

IS THERE A FUTURE FOR SLOW JOURNALISM?

The perspective of younger users

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Speed has always been a central part of journalism, and for good reason: people want to be informed about events and threats as soon as possible. Immediacy is seen as one of the key values in journalism's culture. Over the past decade technological and commercial forces have strengthened the speed game. At the same time professional journalism has lost its monopoly on news production; news has become abundant and the value of news diminished along with the attention of the public for news, especially among the younger part of the population. It is hard to tell whether the future of journalism lies in speed strategies like "digital first", in Slow Journalism, or in both. A decisive question is: will the upcoming digital generation be interested in Slow Journalism? Our research among Dutch users in the age range of 15–39 years (N = 2642) showed that—indeed—an overwhelming majority finds that news should be available anytime, anywhere, and for free. However, we also found that a considerable proportion of younger users want journalism to be more investigative, inclusive, co-operative and constructive. These features can serve as substantive building blocks for the emerging concept of Slow Journalism.

KEYWORDS news preferences; role perceptions; slow journalism; societal functions of journalism; young people

Introduction

Professional journalism finds itself in a phase of fundamental transition. It needs to be rethought (Peters and Broersma 2013) or maybe even reinvented (Waisbord 2013). One of the many issues journalism is facing concerns which societal functions journalism should fulfil in the digital era. Some see the digitalization process as a reason for emphasizing the rapid dissemination of information as a central function, for instance through a digital-first strategy. Others, on the contrary, see it as an incentive to give more attention to the function of providing context. These two visions do not necessarily exclude one another, but they do represent different frames of reference for reflecting on the future of journalism.

The question remains: what will the public expect from professional journalism in the longer run? We are especially interested in the younger part of the public, those who use mainstream news media less frequently, supposedly, because they lack interest in society at large. This group is believed to be "tuned out" (Mindich 2005), to be less interested in socio-political issues (Spanning, Ogris, and Gaiser 2008) and to see news primarily as something to check occasionally, just like your e-mail (Associated Press 2008). This article focuses on the question of whether or not—and if so, to what extent—younger users prefer a journalism that takes its time for in-depth content, reflection and investigation, next to their

obvious interest in news that is available anytime and anywhere. Consequently, the question is to what extent this preference is connected to their views on the societal function of journalism in the digital age.

Speed and Its Problems

Speed has always been an indispensable component of journalism. People want to be informed about relevant changes in their world as soon as possible and journalism can meet this demand as a social “early warning system”. Speed therefore has become an inalienable element of journalistic culture. Deuze (2005, 163) considers “immediacy” as one of the five central values in journalism, next to objectivity, autonomy, public service and ethics. The value that is placed upon immediacy is reflected in the role perceptions of journalists. Across the world, journalists still see the fast dissemination of news as their most important task: “reporting the news quickly had the highest mean score” (Weaver and Willnat 2012, 536). After that, the tasks aimed at deepening of understanding follow, such as providing context and interpretation.

Over the past years the emphasis on speed has further increased in journalism practice as a result of the arrival of interactive and mobile internet, which changed the traditional news cycle with fixed deadlines into a 24/7 news production process with continuous deadlines. The ongoing stress on speed, however, has its downsides. The first is that time pressure can erode journalistic standards of carefulness and precision. In their book *Warp Speed*, Kovach and Rosenstiel (1999, 7) give warning that “In practice, the lowest standards tend to drive out the higher, creating a kind of Gresham’s Law of Journalism”. Several authors share this concern. In *No Time to Think: The Menace of Speed and the 24-Hour News Cycle*, Rosenberg and Feldman (2008) go one step further, in claiming that every mistake in the newsroom in the end is the result of a too strong ambition to be first. Whether or not that is true, it seems clear that too much emphasis on fastness can harm the most important stock a journalist has in trade: credibility (Laufer 2011, 20). The second drawback of the speed-ambition is that in the race to be the first, journalism is at risk of oversimplification and stereotyping. “The average newsroom is not an environment that nurtures reflection on the complexity of the human race. In the haste to label, categorize and synthesize, the more complex aspects of real life can be overlooked” (Gibbs and Warhaver 2002, 85). Furthermore, the emphasis on fastness can strengthen the fixation on clashes, accidents or sensationalism. “A real news story has to be angled on a conflict, a drama, a crook or a victim. And in order for it not to be boring, it has to be written short, square and without too many shades” (Haagerup 2014, 10).

The growing stress on speed in daily practice also has its downsides in the economic field. New technologies have brought an end to the professional monopoly on fast news and the supply of free, “real-time” news has grown considerably. This affects the business model of journalism, as the economic value of fast news is in unremitting decline. A study of the World Association of Newspapers shows that in the area of fast news (who, what, where, when), an overabundance has emerged, “with a value approaching zero” (Erbsen et al. 2012, 7). Scarcity will arise increasingly in the area of reliability, truthfulness, in-depth reporting and analysis. Journalism seems to be getting caught in a paradoxical market logic where high-quality in-depth storytelling could be a unique selling proposition, but at the same time cost savings and speed are used as the main weapons to enhance competitiveness. According to Cooper (2009, 3), this is leading to a kind of schizophrenia among

journalists: “On the one hand reporters were sent to journalism conferences to learn how to conduct investigations or write narrative stories. On the other, business managers—and some editors—sought out quick, quicker and quickest stories that were increasingly parochial in scope.”

Slow Journalism as a Corrective

Several scholars argue that the time has come for journalism to liberate itself from the pressing world of “McJournalism” (Franklin et al. 2005) or “McNews” (Rosenberg and Feldman 2008). Journalism should leave the “digital fast lane” (Greenberg 2012) and invest its scarce time and money in stories of greater substance that are told in an essayistic, narrative style. This aspiration is referred to by the term “Slow Journalism” (Greenberg 2007; Le Masurier 2015).

In *practice*, Slow Journalism is usually about longer stories on the side-lines of breaking news, often made by using literary principles of narrative structuring and multi-layering. Next to that, publications such as *Ricochet* (Canada), *Long Play* (Finland), *The Atavist* (United States), *XXI* (France), *Delayed Gratification* (United Kingdom) and *De Correspondent* (The Netherlands), almost always mention “deepening” in their mission statements as being distinctive for Slow Journalism. *Delayed Gratification* (2015) states this as follows: “Like the other Slow movements, we take time to do things properly. Instead of desperately trying to beat Twitter to the punch, we return to the values we all want from journalism—context, analysis and expert opinion”. There are several other basic principles that are mentioned as characteristic for Slow Journalism, such as transparency and co-operation (cf. the manifesto of *De Correspondent* 2013), but there is less agreement on those. Generally speaking, Slow Journalism is not seen as a model to replace all forms of journalism, but as a corrective.

In the *literature* on Slow Journalism it also is foremost seen as a useful concept to contrast with the dominant trend of acceleration. This is not an isolated phenomenon. In various segments of society resistance to the feverish pace of modern life is growing: “The speed obsession intersects every aspect of contemporary life” (Rosenberg and Feldman 2008, 19). Advocates of Slow Journalism find inspiration in the slow-food movement that wants to create a haven in the frantic world of fast food and ready-made meals by stressing sustainability, transparency about origin and nutritional value, while avoiding the use of unhealthy colourings or flavourings. There is no univocal definition or description of Slow Journalism as yet. In the confined academic literature on Slow Journalism rather divergent features are put forward. Some of these features are mentioned by several authors, who usually do not distinguish between Slow Journalism as a genre and Slow Journalism as an approach. However, to get more conceptual clarity it is useful to make this distinction.

Slow Journalism as a *genre* is about the style and form in which the story is told: essayistic, using long-form formats and principles of narration: “the stylistic focus tends to be narrative storytelling” (Le Masurier 2015, 143). Greenberg (2012, 381), who claims to have coined the term some years ago, describes Slow Journalism as a collection of longer non-fiction genres, like the essay and the reportage. Those genres have to meet the highest standards of the art of storytelling, where “a defining aspect of the genre is that the story works on more than one level” (382; cf. Meuret 2013). Costera Meijer (2007, 112) is primarily focused on audio-visual journalism and finds the narrative

dimension distinctive for Slow Journalism in that sector too: “slow news calls for quality images that not just illustrate a story but add their own narrative dimension”. The relationship between Slow Journalism and literary journalism is highlighted by various authors (Berkey-Gerard 2009; Donat-Trinidad 2012, 101; Greenberg 2007, 16; Keeble and Wheeler 2007). They do not argue that Slow Journalism should be restricted to the longer, literary forms of journalism, but they acknowledge that these forms often will do it better justice.

Slow Journalism as an *approach* goes beyond style and form and refers to the underlying principles and methods. This aspect is, as yet, less elaborated upon in academic literature. Most of the time it is mainly seen as a type of journalism that takes its time for in-depth reporting, for trying to find nuances and perspectives. “Slow Journalism requires the time for deeper reflection and/or investigation” (Le Masurier 2015, 143; cf. Laufer 2011, 31). It can be of special use when complex and ongoing issues need to be covered, because these kind of issues demand a more analytical and persistent approach than is common in breaking-news journalism (Gess 2012; cf. Sundin 2013).

Out of practice and literature arises an image of Slow Journalism as a counter-movement, a corrective to a kind of journalism that gives priority to the fast spreading of news and pays far less attention to other societal functions of journalism. International research on role perceptions shows that the disseminator-function, which is primarily about getting information to the public quickly, is still seen as the most important one by professional journalists worldwide. However, it also shows that a growing proportion of journalists believe that other societal functions are becoming equally or even more important (Weaver and Willnat 2012). In the first place this relates to the adversarial/watchdog-function and to the interpreter-function of journalism. These are successively focused on scrutinizing the established powers and on analysing and interpreting complex issues. In the second place this relates to the mobilizing-function, which is focused on facilitating citizens to become involved in their community or society (Weaver et al. 2007, 144).

The normative importance that professional journalists attribute to their various roles (“should be”) does not always match the actual importance that has to be assigned to them in daily practice (“is”). Research shows that, in practice, less attention can be given to events that can raise the public’s awareness of societal issues or the deepening of their understanding. More attention than is desired by the journalists has to be given to events where one’s own news organization can be the first, where a press release is available, where celebrities are involved and/or can be covered at low costs. The gap between wish and reality seems to be caused mainly by commercial powers and media logic, which in practice, as a rule, get more weight than the professional ideal of public service (Strömback, Nord, and Shehata 2012, 316).

Slow Journalism and the Digital Generation

Slow Journalism as an *approach* can, in terms of role perceptions, be seen as a plea to resist the increasing stress on the disseminator-function and to strengthen the others; especially the interpreter-function, according to the literature on Slow Journalism. The question remains whether this plea is shared by the audience. Unfortunately neither the academic literature nor the research pays much attention to the public’s perspective. However, the answer to the question whether or not Slow Journalism has a future, and if so with which characteristics, largely depends on the extent to which it matches news

preferences and public perceptions of journalism's tasks, in particular those of the digital generation.

Younger users have developed a news routine that centres around the frequent and quick checking of the headlines (Associated Press 2008; Costera Meijer 2007; Drok and Schwarz 2009). It is important to them that news is perpetually and universally available to stay informed about the most important or weird stories, and be able to share them. They have less need for professional news media to fulfil these requirements, because of the availability of mobile and free alternatives. However, this does not seem to be the whole picture. The decline in the use of mainstream news media by the younger part of the population has frequently been the subject of international academic research (Banaji and Buckingham 2013; Drok and Schwarz 2009; Peiser 2000; Pasek et al. 2006). This has led to different kinds of explanations. On the one hand, scholars point at socio-cultural developments, such as a growing orientation of younger people towards popular culture (Van Zoonen 2004; cf. Fiske 1989), an increasing focus on self-realization (Bennett 2008) or a diminishing social engagement by younger people in Western democracies (Skoric and Poor 2013; cf. Buckingham 2000). On the other hand, scholars focus on developments that are more tightly connected to the journalistic process itself. There is a growing feeling of misrepresentation among younger people (Devlin 2006; Wayne et al. 2008), an increasing dislike of the focus by most mainstream media on the institutional side of society (Associated Press 2008; Vogel 2014), as a result of which the bulk of news is seen as boring and irrelevant (Marchi 2012). These findings suggest that the emergence of cheap and mobile devices is not solely responsible for the decline in consumption of mainstream news media.

Research from the times before the iPhone and iPad shows that younger users do not only want fast news, but also profundity: "young people need slow news in order to get the 'deep picture' of something, to hear the complexities" (Costera Meijer 2007, 112). At the Digiday Publishing Summit 2014 on "Myths About Digital Media", the editor-in-chief of Mic—an American media company aimed at the younger share of the public—painted an additional picture: "There is a genuine need for quality content. Young people are curious, engaged and craving for reliable information. The standard image of young people that are only interested in fast news is wrong" (Horowitz 2014). There must at least be some truth in this, as Mic's website attracts 19 million visitors, mostly younger, every month.

Do younger users, the group under 40 that according to Mindich (2005) is "tuned out", indeed want a journalism of two speeds; a journalism that emphasizes the disseminator-function next to a journalism that emphasizes the adversarial-, the interpreter- and the mobilizer-functions?

This article focuses on two interrelated research questions. The answers to these questions should give us more insight into the extent to which Slow Journalism as an approach aligns with younger users' news preferences and with their views on journalism's role in society. The outcomes might help us in working towards a more clear and univocal concept of Slow Journalism. The research questions are:

RQ1: To what extent do the news preferences of younger people indicate an orientation towards Slow Journalism?

RQ2: Is there an association between the degree of preference for Slow Journalism of younger users and their view on the societal functions of journalism?

Method

The data that are used in this article originate from a quantitative investigation into news media use by people in The Netherlands on the basis of a random sample survey ($N = 4200$). This investigation is part of the Dutch Youth Monitor, a five-yearly inquiry into “Young People, News Media Use and Participation” that started in 2009 and is carried out by the Media and Civil Society Research Centre of Windesheim University of Applied Science.

Sample Characteristics

The sampling and fieldwork were carried out by TNS NIPO. The data concerning the younger users (age 15–39, cf. Mindich 2005; $N = 2642$) were selected from the total sample. Outcomes were weighted for age, sex, family size, educational level and region on the basis of the national data of the Central Bureau of Statistics (The Netherlands) and are therefore representative on these variables. The sample coefficient is 0.97.¹

Measuring

Slow Journalism Preference is measured by six items that correspond with features of Slow Journalism according to the literature: “News should contain more diversity in sources and perspectives” (cf. Laufer 2011), “There should be more in-depth reporting” (cf. Greenberg 2012), “The content of news should contribute to the solving of societal problems” (cf. Gess 2012), “The news should more often be explained” (cf. Le Masurier 2015), “News should be reported more from the perspective of the people that are involved” (cf. Costera Meijer 2007), “People should be able to contribute to the news more extensively” (cf. Bradshaw 2009). The answering categories are based on a five-point Likert scale, running from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree”. For the purpose of the descriptive analysis these are reduced to a three-point scale: (1) “(strongly) disagree”, (2) “neutral”, (3) “(strongly) agree”. The six items constitute a reliable scale that was named the Slow Journalism Preference Scale (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.725$; mean = 3.12; SD = 0.53; $N = 6$). This scale is related to Slow Journalism as an *approach*, not as a genre.

To be able to distinguish the degree to which younger users prefer Slow Journalism, a mean score is calculated for all respondents. Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution of these mean scores (range: (1) “low” to (5) “high”; mean = 3.12; SD = 0.53; $N = 2642$).

With the use of SPSS the respondents were grouped into four quartiles: 1st quartile ($N = 757$, mean = 2.50); 2nd quartile ($N = 544$, mean = 3.00); 3rd quartile ($N = 625$, mean = 3.42); 4th quartile ($N = 716$, mean = 3.75). In the analysis that was required to answer RQ2, respondents from the 1st quartile (“Low preference”) were compared to respondents from the 4th quartile (“High preference”).

Views on Journalism’s Role in Society is measured by using a selection of items that are commonly used in the research on role perceptions of professional journalists themselves (Weaver and Willnat 2012). The selected items represent the broad spectrum of possible roles. The wording of the items is adapted so that they became suitable for the questioning

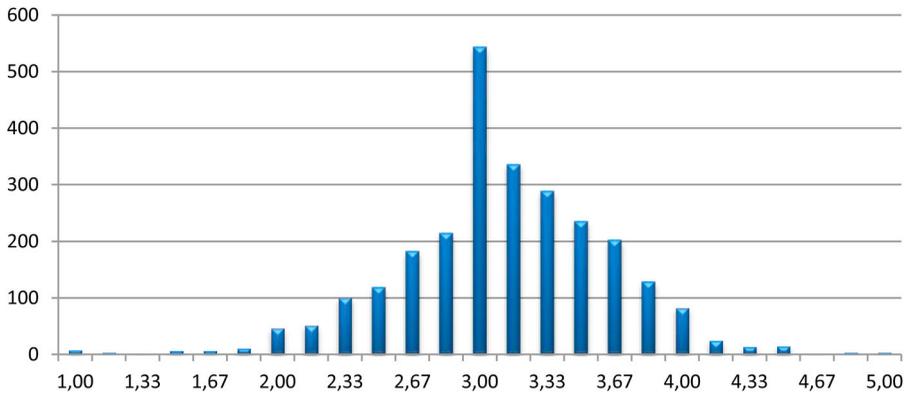


FIGURE 1

Frequency distribution of the scores on the Slow Journalism Preference Scale

of younger users about their views on journalism's societal roles. The selected items were: "Expose social abuses", "Cover deviant events", "Get information to the public quickly", "Provide in-depth background information and analysis", "Give people chance to express views", "Concentrate on news of interest to the widest audience", "Motivate people to get socially involved", "Provide entertainment and relaxation", "Be the first to bring the news", "Point people towards solutions on societal problems", "Cover political debate" and "Provide information that is useful in everyday life". The answering categories are based on a five-point Likert scale, running from (1) "very unimportant" to (5) "very important". For the purpose of the descriptive analysis comparisons were made on the basis of the sum of the percentages of respondents that finds a certain role (4) "important" and (5) "very important". To find out whether or not there would be an underlying pattern in the views of younger people on journalistic roles—in other words, if separate roles would cluster into functions—a factor analysis was carried out. This analysis will be presented in the Results section.

Analysing Process

The analysing process has focused on differences as well as on associations.

Chi-squared (Pearson χ^2 (df = 4), $p < 0.001$) was used to check if there were statistically significant differences with regard to the importance they ascribe to various journalistic roles or functions between respondents with low preference for Slow Journalism and with high preference for Slow Journalism. The outcomes were checked using a *t*-test. This check gave corresponding outcomes and is therefore not reported in this article.

Pearson correlation, with significance on the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed), was used to determine the degree of association between *Slow Journalism Preference* and *Views on Journalism's Role in Society*.

Results

With regard to the first research question, about the extent to which news preferences of younger people reveal an interest in Slow Journalism, the first outcome is that

a large majority of respondents find that news should be available anytime and anywhere, preferably on mobile devices (mean = 3.84; SD = 0.998) and for free (mean = 3.59; SD = 0.891). This rather points in the direction of a preference for Fast Journalism than for Slow Journalism. Other potential elements of fast journalism, such as simpler language (mean = 2.74; SD = 0.905) and shorter news items (mean = 2.62; SD = 0.786), on the other hand, get far less support (Figure 2).

Next to these four statements, respondents were presented with six statements that are included in the Slow Journalism Preference Scale. Figure 3 shows that a share of about 30 per cent of younger users have preferences that point in the direction of Slow Journalism. Five out of six items have a slightly positive score, that is a score above the scale average of 3.00. These are: "News should contain more diversity in sources and perspectives" (mean = 3.36; SD = 0.827), "There should be more in-depth reporting" (mean = 3.20; SD = 0.823), "The content of news should contribute to the solving of societal problems" (mean = 3.17; SD = 0.822), "The news should more often be explained" (mean = 3.09; SD = 0.821) and "News should be reported more from the perspective of the people that are involved" (mean = 3.03; SD = 0.781). The sixth item has a slightly negative score: people should be able to contribute to the news more extensively (mean = 2.86; SD = 0.810).

To answer the second research question, about the association between the degree of preference of younger users for Slow Journalism and their view on the societal functions of journalism, 12 different roles were presented and respondents were asked to indicate the importance they attach to each role. The average score on almost all roles lies in between neutral (3) and important (4) on the five-point scale. Figure 4 shows what percentage of younger users find the various roles important or very important, divided into two groups: those that have a low preference for Slow Journalism (1st quartile; $N = 757$) and those that have a high preference for Slow Journalism (4th quartile; $N = 716$). The most substantial differences between the "low" and "high" groups were found for four roles: "Motivate people to get socially involved" ($\chi^2 = 161.7$), "Give people chance to express views" ($\chi^2 = 149.5$), "Point people towards solutions on societal problems" ($\chi^2 = 137.2$) and "Provide information that is useful in everyday life" ($\chi^2 = 107.6$). Next to that, there are significant differences with respect to five other roles, but these are considerably smaller. Finally, there are three roles that show no significant difference (see Figure 4).

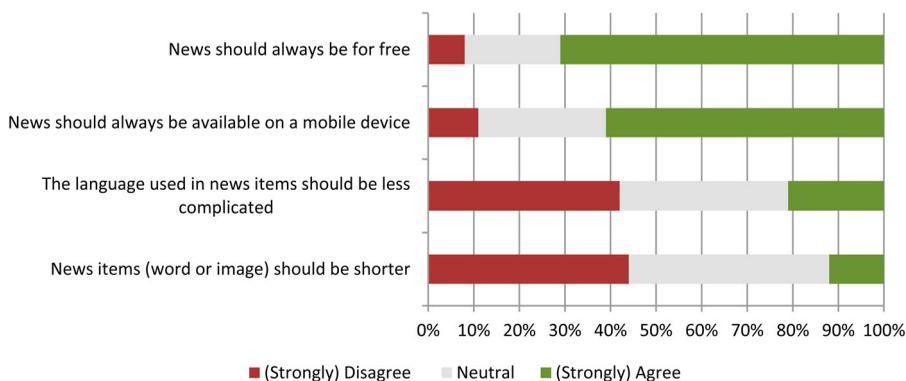


FIGURE 2

News preferences of younger users ($N = 2642$)

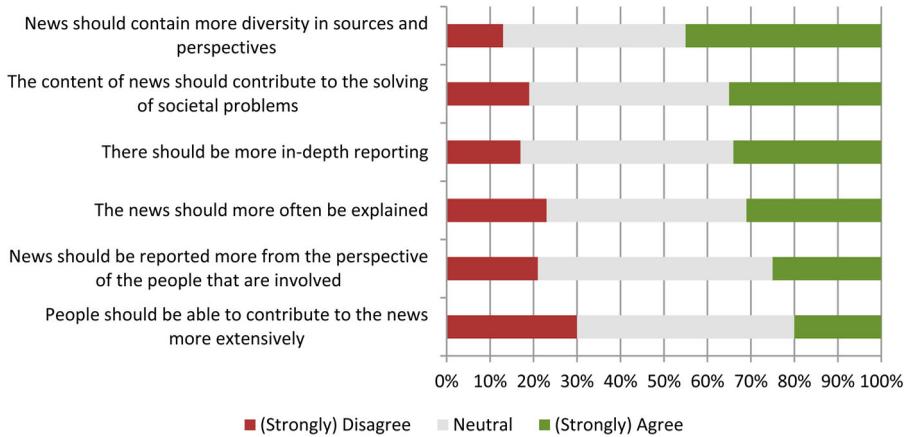


FIGURE 3
News preferences of younger users. The statements are included in the Slow Journalism Preference Scale (N = 2642)

Because there appeared to be a pattern in the outcomes, a factor analysis was carried out to enable a more comprehensive interpretation of the differences. After the exclusion of two roles with high loadings on more than one factor, namely “Cover deviant events” and “Provide entertainment and relaxation”, three factors emerged. Together they

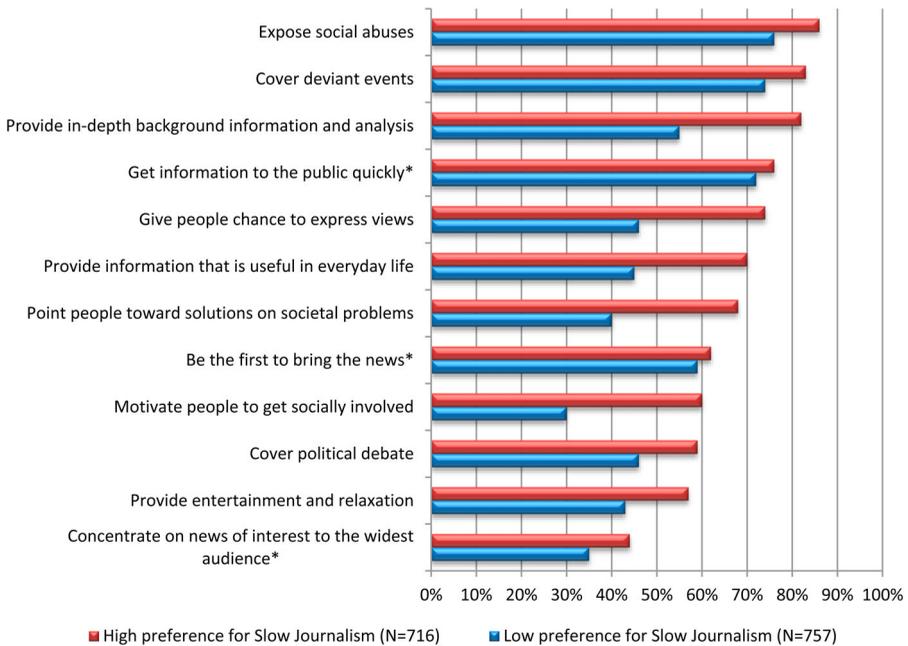


FIGURE 4
Percentage of respondents that finds different journalistic roles (very) important; high versus low preference for Slow Journalism. *Not significant

explain 58.7 per cent of the total variance (Table 1). The first factor contains roles that are related to empowerment: "Point people towards solutions on societal problems", "Give people chance to express views", "Motivate people to get socially involved" and "Provide information that is useful in everyday life". The second factor contains roles that are related to the fast spreading of news to a large audience: "Get information to the public quickly", "Be the first to bring the news" and "Concentrate on news of interest to the widest audience". The third factor contains roles that primarily relate to the classical watchdog- and interpreter-function of journalism: "Provide in-depth background information and analysis", "Cover political debate" and "Expose social abuses".

With the necessary caution these three factors can be labelled as follows: Factor 1 corresponds with the Mobilizer-function, Factor 2 corresponds with the Disseminator-function, Factor 3 corresponds with the Investigator-function, which combines adversarial and interpretative roles. These factors can be transformed into three scales with sufficient reliability, one for each function:

1. Mobilizer ($\alpha = 0.672$; mean = 3.42; SD = 0.58; $N = 4$).
2. Disseminator ($\alpha = 0.654$; mean = 3.47; SD = 0.66; $N = 3$).
3. Investigator ($\alpha = 0.656$; mean = 3.67; SD = 0.61; $N = 3$).

These three factors show a strong resemblance with the functions that professional journalists around the globe distinguish for themselves (Weaver and Willnat 2012). The main difference is that in the case of the younger users the interpreter- and watchdog/adversarial-functions are combined into one function: the investigator-function. This function has the highest mean score, which means that younger users find the investigator-function of professional journalism the most important one. The disseminator-function comes second and the mobilizer-function comes third.

TABLE 1
Factor analysis for journalistic roles (rotated component matrix)

	Component			Communality
	1	2	3	
Point people towards solutions on societal problems	0.754			0.589
Motivate people to get socially involved	0.750			0.592
Give people chance to express views	0.608			0.437
Provide information that is useful in everyday life	0.597	0.327		0.464
Get information to the public quickly		0.811		0.726
Be the first to bring the news		0.802		0.683
Concentrate on news of interest to the widest audience	0.350	0.617	-0.368	0.639
Provide in-depth background information and analysis			0.780	0.651
Cover political debate			0.712	0.517
Expose social abuses			0.678	0.571
Eigenvalue after rotation	2082	1898	1891	
% Variance explained after rotation	20.8	19.0	18.9	

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in six iterations.

Factor loadings < 0.300 are not reported.

Bold scores indicates Factor loadings > 0.400.

TABLE 2

Relationship between Slow Journalism Preference and Functions of Journalism (mobilizer, disseminator, investigator)

	Mobilizer	Disseminator	Investigator
Slow Journalism preference	0.41*	0.08*	0.22*

Pearson correlation ($N = 2642$).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

All of these three functions proved to be positively related to a preference for Slow Journalism. However, there appear to be substantive differences in the strength of these relationships (Table 2).

As could be expected, Slow Journalism Preference has the weakest relationship with the disseminator-function (Pearson's $r = 0.08$). The relationship with the investigator-function is considerably stronger (Pearson's $r = 0.22$). The relationship is the strongest with regard to the mobilizer-function (Pearson's $r = 0.41$).² This is notable as this function ranks third in the overall importance that the total group of respondents attached to it.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, the question is examined to what extent news preferences of younger people reveal a preference for Slow Journalism and, after that, if there is a relationship between this preference and the views younger people hold regarding the functions of journalism in society. From the research, the following conclusions can be drawn.

First of all, it can be concluded that the concept of Slow Journalism is still developing. For the time being it can be seen as a "container construct", maybe not so much with regard to Slow Journalism as a genre (style, form), but as an approach (principles, methods). The lack of conceptual clearness is compensated by the value it can have as a counter-movement, a corrective on a media logic that seems to be pushing journalism further in the direction of speed and haste.

Our research confirms earlier studies that have shown that a large majority of younger users want news to be available mobile and for free. This fits in a news routine where young people habitually pick up bits of news information from various sources, which is referred to by terms such as grazing (Drok and Schwarz 2009), checking (Associated Press 2008) or snacking (Costera Meijer 2007).

Next to that, almost one in three of the younger users show interest in Slow Journalism. This interest is fed by, for one thing, a preference for in-depth stories and context, for another a preference for a greater variety of sources and perspectives, for a stronger orientation towards solutions and for broader use of the perspectives of the people involved.

The degree of Slow Journalism Preference is related to the perception of the functions journalism should fulfil in society: the investigator-function and the mobilizer-function. The investigator-function is commonly recognized as an important element of Slow Journalism (Cooper 2009; Greenberg 2012; Le Masurier 2015), but the mobilizer-function is scarcely mentioned in the literature. This is notable, as it is precisely this function that turned out to be most strongly connected to Slow Journalism (Table 2).

In addition to the investigator-function, the mobilizer-function deserves a more prominent place in the conceptualizing of Slow Journalism. This function is of a relatively recent origin, younger than the disseminator-, adversarial- or interpreter-function. Its rise is strongly connected with the emergence of civic journalism in the United States (Weaver et al. 2007, 174). Civic journalism, according to Schudson (1999, 118) “[the] most impressive critique of journalistic practice inside journalism in a generation”, wanted to mobilize people to get involved again and participate in journalism as well as in the public domain (Rosen 1999; Rosenberry and St.John 2010). Therefore, the public has to be engaged in agenda setting and framing, in the process of finding diversity in angles and perspectives, and in the attempt to have a debate on matters of common concern in large sections of the population. Interactive technology can be of great support in the construction and maintaining of a broad range of sustainable contacts and in actualizing different forms of co-creation between professionals and the public. Using interactive technology mainly for the purpose of producing fast news is—from the perspective of civic journalists—by contrast a step backwards in the evolutionary process of journalism (Ryfe and Mensing 2010).

However, the mobilizer-function is not completely absent in the Slow Journalism discourse. Some aspects are mentioned throughout the literature, but rather haphazardly. On the basis of our research, these aspects of the mobilizer-function can be brought together in a systematic way and—next to the investigative element—serve as building blocks for a more comprehensive definition of Slow Journalism.

The first aspect is *inclusiveness*: to facilitate broad deliberation and consider a greater variety of viewpoints than only a bipolar pro and con (Laufer 2011). “Stories that present only two extremes of a complex issue are not only superficial and inaccurate; they also foster polarization among citizens. Stories that present a range of perspectives, however, lead to more constructive public discourse” (Gibbs and Warhover 2002, 168–169). The second aspect is *co-operation*: using the opportunities our twenty-first-century network society has to offer for collaboration with the public and making use of their contributions, from user-generated content to crowdsourcing (Bradshaw 2009). This co-operation is not limited to the production or distribution phase of the journalistic process. The role of the public is of decisive importance in the preliminary phase of agenda setting and framing, where decisions on core issues and angles are made (Berkey-Gerard 2009), and to feed public discourse with a whole range of perspectives (Ananny 2013). What Bradshaw (2009) says about investigative journalism certainly holds for mobilizing journalism too: “it is about enlightening, empowering and making a positive difference. And the web offers enormous potential here—but users must be involved in the process and have ownership of the agenda.” The third aspect is *constructiveness*: informing the public about possible solutions to public problems and about possibilities to act. This is a central tenet of the civic journalism movement (Rosenberry and St.John 2010) as well as of the arising constructive journalism movement (Haagerup 2014; Gyldensted 2011). In the literature on Slow Journalism, this third aspect is only mentioned implicitly, in the references to the importance of empowerment (Gess 2012; Le Masurier 2015; Sundin 2013).

Together with the above-mentioned investigator-function, these three building blocks correspond with the description that journalist Susan Moeller gave in the *Huffington Post*:

Slow Journalism is about valuing content over speed. Slow Journalism is about identifying core issues and finding a way to give audiences information of lasting substance—it's not about posting the latest news clip on a 24/7 deadline to "feed the beast." Slow Journalism is about news you can use ... to make you a more informed citizen. Slow Journalism is activist journalism; it's journalism that tries to enlighten, and perhaps even empower its audience, often by asking that audience to become collaborators. (Moeller 2010)

Up till now Slow Journalism has been mainly practised in a niche market of literary journalism in a magazine format; online or on paper. In order to develop into a substantial and sustainable alternative for the "digital fast lane" (Greenberg 2012), the wishes and preferences of a far larger audience group should be taken into consideration, especially those of the digital generation. Their preferences seem to point in the direction of a journalism of two speeds, where "fast" probably more often will be associated with free news and "slow" with the kind of journalism one has to pay for (cf. Erbsen et al. 2012). Within this framework of a journalism of two speeds, Slow Journalism should not only be investigative, but inclusive, co-operative and constructive as well. Our research shows that among younger users there is a basis for this.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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NOTES

1. A perfect sample has a coefficient of 1.
2. These outcomes are similar in all five underlying age groups: 15–19 years; 20–24 years; 25–29 years; 30–34 years; 35–39 years.

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