

# Opportunities and Dangers for the Traditional Mass Media in the Digital Age: An Assessment

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Newspaper, Radio, and Television are the admired traditional media platforms, which have emerged in the pre-internet era [15]. So far, they are the pioneer to provide news, information, and entertainment to the people. However, the Digital Age is altering the nature and functions of traditional media by introducing Digital Media or New Media [21]. Now, Traditional Mass Media is not the gatekeeper of news and entertainment [9]. Many people depend more on New Media than traditional media.

This analytical study intends to explore the opportunities and dangers of Traditional Mass Media in the Digital Age. To meet the intent, it has considered both qualitative and quantitative data collected from different journals, conference proceedings, research reports, websites, and newspapers.

## DIGITAL AGE AND NEW MEDIA

The Digital Age is a result of the transformation of an economy based on traditional industry to an economy based on information technology [12]. It was started in the 1970s by the introduction of a personal computer [5]. However, major triumph happened with an invention of the World Wide Web (www) in 1994 [2]. As a result, an idea of New Mass Media based on a virtual network has emerged. The New Media are also known as Digital Media accessible through the internet or online [9]. Some examples of New Media are social media, websites, online newspapers, mobile apps, online streaming, and so on [13]. Among these, social media is the most influential digital platform and acting as an alternative to Traditional Mass Media [8].

## ABSTRACT

Mass Media is an integral part of contemporary society. Traditional broadcast media such as Radio, Television, and Newspapers have emerged in the pre-internet era. They are serving as the prime sources of news and entertainment for a long time. Conversely, the Digital Age is creating alternative sources by promoting internet-based Digital Media or New Media, such as social media, online newspapers, websites, and the like. New Media is becoming more popular day by day and creating a threat to Traditional Mass Media. The internet is surpassing newspapers in popularity as a news platform. In many developed countries, the circulation of newspapers is decreasing; even some prominent newspapers are discontinuing their printed editions. Traditional radio and television are also suffering losses due to Digital Media. However, the Digital Age is not only a danger for Traditional Mass Media but also an opportunity for them. Many newspapers have embraced digital transformation to reach worldwide and attract more readers than before. A similar evolution is also happening for traditional radio and television. Indeed, New Media is a reality of the Digital Age; it indicates that the future of Mass Media is digital.

**KEYWORDS:** Traditional Mass Media, Digital Age, Internet, New Media

## INTRODUCTION

Mass Media is an indispensable part of modern civilization. It has a significant impact on our society, culture, and economy. It also serves as an element of a country's political structure and democracy [10].

**Table 1: Popular social media platforms**

Name	Nature	Monthly Active Users
Facebook	Social networking	2.23 billion
YouTube	Video-sharing platform	1.9 billion
WhatsApp	Messaging app	1.5 billion
Messenger	Messaging app within Facebook	1.3 billion
Instagram	Photo and video sharing	1 billion

Note: The table was developed from the web page "21 Top Social Media Sites to Consider for Your Brand" of Buffer Inc. website [11]. Retrieve from <https://buffer.com/library/social-media-sites>

## The danger for Traditional Mass Media

The Digital Age is altering the overall media landscape and creating some danger for Traditional Mass Media. Some points are as follows:

### Online is the first choice

Usage of social media as a source of news is increasing. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center showed that in the United States, social media surpassed print newspapers in popularity as a news platform [16]. At present, there are more than 3 billion internet users in the world, and they are spending more time online than in Traditional Media (Table 2).

**Table 2 Average time spent on media per day the internet users**

Media (by type)	Amount of time spent per day (hours: minutes)	Percentage of total time spent on media per day
Online	06:45	61%
Traditional TV	01:54	17%
Traditional radio	00:53	8%
Traditional press	00:40	6%
Games consoles	00:57	9%

Note: The table was developed from the report “Digital vs. Traditional Media Consumption” by Global web index, 2019, p.6 [8]. Retrieved from [https://www.globalwebindex.com/hubfs/Downloads/Digital\\_vs\\_Traditional\\_Media\\_Consumption-2019.pdf](https://www.globalwebindex.com/hubfs/Downloads/Digital_vs_Traditional_Media_Consumption-2019.pdf)

**Downfallen subscription and circulation**

Robertson (2005) argued that subscription for a printed newspaper is decreasing worldwide because consumers realize they can read the same content online [7]. For example, like most other American newspapers, The New York Times has experienced a decline in circulation. Its printed weekday (Monday to Friday) circulation is dropping year by year.

**Table: 3 Weekday Circulation of the New York Times**

Year	Printed weekday circulation (copies)
2014	648,900
2015	603,700
2016	571,500
2017	540,000
2018	487,000

Note: The table was developed from the web page “Average paid & verified weekday circulation of the New York Times from 2000 to 2018” of Statista website [17]. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/273503/average-paid-weekday-circulation-of-the-new-york-times/>

**The death of print**

Print media are most vulnerable. Due to a storm of New Media, many newspapers abandoned print edition or ceased publication. For example, The Financial Times' sister paper in Germany, FT Deutschland closed in December 2012 after facing severe losses over the years. Meanwhile, Daily Variety, an American magazine abandoned print edition in 2013. Recently, In March 2016, prestigious British publications The Independent and Independent on Sunday are also closed their print versions [20].

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRADITIONAL MASS MEDIA**

The Digital Age is not only a threat but also an opportunity for conventional mass media, but an appropriate utilization of an opportunity depends on their decision-making abilities. The prospects of Traditional Mass Media are as follows:

**Opportunity to move to digitization**

Traditional media have a chance to transform into online media. Many newspapers have taken this opportunity, such as The Independent. After closing its print versions, this British newspaper switched to digital publishing. Owner of

The Independent Mr. Evgeny Lebedev described it as a bold transition to a digital-only future [20]. Similarly, traditional radio and television have started to promote new digital products and services, including apps for mobile phone. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has made its radio and television programs available through the internet since 2002 and 2008 respectively [18].

**Opportunity to reach more readers, listeners, and viewers**

Nowadays, people use their cell phones to read online content. A newspaper can reach anyone who has a smart cell phone. Thus, digitization can increase the number of readers significantly. The Guardian's (a British newspaper) print edition has an average daily (Monday to Saturday) circulation roughly 151,625 copies in the UK. However, its online edition attracts more readers than the print version; it has 140 million unique browsers in a month [3].

Similarly, online radio can reach to a higher number of listeners than before. For example, BBC Radio has attracted a record-high number of listeners by launching digital channels nationwide focused on specific target audiences in 2013. It also provides an opportunity for the listeners to download radio contents or shows to their mobile devices and enjoy them whenever they like [19].

In the same way, by taking advantage of digitization, BBC TV has increased the number of television channels from two tonine. It also has started to provide content specific TV channel; for example, BBC FOUR for culture and art, BBC NEWS for 24-hour news, BBC PARLIAMENT for live broadcasts of parliamentary debates [18].

**Opportunity to make more profit**

Newspapers with websites now see increases in revenue from online advertising and digital subscription. Dorroh (2005) argued that advertisers consider online advertising is more effective than print, as it is a long-term investment [7]. For example, The Guardian is getting a higher return from online than from the print version [4]. Likewise, an American newspaper, The New York Times is also earning more revenue from digital subscriptions than from print advertising revenue [6].

**Opportunity for the people**

Online newspapers could use high-definition quality of photos, visual effects along with links to other websites. For instance, the Sun (UK), the New York Times (USA) and many other newspapers are using embedded videos, pictures, and digital mapping on their online edition to provide in-depth reporting. Besides, they could present breaking news to make its readers updated, which is impracticable for a print newspaper. Digital technologies also ensure scope for readers to express their opinion or comment immediately [14]. Bly (2010) argued that the instant feedback system for news is a new big thing for journalism [7].

**Opportunity to develop citizen journalism**

By the help of digital technology, citizens are playing an active role in the process of collecting news and information. For example, on July 7, 2005, within six hours of the London bombings, the BBC received more than 1,000 photographs, 20 pieces of amateur video, from the citizens. The former head of global news for the BBC Mr. Richard Sambrook said

that people were participating in their coverage in a way that they had never seen before [1].

## CONCLUSION

New Media is becoming popular as they are more convenient; it gives people extraordinarily more choices and access to news, entertainment, and information [9]. Thus, the traditional media industry is transforming according to the liking of readers, listeners, and viewers. Indeed, they're showing that the future of mass media is digital.

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