

CHALLENGES TO PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM IN THE DIGITAL AGE: THE RISE OF CITIZEN NEWS REPORTING IN MALAKAND DIVISION, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the perception of Malakand Division's social media journalism effects on professional journalism practices. Data collected using structured interviews with 59 working journalists of four press clubs including Swat, Chakdara, Timergara and Batkhela Malakand. The study disclosed that due to the usage of multimedia, audience interaction, attention-getting strategies, and speedy reporting techniques had all been greatly impacted professional journalism by the social media journalism. Professional journalists rely more on traditional media channels, whereas social media journalists use digital platforms and news generated by citizens. While the majority of respondents believed that social media had damaged the reputation of professional journalism, while professional journalists recommended that laws and ethics-related training is necessary to ensure good and professional journalism by social media journalists.

Keywords: Social Media Journalists, Impact, Professional journalists, Malakand division.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the rise of social media journalists, professional journalists are no longer the main source of news delivery. The field of journalism is changing as it becomes easier and more economical for people to participate in public debates. People can now access, create, and share more knowledge than ever before. This has changed the foundations of the traditional and professional journalists practices.

Professional journalism has always challenged and adapted to new, revolutionary technologies like radio and television. This time, social media not only bringing changes in the way of information gathering but also on the behavior of the audiences. Therefore, this research has been conducted to study the impact of Social

media journalists on professional journalists practices.

Journalism has evolved in democratic nations as a tool for meeting citizens' information demands and keeping them up to date (McGuckin 2015). According to (Harcup 2012) journalism is a set of actions that involve the discovery of fresh, topical information and its subsequent public dissemination. Furthermore, (McGuckin 2015) states that it has become a function that simultaneously speaks to and for the larger population. Furthermore, (Noor 2017) believes that journalism is the collecting and dissemination of current events via the media. Concisely, journalism is the deliberate and conscious endeavour to gather information, collect and analyze data for the purpose of

informing, educating, and entertaining the public in order to make an acceptable conclusion (Agbanu and Nwabueze 2011).

It is a fundamental component of civilizations that have grown to meet people's fundamental need to be informed about events in their environment. Because of this essential role, journalism has developed into a professional discipline that methodically fulfils its obligations while disseminating information to the largest audience possible. The foundation of this was essentially the one-way flow of information from professional journalists to obedient, passive audiences, who would use that information as the basis for a large portion of their second-hand knowledge (Bryant, Thompson et al).

The news industry has seen irreversible and severe changes in recent years as a result of the expansion of social media, which has disrupted twentieth-century conventions. The increased degree of interest and effectiveness in social media is mostly attributable to the internet, which allows individuals all over the world to stay connected. Similarly, the internet has reduced the distance between reader, broadcaster, and journalist, resulting in a greater sense of familiarity.

Professional journalism has already faced and adapted to new, game-changing technologies like radio and later television as an industry or art. This time, however, is different because the adjustments have a more immediate impact on the behaviour of the two audiences rather than directly changing the way that journalists with expertise present information. Compared to other adaptations to new media, this calls for a more intricate and significant change in journalism methods in order for the field to survive as a viable one. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to address the topic of what effect professional journalism has had from the emergence of social media journalism.

Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism is the practice of journalism by regular people. People who feel that their opinions are not being heard frequently look for ways to spread their message to a larger audience in order to increase awareness or attract attention. These people are frequently referred to as citizen journalists (Noor 2009).

A citizen journalist is a someone who works independently and is not a trained journalist or reporter (Duffy, Thorson et al. 2010). Citizen journalism, as defined by (Bowman and Willis 2003), is the process by which non-professional people get, examine, and share news with the public. The amateurs of the mainstream media are known as citizen journalists.

These citizen journalists served as the beneficiaries of a one-way media system, and many people once relied on them. However, we currently face more complex difficulties than in the past due to the introduction of new technology and shifting conditions (Noor 2017). Technology and the internet have greatly contributed to the rise of citizen journalism, which may reduce the use of print media because websites provide easier access to essential information (Bruns, Highfield et al. 2012). But as citizen journalism has shown itself to be lacking in objectivity, it is advised that news organizations present as many different viewpoints as they can (Gans 1980) Amateur journalists are unable to cite speakers and sources to back up their claims, in contrast to professional journalists (Bruns, A. 2005).

Statement of the Problem

Social media has made it easier to obtain information and for anybody to disseminate news to a large audience. However, it has also made it more difficult to distinguish between professional and amateur reporting. Social media journalists are posing problems for traditional journalists in terms of ethics, accuracy, and credibility. The purpose of this study is to evaluate how social media journalists affect working journalists and to pinpoint any possible ramifications for the journalism industry.

Objectives of the study

- To investigate the effects of social media journalism on the professional journalistic practices of Malakand division
- To investigate the practices and strategies in response to the rise of social media journalists in Malakand Division
- To explore the professional journalists challenges arising from social media journalism

Research questions

RQ1: Is social media journalists influenced the practices and standards of professional journalism?

RQ2: Do you think professional journalists changed practices and strategies in response to the rise of social media journalists in Malakand Division?

RQ3: What are Challenges to professional journalists in the era of social media journalists in Malakand Division?

Literature Review

One of the best means of disseminating information to the general public is traditional media. For many years, this has been there to quench people's thirst, particularly in rural places where modern media is less prevalent (Mathiyazhagan, Kaur et al. 2015). Citizen journalists are a new breed of journalists that have emerged in recent years as a result of the growth of social media platforms. With smart phones and internet access at their disposal, these people can report news and distribute information instantly, frequently avoiding traditional media outlets. The effects of this phenomena on traditional news outlets and professional journalists are a topic of heated discussion. This study of the literature looks at different viewpoints and research on how citizen journalists affect professional journalism.

A research by Hermida (2010) claims that the traditional gatekeeping role of professional journalists has been disturbed by the rise of citizen journalists. Anyone may become a news source thanks to social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, which democratizes the spread of information. The power and influence that professional journalists once had over news reporting is being called into question by this significant change.

A significant discussion in the field of citizen journalism is the balance between news reporting speed and accuracy. According to research by (Allan and Thorsen 2009) although citizen journalists are excellent at giving updates in real-time during breaking news events, errors and misinformation may result from their lack of editorial oversight and professional training. Professional journalists now have to negotiate a terrain where accuracy and speed need to be carefully and skilfully matched.

(Domingo, Quandt et al. 2008) conducted a study that emphasizes the significance of citizen journalists in cultivating audience trust and participation, Content created by citizens frequently strikes a chord with viewers because of its sincerity and localized viewpoint. However, when false material circulates quickly via social media, raising questions about its veracity and integrity, it becomes difficult to sustain confidence.

According to studies by (Hermida and Thurman 2008), the integration of citizen journalists into newsrooms has resulted in collaborative journalism models. In order to obtain firsthand information and eyewitness testimonies, professional journalists now work in conjunction with citizen journalists. News organizations have developed strict verification procedures since it is still important to ensure the legitimacy and veracity of user-generated material. It has also been investigated how citizen journalism affects established newsrooms financially.

According to research by (Boczkowski and Mitchelstein 2013), citizen journalists present difficulties for traditional news organizations in terms of money generation and sustainability, even though they contribute to the development of information. The traditional journalistic revenue models are impacted by the reliance on freely used, user-generated information. Furthermore studies have demonstrated that more diverse voices are present in the media because of citizen journalism. Now, amateur reporters from underserved areas or communities with restricted access to formal media channels can share their viewpoints and narratives with a worldwide audience. By offering different perspectives and bringing attention to topics that the mainstream media might have missed, this has improved the media ecosystem (Bruns 2009). Amidst the evolving media environment, numerous established news establishments have initiated partnerships with citizen journalists. This collaboration can take many different forms, such using user-generated content in news articles, gathering information through crowd sourcing to support investigative reporting, or teaching citizen journalists how to be journalists (Gillmor 2006).

The nexus of citizen and professional media raises ethical questions. Even while citizen journalists may work under different ethical

guidelines, they also have obligations to maintain accuracy, justice, and privacy. When confirming user-generated content and properly citing sources, professional journalists have to deal with moral dilemmas (Thurman and Walters 2013). Furthermore, worries regarding the possibility of false information and the dissemination of harmful content are raised by the anonymity and lack of accountability present in some kinds of citizen journalism (Coddington, Lewis et al. 2018).

Since the invention of the printing press, people have used it to distribute information through booklets when they felt treated unfairly. These persons were amateur writers. Initially, the channels for contributing information were limited, resulting in restricted citizen journalism (Allan and Thorsen 2009). However, it is now possible to communicate with millions of people in seconds via multiple platforms, hence broadening the reach of citizen journalism (Ozewe Banke, Agbaji et al.).

Traditional media is one of the most effective tools for disseminating information. This has been around for decades to satisfy the thirst, particularly in rural places where modern media is less prevalent. conventional media are described as media channels that try to deliver messages to specific audiences, including newspapers, radio, television, news magazines, and online offshoots of conventional journalism (Mathiyazhagan, Kaur et al. 2015).

However, (Mncina, Letsie et al. 2023) study on Citizen Journalism vs Traditional Journalism indicated major issues for traditional journalism, with local newspapers, periodicals, and newsrooms closing due to pressure from citizen journalism. He further adds on to say that investigative journalism and in-depth news reports are on the decline because journalists are failing to ask challenging questions that lead to quality stories. According to (Koukouridou 2014), citizen journalism through social media has changed traditional journalistic practice by diversifying content distribution in order to reach a wider audience. Furthermore, (Koukouridou 2014) mentions that the conventional media's hold on the public is gradually fading as the audience begins to take control of content generation and dissemination. Adding to the problems of traditional journalism, the quality of content is frequently sacrificed as mainstream

media reporters hurry to be the first to publish the story on their websites (Mncina, Letsie et al. 2023).

In agreement, (Kitty 2020) claims that while seasoned reporters seek the scoop, the rush to be the first to post the article is likely to jeopardize the quality of the articles produced. For example, in 2014, local media outlets published photos of children with measles-like symptoms shortly after being vaccinated with the Rubella vaccine, attributing the illness to the vaccine, which was later refuted by the Minister of Health, who claimed the photos were fake (Mokhethi and McCrindle 2022).

According to a recent study no matter how fast-paced citizen journalism is, but it can never replace conventional media owing to their level of training and expertise in the journalism profession, but rather complement traditional media efforts in assuring timely news delivery to the masses (Hisham 2019). Furthermore, (Noor 2017) discovered that journalists are well aware of the influence of citizen journalism but still believe that it supports the job of mainstream journalists.

In spite of the fact that one-third of journalists think social media posts are unreliable, half of journalists use social media as their main source of information, according to an ING Netherlands social media impact survey of 165 journalists, editors, and bloggers (ING News: 2014). Social media is mostly used by journalists to find out what people are talking about. Sixty percent of respondents said they felt less constrained by conventional journalistic norms and may openly share their opinions on social media. Only 20% of journalists always double-check their facts before publishing, according to the survey, while half of journalists upload their stories as quickly as possible so that they may be amended later if required.

(Mukherjee 2016) study essay on the Advancement of Social Media and the Future of the Newspaper Industry discussed how journalists perceive this change. He explored journalists' viewpoints on the effects of social media on their profession and performance. The study examines and implements interactivity with people, the increase of blogs and bloggers, and journalists' preferences for working with social media. He conducted study on the subject with the following objectives: citizen

journalism/online. Journalism influences newspaper business. Citizen journalism can increase social awareness. Social media plays an important role in social movements, societal changes in India, and the role of citizen journalism in these developments, as well as the age range of people who prefer social media. After using approaches like as cluster sampling and content analysis, he concluded that as smart devices become more widely available, an increasing number of individuals will participate in social media, inspiring them to become citizen journalists. The younger generation browses their devices for information or news. Along with the audience, the top media outlets will shift their focus to this. He stated that if the newspaper industry does not stay up to date; it can have an impact on the newspaper industry.

(Mukherjee 2016) Siddharth Varadarajan, creator of digital media company The Wire, stated during an interview with Columbia Journalism that the pattern is relatively unprecedented. Fernandes, the editor of Scroll, stated in this post that digital also causes discomfort, which is familiar to legacy journalists around the world. Furthermore, Scroll editor Fernandes has banned the word "content" from his workplace, saying: "We don't believe in doing content, We believe in doing journalism for readers rather than consumers." The term "readers," of course, reflects a print mindset, as does Fernandes' attempt to increase the "credibility" of a media he says is "less than reliable" by establishing an ombudsman.

This apprehension about the nature of online media, however, can make it difficult for legacy editors to deal with its audience-driven imperatives, which are perceived as contradictory to "good journalism." (Will the digital revolution rescue Indian journalism? In the same article, writer (Chaudhry 2016) stated that this internal disagreement became visible at an Omidyar Network gathering in Mumbai held in August. Representatives from the Gates organization and the Independent and Public Spirited Media Foundation, a first-of-its-kind Indian organization mostly funded by Indian tech billionaires that supports media startups, were also there, and I serve as an adviser to the latter. The idea was to bring together their digital media grantees to discuss and share experiences, but the discourse quickly became heated, with one

creator declaring, "I will not let the masses dictate my editorial policies." In this talk, The Wire creator Varadarajan emphasizes that editorial quality and integrity have intrinsic value, regardless of medium. They do not, however, ensure sustainability in an ever-changing internet media industry.

Traditional journalists are professionals with journalism training and knowledge who perform certain jobs. Citizen journalists lack professional training in this field yet create stories about new media challenges (Pearce and Rodgers 2020). Traditional journalists are distinguished by their adherence to media ethics and legal considerations, whereas citizen journalists lack training and orientation in these areas. Citizen journalists, as opposed to traditional journalists, look from the inside out. Citizen journalists enable society to report and express its issues, whereas traditional journalists inform, educate, and hold people and authorities accountable (Fisher 2018). Contemporary citizen journalism essentially merges classic journalistic approaches (print, radio, and television) while also implying quantitative and qualitative modifications. Vojtěch Bednář, a sociologist, identifies three key changes in citizen journalism: it is real-time, interactive, and hypertext-based, allowing users to compare multiple media sources at once. Bednář caught the core of citizen journalism by emphasizing the usage of the Internet, which incorporates communication between recipients in its technological creation. This also applies to the web context all internet media (Bednář 2011).

Theoretical Framework

Gatekeeping Theory is the most applicable theoretical framework for examining citizen journalism's impact on traditional journalism practice. German psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) established Gatekeeping Theory as part of his research on human behavior. David White later adapted the approach for journalism and public communication. The study looked into how editors make decisions on which news articles to publish, offering light on the role of gatekeepers in managing the flow of information (Chantal 2021).

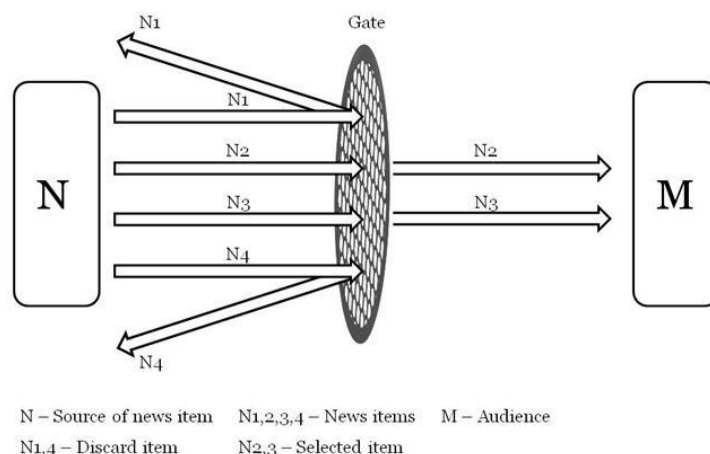
In fact, Gatekeeping in mass communication may be viewed as the total process by which social reality communicated by the news media is built,

rather as a sequence of 'in' and 'out' decisions" (Shoemaker, Eichholz et al. 2001).

Furthermore, (Groshek 2020) contends that this theory outlines the mechanisms that humans employ to pick information while eliminating those that are irrelevant or undesirable. The philosophy of Gatekeeping is based on two principles: first, Gatekeeping establishes a certain standard for information value, and second, the gatekeeper determines which information should and should not pass through them. The first premise states that Gatekeeping establishes

particular requirements for the informative value of news articles.

In news media, editors are essential. He must choose what news stories should and shouldn't be published. The news channel gets a variety of news stories from across the globe every day. The editor selects which news stories to print or broadcast based on the channel's own ethics and rules. A small number of news items are occasionally rejected by the editor because they violate the organization's policies or are unfit for publication.



Gate Keeping Theory

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Relevancy with Current Study

The communication studies-based Gatekeeping theory offers a useful framework for examining how social media journalists affect traditional media journalists. Fundamentally, Gatekeeping theory investigates the ways in which information travels via different channels, with gatekeepers regulating the dissemination of information from its origin to its intended audience. The democratization of information distribution and the spread of user-generated material have fundamentally changed the old Gatekeeping mechanisms in the context of social media journalism. Formerly in charge of all news distribution, professional journalists today face competition from a plethora of social media journalists who can swiftly reach large audiences with information.

This change calls into question the established Gatekeeping responsibilities and the legitimacy and authority of professional journalists in a world where everyone with internet access may this change calls into question the authority and

credibility of professional journalists in an environment where anybody with internet access may contribute to the news cycle and undermines the old Gatekeeping functions. The study's analysis of how social media journalists affect the choice, presentation, and dissemination of news information is made possible by the use of Gatekeeping theory, which in turn changes the nature of professional journalism and its effects on society.

Research Methodology

In this study, qualitative research approach was used to provide a comprehensive knowledge of the participants' viewpoints and life experiences. This strategy made it possible to investigate intricate and subtle phenomena that are difficult to properly describe using quantitative techniques. Qualitative research yielded rich and thorough data that would not have been feasible with other approaches since it allowed the researcher to interact directly with the

participants, fostering the building of intimate rapport and trust.

The researchers adopted an interview-based research approach for this study because it allows for a thorough and nuanced knowledge of the participants' opinions and experiences. Interviews allow the researcher to use a flexible and exploratory approach, delving into rich narratives and learning about the participants' worldviews, motives, and subjective meanings. This design enables a collaborative discourse between the researcher and the participant, allowing for the examination of complicated and sensitive subjects that may not be easily accessible using conventional research methodologies. The interview technique encourages greater involvement and authenticity by allowing participants to tell their story in their own words, resulting in a more complete and meaningful study of the research issue.

The professional journalists of Malakand Division are the population of this research study. Sampling is a statistical strategy that uses a sample of a population to represent the complete population. Researchers can draw conclusions about the population's characteristics based on the sample. The researcher collected data using both cluster and random sample approaches, which is types of probability sampling. The division was divided on the bases of press clubs: Chakdara Press Club, Malakand Press Club, Timergara Press Club, and Swat Press Club. Cluster sampling is the process of splitting a population into clusters in this example, press clubs and randomly picking a subset of these groups for data gathering. Members of the specified clusters provided data. This approach allows for efficient sampling when the population is widely distributed. Meanwhile, random sampling assures that every member of the population has an equal chance of being chosen, which reduces bias. By combining these strategies, the researcher hopes to gather a

representative sample from the various press club communities while maximizing resource allocation.

The researcher used structured interview because structured interviews offer a methodical approach to collecting comprehensive and comparable data, they are an excellent study technique for investigating the influence of social media journalists on professional journalists. Structured interviews provide uniformity between interviews by employing a predefined set of questions; this makes comparisons and answer analysis more trustworthy. With the use of this instrument, the researcher may delve deeply into certain facets of the impact and gain intricate insights into participants' views and experiences that may not be revealed using less formal techniques. Structured interviews also lessen the possibility of extraneous material and guarantee that all pertinent topics are fully explored by keeping the emphasis on the study issue.

The purpose of this research project was to examine the influence of social media journalists on professional journalists. Data were collected through structured interviews. SPSS statistical software was then used to examine the gathered data, enabling a methodical and thorough review of the replies. Key themes and trends were able to be identified through the coding, categorization, and statistical analysis of qualitative data made possible by SPSS. This analytical method guaranteed the validity and dependability of the results, offering a thorough comprehension of the complex influences social media journalism has on the field of professional journalism.

Findings and Discussion

The researchers provided tables and their interpretations in this chapter, which is based on data analysis. It is also show research questions and hypothesis justification.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents on the bases of press club

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Batkhela	8	13.6	13.6	13.6
Chakdara	12	20.33	20.33	35.6
Swat	27	45.8	45.8	81.4
Timergara	12	20.33	20.33	100.0
Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows the respondents affiliation with press club 13.6% belongs to Batkhela, 20.33% working with Chakdara press club, 45% have affiliation with Swat press club and 20.33% belongs to Timergara press club. Interviews were conducted in the above press club members to find out their perception about the impact of social media on professional journalists. The researchers divided the Malakand division into four press clubs based on clusters and closeness due to time restrictions. Swat Press Club is the largest, with more than 50 members,

reflecting its significance as the division's key communal hub; we obtained data from 27 member. The Chakdara Press Club, which has 13 members, had 12 members participate in our data gathering. Timaragara Press Club has more than 20 members, and we collected data from 12 of them. Finally, the Batkhela Press Club, which had just eight members, had complete participation. We chose these press clubs largely because they were close to us and easily accessible.

Table 2. Social Media Journalists are shaping public opinion in Malakand Division

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a. Yes, social media journalists are playing a significant role in shaping public opinion.	34	57.6	57.6	57.6
	b. No, professional journalists still have a stronger influence on public opinion.	19	32.2	32.2	89.8
	Both social media and professional journalists contribute equally to shaping public opinion.	6	10.2	10.2	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. shows that the majority of respondents (57.6%) feel that social media journalists have a big impact on public opinion in Malakand Division. In comparison, 32.2% of respondents believe that professional journalists continue to exercise greater influence. A lower percentage, 10.2%, believe that both social media and professional journalists contribute equally to influence public opinion. As a whole, the findings indicate that social media journalists are regarded to have a higher influence on public opinion than their professional colleagues in this region.

According to the Table 2 findings, the majority of respondents (57.6%) feel that social media journalists have a substantial impact on public opinion in the Malakand Division. This tendency is ascribed to the convenience of publishing and real-time transmission of content on social media platforms, which also provide users with easy involvement. The rising frequency of social media use, particularly among people aged 18 to

30, magnifies this effect, outpacing the reach of traditional newspapers and other channels. Although 32.2% of respondents feel professional journalists still have more influence on public opinion, and 10.2% believe both types of journalists contribute equally, social media's dominance in the present information landscape is clear.

Social media is frequently considered as the most effective method of communication because to its affordability, speed, and direct connection to the global community. (Dwivedi, Ismagilova et al. 2021).

Social media influencers have come out as key actors in the digital world, influencing public opinion and consumer behaviour. These persons or entities, who frequently have a large following on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter, use their online presence to influence their followers' perceptions and decisions. Social media influencers have a tremendous impact on public opinion because

they utilize their platforms to share personal experiences, endorse businesses, and voice their perspectives on a variety of issues. These influencers frequently have the capacity to alter public opinion, whether on political issues, social causes, or consumer preferences. Their followers' perceptions and responses to their information are heavily influenced by their trustworthiness and authenticity (Hearn and Schoenhoff 2016). In Pakistan digital media ecosystem offers distinct problems and opportunities. With more than 76 million internet users, Pakistanis are

rapidly turning to online news sources (Khan, Alharbi et al. 2023). However, the increase in digital news consumption has raised worries about disinformation and polarization of public opinion. Studies has identified political bias in news reporting and the dissemination of false material on social media (Van Zoonen, Luoma-aho et al. 2024).

Table 3. Future of Journalism in Malakand Division

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a. Journalism will become more dynamic and diverse with the integration of social media.	15	25.4	25.4	25.4
	b. Traditional journalism will remain dominant, with social media as a complementary source.	35	59.3	59.3	84.7
	c. Social media will eventually replace traditional journalism in influencing public discourse.	9	15.3	15.3	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 results shows, the majority of respondents (59.3%) believe traditional journalism will continue to dominate in Malakand Division, with social media functioning as a complementary source. Meanwhile, 25.4% of participants believe that the integration of social media will make journalism more dynamic and diversified. A lower percentage, 15.3%, believe that social media will someday replace traditional journalism in influencing public discourse. Overall, it indicates that, while the importance of social media is acknowledged and cherished, traditional journalism will probably maintain its dominant position in Malakand Division's journalistic scene.

The majority of respondents believe that traditional journalism will continue to be the primary source of news in the Malakand Division, with social media functioning as a supplemental medium. Traditional journalists

are respected for their trustworthiness, accuracy, and commitment to ethical norms, which are frequently regarded as missing in social media journalism. While a quarter of respondents believe that the integration of social media will make journalism more dynamic and diverse, and a smaller group believes that social media will eventually replace traditional journalism as a means of influencing public discourse, the prevailing sentiment emphasizes traditional journalism's continued importance. This implies that, despite the growing presence and impact of social media journalists, conventional media will continue to play an important role in moulding public opinion due to its established norms of dependability and trust. Journalists have challenges in confirming facts online, including source authenticity and information reliability (Garrison 2000).

Table 4. The impact of social media journalists on the credibility and trustworthiness of professional journalism

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a. Social media has enhanced the credibility of professional journalism by providing alternative perspectives.	11	18.6	18.6	18.6
	b. The presence of social media has undermined the credibility of professional journalism.	15	25.4	25.4	44.1
	c. There has been no significant impact on the credibility of professional journalism.	33	55.9	55.9	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

The table 4 study results shows, the majority of respondents (55.9%) feel that the existence of social media journalists has had no substantial influence on the region's professional journalistic reputation. Meanwhile, 25.4% of participants believe that social media has eroded the credibility of professional journalism, raising worries about the veracity of information from non-traditional sources. On the other side, 18.6% of respondents believe that social media has increased the credibility of professional journalism by presenting alternative viewpoints. Overall, the evidence reveals that most individuals believe social media has no significant effect on the credibility of professional journalism; however there are strong opinions on both its good and bad effects.

The influence of social media journalists on the factual accuracy and credibility of professional journalism in the Malakand Division offers a variety of perspectives. The majority of respondents say that the emergence of social media has had little impact on professional journalism's reputation, showing that traditional journalistic standards are regarded to be stable and resilient. However, a significant proportion

of respondents believe that social media has harmed professional journalism's reputation, probably due to the spread of unconfirmed and sensationalized content. On the other side, other respondents claim that social media has improved professional journalism by providing different viewpoints and developing a more thorough understanding of events. This range of perspectives demonstrates the region's delicate interaction between traditional and social media journalism. According to a recent survey of Internet users, Internet news sources were not perceived as considerably more credible than traditional (Kohut 1999).

Furthermore, (Johnson and Kaye 1998). found that Internet users rated online political information sources as more trustworthy than their traditional media equivalents. However, trust ratings were low across all media, and they excluded nonusers from their sample. However, (Mashek, McGill et al. 1997) discovered that people evaluated traditional media sources as more fair and unbiased than their Internet counterparts for political information.

Table 5. Social Media journalists have influenced the work or narratives of professional journalists

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a. Social media coverage led to increased attention by professional journalists on certain issues.	32	54.2	54.2	54.2
	b. Professional journalists have adopted stories or angles first reported by social media journalists.	15	25.4	25.4	79.7
	c. Social media journalists and professional journalists often collaborate to cover stories	12	20.3	20.3	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 results indicate that social media journalists have a major impact on professional journalism in the Malakand Division. The majority (54.2%) agree that social media coverage has enhanced professional journalists' attention to certain concerns. Moreover, 25.4% of respondents say that professional journalists have used topics or viewpoints first reported by social

media journalists. Furthermore, 20.3% of interviewees say that social media journalists and professional journalists frequently work together to cover stories. Social media is using his power to spread any cause that benefits someone.(Lee 2010)

Table 6. The method and tools used by social media journalist to gather news and information

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Social media journalists primarily use	44	74.6	74.6	74.6
	b. Professional journalists in Malakand Division typically gather news through traditional methods,	15	25.4	25.4	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 results indicates, a large majority (74.6%) of respondents believe that social media journalists in Malakand Division primarily use social networking platforms like Twitter and Facebook to gather news quickly and directly from sources, frequently relying on user-generated content and citizen journalism. They also use hashtags and geotagging to track and verify information. They use digital tools and venues for gathering news. In contrast, 25.4% of respondents said that professional journalists in the region usually acquire news using traditional means including personal interviews, official sources, and verified outlets. This shows that

social media journalists rely more on current, digital methods for news gathering, whilst professional journalists continue to use traditional, established tactics.

According to the statistics, a large majority of respondents feel that social media journalists in Malakand Division mostly obtain information and news through platforms such as websites, blogs, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. These journalists use social media's immediacy and vast reach to rapidly collect and broadcast information, frequently engaging their audience through user-generated material, real-time updates, and multimedia components.

Professional journalists in the region, on the other hand, frequently rely on traditional techniques of news gathering, such as direct reporting, interviews, and confirmed sources, to ensure accuracy and credibility. The dependence on digital platforms enables social media journalists to respond quickly to events and trends, so affecting public debate in a more dynamic and fast manner than professional journalism. (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010) describe social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and

technological foundations of Web2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content"

However Journalists depend on others to provide most of the information for their reports. Journalists rely heavily on sources to influence their stories, making information gathering essential to their profession (Berkowitz 2019). The primary objective of a journalist's work is gathering information from sources (Amend and Secko 2012).

Table 7 The method of social media journalists disseminate news to the public

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a. Social media journalists disseminate news through social networking platforms, blogs, and websites	47	79.7	79.7	79.7
	b. Professional journalists in Malakand Division disseminate news through traditional media outlets	12	20.3	20.3	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

The table 7 results shows, a majority (79.7%) of respondents feel that social media journalists in Malakand Division convey news using social networking platforms, blogs, and websites, utilizing multimedia formats like as videos and photographs to increase interaction. These journalists use viral sharing and topical subjects to quickly reach a larger audience. In comparison, 20.3% of respondents believe that professional journalists convey news via traditional media means such as newspapers, radio, and television, following editorial rules and professional standards to assure accuracy and dependability. This underscores the major contrasts in transmission strategies, with social media journalists relying on digital and viral processes while professional journalists use established, conventional methods.

The findings show a striking disparity between the strategies used by social media journalists and professional journalists in the Malakand Division to disseminate news to the public. Social media journalists primarily use social networking platforms, blogs, and websites, utilizing multimedia formats such as videos and

photographs to increase audience interaction. Their strategy relies on viral sharing and capitalizing on popular themes to quickly reach a large audience. In contrast, professional journalists in the region rely on conventional media sources like as newspapers, radio, and television to communicate information. They follow editorial rules and professional standards, stressing accuracy and dependability in their reporting. This distinction highlights the various techniques used by social media journalists, who favour quick distribution and audience involvement, vs professional journalists, who prefer established media platforms and journalistic integrity. Meanwhile the introduction of Web 2.0 technology has actually removed the monopoly on some communications that was formerly maintained by an exclusive sector of "professional communicators," which facilitate the sharing of political ideas and facts among citizens (Moy, Xenos et al. 2012).

In order to obtain information, conduct interviews, observe events, get expert commentary, and post their reports on blogs,

videos, Wikipedia, and other platforms, citizen reporters use the internet, video, mobile devices, and other digital technologies. Citizen reporters use social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, micro blogs, and others to share their work. Social media has made it easier for citizens to produce, distribute, and consume news through citizen journalism. (The Digital Switch: Citizen Journalism, Minority Coverage, n.d.)

If someone has a camera, social media journalism turns everyone become a news agency. This fresh type of journalism encourages self-publishing and creative thinking expression, which turns into news when it reaches a big audience (Kuyucu 2020).

Table 8. Social Media journalists and professional journalists collaborating on news

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a. Yes, they often collaborate on investigative pieces and breaking news stories.	6	10.2	10.2	10.2
	b. No, there is little to no collaboration between the two groups.	43	72.9	72.9	83.1
	c. Sometimes, depending on the nature of the story or project	10	16.9	16.9	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 results shows, the vast majority of respondents (72.9%) say there is not much or no collaboration among social media journalists and professional journalists in Malakand Division. However, 16.9% of respondents believe that cooperation occurs sometimes depending on the nature of the story or project. Only 10.2% said

the two groups frequently work on investigative articles and breaking news items. This implies that, while collaboration is uncommon, the two organizations do occasionally collaborate, particularly for specific forms of news coverage.

Table 9. Sense of competition between social media journalists and professional journalists

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a. Yes, there is a competitive atmosphere that drives both groups to produce high-quality content	9	15.3	15.3	15.3
	b. No, the competition is minimal, and it has little impact on the quality of news reporting.	47	79.7	79.7	94.9
	c. The competition can sometimes lead to sensationalism and a focus on clickbait rather than in-depth reporting.	3	5.1	5.1	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 9 results shows, the majority of respondents (79.7%) say there is no competition between social media journalists and professional journalists in Malakand Division, which has little influence on the quality of news coverage. However, 15.3% believe that there is a competitive environment that encourages both groups to create high-quality material. On the other hand, 5.1% of respondents believe that competition might lead to sensationalism and an attraction for click bait over in-depth reporting. Overall, although some see competition as a motivator for great material, others are concerned about the possible negative consequences, such as sensationalism and superficial reporting.

The statistics show that the majority of respondents feel there is little rivalry between

social media journalists and professional journalists in the Malakand Division, and that this competition has little influence on the quality of news reporting. A tiny percentage of respondents believe there is a competitive climate that motivates both groups to create high quality material. However, an even smaller fraction believes that this competitiveness may occasionally lead to sensationalism and a preference for click bait over in-depth reporting. However, In the age of ratings races, professional journalists may (intentionally or inadvertently) report or broadcast news that has been unconfirmed and taken from social media, which might later cause confusion and disorder in society (Jamil and Appiah-Adjei 2019).

Table 10 Social Media journalists follow journalistic ethics as compared to professional journalist

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a. They adhere to similar standards as professional journalists.	4	6.8	6.8	6.8
	b. They often do not adhere to journalistic ethics and standards	43	72.9	72.9	79.7
	c. Their adherence varies widely depending on the individual.	12	20.3	20.3	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 10 results show that a sizable majority (72.9%) of respondents feel that social media journalists in Malakand Division frequently violate journalistic ethics and standards. Only a tiny percentage (6.8%) believe they adhere to the same standards as professional journalists. Furthermore, 20.3% of respondents felt that the adherence to ethics and norms varies greatly among social media journalists based on particular circumstances. This suggests a widespread belief that social media journalists in the region do not always adhere to the same ethical norms and standards as their professional colleagues, despite the fact that individual differences exist. According to the results, a sizable portion of respondents in the Malakand Division think social media journalists regularly break journalistic ethics and standards, while a little percentage think they uphold professional

standards. Furthermore, there is a belief that social media journalists' adherence to ethical norms differs based on particular situations. This predicament might be caused by a number of factors, including the fact that many social media journalists lack formal journalism training, are illiterate, and frequently aren't aware of journalistic ethics. Without realizing the duties and ethical commitments associated with the job, they may just utilize social media sites and consider themselves journalists. This widely held opinion raises questions regarding the reliability and professionalism of the information social media journalists in the area distribute as it implies that they frequently fail to uphold the moral standards set by their professional counterparts. A citizen journalists seldom adhere to journalistic norms, their work is typically of

low standard and lacks values of journalism (Noor 2017).

Table 11 Social media journalists and professional journalists uphold ethical standards

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a. Implementing stricter regulations and oversight	38	64.4	64.4	64.4
	b. Providing education and training on journalistic ethics	18	30.5	30.5	94.9
	c. Encouraging self-regulation within the journalism community	3	5.1	5.1	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 11 results shows that the majority of respondents (64.4%) want tougher restrictions and monitoring. This suggests a need for external methods to monitor and enforce ethical behavior. Furthermore, 30.5% of participants agree that offering education and training on journalistic ethics is critical, emphasizing the need of improving journalists' understand of ethical concepts and practices. A lesser number (5.1%) advocate for self-regulation in the journalistic community, highlighting the need of internal accountability measures. Overall, the data shows a realization of the need for a variety of initiatives, including regulatory, instructional, and community-driven activities, to encourage ethical journalism practices among both social media users and professional journalists.

Table 5.11 results show that an important lead of respondents support more stringent regulations and oversight of journalistic activities, suggesting that outside procedures are thought to be necessary to guarantee journalists' ethical behaviour. A significant proportion of participants underscored the need of receiving education and training on journalistic ethics,

proposing that improving journalists' comprehension of ethical concepts is vital. A smaller faction among the journalistic community is in favour of self-regulation, which emphasizes the significance of internal accountability. The aforementioned data emphasizes the need for a comprehensive strategy that integrates legal, educational, and community-based programs to advance ethical journalism. The need for stronger regulations most likely results from a lack of confidence in the self-regulatory mechanisms in place and the pressing need to put an immediate stop to unethical behaviour. On the other hand, support for education and training indicates a conviction in long-term enhancement via awareness-raising and capacity-building.

Critics expressed concerns over the new contributors' lack of formal training and supervision (Lemann 2006). But Dugan emphasized that both professional and citizen journalists needed to exercise caution to make sure that ethical norms were being fulfilled (Dugan 2008).

Table 12. Social media journalists pose to the credibility and accuracy of news reporting

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a. Spread of misinformation and fake news	40	67.8	67.8	67.8
	b. Difficulty in verifying sources	3	5.1	5.1	72.9
	c. Pressure to prioritize speed over accuracy	3	5.1	5.1	78.0

d. Lack of editorial oversight and fact-checking mechanisms	13	22.0	22.0	100.0
Total	59	100.0	100.0	

The table 12 study findings highlight various issues that social media journalists pose to the legitimacy and integrity of news reporting in Malakand Division. The spread of disinformation and fake news, as noted by 67.8% of respondents, is the most pressing worry, since it has the potential to dramatically weaken public faith in media. Furthermore, 22.0% of participants are concerned about a lack of editorial supervision and fact-checking methods among social media journalists, which might contribute to the spread of incorrect information. A lesser minority of respondents cite issues in verifying sources (5.1%) and the temptation to emphasize speed over accuracy (5.1%) as additional challenges, indicating worries about the credibility of news items generated by social media journalists.

The chart shows that the legitimacy and accuracy of news reporting are seriously threatened by social media journalists in the Malakand Division in a number of ways. The majority of respondents (67.8%) said that the main problem is the dissemination of false information and fake news. Furthermore, five percent of respondents draw attention to the challenge of confirming sources, and another five percent stress the expectation to put speed ahead of accuracy. Moreover, a significant worry raised by 22.0% of respondents is the absence of editorial supervision and fact-checking procedures. These results highlight the several ways in which citizen

journalists contest the norms upheld by professional journalists. News published by social media journalists sometimes lacks the accountability and verification that define professional journalism since there is no editorial supervision or strict fact-checking procedures in place. This situation can undermine the public's trust in the accuracy and credibility of the news, posing a significant threat to the overall reliability of information in the region.

This obsession of people with using social media for a minute -to -minute updates and eyewitness reporting has raised a question not only on the credibility of social media but also about the credibility of Journalism. This customer- driven media is undermining its credibility by disseminating hoaxes, lies, disinformation and rumours from individual to individual unstoppably (Ireton and Posetti 2018). Social media users regularly come across misleading information and have the risk to become entangled in erroneous information (Ketchell, 2021). Conversely, fake news sources lack the editorial standards and procedures that news organizations use to guarantee the veracity and accuracy of their reporting. Other information diseases like misinformation (false or misleading information) and disinformation (false information intentionally disseminated to mislead people) share similarities with fake news (Lazer, Baum et al. 2018).

Research Questions Results

RQ1: Is social media journalists influenced the practices and standards of professional journalism?

Table 13. Social media journalism influenced the practices and standards of professional journalism

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a. Increased competition for audience attention	9	15.3	15.3	15.3
	b. Emphasis on digital storytelling and multimedia content	3	5.1	5.1	20.3
	c. Greater focus on engaging with audiences through social platforms	37	62.7	62.7	83.1

d. Pressure to produce news quickly to keep up with social media timelines	10	16.9	16.9	100.0
Total	59	100.0	100.0	

The table 13 findings show how the emergence of social media journalism has changed the practices and standards of professional journalism in Malakand Division. A sizable majority of respondents (62.7%) describe a higher emphasis on connecting with audiences via social media, indicating a move toward more interactive and audience-centered reporting methods. Furthermore, 15.3% of participants report greater rivalry for audience attention, implying that conventional journalists are changing to compete with the quick spread of news on social media platforms. Furthermore, 16.9% of respondents recognize the need to publish news swiftly in order to meet social media deadlines, demonstrating the demand for quicker news delivery in response to social media's immediacy. A lesser minority of respondents (5.1%) place a focus on digital storytelling and multimedia material, showing that professional journalists are increasingly using multimedia forms to improve their reporting in the digital era. Overall, the findings show that social media journalism has had a significant influence on the region's professional journalistic practices and standards, notably in terms of audience

engagement, competitiveness, speed, and multimedia storytelling.

Professional journalism norms and practices have been profoundly influenced by the growth of social media journalism in Malakand Division. Engaging audiences through social media platforms has become increasingly important, since there is a growing focus on connection and reactivity. Because of this shift, journalists now face more competition for their audience's interest, which forces them to provide content that is both inventive and appealing. To make news more interesting and approachable, there is also a noticeable push toward the use of digital storytelling and multimedia material. Furthermore, because social media moves quickly, journalists are under pressure to report on stories more frequently in order to remain topical and relevant. As globalized media trends become more important for working journalists, news organizations and media houses are operating across more platforms and connecting journalists with audiences across the world in more participatory ways than in the past (Gade and Raviola 2009).

RQ2: Do you think professional journalists changed practices and strategies in response to the rise of social media journalists in Malakand Division?

Table 14 practices and strategies in response to the rise of social media journalism

a. Integrating social media into their news gathering and distribution processes	8	13.6	13.6	13.6
b. Collaborating with social media influencers and bloggers	7	11.9	11.9	25.4
c. Fact-checking and verifying information more rigorously	38	64.4	64.4	89.8
d. Developing strategies to counter misinformation and fake news	6	10.2	10.2	100.0
Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 14 study findings show how professional journalists in Malakand Division have changed their methods and strategies in response to the advent of social media journalism. The majority of respondents (64.4%) say that professional journalists have increased their efforts to fact-check and verify material, demonstrating a proactive reaction to the issues posed by disinformation and false news on social media platforms. Furthermore, 13.6% of participants saw social media integration in professional journalists' news collecting and dissemination operations, implying that social media is valued as a source of news and a way of connecting with audiences. A lesser proportion of respondents (11.9%) identify cooperation between

professional journalists, social media influencers, and bloggers, showing a willingness to use these people's reach and influence to disseminate news. Furthermore, 10.2% of respondents identified the development of tactics to combat disinformation and false news, demonstrating professional journalists' proactive attitude to addressing the issues provided by social media reporting. In all, the data reveals that professional journalists in Malakand Division are altering their methods and techniques to effectively navigate the shifting media landscape brought about by the emergence of social media journalism.

RQ3: What are Challenges to professional journalists in the era of social media journalists in Malakand Division?

Table 15 Challenges to professional journalist in the era of social media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a. Balancing the need for speed with the need for accuracy	19	32.2	32.2	32.2
	b. Overcoming skepticism and distrust of mainstream media	3	5.1	5.1	37.3
	c. Adapting to changing audience preferences and consumption habits	5	8.5	8.5	45.8
	d. Ensuring editorial independence and avoiding bias in reporting	32	54.2	54.2	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 15 findings highlight many issues that professional journalists confront in retaining relevance and credibility in the age of social media journalism. The majority of respondents (54.2%) emphasize the challenge of maintaining editorial independence and avoiding bias in reporting, emphasizing the necessity of journalistic integrity and impartiality in the face of rising scepticism against mainstream media. Furthermore, 32.2% of participants have difficulty matching the need for speed with the requirement for accuracy, indicating the pressure to keep up with the fast-paced nature of social media while adhering to strict fact-checking standards. A lower proportion of respondents (8.5%) note the difficulty of adjusting to

changing audience tastes and consumption patterns, indicating the necessity for professional journalists to constantly modify their narrative tactics and delivery methods. Furthermore, 5.1% of respondents highlighted the challenge of overcoming skepticism and suspicion of mainstream media, emphasizing the need of restoring confidence and credibility among consumers in an era of widespread disinformation on social media platforms. As a whole, the data demonstrates the various obstacles that professional journalists confront in navigating the changing media ecosystem shaped by the advent of social media journalism. In the social media era, professional journalists confront several formidable obstacles to being

relevant and credible. One of the biggest challenges is striking a balance between truth and speed, as social media's rapid-fire news cycle sometimes puts pressure on journalists to release stories quickly—sometimes at costs of careful fact-checking. Additionally, since many viewers have grown suspicious of traditional news sources, it is imperative to overcome scepticism and mistrust of mainstream media. Journalists need to adjust to the evolving tastes and consumption patterns of their audience, who are favoring digital and interactive material over traditional formats more and more. Furthermore, as retaining impartiality and objectivity is crucial for upholding confidence and credibility in their work, guaranteeing editorial independence and avoiding bias in reporting continue to be important concerns. Professional journalists must adapt to these problems by keeping high standards of journalistic honesty while always evolving their procedures.

Conclusion

Significant alterations have been made to the procedures, standards, and nature of professional journalism due to the emergence of social media journalism in Malakand Division. The significance and adaptability of these findings on the journalistic community are highlighted in several key domains.

First, the rising presence of social media journalists has raised competition for audience attention. This has pushed professional journalists to be more creative and engaging in their information delivery, especially via the use of digital storytelling and multimedia material. A sizable majority of respondents stressed the necessity of connecting with audiences via social media, showing a move toward more interactive and audience-centered reporting techniques.

Despite the rising importance of social media news, conventional journalism remains the dominating force in the region. Most respondents feel that while social media adds to a more dynamic and diversified journalistic environment, traditional journalism will remain the major source of news owing to its established authenticity and adherence to professional norms.

The relationship between social media and professional journalism has not been without strain. The dissemination of disinformation and

false news by social media journalists has serious implications for the credibility and accuracy of news reporting. The majority of respondents were concerned about the absence of editorial supervision and fact-checking methods among social media journalists, stressing the possibility of transmitting unverified and sensationalized information.

In response to these obstacles, professional journalists in Malakand Division have increased their efforts to fact-check and verify material thoroughly. There is also a noteworthy trend towards incorporating social media into their news collecting and dissemination processes, recognizing the potential of these platforms for real-time updates and audience involvement.

Most respondents see a low level of competition between social media and professional journalists, implying that the quality of news reporting is impacted more by each group's specific approaches and standards than by direct rivalry. However, the need to create news rapidly in order to meet social media deadlines has influenced the pace at which professional journalists work, frequently questioning their dedication to accuracy and completeness.

Ensuring ethical practices in journalism is still a crucial topic. To address ethical lapses among social media journalists, the majority of respondents call for greater laws and monitoring, as well as education and training in journalistic ethics. There is an acknowledged need for a comprehensive strategy that encompasses regulatory, instructional, and community-driven activities to encourage ethical journalistic practices on both social media and traditional platforms.

In the end, while social media journalism has created new dynamics and difficulties, accredited journalism in Malakand Division continues to develop and adhere to its fundamental values of truth, reliability, and ethical reporting. The changing media landscape necessitates ongoing adaptation and a balanced approach to incorporating new technology and techniques while maintaining journalism's essential values.

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