# "We Need to Keep Moving": Strategies of News Media to Attract Young Audiences in Germany

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**Abstract**

Which kind of news sources is favoured by young media users? Which kind of information mediation is popular among them? And how is the news paradigm changing? Established news organisations struggle in part heavily to enthuse young target groups for journalism. At the same time, social media are increasingly providing alternative ways of addressing audiences. This chapter uses data from a qualitative survey among editors-in-chief of Millennials news media in Germany to discuss how editorial strategies change with respect to the perceived transformation of audience expectations by journalists.

**Keywords** Millennials, adolescents and young adults, media use, journalism, audience expectations, editorial strategies, opinionated news

## 1.   Introduction

What should newsmakers know and what should the general public expect from them? These not at all trivial questions were discussed by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel in their textbook about the "elements of journalism" that became an instant hit in journalism education when it was published in 2001 (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014). Initially, the book took an exhorting stand to strengthen the self-assurance of professional standards in the professional field of journalism, first and foremost about accuracy and neutrality in serving the public by thorough and reliable reporting – against the backdrop of the historic recession of the US press market in the first decade of the 21$^{st}$ century, when many newspapers had to cease regular distribution and thousands of journalists lost their jobs (cf. McChesney and Nichols, 2010). In recent history, however, the book – now in its third revised edition – turned into a resource in search for solutions. Why have so many young media users turned their back on traditional news sources? How and where could newspaper publishers, radio stations and television companies, despite stark drops of their market penetration, attract those users who can be attested a relatively high demand of orientation in their actual life phases, when they start their college or university education, when they start a family or when they want to get a foothold in their job? And how can journalism practice evolve – without harming its core principles – to still be able to reach out to future generations of users?

Kovach and Rosenstiel point out that, despite the importance of professional rules and principles in journalism, the way in which journalistic practice is conducted always remains a matter for negotiation: each generation creates its own journalism, largely marked by technological progress that assist in making production and distribution more effective (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014: 19). If only for demographic reasons, younger age groups have a more important role, especially in the USA: the absolute number of Millennials, born between 1981 and 2000, is today larger than the post-war baby-boomers (c.1946-1964), or the so-called Generation X (born 1965-1980) (see Fry, 2016; Howe and Strauss, 2000). The significance of Millennials is, for all regional differences in demographic profile, not to be underestimated in the development of markets: for the year 2020 a Generation Y is already foreseen that will make up half of the working population and whose behaviour and way of thinking will change the world economy (GoldmanSachs, 2013). Therefore, this chapter will discuss the transformation process of journalism taking the example of two news outlets that – by trying to target young audiences – alter their approaches towards the news paradigm centred around an idea of neutrality and objectivity (cf. Maras, 2013).

## 2. The state of research on the use of media by adolescents and young adults in Germany

In Germany, social media platforms and services are extraordinarily popular among adolescents. We can see a persisting turn by young media users to closed online contexts using social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram, together with communication services like Whatsapp or Snapchat. The special features of media use by people under 30 have been demonstrated by two long-run studies tracking the transformation of media use in Germany; these have in part shown that, for decades, there has been a great difference between younger and older parts of population in the way they use media relating to information, entertainment and communication. Since 1998, the JIM study (Jugend, Information, (Multi-)Media) of the Media-Pedagogical Research Network Southwest (Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest, MPFS) has surveyed the way in which young people use technological means of communication. Every five years, since the early 1960s, ARD and ZDF's long-term study of mass communication has surveyed those of 14 and above regarding their media use and what they think of news media services.

Mobile digital media distribution is, of course, everywhere now, but there is great variation in demand and take-up. The long-term study of mass communication by the ARD and ZDF shows up changes in habits of media use and the attitude of the German population to mass media services (Krupp and Breunig, 2016). One of the largest and most serious changes that have taken place is that in the 14 to 29 year-old age group, where the gradual integration of the internet into everyday life becomes apparent. The amount of media consumption per day by adolescents and young adults has steadily increased: in 1995, at the beginning of the internet, it was five hours and ten minutes; by 2015 this was nearly eight hours including TV, radio, newspapers and internet. The authors of the study consider as the most decisive reason for this general increase in use the universality of digitally-networked media technology which, given the increased significance of social media, has obliterated the distinction between individual and mass communication (ibid.: 34, 42). By comparison with other kinds of media, the use of the internet remains constant at a high level throughout the day, only declining late in the evening. Here, too, there is a clear difference with the general population, where internet usage over the day is half as extensive, and where the traditional types of media have their classical time of day: newspaper and radio in the morning, TV in the evening (ibid.: 37).

The motivations for use also differ a great deal between younger and older sections of the population: younger people get a lot more entertainment from the internet than the general population; they have a stronger sense that they can join in; they are more easily distracted by it; more often they find its use relaxing; when they use it they do not feel alone. Moreover, 14 to 29 year-olds habitually use the internet

much more than the average, reinforcing the greater familiarity with online media behaviour among these younger age-groups (ibid.: 142, 305). In short: the internet is an "*all in one medium*" (ibid.: 133) for mutual as well as produced media communication, whether this last is from digital providers, but also TV, radio and newspapers.

The personal connection of young users to the internet as a technological infrastructure of mediatised communication has a great deal to do with the fact that their interpersonal exchanges take place mostly on line. For users under 30, mutual communication (chat, posting, sending emails or using messaging services) is by far the most important online activity: 87% of users asked would miss being able to communicate via the internet, whereas only 38% would miss the ability to read newspaper websites, and 40% would miss news from search engines or internet providers (ibid.: 135). While two-thirds of the 14 to 19 year-olds would not want to be without it, the figure for 30 to 49 year-olds is about half of it, and less than a third for those over 50 (ibid.: 289).

As the JIM study shows (MPFS, 2016), the majority of 12 to 19-year olds mostly used search engines (Google usually), but also videos streamed on YouTube. Facebook and Twitter are more strongly represented as relevant sources of information among 16 to 19 year-olds. Genuine news sources – sites run by newspapers, magazines, TV stations or email providers – are much less strongly used to search for information (ibid.: 41). The study reinforces the paradox thrown up by the long-term study on mass communication: the younger people surveyed declared that the most reliable medium for information was the daily paper, although they hardly have ever read one (MPFS, 2016: 13). This has been explained by a culturally-transmitted mythology (Krupp and Breunig, 2016: 130), or as a transfer affect following positive experiences with online services from newspaper publishers (ibid.: 125). Young people who, faced with contradictory reporting, would favour the internet, could, however, in the JIM study name only six original news websites as the most trustworthy source of information out of a total of eleven. Among the most-often named sources of information were Google (mentioned by 2), Facebook (3), YouTube and Wikipedia (5) and Twitter (8). The journalistic providers named were *Spiegel Online* (1), *Zeit Online* (4), *Bild.de* (6), *Welt.de* (7), *ARD.de/Tageschau.de* (9) and *ntv.de* (10) (MPFS, 2016: 14).

Using this material, the following topics appear particularly relevant to the issue of new services for young media users and their expectations:

- The use of a marked variety of media services is part of the everyday life of adolescents and young adults.
- Young people are the so-called "early adopters" of digital media services.
- Digital media and technology dominate very much everyday life for the young target group.

- The young target group has a markedly higher usage of digital media than older generations.
- The young target group accesses the internet mainly by smartphones, on the move and not in one place.
- The social life of the young target group is for most of them closely connected with digital media use. A great deal of internet use is taken up with reciprocal media communication.
- Classical news providers, especially public-sector broadcasters and daily newspapers, enjoy a high level of trust among young media users.
- This relatively high level of trust in classical news providers among adolescents and young adults is not reflected in actual use; only a small part of the time daily spent using media is directed towards new media.
- Young users search for, and find, alternative non-journalistic sources of information.

The surveys also demonstrate the existence of a demographic gap with regard to the use of media types. Young media users have opted quickly and intensively as internet pioneers in using its varied and multifunctional services, and so they have turned away from traditional news media services; by contrast, the habits of older media users have changed more slowly. They do discover innovative media for themselves, but much later, in some cases years later. And so, digital media transformation happens at different speeds. Habits that have become medially ingrained over a long period take a long time to change, and they do not really change fundamentally.

The resulting demographic upheaval in media use presents very severe problems to publishing houses: while on the one hand younger people want flexibility, creativity and an experimental spirit from them, the older generations want to rely upon a constant and coherent product. Stefan Plöchinger (2017), a member of the chief editorial team at the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, refers to this as the open and unfinished nature of the transformation in media use, the rapid rate of change in media development and online services being driven forward in particular by younger users: "*Young readers use the net quite differently from the way older readers do. While journalists are still talking about the best way from print to online, the reality has already moved on*". The need to balance the demands by different age groups becomes all the more difficult if young users, from the point of view of the publishing house, seem to be an unreliable or at least volatile target group, whose motives, media preferences and brand preferences form a poor foundation for the development or adaptation of information products.

3.   Adolescents and young adults in the focus of the news indus-
try: leading questions and data basis

Since the 1980s, there has been a steady decline in the number of younger readers
for newspapers, and the press has accordingly taken an interest in the expectations
that adolescents and young adults have for the distribution and presentation of
news. Newspaper publishers have long puzzled over the paradox that younger me-
dia users continue to express the greatest trust in the news provided by the classical
media form of the newspaper, although this is not reflected in the actual figures
for media use. To begin with, the industry relentlessly pursued a three-pronged
approach: the co-operation with schools in newspapers projects ("Newspapers in
School"); the inclusion, in their regular papers, of pages or special supplements
addressed to children or to youth issues; special offers and subscriptions for print
and online media for school students, in further education as well as completing
training (see Körte, 2006; Kubitzka, 2006).

In October 2014, the US lifestyle portal *Buzzfeed* opened up a German web-
site with editorial offices in Berlin, and this gave renewed impetus to the efforts
by newspaper publishers to reach young media users. In 2015, several existing
news-sites opened special versions for young people: *Zeit Online*: *ze.tt*; *Spiegel
Online*: *Bento*; *Handelsblatt Online*: *orange by Handelsblatt*; *Bild.de*: *BYou* and
more. A crowded field quickly developed, including established youth brands
such as *jetzt* belonging to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. This sudden rush to develop
separate online products for adolescents and young adults was explained in part
by the need to avoid alienating a loyal core readership for the classical press
while addressing a rather different message to a younger age-group (see Wang,
2015). The new brands aim to employ themes more related to the daily life of
young people, experimenting with presentation and forms of address on different
media platforms.

This chapter makes use of a partial data set from a survey of senior edi-
tors of digital news outlets whose work is explicitly directed to adolescents and
young adults. The data was collected as part of a large-scale qualitative study,
commissioned by the German Association of Newspaper Publishers (Bundesver-
band Deutscher Zeitungsverleger, BDZV), focused on the media use of adoles-
cents and young adults from the "Millennials" cohort, and its implications for
what might be offered by newspaper publishers (Kramp and Weichert, 2016;
Weichert and Kramp, 2017a). Interviews were carried out between March and
August 2016, based on guidelines involving six thematic clusters: risks and op-
portunities for journalistic practice of digital innovation; character and expecta-
tions of Millennials with regard to the use of news media; forms of publication
and distribution; reception and participation; content, story-telling and forms of

presentation; strategic and prognostic perspective with respect to the further development of ideas for editorial services.

The following questions will be discussed: what conclusions do responsible editors come to regarding the media behaviour of their young target audiences? What are the assumptions of the editors regarding the expectations their audience have of a given kind of news offering? What kind of editorial strategy is there in shaping their offerings for adolescents and young adults?

## 4. Changes to ideas about content distribution, audience engagement and separation of news and opinions

Since 2012, media managers and journalists have regularly been travelling to the USA seeking new ideas for their news offerings and looking for successful concepts that can be an inspiration for them. They search for media innovations, so they engage in visits, workshops and discussions with pioneering journalists and those involved in the development of media technology, getting information about new digital trends and methods of reaching a target audience (see Mielke, 2012; Chefrunde, 2015; Hamburg Media School, no year). Journalistic start-ups that explicitly address media users up to the age of 35 have been an increasing source of interest, a group that established news providers reach only with difficulty. New ventures such as Mic, NowThis or Vox Media are primarily financed with risk capital, so they can experiment with new editorial approaches without there being a need to be funded by advertising or subscription (see Wu, 2016; Kramp and Weichert, 2017; Weichert and Kramp, 2017b).

Unlike the established publishing houses, these companies have an increasing number of employees, and their editorial structure and distribution focus are strongly oriented to the assumed needs of a younger audience. So far, there have been only few such start-ups in Germany, focusing upon Millennials and seeking to position themselves in the market independently from established news organisations. Nonetheless, given the dramatic change in media use in younger groups up to the age of 30, since 2015 there have been a number of new initiatives aimed at those aged between 14 and 30. Here predominate subsidiaries of established media companies that create their own news brands for a younger public. However, international providers are also expanding, and some of them, primarily from the USA, have entered the German market: besides *Buzzfeed*, among others there is the *Huffington Post*, working together with the Burda Media Group. Now we will look at the strategies followed by one of these imports – the lifestyle and youth magazine *VICE* – and by a subsidiary of a German newspaper publisher: *jetzt*, linked to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

## 4.1. Striving for emotional authenticity: the example of VICE Germany

*VICE* began in 1994 in Montreal as a subcultural monthly magazine based in the skater scene, but since then it has grown into a worldwide media corporation. It began under the name of *The Voice of Montreal*, and was explicitly oriented to street culture, with topics such as skateboarding, punk, hip-hop or pornography. One of the magazine's founders, Suroosh Alvi, was quoted as saying before moving to New York: "*What is offensive to us is being bored*" (cited in Picard, 1998; cf. also Kiper, 2015). In 2015, *VICE Media,* when it had already become a diversified multiplatform corporation with recording and fashion labels, its own film and TV production firm, TV broadcasters, various online sales outlets and a book publishing business, was valued at $4.5bn as an unquoted company. (see Winfrey, 2015)

The German-speaking online-editorial office for *VICE.com* in Berlin employs about a dozen journalists. In total, over 150 people work in different locations of the firm in Germany. Tom Littlewood, chief editor for *VICE Germany*, considers that his target audience of those between 19 and 35 has a clear preference for "the new". He thinks it is important to remain unpredictable in choosing topics and in addressing the audience, and not to rely upon presumed recipes for success:

> I think it would be wrong to believe that the data tells us who our readers are and what they really want. If we are talking about Millennials, then that would be a big mistake; for this target group, you have always to find something new. […] We need to keep moving. (Tom Littlewood, VICE Germany)

According to Littlewood, when making substantive and strategic decisions the experience of the editorial team is important. The team is mostly made up of newcomer journalists from the Millennials cohort. Littlewood considers very important for the choice of issues not only the age composition of the editorial staff, but also the language, the presentation, the general attitude of authors and presenters and the way they deal with social media:

> I'm a member of this generation myself. We all are, in this office. That is a basic condition if you are to be successful in reaching the target group. How could we reach young people if we were not ourselves in a similar stage of our lives, if we did not know from our own experience what the typical questions, problems and wishes are that concern this target group? In my view, you are condemned to failure from the start if there is a distance between the editorial group and the public, just from the point of view of age. That cannot be overcome by any forced effort to understand a target group. (Tom Littlewood, VICE Germany)

Littlewood is critical of the increased interest on the part of German media companies in seeking to sell younger audiences between 15 and 35 a customised version of their news services. It looked like an admission of failure, as if media companies wanted to "*do something for young people*" because they had "*messed up and now were trying to understand a lost public*". In this there is a strong assumption of the relevance of the *authenticity* and *plausibility* of journalistic projects, something that is not primarily expressed in content and mode of address to a public, but also through the biographies of journalistic communicators. Here, we have the presumption on the part of the editorial group that young people will favour their own contemporaries in seeking specific ways of the mediation of news, since such providers will be closer to their own *generational reality*.

Editorial activities must not only reach the target group, but also comprehend the heterogeneity and contradictoriness of its everyday life. Littlewood sees his editorial team as "*part of the youth and their mentality*". The target group expects an authentic attitude, a youthful philosophy that is lived very day, "*not only on the surface, but within*". The editorial team at Berlin *VICE* mainly adopt a dialogical concept based on personal responsibility to convey the right attitude, sense of closeness and interest in constructive discussion. The individual journalist is a recognisable person for his or her public:

> We have to think from the point of view of the user: anybody who thinks a story especially good or shit will very much want to be able to speak to the author about it. […] We want to be approachable. And we want to be friendly. And I think that happens best if people who have told a story, who were there, have collected information and recorded something or written it down, come into direct contact with the users. (Tom Littlewood, VICE Germany)

According to Tom Littlewood, openness to self-criticism is an important requirement for the successful implementation of this kind of internal and external editorial culture of communication: "*We don't think that everything that we have ever done is right, we are open to being convinced of the opposite*". A connection to the brand can be systematically built with programs that achieve the right level of *emotional authenticity* and a degree of *ironic distance* on the part of the editorial team, in this way echoing the sentiments of the individual user.

At the same time, Littlewood sees the future role of journalists being greater than of presenters – and not only because of the dialogue with users of social media. Journalism has always had the task of facilitating social understanding, of guiding and developing the social conversation. That is now becoming more dynamic. There are many new digital resources and a range of online services intended to improve the mediation of content as well as mutual communication: young users actively adopt these and so this activity attracts the attention of journalists.

Here, according to Littlewood, *VICE* relies on social adoption in the age group. "*If something new comes on the market it has to first of all find its place. It only gradually becomes apparent how users will use it.*" Newly-emerging services and related instruments enter the toolbox of the editorial team through young members of staff and their peer groups.

## 4.2. *A youth subsidiary with a changing history: the example of jetzt*

In 1993, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* started publishing a youth section as a printed weekly magazine. After nine years, when the printed issue ceased publication, *jetzt* developed into a fixed part of the Munich paper's digital marketing to young readers. From 2002, the offering appeared only as a website called *jetzt*. From 2011, there was a revitalization as a regular bi-weekly jetzt-page in the printed edition of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, but this – again – ceased publication in 2016. It was explained that "*two pages devoted to being* young" in the printed edition were, "*given the networked world of today* […] *no longer appropriate*"; but also, because it was not clear whether the pages were actually read by young readers, or more by their parents and grandparents (jetzt, 2016).

Christian Helten has been editor of *jetzt* since 2013, and for his information about user preferences relies on the services of social media monitoring, which is supposed to "track down" those who might be interested among a dispersed target group. The larger platforms, among which Facebook sets the standard, are, as he suggests, the most important points at which the target group can be assessed. Helten resists treating the public being addressed in terms of a fixed age range, since both younger and older readers should be addressed, so long as they have an interest in supposedly "youth" issues and they are open to a casual form of public address. All the same, in terms of content, those addressed are typically in the phase of life from 18 to 30, a phase that begins with leaving school. Interest in needs and expectations of this target group tends to be greater among the editorial team of *jetzt* than among the editors of the printed paper, where there is an absence, typical in the media, of thought about the details of media use among young audiences, and so circumstances and contexts of this play a lesser role in editorial strategies of the parent newsroom.

In choosing its topics the editorial team of *jetzt* tries to orient itself closely to the interests of its target group as registered in its own content, and reflects this perspective in its reporting. The knowledge gained about thematic interests and media habits of young people beyond its own offerings tries to anticipate changing preferences regarding information and media behaviour, and to react by adapting its own services. Simply the decline in user numbers shows that interest on the part of the readership in interacting with their fellow readers in the *jetzt* online

community has changed. Helten attributes the noticeable decline in user activity within the online community to the gradual premature ageing of existing members who were once very active, but who already in the era before the rise of Facebook to the biggest international network simply "grew out of the idea" as they matured. At the same time, younger users had not found their way into the community: they had grown up with Facebook. And so, what had been the great success that *jetzt* had seen in building the community and interaction, the "*jetzt* cosmos", was now obsolete. He argues that the young target group is not only receptive to "*superficial and amusing entertainment*", but is also looking for order and inspiration – in the form of classical reportage, or portraits of people whose story is emotionally moving, and so something that would be shared with a circle of friends.

Even *jetzt* has to prove itself in the impact evaluation, but Helten maintains that this must not mean giving up an aspiration to high quality. There was a positive response from the firm itself if the team was the first to publish an exclusive, or if items were cited by other media, especially international ones. This was part of the way that the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* worked, its "brand", and reflected its continuing interest in the youth segment. All the same, there was a wish to differentiate oneself from the printed paper in tone and way of writing. Editorial contributions that in their subjective colouring showed a clear position were especially welcomed by a younger public, since one reader could identify with it while it irritated another. Helten maintains that "*ultimately, we are not, as is more usually the case with more traditional news media, bound by an uncompromising neutrality, but rather prompted to publish whatever moves us.*" Without an emotional connection, you do not get noticed in social media, says Helten. Only when you have got the attention of young media users you can start to arouse their interest and give them something that they take seriously, he observes. The mediation of news is, therefore, mostly oriented towards the reflection or constitution of a personal attitude of the respective journalist. The emphasis on subjectivity is meant to lead the way to an "emotional connection" with the young audience. It is Helten's impression that the "*target group is admittedly relatively open and confident, but also in search of an attitude*". He observes that stories providing such an orientation function are more successful than others. Therefore, *jetzt* does not pursue an editorial strategy that puts in the foreground the chronicler's duty, but opinion and attitude that is reasoned and still holds the author and the newsbrand accountable for his or her statements.

The task that *jetzt* has been given, to broaden the appeal of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* among school-leavers, students, and those in their first jobs, has not been made any easier by the creation of other youth channels by other media companies (*Bento*/*Spiegel Online*, or *Ze.tt*/*Zeit.Online*). In an effort to mark themselves off from the almost unavoidable substantive clashes with the new competition, the editorial team at *jetzt* abjures the new representational forms such as "listicles",

journalistic pieces in the form of lists that are supplemented by gifs or memes (see Vijgen, 2014; Tandoc and Jenkins, 2015). Nonetheless, Helten wants to keep a close eye on the market, so that he can anticipate any changes. The youth magazine has an experimental function within the business of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, seeking new platforms and services in regard to their journalistic potential: "*if there is something new that is promising, we have to begin experimenting as quickly as possible, to see whether we can actually use this channel for our purposes*".

## 5.   Conclusion

Mobile, socially-networked, in dialogue: the way in which young people use media has set off a process of organisational learning in news organisations. This does not only involve the development of new skills when dealing with emerging services, but also includes the transformation of the way in which these organisations see themselves as professionals and how they see the public. The cases here discussed, however, show that this learning process is not everywhere treated as a task for existing editorial structures, but that it also involves the creation of new editorial structures and more distinct ideas of news distribution. This is at least the case with the creation of youth-oriented media by established news organisations.

        These case studies also highlight the fact that the turn to a younger public is by no means a recent phenomenon, but is more a reaction to a transformation in media usage that has been going on for twenty years. There was, from 2014 to 2016, an unprecedented upsurge in new companies and new initiatives in the German digital news sector; newspaper publishers, however, were already aware of the need to attach young people, perhaps school graduates but ideally even the younger, to journalistic brands. Given the intense competition with non-journalistic providers of news and entertainment, and the limited budget of young media users, a number of ways of reaching this target group were tried out. The editorial strategies are, therefore, also varied, if one discounts the more or less uniform age range addressed, although varying quite markedly by gender, social stratum and educational level.

        Most obvious is the general and marked orientation on the part of editorial teams to the social media activities of their users. While their own presence on the web was not questioned, it no longer was the point around which the address to the public and editorial content turned. The new media brands do not use social networks platforms and services for their own marketing purposes only, e.g. to attract young users to the offers of their website: they integrate the publication instruments of other platforms so that they might attract their target audience with original content on their favourite platform in order to get into a conversation. Editorial teams have begun to make systematic use of user feedback when planning

their agenda, trying to extend the number of channels for dialogue and their actual reportage; but in so doing they also seek to bind more closely the user to the news brand. This is all in pursuit of the effort to gain a more exact understanding of the expectations of the target group regarding the distribution and mediation of news in an attractive manner, and to act on this understanding.

Another common feature is the composition of the studied teams, which is closely related to the age structure of the target group. This has necessarily led to a comparatively low average age of the teams. This is connected not only to the intention of reducing the communicative distance between the editorial team and its public, but also has to do with the skill in using social media that young journalists share with the target group. Here, the classical mode, in which young journalists began with comparatively little experience and were trained and advised by older colleagues, is no longer relevant: these new young teams need a different path of development. Editorial management, here, presumes that employees, given their affinity with digital media, will develop skills of their own accord, something that lends emphasis to the experimental nature of the projects and of new forms of presentation.

So far as content goes, both news media seek to develop their own profile, in part to differentiate themselves from their competitors. In their reportage, however, they share a common feature of news reporting that has been confirmed by media research: *VICE* and *jetzt* focus upon the everyday socialisation of young people and a strong opinionated and attitude-centred reporting of their (young) editorial staff. This results in a high level of subjectivity and emotionalism in the presentation of issues, something that is marked by a personalised form of address and a casual tone. The same approach is used for all topics, whether dealing with popular culture, advice, or social and political problems.

Both news media dealt with here adopt a partisan and opinionated form of reportage, in contrast to the ideas of neutrality and balance in the classical forms of news distribution. This might be regarded as the outcome of the aforementioned generational negotiation (cf. Kovach/Rosenstiel 2014: 19) on how journalism needs to perform. This can be explained by the need to create in the market as clear a difference as possible from established news outlets, so that a popular brand identity can be developed in the young target group. However, in his forty years old seminal work about the separation of news and opinion, Klaus Schönbach concluded that a "synchronisation" of neutral reporting and commentary might lead into a vicious circle ("circulus vitiosus") of fictitious events – or "fake news" in more recent terminology (cf. Schönbach, 1977: 161). Schönbach outlined a highly dysfunctional transformation process that could profoundly threaten public discourse if there would be no efforts for correction and comprehensive reporting. With their intentional blurring of borders between news and commentary, *VICE* and *jetzt* try to meet the demands of adolescents and

young adults who get their information from a broad variety of non-journalistic and presumably biased sources on the (social) web. Whereas this tendentially volatile and erratic information behaviour poses not only an economic threat to the news organisations, but also to the societal self-understanding, especially among younger age groups, the purposeful use of opinionated news as a subjective form of news mediation, together with the maintenance of journalistic principles like accuracy, source transparency and reliability, might be an effective way to strengthen the bond between younger publics and journalism as a cultural practice.

However, it is still entirely unclear, given the existing competition among journalistic and non-journalistic information sources on the web, how successful these editorial strategies will be in the long run. This will have to be addressed by further empirical research.

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**Biography**

Dr. Leif Kramp is a media, communication and history scholar. He is the Research Coordinator of the Centre for Media, Communication and Information Research (ZeMKI) at the University of Bremen. Kramp authored and edited various books about media and journalism. He is founding member of the Association of Media and Journalism Criticism (VfMJ) and serves in the directorate of its scholarship programme VOCER Innovation Medialab, which promotes young journalists developing innovative projects. Kramp is also a jury member for the German Initiative News Enlightenment (INA) since 2011.

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