



The Role of Opinion Journalism in the Post-Truth Era: A Comparative Study of Global Media

*Görüş Gazeteciliğinin Hakikat-Sonrası Çağdaki Rolü:
Küresel Medya Üzerine Karşılaştırmalı Bir Çalışma*

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ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, characterized by the accelerated flow of information and the contestation of veracity criteria, journalism is observed to transcend its mere function of transmitting objective facts, instead emerging as a primary instrument for the production of political, ideological, and cultural meanings. In this so-called post-truth era, factual realities are gradually being replaced by personal opinions, and the media is observed to reproduce and circulate such discourses. Opinion journalism, in this context, emerges as a practice that legitimizes ideological positioning and shapes public perception in the sphere of public debate, particularly when journalists present their views without providing sufficient evidence or substantiation. This study aims to comparatively analyze the opinion sections of The Washington Post, The Guardian and Pravda in terms of their contributions to democratic debate and their role in ideological orientation. The analysis reveals that the extent to which opinion journalism contributes to critical thinking and democratic participation cannot be considered independently of the level of media literacy in a given country. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the state of press freedom, freedom of expression and patterns of media ownership in the countries where these newspapers operate are directly related to the nature and quality of opinion journalism. Opinion journalism contributes to critical thinking and democratic participation when conducted in light of fundamental journalistic principles; however, it assumes an othering and polarizing role when it is shaped by the subjective value judgments that characterize the post-truth era.

Keywords: Opinion Journalism, Post-truth, Global Media.

ÖZ

Enformasyon akışının hızlandığı ve doğruluk ölçütlerinin tartışmaya açıldığı 21.yy'da, gazeteciliğin yalnızca nesnel bilgileri aktarım işleviyle sınırlı kalmadığı; aksine, siyasal, ideolojik ve kültürel anlam üretiminin temel araçlarından biri haline geldiği gözlemlenmektedir. Hakikat ötesi olarak tanımlanan bu çağda, olgusal gerçeklerin yerini kişisel kanaatlerin almaya başladığı; medyanın da bu söylemleri yeniden ürettiği görülmektedir. Görüş gazeteciliği ise, haber aktarımında gazetecinin görüşlerine yer verirken kanıt ya da dayanak sunmadığı sürece, kamusal tartışma alanında ideolojik konumlandırmayı meşrulaştıran ve toplumsal algıyi yönlendiren bir pratik olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Çalışma ile amaçlanan, The Washington Post, The Guardian ve Pravda gazetelerinin Opinion eklerinin demokratik tartışma ortamı ve ideolojik yönlendirme açılarından karşılaştırılmıştır. Analiz sonucunda, görüş gazeteciliği haberlerinin eleştirel düşünce ve demokratik katılıma katkı sağlamaının ilgili ülkedeki medya okuryazarlık oranından azade kılınamayacağı görülmüştür. Öte yandan gazetelerin faaliyet gösterdikleri ülkedeki basın özgürlüğü ve ifade özgürlüğü koşulları ile medya sahiplik yapılarının da görüş gazeteciliğinin niteliği ile doğrudan ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Görüş gazeteciliği, temel gazetecilik ilkeleri işliğinde yapıldığı takdirde eleştirel düşünceye ve demokratik katılıma katkı sağlamakla; ancak hakikat sonrası çağın öznel değer yargıları işliğinde yapıldığı takdirde ise ötekileştirici ve kutuplaştırıcı bir rol üstlenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Görüş Gazeteciliği, Hakikat-ötesi, Küresel Medya.

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Introduction

The 21st century communication environment represents a period in which the boundaries of truth are increasingly debated, driven by the acceleration and diversification of information flow. The post-truth era has created a system in which emotional, belief-based and ideological discourses take precedence over objective realities in the reporting of political and social events. In this context, the principle of neutrality, traditionally upheld by universal journalistic standards, is increasingly giving way to opinion journalism. Opinion journalism not only reports news but also interprets it from specific political or cultural perspectives. However, when such interpretations and opinions lack an objective basis, they assume the function of shaping public perception. Consequently, the post-truth era redefines not only the transformation of media but also the ways in which societies approach information, news and truth.

This article examines the rise of opinion journalism in the post-truth era and its impact on the public sphere through a global media lens. It seeks answers to questions regarding the conditions under which opinion journalism conflicts with evidence-based journalism and what measures can be taken to address this. In societies with high political polarization and low media literacy, opinion journalism becomes not merely a form of expression but also an ideological tool. This transformation is evident across various media outlets in different geographical contexts. The study examines the opinion sections of *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian* and *Pravda* to analyze the rise of opinion journalism in the post-truth context, focusing on its role in democratic debate, ideological orientation, and the production of public legitimacy.

The differences between these newspapers demonstrate that, in the post-truth era, opinion journalism serves not only as a tool for information dissemination but also as an arena for ideological struggles. Therefore, examining the opinion sections of *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian* and *Pravda*—which differ in ideological, geographical, and media literacy contexts—provides an opportunity to evaluate media discourses in the post-truth era from a comparative perspective.

The Post-Truth Era

The concept of "post-truth" began to appear frequently in academic studies around 2016 and was selected as the Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year in the same year. Over the subsequent decade, its impacts have been explored in fields such as politics, sociology and communication. The term describes a system in which personal opinions are prioritized over information and the significance of truth is diminished. Defined by the Oxford Dictionary as an adjective denoting "circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief," the term was first used by journalist Ralph Keyes in 2004. However, Steve Tesich's 1992 article, "A Government of Lies,"

also addressed the concept of post-truth in a political context (Tesich, 1992).

Tesich (2004, p. 14) argued that the erosion of trust in democratic institutions has led individuals in society to no longer desire to know the truth. In summary, this situation reflects people's awareness that they are being lied to but their refusal to accept this reality. According to Keyes (2004), post-truth also reflects distrust in the media and journalists, traditionally seen as distributors of truth, as well as society's skeptical approach to reality.

The concept of post-truth has gained prominence due to individuals being overwhelmed by an intense flow of data and news. This is intertwined with phenomena such as fake news, conspiracy theories, stereotypes and hate speech. In this process, truths are manipulated or disregarded by both journalists and politicians (Newman, 2023, p. 13). From a political economy perspective, distortions in media ownership structures—such as oligopolization and monopolization—create fertile ground for phenomena like fake news and hate speech, which underpin the post-truth concept. This strengthens the relationship between news and post-truth, pushing journalism's public duty and rights-based approach to the background.

At this juncture, the value created by truth, in relation to the phenomena it is associated with, is of great importance. According to Foucault (1977, p. 14), when speaking of truth, a system of ordered procedures, the production of statements, and their circulation are also implied. Truth is interconnected with the power dynamics that trigger and direct it. Consequently, news production methods, journalistic practices, and media ownership structures become integral components of this cycle. In the post-truth era, where authorities produce their own truths through the media and manipulate society with fake news, the expectation is the exposure of lies and the triumph of truth. However, the observed reality points to the opposite. Society begins to shy away from truths, even equating truth with bad news. Over time, individuals seek refuge in government narratives to shield themselves from reality (Tesich, 1992).

This state of shielding oneself from reality persists even when politicians or government representatives do not tell the truth. Society chooses to hear lies and believe that these lies are necessary for the country's interests. Tesich (1992, p. 13) defines this chronic condition as "the inability to simultaneously hold respect for both truth and ourselves." In this context, another concept in political communication, "skeptical inertia," emerges. Introduced by Çiğdem Bozdağ and Suncem Koçer in their 2022 article, "Skeptical Inertia in the Face of Polarization: News Consumption and Misinformation in Turkey," skeptical inertia describes the passive skepticism developed by individuals and societies due to the bombardment of data, leading to a loss of critical thinking abilities. As a result of skeptical inertia, readers accept the news of the media outlets they find ideologically close to them as "real". Therefore, in the context of post-truth, this concept is also relevant for describing readers' perceptions of misinformation in politically charged news (Bozdağ & Koçer,

2022).

However, the term post-truth is also subject to criticism. Some argue that skepticism toward truth has always existed and that societies have never been exposed to flawless, impartial media messages, suggesting that facts have always been secondary (Dieguez, 2017, p. 45). Similar reflections are increasingly observed across various segments of society. As historian and philosopher Hannah Arendt stated, "If everybody always lies to you, the consequence is not that you believe the lies, but rather that nobody believes anything any longer" (Arendt, 1978, as cited in Berkowitz, 2019). This leads to a system in which truth is devalued.

In the post-truth context, social media has also become a platform where the importance of truth is diminished. The widespread increase in social media usage has brought the issue of algorithms to the forefront. Algorithms present users with content similar to what they follow or like, ensuring interaction only with content aligned with their views. This restricts the circulation of diverse ideas, confining public discourse to a narrow space. In the post-truth era, individuals' exposure to personalized news content is explained by the concepts of echo chambers and filter bubbles. The echo chamber effect is a metaphorical term describing the reinforcement of specific information, ideas, and beliefs through repeated exposure to user-selected messages on social media (Narin, 2018, p. 240). The filter bubble, coined by Pariser (2011), refers to the isolation of users from differing perspectives or content due to online personalization.

The significance of these two concepts in the post-truth context lies in their support for a system where subjectivity takes precedence over facts. In an ecosystem where diverse ideas do not circulate, individuals are continually exposed to similar ideas, making it unlikely to develop an objective perspective. These similar ideas eventually become dogmatic, undermining the environment for free thought. However, the emergence of the internet and digital platforms initially fueled hopes of free circulation of all ideas and easy access to information. In reality, data on the internet is organized within an algorithmic system, ranked based on users' search, like, and follow histories. Factors such as the technological device used, search history, and location directly influence search results.

Post-truth manifests as an era where many individuals feel deprived of practices to access truth and experience disappointment (Jasanoff & Simmet, 2017, p. 763). Acknowledging the media's and journalistic practices' role in this process is essential to finding societal solutions to the ethically concerning outcomes of the post-truth era. Societies whose perception of reality is manipulated lose their critical thinking abilities, forgetting—or worse, ceasing to care about—the requirements of being a democratic nation.

Opinion Journalism

The decline of critical thinking and objectivity in the post-truth era brings certain challenges for media ethics and journalism. The replacement of objective information with personal opinions has brought emotion-based content and news to the forefront. This directly and indirectly affects news content. However, it is first necessary to address the claim of impartiality in journalism. Journalism is regarded as a public profession and a source of accurate and informative news for the development of democratic societies. One of the fundamental principles of journalism is to clearly distinguish between news and opinion and prevent their conflation, as "news is information based on data and facts" (Tokgöz, 2013, p. 133).

However, with the post-truth era and the immense increase in the volume of data, the line between news and opinion has become increasingly blurred. This raises the question of whether news informs readers or manipulates them. Without information, it is impossible to create factual value through opinions alone. For this reason, examining the concepts of post-truth and opinion journalism together is significant in this study. The purpose and theoretical basis of opinion journalism, as well as how it is practiced, require analysis.

Opinion journalism is expected to offer a perspective, provide a forum for comprehensive political, social, and personal expressions and opinions on current issues, encourage new ideas about public issues, and spark new discussions (Soysal, 2025). In this context, there are two distinct perspectives on opinion journalism. The first posits that opinion journalism serves an important epistemic function and has the potential to inform readers in accordance with normative theory (Manosevitch & Walker, 2009; Soysal, 2025). The second argues that opinion journalism adopts a language of hate speech, othering, and polarization, which needs to change (Johnson et al., 2021; Tabada, 2022). This is because, particularly in the post-truth era, opinion pieces or editorial comments often contribute to ideological constructions that directly influence readers' perceptions.

Historically, opinion journalism has been described as a bridge between journalism and literature (Nosova, 2014). Since Ancient Greece, humanity's search for spaces and platforms to freely discuss societal issues and needs has contributed to the development of journalism in this direction. As Thomas Gavin (1991) stated, "Both the novelist and the journalist live in an absolute relation to truth". Pursuing truth and delivering it to readers has been a fundamental goal and principle of journalism throughout history. Therefore, opinion journalism must appear in print without manipulating truth, clearly distinguishing between news and opinion.

Unlike traditional journalism, opinion journalism offers a more subjective perspective. Examples include columns, letters to the editor, and editorial comments. With the advent of new media, instances of opinion journalism have become more prevalent in the online versions of newspapers, news websites, and digital platforms. In the post-truth era, as the claim to objectivity weakens, journalists are increasingly seen as opinion shapers or propagandists rather than mere

information transmitters (Uzunoğlu, 2025). Consequently, claims of truth are made on highly variable grounds, and discussions about the legitimacy of journalism must consider this shifting context (Wahl, 2016).

Opinion journalism has been practiced since the emergence of mass communication tools. Newspaper columns and opinion pieces are the most fundamental examples of this field. However, with the influence of new communication technologies, the journalism profession has evolved, as have readers' expectations and reading habits. While a traditional news article conveys the details of an event through the 5WIH (who, what, when, where, why, and how) framework based on facts, opinion journalism foregrounds the writer's emotions and judgments about the news. Consequently, news articles where facts take a backseat lose their ability to represent truth. Postmodern approaches argue that it is impossible for journalists to report news impartially and objectively, emphasizing the impossibility of writing news independently of personal opinions and ideologies. Stuart Allan (1995) critiques normative theories and ideals of objectivity in journalism, questioning the truth claims of objective news narratives.

Undoubtedly, the dominance of subjectivity over an objective perspective in news reporting creates more significant problems in countries where democratic culture is not fully established. Readers encounter opinions rather than information in news, posing risks to public opinion formation. Therefore, determining the boundaries of opinion journalism and preventing the blurring of the line between opinion and information are critical topics within the discipline of journalism. From a sociological perspective, changes in readers' habits are also noteworthy. The growing prominence of new media technologies in daily life has altered reading habits, with scanning for keywords in texts becoming widespread. This negatively impacts reading rates and the formation of informed public opinion. Rather than consulting primary sources, many readers find it more practical and convenient to read news commentaries.

From a journalistic perspective, the desire to gain more followers and subscribers leads newspapers and news websites to prioritize opinion-heavy news. Headlines and content are designed to attract readers' attention, aiming to increase clicks and, consequently, advertising revenue. This issue is again tied to political economy factors. However, as emphasized in this study, opinion journalism gains meaning when based on information, truth, and credible sources. Attention must be paid to the sources journalists cite when presenting opinions and the extent to which they prioritize objective information. Otherwise, manipulative news content emerges, characterized by polarizing, divisive, and hate-filled discourses, prioritizing baseless and subjective opinions over information.

Opinion Journalism in the Shadow of Media Distrust

Opinion journalism is a journalistic practice in which journalists include their own interpretations and evaluations in news content. It is frequently used in news-

paper opinion sections, news websites, and blogs. The most significant difference between opinion journalism and traditional journalism is that it not only conveys events to readers but also interprets them (McNair, 2017). Historically, journalists have been both reporters, writers, and commentators, a topic extensively debated in journalistic theory. When news is presented from different perspectives, it takes on new meanings and addresses readers' perceptions accordingly.

Opinion journalism has long been practiced within the structure of traditional journalism. However, declining trust in the media and the subsequent rise in interaction-driven news content have brought opinion journalism to the forefront of discussions. News written in a biased tone generates more clicks and engagement. Over time, as news becomes a commodity that generates advertising revenue, readers' trust in news is further eroded.

Historically, the issue of "media distrust" is rooted in political economy factors. Problems in media ownership structures, the marginalization of opposition media, and the circulation of similar news content form the basis of this trust issue. Over time, the belief that digital platforms would create a more alternative and reliable media environment has given way to disappointment. Economic concerns have persisted in digital platforms, and in countries with press freedom issues, alternative business models have been insufficient, allowing advertising or government-dependent structures to prevail. Consequently, biased reporting, disinformation, incomplete information, and misleading headlines are among the primary reasons for eroding readers' trust.

Recent studies indicate a significant global decline in trust in the media, not only in Turkey but worldwide. According to the Reuters Institute's 2024 Digital News Report, only 40% of people globally trust news sources, with this figure dropping to 35% in Turkey (Newman et al., 2024). This situation, which demonstrates the blurring of the distinction between news and opinion, creates a significant space for opinion journalism.

By blurring the boundaries of objectivity and prioritizing subjectivity, opinion journalism can exacerbate distrust. The prominence of emotions in subjective contexts can lead to hate speech and othering discourses in opinion journalism practices. The way journalists express their emotions, the words they use, and the adjectives they employ are significant in discourse analysis. The use of biased language to polarize readers is one of the criticized aspects of opinion journalism.

Thus, while opinion journalism aims to create an authentic tone by incorporating journalists' personal perspectives, it can also contribute to the erosion of trust in news and media. Particularly, the prominence of biased and emotional discourses causes news to deviate from objectivity. Therefore, it is crucial to clearly indicate when news contains opinions or commentary. Journalists must adhere to ethical principles, striving to reveal truths rather than being manipulative, which is essential to mitigate the potential harms of the post-truth era. Opinion journalists can align more closely with science communication by referencing expert opinions

and engaging in evidence-based journalism. When including personal opinions and beliefs, they can use probabilistic language, cite research results in percentages, and openly acknowledge the uncertainty of the discussed topic, noting that perspectives may change based on future evidence and conditions (Soysal, 2025).

By doing so, it is possible to gain readers' trust and incorporate opinions and commentary into news without compromising journalistic principles. The journalistic profession aims to present truth to readers and enable access to truth through news. However, it is not entirely possible for journalists to completely detach from their personal perspectives. While interpreting and evaluating events from different angles is a human trait, journalists must always reference evidence and documents when incorporating personal perspectives to maintain both the profession's integrity and readers' access to accurate information.

Methodology and Findings

Many globally published media outlets include opinion journalism in their newspaper content. In this context, the opinion journalism examples of publications with large readerships and subscriber bases are significant for their potential to shape public opinion. Analyzing opinion journalism in the post-truth era is the primary aim of this study. The selected newspaper examples were chosen from their online versions using purposive sampling. The Washington Post, The Guardian and Pravda are the newspapers examined in terms of opinion journalism. The purpose of this examination is to determine whether the expressions used in opinion pieces are polarizing or divisive, identify the topics addressed, and ascertain whether these topics prioritize clear facts or vague personal opinions. In this context, 150 randomly selected news items published in the opinion columns of relevant newspapers between April and September 2025 were evaluated.

The Post's View: the opinion section of the Washington Post written by the newspaper's Editorial Board, operates under the slogan "Democracy Dies in Darkness", a phrase that highlights the importance of press freedom. Published in the United States since 1877, the newspaper states in its opinion section: "Editorials represent the views of The Post as an institution, as determined through discussion among members of the Editorial Board, based in the Opinions section and separate from the newsroom". This clarifies that opinion pieces reflect the views of the editorial board rather than the newsroom. In February 2025, the newspaper's owner, Jeff Bezos, announced that the Opinion section would focus on personal liberties and free market economy issues (Kellman, 2025), leading to perceptions of a more cautious approach to opinion expression. However, this decision sparked significant internal and external objections, with claims that it restricted press and freedom of expression.

In terms of news language, it's noteworthy that objectivity is largely maintained and statistics and historical context are integrated into the news. However, these

sources appear to have been largely selected from liberal-leaning media outlets. Therefore, it's safe to say that the process of informing the reader lags the process of persuading them. It is also clear that the news in the Opinion section contributes to strengthening the newspaper's liberal identity. The Opinion section includes tabs such as Editorials, Columns, Guest Opinions, Cartoons, Letters to the Editor, Submit a Guest Opinion, and Submit a Letter, aimed at fostering interaction and democratic participation. Content in these tabs, particularly in the Columns section, is predominantly created with references to sources and expert opinions, adopting a critical perspective (Bump, 2025; Ignatius, 2025). Editorials are published under the "Editorial Board" signature, with reader comments included below. Rather than polarizing or baseless subjective discourse, the Opinion section employs a rhetorical tone aimed at interaction and persuasion. While the newspaper remains within certain boundaries in its opinion journalism, it can be said to contribute to public opinion formation and democratic participation.

The Guardian, a British newspaper published since 1821, opens its Opinion section with the words of its 1921 editor, C.P. Scott: "Comment is free... but facts are sacred". The Opinion section comprises The Guardian View, Columnists, Cartoons, Opinion Videos, and Letters, focusing primarily on critical perspectives and producing politically grounded discourses on issues such as social justice, public health, migration, and care services. In the Columnists section, a list of all columnists is provided, with direct quotes from their articles used as headlines. In these opinion journalism examples, government discourses that other and polarize migrants and disadvantaged groups are criticized (Taylor, 2025), with a humanist and heroic framing applied to these groups. For instance, the use of the term "unsung heroes" for migrants (Bird, 2025) aims to reverse societal polarization. However, in political opinion pieces, a polarizing environment is created through framing conservative groups, corporate lobbies, and anti-migrant sentiments as "harmful, populist, and wrong" (Beckett, 2025; Editorial, 2025).

In terms of opinion journalism, topics such as ethical issues in politics, loss of trust in politics, workers' rights, social service issues, and migration are commonly addressed in the Opinion section. Unlike the criticized aspects of opinion journalism in the post-truth context, such as baseless commentary and personal opinions, these contents avoid such pitfalls. The newspaper addresses issues often subject to hate speech in many countries with an inclusive and humanist discourse. By criticizing politicians' polarizing rhetoric, it offers alternative perspectives. In this regard, The Guardian's opinion journalism contributes to democratic discourse and fosters critical thinking. However, it employs a polarizing discourse toward conservative ideas in political news, reinforcing a "we" versus "they" distinction, which aligns with post-truth reflections. Nevertheless, the Opinion section frequently utilizes statistics and expert opinions, avoiding vague information while reinforcing ideological perspectives and framing through clear data.

When the two newspapers are compared in terms of the interaction

between opinion journalism and public opinion formation, it becomes evident that The Washington Post actively seeks to shape public opinion around issues of freedom, the rule of law and electoral processes, while simultaneously maintaining a critical perspective toward political power. Its opinion content is largely characterized by discussions on the functioning of democracy and debates concerning national interests. The Guardian, by contrast, brings more universal issues to the fore and prioritizes the analysis of global policies rather than national interests. Consequently, its contribution to public opinion formation is grounded in ethical and universal values, while its discursive approach is more community-oriented and participatory in nature.

Pravda, established in 1912 as the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, is ironically named after the Russian word for "truth." However, its news content and commentaries openly feature polarizing and targeting discourses (Simpson, 2025; Sarma, 2025; Baofu, 2025). Political opinion pieces, in particular, adopt a tone that vilifies and accuses American politics and media, clearly distinguishing between Russia and the West. The weakening of truth, a hallmark of the post-truth era, is evident in these commentaries. While Russia is often cited as an example of antidemocratic practices, Pravda's opinion pieces focus on accusing other countries, creating an ironic contrast. Rather than fostering a critical public opinion, the newspaper's content aims to perpetuate the existing political and social order without scrutiny, creating a perception of threat and enmity toward Western countries. Legitimizing discourses centered on state and power are prominent in its commentaries (Lulko, 2025; Simpson, 2025).

In Pravda's opinion articles, narratives centered on national interests and geopolitical objectives are prominently emphasized, while government policies are consistently legitimized. Within this framework, such articles function as instruments of propaganda in terms of public opinion formation, aiming to shape readers' perceptions. The content relies heavily on ideological framing, and the absence of alternative perspectives prevents the development of pluralistic and critical viewpoints. Consequently, in the case of Pravda, opinion journalism primarily operates as a tool of propaganda, disseminating exclusively pro-government positions.

Based on the role of opinion journalism in contributing to democracy and press freedom, opinion sections are expected to be critical, inclusive of all societal segments, anti-polarizing, and aligned with ethical principles. Only in this way can they contribute to the formation of a healthy and democratic public opinion. Opinion journalism is an essential and indispensable part of news media, but the topics and discourses it employs and the arguments it relies on are of great importance.

Figure 1: Comparative Analysis

Newspaper	Language	Discourse	Ideology
The Washington Post	Rhetorical, persuasive and interaction-driven. Uses evidence-based language, citing sources and expert opinions. Clear distinction between newsroom and editorial board opinions.	Focuses on framing and interpreting events rather than solely presenting information. Critical but restrained, with editorial boundaries set by ownership decisions.	Focuses on personal liberties and free market economy. Attempts to uphold journalistic integrity through fact-checking.
The Guardian	Inclusive and humanist in addressing social issues. Employs polarizing language against conservative groups. Relies on statistics and expert opinions to support arguments.	Aims to foster democratic discourse by offering alternative perspectives and critiquing polarizing political rhetoric. Avoids baseless commentary, grounding discourse in evidence.	Strongly aligned with progressive and liberal values, emphasizing social justice and humanism. Critiques conservative and populist ideologies. Seeks to promote democratic values and ethical journalism.
Pravda	Polarizing, accusatory and targeting, particularly against American politics and media. Employs a confrontational tone, emphasizing a Russia vs. West dichotomy. Lacks evidence or expert references, relying on vague and subjective assertions.	Propagandistic, aiming to perpetuate the existing political and social order without critical scrutiny. Creates threat perceptions and enmity toward Western countries. Legitimizes state and power-centric narratives, stifling critical public opinion formation. Lacks engagement with alternative perspectives	Strongly aligned with state-driven, nationalist, and anti-Western ideology. Reproduces government narratives, ignoring alternative views. Undermines democratic discourse by prioritizing propaganda over critical engagement, weakening truth in the public sphere.

The three newspapers analyzed demonstrate distinct roles and functions in opinion journalism. The Washington Post employs methods such as fact-checking and source referencing to mitigate the concerns of evidence-based journalism in the post-truth era. For instance, an AI-based fact-checking analysis of U.S. President Donald Trump's statements exemplifies this approach (Sonnenfeld, Henriques, & Tian, 2025). However, paradoxically, Jeff Bezos's decision to limit the Opinion section to personal liberties and free market economy issues conflicts with these efforts. The Guardian emphasizes democratic values, freedom of expression and press, and ethical principles in its opinion journalism content, similar to The Washington Post, by referencing sources and expert opinions. Its Editorial View pieces aim to reflect public opinion rather than propagate. However, alternative perspectives are often framed negatively, presenting readers with a clear political framework. Pravda, on the other hand, lies at the heart of one of the core issues of post-truth journalism: the conflation of news and propaganda. Its opinion pieces feature strategic practices such as creating threat perceptions, accusations, ignoring alternative views, and reproducing government narratives. Undoubtedly, this poses a significant obstacle to the free discussion of truth in the public sphere.

Journalism is not merely the transmission of raw data; it also entails the processing of such data into meaningful information. In this way, journalism does not

only provide readers with factual knowledge but also conveys a particular perspective through which these facts can be interpreted. Within this framework, opinion journalism fulfills an essential democratic function. The role of journalism should not be limited to ensuring that readers passively consume news; rather, it should encourage them to question, compare, and critically evaluate what they encounter. Opinion pieces serve precisely this purpose by fostering critical engagement. Moreover, the inclusion of diverse perspectives and viewpoints in journalistic practice nurtures pluralism and contributes to the development of a democratic sphere of deliberation. Thus, opinion journalism plays a vital role not only in the transmission of social issues but also in opening them to discussion and enriching public debate.

Conclusion

Opinion journalism plays a significant role in presenting truth in news and shaping public opinion. When examined in terms of its role and impact on public discourse, opinion journalism does not conflict with journalism's rational character as long as it offers reliable opinions based on evidence and research findings. However, in the post-truth era, the blurring of distinctions between news and propaganda or news and advertising, the contradictory coverage of the same event in newspapers with differing ideological perspectives, the dismissal of objective truth, or the replacement of information with personal beliefs deeply undermine trust in news and journalism. While this distrust is primarily linked to media ownership structures, the rise in disinformation and propaganda due to digital platform usage is also a significant factor.

Within the scope of this study, the opinion sections of *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, and *Pravda* were selected through purposive sampling, and their news discourses' impact on democratic dialogue was analyzed. The analysis reveals that the contribution of opinion journalism to critical thinking and democratic participation is inseparable from the level of media literacy in the respective country. *The Guardian* brings nearly every topic to the public discourse arena in its Opinion section, supporting its content with evidence and expert opinions. The United Kingdom also ranks in the first category of media literacy, indicating the highest level of media literacy according to various studies. *The Washington Post* references evidence and expert opinions in its opinion journalism but has imposed editorial restrictions by limiting topics to personal liberties and the free market economy. This decision has been criticized in terms of media ownership structures and freedom of thought. The United States generally ranks in the second category of media literacy, among countries where media education is still developing. *Pravda*, however, does not provide evidence or expert opinions in its Opinion section. Its news content, heavily laden with polarizing and othering political rhetoric, extensively employs targeting, propaganda, and perception management. By repeating government narratives and excluding alternative perspectives, this

approach obstructs critical thinking and public sphere contributions, posing a significant barrier to democracy and press freedom.

Opinion journalism must be evaluated in the post-truth era within the context of parameters such as political economy and media literacy, emphasizing its importance in contributing to an information-based public sphere. When conducted in line with fundamental journalistic principles, opinion journalism plays a significant role in fostering democratic public opinion. However, this is not solely dependent on responsible journalism but also on society's media literacy levels. While highlighting the importance of opinion journalism in the context of press and freedom of expression, this study also argues that in the post-truth era, opinion journalism can blur the line between opinion and news, contributing to societal polarization. The analyzed newspapers' opinion journalism examples support this argument. Undoubtedly, increasing the sample size and conducting comparative analyses with more newspapers could deepen the analysis.

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