, explaining 62.67% of the variance, which loaded on two different factors, the items were computed into two indices, one for positive emotions regarding the usage of web analytics (*I feel good when my click numbers are high, I am more motivated when my click numbers are higher, high click numbers serve as an indication for my good journalistic work*), Cronbach's $\alpha = .806$, and one for negative emotions (*web metrics are an additional stress factor for me, the metrics of colleagues are often compared with each other, when my click numbers are low, I often doubt my journalistic abilities, web analytics pressure me and web analytics make me feel watched in my work*), Cronbach's $\alpha = .750$.

Motivation to use metrics

The concept of journalists' motivation to use audience feedback was conceptualized by asking the respondents to rate the following items on a 5-point Likert scale: *Web analytics inform me about the interests of my audience, help me learn more about my audience, to understand what my audience expects from me, to produce relevant content, to make editorial decisions, to measure the impact of stories, to optimize my stories, to decide on future stories and to measure whether editorial goals were reached*. While the first three items were adapted from Hanusch and Tandocs's (2019) study, the remaining items were created from the already existing literature on web analytics (e.g. Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018; Hanusch, 2017; Lee et al., 2014; Lee & Tandoc, 2017; Nguyen, 2013; Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2017).

Job satisfaction

Lastly, the respondents were asked to indicate their job satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale. A total of nine items were used to measure the respondents' satisfaction with different facets of their work: *the daily work, the content of their work, the possibilities to learn something new at work, the acknowledgment of their performance, the results of their work, the variety of their work, the degree of personal responsibility, the audience feedback and lastly the working climate in my newsroom*, which have been created on the basis of previous studies on journalists job satisfaction (Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Liu & Lo, 2018; Ternes et al., 2018). Subsequently, the respondents were asked to indicate their overall job satisfaction.

Findings and Discussion

This study set out to empirically investigate Austrian journalists' adaptation to the newly introduced audience feedback mechanisms and to explore their impact on the

emotional well-being of journalists, as well as their individual news construction process, through the theoretical prism of the *Coping Model of User Adaptation* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005). The findings and their subsequent discussion will particularly focus on journalists' initial appraisal of audience metrics in Austrian newsrooms. To properly interpret the results, it is crucial to contextualize the sample and embed it into previous research. Despite the unprecedented availability of audience feedback tools and high integration potential into the news process as outlined by previous studies in the US (Anderson, 2011; Belair-Gagnon et al., 2020; Ferrucci, 2020), Australia (Hanusch, 2017; Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019), Belgium (Kristensen, 2021) and Denmark (Lamot & Paulussen, 2020), the results revealed that most of the surveyed Austrian journalists look at their metrics less than once a week (52.8%), and only about 15% check them more than once a day, indicating an overall relatively low usage of audience metrics in Austrian newsrooms as of 2018. These results are in line with previous research on Austria's pace of adaptation of new technology as Austrian transition to a digitized economy has been slower (Sisse, 2017), particularly in terms of the usage of information and communication technologies along with big data, where Austria is below the international average (Ecker et al., 2020).

However, the findings also suggest that journalists are more often confronted with web analytics by their supervisors in bigger newsrooms between 31 up to 50 journalists ($M= 3.86$, $SD= 2.04$) compared to newsrooms with less than five ($M= 2.18$, $SD= 1.25$) journalists. The same logic can be applied to journalists seeking out audience metrics themselves. In newsrooms above 50 ($M= 4.63$, $SD= 2.34$), journalists more frequently seek out audience metrics compared to the smaller newsroom with only 11-30 journalists ($M= 3.21$, $SD= 2.04$). There are several possible explanatory approaches for this phenomenon, but particularly bigger newsrooms have more resources available to acquire often costly web analytics software such as Chartbeat and Omniture (E. Tandoc, 2016) and to advance the overall digital transformation within the news organization (Newman, 2022). Additionally, bigger newsrooms are more reliant on optimizing their web traffic to continuously “add scale and value to their subscription or advertising businesses” (Newman, 2022, p.7) and remain competitive with other news outlets around the country, by taking a more consumer-focussed stance in the market orientation of their journalistic practice (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2020; Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019).

Primary appraisal

With the first research question, this study explicitly set out to assess Austrian journalists' primary appraisal of digitized audience feedback in newsrooms across the

country, with a particular emphasis on perceived threats and opportunities, including the journalists' emotional assessment of audience metrics.

The original *Coping Model of User Adaptation* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005) merely distinguished between the components of opportunities and threats in users' initial assessment of an introduced IT event. While the analysis did reveal a variety of different threats and opportunities perceived by Austrian journalists, the findings of this study call for more granularity in those dichotomous differentiations. Therefore, three distinctive, but overlapping dimensions of Austrian journalists' primary appraisal of audience metrics were differentiated, encompassing various aspects of journalists' work: their relationship with their audience (*audience relationship dimension*), editorial decisions (*editorial dimension*), and journalists' emotional well-being in the context of their journalistic work (*emotional dimension*).

The first dimension refers to journalists' assessment of web analytics' potential impact on their relationship with their audience. Nearly half of the surveyed journalists acknowledged the opportunity to learn more about their audience's preferred topics ($M=3.38$; $SD=1.27$) through the application of audience analytics to their work. Additionally, they recognized audience feedback's ability to teach them more about their audience ($M=3.20$; $SD=1.26$) and their expectations ($M=2.95$; $SD=1.18$) consequently enabling Austrian journalists to re-evaluate their relationship with their audience (Loosen & Schmidt, 2012; Napoli, 2011) and to adapt their working routines accordingly (Lamot & Paulussen, 2020; Lee & Tandoc, 2017; Tandoc et al., 2019). The continuously growing importance to re-evaluate the journalism-audience relationship and the journalists' acknowledgment of the changing media landscape is crucial to counterbalance uprising journalistic phenomena such as *citizen journalism* (Bruns & Highfield, 2012; Wall, 2015) and *participatory journalism* (Domingo et al., 2008; Singer, 2011), both of which concepts entirely revolve around the readers' interference in the traditional news construction process. The successful counterbalance of these phenomena is particularly important to secure journalism's unique position in society and to differentiate its historical position and function from uprising journalistic entities such as influencers, bloggers, and other outside actors often referred to as peripheral actors (Eldridge, 2017; Schapals et al., 2019).

The second dimension encompasses journalists' assessment of digitized audience metrics' potential consequences for editorial decisions and the overall news construction process. Despite journalists' assessment of web analytics as an opportunity to learn more about their audience and to adapt to their needs, they do not seem to attribute the same view to the editorial dimension. Hereby the results suggest journalists merely acknowledge audience metrics' potential to track the impact of their respective

news stories (53.3%). However, additional opportunities such as the optimization of new stories (25.5%), the more accurate planning of future news stories (17.2%), and the possibility to review and editorial goals seem (26.1%) to be rather unnoticed in Austrian newsrooms compared to previous studies on audience analytics in countries belonging to the *Democratic Corporatist Model* (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) such as Belgium (Lamot & Paulussen, 2020) or Germany (Fürst, 2017) (also see table 2). The gradual but not all-encompassing application of web analytics in editorial decisions is in line with previous research stating journalists' overall desire to incorporate audience feedback, but to also continuously rely on their journalistic intuition and professional experience (Lamot & Paulussen, 2020). Another explanatory approach is journalists' desire to remain autonomous and to counteract journalism's increasingly consumer-focused market orientation (Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019; Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2017) by explicitly limiting their usage of audience metrics and therefore reducing the impact of the audience on their work.

Table 1

Journalists' motivation to use audience metrics

	M	SD
Web analytics inform me about what topics my audience is interested in.	3.38	1.269
Web analytics help me to find out more about my audience.	3.20	1.259
Web analytics help me to understand what my audience expects from me.	2.95	1.178
Web analytics help me to produce relevant content for my audience.	2.87	1.175
I use web analytics to make editorial decisions.	2.39	1.206
I use web analytics to measure the impact of my produced content.	3.54	1.475
I use web analytics to optimize my content (e.g. headings, selection of photos, etc.).	2.51	1.326
I use web analytics to check if editorial goals were reached.	2.66	1.351
I use web analytics to make decisions on future content	2.46	1.126

The last dimension, and focal point of this study, is concerned with journalists' primary appraisal of web analytics in regard to their emotional well-being in the context of their journalistic work (table 2).

Throughout the analysis, this article differentiates between positive and negative emotions regarding web analytics in the newsroom. As the emotions themselves do not attribute to a coherent picture of the respondents' emotional state, the emotional

dimension was mainly investigated in interaction with the previous two dimensions. A correlation analysis revealed particularly strong negative emotions in the assessment of web analytics, when they are used in salary negotiations ($r(163) = .281, p < .001$), performance reviews ($r(163) = .336, p < .001$), application procedures ($r(160) = .261, p < .001$) and for comparisons amongst employees ($r(163) = .386, p < .001$). In regard to positive emotions, the results reveal audience analytics' potential to motivate journalists ($r(165) = .611, p < .001$) and to encourage their journalistic abilities ($r(164) = .511, p < .001$). However, the findings also revealed a close interconnection between the stages of primary and secondary appraisal with a missing discriminatory power, hence the discussion on the emotional dimension of audience metrics will be continued in the context of secondary appraisal.

Table 2

Journalists' emotions regarding audience metrics in the newsroom

	M	SD
If my content receives a high number of clicks, It gives me a good feeling.	2.78	1.354
If my content receives a high number of clicks, then I am more motivated.	2.81	1.254
Working with web analytics is an additional stress factor for me.	2.40	1.261
I receive support from my colleagues when interpreting web analytics.	2.11	1.117
I receive support from my superiors when analyzing web analytics.	1.91	1.081
In my newsroom, click numbers between colleagues are often being compared with each other.	2.13	1.136
Low click numbers result in me doubting my journalistic abilities.	1.54	.752
Web analytics tend to pressure me.	2.18	1.238
Through web analytics, I feel watched in my work.	2.23	1.170
A high number of clicks show the quality of my journalistic work.	1.97	.953

Secondary appraisal

The subsequent research question was concerned with Austrian journalists' secondary appraisal of audience metrics, more specifically the level of control they feel to be able to exert over the newly introduced technology in their respective work environments. The original *Coping Model of User Adaptation* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005) differentiates between high and low levels of control operationalized as the following for the purpose of the study: journalists being able to freely decide on the extent of the application of quantified audience feedback in their work, hence exerting high levels of control, juxtaposed to institutional or organizational factors, such as supervisors

guiding the utilization of audience metrics in the newsroom, attributing low levels of control to the journalist. To gain a general understanding of respondents' journalistic control, the journalists were asked to indicate their overall journalistic autonomy in the news construction process within their news organization. On average, all journalists indicated relatively high levels of journalistic freedom in their work ($M = 3.96$; $SD = .61$), similar to previous studies on journalists' autonomy in Austria (Lohmann & Seethaler, 2016) and Western journalistic landscapes (Hanitzsch et al., 2019).

Further analysis revealed that most supervisors in Austria provide their employees with audience feedback less than once a month (66.7%) and only one-third of the questioned journalists seek out the audience metrics of their stories at least once a week (32.8%). In terms of control over the technology, this indicates Austrian journalists experience relative freedom and desire to counterbalance their audiences' influence and impact on their respective news stories. These findings link back to Western journalism's basic principles of journalistic autonomy (Anderson, 2011a; Dollah & Tandoc, 2020; Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013), journalism's overall ideology of not merely serving the audience's preferences as consumers but their democratic needs as citizens (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2020; Hanusch, 2017; Napoli, 2008) and its foundation on traditional news values (Hanusch, 2017) instead of mere profit margins and consumer-orientation.

The findings additionally suggest, that especially the perceived level of control on the user's side of the equation appears to significantly impact their appraisal of the possible consequences initiated by the introduction of the IT event in question. More specifically, the results of the survey indicate, that journalists who seek out audience metrics themselves, demonstrating higher levels of control over the technology, tend to perceive them more positively ($r(139) = .39, p < .001$) and as an opportunity, by giving the respondents a good feeling in regard to their work ($r(139) = .36, p < .001$) and motivating them ($r(140) = .42, p < .001$). In contrast, audience feedback used as an institutional evaluation criterion by supervisors tends to ignite more negative emotions such as stress ($r(157) = .16, p = .046$), performance pressure ($r(157) = .19, p = .016$) and the feeling of being watched ($r(156) = .24, p = .002$), resulting in journalists appraisal of web analytics as a threat confirming previous findings on the matter (Nguyen, 2013; Petre, 2015). Apart from the dimension of the journalists' emotional well-being, a regression analysis revealed that higher levels of control have a significant positive relationship with journalists' usage of quantified audience feedback in editorial decisions ($b = 0.506, p = .010$) and to measure the impact of their stories ($b = 0.372, p = .019$) in contrast to audience metrics distributed by supervisors. Furthermore, the findings suggest higher levels of control correlate with journalists motivation to improve their

relationship with their audience by learning more about their interests ($r(139) = .445, p < .001$), expectations ($r(138) = .51, p < .001$) and needs ($r(139) = .50, p < .001$).

The divergence in motivation and adaptation mechanisms to digitized audience feedback can be explained by the psychological components of *intrinsic* and *extrinsic motivation* (Deci & Ryan, 1985). *Intrinsic motivation* refers to individuals' willingness and internal motivation to incorporate audience feedback into their work and is based on inherent satisfaction including feelings such as enjoyment and curiosity. Whereas *extrinsic motivation* typically refers to the individuals' desire to perform a task with the intention to gain approval or receive a reward such as a salary increase or a promotion (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Bénabou & Tirole, 2003). *Intrinsic motivation* is an influential factor in individuals' learning processes and adaptation strategies (Deci & Ryan, 1985) by functioning as a "powerful source of behavioral drive when a person has opportunities to decide his or her behaviors autonomously" (Yoo et al., 2012, p. 943). Particularly in the context of technology adaptation and workplaces, past studies have identified intrinsic motivation to be significantly more effective in comparison to extrinsic motivational factors like increased salaries and recognition (Lee et al., 2005; Teo et al., 1999; Yoo et al., 2012). Yoo et al. (2012) found that intrinsic motivation positively influences individuals' usage behaviors of new technology in the workplace, whereas extrinsic factors do not seem to significantly affect users' adaptation intention. Those results are in line with the findings of this article, as journalists' usage behaviors and appraisal of audience analytics positively correlate with journalists experiencing greater levels of autonomy and thereby suggest that journalists resort to their intrinsic motivation to consider the feedback of their audience in their news construction process.

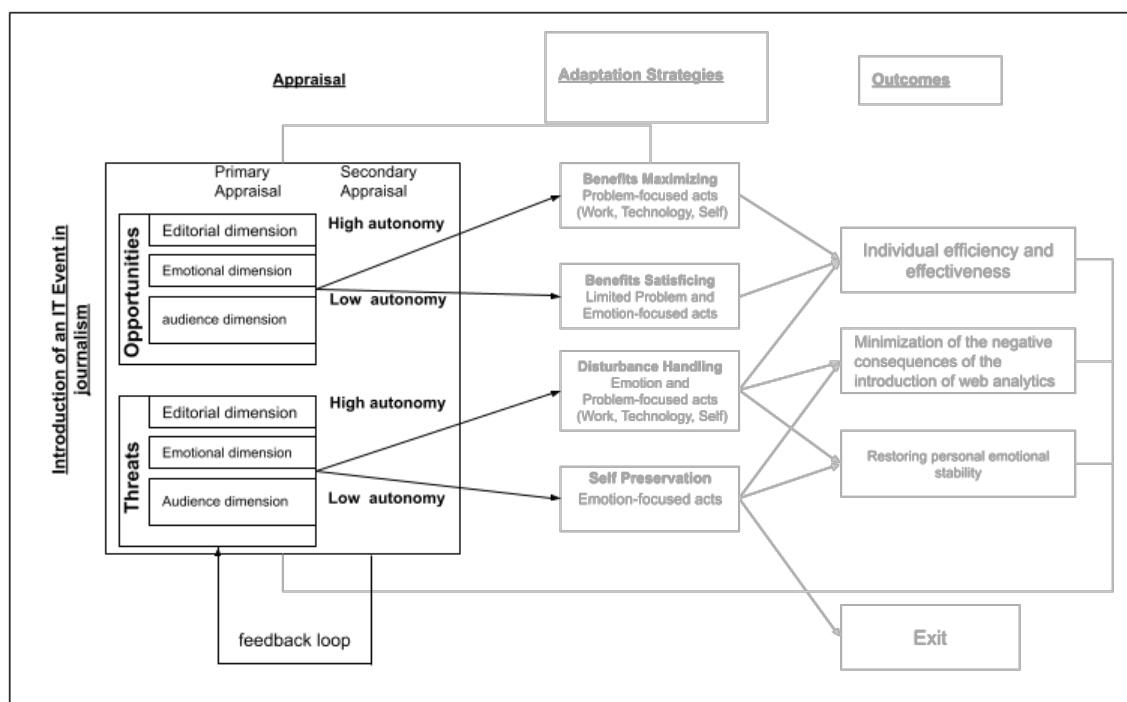
Taking the findings on journalists' primary and secondary appraisal of audience metrics into account, the necessity to reevaluate and expand the original *Coping Model of User Adaptation* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005) arises. Hence, this article suggests revising the original *Coping Model of User Adaptation* for the application in journalism research and to incorporate the different dimensions of primary appraisal - *editorial dimension*, *audience relationship dimension*, and *emotional dimension* - into the model, which derived from the previously elaborated findings. The addition of the dimensions to the model enables future research to gain a deeper and more focused insight into the initial appraisal of technology in newsrooms. The dimensions allow the opportunity to apply the model to various technological innovations in the newsroom beyond quantified audience metrics and to compare their adaptation across the dimensions to detect possible adaptation variations along with the emotional, editorial, and audience-relationship appraisal. Such technological innovations could be the increasing usage of

virtual reality (Goutier et al., 2021) and artificial intelligence (Broussard et al., 2019) in the journalistic field.

Furthermore, the findings suggest a correlation between primary and secondary assessment of audience metrics in the Austrian newsroom, inspiring the addition of an additional feedback loop interconnecting primary and secondary appraisal (figure 3) in the context of journalism research. Additionally, the revised model was adapted to fit the framework of journalism scholarship more coherently by adjusting the used terminology (see figure 3).

Figure 3

Revised Coping Model of User Adaptation



Notes: revised *Coping Model of User Adaptation* adapted from Beaudry & Pinsonneault (2005). Fitted to the field of journalism research.

Job satisfaction

Finally, the third and last research question strived to inspect the overall impact of journalists' primary and secondary appraisal of digitized audience feedback on Austrian journalists' job satisfaction. Overall, journalists reported a relatively high job satisfaction ($M = 4.02$; $SD = .88$) in Austrian newsrooms particularly in regard to their degree of self-responsibility ($M = 4.28$; $SD = .88$), as well as the variety ($M = 4.08$; $SD = 1.02$) and content of their work ($M = 3.94$; $SD = .98$). Furthermore, the findings suggest a positive correlation between journalists' overall job satisfaction and the degree of

autonomy in their work ($r(176) = .30, p < .001$), which is in line with previous research (Chung-Yan, 2010; Taylor et al., 2003) on the topic.

Zooming in on the particular scenario of audience analytics in the newsroom, the findings suggest a particular correlation between journalists' job satisfaction and the emotional dimension of their primary appraisal of the new technology. The results revealed, that journalists negative emotional appraisal significantly correlates with an overall lower job satisfaction ($r(163) = -.17, p < .029$) due to the impression of being watched ($r(164) = -.16, p < .040$), increased stress ($r(165) = -.19, p < .012$) and external pressures ($r(165) = -.17, p < .026$). Additionally, Austrian journalists' job satisfaction negatively correlates with supervisors distributing audience metrics to evaluate journalists' performance ($r(165) = -.21, p < .008$) which could potentially be used to reduce pay or terminate the employment relationship. Thus, these findings indicate the fields' necessity to thoroughly reflect on the constantly increasing influence of the audience on the news construction process and emotional exhaustion to stabilize an already struggling field, by limiting voluntary turnover intentions (Farrell & Carley, 1981; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998) and journalists quitting the profession altogether (Reinardy, 2009) due to the increasing emotional and professional implications of the audience metrics in their work.

Despite job satisfaction mainly correlating with negative emotions, positively connotated items also enhanced the journalists' job satisfaction. Journalists especially appreciated their work, when they received help to interpret the web analytics by either colleagues ($r(165) = -.20, p = .022$) or their supervisors ($r(163) = .26, p = .012$) and have the ability to participate in coaching in web metrics provided by their supervisors ($r(166) = .160, p < .039$). Several respondents also indicated the desire to receive more support on the application of quantified audience feedback ($M = 2.51$; $SD = 1.34$) which negatively correlates with their job satisfaction ($r(166) = -.186, p < .016$), indicating journalists' desire to continuously improve their knowledge to remain satisfied within their work environment (Rowden & Conine, 2005). While digitized audience metrics, like most other technological innovations, were designed to help their users in their daily work, the findings also highlight the importance of proper education to fully embrace the potential of the technology and in this case to avoid journalists repelling it due to frustration and lacking skills ultimately leading to a decreased overall job satisfaction and hindered innovation within the newsroom (Spyridou et al., 2013). With proper education and an overall positive appraisal of the technology, journalists will most likely choose the adaptation strategy of *benefits maximizing* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005), which by implication will not only increase individual journalists' capabilities but ultimately the field's overall success.

Conclusion and Outlook

The overarching goal of this study was to investigate Austrian journalists' appraisal of digitized audience metrics in the newsrooms. Through the theoretical lens of the *Coping Model of User Adaptation* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005), this study surveyed journalists in regards to their initial appraisal of web analytics and the technologies' subsequent impact on their news construction process and audience relationship. Hereby, this study further differentiated between the model's initial dichotomous categories of opportunities and threats in users' primary appraisal and subdivided these into the three sub-dimensions of initial appraisal in the newsroom entailing journalists' emotional, editorial, and audience appraisal, all of whom are interconnected and mutually influence each other. Despite the findings suggesting the limited usage of audience metrics in the Austrian newsroom, they also implied journalists diversified appraisal of them. While the quantified audience feedback is considered to be a significant addition to the newsroom by improving journalists' relationship with their audience, helping to justify editorial decisions, and encouraging journalists in their work, the respondents also reported negative consequences of the increasingly digitized audience. The journalists' responses underlined web analytics' potential to disrupt traditional editorial procedures and negatively impact journalists' emotional well-being on the job site through increasing stress, pressure, and triggering the impression of being watched and subsequently judged based on numbers. The results also indicated the importance of journalists' autonomy in the secondary appraisal of the new technology. Journalists with higher degrees of autonomy were more likely to use audience metrics to improve their work due to their increased intrinsic motivation. Lastly, the study also found journalists' primary and secondary appraisals to influence their overall job satisfaction, underlining the importance of the proper handling of the increased influence of audiences on the news construction process.

As with any empirical study, the present article does not come without its fair set of limitations. Overall, this study relies on self-reported data from Austrian journalists and therefore the underlying assumption of the participant's honest and accurate answers. However, as past studies have extensively shown, research must also assume self-reported data to be subjected to social-desirability and halo errors (Gonyea, 2005). Additionally, this survey asked journalists to indicate their emotional response to audience analytics, which is particularly difficult, as emotions usually do not stand alone but are often caused by other factors such as the desire to fit in, psychological activities, or the individuals' socialization within society, which are mostly extremely difficult to holistically control for (Kotisova, 2019). Lastly, the survey was conducted in 2018, thus it

is important to interpret the presented findings in relation to their age, as the appraisal and subsequent adaptation to audience metrics will most likely have evolved within the framework of the increasingly accelerating world of technological achievements inside and outside of the Austrian newsrooms.

Subsequently, future research should initially re-evaluate Austrian journalists' adaptation to audience metrics based on the proposed revised model and review the current application of audience metrics, particularly in smaller Austrian newsrooms to trace the longitudinal adaptation of web analytics in the journalistic landscape. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to extend the research to the remaining stages of the *Coping Model of User Adaptation* (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005). Additionally, it would be interesting to further investigate journalists' overall motivation to take a more consumer-oriented stance and the resulting implications for the profession through qualitative interviews and ethnographical fieldwork. In the long term, more research on the journalists' adaptation patterns and the proper application of audience metrics in newsrooms will help journalists better assess the technologies' impact on their work and keep the balance between their perception of the audience as a citizen or consumer. Subsequently allowing the journalists to fulfill their responsibility in modern society as the 'Fourth Estate'.

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Appendix

Abstracts

Audience metrics have been a key development in the journalistic field's process of digitization over the past decade. This study explores Austrian journalists' appraisal of digitized audience feedback in the newsroom through the theoretical prism of the *Coping Model of User Adaptation*. The study hereby particularly focuses on users' emotional appraisal and the applications' possible influence on journalists' overall job satisfaction. A quantitative study with 180 Austrian journalists was conducted. The findings suggested a limited usage of audience metrics in Austrian newsrooms, however, journalists acknowledged audience metrics' potential to improve their relationship with their audience and editorial processes. Despite audience metrics potential, the survey also reveals journalists' skepticism towards the new technology, particularly in regards to their emotional well-being and overall job satisfaction. Furthermore, the findings suggest journalists are more willing to adapt to quantified audience feedback when they are autonomous in doing so and are not required to review them by institutional or organizational structures. Subsequently, this article proposes a revised *Coping Model of User Adaptation* adapted to the journalistic field with a specific focus on the dimensions of journalists' relationship with their audience, their emotional well-being, and the editorial process as such.

Web-Analysen sind eine der wichtigsten Entwicklungen im Digitalisierungsprozess des Journalismus im letzten Jahrzehnt. Diese Studie untersucht die Einstellung von Journalist*Innen zu Web-Analysen in Redaktionen durch die theoretische Linse des *Coping Model of User Adaptation*. Die Studie konzentriert sich dabei insbesondere auf die emotionale Bewertung dieser durch Journalist*Innen und den möglichen Einfluss der Web-Analysen auf die allgemeine Arbeitszufriedenheit der Journalist*Innen. Dazu wurde eine quantitative Studie mit 180 österreichischen Journalist*Innen durchgeführt. Die Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass Web-Analysen in österreichischen Redaktionen nur in begrenztem Maße genutzt werden, obwohl die Journalist*Innen das Potenzial von Web-Analysen zur Verbesserung der Beziehung mit ihrem Publikum und redaktionellen Prozesse anerkennen. Trotz des Potenzials von Web-Analysen unterstreicht die Studie auch die Skepsis der Journalist*Innen gegenüber der neuen Technologie, insbesondere im Hinblick auf ihr emotionales Wohlbefinden und ihre allgemeine Arbeitszufriedenheit. Darüber hinaus deuten die Ergebnisse darauf hin, dass Journalist*Innen eher bereit sind, sich auf quantifiziertes Publikumsfeedback einzustellen, wenn sie dabei autonom sind

und nicht durch institutionelle oder organisatorische Strukturen zu einer Anwendung dieser gezwungen werden. Darüber hinaus schlägt dieser Artikel ein überarbeitetes *Coping Model of User Adaptation* vor, dass an den Kontext der Journalismusforschung angepasst wurde und sich insbesondere auf die Beziehung von Journalist*Innen zu ihrem Publikum, ihrem emotionales Wohlbefinden und den redaktionellen Prozessen als solchen konzentriert.

Questionnaire

Vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme an unserer Befragung zur Nutzung von Web-Analyse-Tools im österreichischen Journalismus. Die Befragung ist Teil eines Forschungsprojektes, das unter meiner Leitung am Institut für Publizistik- und Kommunikationswissenschaft der Universität Wien durchgeführt wird.

Ein viel diskutierter Aspekt des digitalen Wandels weltweit sind Software und Applikationen, die das Verhalten von NutzerInnen aufzeichnen und für JournalistInnen visualisieren. Diese sogenannten Web-Analyse-Tools bieten die Möglichkeit, das Verhalten der NutzerInnen detailliert zu messen und Beiträge an die Präferenzen des Publikums anzupassen. Somit entstehen neue Möglichkeiten, aber auch Gefahren für den Journalismus. Da dieses Thema in Österreich bislang kaum wissenschaftlich untersucht wurde, möchten wir mit dieser Studie Erkenntnisse gewinnen, wie JournalistInnen mit Web-Analyse-Tools umgehen und welchen Einfluss diese auf ihre Arbeit haben.

Das Ausfüllen des Fragebogens ist freiwillig und komplett vertraulich. Keine Ihrer Antworten können zu Ihnen persönlich oder Ihrem Medienunternehmen zurückverfolgt werden. Wenn Sie bestimmte Fragen nicht beantworten möchten, können Sie diese einfach übergehen.

Das Ausfüllen des Fragebogens sollte ca. 10 Minuten dauern. Wir sind uns bewusst, unter welchem Zeitdruck Sie als JournalistIn arbeiten, und bedanken uns daher besonders, dass Sie sich die Zeit für diese Befragung nehmen.

Für etwaige Rückfragen können Sie mich gerne unter folker.hanusch@univie.ac.at kontaktieren.

Im Namen des Forschungsteams bedanke ich mich im Voraus ganz herzlich für Ihre Teilnahme.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,
 Univ.-Prof. Folker Hanusch, PhD
 Professor für Journalismus
 Institut für Publizistik- und Kommunikationswissenschaft
 Universität Wien

1. Welche der folgenden Kategorien beschreibt Ihre aktuelle Position am besten?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Chefredakteur(in) / Herausgeber(in) / Programmdirektor(in) | ☐ Reporter(in) |
| ☐ Redaktionsleiter(in) | ☐ Autor(in) |
| ☐ Chef(in) vom Dienst | ☐ Moderator(in) |
| ☐ Ressortleiter(in) | ☐ Freie(r) Journalist(in) / Pauschalist(in) |
| ☐ Redakteur(in) | ☐ Volontär(in) |
| ☐ Produzent(in) | ☐ Praktikant(in) |
| ☐ Anderes (bitte angeben) | |

2. Wie lässt sich Ihre derzeitige Anstellung am besten beschreiben:

- ☐ Vollzeitanstellung
 ☐ Feste(r) Freie(r)
☐ Teilzeitanstellung
 ☐ Pauschalist(in)
☐ Freie(r) Journalist(in)
☐ Anderes (bitte angeben)

3. In welchem Themenfeld, bzw. Ressort, arbeiten Sie **hauptsächlich**?

4. Sprechen wir nun über Ihre Tätigkeiten im Allgemeinen. Wie viel Entscheidungsfreiheit haben Sie bei insgesamt in Ihrer Arbeit?

Überhaupt keine Autonomie	Wenig Autonomie	Einige Autonomie	Viel Autonomie	Volle Autonomie
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. Web-Analysen können Informationen über Publikumsverhalten anhand verschiedener Metriken liefern. Bitte sagen Sie uns, wie häufig Sie diese Informationen vom Arbeitgeber, bzw. Vorgesetzten vorgelegt bekommen, sowie wie häufig Sie persönlich diese Informationen aktiv einholen.

	Niemals	Sehr selten	Seltener als einmal im Monat	Seltener als einmal die Woche	Wöchentlich	Täglich	Mehrmals am Tag	Stündlich	Mehrmals in der Stunde
Von Arbeitgeber/Vorgesetzten vorgelegt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Selbst aktiv eingeholt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. Welche Web-Analyse-Tools benutzen Sie? Wenn Sie mehrere nutzen, listen Sie bitte alle auf.

7. Hier sind einige Aussagen zur Nutzung von Web-Analysen. Bitte sagen Sie uns, wie sehr Sie den jeweiligen Aussagen zustimmen.

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Stimme teilweise zu	Stimme eher zu	Stimme stark zu
Web-Analysen informieren mich darüber, an welchen Themen mein Publikum interessiert ist.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Web-Analysen helfen mir, mehr über mein Publikum zu erfahren.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Web-Analysen helfen mir zu verstehen, was mein Publikum von mir erwartet.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Web-Analysen helfen mir Inhalte zu produzieren, die für mein Publikum relevant sind.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich benutze Web-Analysen, um redaktionelle Entscheidungen zu treffen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich benutze Web-Analysen, um die Reichweite der von mir produzierten Inhalte zu messen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich benutze Web-Analysen, um Inhalte zu optimieren (z.B. Umschreiben von Überschriften, Auswahl von Fotos, etc).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich benutze Web-Analysen, um zu überprüfen, ob redaktionelle Ziele erreicht wurden.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich benutze Web-Analysen, um Entscheidungen über zukünftige Geschichten zu treffen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. Wie beurteilen Sie den Einfluss von Web-Analysen auf die Qualität im Journalismus?

Äußerst negativ für die Qualität	Eher negativ für die Qualität	Weder negativ noch positiv für die Qualität	Eher positiv für die Qualität	Äußerst positiv für die Qualität
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. Bitte sage Sie uns, was Sie für den größten Vorteil und den größten Nachteil von Web-Analysen halten.

Vorteil

Nachteil

10. Nun geht es um verschiedene berufliche Aspekte von Web-Analysen. Bitte sagen Sie uns, in welchem Maß Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen.

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Stimme teilweise zu	Stimme eher zu	Stimme stark zu
Ich beziehe meine Kenntnisse zu Web-Analysen aus Coaching-Angeboten meines Arbeitgebers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich beziehe meine Kenntnisse zu Web-Analysen aus eigener Recherche zu dem Thema.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich fühle mich ausreichend ausgebildet in der Interpretation von Web-Analysen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich wünsche mir mehr Unterstützungsangebote zu Web-Analysen von meinen Vorgesetzten.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kenntnisse über Web-Analysen sind wichtig im Bewerbungsprozess.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In meiner Redaktion haben Web-Analysen direkten Einfluss auf das Gehalt.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich vergleiche meine Web-Analyse-Daten häufig mit denen meiner KollegInnen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Web-Analysen sind Teil von Mitarbeitergesprächen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mein Arbeitgeber bewertet mich anhand von Web-Analysen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Web-Analysen spiegeln meine journalistische Kompetenz wider.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Web-Analysen motivieren mich in meiner Arbeit.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. Nun geht es um Ihre persönlichen Einstellungen zu Web-Analysen. Bitte sagen Sie uns, in welchem Maß Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen.

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Stimme teilweise zu	Stimme eher zu	Stimme stark zu
Wenn meine Inhalte hohe Klickzahlen haben, dann fühle ich mich gut.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wenn meine Inhalte hohe Klickzahlen haben, dann bin ich motivierter.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Die Arbeit mit Web-Analysen ist ein zusätzlicher Stressfaktor für mich.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich erhalte Unterstützung von meinen KollegInnen beim Interpretieren von Web-Analysen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich erhalte Unterstützung von meinen Vorgesetzten beim Interpretieren von Web-Analysen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In meiner Redaktion werden Klickzahlen zwischen KollegInnen oft miteinander verglichen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bei geringen Klickzahlen zweifle ich an meiner journalistischen Fähigkeit.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich fühle mich durch Web-Analysen unter Druck gesetzt.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Durch Web-Analysen fühle ich mich in meiner Arbeit beobachtet.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hohe Klickzahlen zeigen, dass ich als JournalistIn eine gute Arbeit mache.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. Journalismus hat unterschiedliche Funktionen in der Gesellschaft. Inwiefern sind die folgenden Funktionen **in Ihrer eigenen Arbeit** über die vergangenen 5 Jahre wichtiger oder weniger wichtig geworden?

	Wurde viel weniger wichtig	Wurde weniger wichtig	Ist unverändert	Wurde viel wichtiger	Wurde sehr viel wichtiger
Die Regierung kontrollieren	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Die Wirtschaft kontrollieren	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Informationen vermitteln, die Menschen zu politischen Entscheidungen befähigen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Menschen zur Teilhabe am politischen Geschehen motivieren	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Unterhaltung und Entspannung bieten	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inhalte anbieten, die ein möglichst großes Publikum anziehen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rat, Orientierung und Hilfestellung für den Alltag anbieten	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inhalte anbieten, die dem Publikum ein gutes Gefühl vermitteln	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

18. Was ist Ihr Geschlecht?

- ☐ Weiblich
 ☐ Männlich
- ☐ Anderes, und zwar

19. In welchem Jahr sind Sie geboren? (Geben Sie bitte das 4-stellige Geburtsjahr an, z. B. 1976)

20. In welche der folgenden Kategorien fällt Ihr monatliches Einkommen nach Abzug aller Steuern und Abgaben?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ 0 - 600 Euro | ☐ 3.601 - 4.800 Euro |
| ☐ 601 - 1.200 Euro | ☐ 4.801 - 6.000 Euro |
| ☐ 1.201 - 1.800 Euro | ☐ 6.001 - 7.200 Euro |
| ☐ 1.801 - 2.400 Euro | ☐ Mehr als 7.200 Euro |
| ☐ 2.401 - 3.000 Euro | ☐ Weiß nicht |
| ☐ 3.001 - 3.600 Euro | |

21. Für welchen Medientyp sind Sie tätig? (Bitte kreuzen Sie alle Medientypen an, für die Sie Inhalte produzieren)

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Tageszeitung | ☐ Radio |
| ☐ Sonntags- und Wochenzeitung | ☐ Nachrichtenagentur / Mediendienst |
| ☐ Zeitschrift | ☐ Online-Produktion (stand-alone) |
| ☐ Anzeigenblätter | ☐ Online-Auftritt (eines offline-Mediums) |
| ☐ Fernsehen | |
| ☐ Anderes (bitte angeben) | |

22. Wie ist die Reichweite des Mediums, für das Sie überwiegend arbeiten?

- ☐ Lokale Ebene
- ☐ Landesebene
- ☐ Nationale Ebene
- ☐ Internationale Ebene

23. Wie würden Sie die finanzielle Lage Ihres Arbeitgebers, für den Sie überwiegend arbeiten, einschätzen?

Sehr schlecht Eher schlecht Mittel Gut Sehr gut

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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13. Hier sind ein paar Aussagen zu Ihrer Arbeitszufriedenheit. Bitte sagen Sie uns, in welchem Maß Sie zufrieden, bzw. unzufrieden sind.

	Sehr unzufrieden	Eher unzufrieden	Teils/teils	Eher zufrieden	Sehr zufrieden
Mit der täglichen Arbeitsbelastung	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mit dem eigentlichen Inhalt meiner Arbeitstätigkeit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mit den Möglichkeiten, Neues bei der Arbeit zu lernen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mit der Anerkennung für meine Leistungen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mit den Ergebnissen meiner Arbeit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mit der Abwechslung in meinem Arbeitsalltag	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mit dem Maß an Selbstverantwortung in meiner Arbeit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mit der Publikumsresonanz	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mit dem Arbeitsklima in meiner Redaktion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. Alles zusammengekommen, wie zufrieden sind Sie mit Ihrer Arbeit?

Sehr unzufrieden	Eher unzufrieden	Teils/teils	Eher zufrieden	Sehr zufrieden
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. Was ist Ihr höchster Schul- bzw. Bildungsabschluss?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Keine Matura | ☐ Bachelor-Abschluss oder ähnlich |
| ☐ Matura | ☐ Magister-/ Master-Abschluss bzw. Diplom |
| ☐ Hochschulstudium begonnen, aber nicht abgeschlossen | ☐ Promotion |

16. Seit wie vielen Jahre sind Sie bereits im Journalismus tätig?

17. Wie viele JournalistInnen arbeiten in der Redaktion, für die Sie hauptsächlich tätig sind?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Weniger als 5 JournalistInnen | ☐ 31-50 JournalistInnen |
| ☐ 6-10 JournalistInnen | ☐ Mehr als 50 JournalistInnen |
| ☐ 11-30 JournalistInnen | |

24. Wie würden Sie die journalistische Qualität der Inhalte der Redaktion, für die Sie überwiegend arbeiten, im Allgemeinen einschätzen?

Sehr schlecht	Eher schlecht	Mittel	Eher gut	Sehr gut
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

25. Wie hoch ist der Konkurrenzkampf der Medienorganisation, für die Sie überwiegend arbeiten, mit anderen Medienorganisationen?

Sehr niedrig	Niedrig	Mittel	Hoch	Sehr hoch
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

26. Wie hoch ist der Konkurrenzkampf unter den einzelnen JournalistInnen innerhalb der Medienorganisation, für die Sie überwiegend arbeiten?

Sehr niedrig	Niedrig	Mittel	Hoch	Sehr hoch
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

27. Wir sind am Ende der Befragung angelangt, vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme. Nun haben Sie noch die Möglichkeit, einen Kommentar zu hinterlassen, z.B. zu Aspekten von Web-Analysen, die Sie als wichtig erachten, die bislang jedoch noch nicht zur Sprache kamen.