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Constructive Journalism and its Kin: A Comparative Matrix Diagram of Emerging Journalistic Practices

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Abstract

This study provides a systematic review of twelve distinct journalism approaches, centering on constructive journalism. Through an analysis of the academic literature, this paper explores the shared values, distinguishing features, and theoretical frameworks of each approach, including solutions journalism, peace journalism, and slow journalism. A matrix diagram was developed to visually represent these relationships, mapping the approaches along key dimensions such as audience engagement, problem-solving focus, and future orientation. The study highlights constructive journalism as the most comprehensive approach, integrating diverse principles and practices. This comparative analysis offers a new method for understanding and categorizing these approaches, presenting a clearer perspective on how they complement and differ from one another. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on journalistic practices and suggest avenues for future research, including the integration of digital tools and exploration of cultural variations in media application.

Keywords: Constructive Journalism, Journalism Approaches, Comparative Analysis, New Classification Method.

Introduction

In recent years, constructive journalism has emerged as a significant approach in modern media practice, characterized by its focus on solution-oriented reporting and positive engagement with audiences (Lough & McIntyre, 2023). This method has gained traction as a response to the challenges faced by traditional journalism in an era of declining trust and increasing audience disengagement (Aitamurto & Varma, 2018). Indeed, constructive journalism does not exist in isolation; it is part of a broader ecosystem of journalistic approaches that share similar principles or seek comparable outcomes (McIntyre et al., 2018). In fact, it has been conceptualized as an umbrella term, encompassing several related approaches within its framework (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017). Understanding this wider context is crucial for a comprehensive grasp of the evolving landscape of journalism.

Despite the growing body of literature on constructive journalism, there remains a notable gap in comparative analyses that examine how it relates to and differs from other innovative journalistic methods that share the same features with it. Existing research often focuses on individual approaches in isolation, or merely compares the relationship between constructive and solutions journalism, leaving unexplored the potential synergies, overlaps, and distinctions between various practices. As noted, there is raising pertinent question about boundaries between alternative types of journalism and its effects on public understanding and engagement

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(Mast et al., 2019). These unresolved questions underscore the need for a more comprehensive, comparative analysis of constructive journalism and its related approaches.

The purpose of this study is to address this gap through a systematic review of twelve distinct yet interconnected journalism approaches, with constructive journalism at its core. By examining these methods side by side, the research aims to uncover shared values, unique characteristics, and points of differentiation. This comparative analysis not only illuminates the principles that unite these approaches but also highlights the specific contributions each makes to the practice of journalism.

A key innovation of this study is the development of a matrix diagram that visually represents the relationships and differences among the twelve approaches examined. This tool serves as a novel contribution to the field, offering a clear and concise way to understand the complex landscape of contemporary journalism practices. By mapping these approaches along key dimensions, the matrix provides a comprehensive overview that can guide further research and inform practical applications.

RQ1: What are the journalism approaches that share similarities with constructive journalism according to scholarly understanding, and in what ways do they differ from constructive journalism?

RQ2: Is there a classification method that can more intuitively organize these journalism approaches together, highlighting their relationships and distinctions?

Methodology

To conduct a comprehensive analysis of various journalism approaches, a systematic review methodology was employed (Harari et al., 2020). The research utilized the Scopus database for literature retrieval, with specific criteria set to ensure relevance and currency of the reviewed materials. The search parameters were defined as follows: a time frame from 2020 to August 2024, focusing on the most recent scholarly contributions; the discipline category was limited to social sciences to maintain relevance to the field of journalism; only English journal articles were included to ensure peer-reviewed content for academic rigor.

The search yielded varying results across different journalism approaches: solutions journalism (SoJ), peace journalism (PeaJ), prospective journalism (ProJ), restorative narrative (RN), public journalism (PubJ), citizen journalism (CiJ), participatory journalism (ParJ), positive journalism (PoJ), good news (GN), service journalism (SerJ), and slow journalism (SIJ). In the initial identification stage, potentially relevant literature was identified through database searches. Subsequently, during the screening stage, these publications were filtered based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria, involving a review of titles and abstracts. This process resulted in the retention of highly relevant literature for full-text reading and analysis. The screening numbers for each journalism approach are presented in the table below. A total of 3,043 papers were identified, with 280 papers included in the analysis and statistics.

	SoJ	PeaJ	ProJ	RN	PubJ	CiJ	ParJ	PoJ	GN	SerJ	SIJ
Identification	181	107	9	70	1592	383	101	249	-	305	46
Inclusion	26	65	0	8	18	74	29	11	11	20	18

Table 1. Literature Screening Results for Various Journalism Approaches: Pre- and Post-Inclusion Counts

It is worth noting that due to the absence of literature specifically on prospective journalism, a keyword search was conducted within the literature related to constructive journalism. The same approach was applied to public journalism, which is one of the origins of constructive journalism and closely related to it. Keyword searches for public journalism were also performed within the constructive journalism literature, yielding 60 relevant entries, which were included in the analysis. Further, the search for good news presented unique challenges due to its common usage outside of journalism contexts. Consequently, this concept was explored through references in constructive journalism literature, resulting in 11 academic papers and websites, including 6 published before 2000.

Findings

Solutions Journalism

When discussing constructive journalism, it is inevitable to draw parallels with solutions journalism (McIntyre & Lough, 2021). These two concepts are remarkably similar, both aiming to provide a balanced, accurate, and contextualized portrayal of the world while mitigating the overemphasis on negative news. Karen McIntyre, a prominent advocate for constructive and solutions journalism, explicitly states in her research that "solutions and constructive journalism rest within the larger family of socially responsible reporting practices that focus on alternatives to a problem-focused news narrative" (McIntyre & Lough, 2023). These approaches represent similar reporting methodologies, both spearheaded by journalists and professional organizations, and have emerged as distinct subjects of academic inquiry. Their shared objectives and methodologies have positioned them as significant areas of study within the field of journalism research, offering alternative paradigms to traditional news reporting practices (Lough & McIntyre, 2023).

However, there are reasons why solutions journalism is not simply called constructive journalism—despite their striking similarities, there are distinct differences. In their seminal definition of constructive journalism, McIntyre and Gyldensted (2017) proposed a hierarchical relationship, positioning constructive journalism as a broader concept that encompasses the other one. The validity of this perspective can only be ascertained through a thorough examination of the definition and characterization of solutions journalism itself.

Solutions journalism emphasizes comprehensive explorations of why and how solutions work, reframing traditional journalistic methods to focus on solutions-based stories and encouraging readers to engage in making positive changes (McIntyre, Lough, et al., 2018). In parallel, the Solutions Journalism Network (SJN) defines it as "rigorous reporting on how people are responding to social problems". It goes beyond simply reporting on these problems, providing more complete coverage by examining the responses to these issues. Similarly to constructive journalism, it also mirrors a commitment to the social responsibility theory in journalism (McIntyre K. E. & Lough, 2021).

The concept of solutions journalism emerged from the social responsibility theory articulated by the Hutchins Commission in 1947 (Mott, 1947; Siebert et al., 1963). Early traces of this approach appeared in the late 1990s, when the *Columbia Journalism Review* highlighted an increase in "what works" coverage by major news outlets (Benesch, 1998). Although the term "solutions journalism" was first mentioned in academic literature in 1999 (Davies), it was not fully conceptualized until later. Weaver (2007) acknowledged the role of journalists in "pointing to possible solutions," and by 2009, the San Diego Union-Tribune began a solutions-oriented

column. In 2013, the nonprofit Solutions Journalism Network (SJN) was founded, leading to the rapid adoption of solutions journalism by over 90 U.S. news organizations by 2017 (Lough & McIntyre, 2019). Notably, The New York Times' "Fixes" column, launched in 2010, became a hallmark of this approach (van Antwerpen et al., 2022). Academic interest surged, with a peak of 32 publications in 2019, marking a critical period of growth for the field (Lough & McIntyre, 2023).

Based on the analysis and integration of the academic literature, solutions journalism exhibits the following attributes. Firstly, it adheres to rigorous journalistic standards (Fai & Stubbs, 2023). Although combining fact-based reporting with expert opinions while critically examining proposed solutions, it balances problem-focused narratives with solution-oriented coverage, offering a contextualized view of current events (Mellor & Nguyen, 2023). Moreover, structurally, it follows a comprehensive format, detailing the problem, response measures, and evidence of outcomes, ensuring solutions are integral to the story (Lough & McIntyre, 2021). Additionally, solutions journalism has the potential to enhance public engagement by promoting self-efficacy and optimism, often employing humanizing narratives to evoke empathy (Lynch, 2021; Banjac, 2022; Mellor & Nguyen, 2023).

Distinctions between Solutions and Constructive Journalism

Constructive journalism incorporates positive psychology techniques, while solutions journalism focuses on framing issues within their potential resolutions (Lough & McIntyre, 2023). The primary distinction between constructive and solutions journalism lies in their scope of reporting. Constructive journalism, as a broader concept, encompasses a wide range of reporting topics without specific limitations. It requires the presentation of news being fair, accurate, and contextualized (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017). In contrast, solutions journalism is more focused and specific. It concentrates on rigorous reporting of responses to social problems (McIntyre & Lough, 2021). This form of journalism deliberately seeks out and investigates potential solutions to societal issues, examining their implementation, effectiveness, and limitations.

The understanding of the "solutions" differs between these two journalism approaches. While solutions are arguably the most distinctive among the six elements of constructive journalism, this approach is not limited to reporting on solutions alone (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019). It encompasses various forms of positive, optimistic, or inspiring reporting. Solutions, in this context, are one means of achieving the broader aims of constructive reporting, which include providing hope, fostering engagement, and promoting a more balanced view of the world. On the other hand, solutions journalism is more narrowly focused on specific problem-solving approaches (Foot, 2024). It concentrates on concrete solutions to social issues, offering detailed reports on the implementation of these solutions, evidence of their success, and analysis of their limitations (Dü, 2024). This approach goes beyond merely highlighting positive stories; it involves rigorous investigation and critical examination of attempts to address societal challenges (Mellor & Nguyen, 2023).

Regarding the objectives and impacts of these two journalistic approaches, constructive journalism primarily seeks to enhance the value of news by providing context, depth, and relevance to stories. This approach aims to present a more balanced and comprehensive view of the world, fostering more holistic public discussions by offering a nuanced understanding of issues, including both challenges and potential paths forward (van Antwerpen et al., 2022). By presenting a more complete picture, constructive journalism aspires to reduce news fatigue and

cynicism among audiences, potentially leading to a more engaged and informed citizenry. It encourages both journalists and audiences to look beyond immediate problems and consider broader implications and possibilities for positive change. Solutions journalism, on the other hand, has a more focused objective. It specifically aims to increase readers' sense of self-efficacy, optimism, and level of engagement with social issues (Fai & Stubbs, 2023). By reporting on responses to social problems, it seeks to empower audiences with knowledge of potential solutions and ways to contribute to positive change. This approach hopes to inspire action by demonstrating that problems can be addressed, potentially motivating readers to get involved in community initiatives or support effective interventions (Dahmen et al., 2021). Furthermore, solutions journalism aims to boost civic engagement by showing that individual and collective actions can make a difference in addressing societal challenges (Midberry & Dahmen, 2020).

Constructive and Solutions Journalism: Perspectives on Social Responsibility

Solutions journalism, as an emerging journalistic practice, is rooted in the fundamental principles of social responsibility theory and serves as a practical extension of this theory (Li, 2023; Mellor & Nguyen, 2023). The theoretical foundation of solutions journalism can be traced back to the Hutchins Commission of 1947, which explicitly stated that journalists have a moral obligation to consider society's best interests in their news-making decisions (McIntyre & Lough, 2021).

Social responsibility theory emphasizes that journalism should serve the public interest, foster a healthy public atmosphere, help the public make informed decisions, and restore public trust in the media (Li, 2023; Putra, 2023). At the same time, it should maintain journalistic standards and objectivity. Solutions journalism focuses on addressing social issues by not only reporting problems but also providing possible solutions, allowing the public to access more comprehensive information and increase their engagement. This approach creates a more accurate, rigorous, and balanced media environment, which aligns with the values of journalism as advocated by social responsibility theory (McIntyre & Lough, 2021; Midberry et al., 2024). It can be said that solutions journalism, using solutions as a breakthrough point, not only fulfils the traditional news function of information dissemination but also further promotes social progress and public participation (Almeida & Morais, 2024; Dũ, 2024).

Peace Journalism

The concept of "peace journalism" can be traced back to Norwegian scholar and peace researcher Johan Galtung and Holmboe Ruge's landmark 1965 study *"The Structure of Foreign News,"* in which they evaluated Norwegian media coverage of foreign crises, laying the foundation for what would later be defined as peace journalism (Elega et al., 2022). Then, the concept was formally introduced in 1986 by Galtung, and was further refined in 1998 and 2000 (Hussain, 2020). This concept gained further prominence in 2005 through the work of Lynch and McGoldrick (2005), who defined peace journalism as an editorial choice that promotes society's consideration and valuation of non-violent responses to conflict.

Peace journalism is a framework to challenge these traditional news values, and a journalistic and editorial practice that aims to promote non-violent conflict resolution and peace-building through responsible, balanced, and constructive reporting (Kalfeli et al., 2022; Doll, 2023). It requires journalists to report on conflicts not just as two-party battles but as challenges and opportunities for human progress (Lynch & Tiripelli, 2022). It emphasizes revealing the structural causes of conflicts, focusing on peace opportunities, balancing the reporting of multi-

parties' viewpoints, exploring non-violent solutions, and the benefits of reconstruction, thereby altering the conflict escalation trends that traditional war journalism might induce (Hussain, 2020). It encompasses four implicit themes: peace, people, truth, and solutions (Jehangir, 2023). The fundamental reason for proposing this journalism approach is the media's excessive focus on war and violence, which resulted in the marginalization of peace narratives (Galtung, 2003; Auwal & Ersoy, 2022).

Since its inception, peace journalism has evolved into a multifaceted concept. It is simultaneously a method of journalistic practice, a way of reporting and thinking, a model and framework for evaluating and analyzing news coverage of specific topics on wars or conflict events, and can even be considered a journalistic methodology (Perry, 2022; Bhowmik & Ferrucci, 2024). Indeed, peace journalism has continued to innovate based on analyses of ongoing global conflicts. This evolution has led to the development of related approaches such as peace and conflict-sensitive journalism (Peterson et al., 2023), peace-building journalism (Charles, 2021), and transitional journalism (Sweeney et al., 2020), as well as expansions of the original conceptual model (Hussain et al., 2021; Doll & Moy, 2022; Kalfeli et al., 2022). From a geographical perspective, this analytical tool has been widely applied to examine conflict/war news reporting in diverse regions around the world. For specific details, please refer to the table in the Appendix.

Distinguishing Peace and Constructive Journalism Approaches

In the defining papers of constructive journalism, it is portrayed as an umbrella concept, with peace journalism considered as one of its subcategories, suggesting a relationship of inclusion (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017). However, upon examination of the literature, this perspective seems somewhat inappropriate. The collected papers on peace journalism can be roughly categorized into four types: theoretical explanations, analysis of news content using peace journalism as a perspective, exploration of media functions and journalists' roles in peace journalism, and its relationship with other journalism approaches. Except for the last category, the other studies do not mention the relationship between peace and constructive journalism, instead treating peace journalism as an independent journalism approach (Awobamise et al., 2020; Kertcher, 2021; Achem & Ani, 2022).

Nevertheless, in the conceptual definition of peace journalism, scholars indeed use terms like "constructive," "solution-oriented," and "positive" impact - words typically associated with constructive journalism - to describe peace journalism as a reporting method (Atanesyan, 2020; Arregui et al., 2022; Doll & Moy, 2022; Doll et al., 2023). This indicates that there are indeed similarities between the two: both emphasize constructive and solution-oriented reporting, recognize the importance of collaborative participation in creating shared values and common principles, and acknowledge social responsibility (McIntyre et al., 2018; Selvarajah, 2021; Hussain et al., 2023).

Indeed, constructive journalism is an approach based on social responsibility theory (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017). Peace journalism also shares a close connection with social responsibility theory. Firstly, they share common goals, both aiming to promote social well-being and improve public life through media practices. Social responsibility theory emphasizes that media should serve the interests of society, while peace journalism achieves this goal by offering peaceful resolution methods (Hussain, 2020). Secondly, some scholars view peace journalism as an application of social responsibility theory in a specific domain (Hussain et al., 2021; Apuke & Omar, 2022; Páez Valdez et al., 2023; Vochocová & Rosenfeldová, 2023). When reporting on

conflicts and wars, it encourages journalists to transcend the traditional "us versus them" reporting framework, present more comprehensive perspectives, consider the potential social impact of their reporting, and strive to promote peace and understanding (Doll et al., 2023). This aligns with the moral responsibilities that media should assume according to social responsibility theory.

Despite similarities, there are significant differences between peace journalism and constructive journalism. Firstly, in terms of historical development, peace journalism as a specialized term in journalism emerged nearly half a century earlier than constructive journalism. For decades, peace journalism has been consistently used by scholars as an analytical tool to examine news across various regions, with a much broader geographical range of practice than constructive journalism, and it continues to evolve (Lynch & Freear, 2023). Secondly, regarding focus, peace journalism primarily concentrates on conflict and war reporting, emphasizing the promotion of peaceful solutions by balancing different viewpoints. Constructive journalism, on the other hand, has a broader application, covering various social issues and topics (Lough & McIntyre, 2023). Moreover, in terms of core objectives, peace journalism emphasizes reducing violence and conflict, while constructive journalism focuses more on applying positive psychology, aiming to enhance overall social well-being through reporting (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018). Concerning orientation, peace journalism has a more explicit political and moral stance, namely promoting peace (Odiegwu-Enwerem et al., 2021). Constructive journalism, however, is more concerned with how news reporting can drive positive social change, but not necessarily with a clear political orientation. Lastly, in practical methods, peace journalism emphasizes presenting multiple perspectives and in-depth analysis of conflict backgrounds (Shaheen & Tarique, 2022). Constructive journalism is supported by six elements, with specific requirements ranging from exploring solutions and sources, interviewing techniques, to providing context (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007). These differences indicate that although they share common ground, peace and constructive journalism are independently developed paradigms, each with its unique theoretical foundations, practical methods, and areas of application. It can be said that they both belong to journalistic practices under the concept of social responsibility, rather than peace journalism, which falls under the umbrella of constructive journalism.

Prospective Journalism

This form of journalism is focused on the future. Based on the understanding of the concept's proposers and its literal meaning, it employs the concept of prospection, which involves the mental representation and evaluation of possible futures, including planning, prediction, and daydreaming. Journalists practicing this style direct their conversations with sources towards future possibilities, focusing on how problems might be solved and what kind of progress can be envisioned (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017).

The term "prospective journalism," coined by McIntyre and Gyldensted, currently lacks substantial academic literature to elucidate this journalistic approach, raising questions about its widespread recognition and validity. A critical examination of its foundational citations reveals a tenuous theoretical basis. Of the five citations used to define this concept, two draw from positive psychology, asserting the beneficial psychological effects of future-focused thinking (Seligman et al., 2013; Imagination Institute, 2023). Another tangentially relates to the success of *De Correspondent* and its content categorization (Pfauth, 2015). The remaining citations similarly emphasize the value of future-oriented thinking, albeit without an explicit psychological framework, and suggest its application in journalistic interviews (Burns et al.,

However, these sources primarily underscore the general importance of future-oriented thinking rather than substantiating prospective journalism as a distinct journalistic approach. They collectively emphasize that journalism should be forward-looking, which aligns with the future orientation characteristic of constructive journalism (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019). This raises the question of whether prospective journalism offers a truly novel concept or merely repackages existing ideas within the broader constructive journalism framework. Despite the ambiguity in the relationship between these two journalistic approaches, it's important to note that prospective journalism, as a "derivative concept" of constructive journalism, should also be grounded in the theory of social responsibility. This theoretical foundation is crucial for understanding the ethical and societal implications of future-oriented reporting.

Restorative Narrative

The concept of restorative narrative emerged from the non-profit organization Images & Voices of Hope (Peters, 2023). It is not a journalistic idea in itself, but rather a storytelling approach specifically tailored for themes like disaster, trauma, difficult time, and war (Fitzgerald et al., 2020). This approach emphasizes stories about recovery, restoration, and resilience in the aftermath or midst of difficult times that highlight how individuals or communities recover from adversity (Ray et al., 2019). It's characterized by covering the deeper roots of conflicts and the recovery efforts that follow, rather than just the immediate impact of disasters or tragedies. The selected papers suggest that restorative narrative is primarily applied in fields such as literature, health studies and environmental psychology (Kirkland & Price, 2022; Crawford, 2017; Ratcliffe, 2021; Nukarinen et al., 2022). This delineates this narrative's unique role in emphasizing recovery and resilience, distinctly focusing on the aftermath of challenging events rather than the events themselves.

In the field of journalism, restorative narrative is seen as an emerging type of journalistic storytelling. It aims to go beyond current news reporting, focusing on the recovery process after events to help individuals and communities move forward after hardships (Dahmen, 2016). As the subject of the narrative is real events, unlike literary techniques, it places particular emphasis on the actual impact and function of the "story" on society (Dahmen, 2019). Therefore, in this specific context, restorative narrative has developed some unique characteristics.

Restorative narratives in journalism emphasize five key elements. First, authenticity is central, reporting real experiences while balancing hope and reality, focusing on what's being rebuilt rather than what's broken (Dahmen, 2016). Furthermore, continuous inquiry reflects progress, showcasing practical solutions and human resilience, while reducing negative emotions and inspiring empathy and hope. Moreover, the narrative endings are open-ended, highlighting ongoing progress and future possibilities rather than offering a final conclusion, encouraging continued audience engagement (Fitzgerald et al., 2020). In addition to this, social responsibility drives these stories, aiming to inspire community actions such as donations or volunteering and directing broader attention to societal issues. Lastly, emotional depth and inclusivity provide a comprehensive view of human experiences, incorporating diverse voices and perspectives beyond mainstream discourse (Dahmen, 2019; Fitzgerald et al., 2020). Together, these elements aim to offer a more hopeful, engaging, and authentic perspective on news stories.

However, restorative narrative also faces some challenges and criticisms. One of the main issues is how to avoid over-beautifying or simplifying complex recovery processes. Critics worry that

this narrative approach might ignore or downplay ongoing problems, giving a false sense of progress. Another challenge is conveying hope and positive change while maintaining journalistic objectivity. Journalists need to carefully balance not exaggerating the positive aspects while not ignoring real difficulties. Furthermore, long-term follow-up reporting also places higher demands on the resources of news organizations and journalists' time management.

Distinguishing Restorative Narrative from Constructive Journalism

Some scholars believe that restorative narrative and constructive journalism have many similarities, such as the emphasis on social responsibility, the focus on positive values and emotions, and the emphasis on potential solutions (Schäfer et al., 2022).

However, there are also some key differences between them. Firstly, constructive journalism, as a journalistic concept, can be applied to any type of news, including daily news reports, investigative reporting, etc. It can also be applied to any news event theme, including political news, livelihood news, etc., while maintaining the overall basic principles and functions of journalism (Overgaard, 2021). Restorative narrative, on the other hand, is a tool-like narrative technique that can be used whenever the writing style requires it (Fitzgerald et al., 2020). In terms of subject matter, it specifically seeks out stories of recovery, resilience, and rebuilding after significant challenges or traumas (Quishpe et al., 2022).

Secondly, although both emphasize the application of positive psychology, constructive journalism has proposed constructive elements based on journalistic principles, successfully transforming this concept into an operable journalistic concept, and reporting facts and searching for information in an objective and fair manner (Lough & McIntyre, 2023). However, restorative narrative, as a narrative method, emphasizes storytelling and plot, requires shaping character images, is more subjective, and at the same time places a stronger emphasis on emotional storytelling and building deeper connections between the audience and the subjects of the story (Fitzgerald et al., 2020; Schäfer et al., 2022).

Indeed, the degree of emphasis on emotion is the third difference between the two. Constructive journalism uses elements such as solutions and future orientation not merely to evoke positive emotions in the audience, but to engage audiences in thinking about and potentially acting on social issues (Rusch et al., 2022). But restorative narrative seeks to inspire deeper emotional connections and personal reflections in the audience, potentially leading to individual or community action (Dahmen, 2019).

Public Journalism

Public journalism (also known as civic journalism) is a journalistic movement that emerged in the early 1990s in the United States, with its theoretical foundations traceable to Jürgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere (Bro, 2019; Hofmann, 2021). This approach emphasizes the crucial role of news media in fostering rational public discussion and democratic participation (Pearce & Rodgers, 2020). Public journalism aims to redefine journalistic work by placing the public at the center of the news process, strengthening communities and democracy through the encouragement of citizen engagement (Gregory, 2022).

With the development of digital technologies and social media, the practice of public journalism has gradually evolved, incorporating more interactive elements such as citizen journalism and user-generated content (Cammaerts, 2024). Nevertheless, professional journalists continue to play a central role in guiding public participation and promoting the public interest. Under this

concept, journalists are not merely information transmitters, but also take on multiple roles: facilitators of public discussion (St. John & Johnson, 2021), catalysts for community engagement (Pearce & Rodgers, 2020), civic mediators (Hujanen et al., 2021), social watchdogs (Cammaerts, 2024), educators and guides (Thorson et al., 2020), as well as conveyors of emotion and empathy (Buoncompagni, 2023).

Similarities with Other Approaches

It shares relationships with other journalistic approaches, such as participatory, slow, and citizen journalism. While all these approaches seek to address perceived shortcomings in traditional journalism, they do so with different emphases and methods. Public journalism and slow journalism, for instance, both aim to improve upon traditional journalism, but with distinct focuses: public journalism is more community-oriented and action-driven, whereas slow journalism prioritizes in-depth, long-term storytelling and analysis (Serrano-Puche, 2020; Thorson et al., 2020).

Indeed, public, participatory, and citizen journalism share a common goal of involving the audience more deeply in the journalistic process, but their methods differ. Public journalism, which emerged earlier, focused on fostering civic engagement and encouraging public participation in democratic processes through structured and formal approaches, often utilizing organized events and forums to gather public input (St. John & Johnson, 2021). In contrast, participatory journalism, evolving from citizen journalism with the advancement of social media technologies, is more decentralized and spontaneous. It allows for organic audience contributions through digital platforms, offering a more flexible and adaptive model that aligns with the interactive nature of the digital age (Mutsvairo & Salgado, 2022).

The evolution from public journalism to participatory and citizen journalism reflects the changes in technology and media consumption habits. However, the core philosophical goal of engaging the audience remains consistent across these approaches. Notably, the role of professional journalists has shifted across these models. In public journalism, journalists act as primary participants and guides, helping the public engage in civic affairs and democratic discussions (Ross, 2021). In participatory and citizen journalism, their role has weakened to that of information collaborators or platform providers, with the public becoming the primary producers and disseminators of information (Grieves, 2021; Togtarbay et al., 2024).

Differences Between Public and Constructive Journalism

Constructive journalism is most closely associated with public journalism, having developed as a new approach based on the latter, which had begun to lose momentum (Aitamurto & Varma, 2018; McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018; Bro, 2023). Both Gyldensted (2015) and McIntyre (2015), prominent figures in the field, view constructive journalism as a significant continuation and development of public journalism, sharing the same "DNA" and embracing a constructive role. This perspective is widely accepted among constructive journalism researchers.

Constructive journalism inherits public journalism's core principles of emphasizing civic engagement and social responsibility (Abdenour et al., 2021). However, it places greater emphasis on reporting solutions, progress, and positive changes (Lough & McIntyre, 2023). Unlike public journalism, which calls for journalists to actively facilitate democratic dialogue, constructive journalism seeks to present a more comprehensive view of reality by balancing the reporting of problems and solutions. This approach aims to inspire hope and motivate action among the public while maintaining journalistic integrity (McIntyre, 2020).

Both these journalistic approaches challenge the traditional "objective" news model, striving to better serve the public interest and democratic processes without compromising the integrity of journalism ([Lough & McIntyre, 2018](#); [van Antwerpen & Fielding, 2023](#)). They differ in that constructive journalism, rather than directly organizing civic participation, focuses more on the framing and social effects of news reporting. It emphasizes that journalists should understand and consider the potential social impact of their reporting, presenting news in a way that promotes positive change. Together, these two approaches represent the news industry's ongoing reflection on and innovative attempts to redefine its social role.

The key distinction between these two approaches lies in their focus and methodologies. Constructive journalism places greater emphasis on the framing of news reports and their social effects, rather than directly organizing citizen participation activities ([Hermans & Drok, 2018](#); [McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018](#)). It stresses that journalists should understand and consider the potential social impact of their reporting, presenting news in a way that promotes positive change. In contrast, public journalism focuses more on creating opportunities and platforms for citizen engagement ([Lillebuen & Shamchuk, 2023](#)).

Furthermore, constructive journalism more systematically applies research findings from behavioral sciences and positive psychology, providing a more solid theoretical foundation for journalistic practice ([McIntyre, 2015](#); [Mast et al., 2019](#)). This evolution from public journalism to constructive journalism represents a new phase in the movement of journalistic reform. While preserving the core concept of journalistic social responsibility from public journalism, it offers more operational methods to achieve social impact through news reporting ([Bro, 2023](#)). This development reflects the journalism industry's ongoing exploration of how to better serve the public interest and promote social progress in an ever-changing social environment. It demonstrates the continuous efforts of journalism to adapt and innovate in response to societal needs and challenges. The transition from public journalism to constructive journalism signifies a shift in approach: from directly facilitating public participation to strategically framing news content to inspire positive change ([Ermoshina, 2024](#)). This evolution maintains the commitment to social responsibility while providing more concrete, psychologically-informed strategies for achieving meaningful impact through journalism ([Lough & McIntyre, 2019](#); [McIntyre & Lough, 2021](#)).

Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism is a form of news production that emerged at the turn of the 21st century, characterized by ordinary citizens actively participating in the process of gathering, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information without professional journalistic training ([Mutsvairo & Salgado, 2022](#); [Togtarbay et al., 2024](#)). Typically occurring outside traditional media structures, it represents a significant shift in the news ecosystem. It emphasizes grassroots participation and interaction, redefining the relationship between news creators and consumers ([Chen, 2020](#); [Nah & Yamamoto, 2020](#); [Horoub, 2023](#)). This form of journalism goes beyond mere content production to encompass news consumption and dissemination, embodying a form of civic engagement ([Molina et al., 2021](#)). By emphasizing "conspiracy, cooperation, and collaboration," citizen journalism reflects a new understanding of news audiences and their modes of engagement, fostering a more participatory and interactive approach to news reporting and dissemination ([Togtarbay et al., 2024](#)). This evolution in journalism practice has fundamentally altered the traditional boundaries between professional journalists and their audiences, creating a more dynamic and inclusive news environment.

Citizen journalism empowers ordinary people to challenge mainstream narratives, address social issues, and promote diverse perspectives through creative and often digital means, as seen in Lebanon's You Stink movement where citizens used social media to reframe the garbage crisis and corruption issues, and in Brazil's slow journalism coverage of mining disasters, which gave voice to affected communities and exposed long-term impacts of corporate negligence (Alnemr et al., 2020; Alarcón Zayas & Bouhaben, 2021; Kermani & Adham, 2021; Das & Ahmed, 2022).

Participants in citizen journalism can be categorized into different types, such as active participants, quasi-journalists, media watchdogs, and community-oriented reporters (Goyanes & Gil de Zúñiga, 2021). Citizen journalism encompasses a wide range of activities, including providing first-hand information during events, crises, or socio-political occurrences through smartphones and social media (Leyshon & Rogers, 2020; Horoub, 2023); writing opinion pieces, reports, and documentaries; posting relevant content on blogs or personal social media accounts (Nah & Yamamoto, 2020); commenting on existing news stories; uploading photos and videos; and writing news stories for online news platforms (Peifer et al., 2024). The aim of citizen journalism is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, comprehensive, and relevant information to meet the needs of a democratic society. It is often viewed as an alternative or complement to mainstream journalism, frequently offering first-hand accounts of events (Fang et al., 2024). With the proliferation of the internet and smartphones, the influence of citizen journalism has grown significantly, transforming traditional methods of news production and distribution (Tshabangu, 2021).

The Relationship of Citizen Journalism to Constructive Journalism

Constructive journalism is a relatively new journalistic movement, but its roots can be traced back to earlier forms of journalism, including community journalism, public journalism, and citizen journalism (McIntyre, 2015). Gyldensted (2015) observes that both approaches share the same DNA. Both aim to integrate news into the democratic process, striving to engage the public and spark public debate. This suggests that constructive journalism has, to some extent, built upon the foundations laid by citizen journalism and other earlier forms of alternative journalism. Constructive journalism and citizen journalism, while both relatively recent developments in the field of journalism, have distinct characteristics and theoretical foundations.

The theoretical underpinnings of these two journalistic approaches differ significantly. Constructive journalism is grounded in social responsibility theory, which posits that media should be accountable to society and the public, going beyond merely objective reporting of facts (McIntyre et al., 2018). Instead, it should promote public welfare, enhance social understanding, and foster positive change. Media, according to this theory, has an obligation to provide accurate, fair, and beneficial information to support informed decision-making by citizens. In contrast, citizen journalism is based on the importance of "democratic dialogue" and "public sphere discussion" (Nah & Yamamoto, 2020; Peifer et al., 2024). It emphasizes the right of citizens to participate in news production and information dissemination, viewing this as a core component of democratic society (Xu & Zhao, 2022). The underlying principle is that every individual should have the opportunity to be a producer and disseminator of information (Kermani & Adham, 2021).

Another key distinction lies in the level and nature of citizen participation. Citizen journalism strongly emphasizes direct participation of ordinary citizens in the news process, such as submitting photos or stories (Tse & Spiezio, 2022). Constructive journalism, on the other hand, incorporates this kind of participation as one of its six elements, termed "co-creation" (Hermans

& Gyldensted, 2019). It implies a structured collaboration between professional journalists and citizens. This approach aims to leverage both the expertise of trained journalists and the diverse perspectives of community members, potentially leading to more comprehensive reporting (Grijalva, 2018). Meanwhile, it also focuses on how professional journalists can report news in a constructive manner, placing greater emphasis on journalistic principles (Bødker, 2019; Tshabangu & Salawu, 2022).

The content focus also differs between these two approaches. Research indicates that citizen journalists tend to create news stories based on their personal interests and experiences, or report on information from local organizations with which they are affiliated (Weder et al., 2023). In contrast, constructive journalism places more emphasis on solution-oriented reporting, going beyond merely presenting problems (Loizzo et al., 2018).

Despite their differences, both constructive journalism and citizen journalism have emerged as responses to the growing trend of negative reporting and polarizing views in traditional news media (Bødker, 2019; Antonopoulos et al., 2020). They both attempt to provide more balanced and constructive news coverage (Peifer et al., 2024; Rojas-Calderón, 2024). This shared goal reflects a common recognition of the need for journalism to evolve in response to societal challenges and changing public expectations. Indeed, while the underlying principles differ, citizen journalism can be justifiably grouped with approaches such as constructive journalism for comparative analysis due to their shared public orientation, as mentioned, they both focus on the "public attention" (Gyldensted, 2011). This common foundation of public-focused reporting underpins these diverse journalistic approaches, uniting them despite their distinct theoretical bases.

Connecting Citizen Journalism and Public Journalism

In fact, citizen journalism bears a striking resemblance to another concept, public journalism, with which it is often closely associated yet subtly distinct. A key difference lies in the driving force behind the news activity. In public journalism, which emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a response to declining public engagement with traditional media, the news industry takes the lead (Buoncompagni, 2023). The public is mobilized and organized as a secondary participant, with professional journalists remaining the primary decision-makers (Ferrucci et al., 2020). Public journalism often focuses on local issues and community problem-solving, aiming to directly influence public policy and decision-making processes. In contrast, citizen journalism, which gained prominence with the rise of digital technologies and social media in the 2000s, represents news activities where the public, empowered by technology, takes the lead (Walters, 2024). Citizen journalists, free from the framework and control of professional media, independently gather, produce, and disseminate news content (Pain, 2024). The scope of citizen journalism can be broader, covering topics from hyperlocal to global issues, depending on the interests and access of individual citizen journalists (Maryani et al., 2021).

Participatory Journalism

Participatory journalism, as its name suggests, refers to the involvement of audiences in the production process of professional news (Vos & Thomas, 2024). This approach is almost identical to citizen journalism, representing its evolved form in the digital media environment (Oumlil, 2023). It also intersects with other journalistic approaches, such as solutions journalism (Poets et al., 2023), public journalism (Pearce & Rodgers, 2020), service journalism (Carpes Da Silva & Sanseverino, 2020), and public service journalism (Lamuedra Graván et al., 2020). The

participation in this form of journalism can be both active and passive, occurring at various stages of news production, including the formation, dissemination, and interpretation of news. Active participation methods include user-generated content (UGC), reader comments, crowdfunding news projects, news games, storytelling, and membership programs. Passive participation can take the form of reading and discussing news ([Engelke, 2023](#)).

The development of participatory journalism has closely followed the evolution of the internet. Particularly from the late 2000s to early 2010s, participatory journalism rapidly expanded in the digital environment ([Wold, 2022](#)). Audiences began directly engaging in news production and discussion through platforms such as social media, blogs, and comment sections, blurring the boundaries of traditional journalism ([Engelke, 2023](#)). Subsequently, in the 2010s, news organizations started exploring more effective ways to manage and utilize audience participation. They worked on establishing methods to encourage participation while maintaining news quality and ethical standards, leading to a diversified and standardized state of this journalistic concept ([Krstic, 2024](#)). In the 2020s, with the gradual integration of artificial intelligence into the news industry, audience engagement has become an increasingly important issue, which is also the focal point of this journalistic approach ([Vos & Thomas, 2024](#)). From 2020 to the present, research in this field has primarily been based in the United States, but it has also been characterized by diversity. There have been discussions on media practices in Germany, Norway, Serbia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Morocco, India, Japan, Brazil, and others, reflecting the global reach and varied applications of participatory journalism.

In the reviewed literature, scholars have focused their attention primarily on either the audience or media industry and practitioners. On one hand, through examining journalistic practices, it's evident that audiences play diverse roles in participatory journalism, positively influencing news content generation and dissemination by providing data, sharing personal stories, and participating in discussions ([Martin et al., 2024](#)). However, audience distrust of online environments, privacy concerns, and aversion to social media limit the number of actual participants ([Pantic, 2020](#); [Mentzel et al., 2024](#)). Scholars unanimously agree that enhancing participation is the responsibility of media organizations and practitioners. Proposed solutions include developing strategies to understand needs, spark audience interest, and encourage engagement, or establishing real-time interactive platforms to reduce participation barriers ([Korenaga & Ogawa, 2023](#); [Yang, 2024](#)).

On the other hand, in papers focusing on journalists and newsrooms, scholars define them as guardians of professional boundaries ([Riedl, 2023](#)), innovators under political pressure ([Litvinenko & Toepfl, 2021](#)), professional "colleagues" and gatekeepers of user-generated content ([Reader, 2021](#)), implementers of participatory journalism practices ([Schmidt & Lawrence, 2020](#)), and promoters and participants in community development ([Mihailidis & Gamwell, 2022](#)). This highlights the need for journalists to adapt and flexibly respond to various challenges, maintaining professionalism while opening spaces for participation. The desire for public engagement in news inevitably necessitates consideration of the critical function news professionals serve in facilitating participation, upholding professional standards, and navigating evolving external conditions.

Ethical Considerations in Participatory Journalism

The rise of participatory journalism has brought new challenges to journalistic ethics. Scholars have discussed the ethical dilemmas in this field from multiple angles, revealing the complex moral issues faced in the practice of participatory journalism. The core ethical challenges can be

summarized in three interrelated dimensions: balancing transparency and privacy, distributing power and responsibility, and weighing journalistic values against moral obligations. Firstly, the balance between transparency and privacy involves the conflict between information disclosure and the protection of individual rights. While pursuing information transparency, how to protect participants' privacy rights and handle potential conflicts of interest has become a key factor affecting the credibility of news ([Chung & Nah, 2022](#)). Secondly, the issue of power and responsibility distribution is particularly prominent when dealing with vulnerable groups. While empowering these groups with a voice, media also bear the responsibility of protecting them from potential harm. This dual role highlights the complexity of power restructuring in participatory journalism ([Dvořák, 2024](#)). Lastly, the balance between news values and moral obligations reflects the fundamental ethical challenges faced by participatory journalism. From a moral philosophy perspective, in the new media environment driven by new technologies, traditional journalistic ethical frameworks need to be readjusted to adapt to more complex moral situations. This adjustment concerns the repositioning of journalism's social role and moral responsibilities ([Lynch, 2021](#)).

Intersections of Participatory Journalism with Other Approaches

The intersection of participatory journalism and citizen journalism lies in their emphasis on the decentralization of news production. Both approaches allow ordinary citizens to tell stories that may not be fully covered by mainstream media, or to report in ways that differ from mainstream approaches ([Horoub, 2023](#); [Oumlil, 2023](#)). This bottom-up news production method is a common feature of both approaches, leading some scholars to argue that they can be considered as one from this perspective. However, participatory journalism typically occurs on digital media platforms and encompasses a broader range of participation methods beyond allowing ordinary citizens to create news content. Indeed, audience interaction with news content is often real-time. This interactive nature means that audiences are not merely passive recipients of information; they can influence the direction and expression of news content in multiple ways ([Mutsvairo & Salgado, 2022](#)). This level of engagement transforms the audience role from passive consumers to active participants in the news-making process, distinguishing participatory journalism with its more comprehensive and dynamic involvement in the digital media landscape ([Spyridou & Avraamidou, 2023](#)).

Some scholars argue that combining participatory and solutions journalism in news practice can jointly promote the resolution of social issues and community empowerment ([Poets et al., 2023](#)). Taking vulnerable communities like the favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil as an example, this form of "participatory solutions journalism" not only documented the impact of the pandemic on the community but also helped community members find solutions, enhancing their agency and sense of participation.

Furthermore, public journalism and participatory journalism share common goals of promoting social engagement and democratic discussion through news reporting. However, participatory journalism relies more heavily on digital technology, and audience participation forms are more diverse and direct ([Pearce & Rodgers, 2020](#)). Public journalism, on the other hand, focuses more on how news organizations can drive the resolution of social issues through reporting and community interaction ([Buoncompagni, 2023](#)). With the development of social media, the boundaries between these two approaches have become increasingly blurred. Social media, as a tool for public journalism, has further enhanced the effectiveness of participatory journalism ([Sinha, 2023](#)).

Positive Journalism

"Positive journalism," a term coined by Gyldensted and McIntyre in 2015, refers to news reporting that prioritizes emotionally uplifting stories with limited societal impact, often at the expense of journalism's traditional watchdog role and public information functions (Gyldensted, 2015). This concept evolved from Gyldensted's earlier master's thesis, which introduced "the positive journalism community" as an umbrella term encompassing five journalistic approaches: civic journalism, citizen journalism, community journalism, communitarian journalism, and constructive news (Gyldensted, 2011). Despite its initial conceptualization, positive journalism as a distinct framework has not gained widespread acceptance in subsequent media discourse and practice.

In academic literature related to constructive journalism, positive journalism is primarily used as a contrast to clarify what the "positive" aspect of constructive journalism is not (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017; Lough & McIntyre, 2023). These papers often highlight that some journalists struggle to distinguish between positive and constructive journalism in practical application. Notably, a comprehensive exploration of positive journalism's definition and core principles is largely absent from this discourse.

A review of Scopus-indexed papers on positive journalism reveals a similar lack of focus on its fundamental definition. In fact, one paper even suggests that positive and constructive journalism are indistinguishable (Chen & Tian, 2024). In details, these studies explore various aspects of positivity in journalism, such as how journalists balance professional ethics with positive messaging (Sadri et al., 2024), whether this positivity could constitute a new journalistic value (Chen & Tian, 2024), the role of positive orientation in thematic news coverage (He & Caple, 2020), the impact of positive framing on narratives across different media environments (Duffield, 2020; Perreault & Nölleke, 2022), the manifestation of this approach in actual reporting (Singh, 2020), and the media's role during epochal events like the COVID-19 pandemic (Steppat et al., 2020).

Scholars tend to conceptualize positive journalism not as a distinct journalistic approach, but rather in line with Gyldensted's (2011) notion of "positive journalistic stories." This perspective aligns positive journalism more closely with narrative techniques like restorative narrative—essentially viewing it as a writing or storytelling method that employs a positive angle to construct narratives.

Contrasting Positive and Constructive Journalism

Constructive journalism, an approach derived from positive psychology, interprets "positive" primarily through its six constructive elements (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019). This approach stands in stark contrast to positive journalistic stories. The latter focuses on presenting narratives with strong positive emotional value, often lacking significant social importance and devoid of in-depth societal analysis or problem-solving proposals (McIntyre, 2015). Its aim is not to fulfill core journalistic functions (such as government oversight or public information), but rather to convey positive emotions and evoke empathy (Gyldensted, 2015). Conversely, Constructive Journalism places major emphasis on upholding these core journalistic functions (Bro, 2023). However, in practice, some journalists conflate these two concepts, reflecting a degree of ambiguity in understanding the distinct goals and methodologies of these two journalistic forms (Aščić, 2023). This confusion underscores the need for clearer delineation between constructive journalism's nuanced approach to positivity and the more emotionally-driven focus of positive

journalistic stories.

Good News

Good news is a historically resonant term with a well-established definition. It is characterized as the presentation of positive, pleasant events or stories ([Aust, 1985](#)), aiming to evoke positive emotional responses in the audience ([Veitch & Griffitt, 1976](#)), by giving proper weight to achievements, successes, and triumphs (Lewis & Dorothy, 1994). In literature discussing "good news", scholars and journalists across various applications and reporting topics consistently view it as a counterpoint to the "bad news" that dominated 20th-century mainstream media ([Galicjan & Vestre, 1987](#)). This perspective represents a departure from the "bad news is good news" paradigm in journalistic theory and practice. The aim is to present a more balanced view of the world, where the news doesn't just focus on negative aspects but also highlights changes that offer hope and uplift the human spirit, thereby marking the continual progress of mankind.

Both "good news" and "positive journalism" are represented by currently active websites showcasing news content aligned with their respective philosophies ([‘About GNN’, 2024](#); [Positive News, 2024](#)). Notably, Good News Network describes its content as "positive stories", while the Positive News website identifies itself as "good journalism". The terms "good news", "good journalism", "positive news", "positive journalism", and "positive journalistic stories" are often used interchangeably ([McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017](#)). This conceptual overlap is further supported by McIntyre ([2015](#)), who cited Good News Network as an example of media outlets publishing positive news, characterized by uplifting and upbeat stories. Consequently, the distinction between good news and constructive journalism mirrors that between positive and constructive journalism.

Unlike more established journalistic approaches, positive journalism and good news are not rooted in theoretical foundations such as social responsibility theory. Instead, they emerged as practical responses to contemporary media environments, reflecting on and addressing current journalistic practices.

Service Journalism

In the first academic special issue on constructive journalism published by *Journalism Practice* in 2018, From & Nørgaard Kristensen ([2018](#)) proposed a strong relationship between constructive and service journalism, comparing them within the same category. Based on an analysis of the quantity and distribution of collected literature by this study, scholars' attention to this journalism approach is not extensive, and there are some divergences in the understanding of "service." The mainstream definition holds that service journalism primarily focuses on providing practical information and guidance to the audience, helping them cope with challenges and decisions in daily life ([Blanchett et al., 2024](#)). Service journalism typically covers content including consumption, lifestyle, cultural events, as well as moral issues. However, different perspectives exist. One view interprets "service" as journalists providing upward service to meet the requirements of media institutions or the state, rather than downward service based on the needs of consumers or the public. In this interpretation, the provider of service remains the journalist, but the recipient changes from consumers to the media institutions and national governments where journalists work ([Elsheikh et al., 2024](#)). Another perspective further expands the concept of the service object, considering that news serves a broader social responsibility ([Rodgers, 2020](#)). Under this view, service journalism has almost become synonymous with social responsibility.

Under the mainstream definition, service journalism is defined as a journalistic approach where journalists express their commitment to serving their audience (Eide & Knight, 1999). This involves a readiness to contribute to solving everyday problems and providing pleasures of consumption. It represents a shift in the social function of news, moving away from merely disseminating information to selecting what is relevant, especially in times of information overload (Eide, 2017). This concept emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, reflecting the commercialization and tabloidization of news (Eide, 2017). An example of service journalism can be seen in sections of newspapers like *The New York Times*' "Your Money" (2023), which focuses on content such as personal finance, illustrating a practical application of this journalistic approach. In summary, service journalism has several attributes and characteristics: First, audience-centric: it aims to meet audience needs, providing information directly helpful to daily life, focused on solving practical problems, and offering advice and guidance (From & Nørgaard Kristensen, 2018). Second, practical content: it is more compatible with news topics such as health, consumer rights, travel, lifestyle, and cultural consumption, aiming to provide useful, actionable advice or information to the audience (Blanchett et al., 2024). Third, consumer-oriented: it positions the audience as consumers, clients, or individuals, rather than in the traditional role of citizens (Eide, 2017). Therefore, it focuses on personal quality of life and consumer experiences, rather than broader public affairs or social issues. Fourth, emphasis on participation and interactivity: it allows the audience to directly participate in news production and dissemination through comments, sharing, and user-generated content, thus also tending towards infotainment (From & Nørgaard Kristensen, 2018). However, it's important to note the risks associated with this journalistic perspective. Service journalism tends to be individualized and consumer-oriented, which may lead to superficial news content, neglect of public affairs, and reinforcement of consumerist ideology. Its commercialization tendency may also weaken the independence and credibility of news, potentially affecting the coverage of significant public issues.

Service Journalism versus Constructive Journalism

Service and constructive journalism share a common goal of adapting to an engaged audience's need for guidance in a complex world (Mellado et al., 2023). Both approaches redefine the role of journalism, focusing on a more audience-centric, solution-oriented perspective (Ferrucci, 2015). However, they differ in their historical contexts and focus areas. Service journalism is traditionally linked with "soft news" such as lifestyle and consumer topics, emphasizing individual and everyday life aspects with a strong connection to consumption and market (Eide, 2017; From & Nørgaard Kristensen, 2018). The latter, conversely, tackles broader societal issues with a positive, solution-focused approach (Baden et al., 2019). Furthermore, service journalism emerged as a natural market demand accompanying economic development at the time, whereas the latter was an initiative actively launched by journalism practitioners based on their consideration of the concept of social responsibility (Haagerup, 2008; Gyldensted, 2015).

Service as an Emerging News Value in This Journalistic Paradigm

Beyond interpreting service journalism, there is another category of papers discussing service as a journalistic value (Hellmueller & Arias, 2020; Harlow & Chadha, 2021). This analysis helps to understand the core characteristics of service journalism by examining how the service role manifests in different types of news coverage, as well as its application in various cultural contexts and major events. It provides insights into the essential features and importance of service reflected in the journalism field. For example, the service role is more likely to appear

in economic, social affairs, and miscellaneous news, rather than in political, police, and court news. Although the manifestation of the service role in different news topics may be influenced by national culture and the structural characteristics of news organizations, it also gives certain news topics a unique character (Mellado et al., 2021). Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, news content from 37 countries was found to be performing a service role, becoming a key way to provide advice to the public (Hallin et al., 2023). Further, in quality news media in the Czech Republic, news reports consistently have a service role, which doesn't change with the broader economic environment but does vary in proportion according to media ownership (Tkaczyk, 2024). These conclusions, drawn from detailed examinations across different countries, types of journalists, and news topics, have significant practical implications. They demonstrate that the service value in news is increasingly highlighting its unique value in certain news topics, confirming the necessity of service journalism's existence.

Differentiating Service Journalism from Public Service Journalism

There is a concept that sounds very similar to service journalism but is distinct: public service journalism. It focuses on fostering a participatory relationship between the media and the public to enhance democratic processes (Cullinane, 2020). It is typically provided by public broadcasting institutions or non-profit news organizations (Lee, 2024). The aim is to go beyond just reporting news to actively engaging citizens in the conversation, helping them understand complex issues, and encouraging civic participation (Barnett et al., 2022). Public service journalism emphasizes the news organization's responsibility to the public, and often involves in-depth reporting and investigative journalism, focusing on public interest aspects of news, such as exposing corruption and monitoring government actions. This type of journalism is generally supported by public funds, often through government-funded media institutions (Costera Meijer, 2020). In contrast, service journalism primarily provides practical information and focuses more on daily life content. While it also serves the public, service journalism emphasizes immediate, actionable information and may sometimes have an entertainment aspect. The key distinction lies in their focus and approach: public service journalism emphasizes broader societal issues and democratic engagement, while service journalism concentrates on providing useful, everyday information to its audience (Eide, 2017; Blanchett et al., 2024).

Slow Journalism

Slow journalism, both a journalistic genre and a movement, can be defined as a practice that stands in opposition to fast news (Drok & Hermans, 2016; Manias-Muñoz et al., 2023). It emphasizes providing high-quality, authentic, and meaningful news content through extended periods of analysis, in-depth research, and contextual narrative (Mendes & Marinho, 2022). Unlike traditional news that prioritizes immediacy, slow journalism focuses on critical analysis, independence, and human values, typically employing in-depth reporting formats such as investigative reports, profound analyses, and long-form interviews (Manias-Muñoz et al., 2023). The primary objective of slow journalism is to enhance readers' understanding of news events and their background by extending both the time and distance involved in reporting. Scholars often examine this concept within the context of digital media, exploring its potential manifestations beyond text, which increases confidence in the future sustainability of media development (Fulton & Scott, 2022). Slow journalism is characterized by several key attributes: analytical timeliness, objectivity, depth, contextual background, information independence, stories with human value, reader engagement, and creativity (Manias-Muñoz et al., 2023; Le Masurier, 2016).

Some representative media practice cases exemplify slow journalism, such as the American "slow magazine" *The Atlantic* and British magazine *Delayed Gratification* (Manias-Muñoz et al., 2023). In academic literature, case studies of slow journalism from media or geopolitical perspectives are particularly prevalent, with the ratio of such papers to those focused on theoretical interpretation reaching 3:14, an overwhelming proportion not seen in literature on other journalistic approaches. These studies encompass a wide range of examples, including news projects directed by French artists, Denmark's *Kinfolk* magazine, Australia's ABC, and the American *Sports Illustrated*. The geographical distribution of research cases spans diverse global regions, including Spain, Estonia, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Lebanon, and India. These papers discuss the practices and challenges of slow journalism from various angles, emphasizing its contributions to news equity, community engagement, and the depth and quality of content. For instance, in Spanish-language news in Spain, Mexico, and Colombia, researchers found that incorporating slow journalism into cultural content, increasing open news that focuses on literary, cultural, creative, and free-thinking aspects, provides a feasible approach for delivering high-quality news practices (Peñafiel, 2020). In India, media outlets experimenting with slow journalism in podcasting have increased explanatory and narrative storytelling styles in their program content, moving away from the old journalistic norm that prioritized objectivity as the sole standard. Slow journalism has become a lens through which scholars observe media outside Europe and North America, bringing new forms and patterns of journalistic practice from countries not typically labelled as media powerhouses to the forefront of journalism studies (Gore Mehendale & Gokhale, 2021; Mehendale & Jaggi, 2023).

Despite its merits, slow journalism faces several challenges and limitations. One of the primary concerns is its potential audience reach. Slow journalism is most likely to attract individuals who are already interested in news, rather than those experiencing news fatigue. Consequently, it may not encompass all types of consumers and might fail to engage those who could benefit from it the most (Andersen, 2022). Furthermore, in the digital age, slow journalism confronts challenges related to economic sustainability and attracting a wide audience. A survey conducted among Spanish readers illustrates this issue: the majority of respondents expressed unwillingness to pay for slow journalism content (Manias-Muñoz et al., 2022). This reluctance creates a substantial obstacle in establishing a viable business model for this new media trend. Another study highlights the disconnect between the perceived value of slow journalism and consumers' willingness to financially support it (Siil & Kõuts-Klemm, 2023).

Exploring the Connection Between Slow Journalism and Constructive Journalism

An intriguing aspect of slow journalism is its close relationship with constructive journalism, as exemplified by the Dutch media outlet *De Correspondence*, which is considered a representative case for both approaches (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017; Manias-Muñoz et al., 2023). This shared appreciation for in-depth reporting and acknowledgment of social responsibility has created a strong link between these two journalistic movements. Indeed, the developmental trajectory of slow journalism closely resembles that of constructive journalism. First, both began garnering attention in academic and professional circles during the 2000s. In 2007, scholar Susan Greenberg formally introduced the term "slow journalism" to describe a more deliberate approach to news practice (Mendes & Marinho, 2022). Similarly, the term "constructive journalism" was officially established by Ulrik Haagerup as a journalism practitioner in 2008 (Haagerup, 2008). Second, these movements can be seen as evolutions of earlier journalistic trends. Slow journalism continues the tradition of the "new journalism" that emerged in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, characterized by its literary textual features (Le

Masurier, 2016; Mendes & Marinho, 2022). Constructive journalism, on the other hand, represents a further exploration of public journalism (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019). Third, academic journals have played a crucial role in advancing both new journalistic concepts. In 2016, *Digital Journalism* and *Journalism Practice* published two special editions dedicated to slow journalism. Following this, *Journalism Practice* and *Journalism* released special issues on constructive journalism in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Last, after these journalistic concepts were formally defined and gained recognition in academic circles, scholars discovered that practices aligned with both slow and constructive journalism had long been widespread in news media across many countries not traditionally considered media powerhouses (Allam, 2019; Alnemr et al., 2020).

Taken together, slow and constructive journalism, while sharing a commitment to social responsibility, in-depth reporting, and audience enlightenment, differ in their focus and application (Mendes & Marinho, 2022). Slow Journalism, often linked with literary journalism, emphasizes taking time for deeper reflection and investigation and typically involves audience collaboration (Drok & Hermans, 2016). CJ, on the other hand, is more solution-oriented, actively seeking to address societal challenges with potential solutions and present actionable, positive information (Li, 2022).

Shifting: From Umbrella Concept to Matrix Diagram

This study presents a systematic review of twelve journalism approaches, with constructive journalism at its core. The approaches examined include solutions journalism, peace journalism, prospective journalism, public journalism, citizen journalism, participatory journalism, positive journalism, service journalism, slow journalism, restorative narrative, and good news. These diverse approaches to journalism are interconnected in various ways, reflecting the evolving landscape of media practices and their societal impact.

The relationships between these approaches are multifaceted. Some of these journalistic styles fall under the broader umbrella of constructive journalism, sharing its foundational principles and objectives (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017). Others are united by their common adherence to social responsibility theory, emphasizing the media's role in promoting social welfare and democratic values (Lamuedra Graván et al., 2020; Engelke, 2023). While some approaches aim to convey a constructive role in journalism, seeking to impact society positively through their reporting and storytelling methods (Aitamurto & Varma, 2018).

Within this framework, a notable distinction can be drawn between approaches that primarily focus on the form of news production and those that address the requirements for news content. Public journalism, citizen journalism, and participatory journalism are primarily concerned with the mechanics and methodology of news production, emphasizing increased public involvement and democratization of the news-making process (Cullinane, 2020; St. John & Johnson, 2021; Spyridou & Avraamidou, 2023). These approaches seek to redefine the relationship between journalists, news organizations, and their audiences, often leveraging new technologies and platforms to facilitate greater public participation in news gathering and dissemination. In contrast, the remaining approaches, along with constructive journalism itself, primarily address the content and framing of news stories (Hussain et al., 2021; Lough & McIntyre, 2023). These content-focused approaches aim to shape the narrative, tone, and impact of journalism by emphasizing different aspects such as solution-oriented reporting, future-focused narratives, or stories that highlight positive developments and restorative processes in society.

This categorization highlights the dual nature of innovation in journalism: changes in how news is produced and gathered, and shifts in what is reported and how stories are framed. By examining these twelve approaches, this study provides insights into the diverse strategies employed by journalists and news organizations to fulfil their societal role and adapt to changing public expectations and media landscapes.

Scholars have made previous attempts to categorize these various journalism approaches. For instance, there have been proposed the concept of deliberative journalism (Ahva & Hautakangas, 2018), and socially responsible journalism (Hautakangas & Ahva, 2018). However, these classification attempts have been unable to encompass relevant approaches comprehensively and fail to clearly delineate the unique characteristics and distinctions between each approach.

To address these limitations, this study proposes a novel method of classification by introducing a matrix diagram approach, rather than relying on quadrants or umbrella categories. This new method aims to advance the understanding of various journalism approaches, their interrelationships, and their distinct contributions to the field; offers significant benefits for researchers and practitioners alike, providing a valuable tool for navigating the complex and dynamic landscape of modern journalism.

Since these approaches are all centered around constructive journalism, the first step is to summarize constructive journalism with a few key values based on an understanding of the literature, which will also encompass other approaches that share these key values with constructive journalism:

(1) Journalist Engagement (abbreviated as Journalist): Emphasizes the active role of journalists in the news-making process. This concept highlights the importance of journalists taking initiative and being proactively involved in shaping the narrative (McIntyre et al., 2018; Abdenour et al., 2021).

(2) Audience Engagement (Audience): Encourages active participation and involvement of the audience in the journalistic process. This concept recognizes the importance of two-way communication between newsrooms and their audience (Fuqoha et al., 2024).

(3) Problem-Solving Focus (Solving): Highlights the emphasis on finding solutions to societal issues. This approach moves beyond merely reporting problems to actively exploring and presenting potential solutions (McIntyre, 2017; Lough & McIntyre, 2021).

(4) Positive Emotional Impact (Positivity): Aims to create a positive emotional response in the audience. This does not mean ignoring negative news, but rather framing stories in a way that inspires hope and action rather than despair (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018; Seligman, 2019).

(5) Future Orientation (Future): Focuses on forward-looking perspectives in journalism. This concept involves considering long-term implications and potential future scenarios in news reporting (Hermans & Drok, 2018).

The next step is to summarize the key values from solutions journalism, peace journalism, positive journalism, service journalism, restorative narrative, and slow journalism:

(6) Specific News Event (Event): Refers to the focus of certain journalism approaches on particular types of events or situations. For instance, peace journalism specifically concentrates on war and conflict events (Doll, 2023).

(7) Writing Quality (Quality): Highlights the importance of high-quality, well-crafted writing in

journalism. This concept, drawn from slow journalism, emphasizes the value of thoughtful, nuanced, and well-researched content (Fulton & Scott, 2022; Broussard et al., 2023).

This set of seven key terms form the measurement dimensions along the horizontal and vertical axes of the matrix diagram. The matrix will illustrate the performance and focus areas of various news reporting methods across these crucial dimensions. By mapping different approaches to journalism onto these axes, the diagram will provide a visual representation of how each method emphasizes or addresses these key aspects of news reporting. This comparative display will allow for a clear and concise understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, and priorities of different journalistic techniques when evaluated against these essential criteria.

Journalist	slow		peace			public	
Audience						citizen & participatory	
Solving							
Positivity			positive & good news				
Event					solutions		
					service		
Future		prospective		constructive			
Quality			restorative				
	Quality	Future	Event	Positivity	Solving	Audience	Journalist

Figure 1. Matrix Diagram of Journalism Approaches

	journalist	audience	solving	positivity	event	future	quality
constructive journalism	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
solutions journalism	✓	✓	✓		✓		
peace journalism	✓		✓	✓	✓		
prospective journalism						✓	
restorative narrative				✓	✓		✓
public journalism	✓	✓					
citizen journalism		✓					
participatory journalism		✓					
positive journalism				✓	✓		
good news				✓	✓		
service journalism		✓	✓		✓		
slow journalism	✓	✓					✓

Figure 2. Comparison Table of Key Values in Journalism Approaches

From a horizontal analysis of journalism approaches based on key value coverage, the following conclusions can be drawn. *Constructive Journalism: The Most Comprehensive Approach.* It covers the most key values, encompassing five dimensions: future, positivity, solving, audience, and journalist. This extensive coverage indicates that this journalistic approach is highly comprehensive and multidimensional. It focuses on future developments while emphasizing positivity in news, problem-solving, audience engagement, and the role of journalists (Hermans & Drok, 2018). Constructive journalism represents an all-encompassing approach aimed at enhancing the impact and social value of news through multiple avenues.

Solutions Journalism and Peace Journalism: Specific Focus. Solutions journalism covers four key values but differs from constructive journalism in that it doesn't emphasize positivity. Instead, it focuses more on addressing specific social issues (Lough & McIntyre, 2021). Peace journalism also covers four key values but typically limits its reporting scope to specific conflict and peace-related topics (Cooper & Chilwa, 2024). Both demonstrate a focus on particular themes, emphasizing the practicality and impact of journalism in specific contexts.

Service Journalism, Slow Journalism, and Restorative Narrative: Functional Approaches. These methods each cover three key values. Service journalism focuses on providing practical information to audiences in civic-themed news (Ferrucci et al., 2020). Slow journalism emphasizes the depth and quality of reporting, while Restorative narrative uses storytelling techniques to instill hope in specific themes (Fitzgerald et al., 2020; Andersen, 2022). These approaches embody certain functionalities, delving deep into specific needs in news production. Although their focuses differ, they all emphasize the specific value of journalism in certain aspects.

Public Journalism, Positive Journalism, and Good News: Dual Key value Focus. These approaches each cover two key values, indicating more concentrated focus areas. Public journalism emphasizes the collaborative relationship between journalists and citizens (Pearce & Rodgers, 2020). Positive journalism and good news aim to influence readers by spreading positive, inspiring stories (Rice-Oxley, 2018; Chen & Tian, 2024). These methods all emphasize the social impact of news and audience relationships, but their coverage is relatively limited, focusing more on specific dimensions.

Citizen Journalism, Participatory Journalism, and Prospective Journalism: Single Key Value Focus. These approaches cover only one key value each, indicating very clear and narrow focus areas. Citizen journalism and participatory journalism prioritize audience engagement (Pain, 2024), while prospective journalism specifically focuses on future developments (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017). These methods are characterized by their concentration on a key element in news production. Although narrow in coverage, they possess depth and professionalism in their respective fields.

This horizontal analysis reveals the diversity and differences among various journalistic approaches. The number of key values covered reflects the comprehensiveness and focus of each approach. Methods covering more key values typically encompass broader areas in practice, while those with fewer key values often focus on a specific area or function. There exists complementarity between different journalistic approaches. Different methods can be flexibly chosen and combined based on the topic of reporting, audience needs, and journalists' objectives to achieve optimal news communication effects.

Indeed, from a vertical analysis of journalism approaches based on key value emphasis, vertical perspective, audience engagement is the most emphasized dimension, with seven approaches oriented towards it. This shift likely stems from the advent of the digital age, where audiences are no longer passive information receivers but active participants in news discussions and content generation, breaking the traditional unidirectional relationship between journalists and audiences in news production (Mellado et al., 2021; Ermoshina, 2024).

Moving on to another significant dimension, event orientation holds an important position in six journalistic approaches. However, these methods differ in their content treatment. For instance, solutions journalism tends to focus on social problems and challenges (Li, 2023), while peace journalism concentrates on peaceful resolutions in conflict events (Jan & Barclay, 2023). Restorative narrative aims to heal social trauma through storytelling, positive journalism and good news focus on uplifting stories, and service journalism addresses lifestyle topics (Schäfer et al., 2022).

Furthermore, journalist orientation and positivity orientation are each emphasized in five journalistic approaches. This highlights the dominant position of journalists in news production, where their judgments and actions become crucial (Standaert et al., 2021). At the same time, there's an increasing diversity of perspectives on balancing positivity and objectivity in traditional journalism. This reflects the industry's efforts to increase audience trust and engagement in the face of competition from social media and entertainment information.

Shifting the focus, problem-solving orientation is mentioned in four journalistic approaches. One of their reporting objectives is to address practical issues through reporting, whether responding to social problems or audience needs, emphasizing the practicality and functionality of news (McIntyre, 2017).

Lastly, future orientation and quality orientation each occupy two journalistic methods. This doesn't mean that other approaches disregard these two aspects, but rather that they don't consider them as their distinctive features or top priorities.

The results of this vertical analysis reveal that modern journalistic methods are undergoing a transformation from simple event reporting to more complex and interactive models. Audience engagement is at the core of this shift, with the news industry increasingly recognizing the importance of the audience and enhancing their sense of participation through various means. Meanwhile, event reporting remains a primary focus of academic thought on journalistic practice, ensuring the immediacy and relevance of news.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore the relationships and distinctions between constructive journalism and eleven other contemporary journalism approaches through a systematic review and the creation of a matrix diagram. The analysis revealed that while these approaches share common values—such as social responsibility, audience engagement, and the pursuit of positive social impact—they each bring unique perspectives and methodologies to the field of journalism.

Constructive journalism emerged as the most comprehensive approach, encompassing a wide range of key values, including future orientation, positivity, problem-solving, audience engagement, and the active role of journalists. This breadth allows constructive journalism to adapt to various journalistic needs and contexts, making it a versatile and impactful method.

However, the study also highlighted the distinctiveness of other approaches. For instance, solutions journalism and peace journalism focus more narrowly on specific types of events and solutions, while slow journalism and restorative narrative emphasize the quality and depth of reporting. These approaches, while sharing certain values with constructive journalism, offer alternative ways of achieving similar goals.

The introduction of the matrix diagram provided a visual tool to better understand how these approaches intersect and diverge across seven key dimensions: journalist engagement, audience engagement, problem-solving focus, positive emotional impact, future orientation, event specificity, and writing quality. This matrix not only clarified the similarities and differences among the approaches but also suggested new ways to categorize and conceptualize them within the broader landscape of modern journalism.

While this study offers a comparative analysis of twelve journalism approaches centered around constructive journalism, it also opens the door to several potential avenues for future research. One possible direction is to further refine the matrix diagram by including additional approaches as they emerge in the evolving media landscape, such as digital-native forms of journalism or hybrid practices that blend multiple methods. Another promising area of exploration could be the integration of constructive journalism with technology, such as artificial intelligence and data journalism, to assess how these modern tools can enhance or shift the practice of constructive reporting. Finally, future studies might delve deeper into the cultural and regional variations in how these journalism approaches are understood and applied, particularly in non-Western contexts where media dynamics can differ significantly.

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