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Digital news storytelling in Malaysian newsrooms: Multimedia journalists' perspectives on cross-platform journalism

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ABSTRACT

The digital-first strategies in modern multimedia journalism have made digital news storytelling a central practice. This study investigates how Malaysian multimedia journalists (MJs) navigate this evolving landscape, focusing on their conceptualisation and implementation of digital storytelling strategies. As Malaysian newsrooms adapt to a digitised news ecosystem, MJs are tasked with balancing journalistic integrity with the demands of immediacy, engagement, and platform-specific formatting for diverse digital audiences. A qualitative approach, utilising in-depth interviews with 16 MJs from mainstream Malaysian broadcast newsrooms, was employed. Thematic analysis identified four key themes: audience-driven narratives, the challenge of sustaining journalistic ethics, the evolving criteria from newsworthiness to shareworthiness, and the strategic use of multimedia tools and techniques. The findings suggest that while the core journalistic values of accuracy, fairness, and credibility persist, MJs are adopting new storytelling practices to resonate with fragmented digital audiences. This study provides a timely contribution to the literature on digital journalism in Southeast Asia, offering insights into the changing roles and responsibilities of MJs in Malaysia.

Keywords: ***Digital journalism, multimedia journalists, digital storytelling, cross-platform journalism***

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the consumption of news has transformed, moving far beyond the boundaries of the television screen (Kim, 2023). Audiences who once relied on scheduled broadcasts now expect instant, interactive, and on-demand updates delivered through websites, mobile applications, social media platforms, and live streams (Ren et al., 2024). This evolution has redefined not only how news is accessed but also how it is experienced. Audiences are no longer passive recipients of information but active informants who share, comment, and even shape news narratives in real time. For Malaysian television newsrooms, this shift has created both an opportunity and a challenge; while digital platforms provide unprecedented reach, they also demand faster production cycles, platform-specific storytelling, and innovative approaches to sustain audience attention in an increasingly crowded information ecosystem.

In response to these shifting dynamics, broadcast organisations in Malaysia have restructured their operations, most notably by introducing and expanding the role of multimedia journalists (MJs). Himma-Kadakas and Mõttus (2021) described MJs as contemporary storytellers who continue to uphold the traditional values of journalism, such as truth, accuracy, fairness, and credible sourcing, while simultaneously adopting new techniques to meet the demands of digital-first audiences. In practice, this means MJs are no longer confined to the linearity of print or television reporting. Instead, they weave together text, visuals, audio, video, graphics, and interactive elements into cohesive multimedia narratives designed to capture and retain fragmented audiences across multiple platforms (Ren et al., 2024).

This transformation has been particularly visible in leading Malaysian news organisations such as Astro AWANI, RTM, BERNAMA TV, and Media Prima Berhad, all of which have implemented the MJ model to remain competitive in the digital news landscape (Esa et al., 2024). Beyond responding to technological disruptions, the MJ model also reflects an organisational strategy to maximise newsroom efficiency with leaner teams, requiring journalists to multitask across roles that were once clearly delineated. This dual pressure, to innovate creatively while working under increasingly compressed timelines, has made the MJ role both indispensable and demanding.

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates how Malaysian multimedia journalists are "telling the news differently". It explores the ways they conceptualise and practise digital storytelling, the multimedia tools and techniques they employ, and the ethical and professional challenges they encounter. By examining these lived experiences, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how journalism in Malaysia is adapting to the realities of the digital era while remaining grounded in its enduring values.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The integration of digital platforms into news production has transformed not only the technical processes of journalism but also the professional expectations placed on multimedia journalists (MJs) (Kusumawati, 2023). MJs are now expected to maintain an active presence across multiple platforms, engage directly with audiences, and deliver updates in real time. This has accelerated what scholars describe as "speed-driven journalism", where the race to be first often overshadows the need for depth, reflection,

and nuance (Ren et al., 2024). For Malaysian MJs, this constant cycle of content production sustains audience attention but simultaneously heightens the pressures of newsroom work (Esa & Wan Zainodin, 2025).

While digital technologies open new opportunities for creative storytelling, they also create profound challenges. MJs are frequently required to do more in less time, juggling filming, editing, writing, and publishing tasks single-handedly (Gushevinalti & Suparman, 2024). These demands often force them to balance speed with accuracy, leaving limited room for investigative reporting or in-depth analysis. Moreover, the emphasis on immediacy has reshaped the very nature of news, leading to formats that are shorter, more shareable, and often designed for virality rather than depth (Barnidge & Xenos, 2024). The rise of clickbait headlines and listicle-driven content further reflects this shift, raising concerns about how the journalistic values of credibility and fairness can be preserved in such an environment (Pengnate et al., 2021).

Despite the significance of these changes, research on how MJs themselves perceive and navigate this transformation remains limited, especially in Southeast Asia. Much of the literature on digital journalism is centred on Western contexts (Anis Sharadga et al., 2022; Himma-Kadakas & Mõttus, 2021), leaving a gap in understanding how Malaysian MJs conceptualise digital storytelling and negotiate the competing demands of speed, engagement, ethics, and cross-platform production. Addressing this gap is crucial, as their lived experiences provide valuable insights into the evolving nature of journalism in Malaysia, and doing so represents the primary contribution of the present study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital storytelling has become a defining feature of modern journalism, enabling the use of multimedia elements, such as text, video, audio, graphics, and interactivity, to create narratives that enhance understanding and engagement (Kulkarni et al., 2022). Unlike traditional reporting that relied on linear formats, digital storytelling allows news to unfold across multiple entry points, giving audiences the choice to explore stories in immersive and personalised ways (Van Der Nat et al., 2021). This shift is not only technological but cultural, reshaping how journalists design experiences as much as how they deliver information (Planer et al., 2022).

The rise of social media has fragmented audiences, forcing newsrooms to distribute stories across multiple platforms, each with unique conventions and algorithmic demands (Indrati et al., 2021). This requires journalists to adapt the same story differently for television, websites, and platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or X (formerly Twitter). Success is now measured not only by accuracy but also by metrics such as clicks, shares, and engagement, intensifying the demand for speed and consistency (Lim & Wilson, 2024). Multimedia journalists (MJs) must combine traditional reporting with skills in video editing, graphic design, and social media management (Cummings, 2020). While this versatility enables cross-platform storytelling, it also increases workload and raises questions about sustainability, particularly in resource-constrained newsrooms (Mohd Arsad et al., 2024).

The creative opportunities of digital storytelling are tempered by ethical challenges. The pressure to produce content quickly and capture attention can lead to

practices such as clickbait or emotional framing, which risk undermining credibility and eroding audience trust (Thomson et al., 2022). In Malaysia, Lim & Wilson (2024) showed that clickbait-driven viral journalism has become an established feature of the local news ecosystem, placing additional pressure on mainstream newsrooms to compete for attention without compromising professional standards. Algorithm-driven platforms also reward sensational or emotionally charged content, creating tension between journalistic integrity and commercial imperatives (Baranova et al., 2022). Multimedia storytelling has the power to shape public perceptions through visuals and framing, amplifying certain voices while marginalising others. This makes fairness, inclusivity, and balance even more critical in digital reporting, particularly in the Malaysian context, where journalists must also navigate cultural and religious sensitivities in their reporting decisions (Sabri & Abdullah, 2022).

Collectively, the literature highlights that digital storytelling is both an opportunity and a disruption: it fosters innovation and deeper engagement but also intensifies pressures related to speed, platform adaptation, and ethics. Nevertheless, most studies have focused on technological innovation or newsroom practices in Western contexts, leaving limited understanding of how Malaysian multimedia journalists, who operate at the intersection of traditional values and digital imperatives, experience and negotiate these changes. This gap provides the rationale for the present study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted the News Value Theory, originating in Galtung and Ruge's (1965) seminal analysis of foreign news, as its foundational framework for exploring how news quality standards are constructed across cross-media platforms. Galtung and Ruge identified eight core news values, namely threshold, frequency, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, and composition, which have long served as essential criteria guiding news selection processes.

Subsequent scholarship has substantially revised and extended this taxonomy. Harcup and O'Neill (2017) tested Galtung and Ruge's criteria against the content of the British press and proposed a contemporary set of news values that incorporated, among others, celebrity, entertainment, and the news organisation's own agenda. Revisiting the framework in the social media era, Harcup and O'Neill (2017) added shareability, drama, and audio-visual appeal to their taxonomy, explicitly acknowledging that audience behaviour on digital platforms now shapes editorial judgements of newsworthiness. Caple (2018) advanced a discursive perspective, arguing that news values are not inherent properties of events but are constructed through the language and images of news texts, an insight that is particularly pertinent to multimedia storytelling. In computational journalism research, Trilling et al. (2017) introduced the concept of "shareworthiness", demonstrating that the characteristics that predict audience sharing differ from those underpinning traditional newsworthiness. Ittefaq (2018) likewise highlighted the necessity of revisiting classical frameworks to capture the dynamics of globalised journalism and the complexities of the digital media environment.

These theoretical developments resonate strongly with the Malaysian context, where mainstream broadcasters compete with viral, clickbait-driven digital content (Lim & Wilson, 2024) and where editorial judgement is negotiated within distinctive cultural,

religious, and regulatory sensitivities (Sabri & Abdullah, 2022). Applying the News Value Theory in this setting therefore requires attentiveness to how global platform logics intersect with local newsroom cultures.

Accordingly, this study utilised Galtung and Ruge's framework as a conceptual baseline while drawing on these subsequent refinements to interpret the findings. The News Value Theory served not merely as a framework for understanding news selection but as an interpretive lens for examining how Malaysian multimedia journalists negotiate the changing demands of digital journalism, and specifically whether traditional news values remain intact, are reweighted, or are supplemented by audience-oriented criteria such as shareability within the cross-platform practice (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017).

METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore how multimedia journalists (MJs) in Malaysia understand and navigate digital storytelling. Sixteen (16) MJs were purposively sampled from four leading Malaysian newsrooms, namely Media Prima Berhad, Astro AWANI, Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) and BERNAMA TV. These informants were selected based on their active involvement in producing digital-first content across multiple platforms, including social media, news websites, and television. The purposive approach ensured that informants possessed the relevant expertise and first-hand experience needed to address the study's objectives (Dhobi, 2022).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted via Google Meet. Conducting interviews online proved both practical and effective, offering flexibility in scheduling and reducing geographical constraints. This was particularly important given the demanding nature of MJs' work, which required balancing study participation with professional commitments. The virtual format also provided a comfortable and familiar environment for informants, encouraging more open and reflective responses (Carignani & Burchi, 2022).

The interview guide was carefully developed to capture MJs' conceptualisations of digital storytelling, their adaptations to newsroom workflows in the digital era, and the challenges they faced in producing content across multiple platforms. All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and systematically organised for analysis. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase thematic analysis framework. NVivo 12 software was employed to facilitate systematic coding, management, and interpretation of the large volume of qualitative data. Coding was conducted at three levels: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Open coding allowed the researchers to break down the data into initial categories that captured the diverse ideas expressed by informants. Axial coding then linked these categories by identifying relationships and patterns, thereby refining the emerging structure. Finally, selective coding enabled the integration of these patterns into core themes that directly addressed the research objectives. This three-level approach ensured analytical depth and rigour, as it moved from surface descriptions towards more abstract, conceptual insights (Deterding & Waters, 2021). The use of NVivo 12 enhanced transparency and consistency throughout the process, allowing the themes to emerge organically while maintaining methodological robustness.

Following Braun and Clarke's six phases, the researchers repeatedly read the transcripts to achieve familiarisation before generating initial codes. Related codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories, which were refined into four overarching themes through iterative comparison and discussion among the research team. This process ensured that the themes remained grounded in informants' lived experiences while reflecting the study's research objectives.

Table 1 presents the professional profiles of the informants, offering contextual insights to situate the subsequent discussion of findings.

Table 1. Informants' profile

Informant	Age	Position	Working Experience (years)
MJ1	30	Multimedia journalist	6
MJ2	25	Broadcast journalist	3
MJ3	31	Broadcast journalist	7
MJ4	34	Multimedia journalist	10
MJ5	36	Broadcast journalist	11
MJ6	29	Broadcast journalist	5
MJ7	28	Broadcast journalist	4
MJ8	36	Multimedia journalist	12
MJ9	33	Broadcast journalist	8
MJ10	32	Broadcast journalist	8
MJ11	27	Broadcast journalist	4
MJ12	30	Multimedia journalist	6
MJ13	33	Broadcast journalist	9
MJ14	35	Broadcast journalist	10
MJ15	29	Broadcast journalist	5
MJ16	37	Senior broadcast journalist	13

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals that Malaysian multimedia journalists (MJs) are not simply adapting to digital platforms but are actively telling the news differently by reshaping narratives around audience needs, expectations, and behaviours. Digital storytelling here represents a recalibration of practice, where speed is balanced with verification, and innovation with integrity. Rather than abandoning journalism's principles, MJs reinterpret them to sustain trust and engagement in fast-paced media spaces. Four key dimensions emerge from the analysis: (i) audience-driven narratives, (ii) sustaining journalistic ethics, (iii) newsworthiness to shareworthiness, and (iv) multimedia tools and techniques.

Audience-driven narratives

In the eyes of these MJs, digital storytelling is no longer about merely transferring traditional television scripts onto social media feeds. Instead, it is about reimagining the story: tailoring language, visuals, and formats to capture attention, spark interaction, and sustain trust in an increasingly competitive digital landscape.

As informants emphasised, audiences today expect more than just information. They want clarity, immediacy, and relevance across the platforms they inhabit. This requires MJs to blend the traditional journalistic values of accuracy, fairness, and credibility with new forms of storytelling that make news both informative and engaging (Salawu et al., 2022). Two MJs reflected on this balance by noting:

> *Ensure accuracy whether through social media or TV news. Stick to what was discussed in the media session. Deliver news that benefits the people. Avoid unnecessary details and self-made assumptions, as they can lead to issues.*
> (MJ 11, RTM)

> *For example, during a minister's press conference, what are the key points? In that one hour, what do we most want to convey? What do people want to know? Which parts will benefit them the most?* (MJ 10, AWANI)

In this sense, telling the news differently involves sustaining journalistic standards while experimenting with creative storytelling methods that meet audience demands. Informants described how stories are now extended across platforms, with different angles highlighted for different communities. For instance, a breaking news report may be presented as a concise update on X, a visually compelling infographic on Instagram, and a longer analytical video on YouTube or television. Rather than duplicating content, these strategies allow newsrooms to create multiple entry points for audiences to engage with the same story (Lischka & Garz, 2021).

This shift is also driven by competition with digital-only outlets, content creators, and online communities that often break stories first or shape conversations through alternative framings. Informants acknowledged that these actors influence audience expectations of speed and interactivity, sometimes even setting the agenda for mainstream media to follow. However, MJs insisted that what sets professional journalism apart is its capacity to verify, contextualise, and provide depth, qualities that reinforce credibility in a crowded digital environment. As one MJ explained:

> *As authorised media, we may not feel directly challenged by digital platforms and citizen journalists, but we must keep pace with them. They are our competitors, so we must recognise the competition and not concede defeat.*
> (MJ 8, BERNAMA TV)

Thus, telling the news differently is not simply about embracing virality but about strengthening journalism's role in filtering and authenticating information. Informants framed their efforts as a form of responsibility: while attention-grabbing strategies such as thumbnails, captions, or trending hashtags are used to attract younger audiences, these are always tied to the larger goal of informing the public truthfully. As one MJ highlighted:

> *Digital news platforms need to engage Gen Z differently than TV. To capture their attention, we use compelling thumbnails alongside headlines. This strategy increases clicks and broadens content reach.*
> (MJ 5, Media Prima Berhad)

These findings suggest that audience engagement has become an additional consideration alongside classical news values such as significance and meaningfulness, a pattern consistent with past research inclusion of shareability and audience appeal in their revised taxonomy. Rather than replacing traditional news values, digital storytelling reinterprets them within platform-specific environments. This recalibration reflects a shift in how audiences are perceived: not as passive consumers, but as active informants in the news process.

Sustaining journalistic ethics

The findings reveal that Malaysian MJs remain deeply committed to the ethical foundations of their profession, namely accuracy, impartiality, and credibility, even as they adapt stories for the fast-paced environment of digital platforms. While the demand for speed is greater than ever, these MJs emphasise that haste must never override truth. Accuracy is safeguarded through verification, corroboration, and source triangulation, practices that are seen as central to sustaining credibility in an era where misinformation spreads rapidly and irreversibly (Baranova et al., 2022).

The informants highlighted the weight of responsibility that comes with publishing in real time. Aware that even small inaccuracies could erode trust, they described accuracy as their profession's distinguishing hallmark in comparison with citizen journalism:

> *I prioritise accuracy, balance, and clarity, setting us apart from citizen journalists. Our credibility stems from reliable sources, distinguishing us significantly.* (MJ 14, AWANI)

This professional ethos situates mainstream media as custodians of accountability, where truth is non-negotiable. Journalists described the routine of double-checking facts not merely as a safeguard, but as the very foundation of their legitimacy:

> *In court cases, we first give a general update, then details in a subsequent tweet. On Twitter, mistakes are irreversible and risk our reputation. If something feels off, especially with figures, we double-check.* (MJ 15, RTM)

> *There is more fake news than authentic news. Our advantage is connecting with sources to verify authenticity. We must confirm and get consent from relevant parties before posting.* (MJ 9, Media Prima Berhad)

This emphasis on careful validation reflects what Ojala (2021) termed "dual-purpose ethic": fact-checking protects the public from misinformation while simultaneously reinforcing the media's own reputation as a reliable authority. In this way, digital storytelling does not weaken journalistic standards. Instead, it adapts verification to platforms like Twitter and Instagram, where speed and accuracy must coexist.

Equally important is clarity. Amid the noise of convergent media, MJs noted that presenting information in clear, digestible forms is essential to avoid confusion. In sustaining ethical standards, clarity operates as a safeguard against misinterpretation, ensuring that storytelling remains both engaging and responsible (Sabri & Abdullah, 2022). As noted by one MJ:

> *We aim for balance, presenting perspectives from all sides to maintain neutrality. Quality reporting blends viewpoints, allowing readers to form judgments based on facts.* (MJ 1, Media Prima Berhad)

Such commitment reflects the role of MJs as not only gatekeepers of information but also mediators of trust in a fragmented media environment. By emphasising balance and diversity of perspectives, they reinforce journalism's public service function while resisting the polarisation that thrives on algorithm-driven platforms (Grygiel & Lysak, 2021). As one MJ observed:

> *Speed isn't enough; information must be accurate, especially in social media spaces. As mainstream media, we're trusted representatives. We verify news before release: fast, accurate, and authenticated.* (MJ4, BERNAMA TV)

Ultimately, sustaining journalistic ethics is not merely about preserving tradition in the face of change; it is about fortifying journalism's relevance in a digital era. Through careful fact-checking, balanced storytelling, and an unwavering commitment to truth, Malaysian MJs demonstrate that digital storytelling can coexist with, and even strengthen, the core values of the profession.

From the perspective of the News Value Theory, these findings indicate that traditional values such as meaningfulness and continuity continue to underpin editorial decision-making despite increasing technological pressures. While digital platforms encourage rapid dissemination and continuous updates, Malaysian MJs consistently emphasise verification and balance before publication. This suggests that digital transformation has not diminished the importance of classical news values; rather, it has reinforced their significance as mechanisms for maintaining public trust in increasingly competitive and information-saturated media environments.

Newsworthiness to shareworthiness

Traditionally, the concept of newsworthiness has been the cornerstone of journalism, guiding decisions about which events deserve public attention. Caple (2018) defined newsworthiness as content deemed inherently worthy of being published as news. However, in the contemporary digital environment, this standard has expanded beyond editorial judgement to include audience interaction, platform dynamics, and the capacity of stories to travel through networks of sharing and engagement. In this context, the concept of shareworthiness emerges not as a replacement for newsworthiness, but as an extension that reflects the realities of digital journalism (Munger, 2020).

Szymanski et al. (2017) explicitly argued that shareability has become a criterion in assessing the value of news. The rise of social media platforms has transformed news distribution into a participatory process, where the act of sharing functions as both validation and amplification. Tenenboim (2022) underscored this shift by noting that the "share" button has become a mechanism of civic engagement, capable of reshaping narratives and sparking national or even global conversations. For Malaysian MJs, this means that stories are no longer evaluated solely on their alignment with classical values such as significance, timeliness, or conflict. They must also be assessed for their potential to resonate with audiences in ways that encourage interaction and virality.

This evolution is particularly evident in the highly competitive Malaysian media ecosystem, where mainstream broadcasters now compete directly with digital-only outlets, independent content creators, and citizen journalists (Shiang & Wilson, 2024). Informants in this study described how this competition has intensified the pressure to deliver real-time updates while simultaneously maintaining credibility. For them, speed is an unavoidable imperative, yet accuracy and trust remain non-negotiable. As one MJ stressed:

> *In social media, timeliness is crucial for breaking news, but accuracy mustn't be sacrificed. Credibility, comprehensive content, and verification from authoritative sources enhance news quality.* (MJ 2, AWANI)

Here, the balancing act is clear; audiences demand immediacy, but they also hold mainstream media accountable for trustworthiness. This dual expectation has reshaped newsroom practices, with journalists investing more effort in rapid verification, cross-checking with authoritative sources, and ensuring that their updates are both timely and reliable.

One strategy adopted by MJs to meet these competing demands is adherence to the KISS principle, "keep it short and simple" (Luping, 2022). In an age of scrolling feeds and fleeting attention spans, concise news packages allow audiences to absorb information quickly without being overwhelmed. This principle is not merely about brevity, but about distilling complex realities into accessible forms while safeguarding factual accuracy. As one informant explained:

> *On TV, news segments are straightforward and concise, delivering breaking news promptly. Content is distilled to its core due to time limits, ensuring clarity and comprehension for our audience.* (MJ 12, BERNAMA TV)

Beyond concision, however, the findings highlight that shareworthiness is equally about sustaining engagement. MJs are increasingly using techniques of continuity and creativity to hold audience attention across platforms. Instead of treating stories as one-off reports, they construct narratives sequences, breaking a story into parts or following it up with additional context. This approach not only maximises reach but also deepens public engagement by encouraging audiences to return for updates (Hermida & Mellado, 2020). As one informant observed:

> *Quality news often has continuity, with part one and part two stories. MStar, an online portal, is criticised for creating suspenseful stories. Despite this, the strategy engages netizens and boosts their social media popularity.* (MJ 3, RTM)

This continuity-based storytelling illustrates how shareworthiness extends beyond the superficial act of sharing; it taps into the audience's desire for unfolding narratives, inviting them to participate in the story's development.

The findings also reveal how platform-specific tailoring has become integral to the news production process. In broadcast news, headlines and story angles are still shaped

around national significance and collective concerns. In contrast, social media requires more emotive, eye-catching, or "catchy" hooks to drive clicks and engagement. Journalists carefully calibrate these angles depending on the medium:

> *Social media and TV headlines differ based on audience preferences. Some stories fit both platforms, while others trend mainly on social media, such as accidents. TV prioritises national issues.* (MJ 10, AWANI)

Rather than a simple process of repurposing the same content across multiple platforms, MJs now curate their storytelling with platform sensitivity, ensuring that each version resonates with its intended audience. Such adaptability is critical in sustaining both newsworthiness and shareworthiness, as it acknowledges that audiences engage with news differently depending on the medium. At the same time, informants repeatedly emphasised that this pursuit of shareworthiness does not entail abandoning professional ethics; credibility and accuracy remain the backbone of their work, and MJs see themselves as custodians of trust in an environment saturated with misinformation and viral speculation.

This finding lends empirical support to arguments that contemporary news value increasingly incorporates audience-oriented criteria alongside editorial judgements of significance, timeliness, and proximity (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017; Trilling et al., 2017). In digital journalism, the capacity of a story to generate audience interaction through sharing, commenting, and engagement has emerged as an additional indicator of news value. Rather than replacing traditional newsworthiness, shareworthiness complements it by reflecting how audiences participate in the circulation and amplification of news across digital platforms. Accordingly, the findings suggest that news values are becoming increasingly participatory, with editorial priorities shaped not only by journalists' professional judgement but also by anticipated audience behaviour and platform dynamics.

Multimedia tools and techniques

The findings of this study reveal that Malaysian MJs are telling the news differently not only through what they report but also through how they craft and deliver stories using a wide range of multimedia tools and techniques. The evolution of digital journalism demands that journalists step beyond their traditional role of writing and editing text. As Boukes et al. (2020) argued, contemporary journalism is characterised by the fusion of technical expertise and narrative ability, where journalists must balance the craft of storytelling with the technical skills of producing and curating multimedia content. These skills include capturing and editing photos and videos, designing infographics, processing data, and, increasingly, experimenting with technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), and 3D visualisation (Ganzabal Learreta et al., 2023).

The integration of multimedia is not simply an aesthetic choice, it is a strategic response to the expectations of digital audiences. Readers today are no longer satisfied with static narratives; they anticipate immersive, engaging, and visually dynamic stories (Martin & Murrell, 2021). By blending images, video clips, graphics, and interactive features, MJs are able to simplify complex issues, maintain audience attention, and offer richer contexts without overwhelming the viewer. This approach aligns with the "keep it

short and simple" (KISS) principle, which underscores the need for clarity and accessibility in fast-paced digital environments (Fürst, 2020).

Informants in this study emphasised that visual elements often carry as much weight as textual narratives, especially on social media platforms where images and infographics function as hooks to draw audiences into the story. As two MJs explained:

> *In TV news, facts are key, but visuals like still photos are equally important. Visual elements are appealing and effective, just like on social media, where images and infographics enhance engagement.* (MJ 16, BERNAMA TV)

> *We use bullet points on social media, TV, and the web for clear information. For example, we summarise the Health Minister's press conference with key points. We work with graphics team for quick infographics.* (MJ 6, AWANI)

Beyond visuals, journalists are also experimenting with new technologies that deepen engagement. For instance, one newsroom used AI and 3D graphics during flood coverage to illustrate water levels and affected areas, offering audiences a vivid and contextualised understanding of the crisis:

> *Multimedia elements and AI enhance audience engagement. For example, during recent flood coverage, we used AI and 3D graphics to visualise floodwater height, captivating viewers' attention.*
>
> (MJ 13, Media Prima Berhad)

These examples demonstrate how multimedia techniques enable journalists to transform routine news into interactive, audience-centred experiences. A recurring theme in the interviews was the central role of dedicated digital teams in sustaining this new form of storytelling. Informants consistently highlighted that while field reporters remain responsible for gathering information, the digital team assumes the responsibility of enhancing and adapting stories for diverse platforms. This team typically collaborates with editors and producers to incorporate multimedia features that strengthen the impact of the narrative. As Esa and Wan Zainodin (2025) suggested, such collaboration is now integral to the newsroom workflow, ensuring that stories are both journalistically rigorous and digitally engaging. One MJ reflected on this collaborative model:

> *At RTM, we upload stories directly to social media and WhatsApp groups. The duty editor ensures accuracy, and the digital team enhances content with posters or infographics if needed. My role as a field journalist concludes once I provide the news.* (MJ 7, RTM)

Another stressed the speed required in this process, particularly during crises:

> *For critical assignments with top officials, our online team swiftly gathers information from field reporters for breaking news, especially in disasters. They create graphics, identify affected areas, and produce illustrations as needed, ensuring prompt coverage.* (MJ 1, Media Prima Berhad)

What emerges from these accounts is a workflow that is both meticulously coordinated and highly responsive to the speed of digital news circulation. The immediacy of online journalism demands fast turnarounds, and digital teams act as crucial intermediaries in ensuring that stories are not only timely but also visually compelling and contextually rich. This synergy between journalists and digital specialists transforms what might otherwise be a straightforward report into a dynamic multimedia narrative tailored for cross-platform engagement.

Ultimately, the study suggests that multimedia storytelling in Malaysia is not about replacing traditional journalistic values but about amplifying them through new tools and formats. Credibility, accuracy, and clarity remain central, but these values are now delivered through layered, visually rich, and technologically enhanced narratives. The presence of digital teams ensures that this transformation is systematic rather than ad hoc, embedding multimedia practices into newsroom routines and sustaining the relevance of mainstream journalism in an era where attention is fragmented and competition from digital-native content creators is fierce.

These findings further indicate that multimedia technologies have expanded how the News Value Theory operates within digital journalism. Traditional news values such as meaningfulness and composition are no longer conveyed exclusively through written narratives but are increasingly communicated through visual storytelling, infographics, video, artificial intelligence, and interactive multimedia elements, echoing Bednarek and Caple's (2017) argument that newsworthiness is constructed through the semiotic resources of news texts themselves. Malaysian MJs therefore reinterpret established news values by selecting storytelling formats that enhance audience comprehension and engagement while maintaining editorial integrity.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined how Malaysian multimedia journalists (MJs) are telling the news differently in the digital age, reshaping professional practice around four key dimensions: audience-driven narratives, sustaining journalistic ethics, the shift from newsworthiness to shareworthiness, and the integration of multimedia tools and techniques. Together, these dimensions reveal how journalism is evolving from a primarily broadcast-oriented model to one that is participatory, platform-sensitive, and technologically mediated, while still anchored in the enduring values of credibility and accuracy.

The implications are twofold. Theoretically, the findings contribute to the ongoing refinement of the News Value Theory by showing how classical news values are reweighted and supplemented by audience-oriented criteria in a Malaysian cross-platform context. Practically, they call for greater investment in digital skills training, collaborative editorial workflows, and organisational support systems that enable journalists to fully leverage multimedia and immersive technologies without compromising professional standards.

Future research could extend this inquiry by exploring how audiences themselves interpret and respond to these new forms of digital storytelling, or by examining comparative practices across different national and cultural contexts. Equally, studies on the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and extended reality, in shaping newsroom routines and narrative strategies would provide valuable insights into journalism's next frontier.

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