MEDIA ECOLOGY IN JOURNALISM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE

ADAPTATION STRATEGIES OF SENIOR JOURNALISTS

Ali Cinar

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Author Notes

This research is an original copy of my work; peer-reviewed articles from recognized databases support it.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ali Cinar, a doctoral student at Liberty University.

Media Ecology in Journalism: A Phenomenological Study of the Adaptation Strategies of

Senior Journalists

By

Ali Cinar

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APPROVED BY:

Dr. Wesley Hartley, Committee Chair

Dr. Carey Martin, Committee Member

Dr. Robert Mott, Administrative Member

Abstract

This dissertation investigates the adaptation strategies of senior journalists in the ever-evolving media landscape. The extensive technological advancements in media informed the idea behind this dissertation. The study employs a phenomenological approach in exploring the experiences of seasoned journalists and their approaches toward transitioning from conventional journalism to the modern digital landscape. Neil Postman's media ecology theory is the theoretical framework for this dissertation. The theory postulates that the changes in media greatly influence communication, interaction, and human perception. The research commences by investigating the historical context of journalism, taking into consideration the shift to digital media from print and broadcast media. Such a shift has brought about profound opportunities and challenges for journalists. Subsequently, the literature review covers the effect of digital media on the practice of journalism, the rise of citizen journalism, the evolving role of journalists, as well as the challenges resulting from the proliferation of information. The research used qualitative interviews in its investigation, where senior journalists were used as the participants to provide insight regarding their adaptation strategies. The findings of the study indicate that acquiring multimedia skills, embracing new technologies, and ensuring journalist integrity in an increasing infotainment and speed-dominated environment are essential for successful adaptation. At the same time, the research highlights particular approaches that have brought about long-term success and provides insights regarding navigating the digital landscape to aspiring journalists. The study concludes with implication discussions of the findings for education and, most importantly, journalism practice. In this case, emphasis is channeled towards adaptability and continuous skills development during the continuing technological transformation. Ultimately, the research extensively contributes to an in-depth understanding of the adaptive approaches that

facilitate journalists in thriving in the evolving media ecosystem by offering fundamental

insights for not only the current journalists but also upcoming media personalities.

Copyrights Page

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my Dad and Mom, whom I lost within six months of each other this year. My father wanted me to have a Ph.D. since 2015. He fought cancer for seven years and was a true warrior. My Dad was a great role model for me. His work ethic and perseverance taught me the value of dedication. His strength was my anchor during moments of doubt. With his engineering experience, he guided me through complex problems both in research and in life.

My mom, a 40-year veteran teacher, gave me the confidence to pursue this journey. Her sacrifices, love, and encouragement sustained me through the challenges. They were the pillars of my life and education. Their support made this academic achievement possible.

Even though they are not with me now, I know they are happy to see me graduate. Thank you for being my first and most important teacher.

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I am particularly thankful for the countless hours you spent reviewing my work, discussing ideas, and helping me navigate the complexities of academic research. Your influence extends beyond this dissertation. Thank you for believing in me and allowing me to grow as a researcher and scholar. This dissertation would not have been possible without your guidance and support.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

News is essential to communication since it informs the audience of trends, changing

events, breaking stories, and outside-world characters (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2021). News

communication also serves the purpose of entertaining by enabling the audience to learn about

interesting things such as sports, fun opportunities, and other creative events. Both Chua (2019)

and Cali (2020) have noted that the foremost function of news communication is its utility to

empower the informed. Therefore, journalists' core responsibility is to provide the audience with

the information they require to make informed decisions about their governments, societies,

communities, and lives (Bordi et al., 2018; De Lima & Ceron, 2021). Before the invention of

improved technology and digital media, journalists easily undertook their purpose of news

communication as they had more control of the information, unlike the news consumers

(Bengtsson & Johansson, 2021). In the past, news reporters were the first to capture the breaking

stories and then design them through editing to communicate the appropriate content to people

(Yujie et al., 2022). The reporters would get their news facts from witnessing the events and

analyzing external sources and statistical data. As a result, the audience highly depended on

journalists, and many people adhered to the fixed news reporting time to get updates about

trending events around them (De Lima & Ceron, 2021). Ideally, the audience seemed to

understand that quality and accurate news production required more time; thus, they were more

patient.

However, with advent in technology, the journalism culture and environment changed as

digital developments created a new perspective of journalism which now required journalists to

immerse themselves within the subjects they are reporting about (Yujie et al., 2022; Schulz et al.,

2022; Ross et al., 2022). A significant element of modern journalism is its writing structure

which commands journalists to develop characters, build plots, illustrate scenes vividly, and give

consumers dramatic tension (McCullough, 2021). The two significant things that have shaped the

modern journalism culture are digital media and technology enhancement. Digital media

includes multimedia and interactive social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram that

have rapidly increased the quality of information consumed and produced (Chua, 2019;

Littlejohn et al., 2017). Technically, digital media is vital in the modern ecosystem because it

allows people to easily communicate and get instant reporting of the developing stories

happening in any part of the world (Chua, 2019). Today, many news consumers source their

updates from digital media, giving them the power to get immediate updates and participate in

news communication through their mobile devices (Chua, 2019). Thus, digital media has created

a space where even non-journalists can thrive and pursue the roles that professional journalists

initially performed (Carson, 2020). As a result, with the increased use of digital media, many

journalists face challenges navigating through the highly competitive digital media space, filled

with all sorts of content from diverse sources (Schwab et al., 2022). The rise of digitalization

gave news consumers numerous selection preferences, posing an obstacle for mainstream media

brands (Schwab et al., 2022; Chua, 2019). Thus, the need to readjust news communication

emerged and media managers attempted to pursue measures emphasizing effective branding

activities to develop a solid digital information market.

Consequently, the rise of technology came with both negative and positive elements. For

instance, internet development has resulted in vast news sources that provide well-developed

content on the world's events (Dowling, 2022; Garcia et al., 2020). Modern cameras and

improved smartphones have also enhanced the quality of news as audiences get well-designed

content integrated with relevant images and videos. Also, incorporating artificial intelligence

tools into the news workflow has enhanced efficiency. For example, AI tools such as automated news writing, chatbots, sentiment analysis, voice assistants, and content discovery have made newsrooms work better as journalists now enjoy the opportunity to fact-check the message in real time and initiate automated news coverage (Bordi et al., 2018; Cali, 2020). However, adjusting to these news changes was problematic for many journalists already used to old media culture like newspapers and radio, which was relatively simpler. Transitioning from the traditional news communication phase to digital journalism compelled these journalists to enhance their skills and professionalism and accommodate the changing mindset to remain relevant and succeed in modern journalism (Jensen, 2020). Essentially, the older journalists had to seek different survival tactics to ensure they did not go extinct in the digital media filled with overwhelming technologies with intense learning pressure. Today, many people are still unaware of journalists' struggle to remain relevant in the modern news communication culture (Levinson, 2000; Yang, 2020). The lack of adequate research on adaption strategies has also posed a problem for upcoming journalists struggling to survive in digital media.

Indeed, there is a need to bring to light the exact skills, abilities, training, and professionalism approaches embraced by the older journalists who successfully navigated modern journalism. The ability to explore the adaptive strategies used by the previous generations will be useful for the current and coming generation of journalists since news communication strategies will continue to transform and change the journalism ecosystem. Therefore, this qualitative study will follow a phenomenological design where journalist participants will be interviewed to understand how they navigated the overwhelming ecological shift influenced by digital media and technology changes in the journalistic communication environment.

Background

The study aims to explore the impact of technological change and digital media evolution on news communication to understand adaptation strategies applied by older journalists who had conformed to traditional communication forms. Past research has proven that many communication and journalism researchers are focusing more on studies relating to news culture and digital media (Pulos, 2020). However, no comprehensive research has been conducted to expound on measures journalists embraced when transitioning from traditional media to becoming relevant in today's highly competitive digital journalism space. Historically, journalism practice is marked by tremendous evolution. In the past, news communication was mostly centered on print media, and the governments of different countries imposed many restrictions through high taxes and censorship to control print media (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2021). However, by the 19th century, newspaper production came with an indispensable function, and reportorial freedom was maintained to the present day (Yujie et al., 2022). Later, the telegraph development, the radio, and television brought positive impacts due to the timeliness and speed of journalistic activities like anchoring and reporting (Standage, 2003; Griffin et al., 2022).

For instance, with the telegraph, editors could have correspondents situated in different parts of the world. Thus, transmitting news back to the journalism organization took minutes instead of several days before the application of the telegraph (Standage, 2003). These channels offered a massive new audience and outlets for electronically distributed products. The critical attribute of the traditional media is journalists' high sense of control because the technologies used in the past favored them more than the news consumers (Carlson, 2020). These media only supported one-way news communication transmission as only journalists could share the news

with the audiences. Hence, many news consumers mostly depend on news organizations

(Carlson, 2020). Since news communication was one way, journalists had no pressure to

compete for audience attention; thus, no emphasis was placed on other advanced skills and

abilities. Darbo and Skjerdal (2019) elaborated that current journalists face increased pressure to

generate news quickly and to emphasize more infotainment, leaving little space for investigative

journalism. As a result, professionals must possess relevant skills that reinforce efficiency,

humor, speed, and timeliness of news delivery.

In the late 20th century, the internet and satellites were introduced (Newman, 2018). The

innovation paved the way for long distances and instant transmission of journalistic information.

In addition, the growth of digital media was witnessed, creating multiple directions of news

communication where everyone, including non-journalists, enjoyed the chance to create, share,

and disseminate breaking events and develop stories (Hestdalen, 2020; McMullan, 2020). The

need for enhancing journalism's sense of professionalism started to grow to differentiate

professionals from non-journalists. Typically, several vital factors promoted the strengthening of

professionalism. First, there was an increasing organization of working journalists, and literature

growth was being witnessed as people demanded to know more about problems, history, and

mass communication strategies (Darbo & Skjerdal, 2019; Newman, 2018). In addition, there was

a rising sense of social responsibility on the side of journalists. With the digital and

technologically improved media, journalists lost much news communication power to online

users who could access trending stories and share them before journalists could do so (Newman,

2018). As a result, many journalists of the early centuries faced challenges as maintaining

success in the highly competitive environment became an issue (Peicheva & Keranova, 2020).

Though the course of journalism did not change, the rise in digital media gave news secondary

meanings as terms like hard news were introduced to differentiate it from definite news values of the past.

Whereas old journalism existed during the time when information was scarce and highly demanded, contemporary journalism introduced a content-saturated market where consumers devalued news by its overabundance (Tandoc et al., 2020). Innovations like digital technology, artificial intelligence, smartphones, and the internet have made information more accessible and plentiful, stiffening journalism competition (Yujie et al., 2022). To meet the rising consumer demand for more detailed and up-to-the-minute reporting, journalists had to upgrade their skills and embrace new media outlets such as electronic mailing, blogs, social media, user-generated content, and direct interactions. Also, due to the availability of information, many social media users began to abuse digital media by sharing fake news and disinformation through websites that imitate legitimate news organizations (Tandoc et al., 2020; Newman, 2018). As a result, the digital environment became even more challenging for older journalists who value integrity (Chua, 2019).

The history of journalism presents an evolution from a simple work structure to a more complicated journalism ecosystem. The evolution can be explained through Neil Postman's media ecology theory (MET), where the theorists argued that the environment in which technology and communication operate influences the nature of information spread and can affect the audience (Postman, 2000; Cali, 2020). Postman expounded that, though printed media and television can share the same news story, the interpretation by the audience may be different due to the change in communication culture (Levinson, 2000). Nonetheless, from the works of previous scholars, little is known about strategies the older journalists apply to overcome the challenges of the modern media. Therefore, this study aims to bring answers as older journalists

will be incorporated during the research, where they will be interviewed about their navigation approach from traditional media to a digital environment.

Problem Statement

The problem that this study sought to address is the news communication challenges faced by journalists when transitioning from older media to the modern journalism ecosystem with improved technological innovations. Limited research has been done to explore the real issues older journalists face due to the sudden transformation in media ecology and digital media. Essentially, the increased use of social media took away the news control power from journalists as the audience got the power to determine how news should be designed, communicated, and when to be shared (Carlson, 2020). The sudden changes pose a huge problem to many journalists who have to quickly seek best practices to apply to remain relevant in the modern ecosystem. Chua (2019) agreed that the development in journalism categorized news consumers into two groups: those who shifted to digital media as their news sources and those who remained in the old media comprised of newspapers, television, and radio. The population that shifted to digital media was high, as the data released in 2021 indicated that over 67% of news consumers now depend entirely on social platforms as their primary sources (Walker & Matsa, 2021). Therefore, the shift promoted journalists to come up with ways of winning the online population while also retaining the old media population,

Digital media comes with several challenges for journalists. For instance, social media brought freedom of speech as internet users enjoyed the opportunity to share anything on their minds and even take the journalism role of breaking the news (Laskowska, 2019). Thus, the media became flooded with information from all directions with different illustrations. The negative aspect of freedom of speech is that it makes it difficult for news consumers to pinpoint

the correct news communication (Tandoc et al., 2020). Subsequently, with the increased

circulation of information, news consumers started to demand brief, precise, and well-designed

news content that was less overloaded with the message (Ozkent, 2022). Journalists had to find

ways of coming up with short briefings to win the high online population. Yang (2020) agreed

that digital media brings a high demand for information since audiences constantly seek

clarification about the events around them.

     In Nicholas Carr's (2011) book, the scholar discussed that many news consumers have

changed how they read news, as their brains have been rewired to skim some content. Carr

(2011) described the internet as a major cause of interruption as it changed how people process

and read information because their brain has been reprogramed to adjust to the internet speed,

making it easy for news consumers to lose focus and concentration. To respond to the demand,

journalists must constantly watch the developing and upcoming events to ensure they become the

first to break the news before social media platforms are filled with different illustrations from

non-professional reporters (Rashid et al., 2019). Social media has also made it easy for people to

share, comment, and like the stories they encounter on their feeds, altering how messages move

around (Chua, 2019). As a result, ethical journalists must verify if the content is factual before

sharing any update with the audience to eliminate participating in disseminating fake, inaccurate,

or misleading information to a huge audience.

     Navigating the improved technologies also created obstacles as the extended use of

advancements like smartphones impacted how news messages are tailored since journalists must

now back the content with relevant videos and matching images to appeal to many people (Bordi

et al., 2018). Journalism organizations have also shifted from depending on paper writing to

embracing electronic bulleting shaped by AI technologies (Powers, 2020). In addition,

technology has also created room for multimedia journalism, as professionals must incorporate more channels to ensure that their message meets all news consumer populations (Bordi et al., 2018). The milestone technology achievements pushed journalists, particularly the older ones, to upgrade their abilities and embrace the changes. Therefore, this study is significant in addressing the news communication problem journalists face in their practice. The research aimed to expound on the problems journalists face due to the sudden shift to digital media. In addition, the study intended to highlight the best practices journalists applied to remain relevant in the modern journalism ecosystem, where news consumers can get information from any corner.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative research aimed to understand the best practices older journalists embrace to navigate successfully from traditional news culture to a modern journalism ecosystem composed of a complex digitalized environment and advanced technological practices. Typically, the problem that the study proposed to address is news communication issues which are challenges experienced by journalists who shifted to digital media after spending most of their professional years in the traditional journalism environment. The integration of phenomenological research design helped bring relevant insights as the approach required the researcher to engage participants who have experienced the phenomena and allow them to share their stories regarding their experiences and encounters (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Giving older journalists a platform to discuss, through their narrations, the challenges they faced when shifting to the digital ecosystem was more practical in getting the needed information on adaptive strategies.

The theoretical view that this study was grounded on is media ecology, introduced by Neil Postman (Postman, 1974). Neil Postman first coined the term at New York University. He elaborated that different forms of media regulate and dictate the kind of content a given media can transmit (Postman, 1974). The theory argues that improved technological changes are witnessed through news media evolutions, which alter human perception, interaction, value, and understanding of content (Postman, 2005; Cali, 2020). Media ecology theory describes communication as a system with technological boundaries that affects people's feelings and values, including how people work (McCullough, 2021). For instance, when related to the journalism atmosphere, the growth of digital media and the introduction of modern technology has greatly shaped how journalists communicate news (Postman, 2005). Now, they must enhance their professionalism to outshine the non-journalists doing their job.

Indeed, news communication in modern society differs from the past, where journalists used old cameras and paper representation to share briefings. Today, the enhancement of digital media has made journalists incorporate improved tools to deliver news instantly instead of adhering to the fixed news anchoring schedule (Bordi et al., 2018). For example, through social media, news consumers have developed an interactive relationship that allows them to share alerts, trending events, and briefings without waiting for news communication from journalists (Schulz et al., 2022; Bordi et al., 2018). The audiences are exploring the freedom of speech to disseminate news even before professional journalists know about them. Thus, modernization has posed a huge challenge that makes many people avoid following the journalism career path.

Research Questions

RQ 1: What strategies did journalists who had conformed to traditional media forms adopt to remain relevant in the modern digitalized journalism ecosystem filled with advanced technology?

RQ 2: What new experiences did journalists face as a result of the transformation from conventional to digital media news communication?

RQ 3: How did the adoption of unique news communication strategies enable journalists to succeed and overcome the challenges of the new media?

Significance of the Study

Undertaking this study is vital to many journalist populations struggling to get breakthroughs in the intensely competitive technological and digital journalism environment. As a professional journalist and a communication student who has witnessed the changes and challenges that emerging technologies have brought to my profession, I took this opportunity to dig deeper into the best adaptive strategies by learning from older journalists through semi-structured interviews. The information I gathered from the interview is comprehensively complied to make them applicable to many young and upcoming journalists struggling with the change adaptation process. Both Ozkent (2022) and Sokolowski (2018) noted in their articles that despite pursuing a career in journalism and getting relevant knowledge regarding news communication, many journalists struggle to get a considerable audience, which is quite frustrating.

I believe that I had the relevant experience, skills, and ability to undertake this qualitative study and generate an appropriate conclusion and recommendations. As a

professional journalist, I was able to access the purposive sample of older journalists. As a result, I was able to get the right journalist participants to engage in the phenomenological study and get their stories regarding the best practices they put forth during the shifting phase from older news communication practices to the modern technology journalism atmosphere. As a professional journalist, I have a better understanding of the various workflows of a newsroom. Therefore, I know better how to tailor the semi-structured interview questions to generate unique insight into this study. I have also had the opportunity to interact with young journalists who have been affected by digital media. Therefore, I had an idea of the questions I should ask the successful senior journalists.

The researcher aimed to expound on unique strategies journalists should uphold in contemporary and ever-changing technological environments. As noted by Bengtsson & Johanssen (2021), the continual development of digital media is giving rise to microblogging and unique social networking sites that continue to challenge the traditional flow of news bottom-up from top-down greatly. By taking advantage of my professional background, I have been able to produce an appropriate qualitative study whose outcome will equip young professionals with information regarding the best techniques to integrate in order to gain relevance in their careers through the lens of older professionals' points of view.

I believe that I have managed to provide unbiased research as I emphasized on reflexivity. Creswell & Poth (2017) wrote that qualitative researchers should undertake reflexivity by regularly examining their judgments, beliefs, and practices during data collection to determine if their personal beliefs can incidentally affect the research quality. I followed the reflexivity process by reflecting upon my biases and assumptions to ensure that they do not affect the process of conducting the research. Creswell & Creswell (2018) expended that

researchers should eliminate bias right from the moment the research topic and questions are

formulated to the final phase, where conclusions are drawn. I believe I conducted this study

better by acknowledging my role in the research. As a qualitative researcher, I understood that I

am a crucial part of the studying process, and my prior assumptions, experiences, and beliefs

might influence the research process. This study is critical to me as a professional journalist

because it has come in handy in the current polarized journalism ecosystem, where the appetite

for well-researched and valuable information is still growing.

Gaps in Methodology and Research

While several studies have been conducted to explore the impact of technology on

journalism (Bordi et al., 2018; Garcia et al., 2020; Gutierrez, 2020; Levinson, 2000; Jensen,

2020; Logan, 2020), gaps remain in our understanding and methods. The scholars wrote in their

articles that media ecology had undergone innovative growth in the last decade through different

scientific establishments. For instance, Garcia et al. (2020) agreed that technological

improvements have been essential in the historical development of journalism and news

communication. Bordi et al. (2018) clarified that in the past, telegraph introduction assisted in

fostering the establishment of terse, newswire services and standardized style of new writing

(Standage, 2003). In addition, the typewriter and telephone proliferation supported an internal

labor movement since more news reporting and gathering were pursued in the newsroom.

Gutierrez (2020) reinforced that technology linkage has come in a deep and complex way in the

modern journalism environment. For example, the advancement has considerably transformed

contemporary news distribution, production, and consumption (Bordi et al., 2018). The

transformation has challenged the foundational mass communication theories from news

gatekeeping to information flow (Jensen, 2020). Specifically, the development has resulted in establishing unique forms of journalistic labor that are technologically specific as they must depend on modern communication tools.

Much of the previous research has emphasized digital media and technology in news communication (Hestdalen, 2020). However, no substantive studies have been done regarding the strategies journalists should pursue to succeed in the modern journalism ecosystem. Therefore, this research aimed to close the gap by exploring measures older journalists pursued to overcome the issues brought about by digital media and technological growth. The study results are vital for all journalists as they will comprehend from their seniors the best navigation practices that help when shifting from one journalistic era to the other. In practice, as days continue to pass by, more evolution will be witnessed from all corners (Levinson, 2000). Usually, technological change is more rampant in the communication industry as innovations continue to spur within short durations (Logan, 2020). Therefore, this study was solution-oriented research that has provided in-depth information to help journalists remain relevant even when experiencing unforeseen challenges in the future. I see this research as a ray of hope for many enthusiastic journalists losing hope due to digital media challenges.

The major methodological gap was the lack of qualitative research where researchers interact and learn from older journalists' experiences. The inability to seek information from seniors has made it challenging for young professionals to determine ways of gaining relevance in the modern journalism environment (McMullan, 2020). Through this study's qualitative interviews, the personal experiences of seasoned journalists will enable the audience to discover the strategies these journalists employed to adapt to a rapidly-chasing communication ecosystem. The study outcome is relevant for those without a chance to know the history of media evolution

to get comprehensive information and the impactful transformations that paved the way for

digital media. In addition, the study has outlined the differences between older news consumers

and today's news consumers. This study intended to close the widening research gap regarding

best practices for journalists in the modern journalism environment.

Nature of the Study

The study followed a qualitative methodology, where data was collected based on

participants' narrations, opinions, and suggestions (Rashid et al., 2019). Qualitative research

entails collecting and analyzing non-numerical data from audio, text, or video to understand

participants' experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The method is essential

when the researcher wants to gather comprehensive insights into the problem (Rashid et al.,

2019). Specifically, **t**he study followed a phenomenological research design, a qualitative

approach that aims to understand the universal essence of the research problem. In

phenomenological design, the researcher investigates the daily experiences of the population

while suspending their preconceived assumptions about the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The

importance of phenomenological research is its ability to generate in-depth insights into how

individuals understand their encounters. The design is relevant to my research because of its

descriptive elements (Powers, 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2017). For instance, the interview

discussion with older journalists enabled me to accurately describe the structure of journalism

evolution and the challenges faced.

The data collection instrument that was incorporated into the phenomenological research

is interviews. An interview is a qualitative research approach relevant to collecting primary data

(Punch, 2013). The reason for using interviews in the study was to get in-depth information for

journalist participants who described their encounters with the traditional and modern journalism culture. Senior journalist participants made the primary study population. I intended to engage with more than 10 participants. The reason for including more seniors was to get their perspectives on what they did differently to attain relevance in modern news communication environments. The data collected from the interviews will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, which entails reading through the transcribed audio to look for patterns. The thematic analysis makes it easy to identify repeating ideas, phrases, and comments, thus enhancing the process of making meaning of large data to find themes (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Definition of Key Terms

News communication: disseminating information regarding current events, developing stories, and breaking news to inform audiences (McMullan, 2020).

Digital media: Medium of digitized information broadcast that uses electronic devices to distribute information (Newman, 2018).

Technology development: The overall innovation process that emails diffusion of new processes and products that enhances efficiency in operations (Logan, 2020; Levinson, 2000).

Media ecology: The study of media, communication, and technology, including how they influence human environments (Peicheva & Keraniva, 2020; Jensen, 2021).

Traditional news communication: Type of news content distributed through conventional channels that have been around for many years, like print media, telegraph, and radio (Hestdalen, 2020).

Journalist: An individual that writes for a newspaper, makes news reports, anchors, and prepares news to be communicated (Yang, 2020).

Modern journalism: The contemporary journalism ecosystem flooded with technology and digitalization (Tandoc et al., 2020)

Social media: Digital technology that allows sharing of multimedia and text through virtual communities and networks (McMullan, 2020)

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the problem of news communication challenges in the modern journalism environment. This chapter introduced how technological improvement has contributed to developing new forms and logic, influencing news production and communication arrangement (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2021). Thus, the innovations have shaped the roles of journalists and affected the power previously accredited to certain octants, actors, and activities (Cali, 2020; Chua, 2021). The chapter also provided a background on how technology has also led to the introduction of audience analytics, which automatically capture a broad range of news consumers' behaviors (Dowling, 2020; Newman, 2018). The innovation helped usher in a new wave of practices linked to applying an empirical model that produces audience preference.

This chapter provided a problem statement by noting that this study aimed to address the problem of news communication challenges that occurred when journalists transitioned to modern journalism. Importantly, the chapter provided the purpose of this study by noting that this qualitative research will help audiences understand the adaptive strategies used by older journalists to overcome the increased pressure brought the digitalization and technological growth in the journalism sector. This chapter's ability to introduce a theoretical view guiding this

research makes it more vital. The theory discussed was media ecology, which argues that technological change alters society and people, introducing a new interpretation of information (Levinson, 2000; Postman, 2000). The chapter provided an overview of the nature of the study where qualitative phenomenological research was proposed. Information regarding older journalist participants, thematic analysis, and interview data collection instruments was provided.

This chapter pointed out the main methodological gaps that have influenced this study. Despite knowing more about the impact of these transformations, what remains unclear is the approaches used by the senior journalists to gain relevance in the modern digitalized journalism organization quickly. Therefore, the chapter indicated that the study aimed to answer the research gap, as the researcher explored several technological changes in the communication industry over time and how senior journalists successfully shifted into highly competitive digital ecosystems. This research is relevant as its outcome will enable mature, young, and upcoming journalists to know the exact skills to reinforce, abilities to strengthen, and professionalism measures to pursue success even in turbulent moments. The lack of in-depth research to explore this topic has made many budding journalists fail to get into the limelight because they do not have information on maneuvering into the digital ecosystem. This research will produce massive impacts on the lives of many struggling journalism professionals, as they will know the exact strategies to embrace to maintain relevance in today's journalism environment.

The next chapter will focus on a literature review where scholarly works from other communicating and journalism scholars will be analyzed to see what they have found about technology transformation in journalism. In addition, the next chapter will offer an adequate literature review of media ecology to determine what different theorists proposed.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

      News communication is essential because it informs people of developing stories and trending events. Bengtsson & Johansson (2021) and Bordi et al. (2018) highlighted that though news communication is important, the journalism practice faced huge impact when technology evolved. Ideally, the main problem that this study attempted to address is the news communication challenges associated with navigating from traditional journalism tools to the modern journalism ecosystem filled with technological growth. Therefore, this qualitative study explored the strategies and best practices the older journalists applied to overcome the transition challenges when shifting to the modern journalism ecosystem. The objective for undertaking the study was to allow the journalist population, including the upcoming professionals, to know what things to do to succeed in the current challenging journalism environment.

      In the last chapter, a comprehensive explanation for the problem, purpose, and overarching qualitative research questions were provided. In this chapter, an in-depth literature review was pursued and the topic has been situated to a relevant communication tradition. During the review, the key guiding theoretical view was analyzed to understand the different perspectives held by the core theorists. In addition, the chapter explored other crucial literature that covered early journalism practices, modern journalism environment, digital news communication tools, and challenges of digital journalism. Importantly, the chapter has explored a research gap that promoted this study.

Situation to Communication Tradition

Every passing day, people encounter different images, signals, symbols, and impressions flashing before their eyes in the form of content (Maguire, 2006). It is common for different messages to collide to prompt the audience's sense of reasoning. How people process and digest information diversity and understand the signs of what every message means needs a better examination. One way to better understand different communication phenomena is by using theories that attempt to replicate the nature of human encounters and expand on how people comprehend the different symbols (Craig & Xiong, 2022). By basing an explanation on a theory, it becomes easy to comprehend how to apply them in a given community or society. The importance of theories is that they help clarify different views, eliminating the use of different individualistic perceptions of a given form of communication sign due to the complicated nature of assimilating the application and meaning of communication.

However, one challenging aspect of theories is that they are numerous, each attempting to explain a concept using a unique perspective (Punch, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2017). As a result, it becomes possible for one phenomenon to have different explanations and applications. Therefore, the introduction of communication tradition helped counter the challenge of using theories because the traditions are limited and offer a better explanation of different viewpoints and conceits in communication. Robert Craig introduced the seven communication traditions: cybernetic, socio-cultural, phenomenological, semiotic, socio-psychological, critical, and rhetorical (Craig, 1999). The study explores strategies older journalists apply when navigating modern news communication culture. Hence, phenomenological and cybernetic are two traditions that help explain and guide this study topic.

Phenomenological Tradition

Craig (1999) described that phenomenological tradition theorizes communication as a

dialogue. The tradition states that authentic human relationships and common ground is

developed through people's direct experiences (Craig, 1999). Although the phenomenological

tradition is quite a complicated term in reality, in simple terms, it means analyzing people's

everyday lives from their viewpoints about a phenomenon. Therefore, the tradition focuses on

the interpretation of participants' subjective experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Littlejohn

et al., 2017). What made this tradition relevant in this study is that the research was also based on

the phenomenological qualitative design where older journalists were engaged through an

interview discussion to get their opinion on the challenges they faced due to the sudden shift

from the conventional to modern journalism ecosystem. Individual experiences are a vital tool in

gaining the importance of a phenomenon more authoritatively than communication axioms or

hypotheses.

Craig & Xiong (2022) expounded in their article that using phenomenological tradition to

explain a concept is crucial because the Bible, prophets, research, or God's revelation cannot

precede people's direct experience. Apuke (2017) explained that there are three factors in

phenomenology that help in giving a better understanding of people's experiences. The first

factor is congruency which is the appropriateness of the speaker's behaviors (Craig, 1999).

Therefore, during the research, I must ensure that those included in the study have appropriate

behaviors, which should be displayed through their responses' transparency, authenticity, and

realness. The congruency quality enables the researcher to break the experience barriers between

senders and receivers in the communication chain (Maguire, 2006). Unconditional positive

regard is the second element that constitutes an attitude of accepting an individual without

considering their uniqueness, performance, and characteristics (Apuke, 2017). The final factor is

empathetic understanding entailing keeping aside egos and values to effectively fit into other

people's shoes (Apuke, 2017). Hence, the researchers must not apply ego during inquiry to

enable participants to give their real encounter with the phenomenon.

The Cybernetic Tradition

The study topic also fits the elements of cybernetic tradition, which examines the overall

working of communication based on integrated systems. Cybernetic tradition defines systems as

variables or parts that influence one another to control or shape the character of the whole

communication system (Maguire, 2006). Craig (1999) coined the term cybernetic to characterize

artificial intelligence by defining rulers and controllers, illustrating how feedback allows

information processing between computers and people's minds. The systems can reinforce the

future trajectory of information exchange based on the early measures regarding its movement

(Littlejohn et al., 2017). The term feedback explains the way cybernetic tradition is embedded in

the belief that assumes that communication is a link between separate parts of any system.

This topic falls within the cybernetic tradition because it also aims to address the various

communication systems used in the past and those used today to see how information exchange

and feedback have evolved. Since tradition sees a system as a structure that controls feedback

and information, it was vital to use it in the study to explain how news communication has

transformed due to the evolution of control technologies (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Likewise,

cybernetic tradition explains communication approaches as influenced by complex systems

whose interactions induce different meanings. Therefore, communicators should achieve

maximum transfer line capacity incorporated with low signal distortion for communication to

become adequate (Craig & Xiong, 2022). In practice, this tradition was relevant for this study

because its basic system theory assisted in expounding news communication transition process where journalists had to make a shift from a linear, one-way broadcasting communication model, to an ever-evolving omnidirectional communication model (van Ruler, 2018). In addition, modern journalism practices can be explained using the tradition's information theory that focuses on signal transmissions through advanced networks.

Theoretical Framework

Media Ecology

Over the past years, media ecology has become a significant reference in media studies because it relates to theoretical views on the multifaceted relationship between society and media (Levinson, 2000). In addition, media ecology is becoming increasingly relevant since it addresses technological changes in different environments (Postman, 2005; Levinson, 2000). Typically, media ecology theory aims to explain how different media environments shape society, including people's everyday lives (McLuhan, 1964; Griffin et al., 2022; Gutierrez, 2020). McLuhan (1964) outlined that the fundamental premise of the media ecology theory is that communication content does not exert as much influence as the communication medium does.

The term media ecology theory was first coined and introduced by media theorist Neil Postman in 1968 (Postman, 1974). However, the real person that initially inspired the term was Marshall McLuhan through his (1964) book *Understanding Media*. In the book, McLuhan defined media ecology as the study of media environment (McLuhan, 1964). He suggested that people focus on media when defining communication instead of relying on the disseminated content (McLuhan, 1964). When explaining media ecology simply, McLuhan compared it to species living in the same ecosystem that strives to establish meaningful relationships between

them (McLuhan, 1962). McLuhan (1988) stressed that no medium develops its meaning or exists

alone, as there must be a constant interplay with other forms of communication.

Consequently, when explaining transformation and evolution in communication,

McLuhan divided human history into four parts: the tribal age, the literate age, the print age, and

the electronic age (McLuhan, 1964). Regarding the tribal age, McLuhan defined it as an acoustic

environment where the senses of taste, hearing, touch, and smell were more fundamental in

communication than the sense of visual (McLuhan, 1964; Levinson, 2000). In the tribal age,

people were highly primitive but led a richer life because the senses that aided communication

fostered deeper community and awareness (McLuhan, 1962; McLuhan, 1988; Levinson, 2000).

Secondly, for the literate age, communication turned visual as sounds became visible objects

(McLuhan, 1988; Logan, 2020). McLuhan argued that the literacy age jarred individuals from

the collective tribal environment by making them live a civilized lifestyle with private

detachment (McLuhan, 1964).

Later, the literate age gave birth to the print age, which fostered newspaper and magazine

journalism (Cali, 2020). People had the opportunity to read about the news events happing

around them, and the age was marked with privacy and isolation (Levinson, 2000). McLuhan

elaborated that in the print age, news libraries allowed the audience to be alienated from others,

and there was no immediate impact (McLuhan, 1964; McLuhan, 1988). Finally, McLuhan

explained the electronic age, which entailed the rise of the global village where the introduction

of electronic media retribalized the human race (McLuhan, 1988; Logan, 2020). Some vital

advancement of the electronic tools outlined by McLuhan entailed the telephone, telegraph,

computer, film projectors, and radio, among others (McLuhan, 1988). Unlike in the last age,

where people led a private life, the electronic age fostered increased engagement among people and high information demand (McLuhan, 1964).

Looking at the evolution steps outlined by McLuhan on media ecology, it is evident that the theorist grounded the transformation of media and the world and later linked the changes to the emergence of electronic media (McLuhan, 1988; Levinson, 2000; McLuhan, 1964). Indeed, McLuhan's views are critical for this study because he explained technologies as a continuation and extension of the mind, body, and consciousness (McLuhan, 1962). His illustration of the evolution of media ecology is vital when analyzing the journalist's role from different stages and how news consumption has transformed (Cali, 2020). For example, it can be noted that unlike in the past, when news communication was private with minimal engagement between audiences, today's media has created an immediacy impact where people constantly search for instant information (Logan, 2020). Besides, today's news consumer has become more connected, and they can share news information amongst themselves (Levinson, 2000). Therefore, it is evident that journalists who practiced in the print age had to readjust their skills to fit into the electronic age, which McLuhan defined as an ecosystem filled with media that demanded instant dissemination of information (McLuhan, 1964).

McLuhan's probe influenced other scholars to ponder whether a certain media ecosystem was advantageous or distractive to people immersed in them (McLuhan, 1988). One significant theorist that furthered McLuhan's views was Neil Postman, who founded the media ecology philosophy at New York University (Postman, 1974). Just like McLuhan, Postman agreed that the forms of media regulate and dictate a particular medium's content (Postman, 2000; McLuhan, 1988; Logan, 2020). In addition, Postman explained that a particular medium could only sustain a certain type of idea, and a given idea could only be communicated through a unique medium

(Postman, 2000). As a result, technological evolution has the potential to shape people's culture when it comes to communication (Cali, 2020).

According to Postman, new technological inventions presented people with the potential to deal with the devil (Postman, 1992). He stated that "technology is given and taketh away…A new technology can sometimes create more that it destroys, and sometimes the impact can cause more destruction than benefits" (Postman, 2000; Postman, 2005). Postman used the innovation of television to describe how detrimental technology could be to society (Postman, 2005). He saw technology as less beneficial because it resulted in the loss of serious public discourse as it changed the forms of communication from discursive to non-discursive and from rationalist to emotive (Postman, 1992). Postman highlighted that the television environment turned communication into entertainment and made people juvenile adults (Postman, 2000).

Levinson (2000) wrote in his article that, Postman (1974) argued that different technology environments inevitably impact an individual's perception, values, beliefs, and feeling, altering the meaning of things. Ideally, Postman's views on media ecology are vital for this study because they help expound how a new technology or media can impact people's lives and thoughts (Postman, 1992). This study investigates the challenges of news communication due to the evolution from a traditional journalism ecosystem to a highly sophisticated technology environment. Therefore, using Postman's idea will help explain how the addition of news technology in journalism, such as the internet, digital media, and smartphones led to a creation of a new society of audience that demanded journalists seek other strategies to remain relevant (Postman, 2000; Postman, 2005).

Postman (1974) elaborated that by adding new technology, people's culture, including their perception and understanding of information, are affected. The theorist saw technology shift

from print to screen as a huge game changer (Postman, 2000). For instance, during the shift,

journalism transitioned drastically from journalistic newspaper and public discourse to digital

soundbites and cable media that made people consume information rapidly but with minimal

attention (Postman, 2005; Cali, 2020). Indeed, Postman's explanations are crucial in explaining

why contemporary news consumers using digital media such as Twitter, Facebook, and

Instagram have become infotainment audiences as the medium encourages immediate reaction

and flashy imagery that results in lots of online outrage (Postman, 2000; Logan, 2020).

Subsequently, Postman argued that electronic era brought a significant competitive drive as

every journalist tried to get their story to the audiences quickly. As a result, journalist ability to

check facts and other crucial information of their news content reduced, leading to low quality

reporting (Postman & Powers, 2018).

Another theorist that expanded on media ecology was Logan, and he suggested that

media ecology depends on the feedback flowing back and forth between the environment and

media (Logan, 2020). He illustrated that the medium receives data, processes them, and returns it

to the environment, which also processes it into output and later returns the new data into the

medium. In a nutshell, Logan meant that media ecology theory entails the reciprocal relationship

between environment, media, technology, and societal culture (Logan, 2020). Subsequently,

Walter Ong (1967) reinforced McLuhan's ideologies by strengthening the evolution of media

environments and their intersection with population culture and consciousness. In his (1967)

book, *The Presence of the Word*, Ong presented the evolution of communication from primary

orality constituting communication before the times of writing to secondary orality entailing

communication during electronic forms of media (Ong, 1967; Ong, 1982; Gutierrez, 2020).

Thus, his explanations are vital when examining news communication evaluation and the

different electronic tools journalists adopt in each transition phase. Ong further expounded on the

differences between oral and literature sacristy, thereby defining the nature of journalism at each

phase (Ong, 1982; Ong, 1967). Ong's ideas matched Postman's illustration as he also asserted

that the evolution from television to digital media exposed journalists to negative effects due to

the sudden change in the language and culture of news consumers (Ong, 1982; Postman, 2005).

Likewise, Harold Innis expounded on the media ecology theory by exploring media

influences shaping social relations (Innis, 1951; Innis, 1952; Hestdalen, 2020). Innis provided

many questions to the audience to allow them to understand what communication evolution

meant (Innis, 1950). Some of the questions he asked entailed how particular communication

technology operates, what types of power they encourage, and what assumption evolution takes

when contributing to society (Innis, 1951; Innis, 1950; Levinson, 2000). Ideally, when exploring

knowledge about social communication and media, Innis took into account cultural and social

conditions, and he proved that the stability of culture depends on the proportion and balance of

the media they use (Innis, 1951; Innis, 1950). Logan (2020) agreed that when related to the

current ecosystem, it means that the volatile internet and digital media communication have

contributed to the increased instability in journalism. Media ecology theory is vital as it

strengthens that every media used represents a certain attitude, nature, and direction that help

control information.

A common theme emerging from the works of Postman, McLuhan, Innis, and Ong is that

the evolution of communication from the print era significantly altered how people think, make

meaning, and their behaviors (McCullough, 2021; Peicheva & Keranova, 2020). The different

theorists (Postman, 1974; Innis, 1950; McLuhan, 1964; Ong, 1967) asserted that traditional news

communication forms over the mass media and helps the audience establish interpersonal

communication and individuality sense. For example, Postman elaborated that the print culture's

audience mastered basic literacy, making it easy to enjoy vital discussions on historical,

philosophical, and rhetoric topics (Postman, 2005). Another related theme that these scholars

supported was the influence of communication systems which they linked to civilization

(Postman, 2000; McLuhan & McLuhan, 1988; Peicheva & Keranova, 2020). Media ecologists

like Innis point to communication as an evolution from bodily definitions like speech, gestures,

particular writing, and cave art to mental structures like memory, patterning, and creativity

(Innis, 1950; Littlejohn et al., 2017). A basic hypothesis is that each communication phase

evolved from the nature of thought itself, thereby impacting the message perception and content

(Ong, 1967; Ong, 1982; Cali, 2020). McLuhan's (1964) axiom, *The Medium as the Message*,

most famously expressed the view. McLuhan created groundwork for the theory by scrutinizing

popular technology cultures through media imagery (McLuhan, 1964).

The significant reason why media ecology was relevant in this study is that it argues that

it is impossible to understand people's culture and social change without examining the media

mechanisms and environment that people live in (Postman, 2000; Postman, 2005). Meaning,

individual experiences can be perceived daily through the lens of different media such as the

internet, television, film, and digital media (Postman, 2005; Strate, 2004; McLuhan, 1988;

Levinson, 2000). The different media provides people with information regarding events in the

world and their environments (Logan, 2020). As a result, people learn about acceptable things

and what is not acceptable (Levinson, 2000). Levinson (2000) stressed that media ecology argues

that information interpretation depends on culture, technology, and language. For instance, to

understand the content of the media of a given culture, one must be acquainted with several

factors such as traditions, political climate, and language (Postman, 2005; McLuhan, 1964). In

addition, one must have access to the internet as a fundamental form of communication in a

contemporary technological society.

Consequently, when related to the present day, media ecology theory would define the

present-day environment as digital media because communication media are no longer controlled

by production, journalists, advertising companies, or television but by the internet (Strate, 2014).

The introduction and high accessibility of the internet have allowed most people to develop and

access different contents, which have altered their thinking process (Cali, 2020). Typically,

media ecology expounds on a complicated field of study seeking to explain how different media

environments shape and affect lives (Strate, 2014; Postman, 2005; Ong, 1982; Strate, 2004).

Logan (2020) highlighted that it is correct to posit that the contemporary digital environment

outlines a constant interaction between diverse media and people, a product of technological

reality. The positive element of the theory is that it studies all types of technology, not only those

relating to communication, because the ecology component encompasses a comprehensive

meaning for media ecologists who draw on system theory to evaluate the evolution of technology

and human organization (Levinson, 2000; Carlson, 2020; McCullough, 2021).

The theory proves that media makes an integral element of life because it changes

perception and reasoning patterns (Strate, 2014; Postman, 2005). Considering the concepts of

media ecology theory from different perspectives, it is correct to summarize that it constitutes a

vital contribution to communication and media studies (Carlson, 2020; McCullough, 2021).

Therefore, this study will help me comprehend how the evolution of different media

environments has shaped journalism's content, structure, and consequences. For instance, with

the internet emergence, social interaction among the audience has been reinforced (Strate, 2014;

Strate, 2004). This has pushed journalists to devise various mechanisms for evoking positive

behaviors and feelings in the audience to get their unending attention. Any journalist wanting to succeed in modern journalism must understand how to enhance interaction between individual media and their extenuation to human nature (Logan, 2020). Paying attention to the types of media currently used and their features will help to get a significant awareness of how news consumers receive the message (Cali, 2020; Carlson, 2020; McCullough, 2021).

Media Ecology Critics

Though media ecology is crucial in explaining technology evolution in communication and its challenges, some critics see the theory as less effective (Strate, 2008). Several of McLuhan's critics have made a counter argument that medium is not a message (Strate, 2008). The critics seem to reason that McLuhan's views correspond with a mathematical equation stating that x equals y (Strate, 2008). Ideally, McLuhan used the phrase medium is the message as a metaphor to call people's attention and make them understand that a change in communication media results in message interaction even when communicated information remains the same (McLuhan, 1964; Schut, 2023). Other critics argued that media ecology theory denies the existence of content altogether as it has focused more on the media (Treré & Mattoni, 2016). However, the truth is that different media ecology theorists, such as McLuhan (1954), Postman (2005), and Innis (1950) attempted to explore the consequence of the message by examining the media used and how the media played a leading role in human affairs and interpretation. The theory reinforces that technology shapes people collectively and individually (Levinson, 2000).

Subsequently, the emphasis on media and technology made critics label the media ecology theory as a technological determinism approach (Strate, 2008). However, the critique is not substantial because neither McLuhan nor Postman used determinism or argued against

human agency (Treré & Mattoni, 2016). Instead, the media ecology theory focuses on the transactional approach of media, where introducing new tools shapes people's culture, beliefs, and perception (Postman, 2000; Logan, 2020). Some critics complained that media ecology exaggerated the difference between orality, literacy, and electronic age (Schut, 2023). These critics missed that the media ecology theorists often worked dielectrically using varied contracts to understand media (Innis, 1950; Postman, 2000; McLuhan, 1964). In addition, the media ecology theory applies the broad categories of communication evolutions to help readers view the evolution of language and speech as intrinsically related to the origin of human space (Cali, 2020). Each broadly grouped historical era helps readers understand a basic type of media environment and the corresponding culture (McLuhan, 1988).

Related Literature

Early Journalism Practices

In his article, McMullan (2020) described communication as gathering, organizing, and disseminating news by including commentary and feature stories through diverse print and non-print media outlets. During the early era, a few newspapers were publicized daily and hung strategically in the cities to enable people to read important things (Gutierrez, 2020). However, the initial indication of regular news publication can be traced to Germany through a newspaper known as *Weekly News* and later *The Daily Courant* (Chua, 2019; Dowling, 2022; Garcia et al., 2020). The vital aspect of these publications is their ability to keep people informed. The major challenge during the early era was the intense governmental regulation through censorships that placed huge taxes and restrictions on the type of content to produce (Yujie et al., 2022). As years passed, literacy among the population grew, influencing the printing and circulation of many newspaper publications in many regions.

Soon after newspaper publication got a foothold, magazine creation emerged that attempted to merge public opinion and current events with the broader audience. These magazines had illustrations focusing on all types of audiences, including females (Yujie et al., 2022). The positive element of newspapers and magazines is the control power that the producers have, as they enjoy the opportunity to design news they like (Yang, 2020). The traditional era's audience could not dictate news content and only consumed what was available (Yang, 2020). As a result, the journalism environment had no challenge, and few journalists had an easy time thriving in their careers (Yujie at al., 2022). Time passed, and the cost of magazine and newspaper gathering started to increase, leading to the invention of the telegram, which was later followed quickly by the radio, television, and mass broadcasting (Tandoc et al., 2020; Scolari, 2020; Sokolowski, 2018). It was the technological evolution that looked inevitable and yet real. Introducing these non-print media significantly altered the news gathering, dissemination, reporting, and communication dynamic (Scolari, 2020). First, on the positive elements, the introduction of radios and televisions sped up the information exchange process and allowed message flow to wide geographical areas (Schulz et al., 2022). Yujie et al. (2022) discussed that the radio era also gave journalists news communication power because many audiences depended on what they disseminated, and many people observed the fixed news reporting hours that happened only at the designated times.

The evolution journey did not stop at the television and radio phase because satellites were later introduced, and they promoted the transmission of information from one part of the globe to the other within seconds (Schulz et al., 2022; Ross et al., 2022). The journalism of the 20th century was quite different from the traditional form because of the introduction of intense and improved technologies (Roca & Corcoran, 2021). The rise of digital media has become

tremendous, changing the journalism ecosystem. First, digital media reduced news

communication dominance from journalists and placed it in the hand of news consumers (Chua,

2019). In practice, the audience now determines the types of news to be communicated, how it

should be structured, the number of words it should have, and the images or videos to be

incorporated (Roca & Corcoran, 2021).

Digital media eliminated the entry barriers as every person could now communicate news

to a wider audience, just like professional journalists (Pulos, 2020). Schulz et al. (2022) wrote

that, with the sudden changes, it became apparent to journalists that they needed to upgrade their

professionalism. Since everybody could share news regarding trending and developing stories,

the spread of misinformation increased in digital media. Essentially, the competition for

audiences' attention influenced some people to start altering the news content to make it more

appealing to consumers (Powers, 2020). As a result, the rise of misinformation and propaganda

was witnessed (Tandoc et al., 2020). The misinformation problem thus introduced the idea of

social responsibility for journalism as they needed to elevate their work and observe ethical

practices relating to accountability, honesty, and integrity (Schwab et al., 2022).

Indeed, news communication changed drastically with the introduction of new

technologies (Piecheva & Keranova, 2020). Even with the introduction of television, and radio,

the print media maintained relevance, and many people viewed it as a trusted information source.

However, with the coming of digital media, everything changed because non-print media began

to dominate news acquisition by the public (Ozkent, 2022). Millions of news consumers quickly

turned to non-print media to access sound bites of the events happening across the globe

(Ozkent, 2022). The main reason why many news consumers turned to digital and social media

platforms is their ability to allow quick and instant information access (Newman, 2018; Ozkent,

2022). Besides, with social media, news development needed to be merged with relevant videos

and images, which appealed to many people (Yujie at al., 2022).

In addition, the social platforms brought interactivity and engagement where the audience

formed online communities that allowed them to share content (Yujie et al., 2022). Though the

digital environment looked advantageous for news consumers, it posed a huge challenge to

journalists who had to develop new practices to strengthen their relevance (Newman, 2018;

McMullan, 2020). For example, digital media forces journalists to learn how to use relevant

technologies to match the expected standard set by the audience. These technologies were

expensive, and only a few journalists could afford them (McCullough, 2021). The digital media

also forced journalists to be constantly alert to ensure they become the first to disseminate

breaking news before non-professionals could access it (McCullough, 2021). In addition, the

new media forced journalists to come up with best practices that could differentiate them from

non-journalists now performing their roles. Several journalists could not persist with the new

challenges, leading to a career change (Levinson, 2000). However, some quickly learned how to

navigate the challenges and remain successful. Therefore, this qualitative study will engage the

older journalists who persist in learning the right skills and abilities to navigate the transition

issues.

Modern Journalism Environment

As illustrated above, traditional news channels, like newspapers, used to dominate in the

past. Still, today, the audience relies on the internet, social media, and digital channels to get

their news. An intense concentration of news suppliers and different media company ownerships

also marks the modern media ecosystem (Jensen, 2020). In the past, 90% of American news

companies were owned by only 50 companies (Gutierrez, 2020). Today, the concentration is

high, but readership is down. As a result, many papers have merged or closed, making many

journalists to lose their jobs. Indeed, journalism is now complicated because of the major

changes that have raised more concerns and doubts. The rapid technological growth and rise in

social platforms have resulted in increased development and information saturation (Griffin et

al., 2022). The increase in information has led to an informed citizenry myth that describes how

it is easy to manipulate and absorb news audiences.

The high number of power groups that audiences associate with have shaped public

opinion, making journalism duty to now work as a counter power for informing people of the

real government intentions (Garcia et al., 2020; Dowling, 2022). A major technological

development of the time is big data and artificial intelligence, that have greatly transformed the

investigative journalism. Many journalism organizations are now operating under a machine-

generated structure. Still, the innovation is putting a real risk on news professionals whose work

is being replaced by artificial intelligence and algorithms (Cooren, 2012; De-Lima & Ceron,

2021). The demand for quality news is also high in modern news culture, where audiences want

clear images, good writing, and better presentation. Besides, modern news consumers want their

news to be delivered instantly and as they happen because of the increased demand for short and

brief illustrations.

Despite the challenges of modern journalism, its purpose has not changed. Journalists are

still expected to rise above the obstacles and keep the audience informed of the changing event in

an honest manner (Bengtssen & Johansson, 2021). Ideally, the places and times of journalism

information have transformed. For example, zapping has passed from the television remote

control to the P.C. mouse. It means that today journalists need to provide short information in a

short time with interesting titles and make the text click easily. Bordi et al. (2018) argued that the

large population of news consumers has smartphones that have displaced conventional

communication. Chua (2019) added that different applications like cell phones, emails, and

social networks are the core to modern journalism, creating immediacy and urgency that makes

users demand instant delivery of breaking news.

However, the significant challenge of the modern journalism environment is its objective

nature. Ideally, with digitalization, there have been numerous impacts of misinformation and fact

distortion (Peicheva & Keranova, 2020; Cali, 2020). Besides, the demand for attention has made

that disseminating news not do them professional and clear. Indeed, since technology and

internet are here to stay in the modern journalism environment, young and upcoming journalists

need to know how to navigate the overwhelming challenges. Numerous research studies have

focused on modern journalism, including the current technologies used, but no study has

specifically addressed how journalists must overcome such obstacles. Hence, this study aimed to

explore the modern journalism environment in detail to bring out its associated challenges.

Engaging the older journalists in the discussion helped to highlight some problems they

encounter in the digitalized ecosystem. Importantly, the outcome of this study provides

comprehensive information on overcoming the obstacles by getting perspectives from older

journalists who successfully shifted from traditional to contemporary news culture.

Digital Environment and News Communication

Carlson (2020) wrote that, the journalism ecosystem worked under a pretty transparent

separation between news producers and audiences for many years. Ideally, journalists like

anchors, reports, and editors controlled how news looked and influenced the distribution mode.

Most journalists preferred distributing the news through print forms because the audience

associated them with transparency (De-Lima & Ceron, 2021; Garcia et al., 2020). Likewise,

television and radio were used as distribution modes for messages that needed verbal and visual

illustrations. Hestdalen (2020), illustrated that, with the emergence of the digital environment,

journalists still performed news production roles, but the consumers are no longer

straightforward. For example, news briefings made for discrete media channels have now been

blended into a digital environment through social media. Journalists focus news communication

on social media because many audiences use them due to the appealing features that promote

liking, sharing, and commenting (Jensen, 2020; Laskowska & Marcynski, 2019). Though digital

media is good, it created an environment where news can be commented on and shared outside

journalist control. The platform allows non-journalists to freely speak for themselves via

interactive social channels (Jensen, 2020). Therefore, even if the roles of journalists have not

changed and the news still looks the same, the transformations brought by digital media have

altered how the content moves about.

Logan (2020) outlined the several attributes of digital media. First, the authors defined it

as a mass media that allows information to be sent to many people across online societies, known

as audiences or viewers. The social platform also informs news providers because they have

content about things happening globally. For instance, government departments, public

organizations, businesses, and schools use digital media and the internet to share information

with their clients (Yang, 2020). Digital media has a distribution element and is a fast, effective,

and cheap way to disseminate information to many people. Another vital element of digital

media is its information storage and retrieval nature. Yang (2020) explained in his article that

social platforms have brought a huge expansion of the manner data is accessed and stored. As a

result, they enable journalists searching for content to easily access and retrieve. Looking at

digital media elements, it is evident that they make journalists work more efficiently because it is

easy to access global audiences faster. Yujie et al. (2022) argued that digitalization led to the rise

of digital journalism, a contemporary form of news communication where the editorial content is

disseminated through the internet instead of the conventional broadcast or print media.

The fundamental product of digital journalism is its presentation, which entails a

combination of video, audio, text, and news games to get the audience's attention (Yang, 2020;

Tandoc et al., 2020; Scolari, 2020). Besides, digital moralism has fewer barriers to entry, low

distribution costs, and multiple computer networking that have contributed to widespread news

communication practice (Sokolowski, 2018). Digital journalism, aided by improved and mobile

technologies, has democratized information flow initially controlled by traditional media such as

newspapers and radio. Yujie et al. (2022) asserted in their articles that digital news

communication has led to greater creativity due to stiff competition caused by a lack of entry

barriers (Schulz et al., 2022). Subsequently, web and mobile platforms reinforcing digital

journalism demand journalists adopt a platforms-free mindset to improve the integration of an

inclusive production approach that supports creating digital content first and then disseminating

them using appropriate platforms (Yujie et al., 2022). Though some journalists may still want to

repurpose print content for online news consumers, the relevant approach is to develop new

content that appeals to the digital medium unique element, such as hyper-textually. Ross et al.

(2022) added that current journalists must focus on developing news that aligns with interactivity

and multimedia to compel the modern journalism essence.

Pulos (2020) narrated that the contemporary news communication culture can be

functionally differentiated from traditional journalism by its technological aspect requiring

journalists to observe quality when displaying or creating information. The digital journalism

work may be seen from parsley edition messages such as CNN online shared through the public

connectivity websites like Slashdot (Schulz et al., 2022). The significant difference between the

current news culture and traditional media is its unique re-conceptualized role of reporters

concerning news consumers and the journalism organization (Pulos, 2020). The societal

expectations for instant information flow became essential during the evaluation of digital

journalism. Postman (2005) presented a history of digital journalism by expounding on Teletext,

introduced in 1970 to allow viewers to select news stories they wished to read and see (Powers,

2020). The news updates provided through Teletext were instant and brief, similar to the content

currently disseminated through digital journalism. In Teletext, the news information was

broadcasted between television from the signal in what was known as a vertical blanking

interval.

        However, as advancement continued to expand, a fax machine technology was initiated

to enhance the United States US presidential campaign trail reporting (Powers, 2020; Logan,

2020). The machines paved the way for the invention of videotext, which supported the delivery

of newspaper stories through video format (Yujie et al., 2022). Most American newspaper

companies use videotext technology to create online systems to reach many audiences. Later, the

computer bulletin board system was launched in 1980, reinforcing the dissemination of

newspapers online using telephone modes (Levinson, 2000).

        As the evolution of digital journalism continues to expand, major proliferation was

witnessed in the 1990s when a professional digital news site was introduced through the World

Wide Web (Standage, 2003). Though the journalistic content was still repurposed from the

original text and audio sources without substance alteration, news communication became

different due to its online structure that came with toolbars, intertextual links, and topically

grouped content (Standage, 2003). Consequently, Logan (2020) explained that digital journalism

brought a twenty-four-hour news cycle that reminded news organizations to restructure their

news communication timetable that was previously fixed. The changes demanded new ways of

audience-journalist interaction web boards because of the unique features of digital media (Yujie

et al., 2022). For example, most organizations began using digital portals like AOL, Yahoo, and

other news aggregators to collect and categorize links for their news sources. As a result, more

people started to seek news from the online platforms (Standage, 2003).

Data released by Jensen (2020) indicated that by 2008, for the first time, more United

States citizens reported getting their international and national news information from the

internet rather than print media. In practice, over 70% of young people below age 29 stated that

they source all their news from digital media (Hestdalen, 2020; Gutierrez, 2020). As years

passed, the audience of news sites continued to expand because of the launch of new and more

upgraded news sites (Jensen, 2020). Many journalism organizations saw the need to invest in

digital media as the conventional forms were slowly losing meaning (Chua, 2019).

The sudden change also influenced most journalists to understand how to use the internet

regularly to keep in touch with the now volatile new consumers (Gutierrez, 2020). For example,

many journalists started to create online blogs to share fresh and developing information to

amass a huge audience population. Chua (2019) clarified that before 2008, the journalism

industry had projected that online news publication would become lucrative and assist in funding

the cost of conventional news gathering. However, in 2008, online advertising started to drop as

even non-journalists started to pursue the promotion role (Hestdalen, 2020). The outcome created

uncertainty for many journalism organizations as they believed online advertising would be the

best revenue model. Indeed, the Internet introduction has challenged traditional news in

numerous ways.

Digitalization Impact on News Consumers

Carlson (2020) undertook a study regarding journalistic epistemology and he found that, technology innovation in journalism enhanced news communication in different aspects. Typically, digital journalism has strengthened discussions and interaction beyond the level established by the print media (Carlson, 2020). Today, social media users can freely comment and share articles and start discussion boards to analyze trending events. Before internet development, spontaneous discussions between news consumers who had never met were impossible (Chua, 2019; Cooren, 2012). The discussion process of news items is a significant portion of what makes contemporary journalism culture (Bordi et al., 2018). It is now easy for the audience to add stories and connect with other interested users.

Ideally, it can be elaborated that the digitalized news culture has established an opportunity for a niche audience, allowing people to access more alternatives to what to read or view (Bordi et al., 2018). For example, technology has opened a unique way of storytelling through the vital components of the medium. The majority of news consumers can now access news sources in a quick, accurate, and efficient way. Today, it only takes a second to learn about breaking news (Schulz et al., 2022). Thus, society can get a synopsis of events as they transpire. As major events occur, journalists can feed their audience with online sources to keep them updated in mere seconds. However, the negative feature of the quick news speed is that it can affect the reporting accuracy in a manner that does not usually occur in print media. Therefore, journalists must undertake intense validation of the information to ensure the message is delivered instantly and accurately.

Dowling (2022) explored reinvention in journalism in his study and found that, digitalization in journalism has pushed news consumers to improve their web literature and

understands how to apply critical thinking to evaluate sources' credibility. Internet evolution has tremendously changed the definition of journalism. Today, it has become increasingly simple for an average internet user to impact the news world by using tools like blogs or imitating reputable news websites (Schwab et al., 2022; Jensen, 2020). Many news consumers seek different ways of getting personal thoughts from the web, resulting in different interpretations of current issues. Digital journalism's impact on audiences has made journalists evolve and reform (Levinson, 2000; McCullough, 2021). The older news communicators who were not tech-savvy felt the blunt force of the changes, and many were made redundant (Yujie et al., 2022). At the same time, some older journalists quickly advanced their skills and abilities to match the required technology setting and succeeded (McCullough, 2021). This study recognized them and allowed them to guide young professionals on what they should do to keep up with unexpected and potential changes.

Another impact of the digital environment in journalism is the creation of citizen journalism (Tandoc et al., 2020; Yang, 2020). Contemporary journalism indeed lacks a traditional editor aspect. The initial advances that the technology age offered were faster research, conveniences, easy editing, and faster content delivery (Yang, 2020). However, internet technology has significantly broadened digitization's effect on journalism. Due to the internet and social media, many people now have access to and can add their journalism forms to the already saturated information network (Schulz et al., 2022). People who are not professional journalists but communicate news using websites and blogs are called citizen journalists (Yujie at al., 2022).

Chua (2019) discussed that the digital environment has made many people undertake journalism roles without any degree. These people can publish information not reported

anywhere and inform many publics (Chua, 2019). There are also instances where some

organizations had used information that citizen journalists relayed when they failed to access the

message in ceresin situations, and this is common in nations where freedom of the press is

sabotaged (Mutsvairo, 2016). Though citizen journalism is on the rise, Postman & Powers (2018)

saw it as less effective by noting that, "An experienced journalist is much better because they

have sense of what is particularly relevant about a story and insist on including certain facts and

perspectives that the actor-anchor would have no knowledge of" (p. 32).

The Impact of Digital Ecosystem on Publishers

McMullan (2020) undertook qualitative research to explore the new media phenomenon.

The author found that digital journalism has significantly impacted publishers as many

newspapers began to create online sites to remain relevant and gain the advantage of linking

video, audio, and text to appeal to many consumers. Unlike in the past, when the newspaper had

the role of breaking news stories, things have changed in contemporary journalism as most

websites are now the gatekeepers (McMullan, 2020; Newman, 2018). Modern technologies have

pushed reporters to start off vague and later progress to delivering better stories. The

disadvantage of television and newspaper is that they can only communicate news after

compiling stories with adequate detailed and ample information (Özkent, 2022). Essentially,

newspapers must wait until the following day before publishing a story, making them lose

ground on their online counterparts.

Powers (2020) explained the instant nature of online reporting has considerably shifted ad

revenue to the internet, decreasing subscriptions to traditional media. With technology and

digital evolution, people can access the news they want and when they want them without paying

for the content (Özkent, 2022). The outcome has made many journalists view modern journalism

as a death to the standard journalistic practice. The elements like unpaid labor, outsourcing, automation, and metrics and measurement in the current news culture have affected conventional journalism production (Ross et al., 2022). Many individual print and newspapers have been forced out of the industry due to the increased popularity of digitalized news communication methods. The journalism organizations that have not been willing to get out of the business have tried to enhance their survival by laying off staff, eliminating editions, partnering with other businesses, and shrinking their publication size to share content and coverage (Newman, 2018). These survival tactics have placed much pressure on journalists who must find strategies for increasing their relevance to avoid being part of those who face layoffs (Ross et al., 2022).

Pulos (2020), presented the data he collected in 2009 which indicated that most journalists, particularly the older ones, were ready to compete in the digital world as they believed that transitioning from print media to digital culture was compulsory. Therefore, young journalists and students yearning to join the profession must now be familiar with the elements of the digital environment to develop and contribute relevant skills (Pulos, 2020). Today, not only do journalists need to analyze their audience and emphasize effective communication approaches, but they also have to be quick in their news communication practice to update the highly demanding audience with instant news stories (Roca, 2021). Other skills that one must enhance is developing easily accessible websites and uploading content using basic programming skill to meet the demand of all audience (Schulz et al., 2022; Scolari, 2020; Roca, 2021). Newman (2018) agreed that the rise in unprofessional journalism has led to the development of several sites that do not disseminate credible news. The outcomes have blurred the lines between correct journalism and opinionated writing. Modern journalism allows readers and citizens to join in on threaded discussions about news articles that the public has read. As a

result, it offers an excellent source for reporters and writers to discuss important topics and

things to be omitted in the future (Oszkent, 2022). In essence, the threads offer useful

information to news publishers as they enable them to understand how to tailor their future

articles in a pruned and improved way.

Challenges of Digital Journalism Environment

Chua (2019) pursued an ethnographic research study, and determined that, technology

and digital evolution in modern journalism have exposed many journalists to daily affronts

online and physically for their work. Though technology proliferation has brought numerous

advantages, it has equally adversely affected the media landscape to the level that journalism has

come under siege in some countries (Chua, 2019). For instance, the increased digital surveillance

has endangered journalism because the application of sophisticated technologies by the

government has fueled rights violations (Carlos, 2020). It is now easy to detain, arrest, and

prosecute news communicators, primarily when the authorities deem their content unacceptable.

Cali (2020) also stressed that digital growth has put harm by eliminating professional

gatekeepers who uphold journalistic ethics.

Social media use in news dissemination has enhanced the fabrication of content,

information falsification, hate speech, and increased online harassment (Bordi et al., 2018;

Bengtsson & Johanssen, 2021). In the pre-internet world, privacy and freedom of expression

were thought to be only upheld when journalists reported on public figures in what was known as

the right to know (Chua, 2019). Today, those rights have become interdependent since the digital

business model and improved surveillance technologies have facilitated large-scale data retention

and collection (Bengtsson & Johanssen, 2021). The transformation posed challenges regarding

reprisals against news communicators and their sources, affecting free journalism exercise.

Therefore, even though technological improvement has offered broad opportunities, many developing countries have systematically sabotaged the enjoyment of the digital space.

Another challenge addressed by Carlson (2020) is the stiff competition within social media. As online interactive platforms gain more popularity, so does fake news dissemination. Therefore, as many journalists began to practice online journalism, they struggled to source complete information to ensure that the content they generated was fact-based. The author discussed that it is difficult for digital journalists to compete with rumors spread on social networks and draws considerable traffics. Journalists face pressure to keep their news interesting while maintaining the truth to draw the audience's attention by keeping up with social responsibility and educating society about current events (De-Loma et al., 2021). Many journalists are also experiencing intense competition with citizen journalists, which have gained influence due to their timely production of articles. For example, as the battle in Ukraine unfolds, people see the traditional online news outlets lag days or hours behind citizens in documenting every detail of the war (Dowling, 2022). The numerous hashtags on social media and the rising sophisticated forums organize and specify information in real time (De-Loma et al., 2021). Indeed, journalists are now competing with hive-mind tools that big news organizations once monopolized (Postman, 2005). Therefore, to remain relevant, current journalists must produce digital news that provides contextual, detailed, and timely analysis to grow beyond what is happening (Dowling, 2022).

Typically, due to the overwhelming information flow that news consumers receive every day, their attention span is reducing day by day (Carr, 2011). As a result, most readers and viewers are going for media formats that are easy to digest, such as those integrated by animation, pictures, and videos. Long articles demand the audience to pay more attention, which

is less appealing (Carr, 2011). Therefore, for journalists to gain relevance in the modern news culture, they must understand how to deal with the primary challenge of keeping readers engaged without distorting the quality of the text (Gutierrez, 2020; Jensen, 2020; Logan, 2020). Journalists must stand out from the competition because now everybody is a news reporter. If one has a blog, they can publish a story with their perspective and fining. For example, there are Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok influencers who can easily hijack the attention of a wide audience because their content reduces the time consumers spend on conventional journalism sites (Chua, 2019). If many people are pursuing journalist's role, massive competition occurs, making it hard and challenging for journalists to stand out and become successful.

Peicheva & Keranova (2020) stated that, maintaining financial solvency is another challenge brought about by digital and technological improvements in journalism. The evolution has made print products no longer regarded as the 'A Products' for news outlets as many consumers switched to online media (Powers, 2020). It has been challenging for local conventional media or journalists to stay afloat based on the online subscription and advertising model (Dowling, 2022). In addition, many news consumers want to get their content free, but journalists and organizations cannot make any income from free information supply (Peicheva & Keranova, 2020). Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts are now breaking news in one headline. Therefore, many journalists face difficulty making ends meet because financial compensation is low in the digital ecosystem. Roca et al. (2022) highlighted the lack of trust challenge in the media. For many years, journalists have been regarded as news gatekeepers because they convey information with honesty and accountability to the public as the professionals leave their personal opinions and thoughts at the door. However, the idea that

journalists are information gatekeepers has been called into unending doubt in the modern digital environment.

Many journalists agree that lack of trust in the modern digital environment is a significant issue as news information comes from various sources including unverified websites (Tandoc et al., 2020). The mistrust issue poses a serious threat to media value as it has maintained the door open for biasness in news coverage and fake news narrations to feed on journalism confidence (Pulos, 2020; Ozkent, 2022). Some journalists have contributed to the diminished trust since they pursue limited actions to enhance their integrity (Tandoc et al., 2020). There have been cases where some professionals have been fired for delivering ineffective content due to little research and plagiarism. The few lazy journalists do not take pride in their work, thus distorting the image of the many hardworking groups (Schulz et al., 2022).

Research Gap

The literature reviews and analysis of the two theoretical frameworks have shown that different scholars and theorists recognize that technological advancement greatly impacted communication, especially how news is consumed. The scholars noted that digitizing communication mediums significantly altered news interpretation because the increased information saturation allowed people to analyze the stories from different viewpoints (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2021; Dowling, 2022). Though the scholarly works are adequate in explaining technology and journalism, one limitation they seem to have is the inability to indicate some best practices journalists apply when transitioning to digital media. Apart from noting that the current news consumers have power to disseminate news as citizen journalists, no study has given an adequate information on how some professional journalists have managed to overcome the competition issue (Cali, 2020). Chua et al. (2019) illustrated that, as technology

began to grow, multimedia was integrated, encouraging news consumers to engage with the

news they receive and even share their suggestions openly. As a result, journalists lost the

dominant power, and controlling the now-powerful audience became challenging (Yang, 2020).

Yang (2020) added that the internet innovation promoted freedom of speech, thus

allowing the audience to comment on the news content, design, and structure. This freedom

brought unexpected scrutiny to the journalism industry, making it hard for journalists to control

their audience. Sokolowski (2018) also outlined that acquiring advanced technologies became an

issue because most were expensive yet mandatory in aligning with the expectations. Many news

organizations also faced the adverse impact of digitalization because the promotion revenues

they were getting through advertisements diminished due to bloggers and many non-professional

journalists who could cause website traffic and started to pursue the advertisement role

(Sokolowski, 2018). As a result of the stiff competition from citizen journalism, many journalism

organizations closed, and others laid off serval of their employees to remain afloat. All these

challenges exposed journalists, particularly those who were used to the traditional media, to

pressures and stress as their work became more complicated than ever.

Therefore, the affected journalists had to look for strategies to adapt to digital

expectations to ensure they remained relevant. Some enhanced their skills, others grew unique

abilities, and others pursued education and training to learn how to evolve (Sokolowski, 2018).

Since no comprehensive research has been done to expose the exact best practices that intrigued

these journalists, this study purposed to close the gap by exploring the topic in-depth. Ideally, the

study included older journalist participants in the interview. They were asked questions relating

to what they did to succeed and remain relevant in modern journalism. The research aimed to

ensure that those with relevant transition experience can narrate from their perceptive the new

technologies they encountered, the new challenges they faced, and the opportunities that came along.

Another research gap that the study intended to close relates to the design used. From the many integrated scholarly work, limited studies have given older journalists opportunity to tell their stories regarding the navigation journey. This study purposed to close the gap by using qualitative phenomenology where participants tell their stories about their experience with the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Data was collected from participants' narration, as they were allowed express their encounters with technology and digital evolution. The participants had an uninterrupted discussion, and no coercive techniques were applied to encourage them to express themselves freely. The reason for closing this research gap was to allow young and upcoming journalists to learn from the best in the profession and know what to do when navigating from one phase to the other.

Summary of the Chapter

The chapter two task was essential in presenting scholarly work from communication and journalism experts and professionals. First, the task began with an overview of the study's aim, including the goal for undertaking the research. Essentially, this qualitative study aimed to explore best practices strengthened by older journalists navigating the current digital journalism ecosystems. The chapter also situated the study to two communication traditions, including phenomenological and cybernetic. Typically, the phenomenological tradition focuses on the narrations given by participants since the researcher needs to get data from the experiences and stories from the affected population (Craig, 1999; Maguire, 2006). On the other hand, the cybernetic tradition expounds on system interrelation, allowing better analysis of different technological systems that have evolved in the journalism industry.

Subsequently, the chapter provided theoretical view to guide this study: media ecology. The theory allows people to understand the technological evolution in the communication industry and how the introduction of different mediums alerted news consumers' views, feelings, behaviors, and perceptions (Griffin et al., 2022; Levinson, 2000). Hence, if journalists want to get the audience's attention, they must know how to tailor the message to meet the medium characteristics (Chua, 2020). Importantly, the literature review addressed early journalism practices, the modern technological environment, and how the digital ecosystem has changed news consumers' attitudes. In addition, chapter two comprehensively described the challenges associated with the navigation phase from the traditional to current news communication culture. Some obstacles outlined include stiff competition, rising citizen journalism, high technology costs, layoffs, and diminished revenue opportunities (Cali, 2020; Jensen, 2020; Logan, 2020). Therefore, it is correct to conclude that the chapter is adequate in enabling readers to better understand the study topic and why the research is needed.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Overview

News communication is vital because it informs people of trending events, including developing stories and breaking news (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2021). For many years, journalists have pursued the news communication role to give their audience updates and necessary information to make relevant decisions about their health, politics, economics, or religion. Though news communication is critical, it represents a complex process as many journalists encounter different challenges while creating, developing, and disseminating news information to their viewers (Bordi et al., 2018; Bengtsson & Johansson, 2021). Some of the news dissemination obstacles are brought by transformations witnessed in the journalism industry, which mandates that professionals change their way of operation to meet the new demands.

One major transformation that brought huge changes to the journalism landscape is the sudden technological growth that digitalized the news communication process (De-Lima & Ceron, 2021; Chua, 2019). In the early years, when conventional news communication forms such as print media and radios were used as primary channels for news dissemination, news communication work was simple as journalists enjoyed more control of the information, and the audience highly depended on them to get updates (Newman, 2018). In the past, news reporters were the first to capture breaking and developing stories, and they would later tailor the information to their liking and share the content with the audience (De-Lima & Ceron, 2021; Dowling, 2022). Most reporters would physically witness the news events to get the facts they would share with listeners, readers, or viewers (Scolari, 2020). As a result, many news

consumers could patiently wait and adhere to the scheduled news communication hour to get the stories of relevant things in the country or communities.

However, when better technologies were invented in the communication sector, journalism culture changed dramatically (Chua, 2019). The development of the internet gave rise to multimedia sources where audiences could access news from different sites. In addition, digital media made of different social interactive platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp were introduced, allowing news consumers to engage with one another more (Schulz et al., 2020). One element of digital media is that it encourages socialization as users can communicate freely and share information about things happening in their surroundings (Newman, 2018; Schulz et al., 2022). In addition, the technology growth led to the development of smartphones, and many people acquired them as their primary mode of communication (Yang, 2020). The digital environment and technology changes enhanced freedom of speech and allowed people to communicate news despite being non-journalists.

Though the developments led to efficiency in news communication, they posed a huge barrier for many journalists who now needed unique states to capture the attention of newly independent audiences who could access stories without following the fixed news reporting timeframe (Yang, 2020; Schulz et al., 2022). Journalists needed to understand how to gain relevance in the volatile journalism atmosphere filled with millions of non-journalists underrating the news communication role (Tandoc et al., 2020). Also, acquiring the technologies was expensive, making it harder for professionals and journalism organizations to shift to the modern news culture. The digitization evolution slowly started to diminish the relevance of journalism, as conventional forms could not attract promotional advertisements like in the past

(Logan, 2020; Newman, 2018). As a result, several journalism organizations closed while others laid off many workforces to remain afloat.

The technology growth challenges made many journalists lose morale, and some resorted to changing careers (McMullan, 2020). Luckily, there are those groups of journalists who did not succumb to the digital media competition pressure as they acquired better skills and abilities to remain relevant. Therefore, **t**he purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to understand successful navigation strategies incorporated by older journalists who were forced to shift from a traditional news communication form to a modern journalism ecosystem filled with digitalization and technology growth. The research theoretical foundation was based on media ecology theory concepts that give a better overview of technology changes in communication and journalism through various transition phases.

Qualitative Research Method

This study followed qualitative research, a methodology that explores and provides in-depth insight into real-world issues. Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on numerical data, qualitative research helps generate hypotheses and further investigates and understands the participants' data (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Ideally, in qualitative studies, the researchers focus on gathering participants' experiences, behaviors, and perceptions about the phenomenon under study (Punch, 2013). Therefore, the methodology primarily attempts to answer whys and how rather than how much or how many. From the definition, it is clear that qualitative research was best for this study because it created the opportunity to understand the experiences of older journalists when it comes to technology evolution in the communication industry.

Through the method, it became easy to understand these participants' perceptions regarding the transition process, including the best behaviors they put forth to remain relevant.

Researchers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2017) expounded that qualitative

research, at its core, influences the inquirer to ask open-ended questions, intending to get

answers that cannot be easily interpreted into numbers. Therefore, the goal when designing

qualitative research questions for the study was to tailor them on a why, where, how, and when

basis to get better insight regarding the strategies each journalist participant integrated during the

media ecological shift. Due to the open-ended nature of the research questions, qualitative

methodology is often not linear compared to quantitative research.

One significant strength of qualitative research that makes it relevant for this study is its

ability to illustrate patterns and processes of human behavior that are often challenging to

quantify (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Essentially, phenomena like experiences, behaviors, attitudes,

and participants' feelings cannot be easily captured in a quantitative study (Punch, 2013).

However, if the qualitative design is applied, participants can easily express themselves and

explain why, how, and what they are thinking, experiencing, and feeling at a certain time during

an event of interest (Emiliussen et al., 2021). Therefore, when it was applied to this study, it

became possible to get better insights into the feeling and experiences that journalists who had

conformed to traditional media faced when technology changed suddenly and altered the nature

of their job. The ability to get different narrations from the participants enabled the researcher to

get patterns and themes that would have been challenging to quantify yet are important in the

narrative and context of qualitative work. Both Greening (2019) and Punch (2013) have

reaffirmed that qualitative research design works under an approach completely natural to the

topic of interest. Hence, it suits this study because engaging active journalists that worked both

during the traditional news culture and contemporary journalism ecosystem helped shed light on

the natural factors they encountered.

Neubauer et al. (2019) explained that qualitative research is important because its frameworks are based on incoming and available data. As a result, the subject material can be evaluated comprehensively, along with insightful discussions. Hence, incorporating the method into the study will allow me to understand journalists' personalities in their natural surroundings (Punch, 2013). Likewise, all the information gathered in qualitative research is vital data because the method allows for rich and thick descriptions that explain the human experience, thereby helping uncover things that quantitative research cannot (Punch, 2013). Ideally, through qualitative research, it is easy to explain why a given response was given against the questions during the interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Indeed, it was more reasonable to use the qualitative phenomenological method in this study because the method supports the idea of capturing the lived experiences of older journalists who have adapted to the rapidly changing communication ecosystem. Besides, qualitative research is context-dependent since it is situated within the setting of participants. Thus, applying it during the study provided a better understanding of historical, political, and social ages that shaped technology innovation in the industry and pushed journalists to acquire news operation strategies to remain successful. Rashid et al. (2019) elaborated that it is practical to use qualitative research when an issue or problem needs to be explored. When related to this study, it is evident that exploration of the best strategies in modern journalism is needed because many budding and upcoming journalists face different challenges that hinder their success. Therefore, involving older and successful journalists in the study helped solve the study's complexity due to the detailed description of the transition process.

Phenomenological Design

This qualitative research was based on phenomenological design, which entails describing the common meanings from several people of their lived experiences of a phenomenon. When the researcher integrates phenomenological design, they must focus on illustrating all common ideas shared by the participant based on their encounter with the phenomenon (Punch, 2013). Technically, phenomenological design has a solid philosophical element as it draws heavily on the ideas of Edmund Husserl, who described it as a meaning-giving approach grounded on scholars' literature (Creswell & Poth, 2017). What makes the design relevant is its emphasis on the concept to be addressed, requiring the researcher to engage groups of heterogonous participants who have experienced the event (Van Manen & Van Manen, 2021; Rashid et al., 2019). Therefore, phenomenology pushed the researcher to get heterogeneous journalist participants for the study, whose points of commonality included that they are journalists, they have been active journalists for many years, and they experienced a dramatic shift in the communication ecosystem of journalism. These journalists were vital because they have first-hand experience in technology change, and thus, they gave a better view of the opportunities and challenges they faced; including measures they initiated to overcome the obstacles.

The philosophical element of phenomenological design encourages discussions between researcher and participants which turns on lived experiences of people and how they hold objective and subjective views of the context (Punch, 2013). Greening (2019) expounded that researchers using phenomenological study must bracket themselves out of the study by refraining from discussing personal experiences with the explored topic. To ensure that the researcher had easy time bracketing out of the study, reflexivity was practiced by acknowledging their role in

the research. Through reflexivity, the qualitative researcher pursues personal analysis to ensure

their beliefs, assumption, and prior experiences do not impact the quality of the study (Creswell

& Poth, 2017). Greening (21019) also said that interviews are the ideal data collection

procedures that enable people who have experienced the phenomenon to tell their stories. The

consideration of the interview instrument made the design more relevant because the goal was to

engage older journalists in discussions to aid in answering the research question.

Consequently, the step for undertaking phenomenological research is simple and direct,

thus making it more appropriate for my research (Greening, 2019). For instance, the first step is

identifying and illustrating the phenomenon of interest. When related to this study, the researcher

began by identifying the news communication transition challenges to describe why studying the

topic is crucial. The second step is distinguishing and specifying the broad philosophical

assumptions. For example, the researcher wrote about integrating objective reality and individual

experience and why bracketing out is vital in generating better research results. The third step is

data collection from people who have experienced the phenomenon by applying multiple and in-

depth interviews (Emiliussen et al., 2021). In this step, the researcher interviewed older journalist

participants who were relevant during the traditional news communication era and still impactful

in contemporary journalism.

Usually, during data collection, the researcher begins by asking participants two general

and broad questions: what have you experienced regarding the phenomenon, and what contexts

have influenced your encounter with the phenomenon (Greening, 2019)? The next step in

phenomenological design is theme generation, where data analysis is pursued to identify

significant statements. Finally, the researcher creates structural and textural descriptions of the

themes to better report the essence of the phenomena by applying composite descriptions. Hence,

when reporting the study finding to the audience, the researcher began with the introduction to familiarize the audience with the news communication topic and then describe the research procedure applied, the analysis type used, and the themes the participants gave.

Research Questions

The overarching research questions for this study were:

RQ 1: What strategies did journalists who had conformed to traditional media forms adopt to remain relevant in the modern digitalized journalism ecosystem filled with advanced technology?

RQ 2: What new experiences did journalists face as a result of the transformation from conventional to digital media news communication?

RQ 3: How did the adoption of unique news communication strategies enable journalists to succeed and overcome the challenges of the new media?

These research questions helped in addressing the research problem of the study. Ideally, this research intended to explore adaptation strategies integrated by older journalists while looking at the technological evolution in the journalism industry that caused changes in news communication practice when journalists shifted from traditional media to modern journalism. It is true that conventional news communication media disadvantaged news consumers because it did not encourage engagement (Chua, 2019). Still, it offered a good working environment for journalists as they experienced minimal pressure from the audience due to increased information control power (Postman, 2005). The journalists of the past enjoyed the opportunity to control information, and they were solely responsible for determining how news needed to be structured. However, when new technology emerged, the internet took over, giving power to the audience

who wanted to control the news communication process (Logan, 2020; Newman, 2018; Schulz et al., 2022).

Therefore, these overarching research questions assisted to provide insightful information regarding the journalists' barriers in the transition process and their view on the positive and negative elements of digitalization and technology in the communication ecosystem. Creswell & Creswell (2018) wrote that qualitative research questions are best when addressing the study problem because they comprehensively examine the participants' perspectives towards practices, beliefs, and events. In addition, tailoring the research question qualitatively enhanced the exploration of complex research areas, thereby providing a better understanding of the phenomenon of interest. What made these research questions best for this study is that they relate to the central ideas of the inquiry strategy. As a result, they kept the research focused.

Settings

The fundamental feature of qualitative study is the analysis of the context in which a phenomenon is experienced, constructed, and situated (Punch, 2013). Choosing an appropriate setting helps the audience comprehend the study's background by constructing and comparing it with other familiar situations and settings. Van Manen & Van Manen (2021) strengthened that the researcher must provide appropriate information regarding the time, culture, history, location, and environment that may positively influence the participants and phenomenon under study. Since this research purposed to investigate the issues relating to adaptation strategies influenced by changes in technology evolution in news communication, the most appropriate setting was a journalism organization with active journalists who have been in the industry when old media was still useful.

The reason for choosing a journalism organization was to allow the journalists to access archives of modes they used in the past and to have fresh memories of how news communication used to be during the traditional era. In addition, studying within a journalism organization environment helped reveal the modern culture that journalists are operating in, as the researcher exposed the technologies and enable readers to feel the impact of digitalization first-hand. Indeed, many senior journalists still remember how journalism used to be, including the evolution steps and how they occurred. Therefore, selecting the appropriate physical setting where the transformation happened was the right decision in determining the exact changes and how journalists reacted to them. Besides, by relating to their present and past working environment, the journalist participants were in a better position to explain the social and experimental context of the transition. Creswell & Poth (2017) strengthened that, in qualitative research studies, choosing the right setting is crucial in getting correct results because it influences how participants interpret the questions. Situating the study in journalism organization that has been operational for many years was ideal for better discussion and conclusions.

Participants

Unlike in quantitative research, where participant selection is based on standardized and random procedures, qualitative methodology commands researchers to undertake a purposeful subject selection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell and Poth, 2017; Greening, 2019). Meaning, the respondents integrated into a qualitative study must best inform the research question to improve understanding of the topic of interest. Therefore, any qualitative researcher must identify appropriate participants in the design phase (Rashid et al., 2019; Punch, 2013). This study explored the news communication adaptation strategies adopted by older journalists

due to the transformations in the news culture that occurred due to the emergence of new technologies and digital media.

Specifically, the study began by identifying how news communication was done in the past and the tools used by anchors and reporters when sharing briefing and event stories. The next phase examined the emergence of technology that helped shape the modern journalism culture. Thus, this research incorporated the senior journalists who were relevant in the past and are still impactful today to understand better the best practices they integrated to ensure that they maintained relevance in the contemporary journalism ecosystem filled with news communication challenges brought by unprecedented technology progression.

Specifically, this study's best participants entailed older journalists who worked under the traditional media and still operate or operate successfully in the contemporary digital news communication environment. The reason for selecting older journalist participants as the research's primary subject is that their responses would be more accurate and relevant in addressing the two overarching research questions (Schulz et al., 2022; Yang, 2020). In addition, their views would be relevant in relating the study to the theoretical framework of media ecology that also explore technological growth in the communication and journalism industry. Therefore, older male and female journalists gave this study insightful evidence that would help produce a better conclusion and recommendation.

Specifically, when selecting participants, much interest was put on old journalists who are members of the UN Correspondent Association, White House Correspondent Association, among other big journalism groups. Essentially, including participants from these significant associations assisted in getting information regarding essential perspectives related to news communication in the past and today. Since the research is qualitative and the interview formed a

primary data collection instrument, few participants were selected because the interview process is often time-consuming (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The study included 14 journalist participants.

Both Punch (2013) and Creswell & Creswell (2018) illustrated in their article that, in qualitative research, the sample size should not be predetermined because the number picked depends on the numbers needed to inform in-depth about the elements of the phenomenon of interest. This means that the sample size by qualitative researchers is adequate when additional interviews no longer lead to identifying newer insights or concepts due to data saturation (Rashid et al., 2019; Van Manen & Van Manen, 2021). If the researcher wants to determine that data saturation has occurred, their analysis must ideally happen concurrently with data collection during an interactive cycle (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The process allows the researcher to document the emergence of new themes and locate perspectives that may have been overlooked.

A purposive sample type was used during recruitment, where the researcher sought out journalist participants with characteristics relevant to answering the research question (Creswell & Poth, 2017). For instance, the participants must be seniors, meaning they must have worked in journalism from the traditional print era to the current digital era. Rashid et al. (2019) strengthened that purposive sampling helps incorporate communities that best relate to the research question. As a result, research based on purposive sampling has increased validity and reliability of study findings as the engaged participants were most relevant.

Procedures

This research was based on phenomenological design, where data was collected from participants' narrations. As a result, the phenomenological research procedure was followed systematically. Neubauer et al. (2019) wrote that the first procedure when undertaking a phenomenological study is determining if the problem can be best explored using the approach.

Indeed, from the study overview, it is evident that the news communication topic to be explored suited phenomenological design because it required engaging several individuals to understand their shared experiences regarding the technology transition process in journalism. The next step is describing the phenomenon and identifying if it includes an emotional or constructive state, such as professionalism (Punch, 2013). Ideally, this study topic centered on the professionalism construct as it was based on a journalism career where the focus was placed on understanding the challenges they face when transitioning to newer ways of practice (Punch, 2013).

The third procedure entails specifying broad philosophical assumptions by bracketing out the researcher's opinions. Technically, the researcher's ability to not integrate their subjective opinion during the study allows a full description of participants' views as they will comfortably share their experience regarding the strategies they applied to overcome obstacles brought by the sudden incorporation of technology into the news communication practice (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The next procedure is collecting data from selected participants with adequate journalism experience (Greening, 2019). The move to only engage senior journalists was to get multiple and in-depth information because they were present when digitalization was unfolding; thus, they have better insights on survival measures.

The open-ended question assisted in gathering structural and textual illustrations of experiences during data collection (Punch, 2013). As a result, it was possible to understand the participants' common feelings and attitudes (Rashid et al., 2019). The next procedure will be themes generation from thematic analysis, where codes will be used to get patterns from the transcribed audio interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The final procedure in a phenomenological study is reporting the essence of the topic of interest by applying a composite description (Emiliussen et al., 2021). In the final procedure, a comprehensive passage

emphasizing participants' common experiences and strategies will be developed to enable the audience to understand the strategies applied when navigating traditional news communication to digital media culture.

Researcher's Role

There are several roles that a researcher pursues when engaging in qualitative research. Punch (2013) described that undertaking good qualitative research requires a strong commitment to the problem under investigation by putting adequate time and resources. The investigator must commit to extensive time in the field by spending many hours collecting relevant and in-depth data (Rashid et al., 2019). Therefore, the researcher's major role throughout the study was collaborating with journalist participants to get an insider perspective of actual challenges brought by navigation in the journalism sector. However, before engaging with the participants, the first role was to frame the study within the characteristics and assumptions of the qualitative methodology, such as picking a phenomenological design that encourages sharing stories that focus on respondents' views. Essentially, the researcher must apply a relevant approach to qualitative inquiry to improve the rigor and sophistication of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The decision to use phenomenological design provides means for evaluating the quality of the study.

Subsequently, the researcher has the role of conducting an ethical study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As a result, my duty not only entailed seeking and gathering IRB permission, but it also included considering and addressing all emergent and anticipated ethical issues relating to privacy, interparty, and voluntary participation, among others. Confidentiality entails protecting the study participants' information and identity from discourse to ensure that unauthorized persons do not access them (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Thus, to meet the IRB

confidentiality criterion, the researcher secured participants' records by using password-protected

files, encryption, and locking drawers containing study files. Likewise, informed consent ensures

that participants have informed choices about whether to be part of the research study (Punch,

2013). IRB recommends that researchers tell the potential participants about the study's core

elements and their contributions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Hence, to align with the

recommendation, the researcher obtained informed consent from participants through writing to

show that I respect their autonomy to decide to volunteer to participate in the study.

Creswell & Creswell (2018) and Greening (2019) also noted that researchers have a role

of starting their study with a single focus on what is being explored. However, various

comparisons and related factors can be mandated as the study progresses. In addition, the

researcher's role during the research process involved employing rigorous data collection

approaches to enhance the collection of insightful data. Specifically, the researcher applied a

semi-structured interview approach to help get relevant multiple data. Consequently, the

researcher must pursue the role of including detailed methods of describing the collected data

(Rashid et al., 2019). Rigor is revealed when in-depth data collection occurs in the field or when

multiple analysis approaches are applied to narrow themes and codes to broader interrelated

themes to provide a more abstract dimension. Besides, in chapter five, the researcher will

validate data accuracy using several validation procedures such as triangulation, member

checking, and an external auditor to ensure that the research presented is quality.

Punch (2013) commands researchers to take the role of data analysis using multiple

abstraction levels. Moreover, it is relevant to see the active work of the inquirer from particulars

to general abstraction. As a result, the researcher intends to present the best qualitative study

with themes that have been analyzed by exploring unusual and shadow side angles. Another role

Neubauer et al. (2019) strengthened is writing the research outcome more persuasively to enable

readers to experience being there. Technically, the population targeted by this research is all

journalists, including young, mature, and budding professionals. Hence, the researcher aims to

write research outcomes with information relevant to the population. For instance, regarding best

practices for navigating challenges in journalism, the researcher extensively discussed best

practices presented by participants to enable upcoming journalists to not lose track despite facing

digitalization obstacles. Another role that the researchers must partake in is situating themselves

within the study to reflect its history and culture (Neubauer et al., 2019). The act helps to

influence the choice of question to be addressed, the type of data to be collected, and ways of

interpreting the information gathered.

Data Collection

Creswell & Poth (2017) defined the data collection process as a series of interrelated

activities purposing to gather good information relevant to answering emerging research

questions. The data collection process is a circular event that entails locating the site and

participants, gaining access and creating rapport, undertaking purposive sampling, collecting

required data, recording the information, minimizing field obstacles, and storing data securely

(Punch, 2013). For this study, the interview formed the primary data collection instrument where

journalist participants were asked several questions relating to changes they witnessed in the

journalism and news communication ecosystem. The interview is a social interaction approach

based on a conversation between the researcher and participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Neubauer et al. (2019) expounded that using the interview approach gives room for

knowledge construction due to the interaction between the interview and the interviewee.

Creswell & Creswell (2018) also agreed that qualitative research interviews allow inquirers to

understand the world from the audience's perspectives to unfold the meanings of their experiences. Thus, in this research, the interview method enabled the researcher to uncover the world of journalists' right from when their profession was based on conventional media to the contemporary time when technology has shaped their working environment. Van Manen & Van Manen (2021) pointed out that researchers must follow interview protocol grounded on the front end by questions to invite respondents to open up and respond better. Therefore, by following the interview protocol, this study designed many sub-questions with precision to get the right answers.

Often, the interview takes different forms (Punch, 2013). The study integrated different forms during the study, including face-to-face and zoom interviews. In a face-to-face approach, respondents were given questions one-on-one and have adequate time to respond to them. Each interview process took at least one hour. The duration was adequate for an interactive discussion yielding in-depth information regarding digitalization challenges in journalism. The respondents who needed to go past the allocated time were allowed to proceed to enhance the thorough exploration of complex issues. Essentially, this data collection method is relevant in getting contextual information on technology growth in new communication, and it led to getting insights into social, cultural, and historical elements that influenced the role of journalism (Cooren, 2012). The interview data collection instrument was selected because it matches the nature of the chosen phenomenological research design that focuses on getting narrations from people who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Interviews as a data collection method were advantageous in collecting rich data about the experiences that older journalists face when navigating traditional media. Through interviews, the researcher adequately captured the nuance and complexity of journalists'

perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors relating to issues that made their work complicated. Using interviews is good because it strengthens probing and clarification of participants' responses, resulting in a deeper understanding of the topic of interest (Rashid et al., 2019; Neubauer et al., 2019). As a result, the probing helps ensuring that the collected information is complete and accurate, thus facilitating the documentation of insightful conclusions and recommendations (Punch, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2017). Subsequently, the interview was chosen because it is more useful when discussing sensitive and difficult topics. The truth is that the changes brought by technology rendered many journalists jobless, primarily during the transition phase, making the issue quite sensitive (Postman, 2005). Thus, by applying interviews, the participants got a confidential and safer place to discuss their views (Punch, 2013). Importantly, the qualitative interview question will be open-ended and targeted at getting primary data. In addition, the questions were interactive to provoke the exchange of ideas and enhance a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

The audio and video discussions were recorded using smartphones to facilitate transcription during the interview process. The recorded data was saved and stored securely in multiple places like external hard drives and cloud storage approaches like Dropbox. The storage sources must be guarded by strong passwords to encrypt the files (Punch, 2013). The purpose of undertaking audio recording is to facilitate better transcription and make it easy for the researcher to analyze themes and patterns (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study will also incorporate the word error rate (WER) model to determine transcription accuracy. Ideally, the WER model operates by summing the total error numbers in the transcription and dividing them by the total number of words in the audio file (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The transcription is considered more accurate if the values show a low WER (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Data Analysis

This research engaged older journalists in an interview to understand their perception and experience when they were shifting from a traditional to a modern news communication ecosystem filled with technology growth and innovations. Hence, the data gathered during the interview was analyzed in chapter five to get meaning and patterns that inform research outcomes. Thematic qualitative data analyses will be integrated to get patterns and themes from their narrations (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Thematic analysis is an approach to analyzing qualitative data that entails reading through data sets and looking for patterns and meanings (Punch, 2013; Emiliussen et al., 2017). Ideally, thematic analysis can be explained as a reflexivity active process where the researcher's subjective experience is at the core of making sense of data (Neubauer et al., 2019). Therefore, when integrated into the study, the researcher will have to read through the transcribed interview responses and highlight repeating patterns to help get themes. The study selected the thematic approach because it offers a flexible approach to data analysis as it allows all researchers, including those with diverse methodological backgrounds, to interpret data better.

Besides, thematic is relevant in large data sets generated during the interview. It makes it easy for the researchers to compute a large amount of information and get relevant points related to the research question (Rashid et al., 2019; Van Manen & Van Manen, 2021). Since interviews give inquirers large amounts of information, thematic makes their analysis easy as coding and reliability approaches are used to enhance the process. Therefore, the method will enable me to undertake the inductive development of themes and code with ease and precision.

The step for undertaking thematic analysis is straightforward and helps get relevant study themes (Punch, 2013). The first procedure is familiarization, where the researcher examines the

collected data to get broad themes (Punch, 2013). In the familiarization phase, the researcher will transcribe the audio data from the interview into text. At the same time, the study will choose the right code to use to get relevant themes. The second step in the thematic analysis is looking for themes in the selected codes. Technically, moving from codes to themes is not straightforward or simple because the researcher must assign alternative codes to learn more information (Neubauer et al., 2019). Thus, as the researcher will be analyzing data, the goal will be to uncover subdivisions and subthemes that concentrate on relevant news communication components.

Step three involves reviewing data. Once all the codes, themes, and subthemes have been located from the transcribed data, the researcher will evaluate the topic again to verify that all themes classified matches the information given by participants. While reviewing themes, the researcher may separate some themes if they are found to be too broad. Step four in the thematic analysis is theme finalization, where data analysis takes shape after refining and reviewing labeled themes (Greening, 2019). In the finalization stage, the researcher can edit the findings once more if they find it necessary. The objective of theme finalization is to explain the topic more in-depth than what was done in the previous steps. Creswell & Poth (2017) and Creswell & Creswell (2018) wrote that, in the final phase, the researcher must ensure that the themes are named appropriately and their features described comprehensively. Besides, the inquirer must ensure that the themes match the research question and meet objectives and goals. The concluding step in the thematic analysis is report writing that responds to the research's what, why, how, and who (Rashid et al., 2019). The researcher must identify all single elements of qualitative research in report writing to allow readers to verify their findings. Indeed, the thematic analysis will suit this research because it will allow the researcher to go through the

transcribed interview text to get relevant themes that can be easily interpreted to make sense of the vast information given by the journalist participants.

Trustworthiness

Unlike quantitative research, where trustworthiness depends on the reliability and validity of numbers and measurements, qualitative research is different because, by nature, the methodology is more directional (Powers, 2013). Instead of producing figures and facts, qualitative researchers must demonstrate value to participants by providing a context that explains the research's why and how (Neubauer et al., 2019). Therefore, when demonstrating that the study achieved trustworthiness measures, the researcher must display that the findings are highly dependable transferable, credible, and confirmable. Creswell & Poth (2017) defined trustworthiness as confidence in data, methods, interpretations, findings, and discussions to ensure the research's quality matches expectations. Throughout this study, the researcher developed procedures and protocols necessary for the research to be classified as worthy by the readers. One way that qualitative research meets trustworthiness is its authenticity, which explains the extent to which inquirers completely and fairly demonstrates a range of various realities and realistically display participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017). When related to this study, the researcher ensured that authenticity standards are met by selecting appropriate people for the study and providing a detailed and rich description of the entire research criterion. As a result, the targeted audience, the journalist population, gave the study a value by giving a deeper meaning of journalism evolution impact to increase understanding of maintaining success.

Credibility

Credibility refers to a measurable truth value of the study by verifying that the findings presented are accurate (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Creswell & Creswell (2018) added that, to a greater degree, credibility relies on researchers and the methods they use. Credibility is the initial criterion aspect the researcher must establish in their study. There are different ways to measure credibility, including triangulation, persistent observation, prolonged engagement with data member checks, negative case analysis, and referential adequacy (Punch, 2013). In this case, triangulation and member checking will be applied to measure the study's credibility status. Triangulation entails using multiple data sources, methods, theories, and observations to comprehensively understand the phenomenon being explored (Punch, 2013). Using these diverse methods helps ensure the study outcome is rich, robust, well-developed, and comprehensive (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

When collecting data from the selected journalist participants, the study integrated triangulation methods by utilizing different interview approaches, such as semi-structured to check the consistency of the findings. When triangulating various interviews, the research's credibility increases when the researcher identifies that the information given by various participants attempts to explain a phenomenon similarly (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Also, the study will use triangulation of sources where different data sources will be utilized within the same methods. For instance, the researcher will compare participants' data with those provided by other scholars in their research articles to see if the findings align. The researcher intends to engage an analyst to review my study outcome to determine their credibility. Creswell & Creswell (2018) noted that analyst triangulation is essential in illuminating blind spots in the analysis step. Another triangulation measure that the study will apply is theoretical, where

comparison of information from the theory guiding this research, media ecology, will be pursued when analyzing the data given by participants. Likewise, in the member-checking approach, data, interpretations, and findings are shared with participants to clarify if the presentation matches their intentions (Neubauer et al., 2019). The goal of pursuing member checking is to allow the journalists' participants to correct errors and offer additional information necessary for the study.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability entails measuring or demonstrating the reliability and consistency of the research results (Van Manen & Van Manen, 2021). The dependability process begins with precise data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods to determine if they provide adequate contextual information about every element (Punch, 2013). Greening (2019) agreed that dependability is critical because it makes the study findings repeatable and consistent. In this study, the researcher will seek an inquiry audit to establish dependability. Ideally, an inquiry or external audit entails having an external investigator examine the data collection process, analysis, and research results (Punch, 2013). The motive for engaging outside researchers is to enable them to confirm the results' accuracy and validate if the data collected supports the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In addition, the external researcher examines the interpretations provided to identify if they have adequate support (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Using external inquiry is vital for this research because it may enable the study to gain additional valuable insight that leads to a better final defense.

Confirmability deals with the confidence levels of the study finding based on the participants' words and narratives rather than using researcher biases (Punch, 2013). Through confirmability, the researcher's findings verification is determined by participants (Creswell &

Creswell, 2018). When determining confirmability, the researcher will use audit trial and

reflexivity techniques. An audit trial is where the researcher details the data collection, analysis,

and interpretation process (Rashid et al., 2019; Emiliussen et al., 2021). When using the audit

trial approach, the researcher will record the interesting and unique topics during the data

collection, and then present my thoughts when coding to offer a better rationale for merging

different codes. Subsequently, reflexivity entails the researcher's attitude when gathering and

analyzing data (Neubauer et al., 2019). I have examined my position and background throughout

the study process to determine how they might influence the study.

Transferability

Transferability, also known as external validity or generalizability, entails providing the

audience with proof that the research findings are applicable in other situations, timely contexts,

and populations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Punch (2013) clarified that transferability is not

the naturalist duty to provide a generalizability index. Instead, the researcher's primary

responsibility is to avail the database that enables the audience to make better transferability

judgments (Punch, 2013). Therefore, the researcher's task is to make this study more transferable

by briefly describing the journalism and news communication evolution phenomenon.

Technically, thick descriptions entail availing detailed and robust accounts of the participants'

experiences during the data collection process (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In chapter five, the

researcher will attempt to establish explicit connections to the social, historical, and cultural

contexts surrounding the data collection. For example, the researcher will comprehensively

explain where the interview occurred, the possibility of journalist participants engaging in the

discussions after work, and other elements that enable the readers to understand the study setting

fully. The ability to make such information available allows readers to construct the sense

surrounding the study from the everyday lives of the journalists to the way that implicit biases

may interfere with their responses (Rashid et al., 2019; Punch, 2013). The researcher will stress

putting what participants expressed into the social context the research is framed around. As a

result, it will become easy for other vital populations, such as young and upcoming journalists, to

make the transferability of judgments themselves.

Ethical Considerations

Rashid et al. (2019) explained that when planning and designing qualitative research,

researchers must consider the potential ethical issues that may arise and make plans on how the

address the issues. Many researchers tend to think that ethical issues mostly occur during data

collection (Creswell & Poth, 2017). However, the truth is that the dilemma can arise during

several phases of the study process, and they expand in scope as the researcher become more

sensitive to participants, shareholders, and site needs (Greening, 2019). Thus, this study aimed to

maintain high ethical standards from the initial phase to the publishing phase. For instance,

before undertaking interviews, the study followed IRB guidelines by ensuring that the researcher

disclosed the purposes of the study to the participants and inform them of the general motive for

carrying out the research. While seeking potential participants to integrate into the study, I will

refrain from pressuring anyone to sign the consent forms.

Informed consent ensures that participants have informed choices about whether to be

part of the research study (Punch, 2013). IRB recommends that researchers inform their potential

participants about vital components of the research and the participation contributions (Creswell

& Creswell, 2018). Therefore, to align with the IRB ethical standard, the researcher obtained

informed consent from participants through writing to demonstrate that their autonomy is

respected. Previous studies (Neubauer et al., 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2017) have strengthened

that researchers must assure participants that their engagement is voluntary, and thus no coercive

measures should be applied. Importantly, during the study process, the researcher was sensitive

to the needs of the participants, mostly older people. In the data collection phase, respecting the

study site was also a significant ethical consideration by ensuring the researcher do not cause

disruptions. Inquirers must develop trust and convey the extent of expected disruptions when

gaining access (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Consequently, the researcher correctly communicated the purpose and use of study data

to let the respondents know why they have been included. The researcher also refrained from

leading questions and avoided sharing personal impressions that may be disrespectful to

participants. Participants' sensitive information has been securely kept and no information has

been disclosed to unauthorized persons. Creswell & Poth (2017) highlighted that it is

inappropriate for researchers to engage participants in collecting data and leave them without

appreciating their efforts through relevant compensation. Thus, the researcher rewarded the

participant by recognizing their contribution through offering a gift card to adhere to the

consideration. All the data collected has been stored using relevant security measures to preserve

raw information and protocol. The aim is to ensure that the stored material will remain safe

secure for five years. There are also ethical considerations to uphold during data analysis. For

instance, the researcher will refrain from siding with participants or disclosing only the positive

outcomes.

Punch (2013) and Van Manen &Van Manen (2021) encouraged researchers to report

their study's multiple perspectives to inform the audience about the contrary findings. In the

analysis phase, it is also essential to respect participants' privacy by assigning pseudonyms and

creating composite profiles (Emiliussen et al., 2021). Subsequently, when reporting data, the

researcher will avoid any falsification practice that may target evidence, authorship, data, results, and conclusion. The research process must be founded on honesty and integrity (Punch, 2013). The reported information must be communicated straightforwardly, not plagiarized, and with relevant language. Finally, when publishing my study report, I will share findings with others, design the documentation to fit a diverse audience, avoid duplication, and offer complete proof that shows adherence to ethical issues.

Summary

The chapter three task is crucial because it has helped lay down the research methodology. The purpose of this research was to explore effective strategies applied by journalists to remain successful in the volatile digital news communication environment. The chapter began with an overview where a background of the study problem was highlighted to give readers the motive for undertaking the research. Evidence regarding the nature of news communication in the past was compared with the contemporary atmosphere, where it became clear that today's journalists face numerous obstacles. Bengtsson & Johansson (2021), Chua (2019) and Cali (2020) described that the journalist's role in news dissemination is challenging today because the audience is no longer relying on them to get updates since most news briefing is disseminated through different social media platforms.

The chapter then explored the qualitative research methodology used in this study. Creswell & Creswell (2018) explained that qualitative research is best when the inquirer wants to learn about participants' shared experience with the phenomenon because it allows for expressing attitudes, feelings, perceptions, and behaviors. The design that the chapter discussed is the phenomenological approach, which involves gathering data from participants' narrations by interviewing them. The design is relevant became it influences the researcher to focus more on

getting heterogeneous respondents that have experienced the event and have comprehensive

knowledge about it (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Chapter three also provided three overarching qualitative research questions that will help

address the study problems. Importantly, the chapter gave information regarding research roles,

including maintaining honesty and integrity when collecting, analyzing, and reporting data

(Greening, 2019; Rashid et al., 2019). The researcher must adhere to ethical considerations that

include getting consent, encouraging voluntary participation, appreciating and treating

participants with respect, and minimizing disruption in the site, among others (Punch, 2013;

Creswell & Poth, 2017). Lastly, the chapter explored ways the study achieves trustworthiness by

following credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability measures.

Chapter Four: Interview Results

This phenomenological qualitative study aimed to investigate the adaptation strategies that older journalists who had conformed to traditional news media embraced to become more successful in the digital media impacted by digital evolution and the rise in sophisticated communication technologies. The research is based on media ecology theory and provides an overview of how technological change impacted communication and journalism (McLuhan, 1964).

In chapter one, the researcher provided the background of the study, including the problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions. The chapter introduced readers to how technology development shaped the journalism environment. It also expounded on senior journalists' navigation challenges when transitioning to digital media. Chapter two offered an opportunity to explore the literature review, where the researcher expounded on media ecology theory in detail. Other topics analyzed in the literature reviews included journalism in the print era, journalism in the digital media, and the impact of digitalization on news consumers. In chapter three, the research methodology was explored, and the researcher offered a comprehensive description of the qualitative study, phenomenological design, research questions, setting, participants, procedure, data collection instrument, data analysis, and trustworthiness and credibility.

Chapter four presents the results from the qualitative interview questions in which 14 senior journalist participants were engaged. The qualitative interviews were conducted to address the research problem about transitioning challenges senior journalists face when navigating the digital news culture. The open-ended questions were designed to help understand the senior journalists' challenges and transitioning strategies that enabled them to successfully shift into the

modern journalism ecosystem. The researcher applied phenomenological design, which involves gathering common themes from people who have directly encountered the phenomenon under study (Greening, 2019). As noted in chapter three, the reason for using phenomenological design is its influence on pushing to get heterogeneous participants who can adequately answer the research question (Emiliussen et al., 2021). Therefore, the senior journalist participants who were engaged in this study had some commonality in that they were 60 years and above, they have been active journalists both in the traditional media space and in the contemporary digital culture, and they faced a dramatic shift in the new communication environment due to the evolution in the digital ecosystem.

Participants

The researcher engaged 14 senior journalist participants whose ages ranged between 50 to 65. These participants adequately answered the qualitative interview questions as they had comprehensive news communication experience during the traditional news media and the current digital ecosystem. The qualitative interview approach was relevant in that it allowed the researcher to ask open-ended questions during the interviews, and this allowed the participants to have the freedom to respond based on their experiences and perspectives. The open-ended questions were delivered through zoom platform. Choosing the zoom approach worked best for this study since it eliminated the potential for interruptions. By discussing with participants one-on-one via zoom, their concentration during the interview process was high, thus enabling the researcher to get relevant responses that made it easy to identify patterns and themes.

Table 4.1

Participant Information **Category**	**Name**	**Brief**
Participant 1	Bill Mitchell	A senior journalist, a successful reporter who worked for Detroit Free Press, TIME, Havard's Shorenstein Center, Poynter Institute of Media Studies, and the National Catholic Reporter.
Participant 2	Bobby Ross Jr	A senior journalist currently working as an Editor-in-Chief of The Christian Chronicle. During the traditional era, Ross worked at organizations such as The Oklahoman and The Associated Press, serving as religion editor and writer.
Participant 3	Chris Krewson	An executive director of LION Publisher. Before moving to LION Publishers, Krewson pursued journalism digital operations at local and international newsrooms.
Participant 4	Crystal Dempsey	Senior editor and the founder of Hip Communication. Dempsey has worked for Charleston Daily Mail and Charlotte Observer.
Participant 5	Jody Brannon	The principal at Truly Digital. Worked in multiple media organizations, such as OZY Media, USA Today, Online News Association, The Seattle Times, MSN.com, Washington Post, Tacoma News Tribune, American Journalism Review, News Week, Gannett Newspaper, and National Geographic.
Participant 6	Kathleen O'Brien	Started journalism in 1981. O'Brien worked for Star Ledger and later moved to The Record
Participant 7	Patrick Houston	An experienced writer who is still relevant in the digital culture, and has worked for Bitcoin Market Journals, Business Week, and NetShelter Technology Media.
Participant 8	Peter Lewis	A former editor, columnist, and senior writer. Has worked for The New York Times, Fortune Magazine, and Watchdog Org.
Participant 9	Peter Stockland	Currently working as a publisher at The Catholic Register. Worked for several media organizations, including Priam Communications, Calgary Sun, Convivium, and The Montreal Gazette.

Participant 10	Cheryl Bacon	A contributing editor at the Christian Chronicle. Worked at the Abilene Christian University as the chair of the Journalism and Mass Communication department.
Participant 11	Tulin Daloglu	Experienced journalist who worked for the Herbert, BBC, The Washington Times, New York Times, International Herald Tribune, Daily Clear, Middle East Times, and Daily Star.
Participant 12	Yusuf Kanli	A journalist with 50 years of experience, currently serving as the vice president of the journalism association in Turkey. Has worked for Hürriyet Daily News and Sigma Independent Research Society.
Participant 13	Liisa May	May worked for Newsday, The Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Daily News, News Mexico Sun, and Anchorage Times.
Participant 14	Jeff South	A professor emeritus and an affiliate faculty member of the Robertson School of Media and Culture at VCU. For more than 40 years, South has worked in multiple organizations including Phoenix Gazette, Dallas Times Herald, Lubbock Avalanche, The Ledger Star, The Austin Citizen, and Williamson County Sun.

Participant 1

The first participant to be interviewed was Bill Mitchell, a senior journalist who started journalism in the early 90s and worked in the digital era. Mitchell is a reporter who worked for *Detroit Free Press, TIME, Havard's Shorenstein Center*, Poynter Institute of Media Studies, and the *National Catholic Reporter.* As a journalist in the digital era, Mitchell shifted to being an online editor at the Poynter Institute of Media.

Participant 2

The second participant was Bobby Ross Jr., a senior journalist currently working as an Editor-in-Chief of *The Christian Chronicle*. Ross started his journalism work during the print era when news communication had fixed deadlines, and transformations like websites were absent.

During the traditional era, Ross worked at organizations such as *The Oklahoman* and *The Associated Press*, serving as religion editor and writer.

Participant 3

The third participant was Chris Krewson, a senior journalist who is the executive director of *LION Publisher*. Krewson started journalism in 1998, and his ability to shift successfully to the digitalization era made him a champion for embracing digital media by helping in research and innovative projects aiming to create solutions through the adoption of advanced technology and funding the news public policy. Before moving to *LION Publishers*, Krewson pursued journalism digital operations at local and international newsrooms.

Participant 4

Participant four was Crystal Dempsey, a senior editor and the founder of Hip Communication. Dempsey has worked in multiple media organizations, including *Charleston Daily Mail* and *Charlotte Observer*. Dempsey's contribution to the interview was fundamental as she provided a detailed analysis of how news culture transformed and the strategies she embraced not to lose her editing job in the digital space.

Participant 5

Participant five was Jody Brannon, who is the principal at *Truly Digital*. As a senior journalist, Brannon has worked in multiple media organizations, such as *OZY Media, USA Today, Online News Association, and The Seattle Times*. Brannon has worked with other companies, including *MSN.com, Washington Post, Tacoma News Tribune, American Journalism Review, News Week, Gannett Newspaper*, and *National Geographic*.

Participant 6

The sixth participant was Kathleen O'Brien, a senior journalist who started working in 1981. O'Brien is a Columbian University graduate with an MS in Journalism. During her initial career joinery, O'Brien worked for *Star Ledger* and later moved to *The Record*. While working at *Star*-Ledger, O'Brien experienced digital transformation when the company switched to a digital approach in 2014.

Participant 7

The seventh participant was Patrick Houston, an experienced participant, media strategy executive, and writer who is still relevant in the digital culture but also worked in the traditional era. Houston has worked in different journalism organizations, including *Bitcoin Market Journals, Business Week,* and *NetShelter Technology Media*.

Participant 8

Participant eight was Peter Lewis, a former editor, columnist, and senior writer. Lewis is an experienced senior journalist who works in the traditional media and is still working in the contemporary digital ecosystem. Lewis worked for several news media organizations such as *The New York Times*, managing director at *The Bay Citizen*, and senior editor at *Fortune Magazine*. In addition, Lewis was also a journalist residence professor at Stanford University and is currently working as an executive director at the *Watchdog Org*.

Participant 9

Participant nine was Peter Stockland, a senior journalist working as a publisher at *The Catholic Register*. In the past, before news communication changed into digitalization, Stockland

worked for several media organizations, including *Priam Communications, Calgary Sun, Convivium,* and *The Montreal Gazette*.

Participant 10

Participant ten was Cheryl Bacon, a contributing editor at *the Christian Chronicle*. Bacon is a senior and retired journalist. Before her retirement, Bacon worked as a professor at the Abilene Christian University, where she also served as the chair of the Journalism and Mass Communication department.

Participant 11

Participant eleven was Tulin Daloglu, an older journalist who worked for the *Herbert* and *BBC* during the traditional new communication period. She is an experienced journalist with a bachelor's in journalism at American University. Daloglu also worked as a writer at *the Washington Times*, and many of her articles were published in *the New York Times, International Herald Tribune, Daily Clear, Middle East Times*, and *Daily Star*.

Participant 12

The twelfth participant was Yusuf Kanli, a senior journalist with 50 years of experience. Kanli has worked for several media organizations in traditional and current digital ecosystems. Some companies that Kanli has worked with include *Hürriyet Daily News* as a chief editor and Sigma Independent Research Society as chief editor. Currently, he is serving as the vice president of the journalism association in Turkey.

Participant 13

The thirteenth participant was Liisa May, a senior journalist who has worked in many organizations for many years. For example, May worked for *Newsday* for 36 years. Other media

companies she worked for included *the Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Daily News, News Mexico Sun*, and *Anchorage Times*.

Participant 14

Participant 14 was Jeff South, a professor emeritus and an affiliate faculty member of the Robertson School of Media and Culture at VCU. He retired as a full-time faculty member from the Robertson School after 23 years of service at the end of the spring semester of 2020. For more than 40 years, South has worked in journalism – first as a newspaper reporter and editor and then as a teacher preparing the next generation of news professionals. As a journalist and journalism educator, South has carved out a specialty in using technology to find, report, and tell powerful news stories. He has worked for *Phoenix Gazette, Dallas Times Herald, Lubbock Avalanche, The Ledger Star, The Austin Citizen,* and *Williamson County Sun*.

Research Question Findings: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method entailing reading through data sets to construct meanings and themes. Thematic analysis is relevant when dealing with qualitative data because it acts as a reflective, active process that allows the researcher to make sense of the vast information (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This section provides themes that emerged through thematic analysis, where the researcher read through all the transcribed interview responses given by the 14 senior journalist participants and highlighted repeating patterns leading to the creation of themes. The researcher's steps during thematic analysis included transcribing the audio data into text format. The researcher then read through the text to look for themes in the codes. The researcher also reviewed data by re-evaluating the topic to determine if the patterns created align with the

responses given by the participants (Punch, 2013). The following themes emerged from the responses given by the participants.

Adaptation Strategies

This section explores the adaptation themes that emerged during participant interviews. These adaptions entailed strategies that journalists adopted to remain relevant in the emerging digital journalism environment. Understanding how senior journalists navigated the challenges of the quickly evolving digital media landscape is a vital finding of this study. In addition, the participants helped highlight the historical state of traditional news communication and some of the factors that created the need to acquire new approaches for communicating news through digital media.

Acquiring and adopting new digital skills. Many respondents agreed they needed digital news skills to make them relevant in modern journalism. Participant 1 explained that the rise in technology influenced their organization to establish digital newspapers since people were no longer interested in print newspapers. She said, "So we looked and decided to partner with AOL America Online. Thus, at the Mercury News, we created something called Mercury Center." The reason for partnering with AOL America Online was to give them a platform to disseminate their digital newspaper to news consumers who demanded news in soft copy. Participant 2 also agreed that digitalization brought new media, like social platforms, which journalists had to adapt to meet the demand for quick news dissemination. Participant 3 explained that he learned new skills, such as strengthening his internet and web development efficiency to disseminate information online. Participant 4 stated that he pursued more education to allow him to have thoughtful skills at the time. Participant 5 said, "I was open to learning new things and mastering new skill sets." She stressed that only journalists who strengthened their

communication skills and the desire to learn new things could navigate digital media. Participant 5 also indicated that the transformation required journalists to align with the digital media. She stated, "The transformations required journalists to develop digital skills to understand their audience and disseminate information better."

Likewise, Participant 6 agreed that she needed new skills and went to the extent of asking for help from younger people to develop her digital abilities. Participant 8 concurred that senior journalists continued learning to acquire skills that could help them communicate using audio and video and how to distribute content to mobile phones, a much more common way to consume news these days than reading a newspaper. Participant 9 elaborated that he succeeded in digital media as he never gave up on trying new skills. For instance, he could try new things by earning digital skills, like putting the newspaper in the aquarium. Participant 10's answer also aligned with other respondents as she agreed that, "We needed to upgrade skills to allow us to understand the digital world quickly." Senior journalists needed new skill sets to adequately write, shoot, edit, and post online to meet the demands of digital consumers. Participant 10 added that with digital media, journalists needed to upgrade themselves to learn how to use new developments like computers, Zoom, and posting to social media. Participant 11 also commented that she quickly embraced digitalization skills by exploring learning opportunities and other experiences. Participant 14 did not shy away by stating, "The most important skill is learning how to learn. That means setting aside time for tutorials, exploration, and fumbling around; being patient; looking for familiar touchstones in new technologies (how certain features in a new piece of software might be similar to an interface you know well)."

Enhancing Ethical Principles. Participant 4 narrated that the best strategy that made him succeed was adhering to ethical journalism principles like fairness and integrity because

digitalization was altering news culture, and getting authentic journalists was becoming a

challenge. Participant 3 also agreed that strict adherence to the principles of accuracy,

trustworthiness, and commitment led to successful navigation, as readers could trust the

information given by journalists with ethical values. Participant 6 supported that "they succeeded

because senior journalists enhanced the sense of ethics and fairness as the speed and the

competitive pressure could influence a journalist to include things they probably should not."

Participant 11 narrated that adhering to ethical codes allowed many senior journalists to become

more relevant in the digital space as they could interact with sources better. Participant 14's

comments also conquered the rest as he explained, "My main strategy has been to apply

journalism's time-tested values and principles to new media platforms and technology.

Journalism is about truth-telling; it is a discipline of verification, as Bill Kovach and Tom

Rosenstiel put it in their book *The Elements of Journalism*. It is about showing the sources of

your information."

     Ability to Embrace Digitalization. Participant 2 stated that most successful senior

journalists were quick to adopt digital media, such as creating websites and social media

platforms to enable them to share news with the audience in a manner they expected. Participant

7 elaborated, "The best strategy was a willingness to embrace other media. So, if you were a

print journalist, you could not think of yourself as a print journalist anymore. You need to think

of yourself as someone who could talk and be on it in front of a camera at the spur of the

moment." Participant 9's responses also supported that those who were quick to adopt the

immediacy of reaction to align with a new hurry culture, which required journalists to update

things quickly succeeded. Participant 14 responded, "I succeeded because I was an early adopter

of digital technology (the first-generation Apple Macintosh, the first-generation Radio Shack

Tandy TRS-80), so I knew these powerful tools could enhance journalism."

Delivering Engaging Content. Participant 1 stated, "I prioritize readers by focusing on

the topic they were interested in." The ability to share news while having readers in mind led to

delivering engaging information". Participant 2 explained that the news media demanded that

journalists provide news in a way that appeals to the audience. Thus, journalists started to ensure

that the news content they created aligned with audience expectations to foster engagement and

allow them to gain followers. Participant 14 explained, "As an online journalist, I practiced

annotative writing - linking from my digital story to original-source or contextual information. It

was another, and more effective, way to "show your work" - a longtime newsroom mantra. In my

print newspaper stories, I tried to give readers ideas on how they could take action, which helped

foster engagement."

New Experiences and Emerging Technologies

This section presents the themes that emerged from the responses of this study's 14

senior journalists. These themes focus on the new experiences faced by this study's participants

as they shifted from traditional media to digital journalism. These themes shed light on the some

of the old communication practices that journalists had to abandon and the new experiences and

challenges accompanying the emerging forms of digital media.

Moving Away from Fixed News Deadline. Moving away from fixed new deadlines

means embracing flexibility in communicating news where journalist organizations share news

briefs to audience earlier even before the news prime hour is reached. Most participants noted

that the new experiences they faced due to the rise in digitalization neglected strict adherence to

news deadlines The shifting demand for swift dissemination of trending stories forced journalists to adapt and not remain fixed to the traditional print or broadcast deadlines.

Thus, instead of waiting for the scheduled news broadcast or print deadline to report a story, journalists could provide briefs via online media channels as soon as the story emerged. They did not want news consumers to wait up to the following day to access news story from the newspaper as they could share stories as soon as they emerged. Participant 1 explained that news publications in print media moved from a weekly cycle to sharing information as soon as it occurred to meet news consumers' demands. Participant 2 explained, "I remember there were three separate deadlines at night at the *Oklahoman.* However, with the advent of communication technology, deadlines were eliminated as journalists quickly report events as they get them online." Participant 3's answer supported the theme, explaining that digitalization moved journalists from relying on fixed deadlines to continually updating audiences across digital platforms. Intense competition prompted journalists to no longer rely on fixed deadlines since everybody wanted to be the first to break the news. By moving from clear deadlines to continuously updating news stories as they occur, journalists felt they lost a sense of achievement.

Increased Competition. Participant 1 stated that a news experience that came as a significant challenge was competition, also fueled by non-journalists such as Craig Newmark, who created craigslist.org and allowed people to use the website to share information without charge. Many online users preferred such free websites, which appealed more than news organizations charging people to get their content. Participant 4 elaborated that digitalization led to competition challenges since everybody wanted to share the stories. Participant 5 explained that the increased competition made media organizations refrain from fixed news deadlines and

start breaking news each time an event happens to cope with competition. Participant 6

responded that competition in digital media was quite stiff. She explained, "Many of the stories

we were covering, someone else was covering, so your only advantage is to be faster. So, there

was tremendous pressure to be fast". With the stiff competition, some news organizations and

people sharing news were willing to report incomplete news and label it as a developing story.

Many traditional journalists saw the move as a flaw, yet online audiences saw the practice as an

appealing feature. Participant 11 also elaborated that digital media made journalists become their

publishers by publishing and sharing their news instead of publishing stories for the news

organizations they were working for, leading to stiff competition.

        Increased Use of Social Media as A News Communication Channel. Participant 1

explained that digitalization made news consumers depend on social platforms as their channels

for accessing news. Most respondents noted that people no longer relied on getting news from

radio and newspapers because social media made it easy to access information as they emerged.

Participant 13 explained that the increased use of social platforms made non-journalists

interested in disseminating news because no experience was required. As many news consumers

were found online, many journalists created social media accounts and began using them to

disseminate news. Participant 1 explained, "We opened Facebook and Twitter to promote what

we wrote in our newspaper." The practice led to the development of online connections with

audience and friends, leading to success during and after the transition. Participant 2 elaborated

that she created social media accounts to promote news stories and get people to like her website.

She explained, "I used social media to draw people to my stories and photos." Participant 3

supported the idea that opening special media like Twitter helped journalists reach a digital

audience. Participant 5 stated that she started experimenting with social media to see if there was

an audience, and the platform helped her connect with a new online audience. Most participants

narrated that those journalists who created their social media accounts like Twitter and Facebook

and posted on them had the benefit of connecting with online audiences and increasing their

popularity,

      Online Rush. Online rush means speeding to share news stories with the audience

immediately after an event has occurred, or even as events are unfolding. The use of social media

created an online rush as journalists and non-journalists were all competing to be the first to

break the news. The experience of online rush is different from moving away from fixed news

deadlines in that the core element was the rushing to get something posted about the developing

story online as fast as possible, even if the fact were not always known. The catalyst for this

online rush seemed to be the competition that professional journalists faced from non-journalists

who also participated in the online dissemination of the same events or stories. Participant 2

explained that digital media created an online rush culture, which senior journalists and

traditional media saw as negative, as sharing of news stories from different sources and in

different perspective denied people the opportunity to double-check the information they were

consuming. Participant 6 elaborated, "Both journalists and non-journalists were in a rush and

pursue clicks and views because the inability to get the story in time would make even a big

story sink." The rush made the new news culture become very competitive and very corrosive,

which was unpleasant. Likewise, Participant 7 agreed that the demand for instant news made

social platforms to be filled with news content within a short duration. Participant 10's comments

aligned with other responses as she expounded that digital media escalated the speed at which

news spread, which distorted the information's accuracy.

Demand for Eyeballs and Clickbait. Participant 3 illustrated that some non-journalists began to entice readers to get more clicks, which was an ethical challenge for many senior journalists. Participant 7 explained that the demand for online followers made many non-journalists start chasing more clickbait and eyeballs as they acted as the new way to increase brand popularity. Participant 4 clarified, "The desire to get clicks and eyeballs, I think, helped start the erosion of people's trust and faith in newspapers." The practice influenced the rise in distrust of digital media, unlike how it was happening in traditional media. Participant 6 also explained, "The news culture changed so drastically that print media was left with two options: either pursue the subscription revenue model or go with an advertising model based on traffic or clicks, hits, and eyeballs." Participant 14 noted, "Some news organizations went overboard by pursuing hits and publishing clickbait at the expense of journalism's traditional mission."

Poor Readership. Participant 2 explained that digitization reduced people's concentration ability, which led to poor readership. She explained that news consumers brush past the headlines when getting information on social platforms, making them not read deeper into the content. Participant 11's comments aligned with the theme, as she explained that digital media distorted news consumption as the audience could no longer take responsibility for what they were reading. The speed at which the news was read denied the audience the opportunity to understand the key message, leading to poor decision-making.

Loss of Revenue. Participant 3 explained that with digitization, several print media organizations faced bankruptcy as huge audiences moved to digital media. Participant 7 explained that the rise in digital media made traditional media think of new models for generating revenue, as many advertising opportunities were taken online. Participant 8 expanded that digitization resulted in the collapse of many newspaper organizations, making many

journalists who were working there face layoffs. Likewise, Participant 9 concurred that loss of revenue due to sudden shifts led to layoff challenges. The limited revenue the traditional media received could no longer sustain many employees. Participants narrated that the best way to escape layoff was being independent, building their brand, and harnessing digitalization skills. Participant 12 elaborated that "Print media companies start to shrink. It began when normal workers started to lose their jobs, and at a later stage, reporters or laymen page makers, they all started to lose their jobs and to decrease the cost of reporters on the company." Participant 4 also stated that with the emergence of digitalization, they understood that print publication would stop. As a result, their organization channeled the print budget to online publication to ensure that they do not lose revenue. Participant 10's answers also support the theme: "The biggest challenge was a financial challenge and figuring out how to monetize content in this new digital world." The concept was also supported by Participant 11, who explained that traditional media organizations had problems with business models as they could no longer generate revenue. Participant 13's comment aligned with others as she concurred that print media brought financial problems since news consumers moved from buying newspapers to accessing news online, which could be reviewed at no cost. Participant 14 explained, "Online customers now expected free access to news stories and were often unwilling to pay for digital stories."

Specific Tactics That Led to Long Term Success

This section presents the themes that emerged related to participants' views on tactics that led to their long-term success even in the digital space. These themes give understanding of the new strategies that journalists acquired and how they have influenced their long-term survival and relevance in the modern news environment.

Embracing Digital Media Led to Access to Online News Consumers, Leading to Success. Many participants explained that social media allowed them to share stories and access online audiences. Participant 1 explained, "When both Facebook and Twitter were established, we used them to promote what we wrote in our newspaper." The practice led to the development of online connections with audience and friends, leading to success during and after the transition. Participant 2 elaborated that social media allowed her to promote her stories and get people to like her website. She explained, "I use it to draw people to my stories and photos." Participant 3 supported the idea that the rise in social media made it an essential part of journalism as it established a digital audience that many journalists wanted to explore. Participant 5 stated that she started experimenting with social media to see if there was an audience, and the platform helped her connect with a new online audience. She added that journalists who created their social media accounts like Twitter and Facebook and posted on them had the benefit of connecting with online audiences and increasing their popularity.

Participant 7 compared social media to an instrument of reach that many senior journalists explored to get another set of audiences (online news consumers). Likewise, Participant 8 explained that he decided to create his social media account to establish an online presence to access young audiences on the platform. At the same time, Participant 9 noted that social media opened up a new world of connection where journalists and news consumers could interact. Participant 11 also concurred that social media allowed him to comment on news stories he could come across. Indeed, social platforms acted as an excellent opportunity to meet the emerging and concentrated online audience journalists yearned to reach.

Strong Ethical Principles Produced Audience Trust. Most participants explained that the ability to maintain track of ethical principles helped them succeed since the positive

principles and values were essential guidance when navigating challenges. Participant 1 stated they could gain audience trust even during turbulence by focusing on ethical values such as integrity, accountability, and responsibility. The competition and online rush created a misinformation problem as many people disseminating news were not concerned about verifying the truthfulness of the information they were sharing. Thus, Participant 1 explained that the audience developed mistrust and had difficulty believing information that did not come from trusted sources. Participant 4 also stressed the relevance of ethical values, particularly integrity and fairness, as he thought they helped him navigate the news experience and the challenges of digitalization. Likewise, Participant 6 stressed that by observing ethical journalism, senior journalists were always seen as fair, forming the judgment of excellent journalism. Subsequently, Participant 10 talked about the importance of maintaining high levels of accountability and positive values as they helped when they were experiencing navigating challenges.

Harnessing Journalism Skills Strengthened Their Professionalism. Participant 3 explained that many senior journalists could always display core journalistic skills like open-mindedness, goal setting, and flexibility during the transition, enabling them to succeed when facing challenges because they approached the issues positively. Participant 4 also elaborated on the importance of strengthening their critical thinking skills, which was helpful when experiencing obstacles. Participant 5 discussed the essentials of consistency, flexibility, and adaptation skills among senior journalists. He elaborated that these skills helped to display journalists as professionals and helped them last in the profession. Likewise, Participant 4 elaborated that they could attract huge followers by strengthening their critical thinking skills during the emergence of digital media since many online news consumers trusted their analysis of essential topics. Participant 5 also stressed the positive influence of consistency, flexibility,

and adaptation skills, which helped them succeed in an environment where everybody could

attract followers. Participant 14 clarified that, "By eventually realizing that every reporter needed

basic skills in online information retrieval and data analysis, we were able to thrive because these

skills allowed senior journalists to participate in digital innovation, making them more efficient

on developments like World Wide Web, GUI interfaces, and software such as Excel, FoxPro,

and Access.

Advice to Aspiring Journalists

This section presents common themes of advice that participants would offer younger

journalists. These themes distill common wisdom from senior journalists and provide guidance

that could help current and upcoming journalists when navigating the rapidly evolving news

ecosystem

Always Adhere to Core Ethical Principles. Most participants explained that the ability

to maintain track of ethics helps them succeed since the positive principles and values were

essential guidance when navigating changes. Participant 1 stated they could gain audience trust

even during turbulence by focusing on ethical values such as integrity, accountability, and

responsibility. Ideally, the competition and online rush created a misinformation problem as

many people disseminating news were concerned mainly by accessing expansive views. Thus,

the audience developed mistrust and had difficulty believing information that did not come from

trusted sources. Participant 4 also stressed the relevance of ethical values, particularly integrity

and fairness, as he thought they helped him navigate the news experience and the challenges of

digitalization. Likewise, Participant 6 stressed that by observing ethical journalism, senior

journalists were always seen as fair, forming the judgment of excellent journalism. Subsequently,

Participant 10 talked about the importance of maintaining high levels of accountability and positive values as they helped when they were experiencing navigating challenges.

Continually Strengthen Journalism Skills. Participant 3 explained that many senior journalists could always display core journalistic skills like open-mindedness, goal setting, and flexibility during the transition, enabling them to succeed when facing challenges because they approached the issues positively. Participant 4 also elaborated on the importance of strengthening their critical thinking skills, which was helpful when experiencing obstacles. Participant 5 discussed the essentials of consistency, flexibility, and adaptation skills among senior journalists. He elaborated that these skills helped to display journalists as professionals and helped them last in the profession. Likewise, Participant 4 elaborated that they could attract huge followers by strengthening their critical thinking skills during the emergence of digital media since many online news consumers trusted their analysis of essential topics. Participant 5 also stressed the positive influence of consistency, flexibility, and adaptation skills, which helped them succeed in an environment where everybody could attract followers. Participant 14 clarified that, "By eventually realizing that every reporter needed basic skills in online information retrieval and data analysis, we were able to thrive because these skills allowed senior journalists to participate in digital innovation, making them more efficient on developments like World Wide Web, GUI interfaces, and software such as Excel, FoxPro, and Access.

Summary

Indeed, technological advancement influenced senior journalists to seek various adaptive strategies to enable them to remain relevant in the digital journalism ecosystem. With the development of the internet, modern communication devices, and the rise in social media, news

communication has become efficient as news consumers can get immediate updates on events

happening in different parts of the world. The development of technology improved information

speed, and journalists could no longer adhere to fixed news deadlines. The transformation came

at a cost to senior journalists who had conformed to traditional journalism practices as they had

to find new ways of doing things to remain relevant. The interview responses from the 14 senior

journalist participants have been vital because they adequately addressed the research problem.

For example, on the question about the new experiences that senior journalists faced due to the

transformation from digital media, many explained that the changes happened quickly without

them even noticing. For example, the move from print to digital news communication was

relatively fast, and journalists who did not have the needed digital skills faced layoffs.

About the challenges they faced due to new digitalization experiences, most participants

responded that the transformation required them to up their speed. The competition for breaking

news was so intense that journalists could no longer wait for the specific deadlines. For example,

Participant 1, Mitchell, noted that the sudden shift required journalists to publish news as soon as

the story occurred since even non-journalists were taking over the role of news communication.

The competition was escalated by a rise in social media, which now took over as news

communication channels. Participant 3, Krewson, explained that the changes and competition

were happening rapidly, and it seemed that journalists had limited time to adjust. Other

challenges mentioned by participants include loss of revenue, layoff, and poor readership from

news consumers. Participant 7, Houston, elaborated that journalists were challenged in designing

relevant business models because the subscription approach was no longer applicable.

Regarding the new experiences relating to the modern news culture, most participants

explained that digitization eliminated news deadlines, and information was shared on social

media once an event occurred instead of waiting to break it on the mainstream media. The news

culture also changed; news organizations and journalists focused more on pursuing traffic

through eyeballs and clickbait. Participant 6, O'Brien, explained that the news culture has

become corrosive due to intense competition for clickbait. Participant 4, Dempsey, also

strengthened that through digitalization, journalists developed an increased desire to get clicks

and eyeballs, adversely impacting the quality of news being disseminated. Regarding the best

strategies the journalists embraced to remain relevant, most participants talked about

strengthening continuous learning to upgrade their skills and conform to the new ways of

working. For instance, Participant 10, Bacon, illustrated that she was quick to embrace the

changes by gaining digital skills that would make her and her team efficient in the digital

newsroom. The ability to foster the learning culture enabled Bacon and her team to accept that

digitalization was a reality. The response given by Participant 9, Stockland, also supported the

idea that continuing learning and trying was the best strategy that helped senior journalists

navigate the transformation challenges. Another strategy was leadership support. Participant 8

Lewis explained that the sudden shift challenge was confusing and that getting leadership

support was the best way to overcome them.

Regarding the best practices senior journalists adopted to succeed during the navigation

journey, most participants talked about not losing track of ethical practices by ensuring that the

news they communicated was fair and had integrity. For example, participant 1 stated that most

senior journalists aligned their work with core ethical values to avoid being manipulated by the

competitive pressure in the digital ecosystem. Participant 2, Ross, also explained that what made

the transition journey successful was senior journalists' ability to enhance information accuracy,

fairness, truthfulness, and stress on giving facts. Participant 6, O'Brien, also stressed the ethical

values of fairness.

Indeed, this chapter is pivotal, as the participants' responses have helped formulate

themes that will be used to answer the research question in chapter five. The findings gathered

from the interview questions will also be used to develop a detailed discussion by linking the

findings to concepts of media ecology theory in chapter five.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Overview

This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to understand senior journalists' media technology adaptation strategies as they transitioned from a traditional media ecosystem to the current media paradigm. The goal was to understand their strategy to remain relevant in today's news environment, which is constantly changing due to technology and digitalization. The study's phenomenological design engaged 14 senior journalist participants who worked in traditional and current news cultures. Semi-structured interviews with these senior journalists revealed the experiences and obstacles they faced when digitization emerged, the strategies they embraced during the transformation phase, the new skills acquired, and the best practices they believe young journalists should also develop to remain relevant as changes continue.

In chapter one, I provided the background of the study, including the problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions. The chapter introduced readers to how technology development shaped the journalism environment. It also expounded on senior journalists' navigation challenges when transitioning to digital media. Chapter two offered an opportunity to explore the literature review, where I expounded on media ecology theory in detail. Other topics analyzed in the literature reviews included journalism in the print era, journalism in the digital media, and the impact of digitalization on news consumers. In chapter three, the research methodology was explored, and I offered a comprehensive description of the qualitative study, phenomenological design, research questions, setting, participants, procedure, data collection instrument, data analysis, and trustworthiness and credibility.

Chapter four presents the results from the qualitative interview questions, which engaged 14 senior journalist participants. The qualitative interviews were conducted to gain insights into senior journalists' challenges when transitioning to a digital culture. Qualitative questions were asked to understand the senior journalists' challenges and transitioning strategies that enabled them to successfully shift into the modern journalism ecosystem. The researcher applied thematic analysis, which allowed for gathering common themes from transcribed audio texts (Greening, 2019).

Chapter five, therefore, provides a detailed discussion of my study. It begins by summarizing themes of media ecology theory. The chapter will also discuss the findings, which will be linked to the concepts of media ecology theory and explore how different technologies shape human experiences. Typically, media ecology argues that society and culture evolve when a new technology emerges (McLuhan, 1964). Notably, the chapter will conclude by providing the study's implications, methodological practices, delimitations and limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings: Answering the Overarching Research Questions

Three research questions guided my study. This section will draw from the findings discussed in chapter four to answer each of this study's research questions. Indeed, from the exploration of the research findings, it is evident that the answers provided by participants offer meaningful insights to help answer each of this study's three research questions.

RQ1: *What strategies did journalists who had conformed to traditional media forms adopt to remain relevant in the modern digitalized journalism ecosystem filled with advanced technology?*

This research question focuses on the strategies journalists who had conformed to traditional media embraced to remain relevant in the modern digitalization environment. Many participants answered that they developed new digital skills, fostered ethical principles, provided engaging news content, and embraced the latest technologies. These themes answer RQ1 since most participants talked about them, and others repeatedly stressed their relevance in the digital journalism ecosystem. For instance, almost all respondents supported acquiring appropriate digital skills, including participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 14. These participants explained how digital skills like appropriate online communication, ability to make digital editing, efficiency in posting online, creating videos using a computer, and other technical abilities were relevant in helping them navigate successfully. For example, Participant 5 noted that he was open to mastering news digitalization skill sets because they increased his efficiency in operating the new technologies shaping the communication landscape. Participant 14 mentioned enhancing software skills, which assisted in making him familiar with touchstone technologies. The fact that many respondents agreed on the relevance of new skills makes the theme of answering RQ1 correct.

Subsequently, many participants agreed that fostering ethical principles was essential for transitioning into digital media. Participants 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, and 14 concurred that the reinforcing ethical values helped them avoid being swayed by the challenges of the new media. Some ethical principles that participants talked about included integrity, fairness, accuracy, trustworthiness, commitment, consistency, and equity. Participant 4 explained that getting authentic news became challenging as digitalization took over because the line between misinformation and correct news blurred since even nonprofessionals were sharing news. Thus, to remain relevant, the senior journalists aligned their work to moral codes like integrity, which helped display them as

authentic and trusted sources. Participant 14 also mentioned the strategy of showcasing time-tested values of journalism, such as truth-telling, verification discipline, and the ability to integrate sources to support the validity of the news information. Therefore, the theme of ethical values accurately answers RQ1 as it also aligns with the concepts of media ecology theory. For instance, when Postman was exploring challenges associated with new technology, he mentioned ethical concerns by elaborating that people using new media may likely ignore the quantification and effectiveness of communication and human values (Postman, 1974). Therefore, by explaining that they anchored their work on ethical principles, the participants accurately answered RQ1 as they demonstrated that gaining relevance in a new media required earning audience trust through promoting human and truly tested values.

The strategy of embracing digitalization also emerged as many respondents, such as participants 2, 5, 7, 9, and 14, noted the need to adopt new technologies rather than resist them. Some digitalization elements that senior journalist quickly accepted included establishing websites, creating social media accounts, online reporting, and strengthening their mastery of modern computers. By discussing embracing digitalization, participants affirmed that change is inevitable, and they had to accept the new way of working. The strategy, therefore, correctly answered RQ 1 since it also aligned with McLuhan's projection regarding the coming of the digital age. McLuhan foresaw that when digital media emerged, people would be presented with a new communication culture requiring digital technologies to deliver user-generated content (McLuhan, 1964). Finally, the response about creating and disseminating engaging content emerged as many senior journalists concurred that they had to provide news content aligning with the interests of the new online audience.

RQ2: What new experiences did journalists face because of the transformation from conventional to digital media news communication?

The second research question focused on journalists' new experiences due to transitioning from traditional to modern news media. The question was asked to understand the challenges and opportunities of moving into the digital news ecosystem. Some new experiences that most journalists agreed on were abandoning news deadlines, stiff competition, use of social media as a news communication channel, online rush, increased demand for clickbait, loss of revenue, and poor readership. About moving away from fixed news deadlines, participants 1, 2, 3, and 7 agreed that the new media no longer required them to share news within the traditionally set timeframe. Instead, journalists had to share news briefs as soon as an event occurred or even provide live coverage when the story was being told. Journalists had to discard fixed news deadlines because online audiences developed a new demand for getting news information instantly. These themes expressed by the study's participants also align with the core tenets of media ecology (McLuhan, 1962; Postman, 2000). For instance, Postman (2000) described the impacts of digital media and explained that the new technology would become a game changer as it would require people to disseminate information quickly (Postman, 2000). McLuhan also viewed new technology as a cause of disruption to the existing communication systems as it would move people away from old practices (McLuhan, 1962). Thus, participants' responses matched the influences critical media ecology theorists projected. Therefore, these answers and themes comprehensively answered RQ2.

RQ 3: How did the adoption of unique news communication strategies enable journalists to succeed and overcome the challenges of the new media?

The participants also embraced social media, allowing them to share stories online and access audiences. Participants 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 noted that social platforms like Facebook and Twitter helped them to promote what they were writing in their newspaper, which led to the development of online connections with their audience and friends, leading to remarkable success during and after the transition. Most participants agreed that their successful adaptation of digitalization allowed them access to a vast online audience, leading to adequate viewership. For example, Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 conceded that accepting changes, such as being open to social media, increased their awareness and visibility in the digital landscape. Subsequently, many participants explained that the ability to maintain track of ethical principles helped them succeed since the positive principles and values were essential guidance when navigating challenges. Participants 1, 4, 6, 10, and 14 stressed the relevance of ethical values, particularly integrity and fairness, as they helped them navigate the new experiences and the challenges of digitalization. Participants also emphasized the importance of harnessing core journalism skills. They stated that the ability to observe core journalistic skills like open-mindedness, goal setting, and flexibility during the transition enabled them to succeed when facing challenges because they approached the issues positively.

Discussion

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the research findings. The discussion aims to explain the relevance of the interview question outcomes by tying them to the concepts of media ecology theory. The discussion step would entail analyzing the themes that emerged in RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3.

Adaptation Strategies

This section discusses the adaptation themes that emerged during participant interviews. These adaptions entailed strategies journalists adapted to remain relevant in the digital journalism environment filled with digitalization and advanced technologies. The discussion presents an understanding of how senior journalists navigated the challenges of the quickly evolving digital media landscape.

Acquiring New Skills. Many respondents explained a high need to enhance digital skills to remain relevant in the modern journalism environment. Since the digital age led to the quick emergence of the internet, smartphones, and social media, journalists who wanted to survive had to strengthen their efficacy on the internet and web development to disseminate information online. The senior journalist had to harness the new skills by pursuing education, being open to learning new things, and mastering the digital skill set. Ideally, digital media created the need to try new information with videos, clear audio, and news games to earn attention. Thus, the relevant way that journalists who had conformed to traditional media would survive was by delivering digitalized information, which required acquiring the appropriate skills that would support them in the new culture. Participant 5 said, "I was open to learning new things and mastering new skill sets." She stressed that only journalists who strengthened their communication skills and the desire to learn new things could navigate digital media. Participant 5 also indicated that the transformation required journalists to align with the digital media. She stated, "The transformations required journalists to develop digital skills to understand their audience and disseminate information better." Most of the emerging technologies were difficult to operate. Thus, participants expanded that they even asked for help from young journalists who seemed more conversant with digitalization.

The explanations offered by participants aligned with concepts of media ecology. Strate (2004) defined media ecology theory as studying the media environment. Strate expounded that technological changes in media ecology tend to alter the code of communication and mode of information due to changes in perceptions (Strate, 2008; Strate, 2004). It means that when new media emerges, it comes with new demands since the audience develops a new attitude, feeling, and behavior. One strategy for meeting the new demands is learning the needed skills and abilities (Strate, 2014). When defining various levels of media ecology, McLuhan explained the electronic age as the era that transformed people into the global village (McLuhan, 1964). He described those technologies emerging in the electronic age, such as the internet, computers, and smartphones, would keep people in touch (McLuhan & McLuhan, 1988). Walker Matsa (2021) also explained that the rise of social media created room for engagement as users could discuss and interact more with content. Indeed, the theme of acquiring new digital skills aligned with the previous research relating to media ecology.

Enhancing Ethical Principles. Many participants explained that their adherence to ethical journalism principles, such as fairness and integrity, made them stand out as more relevant journalists in the digital environment. Participant 6 stated that "they succeeded because senior journalists enhanced the sense of ethics and fairness as the speed and the competitive pressure could influence a journalist to include things they probably should not." Likewise, Participant 14 commented, "My main strategy has been to apply journalism's time-tested values and principles to new media platforms and technology. Journalism is about truth-telling - it is a discipline of verification, as Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel put it in their book *The Elements of Journalism*. It is about showing the sources of your information." Ideally, participants agreed that their strict adherence to the principles of accuracy, trustworthiness, and commitment led to

successful navigation, as readers could trust the information given by journalists with ethical

values.

The participant's responses align with previous studies on the value of ethical principles

in journalism. In his article, Newman (2018) explained that digitalization altered news culture,

and getting authentic journalists was challenging. Therefore, journalists who could overcome the

barrier by observing the principles of accuracy, trustworthiness, and commitment attained

success since news consumers could trust the information. For example, participants clarified

that many senior journalists succeeded because they enhanced their sense of ethics and fairness,

as speed and competitive pressure could influence journalists to include things they probably

should not. When Postman elaborated on the disadvantages of new technology, he expressed the

ethical concerns of the coming age of the digital environment (Postman, 2005). Postman

questioned how people were attracted to the authority of computation while ignoring the

quantification and effectiveness values (Postman, 2000). Specifically, Postman pondered

whether the thirst for technological development was being seen as more essential than

promoting human values (Postman, 2005). He projected that the rise in the digital era could

expose people to the moral consequences of all symbolic environments (Postman, 1974). For

example, in the article he wrote with Powers in 2018, Postman argued that the electronic age

would create an instant competition drive, making people fail to adhere to ethical values

(Postman & Powers, 2018). Thus, if journalists needed to succeed in the digital environment,

they had to consider the concerns raised by Postman by aligning with journalism ethical

guidelines.

Ability to Embrace Digitalization. When asked how they navigated the transition

process, many participants did not shy away from saying that they embraced digitalization. For

example, Participant 2 stated that most successful senior journalists were quick to adopt digital

media, such as creating websites and social media platforms to enable them to share news with

the audience in a manner they expected. Participant 7 elaborated, "The best strategy was a

willingness to embrace other media. So, if you were a print journalist, you could no longer think

of yourself as a print journalist. You need to think of yourself as someone who could talk and be

on it in front of a camera at the spur of the moment.". Participants 9, 10, and 11 stressed that

those who were quick to adopt the immediacy of reaction to align with a new hurry culture,

which required journalists to update things quickly succeeded. Participant 14 responded, "I

succeeded because I was an early adopter of digital technology (the first-generation Apple

Macintosh, the first-generation Radio Shack Tandy TRS-80) - so I knew these powerful tools

could enhance journalism."

The findings align with outcomes from earlier studies on media ecology. McCullough

(2021) explained that when technologies emerge in journalism, they take over since they provide

a more convenient way of working. The author stated that the technologies and digital media

came with advantages like delivering extensive reach, allowing real-time reporting, enhancing

audience interaction, providing reporter autonomy, and supporting innovative storytelling. These

positive outcomes appealed to news consumers, meaning journalists had to remain relevant and

efficient (Ozkent, 2022). Many participants openly described that the best strategy they

embraced was a willingness to adopt digital media by sharing their skills on the internet, learning

how to post on social media, and doing digital editing to give their content appealing features.

These assertions align with McLuhan's prediction that when the digital age emerges, people will

have to adjust by embracing the new culture it will present (McLuhan, 1964).

Long before the rise of digitalization, McLuhan (1964), through media ecology, predicted a future where media would be more participatory. He envisioned that the coming of digital media would present a communication culture where news consumers would consume content and participate in producing it (McLuhan, 1964). McLuhan's predictions were realized when the digital age emerged, where technologies led to the domination of user-generated content (McLuhan, 1962). The coming of communication technologies appreciated McLuhan's early recognition of shifts. In his prediction, McLuhan described technology as a significant societal change force that has the power to transform the world into a global village (McLuhan, 1964). Therefore, he stated that when these technologies emerge, people will have no choice but to embrace them since that would be the reality they will be living in (McLuhan & McLuhan, 1988). The inability to embrace the digitalization era, thus, meant that journalists would have failed since they would not live in reality. Therefore, even when these technologies presented challenges that were hard to navigate, journalists who wanted to navigate and be more prominent in the digital media had to accept them, as indicated by participants.

Delivering Engaging Content. Many participants noted that their success in the modern journalism ecosystem was influenced by the ability to prioritize readers by focusing on the topic they were interested in. The senior journalists understood that news consumers wanted appealing topics that could make them stay glued to the websites. Participant 1 stated, "I prioritize readers by focusing on the topic they were interested in. The ability to share news while having readers in mind led to delivering engaging information". Likewise, Participant 14 explained, "As an online journalist, I practiced annotative writing - linking from my digital story to original-source or contextual information. It was another, and more effective, way to "show your work." The senior journalists honored the call by creating news while keeping readers in mind that the

delivered message would foster engagement. In describing the medium as the message, McLuhan explained that the channel used to disseminate information dictated how the content should be packed (McLuhan, 1964). Since digital media, like websites and social media, became critical news communication channels in the digital age, journalists have had to tailor their messages to align with the expectations of social media users (Chua, 2019). Participants illustrated that the new media demanded journalists to deliver news in a way that appeals to the audience, making them focus on engaging content to gain followers.

Carlson (2020) pursued research to explore journalistic epistemology. The scholar found that digitalization influenced the rise of social media, which allowed news consumers to discuss and interact more than they used to during the print media. However, for journalists to benefit from getting high engagement from the audience, they need to develop content that aligns with their interests (Ross et al., 2022). Creating engaging content was the best way to earn significant viewership (Garcia et al., 2020). Logan, one of the media ecology theorists, explained that technological change in communication intensified the flow of feedback because digital media allowed news consumers to review information, process it quickly, and share feedback comments with the environment (Logan, 2020). Logan viewed media ecology as a reciprocal structure that changed people's behavior. The explanation can be linked to the new engagement behavior that online audiences developed due to the rise in digital media (Logan, 2020). Therefore, for journalists to successfully navigate digital media, they need to readjust themselves to match the new behavior expected in digital media, as stated by the participants.

New Experiences and Emerging Technologies

This section discusses the themes that emerged from the responses to new experiences and emerging technologies. These themes focus on the latest experiences this study's participants

faced as they shifted from traditional media to digital journalism. The discussion shed light on

some old communication practices that journalists had to abandon and the new experiences and

challenges they encountered due to emerging forms of digital media.

       The Need to Adopt Digital Media. The participants illustrated that the rise in

technology and digitalization influenced journalists and many journalism organizations to start

embracing things like social media, websites, and online news dissemination because the change

had alerted the news environment. Thus, it became mandatory for journalists to embrace digital

media by acquiring emerging technologies. For example, many participants mentioned that

digitalization has changed the news culture by introducing new media channels, such as social

media platforms. Journalists have had to adapt to the growing need of media consumers for rapid

news dissemination, which reflects the audience's new attitude, behavior, and expectations.

Therefore, the only way to survive in the latest news environment altered by technological

change was to develop digital skills to allow journalists and journalism organizations to

understand their audience better and disseminate information. Participant 7 said, "The best

strategy was a willingness to embrace other media. So, if you were a print journalist, you could

no longer think of yourself as a print journalist. You need to think of yourself as someone who

could talk and be on it in front of a camera at the spur of the moment." These explanations are

supported by Chua (2019), who argued that digitalization brought new advancements like

smartphones, social networks, websites, and emails, which journalists had to acquire since they

were fundamental in the modern journalism environment.

     Indeed, the concept of media ecology theory proposed by theorists like Marshall

McLuhan, Neil Postman, and Harold Innis, among others, is supported by the responses given by

the participants. Media ecology theory argues that technological change distorts the symbolic

environment by altering how people construct meanings and social relationships (McLuhan, 1964; Postman, 2000). As a result, technological changes allow people to develop new attitudes, behaviors, perceptions, and experiences (Roca & Corcoran, 2021). McLuhan clarified that the medium people use to communicate influences how people perceive the message (McLuhan, 1962). Ideally, media ecology defines an ecological structure that illustrates how people change their culture and social aspects into something new when change occurs (Ong, 1967; McMullan, 2020; McLuhan, 1964). While defining media ecology, Postman argued that a new communication media impacts how people understand, feel, value, and perceive information (Postman, 2005). To Postman, the term ecology refers to an environment of an ecological structure affecting individuals. Thus, an environment encompasses the complex message that imposes on people a particular way of thinking, behaving, reasoning, and feeling (Postman, 1992). Therefore, as part of the environment, technological change in communication is neither an additive nor subtractive element but a change agent that changes everything by discarding the old ways of doing things (Postman, 1992). The description given by Postman and McLuhan about how technology changes everything, including people's perceptions, aligned with the information provided by participants that they were quick to adopt digital media when it emerged.

Moving Away from Fixed News Deadline. The disruption caused by new technology explains why many of this study's participants noted that by shifting to digital media, they had to abandon the tradition of fixed news deadlines to embrace the swift dissemination approach. Digital media disrupts news ecology by creating a sense of urgency and immediacy among news consumers (Peicheva & Keranova, 2020). Participant 2 explained, "I remember there were three separate deadlines at night at the *Oklahoman*. However, with the advent of communication

technology, deadlines were eliminated as journalists quickly report events as they get them online." Participants 3, 4, 6, and 11 supported the theme by explaining that digitalization moved journalists from relying on fixed deadlines to continually updating audiences across digital platforms. Audiences believed that through social media, they could no longer wait up to the designated news hours to get news of the trending stories. The disruption led to the elimination of news deadlines. For instance, Participant 1 elaborated that news publications in print media moved from a weekly cycle to sharing information as soon as it occurred to meet news consumers' demands. Typically, in the digitalization era, journalists needed to move from relying on fixed deadlines to continually updating the audience across digital platforms, as that was the only way to meet the new immediacy and urgency attitude that the audience had developed.

Media ecology argues that introducing new technology changes culture as people do away with practices they no longer see as relevant (Postman, 1974). Postman saw a technological transformation as a transformative agent that makes people embrace new ways of doing things (Postman & Powers, 2018). Postman (2005) described the shift from print to digital media as a game changer, requiring journalists to disseminate information quickly. McLuhan (1962) also described technological change as disrupting existing systems. He argued that though improvement in technology creates efficiency in ways of doing things, such as enhancing efficiency in communication, the changes also disrupt the existing communication systems. The disruption occurs because the transformation makes people neglect their traditional communication method to embrace a new approach that makes more sense (Postman, 2005). Therefore, arguments from media ecology theorists reinforce the comments made by participants that with the emergence of digital media as the new medium, a disruption of how news was

being communicated changed, making it necessary for journalists to reshape how they were

working to match the new expectations.

   Increased Competition. Many participants expounded on the stiff competition challenge

due to new media. They noted that developments like the internet and social media increased

competition since everybody, including non-journalists, wanted to be the first to break news

stories. Participant 1, for instance, gave an example of Craig Newmark, a non-journalist who

posted content online without charge, thus making it difficult for journalists to make revenue.

Participant 6 responded, "Many of the stories we were covering, someone else was covering, so

your only advantage is to be faster. So, there was tremendous pressure to be fast." Participant 5

also stated that "Increased competition made media organizations refrain from fixed news

deadlines and start breaking news each time an event happens to cope with competition." The

journalists who could not cope with the competition could not make it into the digital age. The

challenge with news communication competition is that it distorts the accuracy element since

those disseminating news do not focus on the truthfulness of the information (Bordi et al., 2018).

   The competition McLuhan projected is what participants commented about by narrating

that evolution into the digital ecosystem subjected them to intense competition where everybody

wanted to be the first to break the news (McLuhan, 1964). McLuhan projected that the digital

age would influence the rise of several digital tribes, which can be linked to the numerous social

media platforms that are becoming integral parts of online media (McLuhan, 1962). What made

the competition in digital media more dangerous is that even non-journalists wanted to pursue

the role of news communication by also competing with journalists in breaking and

disseminating stories as they occur (Carlson, 2020). Media ecology argues that new media

changes how people interact. For example, digital media, such as social media platforms like

Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, transformed how people interact by increasing engagement (Laskowska & Marcynski, 2019). The emergence of social media due to digitalization altered the traditional way news was disseminated (Dowling, 2022). The platforms transitioned communication into an interactive model where people became more engaged with one another (Chua, 2019). The rise in competition through increased engagement alerted the news communication landscape. McLuhan had foreseen that there would be increased competition in journalism when the digital age occurred (McLuhan, 1962). The theorist talked about the rewiring of the global village, where he extended that the digital age would give birth to the growing number of digital tribes, which would cause competition warfare, thereby causing challenges in the communication landscape (McLuhan, 1964).

Increased Use of Social Media as A News Communication Channel. Several participants explained that social media was a significant factor that changed news culture in journalism. Participants explained that digitization made news consumers switch to social platforms as their channels for accessing news. Participant 1 stated, "We opened Facebook and Twitter to promote what we wrote in our newspaper." Participant 2 elaborated, "I used social media to draw people to my stories and photos." Likewise, Participants 3, 5, 8, and 14 supported the idea that opening special media like Twitter helped journalists reach a digital audience. The participant's assertions aligned with information by Chua (2019), who elaborated that news consumers preferred accessing news from social platforms because they were accessible everywhere, and there was no deadline for getting updates. The platform had several features, such as saving the content to review later. These advantages influenced new consumers to no longer rely on getting news from radio and newspapers because social media made it easy to access information as they emerged (Chua, 2019).

In his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman (2005) projects the influence that social media could have on society. When explaining the impact of telegraph development, Postman stated that the technology would cause a peculiar effect by creating an online interactive platform populated with strangers who knew nothing about one another (Postman, 1985). Although Postman described the telegraph, his sentiments remain the same regarding social media. For example, the coming of social media led to breakdowns of cultural and geographical barriers in journalism ecosystems by creating an elevated superficial connection (Carr, 2021). The increased use of social platforms made even non-journalists interested in disseminating news because no experience was required to operate these platforms (Bordi et al., 2018). Journalists who quickly adapted to the social media culture benefited since they expanded their brand popularity in the digital space. Carlson (2020) explained that social media has established effectiveness in journalism by enhancing connections and leading to new online communities. The platforms not only allowed people to stay connected with their friends and families, but the connection extended to strangers who now formed an essential part of digital news consumers (Cooren, 2012). Garcia et al. (2020) added that the digital platform has become practical for public discourse. Postman's forecast of a media that would take people to more entertainment-infused epistemology has been realized through the rise of social media (Postman & Powers, 2018). The responses by this study's participants thus align with findings from earlier research work done by multiple scholars.

Online Rush. Many participants stated that social media created an online rush as journalists and non-journalists competed to be the first to break the news. Participants 1, 3, 4, 7, and 12 described the online rush culture as a negative aspect that denies people the opportunity to double-check the information they were disseminating. Participant 6 elaborated, "Journalists

were in a rush and pursue clicks and views because the inability to get the story in time would

make even a big story sink." Besides, the online rush allowed misinformation to spread as people

became less interested in scrutinizing the information. Participant 10 elaborated that the online

rush influenced journalists to pursue traffic to give their stories comprehensive coverage. The

rush made the emerging news culture very competitive and very corrosive, which was

unpleasant. Also, participants agreed that the demand for instant news breaks made journalists

adopt a new culture of sharing events as soon as they occur.

In his analysis of media ecology, Postman (2005) foresaw the information glut problem

when he stated that when the internet age arises, people will be overloaded with information

from different sources, and they may not know what to do with the numerous contents (Postman,

1974; Postman, 1985). The increased information supply in the digital era would make

differentiating relevant from irrelevant content challenging. Hence, journalists were mandated to

close the scarcity gap by providing information to people through the news. The limited access to

information sparked the development of the internet and digital media to allow people to have

swift updates. However, Postman explained that by attempting to solve the information scarcity

problem, people created a new challenge they never anticipated (Postman, 2000). The challenge

he was referring to was the information glut, which he projected would cause more problems,

such as information incoherence and information meaninglessness due to the rush to disseminate

information (Postman, 2005). Dowling (2022) linked the information glut to the cyberspace

superhighway, where every person seems to have an idea and message to share. Therefore, by

explaining that digitalization created an online rush culture, participants were correct because

their assertion seemed to align with what Postman predicted.

Rising Demand for Eyeballs and Clickbait. Participants did not shy away from describing how a change to digitalization altered news culture by shifting people's focus to eyeballs and clickbait. They stated that many journalists started to entice the audience to get more clicks, and this was an ethical challenge for many senior journalists who knew what objectivity means in journalism. Participant 3 illustrated that some non-journalists began to entice readers to get more clicks, which was an ethical challenge for many senior journalists. Participant 7 explained that the demand for online followers made many non-journalists chase more clickbait and eyeballs as they acted as the new way to increase brand popularity. Participant 4 clarified, "The desire to get clicks and eyeballs, I think, helped start the erosion of people's trust and faith in newspapers." The demand for followers and online ads influenced journalists to begin chasing more clickbait and eyeballs as they were acting as the new way to increase brand popularity.

Postman, in his critique of technology, stated that the rise in new technology is mythic because it transforms a part of the natural order of society (Postman, 2000). Digitalization creates a natural order where journalists started to see clickbait as the only approach for reaching a broad audience base. These developments changed the news culture, making it mandatory for media organizations to find new ways to survive. Harold Innis's evaluation of media ecology focused on time and space (Innis, 1950). He argued that the purpose of media ecology is to evaluate the forms of communication and how civilization communicates. Innis (1950) held that the extension of civility correlates directly to the type of communication channel that people use. He views a communication medium as essential to disseminating knowledge shared with space and time. A fundamental ideology that Innis provided was that each technology evaluation distorts an aspect of space and time (Innis, 1950). Innis's argument provides a basis for explaining how the

rise in technology and digitalization in communication altered how it established popularity by

making journalists shift into looking for more click baits and eyeballs. Logan (2020) described

that though journalism entails the preservation of objectivity, the rise in digitalization led to a

change in focus, where an increasing number of journalists considered clickbait an essential

approach for attracting a vast audience. The information from participants and the ideas provided

by theorists and scholars agree that the digital culture distorted journalism by influencing

journalists to chase more clickbait and eyeballs as they were the new approaches for increasing

brand popularity.

       Poor Readership. Participants explained that digitization reduced people's concentration

ability, which led to poor readership. Unlike in print media, where news consumers could

concentrate on the news story by reading through the whole message and even analyzing

comments, digital media was different because news was presented more in an appealing way to

enhance engagement. Participant 2 explained that digitization reduced people's concentration

ability, which led to poor readership. She explained that news consumers brush past the

headlines when getting information on social platforms, making them not read deeper into the

content. Participant 11's comments aligned with the theme, as she explained that digital media

distorted news consumption as the audience could no longer take responsibility for what they

were reading. Thus, when news consumers get their stories from social platforms, they do not put

more effort into digging dipper. Instead, they just brush past the headlines and start arguing

about the concept they have not explored. The entraining aspect of digital media created a

massive challenge of poor readership, where news consumers cannot take responsibility for what

they are reading (Powers, 2020). This denied them the opportunity to understand the key

message of the news, leading to poor decision-making.

The same way Postman saw television as a medium denying panelists the chance to respond to topics in a severe manner is the same way senior journalists viewed online news consumers as audiences who do not put seriousness on the news they consume as they are not interested in understanding the key message being communicated (Postman, 2005). The digitalization environment transformed news culture into entertainment, leading to the harnessing of poor readership problems. The challenges of digitalization can be described through the lens of Neil Postman's arguments, where he states that a new technology always presents people with a *Faustian bargain*- the potential to deal with a devil (Postman, 2005). What Postman was insinuating is that technology can bring both advantages and disadvantages. He stressed that a new technology sometimes brings more benefits than disadvantages, but in some situations, it causes more destruction (Postman, 2000). For example, while exploring the impact of television development, Postman stated that television invention was detrimental to society since it resulted in the loss of severe public discourse (Postman, 1992). For Postman, moving from print to television led to the change in information from discursive to non-discursive, rationalism to emotionalism, and propositional to presentational. The television environment made everything look like entertainment, which turned the audience into juvenile adults who could not take anything seriously (Postman & Powers, 2018). The destructive element presented by Postman is reflected in the answers given by journalists regarding the poor readership due to digital media.

Loss of Revenue. Participant 3 recounted how digitization caused several print media organizations to face bankruptcy as a vast audience moved to digital media. These economic challenges influenced the traditional press to think of a new revenue-generating model, as many advertising opportunities were taken online, which was gaining popularity. Thus, digital media

led to the collapse of many newspaper organizations, which Postman had foreseen in his argument about the dangers of technology (Postman, 1974). Therefore, the loss of revenue resulted in more problems like layoffs, as the organization needed help to sustain many employees. Participants explained how they could see their peers losing their jobs. Thus, to remain relevant in the modern journalism ecosystem, journalists and journalism organizations have started to think of ways to monetize their content in this new digital world. Carlos (2020) argued in his article that revenue loss for print media was quite significant because of the new preference for digital media.

In his 2005 book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman expounded on digital media's impact on people's culture. Although Postman published the book long before digitalization emerged, he had insight into the consequences that people will face when technological advancement occurs (Postman, 2005; Postman, 1985). The theorist insinuated that technology aimed to suppress and degrade rational, literate, and analytical reasoning found in print media (Postman, 2005). Modern media prioritized entertainment, thereby appealing to a broader audience. Their entertainment made it possible for the audience to become quick in denouncing print media, leading to a loss in revenue (Peicheva & Karanova, 2020). Gutierrez (2020) explained that in the traditional journalism environment, news consumers valued newspapers because they presented information in a way that could be understood better. Thus, print media attracted massive revenue due to its vast audience base. However, with the emergence of digitalization, news culture changed to entertainment, and people started to have limited interest in newspapers.

Specific Tactics that led to long term success

This section discusses the themes that emerged relating to participant views of how success as a journalist was linked to the adoption of new communication strategies. The discussion gives an understanding of the new strategies that journalists have acquired and how they have influenced their long-term relevance in the news environment.

Embracing Digital Media Led to Access to Online News Consumers, Leading to Success

Participants' responses to how adopting unique strategies led to transition successes echoed what Org projected. Multiple participants responded that the rise of social media allowed them to share stories online and create a broad audience. Participants 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 11, and 13 expanded that the development of Facebook and Twitter established an opportunity for developing online connections with audiences and friends. For example, Participant 1 expounded, "When both Facebook and Twitter were established, we used them to promote what we wrote in our newspaper." The practice led to the development of online connections with audience and friends, leading to success during and after the transition. Likewise, Participant 2 elaborated that "I use it to draw people to my stories and photos."

In his seminal work *Orality and Literacy*, Ong (1982) differentiated between the literature and oral cultures, offering a detailed understanding of how new methods of communication would transform the human environment (Ong, 1982). His explorations gave a profound insight into the digital media, primarily on the reals of social media. Org explained the auditory environment as one that prioritizes sound and speech (Ong, 1967). On the other hand, he defined the visual environment as one that prioritizes sight and encourages abstract thinking, individualism, and critical analysis. Likewise, Ong analyzed the digital environment as one that would be filled with audio-chat solutions and podcasts, bringing back the advantages of oral and

auditory culture (Ong, 1982). Ong's projection of the rise of podcasts can be linked to the

introduction of social media platforms, which have created a significant online community where

storytelling thrives, echoing the narrative-rich and communal element of oral media (Ong, 1982).

Ong argued that the digital environment would create an increased sense of connection and

intimacy where people would build personal relationships. Yang (2020) described that the online

news consumers that journalists could access through social media gave them a platform to

promote their stories and get people to like their websites. Ong's analysis of the digital

environment aligns with the advantages that participants linked to social media. For example,

they stated that social platforms came with opportunities like drawing more audience to their

stories, which helped them gain the popularity needed in the digital news culture. Indeed, as

digitalization was taking journalism to online space, the emergence of social media helped

actualize the dream by allowing journalists to access online users who formed a crucial news

consumer base (Walker & Matsa, 2021).

Observing Core Ethical Principles Allowed Them to Gain Trust from Audience

When asked how the adaptation strategies led to their success, senior journalist

participants commented that maintaining ethics helps them succeed since the positive principles

and values were essential guidance when navigating changes. Most participants explained that

the fundamental ethical values they never ignored included integrity, accountability, and

responsibility because they were necessary to differentiate them from non-journalists chasing

followers. Participant 4 also stressed the relevance of ethical values, particularly integrity and

fairness, as he thought they helped him navigate the news experience and the challenges of

digitalization. Likewise, Participant 6 stressed that by observing ethical journalism, senior

journalists were always seen as fair, forming the judgment of excellent journalism. These ethical

values allowed the professionals to establish and retain audience trust even during turbulence.

Other moral values include fairness, commitment, and equity of information, which enabled

senior journalists not to lean on one side of the story, making the audience see them as more

authentic.

Postman expounded that each technology brings internal bias (Postman, 1974). Postman

meant that the advancement of each tool in communication has a hidden ideological bias due to

their unique worldviews and values. At the same time, Harold Innis argued that media is a

dynamic social resource capable of changing people's thoughts and transforming cultural and

social patterns (Innis, 1951). Thus, the inherent bias that each media outlet brings makes the

information they disseminate have unique consequences for people. There (2016) agreed that the

development of new media creates a perpetual bias, which can affect the ethical values of the

content. A biased media has a way of distorting people's emotions and social and political ideas.

The only way to ensure that these biases do not alter the objectivity of journalism is by fostering

ethical values (Strate, 2004). Tandoc et al. (2020) defined communication ethics as moral

relationships that lead to disseminating moral codes, acceptable behaviors, proper evaluation,

and ethical concepts. In the environment of digitalization and quick information sharing, people

tend to ignore their ethical responsibility and the rules abiding by the nature of their work

(Schwab et al., 2022). Thus, it had become common to see many people unquestioningly

accepting and spreading misinformation without considering how their actions would weaken

authentic dialogue. Although the distorted information may pave the way for getting huge

followers, it had no long-term impact on a journalist who wanted to remain relevant for many

years. Schulz (2023) highlighted that journalists must always remain fair as it forms the

judgment of excellent journalism. The inability to observe ethical values could lead to failure in

the profession because the journalism landscape continues to be turbulent as technology changes. Thus, the best strategy for navigating turbulence is to lean on ethical guidance.

Harnessing Journalism Skills Strengthened Their Professionalism.

When explaining how their strategies helped them in the transition journey, most participants talked about the importance of always strengthening their journalistic skills. Participants explained they could overcome unseen obstacles by displaying core journalist skills like open-mindedness, goal setting, and flexibility. Unique journalistic skills like critical thinking, good communication, and confidence differentiate professionals from non-journalists, whose roles are becoming almost similar in digital media. They can learn to navigate obstacles hindering their success by strengthening their critical thinking skills. Participant 4 elaborated, "We could attract huge followers by strengthening their critical thinking skills during the emergence of digital media since many online news consumers trusted their analysis of essential topics." Participant 5 also stressed, "The positive influence of consistency, flexibility, and adaptation skills helped many journalists to succeed in an environment where everybody could attract followers." Participant 14 clarified that, "By eventually realizing that every reporter needed basic skills in online information retrieval and data analysis, we were able to thrive because these skills allowed senior journalists to participate in digital innovation, making them more efficient on developments like World Wide Web, GUI interfaces, and software such as Excel, FoxPro, and Access." Participants also talked about how harnessing skills like consistency, flexibility, and adaptation skills were essential and enabled them to last in the profession.

In his book *The Future of the Library: From Electronic Media to Digital Media*, Robert Logan (2020) extended the media ecology view by relying on McLuhan's ideas. Logan (2020)

published the book to update the communication changes in the digital era by focusing on the

impacts of the internet and other technologies. In the book, Logan writes that communication

culture was oral before people moved to the writing era (Logan, 2020). However, the printing

press took over when writing came, enabling people to access information and understand

critical things happening around them. Technology did not stop at the writing culture because

media advanced to radio, television, telegraph, and other changes (Strate, 2004). However, the

most significant development that many never anticipated was the internet, which gave birth to

the World Wide Web and social interactive platforms. Digital development created a new

ecosystem that promoted communication through visual imagery and shorter texts (Standage,

2003). The digital era changed people's attitudes by developing a new attitude and preferences

for reading short texts integrated with pictures. People adopt preferences and positive

perceptions of social media and the internet because watching something is more accessible than

reading it (Yujie et al., 2022). Therefore, since digital media came with new expectations, it

poses a challenge for journalists to harness their skills to survive. Yujie et al. (2022) explained

that the modern journalism environment is not where a journalist succeeds by doing the bare

minimum. Instead, one must always elevate one's skills and abilities to remain creative and

innovative despite turmoil. Indeed, the relevance of positive skills in journalism cannot be

underrated, particularly in the modern culture where one must always be at the top of their game.

Implications

This section presents this research's methodological, practical, and theoretical

implications. The first section is the methodological implication that explains why qualitative

phenomenological study worked well for this research. Next, I analyzed the practical

significance of this study, where the study's relevance to a broad journalist population was

expounded. I also made the study theoretically relevant by focusing on the importance of media ecology.

Methodological Implications

My study followed qualitative research, which entails exploring insights by gathering data based on how participants describe their experiences, perceptions, and behaviors about the phenomena under study (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Choosing the qualitative method for this research worked well because it created a better opportunity for understanding the experiences of senior journalists when it comes to technological change and the rise in digitalization in the journalism environment. What made the qualitative approach relevant is that it allowed me to ask open-ended questions during the interviews, and this allowed the participants to have the freedom to respond based on their experiences and perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The open-ended questions brought the advantages of not limiting the participants regarding the number of words and how they wanted to describe their encounter with digitalization. I recommend that future researchers who wish to explore studies relating to human experiences consider qualitative approaches because the method makes it possible to illustrate processes and patterns of human behavior that are challenging to quantify. Punch (2013) and Greening (2019) explained that qualitative methods are significant when the researcher wants to get into the natural context of the topic.

Subsequently, the study followed a phenomenological design, which enabled me to generate common meanings from multiple participants. What made the design adequately suit this study is how it influenced the researcher to emphasize the concepts studied (Rashid et al., 2019). Since the goal of my research was to explore strategies that senior journalists adopted to succeed in the current digital media ecosystems, the decision to use phenomenological design

influenced me to seek only senior journalists as they were the most relevant in answering the

research question as they directly encountered the technology transition phase. Thus, engaging

the heterogeneous group of older journalists helped me get first-hand experience of how

technology impacted the communication and journalism landscape. Due to its impact on getting

relevant and correct answers to the research questions, I recommend that other scholars embrace

phenomenological study primarily if they are interested in understanding the phenomena being

studied deeply.

Consequently, using a thematic approach as a data analysis method worked well because

it influenced identifying and exploring the correct themes that emerged from the interview

responses. Emilliussen et al. (2017) defined thematic analysis as a data analysis method entailing

reading through data sets to construct meanings and themes. What made the thematic approach

more suitable for this study is its easy application, which increases efficiency when getting

meaning from large amounts of data. What worked best about thematic analysis is that it allowed

me, when selecting codes, to uncover subthemes and subdivisions, resulting in establishing

relevant themes. Another factor to consider in the thematic analysis is reviewing data by re-

evaluating the topic to determine if the patterns created align with the responses given by the

participants (Punch, 2013).

Practical Implications

My study explored the best strategies senior journalists integrate to succeed in digital

media. Apart from investigating the strategy, I also explored new experiences that resulted from

digital media and how senior journalists overcame the challenges associated with the new media.

The detailed analysis and outcomes that I, as a researcher, found helped deliver practical

significance that can be applied to the whole journalism environment. This section presents the practical implications of this research.

Adaptation Strategies. First, regarding the strategies that journalists who had conformed to the traditional media adopted to succeed in digital media, the research findings from the interview responses indicated that most journalists navigated successfully because they acquired news skills, strengthened ethical principles, embraced digitalization, and delivered engaging content. These responses have practical importance as they guide how a journalist professional can overcome challenges they may experience in their work environment. Ideally, change is inevitable; things transform in the workplace, making it mandatory for people to adjust their ways of doing things (Newman, 2018). However, the bigger question is how one adapts to the changes and succeeds even when the transformation causes turbulence in the work setting. The answer to the question is based on the responses given by senior journalist participants who did not maintain the status quo when new communication technologies emerged. Instead, they adopted new ideas to enable them to cope with the change and emerge successfully.

The response regarding acquiring new skills is essential and can be emulated even with young journalists who may be having challenges dealing with changes. The experience of online rush is different from moving away from fixed news deadlines in that the core element was the rushing to get something posted about the developing story online as fast as possible, even if the fact were not always known. The catalyst for this online rush seemed to be the competition that professional journalists faced from non-journalists who also participated in the online dissemination of the same events or stories. For instance, journalists needed to know how to create digital content and integrate it with appropriate images and high-quality editing to make it appealing. Journalists needed to understand the preferences and behaviors of emerging online

news consumers. Acquiring digital skills was the best way to practice modern journalism. As a result, most senior journalists went for advanced education; they became open to learning digitalization aspects, and some asked for help to master digital skills. This information is essential to all professionals because it constantly challenges them to be open to learning new skills and emerge victorious when transition challenges occur.

Likewise, the responses regarding strengthening ethical principles are also critical as they help professionals understand the role of moral values during challenging times. Participants explained that when digitalization caused competition, an online rush happened because of the demand to gain followers quickly. The online rush created a challenge because many people disseminating news needed to have the opportunity to review their stories before submitting them. Thus, the quality of news delivered to news consumers was reduced, and mistrust increased. However, senior journalists who did not abide by the pressure of competition by remaining grounded in ethical principles could stay relevant as they gained the audience's trust. Therefore, by bringing out the impact of moral values, this research creates practical guidance that enables people to understand that they should not let go of positive values of integrity, accountability, trustworthiness, honesty, fairness, and equity even when facing obstacles.

New Experiences and Emerging Technologies. My study is also practical in understanding the communication challenges in the current digital environment. For instance, when talking about the news experiences senior journalists faced due to the emergence of communication technologies, many mentioned obstacles relating to online rush, intense competition, poor readership, and loss of revenues for traditional media. These challenges indicate that the current news environment may be polluted as news consumers are likely to be exposed to distorted news. For example, participants illustrated that due to social media, news

consumers demanded updates once an event occurred. This means that, unlike in the past, when news was communicated in a specific timeframe, things changed in the digital culture because the urgency of the feeling could not allow people to wait. By setting aside particular timeframes and deadlines for communicating news, journalists had ample time to prepare news content to ensure that the audience gets it in a detailed and comprehensively analyzed manner. However, with the move to share news once an event occurs, journalists were denied the opportunity to dig deeper into the story before sharing the information. The online competition threatened news quality.

Likewise, participants talked about the poor readership problem, where news consumers needed more time to read information than they used to in the print era. Receiving news from social media platforms prevented people from concentrating on the story because the media was also filled with entertaining stories. Relevant stakeholders can use these challenges explained by the participants to develop policies to solve them. For example, a policy that requires people to have complete information details before submitting them can be introduced. Such a policy could prevent online rush by ensuring that anyone interested in sharing a news story investigates it further, verify information from trusted sources, and take time to read what they have before posting it to the public (Schwab et al., 2022). Such measures will significantly eliminate misinformation and distrust problems and cultivate a culture of honesty in people.

Specific Tactics That Led to Long-Term Success. Subsequently, the response to RQ3 about how navigation strategies led to success also has practical significance. Specifically, the discussion on the role of social media in allowing senior journalists access to online news consumers is essential in helping people to know the power of digital media. For example, although digital media exposed journalists to navigation challenges, it also gave them a digital

platform for accessing audiences worldwide. Developing interactive platforms like Facebook,

Instagram, and Twitter, among others, created opportunities for establishing online connections

and meaningful engagement. As indicated by participants, the information regarding the benefits

of social media is practical in helping other people understand the power of social media. For

example, apart from using the platform to make social connections, senior journalists use these

interactive sites to increase brand popularity and awareness, which can help grow a person or

their business. The multiple responses that strengthened the relevance of social media have

helped reinforce the usefulness of the social platform. The information can be used to develop

policies or regulations for guiding people on better use of social media to ensure that people

benefit from them. Adequate regulation would ensure that people do not abuse these platforms to

cause chaos or confusion but instead use them meaningfully to increase brand awareness,

promote candid discussion, and foster positive engagement.

Theoretical Implications

My study also has positive theoretical implications as it expounds on the usefulness of

media ecology in the technology and communication landscape and the journalism ecosystem.

Critical theorists who defined media ecology, like Postman (2005), illustrated how a

technological change could distort people's behaviors. Postman's (2005) ideas helped me make

sense of the challenges that senior journalist participants discussed, such as stiff competition,

poor readership, loss of revenue, and demand for clickbait and eyeballs due to the emergence of

digitalization. On the other hand, McLuhan, in his phrase 'the medium is the message', explains

how the channel that people use to communicate influences the kind of content that should be

shared (McLuhan, 1964). McLuhan's arguments enabled me to comprehend why participants

talked about why they embraced digitalization, enhanced digital skills, and delivered engaging

content since that is what the new digital media demanded. Although these theorists examined

media ecology in terms of communication and technology, its use in this research indicated that

the theory is also helpful in explaining how new communication in journalism has transitioned

from the traditional era to the modern environment. Journalism scholars can pursue additional

research to extend media ecology theory and make it more practical in journalism.

Delimitations

My qualitative phenomenological study investigated the best strategies senior journalists

adopted to successfully transition from traditional news media to a digital journalism

environment filled with new technologies. First, I set the boundary of using qualitative research

because it was the best approach to get first-hand participants' insights based on their

digitalization experiences. Ideally, qualitative research fits my study because its flexibility

enables the researcher to change some variables in the survey to get relevant insights (Creswell

& Poth, 2017). Using qualitative methodology allowed me to ask questions that could not be put

into numbers to comprehend human experiences. I chose not to use quantitative research because

it would have limited the study in getting the bigger picture of the challenges due to

digitalization in journalism.

For the design, I confined the study to phenomenological, which involves the qualitative

process of understanding the universal experiences of a population by interviewing them to learn

from their experiences. A phenomenological study was critical in exploring in-depth,

nonnumerical data on how senior journalists experienced technological transformation in their

work setting. I decided not to use other designs like ethnography, case study, grounded theory, or

action research as they may not have led to getting insights into the lived experiences of the

senior journalists (Punch, 2013). For example, using a grounded theory design may have led to limited generalizability since its findings do not go beyond the study context (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Subsequently, I chose to use senior journalists for the participants. When digitization emerged, even young journalists had just entered the profession. Thus, the obstacles caused by digitalization might have also negatively affected even young journalists. However, I did not include young journalists in the study as participants because this research aimed not only to understand best practices that caused success during the shift process but also to understand what news communication was like in the past. Restricting the study participants solely to senior journalists set the boundary for correctly describing the news communication journey from the traditional era to the digital environment.

I set the theoretical boundary of the study by strictly adhering to media ecology. The reason for using media ecology theory is how it explores the impact of transition and how technological changes can impact communication by altering people's perspectives, opinions, attitudes, behaviors, and actions. Media ecology relates to the study of the environment, where one digs deeper into how a news environment determines the structure and content people embrace when communicating (McLuhan, 1964). Media ecology is more appropriate for this research because it creates an opportunity for understanding technology evolution, interface, and hybridization in the media environment (Postman, 1974). Using other theories would be less appropriate because they would not have created an opportunity to explore the evolution perspective, element interconnection, and how interactions are shaped when new media emerges. By stressing that media should be understood ecologically, the theory directed me to investigate how technological changes altered the symbolic ecosystem of journalism.

Limitations

Although my study was fundamental in understanding journalism's evolution from traditional to digital media, it also came with some limitations. Creswell and Poth (2017) defined research limitations as theoretical and practical shortcomings beyond the researcher's control. Though limitations may weaken the generalizability of the study, they are essential in forming the foundation for future research (Punch, 2013). The first limitation of my research was using a small sample size. Specifically, my research only managed to engage 14 senior journalist participants. Though qualitative interviews are time-consuming and researchers are always recommended to limit their sample size, engaging only 14 respondents was a significant limitation.

Another limitation is that the study only engaged senior journalists as the only participants for the study. The goal was to understand the navigation strategies journalists embraced to overcome the impacts of technological change in journalism. It was a limitation to believe that senior journalists were the only ones affected when digitalization came. The truth is that when technology shakes the journalism landscape, no journalist is spared, as the challenges affect all of them. Hence, it would have been better for the researchers to engage journalists who did not work in the traditional media but worked in the modern journalism environment to understand their challenges. By including younger journalists, I may have gained unique insights into the challenges of digital media. The young journalists may have shed light on what they are doing to ensure they are not shaken by challenges still happening in the journalism environment. The ability to integrate different age groups of journalist participants could have led to more informed findings with validity, transferability, and universality elements. Even with these

limitations, the importance of my study must be considered as it has adequately closed a considerable research gap about best practices for success in the journalism ecosystem.

Future Research

Future research should build on my study's findings and explore the ecological impact of emerging AI technologies. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one technology that alters the nature of work in different professions (De Lima & Ceron, 2021). AI is a unique evolving technology attempting to stimulate human intelligence through machines. AI impact is being felt in the media sector, such as journalism. De Lima and Ceron (2021) explained that AI in journalism revolutionizes how journalists gather, edit, and present news. For example, journalists can generate genuine news articles using AI, such as powered robots. As a result, journalists easily convert complicated texts and data into persuasive content that closely imitates news articles written by humans (De Lima & Ceron, 2021). Thus, it would be essential for future studies to explore the impact of AI in the context of media ecology theory. For instance, although many news organizations use AI in news automation, they lack insight into how the move distorts communication's independence and objectivity (De Lima & Ceron, 2021). Therefore, by using the guidance of critical theorists like Postman, McLuhan, Org, Innis, and Logan, future researchers can expound on AI's impact in the current and future media environment. Grounding the future research of AI in media ecology will help predict the implications that the development will have on journalism settings and the communication field.

Undertaking this study helped me determine the direction future research should pursue. First, future researchers interested in exploring media ecology should include diverse demographics of participants. Future studies should have a sample of young and older

participants from all genders. Rashid et al. (2019) illustrated that when the research includes various groups of participants in their study, they will benefit by getting valuable information for decision-making due to an adequate understanding of different aspects of a unique population. Collecting data from senior, middle-aged, and young journalists would help get a clear picture of the journalism environment, which can influence relevant policymaking. For example, by comparing information from young and senior journalists, the researcher can explore the different approaches different populations have when responding to changes (Punch, 2013). The data can strengthen coordination in the work setting, where different populations are encouraged to learn from one another. Suppose future researchers can allow young journalists to share their views on digitalization culture. In that case, they may get a better view of the current journalism landscape since these actions of the young professionals would help determine the future of news communication. For example, getting their opinions on how they respond to changes and comparing them with older journalists' ideas could help researchers project the best way for professionals to navigate challenging career phases. Relying entirely on senior journalists may have limited the research from exploring the advanced and creative solutions promoted by young professionals. Although the information given by senior participants was crucial in answering the overarching research question, the context of the study needed to have the enthusiastic and aggressive ideas of young professionals currently dominating the media ecosystem. Therefore, my call for future studies is to have rich data from participants from different demographics.

Summary

Indeed, chapter five has been significant in the study as it marked the end of the research. The chapter began by providing a comprehensive summary of the findings. I offered a discussion, methodological and practical implications, delimitation and limitations, and

recommendations for future research. In the summary of the conclusions, I linked the themes that

emerged from the interview responses to the concepts of media ecology theory. The linkage was

made to display the relevance of media ecology ideas in expounding the impact of technological

change in media. For example, by stating that they embraced digitalization as a strategy to

remain successful in the digital journalism ecosystem, participants seemed to echo McLuhan's

ideas that the coming of the digital age will create a new communication culture that people will

have to readjust themselves to ensure that the information they share have meanings. McLuhan

viewed technology as a vital change force that can transform the globe as it will form a new

reality. Therefore, when participants asserted that they had to acquire new skills, accept

digitalization technologies, and provide engaging content to news consumers, they were simply

strengthening what McLuhan predicted that the new media would alter the media landscape,

making it mandatory for people to align to its demands. At the same time, Postman's description

of how new technologies can cause both destruction and benefits was reflected by the themes

that emerged when participants were explaining the news experience they faced when

digitalization emerged. For instance, the participants openly stated the disastrous aspects of

communication technologies, such as unfair competition, online rush, poor readership, and loss

of revenues. The discussion section was vital in exploring how media ecology was relevant to

my study.

In the implication section, I expounded on the methodology's usefulness. For example,

the qualitative design of my study worked well because it gave insights into how technologies

altered the journalism ecosystem. Using qualitative approaches allowed me to ask open-ended

questions during the interview, creating an opportunity for meaningful discussion. Participants

were free to respond based on how they encountered the technology shift. The research also

noted how a phenomenological approach was meaningful for the study, and the design was even

recommended for future scholars who want to pursue studies relating to human lived

experiences. The most relevant aspect of phenomenology is that it guides the research to get a

heterogeneous group of participants with similarities about the explored topic. For instance, since

this research was about strategies that enabled journalists to overcome challenges brought by

new media, the phenomenological design directed me only to seek senior journalists who directly

faced the transition process. The reason for relying on only those participants who encountered

the phenomenon is that it led to getting the ordinary meaning of themes. Other methodological

implications that I applauded included thematic analysis and open-ended interviews.

The research finding also had several practical implications, such as the ability to guide

journalism in overcoming obstacles and the need to develop a policy for controlling social media

use in news communication. Typically, since the primary motive was to understand best

practices that senior journalists put forth to overcome digitalization challenges, younger

journalists and professionals from different fields can use the information from the research

outcome to know how to overcome obstacles that may hinder their career growth. Some critical

strategies that professionals can enhance include strengthening relevant skills, being open to

accepting change, and shielding themselves through ethical principles. Participants noted that,

although the technology changes were happening quickly, they did not give up. Instead, they

pursued learning, asked for help, and became open to trying new things to harness their digital

capabilities. The responses reinforce that despite the nature of the challenges that one faces, one

should recognize the value of developing one's skills because it forms the basis of achieving

success. Another practical implication is that this research helped reveal the need for establishing

policies to guide people on how to read news dissemination in social media. Senior journalists

faced the most challenges due to news media, such as poor readership, competition, online rush,

and increased interest in chasing eyeballs and clickbait, which happened because there was no

policy to regulate how news should be shared on interactive social platforms. These problems

persist in the current news culture, and no solution is being created. Thus, my study has practical

significance in helping the audience determine that the best way to reduce news communication

problems faced in digital media is through policy development to stiffen the regulation of

information people access.

The delimitation and limitation section also helped outline the relevance of the

methodology applied and the shortcomings relating to this research. For example, in the

delimitation section, the research described the reason for pursuing qualitative study, not

quantitative. I also explained why the study adopted a phenomenological design and not other

designs. I illustrated why senior journalists were integrated into the research, not young

journalists. Regarding the choice of participants, it was more appropriate to include senior

journalists because they were directly affected by the transition challenges, unlike young

journalists who may have likely started their careers when digital media was already established.

Likewise, for the limitation section, I described some weaknesses of my study, such as the use of

a small sample size and the inability to include diverse participants in terms of age

demographics. Although qualitative research is time-consuming, engaging only 14 participants

for this crucial study was a shortcoming because the responses generated may not have been

sufficient to make a viable and valid conclusion. Indeed, it is not possible to pursue research

without flaws. Therefore, my study's limitations indicate that no one is perfect.

Finally, I presented the direction and recommendation for future studies. First, by

acknowledging that my research had some limitations, I recommended that future studies address

the shortcomings by pursuing a study with an appropriate sample size and diverse population.

Another important recommendation for future research was the impact of artificial intelligence in

communication and journalism through the lens of media ecology. Indeed, the effect of media

ecology theory cannot be underestimated primarily when investigating the environment, ecology,

culture, and the structure of new media. Throughout this research, the ideas of media ecology

have enhanced my understanding of journalism evolution, including the impacts that news

technology brings. Since AI is becoming a significant news technology in the current

environment, researching its impact could help prepare people on what they should do to remain

relevant.

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