

Research Article | Araştırma Makalesi

Professionalism? Restricting Expressions? Determining Journalists' Individual Social Media Uses Based on Institutional Guidelines Profesyonellik mi? İfadelerin Kısıtlanması mı?: Gazetecilerin Bireysel Sosyal Medya Kullanımlarının Kurum Yönergeleri Üzerinden Belirlenmesi



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Abstract

The usage of social media by journalists might lead to problems with the conflict between their personal and professional identities. Because it can be difficult to distinguish between private and public posts, media companies are developing guidelines to regulate how their employees use social media. The study examines how institutional guidelines for journalists' use of social media can influence their personal use of social media. Through document analysis, the guidelines of both the BBC and Anadolu Agency in Türkiye were examined with the aim of uncovering the expectations of these institutions. Both documents were analyzed using the Python programming language. Furthermore, with the goal to uncover the journalists' perceptions of the guidelines, in-depth interviews were carried out with personnels from BBC and Anadolu Agency. The research showed that the guidelines were designed to safeguard corporate identity and reliability. Moreover, it was noted that the journalists who were interviewed did not view the guidelines as a form of intervention or censorship.

Keywords: Social Media, Journalist, Social Media Guidelines, Personal Identity, Professional Identity.

Öz

Gazetecilerin sosyal medyayı kullanması, kişisel ve profesyonel kimlikleri arasındaki çatışmada sorunlara yol açabilmektedir. Özel ve herkese açık gönderiler arasında ayırım yapmak zor olabileceğinden medya şirketleri, çalışanlarının sosyal medyayı nasıl kullanacağını düzenlemek için yönergeler geliştirmektedir. Çalışma, gazetecilerin sosyal medya kullanımına ilişkin kurum yönergelerinin, kişisel sosyal medya kullanımlarını nasıl etkileyebileceğini incelemektedir. Doküman analizi yoluyla hem BBC'nin hem de Anadolu Ajansı'nın yönergeleri incelenerek bu kurumların beklentilerinin ortaya çıkarılması amaçlandı. Her iki belge de Python programlama dili kullanılarak analiz edildi. Ayrıca gazetecilerin yönergeye ilişkin algılarını ortaya çıkarmak amacıyla BBC ve Anadolu Ajansı çalışanları ile derinlemesine görüşmeler yapıldı. Araştırma, yönergelerin kurumsal kimliği ve güvenilirliği korumak için tasarlandığını gösterdi. Ayrıca görüşme yapılan gazetecilerin yönergeleri bir müdahale ya da sansür olarak görmedikleri kaydedildi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Medya, Gazeteci, Sosyal Medya Yönergeleri, Kişisel Kimlik, Profesyonel Kimlik.



Introduction

Social media platforms encourage individuals to display not only their physical appearance and voice, but also their personality traits, life views, and hobbies (Liu, 2007; Papacharissi, 2011; Dalton & Crosby, 2013; Netchitailova, 2014). However, due to the nature of these platforms, users may unintentionally or intentionally publicly share personal information about their daily lives, activities, and relationships with others, resulting in them compromising their privacy. This can also create a dilemma for professionals like journalists, who may struggle to maintain objectivity and impartiality in their personal posts, potentially conflicting with their professional standards. As a result, journalists need to be mindful of the potential consequences of their online presence.

Individual journalists can utilize social media for professional purposes, such as disseminating news (Ahmad, 2010; Broersma & Graham, 2012; Weaver & Willnat, 2016; Hanusch & Bruns, 2017) and offering glimpses into their personal lives (Lasorsa et al., 2012; Canter, 2013). However, journalists' posts on social media may compromise the traditional values of impartiality and trust within journalism. There is an ongoing debate over whether journalists should express their personal opinions on various issues through social media, and to what extent their employers should monitor their personal accounts. The traditional boundaries between professional and personal identities on the one hand and objectivity and subjectivity on the other are blurred by the diversity with which journalists use social media (Canter, 2015).

It is difficult to make generalizations about how journalists use social media. Some adhere to traditional professionalism principles, while others adjust their behavior to fit the norms of social media platforms. News organizations are working to clarify the distinction between professional and personal posts on their journalists' social media accounts. They have created guidelines to specify what, how, and when employees can or cannot post.

This study aims to investigate whether institutional guidelines for journalists' use of social media lead to more professional behavior or if employees feel restricted and their freedom of expression is limited. The study examines how journalists are impacted by these guidelines. To accomplish this, the study analyzes the social media usage guidelines of the BBC and the Anadolu Agency in Türkiye through document analysis and conducts in-depth interviews with journalists working in these institutions. Although social media platforms seem to be private areas for individuals, this study is important for discussing how free corporate employees are in their individual posts. By examining the conflict between personal and professional identities on social media, this study provides valuable insight into the potential consequences of this conflict in journalism.

Literature Review

Journalists and Social Media Use

Social media platforms have provided a new arena for professionals from diverse fields, while also catering to a vast user base. Journalists can be present on social media by setting up separate professional and private profiles, using exclusively a professional account, or integrating professional and personal identities in a single account (Bossio & Sacco, 2017). While journalists, especially those working in online environments, are more willing to use these tools (Gulyas, 2013), increasing institutional pressures push many journalists to be in this environment (Djerf-Pierre et al., 2020).

For journalists, these networks provide a means to communicate with news sources (Broersma & Graham, 2013; Lasorsa et al., 2012; Nölleke et al., 2017), produce and disseminate news content (Hermida et al., 2012; Hill & Bradshaw, 2018), shape public opinion (McGregor, 2019), promote their work (Molyneux et al., 2018), and receive feedback from users (Lewis et al., 2014; Weaver & Willnat, 2016). Structural differences in media organizations across countries cause journalists to use social media intensively, sometimes to advance their individual careers and sometimes to attract audiences on behalf of news organizations (Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2018). In the past, journalists were always bound to work within an institutional framework. However, with the advent of internet technologies, they now have the ability to continue their journalistic activities and engage with their readers through blogs, websites, and social media platforms (Pavlik, 2004; Newman et al., 2013; Malmelin & Villi, 2016). These avenues also provide journalists with an alternative channel to conduct their work in scenarios where they are not affiliated with a media outlet or have resigned from their positions.

One could say that the way journalists use social media is not so different at first from the way media companies use it. Disseminating information and attracting visitors to the linked institution's website were the main principles of use (Hermida, 2012; Phillips, 2012; Mellado & Hermida, 2021). To build their personal brands, journalists can manage their own social media accounts (Hermida, 2013) and experiment with different techniques to attract and retain followers (Holton, 2016). Thus, individual journalists have the opportunity to create or increase their own 'market values' (Brems et al., 2017). Moreover, in times of economic hardship, media companies may have to downsize, leaving many journalists feeling isolated and uncertain about their future. In these situations, leveraging social media platforms can help you highlight your skills and expertise to both employers and followers (Holton, 2016). The social media presence of journalists, including their number of followers, comments, likes, and shares, can boost their professional reputation and increase their social capital among other users.

Through this activity, journalists are able to establish their own personal brand. Furthermore, editors and managers may view this as a reflection of the organization's overall brand and could encourage journalists to actively engage on social media (Hedman & Djerf-Pierre, 2013). This has also given rise to the concept of "entrepreneurial journalism", where journalists are able to create and share content independently through social media platforms (Manfredi Sánchez et al., 2015; Harlow, 2018; Ruotsalainen & Villi, 2018). It can be concluded that social media has triggered significant changes in the way journalism operates, leading to discussions on practices and norms within the industry.

The way journalists present themselves on social media can be complicated, both personally and professionally. When there is no clear line between individual and institutional content, concerns like impartiality and trustworthiness can arise. It is important to strike a balance between the editorial, organizational, and institutional demands when deciding what and how to post online (Bossio, 2017). Otherwise, there may be instances where employees are compelled to resign from their positions or face termination (Allan, 2006). While journalists' social media habits may vary based on personal preferences, the increased prevalence of social media has led many organizations to develop their own guidelines. These institutions expect their employees to follow these rules when using social media.

This research seeks to reveal the goals of institutional guidelines and how employees understand them. The study will be guided by the following questions:

RQ1: What is the purpose of corporate guidelines in regulating employees' social media use, and what specific usage do they intend to promote?

RQ2: How do journalists react to their employers' social media guidelines? Do they view following these guidelines as a way to enhance their professionalism, or as a limitation on their freedom of expression?

Method

In this study, firstly, the guidelines prepared for the use of social media by the employees of news organizations based in England and Türkiye, such as the BBC and Anadolu Agency, are examined by document analysis method. It is important to note that choosing the BBC and Anadolu Agency as examples is significant in terms of demonstrating their approaches to digitalization. These institutions were established in the early 1920s. They were selected for the study due to their potential to present national and international perspectives, understand different media regulations, and provide diverse data.

Document analysis includes the careful and systematic examination of the contents of written documents (Wach & Ward, 2013) and the analysis of the materials containing information about the researched phenomenon (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Thus, by revealing the details, topics, similarities, and differences in the guidelines of both institutions, the purposes of these texts and the ways of use they suggest for journalists are analyzed. Python was preferred because it has a large textual analysis library and is an easy-to-use language. Python helps reveal the frequencies of words in the analyzed guidelines and understand which topics organizations highlight. In this way, it is aimed to establish the findings on a more solid and reliable basis and to contribute to the depth of the research. The documents' contents were analyzed in light of the study's purpose. Each guideline is coded so that it can be sorted based on the important information and categories it provides. The codes are defined in a clear and distinguishable manner, identifying similarities and differences by comparing guidelines.

Within the scope of the study, in-depth interviews were conducted with the employees working as reporters at the BBC and Anadolu Agency. The in-depth interview is important in that it provides explanatory evidence such as feelings, opinions, and beliefs from the interviewees about the subject to be explored (Legard et al., 2003). In this way, it is focused on what the employees think about the directives of the institutions they are affiliated with, and how they perceive the guidelines to determine their personal social media use. In-depth interviews conducted to create a dataset for the study were held in Turkish as video meetings in a digital environment. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed and converted into written text for analysis.

Ethics Committee Permission

Within the framework of the decision taken during the meeting by İstanbul Aydın University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee dated 27/05/2022 and numbered 2022/09; the study does not contain any ethical issues.

Findings

RQ1: What is the purpose of corporate guidelines in regulating employees' social media use, and what specific usage do they intend to promote?

and BBC platforms should be given priority. It is vital to read content thoroughly before sharing, and social media language and style should not be misleading. The guide also covers topics such as emoji preferences and accounts that represent specific points of view (BBC, 2020). Overall, the purpose of this section is to prevent any posts that could harm impartiality and damage the corporate reputation.

The disclaimer section, located fourth in the document, features a concise yet vital statement. It clarifies that statements made by employees in their personal accounts, such as “my views, not the BBC’s,” cannot serve as a defense if they conflict with the directive (BBC, 2020). This article discusses how sharing content by individual employees can bind the institution and lead to readers identifying the employees with the institution, even if the employees take responsibility for the content.

The fifth article pertains to the implementation of the guide that has been prepared. According to the report, any breach of the guidelines may lead to disciplinary actions and in severe cases, termination of employment. As a result, employees who violate the guide may face repercussions such as contract non-renewal or termination (BBC, 2020). These details outline the consequences that employees may face should they exhibit behavior that contradicts the information provided in the third section. The threat of dismissal is a clear indication of the organization’s expectation for its employees to adhere to the guidelines that have been put in place.

The guide in question specifies its coverage, stating that all individuals employed by the BBC who use social media for any purpose, whether personal or business-related, should adhere to its guidelines (BBC, 2020). It is important to note that every member of the BBC team is expected to comply with the social media guide, irrespective of their role within the organization.

Table 1. *Similarities in Social Media Usage Guidelines of Anadolu Agency and BBC*

Similarities	AA	BBC
Respect to all	✓	✓
Institutional priority in information sharing	✓	✓
Does not show political preference	✓	✓
Honesty, impartiality	✓	✓
Corporate reputation	✓	✓
Complementary principle acceptance of the guidelines	✓	✓

When the AA text was inspected using Python, it was discovered that the text’s total character count, including spaces, was 2448. 291 words make up the entire text. The terms “news” and “social media” were each used six times, and the phrase “Anadolu Agency’s” was uttered three times.

information from personal accounts is not allowed unless it is also shared from corporate accounts (Anadolu Ajansı, 2022). The articles within this section establish boundaries for the opinions expressed in the content and the subject matter that can be shared.

RQ2: How do journalists react to their employers' social media guidelines? Do they view following these guidelines as a way to enhance their professionalism, or as a limitation on their freedom of expression?

Table 3 contains information about the participants interviewed for the research. Each answered questions on their own social media usage and institutional directives.

Table 3. *Information of the Persons Interviewed in-Depth*

No	Sex	Role at work	Institution
1	Woman	Reporter	AA
2	Woman	Reporter	AA
3	Man	Reporter	AA
4	Man	Reporter	AA
5	Woman	Reporter	BBC
6	Woman	Reporter	BBC
7	Man	Reporter	BBC
8	Man	Reporter	BBC

Based on the research conducted, it was found that all interviewed journalists utilize social media platforms for their professional and personal endeavors. However, their preferred platforms vary. While Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are commonly used by many journalists, LinkedIn and YouTube are also among their top choices. Notable responses regarding their platform preferences are highlighted below:

Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube are among the social media platforms I use. (Interviewee 3)

I mostly use Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. I have personal profiles in these and I use them actively. (Interviewee 7)

The research shows that the interviewed journalists utilize various platforms for distinct objectives. Specifically, Twitter is used universally for sharing and tracking news, while Instagram and Facebook are primarily regarded as personal spheres for communicating with family and friends. This shows that posts about personal and business life are separated according to platforms. Notable insights from the participants on this topic are presented below:

I spend the most time on Twitter and Instagram. I primarily use Instagram for personal reasons. Nothing related to my job is mentioned there, instead, I frequently talk about my personal life. As a result of this, I prefer to follow and be followed by people I know, however, anyone can view my profile. I primarily use Twitter for professional purposes. I share the news and I follow the news. I only talk about my work. I don't discuss personal matters. (Interviewee 3)

Instagram is definitely more of a private environment for me. I keep up with what my close friends and family are doing by watching cat and dog videos, cooking tutorial videos, and other videos, and I tell them about myself. I only use Facebook because my organization does. I don't use Facebook much, but I occasionally check it out to keep up with the latest trends. An example of this is Twitter. However, I only lately began using it in this way. I unfollowed practically all news outlets and made a feed that was much more tailored to my interests. Instead, I compiled a list of each news source, newspaper, magazine, institution, and organization. I make different lists for each category that I use when getting ready for work or when I want to be aware of something. Along with that, I work in data journalism and software. For this, I use Reddit

as an example, where I follow various channels and accounts. Because there is an agenda, I use it both for my professional development and for my personal growth. Although I don't post frequently on LinkedIn, I occasionally do publish some of my personal portfolio there. (Interviewee 8)

During the research, journalists were interviewed and they shared the expectations their institutions have of them, which include impartiality and avoiding controversial topics. One key aspect that institutions expect from their employees when using social media is to always keep in mind that they are representing the organization. Here are some notable responses on this matter:

Twitter, in my opinion, is the platform where journalists suffer the greatest harm. Naturally, we receive periodic warning in this regard. By the way, I have worked for several media companies before Anadolu Agency, hence, I have had the opportunity to get exposure to the global market. I have not yet come across a media outlet that permits its staff to use Twitter as they see fit. In this regard, it is advised that we read what we write carefully, and the employer is of the opinion that there shouldn't be a space designated for us to express our personal opinions. (Interviewee 1)

As a responsible user of social media, it's important to keep certain limitations in mind. Before posting anything online, consider if you would also feel comfortable saying it on a public platform. While it's okay to share lighthearted content like jokes or music, it's crucial to approach controversial topics with a journalist's mindset. This means adhering to the principles of responsible journalism and ensuring that your content is accurate and unbiased. If you take a look at the profiles of BBC staff members, you'll notice that they typically share news and information rather than making sharp comments. If you do happen to post something controversial or biased, it's important to correct it promptly. (Interviewee 5)

According to the journalists interviewed for the study, they do not experience any discomfort as a result of their social media activity. They attribute this to their professional approach, which involves using social media primarily for business purposes, refraining from expressing personal views, avoiding contentious topics, and being cautious in their interactions. The statements of the interviewed journalists show that they are aware of their professional awareness and corporate responsibilities. Below are some notable remarks from the respondents on this matter:

As I have separate identities as a citizen and a journalist, I exercise self-control to avoid expressing personal thoughts or opinions on platforms like Twitter. (Interviewee 2)

Personally, I am not uneasy about this as I was already working as a freelancer before joining the BBC. During that time, I followed the same rules of impartiality and objectivity. Even though no institution explicitly stated what I could or couldn't write, I knew my limits. If I express an opinion, I ensure that it is within a safe zone. Therefore, I never feel nervous, as I always abide by these guidelines. (Interviewee 6)

Within the scope of the research, several journalists have expressed that they are not apprehensive about their social media activity leading to job loss. Furthermore, it was noted that individuals in any profession may face similar issues with their posts, particularly if old posts are deemed problematic. The interviewees emphasized the importance of being mindful of what is shared on social media, as certain statements may have unintended consequences. Below are a few notable responses on this topic:

I had no idea that my comments would trigger an investigation by my managers. If I have any issues with my institution, I prefer to discuss them with my managers instead of making public statements. As a professional, I believe it's important to remain neutral and not comment on sensitive social issues that can cause crises. Moreover, I never intended to criticize my institution or jeopardize our working relationship. If I ever witness pollution in the sea, for

instance, I would inform the relevant authorities so they can address the situation. I don't think my actions would ever lead to termination of our collaboration. (Interviewee 4)

Since I find using it for a limited purpose meaningful, I am not likely to enter such a situation. (Interviewee 7)

Looking at things from a broad perspective, I have some concerns regarding sharing my thoughts on various topics such as politics, economics, and sports. What I may think and share today could pose a threat to me or others tomorrow. My thoughts and views tomorrow may differ from those of today. As I reflect on my use of social media over the past 10 years, I realize that a post I made with naivety could negatively impact my job today. Additionally, sharing personal opinions can lead to stigmatization, not just in political matters. (Interviewee 8)

According to the research conducted, all participants interviewed expressed that they deem it unsuitable for journalists to express their personal viewpoints on social media channels. Their reasoning is rooted in the ethical obligations and values associated with the field of journalism, including impartiality, objectivity, and credibility. A selection of noteworthy remarks on this matter are outlined below:

As a general rule, journalists should avoid expressing their personal opinions, not only on social media, but also in their reporting. It's important to note that in Türkiye, there are different roles within journalism, such as columnists, commentators, and reporters. However, some people who have never worked as journalists are still referred to as such. If you are a reporter without expertise in a particular area, it's not appropriate to take a public stance on political issues or express political views on social media. That being said, journalists do have a social responsibility to speak out about certain issues, such as femicide, and can use their social media accounts to do so. (Interviewee 1)

Whether one is a manager, editor, or reporter, I strongly believe that journalists should refrain from openly expressing their opinions on controversial topics. As members of society who hold influential positions, it is important that we remain neutral in order to effectively serve and guide the public. Therefore, it is best to avoid sharing personal opinions on social media platforms. (Interviewee 4)

As human, we may have our own ideas, preferences, and viewpoints, much like any other professional. However, our role is to provide information and assist the public, and as such, we must be mindful of our responsibilities to remain objective and impartial in the content we generate. This principle holds true across all industries that serve the public. While we may have personal social media accounts, we understand the importance of upholding the standards of our profession and therefore refrain from expressing personal views that may conflict with our obligations. As always, we strive to provide fair and helpful assistance to all those we serve. (Interviewee 8)

According to the research findings, the interviewed journalists unanimously expressed that they have no need for a fake social media account. Each participant reported having created their personal social media accounts under their real name. Noteworthy responses from the participants are highlighted below:

When something happens, I discuss it with colleagues or friends. This is why I'm hesitant to give my opinions to strangers and don't have another account. (Interviewee 2)

All of my accounts are registered under my legal first and last name. They are not set to private or hidden, so they can easily be found through a Google search. There is no need for me to create a fake account for any reason. I strive to maintain a moderate approach in all that I do. (Interviewee 6)

Based on the feedback collected during the research, all interviewed participants view the adherence to institutional guidelines regarding the use of social media by journalists as a means to enhance professionalism. Interestingly, none of the participants considered

these guidelines to be restrictive or invasive. The following are some noteworthy responses in this regard:

From my perspective, it is important for individuals to protect their own rights, just as institutions establish their own rules and expectations from the start. These guidelines are put in place to maintain professionalism and ensure that the credibility and integrity of the institution is preserved. As an employee, I view these guidelines as necessary and not restrictive. While employees may come and go, the institution will always continue to operate and maintain its reputation. (Interviewee 4)

The way things are done is crucial. If not executed properly, censorship may occur. However, if ethical standards are followed, as I believe the BBC does, then it is something that should be pursued. Social media should be viewed as a broadcasting platform with principles that should be upheld, just as the BBC has its own principles. Although, if not handled properly, it could potentially become a tool for censorship in the wrong hands. (Interviewee 5)

Based on the responses from the participants, it is observed that the interpretation of these directives can vary depending on the country, institution, and specific context. Additionally, some individuals have expressed concerns that inadequate management of these guidelines could result in interference, censorship, and ethical breaches.

The in-depth interview data provided highlights that social media plays a pivotal yet nuanced role in the professional lives of journalists. The interviews underscore a delicate balancing act between personal expression and professional obligations, particularly concerning the platforms journalists choose and how they utilize them. Moreover, the interviews highlight a conscientious approach towards social media usage among journalists, with a keen awareness of the potential consequences of their posts on both personal and professional fronts.

Conclusion

The integration of personal and professional spheres in social media and the resulting tension have created a dilemma for journalists when assessing their online presence. To safeguard their reputation and image, media organizations aim to strike a balance between personal and professional use of social media. Therefore, institutions have established guidelines to limit potentially damaging content that could erode trust, promote bias, and compromise impartiality.

In an effort to showcase their impartiality, journalists seek different methods to demonstrate their independence from their affiliated organizations. Disclaimers are a common approach employed by journalists. They strive to differentiate their personal and professional activities on social media platforms through statements like “opinions are mine”, “retweets are not endorsements,” or “links, likes, and follows are not endorsements.”

It is clear that the social media use policies at BBC and AA, which were sampled for the study, encourage employees to maintain their professional identity online while taking steps to address potential issues. Employers fear that sharing personal opinions on social media may damage the corporate reputation, as traditional journalism values impartiality. This perception arises because readers may lose trust in media organizations, if they perceive journalists as biased.

From an institutional standpoint, guidelines may be seen as a means to uphold reputation, dependability, and objectivity. However, employees may perceive these guidelines as

limiting their autonomy when it comes to social media activity such as sharing, liking, following, and commenting. As a result, the intersection of personal and professional boundaries in the realm of social media and journalism becomes a prominent issue.

The study found that the journalists who were interviewed view social media as a necessary tool for their profession. They use various platforms to share both their work and personal lives, adapting their content to fit each platform's format. The participants also emphasized the importance of their employers recognizing that they represent their workplace on social media. Despite concerns that their personal opinions could compromise their objectivity, the journalists feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings in a way that aligns with their professional identities. While some view guidelines for social media use as a means of safeguarding the company's image, the participants did not perceive them as overly restrictive or censorial.

Upon evaluating the research findings, it becomes apparent that journalists must assume responsibility for their work, regardless of the context. Even if journalists have their own social media profiles, it is important to remember that any content posted under the assumption that this is a private space is made public and can be viewed by anyone. Although guidelines serve as a means for institutions to mitigate potential issues, it is important to acknowledge that if not utilized properly, they can be wielded as tools of censorship and pressure against journalists.

Journalists strive to strike a balance between limiting their personal views to protect corporate reputation and preserving their personal freedoms. This represents an important effort to understand how traditional journalism norms interact with modern social media dynamics and how journalists can maintain equilibrium in these environments. Media organizations should regularly review and update their social media policies and guidelines to adapt to the evolving media landscape and journalists' needs. These policies should safeguard journalists' professional freedom while emphasizing their responsibilities. If media organizations update their guidelines, a comparative analysis between old and new rules can be made to reveal the points on which the new emphasis is placed. In addition, the values and norms of these organizations can be revealed by examining the guidelines of different media organizations from different countries.

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Professionalism? Restricting Expressions? Determining Journalists' Individual Social Media Uses Based on Institutional Guidelines

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Extended Abstract

It is difficult to make generalizations about how journalists use social media. Some adhere to traditional professionalism principles, while others adjust their behavior to fit the norms of social media platforms. News organizations are working to clarify the distinction between professional and personal posts on their journalists' social media accounts. They have created guidelines to specify what, how, and when employees can or cannot post.

From an institutional standpoint, guidelines may be seen as a means to uphold reputation, dependability, and objectivity. However, employees may perceive these guidelines as limiting their autonomy when it comes to social media activity such as sharing, liking, following, and commenting. As a result, the intersection of personal and professional boundaries in the realm of social media and journalism becomes a prominent issue.

In an effort to showcase their impartiality, journalists seek different methods to demonstrate their independence from their affiliated organizations. Disclaimers are a common approach employed by journalists. They strive to differentiate their personal and professional activities on social media platforms through statements like "opinions are mine", "retweets are not endorsements," or "links, likes, and follows are not endorsements."

This study aims to investigate whether institutional guidelines for journalists' use of social media lead to more professional behavior or if employees feel restricted and their freedom of expression is limited. The study examines how journalists are impacted by these guidelines. To accomplish this, the study analyzes the social media usage guidelines of the BBC and the Anadolu Agency in Türkiye through document analysis and conducts in-depth interviews with journalists working in these institutions.

In this study, firstly, the guidelines prepared for the use of social media by the employees of news organizations based in England and Türkiye, such as the BBC and Anadolu Agency, are examined by document analysis method. Thus, by revealing the details, topics, similarities, and differences in the guidelines of both institutions, the purposes of these texts and the ways of use they suggest for journalists are analyzed. Within the scope of the study, in-depth interviews are conducted with the employees working as reporters at the BBC and Anadolu Agency. In this way, it is focused on what the employees think about the guidelines of the institutions they are affiliated with, and how they perceive the guidelines to determine their personal social media use.

This research seeks to reveal the goals of institutional guidelines and how employees understand them. The study will be guided by the following questions:

RQ1: What is the purpose of corporate guidelines in regulating employees' social media use, and what specific usage do they intend to promote?

RQ2: How do journalists react to their employers' social media guidelines? Do they view following these guidelines as a way to enhance their professionalism, or as a limitation on their freedom of expression?

The study found that the journalists who were interviewed view social media as a necessary tool for their profession. They use various platforms to share both their work and personal lives, adapting their content to fit each platform's format. The participants also emphasized the importance of their employers recognizing that they represent their workplace on social media. Despite concerns that their personal opinions could compromise their objectivity, the journalists feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings in a way that aligns with their professional identities. While some view guidelines for social media use as a means of safeguarding the company's image, the participants did not perceive them as overly restrictive or censorial.

It is clear that the social media use policies at BBC and AA, which were sampled for the study, encourage employees to maintain their professional identity online while taking steps to address potential issues. Employers fear that sharing personal opinions on social media may damage the corporate reputation, as traditional journalism values impartiality. This perception arises because readers may lose trust in media organizations, if they perceive journalists as biased.

According to the journalists surveyed for the study, social media usage is seen as a modern need, and they use various applications depending on the platform's layout to communicate their personal and professional lives. Participants also say that their employers want them to understand that, on social media, they are a representative of the company they work for. Furthermore, the participants state that because they produce content in line with their journalist identities, they do not feel uncomfortable about the things they publish on social media. It follows that it is believed that journalists' personal ideas should not be shared by those with journalistic identities, as doing so will compromise their objectivity when they reveal their thoughts and sentiments on social media. The guidelines' assessment of employees' social media usage is viewed by the participants as a precautionary measure to safeguard the company's image and identity, but they are not considered to be restrictive, censorious, or interventionist measures.

Upon evaluating the research findings, it becomes apparent that journalists must assume responsibility for their work, regardless of the context. Even if journalists have their own social media profiles, it is important to remember that any content posted under the assumption that this is a private space is made public and can be viewed by anyone. Although guidelines serve as a means for institutions to mitigate potential issues, it is important to acknowledge that if not utilized properly, they can be wielded as tools of censorship and pressure against journalists.

Keywords: Social Media, Journalist, Social Media Guidelines, Personal Identity, Professional Identity.

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In this study, the rules stated in the “**Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive**” were followed.

Araştırma tek bir yazar tarafından yürütülmüştür.

The research was conducted by a single author.

Çalışma kapsamında herhangi bir kurum veya kişi ile **çıkarcı çatışması** bulunmamaktadır.

There is no **conflict of interest** with any institution or person within the scope of the study.

Etik Kurul İzni | Ethics Committee Permission

İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Etik Kurulu'nun 27/05/2022 tarihli toplantısında alınan 2022/09 sayılı karar çerçevesinde çalışma etik açıdan bir sakınca içermemektedir.

Within the framework of the decision taken during the meeting by İstanbul Aydın University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee dated 27/05/2022 and numbered 2022/09; the study does not contain any ethical issues.