



# Mapping Audience Perceptions of How Digital Media Impacts the Reception of News from Traditional Media Sources

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## Abstract

The intention of this study is to analyze audience's perception of how digital media impacts the reception of news from traditional media sources. It further seeks to investigate which news sources do audience members prefer to retrieve their news from between printed newspapers and online news sites. Furthermore, the research seeks to answer the general question of whether or not digital media have an impact on the way in which people receive news from traditional media sources.

**Keywords:** Digital media; Traditional media; Broadcasting; Audience theory; Cultural studies

Barthelemy [2] advances that advertising incomes are tumbling down due to the serious financial downturn, whereas readership propensities are changing as readers turn to the web without charge for news and information. To further support this view, Kirchhoff [4] says in the past, major daily papers have closed down and indeed laid off reporters and editors and in a few occasions forced pay decreases to try and deal with the financial downturn. The authors' statement can be supported by recent examples in South Africa such as that of media companies like Tiso Blackstar that recently had to retrench about 150 employees due to the financial crisis the company was in. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) reported that "the majority of media workers affected are from the Herald in Port Elizabeth and the Daily Dispatch in East London" [5].

## Background to the study

The immense growth in popularity of the internet as a source of news has put traditional media under pressure and this has raised concerns about the future of traditional media, also known as print media. The future of digital media or mass media stream is not simple to predict. With digital media, ordinary citizens can easily engage with various online news sources about their political encounters and socio-economic experiences at a time convenient to them. These online sources are often followed by audience as some of them hold high standards of data quality and community values. In the long run, these propensities may well have become the foremost progressive perspectives and major characteristics of the digital media environment [6], which also make them to be seen as credible news sources by their audience members.

Bennett [6] argues that digital media is bringing a new revolution within the media space, one that is allowing the audience to have a say in how news are produced and received. The author further alludes that, previously audiences were regarded as people who receive and act in accordance with what has been communicated

## Introduction

The entry of new media (digital media) has presented a set of new opportunities for audience members while at the same time posing a variety of challenges for traditional media [1]. The arrival of digital media and the web to be specific, has created some challenges for conventional media (traditional media), particularly the printed daily paper. Analysts within the field of digital media are of the view that the newspaper industry is suffering through what could be its most awful financial crisis subsequently to the Great Depression [2].

Warschauer [3] composed that the era of the Great Depression was an extreme world financial misery that happened amid the 1930s, starting within the United States. The time of the Great Depression was different with each country; in most nations, it begun in 1929 and kept going until the 1930s. It was the longest, most profound and the broadest depression of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

to them by the media. This means that at some point traditional media was seen as capable of controlling what the public could and could not know. However, that has now changed since digital media has a capability to allow interactivity with the audience, whereby audiences are able to accept or reject the messages being communicated to them.

Grinberg [7] argues that traditional news media is not dead and that it still plays an important part within the fluid advance age of news coverage. This is often particularly genuine in underdeveloped areas of the world which have fizzled to come full circle in grasping mobile and digital technology. Particularly in South Africa where there are areas that still do not have access to connectivity and digital devices.

### Research problem

Digital media is gradually becoming the most used means of communicating as well as a major channel of public communication of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both individuals and corporate organisations are making use of social media for their various communication purposes. Social media has also influenced the way in which news organisations gather, package and circulate their news. These new means of interacting are expanding the frontiers of the production, reception as well as dissemination of information and communication all over the world. Due to this, there has been a significant rise in the number of users connecting to social media regularly. Many researchers have pointed out that the use of social media is on the rise among users around the world with South Africa included. Therefore, the rise of digital media has put traditional media under pressure due to its growth and relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century [8-11].

Audiences still prefer full detailed reports on stories as they occur however on a much faster pace than that of traditional media. This then puts journalists under pressure because unlike with newspapers that report after an event has occurred, digital media requires journalists to report on news as they happen. MacQuil [12] supports this statement by saying that 21<sup>st</sup> century news media professionals are facing a myriad of challenges. They are not only expected to adhere to the traditional journalistic standards of accuracy and fairness. In addition, they also deal with the rapidly advancing technology and a more skeptical public that wants many things done ethically and as a matter of urgency. Furthermore, journalists have been accused of creating a gap between their profession and the general public, with claims that they serve the interests of those in power.

### Locating the study

The chosen location of the study is East London in the Eastern Cape. The researchers chose this area because East London is one of the province's developing cities that is also emerging in the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs). Mabweazara [13] argues that the rapid and recent uptake of digital media through the mobile phone has increasingly occupied a central position in discourse about participatory media in Africa. East London where the research is located, is surrounded by many

village areas where basic needs such as electricity and water are still a challenge. As much as East London itself is doing better economically as compared to other parts in the province, meaning that people in this part of the province tend to have access to the internet and may often own a cellphone or a laptop that they can use to access the internet. However, this is not the same for the rest of the province. There are still villages without electricity where it is still very difficult for residents to have access to the internet. This challenge has a direct impact on how other people in certain parts of the Eastern Cape receive their news.

### Social context

Over at least the final half decade there has been mounting evidence to prove that innovation (technology) is being utilized, to changing degrees, by citizens to contribute to news-making and information trade in powerful ways [14].

Therefore, this suggests that there is a rapid growth in the use of digital platforms however in this section the focus sits on the area where the researcher will conduct the research to establish Audience's perception on how digital media impacts the reception of news from traditional media sources.

Charles [15] characterizes digital divide by at slightest four elucidations; A gap in access to use of ICTs roughly measured by the number and spread of phones or web-enabled computers. A gap within the capacity to utilize ICTs measured by the aptitudes base and the presence of numerous complimentary assets. A gap in the real utilization of the minutes of telecommunications for various purposes, the number and time online of consumers, the number of web hosts, and the level of electronic commerce. A gap in the impact of utilization measured by monetary and financial returns.

In any case, Cullen [16] characterizes it as the allegory used to depict the seen drawback of those who either are incapable or don't select to use ICT in their way of life. The Digital Divide Network [17] conceptualizes the concept as the gap between those who have access to communication devices, such as the web and those who cannot.

South Africa is the fourth largest nation within the Commonwealth and holds the sixth biggest populace. Fifty percent of its populace is in urban regions and contains the highest rate of urbanization than most Sub-Saharan countries [18]. However, South Africa must still bargain with a number of challenges such as; extreme level of not being equal, a frail Data and Communication Technologies (ICT) framework, particularly within rural areas. Trusler [19] says as a way to address ICT issues at hand or digital divide, the nation needs to give appropriate arrangements which will see the nation move forward and combat all these issues.

Kolko [20] recommended that there's a developing digital divide between the wealthy and the destitute and they base these articulations on various reports and studies that point to Internet usage and access statistics. Therefore, it can be noted that the emergence digitization has added another layer of inequality to already existing inequalities in income, life expectancy, access to

health and education, and other aspects of human development not only in the Eastern Cape but South Africa as a whole.

However, Venables [21] argues that digital era has come along with positive impact on under developing countries. The author further states that over the past fifteen years, the number of telephone mainlines (both settled and versatile) in developing and least developed countries tripled in use whereas mobile and internet services were virtually unavailable fifteen years ago.

### Research design

In order to retrieve data for this research, the researcher will use qualitative research methods. DeFranzo [22] defines qualitative research as essentially an exploratory investigation. It is utilized to pick up an understanding of fundamental reasons, suppositions, and thought processes. It gives experiences into the issue or makes a difference to create thoughts or theories for potential qualitative research.

The researcher is going to conduct interviews with 10 individuals to determine the audience's perception on how digital media impacts the reception of news from traditional media sources, five of the individuals will come from the primary audience and the other five will come from the secondary audience

The researcher chose the qualitative research method because it will assist in proving the hypothesis. This research method allows the researcher to have an interaction with the subjects which the researcher will conduct interviews with to find out the audience's perception of how digital media impacts the reception of news from traditional media sources.

This research will be conducted in the Eastern Cape, East London. It will be conducted amongst individuals of different social classes thus being the lower class, middle and upper class, all races and gender. The research will also focus on both the young and the old. These categories of individuals that the research will be conducted on fall under a term referred to as social context. Below social context will be discussed to find out why these individuals were chosen for the research.

### Literature Review

This section examines appropriate literature to assess and define the meanings of digital media versus traditional media, audience theory, cultural studies and the transition from traditional media to digital media. This literature will assist in clarifying issues that scholars have engaged on in this particular field. Engaging with scholars will shed light on the change that has occurred within the media industry and there will be clarity on whether digital media is taking over traditional media and gain further perspective to the most preferred source of news by audience between digital and traditional media.

### Digital media versus traditional media

**The making of the internet:** Berker [23] affirms that the internet was introduced between 1993 and 1996. He further adds that during these years the internet made its way into the lives of

many end users as a form of communication and information. Berker [23] also adds that the rise of the internet became a formidable event for traditional media.

The development of the internet over the years has had a great impact on the media industry as a whole. Within the industry, journalism and the newspapers have been the most affected. Guo and Sun [24] agree that the advantages of digital media, and the internet in particular have thus brought about a revolution in journalism. Digital media can be distinguished by the speed in which news can be delivered to the reader at a low cost distribution. Another advantage that this medium has is that it also offers an interactive platform for the readers. This means that digital media has potential to be a threat to newspapers or traditional media as it is able to reach a bigger platform at a speed much quicker than that of traditional media.

Nielsen [25] challenges that news sites and digital daily are among the foremost requested and visited websites inside the internet community and around the world. Kaye and Johnson [26] confirm to the truth that the main aim of audiences or clients using the internet is to access breaking news and seek for up-to-the diminutive data.

This then supports and affirms that digital media is a preferred choice of medium for a vast majority of news followers. Data provided by Harris Interactive [27] show that 80% of web surfers read news online. Therefore, it can be noted that digital media has become a cheaper and quicker source of news that audiences around the world are preferring to use.

In contrast It can be distinguished that digital media does not have to necessarily pose as a threat to traditional media, digital media can work hand in hand with traditional media to provide quality news reporting. Hess [28] underpins this by saying that from the early 2000s both conventional(traditional) media and digital communication science have held on to the thought of essentially adjusting traditional media systems through the utilization of new technology in order to challenge the disintegration of conventional media.

It can be noted that traditional media (newspapers) can still play a pivotal role in today's society as more a trusted source. Johnson and Kaye [29] bring to mind that lack of trust in information accessed from the internet could hold it (the internet) from becoming an even more important and powerful news source. The internet is easily accessible to any person and this allows a platform for unverified information to make its way to the public, hence the arrival of fake news sites [30]. Newspapers on the other hand provide time to investigate and verify all information before going to print. Kovach and Rosenstiel [31] contest that the rise in availability of news and information coming from both legal and illegal sources provides a need for journalists in newspapers to act as referees and interpreters to help the audience make sense of news.

### Audience theory

**Conceptualising audience theory:** Webster [32] defines audience

theory as one of the central components of media studies. However, the term implies numerous meanings, some of which maybe contradicting. Ong [32] describes audience theory as an aspect of thought that emerged within academic literary theory and cultural studies (cultural studies to be discussed later on in the literature review). Other scholars such as Mitchell [33,34] and Taylor [35] are of the view that speakers and writers are able to aim communication. Winter [36] alludes to audience theory as an approach that empowers speakers and journalists to draw inductions on the encounters, beliefs and attitudes of an audience.

The above scholars document audience theory in the context of verbal communication (oral communication) however Cassidy [37] is of the view that the audience theory makes an effort to understand the how and why of the audience. McCabe [38] states that when a writer or researcher deals with audience theory there are certain factors to take caution of such as the type of audience, reception and effects of what is being communicated.

### Types of audiences, reception and effects

Audiences are classified by the analysis of the arrangement of the text as this will indicate to which group it appeals to. In this the scholar states that audience classification conveys that there is a superior or dominant group belief when responding to texts. McCabe [38] defines it as how the audience forms understanding of the text furthermore how the audience is affected by the text. Below is a diagram by McCabe [38] of how audiences can be identified (Figures 1 and 2).

Reception Theory basically sees audiences as individuals, accepting and interpreting messages on an individual level, choosing to either acknowledge or dismiss the message or select bits to which they concur with.

Effects Theory sees audiences as people of Mass – as a group experiencing media and its aiming message. Gerbner [39]



Figure 1: Reception theory.

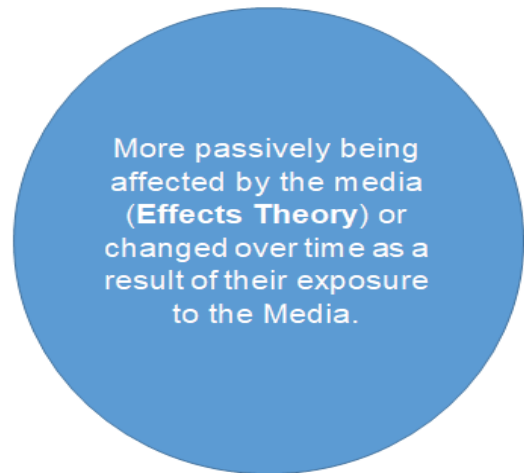


Figure 2: Effects theory.

suggests that media has the impact of improvement of which these improvements are small and happen over a long period of time. The impacts of media viciousness have been considered broadly and can be used to consider the impacts of all media in common. It is acknowledged that viciousness can have coordinate impacts (changes in conduct), desensitization (more tolerant of violence in others), unfeeling world clutter (belief that the world is a scary and mean place, causing anxiety) or Catharsis (a positive outlet by viewing behaviour of others, people do not feel the need to behave in that way themselves).

### Cultural studies

McChesney [40] defines cultural studies as an interdisciplinary field of research that analyses the elements and impact of the cultural context that emerge from the media. The scholar further states that cultural studies “in a broader sense” focuses on the means by which society makes meanings and joins it to everyday objects, ideas and practices.

Various forms and products of media laydown material that helps one coin their identity and sense of self-hood. Products such as radio, television, film, music, internet, social media plus many other forms are according to Kellner [41] what help aid this movement. The sense of awareness that media brings also helps one define or give the ability to discern what it means to be male or female; understanding of class, ethnicity and race, and division of the world according to “us” and “them”. In this Kellner [41] asserts that media provides stories, resources, symbols and myths that construct a common culture through which each individual is able to fit into.

Ryan [42] depicts that cultural studies has as a “theoretical apparatus” in which it examines the construction and political economy of culture, culture texts and the effects and reception of these texts to the audience. Therefore, media has a pivotal role to play when it comes to feeding the audience with information for it is the very information that that helps audience identify with

their culture, therefore media should provide information that is accurate so as to not mislead or misguide the audience.

As mentioned above cultural studies is critical and multicultural and provides comprehensive approaches to culture which will be applied to a good style and wide variety of media artifacts, be it advertising or news reporting [43].

Therefore, cultural studies are an integral part of critical media instruction. Agger [44] documents that cultural studies give authority to audiences to be able to withstand media manipulation.

### Transition from traditional to digital media

**Defining traditional media:** Lang [45] defines traditional media as any combination of mass communication which was accessible some time before the arrival of the new media (digital media). Traditional media is made up of a variety of mediums such as television, traditional newspapers, magazines and the radio. In traditional media, the supply of the data chooses what to distribute and display, while the buyer continually gets the data without actively being involved with the development of any paper article or program. Sivesind [46] concedes that utilizers of newspapers or any other form of traditional media will react with their opinions or conclusions on the program, news revealed or broadcast, however they regularly don't play any part within the development of any news article or broadcast. Noble [47] further states that while the incline of old media (traditional media) is verifiable, the rise of digital media is worthwhile to note conventional media encompasses a broad, however focused developed reach content over the long period of its initiation.

**Defining digital media (New media):** Gray and Caul [48] document that modern media (new media) insinuates to those technological intelligent, dual communication which includes some form of computerization. In assisting to better understand digital media, Logan [49] contends that data is successfully accumulated and scattered utilizing modern development. This is a trait of digital media. This infers that the collecting and announcing is less demanding as an outcome of the utilization of what is termed the new age. Eveno [50] concurs with Logan [49] in crediting the use of technological innovation as a pivotal component of digital media and encourages the users of modern media create and trade substance.

**Transitioning from traditional media to digital media:**The traditional media awoke to a rude awakening over the 20<sup>th</sup> century as it saw the arrival of its successive new medium. This arrival of digital media changed the way affiliated to print news. The internet became the most meaningful game-changers [51]. According to Kolo [52] the internet became a disruptive medium for the print industry as it 'undermined' traditional newspapers by giving news space for the publication of news texts and of advertisement which is the two center sources of income for the print industry.

However, Johannessen [53] contends that media and communication habits are to a greater extent shifting towards

digital domain and social media. In this Gray [48] contend that this shift towards digital media has been perceived by traditional media as an 'disruptive move' in that it can change the existing industry. The transition from traditional to digital media has required a change in the way in which people communicate.

Shepard and Watters [54] write that genres from the traditional medium will typically be copied as-is and used for some time in the new. The scholars further contend that After a while, there will be a new category to emerge, where there will be an adaption of the old ones to make them fit in the digital sphere. The full growth of a medium can be measured by its ability to incorporate genres from both traditional media as well as digital media. Development is, in this case, caught on as the degree to which the audiences included in utilizing the medium concur on the traditions and rules for the medium, as well as the emergence of modern classes, or ancient genres that are adjusted to the functionality of the new medium.

## Research Methodology and Data Collection

This section provides a framework of the research methods that were used in the study by giving a description of what qualitative research is. It gives details on the participants, who they are and how they were sampled. The tools or instrument used to collect data by the researcher and the what processes were used to carry out the study. The researcher also then explains research design that was chosen for the purpose of this study and an outline of why this choice.

### Defining is qualitative research?

Mertens [55] defines qualitative research as an interpretative approach that seeks to gain insight into particular patterns, meanings and behaviours and certain social aspect and all of this done through the participants detailing their experiences. Cresswell and Poht [56] further adds on to these phenomena by stating that qualitative research allows the researcher to construct abstracts concepts, hypothesis and or theories by asking crucial questions such as; why? how? and in what way?

### Research design

The study will center its focus on making use of the qualitative research method. The researcher chose this strategy because it measures the perception of individuals and data that cannot be scientifically counted or put into numbers [55]. As detailed by Neuman [57] a researcher of the qualitative method dwells more on the chosen participant's capacity to clarify and develop a better knowledge of societal issues. Therefore, due to the researcher's topic on the audience's perception of how digital media impacts the reception of news from traditional media sources. This is the best method to collect data for the researcher.

### Advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research

**Advantages:** Denzin [58] recommends that there are a few benefits and advantages to mobilizing qualitative research approaches and strategies. Qualitative research deals with the encounters and

sentiments of the individuals, this brings a human component to the study because it deciphers the opinions of the participants. Other authors contend that qualitative research completely understand the human experience in particular setting, Denzin [58] state that qualitative research about a collaborative field that guides a bigger range of epistemological perspectives, inquires about strategies and interpretive procedures of understanding human encounters. McNamara [59] argues that from the perspective of epistemological point language appraisal could not be isolated from the setting of culture and values of where it was utilized and hence there was the employment of the qualitative research method. This strategy centers on issues that need an examination of content-related variables [60].

Another advantage that qualitative research method holds is that it helps the researcher discover the inner feelings and experiences that the participant is feeling [61]. Figuring out or discovering the feelings and experiences of the participant assists the researcher in interpreting the data that will be collected through the explanations of the participant. Leung [62] supports this statement by further stating that qualitative research helps figure out how meanings are shaped through and in culture.

Qualitative research has the capacity to understand the voices of diverse individuals, implications and occasions. So the source of information in this approach is the meaning of various events [63]. Klein and Myers [64] explain this phenomenon as interpretivism research approach. This study deals mainly with individual events and or cases, thus the ability to understand different dynamics of the participants.

**Disadvantages:** Silverman [65] contends that qualitative research can be limiting in the sense that it has the ability to take out relevant sensitivities and center more on implications and encounters leave out contextual sensitivities. The scholar in the above text argues that qualitative research tends to have an element that omits the sensitive issues that need to be addressed by the study as it shifts its focus more on the overall meaning than the rooted or specific meaning, issue or experience. In addition, Cumming [66] supports the text above by stating that qualitative research purely neglects the social and cultural constructions of the variables studied.

However, Lam [67] argues that another shortcoming that qualitative research has is that it tends to generalize a whole population based on a small sample of the study, Scott [68] concedes that due to the small sample size the study results do not wish to claim wider generalization to other contexts.

Below in Table 1 that gives a summarised account on the different methods that data can be collected using the qualitative methodology.

The researcher used the qualitative research method whereby one on one interviews was the approach used. One on one interviews were the best choice for the researcher as it allowed the researcher to better assess the emotions and experience of the participant. The researcher chose participants based on 2 categories; those who used traditional media as a source to

**Table 1:**Benefits and drawbacks of qualitative research methodologies.

| Benefits   | Drawbacks   |
|--|---|
| Interviews   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closer affinity between questioner and the interviewee.</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrangement time/Time consuming</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured and less devouring time compared to unstructured interview</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for questioner bias. Lack of organized consistency leads to questions of reliability of the collected data.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permits for the same essential data to be collected from all interviewees</li> </ul>  |   |
| Focus groups   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assemble data in a moderately brief time span</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impressive pre-planning and organizing</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enact overlooked points of interest of experience</li> </ul>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test is not arbitrary nor representative</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discharge hindrances among participants</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information quality is impacted by the abilities and motivation of the facilitator</li> </ul>                                    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator can investigate related but unexpected subjects as they come.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize the real words and practices of members to answer research questions</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't require complex testing techniques</li> </ul>                                   |   |
| Chart review   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valuable aide to triangulate data</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time requests of preparing the information</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wealthy in information</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential information overload</li> </ul>  |
| Observation studies  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyst witness's subjects "first-hand"</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyst bias</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation, practices and intuitive can all be studied.</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception aid/tools may be more problematic to use</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researcher bias</li> </ul>  |   |

consume their news i.e., participants who read newspapers. The second category the researcher chose was those who used digital media as means to get their daily news.

### Biographical information of the participants

This study was conducted in East London located in the Eastern Cape. East London is a developing city within the Eastern Cape and as a result many are relocating to the city in pursuit of better jobs and standard of living. The researcher selected 10 participants who live in Southernwood and Cambridge. Southernwood is located in close proximity with the East London CBD area. Students and young people who have just entered the working class reside in this area. Cambridge is one of the oldest suburbs in East London and has people of a variety of social classes and culture reside in this part of the city. The participants ranged from the ages of 15 years to 55 years. The wide range of ages provided a rich perception from the different generations on traditional and digital media. The researcher conducted one on one interviews with the participants and two follow up interviews were conducted after the initial interview.

## Data collection

To collect data, the researcher used one on one interviews with the participants. Karavas [69] affirms that interviews presents an opportunity for the researcher to pick up understanding into the interviewees world and gain a much deeper understanding of the meaning of everyday experiences for the interviewee. The researcher used a semi-structured interview style which involved direct questioning as well as follow up questions. According to Pratt and Loizos [70] a semi structured interview is a mixture of formulated questions and follow-up questions that may come from the interviewer, this may happen when the questioner or interviewer may steer-off the planned questions on case a point that demonstrates to be productive may arise. The researcher will use a set of standardized questions for both participant or audiences who prefer using traditional media as a source of news and the audience that uses digital media as means to generate news. The researcher will use these set of standardized questions as means for validating the researcher’s findings.

## Data analysis

To analyse the data the researcher utilized the thematic analysis strategy to attain a broader and deeper knowledge from the data gathered. According to Braun and Clarke [71] thematic analysis is a qualitative method that identifies, analyses and reports patterns or themes. The scholars further add that thematic analysis “minimally organises and describes data in detail.” Braun and Clarke [71] further state that the researcher has six steps that need to be followed when analyzing data using the thematic analysis method, which are (Table 2):

The first step that is required for the researcher to do is to familiarize with the data. This can assist in the researcher knowing where the source of the data and understanding the data. Knowing the origin of the data assists the researcher in ensuring the data’s credibility. The second step will need for the researcher to know and document all of the important and interesting ideas and the themes that will be collected through the data. The third step is where the researcher will group all similar patterns which will create the themes. During the fourth step the researcher reviews, modifies and develops the preliminary themes that would have been identified in the third step. The fifth step is where the researcher puts or gives a name to the established themes and according to Braun and Clarke [71] this stage identifies the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about. The sixth and final step in analyzing data thematically requires

**Table 2:** Braun and Clarke’s six-phase framework for doing a thematic analysis.

| Thematic analysis |                               |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Step 1            | Become familiar with the data |
| Step 2            | Generate initial codes        |
| Step 3            | Search for themes             |
| Step 4            | Review themes                 |
| Step 5            | Define themes                 |
| Step 6            | Write-up                      |

the researcher to construct a documented report which can be done in a form of a journal article or dissertation. This will therefore present what the researcher analyzed and interpreted of the data.

The focus of this chapter was to detail which methodology was used to complete this study. In doing so the researcher defined and explained that qualitative research was used as the selected method used to collect data. The researcher went on to provide the process followed during data collection.

## Results and Discussion

### Research findings and data analysis

This chapter reports on findings of the information collected from 10 participants who are users of traditional media (newspapers) to generate news, as well as users of digital media (internet and social media) as a source to receive their news this is all in the aim of finding the audiences perception of how digital media impacts the reception of news from traditional media sources. The researcher used semi-structured one-on-one interviews were held, where four questions were used in order to acquire primary experience from the audience or participants. The main objective of this study is to single out the audience’s perception of how digital media impacts the reception of news from traditional media sources.

Mertens [55] defines qualitative research as an interpretative approach that seeks to gain insight into particular patterns, meanings and behaviours and certain social aspect and all of this done through the participants detailing their experiences. For this the researcher chose 10 respondents of which 5 preferred traditional newspapers as a source of news and the other 5 chose digital media to source their news, this was done to get a balanced view on why each participant preferred that certain medium for news as well get the participants view on the impact digital media could be bringing to traditional media.

### Findings

**Background of the respondents:** The researcher selected 10 respondents for a one on one interview. 5 respondents were males and females ranging from the ages of 15 to 55 years who said they preferred using traditional media (newspapers) to get their daily news. The other 5 respondents were also male and female however they ranged from 15 to 45 years. The second category active users of new media, they preferred to access the internet or social media to read daily news. All selected participants availed themselves for the interviews which makes it 100% of the targeted respondents.

**Themes that emerged from the interview data:** From the gathered information, the thematic analysis method will be utilized, as deeply documented in chapter four, to look at the common codes and recover subjects and themes from those codes. The researcher shaped four themes which talked about further down. All the themes are examined by revealing common

and contradicting objections of respondents; e.g. traditional media audience and digital media audience.

**Findings from interview data:** In this study, qualitative data comprised of interviews that the researcher analysed from the collection of information retrieved from the subjects. This chapter thoroughly talks about the discoveries from the interviews, talks about the rising themes from the subject's responses to questions given to them. Respondent's personal opinions feature conspicuously in the description of the themes this is due to that the researcher recorded all participants during the interviews. All participants agreed to being recorded.

### Traditional media audience vs. digital media audience: Reliability

Replying to the questions posed at them, respondents responded freely. A common thread amongst traditional media (newspaper) users was that they relied on newspapers as a source of news. Respondents were under the view that it is highly unlikely for newspapers to report fake news as journalists have an ethical duty to report on facts. Kalsnes [72] contends that unverified or fake news has made it less difficult to control easier to control the conventional media (traditional media) news arrangement which undermines and influences the validity of traditional media. On the other hand, digital media audience have conveyed that they use trusted news sources to generate news.

Respondent Unam Dlebsuku argued that digital news sites can be trusted as many of them are news sites that branched off traditional (newspaper) media. News sites such as the Daily Dispatch, Mail and Guardian and others. She said: "I personally think one can trust news sites but the ones that you can trust are news sites that branched off from newspapers. For example, I get my news from the Daily Dispatch news site and we all know the Daily Dispatch is a trusted newspaper in the Eastern Cape."

Within the theory of the public sphere, Boeder [73] expresses that the web and online spheres have made recently developed spaces for data, discussions and involvement whereby people can both be edified and controlled.

### Traditional media audience vs. Digital media audience: Breaking news quicker on internet sites

Traditional media users and digital media users were in unison that when it came to breaking news and getting instant news, digital media was the better platform. Martin [74] contends that social media has ended up being the most utilized source of news online with more than 2.4 billion web consumers, about 64.5 percent get breaking news from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram instead of daily newspapers.

Digital media user Amahle Marobo states that traditional media provides an in-depth detail on a story however the preference is still on digital media as news are provided instantly, however the worry may be the accuracy of the breaking news as news sites are normally in a rush to break the news first. "Newspapers are useful

when you want to know more on a certain story, basically a follow up story however, I like to stay updated on what is happening and therefore I prefer going on the internet to find my news." Said Marobo

Traditional media user Siyolise Gxashe admits to using social media to follow a breaking news story but would rather buy a newspaper the following day to get an in-depth follow up on the story.

"I don't mind using Facebook or Twitter to follow news for example during the commission of enquiry into the Bossasa case I would stream it live on YouTube because I was at work and could not watch it on the news. I would also follow on Facebook what others said. I would then buy newspaper the following day to see how the journalists narrated it. Reading from the newspaper would also help me gain a different perspective on the case. Therefore, both methods for accessing news are important in their own right."

Scholar [74] states that news happens quickly and today's story will be tomorrow's overlooked story whereas having so much data at our fingertips is incredible, it is worthwhile to always check sources and not take headlines features as the truth. With social media as the new news directors, it is up to the consumers to be the present day truth checkers.

### Traditional media audience vs. Digital media audience: Costs (free access to news on internet versus buying a newspaper)

In this section the researcher picked up opposing views as traditional media users were of the view that buying a newspaper was cheaper than having to buy data to access news sites. Traditional media users further stated that a majority of news sites required that one subscribe with their site in order to generate news.

Traditional media user, Lynette Schultz is of the view that a majority of elderly people cannot use the internet and therefore buying a newspaper is cheaper and easier for them. Cowling [75] contends that an expanding array of media broadcasts, the website, are now in competition with traditional media for people's consideration and for money to advertise this has driven to advertisers decreasing their investing in traditional media as due to the fact that there has now developing online utilization which investors have been progressively giving more revenue to online consumers.

Schultz said, "I cannot use the internet well, it confuses me and it just seems so complicated that is why I still and will always prefer buying the newspaper to get current stories and news updates."

Digital media user Ayabulela Rala details that traditional (newspaper) media is more expensive as one has to purchase a newspaper every day, the respondent further states that she buys data that lasts the whole month and is able to access free



credible sites on the internet to access the news. This renders buying a newspaper for a new media users useless and more expensive.

"I calculated that buying a newspaper everyday actually costs round about the same amount of data. I prefer buying data which I can use for a lot more plus I get access to more new sites on the internet so that is why I prefer using digital media."

### Traditional media audience vs. Digital media audience: Digital media taking on traditional media

The researcher recognised coinciding themes because it seems that each new media user and traditional media user square measure the opinion that digital media is passing traditional media in news coverage, resulting in modern media being quicker and straightforward to infiltrate and it is fulfilling the desire of getting news quickly for audiences. Within the theory of the public sphere by Neto and Lopes [76], points out that despite the fact that the standard media within the variety of television and daily newspapers, they have a crucial role in making public spheres, the belief is that new spheres like the web and its on-line platforms have created communities wherever people share similar issues, common tastes and cultural turns at a worldwide level.

Digital media user, Tiego Nass believes that digital media has reworked the way audiences consume news as they are not forced to look ahead for tomorrow for breaking news within the front pages of newspapers or TV and newscast bulletins, audiences can now be informed as the story updates. what is more is she believes that it's produced a world of instant gratification as people are able to get attention and help quicker through the instant process of digital media. This then takes away the wait and drag of traditional media.

Digital media has transformed news reporting, it's made it quicker and cheaper. We no longer have to wait for the next day to get news updates. Digital media has also changed the way people interact, we now have influencers who make a living from the internet and social media. They get likes and views from Instagram, Facebook and Twitter making them celebrities within an instant."

Another respondent, Angelique Brown accepts that digital media has overwhelmed traditional media as new media produces current, modern and instant news on numerous interactive stages that are quick and very easy to access. A read contended by Feezel [77], states the new media age has collected property on what and the way news is made, dispersed and devoured so undermining the standard agenda-setting control of the mass media that affects the general public on sure problems. Gvili and Levy [78] states that digital media is quickly changing into the most accessed mode of getting news.

A contention backed up by Newell [79] suggest that conventional media may essentially be diverted instead of being uprooted by modern media.

The overlapping topic proposes that conventional media audiences are of a comparable conviction that new media is passing conventional media however the audience conquers that traditional media should now integrate with digital media and not fall behind. An idea supported up by Garrison [80] contends that it now has become a usual custom for conventional media to utilize on-line innovations as news sources while a few have made their own on-line stages in an extortion to get through to new media users.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In the modern era, the internet or digital media is being used exceedingly by a vast number of people across the globe, South Africa being one of the countries. The use of internet crosses across all status and age; the youth, adults as well as male and female counterparts have been documented to be involved.

This study recorded certain discoveries that are very beneficial to note on the subject matter enquiry. By assessment of this study it can be worthwhile to note that digital media has been established as a credible source of news amongst audiences. However, the rise of digital media as the most accessed source of news, will not cause a plummet in traditional media.

Due to the increase in the use of digital media the researcher sees it fit that digital media be deemed a credible means of communication. From the discoveries of the study it has been set up that South Africans have assessed the digital media as a valid channel of communication. However, there are substances found that audiences should take caution of the credibility of news sites and not fall prey to fake news. With that, it will be worthwhile to note that traditional media(newspapers) still play a pivotal role in modern society.

The researcher recommends that this study be conducted on a much larger scale than that of the researcher. The researcher conducted the research with 10 subjects and it can be noted that with a larger scale more results could be attained and researchers could get broader knowledge on the audience's perception of how digital media impacts the perception of news from traditional media sources.

The primary target of this study was to discover the audience's perception of how digital media impacts the reception of news from traditional media sources. Another aim and objective was to find out which source of news did the audience prefer to get their news from between traditional media or digital media. With the information the researcher gathered and examined, it is evident that new media is a strong source medium that could carry the potential to take over traditional media because of its wide access to its audiences. However, it may be clear that traditional media still possesses a future in news reporting in spite of the rise of new media stages that give instant, on the go news for the audiences.

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