



Conflicting interests among Indonesian journalists and *churnalism* in the platformed media ecosystem

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ABSTRACT

Social media has fundamentally transformed the contemporary news media ecosystem and challenged the traditional role of journalists as institutional gatekeepers responsible for verifying information. The platform-based digital environments increasingly prioritize speed, visibility, and audience engagement, generating structural pressures that reshape journalistic practices. Within this context, the rise of churnalism, the rapid reproduction of pre-existing content derived from press releases, social media posts, and other online materials without sufficient verification has become a significant feature of contemporary news production. This study examines how journalists working in mainstream media perceive and navigate in the conflicting tension between verification oriented journalistic professionalism and the acceleration-oriented logic of digital platforms. Using a qualitative approach within a constructivist paradigm, the research draws on in-depth interviews with eight journalists from major Indonesian cities. The analysis employs Uses and Gratifications Theory to understand how journalists simultaneously function as information producers and media users who rely on social media to monitor information flows, gather sources, and distribute news content. The findings reveal that contemporary journalism operates within the coexistence of two competing logics: verification as the foundation of professional legitimacy and acceleration as a requirement imposed by platform metrics and digital competition. This dual pressure forces journalists to continuously negotiate professional values, editorial boundaries, and newsroom practices. The study contributes to the literature on media transformation by integrating discussions of gatekeeping, platformization, and churnalism within a single analytical framework. The results suggest that journalism is not declining but rather undergoing adaptive transformation within an increasingly decentralized and algorithmically mediated communication ecosystem.

Keywords: *churnalism, journalism, social media, uses and gratifications, platformized media*

INTRODUCTION

The media has changed a lot in the past 20 years. It led to ongoing conversations among journalists and other mass media workers about how social media is becoming the major means for people to obtain news. Anwar (2025) argued that social media

has changed news reporting in a big way by making it easier to tell stories quickly and in a way that is interesting to look at, that informs, entertains, and gets people involved. Today's news production focuses on popular topics, quick live coverage, visually appealing formats, and interactive designs to get people more interested. Some people named this manner of delivering information "homeless media." It was made up of small, flexible production systems that used a lot of user-generated content, web-based sources, and fast publishing methods to get to people quickly. The concept of homeless media was grounded in the theory of the network society (Castells, 2009).

Candra (2026) demonstrated that within a network society, the production and distribution of information depended on individual interactions in digital environments. In this analysis, the term "churnalism", originally introduced by Lewis, Williams, Franklin, Thomas, and Mosdell (2006) and later popularized by Davies (2009) was utilized. Davies (2009) criticized journalists who no longer conducted original news gathering but instead relied on secondary sources. Churnalism led to incomplete news, inadequate verification, and prioritization of speed over accuracy. Churnalism in the mentioned context was defined as distinct from professional journalism, which prioritized verification, independence, and direct field reporting.

Churnalism practices by professional media workers involved working conditions which was different from conventional journalism. Conventional journalism employed a structured editorial process to verify and validate information before publication. The filtering mechanism was based on the Gatekeeping Theory which was introduced by Kurt Lewin in 1947 and later was expanded by David Manning White through his study of editorial decision-making in 1950s. The gatekeeping Theory confirmed that information assertion passed through a series of gates which was managed by individuals or institutions who selected, filtered, and shaped content prior to public release (Almakaty, 2025). . Journalistic practice relied on a verification-based gatekeeping process for more than half a century. Many media professionals expressed concern regarding the erosion of verification standards that simultaneously occurred with the increasing social media access as primary source of public information.

Kovach and Rosenstiel (2012) contend that the deterioration of verification processes in digital contexts impacts viewers consuming news via platforms devoid of journalistic research norms. Majerczak and Strzelecki (2022) back up If social media users had a better understanding of the main roles of media as described by Laswell (1948), these worries could be lessened. These roles include: (1) monitoring the environment, (2) connecting different parts of society in response to changes in the environment, and (3) passing down social heritage from one generation to the next. These roles make media a unified social tool that keeps an eye on reality, spreads important information, and shares values, norms, and shared knowledge.

Journalistic procedures that focus on verification, including checking and rechecking content, are still very important for keeping the media credible (Kovach & Rosenstie, 2012). The media environment has changed a lot in the last ten years, and it's not only because of new ways to share information. Expert describe the mix of



conventional media and internet platforms as a "hybrid media system" where its easy to create, share, and use information in an ecosystem that is all connected. Today this kind of interaction changes how news is made, how people think about topics, and how people interact with each other. But furthermore, there is a divided thought that led to tension between two types of journalism in this hybrid system. Journalists that work for mainstream media follow institutional professionalism, which means they focus on verification, accuracy, balance, and being accountable to the public. The other, is coined by a term coined by Davies which is "Churnalism" which refers to the rapid production and replication of news that primarily relies on pre-existing sources such as press releases, social media updates, or aggregated online information, often lacking sufficient verification. These methods are used by freelancer, writers and independent content creators who are not bound by conventional editorial standards.

As social media seeks to be faster and more viral, these two goals start to clash. Computers decide how visible content is to the public in this fast-paced world, which makes things difficult for newsrooms. Jannah (2025) thinks that digital venues don't normally have good narrative validity. This means that people typically want things to happen rapidly before they look at them. This makes it tougher to distinguish the difference between actual journalism and churnalism. More and more newsrooms are utilizing methods that were mostly used by people who worked in fields other than mainstream media in the past.

Most Journalist uses methods that optimized the time used to produce article, and few used secondary sources or cross examined the sources. The mode of writing heavily depends on the audience point of view which is popular topics with only enough details, pressured by the digital performance metrics and engagements indicators. This form of production may lessen the gatekeeping process, and focuses on the race of getting the audiences attention. The conflicting interest within the journalist is about how thinking about media work: one prioritises truth over speed for algorithmic prominence.

Many journalists who work in many news agency or office must faces reality that demands speed and volume. This research focuses on this matter, importantly on how news production professionals manage the conflicting interest between journalist ethic and churnalism. In late events, the mode of production puts critical thinking first, then organizing information, check sources, put knowledge together, and communicate it the ethically responsible way (Supriadi et al., 2025). However, in the most recent events this mode of production is considered traditional compares to adaptation with the speed in the digital age. Thus, the keepers of reliable information in becoming less important.

The course of action leads to the audience perception of realty, making it easy to spread news which are sensational. This condition led some critics argue saying this kind of news may have or entirely are click bait which false or misleading information. Karas (2024) says that false information might made public lose faith in the media as a reliable source of information. The cycle continues worsen, as one proverb says "garbage in, garbage out" bad inputs will only produce bad output (Kilkenny & Robinson, 2018). If this is left unchecked then the media and information ecosystem is

flooded with false news. The public trust media mainstream media because it has strong institutional integrity and strict standards about what it can publish. Social media takes over this trust considering information over real people than “medium”, prioritizing real experience than the known media framing. Khalifa et al. (2026) cite Mohini and Sinha (2025), arguing that social media facilitates interpersonal connections, hence aiding various daily chores and communication requirements.

This study does not dismiss social media as a medium for information dissemination. The major issue is how big and fast digital circulation is. In only a few seconds, millions of pieces of excellent and terrible content spring up on sites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X (Twitter). These circumstances facilitate the rapid dissemination of incorrect, incomplete, or erroneous information, which the public continues to consume. Studies indicate that mass media significantly influences public perceptions of social reality (Bezabih (2017). According to Chomsky (2021), the media changes the way we think, see things, and feel about things. Hodkinson (2017) talks on how the media sends signals that influence how people in a community see things, which changes how they think about social issues. People's thoughts, actions, and behaviour in social contexts alter when they hear bad news over and over again.

Why does information that hasn't been looked at stay around? Digital infrastructures now control how information is shared on the internet. Computers are taking the place of editors in digital ecosystems and choosing what people see and how often they see it. Gillespie (2018) contends that platforms lack neutrality because algorithms determine what individuals observe. Klinger & Svensson (2018) show that the priorities of social media have changed how news is reported and spread. Now, engagement data is used to decide how to distribute. So, the problem isn't only that there is too much information; it's also that the digital selection procedures push certain types of content to the top of public conversations. The quality of information, the way public opinion is shaped, and the way algorithms are made all become linked. This makes it more likely that emotionally charged, divisive, or broken-up content will be shared in the digital public space.

Algorithms that were once used to enhance commercial performance now disseminate polarizing and emotionally charged information. This makes more people interested, but it also makes it less likely that people will argue in public in a wise and logical way. Bayer et al. (2022) believe that today's media is made to get consumers to use it more and keep them interested. Many social media sites make money by selling data about how people use and pay attention to their sites. This is because they are firms that are traded on the stock market. Maharani et al. (2024) demonstrate that social media accelerates and enhances the dissemination of information. People can swiftly alter how others feel about the issue in Palestine by sharing news and their own thoughts. Aytac (2024) says that social media is growing more and more like a new centre of power since it changes how people think and act by using algorithmic curation, content moderation, and persuasive platform design. Algorithms choose what users view, and to make money, they might put things that make people angry or sad at the top. People stop looking for ways to prove the facts wrong when they have less chances to do so and start to believe them.



According to Zhuravskaya et al. (2020), a large part of social media content comes from unverified personal opinions. This makes it more likely that users will be biased and that their beliefs will be reinforced (Maharani et al., 2024). Audience quickly response and the personal opinions becomes even much stronger and echoes much louder than the facts that have been validated. The increasing use of social media makes it more difficult for journalist to play the role of gatekeeping, where personal opinions emerge by the masses and can't be filtered. The audience has become active in also producing opinions that are accepted generally as an organic experience. Social media users have shifted from being passive news consumers to active news creators. In response, journalists adopt strategies that position themselves as part of the public sphere in an effort to rebuild trust and engagement. However, this approach has not significantly improved public trust, as audiences continue to perceive journalists as actors who shape and frame agendas. Consequently, establishing oneself as an individual opinion leader remains challenging, particularly when balancing personal visibility with adherence to professional ethics.

Blumler & Katz (1974) developed a model elucidating media usage by examining the interrelationships among several aspects, including social and psychological origins, media needs and desires, media exposure, and the consequences of media intake. People use media to attain what they want and what others want. This can have effects that are both planned and unplanned. We've spoken about a few changes that show how new technologies and new ways of managing information are changing the media today. Verification-based journalism and algorithm-driven information flow have changed how the media talks about dependability, validity, and professional identity. Researchers have already looked into how algorithms alter how people conduct online, how fake news spreads, and how people react. There aren't many studies, meanwhile, that look at how people who work in the media understand and deal with these changes in their jobs.

The use of social media is also common among journalist, where the social media user often posts interesting point of view. Media or news agency sees this as an opportunity to gain advantages by using the social media as news sources. While in the beginning it may seems harmless, but rapid use of social media post as news sources may lack credential or verified reliable source of information. The mode of production where journalist only reproduce the news without enough detail or unverified sources led to massive gain in terms of engagement but decrease their journalistic professionalism. This mode of production is known as Churnalism, when reporters cease doing their own reporting and just copy news from press releases, social media posts, and other online sources. This happens a lot since there are so many digital sources that want your attention. In this situation, the previous gatekeeping role, which was largely done by tight verification and institutional editing authority, is now competing with new sorts of gatekeeping done by platforms, algorithms, and interactive audiences that value speed and popularity. Digital acceleration has made more people aware of churnalism, but research almost never looks into how media professionals understand, deal with, or fight against these behaviours in a platform-based media environment. We don't fully understand how



journalists change their professional duties, limits, and beliefs when they have to cope with both rules about checking facts and the need to get news out rapidly.

Uses and Gratifications Theory is commonly employed to explicate the motivations behind users' engagement with certain media; yet, its application to clarify the motivations of media professionals has been rather constrained. People who work in the media are also people who use the media in this day and age. They use social media to obtain the news, stay up to speed on the news, and share things. People do two things: they make information and they use it. This creates a difficult interplay between professional conventions and platform functionality that hasn't been completely looked into yet.

The journalists' perceptions on the on the topics of gatekeeping applied in the modern digital ecosystem, which are verification-focused journalistic professionalism and churnalism which is driven by platform logic, algorithmic exposure, and audience engagement in the main topic of this study. The discussion offers a theoretical contribution by integrating gatekeeping and audience engagement into a unified analytical framework. It highlights how journalists deals with their jobs.

This research analyses how journalists perceive and negotiate the conflicting interest between verification oriented professional norms and the growing prevalence of churnalism driven by platform logic, algorithmic visibility, and audience engagement metrics. It specifically asks: How do journalists understand and respond to the pressures of platform logic while maintaining professional standards of verification and credibility? To address this question, the study integrate perspectives on gatekeeping and audience engagement, by suing uses gratification approach this research develops a unified analytical framework that situates journalists within a decentralized and algorithmically mediated information environment.

METHOD

The research uses a constructivist approach and qualitative methodologies. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018:216), constructivism emphasize that social reality is derived from interpersonal interactions, individual perceptions, and adherence to institutional regulations which consistent with the focus of the study between how journalist interact using their perception of their professionalism and regulation in general.

Agusta (2014) asserts that the constructivist paradigm perceives reality as influenced by individuals' interpretations of societal events. This method shows how journalists find out about, comprehend, and respond to changes in the world of information, which is continually changing in terms of producing news that adherent to their professionalism.

The research will apply in-depth interview as primary source of data which then processed by using thematic analysis. Secondary data is also used by reading news article as means of news production and note taking. To verify the data, triangulation is used by member checking and audit trail in the interview text. The verification covers official narratives of media organizations with professional experiences



characteristic of newsroom operations and also implementation of news sources verification standards, editing concerns, and distribution tactics within a digital framework. The research design employed an instrumental case study methodology, adhering to the frameworks established by Yin (2019) and Creswell & Poth, (2018). This unique case is examine not as an isolated incident but as a means to illuminate broader socioeconomic issues which is the perspective of journalistic professionalism to the behaviour of news media by its audience in the digital platforms.

The primary informant are five journalists from Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and Makassar. The informant chosen have experiences in mainstream media, responsible for making required editorial decisions or managing digital content and better understanding inside newsrooms in using platform-based distribution methods.

These informant may be using both online and offline for news resources, like social media and news websites. This way the result will discover how professional standards, business necessity, and platform. These criteria also ensured that the informants possessed the necessary institutional experience and professional expertise to address the study issues. The informant’s testament can highlight how media professionals perceive alterations in information authority, audience conduct, and verification challenges within a platform-centric media landscape.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evidence shows the that social media has emerged as a significant source of public knowledge and has affect the behavior of how journalist also use these advantages in their daily job as writing article and also news. Journalist are also a member of public audience that has the capability to acquire certain niches of topics as news value, and this has shifted the way the use social media as source of news especially the procedure to share to protect information that can be reviewed. Media landscape in the context of news production in Indonesia has many perspectives, evidence shows that perspective given by informant has three distinctive theme which are: transformation of professional, preference in audience and algorithmic perception. Even though this research has primary assumption of only two methods that are considered contradict to one another, a lot of categories arise based on the witness of the informant which are consist of five journalists.

Table 1. Informant profile and their perspective based on theme

No.	Initials Informant	Experience and position in media	Main theme contetxt	Category
1	DF	Editor	Change in media and identity	Transformation and Professionalism
2	ISD	Editor	<i>Behavior, Awareness</i>	Autonomy, Rationality Audience
3	II	Editor	<i>Behavior, Awareness</i>	Autonomy, Rationality Audience
4	A	Editor	Vulnerability to literacy, Algoritm Influence, Shaping	Personal experience,



			perception	social network
5	FR	Writer	Change in media and identity	Transformation and Professionalism

Source: Research data (2025)

Table 1 shows that many of the informant shows concern on how about information verification, and cross-examining sources of news which mainly related with professionalism. Their responsibility as journalism is closely related in professional ethics with the ever-changing news landscape which is affected by platform logic or algorithm. They have a complete awareness of this responsible and has rooted to many categories such as Credibility, mainstream media, value social entity, media as business and pressure. Some well-known reporters are also starting to use it. The fundamental problem isn't only that platforms are competing with each other; it's also that people have different values and ways to function well in the media office.

Three important discoveries help to make sense of this. First, the changes in professional and media standards reveal that journalists are under a lot of pressure to keep up with how swiftly digital distribution happens. Some well-known news organizations have adopted fast and short information because they need to get stories out quickly. It is hard to distinguish the difference between professional journalism and content creation that is dependent on aggregators. Second, the power of information is changing because customers are becoming more autonomous and discriminating. Content performance is becoming less important for media companies than it used to be. Third, fake news is more likely to spread quickly when people don't know how to utilize technology, which makes it easier for stuff that isn't very detailed to do so. The mental map in Figure 2 shows more than just topics. This picture shows the many themes about new production methods in a media system that is well driven by platforms. At this point, the digitization and the platform logic has led to a platformization which describe as algorithmic perception with vulnerability. The category show the vulnerability covers news with click bait, individual opinion and decreasing as ability of critical thinking among audience.

Journalists and content creators that focus on the rapid reproduction of new both work in the same distribution ecosystem and want to catch people's attention. Platform algorithms act as middlemen, which makes it easier for users to discover each other and talk to each other. This means that news that is speedy and terrifying might reach more people than news that has been checked correctly. Figure 2 displays the Indonesian media ecosystem and the fight between different ways of getting information. For example, verification versus virality, public responsibility with algorithmic performance, and professional journalism and the growing tendency of churnalism in spreading information.

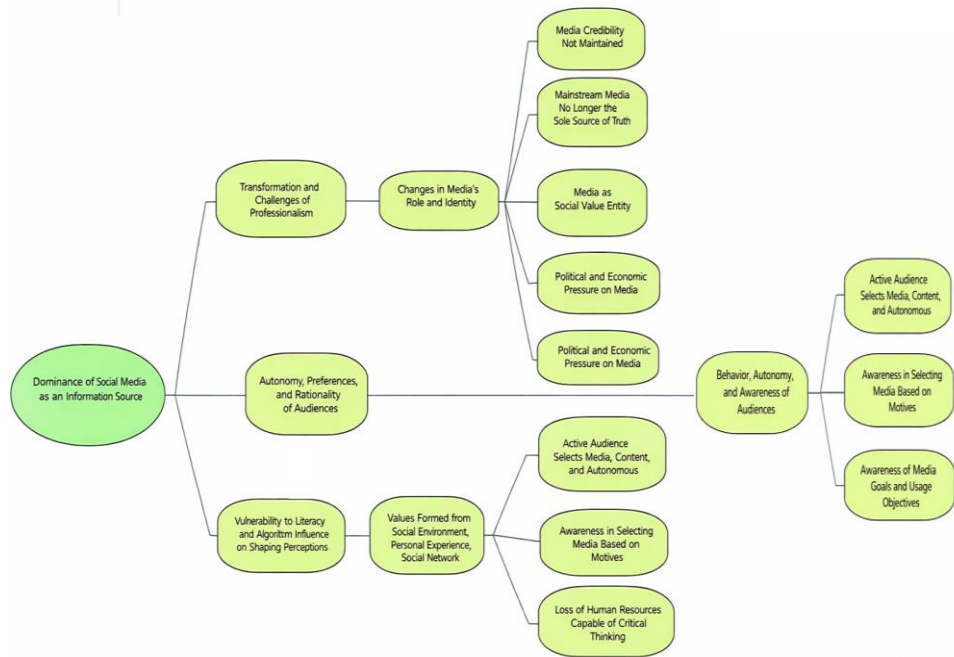


Figure 2. Visualization of changes in the media ecosystem (source: Researcher, NVivo 12, 2025)

Media Transformation and Professionalism

Experts in the media claim that the rise of digital media has made mainstream media less trustworthy and undermined journalism's position as the guardian of the truth. According Ivaska (2026) even though that media has accepted the integration of digital as a routine but they always have defended verification and public value.

The integration has led to transformation where the identity of media professional is slowly degraded. As well as the credibility of journalism as the gatekeeper of media. The verification process can't be applied as the meticulous phase is not matched by the rapid flow of digital information. The outcome of this phenomenon has shifted journalist as also content creator to match the speed of news spread. The ever so responsive audience to accept news is driven by its changing nature of attraction to attention.

The transformation affects the identity of journalism, to fast moving news outlets as media tends to lessen the safeguards of the accuracy and ultimately, the truth. The identity of journalist, in the context of roles now can't be differentiated with general population as they openly also expressed their opinion in social media. Their role as centre of information has taken over by the social media entity, which diverse by many reproductions of information that are considered as news. The transformation of media is getting more compact with more rooms of discussion with only few important details and ties to daily emotional outbursts. the needs of information is well connected with the emotional needs of the audience as it is part of the public discussion, enriched with narration and predictive allusion without any credibility as it is off course an opinion with popular approach to the needs of so called modern audience.

The role of journalist in gatekeeping as well as a responsible news producer would necessarily adapt to many social media news spread, and in the process, journalist has validated this as public discussion even though that this has never stated formally. The reproduction of news as a public discussion has little or somewhat absent from verification but validated as a part of news cycle as the practice of professional journalism which in fact is not but the social media entity which considered as part of journalism.

"The media is no longer seen as the primary source of truth and the sole source of information. The public feels they can find various information on social media themselves, even though it may not be accurate because social media can be used by anyone and produces content without validation. The public now prefers piecemeal posts presented on social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, or Facebook, or other platforms. In-depth reports that have undergone multiple fact-checks or verification are no longer appealing. Therefore, the information the audience receives is incomplete, which will influence their way of thinking." – DF (46), journalist for national television station SCTV.

As stated above by one informant the identity as well as roles has a clear description of the transformation which include the nature of the media, information as well as the social media platform as news source.

"The firewall principle in the newsroom is merely a matter of media idealism. In reality, the newsroom itself is deeply affected by commercial pressures. Media idealism often has to adapt to the needs of clicks, circulation, or what television media people call ratings. Idealism is now merely aspirational. We need to ask whether maintaining idealism can automatically support the many media employees with wives and children. The media is now adapting, even in ways that are far from the idealism they aspire to, in order to maintain the viability of the media as their workplace." – ISD (54), editor of *Pikiran Rakyat* Bandung.

The competition is grown to conflict of interest as now the journalist are competing against each other for news domination. In this matter the competition is considered uneven as one of the party has gain more advantages as churnalism has jump over the ethical professionalism. However this mode of news production has never been criticized as the public acceptance is far wide open.

There is a lot of evidence that businesses and the economy are putting more and more pressure on newsrooms, especially when it comes to garnering clicks, traffic, and ratings. Getting noticed is the most important thing in a world where platforms own the media. So, journalists need to figure out how to balance their professional judgments with the high standards of digital performance, which are monitored in real time and with numbers. At this point, reporters need to find out how to do their jobs while still being honest and obeying the laws of the media. As more and more money is spent on ads on digital media, these concerns get worse. Because big digital corporations all over the world make a lot of money from ads, the ways that traditional media companies make money are becoming less common. Because of this,

media managers often change their priorities, such working with the government or other important groups to keep things running smoothly.

These business needs have a direct impact on how journalists execute their jobs. Newsrooms can get more visitors and provide content faster by utilizing less serious, more sensational, or information-gathering approaches. These corporate needs have a direct impact on the work of journalists. Newsrooms can acquire more views by providing material faster by using less serious, more sensational, or alternative information-gathering methods which are common churnalism practices. So, churnalism happens both outside of mainstream media and inside as it is a reaction to the corporate pressure. Some journalist and also reporters in newsrooms still think that between business and editorial issues should be autonomous. This led to some disagreement which indicates the perspective on the changes in medium that requires transformation or adapting the basic norms that tell journalist and reporter how to do their jobs and how to conceive of themselves as professionals.

Independence, Choices, and Reasoning of the Audience

People have a lot more choices about where and how they get information. People don't just get their news from one source nowadays. Instead, people look for, pick, and share information on sites they think are the most useful, current, and interesting. Digital platforms in the media sector have made it possible for people to acquire their news in a very individualized and broken-up fashion. But this independence isn't completely fair. People choose what to watch depending on their own tastes, and the algorithms that pick what to show in each person's timeline also have a say. This means that the information each individual gets is varied depending on what they have done in the past, what they wish to do, and who they know online. People now think of mainstream media as merely one of several sites to acquire news, not the most important one. In this case, the fight between professional journalism and churnalism has become more and more interesting.

It increases public choice and participation, but it also makes the competition between the logic of verification and the logic of virality stronger. Individual choices, facilitated by algorithms, indirectly intensify the demand for professional journalism to adjust to digital tempos and audience inclinations. In this approach, the audience becomes an important player in the continuous fight between mainstream journalism and churnalism in a mixed media environment.

"People who watch the news are highly active in choosing what they want to see. Media is merely one choice, not the only one. A lot of social media sites send messages straight to people. People can quickly exit platforms that they don't think are useful for getting knowledge or references. Information on social media is often short or missing. In the long run, this will hurt the way the audience thinks. - II (38), the executive editor of *Republika.co.id*.

A (41), who is the editor of the *Jawa Post* in Surabaya, says that the way audience behaviour on information-gathering is shifting. People now a days is no longer waiting for scheduled news broadcasts on TV or newspapers to be delivered. Instead they look out from post from digital platform such as Instagram, X, Facebook, and TikTok.

Information on the social media timelines automatically is claimed to show relevant information, so they don't have to look for it.

"People used to wait for the news. We got news via the TV, whether it was TVRI, RCTI, or SCTV, especially in my hamlet in East Java. We could only find out what was going on when the news was on TV. We read the morning paper in the afternoon, especially with newspapers. It's very different now. People get knowledge in different ways. People have always chosen their own content from different media platforms based on their interests and information demands, especially in the last three years. – A (41), the Jawa Post Newspaper's Editor.

Another source, Faqih, says that these shifts have gotten worse because of the current era of artificial intelligence. Algorithms now fill audiences' timelines with personalized, useful information. Because of this, people are using social media more and less inclined to look for information from mainstream media. As a result, social media is becoming the major and most important source of information, overtaking traditional media.

"Social media has almost taken over the role of traditional media as a source of information. It constantly presents information, even if it is not verified or accurate." – FR (25) writer for *TribunTimur.com*.

Literacy Vulnerability

The survey indicated that a lot of people who obtain much of their news from social media don't know how to use technology well. People occasionally choose what to read based on flashy headlines, short pieces of content, and articles that were put together without the usual fact-checking that professional journalists do. Because of this, the information we get is typically incomplete, broken up, repeated, and lacking in context. Churnalism is growing more widespread in this instance. Digital platforms are superior for making content that needs to quickly collect, reuse, or adapt to match viral trends. Journalistic tales take longer and cost more money to check, which can make them less obvious. There are a lot of scary and clickbait headlines out there that make people more likely to read things without truly thinking about them. Digital media, especially social media, have changed the way people make and think about information. It's hard to ponder deeply and reflectively when information is presented in short parts without any context. People don't think about the information they get; they respond to it and feel things about it.

The platformization work upon algorithms that internet initiate to find more audience with emotional needs, not quality news. The repeated news cycle forms this algorithm are founded in all social media and create the enforced belief system with the audience, not the professional journalist methods to cover both sides. Algorithm works as a recommendation system that initiate emotional needs to show audience things that meet their narration. This means that more and more people are getting the same kind of information. The public never criticised the repetitive narration, and form an echo chamber. The gatekeeping function within the social media is left



untouched as social media information is as seen as news, as public cannot differentiate between news and information.

This conflict has evolved from a mere institutional struggle to a contest between epistemologies that transform perceptions of social reality. "Before digital media became popular, people looked for information that would help them."

"Algorithms are putting more and more emphasis on content that the audience wants to see instead of content that they should know. This arises because all parties value clicks and views equally, and the number of clicks and views is more significant than the quality of the content. -Faqih, who writes for *TribunTimur.com*.

Because people use social media a much, conventional media needs to have stringent ways to check facts and high reporting standards. They also need to protect the core values and honesty of journalism, even when the economy is bad and people are acting differently. Faqih thinks that change is hard yet vital. For instance, the media needs to do a better job of reporting new and intriguing stories if it wants to be a reliable source of information.

The conflict occurs at multiple levels of involvement within the contemporary media ecosystem. At the individual level, journalists face daily corporate pressures to meet production targets, publish stories quickly, and maintain visibility within increasingly competitive digital environments. These operational demands often place journalists in a difficult position where they must balance traditional ideals and the accelerated spread of information by the platformisation. The conventional journalism, frequently clashes with the logic of digital platforms and as a result, journalists are compelled to navigate a constant tension between maintaining professional standards and the structural expectations of digital media.

At the institutional level, this tension expands into broader organizational and economic structure where most media organizations increasingly operate within platform-driven ecosystems. The audience engagement, clicks, and digital traffic are closely tied to advertising revenue and media sustainability. Consequently, editorial decisions are influenced by the commercial imperatives of media businesses which are competing for attention in the crowded information markets. At the same time, audiences themselves play an active role in this situation by not only consuming but also sharing, and responding to news content and even active criticizing the media for their less quality information.

The Rise of Churnalism

The conflicting interest between professional journalist and social media entity are widely discussed among communication experts and also journalist, with its degrading nature of information because of the absent of gatekeeping. This indicates that in the digital age, the ideals of journalism and general behaviour of news gathering in the public are always in the opposite side. Izard et al. (1977) said that the media's trustworthiness depends on how honest, complete, and accurate it is. In today's digital world, which prioritized speed and rapid updates, it's getting more and harder to uphold these standards. In this case, churnalism would probably accept as a good approach to think about how media works and news production. It makes production more efficient and works in a way that is quite similar to how algorithms work (Davies, 2009). Even though Churnalism is the act of fast collecting and using

information again and again to stay up with trends and its efficient it needs to gain more with some adaptation, innovation and up to date technology that can be develop among professional journalism to uphold verification as a new standard.

Pant & Trombetta (2025) argue that competition within the digital media environment accelerates information release, potentially undermining reporting accuracy. Therefore, media transformation can be understood as a technical phenomenon that create competition as conflict among journalistic in serving the public interest and prioritizing commercial objectives.

Astuti et al. (2025) argues that media revolution is a way to survive in the digital age, therefore news production is heavily depended on this new system. This adaptation extends beyond only changes in technology but also journalistic professionalism. It includes modification in how the editorial board, the finances and how professional values are negotiated to stay relevant with digital audiences. So, in other word this new distribution environment which governed by algorithms needed more current ways and methods to also follows is gradual change. Research evidence shows how hard it is to keep journalistic idealism alive in newsrooms, however it also needed practical solution. This means that current media and journalist professional can be balance between the best values, journalistic ethics, and the needs of the institution's economy. Ultimately, the shift in this matter wont effect professionalism which directly impacts the quality of information and the audience's perception of it.

Preference and Rationality

To answer the shifting audience's behaviour with full control in determining which platforms provide information to meet their needs journalist needs to understand their references and rationality with public discussion. When audiences are no longer dependent on a single information channel personalized information can be still maintained by active participation by journalist with more transparency. This independence of selecting relevant media and content aligns with the Uses and Gratifications theory of Elihu Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (McQuail and Windahl, 1993).

With the most advances of technological development in the use of AI (artificial intelligence), audiences no longer search for or wait for news to be broadcast on television or for newspapers to arrive in their hands to read. We are experiencing a flood of information, as Kovach and Rosenstiel (2010) noted. Information arrives instantly, quickly, and continuously. The way people receive information has also changed. If journalist were to use some information or few details because they reproduce information from social media then it is only can be used as short news like running-text and as mandatory must report its source from which account of social media it was acquired. Journalist must also express their scepticism even though it were circulating in social media rapidly. Maintaining a rational public discourse requires not only active audiences but also journalistic transparency, participatory verification practices, and strengthening media literacy to support the public's capacity to interpret and assess information responsibly.

Perception-Shaping Algorithms



When examining the relationship between professional journalism and churnalism, it is important to recognize that many audiences possess limited digital literacy and only a partial understanding of how information circulates within digital systems. Studies indicate that individuals who primarily rely on social media tend to consume fragmented and superficial information, often driven by clickbait headlines or sensational narratives (Yasundari et al., 2024). Kovach and Rosenstiel (2010) argue that in an environment characterized by an overwhelming volume of information, audiences require a high level of critical thinking in order to properly evaluate the credibility and significance of news content. However, the development of these evaluative skills does not always keep pace with the rapid expansion of information in the digital environment. Within the framework of Uses and Gratifications Theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974), audiences are assumed to actively select media that satisfy their needs and interests.

The journalist in this matter can understand better the perception with the gratification that needed by the audience, by expanding their knowledge on the system like how SEO works and modified the definition of click bait into understandable compact headlines. This would need more activity in training the journalist with the current digital expansion, giving the news its popular touch and also gratification. In other word journalist must recognized their gratification with data analysis and digital indicators. This is why data driven news is relevant, actively recruiting research and development division to analyses data within the journalistic context while still applying strict standar Data journalism combines traditional journalistic practices with computational and analytical techniques in order to collect, analyze, and communicate data-driven stories (Bounegru & Gray, 2021).

Through its official accounts, news media can create contents that generates high engagement such as clicks, shares, and reactions rather than content that offers depth or journalistic verification. At the same time, technological innovations such as AI-assisted verification and algorithmic accountability can support journalists in maintaining accuracy within accelerated news cycles. Algorithmic systems can assist journalists in gathering, verifying, and distributing information more efficiently, but they also require transparency and accountability in order to preserve journalistic values (Diakopoulos, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The transformation of the media ecosystem in Indonesia is strongly influenced by the expansion of digital platforms and algorithm-driven information systems. Social media has gradually become a dominant source of public knowledge, reshaping both the practices of journalists and the behaviour of audiences in accessing and distributing information. The findings reveal three interconnected themes that characterize this transformation: the shifting identity of journalistic professionalism, the growing autonomy and preferences of audiences in selecting information sources, and the increasing influence of algorithmic systems in shaping public perception.

Result shows that the professional role of journalists is undergoing significant transformation. The traditional norms of journalism particularly verification, editorial gatekeeping, and adherence to professional ethics are increasingly challenged by the speed and competitive nature of digital information flows. As a result, practices



associated with churnalism, such as the rapid reproduction and aggregation of information, have become more prevalent within the news ecosystem. The discussion however does not necessarily eliminate journalistic professionalism, but it reshapes how professional values are negotiated within contemporary newsroom practices. The principles of Uses and Gratifications Theory, which suggests that audiences actively choose media that satisfy their needs and interests. However, the independence of audiences is also mediated by algorithmic systems that personalize content distribution. As a result, audience choices are simultaneously autonomous and technologically structured, creating a fragmented media environment where mainstream journalism competes with a wide range of alternative information sources. Platform algorithms prioritize engagement-driven content, often amplifying emotionally appealing or sensational narratives. In environments where digital literacy remains uneven, this dynamic can increase the vulnerability of audiences to fragmented information, clickbait headlines, and incomplete narratives. Consequently, the competition between verification-oriented journalism and virality-driven information production becomes a central tension within the contemporary media landscape.

To sustain its public role, journalism must adapt by strengthening verification standards while simultaneously engaging with digital distribution systems. This includes improving journalists' understanding of algorithmic platforms, developing data-driven newsroom practices, and fostering collaborative verification processes with audiences. At the same time, enhancing media literacy and digital literacy among the public remains essential to ensure that audiences can critically interpret the increasing volume of information circulating in the digital environment.

Ultimately, the future of journalism will depend on the ability of media institutions, journalists, and audiences to negotiate the balance between speed and accuracy, virality and verification, and platform logic and public responsibility within the evolving digital media ecosystem.

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