

Local Journalism in the Digital Age: Practices of Multimedia Journalists in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

In today's digital age, journalism has evolved to fit in with the social reality to where it belongs. This raises the question of how journalists are now writing stories in the age of new media. It is crucial to explore the current practices of contemporary journalists as they catch up with the developments in the new media landscape. Through this qualitative-narrative inquiry study design, media practitioners and educators can situate local journalism in the digital age. Nine local journalists took part in an extensive interview that led to a discussion of their journalistic practices in the new media, and the development of a framework for digital news writing. The findings showed that the emergence of new media has caused a change in how news is produced. Technology changed the process of gathering, writing, and publishing news stories. This study concluded that staying relevant, battling misinformation, defending the truth, and being devoted to the people are the biggest challenges for multimedia journalists. It is therefore recommended that multimedia journalists should become better at using technology, polish their social media skills, and learn photojournalism and mobile journalism.

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Introduction

Breaking news, exposing the truth, and serving the public are all parts of journalism. (Deuze, 2019). According to Burns and Matthews (2018) fundamental to journalism is the idea that those who practice it should fairly report on societal issues. Journalism is an institution because it is made up of explicit regulations, informal rules and routines, and shared beliefs and values (Vos, 2019). Additionally, investigative reporting values facts as the fundamental foundation of arguments (Smانيotto, 2020). Journalists are in the forefront of writing news information (Vos et al., 2019) and then distribute it to the public through media outlets (Maniou et al., 2020).

However, most people now have smartphones and other digital devices where they

can read, access, and share news stories anywhere. Digital journalism was introduced in 1994 around the world utilizing digital media through the proliferation of the internet (Salaverría-Aliaga, 2019). Over time, social media became the new platform of news reporting. This new innovation in the news media landscape impacted information and content, resources, and even news media companies (Lopezosa et al., 2023).

Nowadays, the evolving news landscape challenges Philippine journalism, with corresponding criticisms threatening its credibility. Even so, Balod and Hameleers (2021) said Filipino journalists perceived their profession as the defender of truth and advocates of societal reform. Filipino journalists see their crucial role in guarding democracy in the

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country. More so, Prager and Hameleers (2021) highlighted that media play a significant role in forming public opinion.

Since the emergence of digital media, fake news stories have been increasingly popular. This is largely due to the uncontrolled dissemination of unconfirmed news (Lazer et al., 2018). In the Philippines, Ong and Tapsell (2022) emphasized that trolls, fake news, and misinformation threatens freedom and democracy of its people. Because of this, Jones (2018) argued that there's a massive decline in the trust and confidence in the news industry.

Thus, one may wonder how journalists write stories with the onset of the new media. Hence, the study aimed to understand news writing by describing the various practices of Filipino journalists, specifically in Western Visayas, through a narrative inquiry approach. This study delved into Filipino journalists' personal experiences of writing news stories leading to the development a framework for their journalistic practices. It focused on the journalistic process of gathering, selecting, and producing news among these journalists. Generally, this study attempted to answer the research question, With the advent of the new media, how news writing among Filipino journalists in Western Visayas is shaped? More specifically, (a) what are the journalistic practices of local news writers and how it plays in the news writing process and (b) what news writing framework can be derived from the practices of the local journalists?

The locale of the study was confined to Western Visayas. However, not all journalists formed part of the study, although, each province is represented. Results may not be generalizable, and findings limited. This will however give a glimpse of the journalistic practices in a local journalism. Western Visayas, commonly known as Region VI, is consists of six provinces, namely, Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Iloilo, Guimaras, and Negros Occidental (Nagaynay & Lee, 2020).

Literature describing the different journalistic practices in news production is already abundant in media studies (Opiniano et al., 2021). These previous studies established the role of journalists in news production. However, understanding and describing the practices of Filipino journalists, specifically in Western Visayas, has not been investigated yet.

Journalists must stay relevant and readjust their journalistic practices to meet the public's demands. Eventually, results could help media organizations and journalism educators reconsider journalistic practices in news production, embracing the new challenges in journalism in Western Visayas and the country.

Review of Related Literature

Literature describing the different journalistic practices in news production is already abundant in media studies. Brüggemann (2014) mentioned that journalists write stories in line with their interpretations. Van Dalen et al. (2012) highlighted the differences in journalists' role conceptions and news reporting style. Opiniano et al. (2021) also observed how Filipino journalists reflect on their news work to improve their news writing skills and work values. The journalists' perception of their role in news production has a massive impact on media content production (Bartholomé et al., 2015). Al Nahed and Hammond (2018) pointed out that journalistic practices differ significantly in their procedures, emphasis, and assumptions. The news process determines the thematic categories facilitating public discussion (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018). Understanding news writing and how journalists write stories in the digital age is essential. According to Mensing (2010), traditional media's impact is already waning because news is individualized.

Philippine Journalism

Journalists sometimes intervene in news production by using an interpretative approach that focuses on the meaning of events that go beyond facts and sources (Falasca, 2014) which may also be applicable in the Philippines. According to Tandoc et al. (2013), certain factors, such as editorial decisions, other functions, and media pressures, can impede the performance of this role in the Philippine journalism landscape.

Aside from these challenges, Filipino journalists are also concerned with low pay, violence targeting journalists, information access, and professionalism (Tandoc, 2020). In fact, according to Aguilar et al. (2014), the Philippines had the most murdered journalists between 1992 and 2012. This report implies that the country does not enjoy total press freedom because of the lingering threat to journalists. Moreover, Tandoc et al. (2023) highlighted that women journalists in the Philippines encounter online harassment more often than their male counterparts, and still ongoing even on digital platforms.

Since the Philippines is one of the consumers of digital media, it paved the way for the rise of fake news and disinformation. Fake news deliberately beguiles the public to accept false and biased ideologies (Fernandez & Devaraj, 2019). According to Ragragio (2021), fake news disfigures free expression and press freedom. Unfortunately, Deinla et al. (2022) study said that the youth in the Philippines were less likely to identify news between real and fake. Additionally,

a Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey found that 51 percent of Filipinos cannot spot fake news (Tuquero, 2022). This implies that news in social media is rampant and trusted by the public, with an increased risk of vulnerability to being fake.

Umali (2013) found that news stories in Western Visayas are heavily patterned from news produced in the NCR. Moreover, Ladera and Lebrilla (2012) said that the majority of the media companies in Western Visayas use no definite and professional broadcast techniques.

News in Digital Media

Mass media is still the primary source of information on current affairs (Newman et al., 2016). However, most people have smartphones and other digital devices where they can read, access, and share news stories anywhere. The age of digital media revolutionized almost every aspect of journalism that the boundaries between professionals, citizens, and activists are divided by how news is generated and received in the digital age (García-Orosa et al., 2020).

Digitization is one of the primary movers in the evolution of journalism. Digital media had changed journalism practices and revolutionized news values, professional ethics, and newsroom management. Aside from this, digital media also posed a massive challenge to newspaper businesses and established news media organizations that challenged local and international media industries.

Similarly, Blake (2019) said that how news and information are disseminated in the digital age has altered how it is presented, including linguistic style, perspective, and word choice. Additionally, Kim and Dennis (2019) opined that the presentation format of highlighting the source also affects the public. News that highlights its source makes a good impression regardless of the source's credibility. Such strategies make other news articles less attractive to the readers.

On the other hand, Hong and Nadler (2015) found that social media democratized how people consume news by selecting their preferred type of information to read. Due to social media, the public is even participating in producing news themselves (Yang & Su, 2020), which implicates the world of professional journalism. According to Miller (2019), citizen journalism has upended news and media landscapes by undermining the objectivity and fairness of information from mainstream media to media newsrooms. This phenomenon alerted the journalism field and communication scholars to reassess what constitutes news and the news writers.

With the proliferation of digital media, the emergence of new genres of journalism came into the picture. One of these genres is narrative devices dependent on mainstream journalism (Horbyk et

al., 2021). Fake news is imitations, hijacked, and integrated forms of mainstream media storytelling. Even so, the public will not blindly believe the news even if they are reported by media organizations (Vargo et al., 2018). Some suggests that journalists still check their reports with peers and other established media organizations to validate the accuracy of their news stories. These network relationships between news items and information can be transmitted from the media to the public's mind (Guo & McCombs, 2016).

Journalists report on current events and produce news to raise people's awareness of various societal issues. Oppenhuizen et al. (2019) suggested numerous factors, from inner to extrinsic incentives, and how this affects journalists' story creation. Furthermore, Schuck et al. (2016) stated that news organizations emphasize stories that interest their audience. The news media use various techniques to present the general issue while focusing on specific topics or arguments (Geçer & Mahinay, 2018). According to Ardèvol-Abreu (2015), news stories concentrate on details and are already constrained windows of perceived reality.

Methods

This qualitative study used a narrative inquiry study design. Qualitative research mainly focuses on people's experiences (Silverman, 2020) which has a wide-ranging domain that uses various data collection and analysis methods (Wilson & Anagnostopoulos, 2021).

This study investigated the multiple perspectives of Filipino journalists in Western Visayas via an in-depth one-on-one interview to learn about their journalistic practices in news writing.

Nine Filipino journalists in Western Visayas who met the following inclusion criteria were interviewed:

1. Has worked as a news writer affiliated with a local media outlet in Western Visayas for more than five years.
2. Has experience in any of the following fields: investigative, watchdog, broadcast, online, opinion, or political journalism; and
3. Has experience in both traditional and digital newsrooms

There were six females and three male journalists who participated in this study. They have extensive experience in the newsroom ranging from 10 to 39 years. Their profile shows they have in-depth knowledge of traditional and new media. Their names and media organizations were hidden for confidentiality.

Journalism is constantly evolving alongside social reality to where it belongs. Thus, it is vital to understand the experiences of

journalists in news writing and narrate their practices as they catch up with the increasing demands of the public. Through this study, media practitioners and educators can understand the current practices of Filipino journalists in news writing in Western Visayas. Given that the landscape in news reporting has shifted from gatekeeping to largely user-generated content, how can truth be reported accurately? The shift in how the news is written presumably is greatly affected by personal rather than objective views of reporting. The time to produce content, especially with new media as a platform, is much faster than traditional reporting. Thematic coding was employed to analyze the transcribed interview. Analysis of the experiences yields to identifying overarching themes described by the participants (Dawadi, 2021).

Results

Nine Filipino journalists working in Western Visayas participated as participants (P) and served as the primary sources of information. P1 from Negros Occidental is the chief editor of a

multimedia news platform and has been working as a journalist for more than 25 years. P2 is affiliated with a local news outlet in Capiz and has worked as a local journalist for over 10 years. P3 is an editor of a government radio station in Iloilo and has been in the industry for over 39 years. P4 is working in Negros Occidental and is now the editor-in-chief of a multimedia news platform and has been a journalist for more than 18 years. P5 works in Guimaras and has been writing news for over 20 years. P6 is from Aklan and is affiliated with a national news media organization but has been stationed as a local journalist for more than 11 years. P7 is a journalist from Antique with more than 21 years of experience writing local news. P8 is a seasoned journalist from Negros Occidental with 25 years of experience writing news for national and local media organizations. Lastly, P9 is from Iloilo and has been a journalist for more than 34 years.

Journalistic Practices in the New Media

This study came up with seven themes describing the practices of Filipino journalists in the new media as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Journalistic Practices in the New Media

SN	Themes (Labels)
1	Understanding the "SAS" (Short Attention Span) Audience
2	Digital News Gathering
3	Multimedia Journalists
4	Gatekeeper of Truth and Democracy
5	Digital Media Editors
6	Safeguarding in the New Media
7	The New Challenges in the Practice

Understanding the "SAS" (Short Attention Span) Audience

The *audience's behavior* towards journalism changed due to the advent of new media, affecting Filipino journalists' practices. The majority of the local audience in Western Visayas is preoccupied managing their personal life while juggling job. However, despite their hectic schedules, the locals still feel it is important to read the news and keep up with the latest developments in their community, nation, and even the world.

P4 narrated, "I have to provide the information that the people want and need. So it's essential that you understand your market and your audience."

The digital (SAS) audiences required news creators to package and deliver stories in a quick, direct, and fast-paced nature.

P8 highlighted, "Nowadays, no one writes news articles that are too lengthy. I have no choice

but to change my journalistic practice to suit their needs and demands.

Digital News Gathering

The advent of *digital news gathering* can be traced to the advancement of technology and its benefit in the process of inquiry and fact-checking. Multimedia journalists can track news on social media, other media outlets, and even national and international news through digital technologies such as the internet and social media.

P8 shared, "In the newsroom, we keep an eye on our rivals as well as local, regional, national, and even online news."

Aside from that, social media and mobile phones have made it considerably quicker, simpler, and less expensive for journalists to get in touch with their sources.

P1 shared, "Actually, technology has made things better. There are more tools at our disposal, which makes the process easier."

Finally, multimedia journalists benefit greatly from the internet since it makes it simple for them to cross-check information.

P9 highlighted, "Now, you can quickly get press releases, official government documents, and other relevant documents online."

P1 said, "I don't only depend on press releases. I visit the hospital after an accident to speak with the victims and find out whether everyone is okay. I don't simply accept what the police say."

Multimedia Journalists

Various and multiple practices of **writing styles in the new media** were observed. They should also provide implicit details to capture the attention of the digital (SAS) audience.

P4 mentioned, "You must write while considering sight, hearing, smell, and taste."

Additionally, contemporary journalists should now report news stories succinctly and clearly. Long news stories turn off the digital (SAS) audience because they become rapidly disinterested and distracted by too much information.

P7 narrated, "You need to reconsider and modernize your writing style. Long stories cannot be posted on social media. You must be succinct and to the point. Information is brief yet full."

It's interesting to note that the digital (SAS) audience is now satisfied with images, quick video clips, and brief news summaries.

P1 narrated, "You may have high-quality images and videos for your news article thanks to technology. This is significant today because people want this."

P4 shared, "Without good videos, the news story cannot move forward, even if you have a strong article."

Consequently, digital news writing is more complicated because of **cybercrimes and cyber libel**.

P4 narrated, "Copyright issues arise in the digital world. You must obtain the subject's consent before photographing them."

Another consideration is cyber libel. Journalists need to exercise caution when producing news articles, particularly in the digital era where everything and everyone is already available online. When taken out of context, minor information might make the fight against online libel more difficult. All communication, interviews, and proof records should be retained in case of unanticipated situations. This will also protect multimedia journalists from cyber libel attacks.

P9 said, "Cyberbullying and criminality both exist. Because of the changes in the law

brought about by social media and the Internet, journalists must take care of themselves."

Gatekeeper of Truth and Democracy

Multimedia journalists now **have a bigger responsibility** as the gatekeeper of truth and democracy by providing facts to the community and helping to build society. Their role is to serve the public but with the more considerable responsibility of ensuring that they consume only factual, verified, and confirmed facts and information. The journalists' role extends to providing essential news and information and a better understanding of the situation so the public can make an informed decision.

P8 said, "Whether you're a traditional or contemporary journalist, the role of journalism remains the same – to inform, persuade, educate, entertain, and motivate the people to act."

P3 shared, "You are in the media because you are in public service. We are fighting for the rights of the people, and this is what we do."

P8 emphasized, "Our loyalty is to the truth, and our first obligation is to serve the people."

Fighting disinformation is considered the biggest challenge for multimedia journalists today. This is an essential role for multimedia journalists, especially with the advent of fake news. They should advocate their practice in fighting disinformation by blocking peddlers of disinformation, monitoring fake news, and correcting information online.

P3 shared, "We react to the information online, especially if it's disinformation that can affect people's lives."

P4 highlighted, "The number one problem is the spread of disinformation and fake news. And people choose to read fake news rather than credible news stories from real journalists."

Digital Media Editors

The **editors play a significant role in selecting news** in the new media landscape. Digital media editors screen, check and even verify the news story of the multimedia journalists in the new media landscape. If the news story has missing elements, the digital media editor sorts it out with multimedia journalists.

P4 narrated, "We gather everything and collect all the stories that we have. As the editor-in-chief, I rank the news stories according to the most important ones. So I get to decide which stories can make it to the top 10 most important stories."

Safeguarding in the New Media

In dealing with errors, journalists honor **accountability** much more **in the new media**. The

media accountability process reiterates that offline and online news consumption can affect journalistic practices in all phases of news production.

P7 and P8 articulated, “News organizations should have their policies when dealing with these kinds of things like errors, corrections, fact-checking, etc.”

Fortunately, some journalists and local media organizations issue **corrective actions** immediately, using their social media accounts. Some multimedia journalists find it imperative to act on fixing the errors as soon as possible to control the damage of the news story and its implication to the reputation of the journalist and the news media organization.

P3 narrated, “When faced with errors in my news story, I issue an explanation story.” P5 shared, “In other stations, they will issue a new story and quote the previous story stating the error.”

The New Challenges

Today's biggest challenge for multimedia journalists is to hone their skills in **technology** since it will help them tremendously with their journalistic practices. Technology can help ease multimedia journalists' digital news gathering and writing process.

P7 narrated, “You have to learn how to use gadgets. You can appreciate technology if you know how to use it.”

Mobile journalism also proves to be a rising trend in digital journalism.

P5 shared, “Mobile journalism is actually a rising trend right now because of technology. It's essential that you equip yourself with the latest

technology trend and have skills in using social media.”

Staying relevant today is as important and challenging for multimedia journalists in Western Visayas. They should be willing to try new and learn things to offer something new to the digital audience. They should not be stuck up to their old routines, or else they will be left behind by younger generations of multimedia journalists.

P6 reiterated, “You have to be open to changes and innovation.”

P7 shared, “Now we have to learn photojournalism and graphics.”

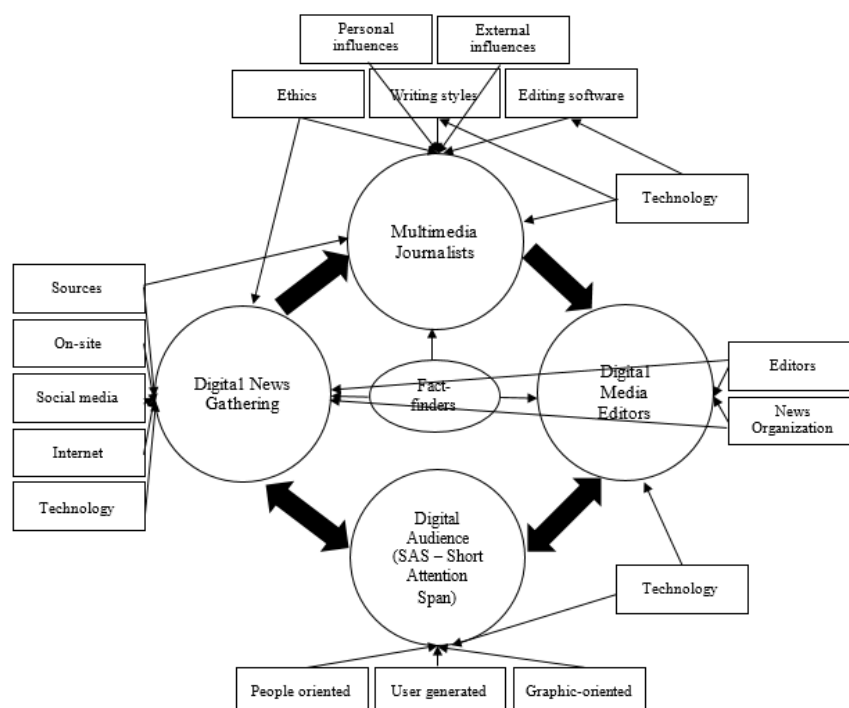
Some multimedia journalists are also willing to explore vlogging and blogging to stay relevant and utilize their influence in reaching the public. However, even if they are innovating their routines, their journalistic principles remain the same, only providing the digital audience with factual, reliable, and credible information.

P8 narrated, “It's a personal decision to innovate and to reinvent yourself. I always believe in reinvention.”

News Writing Framework in the New Media

This framework (see Figure 1) emphasizes that news writing begins with understanding the digital (SAS) audience. The new media landscape evolved with the proliferation of digital technology, and so does the behavior and attitude of news consumers. The digital audience is more graphically oriented and prefers to consume news with photos and videos. Most common news content still revolves around human interest and any activities concerning their day-to-day activities.

Figure 1: News Writing Framework in the New Media



Moreover, the proliferation of new media allows the public to participate in news production by generating, producing, and disseminating news content. This framework posits that the digital audience dictates what news content the public needs, and thus they also choose what types of news stories to consume. Multimedia journalists can find information anywhere and at any time of the day, so they need to be on the ground and do the investigation. They must be diligent in finding news stories and the introduction of digital technology and new media made news gathering much easier, faster, and more accessible. Newsworthy stories are usually centered around people and the community. Journalists can find information anywhere and at any time of the day, so they need to be on the ground and do the investigation. Journalists must also be diligent in finding news stories and know how to spot and follow leading news content. Furthermore, the introduction of digital technology and new media made news gathering much easier, faster, and more accessible.

This framework also suggests that the tedious process of verification and fact-checking is required in the news gathering, writing, and selecting of the stories to be produced. The verification process is vital to ensure that the news story will be devoid of inaccuracies and errors. The real journalist should not settle with only one source but verify the information's veracity with multiple sources. It's an arduous task, but it's the responsibility of the journalists to ensure that their news stories are accurate, credible, and have only verified information.

Multimedia journalists have varied techniques and strategies for presenting their news stories. They should know how to find a good angle to offer the story interestingly so the digital audience will be hooked to read and finish their news stories. Journalists should also learn to be independent of external influences and, most importantly, shy away from their biases and judgment. Moreover, because of the proliferation of new media, journalists must be cautious in their practices because of the emergence of cybercrimes and cyber libel.

Finally, the framework depicts that news content selection in the new media landscape for publication depends on the editor and the news media organization. The media organization also controls the type of published news since the editors should approve all news stories. This framework also suggests that a report cannot be published if it does not contain complete information and unverified facts. News stories must be balanced and provide all sides of the story. This could increase the chances of being selected,

especially if the news concerns the people and significantly impacts their lives and society.

Discussion

With the advent of social media and digital technologies, the digital audience now has a short attention span (SAS), especially in consuming news. The amount of time that the digital audience spends online reading news has decreased since many social media networking sites offer amusement in the form of quick video clips, random memes, and even online shopping. In order to fit, readjust, and tailor their reporting techniques, journalists must truly comprehend the digital (SAS) audience. Understanding audience behavior influences how news is covered and where stories are placed (Nelson & Lei, 2018). Since the characteristics of the digital (SAS) audience are changing, journalists will need to adapt their writing styles, provide new writing dynamics, and take into account alternative viewpoints while producing news. A media environment that prioritizes audience attributes would certainly undergo significant adjustments to their journalistic practices (Hamilton, 2016).

In digital journalism, the news gathering process became easier because multimedia journalists could instantly contact their sources to confirm facts and information through technology. They can contact multiple sources at once even if they are spread across several different cities or locations. However, verification is crucial, especially with the rise of social media. The vetting procedure is considered essential in the digital newsroom, regardless of whether the journalists are modern or conventional. Salvosa and Esguerra (2021) said it was crucial for Filipino journalists to verify information from various sources and confirm facts on the ground. In order to cross-check and verify the material they gathered, multimedia journalists must use a variety of reliable sources in addition to just one. This process might guarantee that the information is impartial and represents all relevant viewpoints, adding depth to the news and offering verifiable facts and information from the relevant parties.

Contemporary journalists prove to have variety of writing styles, however, multimedia journalists must ensure that their news reports are understandable to the general public by using straightforward language. Additionally, they should also use a conversational tone while reporting the news, be impartial in how they deliver it, and most importantly, avoid being confrontational and authoritarian in how they convey their opinions. The digital (SAS) audience seeks for the most pertinent information and doesn't require background knowledge.

Additionally, the digital (SAS) audience is becoming more visually oriented, hence quality images and videos in news items are required. This development in news writing further stressed the need for multimedia journalists to hone their skills in photojournalism. Photojournalism requires multimedia journalists to tell a news narrative with photos alone. This change in the journalistic practice relatively transforms news packaging. Hernandez and Rue (2015) mentioned the term “news package,” which consists of multifaceted stories through an organized layout, such as a video paired with text or an interactive graphic. Photos may add new dimensions of meaning to a text (Hall, 2019). Mitchell (2013) asserts that mixed media is used in different ways in digital journalism, leading to different levels of interpretation and interaction. The development of technology that affected news reporting created opportunities for various news reporting and writing platforms.

Nowadays, multimedia journalists must learn to protect themselves from copyright issues, which may lead to cybercrimes. One of these is the legal quandary of photographing or filming someone without their consent, particularly if it will be shared online. Journalists should take care of themselves, especially with the threat of multiple agencies killing the nation’s democracy. According to Herr (2020), the Philippine government is attacking journalists by eroding their public perception as credible sources. Puente (2020) highlighted that journalists have every right to exercise caution although despite efforts to stifle it, the media will never stop serving a social need.

The primary role of journalists today remains the same: to keep the public updated with what’s happening around them and give them the relevant information they need to make informed decisions for their life, the community, and society (Ladera & Lebrilla, 2012). Moreover, Opiniano et al. (2021) said that Philippine news is driven by the same factors of providing the people with the necessary information, educating them about family values, and making them interested in community participation. Being at the forefront of protecting democracy in the country, multimedia journalists should always fight for the truth and stand guard in protecting the rights of ordinary people. They serve as the defender of the helpless and gives hope to the people who are afraid, abused, and neglected. Some multimedia journalists found their calling in helping the poor and marginalized groups making it their bias when writing news stories. This practice could be evident in how multimedia journalists position their news stories, implicating the news writing process.

The lack of gatekeepers online and the fast-paced nature of the digital media environment

provided a platform for the spread of false information (Shin et al., 2018). Balod and Hameleers (2021) argue the rise of disinformation and deception is both a challenge and an opportunity for Philippine journalism to advance as a discipline and practice.

In publishing news articles, the digital media editor must find the news story relevant and significant to the society. Multimedia journalists thus need to consider first the preference of the digital media editors. Digital media editors also check the completeness of the story, the context of the article, and whether it has a good-quality photo or short video clips accompanying the news story. The digital media editor may request additional information to substantiate the news story further. They can also comment and suggest ways to better contextualize the news story more suitable for the local readers.

Knobel (2018) argues that there’s a more powerful call for better accountability in journalism resulting from the proliferation of new media. However, local media organizations today do not have clear policies and guidelines for their multimedia journalists to deal with errors and be held accountable for mistakes in their news stories. This norm has an immense implication in maintaining the credibility of the news media organization and multimedia journalists.

With new technological tools correcting errors online was made easier and more accessible. Some media outlets add a correction button under each article so the readers can quickly provide a comment or correction on a specific article (Eberwein et al., 2019). However, the public has high expectations, with professional journalists publishing only correct and factual information and having little tolerance for errors (Karlsson et al., 2017).

In this crucial period in Philippine media history, journalism is tested by evolving news consumption habits, technological advancements, and authority-threatening criticisms (Balod & Hameleers, 2021). Multimedia journalists’ practices are challenged to evolve and cope with the demands of the digital (SAS) audience. They should learn how to be tech-savvy and, more importantly, be comfortable using mobile devices and digital technology while undergoing news gathering, writing, and publishing.

Conclusion

This study reiterates the importance of understanding the digital (SAS) audience as the baseline foundation in the news writing process. The emergence of new media and the advancement of technology changed the audience's behavior, especially in news consumption. The digital (SAS) audience proves to be more graphically and visually oriented, demanding good-quality photo or short video recording alongside a very brief and concise news description.

Multimedia journalists in Western Visayas adapted digital technologies to make the news-gathering process more convenient and efficient. Technology made communicating with the public and doing investigative work through mobile devices accessible and cheaper. More importantly, traditional and contemporary journalists know the importance of undergoing the arduous tasks of vetting and fact-checking, which distinctly identify them from social media influencers.

Filipino journalists in Western Visayas have different writing styles and techniques in today's digital age. Multimedia journalists should be brief, concise, and direct to the point in presenting their news content. The digital audience expects more from multimedia journalists, demanding more creative, enticing, and engaging news content.

This study also articulates the critical role of the editors and the news media organization in selecting the news stories to be selected and published for the digital audience's consumption.

Moreover, this study reiterates the importance of media accountability, especially in today's digital media landscape. Digital audiences are critical of journalists who publish false stories and articles with errors and unverified facts. It is also critical that local news organizations put up strict policies and protocols in dealing with errors and mistakes.

Recommendations

In today's digital age, it was established that technology plays a vital role in the news writing process in the new media. With this, it is recommended that contemporary journalists learn to hone their social media skills and be more adept at using technology to cope with the demands of the digital audience. It is also recommended that multimedia journalists invest in studying photojournalism to make their practice more adept in meeting the demands of the digital (SAS) audience.

This study found that local media outlets are not stringent in dealing with errors, even with digital technology. With this, it is recommended that media outlets should have clear and transparent policies in dealing with errors to make their journalists more accountable for their journalistic practices in the new media.

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