



Crafting standards of news quality on cross-media platforms: Exploring the perspectives of multimedia journalists through interpretative phenomenological analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the crafting of news quality standards on cross-media platforms to enhance journalistic practices among multimedia journalists (MJs) in broadcast media organisations in Malaysia. Guided by the News Value Theory, semi-structured interviews with 15 MJs were conducted and interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to identify the superordinate and subordinate themes. Findings reveal three superordinate themes, namely commodities, journalism principles and newsworthiness to shareworthiness. In crafting the standards of quality in news on cross-media platforms, media organisations should develop and enforce a comprehensive code of ethics that prioritises accuracy, objectivity, and transparency in reporting. Additionally, implementing rigorous fact-checking processes and mechanisms for discerning quality news from misinformation promotes responsible and accountable reporting among MJs. In conclusion, the challenges posed by the digital transformation in the media landscape underline the need for a national response from the media industry to navigate future practices while maintaining journalistic integrity standards.

Keywords: **Multimedia journalist, cross-media platform, news quality, interpretive phenomenological analysis**

INTRODUCTION

The crafting of high-quality news on cross-media platforms is pivotal in fostering informed public discourse and upholding journalistic integrity. With the proliferation of news sites, live broadcasts, and social media platforms, viewers today can conveniently access a diverse range of news content. This digital transformation has prompted mainstream media organisations in Malaysia to embrace cross-media platforms, significantly expanding their broadcast coverage through streaming technology and real-time distribution (Taibi & Na, 2020).

Beginning 2010, broadcasting and media organisations in Malaysia embarked on the journey of modernising newsrooms through cross-media convergence (Esa, 2020), marking a pivotal shift in journalistic practices. This evolution ushered the emergence of the multimedia journalist (MJ) role, fundamentally altering traditional newsroom dynamics. As such, newsrooms are no longer confined to the traditional constraints of prime-time broadcast deadlines. Instead, journalists now grapple with the democratisation of news sources with the proliferation of online platforms presenting them with an array of challenges, inherent to the new media landscape.

The Reuters Digital News Report (RDNR) revealed that Malaysian news consumers have become increasingly reliant on online and social media platforms, with 89% citing them as primary news sources (Newman et al., 2023). This trend poses challenges for MJJs to produce high-quality content that rivals online sources. Thus, standardised routines guided by media organisations are essential, highlighting the importance of adhering to news values to enhance story significance and motivate journalists (Araujo & van der Meer, 2020) in navigating the future of journalism practices.

Newsrooms serve the critical function of informing the public about relevant events, necessitating the highest quality of reported news. Inaccurate or misleading information not only fails to inform but also risks misguiding audiences (Lwin et al., 2023). Accuracy in journalism involves obtaining precise facts, rectifying errors, and reducing biases. Therefore, news should be pertinent to the audience, capturing their attention, particularly news directly affecting them. These concerns motivate the current study on news quality standards.

To gain insights into the establishment of news quality standards on cross-media platforms, MJJs from four leading Malaysian broadcast media organisations: Astro Awani, Media Prima Berhad, BernamaTV, and RTM were interviewed. These media outlets were chosen because they represent the mainstream broadcast media organisations in Malaysia that have embraced convergence within their operations, in response to the evolving media landscape. They are notable for disseminating their news across various media platforms to broaden audience reach.

The objective of this study is to explore the crafting of news quality standards on cross-media platforms to enhance journalistic practices among MJJs in Malaysia. With a particular focus on the transitioning role of broadcast journalist to MJ, it is imperative to delve into the perspectives of MJJs on new media to ensure that the credibility and sustainability of improved journalism are complied. This paper comprises five sections: a review of relevant literature, the methodology employed in data gathering, presentation of findings and finally, the conclusion of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The cross-media landscape is characterised by a plethora of digital outlets, offering increased accessibility to news across various platforms (Matassi & Boczkowski, 2021). Extensive

academic research identified numerous facets of news quality in cross media, encompassing transparency, balance, inclusiveness, objectivity, and other dimensions (Bachmann et al., 2022; Cornière & Sarvary, 2023; Muslikhin et al., 2021). This underscores the importance of news impact in establishing quality standards, considering factors like audience reach and information significance (Hudikova & Pravdova, 2020; Martin & Murrell, 2021).

Bachmann et al. (2022) employed content analysis to gauge news quality from both content and audience perspectives, emphasising the symbiotic relationship between media outlets and consumers. Notably, news timeliness emerges as a crucial determinant of quality in cross media (Demirci & Sagioglu, 2022; Panagiotou et al., 2022), with platforms striving to provide real-time updates to evolving stories. Timeliness ensures ongoing relevance and updates in line with emerging developments (Oelrichs, 2023).

Distinctive features of digital news platforms highlight the evolving nature of news quality standards (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2020). Zelizer (2019) posited that digital journalism integrates technological and business elements with traditional journalistic practices. Mumay's (2019) research emphasised readers' emphasis on both quality and trustworthiness across online and print platforms. Abbas (2023) accentuated the indispensable role of journalistic ethics in upholding quality standards and fostering public trust in journalism.

In summary, understanding news quality in cross media necessitates the consideration of diverse dimensions such as impact, timeliness, and evolving digital paradigms, all underpinned by ethical journalistic practices.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employed the news value theory by Galtung and Ruge (1965) to examine the crafting of news quality standards on cross-media platforms that resonates with the needs of modern journalism. The eight core values they identified — threshold, frequency, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity and composition — have been the cornerstone of news selection criteria for decades.

However, recent work by Ittefaq (2018) on news value model in the digital age emphasise the pressing need to update these theories to aptly reflect the realities of globalised journalism and the digital era. Building on the foundational news value theory by Galtung and Ruge, this study employed their model as a baseline while also integrating insights from contemporary researchers.

METHODS

Employing the phenomenology approach, qualitative in-depth interviews were carried out to collect data. The sample, selected through purposive sampling, consisted of 15 multimedia journalists (MJs) from four leading Malaysian broadcast media organisations: Astro Awani, Media Prima Berhad, BernamaTV, and RTM. This selection is crucial in exploring cross-media platform adoption within a specific cultural context. The type of sampling is continued until it reaches saturation, indicating redundancy or no emergence of new themes (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

In the interpretative phase of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), the researchers engaged in a meticulous process of data exploration to uncover significant attributes by participants to their experiences (Larkin et al., 2019), as shown in Figure 1. This involved an in-depth scrutiny of individual meanings embedded within the data,

accompanied by relevant quotes for support, and succinct summarisation in the respective tables. These meanings were synthesised from participants to identify salient subthemes, which served to pinpoint broader patterns of constituent themes. The themes were then organised into a summary table, revealing superordinate themes that encapsulated the essence of the participants' experiences. To ensure the rigorousness of the analysis, an independent rater cross-checked the findings, thereby enhancing the comprehensive validation of the interpretative process.

Notably, the analysis highlighted the absence of significant differences related to participant characteristics within the data, underscoring the universality or uniformity of the themes identified. The interpretative nature of the analysis was further elucidated through the inclusion of example data via excerpts, a practice that fosters transparency and enables readers to assess the credibility of the findings. By presenting tangible examples from the data, the researchers aim to provide a clear understanding of how the themes were derived and interpreted, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the study's findings. Four quality indicators as denoted by Nizza et al., (2021) supported the researchers in achieving a high-quality IPA. These indicators guide researchers in carefully engaging with the data, being reflexive, involving the informants, and ensuring transparency in reporting, to enhance the validity, rigor, and impact of the study. Likewise, tools for navigating phenomenological data gathering and analysis such as audit trail, member checking, expert consultation and triangulation were employed to attain credibility, rigor and trustworthiness of data (Wan Zainodin et al., 2022).

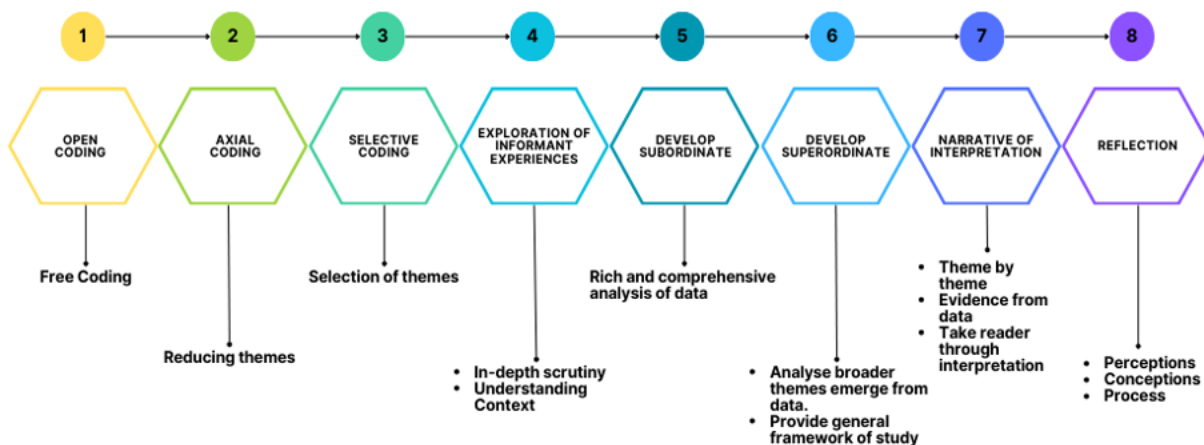


Figure 1. IPA process chart

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of findings took place after completing the data collection stage. Each informant highlighted their unique perspectives and shared experiences from various news desks across all four broadcast media organisations.

Social media platforms have become primary channels for news distribution, prompting traditional media outlets to prioritise engagement on these platforms. News is now typically disseminated on social media before broadcasted on radio and television, reflecting the demand for wider reach and timely updates (Srisaracam, 2022). However, today's cross-media platforms not only revolutionised news consumption but also raised valid concerns about inconsistent quality and credibility (Cornière & Sarvary, 2023).

Hence, standardising news quality across platforms is crucial to address various issues in media practices, especially in the context of Malaysia.

The findings revealed three (3) main superordinate themes and eleven (11) subordinate themes from the perspective of multimedia journalists (MJs), in regard to elements involved in developing news quality standards on cross-media platforms (Table 1).

Table 1. Themes regarding news quality standard on cross-media platforms from the perspective of MJs

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
Commodities	Benefit to Public Virality & Public Demand Attracting Diverse Followers
Journalism Principles	Accurate, Balance, Clarity Accountability Fairness and Impartiality Ethics and Truth
Newsworthiness to Shareworthiness	Real-time KISS (Keep it Simple and Short) Continuity and Creativity Story Angle and News Value

Commodities

The concept of news as a commodity significantly influences news quality, particularly in cross-media settings. The evolving media landscape demonstrates a complex interaction between journalism, technology, and audience engagement, with news becoming increasingly commodified due to market influences (Mont'Alverne et al., 2023; Muslikhin et al., 2021). This transformation, accelerated by digital platforms and social media, shapes news production and dissemination, impacting audience preferences, advertising revenue, and platform algorithms. As a result, crafting effective news stories for cross-media platforms necessitates understanding news as commodities, including articles, videos, images, and interactive elements. Media practitioners play a crucial role in engaging audiences through appropriate content types and formats. By meeting the public's need for relevant and informative content, news outlets can establish trust and credibility, fulfilling their role as primary sources of information across various media platforms in the contemporary society. Thus, commodity was revealed as a superordinate theme encompassing three subordinate themes: benefit to the public, virality and public demand, as well as attracting diverse followers.

Benefit to public

In journalism history, the enduring duty of delivering beneficial news remains pivotal, entrusting journalists to disseminate truth and meet audience needs (Baranova et al., 2022). In today's dynamic media landscape and digital era, providing valuable and informative news is increasingly crucial. Esa (2020) highlighted the role of news content quality role in aiding public learning, stressing media practitioners' duty to offer high-quality reporting, accurate data, unbiased analysis, and comprehensive coverage for enhanced credibility. Conversely, poor journalism with inaccuracies, biases, or sensationalism can lead to misinformation and confusion. With instant news access across platforms, it is vital for media to ensure each piece benefits the public, as noted by most informants:

We deliver news that benefits the people. Don't add unnecessary details, don't make your own assumptions because often these self-made assumptions can lead to issues. (Journalist 1, RTM)

For me, anything that brings benefit or provides information to the audience is something of quality. Meaning, whatever we present must be informative to the people and add value to them. (Journalist 2, Media Prima Berhad)

The excerpts highlight MJs' dedication to professionalism and social responsibility amidst evolving digital platforms. The informants, representing four prominent organisations, acknowledge technology's crucial role in fulfilling their duty to the public. They prioritise disseminating content that serves the public interest, addressing social issues, exposing corruption, and promoting positive initiatives. Understanding the profound impact of their news on society, they emphasise on providing context, background details, informed interpretation, and analysis in quality news delivery (Meier, 2019). The study's findings affirm that distributing public-benefiting news is integral to news commodities, as acknowledged by the informants.

Virality and public demand

Broadcast media outlets increasingly prioritise engagement on cross-media platforms as social media gains prominence. Kim and Ihm (2020) stressed distributing news based on public demand and virality, which is echoed in this study as part of news commodities. Al-Rawi (2019) defined news virality as rapid spread across social networks, gaining attention and engagement while Wold (2023) identified relevance and practicality as key. Concerns have arisen about how tailoring of stories to audience preferences can potentially compromise journalistic integrity. Consumption of news that fits public demand and follows virality emerged in all interviews and can be seen in the following excerpts:

During a flood, I got an emotional soundbite. TV couldn't use it due to time constraints. I posted it on social media knowing its value. Within days, it got 700,000 views and thousands of shares. It shows the importance of tailoring content for each platform. (Journalist 3, Astro Awani)

I shared a story about a Foodpanda rider helping the homeless. People love such news. We added details, interviewing both the rider and the homeless person. Surprisingly, it went even more viral. (Journalist 4, Bernama TV)

These excerpts underline the importance of balancing audience engagement and journalistic integrity in contemporary media in Malaysia. Insights from MJs highlight the careful selection of stories to resonate with audiences while maintaining accuracy. Despite competition from digital platforms, mainstream media's commitment to authenticity and verified facts remains essential in delivering trustworthy information. This underscores journalism's responsibility in navigating the evolving media landscape while meeting audience preferences, as emphasised in the following excerpt:

We sometimes feature viral stories on TV but prioritize fact-checking, especially during events like pandemics, to counter misinformation swiftly. It's our responsibility to confirm the authenticity of viral issues before reporting. (Journalist 5, RTM)

The MJs' responses reveal a significant shift in journalism practices, adapting to the demands of the digital era by closely monitoring the public's pulse on social media. This aligns with scholars emphasising the need to engage with the audience for relevance and influence in the digital landscape (Hiaeshutter-Rice & Weeks, 2021; Tenenboim, 2022). Newsroom decisions increasingly consider audience interests and preferences to enhance the virality and impact of news stories, showcasing a nuanced understanding of today's society's evolving needs.

Attracting diverse followers

News organisations adopt cross-media production to counter declining viewership and meet changing audience preferences (Srisaracam, 2022). This strategy ensures adaptability across diverse digital platforms. Informants highlighted the need to attract diverse followers for varied news angles, aligning with Srisaracam's focus on creating "long-tail" stories for niche perspectives. Additionally, Hiaeshutter-Rice and Weeks (2021) contended that social media post popularity depends on vividness, content, format, and interactivity, with engagement peaking within 24 hours. This underscores the importance of timely engagement strategies in social media news dissemination. The following excerpts reflect these perspectives :

Capturing social media attention is vital, but quality is paramount. When writing digital news, I prioritize holding people's interest while maintaining high standards. We aim for newsworthiness and quality as mainstream media, distinct from citizen journalists. (Journalist 6, Media Prima Berhad)

If you look at my TikTok, 'DAUL TGM', I like to share different types of content. It's not the same as when I create TV stories. Aaaa... for the same event, like a Minister's event, I will choose his statements that could become punchlines, the clips can be FYP. (Journalist 7, Bernama TV)

Informants emphasised the importance of attracting viewers from diverse demographics to distribute quality news across media. Adopting a "digital first" approach, newsrooms devise strategies to boost follower numbers across platforms (Tromble, 2019). The study underscores the newsroom's role in understanding diverse follower needs while preserving news quality and its reputation as a trusted source.

Journalism principles

In the digital era, journalists face challenges that go beyond traditional media, requiring innovative solutions while maintaining core principles of accuracy, objectivity, and relevance (Aguirre, 2021). Upholding integrity and credibility in cross-media reporting is vital amidst versatile information dissemination (Abbas, 2023). In the findings, informants stressed the need for new ethical and legal standards, emphasising versatility in navigating platforms and formats, including writing, video production, podcasting, and social media management. Despite challenges like misinformation and data privacy, the Malaysian media organisations adapt ethics codes for responsible online reporting, fostering self-regulation (Aleksić, 2021). Under this superordinate theme, four more subordinate themes fall: accuracy, balance and clarity; accountability; fairness and impartiality, as well as ethics and truth.

Accuracy, balance and clarity

Porlezza (2019) emphasised accuracy as a key journalism principle as individuals scrutinise news sources and cross-check information. Thus, despite cross-media pressure for quick updates, journalists should uphold accuracy, balance, and clarity (Vziatysheva, 2020). With rapid misinformation proliferation online, journalistic integrity is vital, to ensure comprehensive coverage and to present multiple perspectives (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2020). Clarity in communication prevents misunderstandings amid information overload, underscoring the commitment to journalism principles amidst the evolving media landscape. Further validation is found in the following excerpts:

In social media, updating stories quickly is crucial, but accuracy, balance, and clarity are paramount. These principles define quality journalism, ensuring reliable information for readers and followers. (Journalist 8, Astro Awani)

News needn't be rushed; accuracy is key. Mainstream media requires thorough checks. Quality and comprehensiveness matter more than speed to me. (Journalist 9, Astro Awani)

Maintaining credibility is crucial for mainstream media (Molyneux & Coddington, 2020). In the same way, Baranova et al. (2022) highlighted the public's reliance on factual news for informed decisions. To counter misinformation, media must prioritise accuracy, balance, and clarity, distinguishing themselves through rigorous fact-checking, and solidifying their reputation as trustworthy authorities. This was highlighted by one of the informants:

Today, anyone can report news on social media. Differentiating between new and mainstream media is crucial. Reporting isn't casual; accuracy is vital. We bear significant responsibility to ensure information is precise and reliable. (Journalist 10, Bernama TV)

The findings demonstrate the balance mainstream media must strike between digital benefits and ethical principles, highlighting ethics' ongoing importance in media evolution. Despite fast-paced convergent media, MJs need to uphold accuracy, balance, and clarity (Westlund et al., 2023), ensuring reliable information and audience trust. Maintaining a credible news source reputation will help combat misinformation, and inculcate an informed society. Thus, synergy between journalism principles and speed in convergent media is crucial for timely dissemination without compromising integrity.

Accountability

Past research underscores the significance of accountability significance in professional journalism, especially on global digital platforms (Obuya, 2020). Media's accountability to the public and stakeholders varies depending on newsroom culture, infrastructure, and external factors (Chaparro-Domínguez et al., 2020). Factors like internet access, media literacy, and ethical knowledge empower audiences to reinforce journalism standards. Mainstream media prioritises professionalism and regards service to the public and social responsibility as integral to accountability (Tengku Mahamad et al., 2021). Informants stressed the importance of double-checking or cross-checking facts in maintaining reputation as credible media sources, as elaborated in the following excerpts:

Fake news outnumbers authentic ones, but we can quickly verify sources. First, we confirm authenticity before posting or sharing, respecting relevant parties' consent.
(Journalist 11, Media Prima Berhad)

We're advised not to spread unconfirmed information to avoid negative impacts, especially on BERNAMA TV. We consult editors and double-check facts with trusted sources before sharing a scoop. We prioritize certainty and won't share unverified content.
(Journalist 12, Bernama TV)

Mainstream media organisations prioritise accountability and trust amid rapid news dissemination to uphold their credibility. Similarly, Tenor (2018) stressed media's duty for high-quality communication, diverse representation, and constructive debates. Accountability includes justifying actions to various audiences (Acharya, 2019). Thus, editorial policies shape news essence and uphold accountability standards, ensuring professionalism and maintaining news quality and philosophy.

Fairness and impartiality

The core principle of "balance" in media ethics emphasises fairness and impartiality in news dissemination. Mont'Alverne et al. (2023) stressed informants' support for this principle, vital for mainstream media's credibility. Implementing rigorous fact-checking curbs misinformation, enhancing media's reliability. Promoting diversity in reporting teams offers varied perspectives, crucial for comprehensive and unbiased coverage, as highlighted by media journalists, and cited in the following excerpt:

We seek balance by gathering diverse perspectives for neutrality. Quality reporting blends viewpoints, such as in politics, presenting government and opposition stances. Readers form judgments based on presented facts.
(Journalist 3, Astro Awani)

According to the informants, facilitating discussions on biases and ethical dilemmas is vital. Media outlets can establish internal platforms for dialogue and feedback by promoting self-awareness and improving reporting. Prioritising accuracy, diverse viewpoints, and open discussions enhances news quality, bolstering mainstream media's credibility in a dynamic digital landscape.

Ethics and truth

The study underscores the pivotal role of ethics and truth in journalism, crucial for preserving news quality amidst rapid information dissemination across diverse media. It emphasises journalists' commitment to integrity and accuracy in today's fast-paced media landscape. Understanding factors shaping news quality on cross-media platforms is vital, with all informants stressing adherence to ethical principles and truthful information dissemination. In a social media-driven era, maintaining ethical standards is paramount to preventing truth compromise for immediacy (Indrati et al., 2021). Pennycook and Rand (2019) stressed the importance of truth in combating misinformation, emphasising journalists' role as gatekeepers. Meticulous fact-checking safeguards public confidence and reality from distortion, ensuring trust in journalism. Such views are expressed in the following excerpt:

Information must be fast and accurate, especially on social media. As mainstream media, we're trusted representatives. Verification is crucial, distinguishing us from ordinary journalists in the era of citizen journalism.

(Journalist 13, Astro Awani)

The study reveals the salience of ethical journalism's depth beyond factual presentation, involving contextualisation, diverse perspectives, and discretion on sensitive topics. Amid sensationalism, it highlights journalists' duty to prioritise balanced, nuanced, and accurate narratives over sensational headlines. These sentiments are reflected in the following excerpts:

Accuracy is crucial in journalism, even with fast-paced social media. In Malaysia's diverse context, facts are essential to avoid bias. We prioritize fact-checking to maintain our reputation and uphold journalism ethics.

(Journalist 1, RTM)

Quality news means authenticity, free from plagiarism and personal bias. Journalists refrain from inserting personal opinions, presenting statements verbatim. For instance, in covering a UMNO press conference, reporting ensures authenticity by avoiding additions or embellishments.

(Journalist 2, Media Prima Berhad)

Essentially, this research underscores the enduring importance of journalistic ethics and truthfulness, that is essential for journalism's foundation amidst media evolution. In shaping opinions and decisions, journalists must maintain integrity, amid rapid social media usage. This protects the public from misinformation, fostering a more informed and harmonious society.

Newsworthiness to shareworthiness

Traditionally, journalists determined newsworthiness autonomously, but audience analytics now influence news selection, which raises concerns. Caple (2018) defined newsworthiness as content worth publishing, which has now evolved to include online engagement. Harcup and O'Neill (2017) introduced the concept of "shareability" in mainstream news, reflecting digital distribution. Likewise, Trilling et al. (2017) suggested "shareworthiness" for online news values. Thus, the findings stress maintaining news value across platforms for audience engagement, streamlining efforts to enhance journalistic practices and establishing cross-media quality standards. Next, newsworthiness to shareworthiness is further discussed through four subordinate themes, that is, real-time, KISS (keep it simple and short), continuity and creativity, as well as story angle and value.

Real-time

In the context of Malaysia, the mainstream broadcast news agencies and journalists are regarded as media practitioners who have embraced social networks extensively. They acknowledge that news often breaks on these platforms first, facilitating rapid dissemination and broadening media presence through convergence. Thus, journalists must stay ahead due to the dynamic nature of journalism, with the Malaysian media increasingly prioritising real-time tracking and reporting, driven by competitive pressure from online news portals capturing audience attention in the race to deliver news instantly (Hamzah & Esa, 2020). The relevance of these points is highlighted in the following excerpt:

What's important in the reports we bring is speed. Being up-to-date is the most crucial. For instance, if we are one of the journalists present at the scene or who gets the information first-hand. Therefore, when we quickly share it on social media, it means that we have the most current reports compared to other media.
(Journalist 10, Bernama TV)

The informants also highlighted the role of personal branding in real-time news distribution. By sharing daily tasks and insights, journalists can deepen connections with their audience. As noted by Tenenboim (2022), this engagement attracts attention and shares, fostering a dedicated following. Many journalists, with follower counts exceeding 10,000, have established authority in specialised domains like politics, parliament, courts, and sports. The following excerpts present this view:

On social media, we start with the story's core and use Twitter threads for updates. I find it engaging to cover court cases or disasters, keeping followers hooked. Comments guide us, grabbing attention without causing undue suspense. We avoid speculation while awaiting confirmation.
(Journalist 14, Media Prima Berhad)

On social media, we tease upcoming news to keep viewers engaged. For instance, a court update hinted at midday builds anticipation. TV content should differ from social media to maintain effectiveness. (Journalist 8, Astro Awani)

The findings are consistent with that of Hanusch's work (2019), which affirmed that providing real-time news updates is an essential skill for journalists. This necessity arises from the audience's demand for immediate information and the imperative to stay competitive in the digital age. Adapting to the evolving technological landscape and outpacing fellow online news portals are crucial in maintaining relevance and adopting positively in a competitive edge. Journalists' proficiency in delivering timely, accurate, and compelling news content gains a distinct advantage in capturing the audience's attention amidst the deluge of real-time updates across diverse platforms.

KISS (Keep it Simple and Short)

In the evolving landscape of journalism practice, adapting to new platforms in the digital era is crucial. Ng and Zhao (2020) suggested tailoring to the traditional principles of five W and one H to engage online readers with short attention spans. In reality, brevity is key in online writing, which requires a high value of conciseness in adopting the digital platforms. The principle of KISS, that emphasises short and simple writing, is maintaining accuracy in the process of storytelling in the fast-paced digital landscape. Eventually, such process eventually safeguards credibility in journalism practice, as verified in the following excerpts:

TV news is brief to convey breaking stories quickly due to time limits. Content is distilled for clarity and comprehension, prioritizing succinctness while informing the audience effectively.
(Journalist 5, RTM)

On platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, brevity is key. People prefer quick, digestible information. For example, if a former Prime Minister is sentenced, a short statement suffices. Those who seek more depth can follow the provided links or tune into the TV news.
(Journalist 7, Bernama TV)

Amidst the abundance of online content, established news organisations maintain credibility (Wan Zainodin, 2018). This reassures that the society is provided with reliable sources to assist the basis for understanding events or issues raised by the media which is deemed necessary to make informed decisions. Consequently, media become both informative and responsible to the respective publics with accurate, pertinent, and well-verified news.

Continuity and creativity

Balancing continuity and creativity in cross-media news writing effectively maintains a strong online presence while engaging with the readers (Mast & Temmerman, 2021). Continuity, a key aspect of news value remains crucial in the digital landscape. As such, journalists are able to actively engage with societal issues that resonate with broader communities. Integrating continuity and creativity captures the attention and fosters a deeper connection between readers and news (Srisaracam, 2022), encouraging exploration of comprehensive contextual insights. This approach invites readers to delve into stories, revealing multiple perspectives, ensuring broader dissemination and interactive engagement (Deepak et al., 2020). The following excerpts express these insights:

Using an accident story as an example, we offer real-time updates with videos and pictures, avoiding premature casualty announcements. This keeps followers engaged and eager for updates, driving widespread sharing on Twitter threads.
(Journalist 15, RTM)

Story content aligns on TV and digital platforms, but storytelling varies. Exploring angles leads to differences between online and TV scripts. engage followers and prompt them to watch. Balanced content sustains interest on social media and TV.
(Journalist 11, Media Prima Berhad)

The findings of this study underscore the significance of continuity in journalism, facilitating profound understanding amongst audiences through in-depth topic coverage over time (Boukes et al., 2020). Specialised journalists provide nuanced interpretations, sustaining attention and enabling thorough issue tracking online (Choi et al., 2021). Creativity in crafting high-quality news across media platforms, emphasised by journalists, involves attention-grabbing headlines, immersive storytelling, insightful analysis, and interactive features. These elements foster dynamic engagement, empowering readers to explore diverse perspectives and ensuring a holistic news experience resonating deeply with modern audiences.

Story angle and news value

The Malaysian broadcast media landscape has and continues to be transformed by convergence strategies integrated into the newsrooms as reflected by all four media organizations under study. The shift prompted these organisations to continuously re-evaluate the dynamics of storytelling and emphasise on framing the story angle and news value in cross-media journalism. As these media entities engage with audiences across the cross-media platforms, they recognise the need to tailor the stories to resonate with each platform's audience (Matassi & Boczkowski, 2021). In addition, the writing styles vary to suit the distinctive preferences of users on different platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. The following excerpt underscores these key points:

With the rise of social media, journalists should present unique angles to stand out. Instead of just spotlighting main events, we should also capture the surrounding context, like audience reactions, as they're more engaging and catch viewers' attention on social platforms. (Journalist 9, Astro Awani)

The seismic shifts in the Malaysian broadcast media landscape induced by the integration of convergence strategies fundamentally changed the way journalists engage with their audiences. At the heart of this transformation, lies the dual strategy of tailoring the story angle to specific platforms, while maintaining the bedrock principle of inherent news value. This shift is not just a change in the platform but also a paradigmatic shift in the storytelling approach itself, cited as follows:

We strive to engage our audience by finding unique angles on news stories, even if other portals don't cover them. We create and present these stories uniquely, sharing diverse perspectives on social media. In the digital realm, even the smallest details can become content. (Journalist 12, Berita TV)

In this era of cross-media journalism, the interplay between story angle, news value, and platform-specific adaptability has taken centre stage that challenges the journalist in curating the news in different and unique ways. The transformation of practices across the Malaysian broadcast media organisations exemplify not only the changes in the process of content creation and news value, but also the broader shift toward a more valuable engaged, informed, and interconnected society.

CONCLUSION

In exploring the standards of news quality on cross-media platforms to enhance journalistic practices among MJs in the broadcast media organisations in Malaysia, the insights obtained warrants the need to adhere to salient features in advancing standards to prioritise accuracy, objectivity, and transparency in reporting. Incorporating rigorous fact-checking processes and establishing mechanisms to determine quality news and reject misinformation is essential for responsible reporting on cross-media platforms. These principles are fundamental in producing high-quality, informative, valid, and reliable news content, particularly in an era rife with misinformation and the proliferation of “synthetic media” driven by AI and analytics. As such, commitment to ethics, including rigorous fact-checking and misinformation rejection, fosters trust and enhances credibility for MJs in the digital age.

While timeliness remains crucial in the fast-paced digital world, MJs must balance it with accuracy to ensure reliable information dissemination. Engaging viewers and readers requires innovative storytelling techniques tailored to the unique characteristics of each digital medium. Emphasising shareworthiness in news gathering and dissemination efforts discourages sensationalism, urging mainstream media journalists to provide insightful and meaningful information.

A comprehensive strategy for disseminating news across multiple platforms, including personal social media channels and adherence to journalistic principles, is crucial amid intensifying digital competition. Additionally, keyword tagging and hashtag use increase news story visibility in search engine results and social media features. Overall, prioritising responsible reporting practices, ethical conduct, and audience engagement is imperative for maintaining credibility and relevance in the evolving digital media landscape.

In conclusion, the complexities of digital transformation affecting the media landscape not only pose great challenges to the future role of MJs, but most importantly, a national response of the media industries is crucial in navigating the future direction of media practices while upholding the highest standards of journalistic integrity.

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