News Engagement Process Model: Theorization of Audience and Journalist Interactions

SOO YOUNG SHIN[1]
The University of Alabama, USA

SERENA MILLER
Michigan State University, USA

Journalism scholars are increasingly studying *news engagement* as a topic and employing it as a conceptual lens with an underlying assumption that news engagement leads to positive outcomes for news organizations. However, the construct's boundaries and the related practices representing it require further organization if researchers seek to test the validity of these assumptions. Based on the mapping of *engagement* literature across fields, we present a process model of news engagement that includes multiple engagement concepts. News engagement is a process initiated by journalists through which audiences interact with journalists, news content, and other audience members. We propose a *news engagement model* that comprises three core concepts: (a) journalists' behavioral engagement, (b) audiences' psychological engagement, and (c) audiences' behavioral engagement. The *news engagement model* conceptualizes news engagement as an ongoing, reciprocal exchange between journalists and audiences. In this theoretical essay, our intent with the model is to offer a framework for both identifying and testing how journalists' engagement behaviors influence audience engagement and vice versa.

Keywords: audience engagement, psychological engagement, empathy, news engagement, emotion

As news organizations face financial and credibility crises, some news outlet leadership, professional associations, and media scholars have begun to argue that audience engagement is key to journalism's survival. Several positive outcomes of news engagement have been suggested, including media brand recognition (Assmann & Diakopoulos, 2017), trust building, loyalty (Lewis, Holton, & Coddington, 2014), and community connection (Wenzel, 2023). However, it may also lead to negative outcomes, such as uncivil debates (Masullo & Kim, 2021). Researchers need to assess the effectiveness of news engagement

Soo Young Shin: sshin13@ua.edu
Serena Miller: serena@msu.edu
Date submitted: 2024-09-30

efforts, yet different theoretical and empirical interpretations regarding the meaning of engagement and the varying strategies employed across newsrooms make it difficult to assess the effectiveness of these strategies, measure impact, or establish best practices (Lawrence, Radcliffe, & Schmidt, 2018; Meier, Kraus, & Michaeler, 2018). For some scholars, news engagement refers to individuals' participation and the interaction between journalists and audiences (Lawrence et al., 2018; Martin, Camaj, & Lanosga, 2024), while others view it as individuals' news experiences (Mersey, Malthouse, & Calder, 2010). News engagement may also be conceptualized from a normative perspective, such as expanding journalism's role in society (Peters & Witschge, 2015). In practice, news engagement may involve offering tools and platforms to measure audience reactions to news stories (Lawrence et al., 2018); soliciting audience feedback and news tips (Martin et al., 2024; Scott, 2025); or assigning audiences citizen journalism roles to cover their own stories (Wenzel, 2023).

Given the wide range of interpretations of the news engagement construct and a solid body of research utilizing this conceptual lens, we review the engagement literature across fields to delineate its essence. Based on the mapping of the literature, we posit that news engagement may be viewed as a *process model* rather than a *construct* due to multiple engagement actors (i.e., journalists and audiences) interacting with one another (Chan-Olmsted & Wolter, 2018; Steensen, Ferrer-Conill, & Peters, 2020). We argue that varying approaches associated with defining and measuring engagement across the industry, coupled with varying interpretations across scholarships, may signal a need to map the boundaries of news engagement. This also suggests that the complexity of news engagement must be captured more precisely in a model. For example, scholarly discussions of engagement primarily concentrate on one party—either journalists or audiences—placing all engagement actors and dimensions into a single, porous conceptual engagement framework, which results in a disjointed understanding of the concept. Instead, we suggest that news engagement could be understood as an ongoing, iterative process in which journalists and audiences interact within a feedback loop.

The proposed news engagement model assumes a feedback loop involving journalists' engagement behaviors and audience engagement—the latter is composed of audiences' psychological (i.e., emotional and cognitive) and behavioral (e.g., sharing, commenting, providing news story ideas) engagement. Conceptual labels vary (i.e., *audience engagement*, *media engagement*, *engaged journalism*, and *engagement journalism*), with most research concentrating on one party of engagement (either journalists or audiences), yet labels do not tend to reflect this boundary condition. Based on the social science theoretical premise that news engagement is an ongoing interactive process between journalists and audiences (Lewis et al., 2014; Meier et al., 2018; Nelson, 2018), we adopt the label *"news engagement" process model* to encapsulate both journalists' engagement practices and subsequent audience engagement responses.

To map the engagement literature, we articulated the contributions of each engagement actor—journalists and audiences—under three different conceptual umbrellas, formally recognizing an understudied aspect of news engagement—psychological. Emotions have been conceptualized as a component of audience engagement (Chan-Olmsted & Wolter, 2018; Steensen et al., 2020), but the emotional aspect of engagement has been less studied in journalism. We view emotional involvement, a type of psychological engagement, as a connective link leading to audience participation, which may help researchers assess the

role and subsequent effects of news engagement on expected outcomes (e.g., trust). Specifically, the model emphasizes audiences' psychological engagement as "rich, qualitative 'felt' experiences" (Calder, Isaac, & Malthouse, 2016, p. 3), encompassing emotional reactions to and bonding with the news and the journalists, as well as cognitive involvement (e.g., recognition, elaboration, attention) with news content. Psychological components mediate between journalists' behavioral engagement and audiences' behavioral engagement (e.g., news consumption and participation in activities related to news).

The dissection of news engagement may provide clarity regarding the processes involved, as each component is influenced by various drivers and factors (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011; Weitzl & Einwiller, 2018). The news engagement process model proposes that engagement begins with journalists' intentional behaviors to engage audiences, with the expectation that audiences will respond psychologically and/or behaviorally. As such, the model may help journalists and news leaders evaluate the effectiveness of specific engagement efforts, optimizing their time and resources as they test different news engagement strategies. Additionally, we hope to serve scholars by organizing the literature for interested research communities and helping them assess journalists' engagement effectiveness, including which journalistic behaviors and strategies do or do not foster more engagement.

Scholarly Interpretations of News Engagement

News engagement has been treated as a narrow concept rather than a process, often resulting in research describing individuals' participation or responses to interactions with engagement objects. The simplest definition of engagement is audience participation across various stages of news production (Lawrence et al., 2018), while broader definitions emphasize how media organizations and journalists connect with audiences by encouraging active contribution, attracting audience attention, and cultivating a stronger bond (Lawrence et al., 2018; Meier et al., 2018; Nelson, 2021).

When the engagement approach is production-oriented, it is often viewed through the lens of audience-journalist relationship (Belair-Gagnon, Nelson, & Lewis, 2019; Martin et al., 2024). In this view, engagement refers to journalists' online behaviors that encourage reader interaction, such as framing digitized news content in measurement terms—for example, capturing online traffic clicks on news articles (Assmann & Diakopoulos, 2017; te Walvaart, Van den Bulck, & Dhoest, 2018). However, engagement can also take more idealized forms, such as building and maintaining relationships between audiences and journalists (Meier et al., 2018). Thus, engagement should be conceptualized more broadly to include all parties' roles in engagement interactions.

From a reception-oriented perspective, audiences engage with news by (1) reading or viewing content and (2) participating in actions to improve their communities (i.e., taking civic action; Peters & Witschge, 2015). These engagement forms vary in visibility, from passive actions like reading news content to more active ones, such as attending community newsroom feedback sessions (Martin et al., 2024; Peters & Witschge, 2015). Thus, news engagement may be both quantitative (e.g., audience metrics) and qualitative (e.g., town hall meeting participation). Qualitative perspectives grow partly due to an overreliance on quantitative metrics to assess audiences' engagement with the news media (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2019; Wenzel, 2023). News engagement can include more active forms of user contributions, such

as recruiting audiences for community initiatives or collaborating with community members on reporting societal issues. For data or environmental journalists, for instance, news engagement may mean collaborating with audiences and community members (who may possess relevant expertise) to gather data for a larger project (Martin et al., 2024). News engagement may also reflect more humanistic approaches to community involvement, such as holding listening sessions in communities or fostering more meaningful relationships with them (Lewis et al., 2014; Wenzel, 2023).

Despite the breadth and complexity of the news engagement construct, research continues to focus on audience behaviors. Yet engagement literature suggests that journalism researchers should also consider audiences' emotional involvement and cognitive absorption of the news—factors not always observable through metrics (Barnes, 2014; Evans, 2016). Moreover, quantitative measures—such as time spent, clicks, or shares—may not directly reflect latent engagement; for instance, an individual might spend little time on news yet remain highly engaged (Kormelink & Meijer, 2018, 2020). Therefore, we suggest that *news engagement* requires further mapping and explanation to capture its full scope, recognizing that news engagement requires a broader interpretation than audience behavioral measures.

Theorization of News Engagement

As discussed, our understanding of news engagement would be limited if we focused solely on the efforts of journalists or audiences' behavioral participation. To address the complexity of news engagement and its effects, we posit that (1) news engagement involves two parties (journalists and audiences), across different stages, from news production to consumption, and (2) audiences may become engaged psychologically and behaviorally.

Journalistic Behavioral Engagement: Initiation of News Engagement

We conceive journalists as one of the two primary actors represented in the news engagement process model. The advent of digital devices offered news audiences greater agency, allowing them to become active participants in the news production and dissemination process (Beckett & Deuze, 2016). As interactive, bottom-up community approaches gained attention (Wilhelm, Stehle, & Detel, 2021), news engagement practices began to reflect journalists' attempts to build relationships with their audiences (Green-Barber, 2018; Nelson & Schmidt, 2022). As the field's understanding of news engagement evolved, journalists increasingly considered audience's emotions and needs, often expressed in response to journalistic news content or interactions (Beckett & Deuze, 2016; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013).

Audience Engagement: Psychological Responses and Behavioral Participation

Evans (2016) suggested that engagement can be immersive, where audiences are not explicitly involved in overt participation but remain psychologically engaged with the content. Expanding on this view, news engagement involves not only concrete actions and interactions, but also individuals' subjective experiences (Evans, 2016; Steensen et al., 2020)—how they perceive and experience news on emotional or cognitive levels (Chan-Olmsted & Wolter, 2018; Djerf-Pierre, Lindgren, & Budinski, 2019). Audiences may be emotionally engaged while reading or viewing news (Barnes, 2014; te Walvaart et al., 2018), resulting

in distinct emotional experience(s), such as anger or hope (Djerf-Pierre et al., 2019). Engaged audiences may also be cognitively stimulated through interactions, such as learning from peers (Mersey et al., 2010). We define *audiences' psychological engagement*—emotional immersion during news consumption or cognitive involvement in processing messages—as "the cognitive, emotional, or affective experience that users have with media content or brands" (Broersma, 2019, p. 9).

Psychologically engaged individuals may invest their attention, emotions, and cognitive resources while consuming media content (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021; Weitzl & Einwiller, 2018), which may lead them to take actions, such as commenting on news articles, attending community meetings offered by a local news outlet, or participating in community projects. Therefore, we consider *behavioral engagement*—audiences' behavioral participation and interaction—as part of news engagement and suggest that psychological engagement is a precondition for behavioral engagement. Thus, news engagement consists of journalistic behavioral engagement, audience psychological engagement, and audience behavioral engagement.

News Engagement Process Model: Interactivity and Reciprocity

Across fields, engagement is generally understood within the context of participatory and collaborative cultures. Thus, engagement entails interaction between at least two parties (e.g., an engagement agent, such as an organization and employees) or interaction between individuals and engagement objects (i.e., news products). For example, social media engagement refers to "the *interactive*, synchronous communication and *collaboration among numerous participants* via technology" that enables organizations to "move from basic information dissemination […] to a fully interactive information sharing dialogue" (Heldman, Schindelar, & Weaver, 2013, p. 2; emphasis added). Engagement involves ongoing interactions and exchanges between two entities, such as responding to public opinion (Kent & Taylor, 1998) or co-creating brand or organizational value with stakeholders (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014).

Likewise, journalism scholars have recently begun to conceive of news engagement from a reciprocal and iterative perspective to "develop more mutually beneficial relationships with audiences" (Lewis et al., 2014, p. 229) by engaging with them. Audiences provide feedback, ideas, knowledge, and information that ideally contribute to more relevant news content and a better functioning society. Audiences may engage in direct exchanges with journalists (e.g., social media channel, email), as well as in indirect, sustained ways that focus on long-term community benefits and fostering ongoing collective interactions (Lewis et al., 2014; Wilhelm et al., 2021). In this regard, news engagement may be viewed as an ongoing process driven by a feedback loop, rather than a one-time event.

Given the model's premise of reciprocity, we propose that news engagement is viewed more effectively as a process. *News engagement*, then, is defined *as audiences' interactive experiences resulting from journalists' facilitation of audiences' psychological involvement with news content, contributions to news production, and participation in activities proposed by journalists*. Accordingly, we propose that news engagement can be conceptualized as a process model that involves multiple engagement actors (i.e., journalists and audiences) and objects (e.g., news content, other audience members, and a journalist who authored the news content).

News Engagement as an Iterative Processes

Scholars tend to study and view audience engagement at either the front end (e.g., story ideas) or the back end of the news production process (e.g., news content reactions; Lawrence et al., 2018; Nelson, 2021). However, news engagement entails indirect and sustained interactions over time. For instance, once journalists receive audience input, they may adapt their communication and products to such input. News outlets also employ engagement efforts to build loyal audiences and long-term relationships with underserved communities (Wenzel, 2023). In these examples, journalists' engagement behaviors may also include listening to audience perspectives and practicing care when reporting on community matters (Craft & Vos, 2018).

Therefore, news engagement is more than merely news content metrics or a journalists' invitation to contribute story ideas. It represents ongoing relational strategies, with each engagement party responding to one another in an iterative feedback loop, rather than a state occurring at a single moment. We aim to develop an iterative process model that explains how journalists and audiences interact within a feedback loop, where news engagement involves a series of aggregated engagement states within ongoing cycles (Weitzl & Einwiller, 2018). A given news engagement state is the product of a prior news engagement cycle(s) and is context specific. Various drivers may influence audiences' psychological and behavioral engagement, showing the extent to which they are willing to be engaged. Therefore, we propose the following:

Proposition 1.1:   *News engagement involves dynamic processes occurring within an iterative and ongoing engagement process.*

Proposition 1.2:   *The iterative nature of news engagement suggests that previous outputs of news engagement may play a role in subsequent engagement responses.*

Proposition 1.3:   *Each news engagement cycle is influenced by various drivers reflective of a specific time, place, and context.*

News Engagement Process Model's Concept

We argue that news engagement is a process whereby journalists' behavioral engagement triggers audiences' psychological responses, which may, in turn, lead to audiences' behavioral engagement (e.g., social media participation or civic actions). The model comprises three core theoretical constructs: (1) journalists' behavioral engagement, (2) audiences' psychological engagement, and (3) audiences' behavioral engagement (Figure 1).
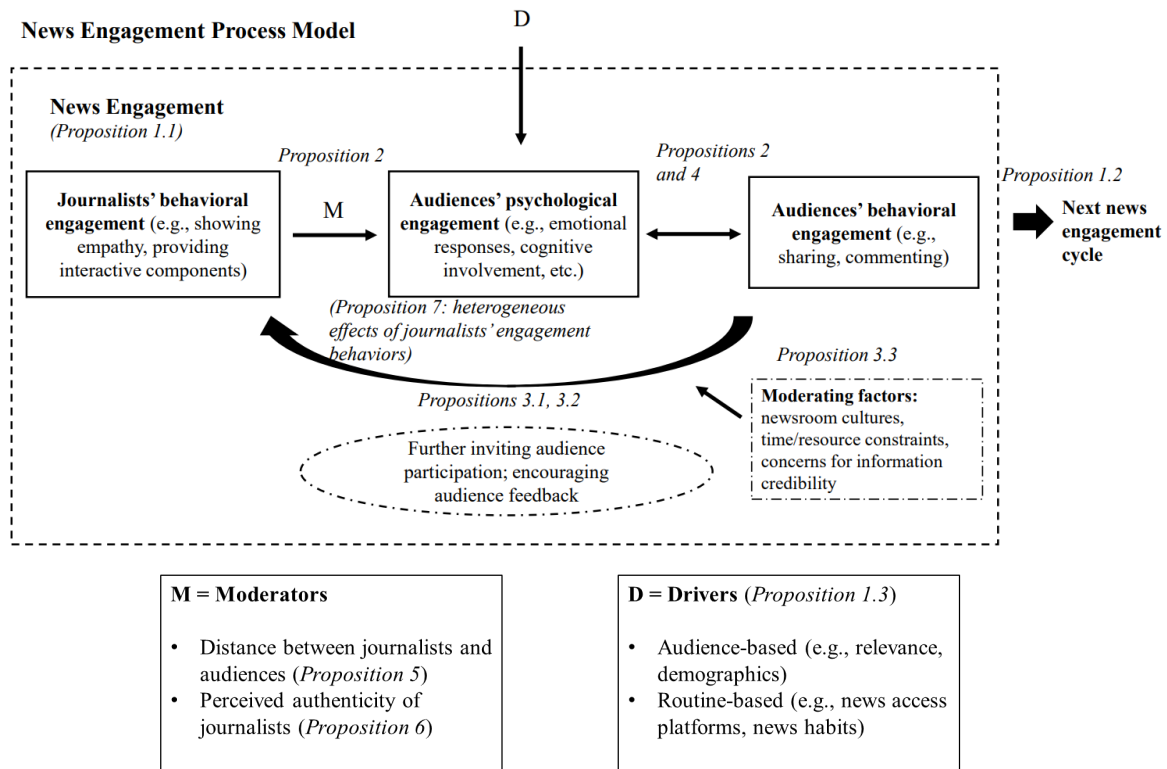
News Engagement Process Model

Figure 1. News engagement process model.

Journalists' Behavioral Engagement

The news engagement process begins with journalists' efforts to reach audiences or improve the performance of news to (1) develop relationships or trust with audiences and (2) acquire deeper knowledge about a community, audiences, and their informational needs. We conceptualize *journalists' behavioral engagement* as being represented by four non-mutually exclusive categories that describe their behavioral engagement approaches: inclusive, civic, dialogic, and strategic/instrumental.

Inclusive

The *inclusive approach* emphasizes journalists recognizing audiences' lived experiences and seeking diverse perspectives (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2019; Wenzel, 2023). Journalists may host online and offline events, such as forums, discussion boards, or listening sessions (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2019; Lewis et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2024). For example, *The Seattle Times* invited community members via social media platforms, Google Forms, and QR codes to collect information, and *The Marshall Project*, a nonprofit news organization, used crowdsourcing tools to investigate systemic issues in the justice system (Scott, 2025). Such practices, enacted through attentive or active listening (as referred to by Craft & Vos, 2018; Robinson, 2023), aim to bridge their gap with the public and empower audiences to voice their realities in

order to create more relevant news angles that reflect the perspectives of local audiences and underserved local groups (Jenkins & Powers, 2023; Wenzel, 2023). The crucial part of this approach is to have a system or process where journalists ensure that audience input is used to inform their work, not just inviting audiences to send news tips or video clips.

Civic

The *civic approach* includes journalists' behaviors that encourage audiences to participate civically through public deliberation, problem solving, and community building, for example (Lawrence et al., 2018). To that end, journalists may offer spaces, such as discussion boards, comment sections, or community forums, where news content and journalistic prompts serve as catalysts that connect people with local or national issues (Green-Barber, 2018). These engagement behaviors, along with those stemming from the inclusive approach, are closely tied to a role in which journalists' desire to help mobilize different groups to contribute to societal, community, and environmental betterment.

Dialogic

The *dialogic approach* concerns more direct communication between journalists and audiences (Kent & Taylor, 1998), and journalists' offering platforms with two-way, interpersonal interaction affordances. For example, *The Frontier* implemented a subscription-based text messaging service that offers interactive text messaging as part of its engagement project—subscribers are able to provide story tips and feedback (Goforth, 2024). Posting email addresses to encourage conversation is considered a behavior representative of this approach, allowing audiences to express their reactions to news content. Both dialogic and inclusive approaches invite audiences to be part of news production processes, but they differ in that audiences' contributions to the dialogic approach are episodic (short-term and immediate) rather than thematic. Journalists using the dialogic approach aim to engage audiences with their products or talent through several, but unrelated, one-time communications, rather than involving them in setting a news agenda or collaborating on a long-term community project, as seen in the inclusive approach.

Additionally, journalists' display of personal opinions or empathy aligns with the dialogic approach (Takahashi, Zhang, Chavez, & Nieves-Pizarro, 2022). Trends show that news organizations, like BBC News, are shifting from factual, distant tones to warmer, more conversational ones (Brants & De Hann, 2010). Thus, the dialogic approach focuses on relational interactions, emotional exchanges, and mutual influence (Kent & Taylor, 1998), where the psychological distance between journalists and audiences is reduced as relationships evolve.

Strategic or Instrumental

Lastly, journalists' engagement behaviors may be more *strategic or instrumental* in pursuing a larger audience reach and increasing online traffic. Journalists seek to secure audience attention and immersion in their organization's news products. For example, *OU Daily* created interactive content, adding visual elements to its newsletter as part of their news engagement project (Prince, 2023). Journalists may produce interactive content (e.g., polls, quizzes) or craft immersive narratives—such as data-driven or

feature stories—to encourage psychological involvement and foster interest in a given topic (Dafonte-Gómez, 2018; Mersey et al., 2010). Behaviors stemming from this approach include providing emotionally charged news content, which increases audience involvement (Lang, Potter, & Grabe, 2003) and often lead to sharing or reacting on social media platforms (Brown, Lough, & Riedl, 2020). This approach primarily concerns the market logic of news engagement.

Taken together, we suggest that journalists intentionally initiate the news engagement process, and that their engagement behaviors facilitate audience engagement. As such, the theoretical proposition on journalistic behavioral engagement is as follows:

Proposition 2:   *Journalists' behavioral engagement will elicit audiences' psychological engagement, and subsequent audience behavioral engagement.*

However, audience members may choose not to engage in journalist-promoted activities; in some cases, they may opt out entirely, depending on various circumstances or driving factors, which will be discussed later.

Journalistic engagement would likely be reinforced if journalists feel they are being rewarded for their efforts (Walker & Buckley, 1968), which may, in turn, further facilitate their engagement behaviors. However, not all journalists' attempts to engage audiences would be positively rewarded. Journalists may receive negative audience feedback, hostile communication (e.g., abusive comments, online/offline attacks), or little support from management (Ivask, Waschková Císařová, & Lon, 2023; Miller & Nelson, 2022).

Proposition 3.1:   *Audiences' positive behavioral engagement will positively influence journalists' behavioral engagement.*

Proposition 3.2:   *Audiences' negative behavioral engagement will negatively influence journalists' behavioral engagement.*

While audience feedback can be valuable, journalists may choose not to incorporate it, depending on individual circumstances or organizational barriers. For example, verifying audience-supplied information can be resource-intensive, requiring digital skills, time, and a willingness to consider news as a collaborative product with the public (Craft & Vos, 2018; Martin et al., 2024).

Proposition 3.3:   *The positive effects of audience engagement in facilitating journalists' engagement behaviors may be mitigated by various factors (including journalists' concerns about independence, the credibility of information provided by audiences, or time and resource constraints).*

Audiences' Psychological and Behavioral Engagement Linkage

Individuals' engagement refers to a range of audience responses divided into two concepts: (1) news audiences' psychological (emotional and cognitive) engagement and (2) behavioral engagement (Figure 2). Psychologically engaged individuals are "fully absorbed, involved, occupied, or engrossed" (Johnston, 2016, p. 272), which facilitates their subsequent behavioral engagement, such as information sharing (Brown et al., 2020; Dafonte-Gómez, 2018).
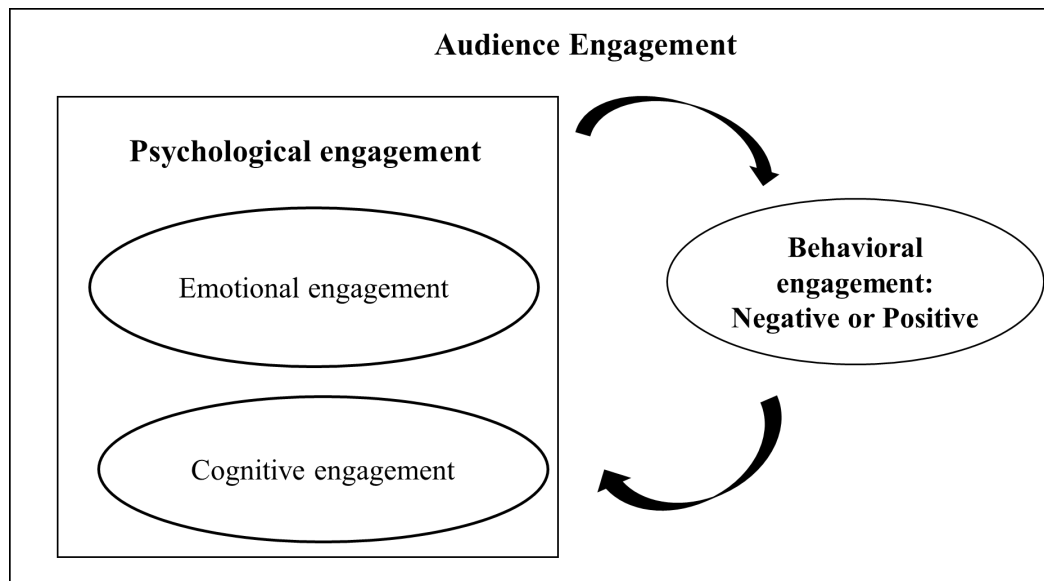

Figure 2. Audiences' engagement.

Individuals' behavioral and psychological engagement fuel or hinder one another (Weitzl & Einwiller, 2018). For example, emotions drive individuals to comment on or share content (Barnes, 2014; Brown et al., 2020) and strengthen their emotional attachment to people in the stories (i.e., emotional engagement). Emotional engagement with news content can increase the likelihood of participating in journalist-initiated activities (Gladwin, 2020). Along with emotional engagement, active participation in discussions about news issues may enhance audience awareness (i.e., cognitive engagement). Studies suggest that the more individuals participate in marketing activities associated with a company's brand (often via social media), the stronger their attachment to and engagement with the brand and brand-related activities (Brodie et al., 2011; Weitzl & Einwiller, 2018). Likewise, when audiences behaviorally engage with the news, such as sharing or commenting on social media news content, they are also more likely to be emotionally engaged and cognizant of the given issues.

On the other hand, the effect of audiences' psychological engagement may be negative, hindering further behavioral engagement. News avoidance studies show that individuals may avoid high-profile or tragic news due to feeling overwhelmed or experiencing negative emotions. Individuals may even disengage from the news due to perceived low credibility of news organizations or journalists (Lee, 2015; Villi et al.,

2022)—for example, noticing a factual error that triggers a negative psychological reaction. Therefore, psychologically engaged audiences may choose not to engage further with the news if they experience negative emotional responses to the content, journalist, or news organization. Thus, we present the following propositions:

Proposition 4:   *Audiences' psychological engagement and audiences' behavioral engagement will influence each other.*

It is noted that the same emotional reactions (e.g., negative emotions such as anger) do not always lead to the same behavioral engagement results (Kormelink & Meijer, 2018). The factors that enhance or inhibit audience engagement are discussed later in the Drivers of Audience Engagement section.

Audiences' Psychological Engagement

Audiences' psychological engagement refers to a state in which audiences are emotionally and cognitively involved with news content or the journalist. Several terms represent audiences' psychological engagement, including absorption, identification, involvement, sense of belonging, attachment, inspiration, and transportation (Chen, 2018; Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014; Kang, Dove, Ebright, Morales, & Kim, 2021).

Engaged audiences may become emotionally aroused (attentive or immersed) (Barnes, 2014; te Walvaart et al., 2018), resulting in them experiencing strong emotions and attachment to the people covered in the story (Chen, 2018; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Hong, 2015). An affective bond or affinity might be developed with the journalist who delivers the news (Kang et al., 2021), especially if the journalist represents the values embodied by their viewers (Weitzl & Einwiller, 2018). Audiences are also likely to be cognitively involved in processing news content, meaning that they pay attention to and make sense of the content based on their own schemata. Audiences' psychological engagement components are detailed below.

Emotional Responses

Psychologically engaged audiences may experience emotions such as disgust, joy, sorrow, hope, anger, or fear as they attend to a story (Brown et al., 2020; Dafonte-Gómez, 2018; Kang, 2014). Audiences may also emotionally respond to a journalist's empathetic communication during an interview, which could be a factor in individuals' information processing, sharing, and participation (i.e., engagement; Dafonte-Gómez, 2018). We consider audiences' emotional responses, along with identification, as key factors that connect individuals, enabling more active and collective participation.

Identification

Identification refers to internalizing "beliefs, values, and attitudes toward identified objects," and encompasses emotional connectedness and cognitive assessment of the images or values associated with

the object (Kang et al., 2021, p. 35). While emotions are audiences' general reactions, identification is more context-specific, such as emotional connection to a media persona, company, or brand (Hong, 2015; Weitzl & Einwiller, 2018). In journalism, psychologically engaged individuals may grow attached to people in a story or a reporter/anchor.

Interviewee identification refers to the audience's empathy and emotional attachment toward the people highlighted in news stories. Interviewee identification involves individuals seeking common ground with identification objects because they share (or are believed to share) the same interests as the characters (Cohen, 2018). Interviewee identification may take place when audiences feel empathy and affinity for the people in the media content, so they may develop a social bond with a news source and may be inspired to take action.

Engaged audiences may also identify with the journalist who reports the news, similar to the phenomena found in celebrity and fandom research (Kang et al., 2021), which we refer to as *journalist identification*. Journalist identification describes audiences liking the reporting style or image of a given journalist, which may result in audiences resonating with the values, emotional states, or viewpoints presented by the journalist (Wan, Lu, Wang, & Zhao, 2017). For instance, audiences may identify with news anchors with particular political affiliations. A strong identification may be formed when journalists deliver immersive news content in emotional/empathetic tones.

Audiences' Cognitive Involvement

Audiences' cognitive involvement is described as "an investment in attention and processing to develop understanding or knowledge about a topic or an idea" (Johnston, 2018, p. 22) and includes components of audiences' attention, recognition, and elaboration. News audiences are engaged when they have an "intense focus on a text" and the processing of its messages (te Walvaart et al., 2018, p. 903). Audiences' cognitive involvement explains news engagement in relation to audiences' attention given to issues or events, and it is represented by their attention to and recognition and elaboration of messages presented in media content (Perse, 1990; Rubin, 1993).

Transportation

Transportation refers to the extent to which respondents feel they are experiencing something— a state of being mentally drawn into a story (Kang et al., 2021; Rubin, 1993; Russell, Hamby, Grube, & Russell, 2019). When engaging with news, audiences may be absorbed in a story because they are captivated by an experience of the events or the people involved, "making mental connections between related pieces of information" (Eveland & Dunwoody, 2002, p. 41). They are transported into a story world that influences their attitudes and behaviors (Cohen, Tal-Or, & Mazor-Tregerman, 2015). Transportation largely concerns audiences' emotional investment and the extent to which they generate mental imagery while consuming news content (Russell et al., 2019), which may engender a greater degree of involvement than identification.

Audiences' Behavioral Engagement

Audiences' behavioral engagement refers to how individuals participate in journalistic-prompted activities and how they interact with news content or with journalists. Common behaviors include audiences' online or social media activities, such as sharing news with their followers, clicking "like" buttons, commenting on posts, replying to other news comments, and creating news content. Audiences may also involve civic behaviors, such as attending public forums hosted by local news outlets or participating in a news outlet's community or investigative project (Lewis et al., 2014; Robinson, 2023).

The behaviors mentioned above comprise two types of activities: engagement that stems directly from news content and engagement that occurs around news content or audiences' news consumption (Steensen et al., 2020; te Walvaart et al., 2018). Some example indicators that represent audiences' behavioral engagement are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Audiences' Behavioral Engagement Examples.

Forms of Audience Behavioral Engagement	Engagement Objects	Descriptions
Engagement stemming from news content	Engagement with news content	Share news, click "like" buttons, and comment
	Engagement with journalists	Provide story ideas to journalists, share user-generated content, or offer feedback on journalist-produced content
Engagement around news content	Interaction with other audience members and participation in a community or civic activity	Participate in discussions, mobilizing the public, or attend public hearings

Facilitating Audiences' Psychological Engagement

Drivers of Audience News Engagement

Individuals vary in their engagement level with engagement objects, ranging from collaborative or immersive engagement to disengagement, both psychologically and behaviorally. We identified two *news engagement drivers* that influence engagement levels: (1) audience-based and (2) news-consumption routine-based. Individual factors (e.g., personal interests, education, and political ideologies) may influence people's news routines and habits (Toff & Kalogeropoulos, 2020). Therefore, some factors may interact, facilitating or hindering the impact levels of news engagement.

Audience-Based Factors

Audiences' psychological engagement is essentially concerned with variables related to how individuals perceive news, which stems from preexisting beliefs and assumptions about the news and the news media. Audience variables include relevance and demographics.

Relevance

Cognitive processing and emotional involvement occur during individual audiences' psychological engagement stage, where they invest cognitive energy to understand information in news stories, depending on a story's relevance to their lives. Relevance is another fundamental factor in audiences' behavioral engagement: relevant news content is more likely to be shared or clicked (Brown et al., 2020). Relevance influences individuals' assessment of the importance of a given news story or issue, thereby affecting their engagement levels and their decisions to engage (Kormelink & Meijer, 2018).

Demographics

Demographics shape individuals' attitudes toward news consumption and participation (Andaleeb, Jamil, & Rajeb, 2022), influencing their engagement levels or intentions to engage (e.g., whether to click or not; Kormelink & Meijer, 2018). Examples of such factors include age, political ideology, ethnicity, religion, gender, and educational attainment (Villi et al., 2022).

News Consumption Routine-Based Factors

Individuals' news access routines may influence their engagement with news. Thus, we review news access platforms and news habits.

News Access Platforms

The platforms individuals primarily use to access news may influence their level of news engagement. Interactive platforms, such as social media channels, are more convenient for individuals to offer feedback and participate than news websites. In addition, affective connections would be more readily built on more interactive platforms, triggering favorable or unfavorable reactions toward behavioral participation (Papacharissi, 2016).

News Habits

Routines that individuals develop around accessing news may influence the amount of time they spend attending to news or doing activities around news consumption (i.e., engagement). News habit factors include when, where, and how often individuals access news; the news outlets they most frequently visit; or their news consumption preferences (e.g., short-form vs. long-form news).

Moderators of the Effects of Journalists' Engagement Behaviors

Psychological Distance Between Journalists and Audiences

Certain circumstances are likely to offer a more appropriate context for practicing specific types of journalists' engagement behaviors due to the psychological proximity between journalists and audiences. Journalists in the digital era are required to practice more interactive and empathetic communication skills when delivering news or reaching out to audiences, which deviates from the historical practice of detached and disinterested reporting (Lecheler, 2020; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013). Recent trends show a steady rise in social media interactions between journalists and audiences, especially during natural disasters or unexpected incidents. Journalists sometimes express empathy and reflexivity when they cover underserved communities or report on tragic incidents (Jenkins & Powers, 2023; Pantti, 2010), and they more freely express themselves on social media channels, podcasts, or blogs (Carpenter, Kanver, & Timmons, 2017). Such trends should result in a stronger relationship between audiences and journalists. By contrast, traditional media, such as television or newspaper, do not particularly aim to achieve close interactions between audiences and journalists: In that context, displaying emotions or personal reflections would not effectively generate the intended effects.

Proposition 5.1:   *The psychological distance between audiences and journalists influences the extent to which journalists' engagement behaviors generate the intended audiences' psychological engagement: the narrower the distance, the more audiences will be psychologically engaged.*

Proposition 5.2:   *The psychological distance is more likely to decrease when journalists report on tragic incidents emotionally: a journalists' behavioral engagement (e.g., displays of emotions or empathy toward interviewees) will have a greater impact on their audience's psychological engagement when covering tragic incidents, compared to non-tragic events.*

Proposition 5.3:   *On certain platforms like social media, psychological distance is likely to be reduced. Thus, journalists' behavioral engagement (e.g., displays of emotions or empathy toward interviewees or the offering of a collaborative space) will have a greater impact on audiences' psychological engagement on social media platforms than on broadcast platforms.*

Perceived Journalist Authenticity

Perceived journalist authenticity may also moderate the relationship between journalists' behavioral engagement and audiences' psychological engagement. Individuals might develop less favorable attitudes, or even get offended, if they perceive that news presenters expressed their empathy in an inauthentic or insincere way, compromising the intended effects of empathy (Mahmoud & Grigoriou, 2017; Williamson, 2019). When an individual believes that a journalist is insincere and uses emotions or personal accounts to manipulate or gain an advantage (e.g., to get information or increase traffic), that journalist's

efforts to engage them would likely fail. Furthermore, they may even disengage from both the news and the journalist.

Proposition 6: *(a) Perceived journalistic authenticity will moderate the impact of the relationship between journalists' behavioral engagement and audiences' psychological engagement. (b) Higher perceived journalistic authenticity will positively influence the relationship between journalists' behavioral engagement and audiences' psychological engagement. (c) Journalists' behavioral engagement influences audiences' news disengagement when they perceive journalists are inauthentic.*

Heterogeneous Effects of Journalistic Behaviors

The effects of journalists' behavioral engagement may differently influence various components of audiences' psychological behaviors: thus, effects should be considered about the extent to which (1) specific engagement behaviors of journalists influence (each or some components of) audiences' psychological engagement, and (2) specific behaviors create a backfire effect. The latter possibility may occur when journalists' engagement attempts result in audiences disengaging from the news.

Some journalists' engagement behaviors may more strongly influence certain components of audiences' psychological engagement than others. Interactive components may assist audiences in internalizing content, increasing empathy with the given content (Hand & Varan, 2009), or increasing their attention (Veenstra et al., 2015). Presumably, providing interactive content would influence how audiences react emotionally or cognitively to a given news issue or whether they identify with the people/community in a story.

A journalist presenting personal information or showing empathy would have a greater impact on certain components of audiences' psychological engagement, such as emotional reactions and identification with a journalist, and less so on other components. When a journalist displays empathy with interviewees and provides personal accounts of a community's concerns or hardships, audiences are more likely to be emotionally affected, resulting in them rating a journalist more positively (Lee, 2015). Based on the discussion above, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 7: *(a) Journalist behavioral engagement will affect components of audiences' psychological engagement differently. (b) Interactive content will have a greater impact on audiences' emotional reactions, cognitive involvement, and identification with people being covered than on other components of audiences' psychological engagement. (c) Journalistic personal reflections or emotional/empathetic displays will have a greater impact on audiences' emotional reactions, and audiences' identification with the journalist than other components of audiences' psychological engagement.*

Conclusion

News engagement is a complex process where many factors and contexts are simultaneously at play. The news engagement model is based on the premise that news engagement is an iterative process comprising ongoing reciprocity between journalists and audiences. While offering scholars a lens to examine interactions between audiences and journalists more broadly, we also seek to conceptualize a visual tool to explain possible psychological and behavioral effects stemming from journalists' engagement strategies. The hope is to help researchers specify particular engagement practices, articulate desired effects, and discern which distinct engagement behaviors and strategies are most effective, depending on the context.

It should be noted that journalistic engagement efforts may remain constrained due to current scarce resources and a competitive news environment, but many news outlets are still experimenting with news engagement, and they are seeking to foster deeper connections with their audiences (cf., *The Seattle Times*, *Outlier Media*, and *The Marshall Project*). Our model may specifically benefit these organizations by offering scholars a framework to identify the intended goals or effects of their engagement efforts, as well as the engagement behaviors that align with those goals.

In addition, it is undeniable that news engagement is considered (though not fully practiced) a core normative value in journalistic practices (Lawrence et al., 2018), and the concept is increasingly tested in the context of digital platforms where interactivity and emotionality are valued. The proposed model responds to an emerging trend that acknowledges interactive and emotional news content by recognizing the role of emotions in journalistic work and audience participation. For example, the model articulates multiple concepts that represent audiences' psychological engagement by acknowledging the roles that emotions and cognitive involvement play in news engagement. The model centers on audiences' experiences to (1) identify the elements that comprise audiences' psychological engagement; (2) differentiate between the components of psychological engagement and behavioral engagement; and (3) consider psychological engagement as a distinct set of antecedents that facilitate or hamper audiences' behavioral engagement.

We argue that journalists' choice of platform reflects specific intentions associated with the platforms—for example, using social media to promote inclusivity or sending interactive text messages via a news app to encourage dialogue. Considering the challenges in assessing the intended effects of emerging platforms where emotions play a significant role (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020), applying the proposed model to newer mediums (e.g., live streaming, immersive journalism) is worth investigating.

In particular, the proposed model emphasizes audiences' news experiences. Such experiences— and the ways audiences are engaged—may vary across platforms. Expanding on propositions 5 and 7, we suggest that each news platform may influence components of audiences' psychological engagement differently. For instance, on social media platforms, where journalists can closely and emotionally interact with audiences, journalist identification and emotional responses may be key aspects of psychological engagement. In podcasts that offer vivid, immersive experiences to audiences, interviewee identification and cognitive involvement may be important concepts in fostering engagement. Thus, the model could assist journalists in strategically targeting different components of audience engagement based on each platform's affordances and strengths.

On one hand, we acknowledge the negative side of engagement—such as spreading fake news and disinformation or facilitating the sharing of polarizing or sensationalized messages that appeal to emotions. It is also not uncommon for for-profit news organizations to use news engagement rhetorically to increase their market value. Hence, its effectiveness depends on how and whether engagement is understood, operated, and implemented. News engagement lies in the tradition (or maybe the ideals) of the public journalism approach (Ferrucci, Nelson, & Davis, 2020): We included an additional perspective—audiences' psychological engagement—to offer an updated version better suited to the current news media ecosystem. If the requirement for newsrooms' survival is to capture audiences' attention with news that affects their lives, recognizing audience emotions may be inevitable in this digital, participatory, and often segmented, media environment.

The expected outcomes of engagement, such as trust, connectedness, and loyalty, result from positive affect and psychological involvement that develop over time through repeated interactions (Kang, 2014; Weitzl & Einwiller, 2018). By considering the psychological aspects of audience engagement, rather than focusing solely on behavioral aspects, and viewing them as an iterative process, the proposed model could help enhance our understanding of how news engagement leads to desired outcomes, such as loyalty and trust, as well as predict negative outcomes.

Journalism faces many challenges—not least of which are public (dis)trust, a decrease in news subscriptions, and a need to adapt to evolving digital and AI technologies. If news engagement is, as many media organizations expect, essential for survival, it is important to understand whether the anticipated effects are realized. Moreover, a closer look at the interactive impacts of news engagement behaviors on different audience groups might be the first step in addressing the challenges of today's participatory, active, audience-centered, and emotionally driven news media landscape.

References

Andaleeb, S. S., Jamil, R., & Rajeb, M. (2022). Demographic effects on TV news credibility: Perceptions in Bangladesh. *Media Watch, 13*(1), 49–68. doi:10.1177/09760911221086

Assmann, K., & Diakopoulos, N. (2017). Negotiating change: Audience engagement editors as newsroom intermediaries. *International Symposium on Online Journalism, 7*(1), 25–44. Retrieved from https://isoj.org/research/negotiating-change-audience-engagement-editors-as-newsroom-intermediaries/

Barnes, R. (2014). The "ecology of participation": A study of audience engagement on alternative journalism websites. *Digital Journalism, 2*(4), 542–557. doi:10.1080/21670811.2013.859863

Beckett, C., & Deuze, M. (2016). On the role of emotion in the future of journalism. *Social Media + Society, 2*(3), 1–6. doi:10.1177/2056305116662395

Belair-Gagnon, V., Nelson, J. L., & Lewis, S. C. (2019). Audience engagement, reciprocity, and the pursuit of community connectedness in public media journalism. *Journalism Practice, 13*(5), 558–575. doi:10.1080/17512786.2018.1542975

Brants, K., & De Haan, Y. (2010). Taking the public seriously: Three models of responsiveness in media and journalism. *Media, Culture & Society, 32*(3), 411–428. doi:10.1177/0163443709361170

Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Jurić, B., & Ilić, A. (2011). Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research. *Journal of Service Research, 14*(3), 252–271. doi:10.1177/1094670511411703

Broersma, M. (2019). Audience engagement. In T. P. Vos, F. Hanusch, D. Dimitrakopoulou, M. Geertsema-Sligh, & A. Sehl (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of journalism studies* (pp. 1–6). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Brown, D. K., Lough, K., & Riedl, M. J. (2020). Emotional appeals and news values as factors of shareworthiness in Ice Bucket Challenge coverage. *Digital Journalism, 8*(2), 267–286. doi:10.1080/21670811.2017.1387501

Calder, B., Isaac, M. S., & Malthouse, E. (2016). How to capture consumer experiences: A context-specific approach to measuring engagement. *Journal of Advertising Research, 56*(1), 1–14. doi:10.2501/JAR-2015-028

Carpenter, S., Kanver, D., & Timmons, R. (2017). It's about me: A study of journalists' self-presentations of their visual and verbal selves. *Journalism Practice, 11*(10), 1246–1266. doi:10.1080/17512786.2016.1245587

Chan-Olmsted, S. M., & Wolter, L. C. (2018). Perceptions and practices of media engagement: A global perspective. *International Journal on Media Management, 20*(1), 1–24. doi:10.1080/14241277.2017.1402183

Chen, Y. R. R. (2018). Consumer engagement in social media in China. In K. A. Johnston & M. Taylor (Eds.), *The handbook of communication engagement* (pp. 475–489). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Cohen, J. (2018). Defining identification: A theoretical look at the identification of audiences with media characters. In R. Wei (Ed.), *Advances in foundational mass communication theories* (pp. 253–272). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Cohen, J., Tal-Or, N., & Mazor-Tregerman, M. (2015). The tempering effect of transportation: Exploring the effects of transportation and identification during exposure to controversial two-sided narratives. *Journal of Communication, 65*(2), 237–258. doi:10.1111/jcom.12144

Craft, S., & Vos, T. P. (2018). Have you heard? U.S. journalistic "listening" in cacophonous times. *Journalism Practice, 12*(8), 966–975. doi:10.1080/17512786.2018.1513339

Dafonte-Gómez, A. (2018). Audience as medium: Motivations and emotions in news sharing. *International Journal of Communication, 12*, 2133–2152. Retrieved from https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/6790/2351

Djerf-Pierre, M., Lindgren, M., & Budinski, M. A. (2019). The role of journalism on YouTube: Audience engagement with "Superbug" reporting. *Media and Communication, 7*(1), 235–247. doi:10.17645/mac.v7i1.1758

Evans, E. (2016). *Negotiating "engagement" within transmedia culture*. Summer School in Cultural Studies, University of Jyvaskyla, Finland. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/26560923/Negotiating_Engagement_within_Transmedia_Culture

Eveland, Jr., W. P., & Dunwoody, S. (2002). An investigation of elaboration and selective scanning as mediators of learning from the web versus print. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 46*(1), 34–53. doi:10.1207/s15506878jobem4601_3

Ferrucci, P., Nelson, J. L., & Davis, M. P. (2020). From "public journalism" to "engaged journalism": Imagined audiences and denigrating discourse. *International Journal of Communication, 14*, 1586–1604. Retrieved from https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/11955/3010

Gladwin, D. (2020). Digital storytelling going viral: Using narrative empathy to promote environmental action. *Media Practice and Education*, *21*(4), 275–288. doi:10.1080/25741136.2020.1832827

Goforth, D. (2024, February 1). Sign up to get text message updates when we publish a story. *The Frontier*. Retrieved from https://www.readfrontier.org/stories/sign-up-to-get-text-message-updates-when-we-publish-a-story/

Green-Barber, L. (2018, October 18). Towards a useful typology of engaged journalism. *Medium*. Retrieved from https://medium.com/the-impact-architects/towards-a-useful-typology-of-engaged-journalism-790c96c4577e

Hand, S., & Varan, D. (2009). Interactive stories and the audience: Why empathy is important. *Computers in Entertainment, 7*(3), 1–14. doi:10.1145/1594943.1594951

Heldman, A. B., Schindelar, J., & Weaver, J. B. (2013). Social media engagement and public health communication: Implications for public health organizations being truly "social." *Public Health Reviews, 35*(1), 1–18. doi:10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002

Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 28*(2), 149–165. doi:10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002

Hong, H. (2015). Audience responses to television news coverage of medical advances: The mediating role of audience emotions and identification. *Public Understanding of Science, 24*(6), 697–711. doi:10.1177/0963662514544919

Ivask, S., Waschková Císařová, L., & Lon, A. (2023). "When can I get angry?" Journalists' coping strategies and emotional management in hostile situations. *Journalism, 25*(10), 2099–2116. doi:10.1177/14648849231199895

Jaakkola, E., & Alexander, M. (2014). The role of customer engagement behavior in value co-creation: A service system perspective. *Journal of Service Research, 17*(3), 247–261. doi:10.1177/1094670514529187

Jenkins, J., & Powers, E. (2023). Listening, reflecting, and protecting: Empathy as a priority for local journalists covering underserved communities. *Journalism Practice, 19*(4), 709–726. doi:10.1080/17512786.2023.2202648

Johnston, K. A. (2016). Engagement. In C. Carroll (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of corporate reputation* (pp. 272–275). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Johnston, K. A. (2018). Toward a theory of social engagement. In K. A. Johnston & M. Taylor (Eds.), *The handbook of communication engagement* (pp. 17–32). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Kang, M. (2014). Understanding public engagement: Conceptualizing and measuring its influence on supportive behavioral intentions. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 26*(5), 399–416. doi:10.1080/1062726X.2014.956107

Kang, S., Dove, S., Ebright, H., Morales, S., & Kim, H. (2021). Does virtual reality affect behavioral intention? Testing engagement processes in a K-Pop video on YouTube. *Computers in Human Behavior, 123*, 106875–106893. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2021.106875

Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (1998). Building dialogic relationships through the World Wide Web. *Public Relations Review, 24*(3), 321–334. doi:10.1016/S0363-8111(99)80143-X

Kormelink, T. G., & Meijer, I. C. (2018). What clicks actually mean: Exploring digital news user practices. *Journalism, 19*(5), 668–683. doi:10.1177/146488491668

Kormelink, T. G., & Meijer, I. C. (2020). A user perspective on time spent: Temporal experiences of everyday news use. *Journalism Studies, 21*(2), 271–286. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2019.1639538

Lang, A., Potter, D., & Grabe, M. E. (2003). Making news memorable: Applying theory of the production of local news. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 47*(1), 113–123. doi:10.1207/s15506878jobem4701_7

Lawrence, R. G., Radcliffe, D., & Schmidt, T. R. (2018). Practicing engagement: Participatory journalism in the Web 2.0 era. *Journalism Practice, 12*(10), 1220–1240. doi:10.1080/17512786.2017.1391712

Lecheler, S. (2020). The emotional turn in journalism needs to be about audience perceptions: Commentary-virtual special issue on the emotional turn. *Digital Journalism, 8*(2), 287–291. doi:10.1080/21670811.2019.1708766

Lee, J. (2015). The double-edged sword: The effects of journalists' social media activities on audience perceptions of journalists and their news products. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 20*(3), 312–329. doi:10.1111/jcc4.12113

Lewis, S. C., Holton, A. E., & Coddington, M. (2014). Reciprocal journalism: A concept of mutual exchange between journalists and audiences. *Journalism Practice, 8*(2), 229–241. doi:10.1080/17512786.2013.859840

Mahmoud, A. B., & Grigoriou, N. (2017). When empathy hurts: Modelling university students' word of mouth behaviour in public vs. private universities in Syria. *Higher Education Quarterly, 71*(4), 369–383. doi:10.1111/hequ.12138

Martin, J. A., Camaj, L., & Lanosga, G. (2024). Audience engagement in data-driven journalism: Patterns in participatory practices across 34 countries. *Journalism, 25*(7), 1578–1596. doi:10.1177/14648849241230

Masullo, G. M., & Kim, J. (2021). Exploring "angry" and "like" reactions on uncivil Facebook comments that correct misinformation in the news. *Digital Journalism, 9*(8), 1103–1122. doi:10.1080/21670811.2020.1835512

Meier, K., Kraus, D., & Michaeler, E. (2018). Audience engagement in a post-truth age. *Digital Journalism, 6*(8), 1052–1063. doi:10.1080/21670811.2018.1498295

Mersey, D. R., Malthouse, E. C., & Calder, B. J. (2010). Engagement with online media. *Journal of Media Business Studies, 7*(2), 39–56. doi:10.1080/16522354.2010.11073506

Miller, K. C., & Nelson, J. L. (2022). "Dark participation" without representation: A structural approach to journalism's social media crisis. *Social Media + Society, 8*(4), 1–10. doi:10.1177/20563051221129156

Nelson, J. L. (2018). The elusive engagement metric. *Digital Journalism, 6*(4), 528–544. doi:10.1080/21670811.2018.1445000

Nelson, J. L. (2021). The next media regime: The pursuit of "audience engagement" in journalism. *Journalism, 22*(9), 2350–2367. doi:10.1177/1464884919862375

Nelson, J. L., & Schmidt, T. R. (2022). Taking the audience seriously? The normative construction of engaged journalism. *International Journal of Communication, 16*, 5843–5863. Retrieved from https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/19467

Pantti, M. (2010). The value of emotion: An examination of television journalists' notions on emotionality. *European Journal of Communication, 25*(2), 168–181. doi:10.1177/0267323110363653

Papacharissi, Z. (2016). Affective publics and structures of storytelling: Sentiment, events and mediality. *Information, Communication & Society, 19*(3), 307–324. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2015.1109697

Perse, E. M. (1990). Involvement with local television news: Cognitive and emotional dimensions. *Human Communication Research, 16*(4), 556–581. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.1990.tb00222.x

Peters, C., & Witschge, T. (2015). From grand narratives of democracy to small expectations of participation: Audiences, citizenship, and interactive tools in digital journalism. *Journalism Practice, 9*(1), 19–34. doi:10.1080/17512786.2014.928455

Prince, S. (2023, November 17). OU Daily among 12 outlets chosen in $100,000 project to cultivate trust in local journalism. *OU Daily*. Retrieved from https://www.ou.edu/studentmedia/news/2023/november/ou-daily-chosen-in-project-to-cultivate-trust-in-local-journalism

Robinson, S. (2023). *How journalists engage: A theory of trust building, identities, and care*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Rubin, A. M. (1993). Audience activity and media use. *Communications Monographs, 60*(1), 98–105. doi:10.1080/03637759309376300

Russell, C. A., Hamby, A. M., Grube, J. W., & Russell, D. W. (2019). When do public health epilogues correct the influence of alcohol story lines on youth? The interplay of narrative transportation and persuasion knowledge. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, 38*(3), 316–331. doi:10.1177/0743915618818567

Scott, I. (2025, February 11). *Got a story about the justice system in St. Louis? We're all ears*. The Marshall Project. Retrieved from https://www.themarshallproject.org/2025/02/11/st-louis-prison-jail-community-outreach

Steensen, S., Ferrer-Conill, R., & Peters, C. (2020). (Against a) theory of audience engagement with news. *Journalism Studies, 21*(12), 1662–1680. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2020.1788414

Takahashi, B., Zhang, Q., Chavez, M., & Nieves-Pizarro, Y. (2022). Touch in disaster reporting: Television coverage before Hurricane Maria. *Journalism Studies*, *23*(7), 818–839. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2022.2038237

te Walvaart, M., Van den Bulck, H., & Dhoest, A. (2018). Engaging the audience in a digitised television production process: A "hierarchy of influences" approach. *Journalism Practice, 12*(7), 901–917. doi:10.1080/17512786.2017.1343093

Toff, B., & Kalogeropoulos, A. (2020). All the news that's fit to ignore: How the information environment does and does not shape news avoidance. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 84*(S1), 366–390. doi:10.1093/poq/nfaa016

Trunfio, M., & Rossi, S. (2021). Conceptualising and measuring social media engagement: A systematic literature review. *Italian Journal of Marketing, 2021*, 267–292. doi:10.1007/s43039-021-00035-8

Veenstra, M., Wouters, N., Kanis, M., Brandenburg, S., te Raa, K., Wigger, B., & Vande Moere, A. (2015). Should public displays be interactive? Evaluating the impact of interactivity on audience engagement. *Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Pervasive Displays, 2015*, 15–21. doi:10.1145/2757710.2757732

Villi, M., Aharoni, T., Tenenboim-Weinblatt, K., Boczkowski, P. J., Hayashi, K., Mitchelstein, E., . . . Kigler-Vilenchik, N. (2022). Taking a break from news: A five-nation study of news avoidance in the digital era. *Digital Journalism, 10*(1), 148–164. doi:10.1080/21670811.2021.1904266

Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2013). The strategic ritual of emotionality: A case study of Pulitzer prize-winning articles. *Journalism, 14*(1), 129–145. doi:10.1177/1464884912448918

Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2020). An emotional turn in journalism studies? *Digital Journalism, 8*(2), 175–194. doi:10.1080/21670811.2019.1697626

Walker, H. M., & Buckley, N. K. (1968). The use of positive reinforcement in conditioning attending behavior. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 1*(3), 245–250. Retrieved from https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1311006/pdf/jaba00085-0053.pdf

Wan, J., Lu, Y., Wang, B., & Zhao, L. (2017). How attachment influences users' willingness to donate to content creators in social media: A socio-technical systems perspective. *Information & Management, 54*(7), 837–850. doi:10.1016/j.im.2016.12.007

Weitzl, W., & Einwiller, S. (2018). Consumer engagement in the digital era: Its nature, drivers, and outcomes. In K. A. Johnston & M. Taylor (Eds.), *The handbook of communication engagement* (pp. 453–473). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

2532 Soo Young Shin and Serena Miller International Journal of Communication 19(2025)

Wenzel, A. (2023). *Antiracist journalism: The challenge of creating equitable local news*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Wilhelm, C., Stehle, H., & Detel, H. (2021). Digital visibility and the role of mutual interaction expectations: Reframing the journalist–audience relationship through the lens of interpersonal communication. *New Media & Society, 23*(5), 1004–1021. doi:10.1177/1461444820907023

Williamson, R. (2019). Seeing for himself: Harold Holt, bushfire and newspaper depictions of prime ministerial empathy. *Journal of Australian Studies, 43*(2), 249–261. doi:10.1080/14443058.2019.1614647