

RESEARCH ARTICLE	Media Practice in the Digital Environment: A Field Study on a Sample of Journalists in Oran and Mostaganem
Aissa Abdi Noria	<p>Researcher</p> <p>Media and Communication Studies Laboratory, University of Mostaganem</p> <p>Algeria</p> <p>Email Id: noria.aissaabdi@univ-mosta.dz</p>
Medjahed Hanane	<p>Researcher</p> <p>Media and Communication Studies Laboratory, University of Mostaganem</p> <p>Algeria</p> <p>Email Id: hanane.medjahed@univ-mosta.dz</p>
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Abstract This study aimed to identify the reality of media practice in light of the digital environment among journalists, where the descriptive survey method was adopted and the interview tool was used to collect data from a purposive sample consisting of 12 journalists belonging to media organizations located in the city of Mostaganem and Oran. The study found a series of results, the most important of which were: Most of the respondents believe that new media have made positive changes in the process of collecting media content due to the speed of access to information and the diversity of its sources. The study also revealed that most of the respondents believe that the digital environment has had a positive impact on the field of work. The study revealed that most of the obstacles that respondents complained about are as follows: Changing the organization's editorial line, the involvement of non-professionals in the world of journalism, and securing the scoop at the expense of credibility.	
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1. Introduction:

Within the framework of the technological development in the technical field, several developments occurred that affected the structure of the media in general, and new media concepts and contents emerged that were reflected in the practice of the media process, in addition to the development of new media characteristics resulting from the advanced applications of modern technology to adapt them to media practice in the new media in a new context characterized by immediacy, rapid flow of information, interaction and social dynamism.

The field of media work has witnessed rapid and succes-

sive developments due to the introduction and use of technological means, which brought about radical changes in the various stages of media production, from techniques of collecting information from the field and delivering it to the headquarters of the media organization, through techniques of storing and retrieving information, techniques of processing and producing journalistic materials, to techniques of publishing, transferring and exchanging the material, which made the press industry witness great development during the last three decades on all material and technical levels, in addition to adopting new methods of production and distribution.

Based on the above, we pose the following problematic:

What is the reality of media practice in light of the digital environment for journalists? Within this question, a set of questions falls under the following:

- ✓ What are the most important media and technological tools that respondents rely on to perform their tasks?
- ✓ What are the most important changes in the process of collecting and producing journalistic content?
- ✓ What are the new media practices produced by the digital environment?
- ✓ What are the most important challenges facing journalists in the digital environment?
- ✓ What are the obstacles or difficulties faced by journalists in the digital environment?

2. Study Significance

This study is significant because it addresses one of the most important media issues at the present time, which is the result of technological developments and their implications on the media environment, as well as changes in the nature of tasks and roles, the nature of relationships within the work environment, and the extent to which journalists benefit from technological techniques in the performance of their tasks.

3. Study Objectives:

This study, entitled “The reality of media practice in the digital environment, a field study on a sample of Algerian journalists,” aims to achieve a number of objectives including the following:

- ✓ Identify the reality of media practice in the digital environment.
- ✓ Learn about the most important media and technological tools that are relied upon by the sample members to perform their tasks.
- ✓ Identify the most important changes that have occurred in the process of collecting and producing journalistic content.
- ✓ Uncover the challenges facing journalists in the digital environment.
- ✓ Identify the obstacles or difficulties faced by journalists in the digital environment.

4. Study Concepts:

Media practice: means practising media work in accordance with the rights, duties, and ethics of professional work, respecting the values and attitudes that guide and direct behaviour in the workplace, or that determine for the individual what to do and what not to do. (Khalafallah Diab, 2006, pp. 07-09)

A more general definition states that media practice is “the rules, methods and procedures of the process followed by journalistic professionals and practitioners, applied during their professional practice in newspapers, and the professional practice of journalists is influenced by a set of professional factors within the work environment and other

non-professional factors outside the work environment.” The professional factors are: The communication system (organisations and policies), editorial policy, the personality and affiliation of the editor-in-chief, sources of information, the economics of the newspaper, the conditions of the newspaper industry, the personal characteristics and qualifications of the communicator, and the technology of journalistic work. Non-professional factors: the orientations and attitudes of the political system, the values and culture of society, or influence groups (Douib, 2014.) or lobbyists and banking lobbies.

Media practice at the level of our study is the process of producing journalistic material from the moment it is an idea, collecting information and facts from its sources and processing it in a specific form according to the general political line of the media outlet to which the journalist belongs, which is determined by internal and external factors.

The digital media environment:

The digital environment, as a term and concept, has been associated with the transformations imposed by technological developments and the digital revolution on the field of media and communication, forming several names such as digital media, new media, interactive media, networked media, cyber media, information and multimedia media, and other names in this context. The digital environment for media production and the digital news industry has created a field for proliferation mainly related to the characteristics of the digital society, which is founded on the freedom and flexibility of information production and reception (Boufroukh & Guetaf, 2023)

The media environment can be defined in two elements: The particular communication technologies used (personal computers, daily newspapers and television) and the social, political and economic structure through which these technologies are used, such as how individuals use them for broader purposes and the governmental systems that influence them.

These are structural changes that form a new media environment or a new media landscape that includes all forms of electronic media from electronic journalism and citizen journalism - blogs, social networks - transforming the media from analog to digital to networked, and turning the receiving audience into a sender and receiver at the same time, leading to audience fragmentation. (Pierce & Williams, 2012, p. 20)

5. Methods and tools:

Methodology of the study: Since our study is centred on the reality of media practice in the digital environment, it falls within the descriptive research that is based on the interpretation of the studied phenomenon by identifying its conditions, dimensions and the relationship between its variables in order to provide a practical and accurate description of the phenomenon, following the descriptive survey method.” The nature of the subject that seeks to describe media practices through a survey and the research objective that seeks to identify the reality of media practice

in the digital environment forced us to follow this method.

Study tool: The research technique we used is the interview, it is a direct technique used to explore the deep motivations of individuals and discover the common causes of their behaviour through the specificity of each case, as for the choice of this technique, it is due to the fact that it allows an in-depth study of each unit of the sample

Validation of the study instrument: The study instrument was judged by Ms. Samira Manad, a lecturer at the University of Mostaganem.

Research population and study sample:

6.The research community: Our research community consisted of journalists belonging to media organisations located in the city of Mostaganem and the city of Oran.

7. Study sample: We relied on non-probability sampling and chose a purposive sample.

Sample characteristics: We preferred a diverse sample (males and females), diverse media organisations (print, electronic, radio, television), diverse nature of media practice (journalist, reporter), diverse years of experience (ranging from one to twenty-five years), nature of the organisation (private, public).

Number of respondents: 12 respondents

8. Previous studies:

A study by Riach Radwan and Riqia Bousnan entitled Media professional performance in the digital media environment, a field study on a sample of Algerian media professionals.

Through this study, the researchers tried to identify the extent of information, linguistic and technical control in the requirements of electronic editing and publishing by Algerian media professionals working in digital media organisations and the impact on their professional performance, where the survey method was adopted, and the questionnaire tool was used on a random sample of 60 journalists distributed equally between the public and private media sectors, and the most prominent results reached are the following:

The performance of Algerian media professionals working in the digital media environment is characterised by professional linguistic and technical incompetence, and the impact of the lack of interest in professional training and specialised media training, in addition to the absence of independent legal legislation regulating the online media profession, negatively affects the effectiveness of performance and digital media practice in Algeria) (Riyah & Bousnane, 2022)

A study by Mounir Ayadi entitled “Communication in the Algerian Media: The New Media: Facebook and Twitter as an Example” - A descriptive study on a sample of journalists in the written and audio-visual sector in Algeria.

Through this study, the researcher tried to identify the extent to which journalists rely on social networking sites as sources of news information, and for this purpose, the

descriptive survey method was adopted and the purposive sample available on the Internet was used, where the electronic questionnaire was distributed to journalists from each of the People's Newspaper, Al-Khabar Newspaper, National Radio, Public Television who use social networking sites, and a number of results were reached, the most important of which are that Algerian journalists do not use social networking sites, especially Facebook and Twitter as main sources of news information, and that the majority of them have little to no trust in social media and prefer to combine these sources with traditional sources (Ayadi, 2018).

A study by Jamal Abdul Namous Akka, titled Reflections of the digital environment and its effects on journalists working in the Iraqi press: (A field study on journalists working in the newspapers Al-Zaman, Al-Mada, Al-Sabah, Al-Mashriq, Al-Zawraa and Al-Sabah Al-Jadid.

This study aimed to reveal the reflections of the digital environment and its effects on the work of Iraqi journalists, and to achieve the objectives of the study, the survey method was adopted, and the questionnaire tool was used to collect data from a random sample of 94 individuals from the newspapers (Al-Zaman, Al-Mada, Al-Sabah, Al-Mashreq, Al-Zawraa, and Al-Sabah Al-Jadid). The results of this study showed the following: The high percentage of journalists benefiting from the Internet in their journalistic work due to the importance of digital applications for media organisations in general and journalists in particular in accomplishing the journalistic work of media organisations, in addition to the significant contribution of digital media to the development of traditional media with a percentage of (90.4%) (Namous, 2020).

The study of Mohamed Abda Mohamed Youcef Nasr entitled: "the impact of Egyptian journalists' use of digital media platforms".

This study aimed to identify the impact of Egyptian journalists' use of digital media platforms in developing their professional performance. The researcher relied on the survey method as well as the questionnaire tool to collect data from a non-probability random sample of 300 individual communicators in digital media platforms, and the study concluded with a number of results, including the following:

- ✓ Respondents are keen to use digital media platforms in Egypt on a regular basis, with a percentage of 89.8%.
- ✓ The respondents' frequent use of mobile phone applications that help them in performing their work, as the phone camera application came in the first place, the second place is WhatsApp, in the third place came the photo editing application, in the fourth place Record Calls, and then the rest of the applications come in the use
- ✓ Failure to organise training courses to the full extent, especially since most of the respondents obtain training courses from the Journalists Syndicate or from their personal diligence and training courses are rarely offered to them (Hashim, 2022)

9. Results of the study:

Qualitative analysis of the interviews:

The great strength of qualitative analysis is that both data collection and data analysis go hand in hand. We reproduced the various interview statements, although they are personal in terms of production, they carry essential analytical elements to understand the studied phenomenon. We conducted a process of detection, classification and comparison of research data in order to develop an accurate systematic construction of the phenomenon by dividing the interview statements by themes and the main ideas of each theme by transcribing the tapes to later convert them into written statements, resulting in statements that are richer in content and others less rich in content, so we focused on the former for the topic.

9.1 Media used in media practice:

The rapid technological development in the media field has contributed to the emergence of new methods in the production of media content due to the ease of use, broadcasting news and interacting with it, as well as interacting with the receiving audience.

It became clear to us through interviewing the respondents about the new media adopted as sources of information gathering that some respondents stated that social networking sites are an approved source of information gathering, but with verification, we realised this through the answer of the respondent (male, newspaper reporter, 8 years of experience, private audiovisual sector) "We rely on social networking sites, Facebook, WhatsApp, but with verification...."

Other respondents indicated that they rely on the news agency to contact the concerned parties and official pages and websites, as the respondent (male, newspaper reporter, 4 years of experience, private audiovisual sector) admitted: "The media are multiple and renewed by the renewal of media channels, and among those we rely on the news agency, sources and official pages of media organisations and authorities, as well as the media in each organisation." One respondent stated that the only source of information gathering is the field (male, journalist, 25 years of experience, print and online journalism sector - public) "There are no sources that we rely on as a source of information, but there is one and only one source: going to the scene and confirming the event, information, interviewing people..."

We noticed through analysing the first question that the answers varied between three sides, there are those who believe that social networking sites are an easily accessible source as well as characterised by speed due to the digital environment that the rapid scoop imposes on us, but they emphasised on verifying the news, while the second side believes that the news agency and the official pages and websites of the institutions are the only source; they rely on social networking sites but through their official pages which guarantees speed and confidence in the source, while one respondent expressed that the field is the only source. We noticed that the respondent has twenty-five

years experience in the public written journalism sector. We deem that professional experience obliges him to go to the field himself, but if he is unable to reach the place of news, what is the solution? This is on the one hand, and on the other hand, we notice that he belongs to the public sector of written journalism meaning the news scoop is not controlled by him like the journalist in the private audiovisual sector, although going to the field remains a realistic source of news.

By asking the respondents about the technological tools they use to process and produce media contents, all respondents stated that they use the computer, smartphone, smart board and some applications: Google Drive, PowerDirector, Mojo, KineMaster, nagra numérique, digimedia adobe/netia, InShot, Android, Avid, Vn, Dji mimo, Adobe Première, Application mobile. A male journalist with 17 years of experience in the APS public sector answered: "We mainly use a computer, then a smartphone, we exchange videos with google drive and PowerDirector application, and for a montage application I use KineMaster without forgetting the Mojo application".

By analysing the data of this question, it became clear that all respondents use computers, smartphones, and some applications for sharing videos and making montages, and this is what ICT has allowed to facilitate the process of creating electronic content, including gaining time, effort, and quality.

After sorting the answers to the third question, which focused on the electronic tools that help in the wide dissemination of media information, it became clear that all the answers declared YouTube and Facebook as the most used tools, and some respondents added smart TV, as stated by a female journalist, editor, investigator in the public audiovisual sector. After the transition of society from industrial to informational, the data is collected through complex algorithms that provide information rapidly through the Internet and the interactive videos in mobile phones and the transfer and coverage of news and events became quick and accurate, as well as the facilitation of the process of communication between the media internally and externally by providing the media with various images, shapes and graphics."

The video or moving visual image is one of the important elements in today's media uses, as it provides the news with movement and suspense. In this context, Hassan Abbas Naji argues that the use of multimedia would allow understanding and perception of topics through video and can help communicate information to users at different levels more efficiently (Naji Hassan, 2016, p. 154).

9.2 Changes in the process of collecting and producing media content:

The study revealed to us through interviewing the respondents about how the new media changed the process of collecting media content that most of the respondents' answers felt that the change brought about by the new media was in favour of collecting media content due to the speed of access to information and the diversity of its sources. This is what we noticed in the answer of a male

journalist with 15 years of experience in the public audio sector: "It gave an opportunity to collect the largest amount of information and speed of access to it, and it gave an opportunity to approach and identify the sources of news...". While some responded that this change negatively affected the process of collecting information because the speed of collecting information affected the process of ensuring its credibility, and the multiplicity of sources and the participation of non-professionals in the production of media contents makes the journalist in the spiral of choosing the news from a reliable source, verification and the scoop. This is what the respondent who is a female journalist, editor, and investigative reporter in the public audiovisual sector said: "Information has become available through various social media, which has made it easier to gather, but the journalist must remain alert and committed to professional ethics by verifying the correct and truthful information in light of the widespread of false information and rumours."

When analysing the answers to the question: "How has the new media changed the process of producing media content?" Most of the answers revealed that the media have facilitated the process of producing media content in terms of speed, as stated by the respondent who is a male reporter with 8 years of experience in the private audiovisual sector: "When I'm working, I shoot and manage a montage in five minutes." There are respondents who focused on the quality of content production and how to transform the journalism of the scoop into slow journalism. The respondent who's a male, journalist with 17 years of experience in the public sector of the Algerian News Agency stated: "The new media have changed the process of producing media content. First, it improved the presentation of the news, infographics and digital caricature. The content of the news turned into a story turned into content journalism, with rich information and this is called slow journalism." "Slow journalism is a new term in the world of the profession, and it seems to have emerged from many debates about the state of the journalism profession and its fate in light of what is known as the digital age, which has witnessed what can be called the abandonment of many of the rules of journalism, its professional determinants and ethical obligations, all for speed in the context of competition between media outlets, or between the outlets and social media. The speed of news dissemination has become an obsession for many traditional journalistic institutions, which, in order to compete with Twitter, Facebook and other social media outlets, have waived many of the accepted conditions related to accuracy and verification of information credibility. This new school of journalism - if we can call it that - relies on the principle of "We value being right above being first," meaning that the values of accuracy, credibility and comprehensiveness are prioritised over scoops. This is justified by the fact that slow journalism gives an opportunity for further optimization and satisfies the needs of the media consumer." (Kabashi, 2016).

Some respondents tended to oppose this change because it allows non-professionals to enter the world of journalism, as stated by a female journalist with 18 years of experience in the public audio sector: "This change allowed non-

professionals to produce media content with the emergence of what is known as citizen journalism, the difficulty of verifying the truth of media content, and facilitated the process of editing and producing content."

9.3. New Media Practice

After sorting the answers to the question of the impact of the digital environment on the media work environment, it became clear to us that most of the respondents were positive about the impact of the digital environment on the field of work, including the transformation of the journalist into a technical journalist and director at the same time, minimising the difficulties of accessing and processing information, as we saw in the statement of the respondent who's a male journalist with 15 years of experience in the public audio sector:

"The positive side is that it saves time, as it speeds up the processing of information, as it also saves time in the various stages of the production of media content and the possibility of accessing and verifying sources, turning the journalist into a technician and director of content with the possibility of dispensing with other elements during news coverage."

Jamal Chaouch believes that the use of multimedia in the field of journalism has greatly affected the production routine of media content and the time management of media institutions, and has added a professional dimension that translates into the dynamic and direct dimension of the editorial field, which consists of journalists who can determine the nature of facts and events, collect data, information, statistics and images, and carry out the act of production, publication and distribution regardless of their location (Chaabane Chaouche, 2021)

While some respondents complained about the pressures caused by the pursuit of news in the era of speed and subjecting information to scrutiny, as stated by male journalist with 17 years of experience in the APS sector: "We suffer pressure resulting from the race with the news, because citizen journalism is ahead, and scoop is my market value in the organisation to obtain and process information."

The study revealed to us through analysing the question of the impact of the digital environment on the ethics of journalistic work that most journalists agreed on the ethics of media practice with the emergence of other models of journalism such as citizen journalism and emphasised the issue of verifying the news and stealing content, as stated by a female reporter with 10 years of experience in the private written/electronic journalism sector: "It affected it greatly, the journalist no longer checks the source of the news or how it is edited, which leads to great fallacies for public opinion and the reputation of the journalist alike."

Mona Hashim notes that social networks have imposed new ethical challenges on journalists in light of the radical changes in the process of producing and consuming information, as journalists and media companies have been forced to be in the same position as their audience on social networks (Hashim).

9.4. Challenges of media practice in the digital environ-

ment:

Through the respondents' answers regarding the obstacles faced by media professionals in the digital environment, it became clear that all respondents face obstacles, most of which were common to all of them, such as changing the organisation's editorial line, the entry of non-professionals into the world of journalism, and achieving a scoop at the expense of credibility. This is what a female journalist with 14 years of professional experience in the public audiovisual sector said: "Sometimes there are restrictions and monitoring ... the editorial line of media organisations changes, as well as the spread of a huge amount of information quickly, and the spread of false news by the citizen journalist.". There are those who linked the obstacles in the digital environment to the accessibility of technological means as stated by male journalist with 16 years of experience in the public audio sector: "Obstacles in the digital environment are related to access to technological means as well as training sessions related to the digital developments that emerge every time." "The tasks of the journalist extend to include the activity of a permanent technical employee who performs all procedures and digital professional functions, which are additional to the roles he previously performed, such as searching for information and presenting it to the public, as some media organisations have assigned journalists to perform new professional roles on websites, without prior training or specialised knowledge to do so." (Chaabane Chaouche, 2021).

After analysing the respondents' answers regarding the future of media work in light of AI, the study revealed that most of their answers focused on the duality of its positive and negative impact on media practice, as stated by female journalist with 14 years of experience in the public audiovisual sector: "It helps journalists to edit and create news contents faster, but without forgetting that it can be used in falsifying contents, spreading false news and propaganda." "AI is gradually changing the work of the media, affecting all steps from production to consumption. The most important possibilities offered by AI in the field of journalism can be identified as follows: Attending to simple tasks and freeing journalists from engaging in more complex qualitative reporting; enhancing communication and collaboration between journalists. Enabling journalists to sift through a wide range of data, text, images and videos. Helping journalists better connect and engage with their audiences. Enabling the creation of entirely new types of journalism." (Marconi, Seigman, & Journalist, 2017)

Others saw AI as a threat to the status of journalists (male, reporter, 7 years of professional experience, public audiovisual sector) "AI will revolutionise the media field and threaten the status of journalists, especially news and TV presenters." Al-Emadi pointed out that some media professionals fear that AI could replace their jobs, while at the same time emphasising the superiority of humans over AI and its various programs in what is called deep journalism and carrying out tasks related to human interviews or investigative journalism, which have not yet appeared applications and systems capable of carrying them out yet (Al-Emadi, 2023).

10. Conclusion: The study reached a number of conclusions regarding media practice in the digital environment, as follows:

- ✓ With regard to the new media adopted as sources of information gathering, the respondents' answers varied into three groups: those who believe that social networking sites are a source characterised by ease and speed of obtaining the scoop with the need to verify the news, while the second trend believes that the news agency and the official pages and websites of the institutions are the only source, i.e. relying on social networking sites but through their official pages which guarantees speed and confidence in the source, while the third group believes that the field is the only source of information.
- ✓ Regarding the technological tools used by the respondents to process and produce media contents, all of them stated that they use the computer, smartphone, smart board and some applications like Google Drive, Powerdirector, Mojo, KineMaster, nagra numérique, digimedia adobe/netia, InShot, Android, Avid, Adobe Première, Application mobile, Vn, Djimimimo, and this is what ICT has allowed to facilitate the process of making digital contents, including gaining time, effort and quality. In terms of electronic tools that help in the widespread dissemination of information, YouTube comes first, followed by Facebook, while others added smart TV.
- ✓ Regarding how the new media have changed the process of collecting media content, the study revealed that most respondents believe that the new media have brought about positive changes in the process of collecting media content because of the speed of access to information and the diversity of its sources.
- ✓ Most of the respondents believe that the new media have facilitated the production of media content in terms of speed, while some of the respondents focused on the quality of content production and how to transform the scoop journalism into slow journalism that works to enrich the news with abundant information.
- ✓ The study revealed that most of the respondents were positive about the impact of the digital environment on the field of work, including the transformation of the journalist into a technical journalist and director at the same time, minimising the difficulties of accessing and processing information.
- ✓ The study revealed that most journalists agreed on the ethicisation of media practice with the emergence of other models of journalism, such as citizen journalism, and emphasised the issue of verifying the news.
- ✓ The study showed that most of the obstacles complained about by the respondents are as follows: Changing the organisation's editorial line, the entry of non-professionals into the world of journalism, and achieving the scoop at the expense of credibility.
- ✓ Regarding the future of media work in light of artificial intelligence, most respondents believe that it will have both a positive and negative impact on media practice.

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