

Has Social media killed traditional journalism?

Outline:

1) Introduction

Thesis Statement:

Social media has severely disrupted traditional journalism by eroding its gatekeeping authority, accelerating misinformation, undermining its credibility and professional standards of traditional journalism.

2) Understanding the social and traditional journalism

3) How social media has killed traditional journalism?

a) Collapse of the information monopoly

Case in point: Breaking news appears first on X before TV channels

b) Decline in newspaper readership

Case in point: US newspaper circulation dropped by 55%. (Pew Research)

c) Rise of influencers over journalists

Case in point: Youtube - most-used news platform

d) Formation of echo chambers

Case in point: Political polarization in the U.S

e) Rise of Citizen journalism

Case in point: 2020 Beirut explosion captured by civilians not news agencies

f) loss of public trust in mainstream media

g) Political actors bypassed traditional journalism

Case in point: Donald Trump, Modi, uses social media to reach supporters

h) Public opinion shaped by viral trends, not facts

Case in point: Election misinformation in multiple countries

i) Free news culture devalues journalism

Case in point: 80% people avoid paid news subscriptions (Reuters report)

4) Counter arguments: Social media is an extension, not a threat to traditional journalism

a) Newsrooms use social media to amplify their reporting

Rebuttal: Using social media does not ensure journalism integrity

b) Increased audience engagement and interactivity

Rebuttal: Audience engagement on social media does not guarantee quality journalism

5) Policy recommendations : Using social media to boost traditional journalism

- a) Promoting media literacy
- b) Training journalists for digital platforms
- c) Collaboration between platforms and newsrooms to flag misinformation

6. Conclusion

Every day, over 4 billion people scroll through social media, consuming news in seconds — but meanwhile, global newspaper circulation has dropped by more than 50% in the last two decades. Here, the question arises: has social media killed the very journalism that once informed society? Social media platforms like Facebook, X (Twitter), TikTok and YouTube have transformed the very nature of the way information is shared, allowing everyone to report events in real time. This digital revolution has created widespread interactivity, but it has also raised concerns about the erosion of professional journalism. While social media amplifies news, it has challenged the authority and credibility of traditional journalism. Through social media, unverified reports, viral videos and citizen-generated content often reach millions before newspapers or television channels can verify facts. Also, the rise of influencers and citizen journalists has fragmented audience, thereby reducing trust in professional reporting. Owing to its nature to influence public opinion, political actors use social media, thereby bypassing traditional journalism. In other words, it has weakened the traditional journalism. Therefore, it can be rightly said that social media

has severely disrupted traditional journalism by ending its gatekeeping authority, accelerating misinformation and undermining the professional standards of traditional journalism.

Traditional journalism, rooted in newspapers, television, and radio has historically served as society's watchdog, emphasizing verified facts and investigative reporting. It relies on professional training, ethical guidelines and editorial oversight to ensure accuracy and credibility of information shared. In contrast, social media allows everyone to report events instantly thus prioritizing speed, virality and engagement over verification. Through platforms like Facebook, Twitter and TikTok through algorithms, it overshadowed in-depth traditional journalism, thereby disrupting the authority and influence of traditional journalism.

To begin with, one of the most significant ways social media has killed traditional journalism is by collapsing the information monopoly that was once held by traditional newspapers and television. In the past, newsrooms controlled the flow of information deciding what the public could see. However, social media platforms have dismantled

this monopoly by enabling everyone to report events instantly, than professional journalism. For instance, during the Arab Spring in 2011, ordinary citizens uploaded videos and updates that reached millions before traditional journalism could report the uprisings. Also, in Pakistan, during the 2017 Lal Masjid 'crack down', citizen videos and social media updates circulated widely, while mainstream channels were slower to report details; This reflects that social media has significantly undermined the monopoly of traditional journalism.

Furthermore, through the sharp decline in newspaper readership has weakened traditional journalism. As audiences increasingly consume online content, print circulation has significantly reduced. Social media designs interactive posts to engage audience in a much better way than traditional journalism. This shift results in reducing readership. In case of Pakistan, iconic newspapers like Daily Jang ~~have~~ and Express have reported a steady decline in print subscribers as more people rely on Twitter, Facebook and news apps for

instant updates. Moreover, it was reported by the Pew Research Centre (2023) that total weekday print circulation of U.S newspapers dropped by over 55% between 2005 and 2022 while digital news consumption via social media surged. Hence, declining readership driven by social media has directly undermined the influence of traditional newspaper.

Moreover, another way social media has challenged the traditional journalism is through the rise of influencers and independent content creators. Due to this, the professional journalists have been overshadowed. On all social media platforms, influencers with large followings more effectively influence public opinion. Globally, during the 2020 U.S elections, political influencers on TikTok, Instagram and X reached million of young voters with opinion driven content, bypassing mainstream journalism. Similarly, during the Hong Kong Protests (2019-2020), social media influencers shared live updates that reached global audience before international news outlets could report. It illustrates how social media diluted the traditional journalism.

Not only this, social media has killed traditional journalism through the formation of echo chambers. Social media algorithms are designed in such a way that shows users content they are more likely to engage with, thereby often reinforcing existing beliefs and traditional political biases. It is evident that during the 2016 U.S. elections, echo chambers on social media helped to amplify partisan misinformation that confirmed their biases. Also, in India, WhatsApp and telegram app groups created politically polarized networks during the 2019 elections, thus spreading selective news that reinforced local ideological bubbles. These echo chambers erode trust in professional news sources, and weakened the influence of traditional journalism.

Along with the formation of echo chambers, traditional journalism has been undermined due to sharp decline in public trust in mainstream media. Through the social media platforms, millions of unregulated voices spread misinformation rapidly, thereby questioning the credibility of professional news outlets. It is supported by the Global Edelman Trust Barometer (2022) report that global trust

traditional media fell to 50% the lowest in a decade, while 76% of respondents expressed fear of fake information being weaponized on social platforms. Social media fuelled the narratives that traditional journalism is unreliable. Therefore, it can be said that social media has created an environment where traditional journalism lose authority.

In addition to this, political actors bypassed traditional journalism to communicate directly with the public, reducing the role and effectiveness of traditional journalism. As social media platforms provide an effective tool and platform to the political leadership, so they prefer to use it to ^{or they} launch an election campaign or ^{to} influence public opinion. Role of traditional journalism, in contrast, is slow and ineffective.

During elections in Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro used youtube and whatsapp groups for rapid mobilization, instead of relying on investigative reporting by outlets like Folha de S. Paulo. In the same manner, former U.S President Donald Trump's use of Twitter is one of the examples. His account reached 88 million

followers that enabled him to dominate political discourse without relying on major networks, like CNN or The New York Times. This direct communication to audience erodes the effectiveness of traditional journalism.

Also, by creating an environment where viral content, not verified information, shapes public opinion, social media has killed traditional journalism. Algorithms on social media platforms prioritize content with high interactivity with audience regardless of accuracy. This viral misinformation outperforms traditional journalism. It is evident from the fact that during the COVID-19 pandemic, conspiracy videos on YouTube and Facebook reached tens of millions of viewers before health agencies could counter them with evidence-based reporting. It demonstrates that owing to the faster speed of spreading information by social media, public opinion already influenced by such digital platforms which the traditional journalism is unable to do it.

Even though traditional journalism has been killed by social media, it is equally important to acknowledge that it is often argued that social media is a tool for expanding traditional journalism outreach. It allows newsrooms to adapt to digital consumption habits. Many global outlets now use social media platforms to attract wider audience and to disseminate information effectively. For instance, South Africa's Daily Maverick uses Twitter threads to simplify corruption cases, thereby boosting readership for its long investigative reports. Even in Southeast Asia, independent newsrooms like Rappler (Philippines) rely on social media platforms to amplify stories on governance, human rights and disinformation, therefore engaging millions of young users who rarely read newspapers. These examples demonstrate that social media, when used strategically, can strengthen traditional journalism.

While social media may seem to expand the reach of traditional journalism, this view ignores how these platforms have systematically undermined professional newsrooms. For example, the Australian News media

Bargaining code (2021) was introduced after Google and Facebook diverted billions in advertising revenue from major outlets like The Sydney Morning Herald, leaving news organizations financially weakened despite high online ~~cat~~ traffic. Similarly, Kenyan newsrooms have reported that viral TikTok clips often overshadow their investigation, forcing them to chase trends. These cases illustrate that rather than strengthening journalism, social media reduces its journalistic depth.

Despite these limitations, another argument suggests that social media has significantly enhanced audience engagement in traditional journalism. It enables news consumers to interact with stories, reporters and newsrooms in real time. Digital platforms allow audience to comment, react, fact-check and even shape ongoing news coverage through instant feedback. In Japan, the public broadcaster NHK uses Twitter during natural disasters. It allowed citizens to share on-ground updates that help refine official reporting. It demonstrates that social media has transformed audience from passive readers into active ~~readers~~ participants, which enabled

traditional journalism to build trust, engagement and community dialogue.

Although social media appears to increase audience engagement for traditional journalism, this engagement does not guarantee quality journalism. Most of the times, information shared is shallow and shaped by virality rather than verified facts. This ultimately results in weakening traditional journalism. During the New Zealand Christchurch attack, mainstream outlets such as Stuff and NZ Herald observed that unverified narratives on social media platforms garnered far more engagement than their fact-checked reports. Consequently, forcing them into reactive reporting instead of proactive traditional journalism. It shows that the engagement generated by social media is distorted and often antagonist to traditional journalistic integrity.

Therefore, it is pivotal to address the challenges posed by social media to boost traditional journalism. For this purpose, news organizations must adopt a strategic, multi-pronged approach to integrate fact-checking. By dedicating verification

teams to social media content, it is possible to ensure that viral posts are properly validated before amplification. For instance, outlets like Agence France-Presse (AFP) and Reuters have established digital verification units to combat misinformation. Also, media^{literacy} campaigns should be promoted to educate audience about distinguishing credible reporting from misinformation, as seen in Finland's government backed media literacy programs. By adopting these measures, traditional journalism can harness the benefits of social media.

In conclusion, it is evident that social media has undeniably disrupted traditional journalism. It results in collapse of information monopolies, declining newspaper readership, echo chambers, erosion of public trust and political actors bypassing newsrooms; yet the counterarguments reveal that social media ^{has} expanded journalism outreach by enabling faster reporting and enhancing audience engagement. The rebuttals show that these opportunities remain meaningful only when aligned with media ethics and information verification. Therefore, the future of journalism lies in choosing between successfully integrating digital platforms in traditional

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journalism. By doing so, it is possible to rebuild traditional journalism stronger, smarter and more literate for the generations to come.