

# The Adoption of Digital Journalism by Pakistani Journalists: Examining External Factors

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** The fast growing of digital technology significantly changed journalism, influencing journalists to adopt digital journalism. In this study, researchers examined various external factors that influenced journalists to adopt digital journalism in Pakistan.

**Methodology:** Researchers used a quantitative method to conduct the study. The technology acceptance model (TAM) has been applied in this study with a special focus on external variables. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire designed and developed in advance based on five point likert scale and distributed to journalists through WhatsApp, email, and hard copies. These journalists were working in both electronic and digital media simultaneously; they were from Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, and other cities of Pakistan. A total of 100 journalists participated in the survey majority of them were male. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software.

**Findings:** The findings of the survey show that faster publishing of news, the freedom to share news, technological advancement, and audience demand for immediate news or real-time reporting significantly influenced journalists to adopt digital journalism in Pakistan. Some other factors like financial issues, job insecurity, economic benefit, government regulation, and censorship also contributed a major role in the adoption of digital journalism in Pakistan.

**Conclusion:** Overall, the study concludes that the transition toward digital journalism in Pakistan is primarily driven by the need for speed, expanded freedom of expression, technological progress, and growing audience expectations for real-time news and information.

**Keywords:** Digital journalism; Journalists; Adoption; External factors; Technology Acceptance Model (TAM); Pakistan; Technological advancement; Censorship.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The fast-growing new technology has significantly changed journalism. Changing the way news is produced, disseminated, and consumed. The rise of new media tools and online platforms has allowed journalism to move from an old one-way dissemination model to a more engaging and interactive (Steenen & Westlund, 2020). Internet-based platforms and digital media have sped up this revolution,

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offering journalists innovative ways to involve with viewers and present news and information immediately (Deuze, 1999). Perreault stated that digital journalism provided opportunities for journalists to integrate videos, graphics, and real-time reporting in their journalism, increasing audience involvement, which was not possible in traditional media (Perreault, 2022). Moreover, the transition from traditional to digital journalism provided greater flexibility to disseminate news and information freely without any restriction or approval for publication (Zelizer, 2019).

Due to the growing availability of the internet and modern technologies, journalists globally are adopting digital journalism and its tools to improve their journalism competence and abilities (Steensen et al., 2019). Many journalists are using data-driven journalism, real-time reporting, and digital media analytics to advance news collection and story presentation (Scott, 2005). This change and conversion have been influenced by the audience behavior, where the audience prioritizes real-time updates and engaging content over the old and traditional news model (Roberts, 2019). In Pakistan, digital journalism has achieved great momentum as journalists adopt digital media, autonomous news websites, and mobile journalism to reach larger audience (Jurrat, 2011). Financial issues, decreasing profit in traditional media, and editorial restrictions influenced journalists to adopt alternative platforms for journalism (Noor, 2016). Furthermore, the increasing influence of new media platforms has changed newsroom systems, demanding journalists to adapt multimedia reporting techniques for journalism (Wall, 2020).

### ***1.1 Problem Statement***

Journalists are increasingly adopting digital journalism that changing news production, distribution, and audience engagement. But there are limited studies on the examination of specific external variables that influence journalists to adopt digital journalism. Therefore, there is a need to examine the external factors that influence journalists to adopt digital journalism in Pakistan.

### ***1.2 Research Objective***

To examine external factors influencing journalists' adoption of digital journalism in Pakistan.

### ***1.3 Research Question***

What external factors influence journalists' adoption of digital journalism in Pakistan?

### ***1.4 Research Variables***

*Independent variable:* External influential factors

*Dependent Variable:* Adoption of Digital Journalism

### ***1.5 Significance of the Study***

This research is significant for various stakeholders; it is important for the media industry, journalists and journalistic bodies, government, academic, and international bodies. Examining the external factors, it provides insights and a deep understanding of why journalists are adopting digital journalism in Pakistan. The finding can guide stakeholders and policymakers in changing the future of journalism in Pakistan.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter researchers reviewed existing literature based on external variables that influenced journalists to adopt digital journalism worldwide and in Pakistan

### ***2.1 Factors Influencing Journalists Worldwide***

Journalists are adopting digital journalism worldwide because of technological progressions, changing audience behaviors, and financial issues. The availability of digital tools such as mobile phones, digital media platforms, and multimedia conversion has changed news production and dissemination. In “Kenya” and “Tanzania,” journalists rely on mobile phones and digital tools instead of traditional tools like a

typewriter and notebook. The fast news distribution become possible due to digital media that speed up journalistic practice, overcoming the time to source, write, and disseminate news from days and hours to minutes. (Wairimu, 2018). technological advancement, audience demand for immediate news, and availability of digital platforms influenced journalists to adopt digital journalism in Tanzania. The transition from traditional media to digital tools faster news collection and distribution(Aziz, 2014). In Kenya and other parts of the world, journalists are adopting digital journalism due to technological improvements, audience demand for immediate news, and availability of digital media (Sharma, 2021). According to Hamza and Esa, there are various factors that influenced journalists to adopt digital journalism, these are journalist desired to learn, access to technology, organizational support, and the newsroom system. The younger journalists adopt digital journalism more than the older (Hamzah & Esa, 2020).

## ***2.2 Factors Influencing Journalists in Pakistan***

There are various factors that influenced journalists to adopt digital journalism in Pakistan; these factors include financial issues, altering audience behaviors, and technological growth. The rise of the internet and modern technology, audience demand for real-time reporting, and accessible news influenced journalists to adopt digital journalism. Due to the decline of traditional revenue, traditional media organizations are moving towards digital integration to stay alive and survive. Journalists are pushing to produce media content for various platforms even without appropriate assistance, training, and organizational support(Ittefaq et al, 2021).

Journalists are adopting digital journalism in Pakistan due to multiple factors like technological advancements, widespread use of smartphones, internet accessibility and professional requirements of digital media usage. These digital tools made the process of news production and dissemination faster (Jamil, 2020). Hasmat stated that peer influence and industry trends extensively changed journalists' behavior to adopt digital media platforms (Pasha et al., 2022). Moritz stated that journalists are significantly adopting digital journalism in Pakistan due to newsroom demand, the requirement of immediate reporting, and increased audience engagement via digital media. This transition creates challenges for journalists to manage digital and traditional media simultaneously. Despite this challenge, the fast-growing digital media environment pushes journalists to adopt digital media for digital journalism in Pakistan (Moritz, 2014).

## ***2.3 Conceptualization of Digital Journalism***

Digital journalism refers to the journalistic practice of using digital technology. It is the new ways of telling stories through multimedia, informing, interacting, and connecting with the audience or public (Perreault, 2022).

Digital journalism refers to choosing, gathering, editing, and distributing real information to a large audience through digital media (Steensen & Westlund, 2020).

## ***2.4 Operationalization of Digital Journalism***

Digital journalism refers to the journalistic practices where journalists use digital media platforms to select, collect, and distribute news and information. News and information can be in the form of video, images, and text. Journalists use digital technologies like smartphones, cameras, a laptop, and editing software for news production and distribution. The process of news production in digital journalism involves recording video-based explanations, incorporating voice-over narration, or combining multimedia elements to create visually engaging news stories, effectively updating the audience through digital media. Journalists also use digital technology for live reporting regarding any event, incident, or other activities.

**Research Variables:** This study examines external factors influencing journalists as independent variables, whereas the adoption of digital journalism is the dependent variable.

#### **2.4.1 Independent Variables**

##### **1.1 External Factors Influencing Journalists' Adoption of Digital Journalism**

There are several factors given in the following that may influence journalists to adopt digital journalism in Pakistan. These are considered as an independent variable.

*Government regulation and censorship:* it means the government regulates media channels and controls or censors information that is not in favor of them.

*Audience Demand:* This means the demand for real-time and multimedia content.

*Technological Advancements:* This means the availability and ease of use of digital tools.

*Social Influence:* This means the peers' influence.

*Political narratives:* this means to support or promote a political party's narrative

*Limited Airtime:* This means journalists don't have the opportunity to appear many times on the television screen as compared to digital media; therefore, they adopt digital platforms for more appearances.

*Reduce TV dependency:* This means that journalists overcome dependence and reliance on a television channel.

*Wider audience reach:* this means to share news and information with a large audience via digital media and connect with them on social media.

*Competition:* this means competition with other journalists and media outlets in news and information dissemination.

*Freedom of expression:* This means journalists can freely express their views or disseminate news and information to the masses on digital media rather than traditional media.

*Faster publishing:* this means sharing news and information immediately

*Economic Pressures:* This means the financial constraints in traditional media are pushing journalists to digital platforms; therefore, they adopt digital journalism to earn money.

*Job insecurity:* This means journalists have job insecurity working with traditional media organizations, and social media gives them job ownership that influences journalists to adopt digital platforms.

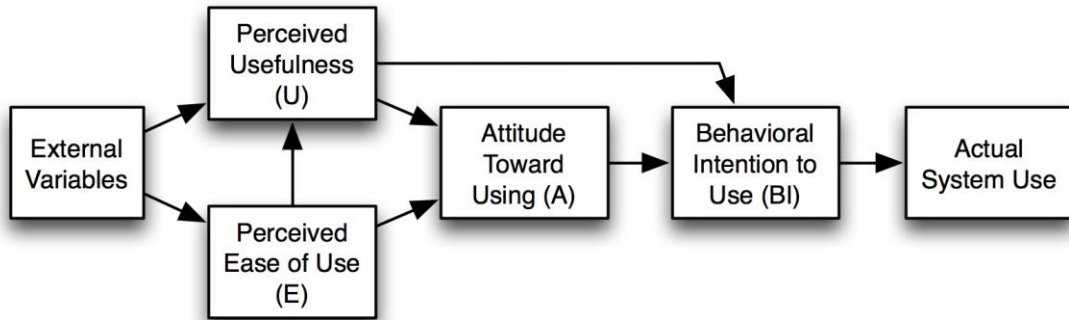
#### **2.4.2 Dependent Variable**

*Adoption of Digital Journalism:* It is the process of adopting digital technology, tools, and platforms by journalists for their journalistic practices, like live updates, reporting, and disseminating news or information to large audiences through digital media.

#### **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

This study applies the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to examine the external factors influencing journalists' adoption of digital journalism (see figure 1).

**Figure 1: The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**



The Technology Acceptance Model was originally developed by Fred D. Davis in 1989. It was an adaptation of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). The Technology Acceptance Model was initially designed to show how users accept a new technology. The model shows that when users are introduced to a new technology, several factors influence their decision to use it (Masrom, 2007). There are two core determinants of the technology acceptance model, the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, while external variables were not in the initial TAM (Park et al., 2008).

### **2.5.1 External Variables**

In the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), external variables are the personal, organizational, social, or contextual factors that indirectly affect an individual's decision to accept or reject a technology. These variables determine the users' beliefs about the system's perceived "usefulness" and "perceived" ease of use, which are the primary factors in TAM. External variables, although not included in the central constructs of the original TAM framework, play a crucial role in comprehending how and why users develop particular perceptions of technology (Park et al., 2008). In this research, the external variables include political, organisational, economic, technological, government regulations, and censorship in traditional media, audience demand, technological advancements, job insecurity, economic incentives, social influence, and the relative freedom, speed, and reach that affect the adoption of digital journalism by journalists.

### **2.5.2 Application of the Technology Acceptance Model to the Research**

In this study, the Technology Acceptance Model is used to examine only the external factors influencing journalists to adopt digital journalism, and the other factors in the model are not taken into consideration since they are not relevant to the study.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

In this study, researchers adopted a quantitative research method to examine the external factors influencing journalists to adopt digital journalism in Pakistan.

### **3.1 Population**

The population of the study are the journalists working in both electronic media and digital media in Pakistan.

### **3.2 Sample & Sample Size**

A total of 100 journalists, who were involved in digital journalism and also working in different news channels, were taken for the sample. Responses were collected from the journalists who were working in

digital media and also working from the bureau offices of news channels situated in Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar, Karachi, Quetta, and other cities.

### 3.3 Sampling Technique

The “convenience” sampling technique was used to gather data from the journalists who were working with the prominent television news channels in Pakistan and were also involved in digital journalism. The method ensures that only those participants are selected who are most relevant to the objectives of the study.

### 3.4 Data Collection Methods and Research Instrument

*Survey (Quantitative Data):* A structured questionnaire was prepared in advance and distributed in both soft and hard copies to get maximum responses. Online questionnaires were prepared using Google Forms and were sent through WhatsApp and email, while printed questionnaires were sent to journalists who wanted to respond offline.

*Reliability Analysis:* The reliability of the 13-item scale was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha. The value ( $\alpha = 0.839$ ) is above the acceptable level of 0.70, showing that the scale is reliable and the items measure the same concept consistently.

*Data Analysis Techniques:* The data collected from the survey were analyzed using SPSS software. The responses gathered from both online and paper-based questionnaires were coded and analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the data. The data was displayed in tables and interpreted in detail below each table.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the analysis of data from 100 journalists, organized in two tables, covering their demographic information and the external factors influencing their adoption of digital journalism.

**Table 1: Demographic information of 100 respondents**

S.N	Demography	Frequency	Percentage
1	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	80	80%
	Female	20	20%
2	<b>Age</b>		
	21-30	26	26%
	31-40	32	32%
	41-50	24	24%
	51-60	12	12%
	Above 60	6	6%
3	<b>Qualification</b>		
	Matric (10 “years” of education)	3	3%
	FA/FSC (12 “years” of “education”)	2	2%
	BA/BSc (14 “years” of education)	23	23%
	BS/ MA (16 “years” of education)	50	50%
	MS/MPhil (18 “years” of education)	21	21%
	Ph.D. (21 years of education)	1	1%
4	<b>Experience</b>		
	Less than 2 “years.”	9	9%
	2-5 “years.”	12	12%
	6-10 “years.”	28	28%
	More than 10 years	51	51%
5	<b>Working City</b>		

Islamabad	61	61%
Karachi	2	2%
Lahore	16	16%
Peshawar	7	7%
Quetta	6	6%
Other	8	8%

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the 100 journalists who contributed in the study comprised gender, age, education, experience, and working city. The majority of the respondents were male (80%) and female (20%) aged 31 to 40 years (32%), followed by 21 to 30 years (26%), 41 to 50 years (12%), and above 50 years (6%). In terms of education, 50% had a BS degree, (23%) had a BA/BSc, (21%) had an MS/MPhil, (3%) had matriculation, (2%) had 12 years of education, and (1%) had a PhD. In relation to professional experience, (51%) had more than 10 years, (28%) had 6-10 years, (12%) had 2-5 years, and (9%) had less than 2 years. In terms of geographical distribution, the majority of the journalists were based in Islamabad (61%), followed by Lahore (16%), Peshawar (7%), Quetta (6%), and other cities (2%).

**Table 2:** *The External Factors influencing journalists' adoption of digital journalism.*

S.N	Factors	SD n(%)	D n(%)	N n(%)	A n(%)	SA n(%)
1	Government censorship	3 (3%)	6 (6%)	18 (18%)	50 (50%)	23 (23%)
2	Audience demand	5 (5%)	3 (3%)	7 (7%)	57 (57%)	28 (28%)
3	Technological advancement	5 (5%)	1 (1%)	4 (4%)	57 (57%)	33 (33%)
4	Peer influence	3 (3%)	15 (15%)	17 (17%)	52 (52%)	13 (13%)
5	Political narratives	30 (30%)	30 (30%)	10 (10%)	24 (24%)	6 (6%)
6	Limited airtime	7 (7%)	14 (14%)	17 (17%)	38 (38%)	24 (24%)
7	Reduce TV dependency	6 (6%)	7 (7%)	7 (7%)	63 (63%)	17 (17%)
8	Wider audience reach	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	10 (10%)	45 (45%)	40 (40%)
9	Competition	3 (3%)	9 (9%)	20 (20%)	53 (53%)	15 (15%)
10	Freedom to share	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	4 (4%)	46 (46%)	46 (46%)
11	Faster publishing	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	3 (3%)	43 (43%)	50 (50%)
12	Earning money	4 (4%)	9 (9%)	17 (17%)	39 (39%)	31 (31%)
13	Job insecurity	3 (3%)	3 (3%)	11 (11%)	47 (47%)	36 (36%)

**Note:** SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neither Agree nor Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree; n = number of respondents.

Table No. 2 shows the responses of journalists regarding the external factors that influence their adoption of digital journalism in Pakistan. These responses are measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The responses to the variables are explained in the following.

The findings of the study show that several factors played an important role in the adoption of digital journalism. Government regulation and censorship were crucial factors, with (50%) agreeing and (23%) strongly agreeing. (57%) journalists agreed that audience demand for real-time updates and interactive multimedia content influences them, while (28%) strongly agreed with the statement. (57%) journalists agreed that technological advancement influenced them to adopt digital journalism, whereas (33%) strongly agreed with the statement. Peer influence was a moderate factor (52%) agreed, (13%) strongly agreed), while political narratives were less important (24%) agreed, (6%) strongly agreed). Other influential factors include limited airtime on television (38%) agreed, whereas 24% strongly agreed), reducing dependency on TV channels (63%) agreed, (17%) strongly agreed), and audience reach (45%) agreed, (40%) strongly agreed). Competition from other journalists was an important factor for (53%) of the respondents, while freedom to share news was also important (46%) agreed, (46%) strongly agreed). Publishing news and information faster was a strongly important factor (43%) agreed, (50%) strongly

agreed), as was earning money (39%) agreed, (31%) strongly agreed) and job insecurity (47%) agreed, (36%) strongly agreed).

## **5. DISCUSSION**

The data for this research were collected through a questionnaire specially designed to examine external variables influencing journalists' adoption of digital journalism in Pakistan. A total of 100 journalists participated in the study. (80%) were male, whereas (20%) were female. The participants varied from each other in age, education, experience, and working city. The majority of the journalists' ages were between 31 and 40 years, which are (32%), whereas (26%) journalists were between 21 and 30 years. (12%) age group were between 41 to 50 years, and (6%) journalists were above 50 years. In terms of education, (50%) journalists had a BS degree, whereas (23%) had a BA/BSc degree, (21%) had an MS/MPhil degree, while (3%) were matriculate, (2%) were FA, FSC passed, and a PhD degree (1%). Based on experience, (51%) had more than 10 years of experience, (28%) had 6 to 10 years of experience, (12%) had 2 to 5 years of experience, and (9%) had less than 2 years of experience. Geographically, the majority of the participants were from Islamabad (61%) whereas (16%) were from Lahore, 7 from Peshawar, (6%) from Quetta, and (3%) were from other cities.

The findings of this study revealed several external factors that influenced journalists. According to the data, (73%) respondents agreed that Government regulation and censorship are the influential factors, as found in (Jamil, 2020); (Ittefaq et al., 2021) research that government control causes journalists to adopt digital media. Digital media provide greater professional freedom (Zelizer, 2019). Audience pressure for live, multimedia content influenced (85%) of respondents, as found in (Wairimu, 2018) and (Steensen et al., 2019) research on the shift in audience consumption patterns. Also supporting Deuze's claim that digital journalism transforms storytelling (Deuze, 1999). Technological development was a very influential factor, with (90%) journalists agreeing that digital technology made adoption easier, supporting research that emphasises the importance of access to smartphones, the internet, and digital technology (Aziz, 2014); Steensen & Westlund, 2020). Peer influence was a factor in (65%) of journalists, as expected by the influence of social and professional networks. Political stories were less important (30%). Professional constraints like limited airtime (62%) and minimizing reliance on TV channels (80%) were factors in adoption (Ittefaq et al., 2021). Other factors included reaching more audiences (85%) and competition (68%). The ability to post news freely (92%) and faster publication (93%) proved to be strong motivating factors, as expected by the influence of immediacy, gatekeeping, and professional autonomy (Deuze, 1999); (Zelizer, 2019). Financial factors were also important, with (70%) adopting digital journalism to make money and (83%) motivated by job insecurity, as expected by studies on financial instability in the Pakistani media industry (Jamil, 2020).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study indicate that various external factors have played a significant role in encouraging journalists in Pakistan to adopt digital journalism. The results suggest that the most prominent motivations include the ability to publish news more quickly, greater freedom in sharing information, technological advancements, and the increasing demand from audiences for timely and continuous updates. Rapid dissemination of news and enhanced freedom of expression emerged as particularly strong influences, alongside the expanding role of digital technologies in news production and distribution. The opportunity to reach a broader and more immediate audience also contributed substantially to this shift.

In addition, concerns related to job security and the impact of government regulation and censorship within traditional media environments encouraged many journalists to transition toward digital platforms. Economic considerations further supported this movement, as digital journalism offers alternative avenues for income generation. Competitive pressures within the media industry and the influence of professional peers also shaped journalists' decisions. Limited airtime on television channels was another contributing factor, prompting journalists to seek platforms that allow greater space and flexibility for

content dissemination. A comparatively smaller group indicated that their adoption of digital journalism was motivated by the intention to support or promote particular political narratives.

Overall, the study concludes that the transition toward digital journalism in Pakistan is primarily driven by the need for speed, expanded freedom of expression, technological progress, and growing audience expectations for real-time news and information.

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