Google, Facebook, and what else? Measuring the hybridity of Italian journalists by their use of

sources

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interdependence among actors, media and communication formats. The hybrid media system

approach underlines that legacy news media and non-elite media actors construct flows of news

through different media technologies and according to complex temporal structures. A media

environment arises in which traditional distinctions between concepts like 'online' and 'offline',

'producer' and 'audience', 'citizens' and 'journalists' become blurred. The emphasis appears to be

on change more than continuity, and on difference more than similarity. Although the hybrid media

approach is appreciated by numerous contemporary media scholars, hybridity in media often remains

an all-encompassing concept and few attempts have been made to measure it. This paper assesses the

level of hybridity by investigating journalists' uses of sources. It considers mainly journalists' use of

sources by the medium for which they work (from newspapers to web or radio) and the kinds of news

that they produce (hard or soft news, business/finance, tech/science). The assumption is therefore

that, within a homogenously hybridized media system, journalists use the same sources regardless of

the medium for which they work and the topics with which they deal. This objective is pursued by

analyzing the data collected via a survey conducted by means of structured interviews with a sample

of 1,424 Italian Italian journalists between October and November 2016. The findings show that the

analytical distinction among platforms for which journalists work still matters in terms of sources.

Except for the use of Facebook and Google journalist have still very defined paths to collect sources

according to the medium they work for. The paper has implications also for the literature on

journalists' authority and expertise

Keywords: hybrid media, NEWS/INFORMATION, JOURNALISM, sources, media outlets

The contemporary media systems present hybrid (Chadwick, 2013) and convergent (Jenkins, 2008) logics and features that imply an increasingly interdependence among actors, media and communication formats (Klinger and Svensson, 2015). The information cycle of the 21st century is characterized by an interdependent multitude of media technologies wherein multiple media or non-media actors producing news follow newer and older, overlapping and competing, media logics. The hybrid media system approach underlines that legacy news media and non-elite media actors construct flows of news through different media technologies and according to complex temporal structures. A media environment arises in which traditional distinctions between concepts like 'online' and 'offline', 'producer' and 'audience', 'citizens' and 'journalists' become blurred. The emphasis appears to be on change more than continuity, and on difference more than similarity; these communication exchanges are networked rather than being centralized, user-centered (and algorithmically-managed) rather than being professionally controlled (Papacharissi, 2015). As Mast and colleagues (2017) put it, the hybrid media system accomplishes the shift from "either/or" to "both/and".

Although the hybrid media approach is appreciated by numerous contemporary media scholars, hybridity in media often remains an all-encompassing concept (Witschge et al., 2018). To date, few attempts have been made to measure it. The aim of this paper is to assess the level of hybridity by investigating journalists' uses of sources. It considers mainly journalists' use of sources by the medium for which they work (from newspapers to web or radio) and the kinds of news items that they produce (hard or soft news, business/finance, tech/science – see the methodological paragraph for a discussion of this typology). Ours is mainly a descriptive attempt to measure hybridity through journalists' uses of news sources; nevertheless, where extant research supports our aim, we formulate clear hypotheses. Anyway, the general assumption is that, within a homogenously hybridized media system, journalists would use the same sources regardless of the medium for which they work and the topics with which they deal.

Measuring hybridity through news sources means measuring the level of interconnectedness among different domains. In this way, we can first observe hybridity at the systemic level, particularly at the "meld of multiple technological affordances […], and institutional structures of media production and distribution" (Baym, 2017: 13), and then do so in terms of professional figures (i.e. journalists who interact with public relators).

Our proposal is applied to the Italian media system. This objective is pursued by analyzing the data collected via a survey conducted by means of structured interviews with a sample of Italian journalists between October and November 2016.

The article is structured as follows. The first section discusses the different meanings that have been assigned to the concept of 'hybrid media', and then clarifies how we use that term in our study. The second section sets out our theoretical argument, which relates media hybridity to the overarching theme of journalistic sources and discusses which sources are considered here. The third section describes the data and the variables used in the empirical analysis, the results of which are discussed in the fourth section. A final section presents the main conclusions of the study. The findings have implications also for the literature on journalists' authority and expertise (Carlson, 2017).

What hybridity for a "hybrid media system"?

Andrew Chadwick (2013) propounded the most complete and comprehensive definition of hybrid media system. It encompasses and shapes the latest uses that have been made of the term *hybrid media*. According to Chadwick (2013), media should be regarded as "technologies, genres, norms, behaviors, and organizational forms" (Chadwick, 2013: 4); therefore in terms of a dynamic and complex concept with many implications. Starting from the concept of "hybrid media system" means considering a broad process of de-differentiation and loss of distinction. Forms of hybridity arise precisely where loss of distinction and interdependence among actors entails an integration of cultural

logics and institutional practices that were previously kept separate. The notion with which Chadwick (2013) deals mainly is 'media logic' discussed in Altheide and Snow's (1979) terms. Therefore, "hybridity of media logics" means the hybridity of the process by which media organizations and practitioners determine how material is categorized, and how the selection of social experience is performed in the media, including styles of communication formats and values. In this paper, analyzing the selection of sources by journalists who work for different media and produce different topics entails looking at which organization routines they have established, and which selection of social experience they regard as journalistically valuable. Mattoni and Ceccobelli (2018) furtherly develop Chadwick's framework as a heuristic device to capture national differences in order to "understand whether the transformations introduced by ICTs in the media and political realms also contribute to reshaping national media systems" (2018: 541). They combine the Chadwick's proposal with the famous Hallin and Mancini comparing media system (2004), emphasizing the role of digital media within the national domestic dimension. It is precisely the aim of our effort, looking at forms of hybridity declined within the Italian media system.

Affirming that Chadwick's (2013) perspective encompasses the others that have adopted – in different ways – the expression "hybrid media" means that despite the existence of various uses of the *hybrid*-term, Chadwick offers the only holistic overview of the concept. Nevertheless, "current media ecology is one thing, but a holistic approach to examine the extent to which processes of hybridization are visible in the news is another" (Harder et al., 2016, p. 3). With few exceptions (see the revealing discussion in Jungherr et al., 2019), a great deal of empirical research that investigates processes of hybridity often adopts, as in this case, a narrower approach that fits well-defined contexts in comparison to Chadwick's holistic approach (2013). At the same time, that variety of research furnishes nuanced perspectives that enhance understanding of the evolving media system. Hybridity is often considered to be a mere convergence between structural different actors, like journalists and activists (Barnard, 2018), or journalists and programmers (Hermida and Young, 2017), convergence

between reporting practices, or communication formats as among fictive and factual forms of storytelling (Baym, 2017), news and entertainment (Bailey, 2018) or news and advertising/public relations (Erjavec, 2005). The notion of hybridity characterizes not only the cross-media flows of news, practices, or professional roles but also differentiations between producers and users of news (Harder et al., 2016; Papacharissi, 2015). This heterogeneity is precisely the reason why (Witschge et al., 2018) consider it necessary to develop the term further in a productive manner.

Thus, forms of hybridity are processes of de-differentiation and loss of distinction among professional roles, discourses, practices or values. Measuring hybridity via sources exactly means measuring the processes of de-differentiation through the convergence between the reporting practices of different journalists (i.e. journalists who work for different media), and analyzing whether that convergence reflects the production of different news topics (here we consider *hard or soft news*, *business/finance* and *tech/science*).

This approach also entails considering processes of de-differentiation by treating media as technologies, logics, and organizational forms. To provide a practical example, the journalistic use of social media to cover *hard news* or *business/finance* (that is, what this research can monitor) means that journalists use social media as technologies with their affordances (i.e. a mix of constraints and potentialities). It also means that journalists consider Twitter or Facebook to be *social experiences* adapted to become news, so that those platforms are intertwined with journalistic logic. Finally, it means that from an organizational point of view, journalists perform part of their jobs at their desks. Additionally, from an epistemological point of view (see Ekström, 2002; Godler and Reich, 2017) it means that they may privilege what they can see before their eyes (e.g. politicians' tweets), rather than discovering or using anonymous sources that cannot be revealed.

The relation between journalists and sources is *per se* an exemplum of interdependence, of *hybridity*. Here we explore the initial part of the cycle of news stories, precisely when journalists select their sources. We accordingly measure the extent to which the origin of news is hybrid in terms of

interaction among media actors (i.e. whether journalists who work for newspapers use Twitter and/or personal contacts, or whether journalists use blogs to produce soft news items). In this study, the selection of news sources focuses mainly on which medium can exert influence on diverse kinds of journalists and the diverse topics that they produce. This approach follows Harder and colleagues (2016), but we directly analyze journalists' accounts of their practices. This helps to gain closer insight into their logics and norms. In fact, here we consider what kinds of sources journalists *claim* that they use the most, regardless of any control of what they actually use (see Hanitzsch and Vos, 2018). We therefore assume that, regardless of the eventual use of sources, what journalists state that they use is precisely what they consider to be intertwined with their practices and what they take for granted in their everyday routines.

Another common feature of the hybrid approach is that scholars assume that the hybrid media system is "built upon interactions among older and newer media logics" and shaped by "complex and ever-evolving relationships based upon adaptation, interdependence and simultaneous concentrations and diffusions of power" (Harder et al.: 4). The hybrid media system is therefore a stage where diverse actors struggle for their independence, while interdependence is unavoidable. As Stephen Barnard (2018) suggests, this perspective applies to a Bourdieusian approach. Barnard reminds that field theory suggests that actors operate in separate but related social spheres. He then talks appropriately about the growing *hybridity* within the social interrelated fields that deal with the production of news (mainly the hybridity between journalism and politics). This approach induces us to conceive the hybrid media system and the hybrid interactions, texts, discourses that it implies, as loci where analyzing "concentrations and diffusions of power" (Chadwick, 2013: 4). In the case of journalism, the hybridization process shapes power relations among actors, affects the meanings of news and, ultimately, what *reality* journalists recount or, to put it in Jungherr et al.'s (2019) terms, *which speakers* have the discursive power to shape the news. In our research, the growing use of Twitter rather than personal contacts, may suggest 1) journalists' attitude about what they regard as reliable,

2) about what they regard as adapt to their practices, 3) what it more adapt to 'media logic' (the adaptability to journalists' practices, as mentioned, it is the core of media logic as elaborated by Altheide and Snow, 1979). Actors behind sources that journalists regard as reliable for their organizations and practices are undoubtedly those able to shape power relations and, ultimately, news items themselves. This process also questions whether the power once attributed to traditional news organizations still obtains (Jungherr et al. 2019: 2).

Measuring hybridity by sources

The relation between journalists and sources is one of the topics most debated in journalism studies (Carlson, 2009; Cottle, 2000; Davies, 2008). This debate has long discussed, particularly via distinctions among elite/institutional sources (e.g. politicians, officials, governments), civil society sources (labor unions, environmental group, see. Tiffen et al., 2014), and non-elite sources, prospective ones that do not possess the authority to attract media attention (Kleemans et al., 2017). Considering our research design, this distinction cannot be applied here. This study may only presume distinctions among elite, non-elite or emergent sources (Kleemans et al., 2017; Thorbjørnsrud and Ustad Figenschou, 2016), but it cannot further discuss this issue.

The ongoing development of different forms of hybrid media system is considered to have brought a more dynamic use of sources. Various online environments – from social media to personal blogs or websites – have indubitably diversified for all actors involved in the process of news production (from social movements to institutional political actors) the possibilities to express their voices and eventually being selected by journalists (Splendore, 2017; Hermida, 2010; Paulussen and Harder, 2014). This does not mean that every source has the same power to influence journalists; rather, it means that the chances of minor (in terms of power and influence), non-elite, and non-professionalized sources becoming accessible and reliable are greater than in different media

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environments (see Chadwick 2013). If we regard the matter in terms of pluralism and journalists' ability to access an increasing number of sources, it is a potential improvement of their work.

Here we consider twelve sources. Precisely, we discuss "Personal Contacts", "Press Releases", "News Agencies" and "Traditional media (newspapers, magazines, TV, radio)", which are analyzed in Table 1; "blogs", "Twitter", "Facebook" and "Other SNs" (Table 2); "Online Media", "Search engine", "Wikipedia" and "Open data" (Table 3). We will evaluate the impact of the three groups of sources on both journalists who work for different media and the content produced (in other words, the extent to which those three groups of sources are influential in producing hard and soft news, business/finance and tech/science news).

We can identify the four sources included in Table 1 as the most traditional. The second group is the one that has recently taken the news production process by storm, some scholar does not hesitate to define this change as the *twitterization* of journalism (Houston et al., 2018). The third category instead comprises the most challenging types of source to disentangle (by means of a search engine or Wikipedia, journalists can search for literally anything) and at the same time the least investigated. For this reason, it is interesting to measure which journalists use those sources and to what extent. Open data are instead more clear-cut. They are particularly meaningful within studies on data journalism and open government (Coddington, 2015).

Our primary task is to describe whether a hybridity of practices exists among Italian journalists' uses of sources regardless of the media for which they work for and the topic that they have to produce. At the same time, the discussion of the results will predict also patterns of power relations and concentration based on the patterns we have highlighted.

Among journalistic routines, the use of the first group of sources (see Table 1) is the most established. In Italy, personal contacts traditionally shape the production of political news. Italian journalism is characterized by a high level of political parallelism (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) so that it assigns a central role to politicians' statements. As Cornia (2014: 54) states, Italian journalism is highly

opinionated because it usually reports the opinions of political sources. The use of personal contacts as sources is the practice that most embeds political parallelism (Mancini, 2000). As Esser and Umbricht (2013) affirm, the importance of personal contacts in Italian journalism is also due to the polarized multi-party system that provides access to a broader range of voices to enter the political debate. Nevertheless, in a hybrid media system we can hypothesize that the closeness between journalists and politicians means also that journalists replicate practices that usually operate offline, especially in the process of elite building (Bentivegna and Marchetti, 2018). However, we can generally hypothesize that personal contacts are less cultivated by journalists under greater pressure to publish quickly (the reference is to web journalists), but they may be important with reference to the production of political news.

If *time* is the most important variable for maintaining personal contacts, and consequently web journalists may rely on online relationships, for news agencies the most important component it is money. Use of news agencies is the prerogative of the richest newsrooms (generally legacy media linked to traditional media outlets).

Press releases are a different matter. There are few studies on Italian journalists' uses of *press releases* (see Tiffen et al. 2014). This topic is instead one of the most recurrent in journalism studies. Indeed, the rise of the public relations professionals over the last twenty years has meant that journalists are daily confronted by a growing amount of information-driven PR, especially within the new hybrid media system (Phillips, 2010). The practice of gathering PR material and then rewriting it has also been defined as a hybrid practice, where different logics coexist (Erjavec, 2005). Considering the increasing importance of public relations in journalistic practices (see Davis, 2009; O'Neill and O'Connor, 2008), we can suppose that in this field a process of de-differentiation is accomplished between public relators and journalists. Our hypothesis would be that all journalists use press releases.

The use of traditional media is not regarded as a practice for journalists that work for legacy media (newspaper, radio and TV), nor for web journalists. News obsolescence requires journalists to find new sources and new or updated facts, rather than what has been already published.

Regarding content, differentiation between soft and hard news is a much explored issue (Boczkowski, 2009; Reinemann et al., 2012). Boczkowski (2009) affirms that hard and soft news are structurally produced in different ways. The ongoing shift to a complete hybrid media system has still not changed these patterns, especially within a context resistant to changes like Italy. Thus, as mentioned above, considering how political news are usually covered in Italy, we can hypothesizes that personal contacts are really important for hard news. Regarding business/finance, studies about economic journalism state that it is too affected by the sources they used (see Knowles et al. 2017, but also Gandy 1981 and Davies 2008), so we expected that to produce that topic, press releases are statistically significant. No clear hypothesis may be formulated in terms of the production of tech/science news.

H1: considering the group of traditional sources (personal contacts, news agencies, press releases, and traditional media) the level of hybridity of the Italian media system is still low. More precisely, web journalists are less likely to use personal contacts (for a matter of time) and press agencies (for a matter of economic resources that legacy media still have). The level of hybridization may be higher in reference of press releases (all journalists should use it) and traditional media (journalists are not likely to use them). Regarding news topics, considering the level of political parallelism in Italy, we can hypothesize that personal contacts are more used to produce hard news. Press releases may be important in the production of news related to finance/business.

The second group of sources comprises "blogs", "Twitter", "Facebook" and "other SNs" (Table 2). Social media provide a space in which the convergence of fields is most visible (Barnard, 2016).

Social media are also those most debated in terms of hybridity. We consider social media within the broader cross-media environment, considering therefore social media in relation to the broader media ecology of which it is an integral part (see Harder et al., 2016; Paulussen and Harder, 2014).

Few Italian studies have investigated the distinctive use of social media as news sources. Splendore and colleagues (2016) has used a mixed method to verify what is already well-known (see among others Broesma and Graham 2013) in other media systems: reporters increasingly use tweets or Facebook posts in newspaper and online reporting. Blogs were much studied before the spread of social media (see among others Domingo and Heinonen, 2008), but they recently appear to be a niche domain. Among the overall characteristics of Italian journalism, we can envisage a scenario where journalists, regardless of the media for which they work, widely use social media to check and report news stories about what prominent news actors, especially Italian politicians and institutional sources (see Bentivegna 2015), but also celebrities write. The wide use of social media is stronger among web journalists because it is driven by SEO practices as well as users' habits (Striphas, 2015; for the Italian case see Splendore, 2013). In terms of content, instead, different patterns should highlight the production of business/finance and tech/science news. Both domains are often characterized by inaccuracy (Olsson et al., 2015; Schäfer, 2011), but also by the necessity to access highly specialized sources. The contemporary media ecology furnishes nuanced perspectives on both domains, making journalists more likely to use a diverse range of sources. The production of business/finance and tech/science news might find a more eligible number of sources within this second group considered here.

H2: considering the second group of sources analyzed here (blogs, Twitter, Facebook and other SNS) the level of de-differentiation is stronger than it is for traditional sources. In other words, newspaper, TV and web journalists are equally likely to use Twitter as well as Facebook. The topic is an exception: in fact, to produce business/finance and tech/science news journalists may rely more on

social media (especially Twitter) or blogs where some experts usually express themselves more freely.

Regarding the third group of sources considered here, given the lack of any previous research accomplished in our terms (particularly in the Italian context), it is more difficult to formulate hypotheses. The use of online media as a source has been regarded as a practice linked to the *age of information abundance* (Boczkowski, 2010). Boczkowski (2010) also suggests that it is due to the cross-checks that news outlets regularly perform on news production by the other media. It is therefore unlikely that journalists working for a newspaper may use online media outlets as a source. Following Boczkowski's reasoning, it is more typical of web journalists. We can regard the other three sources considered here (search engine, Wikipedia and open data) precisely as mere indicators of the process of de-differentiation whether it happens. Otherwise, if strong differentiation in the use of those three sources exists between offline and web journalists, as Harder and colleagues (2016) argue, it would be proof that analytical distinction between platforms still matters, since they have different roles in creating and shaping news stories.

Method

To test our argument, we relied on data from a survey conducted in 2016 (October-December). A CASIC (Computer Assisted Survey Information Collection) method was used. The link to fill the questionnaire was sent via e-mail to about 12,100 Italian professional journalists. The final sample consisted of 1,424 Italian journalists, actively working in (or for) a newsroom. The final response rate was about 11.7%. This was lower than the average of *email surveys*, which fluctuate between 25% and 33%. Nevertheless, considering the special population surveyed and the fact that the final sample was around 5% of the entire Italian journalistic population, this is a satisfactory response rate. The

size of the journalistic population in Italy was calculated using the lists provided by the Ordine dei Giornalisti (OdG), the self-regulated Association of Journalists established by law to which all journalists must belong in order to see their profession publicly recognized and the Istituto Nazionale di Previdenza dei Giornalisti Italiani (INPGI – a separate insurance fund for journalists). The size of the population was estimated at around 30,850 working journalists. Additionally, we adopted a weighting adjustment procedure (weighting adjustment assigns an adjustment weight to each survey respondent; journalists in under-represented groups received a weight larger than 1, and those in over-represented groups received a weight smaller than 1). The weighting adjustment was conducted by the National Institute of Statistics (i.e. ISTAT), and included the following four auxiliary variables: gender, Italian macro-area, age, and income. Therefore, the final weighted sample perfectly matched the universe of Italian journalists (in 2016), at least as far as major socio-economic characteristics were concerned.

In general, 36.2% of the sample journalists were women, 46.7% worked in a newsroom (thus 53.3% were freelance) in one of these macro-areas: North-West (28%), North-East (22%), Centre (26%), South (12%) and Islands (10%); while less than 2% worked abroad for an Italian newsroom.

The question "Which sources do you usually use?", which comprised a list of twelve answers (press agencies, traditional media, press releases, personal contacts, search engine, open data, online media, Wikipedia, blog, Twitter, Facebook, other SNS – i.e. Google+, Snapchat, Linkedin) formed the dependent variable. The fact that multiple answers were allowed was particularly suited to our aim of measuring the hybridity of Italian journalists by their use of sources.

Regarding the independent variable, we used the question "Do you work for a print medium and/or its online version?". The same question was replicated later in the questionnaire in relation to Magazine, Television, Radio and only online news media. When a journalist worked for various media we considered his/her answers about sources regarding each of the media for which s/he

worked. This approach should have provided stronger results in favor of the assumption of the existence of a homogenously hybridized media system.

The question on this issue was: "Which topics do you usually deal with?" Multiple answers were allowed among a list of 20 items. Those items were grouped in a typology composed by four categories: 1) hard news (in which we considered current and foreign affairs, local and national politics, crime news), 2) business/finance, 3) tech/science, and 4) soft news (i.e.: gossip, show business, sports, entertainment, travel, fashion, home, kitchen, cars, travel and others).

This typology is one-dimensional, it considers solely the topic (it therefore ignores characteristics related to production, focus, style and reception see Reinemann et al. 2012). Its strong point is that our interviewees selected those topics among the list the questionnaire provides. Moreover, just few journalists (less than 1%) opted for the category "other", it means that our interviewees regard as complete the list the questionnaire presented. To compose the typology, we relied on Shoemaker and Coen (2006) definition of hard news items as urgent occurrences that have to be reported right away because they become obsolete very quickly, and soft news as based on nonscheduled events". Additionally, we decided to single out finance/business from one side and tech/science from the other for two different reasons. 1) Those topics may be alternatively in both categories (hard and soft). But we regard the other two as more significant 2) the financial press attracted criticism for its coverage after 2008 crisis, especially news journalism provided appeared too affected by the sources they used (see Knowles et al. 2017). It was therefore a significant field to explore. 3) Considering that role of tech companies in affecting journalism itself, it was significant analyzing how journalists deal with news about technology itself in terms of sources (see. Brake 2017).

As control variable, our probit models controlled also for individual characteristics of the journalist. In particular, we controlled for age, employment status (i.e. dependent or freelance), and generic (i.e. high school, BA, master, Ph.D.) and professional (school of journalism) education.

Our main independent variables were the medium "j" of the news organization for which journalist "i" worked (i.e. newspaper, magazine, TV, radio, and web) and the topic(s) "t"(s) that the journalist "i" handled within the newsroom "j". We analyzed the information across news platforms through a series of econometric (probit) models that estimated the probability that a journalist "i" (i=1, 2, …, 1,403) working for the newsroom "j" (j=1, 2, …. , J) on topic "t" (t=1,2,…., Y) would use the source of information "s" (k = 1, 2,…, K). The analysis exploited the above-mentioned database, which comprises information on the journalist "i", who works on topic(s) "t" for the news organization "j", using "s"(s) source(s) of information. We therefore considered four levels of analysis simultaneously.

Results

Table 1 displays the results concerning personal contacts, press releases, news agencies and traditional media. The use of personal contacts is widespread among journalists (on average, they are used by more than 70% of them). Moreover, there are no significant differences among news outlets except for that between traditional and online media. In fact, the coefficient of web is the only one that is significant (and negative) at conventional levels (p<.05). If we estimate probabilities of using personal contacts as a news source, we find a difference of 12 p.p.: i.e. 72% for traditional platforms vs. 64% for online newsrooms. In regard to press releases, nearly two thirds of journalists use press releases as one of the main sources for producing news. This is the case, in particular, of magazines (coefficient positive and p=.004) in which news is more specialized (e.g. fashion, sport, electronics, software) and there is a more direct link between journalists and PR professionals. Media outlets use news agencies as a secondary source of information. Not surprisingly, the greatest difference is for journalists who work for magazines. At one extreme of the continuum, magazines are less likely to employ news agencies (its coefficient is negative, and significant, p=.084, which implies a probability equal to 59%). As hypothesized, news agencies are not crucial for web journalists.

At the other extreme of the continuum, radio newsrooms (p=.000) are more prone to use news agencies and their vested services (81%). TV (73% and p=.019) and newspapers (70%, p=.032) are almost in the middle. Considering the topics, as hypothesized hard news items impact (positively) on the probability of using personal contacts. In this case, the difference rises to 15 p.p. (87% versus 72%).

TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

The H1 is therefore confirmed. Journalists from different media outlets make different uses of the sources considered here. There are essentially two factors that slow down the process of hybridization (by which is meant here the de-differentiation in the use of sources). The first is an unequal distribution of resources between more and less established newsrooms (newspapers and TV, on the one hand, and online media on the other). In this regard, we also find evidence that the use of news agencies is the prerogative of the best endowed and most established newsrooms. Indeed, controlling for major national TV and newspaper newsrooms evidences a strong significant effect on the use of such sources. The second factor is that routines and organization of those newsrooms are embedded in older and traditional media outlets (i.e. those sources are the ones that have traditionally been chosen by those newsrooms). Particularly significant is also the result concerning journalists who work for magazines where press releases are the most important sources. There the conventional hybridization between news and business is apparent, that between two different professional figures: journalists and public relators (Erjavec, 2005).

TABLE 2 AROUND HERE

Analysis of the results for the second group (Table 2), shows a less differentiated dynamic compared with that of the first group, but nevertheless more differentiation than expected. Unsurprisingly, web journalists are more likely to use blogs and less popular social media (Google+, Snapchat, LinkedIn). The reasons may be the needs to write a greater number of news in comparison to other media and an accomplished process of appropriation of those social media (see. Djerf-Pierre et al., 2016). By contrast, the minor role played by Twitter was not hypothesized. Several studies show the extent to which Twitter is used by Italian journalists (Bentivegna and Marchetti, 2018) and by Italian newspapers (Bentivegna, 2015). Some qualitative research states that journalists can use Twitter to flavor their stories (Marcel Broersma and Todd Graham, 2013). At the same time, while it is predictable that magazines do not use Twitter to a significant extent, it is less understandable regarding radio journalists, who usually need updated news about current affairs. The same reasoning applies to the use of Facebook, which appears to be neglected by journalists who work for magazines and radio. About topic, as suggested journalists who work on tech/science issues are more likely to engage in social media (the coefficient is positive and significant in all regressions with the exception of Facebook). On the topic side, to produce soft news journalists are heavy users of blogs (coefficient equal to .270 and p=.003) and Facebook (.223 and p=.008), while Twitter is more often used as a source by journalists dealing with business (.276 with p=.001) and tech issues (.205, p=.012). The use of news agencies does not vary across news topics, except for business and financial issues. Hypothesis 2 is therefore rejected. The results show that by both media and topics there is still a good level of differentiation in journalists' routines.

In regard to the third group of sources, which are essentially represented by online media, we did not elaborate any hypothesis because of the lack of research in this field. Those sources are not influential on journalists' practices, except for the expected routine that comprises the control of other online outlets by web journalists (Boczkowski, 2010). Conversely, newspaper journalists do not use that

kind of source. Therefore, the differentiation is between online and offline media outlets, in line with

other research (Reich, 2013).

TABLE 3 AROUND HERE

Discussion

In our research we started from the concept of 'hybrid media system' (Chadwick, 2013). The concept

of hybrid media is rather general and includes many different nuanced perspectives. It is variously

considered as a mere convergence among structurally different actors, such as journalists and activists

or producers and audience, or communication formats such as fictive and factual forms of storytelling.

Here we have analyzed a specific context: the selection of sources made by journalists. We have

discussed a measure of the hybridization of journalists' practices within the Italian media system. The

aim of this paper has been to provide insights into the origins of news stories in the contemporary

Italian news ecology. We analyzed the relations between Italian journalists and their sources within

the scenario of a homogenously hybrid media system (i.e. a media system where journalists' practices

are similar regardless of the medium for which they work or the topic that they are producing).

Considering the ongoing process of digitization, that scenario could be possible in future. We have

therefore measured the extent to which the reality is distant from this hypothetical scenario. As noted

in the method section, our approach favored the assumption of the existence of a homogenously

hybridized media system.

By contrast, our results reveal instead that the analytical distinction among platforms still matters.

The twelve sources that we have analyzed perform different roles and exert different influences upon

media outlets and news topics. The roughest differentiation can be made between online and offline

journalists. Other factors influencing the sources that journalists are more likely to use are also the

temporality of publication (shorter is the time for updates and journalists more likely use online sources). Moreover, concerning production habits and routines, more established is the newsroom, the less journalists rely on online sources. Not surprisingly, the topic also exerts a strong influence on the sources chosen. This study cannot intercept change, because there are no data available on previous practices. Nevertheless, it is clear that some new practices have steadily grown in importance. For instance, the use of Facebook for newspapers is almost important as news agencies, while the use of Twitter for TV is now even more important than personal contacts. This is in line with Chadwick's reconstruction (2013), which disrupts the narrative about legacy institutions overtaken by new media and it confirms that the relation is encroached in mutual shaping.

Nevertheless, the level of hybridity of Italian journalism appears to still lag behind the expectation, and generally behind the rhetorical discourses on hybridity. For these reasons, both longitudinal and comparative future research is paramount.

Measuring the level of hybridity means also evaluating the reconfiguration of power relations among the actors involved. Talking about Italian journalists' uses of sources is a good perspective to analyze the outputs of those struggles/negotiations between different actors. Against this scenario, three results are really significant: 1) The crucial differentiation between online and offline journalists in the use of personal contacts. Italian journalism is usually characterized by a strong closeness between journalists and their contacts. This characteristic does not exist for web journalists. From the results of our research we cannot estimate whether this means that those journalists are more autonomous from or are more dependent on other actors (if a journalist uses the words that a politician writes in his/her Twitter account, this politician may acquire more discursive power than in the past). Nonetheless, it is a structural change in the form of how power relations are usually shaped in newsmaking; 2) The massive use of social media as a source. In this case, it is crucial to determine whether that use of social media is intended to enrich the range of sources, or whether via social media journalists simply monitor institutional sources' behavior, in particular prominent politicians

and political parties. Obviously, in terms of plurality of voices and frames it is radically different; 3)

The establishment of new actors like Google, Twitter and Facebook, with which journalists must deal regularly. Regardless of what kind of information journalists search on Google, or what social media accounts they monitor, they have established a relation with actors that shape and ultimately decide about the affordances of their media.

The last reason concerns the implications also for authority and expertise (Carlson, 2017). Twitter, Facebook and Google are not just sources; they are increasingly also distributors and providers of information. The growing dependence on those platforms may erode the traditional news providers' authority (Carlson 2017) and the credibility of established news institutions (Peters and Broersma, 2013). Expertise and authority are strictly contextual, so that within a hybrid and intertwined media system, social actors may find it more and more difficult to assess the reliability of the source of information to which they are exposed.

Like many surveys, this study has some limitations. First, it deals only with journalists' self-expression; therefore, it cannot precisely evidence what they do. Nevertheless, considering that our main aim has also been to intercept cultural logics, journalists' representations may be even more useful than evidence of their practices. In other words, if the level of hybridity of the Italian media system is actually higher than our estimates, this means that there exist high cultural barriers that impede its realization. The main limitation, especially in regard to our interpretation in terms of power relations, is that we cannot understand the precise interaction between journalists and the sources that they have declared to use.

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Table 1 Probit Models (N = 1,403): Use of Offline Sources (coefficients and standard errors)

	Personal Contacts	News Agencies	Press Releases	Traditional media (newspapers, magazines, TV, radio)
Newspaper	.099 (.083)	.163 (.076)**	.063 (.078)	-.175 (.073)**
Magazine	.129 (.084)	-.131 (.076)*	.230 (.079)***	-.022 (-073)
TV	.016 (.116)	.245 (.104)**	-.126 (.103)	.011 (.097)
Radio	.172 (.142)	.521 (.137)***	.187 (.132)	-.034 (.118)
Web	-.231 (.090)**	.078 (.085)	.073 (.090)	-.056 (.082)
Hard news	.536 (.083)***	.0776 (.075)	.107 (.078)	-.051 (.072)
Business/Finance	.105 (.094)	.219 (.086)**	.275 (.088)***	.158 (.080)**
Tech&Science	.018 (.092)	.097 (.085)	.118 (.087)	.038 (.080)
Soft news	-.004 (.096)	.076 (.087)	.359 (.096)***	.190 (.083)**
Joint tests on groups of explanatory variables[a]:				
News outlet	12.67 (5)**	28.03 (5)***	14.97 (5)**	7.52 (5)
Topic	46.59 (4)***	12.35(4)**	33.81 (4)***	10.25 (4)**
Journalist[b]	9.84 (7)	58.87 (7)***	17.50 (7)**	19.63 (7)***

[a] Joint tests for significance of coefficients (Chi-squared and degrees of freedom in parentheses).

[b] Journalist's individual characteristics: age, gender, employment status, education.

*** Significantly different from zero at the 0.01 level

** Significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level

* Significantly different from zero at the 0.10 level

Table 2 Probit Models (N = 1,403): Use of Social Media (coefficients and standard errors)

	blogs	Twitter	Facebook	Other SNs
Newspaper	-.034 (.085)	.012 (.076)	.172 (.074)[**]	-.080 (.088)
Magazine	-.082 (.086)	-.176 (.076)	-.144 (.074)[*]	-.006 (.088)
TV	-.047 (.113)	.300 (.101)[***]	.155 (.100)	.178 (.113)
Radio	-.045 (.136)	-.131 (.123)	-.294 (.119)[**]	-.136 (.147)
Web	.185 (.094)[**]	.420 (.085)[***]	.241 (.083)[***]	.231 (.098)**
Hard news	-.096 (.085)	-.076 (.075)	.457 (.073)[***]	-.061 (.086)
Business/Finance	.100 (.091)	.276 (.081)[***]	-.149 (.080)[*]	.186 (.091)**
Tech&Science	.422 (.088)[***]	.205 (.082)[**]	.027 (.080)	.255 (.090)***
Soft news	.270 (.092)[***]	.125 (.084)	.223 (.084)[***]	.015 (.097)
Joint tests on groups of explanatory variables[a]:				
News outlet	5.50 (5)	41.79 (5)[***]	25.68 (5)[***]	9.41 (5)*
Topic	39.57 (4)[***]	25.29 (4)[***]	51.69 (4)[***]	15.12 (4)***
Journalist[b]	12.75 (7)[*]	21.53 (7)[***]	17.62 (7)[**]	10.38 (7)

[a] Joint tests for significance of coefficients (Chi-squared Wald tests).

[b] Journalist's individual characteristics: age, gender, employment status, education.

[***] Significantly different from zero at the 0.01 level

[**] Significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level

[*] Significantly different from zero at the 0.10 level

Table 3 Probit Models (N = 1,403): Use of Online sources (coefficients and standard errors)

	Online Media	Search engine	Wikipedia	Open data
Newspaper	-.299 (.075)***	-.142 (.074)*	-.011 (.082)	.047 (.092)
Magazine	-.133 (.075)*	.033 (.075)	-.010 (.083)	-.038 (.092)
TV	-.004 (.099)	.037 (.101)	-.033 (.114)	.025 (.121)
Radio	.124 (.118)	.185 (.125)	-.314 (.147)**	-.026 (.141)
Web	.141 (.083)*	-.049 (.084)	.037 (.090)	.099 (.099)
Hard news	-.130 (.074)*	-.209 (.074)***	-.165 (.082)**	.327 (.091)***
Business/Finance	.124 (.081)	.108 (.082)	.023 (.088)	.240 (.093)***
Tech&Science	.256 (.080)***	.229 (.082)***	.247 (.086)***	.341 (.093)***
Soft news	.168 (.083)**	.238 (.085)***	.422 (.088)***	-.089 (.102)
Joint tests on groups of explanatory variables[a]:				
News outlet	27.99 (5)***	8.38 (5)	5.43 (5)	1.52 (5)
Topic	22.32 (4)***	25.78 (4)***	35.22 (4)***	39.66 (4)***
Journalist[b]	25.97 (7)***	12.98 (7)*	13.46 (7)*	7.91 (7)

[a] Joint tests for significance of coefficients (Chi-squared Wald tests).

[b] Journalist's individual characteristics: age, gender, employment status, education.

*** Significantly different from zero at the 0.01 level

** Significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level

* Significantly different from zero at the 0.10 level