

# Local and Hyperlocal Media in the Warmia and Mazury Region (Poland) in the Face of the Problem of Disinformation

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**Abstract:** This article presents the results of a study of the attitudes of local and hyperlocal media representatives towards disinformation. Between October 2024 and April 2025, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of selected media from the Warmia and Mazury region (Poland). The objective of the study was to determine how local and hyperlocal media experience disinformation in their daily editorial practice and what content verification rules they apply. The study reveals that knowledge of the local context and the ability to quickly verify information make local and hyperlocal media a reliable source of content, counterbalancing anonymous reports on local social media channels. Due to their specific nature, local and hyperlocal media can play a crucial role in building resilience against disinformation.

**Keywords:** Local media; Hyperlocal media; Warmia and Mazury; Poland; Disinformation

## INTRODUCTION

Although the issue of disinformation has been the subject of scientific research and expert analysis, the prevailing approach primarily considers the global context and the perspectives of selected countries. Scientific literature and NGO reports most often address large-scale aspects of the phenomenon, such as the importance of social media in disseminating misinformation, disinformation campaigns conducted by individual countries as part of ongoing hybrid wars, and the impact of disinformation on national security and public health.

This article presents a distinct perspective on disinformation, specifically that of local media. At this point, it is appropriate to refer to the phenomenon of glocalization, which demonstrates the mutual interaction between globalization and localism, occurring in the areas of politics, culture, and economics

(Biernacka-Ligieža, 2013, p. 163). Since ‘global’ is becoming ‘local’, global problems also have their local counterparts. One example to consider is the NASK (2019) report entitled “The phenomenon of disinformation in the era of digital revolution. State. Society. Politics. Business”, highlighting that local news websites are also victims of disinformation campaigns.

It is important to note that problems can be addressed more efficiently at the local level, especially when central institutions fail (Mihr, 2022). In the article “Disinformation at a Local Level: An Emerging Discussion”, Pedro Jerónimo and Marta Sanchez Esparza (2022) emphasize the need to initiate a discussion on disinformation at the local level and to make this issue a subject of research. The authors note that, given the rapid spread of disinformation on social media, attention must be given to reliable sources of information on local issues. A local perspective allows for a more nuanced understanding of the circulation of disinformation within community-based communication networks and its implications for trust in local democratic institutions and processes.

When conducting research on disinformation, it is worth considering the role of local and hyperlocal media in counterbalancing, for example, social media channels that focus on local issues but are often created anonymously and disseminate unverified information or fake news (Fernández-Barrero et al., 2024; Ardia et al., 2020; Zilic Fiser & Caks, 2023). Local and hyperlocal media can play an important role in fostering resilience to disinformation within their communities.

Drawing on existing scholarship (e.g., Humprecht, Esser & Van Aelst, 2020; Harich & Rosas, 2026), disinformation resilience can be conceptualized not only as an individual journalistic skill, but also as an organizational and community-based capacity embedded in local information ecosystems. The findings of this study suggest that such resilience is grounded in proximity to audiences, strong local knowledge, and established trust relations with communities. At the same time, it is reinforced by routine verification practices and selective engagement strategies that allow local media to limit the spread of unverified content while maintaining credibility.

In light of the current state of research on the situation and role of local media in the context of the growing disinformation problem, the analyses presented in this article are preliminary and aim to identify areas that could be explored further. It is not without reason that the material analyzed here consists of interviews with representatives of local and hyperlocal media who have extensive journalistic experience and are very familiar with the local environment. These interviews explore the local dimensions of disinformation and information-verification standards in local and hyperlocal media.

The aim of this study is to highlight the challenges faced by local media in relation to disinformation, without seeking to generalize the findings beyond

the context analyzed. The analysis is deliberately situated at the micro-level, focusing on the everyday professional practices, experiences, and perceptions of local media representatives within a regional setting. These findings highlight the importance of paying closer attention to the specific problems, information needs, and vulnerabilities of local communities, which are often overlooked in broader, macro-level analyses.

At the same time, the results underscore the crucial role local media can play in countering disinformation by providing verified, context-sensitive information and fostering trust among their audiences. Despite its qualitative, regionally grounded design, this study offers insights relevant to an international audience. By demonstrating how local and hyperlocal media operate as verification-oriented, trust-based actors embedded in community networks, it extends existing research on disinformation, which has predominantly focused on national and global levels. The findings suggest that strengthening local media ecosystems may represent a viable strategy for enhancing resilience to disinformation across different countries and media systems.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This article examines the attitudes of representatives of selected local and hyperlocal media outlets in the Warmia and Mazury region, Poland, towards disinformation. To better frame the empirical findings of this study within an established analytical approach, Wardle and Derakhshan's (2017) typology of information disorder can be applied. The authors distinguish three interrelated categories: (1) misinformation, defined as false or misleading information shared without harmful intent; (2) disinformation, understood as deliberately created and disseminated false information intended to cause harm; and (3) malinformation, referring to genuine information that is shared with the intention to cause harm, often by moving private or contextual information into the public sphere.

This framework highlights that the key differentiating factor between these categories is not only the content itself, but also the intent behind its production and circulation. Particular attention is paid to how local media understand and address disinformation in their professional practice. Agnieszka Roguska (2012, p. 34) emphasizes that local media represent social capital that comprises "mutual trust (I trust my partners and my colleagues trust me), responsibility for oneself and the community, and deriving benefits from living and working together." Local media promote the strengthening of the local community's identity and can be seen as organizations that provide direction to the local community, as they are trusted (Roguska, 2012, p. 35).

Defining local and hyperlocal media presents difficulties that are exacerbated by the growing importance of communication in the online space (Skrzypczak, 2013, pp. 19-39). An overview of definitions of local media, conducted by Adam Szynol (2011, pp. 101-125) and Sylwia Męcfal (2019, pp. 31-37), provides a picture of the diversity of terminological approaches as well as the multitude of research positions resulting from them (Kowalczyk, 2008, pp. 96-98; Mądry, 1983, p. 75).

It is not the intention of this paper to review the definitions of local media, as this would duplicate prior work; instead, it focuses on one of the most frequently cited terminological approaches relevant to ongoing research. S. Dziki and W. Chorążki (2000, pp. 121-122) define local media as a formal category resulting from the division of the media according to the range of their impact. They point out that the criterion of press impact range is insufficient, and that aspects such as the place of publication and editing, the area of distribution, and, most importantly, the content should be taken into consideration. Adam Szynol (2011, p. 106) underscores that the content of messages is crucial in defining local media. He also highlights the significance of the local community as a group of local media recipients.

The functions and tasks of local media include: providing comprehensive and up-to-date local information, monitoring local authorities, promoting local initiatives, serving as a forum for the local community, integrating the local environment, shaping local public opinion, supporting local culture, integrating the community in local and supra-local structures, promoting one's local homeland and providing economic education to the local community, advertising and announcing, and entertaining (Dziki & Chorążki, 2000, pp. 130-131). When analyzing the above list, Adam Szynol (2011, pp. 110-111) considers the informational and monitoring functions to be the most important.

Another significant phenomenon in the field of locality is the development of hyperlocal media. Damian Radcliffe (2012) defines hyperlocal media as "Online news or content services pertaining to a town, village, single postcode or other small, geographically defined community". The researcher perceives the role of local media as, among other things, defining local identity, filling content gaps for users, and holding authorities accountable. Radcliffe (2013) analyses the development of hyperlocal media in Great Britain, emphasizing the importance of technological and economic factors, such as the development of tools and platforms that facilitate content publishing by journalists and citizens, and changes in media usage patterns, involving a shift towards mobile devices that are altering the way media is consumed. Although many local media are created on a voluntary basis, there is a growing number of commercial initiatives, which the researcher also perceives as beneficial for local businesses that can advertise in hyperlocal media. The development of hyperlocal media in Great Britain is supported by grants, training sessions, and interest from the academic

community and decision-makers. Radcliffe (2013) sees opportunities for further development of the sector in intra-sectoral cooperation (cooperation between hyperlocal media), in building links between traditional and hyperlocal media, partnerships with academic institutions and local communities, and in developing industry organizations that represent their interests while cooperating with legislators and engaging in intra-sectoral cooperation.

The often-cited definition of hyperlocal media by Radcliffe (2013) is disputed by Krzysztof Wasilewski (2022, pp. 10, 33). According to this Polish researcher on digital regionalism, hyperlocal media, which have emerged as a result of the dissemination of Internet access and the simultaneous crisis of traditional local media, should be perceived as belonging to cyberspace and functioning especially in the area of social media. Wasilewski believes that geography cannot play a major role in defining hyperlocal media because territorial coverage, which is important in traditional media, loses significance in the online space. Wasilewski also emphasizes the interactive nature of hyperlocal media, the blurring of the boundary between creator and recipient, and the amateur nature of these media, understood as the absence of a commercial dimension in their activities.

This paper, however, will use Radcliffe's definition, which stresses the role of the geographical factor, but it is important to emphasize the accuracy of Wasilewski's observation, which highlights the transformations of hyperlocal media under the influence of new technological phenomena, as well as their diverse nature, which hampers the development of a systematic approach. Regarding the functions of hyperlocal media, Radcliffe (2012) mentions building local identity, filling content gaps, monitoring authorities, and expanding the range of media available to audiences.

## THE STUDY

The research material analyzed in this article comprises 20 interviews conducted between October 2024 and April 2025 with representatives of local and hyperlocal media. The choice of this region as a research area was partly due to the fact that it is a border area neighboring the Kaliningrad Oblast, which, as one might expect, is associated with disinformation activities on the part of Russia, especially since a multinational NATO battalion battle group is stationed in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship.

The study's participants were selected purposively. The interviews were conducted with those responsible for shaping the editorial line of individual media outlets, primarily editors-in-chief, and occasionally with individuals recommended by editors-in-chief, including publishers and journalists.

The interviews were semi-structured, with the main purpose of obtaining information on the attitudes of editors-in-chief of local media towards the problem of disinformation, including mainly their experience of disinformation in the daily editorial practice of local and hyperlocal media, as well as the principles followed by representatives of these media in the information verification process. The semi-structured nature of the interviews was linked to the fact that respondents raised topics not directly related to the subjects under discussion, but that were important to them (among them, the most frequently mentioned issues included the form of cooperation with local authorities and relations with competing media).

Local government media were excluded from participation in the study due to their distinct nature and functions. The interviews were conducted at the headquarters of individual editorial offices or at locations designated by the participants when the editorial office operated remotely. The respondents were guaranteed anonymity. Individual interviews were assigned random numbers and are referenced in the text next to the corresponding quotations.

With the participants' consent, the interviews were recorded in audio format and subsequently transcribed. The interviews were coded in order to highlight the most important and frequently addressed topics, and the results are presented later in this paper. The analysis of evocative source materials employed a qualitative research approach, enabling an in-depth understanding of editorial personnel's attitudes. Numerous quotes are presented in the article to reflect the respondents' perspectives as accurately as possible.

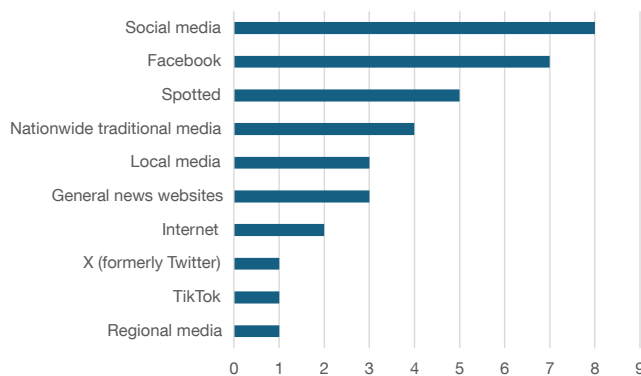
## FINDINGS

The statements of local media representatives are dominated by a distancing from the Internet, particularly social media, as a source of information. When asked to indicate the channels on which they most often encounter disinformation, the respondents provided answers such as: "Well, it's social media for sure. [...] everyone seems to thoughtlessly spout their pearls of wisdom, or at least what they consider wisdom, on social media" (I9); "I am very cautious when it comes to any information I found somewhere on the Internet, on social media" (I6); "These social media are a huge area open to... . A huge hotbed of all sorts of fake news" (I10); "We can often see, on social media, that this information, namely fake news, is being reproduced. It disseminates very quickly" (I1). The respondents noted that their critical assessment of the Internet, including social media, as a source of information stems from the spread of fake news in this information space, as well as the lack of access to the original source of information in cases of content that is repeatedly shared. It should be added that

local media representatives did not consider the problem of disinformation in the context of international politics, but rather from their own perspective, particularly by analysing their experiences related to searching for information on local topics, verifying content, and managing local and hyperlocal media.

The respondents indicated that they most often encountered disinformation in communication channels such as social media, the social networking site Facebook, Spotted channels on Facebook. They mentioned traditional Poland-wide media and competing local media less frequently (Figure 1)<sup>1</sup>.

**Figure 1. Media perceived by respondents as channels of disinformation**



Source: Own elaboration

Facebook was a communication channel often associated with the spread of disinformation. The opinions expressed ranged from balanced views on the need to treat this source of information with caution to more emphatic assessments, such as: “[...] I think Facebook is such a channel [...] where you need to take the information it contains with a pinch of salt” (I14); “Facebook is one big rubbish dump. In my opinion, every evil thing that has ever happened on the Internet has happened on Facebook. [...] These days, Facebook is a Wild West of sorts, unmanageable in any way” (I8); “And that wonderful Facebook of ours, which allows much and punishes so little. This is the greatest threat at the moment, when it comes to disinformation” (I2); “The greatest disinformation is spread by Facebook. The greatest. Because they describe such things there that, you know, it just boggles the mind” (I17).

The respondents, seeking inspiration and interesting topics, check Facebook content, but note that it is often untrue. Some editors-in-chief acknowledged their own mistakes in assessing the veracity of content published on Facebook,

<sup>1</sup> The responses vary in their level of generality because the respondents did not complete a questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions, but answered open-ended questions.

citing cases in which they initially accepted and later disseminated unverified information. One respondent recalled an example related to the “Blue Whale Challenge”, which was widely reported in the media at the time and later turned out to be misleading information, noting that the editorial office had followed the initial lead without sufficient verification (I16).

Representatives of another editorial office admitted that publishing false information sourced from Facebook prompted them to verify content from the Internet more carefully: “[...] we had a few minor slip-ups, such as posting events that were not necessarily confirmed by the city and so on... they did not take place, actually. [...] Maybe someone had actually announced them, but they did not occur. People frowned upon us for publishing it. The source of this information, for example, was Facebook. [...] And, after such experiences, we actually try to confirm this much more when it comes to events” (I20).

Another popular sources of information on local topics are the Spotted channels on Facebook. Users can send their content (messages, questions, announcements) to the site administrator, who publishes it without disclosing the sender’s details. The administrator usually remains anonymous as well. The respondents were critical of the lack of reliability of the content on Spotted channels and pointed to specific instances of fake news they had encountered there. Many editors-in-chief participating in the study were able to identify the people managing local Spotted channels, while others emphasized that they did not know who the administrators of these channels were, so they did not trust the content published on them. Interestingly, both the awareness of who manages Spotted channels and the anonymity of their creators have been identified as the reasons for distancing oneself from the content shared on those channels and perceiving it as unreliable. The primary reasons for the critical approach to the content shared on Spotted channels, as mentioned by respondents, included its clickbait nature, the focus of such channels on quantity rather than quality, and the dissemination of unverified material.

Some respondents accused competitive local media outlets of sensationalism, political bias, a lack of professionalism, and the publication of unverified information. Critical opinions on the activities of other local media were sometimes substantive, but from time to time, respondents pointed out that conflicts between editorial offices result in hate directed at individual journalists and even their families, which is definitely not conducive to public debate in the local environment. Although relatively few editors mentioned online portals and traditional Poland-wide media as potential sources of disinformation, this issue warrants examination. Internet portals are being accused of presenting derivative content and communicating it without prior verification. Regarding the assessment of traditional Poland-wide media, the way local media journalists cover topics related to their local communities is important. Editors-in-chief

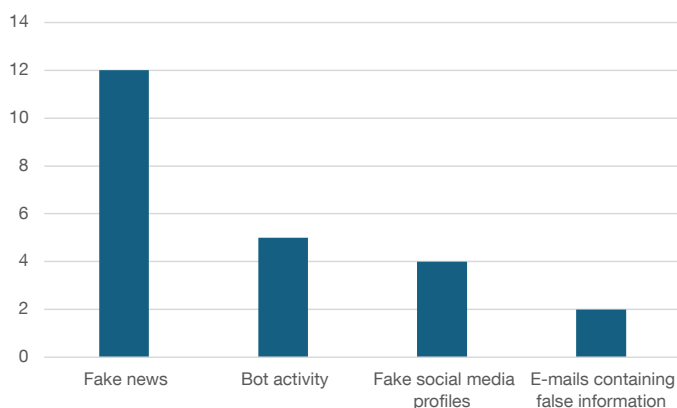
of local media accuse traditional Poland-wide media of bias, of seeking data that confirms a preconceived thesis, and of obtaining information remotely, without appearing at the scene of events.

The basic forms of disinformation encountered by local media representatives include fake news, comments posted by automated accounts (commonly referred to as bots), fake social media profiles, and e-mails containing false information (see Figure 2).

Among the fake news concerning local communities, the most common topics include kidnappings, accidents, and the deaths of well-known members of the local community. One of the most widespread pieces of fake news to appear in the region under study was the claim that the mayor of Orzysz was inviting people to participate in a march against the presence of American troops in the town. The publication of that piece of fake news on a local Internet website, as well as on the website of the Orzysz Town Hall, was the result of a hacker attack that was part of a widespread disinformation campaign. The content was shared in other media, not just local ones. Respondents also highlighted disinformation related to the use of bots, while issues such as fictitious social media profiles and emails containing false information were mentioned less frequently.

When discussing the problem of disinformation, respondents also pointed to political pressure on the media, aimed at ensuring that local journalists cover certain topics or ignore others, a practice that intensifies in the lead-up to elections. The aspects of local politics that can be applied to the national political struggle are particularly important. In recent years, this has included issues related to immigration centers, as well as investments important to the region.

Figure 2. Forms of disinformation that respondents encounter most frequently



Source: Own elaboration

However, the topic of relations between local governments and local media is a complex one, for instance, because of the issue of financing local media, and requires a separate study. One of the respondents outlined this issue in the following manner: “Well, it is well known that the city has, so to speak, certain instruments with which it can support local media, and some people are very keen to take advantage of this, so yes, in my opinion, pressure is a problem that needs to be solved in a way, because local media are often, very often, not independent, and if the city cuts off their funding in some way, then it is very dangerous, and there is a lot of dependence”.

On many occasions, when local media exercise supervisory oversight over local government, this results in conflicts that lead to situations in which local authorities do not provide journalists with information or fail to respond to public information requests in a timely manner, thereby impeding the production of material.

Despite the problems discussed above, all respondents agreed that the specific nature of local media means that the problem of disinformation occurs on a completely different scale than in nationwide media. They also listed several factors that determine the veracity of local media. The respondents’ statements clearly indicate that adherence to classic journalistic techniques and immersion in the local environment are the factors that most influence the credibility of local media.

The respondents pointed to the practice of classic journalistic techniques as the basis of their work: “This is how journalism should be practiced – namely, we verify every piece of information” (I9); “The credibility of a particular title or publication on the market sort of depends on how well these journalistic techniques are known” (I10).

One of the editors-in-chief addressed the issue of the number of sources in which information needs to be verified: “[...] it needs to be verified from five sources, all five of them. Indeed, there are situations where two sources are not sufficient”, which was related to a lawsuit in which it was ruled that a journalist should obtain an expert opinion and not just present the positions of the parties to the conflict (I17).

Editors-in-chief observe the principle that it is the parties involved in a dispute that should be given a voice. As one of the respondents put it: “As a matter of fact, we always show both sides. If someone reports a problem, then we obviously show the other side as well. We strive to ensure that this information is as reliable and objective as possible. Presented from several perspectives” (I14). Some editorial offices noted that the lack of urgency due to low competition in the local media market allows for meticulous verification of each piece of information (I8, I19).

The aforementioned “immersion in the local environment” enables local media journalists to verify information quickly, thanks to their proximity

to events and extensive knowledge of local information sources. The respondents addressed this issue as follows: “This is simply the specific nature of our job – we have this information, so to speak, at our fingertips” (I10); “Well, you could jokingly say that all I have to do is open the window and see whether it’s true or not. Yes, I am here, at the specific location where my website operates, and I am able to verify very quickly whether something is true or not” (I6); “[...] we are in direct contact with the inhabitants, and in direct contact with our sources of information.

So, for example, if we need to verify some information, say at the local council or the mayor’s office, we know each other, we have that contact, so we can do it quite quickly” (I14); “There are people I know in every village, so I just call them and ask a question or two” (I17). The respondents point out that the strength of their media activities lies in their proximity to events and in easy access to people who can directly verify information, for example, on social media.

At the same time, some respondents noted that local media are reluctant to quote one another, so they independently consult sources to verify information (I19). Representatives from many editorial offices also stated that it was impossible for them to publish false or unverified information, as they obtained information independently and did not use content provided by outside sources. “We look for information, so to speak, at the very bottom, don’t we? It is we who meet directly, if we want to. We participate in local government meetings, sessions, and committee proceedings. We try to listen to all of this. It is not the case that we receive a piece of information and then pass it on uncritically, without processing it in any way or involving ourselves. So, all this information is generated by us” (I10); “We provide materials, we don’t source them from other parties” (I8).

Local media journalists are familiar with both the history of a particular place and its contemporary problems. A journalist’s relationship with a particular place is a crucial factor in determining their credibility in the eyes of local inhabitants. At the same time, it should be noted that local editorial offices are often managed by one or two persons, so journalists put their own names behind the editorial office’s activities, and the sense of responsibility associated with this is a recurring theme in the respondents’ statements, e.g. “[...] in these local media, that’s we who personally endorse all that” (I6). “When I appear somewhere, people know, they must know, they must be aware that this is a reliable material (I8); “this reflection in the mirror is important to me, for example, so that no one says to me: What is this rubbish you are writing? Well, for me, this is relevant” (I16).

Proximity to the local community is undoubtedly linked to credibility and reliability, as the respondents admit that it is the readers who are quickest to verify published content: “When you are a journalist working for ‘Fakt’, you

can let yourself release a piece of fake news. Here, it will be unforgivable. You will be reproached for this" (I2); "We cannot take the easy route, [...] as we are being verified on a constant basis" (I9); "It is evident that if I post one or two messages that are not true, and so on, people will stop visiting my page" (I7).

For representatives of local media, credibility achieved through reliable, often long-term work in the local environment, and for the benefit of the local community, is of great importance. The respondents say: "I am sensitive to the credibility of what I write" (I2); "If we take ourselves seriously, we should take our readers seriously as well. And we cannot publish fake news and unverified information just to get clicks" (I6); "I care about good, reliable information, which, in my opinion, will always stand up for itself, so to speak" (I16); "For me, actually, credibility is important. [...] Anyway, I'm glad about it, because when someone retires, one person, then another, then one more, I often hear people saying thank you for never lying. And this is so uplifting, inspiring" (I12).

Editorial offices that have been in existence for two or three decades have been paying attention to the effort put into shaping a positive image of a particular title, as well as to the efforts to maintain that image, e.g.: "We do not distribute unverified information at all, because we know that it can simply happen somewhere else, while we cannot afford to lose the credibility that we have been building for 20 years" (I3); "We have been working too long to build this reputation, and now we cannot lose it by publishing unverified information or misleading people. We do perform, like, a function of public trust [...]" (I8).

The credibility gained over many years of reliable work by the editorial team means the local media's content is a crucial point of reference in discussions of local issues, and the editorial office enjoys the trust of the local community. One of the respondents stated: "We do not allow ourselves to publish unverified information, do we? People firmly believe that what is written in a newspaper is the truth. [...] I will not publish something I am not sure about. [...] And I think that's what we benefit from, because we write the truth. Indeed, sometimes there are light topics, not necessarily very difficult or important ones, but people trust us. [...] And I think that's because they've probably never been disappointed by the fact that what the newspaper has written was completely untrue" (I15).

The respondents also commented on the strategies developed to address disinformation, e.g., fake news about the local community circulating on social media. The prevailing strategy is to ignore such content, which may arise from the belief that verification of fake news will not reach as many recipients as the fake news itself, for example: "It's a bit scary, this charm, so to speak, ironically, charm of social media, where if fake news appears and is reproduced countless times, then the verification of this fake news will never break through" (I5).

Situations in which editors-in-chief deliberately ignore false information circulating in other local media, especially on social media, sometimes prompt

readers to criticize a particular newspaper or website for failing to publish such information. The editors-in-chief indicated that their attitude resulted from the need to maintain reliability and omit information that was uncertain or verified as false: “I get blamed for it, because the following question later arises: why didn’t you publish it? I did not publish it, because it has never happened. Or it did happen, but was completely different” (I12).

Respondents also tend to prefer careful observation and waiting to see how events unfold, rather than quickly sharing content: “It is essential to monitor attempts to disseminate unreliable, untrue, and not completely verified information, which can cause harm, both individually and collectively” (I1).

However, it should be noted that local media do not rely solely on a reactive approach to disinformation. In many cases, they actively counter false information by publishing clarifications about fake social media accounts (W19) and by verifying information about locally relevant events reported in national media (W3). Some newsrooms also reported collaborating with local police authorities to raise awareness of online scams and other forms of digital fraud (I2, I6, I7, I11, I13, I15, I17). These initiatives improve digital literacy and reduce vulnerability to disinformation-related threats. Such collaboration reflects an increasingly proactive role of local media in supporting public safety and strengthening community resilience to information-related risks.

## CONCLUSIONS

As Stanisław Michalczyk (2010, p. 32) noted, “The rapidly changing media reality requires researchers to respond methodically just as quickly, and face new challenges.” One such challenge, and there are many in today’s media sphere, is to consider the local perspective when researching disinformation. The respondents’ statements in the present study allow us to examine the problem of disinformation from a perspective other than that typically presented in expert analysis or scientific research. The interviews reveal that the content verification mechanisms employed by local and hyperlocal editorial offices enable them to maintain the credibility of their messages, and the content they share serves as a crucial point of reference for local communities.

When analyzing the phenomenon of disinformation, the respondents mainly pointed to social media and Facebook as a platform for spreading false content. Particular attention was paid to Spotted-type channels on Facebook, where users send and add information anonymously. The administrators who share the content also remain anonymous. The representatives of local and hyperlocal media who participated in the study most often encounter disinformation, such as fake news and fake social media accounts. Local media, while maintaining

high editorial standards, select information and provide the local community with verified and reliable content. Local media journalists, thanks to their proximity to events, knowledge of the environment, and contacts with inhabitants, are able to quickly verify content. The respondents' statements reveal, on the one hand, a sense of responsibility towards the local community, and on the other, concerns about trust in the local editorial office. The social capital built by local and hyperlocal media allows us to view them as entities that can play a significant role in combating disinformation, for example, by building resilience to it.

The potential of local media has been recognized in an Opinion by the European Committee of the Regions (2023), "The role of local and regional authorities in countering disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference". The document emphasizes that financial and programmatic support for local and regional media, especially those operating in "news deserts" (areas affected by a lack of local media), is recommended to strengthen pluralism and the information resilience of societies. This support would enable local media to develop initiatives to combat disinformation and enhance the public's resilience to it. Being rooted in the local context, having personal relationships with local residents, and being able to verify information sources make local editorial offices obvious allies in combating disinformation, which has both a global and a local dimension. In an era dominated by global platforms, being rooted in the local community can be an effective strategy for combating disinformation. The role of local media in developing resilience to disinformation is worth acknowledging, both in public debate and in scientific research.

The findings of this study can also be situated within broader theoretical discussions on the changing relationship between local media and digital platforms. Existing research (e.g., Ardia et al., 2020; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022) often conceptualizes platforms as dominant actors in local information ecosystems, with local media positioned as increasingly marginal or reactive. In this perspective, platforms act as primary distributors of information, while local news organizations struggle to maintain visibility, authority, and economic sustainability. The results presented in this article both confirm and extend these models. On the one hand, the respondents clearly identify social media—particularly Facebook—as the primary environment in which disinformation circulates, supporting the view of platforms as central nodes in contemporary information disorder. On the other hand, the study demonstrates that local and hyperlocal media are not merely passive actors within platform-dominated ecosystems. Instead, they actively perform a corrective and filtering role, based on verification practices, local knowledge, and trust-based relationships with audiences. This suggests a need to reconceptualize local media not only as vulnerable actors, but also as key intermediaries in building community-level resilience to disinformation.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research is based on a relatively small sample of 20 interviews. Second, local government media were deliberately excluded from the analysis due to their specific institutional nature and functions. Despite its qualitative design and limited sample size, the study provides valuable exploratory insights into newsroom practices and contributes to a better understanding of how local and hyperlocal media respond to disinformation in their everyday professional practice. Therefore, the findings should not be directly generalized beyond the studied region. Future research could benefit from a comparative design that examines local and hyperlocal media across regions or countries, enabling the identification of context-specific and shared patterns in responses to disinformation. Such studies would make it possible to assess how varying political, media, and regulatory environments shape newsroom strategies. In addition, a comparative analysis of local, hyperlocal, and national media could further clarify differences in approaches to verifying and correcting false information. Longitudinal research would also be valuable in tracking how these strategies evolve over time, particularly in response to changes in digital platforms and information ecosystems. This would provide a more dynamic understanding of how resilience to disinformation is developed and sustained in journalistic practice.

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