

HANDOUT

Title of the presentation

Active Audiences and the Mainstream News Organizations

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Outline of the presentation

Background:

In the digital cross-media environment it is assumed that audiences not merely can – but also should – participate in journalism as actively as possible. But do newsrooms want their audiences to participate? This presentation aims to give a brief historical background of how media organisations have thought about their recipients before and during digitalisation.

Key concepts:

While there may be many ways how active audiences may contribute to journalism, one of them is media accountability. The concept denotes “voluntary or involuntary processes by which the media answer directly or indirectly to their society for the quality and/or consequences of publication”.

At the level of news practices, media accountability may be pursued by “actor transparency” (telling who journalists are), “production transparency” (telling what journalists do at the moment), and “responsiveness” (correcting errors, answering to questions and criticism).

Recommendations:

Rather than taking ‘audience participation’ in journalism for granted, we should think thoroughly where and how it may contribute to public communication. One of such areas may be media accountability. If news organisations became more transparent about what they are doing, people would have opportunities to better evaluate the quality and ethical standards of journalism. This would not automatically make citizens trust in journalism, but it may pave way towards that objective.

References:

Bivens, Rena Kim (2008). The Internet, Mobile Phones and Blogging. *Journalism Practice* 2, 1, pp. 113–129. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17512780701768568>

Fengler, Susanne et al. eds. (2014). *Journalists and Media Accountability: An international study of news people in the digital age*. New York: Peter Lang.

About the Speaker

Heikki Heikkilä (Dr. of Social Sciences) has participated in several comparative research projects on journalism cultures. One of them focused on the development of media accountability and transparency in journalism in 14 countries, including Tunisia (MediaAct). He has also published extensively on audiences in the digital era. Heikkilä is co-editor of the forthcoming book *Journalism and the NSA Revelations: Privacy, Security and the Press* (Tauris/Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism).

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