



Master's Degree in Law, Digital Innovation & Sustainability

Chair of Law & Ethics of Innovation & Sustainability

From journalistic professionalism to information without rules: what future for the dignity of the profession?

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INDEX

Introduction 1

Chapter 1

Ethics and deontology in traditional journalism 2

1.1 The roots of journalistic ethics 2

1.2 Deontological principles of the journalistic profession 4

Chapter 2

Modern journalism and new platforms: evolution or dissolution of information ethics?

7

2.1 From the editorial team to the platform 7

2.2 The dictatorship of *engagement* 8

Chapter 3

Very false: when does gossip become journalism?

14

3.1 The *False* 14 format

3.2 The success of the Corona 16 format

CHAPTER 4

Ethics vs. Responsibility: A Challenge for the Future of Journalism 21

4.1 Popularity vs. Responsibility: The Central Challenge of Contemporary Journalism 21

4.2 A pedagogical reflection: rethinking journalistic training in the era of disintermediation 25

Conclusions 31

Bibliography 32

Sitography 34

Introduction

In recent decades, the advent of media digitization has significantly shaped the world of information, creating an important change in communication formats, especially thanks to the popularization of the algorithmic platforms used for the production and, subsequently, for the dissemination of news. Journalism, which has always represented one of the key pillars of liberal democracy, has inevitably found itself immersed in an unstable constantly evolving information system, governed by the scarcity of boundaries between truth and opinion, between information as news and entertainment aimed at entertainment.

This thesis stems from the aim of questioning what is happening to the dignity of the journalistic profession in today's era, a profession that risks sinking into a crisis of editorial authority, leaving room for unregulated information with the sole purpose of making a spectacle.

The research question that guided the entire work is what remains today of the dignity of the profession in the transition from traditional journalism to unregulated information. The aim is to question what remains today of journalism understood as a profession based on respect for ethics and truth, guided from the depths without responsibility as a public service.

The first chapter talks about the codes of ethics that regulate the editorial roles of traditional journalism; then, the transition to postmodern journalism is analyzed, in which professionalism is reduced to give more and more space to a new figure of journalist-influencer.

To give a clear example of this phenomenon, the case study of Fabrizio Corona and his new format *Falsissimo* was analyzed, an emblem of spectacularization of the news, full of an unwanted respect for the ethical rules at the basis of good journalism. Then the dilemma that arises in the contemporary world of communication is analyzed: the challenge between ethics and popularity. The economic survival of the media requires a high presence of virality and content sharing, but we will analyze this context to understand if we are able to practice modern journalism that falls within the criteria of this evolution without sacrificing respect for the dignity of the people involved.

In conclusion, a pedagogical reflection is proposed on the teaching that modern journalism schools should impart, capable of training professionals in the sector able to keep up with the continuous technological evolutions, but without ever losing sight of respect for ethical bases. A journalism that does not have to give up its social function while remaining in the competitive landscape, capable of renewing and updating itself while remaining faithful to the public.

Chapter 1

Ethics and deontology in traditional journalism

1.1 The roots of journalistic ethics

Journalism has very solid foundations based on ethics and respect for the latter: it represents, in fact, the foundation of the credibility of this profession and of the democratic function of information. This profession is very much based on the relationship he manages to create with the public, because the journalist makes a commitment to his readers: to always tell the truth, respect the facts and safeguard the dignity of the people involved in the news.

Modern journalism has to deal with information that is accessible and manipulable by anyone; So what distinguishes old traditional journalism from simple news reporting or sensationalism? It is precisely ethics and respect for the latter that determine the value and dignity of this profession. But what is meant by "journalistic ethics"?

Over time, a regulatory and deontological framework has been created to provide a unanimous definition and make it easy to distinguish the lawful from the unlawful, so that behind the right to inform there is always the duty to respect.

Since the prehistory of journalism, and even more so with the evolution over the years, this profession has taken on a strategic role as a tool of mediation between power and citizens, which is why professional ethics has always been a fundamental requirement, since a journalist must not limit himself to telling the facts, but must do so in such a way as to guarantee the right of citizens to be informed in a correct and transparent manner.

Journalism is often referred to as the "fourth estate" of a democratic society: this power derives from the ability of journalists to inform and influence public opinion. However, with such great power comes great responsibility, and this is where the *Code of Ethics for Journalists comes into play*, a fundamental document that defines the ethical and moral standards that journalists must follow in their profession, the latest version of which was approved by the Order of Journalists in 2024, and came into force the following ¹year. This document represents a pillar in journalistic ethics and has inspired many other organizations in the field around the world to develop their own ethical guidelines. The latest revision also updates the historical framework

¹ National Council of the Order of Journalists, *Code of Ethics for journalists*, approved on 11 December 2024, and entered into force on 1 January 2025.

of the provisions related to the exercise of the journalistic profession, including the new rules established for the use of Artificial Intelligence by journalists.

The *Code of Ethics* contains a series of fundamental principles that outline the ethical behavior required of a journalist, including: truth and precision, since a professional in the field is required to seek the truth and report it accurately, having as its main objective to inform the public in a fair and objective way. The journalist must also maintain independence from external influences, such as political, economic or personal interests, which could affect his integrity and impartiality. Another principle that the journalist must observe is to always guarantee respect for the person, i.e. the right to privacy and dignity of the people involved in the news, as the victims of crimes or accidents must first of all be treated with sensitivity. Respect for people also requires avoiding any form of discrimination, including discrimination based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

The *Code of Ethics* for the Journalistic Profession promotes pluralism and diversity of opinions, giving space to a variety of voices and points of view, always according to the cardinal principle that the journalist has the social responsibility to inform the public about important issues of public interest.

The *Code of Ethics* is not just a theoretical document: it is a practical tool that journalists and journalistic organizations use to guide their daily work. Violations of these principles can lead to professional sanctions and damage the reputation of both the journalist and the organization for which he works. Moreover, this Charter plays an essential role in gaining and maintaining the trust of the public: when readers, viewers and listeners are aware that journalists follow high ethical standards, they are more inclined to believe and rely on the news they provide.

The *Code of Ethics* is a crucial document in the world of journalism, as it represents an ethical guide for the behavior of journalists and helps to maintain integrity and objectivity in the field of information. As the world of media continues to evolve with new technologies and the challenges of the digital age, these ethical principles remain a guiding light for journalists seeking to report on contemporary events responsibly and honestly².

1.2 The ethical principles of the journalistic profession

According to the historical definition of Kovach and Rosenstiel, journalistic ethics are based on nine fundamental principles: the obligation of truth; loyalty to citizens; the discipline of

² *There.*

verification; independence from subjects of power; the ability to act as controllers of power; the maintenance of a public forum for debate; respect for proportion and relevance; commitment to meaningfulness and relevance; personal conscience as an ethical guide³.

In essence, Italian journalistic ethics is based on a balance between the freedom of information protected by Article 21 of the Constitution and respect for the fundamental rights of the person according to Article 2⁴ and the Privacy Code⁵. However, in the contemporary era, a complex relationship has been created between ethics and the journalism market, in which law and professionalism are beginning to crack, causing the foundations of traditional journalism to falter.

The journalist, today, in fact, is no longer a simple mediator, a bridge between information and the public, but a subject who wants to be the center of attention and who often speculates on work to make his name stand out: there is no longer the news at the center but who tells it. Furthermore, often, as we will see, the journalist, in order to justify an alleged behavior that does not respect the privacy or reputation of the subjects involved in a news, resorts to the use of the concept of public interest as an excuse, distorting its meaning to justify forms of journalism understood mostly as entertainment.

The evolution of traditional journalism is based on a constant search for attention by an increasingly large audience and this creates a shift in attention from what is the focus of making news, risking falling into the gossip disguised as the right to information of a "tabloid journalism". For example, it is legitimate to inform about a politician under investigation for corruption, but not about intimate details of his private life, unless these have a direct link with his public function⁶.

Another fundamental principle that journalists should observe concerns the service they provide to the community: guaranteeing the right to information and its essentiality, although this is now increasingly blurring in entertainment. If, in fact, in the past the journalist was only the mediator, the impartial observer who acted as a critical guide to understand the facts, today those who wish to take this path, without prejudice to the right to freedom of speech, are also eager for fame⁷. So it happens to witness a form of show journalism, which was the first to

³ B. Kovach, T. Rosenstiel, *The Foundations of Journalism. What journalists should know and the public should demand*, Lindau, Turin, 2007.

⁴ Constitution of the Italian Republic.

⁵ Legislative Decree no. 196 of 30 June 2003, *Personal Data Protection Code*.

⁶ C. Berti, P. Davigo, *Corruption. Society and politics from Italy to New Zealand*, Castelveccchi, Rome, 2024.

⁷ R. Maraglino, *Right to report and privacy, when information is essential: the principles to follow*, 01/10/2020, <https://www.agendadigitale.eu/sicurezza/privacy/diritto-di-cronaca-e-privacy-quando-linformazione-e-essenziale-i-principi-da-seguire/> (Accessed on 03 September 2025).

establish itself on television through infotainment formats, of which six will later talk in more depth, in which the focus is not on the news, but on the one who tells it, becoming a performer or an entertainer from a journalist.

Starting from the eighties, a new form of journalism emerged, commonly known as the fourth generation, namely that of global journalism and world communication, as advocated by Mattelart⁸. This phase is characterized by the explosion and diffusion of communication technology, which is characterized by a technological innovation now in common use, namely the telematic network. It should be noted, however, that with the dissemination of news on the web, there is often the risk of so-called "social opacity"⁹ generated by an excess of news, often provided by journalists with the intention of accentuating the most scandalous details of a narrated event. Modern journalism has found, in fact, in the web, a privileged place for the dissemination of information: on the web the protagonists are the typical talk shows born from television formats often adapted to viewing on the Youtube platform, as we will see later.

Another recent phenomenon in the world of journalism, as will be seen later in more detail through a *case study*, is the ever-increasing economic profit that in many cases derives from information, and that the right to information has made the protagonist, as already argued at the end of the last century by White

The culture of our traditional media is based on the idea of 'mission' and it is considered a public duty to provide information. [...] At its core, journalism has always been considered in the cultural responsibilities it has towards society as a whole [...] multimedia companies often consider information only as a commodity for sale¹⁰.

The criticisms leveled at the new information system are undoubtedly inspired by the Anglo-Saxon concept that considers mass culture the product of an extremely consumerist society that bases the value of communication on its effectiveness, as elaborated by Lasswell. The latter, in fact, one of the pioneers of propaganda analysis, had developed the theory of the 5Ws: *who*, *what*, *which*, *whom*, *what*¹¹. However, Gozzini notes, the theories developed on mass information communication are revised in the light of the fact that the recipients are not taxable

⁸ A. Mattelart, *La comunicazione mondo*, Il Saggiatore, Milan, 1964.

⁹ G. Gozzini, *History of Journalism*, Pearson, London, 2020.

¹⁰ A. White, (1999) *The Information Society*, in H. Darbishire, F. Hurard, K. Jakubowicz, B. Peters, D. Voorhof, A. White, *Media & Democracy. The media «public watchdogs»*, Sapere 2000, Rome, p. 246.

¹¹ D. H. Lasswell (1927), *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, Martino Fine Books, 2013.

persons, but mediators. And it is in this evolution, as we will see, that the need to select the news deemed "worthy of being published¹²" according to criteria of newsworthiness assumes increasing importance, i.e. being able to identify what can 'make news', especially based on the channel of transmission of the message, an element that becomes even more relevant with the fourth technological revolution that sees the network and its tools as protagonists.

¹² G. Gozzini, *op. cit.*

Chapter 2

Modern journalism and new platforms: evolution or dissolution of information ethics?

2.1 From the editorial team to the platform.

In the last twenty years, the world of information has undergone a significant change dictated, above all, by the need to adapt to what are, by now, the new frontiers of communication. We have gone from the vision of the journalist as the one who holds the role of custodian of information, in a centralized and regulated way, to an environment governed by the leak of news, increasingly decentralized, accessible and hyper-connected where anyone needs to feel legitimized to become a "producer" of news.

However, while this evolution has fostered the democratization of communication and given importance to the plurality of voices, it has seriously jeopardized the stability and professionalism of traditional journalism ethics.

There is a risk that the culture of knowledge will lose more and more its professional structure and be dispersed between a chaos of gossip and a spasmodic search for propaganda projected towards entertainment and spectacle: in this way the result is the creation of an emotional commodity that is increasingly distant from its function of public opinion.

Among the fundamental changes that have occurred in the transition from traditional journalism to journalism in the modern era, the most crucial is certainly the way in which the news is packaged.

Traditional journalism involves well-differentiated but interconnected phases: behind each news broadcast there is a careful selection phase, followed by verification, a truth and quality control, all framed by the observation of the fundamental principles of information ethics.

This process is typical of press agencies, journalistic editorial offices, editors and editors, all aware of their profession, unlike the new "journalist-influencers" who mostly bypass these filters making them superfluous.

Today the news is easy to capture, at any time, in any situation, to the detriment of the privacy of others, all you need is a smartphone and an internet connection: this has drastically lowered the threshold of entry to the production of journalistic content, shifting the ethical responsibility of the collective to the individual as an editorial staff is no longer accountable to the work done, but only to one's own audience and consequently to the individual's own interest.

What we are witnessing today is called infodemic: according to the neologism coined in 2020, this term means "the circulation of an excessive amount of information, sometimes not carefully

screened, which makes it difficult to orient oneself on a given topic due to the difficulty of finding reliable sources¹³". The Covid-19 pandemic has made this global phenomenon more evident, exacerbating it to the point of creating an epidemic of information, as stated by the WHO itself, which coined the term through the term *infodemic*, a crasis of the English terms *information* and *epidemic*; it is a complex and growing problem, which has remained even after the pandemic, which consists of massive production and diffusion, rapid and capillary, of an overabundance of news, accurate and less accurate, to the point of creating confusion in communication, distrust in institutions and division in the community. The circulation of an excessive amount of information, sometimes not accurately verified, can generate misinformation with consequent distortion of reality and potentially dangerous effects on social reactions and behavior. In some cases, however, it can happen that the truly necessary information disappears in the chaos of polarized information, showing how the phenomenon has deep origins, mainly traceable to the need of a certain press to arouse the interest of the public more.

2.2 The dictatorship of *engagement*

Although the focus of traditional journalism is on the structure and body of the text, so that it has a complete, direct and coherent meaning; Modern journalism, on the other hand, shifts the focus from the main interest, focusing attention no longer only on what is said, but on how it is said, when and how much is shared.

The primacy is no longer in the hands of those who provide news based on the quality and veracity of the same, but to those who manage to achieve a high level of *engagement*, i.e. involvement by users, especially social platforms, through which the latter interact with the content of an individual or a company through views, likes, comments, shares¹⁴. For this reason, it often happens that, in spreading a piece of news, we try to capture more attention and, therefore, we tend to pay much more attention to the creation of the frame of a content, rather than the content itself.

It is no longer a service, but an emotional product: you have to be direct, visual, provocative, become real machines capable of capturing attention at the first click: you must, therefore, know

¹³ *Infodemic*, [https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/infodemia_\(Neologisms\)/](https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/infodemia_(Neologisms)/) (Accessed September 8, 2025).

¹⁴ A. Velasquez, *The Social Media Manager's Glossary: Engagement vs Conversion*, 22/030/2024, <https://www.ecostampa.it/blog/il-glossario-del-social-media-manager-engagement-vs-conversion/> (Accessed on 08 September 2025).

how to work online. If we add to this the aforementioned infodemic characteristic of contemporary times, the result is evident in some rather absurd newspaper headline releases, made with the precise aim of obtaining as many clicks as possible on social platforms, i.e. the so-called *clickbait journalism*, with sometimes absurd distortions. This definition combines the world of journalism with that of *clickbait*, a technique of writing and presenting content created with the specific aim of attracting the attention and curiosity of users by leading them to click on a certain link thanks to the studied creation of an *information gap*, i.e. an information ¹⁵gap. It is a communication strategy that is generally very widespread in the digital world, and it is even more so on social platforms on the net, also considering that these are tools that by their very nature are based on interactions that generate visibility and advertising, with the related earnings, often from content that focuses on light topics, both popular and gossip¹⁶.

Clickbait is, therefore, a recurring element especially in the world of digital communication, and in particular in the journalistic one, but it should be noted that, often, in addition to this mechanism, there are an increasing number of what are called *fake news*. Both communication strategies are based on the use of catchy and sensationalist headlines whose purpose is to attract the attention of users, although, in reality, they are two different phenomena in terms of both objectives and content. In the case of *clickbait*, in fact, considering that it is based on the need to attract clicks, sensationalist headlines are often used that let the public understand that they reveal intriguing information, without, however, the content itself necessarily having to be false; in this case, more than anything else, there are forms of narrative exaggeration in the story often accompanied by deliberate omissions or equally refined ambiguous references.

Fake news, on the other hand, is based on the goal of spreading false or manipulated information to exert a certain influence on public opinion or to deliberately cause disinformation: they are two communication mechanisms that use similar psychological mechanisms, such as curiosity or strong emotions and can both contribute to the creation of a superficial information culture, which favors form over real content¹⁷.

As far as *fake news* is concerned, it is also necessary to remember that at present, *fact-checking*, i.e. verifying the veracity of facts and information reported, is an aspect of the world of

¹⁵ K. Scott, *You won't believe what's in this paper! Clickbait, relevance and the curiosity gap*, in 'Journal of Pragmatics', 175, 2021, pp. 53–66

¹⁶ M. D. Molina, S. S. Sundar, M. M. U. Rony, N. Hassan, T. Le, D. Lee, *Does Clickbait Actually Attract More Clicks? Three Clickbait Studies You Must Read*, in 'Proceedings of the 2021 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems', 2021, pp.1–19.

¹⁷ A. Lamperti, *Clickbait: what it is, how it works how to recognize it*, 04/06/2025, <https://www.osservatori.net/blog/internet-media-advertising/clickbait-cose-come-funziona-come-riconoscerlo/> (Accessed on 8 September 2025).

journalism that is constantly the subject of debate and discussion. To this must be added the competition of journalists with digital realities typical of a society in which the audience is increasingly fragmented, as there is a multiplicity of social platforms and personalized content. Furthermore, information overload, due to the unstructured flow of content that constitutes its nature, contributes to ensuring that users are naturally led to select and share content that corresponds to their ideas and beliefs.

The dynamics related to the dissemination of news through digital platforms reflects a shift from what van Dijck considers the *network society*, i.e. a horizontal model of participation, to a model that, by chasing likes on the net, in many cases contributes to reducing the decision-making autonomy of journalists and publishers¹⁸.

The advent of television has created a new information system: over the decades, new television formats have been added to the information of public service newscasts, created with the aim of informing by attracting the attention of the public. This is how what is commonly called *infotainment* was born, i.e. a mixture of information and entertainment, which radically changes the idea of the objectivity of information characteristic of public service, as argued by Mazzoleni and Sfardini

The advent of *infotainment*, with its manifest strategy of giving appeal to news, has seen the abandonment of the image of TV as a witness to reality or of the window on the world, replaced by the less reassuring one of a pervasive voyeur that engulfs the real world: television representation short-circuits the reality-truth axis, definitively betraying the idea of the journalistic story as an objective reconstruction of a fact¹⁹.

The following image takes up a scheme proposed in 2007 by Renger and Weisner for an analysis of journalism and the process that leads from information to forms of *infotainment* and *infomotion*, a genre that informs the public by leveraging the emotionality and feelings that a given news can arouse in the public

¹⁸ J. van Dijck, T. Poell, M. de Waal, *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2018.

¹⁹ G. Mazzoleni, A. Sfardini, *Politica pop. From "Porta a porta" to "L'isola dei famosi"*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2009, p.44.

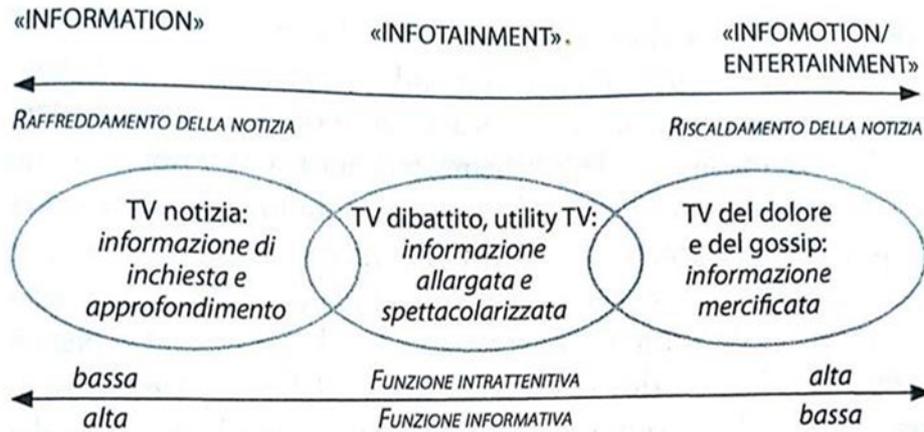


FIG. 2.1. I generi dell'informazione televisiva.

nota: La figura qui presentata prende ispirazione dallo schema proposto in Renger e Wiesner [2007] per analizzare il giornalismo della stampa, in cui compaiono gli indicatori *information/infotainment/infomotion*, differenziandosi poi sia rispetto all'oggetto di analisi che nelle categorie interpretative impiegate.

Figure 1. The genres of television information. Image taken from G. Mazzoleni, A. Sfardini, *Op. Cit.*, p. 29.

Television debates are based on a type of information that is expanded and spectacularized more and more to the point of leading to genres that are based on gossip news or on what is called pain TV, that is, commodified information that aims more at the sensationality of what is told than at the principle of deepening the news and making investigative information.

The digital age is characterized by the ever-increasing weight that platform users play in communication processes: this is a process typical of contemporary society that has seen the passive role of the public radically change thanks to its participation in the creation of content on the web. Toffler had already defined these new figures in the eighties with a term such as *prosumer*, a crisis between producer and consumer²⁰, and it is a term that can be easily adapted to the contemporary era, characterized by the possibility, thanks to the network and social and video platforms, to quickly share one's content. Thus, a new genre of media communication is born, based on user-generated content, *UGC, User's Generated Content*²¹.

Bassan intervened to clarify why journalists and influencers cannot be the same figure by declaring

²⁰ A. Toffler, *The Third wave*, William Morrow & Company, New York, 1980.

²¹ E. Menduni, *Prosumer*, 2008, [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/prosumer_\(Enciclopedia-of-Science-and-Technology\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/prosumer_(Enciclopedia-of-Science-and-Technology)/) (Accessed September 10, 2025).

If social media are becoming the new TV, it seems to me that influencers are nothing more than the prime time hosts of the new small screen. More like charismatic telemarketers, perhaps, than forces capable of moving the masses and opinions. Before judging them, let's always remember that influencers are just like us, but with more followers: they do what we would do, they make mistakes as we would do wrong. Their superpowers do not belong to gold, but to platforms. And platforms are temples whose rules and laws are more earthly than we are often led to think²².

Infotainment can be traced back to two categories: the first can be summarized in the definition 'information that makes a show', the second 'show that makes information; in the first case it refers to programs that, although proposed as information tools, are, in reality, built according to narrative logics that in some cases distort the information. In the second case, on the other hand, reference is made to programs that, with the aim of involving as wide an audience as possible, appropriate information to emphasize values and content that are already inviting to the public. However, it often happens that we aim for a spectacularization of information that distorts the informative value of content due to the use of increasingly refined strategies to gain the favor of the public.

Influencers adopt these narrative logics by attempting to produce informative content that, in reality, can mask the advertising of products or services on social platforms, or even generate profit through monetization with the aforementioned *clickbait*.

From infotainment designed for television platforms, the new way of informing while entertaining the public has also rapidly spread to digital channels such as social platforms or the Youtube channel, in which numerous journalists, who have often become influencers with several followers, deal with providing information and, vice versa, influencers propose themselves as journalists.

A particular figure is certainly that of the *lifestyle journalist*, i.e. a professional in the journalistic sector who deals with aspects related to lifestyle, culture, well-being, entertainment and social trends, what falls under *soft news*, i.e. those news that do not have a particular urgency. The *lifestyle journalist*, when he also has a large following on social media, inevitably comes into contact with newspapers and brands with which to collaborate due to the social resonance of his statements. The professional seriousness that makes this figure a qualified journalist takes the form of transparent content without excessive imbalances towards the publisher for whom he works. If, however, the *lifestyle journalist* decides to explicitly declare the collaboration and

²² V. Bassan, *Ellissi*, cit. in L. Pattarini, L. Rinaldi, L. Alessandri, N. Pedrazzini, *la fabbrica del dubbio. Handbook of Survival to Journalism*, Blonk, 2023.

advertising partnership with companies on social media, he becomes an influencer, through the practice of *gifting*, i.e. the free sending of articles to a famous person with a large following on social media, thus guaranteeing wide publicity.²³

²³ G. Banfi, *From the pen to the post: lifestyle journalists or influencers?*, 26/07/2024, <https://medium.com/mapping-journalism/dalla-penna-al-post-giornalisti-lifestyle-o-influencer-0838ca283f35> (Accessed on 10 September 2025).

Chapter 3

Very false: when does gossip become journalism?

3.1 The *Falsissimo* format

In today's context, traditional journalism is increasingly challenged by multiple emerging figures, more or less professional, who, in addition to the simple transmission of information, often combine entertainment, shows and entertainment.

One of the most emblematic and recent concrete cases of the Italian scene that best represents this phenomenon is the case of Fabrizio Corona and his project "Falsissimo". It is, in fact, an example of how modern journalism can, in some cases, go beyond the boundaries of ethics to take on traits proper to entertainment, marketing and provocation, with crucial implications in terms of privacy, the reputation of the subjects involved and the veracity of the news.

Known as the former king of the paparazzi, Corona has, to date, returned to the scene wearing new clothes: those of a journalist-showman. After all, at his debut he declared contemptuously in front of the cameras "I'm here because you don't know how to do your job",²⁴ leaving little room for imagination of what would have been the way to approach his project. His deep knowledge of social media and media has certainly contributed to the success of his program on YouTube, starting with the name itself, a clear ironic allusion to the format entitled "Verissimo" conducted by Silvia Toffanin on Canale5²⁵, managing to reach all age groups.

With his "Falsissimo" format, Corona has bypassed the canons of traditional journalism by launching a product that represents the combination of talk show, sensationalist documentary and reality TV: the protagonists interviewed, in fact, are always celebrities, well-known personalities from the web or the world of entertainment. The narrative structure of the project is articulated as a mini-series, with progressive revelations, in order to always keep the attention of the public alive by arousing a morbid curiosity and attracting more and more viewers eager to discover secrets and captivating behind-the-scenes.

From the first episodes of "False" it seemed that every sentence of the show would go viral: every episode was passed off as a public, disruptive threat, revelations, secrets and who knows what else; all exacerbated by a dark and threatening tone, almost like an Italian thriller.

Corona does not hesitate to attack very prominent characters without neglecting names and surnames and, above all, with a view to a new form of journalism, mixed with entertainment,

²⁴ G. Baglio, *Fabrizio Corona, the Batman of journalism*, 23/05/2025, <https://www.italiaoggi.it/economia-e-politica/commenti/fabrizio-corona-il-batman-del-giornalismo-ok7ht6mm> (Accessed on 11/09/2025).

²⁵ A. Mulassano, *Beyond journalistic deontology: Falsissimo*, 12/02/2025, <https://futura.news/corona-falsissimo-deontologia/> (Accessed on 11/09/2025).

he takes care to provide details and particulars that keep the interest of the public alive and entice them to wait for the next episode to have 'scandalous' details.

Thanks to the numerous contacts at his disposal, Corona can easily have access to useful information to launch his scoops and, in promoting his information program, he also manages to advertise articles of various kinds, from t-shirts to products to training course offers: high earnings deriving from mixed promotion with information. But it can also happen that you do not have necessary information, and then the choice would be between not declaring anything or inventing something. In the second case, we can no longer speak of real journalism, but of investigative reports improvised by a public figure who has become a disseminator of information, and not of a real journalist, since, if this were the case, his scandalous revelations could violate the codes of ethics and lead to sanctions.

Journalism, in fact, as has already been previously stated, according to the deontological principles underlying the profession itself, is based on the search for and dissemination of truthful and precise information, while *Falsissimo* does not aim at the truth, but at fun and scandal.

Corona, with *Falsissimo*, appears to pursue private interests, such as economic gain and popularity, rather than the public interest; however, *Falsissimo* is not a journalistic source; therefore, his 'disclosures' are not subject to the same ethical and legal standards applied to the press and other media.

The success of the format is due to a viral strategy and not mainly from the topics it decides to deal with and the guests interviewed. Corona has tried to take advantage of the opportunities that social platforms offer to promote his program in every way, using captivating messages and provocative excerpts to ignite interest and stimulate the passing on of the news. All made possible by a careful choice and selection of captivating titles that helped to make the public's interest high between episodes.

Falsissimo is a clear example of how modern journalism can be monetized as the king of gossip has decided to expand his earnings, adding to the revenues from his views on platforms such as YouTube, introducing premium content. The videos are viewed by millions of people, who are also willing to pay a subscription to be able to see the content. Between one scoop and another, he sells the shirts he wears, offers training courses, sponsors products. And he grinds money.

The Corona-reporter success raises important ethical questions,

The question of whether to publish news concerning the private lives of public figures is certainly not new, but

The boundary between the right and duty to report and the absence of ethics is always identified in a very thin thread that in the case of gossip becomes almost invisible and, if one presents oneself to the public as bearers of absolute truths, it should not use double standards depending on the friendship relationships one has with one of the parties concerned²⁶.

The success of this case should make those who love this profession and work daily in full compliance with the ethical rules of journalism question, trying to provide correct, responsible information and awareness of the crucial role of journalism for democracy.

Traditional journalism has to deal with readers who choose social networks with their algorithms and their "Corona" to get information. But the reflection is: why have we come to this point? Has a challenge perhaps begun where it is better to preside over that same fertile ground, exploit the same tools and learn the new languages before it is too late?

3.2 The success of the Corona format

A key that has certainly contributed to the success of Corona has been the strategic use of *SEO* techniques and organic search management²⁷; the definition *SEO* indicates *Search Engine Optimization*, literally optimization for search engines. It refers to all actions and techniques based on the use of specific *keywords*, or keywords, that are used directly in the constituent elements of the website (*on-page SEO*), or by working on external components such as *link building* and *content marketing* (*off-page SEO*), improve its position in search results²⁸.

The strong point is the use of keywords with the aim of intercepting the searches of the public interested in the show that gives the gossip: the titles are carefully chosen using strategic terms that can guarantee greater visibility on search engines.

²⁶ M. Zapparoli, *Corona and the scoop on the Ferragnez: the boundary between news and ethics in gossip is almost invisible*, 30/01/2025, <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2025/01/30/corona-ferragni-fedez-ferragnez-cronaca-etica-gossip/7858157/> (Accessed on 12 September 2025).

²⁷ M. Plastic Media, *Fabrizio Corona: the case study of an extreme Personal Brand*, 14/02/2025, <https://www.soluzionebrand.com/2025/fabrizio-corona-il-caso-studio-di-un-personal-brand-estremo/> (Accessed on 18 September 2025).

²⁸ *SEO optimization for small businesses: techniques and strategies to be found online*, 16/05/2025, <https://www.digital4.biz/content-marketing/ottimizzazione-seo-per-piccole-imprese-tecniche-e-strategie/> (Accessed on September 18, 2025).

His clever use of social media has allowed him to create a viral effect in the community: Corona has been able to take advantage of this fundamental step to fragment the content of the episodes and relaunch them. Each video, short and full of strong statements well used, aroused suspense in the audience and a fair amount of provocation, creating scenarios of debate and moments of high attention between one episode and another.

Very false is not the cause of the crisis of journalism, but the most extreme symptom of a profoundly changed media ecosystem. The case of Fabrizio Corona represents the perfect key to understanding and explaining the evolution of traditional journalism up to today's form, in which the transformation of tools and operating methods becomes the protagonist, compromising the principles on which this profession is based.

Corona plays with the boundaries of the ethics of good journalism by attracting public attention for his provocative style, creating a game between reality and spectacularization and, in favor of his format, he has decided to move further and further away from the ethical framework of reference relating to the processing of information, sacrificing it in favor of clicks.

Analyzing the behaviors adopted by Corona for the creation of content, it is easy to say that he is not working as a professional journalist, but as a show-man of information without rules.

Although innovation and evolution are two fundamental things to take into account for the improvement of any profession, there are key principles that must always be respected.

As already mentioned in previous chapters, journalism is based on some essential principles and, some of these, have been clearly violated: in the model proposed by Corona there is a clear lack of respect for the privacy of the people involved, both personally and indirectly. All this in favor of the public interest.

The verification of sources is often not fully ascertained as non-verifiable anonymous sources are also used.

It is clear that Corona has decided to sacrifice the dignity of the subjects in question, only in favor of the camera and media hype; after all, Corona does exactly what the system asks of him: he feeds the public the material that allows the camera to turn, without caring about any ethics. Only functionality, as he himself declares "I have ethics and morals in relation to what is my personal sphere. No morals outside the house"²⁹.

²⁹

2046, https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=fabrizio+corona%2C+fuori+da+casa+nessuna+morale (Accessed September 18, 2025).

podcast,

This approach is a serious problem both in terms of the disregard for precise and well-founded rules that regulate the ethics of journalism, and for the ethical desensitization that could influence anyone who wants to enter the world of this work, but also the public³⁰.

Although Corona is an isolated case, there is a great risk that could considerably increase the virality of its format, namely the probability that it will represent a replicable model for future generations of journalists, as Bennato states, according to whom " In this scenario, information loses its democratic function, turning into a tool of spectacle and entertainment³¹".

As Tiziana Ferrario, a RAI journalist, argues, it is necessary for journalism, in order to survive, to return to being inspired by its fundamental principles, that is, to tell, with honesty and rigor, the facts, and not to make information pure entertainment³².

The key point is precisely to innovate without forgetting ethics and respect for the latter.

It is, undoubtedly, a new way of carrying out the profession, but it is also an approach to journalism that raises some doubts for those in the sector about how much value should be given to those who speculate on information in such an obvious way and, above all, whether it is really the path they want to take for journalism. Furthermore, precisely because the world of information is easily accessible and available to everyone, one would wonder what should be taught today to tomorrow's journalists, and, according to Mulassano, it is necessary to teach young people first of all that the profession is an ethical and moral choice. It is necessary to ask how much space it is legitimate to reserve for details of the private life of a couple with children, considering that the latter are also, according to this approach to information, exposed exactly as adults.

It is also true that, despite the desire to respect the ethical principles of the journalistic profession, the success of the public found by Corona-reporter testifies to how contemporary readers to inform themselves favor the use of social networks and their algorithms, in which the protagonists are often characters like Corona³³.

In an era in which digital platforms have progressively thinned the line between information and entertainment, people's morbid thirst for details regarding news and scandals has fueled Fabrizio Corona's conviction that he legitimizes himself as a "champion of the truth³⁴".

³⁰ R. Maggiolo, *The three threats to the future of journalism and why its crisis affects us all*, 17/01/2024, <https://www.huffingtonpost.it/blog/2024/01/17/news/le-tre-minacce-al-futuro-del-giornalismo-e-perche-la-sua-crisi-ci-riguarda-tutti-14838199/> (Accessed on 18 September 2025).

³¹ D. Bennato, *The pluralism of information to the test of the crisis of confidence in the media*, Report 2023, <https://www.odg.it/il-pluralismo-dellinformazione-alla-prova-della-crisi-di-fiducia-nei-media/50513> (Accessed on 18 September 2025).

³² T. Ferrario, *Men, it's time to play without fouls*, Chiarelettere, Milan, 2020.

³³ A. Mulassano, *op. cit.*

³⁴ M. Zapparoli, *op. cit.*

His new format Falsissimo is the emblem of this transformation, especially for the very structure of the program, which Corona wants to sell as an 'investigation', but which is configured to all intents and purposes as a spectacular curtain, tailor-made for an audience increasingly thirsty for gossip.

The format works thanks to its structure: it is articulated, in fact, in several medium-length videos and any content, tone and movement of the narrator are elements that play on ambiguity, aimed at creating suspense in the reader.

The language used is direct, provocative, theatrical: Corona presents himself boldly with emphatic tones and with a clever use of the dramatic pause. The narrative is constructed in such a way as to alternate images of high emotional tension (screams, tears, shocking statements), with moments of 'revelation' that are often based on unverifiable sources or partial testimonies. The goal is to create a new information scheme that stands out from the traditional one, a worthy adversary capable of capturing attention.

"Falsissimo" differs from traditional journalistic work in that, behind the media operation, there is a strong commercial component with the aim of monetization. This work takes place using different sources, such as Youtube and Instagram: the publication of content on these platforms has a following of views fueled by ad hoc advertising. Another source of monetization comes from subscriptions and exclusive content, as Corona has made some of the content available only for a fee by exploiting parallel sites. Sponsorships play a fundamental role among the different sources of monetization: the format creates such visibility that it can afford an important *Personal brand reputation* fueled by collaborations, merchandise, television appearances, and everything that contributes to the promotion of the character³⁵.

The purpose of the care of this model is, in fact, the construction of the character, even going to the detriment of the verification of the facts and respect for the ethics of the profession.

³⁵ M. Plastic MEDIA, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER 4

Ethics vs. Accountability: A Challenge for the Future of Journalism

4.1 Popularity vs Responsibility: The Central Challenge of Contemporary Journalism

The modern scenario of communication presents an evident mutation of the journalistic profession: the hybrid forms of contemporary times privilege entertainment, entertainment, social media, live and viral videos, focusing on the divergence between the need for visibility and ethical responsibility³⁶. Among emerging journalists, the question arises spontaneously whether, in this context, it is necessary to adapt to this evolutionary wave and privilege the ability to generate visibility and entertainment in order to survive, sacrificing the ethical responsibility that good self-respecting journalism imposes³⁷. A paradigmatic context arises: in this competitive landscape, remuneration and visibility are the objectives to be achieved; ethics becomes uncomfortable, downgraded as a secondary topic of discussion, all in favor of a spectacularization that leads to profit³⁸.

In this context, the algorithmic logic that is restructuring the traditional information system acquires a role of fundamental importance, leading to a strategic selection and dissemination of news, aiming at a very specific result, as we have already seen: *engagement*³⁹. This term indicates the ability of a piece of news to arouse reactions and emotional involvement in the public in order to create a dense network of shares by users.⁴⁰ What makes *engagement* attractive is the creation of dynamics that is created around this system, characterized by elements of spectacularization, to the detriment, however, of in-depth analysis and accuracy.

The journalist, therefore, inevitably finds himself involved in a professional environment in full metamorphosis, conditioned by quantitative metrics aimed at the need to function in a digital market redesigned for the modern age, where editorial survival depends directly on the ability to create visibility. The latter is not only a criterion for evaluating the journalist's ability,

³⁶ A. Fabris, *The ethics of journalism in the current communicative scenarios*, Pacini, Pisa, 2019.

³⁷ E. Morresi, *Ethics of the News. Foundation and critique of journalistic morality*, Casagrande, Bellinzona, 2020.

³⁸ C. Cassani, *Journalism and Ethics of Communication. In the era of "user generated content" and artificial intelligence*, Castelvocchi, Rome, 2025.

³⁹ F. Rizzuto, *Journalism in the Age of the Algorithm: The Impossible Marriage Between AI and News*, 31/05/2023, <https://www.agendadigitale.eu/cultura-digitale/il-giornalismo-nellera-dellalgoritmo-il-matrimonio-impossibile-tra-ia-e-news/> (Accessed on 12 September 2025).

⁴⁰ And. Locatelli, N. Vittadini, (eds.), *Digital media. Algorithmic platforms and society*, FrancoAngeli, Milan, 2023,

understood as economic success, but also has a weight in terms of professional status: all this has as a consequence an erosion of journalistic ethics⁴¹.

The main problem that emerges from these changes is the crisis of the public function of journalism, which is why, in an ecosystem full of techniques in order to ensure wide algorithmic visibility, the original mission of information that sees the journalist as the guardian of the correct news to allow citizens to make informed choices in a democratic society, it is put in the background to ensure greater attractiveness. Information takes on a more ephemeral dimension regulated by the need for immediacy, which makes truth a content, also shaped for the purpose of interest and palatability.

As Mariagrazia Villa observes, the challenge for digital journalism is not only technical or commercial, but above all ethical: an effort is needed to "train" the professional conscience of journalists, so that they know how to resist the temptation of immediate popularity and maintain the principles of responsibility and public service⁴².

To pursue the goal of ethical journalism, nowadays, it is necessary to acquire the use of new tools and new forms of awareness: from newsrooms to digital platforms, passing through journalism schools, it is necessary to create a shared project that can redefine the parameters of the value attributed to information. The algorithm must be the tool through which a new alliance between technology and ethics must be created: it must no longer be considered exclusively a means to profit, but must also be understood as an instrument of responsibility towards the community. This is a necessary process to rebalance a situation in which the essential function of journalism is at risk and, at the same time, professional dignity is at risk when it could be subordinated to dynamics extraneous to truth and freedom of information⁴³.

On 1 June 2025, the new Code of Ethics for journalists, approved by the National Council of the Order of Journalists on 11 December 2024, came into force, which contains significant updates to the professional rules that journalists are required to follow, "adapting them to contemporary challenges and promoting greater ethical responsibility in the exercise of the

⁴¹ M. Villa, *The digital journalist is a saint's shin*, Flaccovio, Palermo, 2018.

⁴² M. Villa, *Ethics Gym. Let's train the ethics of communication*, FrancoAngeli, Milan, 2022.

⁴³ *There*.

profession⁴⁴». Freedom of information is a right, as stated in art. 21 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic, and cannot be compromised, but it is necessary for professionals in the world of information to identify the right and correct ways for a future of journalism in which professionalism and innovation are a reference.

As Ginevra Cerrina Feroni, Vice President of the Italian Data Protection Authority, states,

this will involve experimenting with the uses of generative AI to optimize the search and selection of news, the verification of incorrect or artificial data and content, and the creation of original content, in compliance with the non-negotiable principle of transparency. The application of the latter principle will require in practice to declare the origin of the content disseminated by the language models, providing clear and intelligible information to the public, with appropriate disclaimers and labels⁴⁵.

It is not only a technological transformation, but involves the regulatory and deontological aspect. There are numerous signs that indicate how the professional context is radically changing, as evidenced by the introduction of new articles to the Code of Ethics recently updated by the Order of Journalists, where space is given to rules for the use of artificial intelligence, transparency of the sources used and ethics for the processing of the image and personal data of the subjects involved. These changes are synonymous with profound innovation, but they do not alone guarantee that the profession will be able to maintain its public function at a time when the business market demands entertainment.⁴⁶

In addition, it is good to keep focused on the common good that must always guide the journalistic profession, as a social dimension that underlies the regulation of this profession and that does not imply a profit given by a viral effect. Anyone involved in carrying out this job, therefore: publisher, editorial staff and the platforms that deal with spreading the news has the burden of guaranteeing information not as any commodity but as a right of citizens that is

⁴⁴ A. Lucchini, *AI and journalism: the new code of ethics gives an ethical guide*, 31/12/2024, <https://www.agendadigitale.eu/cultura-digitale/intelligenza-artificiale-e-giornalismo-le-nuove-regole-deontologiche-per-la-professione/> (Accessed on 19 September 2025).

⁴⁵ *There.*

⁴⁶ *There.*

enshrined in the Italian Constitution and in the deontological texts, as a matter of fundamental importance towards weak subjects, of fairness and truth⁴⁷.

The role of the journalist is based on fundamental principles that ensure that this profession is regulated by criticism and reflection, values that could be put at risk to the detriment of democracy if spectacular information is normalized. The risk could be the gradual loss of these values if the standard becomes the spectacle and could take over good and not superficial information.

This new hybrid form of communication can create a habit of entertainment in the public, as if they recognize journalism only in the show and this is a risk for the loss of credibility. This can lead to a skeptical attitude, weakening the role of the journalist, who is seen as the protagonist of what is considered more ephemeral rather than as a public service and guardian of information. AGCOM data show how, for many Italians, the Internet and social media are now the main sources of information, but accompanied by lower levels of trust than traditional media; The web is used, but not fully trusted⁴⁸.

Therefore, democracy establishes the right of citizens to be informed, so that they can discern, evaluate sources, the content of what they are learning and the veracity of the latter, but this rapid flow of fragmented news between one click and another, governed by virality compromises the quality of the citizen's education. To guarantee democracy at the grassroots, there must be good journalism that is first and foremost responsible and independent.

These challenges have undermined the dignity of the journalistic profession, but it is not lost. It is inevitable to say that he is at risk of numerous influences, but despite this, the awareness of ethical responsibility behind a professional journalist has not been lost. There are those who do this profession with passion, guided by a criterion that allows them to create a fair circulation of information, with accuracy and the necessary transparency that is needed towards the public. Professionals stand out in that they always give precedence to codes of ethics, not favoring

⁴⁷ A. Piccione, G. Tridente, (eds.) *The duties of the journalist. Professional Ethics and Service to Society*, Amazon, 2019.

⁴⁸ *Italians' spending on digital content in 2024 reaches €3.7 billion (+5% compared to 2023)*, [https://www.osservatori.net/comunicato/digital-content/contenuti-digitali-italia-mercato/#:~:text=The%20spesa%20degli%20italiani%20in,\(%2B5%25%20respect%20al%202023\)&text=The%20Video%20Entertainment%20si%20confirm,the%2045%25%20ofthe%20expenditure%20total](https://www.osservatori.net/comunicato/digital-content/contenuti-digitali-italia-mercato/#:~:text=The%20spesa%20degli%20italiani%20in,(%2B5%25%20respect%20al%202023)&text=The%20Video%20Entertainment%20si%20confirm,the%2045%25%20ofthe%20expenditure%20total) (Accessed on 20 September 2025).

sensationalism. They have that awareness that leads them to carry out their work regardless of mere notoriety.

What distinguishes the dignity of a good journalist is his or her ability to resist this new system. It is independent of the need for virality and easy clicking, it does not give in to media noise, it resists economic pressures and is not looking for an audience; So he never loses sight of the ethical quality of his work. His value and dignity can be deduced from the choice to always act responsibly and honestly, also for the purpose of economic recognition and popularity.

All this, finally, results in a social recognition by users, which is the key to understanding the dignity of the profession. A public opinion that is able to separate authentic journalism from spectacular information and that knows how to consciously evaluate who to be guided by and who not. This media system can warn those who practice this profession, finding themselves faced with an increasingly fragile recognition, but through proper media awareness, education in transparency and respect for the deontological system, the right recognition of those who exercise this role correctly can still survive.⁴⁹

4.2 A pedagogical reflection: rethinking journalistic training in the era of disintermediation

We are in an era governed by digital transformations, which is why it is inevitable to redesign the information system. In this context, it is necessary to review the training of journalists, for whom specialization in writing techniques, editing, conducting interviews and photographic skills is no longer sufficient, but journalism schools must implement an education capable of training specialists in the field not only for technical tools, but also and above all for solid ethical foundations, Capable of preparing journalists aware of the importance of their role in the information and democratic system.⁵⁰

In order for journalism to survive, it must be reinterpreted according to the new standards required by the technological landscape, such as respect for privacy, responsible management

⁴⁹ M. Villa M., *Ethics Gym. Let's train the ethics of communication*, FrancoAngeli, Milan, 2022.

⁵⁰ *There*.

of the image of those involved on social media, compliance with ethical rules regarding the use of personal data, transparency in the use of artificial intelligence and algorithmic techniques.⁵¹ This is a change to be understood as an evolution of journalism, in favor of protecting its ethical responsibility in the age of digital media.

The way in which news takes on visibility takes on a central role in the teaching that journalism schools should provide, through the analysis of the functioning of *ranking* and distribution algorithms, the engagement logics that influence the selection of content by users, and *biases* which are used to obtain an overexposure of content for sensationalist purposes, all this affects a balanced dissemination of the news.⁵² Without this education in the algorithm, the journalist risks losing control of the information system by automatically assuming the role of an actor.

The public is increasingly taking on an active role in the production and dissemination of information, which is why there is a need for media literacy extended to them and not only reserved for journalism professionals. In this context, the role of the journalist is to manage this relationship and be able to maintain a clear distinction between professional content and unverified and amateur news.⁵³

It becomes, in fact, indispensable for a journalist and for those who will be the recipients of such news, to be able to distinguish fact from opinion, between information and propaganda.

The journalist has always been seen as the mediator between power and the citizen, called *the public watchdog*, the one who provides information guaranteeing transparency, accountability and pluralism during public debate, but it is also of fundamental importance to consider the aspect of his social role, since his profession must not be reduced only to a technical job of the one who creates content for his audience⁵⁴. The journalist has an ethical responsibility towards those minorities of groups that often live on the margins and in vulnerability. Information law, as well as communication and sociology of the media are fundamental subjects to be addressed for journalistic training.

⁵¹ Order of Journalists, *Code of Ethics for Journalists*, 2024, arts. 2, 5, 7 and 9.

⁵² E. Locatelli E., N. Vittadini N. (eds.), *Digital media. Algorithmic platforms and society*, FrancoAngeli, 2023.

⁵³ E. Morresi, *Ethics of the News. Foundation and criticism of journalistic morality*, Casagrande, Bellinzona, 2003.

⁵⁴ A. Piccione, G. Tridente G., *op. cit.*

For a good understanding and approach to the contemporary journalistic pedagogical context by students and professionals, it is necessary to analyze case studies of evident manifestations of these deontological issues and how the latter have been violated, such as that of Fabrizio Corona and his format, a caricature of spectacularized journalism and how the ethical codes regarding intrusion into the private and leading to a scandalistic narrative have not been respected. This analysis can provide students with the necessary means to deal with real examples. For informed training, *role-play simulations* and *workshops* are necessary that recreate real conditions of decision-making pressure, considering the consequences on social impact, transparency and respect for the rights of the subjects involved.⁵⁵

In the dissemination of news according to the canons of traditional journalism, it is the professionals who organize all the information in a context that determines the relevance attributed to each of them, which takes the form of the specific choice to devote margins of time and space established by journalists. When, on the other hand, news comes from digital information, it is the reading public itself that decides how much importance to attribute to certain information and chooses to deepen some aspects of it. However, in this process it is important that the public itself possesses a good degree of digital literacy, i.e. the mechanisms that are the basis of new technologies, so as to give credit to professionals and not to subjects who mask personal intentions by pretending to disseminate news.

In this regard, it would be appropriate to consider the reflection of Sorrentino, who states

To put it with an expression that has now become slang: if something is free, it means that the product is us! Having this awareness does not necessarily have to make you develop a circumspect attitude, but rather help you to move with greater knowledge in an increasingly enveloping information ecosystem, which does not allow you to remain helpless, because it still involves you⁵⁶.

Finally, in order to train journalists capable of dealing with the competitive world, it is necessary to train them not only from a technical and ethical point of view, but also from a

⁵⁵ M. Partipilo, *Manuale di deontologia del giornalista. Information, disinformation, society*, Journalistic Documentation Center, 2022.

⁵⁶ C. Sorrentino, *Journalism has a future. Why it is changing, how it must be rethought*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2025, p. 42.

psychological point of view, in such a way as to make them resilient to economic pressures and always able to maintain their independence even when the system is increasingly full of ethical violators.

Teaching contemporary ethics means preparing for strong moral resistance and a capacity for common sense and thoughtfulness.⁵⁷

In this context, everyone feels legitimized to be a reporter thanks to the ease of sharing through access to the technologies of production and distribution of materials; It becomes, therefore, even more urgent to reflect on the importance of journalistic ethics, on how the latter is formed and is, consequently, respected. It is not only composed of a set of rules but is an evolution that arises from human comparison, experience and awareness of compliance with transparency standards that support the importance of verifying shared content, so that the quality of the information system is always kept high.

Therefore, it is clear that the future of the journalistic profession is linked to the confrontation between ethics and visibility, as a constant characteristic that indicates a tension to be kept under control: it is necessary to understand that ethics is not an additional tinsel or a sign of some luxury of the journalist, but the essential condition for guaranteeing professional dignity to journalists,

The problem is that today it is precisely dignity that is in crisis, and those who have the honor and burden of defending it must necessarily acquire awareness of the importance of new technologies and the tools connected to it, with the relative necessary education and the professional responsibility to act not for greater visibility, but to defend the truth of information.

⁵⁷ M. Villa, *The digital journalist is a saint's shin*, *op. cit.*

Conclusions

In the course of this thesis, the important change that journalism has undergone in recent decades has been analyzed, focusing on how a deregulated information system has significantly affected the dignity of the journalistic profession.

The analysis included a focus on the mechanisms of algorithmic visibility, engagement strategies, the spectacularization of information, and it emerged that the hunger to survive in the world of popularity is progressively damaging the quality of information and ethics.

From the study of the case of Fabrizio Corona it emerged how this type of format can attract the attention of a wide audience, by virtue of the transgression of any form of professional responsibility, highlighting how ineffective the current deontological barriers are in removing any sensationalist fracture.

The dignity of the journalist, therefore, is not only a formal respect for a Code of Ethics, but a solid resistance full of responsibility towards society, while maintaining a continuous update on the use of critical and ethical skills.

In a world where information is at the mercy of everyone, and anyone can be a reporter, the main challenge is to re-establish and not lose sight of one's authority, guaranteeing quality and transparency for this civic commitment.

The point is not to take a step back and go back to the past, but to build a new system of the profession capable of reconciling the numerous possibilities offered by the digital world with respect for the values of journalism.

To this day, the dignity of the profession is still alive. One can consciously choose what kind of journalist to be, respecting the main values in order to best cover this role in contemporary society. Through the training, responsibility and care of a company with solid professional foundations respectful of ethics, this challenge is possible.

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Appendix