RESEARCH ARTICLE

MEDIA EVOLUTION AND THE IMPACT OF DIGITALISATION ON TELEVISION

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Abstract

The article examines the radical transformations in the media industry that have occurred over the last years under the influence of the development of online platforms and digitalization. First, the article explores how access to news and media content has evolved from television to online platforms and social networks. It discusses how TVs have responded to this change by creating online news and content sites and adapting to the social environment. It also highlights the importance of active user participation in the production and distribution of media content influenced by new technologies such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence. In conducting the research, we used the quantitative method by applying a questionnaire on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is total disagreement, and 5 is total agreement. The questionnaire was applied to the general public consumers of media content. The conclusion is that the public is increasingly turning to online media and consuming less content from traditional media outlets. In this context, broadcasters have increasingly had to adapt to this trend. The article is useful mainly for researchers but also the industry.

Keywords: Television, media, news, social media, media convergence

1.   Introduction

In recent years, television has undergone radical changes. Primarily due to the development of online platforms (Vázquez-Barrio et al., 2021), but also as a result of the economic changes (Motoi G., 2020). People no longer had to wait for the main news programs to find the most important news of the moment but could access them quickly online without turning on the TV. So as not to lose their consumers (viewers) but also their commercial partners who provided advertising, the TV stations took it in turns to set up news websites that complemented their TV stations, where they started posting breaking news and related content such as shows and horoscopes. However, people have also slowly moved to social media, which has taken over much of the TV audience. So journalists, industry employees, and trust owners were forced to compete for the public's attention with platforms that had free content built and pre-loaded by users themselves. A phenomenon has thus emerged due to the digital revolution that has made its mark on the entire media industry and led to an interconnection between television, online media, and various media platforms. So the technological explosion has also transformed traditional TV viewing. (Elareshi et al., 2022; Habes, Elareshi, Almansoori et al., 2022; Houfey & Elserogy, 2013).

This intersection allows consumers to access content from the same media platform (Cummings D., 2023) in multiple formats, on different devices, and in other contexts. Moreover, users are no longer passive consumers but active participants who can choose content. Media is accessible anywhere and anytime, thanks to mobile devices and ubiquitous internet connections. Virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and immersive technologies could take convergence in this field to new horizons, creating truly immersive and multisensory media experiences. Also integrating blokchain into the journalism sphere could change procedures in journalism. (Voinea D-V., 2019) So, media convergence represents an evolution in journalism in recent years and translates into a change in how information is produced, distributed, and consumed. This evolution gives us unlimited possibilities but also comes with new responsibilities. For media to remain a powerful tool for information, education, and entertainment, we must understand and navigate this changing landscape wisely.

2. Materials and Methods

In conducting the study, we used the quantitative method, based on the structured questionnaire with closed response, on Likert scale, where 1 is total disagreement, 2 is disagreement, 3 is neutral, 4 is agreement, and 5 is total agreement. The first two questions were different and allowed the choice of multiple response options. Respondents were selected using a random sampling method without including a separate category. The questionnaire was constructed in Google Forms and distributed via email and the WhatsApp platform. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and were instructed on how to complete the questionnaire and the chosen coding. One hundred-seven responses were obtained, and the data collected was analyzed using statistical methods. Thus, we conducted a descriptive analysis to assess the relationships between the research variables and to gain an understanding of respondents' opinions and behaviors concerning media developments.

3. Competing for audience in the digital age

In recent years, the global audiovisual landscape has undergone a remarkable evolution. This transition, significant both in terms of content and form as a result of digitization, has been particularly marked in terms of program schedules. An analytical look at these changes reveals profound implications for how we consume and understand media in the contemporary era.

To meet the demands of an increasingly diverse audience, broadcasters have expanded and diversified their programming. Whereas previously, TV schedules were dominated by news, soap operas, or reality shows, we now see an increase in documentaries, home-grown series and entertainment shows on mainstream TV. At the same time, digital integration and on-demand technology have revolutionized traditional program schedules (Piñón, J., 2021). Streaming services such as HBO, Disney+, Rakuten, or Netflix have prompted editorial teams in national or local television to innovate and adapt (Shapiro S., 2020), offering exclusive content or even owning on-demand platforms such as Voyo.

On the other hand, niche TVs such as news have been focusing on live broadcasting for years since technology enabled it. We see an increasing trend towards live programs, debates and talk shows, which allow for live discourse and greater interactivity with the audience. For example, we are increasingly seeing an attempt to involve viewers in the broadcasts (A3 CNN's "Sinteza zilei" has all sorts of national consultations, Digi 24 has polls, and viewers are asked to respond online). This closeness to immediate and topical reality makes TV relevant in a digitalized world. With today's increasingly demanding media consumer, production quality has become essential in broadcasting (Lassen J., 2023). Grids now focus more on modern graphics and artistic value, following international high-quality standards.

So, as society and technology evolve, TV schedules are transforming to reflect and respond to these changes. This is an ongoing process dictated both by innovation and the need to remain relevant in the eyes of a demanding audience.

By observing these trends, we can anticipate the direction in which media will be heading in the near future, with significant implications for consumers, producers, and society as a whole. Digital technology and social media platforms now allow for an unprecedented level of interactivity in live programming. Audiences are no longer just mere receivers but can become active participants, submitting questions, commenting, or even voting in real-time.

However, this seems challenging, given that the digital revolution is changing and competition in TV is also fierce. For example, in the post-revolutionary years in Romania, the media landscape was dominated by a few main channels. Today, the landscape has been expanded, with at least nine channels dedicated exclusively to news, as well as numerous other generalist or niche channels. So, with so many sources of information and entertainment available just a click away, broadcasters need to offer an extra layer of quality to keep their audience.

4. Results

The first question for the 107 respondents asked about the main sources of information they use and the closed-ended question had five possible answers and were able to select three options. Thus, most 47.1% answered social networks, 23.5% answered news apps, on a par with traditional TV channels. 17.6% said they get their information from newspapers and 5.9% from radio. (Fig. 1) The data suggest significant diversity in respondents' information source preferences, with a particular emphasis on the use of social networks and news apps. This indicates the increasing impact of digital and social media on how people access news and information.

However, TV and newspapers remain relevant sources of information for a significant number of respondents. These findings highlight the complexity of the contemporary media environment and the diversity of options available to news consumers.
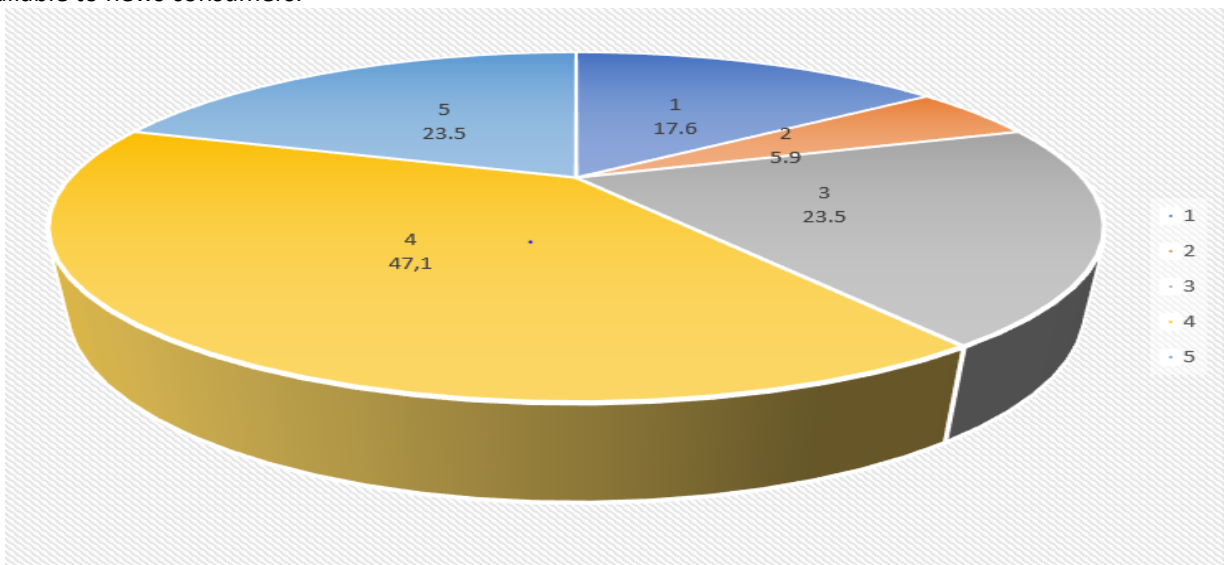

Figure. 1. What are the main sources of information?
1. online newspapers, 2. radio, 3. television, 4. social networks, 5. news apps

The second question of the structured closed-ended questionnaire focused on trust in information channels. Respondents could select three answer variants; thus, when asked which source of information they trusted, most respondents answered news apps (58.8%). In second place in the order of respondents' level of trust was television by a small margin (52.9%). 23.5% trusted information from radio, official websites, and online newspapers. Only 11.8% said they trust information from social media (Fig.2). The results of the questionnaire suggest that there is significant diversity in the preferences of information sources and the level of trust given to these sources. News apps were perceived as the primary source of information with the highest level of trust, indicating an increased importance placed on the digital environment. Television remained a significant source of information, while radio, official websites, and online newspapers were trusted sources by a segment of respondents. Social networks were less trusted, suggesting greater caution about information obtained through these platforms. These findings reflect the complexity of the contemporary media environment and the variability of individual preferences and perceptions of news consumers.
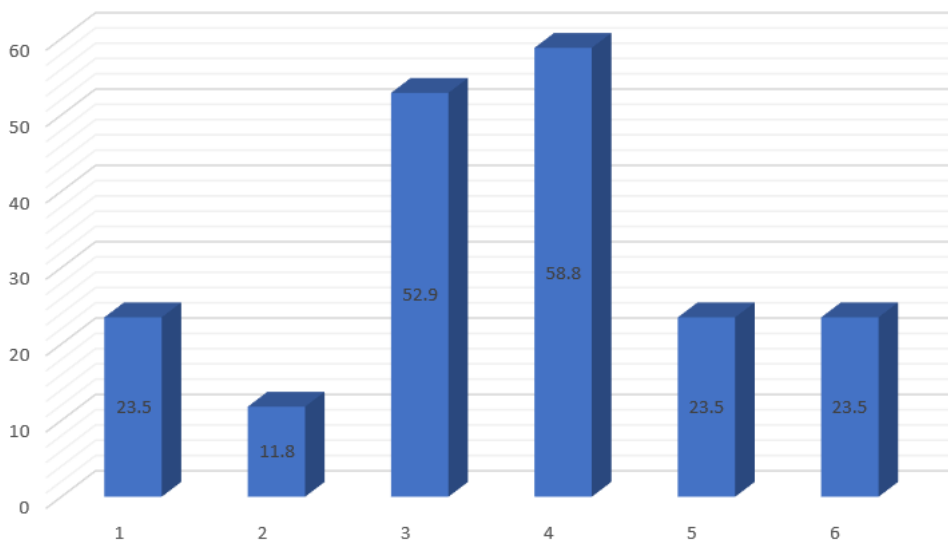

Figure. 2 Which sources of information do you trust? 1. online newspapers, 2. social networks, 3. television, 4. news apps, 5. radio, 6. official websites

Respondents were then given a choice between online media and television. "On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is total disagreement, and 5 is total agreement, rate the following statement: I prefer online media content to television". Thus 63.71% answered strongly agree, 17.65% answered agree, 11, 76% were neutral, 5.88%

disagreed, and 1% ticked strongly disagree (Fig. 3). Based on the results obtained from the question related to preference between online media content and television, we can conclude that online media has gained significant popularity among the respondents. Most respondents indicated that they prefer online media content, showing a preference for this media. Although there is a segment that maintains a neutral attitude or favors television, the predominance of those who prefer online content highlights the significant changes in how people access and consume information and entertainment in the digital age. This preference for online content may reflect its advantages, such as easy and varied access to information, flexibility in choosing and interacting with content, and the opportunity to personalize the media experience.
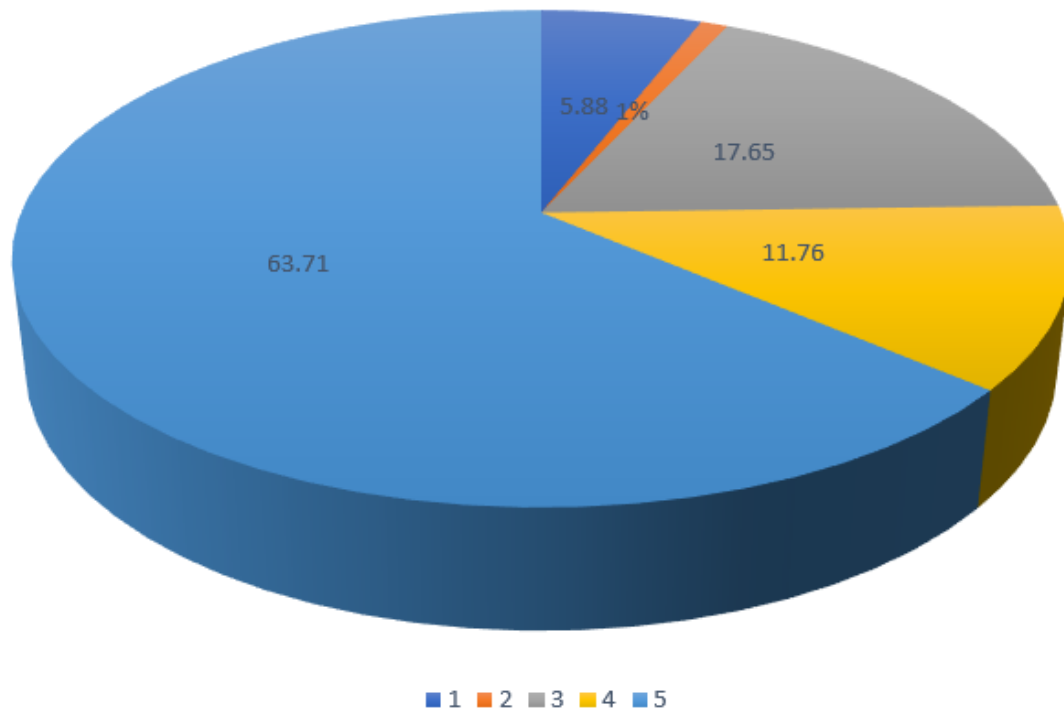

Figure 3. "I prefer online media content to TV"
1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree

Respondents were also asked about the quality of online media content, specifically whether it has improved in recent years. 40% of respondents answered 5. Strongly agree, 23% agree, 24% were neutral, 6% disagreed, and 7% strongly disagreed (Fig. 4). The majority of respondents perceive an improvement in the quality of online content in recent years, indicating a positive perception of the evolving online environment. However, there is also a segment that is less certain or perceives a decrease in quality. This variation in opinions reflects the complexity of the online media environment and how different people perceive its changes and evolution. The quality of online content remains the subject of different debates and interpretations among media consumers. This diversity of perceptions can be influenced by personal experiences, the type of content consumed and respondents' preferred sources of information.
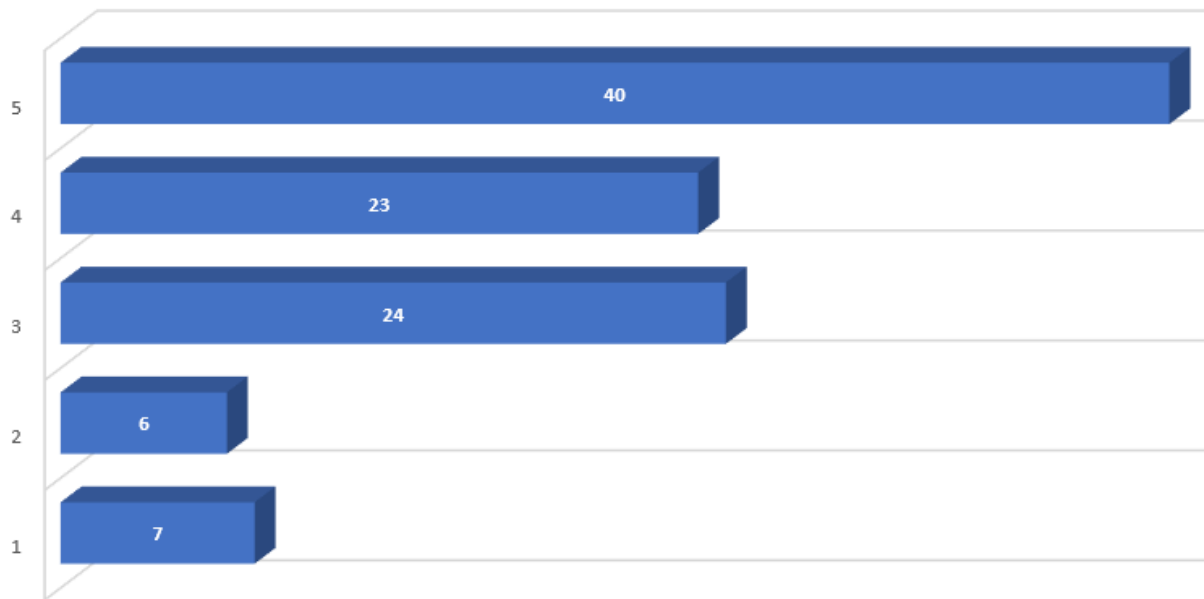
Figure 4. The quality of online media content has improved.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree

Also, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents total disagreement and 5 total agreement, respondents could rate the following statement: "I prefer to watch movies on streaming platforms rather than on traditional TV channels". Thus, 74.6% answered 5, i.e., total agreement, 17.5% answered agree, 5.7 answered 3, neutral. Only 2.2% resulted from adding together the percentage of respondents who strongly disagree and those who ticked 2 disagree (1.3%). The results indicate a dominant preference for streaming platforms among respondents, with a significant majority preferring to watch films on these platforms rather than traditional TV. This preference may be influenced by the advantages offered by streaming platforms, such as access to on-demand content and a wider variety of choices. However, there is also a segment that remains neutral or prefers traditional TV, suggesting that there is diversity in media consumption preferences.
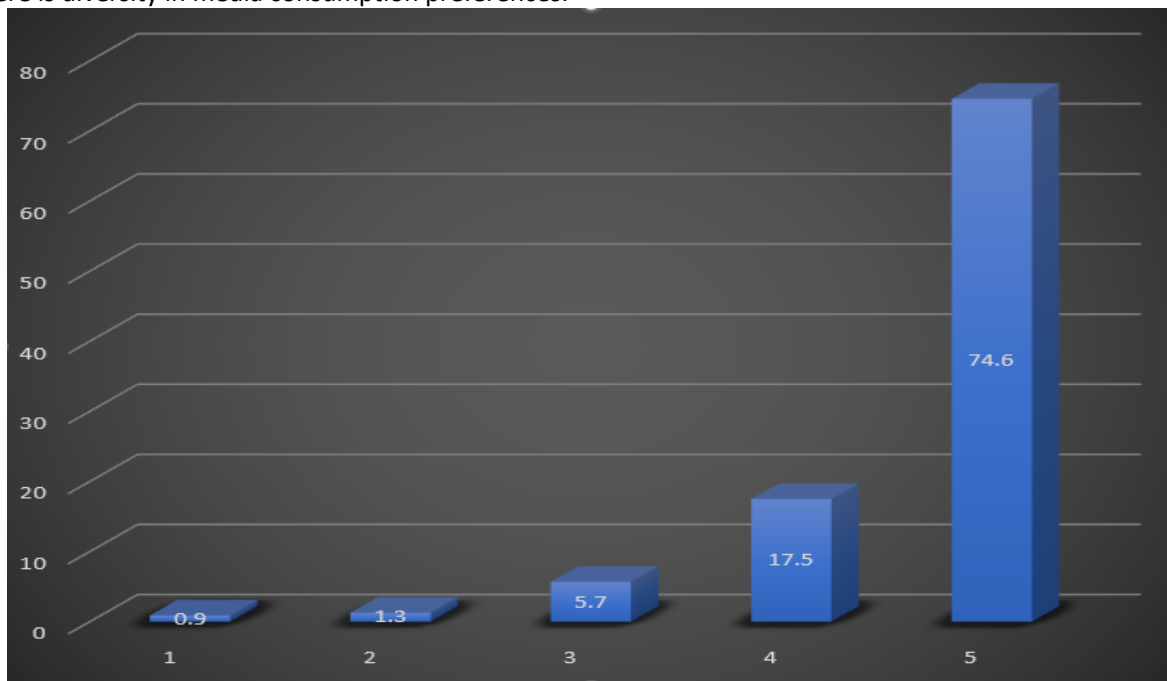

Figure 5. I prefer to watch movies on streaming platforms rather than on traditional TV channels. 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree

When asked if they prefer to watch the news on TV, only 7% of respondents expressed total agreement with the statement "I prefer to watch the news on TV," while 40% indicated total disagreement suggests a strong trend towards other sources of information, especially online or digital. This correlation indicates that the majority of respondents prefer to get news and information from sources other than TV, which could reflect changes in the way people consume media in the digital age.

This could be due to the increased accessibility of online news, the ability to choose content and access it at any time, or a preference for more varied sources of information. Majority disagreement may also indicate a change in how the public perceives the quality and relevance of news broadcast on TV.
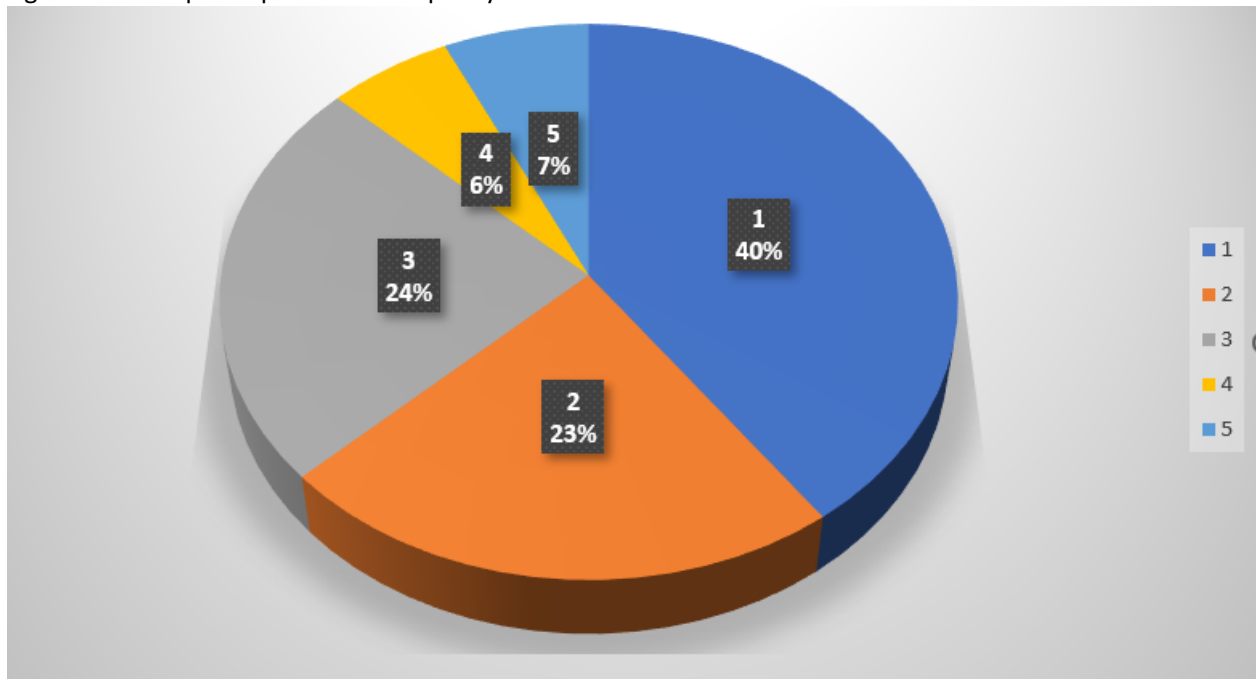

Figure 6. I prefer to watch the news on TV. 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Easy access to information and the digital revolution have radically changed how people consume media content. Audiences have become much more discerning and selective about the sources of information and types of content they view. This has put significant pressure on traditional TV, which has had to adapt to remain relevant. Media omnipresence has also had a significant impact on the whole industry and has created a link and interconnection between TV, online media, and social media. Furthermore, the main effect has been to create more competition between channels. Journalists have had to adapt to new technologies and the demands of a predominantly online audience.

Live broadcasts and audience interactivity have become more common, allowing for greater audience involvement in the media content production. Survey results suggest that audience preferences have shifted towards streaming platforms and online content. This raises questions about the future of traditional TV and how it will continue to evolve to attract and retain audiences. It is important to emphasize that public perceptions of information sources and trust in the media have been influenced by these changes. Disinformation and the impact of social media on public opinion have become important topics of discussion, and social media is often viewed with skepticism in some cases, with respondents preferring official media channels(television, radio, online newspaper, news app).

These issues show that the evolution of the media environment in the digital age is not just a matter of technical change but has profound implications for society and how people obtain, interpret, and interact with information. It is an ongoing challenge for the media industry, journalism, and the general public to navigate this changing landscape.

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