

# Transformation and Challenges of Digital Journalism in Aceh

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## ABSTRACT

Technological developments have changed the distribution pattern and access to information from conventional to digital media. Hence, digital journalism has an impact on the media industry and journalists. The purpose of this research is to analyze the transformation and challenges of digital journalism from the perspective of journalists in Aceh. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Interviews were conducted with ten journalists in Aceh from print, radio, television, and online media. Validity of the data was tested using the technique of triangulation of sources and data analysis of the Miles and Huberman models, namely data reduction, presentation, and verification. The results of journalism platform research in the digital era adapt to media convergence. The journalism format incorporates text, video, and images. The challenge is maintaining the quality of journalism, both credibility, and accuracy. Journalists must improve their abilities and skills in using digital technology in order to survive.

Keywords: Digital Journalism, Transformation, Journalists

## ABSTRAK

Perkembangan teknologi telah mengubah pola distribusi dan akses informasi dari media konvensional ke media digital. Sehingga jurnalisme digital berdampak pada industri media dan jurnalis. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis transformasi dan tantangan jurnalisme digital dari perspektif jurnalis di Aceh. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Wawancara dilakukan dengan 10 jurnalis di Aceh dari media cetak, radio, televisi dan online. Uji keabsahan data menggunakan teknik triangulasi sumber dan analisis data model Miles dan Huberman, yaitu reduksi data, penyajian dan verifikasi. Hasil penelitian platform jurnalisme di era digital beradaptasi dengan bentuk konvergensi media. Format jurnalisme menggabungkan teks, video, dan gambar. Tantangannya adalah dalam mempertahankan mutu jurnalisme baik kualitas, kredibilitas dan akurasi. berlandaskan etika dan nilai-nilai jurnalisme. Jurnalis harus meningkatkan kemampuan dan keterampilan dalam menggunakan teknologi digital agar tetap dapat bertahan.

Kata Kunci: Jurnalisme Digital, Transformasi, Wartawan

## INTRODUCTION

Technology development is increasingly rapidly marked by the increasing number of internet users. According to the Indonesia Internet Service Providers Association’s (APJII) research, the level of internet users throughout 2021-2022 has reached 210,026,869 users, or 77.02% of Indonesia’s total population of 272,682,600. This internet penetration has shown an increase since 2018 reaching 64.80%, and continues to increase throughout 2019-2020 by 73.70% (APJII, 2022). As the following picture:

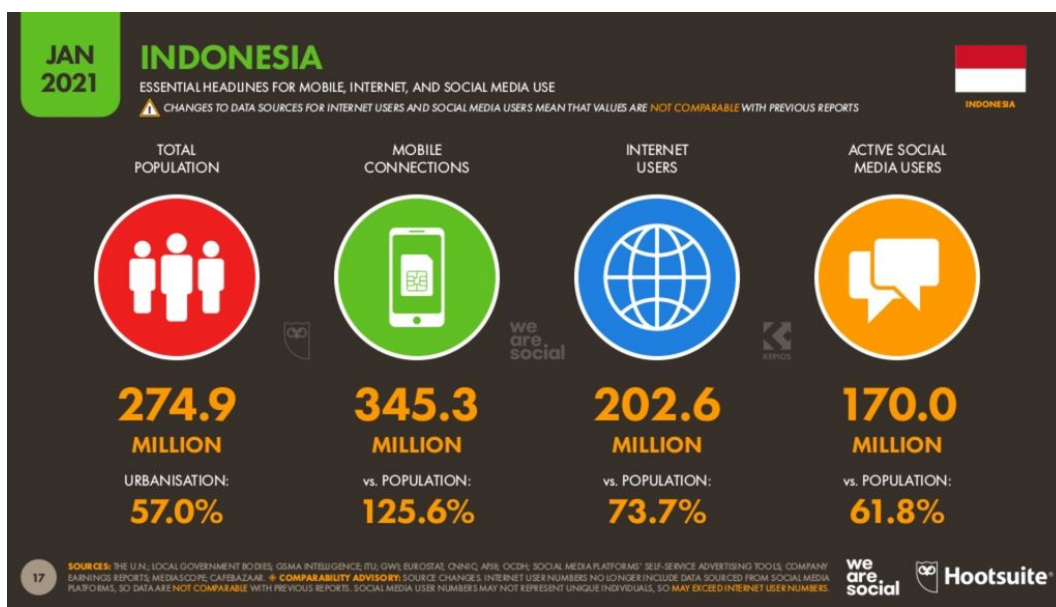


Figure 1. Internet Penetration (APJII, 2022)

This development impacts the dissemination and diversity of information by the mass media. Based on data from the Indonesian Press Council, until 2019, there were 47,000 mass media in Indonesia, percisely 43,300 online media, 3000 printed media, and the rests were radio and television (Dewan Pers, 2019). The presence of the internet has changed the pattern of people accessing information from conventional media, such as print and electronic media, moving to online media or social media. So the distribution of information has also undergone changes that can be accessed by the public quickly and easily. This must be accompanied by the professionalism of journalists in reporting. However, there are still violations of journalistic ethics in reporting in online media. Related to this, the Press Council noted that there were 42 complaints of violations in 2018, generally about inaccurate, unbalanced news or containing judgmental opinions and information that was not verified beforehand (Dewan Pers, 2019).

Indonesian internet users spend an average of 8 hours 52 minutes accessing the internet, streaming for 2 hours 50 minutes, hanging out on social media for 3 hours 14 minutes, and can spend 1 hour 38 minutes for reading online and offline media. The data is explained in the following figure:

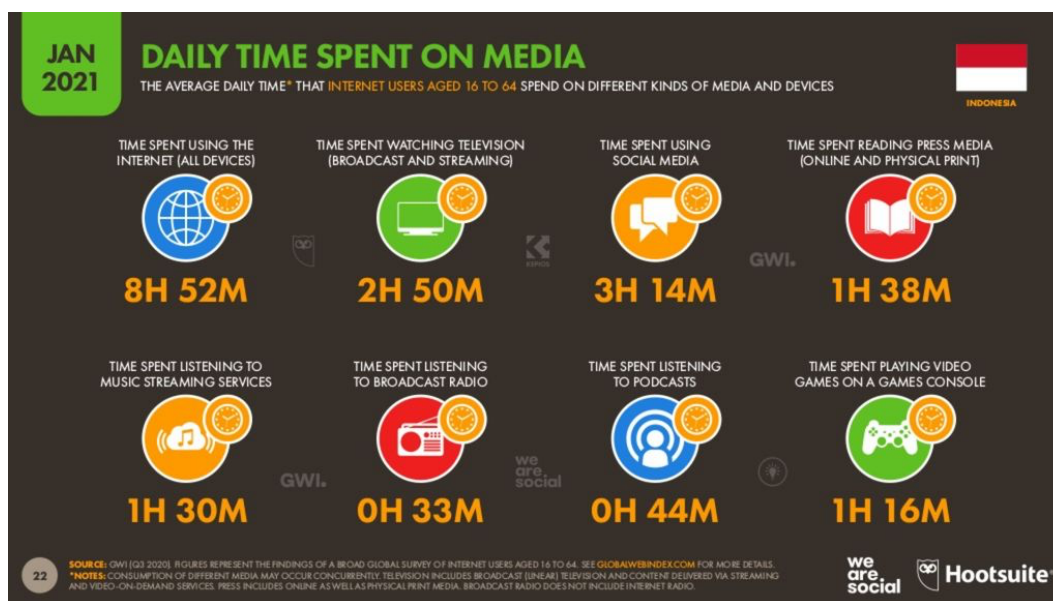


Figure 2. Duration of Time Using the Internet

One of journalism violations presented in the online media [www.ajnn.net](http://www.ajnn.net), in Aceh in 2016, where there were 18 violations of journalistic ethics. The violation is related to the delivery of information that is not balanced and does not check the truth of the information. This phenomenon shows that journalists must re-examine journalistic ethics and the principles of journalism (Dimitha et al., 2017). In another phenomenon, it was also reported that the online media [Tribunnews.com](http://Tribunnews.com) has implemented journalistic ethics. However, there are still some news related to sexual violence indicated to violate journalistic ethics. The violation is related to the notification of the victim's identity to the public, which can impact trauma and mental stress on the victim. This shows the importance of journalists increasing consistency in spreading responsive news (Astria et al., 2021).

This change also encourages conventional media to adapt and focus on utilizing digital developments. Digital developments have also changed the form of journalism today. Information from the internet can be collected, processed, and analyzed, and then presented with an attractive visual display. This means that journalism that is transforming at this time has an impact on the ability of journalists to understand developing digital technology. In addition, this transformation is also a challenge for journalists, namely maintaining accurate and reliable information distribution. Based on this, researchers are interested in studying the perspectives of Aceh journalists regarding digital journalism's transformation and challenges. And this study aims to describe the perspective of journalists in Aceh regarding the transformation and challenges of digital journalism.

The transformation of journalism in the digital era is called digital journalism. It can be seen from the information that spreads widely and globally as an implication of the use of multimedia connected to the internet (Malik & Shapiro, 2016). Digital journalism is a form of journalism that utilizes digital resources (Salaverria, 2019). The resources meant are not only internet network but also radio and digital television. This definition has a broad reach and, in the example, is more for journalists who use digital media. Another definition of it mentions digital journalism as a digital medium used by journalists in the journalism process (Bosch, 2010). Digital media is defined as online print media or e-paper as well as social media such as Twitter and Facebook so that they can reach the audience. Another opinion mentions that digital journalism which is more emphasized on the use of social media (Deuze, 2017). Social media in digital journalism is seen as being able to function to collect and verify information sources. Digital journalism is also associated with the use of hardware and software as a means to distribute information. Merging these various platforms is considered part of digital journalism.

Some of the meanings of digital journalism show more at the stage of information dissemination. Likewise, the use of digital media in the concept of digital journalism only describes the work process of journalism in the information dissemination stage. The definition of digital journalism emphasizes more on the stages of information dissemination. It is more on the understanding of media

convergence. Media convergence by combining multiple platforms is one of the media industry's strategies to publish news content to multiple platforms at a lower cost (Dwyer, 2010). Connecting the notion of digital journalism and media convergence explains that the multi-platform distribution of information is a current trend in the media industry. Because in its development, a journalist will always be in contact with digital technology, this dimension of digitization becomes important in journalism. Although digital technology has changed the media production system, journalism values such as accuracy and truth still determine the quality of journalism.

In the bulk of literature that shapes our theoretical stance, we notice the transformation of journalism in the digital age demands speed in distributing information. And it is a challenge for journalists to improve their ability to utilize digital platforms. The journalism industry has penetrated into digitalization with the emergence of online journalism as a result of rapid technological advances. Journalists are required to convey information more quickly and creatively. In addition, they must also have more skills than conventional journalists, especially in writing on multi-platforms (Muliawanti, 2018). On the other hand, the journalist's skills can also cause problems related to the journalist's professionalism if the news presentation is not in accordance with journalism ethics. Conventional journalism has undergone a change in today's digital age by rapidly distributing information. The journey of conventional media to online media as a form of transformation of journalism must have certain standards for the information disseminated. The challenge of transforming conventional media into online media is keeping the information accurate and trustworthy (Wardaningsih, 2021).

Another view suggests the need for elaboration on the concept of digital journalism so that the concept can cover all news production practices. Because digital journalism is not only limited to utilizing digital platforms, but more than that is how journalists hunt for information to be distributed through various news channels (Ashari, 2019). The same opinion states that the definition of digital journalism emphasizes the distribution of information with a set of digital media technologies or media convergence. So journalists must reorient journalistic elements in their activities (Marhamah, 2021). Journalism in the digital era has transformed how journalists seek information, the nature of the relationship between journalists, media and audiences, organizational structures, and news content. Meanwhile, the challenge of digital journalism is to distribute quality and good information in the midst of a lot of circulating information that has not been confirmed to be true. Journalism in the digital age becomes a challenge regarding accuracy, credibility, and quality when information must be quickly published. Meanwhile, because of the pursuit of speed in publishing, it is caught in the verification of information that is not yet clear.

The rapid growth and development of the internet in Indonesia impact the credibility and quality of information disseminated to the public. In addition, online media journalists also pay less attention to journalistic ethics. The verification of information is not final, but the information has been distributed to the public, giving rise to mis-interpretation and mis-perception. The verification of information is not final, but the information has been distributed to the public, giving rise to mis-interpretation and mis-perception. This is because the news is not objective, such as no checks and checks, siding with one party, not covering both sides, and imbalance (Juditha, 2016). Meanwhile, this study further examines the views of journalists with changes in the field of journalism and the attitudes taken to face these challenges. The novelty of this research is to make a reference for journalists about improving their skills and professionalism in accordance with digital developments. Because in the digital era, it becomes a necessity for journalists to master digital media.

The studies above put more emphasis on changing conventional journalism to journalism that uses digital platforms such as online media and its impact on journalistic ethics. In comparison, this research focuses on journalists' perspective in responding to digital journalism's transformation and the challenges it faces. The change in journalism in the digital era gave birth to various terms, namely multimedia journalism as contemporary journalism that combines multiple forms of content such as video, audio, text, photos, animation, and even infographics into one information package (Deuze, 2017). In other terms, it is called online journalism or journalism which uses the internet or websites to be a medium for channeling news (Steensen, 2011). However, the term often used is digital journalism to define the operation of disseminating information through internet channels by combining audio, text and video so that internet users can reaccess it (Schultz, 2005). In addition to these opinions, digital journalism is defined as producing content for audiences using digital technology, namely digital audio recorders, weblogs, and websites (Kawamoto, 2003). The term digital journalism is not only limited to how journalists use various digital platforms to disseminate

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information. More than that, journalists can hunt for information and process it to be disseminated through various news channels. This means that digital journalism also includes the problem of searching and processing digital data as news material. This is an opportunity as well as a challenge for journalists in line with the emergence of open data policies. Therefore, through this article, research findings will be presented to see how journalists work in processing digital data and distributing it. In addition, it will also be explained how journalists maintain the accuracy and quality of news.

## METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research approach that uses words, pictures, and not numbers in collecting data to describe the realities that occur (Moleong, 2017). Data collection in this study was carried out through interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews are conducted in-depth with a semi-structured type of interview with open-ended questions (Anggito, 2018). The informants in this study were ten journalists in Aceh from various media, as shown in the following table:

Tabel 1. Research Informants

No	Name	Media
1	Armia	Media cetak Harian Rakyat Aceh
2	Ayi Jufridar	Media online Kabartamiang.com
3	Deni Andepa	Media televise, Puja TV Aceh
4	Zulfikar Syarief	Media online Marjinal.id
5	Irmansyah	Media online Portalsatu
6	Deni Usman	Media radio RRI Lhokseumawe
7	Taufiq	Media CNN
8	Jafaruddin	Media cetak Harian Serambi Indonesia
9	Al Bara	Media radio RRI Lhokseumawe
10	M. Jafar	Media MNC TV

Furthermore, the findings of interviews and observations were complemented by documentation methods to strengthen the data. Data analysis in this study was conducted through several stages, namely data collection, data reduction, and data presentation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Transformation of Digital Journalism in the Perspective of Journalists in Aceh

Changes in journalism in the digital age can be seen in online media shifting conventional media. And journalists must adapt to the migration from conventional media to digital platforms. Acehnese print media journalist Armia confirmed this. According to him, the impact of the existence and development of digital technology also affects the media industry ecosystem.

“Because the media industry is fundamentally disrupted, journalists as the backbone are also affected. In addition, the reorientation of journalistic elements requires a form of media management in accordance with the demands of the audience in this digital era (Armia, Acehnese journalist, interview July 2022)”

The same thing was also conveyed by online media reporter of Kabartamiang.com, who stated that journalists must have new skills in using digital technology to process interesting facts. In fact, internet-based technology in this digital era makes information can be disseminated and accessed using various existing media.

“The presence of digital technology has changed the way people consume information and this is a necessity, so journalists and media must adapt to survive. Many media are late in realizing the onslaught of digital technology, so they have to go out of business (Ayi Jufridar, journalist/Pimred of Kabartamiang.com, interview July 2022)”.

In the current digital era, it is a necessity to converge media to survive. According to Sunarto (2018), digital is the change of text, sounds, and images into a format that can be read by the computer. The convergence of media and multimedia journalism has become integral to

contemporary journalism. Journalists must incorporate mobile devices into journalistic practice to produce multimedia stories to meet changing journalistic and business needs. Journalists are expected to produce journalistic content in short videos using mobile devices related to daily events around them (Prestianta, 2022). The digital era demands that journalists have the ability to convey information by simultaneously combining various media such as text, audio, and video (Adzkoa, 2015). This phenomenon makes journalism transform with the concept of internet-based media convergence. The media convergence also affects the way journalists work.

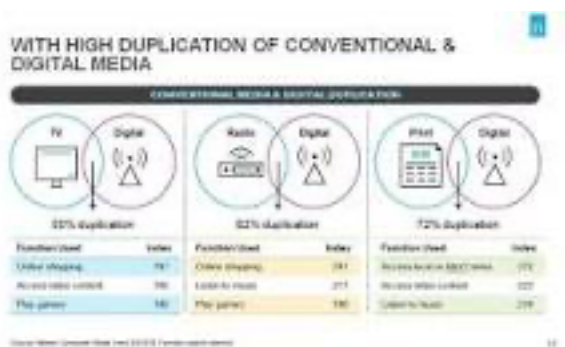


Figure 3. Distribution of Media Consumption Time

The developments in information and communication technology (ICT) have significantly impacted some key sectors of societies (such as transport, health, business, education, and communication) in many developed and developing countries of the world. However, the internet has proliferated unevenly worldwide, resulting in a global digital divide. Digital inequality in Pakistan increases regarding public access to and use of Internet and ICT devices (such as mobile phones and computers). Various challenges underlie the digital divide, such as the urban-rural divide, gender differences, income and education inequality, and religious and cultural barriers. In addition, policy-related issues also affect digitalization widely in the country (Jamil, 2021).

News media industry is indeed no exception to witnessing the transforming impacts of the growing penetration of the internet and digitalization, especially in the developed economies of the global North. While Pakistan’s mainstream news media organizations have newsrooms that are well-connected regarding Internet access. However, journalists’ digital skills are still low to use the internet and other digital devices. Journalists’ digital incompetence affects their regular work and the evolution of digital newsrooms in Pakistan’s mainstream news media (Jamil, 2022).

These changes require journalists in conventional media to adapt to using digital developments. Digital journalism has the characteristic of presenting information using multi-platform and is always updated (Muliawanti, 2018). The ability to use the internet or digital devices affects the pattern of accessing information carried out by the audience. Audiences who originally accessed information from print and electronic media began to shift to online media. This was also conveyed by the journalist of Puja TV Aceh television media, Deni Andea, that the convergence of media is joining different types of media that were previously considered separate and different, e.g. newspapers, television, radio, computers into a single medium.

“Like it or not, journalists have to keep up with the development of digital technology. Journalists should make more efforts to improve their capabilities in technology so that journalists can continue to exist providing information to the public (Deni Andepa, journalist for Puja TV Aceh, interview August 2022)”.

The same opinion also came from RRI Lhokseumawe radio media journalist, Deni Usman, that to face this digital era, radio media must also converge media.

“The digital era offers a new world for journalism, forcing journalists to adapt. Previously, journalism was only in conventional formats, such as radio, only to be heard, but now it is multi-platform. Like RRI, there is now an RRI.co.id website that presents print and image concepts online. In addition, the concept of audio streaming can be heard through the website. RRI has also come with a video platform, namely RRINet, so that RRI broadcasts use the three in one concept, namely audio, video, images, and text (Deni Usman, journalist for RRI Lhokseumawe, interview September 2022)”.

The digital mass media platform as software are websites, online media, applications and social media. In the infrastructure of media organizations, digital platform implementation is a form of media group policy in converting technology, content convergence, and economic convergence. Implementing the digital platform is not only about following technological developments, but it also serves as an economic policy. In the media industry, these media groups use digital platforms because they allocate cheaper production costs and even get other profits other than the income from their conventional media (Kencana & Meisyanti, 2020). The traditional concept of broadcasting is gradually becoming a misnomer due to technological transformations as epitomized by media convergence. Broadcasting has lost its utility due to media convergence. It will be interesting to see what may collocate and how they may increase in frequency due to the decrease in the use of the terms broadcasting in lieu of digital platforms such as streaming TV and multimedia technology (Aziz, 2019).

Media convergence presents the term versatile journalism, which is the capability and expertise of journalists to utilize multimedia in reporting and news production (Saltzis & Dickinson, 2008). This means that convergence occurs at the technological level causing multimedia to appear in the news that combines various technologies such as print media, television, telephone, and computer (Boczkowski, 2004). In international news, SKY media sites, CNN, and BBC use online sites to disseminate information through various platforms.

Structural media convergence is the integration of three parts into one medium: telecommunications, data, and mass communication, according to Willis and Willis in (Bawapratama, 2010). One of the efforts of media existence is media convergence. Although the costs incurred are quite large, it can reduce long-term expenses. This phenomenon arises with the existence of new media and digital technology, making it easier to access content on various media platforms. Convergence is the phenomenon of the integration of various previously different media, such as print, radio, television, and computers, into one medium. It can also be said that media convergence is an amalgamation of information, communication, and content technologies in response to the times (Wahyuningsih, Titik, 2020)

The change in journalism in the digital age is not only in the convergence of media. As stated by marjinal.id online media journalist Zulfikar Syarif, journalists must be familiar with the internet to support their professionalism.

“Journalism in the digital era is mandatory because it has become a necessity for every media to adapt; otherwise, the media will die. Now print media also has online media. And the media that do not want to adapt, we see that many have died, both print media, as well as television, radio. Likewise, journalists must increase their capacity, not only being able to print out but also having to be familiar with the internet, with multi-platform media (Zulfikar Syarif, online media journalist marjinal.id, interview June 2022)”.

The same thing was conveyed by another online media journalist from portalsatu media, Irmansyah, that currently there has been a metamorphosis in conventional media into online media.

“The digital era changes the pattern of news consumption from conventional media to digital, both online and social media, so conventional media must move to digital platforms. The conventional media industry must establish or acquire cyber media, which can even metamorphose into online media. So journalists also like it or not, one day they will fully work on digital platforms (Irmansyah, journalist for online media portalsatu, interview in August 2022)”.

The media industry and the performance of journalists have changed with the development of digital technology, which affects the increase in the amount of efficiency and variety of information to the public (Ruben & Brent, 2016). The transformation of journalism from conventional media to online media has the characteristics of fast production and distribution but remains accurate and reliable. So this change gives information originally provided by conventional media and then presented by online media with more variety. Digitization encourages journalism to transform. Accordingly, development of digital media, communication, and media scholars have predicted journalism to develop at two levels. First, journalism evolves along with technological developments and is involved in media disruption. Second, journalism sticks with professionalism and establishes technology as a tool to realize social responsibility. Today we are dealing with the transformation in journalism that we get from disrupted content, disrupted media companies, and collaboration among media institutions. Digital journalism still has to deal with the dilemma between social responsibility and the political economy of media. On the one hand, digital journalism faces disruption, which is a significant factor that encourages journalism to transform. On the other hand, digital journalism also

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deals with a natural selection that forces them to collaborate, i.e. manifestation of the political economy of media (Nurlatifah & Mutmainnah, 2021).

### **Quality Journalism as a Challenge in the Digital Age**

The challenge of journalism in the digital age is in terms of maintaining the quality of information. As stated the *Harian Serambi Indonesia* print media journalist, Jafaruddin, the current digital era of information dissemination is very fast, so there is often unverified information.

“In today’s digital era, journalists cannot only report an event. Journalists must also be accustomed to adapting to the times, and must master various technologies to assist in carrying out their duties. The challenge for journalists is to uphold the ideals of maintaining the values of journalism in their journalistic work. Journalists should be the light in the midst of the onslaught of disinformation and misinformation by maintaining journalistic ethics and presenting verified facts (Jafaruddin, *Serambi Indonesia* journalist, interview June 2022)”.

Taufiq, a CNN reporter, conveyed the same thing, that in this digital era, fast information delivery is needed. However, journalists still have to pay attention to journalism ethics.

“In this digital era, journalism requires speed in disseminating information, becoming a challenge in maintaining journalistic ethics. In addition, this digitalization also opens opportunities for the emergence of journalists or online media who do not understand journalistic ethics. “So the negative impact is that journalistic ethics is now out of control (Taufiq, CNN reporter, interview September 2022)”

Digital journalism is known for its advantages, namely the rapid dissemination of information. However, this factor is also a weakness if it is not supported by maintaining data accuracy. Digital journalism often makes mistakes in terms of credibility, quality, and accuracy of information (Artini, 2017). This happens because the pursuit of information can be conveyed as soon as possible so that it is trapped in information that has not been verified. While many promising, Internet-based news sites have sprung up over the past few years to help fill the gap, they have not kept pace with what has been lost. Meanwhile, during a difficult digital transition, the business model for supplying quality journalism has come under severe stress, and an industry-wide rethinking is underway. Until now, the idea that news on the Web should be free has prevailed, and during years of expansive advertising, this ethos saw the flowering of thousands of different news sites and a healthy democratization of voices of authority. Journalism has become more participatory and collaborative, producing quality journalism on many platforms (Abramson, 2010). The key to journalism is basically facts and verification of information. As a commitment from journalists to the truth, the information submitted to the public must be verified (Kovach, Bill & Rosenstiel, 2007) because verified information is information obtained from credible sources. Although the transformation of digital journalism demands speed in conveying information, journalists must still uphold journalistic ethics.

For several decades, citizens have reported that they trust some news outlets over others largely because they perceive the industry as biased in its coverage. On the other hand, journalists have a more positive perception of their work than the public. Long-standing research on journalists confirms they see their profession as a public-service calling, featuring principal tenets that include being watchdogs and providing analysis of complex problems. Recent research on the public suggests poor perceptions of press performance are linked to reduced news consumption. Using two contemporaneous survey data from US newspaper journalists and the US public, this research first sheds some light on what may constitute “good journalism” for the public and journalists. Then, it compares news consumers’ views of the work being produced by the newspaper profession and the views held by the newspaper journalists themselves. Additionally, the present study explores the connection between the public’s perception of good journalism and their consumption of distinct modes of information: traditional news, citizen journalism, and infotainment. Findings indicate that newspaper journalists give significantly higher marks to their performance on the tenets of “good journalism” than public members do. Furthermore, there is a positive association between citizens who reported higher scores on journalists’ “good journalism” performance and the consumption of traditional news and infotainment programs (Gil de Zúñiga, Homero, 2013).

The professionalism of a journalist can be seen in his awareness of journalistic ethics and his competency standards, including skills in using technology. The professionalism of journalists is a determinant of useful news to be conveyed to the public and the development of the news. This is because the ethical norms of professionalism are seen in their journalistic products, giving the public



the right to obtain the truth of information (Nasution, 2017). Digital journalism is more direct and interactive, emphasizing rapid publication, but more prone to error. Journalism practiced by journalists must rely on regulations, and journalistic ethics by not ignoring the importance of adjusting to developments in the presence of digitalization (Waluyo, 2018). Changes in journalism in the digital era have more characteristics to the processing and presentation of news that is fast and reliable

The impact of the rapid dissemination of information is that a lot of hoax information appears. This is what the *Harian Rakyat Aceh* print media reporter, Armia, revealed.

“Nowadays, there is a lot of instant journalism as well as hoax information. This is a challenge for journalists to apply the basic values of journalism, namely the accuracy of information. Journalists have a responsibility for social control in rectifying information and maintaining journalistic ethics (Armia, Acehnese journalist, interview July 2022).

Likewise, Zulfikar Syarief, a media journalist of *marjinal.id*, mentioned that the most important thing now is to maintain journalistic ethics.

“In today’s digital era, journalists must be more strict, professional and measurable by applying journalistic ethics. This is to distinguish professional journalists in mainstream media from people who are conducting citizen journalism in conveying information without the competence of journalists. So this is a challenge for journalists to improve their competence to be more accurate in conveying information (Zulfikar Syarif, online media journalist at *marjinal.id*, interview June 2022)”.

The challenge for journalists in this digital era is to maintain quality journalism through applying journalistic ethics and combining it with formulating journalistic elements. The first and foremost principle of journalism is truth because this is the purpose and essence of news (Kovach, Bill & Rosenstiel, 2007). The first obligation of journalism is truth, so when journalists convey facts, they must be fair and reliable with transparent sources so that the public can judge the veracity of the information (Luwi, 2011). The truth of information begins with the professional attitude of journalists in collecting and verifying facts. As truth seekers and presenters, the responsibility of journalists lies in verifying the facts that ensure the accuracy of a news story. The challenges of digital journalism are also from the aspect of competition between mainstream media and online media, as conveyed by Al Bara, a journalist for radio media RRI Lhokseumawe.

“The challenge of digital journalism is the competition between mainstream media and online media. Now journalism or news production practices have used the internet, so like it or not, you have to follow it; otherwise, the audience will be left behind. To survive, conventional media journalism must be able to maintain the trust and credibility of the information presented. Trust and credibility are built on the professionalism of journalists by applying journalistic ethics. So, the biggest challenge right now is to maintain the quality of journalism to keep putting forward the truth by verifying so that the information presented is clear and accurate” (al Bara, journalist for RRI Lhokseumawe Aceh, September 2022).

According to the Press Council, journalists must have competence in awareness or sensitivity to journalistic ethics and law. This awareness will lead journalists to the values and principles they should guide (Pers, 2019). Lack of awareness of journalistic ethics results in journalists not functioning properly. Journalistic ethics must be equipped with legal understanding and awareness of journalistic work. Legal competence demands the law and boundaries that can make the right and courageous decisions to fulfill the public interest. This shows that journalists’ independence can be seen in their competence which is free from intervention from any party. In addition, knowledge includes general and specific knowledge as well as journalistic theories and principles as the competence of journalistic ethics is closely related to the mastery of that knowledge. So journalists are required to master the latest information developments in their fields or have to update their journalistic theories and principles.

Journalists must also have skills including reporting, research, investigation and analysis skills, and news direction. Then this competence will appear in the quality of journalism. The indicator of journalism professionalism lies in the quality of journalistic work according to the category of journalistic competence that has been determined. Maximum-quality journalism provides comprehensive insight into actual issues. The digital era will be a challenge for quality journalism when the convenience of technology for the sake of journalism actually raises the practice of cloning news and violating journalistic ethics. The demand for speed in presenting news will potentially lead to problems of balance and accuracy. So, in reality, speed is often considered more important than verification. In addition, journalists are also required to have multiskilled competence or multiskilling

journalists, which often causes digital media insecurity. The adoption of multi-platform and convergent digital technology in the media industry impacts the news production process.

The ethics built a century ago and dominating professional journalism are now being questioned. Journalism ethics is a means of meeting old values, such as accuracy and objectivity, with new values influenced by technology (Nasution, 2017). The speed factor that is the mainstay of digital journalism tempts many users to ignore accuracy and verification, which is the essence of journalistic ethics. Basically, fact verification is done by seeking as much data as possible from various valid sources. It is in fact an important element in verifying the content and source of the media content (Brandtzaeg, P. B., Følstad, 2017). The development of digital journalism is increasing the data verification process because a lot of data is spread and processed in digital media, which often becomes biased in information. Fact verification activities, in principle, must refer to the values of journalism, which aim to convey accurate information to the public. Verification of facts in digital journalism is very complex, and influenced by the transformation factor of journalism with the presence of digital media (Graves., 2016).

Empathy performs a central role in regulating social relations. This applies equally to journalistic work routines. Research conducted with a cross-cultural approach it became clear that empathy occupies a central place in news production, fulfilling multiple roles. It serves to achieve comprehensive access to information and to news protagonists at the interpersonal level. Without this “invisible” mode of communication, qualitative and ethical news journalism cannot be achieved; and the authenticity and emotionality of news packages would be diminished. Empathy varies on the individual level, but especially in sensitive journalistic work fields; it represents a “naturally present” core skill for journalists. A final empathic dimension is found in the imaginary empathy toward the audience, which provides essential guidance for journalistic news products (Glück, 2016).

However, the rapid development of digital media also creates problems, especially regarding the minimal quality of journalism and its credibility (Juditha, 2016). Truth as an indicator of the objectivity of journalism includes facts, both sociological and psychological facts, and accuracy, namely the accuracy of the information conveyed by testing the truth of the subject. Objectivity is news that is true, balanced, and impartial, whose indicators appear in the dimension of truth.

Meanwhile, the fast-paced digital era now causes less attention to journalistic ethics so that information that is not yet clear is conveyed to the public, leading to misinterpretations and misperceptions.

Digital media influences the development of journalism today, especially in producing and distributing information to the public (Pavlik, 2008). Moreover, digital media also influences the values of journalism itself. Digital journalism is understood not only to convey information using digital platforms. However, more than that, it is also an understanding of the search for information by journalists who are disseminated through various news channels (Ashari, 2019). The biggest challenge in journalism today is not because of the development of digital technology that has merged into the journalism process. It is actually journalists' readiness, competence and skills to master computing (Manovich, 2016). Digital technology that affects changes in the culture of media organizations is also a challenge, in addition to the ability of journalists to adapt to digitalization. In addition, the large number of information dissemination using multi-platform requires content to be updated continuously. Conditions create uncertainty for journalists in seeking information. Due to the changing rhythm of work and requiring journalists to constantly update content, journalists have limited time to verify facts (Lugmayr & Artur, 2016). Changes in working conditions or rhythms affect the quality of information that has been disseminated. However, it is undeniable that digital technology can increase the ability of journalists to expand the reach of their reporting activities.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research above, it can be concluded that the transformation of digital journalism based on the perspective of journalists in Aceh is the occurrence of a shift in audiences in accessing information from conventional media to online media, and this affects the dissemination of information by journalists. Meanwhile, the media industry is responding to this transformation by adapting digital platforms in the form of media convergence, namely, various media are integrated into one media. In addition, there is also a change in text, audio, video, images, and animation into a

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format that a computer can read. Likewise, journalists adapt to these changes by increasing their ability to use technology.

Meanwhile, the challenge of journalism in the digital era from the perspective of journalists in Aceh is to maintain quality journalism because the digital era accelerates the dissemination of information to the public. And this is a weakness because often the quality, credibility, and accuracy of information are neglected because they pursue the speed aspect so that journalists are trapped in informing things that have not been verified. Even though an important element of journalism is truth, even in the digital era, it becomes a challenge to uphold the ethics and values of journalism. In addition, it is a challenge for journalists to improve their abilities and skills in using digital technology for journalism activities.

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