

Evolving gatekeeping in cross-media newsrooms: The synergy between editors and multimedia journalists in ethical and efficient news distribution

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the evolving collaboration between editors and multimedia journalists (MJs) in cross-media newsrooms, focusing on their synergy in ensuring ethical and efficient news distribution within four main broadcast media organisations in Malaysia. As digital convergence reshapes journalism, understanding the interplay between editorial leadership and journalistic roles is crucial for maintaining news integrity and efficiency. Using in-depth interviews with 10 editors and 15 MJs, this research employs interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to identify key themes shaping newsroom dynamics. The findings identify two superordinate themes, namely dynamic relationships and leadership, which encompass five subordinate themes: communication, empowerment, teamwork, professionalism, and editorial guidance. Editors play a critical role in mentorship, decision-making, and quality control, while MJs contribute by adapting content for digital platforms and engaging audiences through multimedia storytelling. The study's findings underscore the need for structured editorial workflows, continuous professional development, and enhanced communication strategies to strengthen newsroom efficiency. It provides insights for media organisations, policymakers, and journalism educators to develop training programs and management practices that support ethical journalism in the digital era. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how collaborative newsroom cultures can uphold journalistic integrity while adapting to the demands of cross-media reporting.

Keywords: *Multimedia journalist, cross-media platform, editors, gatekeeping, news quality, interpretative phenomenological analysis*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid digital transformation of the media industry has revolutionized newsroom dynamics, with cross-media platforms now central to news production and distribution. As Erdal (2008) articulated, *cross-media* practice reflects the convergence of production and communication across multiple platforms, where different media forms operate in a coordinated and integrated manner. Expanding on this, Tenenboim (2023) defines cross-media journalism as the strategic digital production of news content tailored for simultaneous publication across various online channels, including social media platforms and independent news portals.

In this evolving media ecology, collaboration between editors and multimedia journalists (MJs) has become indispensable to maintaining the quality, efficiency, and audience orientation of news content (Hayes & O' Sullivan, 2024). Cummings (2020), Kartveit (2020) and Esa et al. (2024) characterises *multimedia journalists* as professionals capable of producing, editing, and distributing content across multiple platforms, combining traditional reporting techniques with digital storytelling methods. This hybrid skill set positions MJs as central agents in the shift toward converged newsrooms.

Given the increasing demand for agility, speed, and technological proficiency in journalism, synergistic relationships between editorial management and MJs are no longer optional, they are critical to newsroom performance. Such collaboration not only ensures coherent and timely content delivery but also upholds journalistic standards and reinforces public trust in an age of media convergence (Esa, 2024).

Previous studies by Anis Sharadga et al. (2022) and Dvir-Gvirsman and Tsurriel (2022) highlight how collaboration enhances journalistic practices by streamlining workflows and reinforcing the editorial values of accuracy, ethics, and depth. In particular, cross-media newsrooms require dynamic leadership, strong teamwork, and transparent communication to navigate the challenges posed by the convergence of traditional and digital media (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2020; Esa, 2024; Ivask, 2019). The involvement of multi-skilled MJs, guided by experienced editors, allows for the efficient organization of content around shared themes, locations, and community interests (Thomas & Thomson, 2023).

Crucially, this synergy also ensures that ethical standards are upheld in an era of fast-paced information exchange, where misinformation and shallow reporting can easily proliferate (Baranova et al., 2022). Editors act as custodians of journalistic integrity, while MJs serve as agile content creators navigating diverse platforms (van Drunen &

Fechner, 2023). Together, their collaboration enables rigorous fact-checking, contextual accuracy, and the timely dissemination of reliable news (Hamzah & Esa, 2020). This partnership not only enhances newsroom efficiency but also ensures ethical gatekeeping, thus safeguarding audience trust and reinforcing the social responsibility of journalism in the digital age (Himma-Kadakas & Möttus, 2021).

This study aims to examine the synergy between editors and MJs across four major broadcast media organisations in Malaysia which are Media Prima Berhad (MPB), Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM), Bernama TV, and Astro Awani. By analyzing these relationships, the research seeks to understand how collaboration can be leveraged to optimize cross-media journalism practices, strengthen news accuracy, and enhance content delivery. As the newsroom environment continues to evolve, this research will provide valuable insights into the structures and strategies that promote collaborative success in Malaysian cross-media newsrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The shift toward cross-media platforms has profoundly impacted newsroom structures, altering both the ethos and output of journalistic practice (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2020; Esa, 2024). Collaboration between news editors and multimedia journalists (MJs) is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in navigating this transition. Effective collaboration fosters content innovation, strengthens journalistic standards, and ensures efficient news distribution across multiple channels (Obuya, 2021).

Several studies emphasize that synergy between editors and MJs promotes standardization of news quality, reduces the burden of individual fact-checking, and enhances public trust (Esa et al., 2022; Walth et al., 2019). Tromble (2019) and Caple (2018) note that collaboration enables content repurposing, remixing, and more meaningful audience engagement, while Kosterich (2020) highlights that strategic partnerships across media sectors can combat misinformation and support sustainable journalism models.

However, challenges persist, particularly in separating roles across broadcast, audio, and print media (Saquete et al., 2022), exacerbated by the rise of social media platforms as rivals to traditional news outlets (Abbas, 2023). Cross-checking mechanisms, supported through collaboration, are vital for maintaining news accuracy and credibility (Boukes et al., 2020; Chaparro-Domínguez et al., 2020).

Moreover, successful collaboration hinges on strong communication between management and subordinates (Atkinson et al., 2021). Effective leadership and mentoring by editors not only improve content quality but also enhance MJs' skills, self-confidence, and productivity (Bunce, 2019; Wenzel & Nelson, 2020). Collaboration further promotes resource maximization, knowledge sharing, and high-quality journalism outputs (Porcu et al., 2020).

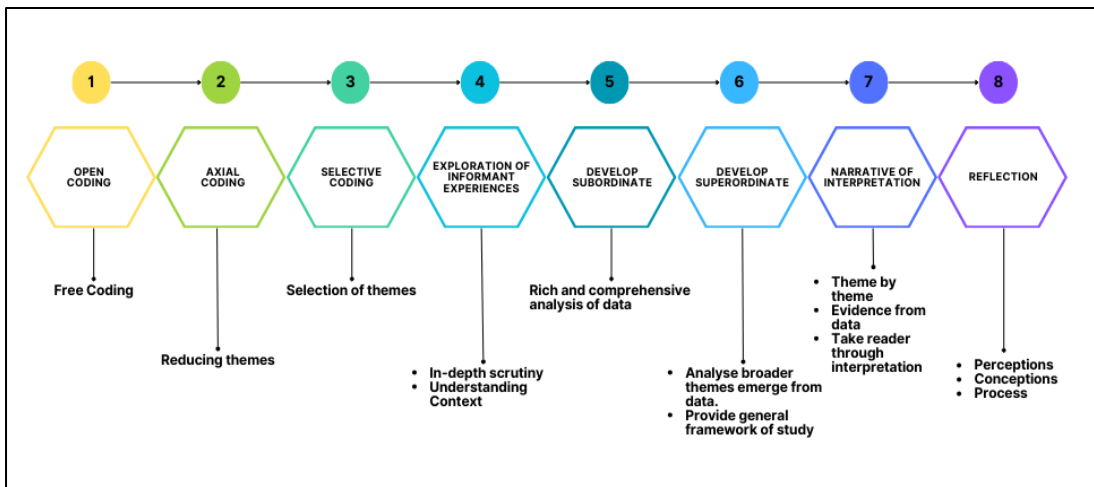
Thus, understanding the dynamics of collaboration between editors and MJs is vital in addressing cross-media challenges, elevating journalistic standards, and fostering a more resilient, efficient, and productive newsroom culture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a phenomenological approach, utilising qualitative in-depth interviews to gather data. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, comprising 10 editors and 15 multimedia journalists (MJs) from four major Malaysian broadcast media organisations: Astro Awani, Media Prima Berhad, Bernama TV, and Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM). The purposive selection was designed to explore the use of cross-media platforms within a specific sociocultural context. Sampling continued until data saturation was achieved, signifying the point at which no new themes emerged, and redundancy was observed (Wan Zainodin, 2018).

In the analytical phase, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed, with the researchers engaging in a detailed interpretative process to extract the subjective meanings participants attributed to their lived experiences (Rajasinghe, 2020). As illustrated in Figure 1, this involved a thorough examination of the narratives to identify key subthemes, which were subsequently grouped into broader, constituent themes. These themes were then organised into a summary framework highlighting superordinate themes that reflected the essence of the participants' experiences. To ensure analytical rigour, an independent rater reviewed the coding and interpretation, thereby strengthening the reliability and credibility of the findings.

Figure 1. IPA process chart



Importantly, the analysis revealed minimal variation across demographic attributes, suggesting the generalisability of the emergent themes. To support transparency and allow for evaluative scrutiny, direct excerpts from participant responses were incorporated into the findings, demonstrating how interpretations were derived. The study adhered to four IPA quality criteria as proposed by Nizza et al. (2021), namely thorough data engagement, reflexivity, participant involvement, and transparent reporting. Additionally, measures such as maintaining an audit trail, conducting member checks, consulting subject matter experts, and triangulating data sources were implemented to enhance the credibility, rigour, and trustworthiness of the research process (Wan Zainodin et al., 2022).

This study used purposive sampling to select MJs and news editors from four major broadcast media organisations in Malaysia. MJs were chosen based on having more than two (2) years of experience and active involvement in producing news content across both broadcast and digital platforms. News editors were selected if they held managerial positions, had over ten (10) years of newsroom experience, and were involved in daily editorial decision-making. Participants were included regardless of gender or news desk affiliation to ensure diverse professional insights. A detailed background of the informants is presented in the following section:

Informants	Gender / Age	Organisation	Year of Experience
MJ 1	Female / 37	MPB	13
MJ 2	Female / 40	MPB	15
MJ 3	Male / 30	MPB	6
MJ 4	Male / 29	MPB	5
MJ 5	Female / 35	RTM	10
MJ 6	Female / 41	RTM	16
MJ 7	Male / 38	RTM	13
MJ 8	Male / 30	RTM	6
MJ 9	Female / 39	Bernamea TV	14
MJ 10	Female / 32	Bernamea TV	7
MJ 11	Male / 28	Bernamea TV	4
MJ 12	Male / 34	Bernamea TV	10
MJ 13	Female / 31	Astro Awani	6
MJ 14	Male / 36	Astro Awani	10
MJ 15	Male / 34	Astro Awani	7
Editor 1	Male / 59	MPB	33
Editor 2	Male / 47	MPB	22
Editor 3	Female / 49	RTM	22
Editor 4	Male / 50	RTM	24
Editor 5	Male / 60	Bernamea TV	34
Editor 6	Female / 55	Bernamea TV	30
Editor 7	Male / 40	Astro Awani	16
Editor 8	Male / 41	Astro Awani	15
Editor 9	Female / 45	MPB	20
Editor 10	Female / 46	RTM	21

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The role of collaboration between editors and multimedia journalists (MJs) has garnered growing scholarly interest in response to the evolving demands of contemporary media environments. Expanding upon foundational studies such as those by Cummings (2020) and Deuze and Witschge (2016), this research affirms that collaborative interactions between editorial leadership and MJs not only strengthen journalistic standards but also enhance newsroom adaptability within increasingly complex and convergent media landscapes. This study specifically investigates the

operational synergy between editors and MJs within four mainstream Malaysian broadcast media organisations, focusing on how this collaboration supports ethical and efficient news production across cross-media platforms.

As summarised in Table 1, the analysis identifies two (2) superordinate themes and five (5) subordinate themes that offer a structured understanding of how newsroom collaboration contributes to both content integrity and production efficiency in a digital-first news ecosystem.

Table 1. Themes derived highlighting on synergy between editors and multimedia journalists in ensuring ethical and efficient news distribution on cross-media newsroom

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
Dynamic Relationship	Communication Empowerment Teamwork
Leadership	Professionalism Editorial Guidance

Dynamic Relationship

In cross-media newsrooms, the synergy between editors and multimedia journalists (MJs) is crucial for ethical and efficient news distribution. This study identifies a dynamic relationship as a core factor in enhancing journalistic practices, built upon four interconnected elements: communication, respect, empowerment, and teamwork.

Effective communication ensures quick decision-making and coordination across diverse platforms. Open channels foster innovation and adaptability in managing content for text, video, and interactive formats (Ivask, 2019). Mutual respect enables professional autonomy. When both editors and MJs understand and value each other's roles, collaboration becomes more productive and aligned with ethical standards (Duffy, 2021).

Empowerment goes beyond delegation, offering MJs the confidence to take initiative, experiment with new formats, and contribute diverse perspectives (Ewing et al., 2019). Teamwork, grounded in trust and understanding, strengthens role clarity and mutual reliance. It ensures shared responsibility for upholding journalistic values (Austin et

al., 2021). In sum, this dynamic relationship provides a framework for ethical and efficient collaboration in today's digital-first newsroom.

i) Communication

In today's converged news environment, the integration of television and digital platforms has blurred traditional media boundaries. As such, effective synergy between editors and multimedia journalists (MJs) is crucial for producing content that meets the demands of diverse audiences (Esa, 2024). However, this collaboration is often hindered by communication challenges that directly affect news quality and newsroom efficiency.

A recurring issue is the conflicting editorial expectations between digital and TV platforms. MJs report difficulties in accommodating divergent requests, especially when managing assignments alone. Such misalignment can compromise the depth and coherence of news stories (Milosavljević & Vobič, 2019). One MJ expressed the strain of handling simultaneous demands:

“Editors often have different requests... making it hard to meet their immediate demands.” (MJ 10, Berita TV)

This points to the necessity for clear and consistent communication strategies to unify editorial directives and reduce redundant workloads. MJs also highlight the importance of editors understanding the practical constraints of on-ground reporting, such as location-related delays. A lack of awareness often results in unrealistic expectations:

“Editors often have various requests... Without good communication, the newsroom can't function well.” (MJ 14, Astro Awani)

The quality of communication between editors and MJs emerged as a decisive factor in newsroom productivity. MJs emphasised that clarity, conciseness, and mutual respect are essential to maintaining a positive working environment. They noted that unclear instructions or overly meticulous feedback can hamper efficiency:

“Communication between us is essential. In my newsroom, some editors are easy to talk to, and some are not.” (MJ 4, MPB)

Physical separation between editorial and reporting teams further compounds communication difficulties. For example, at RTM, editors and MJs are situated on

different floors, which impedes quick interactions and timely approvals. One MJ noted that this arrangement had increased dependence on digital communication tools, which are not always efficient:

“With editors on the third floor and us on the fifth, communication issues arise... I discuss with editors to avoid mistakes.” (MJ 5, RTM)

Editors themselves acknowledge the limitations of such spatial arrangements. An RTM editor remarked that separating editorial and reporting teams disrupts workflow continuity:

“A super newsroom should be in one space for easier issue resolution. Messaging doesn’t guarantee an immediate reply.” (Editor 10, RTM)

Another issue is the introduction of numerous new editors unfamiliar with existing staff. This lack of familiarity disrupts established workflows and weakens team cohesion. The absence of pre-existing rapport can hinder open communication and diminish trust. Editors and reporters may struggle to coordinate, especially under deadline pressure.

This structural disconnect points to a broader organisational issue. While physical proximity may seem minor, in a fast-paced newsroom setting it significantly influences the speed and clarity of editorial decisions. RTM and similar organisations should consider redesigning their newsrooms to facilitate closer proximity and encourage spontaneous, face-to-face communication.

Editorial perspectives in this study further reveal the complexity of communication dynamics. Editors acknowledged that their expectations for fresh news angles might not always align with the MJs’ situational constraints. This can create unnecessary tension and calls for editors to articulate their instructions more clearly while remaining open to feedback from the field:

“Communication between editors and reporters is vital but often lacking... Using WhatsApp could prevent miscommunication.” (Editor 1, MPB)

Digital communication platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram have become indispensable tools in today’s newsrooms. All participating media organisations reported relying on messaging apps for issuing instructions and sharing updates. These platforms offer immediacy and accessibility, especially when dealing with high-volume, time-sensitive content:

“We have a WhatsApp group... We can also ask the editor directly through that group.” (MJ2, MPB)

“Telegram is used for large videos; WhatsApp for updates. Everyone is informed through the group.” (Editor 6, Berita TV)

However, this reliance on text-based communication has limitations. Misinterpretation of tone, lack of immediate feedback, and absence of visual cues can lead to misunderstandings, particularly under high-pressure situations. Editors from Astro Awani highlighted the need for active, two-way communication that balances digital convenience with personal engagement:

“We understand their increased workload but hope for active communication when problems arise.” (Editor 7, Astro Awani)

The findings underline that while digital tools are indispensable in contemporary journalism, they cannot fully substitute for interpersonal communication. Editorial teams must adapt to hybrid communication strategies that incorporate both digital and face-to-face interactions. Training editors and MJs in digital communication etiquette and collaborative problem-solving may help alleviate tensions and improve efficiency.

To ensure ethical and effective news production, both editors and MJs must engage in open dialogue grounded in mutual respect and shared goals. Editorial leaders should foster a culture of transparency and inclusivity, where feedback is encouraged and challenges are addressed collectively.

ii) Empowerment

In the evolving media landscape, effective collaboration between news managers and Multimedia Journalists (MJs) is critical for maintaining journalistic standards across multiple platforms. A key element fostering this collaboration is empowerment, which is fundamentally driven by tolerance and a positive attitude. These two components underpin mutual understanding, constructive communication, and shared responsibility, elements that are essential in managing the complexities of contemporary journalism (Westlund et al., 2021)

Tolerance, in this context, refers to the ability to accept differing opinions, approaches, and interpretations within the newsroom. It allows journalists to articulate diverse viewpoints while respecting editorial guidance. Attitude, on the other hand, includes a journalist’s willingness to engage in dialogue, defend their editorial decisions, and

contribute proactively to newsroom discussions. Together, these factors strengthen the collaborative fabric of news organisations, improving workflow efficiency and fostering a respectful, inclusive working culture.

Editors interviewed for this study stressed the importance of working with journalists who exhibit confidence and clarity in their editorial choices. Journalists who defend their viewpoints with evidence and professionalism are seen as assets in the collaborative process. As one editor at Astro Awani noted:

“I appreciate outspoken reporters with their own opinions, understanding what’s happening. Reporters should explain their perspective. Editors should respect their opinions, even if better than ours.” (Editor 8, Astro Awani)

This sentiment underscores a shift away from hierarchical decision-making toward a more dialogic newsroom culture, where ideas are valued regardless of seniority. Two-way communication also emerged as a critical facilitator of collaboration. Editors emphasized that MJs should be aware of newsroom objectives and seek editorial clarification when needed, especially given the immediacy of digital news environments, as explained in the following excerpt:

“Good communication makes work easier, minimising mistakes. Updates are real-time in the digital realm. Reporters can post news headlines on social media without a gatekeeper but should seek guidance if uncertain.” (Editor 2, MPB)

The perspectives of MJs also reflect this evolving dynamic. While newsroom environments were previously described as authoritative and rigid, current observations point to a more open and collaborative atmosphere. MJs acknowledged that while editorial oversight remains essential, mutual respect and shared ownership of the news product help maintain morale and productivity, especially under pressure.

Moreover, MJs advocate for constructive dialogue in the editorial process. Rather than avoiding confrontation, they see value in respectful disagreements that lead to better editorial decisions. This sentiment is reflected in the following excerpts:

“Back then, editors used to shout, but now communication has become lacking. Our stories are already subbed without much discussion. Editors ask questions through messages since we’re not always in the office.” (MJ 9, Bernama TV)

“Editors have diverse requirements: some emphasise detail, others language quality. We maintain high standards while accommodating each editor’s preferences and expressing our opinion on a news piece.” (MJ 13, Astro Awani)

This perspective highlights how a tolerant editorial environment empowers MJs to engage critically and assertively. The aim is not only to meet editorial standards but also to ensure that field-level insights are not overlooked.

A recurring theme is that this evolving culture of communication and empowerment has led to a more balanced and effective newsroom. Both editors and journalists now recognise the value of each other's expertise. Journalists, being on the ground, offer first-hand insights, while editors bring overarching strategic and quality perspectives. These findings align with the research of Ewing et al. (2019) and Mercader et al. (2021), which underscores the concrete benefits of diverse thought in collaborative environments, as explained below:

“We witness events, but editors have their own perspectives. If we believe our information is essential, we must persuade them. Self-confidence is crucial; we must assertively present our case.” (MJ 1, MPB)

In conclusion, tolerance and a positive attitude are not just desirable traits; they are fundamental pillars of a collaborative newsroom culture that thrives in diversity, inclusivity, and the pursuit of high-quality journalism. This constructive collaboration of tolerance and a positive attitude fosters an environment in which creativity flourishes, stress is manageable, and the final journalistic output is of the highest calibre. Therefore, as newsrooms continue to adapt to the ever-changing media landscape, embracing these core principles is indispensable for sustaining and enhancing collaborative journalistic practices.

iii) Teamwork

This study highlights teamwork as a central factor in cultivating effective relationships between news managers and multimedia journalists (MJs), particularly within the context of cross-media journalism. Teamwork emerges not merely as a logistical necessity but as a foundational principle for fostering trust, mutual understanding, and a sense of shared responsibility, each of which is essential in enhancing journalistic output in a rapidly evolving media ecosystem (Ozgul & Veneti, 2021).

Within the newsroom environment, teamwork is deeply intertwined with the dynamics of trust and professional autonomy. The findings indicate that collaboration between editors and MJs is significantly strengthened when both parties engage in open communication and reciprocal respect. Editors, according to this research, often provide MJs with considerable latitude in shaping their stories, empowering them to incorporate their own journalistic judgment and field-based insights. This autonomy,

grounded in trust, reflects a broader organisational culture where individual initiative is valued and supported (Choi & Ko, 2020). One of the participating editors articulated this collaborative stance as follows:

“I give freedom to reporters to choose their angles, but it depends. For broadcast, each news bulletin has a different approach. If I feel that what the reporter has written is not suitable, I will guide the reporter to provide a better lead or reangle their story.” (Editor 4, RTM)

This quote encapsulates the delicate balance between editorial oversight and creative independence. While editorial standards are upheld, reporters are encouraged to take ownership of their narratives (Mercader et al., 2021). From the MJs’ perspective, such flexibility enhances their sense of professional agency. They feel respected and trusted to make editorial decisions, particularly when reporting on-site and in real time. The following perspectives from the MJs illustrate this point:

“We receive about 10% guidance, and the rest is up to us. Clear communication with the editor helps prevent misunderstandings. They often accept my views since we’re on location and have firsthand information.” (MJ 6, RTM)

“If I deem the additional information crucial for the story, I’ll call the editor directly. While they provide guidelines, we can override them because they trust our judgment as on-location reporters.” (MJ 12, Bernama TV)”

However, the study also reveals a more complex reality in which mutual trust is occasionally challenged. Some MJs reported instances in which editors altered or substituted their editorial angles with content drawn from mainstream news agencies such as Bernama. These actions were perceived as undermining the originality of their work, generating frustration and a sense of professional disempowerment. The frustration expressed in the excerpts below is illustrated:

“Reporters often align with our chosen angle, but editors may opt for a different lead from Bernama, leading to frustration. Editors should communicate changes to maintain job satisfaction and collaboration.” (MJ 11, Bernama TV)

“I worked hard on this story, and then the editor takes the angle from another portal. Wouldn’t you be frustrated?.....we have our own view. If it’s the same as other portals, what’s the difference?” (MJ 3, MPB)

These comments underscore the fragile nature of trust in editorial relationships. The tendency to rely on external content or framing, even when MJs have provided

original material, may signal a lack of confidence in their capabilities. This can result in diminished morale and a reduced sense of ownership, thereby impacting the creativity and distinctiveness of the news product (Darrough, 2013). When MJs perceive their efforts as undervalued or interchangeable with syndicated content, it may hinder their motivation to engage in ambitious reporting or investigative work.

The study also highlights the value of empathy and editorial support in maintaining positive working relationships. Editors who acknowledge the challenges MJs face in the field, such as limited access to sources or tight deadlines, contribute to a culture of understanding and cooperation. As Randhawa and Lee (2021) argue, empathetic leadership enhances problem-solving and reduces friction within teams. One MJ emphasised the importance of trust and understanding between both parties:

“To produce quality news, there must be understanding between the editor and the reporter. Discussion and teamwork are necessary. This is what is practiced in our agency....” (MJ 7, RTM)

Editors, for their part, emphasised the importance of maintaining editorial quality while being sensitive to the field realities MJs encounter. While they recognise the need to push journalists to achieve the highest standards, they also strive to maintain open channels of communication to avoid misunderstandings or resentment. They must tailor their stories to capture the audience’s or readers’ attention, as stated by one of the editors in the excerpts below:

“.... they need to understand that this is a matter of news quality, and of course, we want the best for our news. That’s why sometimes we push reporter’.” (Editor 5, Bernama TV)

Another significant finding of the study is that MJs tend to tailor their working styles to align with the distinct editorial preferences and personalities of individual editors. This adaptability contributes to organisational cohesion and a more seamless news production process. Recognising these differences allows MJs to anticipate editorial expectations and refine their pitches and drafts accordingly (Ansaldo, 2021). As elucidated in the excerpts below:

“Every editor has their own writing style and approach..... In my opinion, it’s easier for us to work if we understand their working style.” (MJ 8, RTM)

In summary, teamwork in the newsroom is not merely a function of coordinated task management but rather a multi-layered process involving trust, mutual understanding, empathy, and adaptability. When effectively practised, teamwork

leads to greater editorial freedom, stronger professional relationships, and improved journalistic quality. It fosters an environment where both MJs and editors feel empowered to contribute meaningfully while respecting each other's roles and expertise.

The research suggests that as newsrooms continue to operate in increasingly complex and digital-first environments, the emphasis on collaborative culture becomes more critical. Trust and understanding, key dimensions of teamwork are indispensable in achieving journalistic excellence. Their presence enhances the editorial process, while their absence can hinder the production of authentic and impactful news stories. Ultimately, embedding these values into newsroom practices will not only enrich the working relationships within media organisations but also elevate the quality and credibility of journalism in the public sphere.

Leadership

In today's cross-media newsroom environment, leadership is instrumental in facilitating ethical and efficient collaboration between editors and multimedia journalists (MJs). This study identifies two essential dimensions of leadership: professionalism and guidance, both of which are central to maintaining journalistic integrity and effective content distribution across digital and traditional platforms.

Professionalism forms the core of the editors' gatekeeping role. It ensures content accuracy, credibility, and adherence to ethical standards (Jenkins & Jerónimo, 2021; Katerynych, 2022). Editors uphold structured workflows and foster newsroom discipline, which is critical when adapting content for multiple formats. Their leadership reinforces consistency and supports public trust in journalism (Sujoko, 2022).

Guidance complements professionalism by aligning MJs' creative efforts with editorial expectations. Editors provide mentorship through clear direction and support, cultivating an environment that encourages innovation while upholding ethical norms. Rather than controlling, this approach nurtures open dialogue and mutual learning. Together, professionalism and guidance establish a leadership model that strengthens cross-media collaboration. In summary, the synergy between editors and MJs, shaped by these leadership attributes, enhances newsroom adaptability and upholds ethical gatekeeping in a rapidly transforming media ecosystem.

i) Professionalism

Professionalism constitutes a fundamental pillar in shaping the interactions and collaborative dynamics between news management and multimedia journalists (MJs), playing a vital role in enhancing cross-platform journalistic practices. Upholding professional standards and ethical principles facilitates efficient coordination among different roles within a media organisation, thereby strengthening the credibility and reliability of the information disseminated to the public (Elizabeth et al., 2019; Hayes & O' Sullivan, 2024).

The findings of this study indicate that MJs perceive editors as authoritative figures within the newsroom hierarchy. Editors are entrusted with leadership responsibilities and serve as pivotal decision-makers, particularly in directing the daily editorial workflow. As gatekeepers, editors filter and verify the inflow of information, ensuring that only accurate, relevant, and ethically sound content is delivered to the audience. This gatekeeping function is critical to preserving journalistic integrity and maintaining the public's trust in the news media (Aruguete et al., 2021; Bello & Ajibola, 2020).

Rooted in the gatekeeping theory initially conceptualised by Kurt Lewin in the 1940s and later developed by David Manning White in the 1950s, the role of the editor involves controlling the flow of news by selecting which stories are published or aired. This editorial control directly influences public discourse by shaping the information that reaches the audience (Iqbal et al., 2023). Adherence to such rigorous editorial standards reinforces MJs' trust in the editorial process and facilitates a smoother workflow within news organisations. This relationship is reflected in the perspectives shared by MJs:

“... the editor is adept at assessing stories because they are the gatekeeper. Gatekeepers are more rational compared to journalists...” (MJ 4, MPB)

“The editor is still the gatekeeper, although this role may have changed slightly due to convergence. We need gatekeepers to ensure our story's sentence construction is accurate and, most importantly, reaches the audience.” (MJ 9, Bernama TV)

In addition to acting as gatekeepers, editors are also perceived as essential sources of guidance and secondary validation. Their experience and expertise enable them to act as mentors and reference points, particularly when MJs require editorial feedback or second opinions to improve clarity and accuracy. This collaborative interaction

strengthens the overall quality and dependability of news content and fosters a collegial newsroom environment (Duffy, 2021). MJs view these exchanges as integral to their professional development, as reflected in the following statements:

"I will refer to the editor for a second opinion. Sometimes we feel our sentence is correct, but it might convey a different meaning." (MJ 14, Astro Awani)

"The editor is our reference or like our mentor. They understand better because of their experience. So, we will refer to them if we need a reference." (MJ 5, RTM)

Furthermore, the study highlights that each broadcast media organisation maintains its own distinct editorial style or "house style." MJs are expected to align their output with these institutional standards, often learning these stylistic preferences through informal mentorship by senior colleagues or direct editorial feedback. This practice ensures stylistic consistency across published content and helps reinforce the organisation's brand identity. At the same time, it provides a structured framework for the ongoing professional development of MJs, who refine their craft within these parameters (Neto et al., 2019). This is evidenced in the following remarks:

"..we have a house style. I learn from seniors and editors. But usually, the editor will give guidelines and the angle of the story that they want. Especially if it is a follow-up news." (MJ 3, MPB)

"At RTM, our guidelines indeed favour the government. We are well aware of this, and editors will indeed guide and monitor every story." (MJ 8, RTM)

From the perspective of editors, maintaining professional credibility is a key component in fostering productive relationships with MJs. Editors are viewed not only as supervisors but as credible mentors whose leadership is essential for upholding journalistic standards. Their ability to lead, guide, and inspire confidence among MJs is integral to the newsroom's collective commitment to editorial excellence.

This mentor-mentee dynamic is especially important in contemporary journalism, where the complexity of digital convergence demands multifaceted competencies (Porcu et al., 2020). The following excerpts further reinforce this point:

"Editors need to have leadership because our duty is to guide journalists. They will refer to us with their problems. We have a big responsibility to ensure the quality and integrity of the news." (Editor 9, MPB)

“A reporter is promoted to the editor because they have credibility. It’s not easy to guide MJs, especially in this digital age now. Editors who have credibility usually become mentors to reporters.” (Editor 3, RTM)

Another significant finding from this study is the role of convergence in facilitating more frequent and effective communication between editors and MJs. As media platforms become increasingly integrated, the need for immediate and continuous communication becomes imperative. Editors acknowledge that convergence has enhanced real-time communication, often mediated through instant messaging applications, which helps reduce misunderstandings and ensures the accuracy of field reporting (Esa, 2024; Ittefaq et al., 2021). The importance of this development is articulated by one editor:

“I’ve noticed that since the convergence, we communicate more. Miscommunication happens, but we try to overcome it. We need to ensure that the information conveyed by reporters is accurate; now, we communicate more frequently through WhatsApp.” (Editor 9, MPB)

In conclusion, professionalism is a foundational aspect of the relationship between editors and MJs, deeply influencing the quality and credibility of journalistic output across media platforms. The professional roles adopted by editors as gatekeepers, mentors, and decision-makers will help maintain ethical standards and ensure the production of reliable news. MJs, in turn, rely on this leadership while adapting to organisational styles and leveraging editorial feedback to hone their skills. The intensified communication brought about by convergence further strengthens these professional relationships, facilitating collaboration and upholding journalistic integrity in a rapidly evolving media environment.

ii) Guidance

The dynamic transformation of multimedia journalists (MJs) within the contemporary journalism ecosystem necessitates robust guidance structures, particularly in fostering collaborative relationships between news management and journalists. In the context of cross-media operations, such guidance assumes greater significance as it reinforces and enhances journalistic practices in a rapidly evolving media environment. The findings highlight the pivotal role of editors as facilitators who enable MJs to align their competencies, knowledge, and ethical sensibilities with the shifting requirements of modern journalism. Editors are seen not merely as supervisory figures, but as essential mentors who contribute to shaping the quality and coherence of journalistic output across diverse platforms (Ansaldo, 2021).

Findings from the study reveal that MJs consistently acknowledge the influence of editorial direction in helping them navigate the complexities of their roles. Editorial guidance bridges the gap between individual skills and collective newsroom standards, ensuring content accuracy, stylistic consistency, and adherence to professional ethics. This alignment plays a fundamental role in safeguarding the integrity of information presented to the public. The following excerpts illustrate the impact of such mentorship:

“...when our editor guides us, we will learn quickly. Sometimes we make a mistake that we don’t realise. But when the editor guides and we see the way they edit the story, we will learn new things.” (MJ 10, Bernama TV).

“Every editor has their own way, from the way they subbed the story, we can understand their style. When the editor improves the reporter’s story, the quality of the news is better...” (MJ13, Astro Awani)

Significantly, the editorial process does not stifle journalistic autonomy. Instead, it cultivates an atmosphere that encourages creative exploration. Editors play a crucial role in facilitating intellectual growth by supporting MJs in experimenting with new formats, story angles, and digital tools. In this supportive environment, journalists are empowered to adapt to technological shifts and the demands of cross-platform journalism. The evolving media landscape, characterised by continual innovation, requires journalists to remain flexible and inquisitive. Editor-guided feedback loops contribute to a learning ecosystem that is iterative and developmental in nature (Mumay, 2019). The following remarks underscore this collaborative spirit:

“This collaboration provides us with the opportunity to be more creative. Our ideas are supplemented with the editor’s ideas. I might be proficient with technology, but in terms of grammar, I need an editor....” (MJ 2, MPB).

“...for me, the editor shapes the reporter. In our newsroom, we are free to express opinions with the editor. There is 2-way communication. This is good as it will further improve the quality of the news..” (MJ 15, Astro Awani)

Nevertheless, from the editors’ perspective, they perceive their role as both guides and architects, appraising news stories in their entirety and considering prospective follow-up angles. Editors assess news items not only in their immediate context but also in terms of potential for follow-up stories, offering MJs guidance that enhances depth and continuity in reporting. However, editors also emphasise that their efforts are most effective when met with mutual commitment and engagement from

journalists. Productive guidance thus rests on reciprocal respect and a shared commitment to journalistic excellence:

“An editor looks at an issue as a whole. It includes thinking about what stories we can follow up on the next day. The editor already has his plan. So, the editor will guide the reporter. What is important is the commitment from the reporter...” (Editor 7, Astro Awani)

The editorial guidance process emerges as a collaborative and multidimensional engagement. It is not limited to supervision but includes mentoring, strategic thinking, and the nurturing of creativity. Editors strike a delicate balance between directing MJs and granting them the space to innovate, which is vital in adapting to the fluidity of cross-media journalism (Srisaracam, 2022). This balance cultivates a newsroom culture where knowledge flows freely, fostering professional development and cohesive teamwork.

In conclusion, the guidance provided by editors is indispensable in shaping the evolving roles of MJs within the contemporary media landscape. It harmonises journalistic competencies with organisational standards, fosters creativity, and enables the construction of clear and impactful narratives. As journalism continues to adapt to technological and cultural shifts, the editor’s role in balancing structure with innovation will remain fundamental to sustaining ethical, high-quality journalism across platforms.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study highlights the evolving nature of gatekeeping within cross-media newsrooms, emphasising the critical synergy between editors and multimedia journalists (MJs) in upholding ethical and efficient news dissemination. The findings underscore that dynamic relationships, characterised by communication, mutual respect, empowerment, and teamwork are integral to sustaining effective collaboration. Leadership, particularly through professionalism and editorial guidance, serves as a central pillar in maintaining journalistic standards while fostering adaptability in a rapidly converging media environment.

The implications of these findings suggest that media organisations must strengthen internal communication frameworks, invest in leadership training, and support ongoing professional development. Such initiatives are vital to ensure editorial

alignment and ethical coherence across multiple platforms. Furthermore, empowering MJs through constructive mentorship and collaborative engagement enhances content quality and supports innovative storytelling approaches.

It is recommended that journalism education programmes integrate cross-media collaboration modules to better prepare future practitioners for converged newsroom settings. Additionally, newsroom managers should implement structured editorial workflows and facilitate regular team debriefings to encourage shared understanding and accountability.

Overall, this study offers a conceptual and practical framework for enhancing newsroom synergy, supporting ethical gatekeeping practices, and promoting a collaborative culture that meets the evolving demands of cross-platform journalism.

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