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# Integrating Media Education into ESP Acquisition: A Multimodal Case Study of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

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**Abstract**

This study integrates media education into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) acquisition by examining feature films' methodological potential for developing media literacy. Using *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Forman, 1975) as a multimodal case study, the research proposes a three-phase pedagogical framework – preparatory, demonstration, post-viewing – to optimise film-based language acquisition and critical media analysis. Grounded in Situational Language Teaching and media education theory, the framework fosters four media literacy competencies: access, analysis, evaluation, and creation of media content. Empirical data were collected from 16 second-year university students across three disciplines (psychology, philosophy, philology). Findings indicate that integrating feature films into ESP curricula enhances media education by fostering learners' ability to decode, evaluate, and create multimodal professional discourse. The framework supports holistic ESP acquisition while promoting critical engagement with institutional power dynamics, narrative strategies, and ideological subtexts. Film-based learning offers motivational benefits, simulating authentic professional interactions in a dynamic, multimodal environment. Feature films catalyse both linguistic competence and media literacy, bridging theoretical knowledge and real-world communicative demands. These results contribute to media education by offering a replicable model for integrating audiovisual media into ESP acquisition in higher education.

**Keywords:** media education, media literacy, media competence, film pedagogy, multimodal learning, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), feature films, interdisciplinary education.

## 1. Introduction

Film pedagogy aligns with media education objectives and plays an increasing role in ESP acquisition. UNESCO (UNESCO, 2021) defines ESP as competencies for critically engaging with communications content and its institutions. Traditional ESP research focused on lexical and grammatical outcomes, but feature films inherently foster media literacy – accessing, analysing, evaluating, and creating messages across contexts.

Media literacy education, as conceptualised by R. Hobbs (Hobbs, 2011; Hobbs, 2021), transforms passive consumers into active, critical practitioners capable of deconstructing ideological subtexts and audiovisual codes. According to A. Fedorov, whose scientific school has significantly advanced media education in Russia, the development of media competence involves not only technical skills but also critical thinking regarding media texts' ideological and aesthetic dimensions (Fedorov, 2008; Fedorov, Mikhaleva, 2020). Building on these theoretical

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foundations, the current study aims to demonstrate how a carefully selected feature film can serve as a dynamic pedagogical resource that bridges ESP instruction and media education.

The use of feature films in language pedagogy is well documented. Films provide authentic sociolinguistic contexts that mirror real-world communication (Mu, 2018), combine multiple input modalities (Jewitt, 2014), and enhance learner motivation (Dörnyei, 2014). Empirical studies confirm that films facilitate the acquisition of pragmatic competence, discipline-specific terminology, and cultural norms (Champoux, 1999; Lee et al., 2009). Beyond general language teaching, films have proven effective across various educational fields. T. Brown (Brown, 2011) and A. Marcus et al. (Marcus et al., 2018) demonstrated how cinema enhances critical awareness and historical literacy. J.E. Champoux (Champoux, 1999) identified films as conceptual anchors, behavioural models, and catalysts for reflection. In therapeutic education, G. Koch and C.T. Dollarhide (Koch, Dollarhide, 2000) found that 78 % of counselling students improved their comprehension of theoretical ideas after film-based activities, supporting J.S. Beck's (Beck, 2002) claim that films serve as behavioural models. P.G. Blasco et al. (Blasco et al., 2015) reported attitude shifts among education students through film-based reflection. K. Donaghy (Donaghy, 2014) emphasised that visual context enables learners to understand language more effectively.

Recent scholarship reinforces these findings. D. Selmi (Selmi, 2025) showed that film viewing and analysis enhance critical thinking among ESP university students. Film as content material effectively engages students to analyse, interpret, and discuss professional topics. L. Schofield (Schofield, 2024) demonstrated that repurposing cinematic profession-based fiction in ESP courses fosters critical thinking skills, particularly when tasks incorporate ethically charged questions related to students' professional fields. N. Amgott and J. Gorham (Amgott, Gorham, 2023) established the benefits of using multiple semiotic modes – including image, sound, and text – in digital second language communication, highlighting how embodied modes augment students' metalinguistic awareness. Studies in the *Journal of Media Literacy Education* have examined how teachers perceive the value of media literacy skills (Gould et al., 2024), how critical media literacy is vital for navigating misinformation (Allen et al., 2022), and how game-based learning can tackle news literacy education (Literat et al., 2021). These studies collectively underscore the potential of film-based pedagogy to cultivate both linguistic and critical competencies, placing media education at the centre of ESP innovation.

In ESP contexts specifically, authentic video materials from students' subject areas alter classroom dynamics and foster professional communication. Multimodal materials such as films help students understand and retain information through visual cues (Canning-Wilson, 2020) and increase motivation (Lonergan, 2016), while the immersive quality of cinema bridges classroom learning and hands-on experience (Talaván, Rodríguez-Arancón, 2014). Potter's cognitive theory of media literacy emphasizes that meaning is actively constructed by the viewer through filtering and schema-matching processes (Potter, 2004). Similarly, R. Hobbs argues that media literacy education transforms passive consumers into active, critical practitioners (Hobbs, 2011). These theoretical perspectives underscore the potential of film-based pedagogy to cultivate both linguistic and critical competencies.

Russian research has also examined the use of films in foreign language teaching. Several scholars have developed practical frameworks: I. Pichugova (Pichugova, 2009) and E. Petrova (Petrova, 2010) propose three-stage models (pre-, while-, post-viewing) for integrating films into language lessons, while E. Sokolova (Sokolova, 2015) and I. Belyavtseva and E. Kukshinova (Belyavtseva, Kukshinova, 2022) apply similar stage-based approaches in online and railway transport education. E. Vyushkina (Vyushkina, 2016) and T. Dementieva (Dementieva, 2016) focus on professional communication, using films to teach legal English and foster intercultural dialogue. O. Rodionova (Rodionova, 2011) distinguishes between scripted course videos and authentic TV programmes, and O. Bobrikova (Bobrikova, 2011) emphasises sociolinguistic competence. I. Samokhin et al. (Samokhin et al., 2019) caution that films primarily add variety and pleasant memories, while traditional exercises should remain central. O. Khurmuz (Khurmuz, 2019) offers foundational models of professionally oriented teaching introducing a "variable textbook" for A2–B2 levels.

Few studies have systematically exploited a single film's linguistic and paralinguistic features within an ESP framework to enhance professional language skills and media competence. Existing Russian studies focus on general proficiency, isolated lexical or cultural aspects, or single-discipline communication (e.g., law, engineering). Key questions remain: How does the film encode

discipline-specific features? What pedagogical strategies optimise its multimodal elements? How does film-based learning facilitate pragmatic and intercultural competence? A framework integrating terminology from multiple fields (psychology, philosophy, philology) with multimodal analysis remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by identifying the film's semiotic resources, proposing a pedagogical framework, and assessing its impact on pragmatic awareness, vocabulary retention, and critical disciplinary thinking – demonstrating how cinematic discourse catalyses linguistic competence and media literacy.

## 2. Materials and methods

This research employs a multimodal approach (Kress, van Leeuwen, 2001) to examine *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Forman, 1975) in ESP classrooms. The study integrates this perspective with Situational Language Teaching (Richards, Rodgers, 2014).

From the standpoint of language acquisition theory, multimodal input supports ESP acquisition by providing multiple semiotic channels (visual, auditory, linguistic) that reinforce meaning-making and retention (Mayer, 2009). To strengthen media pedagogy, the framework incorporates principles of critical media analysis (Buckingham, 2003; Hobbs, 2011), including deconstruction of media texts, analysis of ideological subtexts, and interpretation of audiovisual codes.

Aligned with Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), the study incorporates TBLT principles (Nunan, 2004; Van den Branden, 2016) and a three-phase design (Mu, 2018; Talaván, 2013): *pre-viewing* (vocabulary activation), *while-viewing* (listening comprehension, paralinguistic analysis), and *post-viewing* (critical discussion, role-play, case studies). The post-viewing phase promotes pushed output (Swain, 2005), essential for moving from comprehension to productive ESP acquisition. Each phase includes explicit media literacy objectives: identifying narrative bias, evaluating audiovisual discourse, and creating media content (film reviews, research presentations).

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Forman, 1975) was selected for its rich professional discourse, including medical jargon, power dynamics, and non-verbal communication. The design draws on both Kesey's novel (Kesey, 1962) and its film adaptation. The selection follows King's (King, 2002) criteria for ESP materials and Mayer's (Mayer, 2009) principles of multimedia learning. By integrating visual, auditory, and linguistic input, the film provides a rich environment for incidental vocabulary acquisition and pragmatic awareness – both central to ESP acquisition. From a media education perspective, the film offers complex representational strategies, including unreliable narration, dialectal power dynamics, and cinematic techniques that reinforce ideological themes – all of which are essential content for media literacy development.

The study involved 16 second-year students from Perm State University (psychology, n = 9; philosophy, n = 4; philology, n = 3). This interdisciplinary composition presented both opportunities and challenges for ESP instruction (Basturkmen, 2010). Data collection included pre- and post-tests for vocabulary retention (Boulahnane et al., 2025), discourse analysis of student-led discussions, evaluation of structured film reviews using media literacy rubrics (Hobbs, Frost, 2003), and self-reported engagement surveys.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were combined. Vocabulary gains were measured via repeated-measures ANOVA (Boulahnane et al., 2025). Discourse competence was evaluated using a rubric adapted from S. Webb (Webb, 2020). Media analysis competence was assessed using Potter's (Potter, 2004) cognitive dimensions: identification, deconstruction, evaluation, and integration of interdisciplinary perspectives. Inter-rater reliability was 73 % (substantial agreement). These analytical dimensions complement language acquisition assessment by capturing not only vocabulary gains but also learners' ability to process and produce discipline-specific discourse – a core indicator of successful ESP acquisition and media literacy.

## 3. Discussion

A preliminary needs analysis survey (Dudley-Evans, St John, 1998) identified three learner objectives: 1) discipline-specific terminology (M = 4.7); 2) professional discussion skills (M = 4.5); and 3) processing authentic academic texts (M = 4.3). These objectives reflect core media education competencies: access, analysis, evaluation, and creation of media content (UNESCO, 2021).

Eight ninety-minute sessions made up the instructional sequence, organised using the three-phase multimodal framework (Figure 1). This framework operationalises key principles of media pedagogy (Fedorov, 2008; Hobbs, 2011), moving students from passive viewing to active critical analysis.

Crucially, the framework is designed to scaffold ESP acquisition by progressively increasing cognitive and linguistic demands: from vocabulary recognition (preparatory stage) to comprehension and analysis (demonstration stage) to productive use and critical evaluation (post-viewing stage). Each stage explicitly targets media literacy skills: accessing relevant information (preparatory), deconstructing audiovisual codes (demonstration), and creating professional media content (post-viewing).

For intermediate-level learners, this scaffolded method accommodates Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) while addressing Swales' concept of "discourse community socialisation" (Swales, 1990). At the same time, it aligns with Potter's cognitive model of media literacy (Potter, 2004), which requires structured knowledge construction.

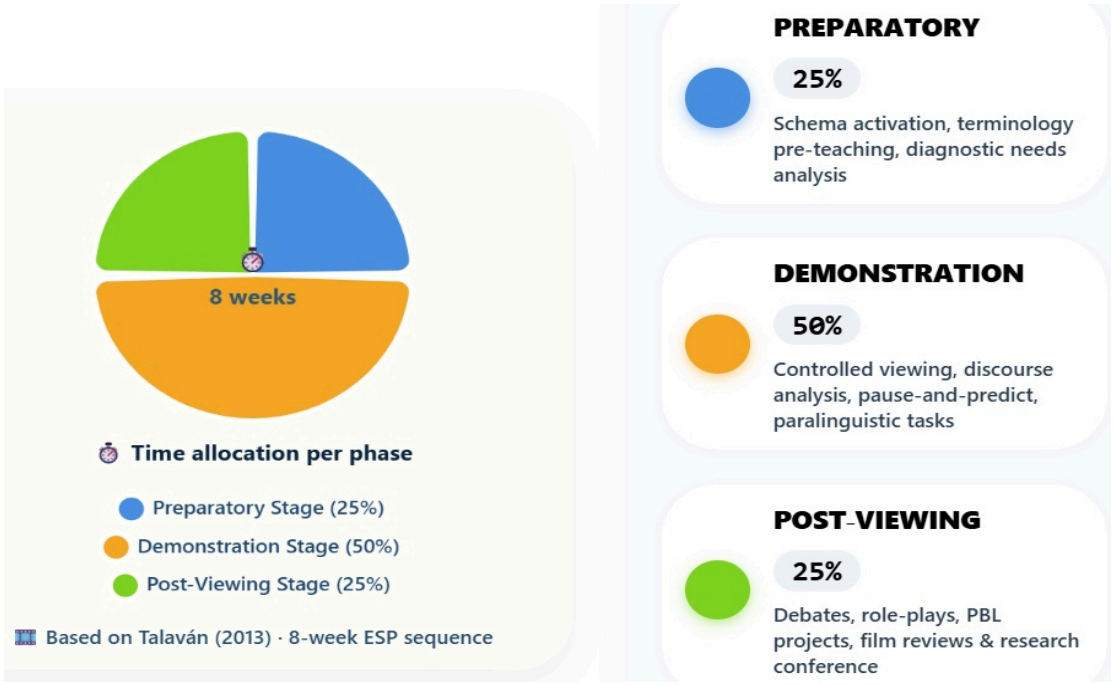


**Fig. 1.** Multimodal instructional sequence (8 weeks)

I. Preparatory Stage: Multimodal Pre-Viewing Framework

The preparatory stage is crucial for developing students' receptive skills in processing authentic speech patterns, including prosodic aspects and paralinguistic variables. From a media education perspective, this stage builds the foundational skill of accessing and identifying relevant media content (UNESCO, 2021).

Prior to viewing, instructors perform a diagnostic needs analysis to identify complex structures, culture-bound references, and specialised vocabulary. Students compile a glossary according to their major: philology majors list literary terms, while psychology majors compile psychological terminology. This assignment immerses students in search activities. They then upload terms on Vkontakte, where the instructor forms a public group for exchanging materials, allowing students to familiarise themselves with professional terminology both within and outside their major before viewing the film.

During class discussions and online collaboration, each major clarified terms from their own and other fields, reflected in the glossaries they created. Psychology students compiled terms such as *chronic, mental disorder, depression, treatment, phobia, obsession, verbal behaviour, consciousness*, etc.; philosophy students focused on e*xistentialism, subjectivity, ethics, biopower, human values, law and order*, etc.; and philology students listed literary concepts such as *metaphor, discourse, characterization, narrative, irony, hyperbole, speech characterization, body language, imagery, subtext, intertextuality*, and many others.

The goal is to introduce key terms and have students explain them using their academic knowledge. As students deepen their expertise, they engage in stimulating conversations and gain alternative viewpoints on the film's discourse. The exercise emphasises horizontal peer contact and

multidisciplinary dialogue. And pair work and discussion "motivate communication in a foreign language, allow students to form their own point of view ... promote the development of cognitive activities, and help to show intellectual and creative activity" (Abramova, Boulahnane, 2019). This collaborative approach mirrors the social construction of meaning central to media literacy education (Hobbs, 2011).

Pre-test data reveal baseline accuracy of 62 % (Table 2). Psychology students (62 %) showed stronger retention due to overlapping clinical ideas. Philosophy students (58 %) struggled with abstract concepts like *subjectivity*, indicating a need for contextual support. Philology students (65 %) performed best – literary concepts are more common in general language instruction. These discrepancies confirm the need for *customised scaffolding*, a key principle of both ESP and media pedagogy (Buckingham, 2003).

**Table 2.** Pre-test results for specialized vocabulary retention (psychological/philological/philosophical terminology)

| Discipline | Number of Students | Average Accuracy (%) | Key Terminology Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| Psychology (including Clinical Psychology) | 9 | 62 | chronic, mental disorder, depression, therapy, DSM-5 terms |
| Philosophy | 4 | 58 | existentialism, materialism, ethics, subjectivity |
| Philology | 3 | 65 | metaphor, discourse, characterization, narrative |
| Overall | 16 | 62 | Baseline before film-based intervention |

II. Demonstration Stage: Multimodal Film Analysis in ESP Instruction

The demonstration stage employs controlled viewing (Sherman, 2003) of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Forman, 1975). The 133-minute film screens without subtitles – in class and as homework – to strengthen auditory decoding, a fundamental ESP input skill. This design serves three purposes: (1) helps learners identify discipline-specific concepts with authentic materials; (2) trains critical film analysis skills (cognitive load theory, Sweller, 2011); (3) guides recognition of linguistic and discourse patterns through structured questioning. This stage applies media education practice – deconstructing audiovisual texts (Fedorov, Mikhaleva, 2020) – while exposing learners to multimodal input that mirrors authentic professional communication.

Prior to viewing, students receive a contextualised summary. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) is an American drama directed by Miloš Forman, based on Ken Kesey's 1962 novel. Jack Nicholson stars as Randle McMurphy, a prisoner transferred to a mental institution for evaluation, hoping to avoid hard labour, though he shows no signs of mental illness. He encounters Nurse Mildred Ratched, who humiliates patients and enforces a dull daily routine.

The film was only the second to win all five major Academy Awards (Best Picture, Actor, Actress, Director, Screenplay). Regarded as one of the greatest American films, the Library of Congress (1993) deemed it culturally, historically, and aesthetically significant. It screened in Swedish theatres for almost 11 years (1976–1987), a record.

D. Buckingham (Buckingham, 2021) argues that effective media education must move from familiar texts to critical analysis. Our preparatory stage operationalizes this principle. R. Hobbs (Hobbs, 2023) emphasizes integrating analysis and creation, which our post-viewing stage achieves through project-based learning. Our structured viewing guide incorporates Hobbs' key questions for critical media analysis, transforming students into active interrogators of media discourse.

To enhance the meaningfulness of the video viewing experience – and to promote selective attention to features relevant to ESP acquisition and media literacy – students respond to the guiding questions presented in Table 3. These questions are structured to guide learners through successive levels of cognitive engagement, from literal comprehension to critical analysis, thereby scaffolding the progression from input to intake to output. Each question is designed to develop specific media literacy competencies: identification (literal), deconstruction (interpretive and clinical), evaluation (philosophical), and creation (cinematic literacy).

*General psychology* and *clinical psychology* students applied *DSM-5* criteria to character diagnoses (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and examined therapeutic modalities such as electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and group therapy.

*Philosophy students* framed the core opposition as McMurphy's existential protest versus institutional biopower (Foucault, 2006), contrasting freedom and control in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

**Table 3.** Structured viewing guide for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

| Cognitive Level | Question Type | Sample Questions | Disciplinary Alignment |
|---|---|---|---|
| Literal Comprehension | Theme, Plot, and Conflict Analysis | 1. What power dynamics or social criticisms may this story examine, given the title of the movie and its historical setting (1960s mental healthcare)?<br>2. In what ways do your cultural conceptions of "mental illness" and "institutional control" influence the way you anticipate this film? | All disciplines |
| Interpretive Analysis | Character Study | 3. What psychological profiles emerge among patients?<br>4. Analyze McMurphy's leadership style. | Psychology Philosophy |
| Clinical Application | Therapeutic Evaluation | 5. What *DSM-5* criteria might apply to Billy Bibbit?<br>6. Critique Nurse Ratched's behavior modification techniques. | Clinical Psychology |
| Philosophical Inquiry | Ideological Conflict | 7. How does the film represent Foucault's concept of biopower?<br>8. What existential choices do patients face? | Philosophy |
| Cinematic Literacy | Artistic film analysis and interpretation | 9. Conduct a formal stylistic analysis examining how the director's technical choices (cinematography, editing, sound design) and narrative techniques (symbolism, irony, perspective) collectively construct meaning and reinforce the film's central themes and conflict.<br>10. How does Forman use camera angles to convey power dynamics? | Philology |

*Philology students* examined narrative unreliability and dialectal power dynamics. Regarding narrative unreliability, the film depicts Chief Bromden's perspective. The schizophrenic narrator's fragmented consciousness (e.g., mechanical fog hallucinations) results in a destabilised narrative. Philologists studied linguistic markers of unreliability (disjointed syntax, shifting tenses) and metaphor as subjective reality (hospital as "combine"), investigating how Forman employs this approach to criticise institutional "sanity" norms. Regarding dialectal power dynamics, the opposition between McMurphy's Appalachian vernacular (colloquialisms like "What the hell", grammatical reductions like "ain't", folksy idioms) and Nurse Ratched's institutional discourse (clinical passive voice: "Therapeutic measures will be continued ...", "Medications are to be taken ...", performative politeness) epitomises the film's linguistic conflict. This sociolinguistic clash embodies the central power struggle, where dialect serves as both cultural identity and ideological contestation. Philology major students analysed how dialectal strain is emphasised by cinematic devices like voiceover distortion and subtitles.

The film generated strong student involvement: learners developed thoughtful enquiries, sought domain-specific vocabulary, and participated in critical discussions. Students' comments revealed interdisciplinary perspectives and critical depth, reflecting the cohort's heterogeneous composition. Different interpretive frameworks – psychology (clinical readings), philosophy (power structures), philology (narrative devices) – operationalised collaborative knowledge construction (Table 4). This interdisciplinary dialogue exemplifies Potter's (Potter, 2004) "media literacy knowledge structure", where learners actively filter and integrate multiple perspectives.

**Table 4.** Discipline-specific performance (n = 16)

| Metric | Psychology | Philosophy | Philology |
|---|---|---|---|
| Terminological Accuracy | 92 % | 85 % | 88 % |
| Conceptual Depth | 4.6/5 | 4.8/5 | 4.3/5 |
| Interdisciplinary Links | 73 % | 81 % | 67 % |

III. Post-Viewing Stage: Multimodal Assessment and Professional Application

The post-viewing stage converges ESP acquisition and media education through productive output. Learners apply acquired vocabulary and discourse strategies in authentic scenarios – writing film reviews, debating, presenting research projects. This stage operationalises media pedagogy's core principle: balance critical consumption with creative production (Hobbs, 2011; Fedorov, 2008), while fostering pushed output (Swain, 2005) that consolidates ESP acquisition.

The post-viewing stage consolidates learning through three approaches: *Content Mastery Assessment*, *Critical Evaluation and Review Writing*, and *Project-Based Learning (PBL)*. Feature films encourage discussion of social and professional issues; 92 % of students linked the film's 1960s psychiatric care to current mental health stigma, citing specific scenes such as the electroshock therapy session. This reflective practice is a core outcome of media pedagogy: evaluating media content in light of real-world social issues (Hobbs, 2011; UNESCO, 2021).

In *Project-Based Learning (PBL)*, students prepare research projects and specialised assignments related to their academic subjects. In the final conference session, participants share findings through ten-minute PowerPoint presentations followed by cross-disciplinary discussion. Assignments enable students to converse about professional subjects using discipline-specific terminology. Philology majors read Kesey's (Kesey, 1962) novel, selected a literary character, and contrasted depictions in book and film; one student identified 12 narrative divergences (e.g., Chief Bromden's perspective shift). Using Foucault's biopower theory (Foucault, 2006), philosophy majors discussed institutional power systems; 79 % connected *History of Madness* ideas to cinematic representations. Psychology students investigated one of five *DSM-5* disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), namely: *Major Depressive Disorder, Bipolar and Related Disorders, Schizophrenia* and *Other Psychoses, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Multiple Personality Disorder*. One student analysing schizophrenia examined worldwide prevalence rates (2.8 %), contrasted current CBT with 1960s institutionalisation, and applied positive/negative symptom criteria to diagnose Chief Bromden. Student research projects were assessed using four criteria: lexical accuracy (20 %), argument coherence (30 %), professional relevance (25 %), and engagement (25 %).

The task design yielded significant gains: professional terminology accuracy rose to 86 % (+24 % from pre-test), with 73 % inter-rater reliability. Peer-evaluated presentation quality averaged 4.2/5 (84 %), confirming improved knowledge and communication skills. These indicators demonstrate the framework's effectiveness in fostering specialised language competence (Table 5) and confirm that structured film-based learning advances both linguistic outcomes and media literacy competencies – the central claim of our article.

**Table 5.** Performance metrics

| Evaluation Dimension | Performance | Benchmark |
|---|---|---|
| Professional Terminology Accuracy | 86 % | +24 % from pre-test (62 %) |
| Inter-rater Reliability (Analysis from a professional perspective) | 73 % | Substantial agreement (Landis & Koch scale) |
| Presentation Quality (Peer-evaluated) | 4.2/5 (84 %) | Exceeds competency threshold (>4.0) |

## 4. Results

This study confirms *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* as an effective multimodal resource for ESP acquisition, supporting prior work on multimodal learning and authentic materials. The findings address the central research problem: systematically exploiting a film's linguistic and paralinguistic features to enhance both professional language skills and media competence – integrating media education into ESP acquisition. Three main contributions emerge from the film-based pedagogy, each corresponding to the needs analysis objectives

First, the film provides authentic professional language input – specialized terminology, paralinguistic cues, and pragmatic strategies like power dynamics in clinical settings. Post-test results showed marked vocabulary improvement: overall accuracy reached 89 % (+27 % from baseline) (Table 6). Psychology students gained most (92 %, +30 %), likely due to the film's clinical setting reinforcing *DSM-5* terminology. Philosophy students progressed in abstract concepts like biopower (85 %, +27 %), confirming that film narratives scaffold complex disciplinary discourse. Philology students benefited from multimodal input (88 %, +23 %), particularly in analysing narrative devices and dialectal power dynamics. These gains demonstrate that systematic film integration enhances ESP learning through multimodal engagement, active application, and authentic contextualisation of specialised vocabulary.

**Table 6.** Post-test results for specialized vocabulary retention (psychological/philological/philosophical terminology)

| Discipline | Number of Students | Average Accuracy (%) | Improvement (+ %) | Notable Gains |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Psychology (including Clinical Psychology) | 9 | 92 | +30 | DSM-5 terms, therapeutic modalities, ECT protocols |
| Philosophy | 4 | 85 | +27 | Foucault's biopower, existentialism, institutional critique |
| Philology | 3 | 88 | +23 | Cinematic narrative devices, dialectal power dynamics |
| Overall | 16 | 89 | +27 | $p < .05$ (statistically significant) |

Second, the cinematic approach increases engagement and motivation (Table 7). Learners reported high levels of engagement across multiple dimensions: film analysis (M = 4.6), vocabulary retention (M = 4.7), role-plays (M = 4.5), and interdisciplinary debates (M = 4.4). Student feedback indicated that the film made vocabulary relevant to their fields, enabled confident practice of professional dialogues, and broadened their understanding of patient care through exposure to peers' disciplinary perspectives. These findings demonstrate how film stimulates narrative-driven learning outcomes, thereby enhancing ESP acquisition through affective and cognitive engagement (Dörnyei, 2014). Moreover, by engaging with *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, students did not merely learn professional terminology; they participated in a structured process of media analysis that aligns with the UNESCO framework of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) (UNESCO, 2021), which includes critically evaluating media content and understanding its role in society. This integration of media literacy into ESP acquisition exemplifies the core mission of media education: to develop critical consumers and creative producers of professional discourse (Hobbs, 2011). In the context of Fedorov's models of media education (Fedorov, 2008; Fedorov, Mikhaleva, 2020), our three-phase framework operationalizes the synthesis of media criticism and pedagogical practice, moving students from passive viewing (literal comprehension) to active interpretation (ideological and structural analysis). P. Mihailidis (Mihailidis, 2023) argues that media literacy requires cultivating "critical autonomy" – the capacity to independently navigate and evaluate media content. Our three-phase framework fosters this autonomy: 89 % post-test vocabulary retention and interdisciplinary debates demonstrate active appropriation of professional discourse. S. Flores-Koulish (Flores-Koulish, 2022) similarly found that critical media

literacy practices enhance students' ability to identify ideological assumptions in professional texts, which our results corroborate.

**Table 7.** Student feedback (mean scores and qualitative comments)

| Indicator | Mean Score (5-point Likert scale) | Notable Qualitative Comments |
|---|---|---|
| Engagement in film analysis | 4.6 | "The film made vocabulary feel relevant to my field." |
| Participation in role-plays | 4.5 | "Acting as McMurphy helped me practice medical dialogues confidently." |
| Interest in interdisciplinary debates | 4.4 | "Hearing philosophy students' perspectives changed how I view patient care." |
| Self-reported vocabulary retention | 4.7 | "Visual scenes helped me remember terms like 'cognitive behavioral therapy.'" |

Third, the film bridges academic disciplines. Philosophy students applied Foucault's ideas on power (Foucault, 2006), psychology students used *DSM-5* criteria for diagnosis (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), and philology students analyzed narrative unreliability and dialectal conflict. This interdisciplinary approach strengthened language skills and critical thinking, demonstrating that ESP acquisition is a socially mediated construction of meaning across discourse communities (Swales, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). This supports Potter's assertion that media literacy requires structured knowledge frameworks, exemplified by interdisciplinary debates comparing clinical diagnoses, Foucauldian critiques, and narrative analysis (Potter, 2004). This multidimensional analysis transformed the film from linguistic input into a complex text for critical inquiry. As Hobbs notes, effective media education bridges classroom and culture (Hobbs, 2011). Our data – high student engagement (M = 4.6) and improved interdisciplinary links – confirm that feature films catalyse the critical autonomy central to both ESP and media pedagogy in the digital age.

Thus, the proposed three-phase framework fosters discipline-specific language competence and critical media literacy. Significant vocabulary improvement ($p < .05$) and high interdisciplinary engagement confirm feature films as dynamic pedagogical catalysts, transforming passive learners into active practitioners. By bridging ESP acquisition and media education, this study offers a replicable model where language learning and media pedagogy mutually reinforce each other.

## 5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* serves as an effective multimodal resource for ESP acquisition, bridging language learning and media education. Feature films act as a pedagogical catalyst, transforming passive learners into active practitioners. Our framework operationalises media pedagogy's core principle – critical consumption and creative production of professional discourse are mutually reinforcing (Hobbs, 2011; Fedorov, 2008) – and aligns with principles articulated by (Buckingham, 2021), Hobbs (Hobbs, 2023-2024), Mihailidis (Mihailidis, 2023), and Flores-Koulish (Flores-Koulish, 2022), who argue media literacy is fundamental for professional discourse in the digital age. Future research should extend this model across disciplines, genres (documentaries, news broadcasts), and digital formats (streaming content, social media videos), grounding pedagogical innovation in media education theory.

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# Unlocking Digital Financial Inclusion through Media Literacy: Examining Gender Disparities in Jharkhand, India

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**Abstract**

Digital Financial Literacy (DFL) and Media Literacy (ML) are significant concepts comprising financial literacy, digital literacy, and cybersecurity literacy, and strengthened by inclusive governance, cooperation, and education. Financial decision-making in digital environments is increasingly being done through social media platforms, mobile applications, and algorithmic content. This research work proposes a Gender-based Digital Financial Literacy Index (DFLI) for Ranchi District, Jharkhand, India. The index measures the differences in digital financial awareness, access, usage, knowledge, and confidence in using digital payment tools among genders. We conducted a survey on six chosen blocks of the Ranchi District in the state of Jharkhand, India. We gathered data from 480 respondents. The survey covered a few points, which included their knowledge of mobile banking, UPI services, e-wallets, and internet safety. To measure the rates of digital media literacy, a series of questionnaires with a five-point Likert scale has been designed. By integrating W. James Potter's Media Literacy Theory with Amartya Sen's Capabilities Approach, a fitting paradigm has been established for media and gender research. The survey findings reveal that women are less competent in using digital tools and in security awareness. The index of the study will offer recommendations on gender disparities in the digital era.

**Keywords:** cybercrime, digital media literacy, financial frauds, digital payments, gender gap.

## 1. Introduction

Digital financial literacy (DFL) and media literacy are necessarily and inherently linked in the digital environment because financial engagement is increasingly taking place in mediated information spaces. Conventional definitions of financial literacy emphasized knowledge of savings, credit, interest rates, and budgeting. But in the digital age, financial decision-making is no longer taking place in formal banking environments; instead, it is taking place in social media sites, mobile apps, algorithmic advertisements, messaging apps, and influencer-driven content. Thus, financial opportunities, risks, and threats are being evaluated through media platforms even before they are evaluated through financial institutions. Media literacy, therefore, becomes an integral and not a secondary aspect of digital financial literacy.

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is critical in the new digital media environment, where financial transactions, information dissemination, and communication are brought together in mobile devices. MIL competencies can empower people to critically assess online financial information, transact safely in digital payment services, and avoid cyber fraud like phishing and

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scams, thus enabling people to safely engage with the digital economy (Grizzle et al., 2013). DFL is the extended form of MIL.

Thus, the problem of vulnerability to digital financial risks stems not only from a lack of financial knowledge but also from a lack of media literacy. The role of media platforms, especially social media platforms, in shaping financial knowledge and behavior has been recognized in the literature. It has been discovered that the internet is a source of financial information that impacts young individuals. Moreover, the availability of correct financial information on social media is a contributing factor to financial literacy outcomes (Li, 2025). Similarly, bibliometric research points out the growing trend of the convergence of digital finance, social media, and investor behavior, which indicates that online influencers and algorithm-driven platforms are becoming increasingly important channels for financial information (Renuka, Swaminathan, 2025). The above results provide a strong case for including media literacy in digital financial literacy education, as evaluating media content is crucial for individuals to make sense of the large volume of financial information and misinformation available on digital media platforms (Li, 2025). Media literacy empowers individuals to think independently, question why they are being offered certain financial products, and whether the information is in their best interests. Therefore, media literacy enhances the reflective component of digital financial literacy.

The fast growth of digital finance has brought new tools, such as digital wallets, cryptocurrencies, and robo-advisors. This shift places more responsibilities and threats on citizens to manage their finances (Choung et al., 2023). Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is a digital payment system in India. It enables the users to transfer money instantly between bank accounts through their mobile phones. UPI now connects 491 million users, 65 million merchants, and 675 banks. According to the Press Information Bureau (PIB), India report, the UPI transaction value reached up to 2,330,720 billion in FY 2024–25 (up to January). UPI's overall value has grown from 21,300 billion in FY 2019–20 to 260,560 billion by March 2025.

The Digital Financial Literacy has come into prominence as a very important factor of Financial Inclusion in a constantly digitizing economy. The definition of financial inclusion being access and effectiveness of utilization of formal financial services has been related to improved resilience, increased savings, and increased investment in health and education initiatives alike (Karlan et al., 2014; Prina, 2015; Ruiz, 2013).

Despite this, inequalities among women exist in both conventional and digital financial methods. The issue of a gender gap regarding financial accessibility has been emphasized by the Global Findex Database among low-income groups, thereby demanding a closer look at Digital Financial Literacy from a gender perspective (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2015). From an empirical point of view, the linkages of Digital Financial Services (DFS) to Digital Financial Inclusion (DFI) are seemingly moderated by DFL because it represents a significant key driving force of sustainable finance (Hussain, Gupta, 2025). Although factors such as the level of earnings, age groups, and use of smartphones affect the mobilization of females for digital transactions, barriers such as lower skills in using the technology, social and cultural factors, language limitations, and security issues obstruct them (Kulkarni, Ghosh, 2021).

The region of Jamtara has specifically gained popularity in India for its involvement in carrying out phishing activities on a large scale, referred to as the ‘phishing capital of India’ (The Hindu, 2023).The financial side of cybercrime in India is expected to see a spate of growth (Rathore, 2023). The reason, structurally speaking, for the continuation of Jharkhand being the epicenter of cybercrimes, currently attracting considerable interest in research studies, will also be explored in this chapter. There have been reports that point towards the convergence of socioeconomic factors and technological factors. Unemployment, a lack of development in the industries, and the absence of livelihood options have lured marginalized youths into this sector, acting as a source of additional earnings (Kumar, 2021). The Jharkhand Government has launched many initiatives to increase public awareness and readiness in combating cybercrime. The first one is the release of the *Cyber Security Awareness Handbook* in Hindi as well as English, which raises awareness about typical cyber threats, including OTP fraud, phishing, job scams, social fraud, and cyber illusions (Times of India, 2020). Moreover, every government school in the country marks *Cyber Awareness Day* as *Cyber Jagrookta Diwas*on the first Wednesday of every month, highlighting cyber safety, cyber bullying, and the usage of the *National Cybercrime Reporting Portal* (Times of India, 2022). The *Police ki Pathshala*, which refers to *Police's classroom*, was launched in Jamtara, which was previously known as one of the country's *phishing capitals*,

to raise awareness about cybercrime through panchayat libraries, with the objective of making the district less vulnerable by *repainting its image* (The Hindu, 2023; News18, 2022).

Awareness studies regarding cybercrime in the context of India open up important observations regarding the challenges currently manifested in the context of DFL. In addition to advancements in digital engagement, the current gaps in awareness regarding digital risk, rules, and safeguards remain considerable despite advancements in digital engagement activities (Choudhary, 2020; Reddy, Shaik, 2023; Taba, 2024). These knowledge gaps are more problematic for women, who are exposed to higher risks of cyber frauds and harassment. Cybercrime against women suggests that these impediments hamper trust within digital platforms, thereby deterring engagement in finance (Kabi et al., 2022).

To conclude, the above-discussed literature essentially brings into focus the fact that, digital financial literacy stands to have immense possibilities in bridging the existing gap between women and men from the viewpoint of financial inclusion, various impediments, largely from the educational, structural, or cyber perspectives, prevent the full realization of its empowering possibilities. Nevertheless, the more complex interface of the factors of gender, digital risk, financial capability, with special reference to the Indian context, remains an under-explored phenomenon.The objective of the research is to assess and quantify the level of digital literacy among respondents by developing a Gender-based Digital Financial Literacy Index (DFLI) in the context of Ranchi District, Jharkhand, India.

A Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy, developed by W. James Potter, describes the process of navigating message-rich environments through filtering a message, interpreting schematically, and building meaning within the context of the message receiver's locus of knowledge of media systems (Potter, 2004). Applying this theory in the context of gender studies, for example, one could analyze the process of media's construction of gender norms in the context of message reception and negotiation (Kellner, Share, 2007). In support of this theory would be the Capability Theory of Amartya Sen, where the enabling freedoms of use of digital finance tools would be emphasized, rather than just the accessibility of these tools (Sen, 1999). Regarding the context of digital finance, the inequalities in terms of these skills, perceptions, and use appear to be restrictive for women in terms of the finance enablement aspects (Klapper et al., 2019; Singh, Gupta, 2021). These theories, both individually and cumulatively, are critical to understanding the effectiveness of message reception and capability acquisition within an equity-based empowerment of women (Banaji, Buckingham, 2013). The inclusion of media literacy components, based on W. James Potter's Media Literacy Theory, acknowledges that digital financial decision-making is a mediated information environment where critical evaluation skills are required.

## 2. Materials and methods

The research was carried out in Ranchi, which is the state capital of Jharkhand, identified as a hotspot for cybercrimes in India. A total of 480 respondents were chosen through a systematic sampling method to select blocks and villages. The research considered gender as variables to include both individualistic and social context factors as identified by the different theoretical perspectives. The study utilized a primary data collection approach by structured questionnaires with a scheduled survey approach. The structured questionnaire approach is designed to cover the quantifiable perspectives proposed by a scholar such as W. James Potter's Theory of Media Literacy: A Cognitive Approach, including perception, awareness, and decoding skills of online messages. Moreover, this survey also probed into themes uncovered in Capability Theory, proposed by Amartya Sen, such as socio-economic, trust, and communal attitudes regarding cybercrimes. For statistical analysis, some inferential statistical tests, such as Chi-Square, correlation, regression, among others, were employed in addition to descriptive statistical tests. It is further classified into categories such as Awareness & Access, Knowledge, Skills (Practical Ability), Behaviour & Usage, and Confidence & Attitude. For conducting statistical analyses, the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. At this point in the analysis, it was considered appropriate to employ some statistical tests in obtaining the target result. The key findings are presented in the findings section.

We surveyed between the time of November, 2024 and March 2025. The researchers visited each selected village to collect primary data. Participants were randomly selected and included both men and women, shop owners those who using UPI payment systems, as well as individuals

from different age groups, including youth and older adults as well. The data were collected with a set of closed-ended questionnaires administered through the scheduled method.

Additionally, we declared that our study followed all the ethical standards of academic inquiry. We strictly maintained the confidentiality of both the data and the identities of the participants throughout the research process. We utilized all the collected data solely for academic purposes and would submit it to the Central University of Jharkhand. The primary objective of the study is to address and contribute to the resolution of a pressing societal issue. We made sure ethicality of data collection process by briefing the participants about the study. We explained the purpose of the study and informed them that their participation was voluntary. We also told them how long the survey would take, the possible risks or discomforts, and the potential benefits of the research. We also informed participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time if they felt any discomfort. We utilized the data for derivative academic outputs, including conference presentations and journal publications. To ensure the validity and reliability of the survey questionnaire, we took help of other researchers from different fields. Two external experts in media studies gave a validation review to confirm the contemporary relevance of the survey questionnaire.

Moreover, we want to discuss the limitation of the research. First, we decided to divide the 480-survey sample into a 50-50 ratio for males and females. But the end result was a less percentage of women's participation. When we visited villages, we approached both men and women. While men participated fruitfully but women hesitated to take part in it. In women's participation, we faced a few challenges. One, women don't want to discuss money transactions because they think that money transactions are a man's matter. Second, men don't allow their wives or daughters to talk with outsiders. Third, tribal women are more progressive in this matter; they were willing to take part in the survey.

The ultimate composition of respondents used in the sample included 332 males (69.2 %) and 148 females (30.8 %). It is worth mentioning that such an imbalance is associated with some socio-cultural and structural realities of digital access and involvement in the current research setting. Undoubtedly, the gender imbalance can be identified as a significant limitation of the study conducted due to the fact that the research aims at addressing gender aspects of DFL and digital media use. Future research may benefit from targeted sampling strategies, region-specific gender balancing, and qualitative approaches that further explore women's digital financial experiences in contexts shaped by structural inequality.

At the result section, we mentioned gender data with individual percentages in the tables to visualize the survey data. We mentioned individual gender data percentages in every column of the tables.

**Table 1.** Variables details

| Survey Item | Variable Name | Dimension | Theoretical Relevance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Heard of any online money transaction terminologies? | V1. Digital Financial Terminology Awareness | Access and Exposure | Knowledge Structures (Potter's Theory) |
| Heard of any online money transaction methods? | V2. Digital Payment Method Awareness | Access and Exposure | Knowledge Structures (Potter's Theory) |
| Heard of any online money transaction apps? | V3. Digital Financial Application Awareness | Access and Exposure | Knowledge Structures (Potter's Theory) |
| Most used online money transaction apps | V4. Primary Digital Payment Application used | Usage and Adoption | Capability Utilization (Sen's Theory) |
| Precautions to verify the legitimacy of financial information | V5. Financial Information Verification Practices | Critical Evaluation and Risk Awareness | Critical Skills (Potter's Theory) |

| Survey Item | Variable Name | Dimension | Theoretical Relevance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Verification rate | V6. Verification Behaviour Score | Agency and cognitive Processing | Interpretative Autonomy (Potter's Theory) |
| Have people experienced any of the following | V7. Experience with Digital Financial Risks | Risk Exposure and Security Outcomes | Conversion Factors (Sen's Theory) |
| Self-assessment items (four) | V8. Understanding the language of online bank information;<br>V9. Awareness regarding online transactions;<br>V10. Ability to verify the authenticity of financial information received through media;<br>V11. Knowledge of common financial frauds such as phishing scams, Ponzi schemes, and identity theft. | Self-Efficacy and Agency | Agency (Sen's Theory) |

The DFLI was used to assess respondents' DFL skills. Composite indexes are popularly utilized in social science research studies for measuring complicated and multidimensional issues by incorporating various indicators to form a univariate variable (OECD, 2008; Sarma, 2008). The DFLI is a measure of capability in the current study, which combines the knowledge of respondents about financial information, verification process, awareness of financial threats, and confidence in using digital finance.

The formation of the DFLI framework was influenced by Cognitive Media Literacy Theory by Potter and Capability Approach by Amartya Sen. According to Potter (Potter, 2019), media literacy includes knowledge structure, analysis, and verification capabilities that help people to interact effectively within media communication environments. Sen (Sen, 1999) also states that capabilities can be viewed as effective freedoms which allow individuals to make good use of their potential opportunities. In other words, DFL should not be considered only from a technical perspective but as a capability that enables safe interaction with digital finance resources.

The DFLI was constructed using five conceptual dimensions: Knowledge and Exposure (KE), Usage and Adoption (UA), Verification and Risk Management (VR), Security Experience (SE), and Self-Efficacy and Agency (SA). The above factors included the participant's awareness of digital finance system, the use of internet transaction system, the verification of financial data, awareness of digital financial fraud, and finally confidence in the usage of digital financial technology.

An equal-weighted arithmetic mean was used in the creation of the index due to the theory that there exists a relationship among all the dimensions and their importance in the calculation of the DFL of people in digital-mediated environments (OECD, 2008). The application of equal weights in the creation of indexes is very common, especially in exploratory researches (Nardo et al., 2008). Accordingly, equal weights were assigned to all five dimensions, and the overall DFLI was calculated using the following formula:

$$DFLI = \frac{KE + UA + VR + SE + SA}{5}$$

The selected variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale, whereby "1" signified the lowest level of awareness/competence while "5" signified the highest level. In this regard, since higher values signified higher levels of digital financial literacy, there was no need for reverse

coding for the selected variables. The resulting composite variable was then standardized to a 0–100 scale using the following normalization equation:

$$DFLI_{100} = \frac{\bar{X} - 1}{4} \times 100$$

where (\bar{X}) represents the respondent's average score across the selected DFLI items.

The range of scores obtained on the DFLI was between 0 and 100, with high scores showing high levels of digital financial literacy. The reliability test that was carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics provided a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.788.

## 3. Discussion

The discussions are followed by few themes concerned with access and exposure, cognitive processing, agency and capability expansion, structural barriers to capability expansion and application of digital financial literacy in daily life.The Digital Financial Inclusion Index (DFII) evaluates the use and accessibility of digital financial services pertaining to mobile banking, digital payments, and fintech services (Sarma, 2015). The aforementioned indices focus on various parameters, such as the present and use of the services, and the overall quality of the services, to measure the level of digital finance present in the region (Kim, Yu, 2020).

Moreover, it has been observed that financial decision-making has been impacted by mediated influences, such as social influencers, advertising through algorithms, and fintech advertising. This implies that people who have higher digital financial literacy skills find it easier to analyze digital financial information to make informed choices regarding it (Lyons, Kass-Hanna, 2021). This again aligns perfectly with one of the basic aims of media literacy skills, which is analytical assessment. As Sarma (Sarma, 2015) states, it is important that not only are people able to access these services, but their capabilities must also be developed to use these services effectively and not get exploited by the financial service providers and their accomplices. Digital financial literacy education can be defined as a specialized field of media literacy in the modern digital society. From the perspective of Amartya Sen's Capabilities Approach, digital financial literacy education should be understood not only as a technical skill set but also as an enabling capability that increases the absolute freedom to participate in the digital economy. Media literacy increases this skill by improving interpretative autonomy and resisting manipulation in mediated financial contexts. Therefore, the inclusion of media literacy in digital financial literacy education is important for taking advantage of digital access to enable effective and safe financial participation.

One of the most important findings that have come to light in relation to this research has to do with the DFL being an important part of protecting individual subjects from digital financial risk. These are represented by Choung, Chatterjee, and Pak (Choung et al., 2023) and refer to how fraud awareness skills, secure skills in digital transactions, and knowledge of financial products online can help to build financial well-being. This is why media literacy education is inefficient without the necessary knowledge of financial scam data.

In the study, men and women of the respondents said they have almost equal access to digital media. However, the usage of the media is quite different. Men used online apps for money transactions and other digital work, while women (74.33 %) use online shopping somewhat more. Women (62.83 %) also indicated that they used social media more to learn about cybercrime and to stay updated. Women (45.95 %) are also making use of online money transactions in their business. This shows that these phenomena are not solely dependent on technical issues but rather on gender expectations with respect to their social roles, which influence their level of information and opinions. According to Potter's framework, this suggests a variation in *knowledge structures*, men drawing more from instrumental and technological domains, while women emphasise social and relational contexts.

At the primary level, Financial Literacy was found to positively influence performance, indicating that indicators of literacy should be included in a composite digital financial index (Tuffour et al., 2020). Such findings are therefore in concert with the wider literature that emphasizes the role of digital trust and cybersecurity knowledge in digital financial inclusion (Hasan et al., 2021). Thinking about terms used in media use is associated with knowledge acquisition, structuring, and application processes. For Potter, based on Cognitive Approach Media Literacy Theory, audiences use pre-existent knowledge structures concerning media, content,

effects, and reality to interpret and evaluate messages communicated through media. There are 88.25 % of male respondents familiar with 'Bank cards', and men are more likely to recall the UPI Apps name than women, but women are more familiar with the UPI Apps' features. Apparently, gender influences the way these knowledge structures are formed and activated. Males exhibited a broader yet superficial level of knowledge, which they acquired through quick scanning on several information sources. Female respondents, however, engaged more deeply with personal needs. Their knowledge was not merely based on facts but also on understanding meanings of a social and cultural kind. This includes information relating to gender roles that they observe or observe through stereotypes.

Media use agency is established with regard to the manner in which persons use information with circumspection, verification, and self-confidence. It was discovered that female participants used circumspection with regard to source credibility in verifying before accepting any information as true. This is consistent with Potter's views on critical cognitive skills which require verification as an integral part of high-order media literacy. However, for men, acceptance was readily gained, and with their confidence in the use of media technology established, fewer tendencies towards verification were noted.

Male participants were normally demonstrating their confidence with regard to the application of media knowledge for professional or political purposes, to help them expand their capabilities within public contexts. The female participants were also demonstrating their critical knowledge of verification and awareness. The male participants demonstrated confidence with regard to articulating their views within the public domain or going against the dominant discourse, taking into consideration societal constraints for the female participants. Based upon the perspective of Sen, this indicates that both gender groups apply their potential effectively, but the application of literacy to develop capabilities confronts obstacles beyond those of knowledge.

Current evidence reveals that financial literacy in a digital environment, namely the skills-and-knowledge set for digital platforms, risk management in finance, and secure transactions, correlates very closely with a higher score on the digital financial inclusion index (Grohmann et al.,2018). Improving literacy leads to greater adaptability with Internet-based banking, mobile payment systems, and fintech solutions in influencing country-level and regional-level scores (Lusardi, Mitchell, 2014). In the study, a number of gender issues were revealed. Even as women showed high capability in critical evaluation related to the content of media, they were impeded in stating their opinions or participating in decision-making arenas. The traditional gender roles and expectations limited their application of knowledge to the private domain.

Men could access a personal device more readily, as well as internet access without interruption; along with more freedom of choice as far as media websites were concerned. Women's access might be mediated by their immediate family members or through the use of a shared device, thereby inhibiting their freedom of action when it came to discovering a wider array of sources. Even if these women were highly media-literate, their freedom of action when it came to using this knowledge at a workplace or academic level or in daily life might be inhibited by issues of inequality relating to wage discrimination, a lack of representation as leaders, and mobility constraints.

According to Sen, such limitations demonstrate the disconnection between the possession of knowledge and freedom to employ the knowledge for optimal results. The importance of media literacy, as indicated by Potter, develops cognitive skills. However, as explained by Sen, without the removal of structural limitations, such literacy does not necessarily result in increased freedoms for everyone, especially women. In such a way, structural restrictions act as constraints that inhibit the full exploitation of human capabilities.

The available evidence suggests that improved access to financial services may enable women to have more control over their earnings and be more autonomous in decision-making; they are even able to participate in the labour market (Field et al., 2016; Islam et al., 2014; Suri, Jack, 2016). Regardless of these facts, the current levels of use of digital finance among women are constrained by factors like restricted digital access, relatively lower education, binding social norms, and limited awareness of the law. Systematic reviews reveal that the current state of research on FI & DFL mostly overlooks outcomes at the institutional level and also ignores the question of age (Gammage et al., 2017).

It was revealed in the study that the implementation of this literacy in the context of day-to-day life was practiced by both males and females in different ways. Males actively engaged the digital

platform for the payment of bills, transfer of funds, tracking investments, and business transactions, given the confidence they had in applying the technological tool. Females also utilized the digital financial knowledge they had in limited ways, which included domestic and educational expenses.

According to Potter, this means there are disparities where the patterns of structures and cognitive ways relate to the application of men using digital literacy in the economic business world compared to the critical and limited domestic world that the females apply. Verification was mostly evident in the case of females, who verified some of their transactions to avoid fraud and have the capabilities to evaluate.

From Sen's view, the technological skill concerning digital financial literacy is an expansion of capabilities because it provides people with the capacity to make their own decisions regarding enhanced autonomy, efficiency, and agency when it comes to financial affairs in their lives. From the structural perspective, the constraints in the application and utilization of smartphones, training, and access through male relatives limited the full utilization of the capabilities by the women's gender group since both gender groups possess the capacity to utilize digital financial literacy in the different dimensions of their lives and thereby influence their agency and real freedoms.

As per the field visit observation, there are various factors that draw the concept of digital divide in India away from economic considerations, and it has become imperative for digital inclusion efforts, along with the economic, also to consider the different socio-cultural family scenarios that exist in the country. It has been observed that at the household level, which constitutes the foundation of empirical analysis in India, factors such as culture, regional considerations, and endogenous factors, such as historical dimensions, play an important role. Although mobile phone possession depends heavily on economic factors for the wider populace, the uses and access offered by mobile phones, which are essentially for the personal use and privacy of the user, are often not available at the disposal of women and the youth, and the shared use also creates the digital divide at the intra-household level.

## 4. Results

Among 480 respondents, 148 (30.8 %) are female, and 332 (69.2 %) are male. The majority of respondents (53.5 %) belong to the age group of 19-30 years, followed by 31–40 years (19.8 %), the age group between 41-50 years (8.8 %), and those above 50 years (15 %). Additionally, most participants (35.6 %) held a graduate degree, and 15.6 % of the participants are illiterate. Interestingly, 99 % of the respondents can speak Hindi (Official Language of Union of India).

Most respondents (96.3 %) own mobile phones. 3.8 % of people don’t have a mobile phone, but among those people, 4.16 % of respondents use their family member’s mobile phone. Most respondents (98.3 %) are using smartphones. Only 1.6 % of respondents have a basic mobile phone. Interestingly, only 35.14 % of women respondents use online money transaction apps regularly, in compare with large male respondents (62.05 %) use online money transaction apps regularly.

The purpose of media use refers to the reasons why people engage with different media platforms or content. Most of the participants (81.8 %) use UPI APPs to send money to others, and 78.54 % of respondents are accustomed to making online purchases through online transactions. Moreover, no women participants are interested in spending money on purchasing music, videos, e-books & articles through online transactions. Almost in every section, the percentage of men and women is approximately equal. A significant (50.62 %) number of participants are using UPI in their business.

Building skill sets to identify and counter cyber fraud is a vital task for improving financial security. A small percentage (16.87 % including 31.75 % of male & 22.97 % female) of participants joined the awareness program about cyber fraud in the Ranchi district.

The researcher covers a few of the digital financial terminology such as National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT), Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS), Electronic Clearing System (ECS), Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), QR Code (Quick Response Code), UPI (Unified Payments Interface), OTP (One-Time Password), CVV (Card Verification Value), KYC (Know Your Customer). Interestingly, most respondents (90 %, 94.79 %, and 96.25 %, respectively) are familiar with QR Codes, UPIs, and OTPs. Only 42.9 % of them are aware of the National Electronic Fund Transfer.

**Table 1.** Heard of any online money transaction terminologies?

| Multiple Choice Options | Frequency | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Female(30.8 %) | Male (69.2 %) | |
| a. NEFT | 51 (34.45 %) | 99 (29.81 %) | 31.25 |
| b. RTGS | 31 (20.94 %) | 66 (19.87 %) | 20.20 |
| c. ECS | 21 (14.18 %) | 13 (03.92 %) | 7.08 |
| d. IMPS | 23 (15.54 %) | 46 (13.85 %) | 14.37 |
| e. QR Code (Quick Response Code) | 360 (90 %) | 72 (90 %) | 90 |
| f. UPI (Unified Payments Interface) | 376 (94 %) | 79 (98.75 %) | 94.79 |
| g. OTP (One-Time Password) | 383 (95.75 %) | 79 (98.75 %) | 96.25 |
| h. CVV | 266 (66.5 %) | 68 (85 %) | 69.58 |
| i. KYC | 203 (50.75 %) | 56 (70 %) | 53.95 |

Digital payment systems have increasingly replaced cash transactions by offering faster, safer, and more cost-effective alternatives, particularly in developing economies such as India. A range of instruments supports this shift, including banking cards, Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) (13.33 %), the Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AEPS) (34.79 %), UPI (38.12 %), mobile wallets (42.92 %), prepaid cards (20.42 %), point-of-sale (PoS) terminals (16.04 %), micro ATMs (31.66 %), and mobile banking (6.66 %).

**Table 2.** Heard of any online money transaction method?

| Multiple Choice Options | Frequency | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Female (30.8 %) | Male (69.2 %) | |
| a. Banking Cards | 103 (69.59 %) | 293 (88.25 %) | 82.5 |
| b.USSD | 08 (5.40 %) | 56 (16.86 %) | 13.33 |
| c. AEPS | 52 (35.14 %) | 115 (34.63 %) | 34.79 |
| d. UPI | 61 (41.22 %) | 122 (36.74 %) | 38.12 |
| e. Mobile Wallet | 46 (31.08 %) | 160 (48.19 %) | 42.92 |
| f. Banks Prepaid Cards | 12 (08.10 %) | 86 (25.90 %) | 20.42 |
| g. POS | 14 (09.45 %) | 63 (18.97 %) | 16.04 |
| h. Internet Banking | 51 (34.45 %) | 103 (31.02 %) | 32.08 |
| i. Micro ATMS | 50 (33.78 %) | 102 (30.72 %) | 31.66 |
| j. Mobile Banking | 12 (08.10 %) | 20 (06.02 %) | 6.66 |

Here, the researcher tries to verify the recall value of respondents about the online money transaction app. According to the survey results, Google Pay(98.75 %), Paytm(98.54 %), and PhonePe (93.12 %) are the top three apps in terms of recall value. But interestingly, as per the respondents, 26.6 % of participants use Google Pay, and 22.2 % use PhonePe mostly.

Only 24.79 % of respondents cross checked information from various sources. Only 5.42 % of participants use online tools to check for scams and 11.25 % verify information with financial institutions.

41.45 % (51.35 % of female & 37.04 % of male)including of users adopt strong authentications like complex passwords, PINs, biometric verification, which are required to be adopted to prevent unauthorised access to financial apps. Regular software and application updates (only 10 %) are the key to ensure that security patches are being implemented by the software to patch the vulnerabilities being exploited by attackers. Another important preventive method is to download apps from trusted locations (only 8.95 %), which can protect the system from malware attacks.

Similarly, users should opt for extra security options like enabling two-factor verifications (only 20.83 %), giving an extra sense of protection in the event of the loss of devices. Not more than 3.34 % of users are cautious while entering public Wi-Fi connections that can be easily intercepted by attackers. Use of virtual private networks (VPNs) (only 1.04 %) can provide an extended level of security to sensitive transactions. Not to forget that awareness about phishing activities can be vital

in preventing unauthorised transactions initiated by attackers in the form of SMS or online messaging services (only 4.37 %). But the noticeable outcome the result of the survey is that in all sections of precautions women score higher than male.

**Table 3.** Heard of any online money transaction apps?

| Heard of any online money transaction apps? | | | | The most used online money transactions apps | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Multiple Choice Options | Frequency | | Total Percentage | Frequency | | Total Percentage |
| | Female (30.8 %) | Male (69.2 %) | | Female (30.8 %) | Male (69.2 %) | |
| a. Google Pay | 143 (96.63 %) | 331 (99.69 %) | 98.75 | 107 (72.29 %) | 276 (83.14 %) | 79.79 |
| b. BHIM | 101 (68.24 %) | 255 (76.80 %) | 74.16 | 46 (31.08 %) | 95 (28.62 %) | 29.37 |
| c. Paytm | 142 (95.94 %) | 331 (99.69 %) | 98.54 | 71 (47.97 %) | 197 (59.34 %) | 55.83 |
| d. MobiKwik | 34 (22.97 %) | 105 (31.63 %) | 28.95 | 08 (05.40 %) | 58 (17.46 %) | 13.75 |
| e. Amazon Pay | 88 (59.45 %) | 221 (66.56 %) | 64.37 | 24 (16.22 %) | 122 (36.74 %) | 30.41 |
| f. PhonePe | 129 (87.16 %) | 318 (95.78 %) | 93.12 | 95 (64.18 %) | 225 (67.77 %) | 66.66 |
| g. Jio Money | 62 (41.89 %) | 105 (31.63 %) | 34.79 | 01 (0.67 %) | 29 (08.73 %) | 6.25 |
| h. Airtel Money | 60 (40.54 %) | 118 (35.54 %) | 37.08 | 0 | 29 (08.73 %) | 60 |
| i. ICICI Pockets | 20 (13.52 %) | 16 (04.82 %) | 7.5 | 06 (04.05 %) | 40 (12.05 %) | 9.58 |
| j. HDFC PayZapp | 25 (16.89 %) | 25 (07.54 %) | 10.42 | 10 (06.75 %) | 01 (0.30 %) | 2.29 |
| k. YONO SBI | 41 (27.70 %) | 109 (32.84 %) | 31.25 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| l. Ola Money | 17 (11.48 %) | 37 (11.14 %) | 11.25 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| m. Vodafone M-pesa | 08 (05.40 %) | 23 (06.93 %) | 6.4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| n. Airtel Payments Bank | 02 (01.35 %) | 37 (11.14 %) | 8.12 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| o. Momoe Xpress | 01 (0.67 %) | 03 (0.90 %) | 0.83 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| p. Mswipe | 02 (01.35 %) | 00 | 0.42 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| q. PNB ONE | 01 (0.67 %) | 20 (06.03 %) | 4.37 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**Table 4.** Precautions to verify the legitimacy of financial information

| Multiple Choice Options | Frequency | | Total Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Female (30.8 %) | Male (69.2 %) | |
| a. Cross-referencing multiple sources | 55 (37.16 %) | 64 (19.27 %) | 24.79 |
| b. Seeking professional advice | 32 (21.63 %) | 26 (07.84 %) | 12.08 |
| c. Verifying information with financial institutions | 42 (28.37 %) | 12 (03.62 %) | 11.25 |
| d. Using online tools to check for scams | 02 (01.35 %) | 24 (07.22 %) | 5.42 |

In the current online environment, it has become imperative for individuals to check the authenticity of websites since it helps protect individuals against fraud and cyber-attacks. With spam websites (only 18.95 % aware), it becomes difficult for the websites to steal sensitive information such as login passwords, Aadhaar numbers, or PAN card details through which identity theft or lose of money.

**Table 5.** Verification rate

| Multiple Choice Options | Frequency | | Total Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Female (30.8 %) | Male (69.2 %) | |
| a. Check for the “http://” in the URL | 36 (10.84 %) | 55 (16.56 %) | 18.95 |
| b. Look for a padlock symbol in the address bar | 18 (12.16 %) | 16 (04.82 %) | 7.08 |
| c. Verify the website’s reputation and reviews | 25 (16.89 %) | 28 (08.44 %) | 11.04 |
| d. Use security software or antivirus programs | 23 (15.54 %) | 02 (0.60 %) | 5.20 |

Recognising fraud at an early stage not only allows individuals to protect themselves but also facilitates the dissemination of warnings within families and communities, thereby breaking the cycle of victimisation. Table 6, portrayed that men respondents receive more fake phone calls (86.74 %) and fake messages (74.09 %) than women.

**Table 6.** Have people experienced any of the following

| Multiple Choice Options | Frequency | | Total Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Female (30.8 %) | Male (69.2 %) | |
| a. Fake phone calls | 111 (75 %) | 288 (86.74 %) | 83.13 |
| b. Fake messages | 86 (58.10 %) | 246 (74.09 %) | 69.16 |
| c. Spam Email | 28 (18.92 %) | 37 (11.14 %) | 13.54 |

The researcher set a five-point Likert scale to assess the self-assessment capability of the respondents. A reliability test is applied to four questions based on a five-point Likert scale. Cronbach’s Alpha is a statistical measure used to assess the reliability (or internal consistency) of a set of scale or test items. A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.788 indicates a good level of internal consistency among the items in a scale or questionnaire.

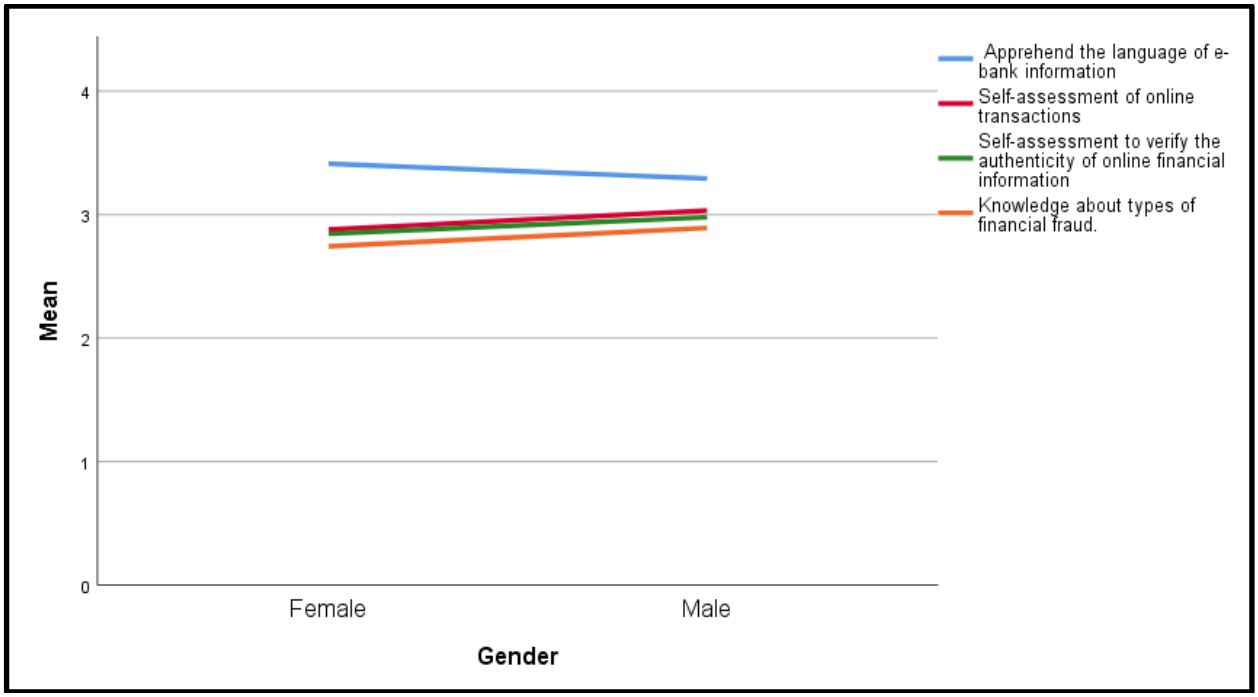


**Fig. 1.** Gender Vs. Self-assessment items

The line graph depicts the average scores of four scale points based on gender (male and female). As clear from the graph, both genders expressed greater confidence in understanding the language of e-bank information, wherein slightly higher average scores have been expressed by females as compared to males. At the same time, both males and females expressed least awareness concerning knowledge of financial fraud types. In relation to other two points, namely self-evaluation of online transactions and self-evaluation to check the authenticity of financial online information, males have expressed slightly higher average scores as compared to females. Nonetheless, there is minimal difference between males and females concerning their awareness related to finance going online.

*Digital Financial Literacy Index*

**Table 8.** Apply variables to the five dimensions

| *Dimension* | *Meaning* |
|---|---|
| KE = Knowledge & Exposure | Awareness and understanding of digital finance |
| UA = Usage & Adoption | Practical use of digital financial tools |
| VR = Verification & Risk Management | Ability to verify and avoid fraud |
| SE = Security Experience | Awareness/experience of fraud risks |
| SA = Self-Efficacy & Agency | Confidence and perceived competence |

Conceptual Individual DFLI Formula

$$DFLI = w_1KE + w_2UA + w_3VR + w_4SE + w_5SA$$

where:

**Table 8.** Symbol and meaning

| *Symbol* | *Meaning* |
|---|---|
| $w_1$ | Weight assigned to Knowledge & Exposure |
| $w_2$ | Weight assigned to Usage & Adoption |
| $w_3$ | Weight assigned to Verification & Risk Management |
| $w_4$ | Weight assigned to Security Experience |
| $w_5$ | Weight assigned to Self-Efficacy & Agency |

$$w_1 + w_2 + w_3 + w_4 + w_5 = 1$$

Since the study is exploratory and interdisciplinary, the best approach is equal weighting. Thus:

$$w_1 = w_2 = w_3 = w_4 = w_5 = 0.20$$

So the final formula becomes:

$$DFLI = 0.20KE + 0.20UA + 0.20VR + 0.20SE + 0.20SA$$

or simply:

$$DFLI = \frac{KE + UA + VR + SE + SA}{5}$$

*The formula to Compute Each Dimension*

(a)Knowledge & Exposure Index (KE)

Variables: V8 & V9

Formula: $KE = \frac{V8+V9}{2}$

(b) Usage & Adoption Index (UA)

Variables: V8, V10 & V11

$$UA = \frac{U_1 + U_2 + U_3}{3}$$

(c) Verification & Risk Management (VR)

Variable: V10

Thus: $VR = Q26$

(d) Security Experience Index (SE)

Variable: V11

Thus: $SE = Q27$

(e) Self-Efficacy & Agency (SA)

Variable: V8, V10 & V11

The DFLI scores of the 480 respondents ranged from 0 to 100, with a mean score of 58.28 (SD = 25.35). The findings indicate a moderate level of DFL among the respondents overall. Though the participants showed knowledge about the digital financial system as well as awareness about digital transactions, differences were seen in terms of verification, fraud prevention, and confidence about using digital financial tools.

**Table 10.** Interpretation of DFLI scores

| DFLI Score Range | Interpretation |
|---|---|
| 0–20 | Very Low |
| 21–40 | Low |
| 41–60 | Moderate |
| 61–80 | High |
| 81–100 | Very High |

Findings from gender-based analysis showed differences in how the respondents used and interpreted DFL. The male respondents were found to be more confident in using the digital financial tools and online financial systems. On the other hand, the female respondents had better verification skills and knowledge of financial frauds and authentication.

In order to determine whether these differences led to any statistical significance in their overall digital financial literacy levels, an independent samples t-test was carried out on the DFLI scores. This test revealed that the average DFLI score for males was 58.58, whereas for females, it was 57.60. Nevertheless, there was no statistical significance between the two groups ($t = 0.362$, $p = 0.718$).

The above discussion implies that while there are differences between the two genders in relation to their approach to and utilization of DFL, their general level of DFL is not very different from each other. It has been seen that the differences between the two genders lie more in terms of application and verification behaviour rather than literacy itself.

## 5. Conclusion

The study shows that while media and digital literacy are accessible for men and women, processing and application occur in gendered ways. Men are more functional in terms of leveraging

knowledge of media and digital technology in professional and public domains, while women are expected to be more critically capable, but are hampered by certain socio-economic and cultural factors, which obviously impede the development of ability. On the basis of the cognitive approach to knowledge presented by Potter and the Capability Approach formulated by Sen, findings imply that knowledge and literacy by themselves cannot be the instruments of empowerment but are instead subject to the dictates of individual agency. Agency and enhancement of capabilities depend on both caution and verification (critical processing of knowledge) and self-confidence (courage to take action based on knowledge). These factors combine to make media literacy a meaningful empowerment; whereas, in conditions where these factors are limited, the potentials of literacy lie in wait to be discovered. The gender differences are there, yet not substantial, which means both male and female respondents demonstrate the same levels of digital financial literacy.

On the basis of the findings, this study proposes that digital financial inclusion initiatives should include media literacy components in digital financial literacy programs. With the growing use of financial transactions in media-enabled digital environments, training programs should include information on how to avoid deceptive financial advertisements, resist phishing attacks, check online financial information, and understand how persuasive intent in digital content is created.

The paper also suggests that policymakers should use gender-sensitive methods to deal with the gaps in the use of digital tools, awareness, and confidence among women. Special training sessions in self-help groups and educational institutions can help improve the critical and operational abilities of women. The report recommends that there should be a combined effort in the development of digital financial and media literacy frameworks by government institutions, fintech companies, NGOs, and learning institutions. This will ensure that there is an improvement in financial resilience, reduced vulnerability to digital fraud, and increased inclusivity and security in the digital economy.

As such, digital and media literacy cannot be treated as separate variables. Digital financial literacy is the enabling platform for digital financial transactions, while media literacy is the critical filter that enables the navigation of the mediated environment of financial information. They, therefore, offer a comprehensive framework for financial resilience in the digital age. The inclusion of media literacy in the study of digital financial literacy offers depth to the theory and enables more accurate measurement and comprehensive policy interventions for inclusive and secure digital financial participation.

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# Media Industry and Media Production: the Educational Community's Response to the Challenges of Artificial Intelligence

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**Abstract**

This article examines the educational community's response to the challenges posed by the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI). The authors identify four key aspects of the education system's necessary response: active adaptation and integration; balanced and meaningful application; affirmation of humanistic values; and participation in the formation of ethical norms. The paper also emphasises the crucial role of media literacy education in equipping students with the competencies to critically evaluate AI-generated content and to use AI tools responsibly. The authors argue that society's future attitude toward this technology depends on education's ability to adequately assess and wisely apply AI. Preserving human agency and independent thinking in the face of irreversible technological progress is declared a key task. The empirical basis of the study was curricula for the use of AI in training personnel for the information sphere. The results of the study showed that the introduction of generative neural networks and immersive technologies affects the fundamental foundations of media production. Under the influence of technology, significant transformations have occurred in media practices, requiring personalized training for information workers using intelligent learning systems.

**Keywords:** education, higher education, media technologies, machine communication, communication, media communication, journalism, artificial intelligence, media literacy, media literacy education.

## 1. Introduction

The relevance of this research is explained by the unprecedented growth in the use of artificial intelligence in the creation of informational products and the significant transformations in journalism under the influence of technology. Scenarios for reforming and representing the image of the digital future are inconceivable without mass media, which construct reality (Algaliyeva, Shalkarbek, 2024; Gálik et al., 2024; Gálik, 2019; Shafir, Tatarsky, 2025; Shilina, 2023; Shilina, 2024; Tinák, Gálik, 2026; Volcic et al., 2023; Volodenkov, Konson, 2023).

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is driven by numerous factors, including human curiosity, the desire to increase productivity, the capitalist pursuit of profit (Volcic, 2023), and technological competition between states. The rapid penetration of AI into all spheres of human activity undoubtedly presents serious challenges for education (Zhang, 2025) in achieving educational equality and increasing efficiency in the educational process. The problem is multifaceted, hence the diversity of aspects in its discussion: the use of AI in higher education in general (Adiguzel et al., 2023; Johnston et al., 2024; Owa et al., 2023; Such, 2021;

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Toteva, 2023), in humanities education (Li, 2025; Rashid et al., 2024; Warschauer et al., 2023), and in business education (Wang, 2025).

Of particular interest to our research are review articles and special issues – collections of articles on AI applications in the information sphere (Akinfiev, Bodrunova, 2025; Pavlik, 2023).

In the work of media expert A. Gradyushko, the results of surveys of 260 students from BSU and Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno are presented, according to which 59 % use 2–3 AI tools, selecting them depending on the specific task. The most frequently mentioned tool by respondents was ChatGPT – 82.7 % of the total number of respondents. It is followed by DeepSeek – 41.9 %, Midjourney – 28.5 %, Copilot – 25.8 %, and YandexGPT – 12.3 %. Thus, universal language models and multimodal platforms predominate among students. Important is the students' understanding of the boundaries of AI application in the educational process. 88.5 % of students believe that training in the use of neural networks should be included in the educational process: 45 % advocate a mandatory format, 43.5 % – an elective one (Gradyushko, 2026). Other studies also show a clear demand for systematic training in working with AI (Buyakova et al., 2024; Rubtsova, 2024).

A large number of articles are devoted to the use of ChatGPT in the broad context of media, information, and digital literacy. The scholarly discourse raises ethical, pedagogical, and cultural implications of generative AI in higher education. The importance of such tools as an aid for technical writing is emphasized, along with a warning against over-reliance on AI and the loss of individual style in media products.

In recent years, studies have emerged that compare key directions in international AI research with the Russian research context. The problems of artificial intelligence are being intensively studied in various countries.

With the technical development of the digital environment, the question of the human essence, defined by the capacity for independent thinking and the presence of a humanistic spirit, becomes increasingly acute. While the development of AI has significantly enhanced the efficiency of educational and production processes, abandoning the inherent humanistic principle is unacceptable. AI relies on machine algorithms in a process conditionally termed "thinking." However, can such "thinking" be considered independent? The answer to this question may vary depending on one's point of view.

The rapid, particularly breakneck, evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) technology may harbor unforeseeable risks. Concurrently with the advancement of AI, technologies like brain-computer interfaces are also developing at a staggering pace. Consequently, the future convergence of AI with technologies such as brain-computer interfaces could potentially blur, or even fundamentally alter, human biological makeup. Prior to the launch of ChatGPT, Hehui wrote and published a science fiction novel titled *Invasion of the Unknown*. Through literature, this novel explores an extreme potential state of human biology under conditions of unchecked AI advancement. This work of science fiction reflects the author's profound apprehension regarding the consequences of extreme AI development, even as the author actively advocate for its positive application (He, 2022).

What distinguishes humans from animals? Leibniz once argued that "animals act purely empirically, guided only by examples, for, as far as we can judge, animals are absolutely incapable of formulating necessary propositions, whereas man is capable of demonstrative science. This is precisely why the associative function possessed by animals is something inferior to the reason inherent in man" (Leibniz, 2017).

Today, we might add that AI technologies allow machines to use existing knowledge (including demonstrative science) for associations and reasoning, potentially surpassing the human mind. Nevertheless, the key question is not AI's relative position on a scale of intellectual development, but its inability, unlike a human being as an independent personality, to rely on its own unique thinking and respond to constant changes – even if those reactions are erroneous. In other words, AI's associative and deductive thinking, based on algorithms, lacks uniqueness and individuality. Based on the existing definition of the term "human," AI cannot be equated with human intelligence.

The strategic direction for the future application of AI technologies lies in realizing the concept of human-machine cooperation, not in completely replacing human labor. In the process of carrying out activities within the framework of human-machine cooperation, people must and are obliged to preserve their inherent humanistic spirit. Otherwise, humanity will lose its agency,

the individual will lose their independence and individuality as a person, and become an appendage of the machine. In a recent report from Anthropic, forecasts regarding labor productivity in the USA were adjusted. Taking into account potential AI errors and failures, Anthropic predicts that AI will contribute to productivity growth of 1.0–1.2 % annually over the next decade. If the forecast proves correct, US productivity growth rates would return to the level of the internet boom period of the late 1990s. This forecast is based on the capabilities of models from November 2025. With the release of Claude Opus 4.5 and the strengthening trend where users are moving from trying to offload all work to AI towards more effective cooperation – which is gradually becoming the dominant behavior model – this indicator has enormous growth potential (Anthropic, 2026).

Anthropic's research also confirms that the paradigm for human-AI coexistence should be oriented toward human-machine cooperation, not the complete replacement of humans by AI. The educational community must clearly formulate and advocate the idea that it is the human, not the machine, who is the subject of the creation and transmission of human civilization. It is the human who created human civilization as the subject. AI, which emerged at a certain stage in human history, is also a part of civilization created by humans. Educators, as bearers of an epochal responsibility and mission to transmit culture and human civilization, must consistently emphasize to students the enduring significance of the humanistic spirit.

## 2. Materials and methods

The research methods employed are discourse analysis and critical analysis of scientific discourse. The research methodology is interdisciplinary due to the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the phenomenon of AI's image in the digital future. The research methodology does not involve experiments or the use of quantitative data. A critical review of the scientific literature is correlated with existing practices of AI implementation in journalism, public relations, and advertising (Barsan, 2023; Toteva, 2023) and with educational curricula.

## 3. Discussion

A critical analysis of the scientific literature revealed the following:

*First, the integration of AI into education requires not only technological adaptation but also a pedagogical rethinking of media literacy***.** Recent scholarship emphasises that media literacy education must evolve to address the challenges posed by generative AI. Mensonides et al. (Mensonides et al, 2024) provide a practical tool for assessing student competencies. Liao, Rodwell, and Porter (Liao et al., 2024) explored media framing of AI romantic relationships, highlighting how public discourse shapes perceptions and the need for media literacy to counter misleading narratives. Together, these studies underscore that media literacy education is not merely about tool usage but about fostering critical thinking, ethical awareness, and social responsibility in the AI era.

*Second, education must actively adapt to the trend of the rapid development of AI technologies, rather than passively resist.* On a conceptual level, it is necessary to actively embrace it, rather than passively resist it. AI technologies have made significant progress in a short period, exerting a broad and deep influence. The rapid development of AI itself is a consequence of its active application in various fields, especially in the information sphere. Modern education cannot remain aloof from this influence. The educational concept determines approaches and methods of teaching. In the field of education, despite the doubts and resistance of some educators, the influence of AI technologies is an objective trend. Only by actively accepting, learning about, and studying AI can educators subsequently successfully apply and manage these technologies. Rejecting AI due to a negative attitude will lead to education becoming disconnected from modern technologies and societal needs, rendering graduates non-competitive. The integration of AI into education can be realized in various aspects, including learning content, teaching methods, the educational process, and the management of educational activities. The sequence of implementation depends on the educational infrastructure, concepts, and traditions of specific countries and universities. However, regardless of the sequence, the trend of using AI to empower education is inevitable. For example, the Key Laboratory of Artificial Intelligence and Human Language at Beijing Foreign Studies University actively conducts research in AI-based language teaching, multilingual corpora, natural language processing, and enhancing intellectual capabilities

in foreign language learning. Since 2020, Beijing Language and Culture University has been implementing a large-scale project, "Smart Education of International Chinese".

Artificial intelligence, particularly large language models, can significantly enhance the efficiency of learning and work processes. It is commonly believed that AI is effective in performing routine tasks; however, its capabilities are limited in areas requiring deep expert knowledge. However, recent research demonstrates a different perspective. According to data from Anthropic dated January 15, 2026, the "acceleration" provided by AI increases proportionally to the complexity of the task. The report shows that for tasks requiring high school-level knowledge, Claude increases completion speed by 9 times; when the complexity rises to the university education level, the "acceleration" factor increases to 12 times (Anthropic, 2026). The application of AI in humanities fields such as media education and linguistics demonstrates particularly noticeable results, as the vast and constantly expanding humanities corpora on the internet provide rich material for analysis and processing. The spread of AI technologies also contributes to educational equity, experience sharing, and cooperation in the field of education.

The authors of the articles are convinced that educators should guide students towards the reasonable use of AI technologies. Students raised in the digital age quickly master new tools; however, the misuse of AI can negatively affect the development of critical thinking and lead to excessive dependence on technology. For example, excessive use of large language models in writing academic papers can lead to a large amount of pseudo-scientific information due to AI "hallucinations." This problem requires attention from both teachers and students.

*Third, in the era of the pervasive implementation of AI technologies, the educational community must consistently emphasize the fundamental value of the human personality and the humanistic imperative.* Since AI encodes and processes existing knowledge, and training data is largely oriented toward the probabilistic distribution of word sequences rather than logical connections (Li, 2025), it is incapable of conveying subjective experience, individual emotions, or creating outstanding works based solely on its own algorithms. In arts education, AI also cannot replace the human factor. As researchers note, "the ultimate goal of art education is not simply to teach students certain skills or impart certain knowledge, but to shape value orientations. Value orientations generate moral enthusiasm, allowing revolutionaries to enter a state of 'flow,' forgetting themselves, and allowing people to transition from the utilitarian to the aesthetic, from training to freedom. In this sense, the true goal of teaching in art education is to teach students to 'forget themselves,' and simultaneously through art to 'recreate themselves,' undertaking a self-revolution. This kind of training is something that AI cannot replace in the foreseeable future" (Qiu, 2026).

*Forth, the educational community must play an active role in shaping the ethical landscape of AI use, participating in the discussion and development of relevant norms and rules.* The widespread penetration of AI technologies into all spheres of human activity, from production to daily life, creates unprecedented ethical and institutional challenges. Despite the fact that progress in AI contributes to increasing productivity, it also generates ethical dilemmas and questions of institutional design that, if not resolved effectively, could entail long-term negative consequences for society. This is evidenced, in particular, by the "AI Index 2025" report published by the Stanford Institute for Human-Centered AI, which shows an increase in the number of AI safety incidents, including ethical violations, by 56.4 % in 2024 compared to the previous year (Stanford, 2026). In response to the challenges related to AI governance, the Chinese government has taken a number of measures. In April 2025, the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) initiated a special campaign, *Clean Net – Combating the Abuse of AI Technologies* (CAC, 2025), which received active support from leading internet platforms such as Tencent, Douyin, Weibo, and Kuaishou. Furthermore, on March 7, 2025, the CAC issued a Notice on issuing the "Measures for Labeling of Artificial Intelligence Generated Synthetic Content." This regulatory act establishes clear rules for labeling content created using AI, representing a significant step forward in regulating AI content in China. These measures aim to increase the media literacy of the population, especially vulnerable groups such as the elderly and children, who may have difficulty distinguishing media content.

International research further supports the need for a multi-faceted educational response. Vraga and Tully (Vraga, Tully, 2021) demonstrated that news literacy can reduce susceptibility to misinformation, a finding directly applicable to AI-generated content. Walter (Walter, 2024) argued that AI literacy, prompt engineering, and critical thinking should be core components of

modern curricula. Luckin and Cukurova (Luckin, Cukurova, 2019) proposed the design of personalised media literacy tutors powered by AI, emphasising the importance of human-centred design. Adiguzel, Kaya and Cansu (Adiguzel et al., 2023) explored the transformative potential of ChatGPT in education, while Johnston et al. (Johnston et al., 2024) provided student perspectives on generative AI, highlighting both benefits and concerns. Warschauer et al. (Warschauer et al., 2023) examined the affordances and contradictions of AI-generated text for second-language writers, stressing the need for pedagogical support. Rashid et al. (Rashid et al., 2024) and Wang (Wang, 2025) investigated AI in academic writing and business education, respectively. Collectively, these studies confirm that media literacy education must be re-conceptualised to address AI's challenges, focusing not only on technical skills but also on critical evaluation, ethical reasoning, and the preservation of human agency.

Of interest to our study are review articles and special issues – collections of articles on the application of AI in the information sphere (Akinfiev, Bodrunova, 2025; Wang, 2025).

There is a burgeoning growth of research devoted to the use of artificial intelligence in the media industry, media production, and media education; questions are being raised about the integration of artificial intelligence into the processes of creating media content.

A critical review of the scientific literature on this topic showed that AI is used in the training of various information sector specialists – marketers, managers, PR specialists, journalists, and bloggers (Bombin, 2025). For example, the article by K. Vinogradova and G. Melnik characterizes the software used in editorial work; assesses its capabilities for creating immersive experiences; discusses its potential as a tool for overcoming crisis phenomena in journalism; conceptualizes terms such as "generative journalism," "automated journalism," and "algorithmic journalism"; and notes the importance of distinguishing between these types of journalism (Vinogradova, Melnik, 2025).

Most scientific works demonstrate increased audience engagement, improved user experience, and increased revenue for media platforms when using AI (Algaliyeva, Shalkarbek, 2024). The parameters of processing, creating, and distributing media information using AI technologies are discussed. In her articles, researcher M.G. Shilina notes that "the effects and effectiveness of communication directly depend on the effectiveness of interaction and communication among all actor-participants in the process, including the participation of algorithms" (Shilina, 2024: 71). Media experts qualify the situation as a competency digital divide, which requires a significant restructuring of media education. It is believed that proper training of neural networks, retraining, and the development of new professions will help media companies not only adapt but also become leaders in the era of digital transformation (Sergeev, 2025; Shilina, 2020).

Articles devoted to AI and fact-checking are also highly relevant. On the one hand, targeting accuracy and response speed increase; on the other hand, the risks of disinformation spread increase. The task is to balance the technical capabilities of AI agents with maintaining trust and transparency" (Singh, 2025). Media experts call this a trend in the modern media industry (Shafir, Tatarsky, 2025). The topic of using AI in media production, the media industry, and media education includes many aspects. However, the key processes remain the formation of hybrid models of human-AI interaction (Bodrunova, Nigmatullina, 2025).

We agree with researcher A.Y. Bombin that today, "the integration of individual tools and AI in general into education is not just a technological trend, but a strategic direction that is changing approaches to specialist training. Understanding the advantages and limitations of these technologies, as well as their conscious use, will allow us to form professionals ready for the challenges and opportunities of the modern digital economy" (Bombin et al., 2024: 28). AI is no longer seen merely as an assistant, but as a full-fledged player in the media world, capable of radically changing the rules of the game (Shilina, 2020: 72) – from an individual assistant to corporate work processes.

## 4. Results

The study of the scientific discourse on artificial intelligence (AI) showed that in most works, the authors note its advantages in creating media content.

*Advantages of Using AI*

– Adaptation to the market;
– Cost reduction, acceleration of content production and its personalization;
– Acceleration of creative processes (including the ability to find creative visual solutions);
– Influence on audience behavior;

– Human-centeredness, focus on social effects (Shilina, 2024);
– Consideration of country-specific language and national context;
– Creation of highly interactive learning models;
– Uniform standards in media production preparation;
– Possibility to divide team tasks among agents (Nguyen et al., 2025) (planner, step definer, data extractor, and responder);
– Systematization of communication work.

Kazakhstani media experts believe that artificial intelligence in the information world will help search for duplicates, content authors, and fake news; launch chatbots; create auto-subtitles, translations for videos, and much more (Adiguzel et al., 2023).

A study by Moscow authors examined the applied possibilities of the MAS+RAG synergy for scenario modeling and proposed a theoretical architecture for a virtual PR consultant. This is important because the scientific community is systematically striving to teach autonomous agents "to solve tasks at all levels – from an individual assistant to corporate work processes." The meaning of RAG is to perform a search before generating an answer and insert information found from reliable sources into the model's prompt. The authors propose using corporate assistants on the Amazon Bedrock platform, where the entire procedure is built on the "search + GPT" scheme (Evstafiev et al., 2025).

At the same time, media experts cannot remain silent about the risks, disadvantages, and limitations in applying AI. A number of articles are devoted to the analysis of the digitalization of traditional processes of socio-political communication in the context of the development of AI and neural network technologies, and to identifying the risks, threats, and challenges it poses to these processes (Evstafiev et al., 2025).

– Low level of professional narratives, low correlation of communication goals and values in interaction with target audiences (Shilina, 2023);
– Digital divide in the interaction of actors in mass communication and in the creation of narratives (Shilina, 2020: 70-71);
–Vulnerability to failures, cyberattacks, and algorithmic bias (Shafir, Tatarsky, 2025);
– Distortion of context in the processing of material;
– Stylistic unification of media texts;
– Illusion of shared reasoning or dialogue, when the information consumer interacts not with a source of knowledge, but with an interface that organizes dialogue within predictable linguistic frameworks (Bottazzi Grifoni, Ferrario, 2025);
– Ethical dilemmas, open question of who is responsible for the content;
– Difficulty in implementing competencies; a journalist must "combine the roles of operator, editor, and author, which requires new skills in cognitive management" (Bodrunova, Nigmatullina, 2025).
– Increasing complexity of work modes (Sergeev, 2025).

Some studies show that LLMs impact meaning-making and reasoning styles. Scholars draw attention to the fact that the gap between text and authentic human thinking persists. As, and Guglielmo, O'Loughlin and Snowball (Guglielmo et al., 2026) argue, human – GenAI interactions function as recursive circuits of meaning-making, giving rise to emergent hybrid subjectivities on a spectrum from diminished human agency to augmented democratic agency. This perspective highlights how discourse acquires hybrid forms that blur the boundaries between human and machine-generated language.

During the research, we examined university curricula that include the direction of using neural networks in educating specialists for the information sphere. Within the discipline "Digital Communications" at the Higher School of Economics (HSE), for example, text generators are studied that help solve real-world professional problems, and skills and competencies demanded in the labor market are developed. HSE has developed a prompting guide and a special policy on the use of generative AI, ensuring the ethical and effective application of technologies in the educational process. Teachers developed the course "Artificial Intelligence in the Media Industry and Media Studies" (Hse.ru, 2025). Research by N. Rubtsova to identify the awareness of students in the "Journalism" field about neural networks and their practical application skills showed students' readiness to use neural networks in their future professional activities (Rubtsova, 2024).

At St. Petersburg State University, the main master's program "Artificial Intelligence in Journalism and Media Communications" (with an additional qualification "Mass Media Editor") is

being implemented, focusing on professional skills in the production, implementation, and production of media products using AI and big data technologies. Students will master not only AI technologies in media production, data journalism, project analytics, PR, and advertising but also specialized modules related to editorial activities: managing content strategies, editing multimedia materials, digital media ethics, audience engagement, and media product optimization. The program allows students to integrate AI technologies into the creation and evaluation of media products, as well as to develop editorial skills. Educational projects include the development of AI tools for content automation, big data analysis for trend forecasting, and workshops on editing and adapting media materials for digital platforms (spbu.ru, 2025).

Moscow State University has announced the launch of a similar new master's program, explaining this by the need "to shape the future of the media industry, in which artificial intelligence becomes an integral part of professional activity" with the program "Artificial Intelligence and Big Data in Media Communications" (Vyrcovskiy, 2025). The program aims to train specialists capable of working with generative neural networks and applying them to create media content, analyze audiences, and develop marketing strategies (Ievlev, 2026). Similar programs began to be launched one after another in other federal and regional universities in Russia.

A comparative analysis of typical cases of AI application in education is presented in a fundamental article by Zhang Linqi, which reveals both successful experiences and possible risks (Zhang, 2025). Acquaintance with numerous sources indicates the demand in the information market for new professions (Liu et al., 2024; Owa et al., 2023; Rashid et al., 2024). A collective article by V.A. Evstafiev, M.A. Tyukov, and R.R. Khismetova provides a full description of the functions of various AI agents. Monitoring Agent – continuously collects data from external sources for subsequent analysis; Analyst Agent – processes the collected data and turns it into insights; Content Generator Agent – based on insights from the analyst, forms drafts of communication materials; Validator Agent – checks the quality and reliability of the generated content; Coordinator Agent – receives external requests (and breaks them down into tasks for the other agents) (Evstafiev et al., 2025). The most useful for journalism practice are articles describing AI tools and programs, although the emphasis is mainly on Western sources (IEEE, arXiv, Gartner, IBM, PRSA, etc.), as they respond most quickly to the emergence of new technologies (Adiguzel et al., 2023; Bibi, Atta, 2024; Qiu, 2026).

In scientific discourse, extremely important problems are increasingly being raised concerning the perception of media texts, their correct understanding, and the transformation of language and meaning-making in the communicative environment under the influence of large language models. Recent research has examined how LLMs affect meaning-making and reasoning styles. As Beato (Beato, 2025) argues, LLM generativity remains at the level of surface structures, creating a "generative illusion," while semantic depth, narrative transformation, and cultural resonance remain uniquely human domains. Attention is drawn to the characteristics of the hybrid form of discourse arising at the intersection of human thought and machine text generation.

In recent years, works have appeared that compare the key directions of international AI research with the Russian research context.

In both Russia and China, practice-oriented curricula are being predominantly implemented, and educational priorities in theory and media practice are being established (Cao, 2022; Geng, 2025; Guo, 2020; Yang, 2022). However, this direction does not negate the need to teach students critical thinking, their awareness of the journalist's social mission, as well as the comprehension of cultural heritage and the preservation of collective memory in contemporary society.

## 5. Conclusion

The sphere of education, being one of the areas influenced by AI technologies, requires the active participation of educators in discussions and the development of ethical norms and rules for AI use. Teachers and researchers, drawing on their pedagogical experience, should provide regulatory bodies with recommendations for creating data protection mechanisms, preventing the risks of technological dependence, and standardizing ethical principles for AI, thereby contributing to institutional building in this area.

Universities need to create a conceptual model for training media specialists and develop a set of competencies that includes the technical, analytical, ethical, and communication skills of future information sector workers.

Artificial intelligence, being one of humanity's most significant inventions, has an inevitable and irreversible impact on its future. The educational community's ability to adequately assess and

wisely apply AI in the educational process will determine the attitude of current and future generations towards this technology and, as a result, will have a substantial impact on the fate of humanity. Regardless of the trajectory of AI's development, humanity must strive to preserve and protect its own agency and capacity for independent thinking as key attributes of individuality. However, despite optimistic forecasts, a legitimate question arises: will humanity be able to successfully cope with this task?

Under the influence of technology, significant transformations have occurred in media practice, necessitating personalized training for information sector workers using intelligent learning systems. However, the gap between the demands of the information market for young professionals and their readiness to meet these demands and challenges is only widening, making it an urgent necessity to optimize training programs and increase the professionalism of university teachers and trainers, and for them to master skills in using AI in media education and media production. However, it is important to understand that AI, while being used in the implementation of the basic functions of journalism, requires not only the development of a set of legal, administrative, and other measures but also the correction of the hyper-technologism attitudes characteristic of many modern media actors (Fotieva, 2025).

Universities are adjusting their curricula in digital technologies, teaching students to use neural networks for applied purposes, and developing special AI tools. However, the demands of the media industry and media production are not yet being fully met, as there is a problem in training the teaching staff themselves.

In conclusion, we emphasise that media literacy education must be at the core of this transformation, as demonstrated by the works works of Tsang (Tsang, 2025), Stewart and Rodgers (Stewart, Rodgers, 2025), Ng et al. (Ng et al., 2024). The educational community has a unique opportunity to shape a future where AI serves human values rather than undermining them. This requires not only updating curricula but also fostering a culture of lifelong learning, critical reflection, and humanistic responsibility among educators and students alike.

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# Lived Experiences of Female Journalists with Generative AI in Pakistan: A Phenomenological Approach

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**Abstract**

Artificial intelligence has transformed journalistic practices worldwide, raising new opportunities and challenges, particularly for women journalists working in developing countries. However, empirical research exploring gendered experiences of generative AI adoption in journalism, especially in the Global South, needed to be highlighted. The study explores the lived experiences of female journalists in Pakistan regarding the adoption and use of generative AI in their professional practices. This qualitative, phenomenological research design employed in-depth interviews as a tool to collect data from ten female journalists who working both traditional and digital media organizations. The study is grounded by Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to support understanding the use and AI adoption. The findings shows that female journalists in Pakistan use and adopt AI tools such as ChatGPT for different purposed in production stages from news writing to editing and all most in all stages from pre-production to postproduction, for background research, ideas, topic selection for program, asking questions, drafting, translation, scripting, and content optimization. The study examined that generative AI has strong potential to empower female journalists and make journalistic practices easy and fast when use in ethical way that align with organization policies. The findings also situate AI competence as an enactment of competencies proposed by MLE. By foregrounding women journalists' voices from Pakistan, this research contributes to the limited scholarship on AI, journalism, and gender in the Global South and offers insights for media organizations, policymakers, and educators seeking inclusive and ethical AI integration in journalism.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, digital Journalism, digital media, Female Journalist and AI tools.

## 1. Introduction

AI has brought drastic changes in human life and redefined new boundaries and limitations and open limitless opportunities. Despite so many challenges, these AI tools present significant opportunities and make your work efficient and faster than ever before. Similarly, AI has reshaped journalistic activities and now it needs to define new policies and code of ethics that how journalists and media professionals adopt these AI tools in credible way. Traditionally journalism has been defined as an activity or profession of news gathering, producing, distributing content and information through newspaper, radio, and television. But now digital media and AI have revolutionized these practices and changed the way news produces and consumes. This transformation promises creativity and innovation in newsrooms (Jamil, 2021). However, it also presents significant challenges in areas such as credibility, fairness, accuracy, ethics, true news and

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equity. Pakistan's media landscape has been changed rapidly due to the global media landscape is undergoing a profound shift due to Artificial intelligence (AI) and digital transformation (Chandio et al., 2024). Traditional journalism is increasingly being redefined by technological advancements such as digital newsrooms, social media platforms, mobile journalism, data analytics, and artificial intelligence. These changes are not only reshaping how news is produced, distributed, and consumed but are also influencing the roles and experiences of journalists across the world.

The formal beginning of Artificial Intelligence (AI) started in 1950s, it rooted in the creation of machines that can perform tasks that require human intelligence was coined by John McCarthy at the Dartmouth Conference (Radcliffe, 2025). Most historical scholarships agree on the promising beginnings of digital journalism and considered 1980 as a turning point when Knight Ridder took an initiative by sending news to subscribers digitally, view Tron was the first online service (Perreault, Ferrucci, 2020). Generative AI is the result of technological advancement. It reshaped the world and changed the ways things occurred in different fields of life, it accelerated the pace of technical and organizational innovation, use of effectiveness and sophistication of digital technologies, empowering new market entrants and changing the ways how we live, work, and play. Most historical scholarship agrees on the promising beginnings of digital journalism and considered 1980 as a turning point when Knight Ridder took an initiative by sending news to subscribers digitally, Viewtron was the first online service (Perreault, Ferrucci, 2020). In 1994, almost after one decade, the San Jose Mercury newspaper initiated digitally and became the first American large newspaper to publish a daily electronic reproduction of its paper. By the early 2000s, almost every major newspaper in the country offered a digital edition. Media General's invested more than $40 million converged newsroom featuring (Perreault, Ferrucci, 2020). After 2000, many digital media platforms launched and changed the way of news production and consummation, such Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram. Facebook was founded on February 4, 2004, by Mark Zuckerberg, YouTube was created on February 14th, 2005, in San Mateo, California by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim, Twitter was created on March 21, 2006, by Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams. Instagram was launched on October 6, 2010, by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger (Mfk, 2026).

Artificial Intelligence is not a new phenomenon in Pakistan, but its impact and use is yet to be unveiled completely, because of lack of digital literacy rate and compatible training in Pakistan to incorporate AI in different fields, especially in media and journalism, at its current stage, there is no complete reliance on AI yet, as it still requires large improvements to improve reliability and verification mechanisms (Vincent, Hashma, 2025). There is a lot of debate going on AI use in Pakistan, but its true impact is still uncertain, currently, relying entirely on AI is impractical, as it requires further advancements, policies and credible use to improve accuracy and verification capabilities. So, AI is transforming journalism and media in Pakistan by simplifying specific tasks and assisting in factchecking, but human observation and check remain the important part (Vincent, Hashma, 2025). Journalists with prior experience and expertise use and adopt AI tools but require more training and organizational support to enhance the quality and credibility but still lack confidence or interest in AI adoption in professional use of organization (Kazmi, Ali, 2025).

Journalism is one of the difficult professions when it comes to fulfilling your responsibilities and performing your professional duties by practicing gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting updated news and information to audiences. Now Artificial intelligence and digital transformation make this practice easy and create more opportunities than ever before but make it more challenging in terms of quality, techniques, standards, credibility, ethics and skills to survive in digital world as the digital age redefines the boundaries and standards of journalism, women are at the forefront, leveraging technology and journalistic spirit to strengthen their voices and redefine the narrative. Journalism has long been a field where women have made significant contribution and impact, yet they still face unique challenges within the profession. Gender inequality is one of the most prevalence issues in the field of journalism face by women journalist and one of most debated issues worldwide (Khamis, El-Ibiary, 2022; Posetti et al., 2021). In this study, the researcher investigates the role of generative AI in journalistic practices, challenges and opportunities for female Journalists in Pakistan, exploring both their contributions (opportunities) and the hurdles they encounter as they navigate their careers. AI has moved from merely a supportive tool to a co-creating partner in the entertainment and media industries. Agents like Manus AI can produce plot outlines, write scripts, simulate scenes, and suggest camera angles, functioning as intelligent collaborators in the creative pipeline (Yang, 2025). After AI and digital

advancement, journalism has various forms and platforms such as broadcast, online, multimedia, investigative, storytelling, blogging and many more. These various journalistic forms and platforms require different techniques, standard, skills and knowledge while performing your professional duties otherwise you can confront some serious challenges. Therefore, it is important to investigate the role of generative AI in Journalistic Practices among female journalists in Pakistan (Challenges and opportunities) while performing their professional duties. Secondly artificial intelligence and AI technological advancement is new phenomena and upgrade every day. However, empirical research exploring gendered experiences of generative AI adoption in journalism, especially in the Global South, needed to be highlighted. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the Role of generative AI in Journalism Practices, the challenges and structural barriers encountered by women journalists in Pakistan.

Furthermore, this study also attempts to provide novel perspectives for MLE Media Literacy Education models. Traditional MLE frameworks (e.g. access, analyze, evaluate, create, act, framework) focus on media consumer and media critique. However, with the surge in AI use in content creation and easier accessibility to AI tools, scholars have advocated for inclusion of AI literacy within media literacy. This constitutes the ability for critical evaluation, responsible use and effective collaboration with AI systems (Long, Magerko, 2020). Similarly, as AI proliferation transforms pedagogy, AI literacy then becomes a required competency built upon dimensions such as: To know and understand AI; Evaluate and create AI; To use and apply AI; Understand ethical issues pertaining to AI (Ng et al., 2021). Thus, this study attempts to demonstrate the manifestation of AI literacy within journalistic workspace. As M. Pinski and A. Benlian (Pinski, Benlian, 2024) had made the distinction between use of AI by expert and non-expert users, emphasizing how AI literacy isn't an array of universal competencies. Therefore, AI literacy warrants tailoring specific to contexts of user's environment, be it media students, journalists, teachers, doctors and the public. The present study's focus on female journalists within Global South geography, provides a novel perspective on how MLE programs for Global South should address cultural and structural nuances that impact AI adoption and literacy.

The researcher aim to explore the lived experiences of female journalists in Pakistan regarding the integration of generative AI into their professional practices, understand the challenges, structural barriers, and ethical concerns faced by women journalists while engaging with AI-driven tools in their work and to examine how female journalists perceive the opportunities and transformative potential of generative AI in shaping their roles, voices, and identities within the field of journalism.

Align with research objective the researcher addresses the following questions, how do female journalists in Pakistan experience the integration of generative AI in their professional practices? What challenges, structural barriers and ethical concerns do women journalists encounter while using generative AI tools in journalism? And how do female journalists perceive the opportunities and transformative potential of generative AI in shaping their professional roles and identities?

This study is among the early scholarly attempts to explore the role of generative artificial intelligence in journalistic practices among female journalists in Pakistan, with a particular focus on opportunities and challenges. Within the cultural context of Pakistan, where women journalists often face structural barriers, gender bias, limited access to technological resources, and professional insecurity, this research provides timely insights into how generative AI may serve as both an empowering tool and a new source of ethical and professional concerns. By foregrounding women lived experiences, the study contributes locally grounded knowledge that can inform media organizations, journalism educators, and policymakers in developing gender-sensitive strategies for responsible AI integration, capacity building, and digital inclusion in Pakistan's media sector.

## 2. Materials and methods

This study employed a phenomenological approach in studying the Pakistani Female Journalists' experiences in utilizing AI within their respective professional contexts and to understand the opportunities, challenges and transformations produced by employment of AI in the journalistic workplace. For this purpose, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with female journalist working in different mainstream media channels and digital media sphere. This study has qualitative nature; data is collected through interviews and then analyzed in depth interview for findings (Quad, 2016). Qualitative research is informed by the premise that social

reality is subjective, and examination and analysis reveal multiple perspectives and emergent themes. Thus, the present study employed in-depth interviews of female journalists from varying media outlets to explore their diverse experiences and perceptions regarding use of AI in journalism, and the accompanied challenges and opportunities. A research instrument is any tool, device, or method that researchers use to collect, measure, and analyze data. These instruments can vary widely depending on the nature of the research, the type of data being collected, and the methodology being employed. The interview questions were developed by researchers according to research questions to record rich and detailed responses of respondents. In-depth interviews conducted face-to-face, as well as through Zoom, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and other online applications depending on the availability of journalists. Women journalists representing different digital and tradition media houses and affiliations, experiences, and demographics interviewed as a sample. And purposive sampling techniques will be used. Though, purposive sampling procedure in qualitative research gives freedom for researchers to select the participant based on the research questions asked.

## 3. Discussion

The contemporary era of AI is dominated by machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL), which enables systems to learn patterns from data and improve performance without explicit programming. Artificial intelligence systems work efficiently and effectively and have seen major improvement since last decade, which is the reason media adopt these tools around the globe to compete with market (Radcliffe, 2025). The study showed that over 80 percent of the respondents used AI tools in their professional journalistic duties in all stages of news production activities (Radcliffe, 2025; Sarısakaloglu, 2025). The new digital AI era is dominated by AI companies that compete with nations around the world by using machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) which is continuously improve performance, all AI model and apps from natural language processing, smart assistants, self-driving cars, predictive analytics computer vision, robotics, expert systems, to industries ranging from healthcare and education to finance, agriculture, and governance adopting AI to perform effectively and efficiently (Kausar et al., 2024).

Their utilization of AI in academic research can provide significant vast landscape of exploration, offering both theoretical contributions and practical applications. In a developing country like Pakistan with a rapidly evolving digital ecosystem, this transformation holds unique implications for female journalist to adopt AI and enhance their professional values and duties. The intersection of gender and technology introduces an important area of study, especially when focusing on women journalists. Despite progress in media participation, women journalists in Pakistan continue to face a complex mix of systemic, societal and professional challenges (REHMAT, 2017). The rise of digital journalism, while offering new avenues for participation and empowerment, also brings fresh hurdles related to access, safety, capacity, and representation.

The proliferation of generative AI tools within pedagogy and industry has provided the impetus for inclusion AI literacy, as a supplementation to digital literacy. An integration of AI literacy with existing digital literacy theories and constructs will yield an integrative AI literacy framework guiding across critical, practical and ethical dimensions (Memarian, Doleck, 2026). Media literacy scholarship argues that AI literacy demands an ensemble of critical thinking, evaluative skills, practical skills and ethical awareness when engaging with AI systems. As D. Long and B. Magerko (Long, Magerko, 2020), described AI literacy to constitute competencies such as ability to distinguish between narrow and general AI systems, understanding intelligence, evaluating an AI system's strengths and limitations while also considering the ethical dimensions of AI use. Furthermore, these competencies need to be supplemented with understanding of undercurrents of ideology and bias, requiring understanding of how these AI systems are designed and whose interests they serve (Stewart, Rodgers, 2025). Moreover, (Ruiz et al., 2024) emphasized two core values when engaging with AI systems i.e. Human judgement and Centering justice (fair use of AI). AI literacy holds salience in academic environments, warranting inclusion of students of non-technical fields as well as integration of AI literacy within existing MIL (Media an Information Literacy) Programs. Therefore, MIL with the supplementation of algorithmic literacy, AI ethics, privacy, AI-content evaluation and prompt engineering can provide a guiding framework for students (Ndungu, 2024).

Media and AI literacy holds significance for media pedagogy and journalism as it is increasingly employed in newsroom environments. Journalism educators play the role of news

literacy educators in society as well thereby imparting values of recognizing misinformation, evaluation of the news industry and understanding journalistic practices (Morris, Yeoman, 2021). Moreover, journalists themselves engage in JME (Journalistic Media Education) where they engage audiences through workshops, school visits, and projects. JME is categorized into three modes: education on journalism; education via journalism and education in journalism (Jaakkola, 2020). Therefore, when a female journalist exercises her skills of AI use in professional work, she is practicing core competencies of that MLE (Media Literacy Education) posits.

The use of AI in African newsrooms is no longer a futuristic concept, but a present-day reality. While implementation varies across media organizations, there's a noticeable sense of caution surrounding its adoption (Umejeia et al., 2025). AI has reshaped journalism and defined new boundaries and standards to follow but ethical concerns such as fairness and credibility, disinformation and misinformation are intensified. According to UN, 2025 report on AI, A prominent example occurred in start of 2024, when a journalist from France 24 News channel was targeted with AI generated deepfake and voice cloning both his voice and article headline. This incident happened during President Emmanuel Macron's visit to Ukraine leading to concerns such as fairness and credibility, disinformation and misinformation and the altered content distorted his reporting and credibility.

As mentioned earlier, the future of journalism is perceived based on AI generated images, now Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing journalism. New AI tools are not only reshaping how journalistic practices are performed, but how journalism is perceived (Sarısakaloğlu, 2025). AI image generator tools will serve as primary meaning makers that how journalists understand in public and how a journalist looks like (Kempton, 2025).

The analysis of S. D. Kempton (Kempton, 2025) revealed the difference depiction of male and female journalists, Certain journalistic roles associated with respect and power, while others representation are marginalized, male journalists were more often depicted as leader and authoritative, while female journalists are more likely to be portrayed in less powerful and more aestheticized, or supportive roles. It means AI generative tools are powerful in depiction of journalist role and images in public reinforcing traditional structure hierarchy.

Journalists from different media use a wide range of AI tools across different stages of news production process such as Dataminr, Maltego, DocumentCloud, TruthBuzz, and TinEye, Wordsmith (Associated Press), Lynx Insight (Reuters), and Cyborg (Bloomberg), DeepL Write, QuillBot, WordTune, ChatGPT, GPTZero, and TweetGPT, these AI tools are widely used by different media platforms and journalists (Aissani et al., 2023). These AI tools serve different purposes in journalistic practices, such as writing, reporting, data mining, fact checking, verification, refining, editing, from pre-production to post-production and then social media management (Aissani et al., 2023).

AI tools have also the potential and present some great opportunities to enhance productivity and efficiency by reducing manual workloads, organizing your work better, speeding up editing, writing news production processes, help in more in depth investigative reporting, advanced data analysis, fake news detection and pattern detection, content accuracy, audience engagement, and personalization, creative possibilities, automated video, audio, and visual content production (Yang, 2025).

E. Umejeia (Umejeia et al., 2025) Argue that AI tools have the potential to significantly enhance various aspects of journalism, from data analysis and content generation to audience engagement and factchecking. However, it's essential to approach the use of AI tools in journalism thoughtfully and ethically. Journalists must ensure that these tools are used responsibly, with human oversight, to maintain editorial integrity and accuracy. AI tools are not a substitute for journalistic judgment, critical thinking, and ethical decision-making (Umejeia et al., 2025). The following are the dominant AI tools that participants utilized in news production in the four countries: Nigeria, ChatGPT, Grammarly, Gemini (formerly Google Bard), ChatGPT; Ghana, Grammarly, ChatGPT, Gemini; Kenya, Grammarly, ChatGPT, Gemini; and South Africa, Quillbot, and Grammarly. These tools fall into two of the seven subfields of AI in the news industry: NLPs and machine learning (Umejeia et al., 2025).

H. Saleh (Saleh, 2024) argues that artificial intelligence is not just a technology but an encompassing power re-shaping daily practices, individual and professional interactions, and environments. Recent developments such as Manus AI, ChatGPT, DeepSeek, and Grok show clients how AI agents are no longer passive agents working in background positions but active

agents that author and create content across format and platform (Nasir et al., 2025).

AI has moved from merely a supportive tool to a co-creating partner in the entertainment and media industries. Agents like Manus AI can produce plot outlines, write scripts, simulate scenes, and suggest camera angles, functioning as intelligent collaborators in the creative pipeline (Yang, 2025). Unlike traditional models, where ChatGPT expects users to afford input when generating and AI typically with a prompt from users, Manus can read and interpret a creative brief autonomously, and create multimedia files e.g. text, images, and music to enable a story through its original set of commands (Nasir et al., 2025). The digital media landscape in Pakistan has witnessed a significant transformation over the past decade, formed by technological advancements, global trends, technological culture, political changes, socio-economic factors, and global digital transformation.

Artificial Intelligence is not a new phenomenon in Pakistan, but its impact and use is yet to be unveiled completely, because of lack of digital literacy rate and compatible training in Pakistan to incorporate AI in different fields, especially in media and journalism, at its current stage, there is no complete reliance on AI yet, as it still requires large improvements to improve reliability and verification mechanisms (Vincent, Hashma, 2025). There is a lot of debate going on AI use in Pakistan, but its true impact is still uncertain, currently, relying entirely on AI is impractical, as it requires further advancements, policies and credible use to improve accuracy and verification capabilities. So, AI is transforming journalism and media in Pakistan by simplifying specific tasks and assisting in fact-checking, but human observation and check remain the important part (Vincent, Hashma, 2025). Journalists with prior experience and expertise use and adopt AI tools but require more training and organizational support to enhance the quality and credibility but still lack confidence or interest in AI adoption in professional use of organization (Kazmi, Ali, 2025). Media organizations can take benefits by using and adopting AI in professional work of media while reducing its potential risks by training their journalists on specific tasks, tools, setting ethical guidelines, policies and encouraging cooperation of technologists with journalists (Kazmi, Ali, 2025).

Digital media landscape in Pakistan has evolved rapidly over the last decade and brought some drastic changes in life of people here in this country, driven by increasing internet services than ever before, increasing mobile phone usage, and the rise of digital media platforms. Conversational AI (like chatbots and automated writing tools) are increasing being employed in Pakistan's newsrooms. Based on surveys of 202 media professionals across print, broadcast, and online outlets, it finds optimism about AI's potential to personalize content and streamline workflow but also concerns risks like algorithmic bias and challenges in maintaining journalistic ethics (Liaquat, Shah, 2025).

Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and WhatsApp are the most famous and most widely used digital platforms. Traditional media outlets like Geo News, ARY, Express News and Dawn news have converted set up to digital platforms and have strong digital arms with rise in independent digital journalism via digital platforms such as YouTube and blogs. Now there are so many content creators and influencers, both male and female creators on Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram work as a journalist. With Freelancing boom now women journalists the opportunities to work as a freelancer or with digital media as Pakistan ranks among the top countries for freelancers (Kemp, 2025).

The study aims to investigate that how AI and digital transformation impact women journalist's professional duties, structural barrier and challenges, and opportunities for women journalists in today's digital world and what is the role of AI generative among female journalist in Pakistan. As the women journalist despite showing progress in recent years in the field of journalism, they still confronting some serious challenges, such as lake of technical skills, gender discrimination and it is one of the major challenges faced by women journalists today and need to overcome several challenges and threats in the media industry (Dhiman, 2023).

In the past two decades, technological advancement has transformed multiple industries and has brought drastic changes in field of journalism and reshaped the news media landscape in many developed and developing countries of the world. Digital transformation has reshaped the world and changed the ways things occurred in different fields of life, it accelerated the pace of technical and organizational innovation, use of effectiveness and sophistication of digital technologies, empowering new market entrants and changing the ways how we live, work, and play (Lievrouw, Livingstone, 2002). Digital transformation is the process of combining and merging digital technologies into different areas of an organization, basically changing how it operates and delivers value to customers (McKinsey, 2023). Journalism is the profession and the practice of gathering,

organizing, assessing, producing, and presenting news to audiences. The process involves investigation, researching, interviewing, and most important of all is verifying data and facts to inform the public about different events, issues, and trends (Sanusi et al., 2024). Journalism often takes various forms, including print, broadcast and digital media. Journalism often believes on the practice of its professional duty with fairness and objectivity and aim to report the even to near reality with accuracy and balance (Birt, 2025). Journalism is one of the difficult professions when it comes to fulfilling your responsibilities and performing your professional duties by gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting updated news and information to audiences. Now digital transformation make this practice easy and create more opportunities than ever before but make it more challenging in terms of quality, techniques, standards, credibility and skills to survive in digital world as the digital age redefines the boundaries and standards of journalism, women are at the forefront, leveraging technology and journalistic spirit to strengthen their voices and redefine the narrative (Sanusi et al., 2024).

Explored that challenges face by women journalist in the workplace and due to digital transformation are the lack of technical skills and sexual harassment in carrying out reporting activities in the field (Saragih, 2023). The researchers emphasized for gender equality in the media sector to facilitate female journalists to work in safe environment needs serious attention to create a healthy working climate for women journalists.

The present study applied Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) of F.D. Davis (Davis, 1989) to systematically investigate how AI's perceived usefulness and ease of use influence female journalists' acceptance and integration of AI into their work processes. The current model support and grounded the study by exploring lived experiences of female journalists with generative AI in Pakistan. Over time, the original TAM has been expanded by integrating additional variables to account for contextual and individual differences (Lim, Zhang, 2022). An important extension of the TAM was introduced with TAM2 and later with TAM3 to enhance the model's explanatory power (Venkatesh, Davis, 2000; Venkatesh, Bala, 2008). Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) stated a clear explanation of how technology is used and adopted in society (Lee et al., 2003). The model focused on two things

1. Use of technology depends on perceived usefulness;
2. And perceived ease of use.

In the context of this study, the first point which is about the perceived usefulness highlights the extent to which female journalists thinks that generative AI can provide support and help in their professional duties and can enhances their productivity in pre-production and post production activities and task such as writing, reporting, drafting, ideas generating, topic selection for discussion, data mining, fact checking, verification, refining, editing, from pre-production to post production and then social media management, producing news content, translating material, or fact-checking.

The second point is about the perceived ease of use reflects how easily a female journalist can use and adopt these platforms and AI tools and how accessible and user-friendly these AI tools are for women journalists working in media industry and digital media landscape.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), provide insight and lenses to this study as this model was originally developed by F.D. Davis (Davis, 1989), provides significant relevancy, support and useful framework to explore the use and adoption and integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools in journalism practices, from ideas generating to content production, writing, reporting, data mining, fact checking, verification, refining, editing, from pre-production to post production and then social media management particularly among female journalists in Pakistan.

In the context of this study, TAM provides a framework and guidance about the decision to accept or reject AI tools depend primarily on two factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

As mentioned earlier If AI tools and technologies are accessible, easy to use or user-friendly, and adaptable to the culture such as language, social norms in context of Pakistan, they are more likely to be adopted. Conversely, if the tools are difficult to use in terms of technicality, complex that require specialized training, and not adoptable to culture, women journalists may perceive them as barriers rather than facilitators of their professional work (Chuttur, 2009).

## 4. Results

The qualitative strand was guided by semi-structured interviews with experts, which were

transcribed, systematically coded, and analyzed using NVivo 15. The data analysis followed the six-phase thematic analysis approach proposed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (Naeem et al., 2023). This qualitative component provided an in-depth understanding of the research context by exploring the nuanced perspectives and lived experiences of journalists. NVivo 15 facilitated the organization, coding, retrieval, and management of qualitative data, while the final themes were developed through Braun and Clarke's rigorous thematic analysis framework to ensure analytical transparency and trustworthiness.




**Fig. 1.** Word cloud

Figure 1 shows a word cloud, illustrating the most frequently used words by the respondents within the data set. Prominent words such as “tools,” “use,” “journalists,” “work,” “content,” and “ChatGPT” highlighting that AI is primarily used and perceived as a practical instrument embedded in everyday journalistic tasks, from pre productions to post productions particularly in content creation, editing, writing, fact checking and reporting. The frequent appearance of terms like “ethical,” “issues,” “problems,” and “challenges” reflects participants’ strong concerns and challenges regarding responsible AI use, including matters of bias, credibility, trust, and professional accountability. At the same time, words such as **“**change,” “changing,” and “opportunities” suggest that journalists recognize AI as a transformative force which present them an opportunity with the potential to improve efficiency and innovation within the newsroom and other production activity. The presence of “policies,” organizational and “professional” highlights ongoing discussions about the need for formal policies regarding use of AI and guidelines and institutional oversight alight with credibility and professional values in Journalism.

Figure 2 shows a Tree Map, illustrating the most frequently utilized terms and phrases within the participant's discourse; the data is presented in and hierarchical and structural manner, aiding in interpretation.




**Fig. 2.** Tree map

Figure 2 illustrates the most used words by the women journalists (respondents) presents a tree map generated through NVivo, illustrating the most used words by respondents when discussing the use of artificial intelligence in journalistic practices and media responsibilities and duties. The visualization highlights the hierarchical prominence of terms such as “tools,” “content,”

"use," "journalists," "news," "work," and "ChatGPT," showing that ChatGPT is most used AI tools, participants strongly associate and use AI with practical newsroom and all stages of production activities, particularly content creation, news production, and everyday journalistic work. The appearance of terms and other words like **"**generative," "writing," "reporting," and "research" suggests that AI is viewed as a supportive mechanism that help journalists across multiple stages of news production, from news gathering to news story development. At the same time, the tree map shows words such as **"**issues," concerns "challenges," "ethical," "trust," and "policies," reflecting women journalist' concerns about credibility, bias, professional responsibility, gender discrimination, no AI policy in media houses and the need for organizational policy development and guidelines governing AI use more effectively and accurately. The inclusion of contextual terms such as "Pakistan," "women," "female," "gender," and "cultural" illustrate some social and cultural, differences, mindset and gender-related dimensions shaping journalists' activities and engagement with AI technologies.

Figure 3 illustrates extracted themes depicting participants' discourse subjects and key areas of discussion.

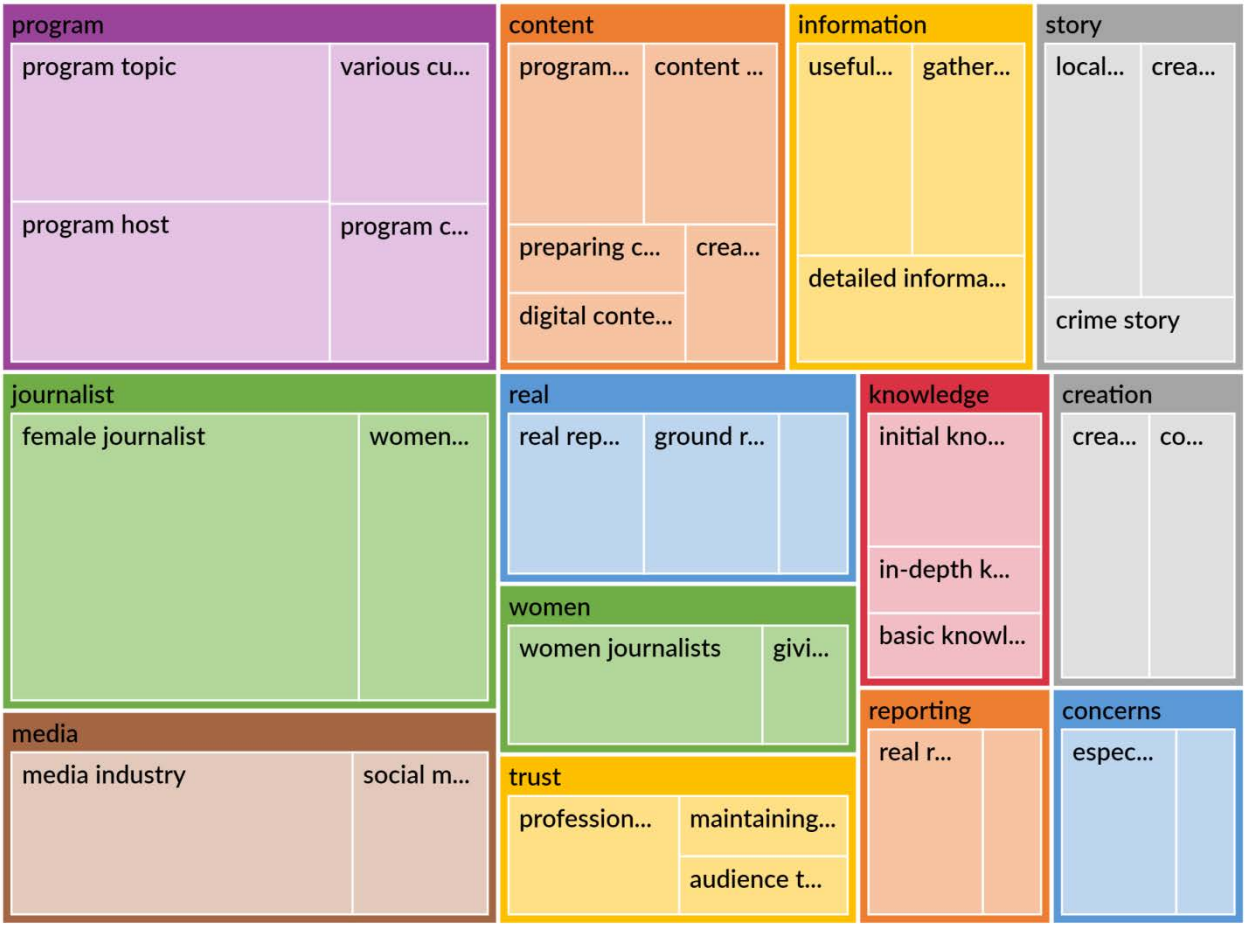


**Fig. 3.** Auto coded themes

Figure 3 depicts themes extracted from interview data that highlight recurring discursive topics and ideas, presented in an organized manner. The visualization shows a strong emphasis on programs, content, information, and storytelling, indicating that respondents associate effective media work with structured programming, informative content, and locally grounded narratives. Prominent themes such as journalists, women journalists, and female journalists reflect the salience of gender and representation in media practices, suggesting recognition of women's roles and experiences within journalism. The presence of themes like real reporting, ground realities, and in-depth knowledge underscores the importance placed on authenticity, factual accuracy, and contextual understanding in news production. Additionally, clusters related to media industry, social media, trust, and professional credibility reveal concerns about maintaining audience trust

while adapting to digital platforms. Subthemes under creation, reporting, and concerns further point to the balance respondents seek between content creation and ethical responsibility. Broadly, the figure reveals the undercurrents of journalistic values such as factual reporting, structured content and informative programming among the participants while also highlighting the salience of gender representation within the journalistic profession.

In the given below Figure 4, the most frequently employed speech forms and phrases are illustrated, explaining the opportunities and challenges pertaining to the use of AI in Pakistani news media ecosystem while also reporting AI's potential impact on tradition modes of journalism. Ethical concerns faced by women journalists while engaging with AI-driven tool and generated AI content in their work and show how female journalists perceive the opportunities and transformative potential of generative AI in shaping their roles, voices, and identities within the field of journalism.

Figure 4 Word Trees of Frequently Used Terms by Sampled Experts highlight that journalists recognize AI as a transformative force which presents them an opportunity with the potential to improve efficiency and innovation within the newsroom and other production activity. The presence of **"**policies," organizational and "professional**"** highlights ongoing discussions about the need for formal policies regarding use of AI and guidelines and institutional oversight alight with credibility and professional values in Journalism.

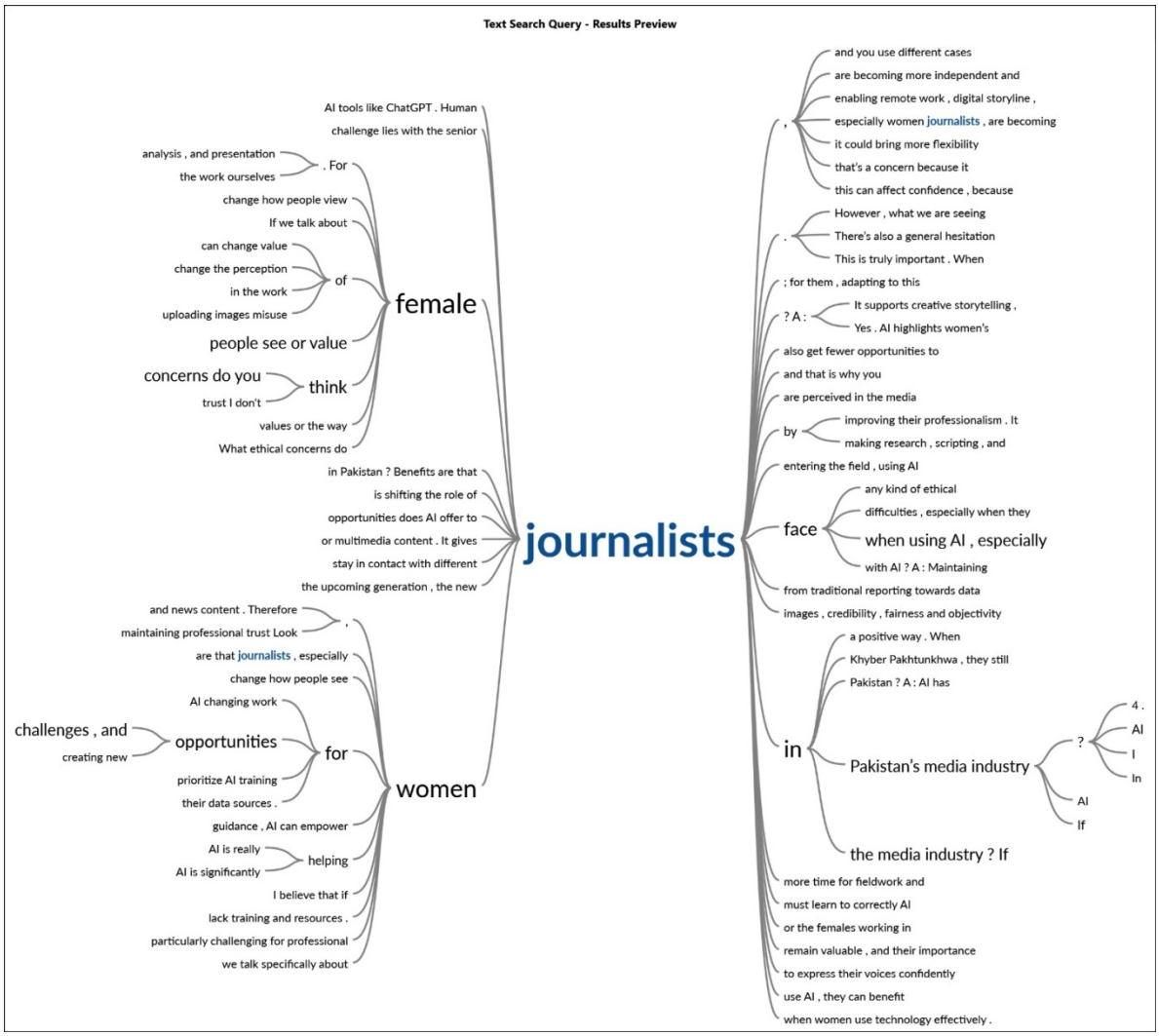


**Fig. 4.** Frequently utilized speech forms

In Figure 4, the image depicts how the term journalist was used in relation to different terminologies used in the study. First of all, the sampled experts can be seen arguing about the adoption and use of AI in journalism, almost all the respondents who were interviewed use AI tools

in journalistic practices from pre-production to post-production in all stages of production. AI tool was generally perceived by the interviewed female journalists as a supportive and time-saving tool rather than a replacement for professional journalism. Most respondents reported using AI for background research, drafting outlines, headlines, scripting, translations, visuals, and brainstorming, especially in fast-paced or digital newsroom environments. AI is seen as enhancing productivity, enabling remote work, and offering greater flexibility factors that are particularly valuable for women journalists in Pakistan who often balance multiple responsibilities and face mobility or structural constraints. However, its effectiveness depends heavily on the journalist's own skills, prompting ability, and editorial judgment, with strong emphasis placed on human creativity, field reporting, and contextual understanding.

At the same time, journalists expressed serious ethical, institutional, and practical concerns. The most common issues included misinformation, lack of verification, weak understanding of local languages and cultural contexts, privacy risks, and potential harm to credibility and public trust. Organizational barriers such as limited training, unclear newsroom policies, and unequal access to technology, and resistance from senior colleagues further restrict effective AI use, particularly for women. While some respondents felt AI is gender-neutral, many acknowledged that female journalists face greater scrutiny, risks of harassment, and reputational damage. Overall, the findings suggest that generative AI can empower female journalists and enhance their professional value only when used ethically, transparently, and under strong human oversight, reinforcing rather than replacing journalistic integrity and expertise.

The study found some serious challenges and opportunities highlighted by female journalists during interviews. First challenge which faced almost every journalist is accuracy of information as AI tools sometimes provide incorrect information. AI Information and news needs verification and cross. AI sometimes provides fabricated references. Risk to Journalistic credibility, fairness, creativity and true information, Al lacks cultural, local context and epistemology, Language sensitivity and grammatical mistakes particularly in Urdu and regional languages, Misuse of female journalist pictures are one of the prominent issue highlighted by female journalists., Risk of disinformation, misinformation and deepfake, Structural challenges, newsroom policies, plagiarism and loss of trust are the most common challenges in Pakistan, Insufficient AI training, lack of prompt engineering, limited access to internet technology, Lack of emotional depth, as AI cannot feel and think and editorial judgment And lack of investigative skills as one of the important journalistic elements.

At the same time with so many challenges, the interviews revealed significant opportunities that AI tools offer to female journalists discussed by female journalists during interviews. The most prominent opportunity revealed by Journalist is Time saving, Female journalist called AI, the efficiency-enhancing tool, AI enabling faster research, topic selection, questions selection scripting, headlines writing, translations of different languages and story development, AI help in content structuring of big data and news content and information, Female journalist explored that AI help in creative storytelling, allowing them to explore multiple angles, formats, and presentation styles, During interview female journalist from Peshawar discussed that AI enables greater flexibility and independence, especially for women managing household responsibilities, facing mobility restrictions, or working remotely, AI reduces Participants workload, AI helps in news analysis, fact-checking, editorial judgment, and narrative quality, AI also helps in increasing their visibility in digital journalism by using analytical data and SEO, Female journalists called AI, the supportive tool that empowers women journalists, enhances productivity, give them more value if use appropriately, and expands Pakistan's participation in evolving, technology driven media landscape on global level.

In today's digital and AI revolutionized world, every aspect of life has been redefined and changed. Similarly, journalism has no exception, AI changed journalistic practices from the field to digital spaces where Roberts can work as a news caster in studio and so many media houses around the globe adopt AI in newsrooms and studios. Findings revealed that 80 % of participants use AI tools in professional context, ChatGPT being the most extensively used, aiding a variety of tasks such as drafting, editing, research, factchecking, translating and producing ideas. Moreover, almost half of the participants shared using AI daily. This integration of AI in workflows presumably increased work efficiency.

The study aim to examine the use of AI by female journalists in Pakistan and to explore the lived experiences of female journalists in Pakistan regarding the integration of generative AI into

their professional practices and to understand the challenges, structural barriers, and ethical concerns faced by women journalists while engaging with AI-driven tools in their work. And examine how female journalists perceive the opportunities and transformative potential of generative AI in shaping their roles, voices, and identities within the field of journalism.

The researcher interviewed 10 Female Journalist from Pakistan who has experience of working both traditional and digital media. First question is about the Use of generative AI in journalism work. Across all ten interviews, most female journalists reported using generative AI tools in limited because of organization policies and credibility but in practical ways, mainly for background research, story outlines, headlines, scripting support, translations, visuals, thumbnails, and question generation. Journalists working in digital, newsroom, or breaking-news environments (e.g., PTV, Geo, AJJ, ABN, and APP) found AI particularly useful for saving time during tight deadlines. Some senior journalists and anchors emphasized that they do not rely heavily on AI, preferring their own writing skills and field experience, while still acknowledging AI's usefulness for SEO, YouTube descriptions, or brainstorming. ChatGPT was the most used AI tool. ChatGPT is one of most widely uses AI tools in all processes and stages of production, journalist now use AI tools personally and on organization level has significantly accelerated AI adoption in journalism (Wu, 2024). Overall, AI is viewed as an assistive tool rather than a replacement for journalistic labor. Professional media organizations now allow journalists to use AI tools and technology only to the extent that it aligns with credibility, objectivity, accuracy and values of their profession (Wu, 2024).

The second question is regarding challenges confronted by female journalist while using AI. A dominant concern raised by nearly all journalists was accuracy and misinformation. Many highlighted that AI-generated content can sound convincing but may include incorrect facts, fabricated references, or misleading phrasing, requiring strict verification. Several journalists stressed that blind reliance on AI can damage credibility and professional trust. Others pointed to ethical risks related to robotic language, lack of emotional depth, authorship transparency, and overdependence. While some respondents reported minimal ethical problems when AI is used carefully, consensus emerged that human judgment and fact-checking are non-negotiable. AI presenting opportunities in media field but arises some serious and major concern such as bias and discrimination, reproduce racial, gender, or ideological, Job, rise of disinformation deepfakes and AI-generated misinformation, journalistic credibility, public trust, lack of transparency, accountability, objectivity, and editorial control, data privacy, source protection, academic integrity, and the erosion of professional journalistic identity are the major concern faces by journalist and media (Aissani et al., 2023).

Third question is about AI's impact on work, challenges, and opportunities for women journalists. Most participants agreed that AI is reshaping journalism by increasing speed, flexibility, and efficiency, particularly benefiting women who juggle professional and domestic responsibilities. AI enables remote work, faster research, and multitasking, which is especially valuable in Pakistan's socio-cultural context. However, journalists also noted challenges such as lack of training, limited institutional support, uneven access to technology, and resistance from traditional newsrooms. While some respondents argued AI is gender-neutral, many emphasized that women could gain empowerment if given equal access and skills development.

Fourth question is about Practical challenges in using AI tools. Common challenges included limited internet access, paid tool restrictions, weak Urdu and local-language performance, lack of cultural context, and generic outputs. Several journalists emphasized that AI struggles with local reporting, sensitivity, tone, and ground realities, making it unsuitable for field-based journalism without human input. Others pointed out those poor prompting skills often lead to irrelevant or biased results. Despite these issues, most journalists agreed that AI's limitations can be managed through experience, careful prompts, and editorial oversight.

Fifth question is about organizational, cultural, and structural barriers. Many respondents highlighted organizational barriers, including the absence of clear AI policies, lack of formal training, unequal access to systems, and newsroom resistance especially from senior colleagues. Several journalists noted that women often receive fewer opportunities to explore new technologies, and their use of AI may be questioned or discouraged. However, a few participants reported no significant barriers in their organizations, provided AI is used ethically. Overall, the findings suggest institutional readiness and gendered access gaps significantly shape AI adoption.

Sixth question is about ethical concerns specific to female journalists. Female journalists

expressed concerns about trust, credibility, gender bias, privacy, harassment, and misuse of images or deepfakes. Some emphasized that AI systems can reproduce cultural or gender stereotypes, indirectly affecting women's professional image. Others argued ethical issues are not gender-specific but acknowledged that women face greater scrutiny and reputational risks if errors occur. Maintaining transparency, fairness, verification, and professional judgment was repeatedly emphasized as essential for preserving trust in a highly polarized media environment.

Seventh question is about opportunities created by generative AI. Participants widely agreed that AI creates new opportunities in research, storytelling, scripting, summarization, translation, headline writing, data handling, and multimedia production. AI allows journalists to experiment with multiple angles, formats, and narratives, enhancing creativity and productivity. Many noted that routine and mechanical tasks are reduced, enabling journalists to focus more on analysis, editorial judgment, and narrative quality. AI was seen as particularly empowering for women by saving time and increasing independence. AI tools have also the potential and present some great opportunities to enhance productivity and efficiency by reducing manual workloads, organizing your work better, speeding up editing, writing news production processes, help in more in depth investigative reporting, advanced data analysis, fake news detection and pattern detection, content accuracy, audience engagement, and personalization, creative possibilities, automated video, audio, and visual content production (Yang, 2025).

Question eight is about Changes in roles and responsibilities of female journalists. Most journalists felt that AI is shifting their role from routine reporting toward analysis, creativity, and strategic decision-making. AI is perceived as a supportive tool that reduces workload pressure and increases efficiency but cannot replace field reporting, human observation, or ethical responsibility. Several respondents stressed that AI enhances independence, especially for women facing mobility or societal restrictions. However, many also warned that over-automation could threaten job security if misused by organizations. These AI tools serve different purposes in journalistic practices, such as writing, reporting, data mining, fact checking, verification, refining, editing, from pre-production to post-production and then social media management (Aissani et al., 2023).

Ninth question is about the Impact of AI on perception and value of female journalists Opinions varied on whether AI can change how female journalists are valued. Many believe that confident and ethical use of AI can challenge stereotypes, showcase professionalism, and highlight women's adaptability to modern technology. Others argued that AI alone cannot change societal attitudes, especially in a patriarchal context, and may even increase risks through deep-fakes and misinformation. Overall, respondents emphasized that skills, credibility, education, and ethical practice supported but not replaced by AI are key to enhancing the value of female journalists.

## 5. Conclusion

The study has concluded the following objectives and findings of the research. The phenomenological study that was aimed to explore the lived experiences of female journalists in Pakistan as they adopt, use and engage with generative AI tools within a rapidly transforming digital media environment. For this purpose, researcher conducted in depth interview with 10 female journalists, who is working in traditional and media landscape of Pakistan. Through lens of technological acceptance model, the researcher provided foundation to this study. Qualitative and phenomenological study found that AI tools have embedded in everyday journalistic practices. Female journalists view these AI tool as powerful and supportive tools but emphasized on ethical use and clear policy.

The study concludes that generative AI holds significant transformative potential for empowering female journalists in Pakistan, provided it is implemented responsibly, ethically, and inclusively. AI can amplify women's professional agencies by reducing routine workloads, enabling remote and flexible work, and supporting more analytical and creative journalistic roles. However, this potential can only be realized through strong human oversight, ethical frameworks, gender-sensitive newsroom policies, and targeted capacity-building initiatives. The research contributes to existing scholarship by foregrounding women journalists' voices from a Global South context and emphasizes the need for media organizations, policymakers, and educators to ensure that AI adoption strengthens journalistic integrity while advancing gender equity in Pakistan's media landscape. As mentioned earlier, the future of journalism is perceived based on AI generated images, now Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing journalism. New AI tools are not only reshaping how journalistic practices are performed, but how journalism is perceived. AI image generator

tools will serve as primary meaning makers that how journalists understand in public and how a journalist looks like (Kempton, 2025).

Furthermore, this study also provides novel perspective to MLE (Media Literacy and Education) as well as AI literacy scholarship by providing a case from Global South journalistic environment. The findings which highlight AI use in various stages of journalistic practices document an applied scenario of the AI literacy situation within Pakistan's media ecosystem. Furthermore, as journalists themselves acquire the role of media educators in various modes; this study demonstrates enactment of the level of AI literacy within newsrooms. This presents implications for professional training of journalists as well as media students in an epoch of AI systems. Lastly, findings suggest that MLE programs should address cultural nuances that exist in Global South journalistic environments; addressing not just skill gaps but the structural conditions that influence AI adoption.

Every study has limitations; despite offering valuable knowledge and insights from Pakistani setting, this study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research is based on a relatively small and purposively selected sample of ten female journalists, which limits the Generalizability of the findings to all women journalists in Pakistan. While the phenomenological approach allowed for in-depth exploration of lived experiences, it does not aim to produce statistically representative results. Second, the study relies on self-reported perceptions and experiences, which may be influenced by personal biases, professional positioning, or social desirability, particularly when discussing sensitive issues such as organizational policies, ethics, and gender-based challenges. Third, the study focuses exclusively on female journalists; therefore, it does not offer a comparative perspective with male journalists or newsroom managers, which could have further enriched the understanding of gendered differences in AI adoption. Finally, given the rapidly evolving nature of generative AI technologies, the findings reflect a specific moment in time and may change as tools, newsroom policies, and regulatory frameworks continue to develop.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several policy recommendations are proposed to ensure the ethical, inclusive, and effective integration of generative AI in journalism in Pakistan. Media organizations should develop clear and transparent AI usage policies that define acceptable practices, emphasize human oversight, and safeguard journalistic values such as accuracy, credibility, and accountability.

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# The Communicative Code of Youth Self-Expression in Memetic Templates #SigmaBoy

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**Abstract**

The possibility of self-expression are becoming the leading motives for the activities of the modern generation, when the information and digital environment with the visual appeal of content include: communication, identity, entertainment and media learning. Ritualized performances of social network users define a new communicative code in the transmission of cultural experience. As a result, the younger generation (people 14-35 years old) is positioned as an active participant in the culture of self-expression through the meme as a language of thinking. Federal state educational standards enshrine a focus on developing a culture of self-expression among students, and for the education system, translating meaning into the cultural code of the audience becomes a basic need to develop methods and technologies for customizing the communicative code.

The authors of the article analyze the reactions of the online public from January to March 2025, determine the forms of personal self-expression in the memetic expressive patterns #sigmaboy – emotional, dynamic, expressive.

The results obtained may be useful in developing effective strategies to reduce communication barriers and expand understanding of media literacy in the context of knowledge of media algorithms and their socio-psychological influence and consequences.

**Keywords:** memetic patterns, #SigmaBoy, self-expression, communication code, media literacy.

## 1. Introduction

The accessibility of the Internet and the popularization of social networks create conditions in which users become creators of the online space, collective activism develops, consolidating new ways and forms of individual self-expression. Templates on TikTok become memes – the results of user-generated content that are reproduced through imitation and quickly spread, with individual creative variations, mediatizing emotions as an affective practice – "a human activity where emotions are the specific and primary focus of practice" (Smith et al., 2018). The potential of the TikTok space allows the user to complete his personal identity using algorithms for interpersonal, cross-script, and cross-cultural interaction in a gaming strategy for presenting himself to the media public. “Meme” is used to denote a unit of cultural information that can be presented in both verbal and paraverbal, non-verbal form.

Network mass culture has gained new zones of influence: psychological-social, linguistic-cultural, socio-political and is largely focused on the needs of the younger generation for self-expression and self-identification. In studies of the mass consciousness of Russian youth, the authors note a tendency to build their own “I” from previous generations through a system of

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symbols and narratives (values, attitudes, discourses, “friend or foe” patterns, verbal and visual memes, etc.) and, in general, distinguish the agenda of young people from the perception of life by middle and older generations (Dezhnev, 2021; Tokarev, 2024).

We propose identifying the key characteristics of the online public: *social*, as a confident user of the online space with a media identity; *psychological*, as a conscious intention to express one's opinion or attitude to others through accessible online means (an act of self-expression); and *linguacultural*, as the manipulation of scripts and frames of popular culture that can be interpreted individually and by the author.

Self-expression is inextricably linked to the fundamental socio-psychological phenomena of self-disclosure (Jourard, 1971) and self-presentation, aimed at forming an image of the “I”, which is embedded in the fundamental ideas of an individual's understanding of their boundaries in society and the world (Mead, 1963). Self-expression in communication is realized through the transfer of information about oneself to others and, in creating a certain self-image, thereby emphasizing the central line in the functions of self-expression – self-identification within the boundaries of the social world, the desire for social identity (Tajfel, Turner, 1986).

Awareness and purposefulness of self-expression of the individual are revealed in the mechanisms of “self-monitoring” in the desire of people for a positive self-presentation due to the motive of social desirability (Snyder, 1974), when control over one’s behavior allows one to manage the impression that others form of one, and in the mechanisms of self-control, when a sense of loyalty ensures a high level of authenticity and a clear self-concept (Kokkoris, 2024).

In a context of constantly evolving media content, influencers and opinion leaders play a significant role, serving as role models and sources of inspiration for millions of their followers. Their popularity shapes new values and aspirations, reflecting and stimulating the evolution of social dynamics (Erasov, 1996; McLuhan, 2007; Selivanova, 2020; Shifman et al., 2026). Online audiences shape unique trends not only in music, fashion, and blogging, but also in social and verbal behavior. The “collective subject” (Zhuravlev, 2000) of social and informational activity develops a strong skill, habit, behavior, and lifestyle in the information environment – a constant readiness for creativity in the production of social information (Gálik, 2019; Krotova, 2024; Krotova, Palekha, 2024).

The online audience of new media expresses itself to society (the world) freely and purposefully. TikTok is becoming a socio-technological tool for personal self-expression in the development of identity and cultural politics (Hartung et al. 2023; Southerton, 2021; Zeng et al. 2020). Interaction between users is realized through interactive functions: uploading a short video by any user, superimposing a voiceover on a memetic video or using it as a template for a meme, operating with background music, creating a “duet” that allows mixing popular genres of mass online creative culture (dance, comedy, challenges) (Bhandari, Bimo, 2020; Lee et al., 2023, Volkova et al., 2024). Feelings and affects are transmitted and directed to the “Other” through the interactive and hypertextual possibilities of social networks – this is how “affective gestures (e.g., humor)” appear, which “provide a basis for connecting and attuning people to ongoing events” (Boffone, 2021; Hautea et al., 2021; Papacharissi, 2015).

User interaction occurs with trending videos featuring memetic elements (text, movement, and sound), which then spread as viral performances. Given the “searchability” afforded by adding hashtags to the caption of any video, they become “a means for exploring playful interaction” and virality, as users experiment with various combinations in pursuit of their desire to be “algorithmically recognizable” (Gillespie, 2014; Pearce et al., 2009; Teo et al., 2024).

A number of the author reviews we examined (e.g., (Cervi et al., 2023) identified a set of the most popular patterns for creating online content:

1) lip syncing (users draw on specific song lyrics, short musical excerpts, or informal colloquialisms, reworking them and adding a personal twist to the visual narrative);

2) copying the duet form of presentation (users react (or ”respond”) to the original video by juxtaposing the videos side by side, where they can be viewed together, and copying the “duet” for comparison or adding a commentary as a compliment or criticism);

3) playing with “point of view” (users implement the cinematic aesthetic of point of view, impersonating others to express their point of view on a particular issue).

Gaming meme culture encourages imitation of each other, influencers, and celebrities through the reproducibility of meme templates (Kaye et al., 2021; Shifman, 2013) and engages users in the creation of remixes and memetic content for the purpose of self-expression.

## 2. Materials and methods

The key methodological principle of the study is a systemic and interdisciplinary approach, which allows us to consider the object of study (the communicative code in individual self-expression) as a multicomponent dynamic system in media culture, through a psycholinguistic analysis of user reactions, denoted by the hashtag #SigmaBoy.

The article is based on a method for analyzing basic concepts of the mechanisms of mass consciousness, as characteristics of an online public with behavior patterns and their changes at the emotional-action level, where strong emotions are reflected in the mechanism of emotional contagion. As the main quantitative indicator of individual engagement, we considered the hashtag as an indicator of the strengthening and development of user affect in the targeted transmission of mood in social, cultural, and socio-psychological discourses. The study utilized a comprehensive approach and methods, including discourse analysis of the media environment, case studies, intent analysis, secondary data analysis, linguacultural and socio-psychological interpretation of concepts, as well as elements of component, etymological, comparative, and semantic analysis, as well as content analysis extracted from social media using a continuous sampling method.

One of the key methods is the analysis of polymodal (creolized) texts, which allowes for the exploration of verbal and non-verbal components in their interaction.

The study's chronological scope: January 1 – March 15, 2025; the TikTok online audience is defined as the primary users of online spaces aged 14 to 35, as well as group (“collective”) entities involved in the hashtag.

## 3. Discussion

An analysis conducted in two stages of digital traces – the effects of #sigmaboy – showed that the self-expression of a network personality is one of the leading motives of its behavior. The dominant position of social networks significantly determines the crucial role of public digital spaces in the dissemination of emotions, feelings, and moods (Owens, 2025; Wang, Scherr, 2022). Social media user performances define the communicative code in a multi-component dynamic system of media culture, which is confirmed by a psycholinguistic analysis of user reactions and demonstrates an interdisciplinary yet focused approach in the studies of social media with mixed relations (Lotz, Lunardi, 2026; Schellewald, 2023). The studied potential of multifaceted ways of interaction provides a practical and scalable basis for improving the methods of influence in the formation of effective digital habits.

The first stage of the study analyzed the #sigmaboy hashtag for the song *Sigma-Boy*, based on ratings, number of plays, and usage. The hashtag's TikTok page serves as a repository of user audiovisual interactions, allowing us to conduct a step-by-step observation and documentation, creating a repository of five videos and eight audio recordings. We categorized the results by the identifiers, “video”, “music”, and likes, comments, saved videos, reposts, using background music (Table 1; Table 2).

**Table 1.** Analysis of the #sigmaboy hashtag in the "video" category

| Total number of #sigmaboy publications | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 188,9 K | | | |
| Video 1 *Snowball* | | | |
| Likes | Comments | Saved videos | Reposts |
| 165,1 thsd. | 14,3 thsd. | 19 thsd. | 11, 8 thsd. |
| Video 2 *Evgeny Kazakov* | | | |
| Likes | Comments | Saved videos | Reposts |
| 18,3 thsd. | 1797 | 2246 | 1128 |
| Video 3 *Darina* | | | |
| Likes | Comments | Saved videos | Reposts |
| 7167 | 1180 | 1149 | 887 |
| Video 4 *Ksenya* | | | |
| Likes | Comments | Saved videos | Reposts |
| 3769 | 490 | 599 | 447 |
| Video 5 *maia_fatbike_forever* | | | |

| Likes | Comments | Saved videos | Reposts |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1211 | 265 | 143 | 273 |

**Table 2.** Analysis of the #sigmaboy hashtag in the “music” category

| Music | |
|---|---|
| Title | Number of hits/usage |
| 1. Sigma Boy/Betsy & Maria Yankovskaya 00.47 | 1,4 M |
| 2. Sigma Boy/Betsy & Maria Yankovskaya 01.00 | 46,8 K |
| 3. Sigma Boy – Remix/Lavinia & Ely Oaks & Betsy 00.15 | 507,4 K |
| 4. original sound – c7epic.aep/c7epic.aep 00.13 | 116,7 K |
| 5. original sound – amis.opO/amie. 00.13 | 104,6 K |
| 6. original sound – realx7aep/Realx7 00.17 | 55,2 K |
| 7. original sound – caitin666/Caitin 00.20 | 23,9 K |
| 8. original sound – alfar1zi_17/yanzz... 00.16 | 86,6 K |

It can be emphasized that in order to understand the spread of messages, it is necessary to combine communication theories and the mechanism of online propagation when creating an activism community on TikTok (Gerbaudo, 2026) in studying the contradictions between viral propagation and community creation with an understanding of their audience.

Our results show that viral propagation is an integral part of TikTok and a tool that helps them reach a wide audience by following current trends on the platform with memorable, engaging, and playful videos. There is a constant interaction between activists and TikTok's capabilities and culture, leading to what is referred to as "flat virality," a spreading logic driven less by shared values and more by algorithmic imperatives. At the same time, existing research highlights the role of user-generated visual content in shaping public discourse (the concept of cultural projection to the visual realm). Activism operates within social media ecosystems, reinforcing the idea that visual narratives play a central role, and hashtags like #sigmaboys serve not only as acts of self-expression but also as mechanisms for user engagement, contributing to the sustainability and adaptability of dissemination.

*Sigma Boy* is a song by Russian bloggers Betsy, 11, and Maria Yankovskaya, 12, released as a single by Rhymes Music on October 4, 2024. It went viral on TikTok and charted on Spotify, YouTube, Shazam, Apple Music, and iTunes (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United States), and "spawned a wave of memes" and became a worldwide hit, spreading on TikTok. On Spotify, it topped the global Viral 50 chart (ru.wikipedia.org https://translated.turbopages.org/proxy_u/en-ru.ru.f2de739e-67cecbbd-e150f39f-74722d776562/ https/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigma_Boy).

In January 2025, the track reached number seven on the international Billboard Hot Dance/Pop Songs chart. As of January 2025, more than 140,000 videos had been made for this song on social media (according to RIA Novosti). The audio version on YouTube currently (March 10, 2025) has 102 million views (*Roskomnadzor of Russian Federation restricted access to the service), the video "STS Kids Award; #SuperLikeShow in the SuperTrend category" has 33 million views, and on TikTok, #sigmaboy has 207,100 TikTok posts (with five posts having the highest number of views, ranging from 300,000 to 7 million views). In TikTok's “Music” section, the original has about 1.9 million plays, and creative variations have about 387,000.

As a result, the younger generation is positioned as an active participant in the culture of self-expression through memes, as a language of thought (Marôpo et al., 2026), where we can observe how interactive infrastructures and algorithmic visibility are reshaping values in modern society (Berman, 2026), and this is not a random change, but a structural transformation in the creation, distribution, and consumption of content. This interplay contributes to the development of broad discussions in the fields of media and cultural studies regarding social identity and the changing dynamics of entertainment mediated by digital technologies and, in particular, music (Arrieta, 2025) and its role in shaping the beliefs and identities of adolescents (Carbone et al., 2026).

In the second stage of the study, the forms of self-expression of the individual were analyzed in the context of media activism and the high speed of dissemination of images in the memetic templates of the song chorus (in the context of the potential for emotional contagion): 1) emotional

form – eye and lip movements (“lipsynching”), dynamic form – dance movements, expressive form – appearance (image).

Chorus of the song “Sigma Battle” (refrain):

Sigma, Sigma boy, Sigma boy, Sigma boy,

Every girl wants to dance with you.

Sigma, Sigma boy, Sigma boy, Sigma boy,

I'm so full of it, it'll take a year to get you.

This review highlights the importance of media metrics for assessing the development of students' self-expression culture, where the translation of meaning into the audience's cultural code becomes necessary for the education system to adjust the communication code. Media communication should encompass both academic and social spheres of life (Kim, 2025). The trend reflects opportunities for active dialogue and raising awareness about interaction in the digital environment, while also highlighting the challenges of reaching diverse audiences and addressing vulnerabilities. In general, it is necessary to use interdisciplinary networks and strategies to enhance the visibility and accessibility of education research (Crocker, Fazekas, 2026).

In the reactions of the network public, the forms of self-expression of the individual in memetic patterns are determined, determining the effect of emotional contagion, behavioral changes, due to the speed of propagation. The results obtained can be useful in developing effective strategies for reducing communication barriers and expanding the understanding of media literacy (Lu et al., 2026), in the context of knowledge of media algorithms and their socio-psychological influence and consequences (Kan et al., 2025; Munn, Badri, 2026).

It is possible to increase the efficiency of information ecosystems in the development of education policies based on the media needs of the modern generation, which are focused on aesthetics, narratives, and authorship in mixed (hybrid) realities. New forms and formats for community engagement are not only a technical but also a social element of storytelling in an ever-changing media ecology. It is possible to transition to "smart storytelling" by establishing new connections between the nodes of the screen plot and the surrounding world (Schleser, 2022). Interdisciplinary collaboration in the field of media literacy and communication will contribute to the development of methodological innovations in active learning strategies (Yi Zhang et al., 2025) and the perception of social presence, which positively affects motivation, satisfaction, retention, and learning outcomes (Castellanos-Reyes et al., 2024).

## 4. Results

*Analysis of Memetic Templates*

1. Emotional template – lip and eye movements (https://vk.com/video-201278708_456239449 (STS video)).

Users draw on specific song lyrics, short musical excerpts, or informal colloquial expressions, reworking them and adding a personal twist to the visual narrative. This is an accessible and simple form of online self-expression, where “emotions and actions” ensure the rapid spread of imitation.

This memetic template primarily represents the nonverbal aspect of communication, which has the highest potential for emotional charge – eye contact – gaze – visual contact – direct gaze demonstrates a complete readiness for dialogue and interaction. This aspect of communication is the first step in establishing contact and getting to know the interlocutors – the stage “a dialogue begins with a glance”.

The emotionality of the template is proven in classical concepts of the functions of facial expressions, where the main load is on the eyebrows and the area around the mouth (lips); in theories of basic emotions and acting techniques, they (emotions) are transmitted and read in their stable patterns of combining the line of the eyebrows and mouth.

Analyzing the viral version of the *Sigma Boy* chorus, we can note the most active facial expressions in the mouth area – the lips are pursed and stretched into a half-smile – and identify the so-called contrasting elements of the template, which, according to the laws of psychological perception, realize the function of attracting the audience's attention. The first contrasting element is when the mouth area is mobile, but the eyes are closed; the second element is the side-to-side movement of the eyes, followed by a piercing, open gaze (widely open eyes indicate interest and excitement), but the lips remain motionless; the third element itself performs a nonverbal function of attracting attention – a raised eyebrow and a wink (flirting and the “sigma face”). Thus, the sequence of elements presented to the online recipient is very convenient for ease of perception – the emotional

image develops gradually, unobtrusively, organically, in sync with the words of the song's chorus. It's worth noting that the eye and lip movements in the chorus text reinforce the appealing context of gender relations. From a communicative perspective, users' faces become physical templates for the romantically emotionally charged artistic creations of men and women, which allowed them to resonate with such a large number of users who potentially share the song's context.

Here, we can also note the rhythmic movement of lips and eye movements from side to side, as well as the effects of repetition, also contribute to ease of perception and imitation. The nonverbal characteristics of rhythm convey conditions of safety, certainty, and predictability for humans. Sensitivity to rhythmic, repetitive stimuli is particularly strong in the formation of emotional stereotypes, and, as a result, vivid and persistent affective memory. In the affective practice of lip syncing, it is a “codified mode of expressing affect”, where lips, lyrics, and music orchestrate a specific mood and movement, with performers and audience influencing each other.

We believe that lip syncing is made possible, in part, by the linguistic simplicity of the verse lines, its refrain-like organizational structure, reflected in the rhythmic side-to-side bobbing of the performer's head, and the phonemic appearance of the [o] sound in the stressed position, visually expressed in the ability to round the lips and elongate the face, mimicking the movements of the original performers.

The pattern of lip syncing, lip and eye movements in the TikTok space is highly disseminable (viral) and intelligible, and becomes a powerful memetic tool, allowing users to (re)tell media stories to the online public.

*2. Dynamic template* (TikTok video statistics #sigmaboy, https://vk.com/video-201278708_456239449 – STS video).

Users’ emotionality is visible in their own memetic versions, facial expressions, movements, postures, design contexts, intentions, attitudes, and narratives. The widespread user performances create accessible templates for analyzing their activism. We can note that the online public expresses itself in multilayered content modes, expressing their feelings of solidarity, joy, good mood, and creatively formulating their position.

Thus, we turned to identifying and describing certain phenomenological affective mental units, explored and defined through dance movements in the context of nonverbal communication as a set of gestures and the dynamics of postures. Of the general list of gestures – communicative, modal, and descriptive – the category we're analyzing is descriptive, meaning they exclusively accompany and complement the lyrics. Such gestures are meaningful only in the context of a spoken utterance, facilitating the ease of perception of the media image, helping to visually convey the actions, events, and objects described in the lyrics.

The postures we see within this memetic template are open, rhythmic, and alternating, possessing a coordinated character and unambiguous perception. Continuing the logic of nonverbal communication, we can also speak of the emergence of kinesthetic empathy, when observing another person's movements, a person experiences sensations reminiscent of those experienced by the person moving. Research in dance psychotherapy has identified a kinesthetic component of empathy, which involves synchronizing the movements of partners or an entire group of dancers.

In general, the context of synchronization of “dance movements”, as well as in the first memetic (facial) template, is characterized by a high level of comfort for perception, support, infection; in the concept of dance-movement therapy, in the emergence of such reactions of self-expression of the individual, a safe space of relationships with creative energy is formed, a dialogue with oneself is established through the expression and acceptance of relationships with one’s feelings, self-respect and self-acceptance develop in the acquisition of feeling and awareness of one’s own “I” (Khodorov, 1991).

*3. Expressive template*

By repeating the song's refrain after the performers, users embody a cinematic aesthetic, posing as “others” (imitating the performers' media image), thereby expressing their attitude toward the song as a cultural and social phenomenon.

Within the analyzed media image, it's worth noting the lexical units *sigma-boy* and *sigma-girl*, which are barbarisms for Russian language and English-language neologisms created by analogy with the terms *alpha-male, alpha-female*, and so on.

Linguistically, the word *sigma* has evolved from a mathematical symbol to a key unit of modern slang. The concept of “sigma male” (or “sigma-man”) existed in English-language

discourse much earlier, beginning in the 2010s. Theodore Robert Beale, in his blog Vox Popoli (blogspot.com), dedicated to the study of the "manosphere," coined the term to describe an introverted dominant personality type, analyzing social dynamics and expanding the theory of sociosexual hierarchy. The sigma man, according to Beale, is a personality type that defies classification within the traditional alpha, delta, gamma, and omega male categories. In his understanding, a sigma man is a self-sufficient individual, even an outsider, whose behavior and characteristics stand out from the crowd. He seems to lack social approval, does not strive for dominance or submission, and does not seek to steal women's attention, preferring independence, introversion, adaptability, and self-reliance (Beale, 2024).

Before the #sigmaboy meme-hashtag appeared, another, related term, #sigmaface, gained widespread popularity. This facial expression involves frowning and pouting, demonstrating approval. The main pop culture character to sport the #sigmaface was Patrick Bateman from the film *American Psycho*. Thus began the emergence of the “lone wolf” aesthetic, and sigma characters became a recognizable meme and spread across the media through 1) simple copying of the original images through forwarding, saving, and posting on users' personal pages, and 2) media imitation (creating secondary publications based on the viral meme).

By early 2025, semantic attenuation (weakening) had occurred in the Russian-speaking community: from a serious masculine archetype, the word had transformed into an ironic marker of "coolness" or even an absurdist element of so called “brainrot culture” (Kanashina, 2018; 2023). The catalyst for the spread of this linguocultural phenomenon was the musical lyrics of the track *Sigma-boy* (Spanish: Betsy & Maria Yankovskaya). From a linguocultural perspective, these lyrics are an example of secondary semiotization. The use of the term by teenage performers completely deconstructs the original patriarchal meaning, and the hybridization of discourses in the song's lyrics (a combination of Anglicisms and Russian-language slang clichés) creates a specific *Zoomer* register of speech.

The *#sigmaboy* phenomenon is realized in the Russian-speaking environment as a polymodal discourse (Kanashina, 2023), since the verbal component "sigma" is inextricably linked with the nonverbal component – the “sigma face” (a specific facial expression of approval/superiority, imitating the features of K. Walker or P. Bateman). At the end of 2025, the linguistic portal Gramota.ru included “sigma” in the list of contenders for *Word of the Year*, confirming the high degree of common usage (entry into widespread use) of the term in the national corpus of online communication (Gramota.ru, 2026).

In the socio-psychological context of media image, the image of performers belongs to the “image-intention” type, which strives for the symbolic expression of intelligible reality. The creative intention and perceived image of the text contain components of emotional charge, which is provided by the colloquial functional style of speech, slang, the speech functions of which include: ease, oral form, and emotionality.

In the context of psychosemiotic space, one can highlight the attention-grabbing aspect, such as the contrasting images of the blonde and brunette, and the ease of perception in the simplicity of the performers' silhouettes (the pictographic style – a gender symbol (skirt) and a triangle (pointed upwards) – and the contrasting color combinations in achromatic colors. Further, when analyzing this memetic template in the media image, one can note the semantic intention of developing a romantic relationship in the context of a playful flirting strategy (Ryumshina, 2019) as a complex process in which biological, sociocultural, and individual aspects of personality are intertwined.

Thus, the analysis of the identified memetic templates demonstrated the mechanism of emotional infection of the mass consciousness of the online public and the satisfaction of the need for self-expression through engagement and creativity through imitation.

## 5. Conclusion

The culture of influence, formed by various media practices, focuses interaction on more flexible forms based on personality. This study examines the training of media literacy in the possibilities of creating an algorithm that takes into account the features of socio-network platformization in the presentation of content and the possibilities of self-expression of users and will allow a person not just to consume content, but to actively work with it – analyze, evaluate, and, if desired, create your own.

The main indicators of a person's media competence that have been enriched are: a) information in understanding the media environment, mass communication and media

influences in platform algorithms (virality, video, music) and their impact on the psychological internal causes of our behavior in striving and reinforcing the need for self-expression, which also allows us to create our own content when the position of a passive viewer shifts as an active creator; which allowed us to identify the characteristics of the online public: social – a user of a hybrid space with media identity, psychological in expressing one's judgment or attitude to others, linguocultural in scripts of mass culture with an individual author's refraction; b) perceptual in understanding the author's position and, as a result, the predictability of behavior and needs in the emotional and semantic context of media messages, in the dynamics of the user's auditory and visual image of their feelings. The phenomenon of memetic culture lies in its ability to transmit culturally significant information in a simplified (viral) form from one person to another. The form of expression of meaning is a memetic expressive template based on simple mental schemas and cultural codes that have a high persistence in consciousness and culture. The communicative code of youth, as exemplified by self-expression in the memetic templates #SigmaBoyRole, is presented in the characteristics of expressiveness: *emotionality, dynamism, expressiveness*, as forms of linguistic and rhythmic simplicity for the target audience. Standards of imitation are embedded in the dynamic components of mass consciousness – attitudes and moods – through the automatic copying of facial expressions, voice, and gestures in the formation of social identity and the satisfaction of the need for self-expression in the presented memetic construct in the expressive templates of #sigmaboy discussed: emotional – eye and lip movements ("lipping"), dynamic – dance movements, expressive – appearance (image); c) interpretative in understanding the process of media functioning in society, taking into account the factors of expressive memetic patterns, and, as a result, the ability to recognize manipulations in emotionally colored words, stereotypes, etc. The accessibility of mobile screens includes new forms of collaboration between the audience and artificial intelligence, as well as the development of critical thinking skills in relation to modern media products and a competent user attitude towards memes, etc. In the future, the development of AI literacy skills (the art of prompt, AI-detecting, AI-fact-checking, etc.) (Boukhari et al., 2026; Fang et al., 2026).

The obtained results of the study allow us to formulate proposals and recommendations for the system of media education: firstly, it was determined that online behavior is potentially accessible for direct analysis and prediction within the framework of communication theory and the culture of personal self-expression; secondly, ideas about improving media literacy in general were expanded; thirdly, the identified memetic *expressive* patterns in the culture of self-expression can be used in the development of SEL-programs; fourthly, in social networks as part of the information infrastructure, it is necessary to take into account the local context of their use depending on the specifics of the goals of interaction – family, educational, regional, cultural; fifthly, personal self-expression in the education system is not only a way of personality manifestation, but also an important factor in its development, socialization and self-realization, which corresponds to the norms of society and culture, and the possibilities of online discourse can be realized in programs with a personal-axiological focus in the conscious perception of media messages.

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# Flouting Grice's Conversational Maxims: A Linguistic Study of Authentic Podcast Discourse

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**Abstract**

The study examines how Grice's Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims operate in authentic spoken discourse, focusing on five educational podcasts published on the platform Spotify between the years 2024 and 2025. Drawing on pragmatic theory – including conversational implicature and Relevance Theory – it is investigated how and why speakers flout the Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Manner maxims in real-life communication. The empirical analysis combines qualitative analysis of communicative function with a quantitative count of flouting instances. A total of thirty-eight instances of maxim flouts are identified, classified, and evaluated. Contrary to the initial hypothesis, flouting of the Maxim of Quantity is not the dominant pattern. The findings indicate that flouting is rarely a communicative failure; rather, it functions as a purposeful strategy that generates implicature, emphasizes emotion, and increases listeners' engagement without undermining mutual understanding. The study concludes that conversational maxims function as flexible, adaptable guidelines rather than fixed rules, and that authentic materials of this kind hold considerable value for developing learners' pragmatic competence in teaching and learning contexts while also informing related fields including translation studies, intercultural communication training, media discourse analysis, and the design of conversational AI systems, highlighting its relevance for both theoretical and applied linguistic research.

**Keywords:** Grice's cooperative principle, conversational maxims, flouting, conversational implicature, pragmatics, Relevance Theory, podcast discourse, pragmatic competence.

## 1. Introduction

Natural language is efficient in the sense that a single message can convey different semantic contents in different contexts. Meaning is shaped by the interaction between the linguistic form and the situation in which it is produced, therefore it comes from the combination of words and context (Carston, 2002; Fabian, 2024). Interpretative strategies help listeners understand meanings that are not directly expressed. The ability to deal with vagueness and fill in missing information is a key skill in using language (Rooy, 2001). The process of understanding extra meaning that is not said directly is related to conversational implicature (Levinson, 2000; Elmahady et al., 2022). H.P. Grice (Grice, 1975) explains that speakers often expect listeners to work out additional meaning by using context, general communication rules, and shared knowledge. Because of this, implicature depends strongly on the situation and on what the speaker and listener already know prior to their conversation (Li, 2021). The hidden meanings are gathered based on how they are created, especially depending on how speakers follow or do not follow conversational maxims:

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– observance and direct application of conversational maxims – even when an utterance is clear, relevant, truthful, and informative, listeners may still suppose additional meaning.

– conflict between conversational maxims – one maxim is sacrificed to preserve another one which is more important,

– flouting of conversational maxims – a speaker openly and intentionally breaks a maxim, while expecting the listener to notice this and search for an implied meaning; it is common in irony, sarcasm, or emotional exaggeration,

– deliberate violation of conversational maxims – a maxim is broken without signalling it clearly, often to hide information or prevent understanding (Thomas, 1995).

Relevance Theory (Sperber, Wilson, 1986; Yus, 2006) is a cognitive approach to communication that explains how hearers interpret utterances beyond their literal meaning. Instead of seeing communication mainly as rule-governed cooperation, it is guided by general principles of human cognition. Human beings are naturally inclined to look for information that is worth their attention. When they receive linguistic or non-linguistic stimuli, they automatically try to interpret them in the most meaningful way possible. Relevance Theory agrees with the idea that understanding communication involves recognizing speaker's intention. Understanding an utterance is a matter of inferring what the speaker intended to convey from what she utters (Allott, 2013). According to D. Sperber and D. Wilson (Sperber, Wilson, 2015), there is a continuum of cases between 'meaning that' and 'displaying evidence that'. As B. Clark (Clark, 2013) asserts, cognition includes processes such as remembering, planning, evaluating and can be understood as the process of acquiring, storing, and manipulating information. Communicators shape their messages in ways which make it easier for us to see how they intend their behaviour to be relevant (Clark, 2013). Language comprehension depends on the listener's or reader's ability to construct inferences when building a mental representation of what a text is about (Graesser et.al, 1994). M. Terkourafi (Terkourafi, 2021) notes that meaning which does not come from the words themselves but rather from how they are used is considered pragmatic meaning. M. Stone (Stone, 2003) adds that plans and intentions function as mental structures that connect actions with expected outcomes. According to P. Kendeou et al. (Kendeou et al., 2020), inference making is a fundamental skill that enables the construction of coherent representations during reading comprehension.

Context provides the basis for both implicature and inferential interpretation. It is necessary to any adequate account of meaning and understanding (Carston, 2002). Context in pragmatics can be divided into several types based on what aspects of communication they emphasize: situational, background knowledge, and co-textual contexts (Cutting, 2022). Different communicative contexts establish different priorities among maxims, and successful communicators learn to recognize and adapt to these contextual variations (Fabian, 2026). Meaning is often inferred from multiple sources, such as context, tone of voice, intonation, pauses, emphasis, and shared knowledge between speakers and listeners, by their relationship, the topic of conversation, and the wider communicative situation. From a cognitive-pragmatic perspective, communication is best understood as an inferential process grounded in the speakers' mental states and shared knowledge, extending context well beyond the spoken words themselves to include everything presupposed as common ground among participants (Airenti, Plebe, 2017). Previous research has also shown that emotional aspects of language use influence learners' responses to spoken discourse and their emotional habitual subjective well-being across different language contexts, highlighting the close relationship between language processing and emotional experience (Škorvagová, Beclerová, 2022). The motivating force behind speakers' self-realization is the choice of goals and ways of their essence realization, self-determination and aspiration for self-presentation in a new cultural environment, in particular by the means of speech activity (Handzilevska et al., 2019).

Grice's principle assumes that people cooperate in the process of communication in order to reduce misunderstanding (Finch, 2000). But the real-life communication may not always follow the principle in a simple or predictable way (Davies, 2000). Speakers appear to break cooperative expectations, yet communication still succeeds because listeners look for a deeper meaning. A. Hadi (Hadi, 2013) emphasizes that communication often involves conflicting intentions or strategic behaviour. In authentic discourse, including spoken interactions such as podcasts, speakers are ironic, indirect, or intentionally ambiguous, and listeners must still interpret meaning successfully. For this reason, Grice's model needs to be accompanied by Relevance Theory, which offers a more detailed account of the cognitive processes involved in interpretation.

As part of his Cooperative Principle, Grice proposes a set of conversational maxims that describe how speakers typically cooperate in communication. Rules are either adhered to or broken, whereas the upholding of principles is a cline (Davies, 2000). When people speak or write, they usually aim to express themselves in a way that others can understand. For this reason, interaction involves continuous adjustment between participants, i.e., clarifying, reformulating, or paraphrasing ideas in order to reach mutual understanding. Effective communication also requires a certain level of shared knowledge between participants (Thomas, 1995).

The Maxim of Quality relates directly to truthfulness in communication. It requires speakers to aim to be truthful and only provide information that is accurate and supported by evidence (Thomas, 1995). This expectation is especially important in podcasts. Podcast listeners usually cannot directly verify the information they hear. Therefore, they rely heavily on the assumption that speakers follow the Maxim of Quality. When a podcast host presents statistics, personal experiences, or opinions from experts, the audience interpret them under the belief that the speaker is being honest and has sufficient evidence and research. If this assumption is broken, it may significantly weaken the relationship of trust. Without this basic rule, the goals of communication would become difficult to achieve (Yule, 1996). If participants suspect dishonesty, they may question everything that is said, which disturbs the flow of interaction. Flouting of maxim occurs when speakers deliberately and obviously say something untrue. In podcasts, this type of flouting often appears in a playful or ironic style. Hosts may exaggerate or make obviously false statements to entertain the audience. Listeners are expected to understand that these statements are not meant to be factual but rather pose as stylistic devices.

The Maxim of Quantity concerns the amount of information that is provided in conversation. Speakers should provide all the information which is necessary for the purpose of the current exchange but also leave out any unnecessary details that aren't important (Thomas, 1995). This balance supports clarity of the conversation and helps the listener focus on what is relevant at that moment. Overinformativeness may raise side issues or make listeners think that the extra detail has a special purpose (Grice, 1991). Podcasts are influenced by time limits and their conversation-like style. Hosts add personal opinions, jokes, small talk, and spontaneous reactions along with facts. However, they should be sufficiently informational for the listener to understand the message without confusion or excess (Haniyah et al., 2025).

Maxim of Relation focuses on staying on topic and making sure that each contribution supports shared understanding. Speakers are expected to provide information that helps answer the implicit questions and support coherence and continuity in discourse (Sperber, Wilson, 1995). Podcast interviews often revolve around a central theme, e.g., a guest's professional experience, personal story, or a current social issue. When both host and guest follow the maxim of relevance, the discussion remains focused, and listeners can easily follow the line of thought. Irrelevant departure from the topic may confuse the audience or weaken the impact of the central message. In interviews, a guest may change the topic when asked about personal or controversial issues. These changes are usually not accidental; they are often used to protect oneself or create emotional distance (Haniyah et al., 2025).

Maxim of Manner is described as a guideline encouraging speakers to present information clearly, straightforwardly, and in an organized way, not to confuse the audience (Sperber, Wilson, 1995). In podcasts, listeners cannot easily re-read or review what was said. Therefore, clarity and logical structure are crucial. When speakers talk in a disorganized or ambiguous way, listeners struggle to follow the discussion. In contrast, clear and well-structured speech helps maintain engagement and understanding, which is especially important in audio-based media.

Podcasts have become one of the most popular forms of digital media in recent years. In educational contexts specifically, common genres include the *Chat Show* (conversational, interview-style formats), the *Narrative* (storytelling-driven formats), and the *Quick Burst* (short, information-dense episodes) (Drew, 2017). Educational podcasts feature clear explanations, expert interviews, or discussions that make complex topics easier to understand. They also frequently include speakers sharing their own experiences. Spoken communication involves a range of interactional features – backchannelling, fillers, discourse markers, hedging, clarification, and repair – contributing to the natural flow of conversation and supporting the interpretation of meaning in real-life communication (Pete, 2020). M.R. Arfanda et al. (Arfanda et al., 2022) adds that communication needs to be delivered smoothly to make it understandable. I.P. Wijaya and A. Afriana (Wijaya, Afriana, 2026) highlight how implicatures contribute to the construction of humour through dynamic and pragmatic interaction between the host and his guests. Studying

maxim flouting in podcasts helps us understand how speakers use language to create humour and keep the audience interested (Zelianti et al., 2024). A. Hadi (Hadi, 2023) observes interview podcasts with question-and-answer exchanges where guests may flout maxims to shape their public image or shift topics. They claim that flouting maxims for humour keeps listeners entertained and creates a relaxed atmosphere. Educational podcasts tend to follow the maxims more closely to ensure clarity and understanding, even though flouting can still occur to make explanations more engaging (Arfanda et al., 2022). Across all formats, speakers and hosts use maxim flouting to their advantage – to generate laughter, build rapport, hold attention, or convey certain messages without stating them directly. Understanding when and why speakers flout maxims in educational settings can reveal how hosts make learning enjoyable without sacrificing understanding of the topic. The study focuses on educational podcasts as they combine learning content with natural, real-life communication. Examining maxims in this context helps us understand how speakers explain important ideas while maintaining listeners' attention and connecting with them through appealing examples and experiences.

## 2. Materials and methods

The main objective of the present research is to analyse how conversational maxims are flouted in educational podcast discourse. More specifically, the study aims to identify instances of flouting of all the maxims, determine which conversational maxim is flouted most frequently and examine the most common reasons for the Maxim of Quality flouting. Based on these objectives, the research questions have been formulated:

RQ1: How are Grice's conversational maxims flouted in educational podcasts?

RQ2: Which conversational maxim is flouted most frequently?

RQ3: What are the most common reasons for flouting the Maxim of Quality?

The research hypotheses are based on the theoretical framework of Grice's Cooperative Principle and previous research on the spoken discourse which suggests that speakers often use non-literal language (e.g., exaggeration, humour, or digression) to achieve communicative goals (Grice, 1975; Krisdwiyani, Hanidar, 2022; Liu, Jiang, 2024).

H1: Flouting of conversational maxims in educational podcasts is expected to occur most commonly through over-explanation (Quantity), exaggeration (Quality), topic shifts (Relation), and disorganized speech (Manner).

H2: The Maxim of Quantity is expected to be flouted most frequently, as speakers in spoken discourse tend to provide extended explanations.

H3: Flouting of the Maxim of Quality is expected to occur mainly through exaggeration, humour, and irony, rather than deliberate falsehood.

The research sample consists of five educational podcasts published between 2024 and 2025, selected based on their relevance to current educational topics and their availability on the Spotify platform which has been recognized as a valuable and varied resource for authentic spoken-language analysis (Yuliana, Wulandari, 2023). Table 1 presents the selected podcasts including titles, shows, release dates and episode lengths. From all the podcasts conducted in English, we selected specific parts of the discussions for analysis, excluding introductions and closing remarks to focus on substantive, topic-driven dialogue. Selected segments were manually transcribed and reviewed for accuracy. Afterwards common patterns of flouting were identified (H1). The frequency of each category was calculated to examine which maxim is flouted most often (H2), while selected examples were analysed to explore the role of exaggeration, humour, and irony (H3). The analysed podcasts focus on the current state of the education system, the role of the teacher, the use of technology in education and educational policy. The topics were chosen as they provide meaningful and content-rich discussions suitable for pragmatic analysis.

**Table 1.** Podcast research sample

| № | Episode | Show | Release date | Length |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Growth Discourse: A Framework for Discussing Hard Topics with Students | The Cult of Pedagogy | 07/12/2025 | 01:10:07 |

| № | Episode | Show | Release date | Length |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Keep Calm and Lead on with Patrick Cozier | Mind the Gap: Making Education Work Across the Globe | 18/07/2025 | 58:55 |
| 3 | The Purpose of Education: In Conversation with Professor Gert Biesta | Talking Teaching | 26/03/2025 | 41:06 |
| 4 | Our First-Year Teaching Was ROUGH... | Teachers Off Duty | 21/07/2024 | 53:26 |
| 5 | The Elements of Great Teaching – Dimension 1, Element 1 | Evidence Based Education | 06/01/2025 | 57:16 |

## 3. Discussion

The empirical findings of the study contribute to ongoing debates in pragmatic theory, media culture, and digital pedagogy regarding how speakers navigate conversational norms in unscripted audio formats. Apart from treating Gricean maxims, our results reinforce a flexible, cognitive-pragmatic framework consistent with Relevance Theory (Sperber, Wilson, 1995) and contemporary media discourse analysis. Modern audio audiences seek platforms that deliver a blend of intellectual value, conversational authenticity, and parasocial intimacy (Chan-Olmsted, Wang, 2022). Digital audio formats negotiate shifting communicative norms and narrative structures to foster active listening and trust (Nee, Santana, 2022). Listeners approach educational media with an implicit expectation of shared interpretive goodwill (Lacey, 2025). However, the presence of deliberate flouting of Quality and Quantity maxims raises significant questions for media literacy and educational practice. According to N. Anstead et al. (Anstead et al., 2025) media literacy interventions must equip audiences with the critical capacity to navigate ambiguous, non-literal, and persuasive media contexts. In educational audio settings, listeners – particularly non-native and younger speakers – are supposed to continuously differentiate rhetorical hyperbole from literal claim-making. Modern digital education moves beyond basic textual comprehension toward critical media analysis (DiGiacomo et al., 2023). The demand for high listener retention and dynamic audio flow encourages podcast creators to adopt conversational styles characterized by spontaneity, personal anecdotes, and stylistic maxim flouts (Ellis, et al., 2021; Jung, 2024). The identified, systematic, genre-linked patterns of maxim flouting also contribute to the design of conversational AI systems and dialogue models which aim to generate and correctly interpret non-literal language such as irony, hyperbole, or humour (Rappa et al., 2026). While advanced audio language models are beginning to navigate metaphorical reasoning, they often struggle with the subtle acoustic cues essential for 'listening between the lines' in non-literal digital discourse (Xiao et al., 2025). This is the reason why empirical evidence of how and when speakers flout maxims in real discourse could help language models achieve a more human-like grasp of conversational implicature.

From an applied perspective, the research findings highlight the importance of developing learners' pragmatic competence – specifically, their ability to recognize and interpret non-literal language – as a core component of listening instruction in English as a foreign language. Podcasts as authentic materials expose learners to natural conversational strategies rarely found in textbook dialogue, and Spotify platform has been shown to effectively support listening comprehension and digital literacy development among language learners (Yuliana, Wulandari, 2023). Long-term engagement with multimedia audio formats has been shown to foster holistic communicative development and bridge the gap between the classroom instruction and real-world linguistic demands (Mekheimer, 2024). Spotify-hosted educational podcasts constitute a viable and rich data source for pragmatic and discourse-analytic research (Clifton et al., 2020). They can be productively used in future corpus-pragmatics research on implicature, humour, or irony (Rahardi, Noviance, 2025).

## 4. Results

It was assumed that podcast discourse is typically semi-formal and combines informative and conversational elements (Babayode, 2023). Speakers often react spontaneously, share personal experiences and aim to engage listeners. As a result, communication may include non-literal

language, such as humour, exaggeration, or digressions, which can affect clarity but also increase listener engagement and make the content more memorable (Liu, Jiang, 2024).

Our analysis identified a total of 38 flouting instances of Grice's conversational maxims (Table 2). The Maxim of Quality was flouted most often (12 times, 31.58 %), mainly through exaggeration and humour. The Maxims of Quantity and Relation were each flouted 9 times (23.68 %), while the Maxim of Manner was flouted the least (8 times, 21.05 %). These results do not support Hypothesis 2, which predicted that the Maxim of Quantity would be flouted most frequently.

**Table 2.** Distribution of maxim flouting across podcasts

| | Podcast 1 | Podcast 2 | Podcast 3 | Podcast 4 | Podcast 5 | Sum | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maxim of Quality | 1 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 12 | 31.58 |
| Maxim of Quantity | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 23.68 |
| Maxim of Relation | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 23.68 |
| Maxim of Manner | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 21.05 |
| Sum | 8 | 6 | 7 | 12 | 5 | 38 | 100.00 |
| % | 21.05 | 15.79 | 18.42 | 31.58 | 13.16 | 100.00 | – |

Figure 1 and Figure 2 transparently present distribution of maxim flouting across all five podcasts as well as comparison of total maxim flouting across them.

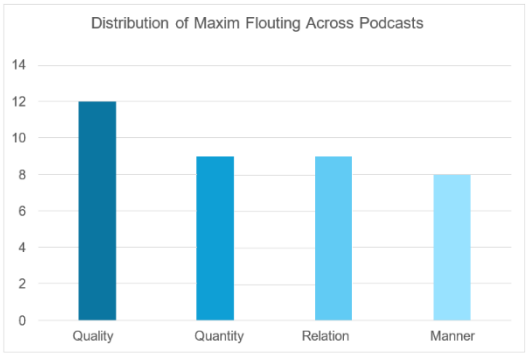


**Fig. 1.** Maxim flouting across podcasts

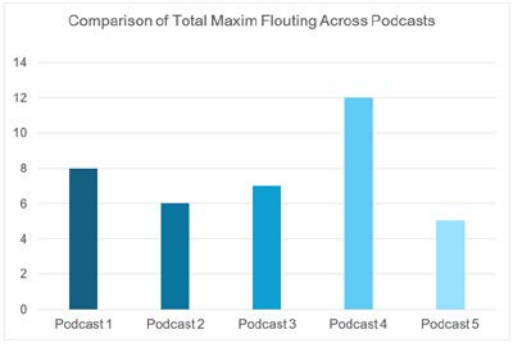


**Fig. 2.** Maxim flouting per podcast

The high frequency of flouting of the Maxim of Quality can be explained by the nature of spoken discourse, where speakers often use exaggeration, irony, or humour to create additional meaning (Krisdwiyani, Hanidar, 2022; Manurung, 2019). According to Grice's framework, these cases do not represent simple violations, but rather intentional flouting that leads to the interpretation of implicature. In contrast, the low occurrence of Maxim of Manner flouting may reflect speakers' preference for clarity, as they generally avoid ambiguity or confusion (Manurung, 2019). This suggests that the frequency of maxim flouting is influenced by the speaking style, level of formality, overall purpose of the podcast, and its target audience (Al-Shboul, 2022).

Figure 3 presents the distribution of different types of maxim flouts within each podcast. Podcast 4 is strongly dominated by the Maxim of Quality flouting while the other podcasts display a more balanced distribution across maxims. In Podcast 3 the Maxim of Quality flouting is not present.

The findings show that flouting of Grice's maxims plays a significant communicative role in the analysed podcasts. Rather than being communication 'failures', these flouting instances often generate implicatures, meaning that listeners are expected to infer the speaker's intended message beyond the literal words.

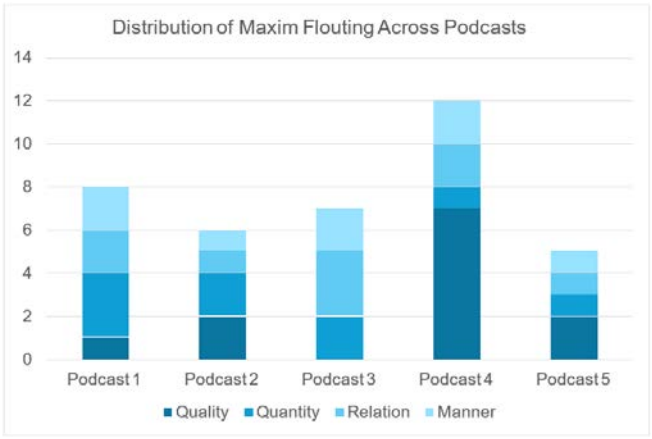


**Fig. 3.** Distribution of maxim flouting across podcasts

Podcast 1 (Episode: *Growth Discourse: A Framework for Discussing Hard Topics with Students*) represents a semi-formal educational podcast with two speakers. The tone is mostly professional but still relaxed and conversational. There were 8 flouting instances identified in this episode. The Maxim of Quality was flouted with the idiom *"And you can bet your bottom dollar that I have many questions that I would like to ask"* (57:25–57:31). For most native speakers it clearly implies that the speaker had many questions he chose not to ask. The maxim was flouted several more times through over-explanation: when the topic was lesson plans and the speaker gave a very long and detailed description of the Emancipation Memorial (33:25–37:58), including its location, surroundings, and full historical background. This went far beyond what was needed for answering the question. While the extra context helped some listeners better understand the lesson idea, others may have lost focus or felt overwhelmed by the amount of information. The Maxim of Relation was flouted when the speaker used a long bowling analogy instead of a direct answer: *"I don't know if you're a bowler or if you've ever gone bowling... So, think of those pins as truth, right? We're all trying to aim at truth. If we stay right in the middle, we have less of a chance of knocking all those pins down. But if we try to curve it, yeah, we might get closer to truth"* (15:29–15:48). The Maxim of Manner appeared to be flouted when the speaker gave an informal and slightly unstructured explanation: *"One of the things we want them to wrestle with is ... this, um sometimes... I'll give you an example one: sometimes, uh, interrupting is really bad for a group, right"* (54:49–55:27). The hesitations and informal style made it feel authentic, but it could be harder for non-native or less experienced listeners to follow. Despite some over-explanation and occasional figurative language, the podcast remained mostly clear and easy to understand. The educational focus and calm pace helped listeners follow the main ideas without major confusion.

Podcast 2 (Episode: *Keep Calm and Lead on with Patrick Cozier*) included three speakers involved in a mixed professional discussion with personal stories and light humour. The Maxim of Quality was flouted twice: *"I was scared of my own shadow"* (19:54–20:01) and *"We have got to be a couple of adrenaline junkies"* (51:16–51:22). These exaggerations helped emphasize how overwhelming and intense leadership felt at the beginning, making the speaker seem more human and relatable. The Maxim of Quantity was flouted when the speaker said, *"Let's not talk about me"* (11:18–11:24) and then immediately told a long personal story. This created a humorous and self-aware tone, though it slightly contradicted his own statement. The Maxim of Relation was flouted by shifting from the main topic to personal political views (11:24–11:30). The intended meaning was to show the tension between personal identity and professional responsibility. Most listeners likely found this honest and engaging. The Maxim of Manner occurred when the speaker became disorganized and admitted, *"Yeah, I know I'm messing up completely..."* (37:17–37:23) while trying to recall a saying. This moment of vulnerability made him more authentic and likeable to the audience. The podcast was clear and enjoyable to listen to. The light humour and personal stories made the content feel warm and relatable, even though a few small digressions and exaggerations occurred.

Podcast 3 (Episode: *The Purpose of Education: In Conversation with Professor Gert Biesta*) represented a focused academic interview with one main speaker and interviewer. Its tone was

serious and educational with several personal statements. The Maxim of Relation was flouted three times – when the professor started with a long story about the destruction of Rotterdam in WWII (1:46–2:08), before answering the question about his background, or when he suddenly brought up child labour in 19th-century mines (32:15–32:21) while discussing learning environments. These digressions initially seemed off topic, but they served to give a deeper historical and moral context and help listeners understand the seriousness of the topic. The Maxim of Quantity was flouted twice by giving very detailed explanations instead of short answers. They sometimes made the conversation feel dull but, on the other hand, allowed listeners to gain richer insight into the speaker's philosophy. The Maxim of Manner flouting appeared through hesitation and use of complex words like *"subjectification"* (12:10–12:25). Despite reduced immediate clarity, listeners were encouraged to think more deeply about the idea behind it. The episode was intellectually rich but occasionally intense and challenging to comprehend. Thanks to the thoughtful examples and clear structure, the main ideas remained understandable for listeners, though some parts required more attention than others.

Podcast 4 (Episode: *Our First-Year Teaching Was ROUGH...*) presented three speakers who shared funny personal stories using slang, sarcasm, inside jokes, and personal stories with cases of exaggeration. This episode had the highest number (12) of flouts. The Maxim of Quality was heavily flouted (7 times) through strong exaggeration and irony. Examples include *"Those kids have aim"* (10:02–10:10) after a desk was thrown at her, *"I'm rich, I'm rich"* (18:28–18:36), and *"I'm actually a trash teacher. I taught the kids that the Earth was flat"* (22:07–22:09). These flouts created humour and made the difficult first-year experiences more entertaining and relatable, especially for teachers who have been through similar situations. However, some listeners might take the exaggerations too literally and feel unnecessarily worried. The Maxim of Relation was flouted with sudden unrelated jokes and pop-culture references (e.g., *"you can dodge a wrench"* at 20:14–20:21). The shifts kept the energy high and made the episode funny, but they could have confused new listeners who didn't understand the popular references. The Maxim of Manner was flouted due to unclear and disorganized speech (especially at the beginning of the podcast) with many inside jokes that new listeners might not understand. While this contributed to the podcast being friendly and authentic, it risked leaving some listeners feeling excluded. The podcast was highly entertaining and easy to listen to if people enjoyed casual, humorous conversation. Nevertheless, due to frequent digressions and heavy use of exaggeration, it was sometimes less clear and could feel chaotic. We could recommend it to listeners who want to relate to others' real-life teaching struggles rather than learn practical teaching strategies.

Podcast 5 (Episode: *The Elements of Great Teaching – Dimension 1, Element 1*) functioned as a formal online webinar with only one speaker giving a structured presentation. As expected, it had the lowest number of flouts, most of them were Quantity (using vague phrases like *"lots and lots of different ways"* at 9:19–9:27) and Manner (some hesitation and stuttering while searching for words at 11:02–11:08) flouting cases. Quantity flouting occurred twice through exaggerations: *"every second counts"* (23:52–23:59) and *"they seem to have eyes in the back of their heads"* (28:02–28:07). They made the message more memorable and motivating without confusing the listener. The webinar was clear, well-structured, and easy to follow. The formal style and focus on straight-forward delivery made it one of the most understandable episodes, ideal for listeners seeking straightforward educational content without unnecessary digressions or personal stories.

In summary, the results clearly show that the style of the podcast strongly influences how often maxims are flouted. The most common reason for Quality flouting was exaggeration used for humour or emphasis. Speakers often sacrificed literal truth to make stories more entertaining or relatable. Quantity flouting usually involved over-explanation, while Relation was mostly flouted through temporary digressions and personal stories. Manner was flouted when speakers hesitated with their answer, became disorganized, or used unclear expressions.

The research results confirmed Hypothesis 1 – the number and type of flouting instances depended on the style of each podcast, with recurring patterns of over-explanation, exaggeration, topic shifts, and disorganized speech observed across the sample (Table 1). Podcast 4, for example, showed a markedly higher number of flouting instances than the other episodes, reflecting its more conversational and spontaneous style.

Hypothesis 2 was not confirmed. Rather than the Maxim of Quantity, the Maxim of Quality proved to be the most frequently flouted, accounting for 12 of the 38 identified instances (31.58 %). The Maxim of Quantity and the Maxim of Relation were each flouted 9 times (23.68 %), and the

Maxim of Manner was flouted least often (8 times, 21.05 %). We can conclude that speakers relied more heavily on exaggeration and humour to enhance engagement and expressiveness than on providing excessive detail, although extended explanations remained a frequent strategy as well.

Hypothesis 3 was confirmed – flouting of the Maxim of Quality occurred primarily through exaggeration and humour rather than deliberate falsehood, supporting the view that such flouting functions as a rhetorical and stylistic device rather than a breakdown in cooperative communication.

Podcast 1 combined educational content with a conversational style, leading to fewer cases of flouting, mainly through long explanations and analogies. Podcast 2 included personal stories and humour, which made the discussion more appealing while still maintaining its formal tone. Podcast 3 was more academically focused, where flouting supported deeper thinking in listeners but sometimes made the content harder to understand. Podcast 4 relied heavily on humour and exaggeration, making it very engaging yet occasionally unclear and not much educational. In contrast, Podcast 5 remained clear and structured, with only minor flouts that did not affect understanding of the professional educational data.

Overall, the findings showed that flouting of Grice's maxims is a natural part of podcast communication rather than a communication problem. Although flouting may at first appear to reduce clarity or seem like a breach of effective communication, especially for non-native listeners, it usually makes the content more interesting and memorable. In most cases of discovered flouting cases, the main message remains clear – the Maxim of Quality is most often flouted through hyperbole and exaggeration, and the Maxim of Quantity is typically flouted through over-elaboration, where speakers provide too much information, or occasionally too little of it. The Maxim of Relation is mainly flouted through topic shifts and digressions while the Maxim of Manner is most often affected by unclear, hesitant, or disorganized speech. Across all podcasts, exaggeration appeared 9 times, making it the most common strategy of flouting. Topic shifts were observed 7 times, Unclear or disorganised speech was observed 8 times, topic shifts 7 times, and over-elaboration 5 times. The results confirm that speakers frequently move away from strict conversational norms in order to make their speech more engaging, expressive, or easier to relate to.

**Table 3.** Frequency of flouting strategies across podcasts

| | Hyperbole | Over-elaboration | Topic shift | Disorganized speech |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Podcast 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Podcast 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Podcast 3 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Podcast 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Podcast 5 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Sum | 9 | 5 | 7 | 8 |

The analysis of flouting strategies shows that the most common reason for flouting the Maxim of Quality is hyperbole. It appears in the forms of dramatic overstatements and exaggerations, ironic comments, or statements that are not meant to be taken literally. Speakers often exaggerate situations (*"this was the worst day ever"*) or use ironic praise to express criticism. They are not intended to mislead the listener but rather create a particular communicative effect. Podcasts are typically informal and conversational, and speakers often aim to engage their audience. Exaggeration makes speech more expressive and memorable and helps maintain listeners' interest. In this context, flouting the maxim of truthfulness does not harm communication; on the contrary, it enhances it. Speakers use exaggeration to highlight their feelings, attitudes, or opinions. By overstatements they signal that a situation is important, surprising, or emotionally significant. This allows listeners to better understand the speaker's viewpoint, even if the statement itself is not literally true. In several cases, speakers say something that is obviously false in order to imply the opposite meaning. Thus, they require the listener to recognize the non-literal intention and interpret the statement correctly.

Less frequently, the Maxim of Quality flouting may also occur through using idiomatic expressions or figurative language – the meaning is easy to grasp but not literally true. Listeners rely on shared knowledge and context to interpret the intended meaning correctly. The Maxim of Quality flouting in podcasts is not random or problematic, but rather a systematic and purposeful strategy. Speakers use non-literal language to achieve communicative goals such as humour,

emphasis, and engagement. And, evident violations of conversational norms often serve important, pragmatic functions.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study identified 38 flouting instances across the five podcasts, with the Maxim of Quality flouted most frequently (12 times, 31.58 %), primarily through exaggeration and humour rather than deliberate falsehood. Beyond its descriptive findings, it carries applied relevance. The results underline the importance of developing learners' pragmatic competence in EFL listening instruction, since recognizing non-literal language such as hyperbole and irony is essential to interpreting authentic spoken discourse. They also support the view central to both Grice's original framework and later developments (e.g., Relevance Theory) that conversational maxims are best understood not as fixed rules but as flexible, adaptable guidelines against which meaningful flouts are interpreted. Future studies drawing on larger and more genre-diverse samples can develop a fuller picture of how conversational maxims operate in real-world spoken communication. They will help determine whether the patterns identified reflect a broader tendency in podcast discourse or are specific to the educational genre examined in this study. Flouting the maxims is an important and meaningful part of real communication, contributing to the creation of implied meaning and making interaction more expressive, natural, and effective. Understanding this process offers deeper insight into how language works in practice, beyond the idealized models often presented in linguistic theory.

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# Content Analysis of Modern Russian University and School Media Education Courses

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**Abstract**

This article presents a content analysis of contemporary Russian university and school media education courses developed between 2000 and 2025. The study is based on more than eighty courses for preschool, school, university, teacher training, parental education, and older adult education. The research employs content analysis, theoretical analysis, synthesis, classification, and generalization methods to identify the key tendencies, dominant educational goals and objectives, and theoretical foundations of modern media education in Russia. The findings demonstrate that Russian media education has evolved into a multi-level and dynamic system encompassing the studies of film, television, journalism, advertising, digital media, and multimedia technologies. The results confirm the dominance of socio-cultural, cultural, and critical thinking development approaches, alongside with semiotic, aesthetic, protective, and practical-utilitarian theories, often presented in integrated forms. A key finding is the shift in the pedagogical focus over time: from media as cultural phenomena, to media competence and literacy, to critical reflection and media safety, and finally to digital socialization and civic-value education. The study also identifies such underrepresented research areas as artificial intelligence, fact-checking, digital well-being, and cyber safety. Overall, Russian media education is characterized by interdisciplinarity, adaptability, and ongoing transformation in response to technological and social change.

**Keywords:** media, media text, media education, media literacy, media competence, media culture, programme, course.

## 1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, media education has become an increasingly important area of pedagogical research and educational practice in Russia. Rapid technological development, the expansion of digital communication, and the growing influence of media on human socialization have stimulated the creation of media education programmes for different categories of learners. These programmes address a wide range of educational objectives, including the development of people's media literacy, critical thinking, media competence, digital literacy, and responsible participation in contemporary information environments.

Russian scholars have made a significant contribution to the theoretical and practical development of media education. A comparative analysis of media education courses for schools and universities was previously conducted by A.V. Fedorov (Fedorov, 2007, 2013) and I.V. Chelysheva (Chelysheva et al., 2009), whose studies provided an important foundation for understanding the evolution of media education courses in Russia. "In global media pedagogy, educational, training, and creative approaches to harnessing the power of media prevail. Generally

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speaking, the main stages of implementing most media education approaches are as follows: acquiring knowledge about the history, structure, language, and theory of media (educational component); developing the perception of media texts, "reading" their language, activating the imagination and visual memory, developing various types of thinking (including critical, logical, creative, imaginative, intuitive), and skills for understanding ideas (moral, philosophical issues, etc.), images, etc.; developing creative practical skills using media materials" (Fedorov, 2013: 263). However, the rapid transformation of media technologies and educational priorities requires a renewed examination of contemporary media education programmes.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the content of Russian university and school media education courses developed between 2000 and 2025. The study seeks to identify their dominant educational goals, theoretical foundations, target audiences, and major developmental trends. Particular attention is paid to the changing priorities of media education in response to social, cultural, and technological transformations in modern society.

## 2. Materials and methods

The study materials are based on Russian university and school media education programmes and courses published during the last twenty-five years (2000–2025). The research methods used include the collection of relevant data, content analysis, analysis of academic literature, theoretical analysis and synthesis, also generalization and classification.

## 3. Discussion

The analysis of Russian media education programmes and courses has enabled us to identify some trends in media education, determine its key objectives, and examine its content and organizational forms of application. The programmes and courses under consideration cover a broad time span from 2000 to 2025 and include training courses designed for diverse groups of learners, ranging from preschool children to university students, teachers, and parents. The analysis of these programmes with regard to their target audiences, academic levels, types of media employed, educational goals and objectives, and organizational formats reveals a diversity of approaches to media education and demonstrates a gradual expansion of its conceptual and content domain.

We have examined more than eighty media education programmes and courses for educators, university students, schoolchildren, and parents. The universities programmes accounted for the overwhelming majority – over fifty programmes in total. A substantial proportion of the academic programmes examined in this study consists of university-level courses and specialized modules designed for students in teacher training, humanities, journalism, and related academic fields. This group includes the following courses: *History of Media Education* developed by A.V. Fedorov and I.V. Chelysheva (Fedorov, 2013: 60-80), *Theories of Media and Media Education* (Fedorov, 2013: 38-59), *Media Education Technology in Schools and Universities* (Fedorov, 2013: 263-286), the teacher-training course *Screen Violence and the Rehabilitative Potential of Media Education* (Fedorov, 2007), *Synthesis of Media Education and Media Criticism* developed by A.V. Fedorov and A.A. Levitskaya (Fedorov et al., 2016), *Fundamentals of Media Criticism* (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2015), *Fundamentals of Media Psychology* (Zhizhina, 2008), *Mass Communication* (Naumenko et al., 2002), *Fundamentals of Media Culture* (Adamyants, 2002; Kirillova, 2007b), *Fostering Civic Engagement and Patriotism through Film Education* (Mikhaleva, 2021), *Fundamentals of Media Competence* (Afanasyeva, Fedotova, 2021), *Sociology of Media* (Sharikov, 2000), *Media Law and Ethics* (Korkonosenko, 2003), *Introduction to Media Education* (Vozchikov, 2001), *Mass Media Education in the CIS Countries* (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2020), *School and University in the Mirror of Audiovisual Media Texts* (Fedorov et al., 2018), *Media Education of Pedagogical University Students Based on English-language Screen Arts* (Ryzhikh, 2007: 144-170) among others. Our content analysis of these programmes indicates the necessity of developing students' systematic understanding of media as a social, cultural, and educational phenomenon. These programmes aim to familiarize university students with the history of media education in Russia and abroad, major theoretical approaches and concepts in media education, methods of media text analysis, and technologies for integrating media education practices into the teaching and learning process.

A significant place in the research materials under consideration is occupied by learning programmes and elective courses for schoolchildren of different age groups. For example, primary

media education is supported by a supplementary course *The ABCs of Cinema for Children Aged 7-10* (Bazhenova, 2005). "Experience shows that screen arts, and cinema above all, offer great potential for child development. The educational potential of cinema is so broad that one can speak of its universality for supplementary education institutions. The silver screen possesses enormous persuasive power; ideas perceived through cinema, reinforced by vivid emotions, are deeply absorbed, becoming the foundation for the development of a child's worldview" (Bazhenova, 2005: 152).

For middle school students, the following media education courses have been developed: an elective course *Advertising as a Contemporary Speech Genre* (Glushchenko, 2014), *Fundamentals of Media Literacy* (Zalagaev, 2005) and others. High school students are also targeted by E.V. Muryukina's course *Media Education of Senior School Students Based on Film Press Materials* (Muryukina, 2006), as well as specialized and elective journalism courses developed by Yu.A. Agafonova (Agafonova, 2007). A special group includes the *Working Programs for the Elective Course "Media Education" for General Education School Students* (Galchenkov, Barabash, 2010), etc. These courses are primarily aimed at fostering school students' media literacy, developing their skills in analysing media texts, and helping them acquire fundamental knowledge of journalism and the critical evaluation of information. The number of programmes developed for schoolchildren amounts to just over a dozen.

An additional area, yet less numerous, is represented by media education programmes and courses for preschool-age children. For example, such programmes as *Media Club Programme for Older Preschoolers* (Chelysheva et al., 2017), *Preschool Child in the Media Space* (a partial educational program for developing the basics of social culture in the media environment of a preschool institution for children aged 5-6) (Maydankina et al., 2018), *Preschool Media Education* (Nemirich, 2012). In general, the content of these programmes is aimed at introducing preschool children to the media environment, developing their skills for safe interaction with media, and promoting their social culture within the context of the modern information space.

In terms of application and education level, one can generally distinguish the preschool level, primary school, lower secondary school, upper secondary school, the system of supplementary education for children, and higher education (the full range of university courses on media theory, the history of media culture, media criticism, mass communication, media sociology, and media education technologies). A separate segment is made up of postgraduate education programmes and in-service teacher training programmes.

A significant number of training programmes and courses is aimed at future and practising teachers, as well as the system of continuing professional education. These include mainly the professional development courses: *Fundamentals of Media Education* (Fedorov, 2009), *Developing the Information Competence of a Supplementary Education Teacher in Decorative and Applied Arts* (Nesmeyanova, 2016), the project-based course *Information and Communication Technologies in Primary School* (Aleksandrova, 2016), *The Internet in Educational and Extracurricular Activities* (Ataeva, 2016), a tutoring support programme for developing teachers' ICT competence (Bryksina et al., 2016) and others. This group can also indirectly include the programme for developing parents' digital literacy (Aikhel, Uvarina, 2025). The common objective of these media education courses is fostering professional competencies of education participants in using modern media and digital technologies.

As for media education for older or retired people, media education programmes for the elderly are primarily aimed at developing their digital literacy, online safety, critical thinking skills, and adaptation to the modern information society. For instance, they help retirees confidently use smartphones, pay for some services online, and protect themselves from cyber fraud. These programmes exist at both the federal and regional levels. For example, the *Active Longevity* program, which includes state and regional initiatives, provides free computer courses and media lectures at social service centers for the older generation. E.V. Muryukina developed a media club programme for elderly people in a cultural centre: "We have developed a media club program for elderly people and believe that its implementation will help shape their social status and restore lost social connections at the macro and micro levels" (Muryukina, 2018: 142).

These may also include university-based initiative programmes and courses for the older generation. For example, Tomsk State University (TSU) and the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA) implemented training programmes for elderly people aimed at developing their digital competencies within the framework of the federal project "Employment Promotion". T.V. Savelyeva described the experience of Chelyabinsk State

University in implementing the course *Computer Literacy for the Population: Users of Electronic Government Services* aimed at involving older adults in the information space (Savelyeva, 2017). Overall, media education for the older generation is usually designed with their specific needs in mind: the learning materials are presented in large print, explained in simple language, and a special emphasis is placed on the practical use of modern gadgets in everyday life (communicating with family members via video calls, ordering medications, making medical appointments, etc.).

Our content analysis of media-based courses has also shown a clear predominance of the aesthetic orientation: a significant number of the courses is related to film studies and screen culture: *Fundamentals of Film Art* (Penzin, 2000), *Film History* (Fominova, 2008a), *The History of Russian and Foreign Film Art* (Kirillova, 2007a), *The ABCs of Cinema* (Bazhenova, 2005), *The Cinema Art and National Culture* (Franko, 2005), *Family Education in Russian Feature Films* (Chelysheva, 2025), *School and University in the Mirror of Audiovisual Media Texts* (Fedorov et al., 2018). Within these programmes and courses, cinematography is viewed as an important object of media-cultural analysis and as a means of upbringing, education, and personal development.

The study of advertising as a special media text forms another group of media education courses: *Media Education Based on Advertising Materials* developed by E.A. Stolbnikova (Fedorov, 2013: 161-180), *Media Education at School (Based on Advertising Materials)* (Le-van, 2008), an elective course *Advertising as a Modern Speech Genre* (Glushchenko, 2014), *Programme for Developing the Learner through Advertising Texts in Teaching Russian* (Smolyakova, 2013), *Media Education Based on Advertising* developed by E.A. Stolbnikova (Fedorov, 2013: 161-180) and others. In these media education programmes, advertising media texts serve as objects of students' critical analysis and as a means of developing students' communicative and analytical skills: "In the current environment, the role of advertising is increasingly important. It is one of the most important tools of the market and political election campaigns; its non-commercial forms draw people's attention to pressing social issues. The nature of advertising reflects the level of societal development and economic and social relations. Bright, alluring, and often intrusive, it has become an attribute of modern Russian reality. The impact of advertising on social reality is far from straightforward: on the one hand, it stimulates the development of commodity markets and services and increases political activity, but at the same time, it can manipulate public opinion and behaviour" (Fedorov, 2013: 161).

A separate direction is represented by university media education courses related primarily to journalism, mass communication, and media criticism: *Mass Communication* (Naumenko et al., 2002), *Fundamentals of Journalism Theory* (Korkonosenko, 2026), *Media Criticism in the System of Contemporary Journalism in Russia* (Bakanov, 2006), *Synthesis of Media Education and Media Criticism* developed by A.V. Fedorov and A.A. Levitskaya (Fedorov et al., 2016), *Fundamentals of Media Criticism* (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2015), etc. Such courses are focused on studying the mechanisms of media functioning, journalistic activity, media-critical analysis, and the legal aspects of the media sphere.

Finally, an important place in the system of present-day Russian media education is occupied by courses devoted to mastering modern information and digital technologies: *Information and Communication Technologies for People with Visual Impairments* (Akhpasheva, 2013), including media education programmes focused on promoting ICT competence among teachers and digital literacy among parents (Aichel, Uvarina, 2025). In such programs, the authors primarily focus on people's mastering the technological aspects of the media environment and developing practical skills for working with present-day digital resources.

Based on their training goals and learning objectives, the media education courses under analysis can be roughly grouped into several categories. The first group consists of media education courses with a theoretical and historical focus, including *History of Media Education* developed be A.V. Fedorov and I.V. Chelysheva (Fedorov, 2009: 59-79), *Theories of Media and Media Education* (Fedorov, 2013), *History of Media Culture* by A.V. Fedorov and N.P. Ryzhikh (Fedorov, 2013: 138-160), *History of Media Education in Russia* by I.V. Chelysheva (Fedorov, 2013: 81-100), *Media Education in Western Countries* (Fedorov, 2013), *Media Education in the USA* (Novikova, 2001), *The Development of Mass Media Education in Great Britain* (Mikhaleva, 2012), *Mass Media Education in the CIS Countries* (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2020) and others. Their main objective is for students to study the genesis of media education theories and international experience in the development of this field.

The second group comprises media education courses aimed at developing students' media competence and media literacy: *Fundamentals of Media Education* (Fedorov, 2013), *Basics of Media Competence* (Fateeva, Fateev, 2011), *Fundamentals of Media Literacy* (Zalagaev, 2005), including courses focused on fostering students' information culture (Gendina et al., 2006), digital literacy, and ICT competence among various categories of learners (Akhpasheva, 2013). "Federal state educational standards for all areas and specialties prescribe the need to develop in graduates the competencies thematically related to information (both general cultural and professional), since in a modern society (informational by nature), the ability to work with information, of course, is one of the basic skills, the level of proficiency of which determines a person's success in life" (Fateeva, Fateev, 2011).

Another group of media education courses develops students' critical thinking skills and the abilities for critical analysis of media texts of various genres: *Development of Audience Critical Thinking in Media Education* (Fedorov, 2013), *Synthesis of Media Education and Media Criticism* (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2015), *Media Criticism in the System of Contemporary Journalism in Russia* (Bakanov, 2006) and others.

A special place, in our view, is occupied by media education courses containing a sociocultural and socio-educational aspects (Table 1): *Developing Interethnic Tolerance through Media Education* (Chelysheva, 2020), *Fostering Civic Engagement and Patriotism through Film Education* (Mikhaleva, 2021), *Family Education in Russian Feature Films* (Chelysheva, 2025), the experimental courses *Ecology of Culture in the Centre of Creative Media Pastime* (Khilko, Susloparova, 2005) and *Ecology of Media Culture in Literature Lessons* (Khilko, Surkova, 2005), as well as the comprehensive target program "Schoolchild in Virtual Reality" (Kadubets, 2010). These programs pay special attention to the educational potential of mass media culture and its influence on personality development: "The potential of media culture in modern education and training is determined by its broad range of opportunities for the development of human individuality: emotions, intellect, independent creative thinking, worldview, the activation of knowledge acquired by students in the humanities, and aesthetic consciousness (perception, artistic analysis skills, etc.). The specific nature of audience interaction with audiovisual media is determined by the synthetic audiovisual, spatiotemporal nature of cinema, television, and video, which combines the characteristic features of virtually all traditional arts" (Fedorov, 2013: 181).

**Table 1.** Classification of media education courses based on their training goals and learning objectives

| Training goals and learning objectives | Media education courses |
|---|---|
| Theoretical and historical goals | History of Media Education, Theories of Media and Media Education, History of Media Culture, History of Media Education in Russia, Media Education in Western Countries, Media Education and Media Competence in Foreign Countries (Fedorov, 2013), Mass Media Education in the CIS Countries (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2020), etc. |
| Development of students' media competence and media literacy | Fundamentals of Media Competence (Fedorov, 2013), Fundamentals of Media Education (Fedorov, 2009), Fundamentals of Media Literacy (Zalagaev, 2005), Basics of Media Competence (Fateeva, Fateev, 2011), etc. |
| Development of students' critical thinking skills and critical analysis of media texts | Development of Audience Critical Thinking in Media Education (Fedorov, 2013), Synthesis of Media Education and Media Criticism (Fedorov et al., 2016), Fundamentals of Media Criticism (Fedorov et al., 2016), Media Criticism in the System of Contemporary Journalism in Russia (Bakanov, 2006), etc. |
| Socio-cultural and educational goals | Developing Interethnic Tolerance through Media Education (Chelysheva, 2020), Fostering Civic Engagement and Patriotism through Film Education (Mikhaleva, 2021), Family Education in Russian Feature Films (Chelysheva, 2025), N.F. Khilko's courses on the ecology of media culture (Khilko, Surkova, 2005), A Schoolchild in the Virtual Reality (Kadubets, 2010), etc. |

| Training goals and learning objectives | Media education courses |
|---|---|
| | |
| Methodological and professional teacher training goals | Media Education Technology in School and University (Fedorov, 2013), Scientific Research in the Field of Media Culture and Media Education (Fedorov, 2009), professional training courses for teachers and tutoring support of their media competence |
| Integrating media education into different academic subjects | French and Media Education (Ivanova, 2013), Media Education in the System of Work of a Teacher of World Artistic Culture (Fominova, 2008b), Developing the Learner through Advertising Texts in Teaching Russian (Smolyakova, 2013), etc. |

Source: author's compilation

In terms of organizational forms, one can distinguish autonomous media education courses and integrated models in Russian educational practice. Some autonomous media education courses are implemented as independent university or school subjects, special training or learning courses, electives, or professional development programmes such as *History of Media Education* by A.V. Fedorov and I.V. Chelysheva (Fedorov, 2013: 60-80), *Basics of Media Competence* (Fateeva, Fateev, 2011; Fedorov, 2013), *Synthesis of Media Education and Media Criticism* developed by A.V. Fedorov and A.A. Levitskaya (Fedorov et al., 2016), *Media Education of Senior School Students Based on Film Press Materials* (Muryukina, 2006), and many other programmes.

Alongside with autonomous media education courses, integrated models of media education are also widely represented in Russia, which "embed" a media education component into existing subject areas and educational practices. For example, the course *French and Media Education* by L.A. Ivanova combines students' foreign language learning with analysing media texts (Ivanova, 2013); E.E. Smolyakova's media education course integrates the analysis of advertising media texts into learning Russian (Smolyakova, 2013); and the experimental course *Ecology of Media Culture in Literature Lessons* by N.F. Khilko and M.P. Surkova links media education tasks with studying literature (Khilko, Surkova, 2005). Also, integrative approaches are characteristic of training courses concerned about promoting information literacy and ICT competence among teachers, since media education tools in these contexts function as teaching instruments for broader educational objectives.

Thus, our analysis of media education courses shows that contemporary Russian media education is developing as a multi-level system, since its structure includes training courses for all educational stages – from preschool to postgraduate education – and covers a broad range of media, including film, television, advertising, journalism, digital technologies, and multimedia communication tools. At the same time, there is a diversity of educational objectives, ranging from promoting media literacy and media competence among audiences to implementing educational, cultural, research, and professional pedagogical tasks. A significant feature is the coexistence of autonomous and integrated models of media education, which indicates a high degree of adaptability of this field to various educational contexts and learners' needs.

## 4. Results

In this research study, we have conducted a content analysis of contemporary Russian media education courses from the perspective of media education theories. It is essential to note that most media education courses are of a complex nature and may simultaneously reflect the principles of several theoretical approaches. Nevertheless, the analysis of their aims, content, and objectives of studying has allowed us to identify certain dominant theoretical foundations.

In our opinion, the socio-cultural theory of media education is most widely represented in the courses under consideration: it interprets modern mass media as a key institution of personal socialization and an essential element of modern culture. This theory is primarily evident in media education courses focused on studying media culture, media history, and the social functions of media communication. The following programmes, in our view, can be attributed to this group: *History of Media Education* by A.V. Fedorov and I.V. Chelysheva (Fedorov, 2013: 60-80), *Theories of Media and Media Education* (Fedorov, 2013), *History of Media Culture* by A.V. Fedorov and N.P. Ryzhikh (Fedorov, 2013: 138-160), *Media Education in Western Countries* (Fedorov, 2008), *Sociology of Media* (Sharikov, 2000), *Sociology of Media Culture* (Fedorov, 2008), *Mass Communication* (Naumenko et al., 2002), etc. These programs are characterized by a deep

understanding of media content as an important component of social and cultural life that influences human socialization, promoting values, and the individual's worldview.

Also, a vital place is also occupied by the theory of critical thinking development aimed at forming the audience's ability to analyse media texts and identify their ideological, political, commercial, and cultural meanings. This theory is most consistently reflected in the following media education courses: *Developing Critical Thinking of the Audience in Media Education* (Fedorov, 2013), *Synthesis of Media Education and Media Criticism* developed by A.V. Fedorov and A.A. Levitskaya (Fedorov et al., 2016), *Media Criticism in the System of Contemporary Journalism in Russia* (Bakanov, 2006), *Media Education of Senior School Students Based on Film Press Materials* (Muryukina, 2008), *Fundamentals of Media Competence* (Fedorov, 2008), *Basics of Media Competence* (Fateeva, Fateev, 2011), *Fundamentals of Media Literacy* (Zalagaev, 2005), including the courses devoted to the study of advertising as an object of critical analysis: *Media Education Based on Advertising Materials* (Stolbnikova, 2008), *Media Education in School (Based on Advertising Materials)* (Le-van, 2008), and *Advertising as a Modern Speech Genre* (Glushchenko, 2014). In these programmes, the central focus is on the critical analysis of media content, the development of skills in interpreting media information, and resistance to manipulative influences of the media environment.

The courses associated with the protective (or protectionist) theory of media education are linked to the objectives of minimizing the negative effects of the media environment on audiences and promoting mechanisms of psychological or pedagogical protection for the individual. A prominent example is A.V. Fedorov's training course *Screen Violence and the Rehabilitative Potential of Media Education* (Fedorov, 2007) directly devoted to studying the influence of screen violence on audiences. This group also includes the following media education courses: *A Preschool Child in the Media Space* (Maidankina et al., 2018), A. Nemirich's media education courses for preschool children (Nemirich, 2012), the university teacher training course *Developing Interethnic Tolerance through Media Education* (Chelysheva, 2020), *A Schoolchild in the Virtual Reality* (Kadubets, 2010), etc. These programmes place a considerable emphasis on human safe interaction with media, prevention of harmful media impacts, and the fostering of responsible media consumption.

It is also worth mentioning that a fairly large number of Russian media education courses are based on the practical-utilitarian theory of media education viewing mass media primarily as a means of users' acquiring practical skills in working with information and modern technologies: *Media Education Technology in School and Higher Education* (Fedorov, 2005), *Distance Education and Information Technologies* (Fedorov, 2008), *Information and Communication Technologies in the Educational Process of Primary School* (Aleksandrova, 2016), *The Internet in Educational and Extracurricular Activities* (Ataeva, 2016), *Information and Communication Technologies for People with Visual Impairments* (Akhpasheva, 2013), the courses for promoting ICT competence among teachers (Bryksina et al., 2016), the digital literacy course for parents (Aikhel, Uvarina, 2025), as well as school journalism courses (Agafonova, 2007). Such courses focus on people's mastering specific media technologies, developing learners' practical skills in creating media products, and using media in future professional activities.

The semiotic theory of media education, oriented toward the study of media language, the structure of media texts, and the mechanisms of meaning-making in media texts, is most clearly manifested in courses related to the analysis of screen and advertising media texts. For instance, *Media Education Based on Advertising Materials* (Stolbnikova, 2008), *Media Education in School (Based on Advertising Materials)* (Le-van, 2008), *Advertising as a Modern Speech Genre* (Glushchenko, 2014), etc. Such programs are characterized by particular attention to the sign-based nature of media texts, the analysis of codes, symbols, images, and the ways in which media reality is constructed.

Some media education courses are based on the cultural theory of media education regarding media texts as an important part of human cultural heritage and a means of introducing individuals to both world and national culture: *The History of Russian and Foreign Film Art* (Kirillova, 2007a), *Film History* (Fominova, 2008a), *History of Media Culture* by A.V. Fedorov and N.P. Ryzhikh (Fedorov, 2013: 138-160), *Fundamentals of Media Culture* (Adamiyants, 2002; Kirillova, 2007b), *The Art of Cinema and National Culture* (Franko, 2005). In such courses mass media stand for a cultural phenomenon contributing to human mastering cultural values: "The intensive development of media culture, particularly audiovisual media (satellite TV, video, cinema, computer channels, the Internet, etc.), is increasingly influencing public consciousness as a powerful means of information, cultural and educational contacts, and a factor in the

development of individual creativity. The role of media culture in society is growing at an unprecedented rate, serving as a comprehensive means of human exploration of the surrounding world and a factor in one's socialization" (Kirillova, 2007b: 5).

Closely related to the cultural approach is the aesthetic theory of media education, which emphasizes the artistic nature of media texts and the development of the audience's aesthetic perception. The aesthetic theory is most clearly expressed in such film education courses as *Fundamentals of Film Art* (Penzin, 2000), *The ABCs of Cinema* (Bazhenova, 2005), *The Structure of the Screen Image* (Polichko, 2002), *School and University in the Mirror of Audiovisual Media Texts* (Fedorov et al., 2018), etc. These media education courses primarily focus on the artistic analysis of media texts, the development of viewers' aesthetic taste, and the ability of the audience to perceive audiovisual art.

Several media education courses reflect the ideas of the so-called media education theory of "uses and gratifications", according to which the audience is seen as an active agent of interaction with media – a so-called "prosumer", using them to satisfy their cognitive, communicative, cultural, or personal needs. Some elements of this approach are most evident in the following courses: *A Preschool Child in the Media Space* (Maidankina et al., 2018), *Fostering an Individual's Information Culture* (Gendina et al., 2006), including some media education courses on digital literacy for parents. These courses put a special emphasis on promoting the individual's ability to consciously and effectively use media to satisfy their educational, professional, or personal needs.

As we have noticed media education courses based on the theological or religious theory of media education are encountered relatively rarely. Such an example is the supplementary media education course *School Studio 'The Orthodox World'* (Krasnova, 2021) aimed to foster the spiritual and moral values among high school students through the study of Orthodox culture, combined with the development of their basic media production skills and the creation of video content focused on Orthodox and local history themes.

Overall, our analysis shows that the socio-cultural, cultural, and critical thinking development theories dominate within the corpus of media education courses under study, which corresponds to the general evolution of Russian media education. At the same time, it should be stressed again that a lot of media education programmes combine elements of several theoretical approaches and therefore have a comprehensive character. For example, E.V. Muryukina's course *Media Education of Senior School Students Based on Film Press Materials* (Muryukina, 2008) integrates the concepts of the critical theory and the cultural approach; the course *School and University in the Mirror of Audiovisual Media Texts* (Fedorov et al., 2018) combines the cultural, aesthetic, critical and semiotic theories of media education; while the course *Screen Violence and the Rehabilitative Potential of Media Education* (Fedorov, 2007) incorporates the protective, socio-cultural, and critical-analytical media education approaches. This demonstrates the interdisciplinary and integrative nature of the majority of contemporary Russian media education courses.

Moreover, across different periods of modern Russian media education, the very object of pedagogical attention changed: from studying media as a cultural phenomenon, to the development of media competence, then to media literacy and competence, and subsequently to the digital socialization of individuals and the development of civic and social competencies, including the advancement of citizens' digital culture, the strengthening of their civic responsibility, and their successful socialization within a digital society (Figure 1).

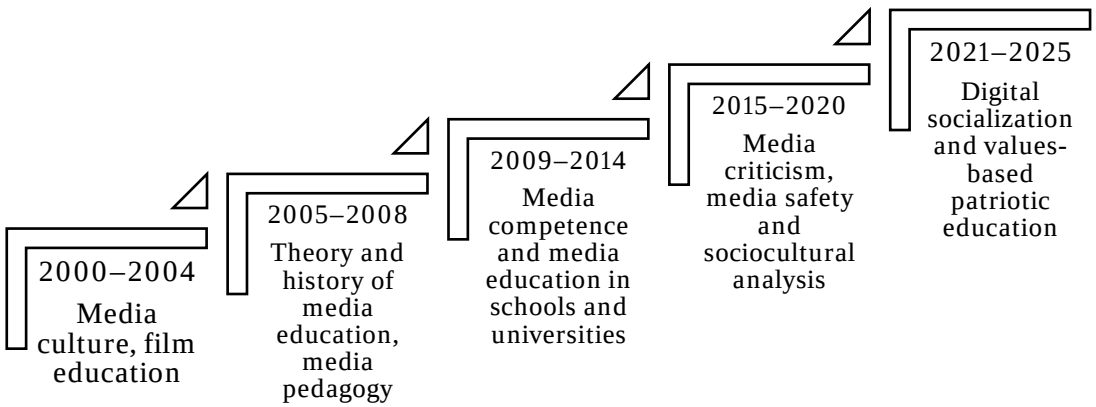


**Fig. 1.** Dominant Content Areas of Russian Media Education Courses Across Different Periods

A more detailed presentation of these dominant content aspects of contemporary Russian media education courses is provided below in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Characteristics of the dominant content priorities of contemporary Russian media education courses

| Periods | Dominant Themes of Contemporary Russian Media Education Courses |
|---|---|
| Media and media culture as objects of study: 2000–2004 | Mass communication, journalism, media culture, the structure of the screen image, development of film education, sociology of media, multimedia technologies |
| Media education as a scientific field: 2005–2008 | History and theory of media education, media pedagogy, media education technologies, media competence, critical thinking, media pedagogy, film education, information culture |
| Media education as a pedagogical practice: 2009–2014 | School and university media education, integration of media education, training of media educators, media literacy, film clubs, advertising as an object of analysis, school journalism practice, preschool media education |
| Critical and sociocultural approaches in media education: 2015–2020 | Media criticism, media safety, international experience of media education, audiovisual media texts, tolerance, mass media education, digital and information competencies |
| Digital socialization of citizens and value-based education: 2021–2025 | Civic-patriotic education, socio-cultural media education, family education through film, interethnic tolerance, citizens' digital literacy, virtual reality, media competence of teachers |

Source: author's compilation

Thus, our research analysis of Russian media education courses from 2000 to 2025 has made it possible to identify that the most developed areas at the present stage are media culture, media literacy, media competence, film education, and digital literacy. At the same time, in our view, the issues related to artificial intelligence, fact-checking and countering misinformation and manipulation in the media environment (especially in the context of digital warfare), media psychology and the digital well-being of individuals and society, social networks and the culture of digital participation, cyber and media safety, digital citizenship, media education for the older generation, and the ecology of the digital environment, among others, still remain insufficiently represented though these areas are highly relevant for the strategic development of media education in the future and will require the development of new media education programs in the coming years.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study has provided a comprehensive content analysis of contemporary Russian university and school media education courses developed between 2000 and 2025. The analysis demonstrates that Russian media education has evolved into a complex, multi-level and dynamically developing field that integrates diverse theoretical foundations, pedagogical strategies, and target audiences. The examined media education courses cover all educational stages – from preschool to postgraduate education – and address a wide range of media, including film, television, journalism, advertising, digital media, and multimedia technologies.

The research results confirm that contemporary Russian media education is characterized by a high degree of theoretical pluralism. The most prominent approaches include sociocultural, cultural, and critical thinking development theories, which collectively shape the dominant conceptual framework of the field. This confirms the integrative and interdisciplinary nature of modern media education curricula.

A key finding of the study is some clear shifts in the dominant object of pedagogical attention across different periods. While early stages of development (2000–2004) focused primarily on media as cultural and communicative phenomena, the later phases gradually expanded toward promoting the audiences' media competence and media literacy (2005–2014), followed by an increased emphasis on critical reflection, sociocultural interpretation of media texts, and media safety (2015–2020). The most recent stage (2021–2025) is characterized by the growing

importance of people's digital socialization, their civic engagement, and value-based education in the context of a rapidly evolving digital environment.

The analysis also highlights that Russian media education is increasingly oriented toward interdisciplinary integration and practical application. The coexistence of autonomous and integrated educational models reflects its adaptability to diverse educational contexts and learner needs. In particular, media education is actively embedded into subject-based teaching, teacher training, extracurricular activities, and lifelong learning programs, including initiatives for parents and older adults.

At the same time, the study identifies several underdeveloped yet increasingly relevant areas that require further scientific attention such as artificial intelligence in media environments, fact-checking and resistance to misinformation, media psychology and digital well-being, social media cultures and participatory practices, cyber and media safety, digital citizenship, media education for elderly people, etc. The limited representation of these topics indicates the need for future curriculum development and theoretical expansion in response to contemporary technological and societal challenges.

In conclusion, Russian media education between 2000 and 2025 can be characterized as an evolving system that reflects both continuity and transformation in its theoretical foundations and pedagogical priorities. Its further development will depend on the ability to integrate emerging digital realities into educational practice while maintaining its established cultural, critical, and pedagogical traditions.

## 6. Acknowledgements

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# Twitter Narratives Before and After Arrest: Sentiment Shifts and Influencer Dynamics in the Rhea Chakraborty Case

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**Abstract**

This study examines how public conversations shifted online following Rhea Chakraborty's arrest on September 8, 2020. By examining a carefully selected group of 29,626 real tweets, the research uses Tweepy to gather real-time data and NVivo to organise it in different ways. This helps map how stories evolved in two different time periods.The findings show a major shift in digital influence and public feelings. Before the arrest, the discussion mostly came from institutions and journalists, with a largely negative and accusatory tone. However, after the arrest, the narrative became more inclusive. Celebrity accounts and independent voices moved from the sidelines into the spotlight. This change came with a shift in emotions, as the initial intense scrutiny eased into a more neutral and sometimes supportive public view.In the end, the research emphasises that social media platforms serve as active spaces for the creation of shared meaning. The shift from local ridicule to wider questioning of institutions highlights the unstable nature of hashtag activism. This study offers important insights into the current era of journalism, showing how feelings and influence shift during major legal events in the Indian digital scene.

**Keywords:** media trials, sentiment analysis, Twitter, celebrity justice, influencer networks.

## 1. Introduction

The death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput in June 2020 resulted in a tremendous media and public scrutiny unseen in contemporary Indian history. In the course of the investigation, his girlfriend, Rhea Chakraborty, got involved in a legal battle and media trials. This is often depicted as a case of*media trial* (Lodhi, Agrawal, 2024; Shukla, 2020). When stars are in the dock, even in the drama-filled world of Indian politics, the trial by media that has played out over recent days around one high-profile arrest should be a cause for great concern for India's democratic and judicial system. This is particularly in the cases where high-profile personalities and celebrities are involved (Agarwal, Jain, 2024; Singh, Bhargava, 2021).

The media, otherwise described as the *watchdog* of democracy with its fourth pillar analogy, is entrusted under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India to inform citizens and bring institutions into scrutiny (Bajpai, 2024). However, this freedom is not unqualified. There are reasonable restrictions on matters that protect the trial process, such as the right to a fair trial under Article 21 (Sharma, 2025; Indian Constitution and Media, 2025). In fact, sensationalised coverage could prejudice people's attitudes to issues and exert pressure on judicial officials. Both judicial independence and fairness are compromised due to these incentives (Sahu, 2023). Scholars

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have determined that media trials bias against defendants, influence witnesses to testify to avoid public backlash, and subtly interfere with trial strategy. This undermines the very basis of just impartiality (Basu, 2020).

The more famous you are, the more likely media bias will play into the results of your trial. Chakraborty's case illustrates the point. Her arrest by the *Narcotics Control Bureau* and drug allegations became intertwined in media coverage with the original death case, although they were separate from that investigation into Rajput's suicide. This presentation led the public, in general, to believe that she was guilty even before being found so(Chaudhuri, 2021). What added to the muddle were televised *prime-time* panel shows and social media campaigns that ran as a parallel court, whose hosts and commentators posed as judge and jury(Ninan, 2020). Its media trial has impacted not only Chakraborty's personal and professional life, she said in an interview, but also how the media discourse intertwines with celebrity culture, gender, and power in India (Chaturvedi, 2021).

Also, studies on *Indian news media* suggest a systemic disparity in representation and coverage of cases, particularly high-profile ones (Chakraborty et al., 2021). In their massive study of more than 4 million articles, they observed that media outlets tend to gravitate towards sensational, divisive content and centralised coverage, the perfect conditions for a media trial. This, together with the inadequacies of regulation, Section III: Celebrity trials 277, as demonstrated by the incapacity of the Press Council of India to control parallel trials (Madhavan, 2023), shows how celebrity media and law-politics-ethics-public opinion are combined in a labyrinthine culture of justice when it comes to celebrities.

The article analyses Twitter sentiment pre- and post-arrest of Rhea Chakraborty in the Sushant Singh Rajput case,drawing on four propositions. First, the authors hypothesise that the network of influential actors shaping discussion will vary between the pre-arrest and post-arrest periods, with limited overlap in whose voices are dominant from one phase to the next. Second, they expect a turn toward the positive post-arrest, illustrating how a celebrity's place in media discourse can mutate with public narratives. Third, they suppose that the interests of users are varied, which can be seen from widely scattered geotagged data rather than one core centralised cluster. Finally, they claim that the terms used will correspond to the prevailing sentiment in any given period – i.e., test word constructions should reify the emotional tenor of pre-arrest and post-arrest corpora.

These challenges highlight how important media literacy has become. Citizens are relying more on digital platforms for information and understanding legal events. Improving media literacy can help audiences think critically about media stories and avoid jumping to conclusions.

In today's digital world, media literacy goes beyond just accessing information. It involves the ability to critically evaluate, verify, interpret, and responsibly engage with online content (Hobbs, 2021; UNESCO, 2024). Social media has changed audiences from passive consumers into active participants who create, share, and spread narratives. While this active participation improves democratic engagement, it also raises the risk of misinformation, emotional polarisation, and the quick spread of unverified claims. High-profile legal issues, especially those involving celebrities, often lead to intense public debate. Public opinion is shaped not only by journalists and news organisations but also by influencers, political figures, and regular users. As a result, audiences might form opinions about guilt or innocence before court cases are resolved. Media literacy education can help people recognise framing techniques, algorithmic promotion, confirmation bias, and sensational reporting that affect public understanding of legal matters(Hobbs, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). Building these skills is especially crucial in India, where social media increasingly serves as a main source of news and public discussion. Therefore, examining online narratives related to the Rhea Chakraborty case highlights the importance of media literacy in protecting against trial by media and the erosion of due process in digital spaces.

## 2. Materials and methods

Interest in mining sentiment and opinions in text has developed rapidly over the past decade, partially due to the substantial increase in the availability of documents and messages expressing personal opinions (Pang, Lee, 2008). In several domains, such as the stock market, politics and social movements, sentiment in Twitter data has been used for prediction or calculation (Bollen et al., 2011; Choy et al., 2011; Tumasjan et al., 2010; Zeitzoff, 2011). However, the methodology used

in this research is the sentiment analysis model, which has been employed in this study. The model is discussed as follows:

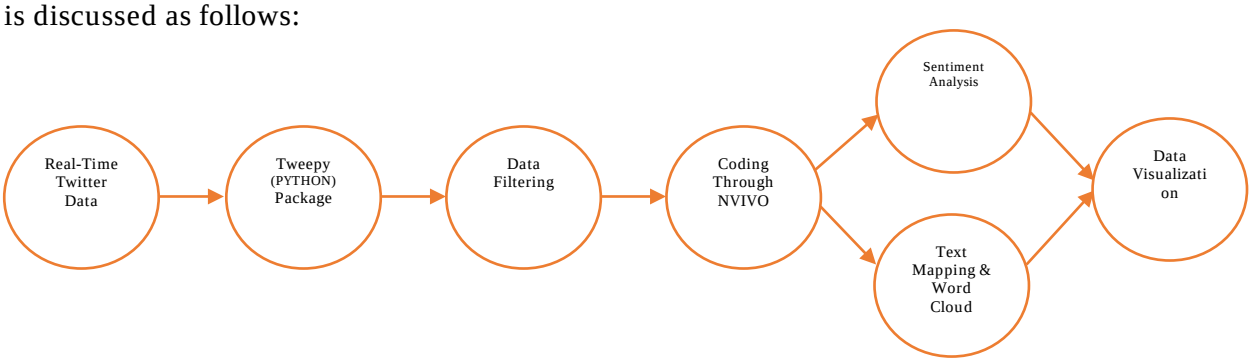


**Fig. 1.** System Architecture for Real-Time Tweet Processing and Visualisation

After the collection of real-time data from Twitter, the data is run through the coding system of the NVIVO software. The data filtering process in this research is implemented using the Python (tweepy) package. The sentiment analysis and text mapping wereconducted using NVIVO for coding. The data visualisation was produced in NVivo.

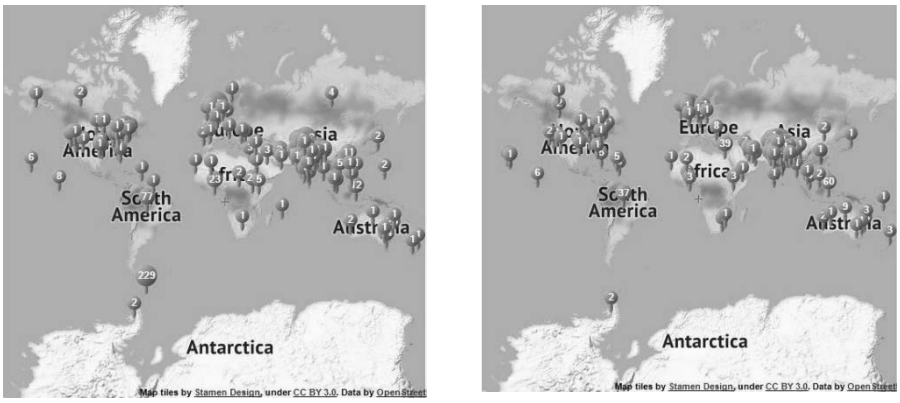


**Fig. 2.** Source: Data Mining Map of pre-arrest (left) and post-arrest (right) from NVIVO geo-tagging reference plotting

*Sampling Method:* The research universe is the tweets that were shared in the case of Rhea Chakraborty during and after her arrest. The data sample or the population that was used for this research was limited to a time frame:

*Pre-Arrest*: 04th.08 (August).2020 to 07th.09 (September).2020

The dates for the specific data have been selected based on real-life events involving Rhea Chakraborty being called in for suspicion and arrest.

*Post-Arrest*: 09th.09 (September).2020 to 07th.10 (October).2020

Rhea Chakraborty's being released on bail marked the end of the data sample collection from the researchers' end.

The sample method used for this research is purposive sampling because the research sample serves the purpose of the research objective, which involves the comparative analysis between the tweet sentiment of *Pre-Arrest* and *Post-Arrest* data. The data collection complements the sampling method, which uses big and real-time datasets.

*Sample Size:* The volume of data collected for the research is (n = 58,348) tweets, including retweets and shares. Hence, the data was filtered to around (n = 29,626) original tweets. For coding reference, the tweets were utilised for sentiment and textual-comparison analyses. The sample collected from Twitter is real-time big data, and hence, it validates the sample used in this study.

*Sample Area:* The sample area includes two different data sets, one from *pre-arrest* and the other from *post-arrest*. Hence, we can see two different data maps. The following data maps represent the sample area used for the study.

## 3. Discussion

The phenomenon of *media trials*, where media platforms shape public opinion ahead of judicial outcomes, has drawn increasing scholarly attention in recent years. Research in Digital Journalism shows that sensational reporting often constructs narratives of guilt or innocence even before legal processes unfold, thereby influencing public perception and potentially interfering with judicial fairness (Bossio, Bebawi, 2020; Kumar, Jodhta, 2023). This transformation reflects a broader shift in journalism, where media no longer act merely as observers but as active participants in shaping discourse.

Recent studies situate this issue within the dynamics of digital platforms and algorithmic amplification. Work highlights how platform governance has evolved toward shared responsibility, yet continues to struggle with balancing accountability and freedom of expression (Broeders et al., 2021; Helberger et al., 2022). At the same time, content moderation at scale often prioritises visibility and engagement, allowing sensational narratives to circulate more widely than verified information (Gillespie, 2020). These developments contribute to a hybrid media environment in which traditional journalism and digital platforms interact to intensify public scrutiny.

Scholars have also examined the legal and constitutional implications of media trials. Studies underline the persistent tension between safeguarding free speech and ensuring the right to a fair trial, particularly in digitally mediated environments (Parsheera, 2022; Woods, 2021). This tension is especially visible in contexts like India, where regulatory frameworks continue to evolve in response to rapidly changing communication technologies.

Gendered dimensions of media trials have received significant attention. Research demonstrates how women involved in high-profile cases are often subjected to disproportionate scrutiny and moral framing, reinforcing existing social biases (Chakraborty, Das, 2021). Such cases frequently generate moral panic, reducing complex legal realities to simplified and emotionally driven narratives.

Emerging scholarship also adopts computational approaches to examine digital discourse during legal controversies. Large-scale analyses of media content and social media interactions show how visual framing, networked communication, and algorithmic amplification shape public narratives and redistribute visibility among actors (Agarwal et al., 2024). These studies illustrate how peripheral voices can quickly gain prominence and influence collective opinion.

Further research highlights how misinformation and selective amplification create structural imbalances in digital communication, where high-engagement content often overshadows factual reporting (Chenou, Radu, 2020). Together, these dynamics contribute to increasingly polarised public spheres, particularly during high-profile legal cases.

Overall, the literature identifies three major concerns: the impact of media trials on judicial fairness, the reinforcement of gendered and moral narratives, and the growing influence of digital platforms in shaping public discourse. These insights point to the need for more balanced, adaptive regulatory frameworks that address the complexities of contemporary media environments while safeguarding both freedom of expression and the integrity of legal processes.

Media literacy education is an important response to these challenges. Recent research shows that improving people's ability to evaluate media content can lessen the effects of misinformation, sensationalism, and bias in high-profile cases. In digital environments, where users actively create and share content, media literacy serves as both a protective tool and a civic necessity. Studies indicate that individuals with better digital and legal awareness can more easily tell the difference between factual reporting and opinion-driven narratives, helping them resist the influence of media trials. Bringing media literacy into public education and professional training, especially for journalists and social media users, can encourage more responsible engagement and support the integrity of media and judicial processes.

This study highlights the role of media literacy education in understanding social media discussions during high-profile legal cases. The changes in sentiment and how narratives are presented show that digital audiences can be swayed by shifting media portrayals of legal happenings. Improving media literacy skills among citizens can help them engage critically with online content, make them less vulnerable to sensationalism and misinformation, and promote a better respect for due process and fairness in the judicial system. Therefore, media literacy education should be seen as an essential step for encouraging responsible participation in online public spaces.

## 4. Results

*Sentiment Analysis*

Various social science researchers are taking up sentiment analysis as a tool to understand human sentiment towards the desired object or the event (Agarwal et al., 2011). Tends to analyse the sentiment involved in microblogging, such as Twitter. It concentrates on Twitter data to release its research results. It involves the sentiment classification tasks using the hashtags, emotions, parts of speech, tags, and so on.

To examine the random tweets as per the requirement of the study, it takes the help of the unigram model, feature model, and kernel-based model. The study reaches the result with randomly annotated data. The combination model is used to reach the accuracy of the data. Even to give a different dimension to the classified data, it takes the help of prior polarity scoring. Two and three-classification tasks have been introduced here experimentally.

It has used Support Vector Machines with C parameters and took the help of 5-fold cross-validation to reach the accuracy of the data. There are more than 3,000 data points that have been eliminated as "junk" because the human annotator couldn't rectify the, and Google Translate failed to translate the data from different languages properly. Here, the help of unrestricted real-time streaming data from a commercial source has been taken. Rejecting the "junk" resulted in an unbalanced sample of tweets.

Vishal A. Kharde (Kharde, 2016) intends to discuss sentiment analysis using Twitter, where the data are unstructured, heterogeneous, and sometimes two or three are classified. It surveys Twitter pieces of information and comparative analysis between existing techniques like machine learning, lexicon-based approaches, cross-domain, cross-lingual methods, and so on. These methods are used to achieve accuracy while classifying the opinion mining. As per the study, machine learning, like SVM, naïve Bayes, gives the highest accuracy and is best for baseline learning method, while the others are also effective in some way.

To make the study, a Twitter data set from Stanford University has been used. With the different features of extraction techniques, the data has been analysed. With machine learning and semantic analysis, the data meets accuracy. It uses a table to show the obtained accuracy in different sizes in different techniques, like Baseline Algorithms, Naïve Bayes, SVM, using unigram, bigram, and trigram models. The Maximum Entropy Classifier helped to gain an accuracy performance between Naïve Bayes and SVM.

Sentiment analysis is challenging in microblogging sites like Twitter. The study also found challenges like identifying text, understanding sarcasm, the negation of sentiment, recognition of sentiment, dependency of opinion, and so on. So, the study proposes to use a combination of machine model and lexicon method to improve accuracy in analysis, irrespective of different domains and languages or other human documents.

Ana Reyes-Menendez (Reyes-Menendez, 2018) moves forward by analysing the tweets to identify the main concern of the global population regarding the environment and public health, relating it to the Sustainable Development Goals. It uses the hashtag #WorldEnvironmentDay to collect the data regarding the environment shared by the people worldwide. Here, the tweets by the users help to understand social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors through their negative, positive, and neutral approaches, which can contrast with previous studies and identify new problems.

Taking the help of the hashtag #WorldEnvironmentalDay, it collects all the Twitter data. The data is analysed with sentiment analysis and a textual analysis process. The help of an algorithm developed by Python and trained by data mining has been taken to group the data during the process of sentiment analysis. All the key data relating to the environment and public health are sorted according to the SDGs. In the stage of qualitative data analysis, the software NVivo Pro 12 has been used.

The study identifies some limitations and challenges, such as the fact that during sentiment analysis, there is some context that remains unidentified and labelled as neutral. This is to be considered as a limitation to validating the advanced analysis of high-volume data. The time horizon analysed and the accuracy level of the algorithm using machine learning are the limitations of the study.

Accessing the textual data on Twitter (Nazan Ozturk, 2017) analyses the public opinions and Sentiment approach towards the Syrian civil war and the Syrian refugee crisis. Taking up the help of tweets in two languages, English and Turkish, the study polarises the sentimental approach to

negative and positive. It not only gives an idea of the public approach but also compares the sentimental opinions of English and Turkish regarding the Syrian issue. It shows the prime concern of Turkish and English-speaking countries is the situation of the border during the war and immigrant policies, respectively.

The data were gathered from Twitter using the twitteR package in the R programming language and saved in CSV files for further analysis. The tweets are divided into three clusters: Politics, War, and Humanitarian. The Turkish tweets have been analysed in Lexicon. The study developed a sentiment Lexicon as there was no Turkish lexicon available. The English tweets are put under the RSentiment package. Both tweets were summarised in a graphical representation with the help of the word cloud, and the lexicon was manually created to reach accuracy.

Here, the emojis are not taken under the analysis, whereas emojis are the main factor in sentiment determination and overall impact. Moreover, geographical locations are not taken into consideration while doing the analysis. Not only that, the study hasn't analysed the languages like German and Arabic, which would have given more insights to the study, as Germany had the biggest number of refugees in Europe according to 2016 data, and Jordan is the border country of Syria, having Arabic as an official language.

From the above literature, we can realise the vast areas where sentiment analysis can be employed as a tool to discuss and understand various aspects of data mining and listening to the data properly.

*Data Analysis*

The data analysis is done in steps; the researchers used NVIVO software for data analysis and visualisation. The data is manually coded with reference to Python coding. Initial data filtering was done by the Python (tweepy.py) package. The researchers used the word cloud analysis tool, filtering four stop words in the data. The whole paragraph of data extracted was used for the analysis. Stemmed words were used to create a more effective data visualisation through the word cloud tool of NVIVO. Sentiment manual codes were applied to the data set through NVIVO. The sentiment was divided into positive (very positive and moderately positive) and negative sentiment (very negative and moderately negative).

*Influencer Analysis*

*Pre-Arrest:* If we look at the data visualisation (bar chart) of the influencers for the 'pre-arrest' scenario, we can find that most of the information circulated over twitter during the pre-arrest of Ms. Rea Chakraborty was following the nucleus of @meenadasnarayan, journalist, editor-in chief of Gulf Connoisseur, writer, poet, artist, film/opera director, Political Cartoonist. Following the influence of her in this case, ANI (Asian News International) @ani was another notable influencer in this regard before the arrest. The other notable influencers who had a significant impact on the discourse cluster in this case were @nehaltyagi08, @sumitkadei, @asjadnazir, @kangnaofficial, etc.

*Post-Arrest:* If we look at the data visualisation (bar chart) of the influencers for the 'post-arrest' scenario, we can find that most of the information circulated over Twitter during the post-arrest of Ms Rea Chakraborty was following the nucleus of @samiprajguru, who is an acclaimed journalist and news presenter associated with AajTak and the India TV news channels. He was followed by @kangnaofficial, who is a Bollywood actress and was found to be very vocal in this case. 90 % of the conversation on Twitter has revolved around them. A lot of retweets and tweet threads have resulted from their discourse, as we can see from the results on social media. Therefore, becoming the prime influencer after the arrest of Ms Rhea Chakraborty.

*Sample Area of Data Mining*

*Pre-Arrest:* The map identifies two specific conglomerated data hotspots (South America, South Africa). Other areas include India, Europe and some parts of Malaysia and Indonesia, which constitute the majority of the cluster of geocoded tweet data during the pre-arrest data mining. The data distribution, as we can see from the sample map, is well explained.

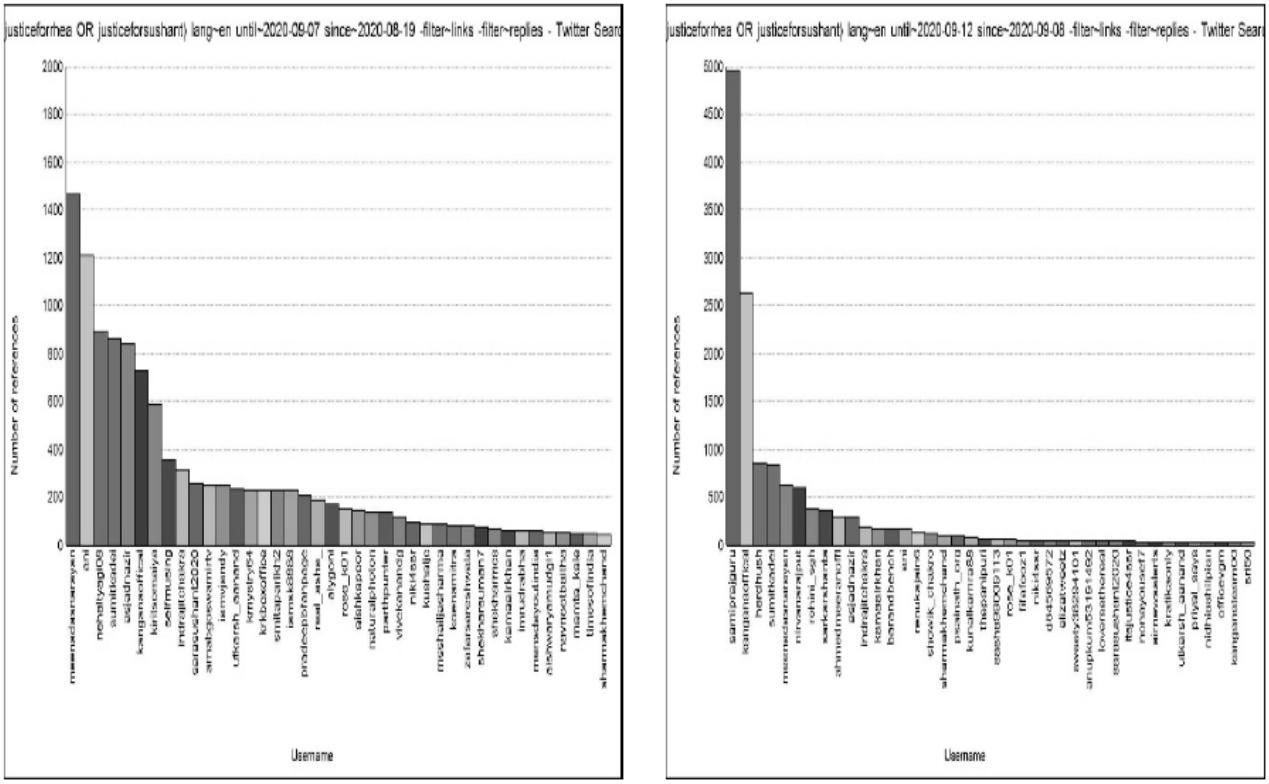


**Fig. 3.** Source: Influencer of pre-arrest (left) and post-arrest (right) from NVIVO account reference plotting

*Post-Arrest:* The map identifies three specific conglomerated data hotspots (South America, Indonesia, Saudi Arabian States). Other areas include India, which constitutes the majority of the cluster of geocoded tweet data. The researchers did not geocode the tweets beforehand to keep the data flow intact and to increase the number of tweets extracted through the topic analysis (folksonomy) approach as used in this research. Data adequacy was maintained by the researchers by extracting a considerable amount of the data from all corners of the globe. The control variable assumes that tweets by Indian citizens can be done from different parts of the world, as we see in this data set of the sample area.

*Sentiment of Tweets*

*Pre-Arrest:* The bar chart on the discourse of social media during the post-arrest of Rhea Chakraborty shows that the majority of the data is *moderately positive*, followed by *extremely positive.* These two sentiments create a normal curve with a skewness towards the negative area of the data set. We see that moderately positive tweets are much less in comparison to the negative tweets. The *extremelypositive* tweets are very low in (%) in overall comparison by the researchers, as we can see from the data visualisation.

**Table 1.** Source: results of Twitter data analysis through NVIVO (sentiment coding)

| A: Very negative | B: Moderately negative | C: Moderately positive | D: Very positive |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5827 | 6865 | 3869 | 1036 |

*Post-Arrest:* The NVivo sentiment histogram indicates that the discourse is concentrated in the moderate categories. Of the coded tweets (n=12,032), moderately negative tweets account for 6,022 (50.05 %) and moderately positive tweets for 2,889 (24.01 %). The extremes are smaller in proportion: very negative 1,978 (16.44 %) and very positive 1,143 (9.50 %). Compared to the pre-arrest phase, the post-arrest corpus is less polarised, with relatively fewer very negative tweets and a higher share of supportive/neutral-leaning moderation.

**Table 2.** Source: results of Twitter data analysis through NVIVO (sentiment coding)

| A: Very negative | B: Moderately negative | C: Moderately positive | D: Very positive |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1978 | 6022 | 2889 | 1143 |

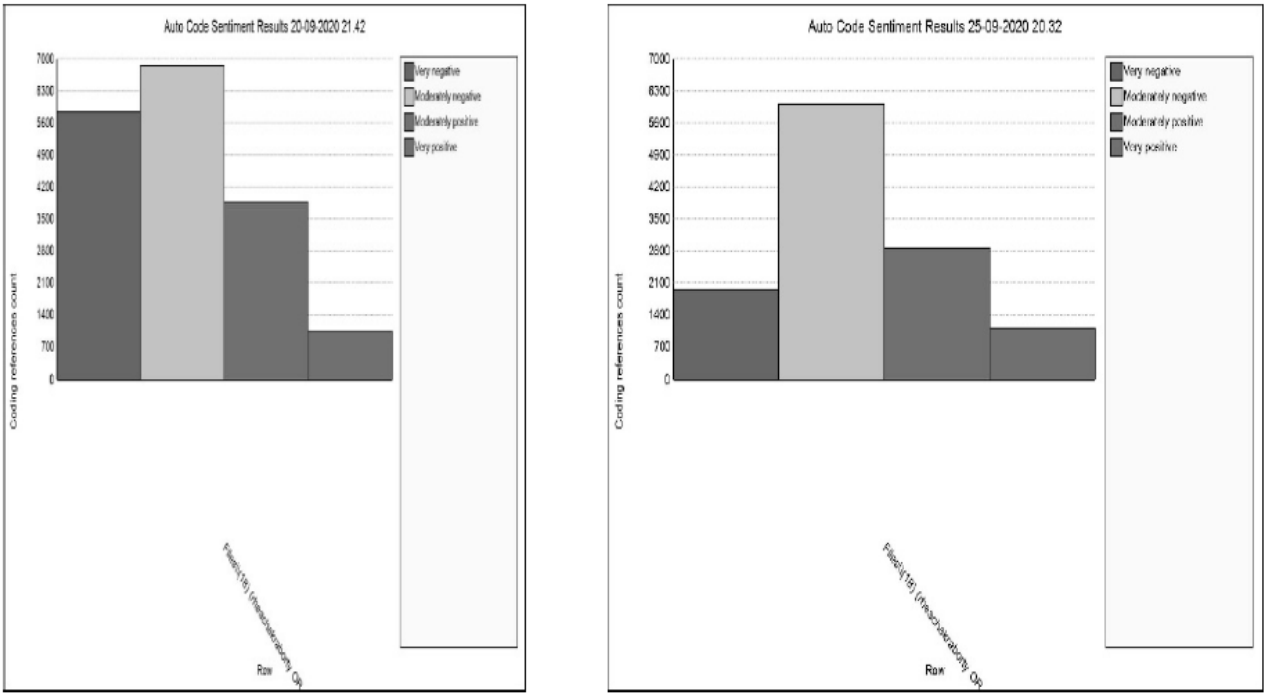


**Fig. 4.** Source: Sentiment of pre-arrest (left) and post-arrest (right) from NVIVO sentiment coding reference plotting on a histogram

*Text Mapping*

Text mapping was done by the researchers to explain the discourse on social media, as words constitute the information shared on Twitter. The researchers put together all the words and tried to analyse them from a macro and micro perspective.

*Pre-Arrest:* From the text mapping chart, we understand that before the arrest of Rhea Chakraborty, the social media exploded with support for Sushant, which constituted the major discourse during the pre-arrest of Rhea Chakraborty. But the discussion about them was on similar terms. We can see that Sushant Singh's name constituted (2.56 %) with (n = 9262) occurrences, while Rhea was overshadowed with a lesser (2.07 %) with (n = 7504) words used from the data set collected by the researchers from Twitter data on the issue.

**Table 3.** Source: results of Twitter data analysis through NVIVO (text mapping)

| Word | Length | Count | Weighted Percentage (%) | Similar Words |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sushantsinghrajput | 18 | 9262 | 2.56 | #sushantsinghrajput, #sushantsinghrajput#justice, sushantsinghrajput |
| rheachakraborty | 15 | 7504 | 2.07 | #rheachakraborty, @rheachakraborty, rheachakraborty |

As we can see from Table 3, the pre-arrest discourse revolved primarily around Sushant Singh Rajput, with "sushantsinghrajput" appearing 9,262 times (2.56 % of weighted word usage), while "rheachakraborty" appears 7,504 times (2.07 %). This difference of 1,758 occurrences (a 0.49 percentage-point gap) indicates that early Twitter discussion was anchored more strongly in

victim-centred framing than in sustained attention to Chakraborty herself. Other terms outside these two keywords each contribute less than 2% of the total weighted discourse, as reflected in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Source: results of Twitter data analysis through NVIVO (text mapping)

| Word | Length | Count | Weighted Percentage (%) | Similar Words |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| arrests | 7 | 5832 | 1.61 | #arrest, arrest, arrest', arrest', arrested, arrested', arresting, arrests |
| drugs | 5 | 4307 | 1.19 | #drug, #drugs, drug, 'drug, drugged, drugging, drugs, drugs' |
| rheas | 5 | 3648 | 1.01 | #rhea, rhea, 'rhea', rheas |

Collectively, the terms listed in Table 4 (e.g., “arrests” at 1.61 %, “drugs” at 1.19 %, and “rheas” at 1.01 %) account for 3.81 % of weighted word usage in the pre-arrest corpus, signalling a tight cluster of accusation-linked vocabulary. In line with the sentiment coding, these high-frequency associative terms reinforce a narrative environment in which Chakraborty is positioned through suspicion, criminalisation, and moral judgement.

Post-Arrest: From the text mapping chart, we understand that after the arrest of Rhea Chakraborty, the social media exploded with support for Rhea, which constituted the major discourse during the post-arrest session of the data analysis

**Table 5.** Source: results of Twitter data analysis through NVIVO (text mapping)

| Word | Length | Count | Weighted Percentage (%) | Similar Words |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| support | 7 | 8207 | 2.58 | support, supported, supporter, supporters, supporting, supports |
| #justiceforrhea | 15 | 7647 | 2.41 | #justiceforrhea, '#justiceforrhea, justiceforrhea |
| rheachakraborty | 15 | 7174 | 2.26 | #rheachakraborty, #rheachakraborty#gotojail, @rheachakraborty, rheachakraborty |
| Rhea | 4 | 6839 | 2.15 | #rhea, #rhea', rhea, 'rhea, rheas |

As we can see from Table 5, the post-arrest discourse shifts toward solidarity and procedural justice. The word “support” appears 8,207 times (2.58 %), followed by “#justiceforrhea” at 7,647 (2.41 %), “rheachakraborty” at 7,174 (2.26 %), and “rhea” at 6,839 (2.15 %). Together, these four items account for 9.40 % of weighted word usage, indicating that support- and justice-framed language becomes a dominant organising feature of the post-arrest conversation.

**Table 6.** Source: results of twitter data analysis through NVIVO (text mapping)

| Word | Length | Count | Weighted Percentage (%) | Similar Words |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coming | 6 | 6323 | 1.99 | come, comes, coming |
| campaign | 8 | 6272 | 1.98 | campaign, campaigners, campaigns |
| bollywood | 10 | 6127 | 1.93 | #bollywood, @bollywood, bollywood, bollywood, 'bollywood, bollywood', bollywoods |

| Word | Length | Count | Weighted Percentage (%) | Similar Words |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| actually | 8 | 5688 | 1.79 | actual, actually |
| Pasted | 6 | 5428 | 1.71 | past, paste, pasted |
| @kanganateam | 12 | 5416 | 1.71 | #kanganateam, @kanganateam |
| #behenplsmeranaammaatlena | 25 | 5246 | 1.65 | #behenplsmeranaammaatlena, behenplsmeranaammaatlena |
| True | 4 | 5210 | 1.64 | true |
| Felt | 4 | 5159 | 1.62 | felt |
| Copy | 4 | 5155 | 1.62 | #copied, copied, copied |
| Frnd | 4 | 5108 | 1.61 | frnd |
| Bail | 4 | 4320 | 1.36 | #bail, bail, bailed, bails |
| #immortalsushant | 16 | 3840 | 1.21 | #immortalsushant |
| chakraborty | 11 | 3539 | 1.11 | chakraborty |

The table represents the other words that are also part of the conversation post Rhea Chakraborty. We see words like *coming, campaign, Bollywood, etc.* These are examples of associative words used in tandem with the major words as shown in the previous table.

*Findings*

*Influencer of Twitter*

We can see that in both the pre-arrest and post-arrest the only influencer whose presence has been constant is @kangnaoffical, she is a Bollywood actress who showed interest in this case from the beginning and hence been the prime influencer in this regards, if we closely look at this then we can find that the volume of tweets before the arrest and after the arrest has huge numerical difference. The number of tweets produced before the arrest surpasses the post-arrest period, and we also find that the number of influencers declines in the post-arrest period. The most primary influencer before the arrest was no longer relevant during the post-arrest arrest, and we see a new set of influencers taking to the discourse on social media, Twitter. If we do a micro analysis of the difference between tweets by @kangnaofficial of pre and post arrest, we find that her tweets were popular after the arrest of Ms Rhea Chakraborty in comparison to the pre-arrest scenario. Analysing the influencers helps us to gauge the level of discourse and its source, giving us a clear picture of the information credibility (reliability of the data) of the data sample.

*Sentiment Analysis of Twitter Discourse*

The comparison between the *pre-arrest* and post-arrest in the case of sentiment analysis of the Twitter discourse is significant. If we see the graph, then we can find that there is a considerable amount of shift in the sentiment. The *pre-arrest* data shows that the sentiment was considerably negative, but when we see the data from post-arrest, there is a shift towards a more positive mindset.

The starting negative tweets are very low in the case of *post-arrest* than in comparison to the *pre-arrest.* The graph that we see above shows that the post-arrest data has less negative sentiment than positive sentiment in tweets. This gives us a very interesting find that once Rhea Chakraborty was arrested, the sentiment discourse took a considerable shift, which is very evident from the study.

*Text Mapping of Tweets*

With a similar trend in the data, we also find the textual discourse to be different in the case of post-arrest and Pre-arrestdata. Use of different words and conversation threads revolving among them can be seen as follows in the graph below. The data below represents the most influential words as shown in the data in the analysis segment of the research above.

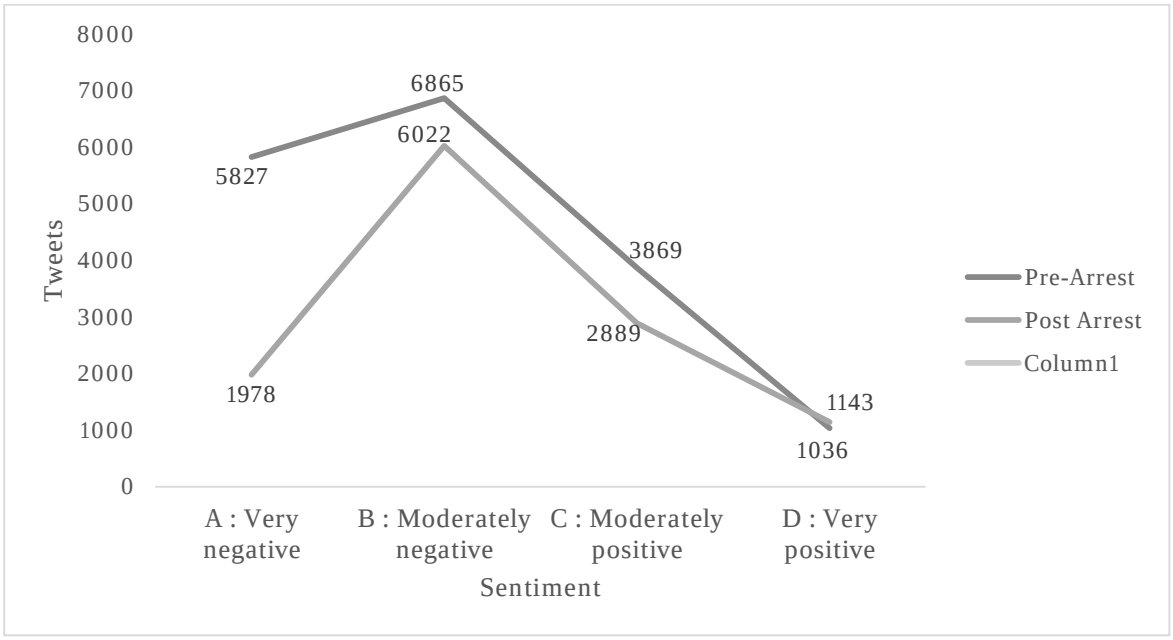


**Fig. 5.** Sentiment comparison of *Pre-Arrest & Post-Arrest* of Rhea Chakraborty




**Fig. 6.** Source: word cloud of pre-arrest (right) and post-arrest (left) from NVIVO textual analysis coding

From the word cloud, we can see that the post-arrest is about the support for Rhea Chakraborty, while during the pre-arrest, it was about Sushant Singh Rajput, and from the visualised infographic, we can see that the discourse was against Rhea at the beginning but changed after her arrest to a more supportive discourse on Twitter.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined the evolution of Twitter discourse surrounding Rhea Chakraborty before and after her arrest in the Sushant Singh Rajput case, focusing on influencers, sentiment patterns, geo-tagged activity, and textual themes. Using a dataset of 58,348 tweets—later refined to 29,626 original tweets—the analysis demonstrates that online narratives around high-profile legal cases are fluid, event-driven, and heavily shaped by media dynamics. The findings support all four propositions (P1–P4), offering important insights into the intersection of social media, public opinion, and celebrity-centred controversies.

With respect to influencers (P1), the results show a clear shift in key voices dominating the conversation. Pre-arrest discourse was shaped by journalists and media accounts, whereas post-arrest discourse saw significant participation from celebrity Graphures and commentators. Notably, only one influencer appeared prominently in both phases, illustrating how influence on social media is situational and highly sensitive to developments within the case. This fluidity

highlights the role of influential accounts in setting narrative frames and directing attention to particular interpretations of events.

The sentiment analysis strongly supports P2 by revealing a substantial shift from predominantly negative sentiment before the arrest to a more balanced and moderately positive sentiment afterwards. Pre-arrest tweets contained high levels of hostility, blame, and suspicion, reflecting a media-driven presumption of guilt. In contrast, post-arrest discourse displayed increased empathy, calls for fairness, and criticism of perceived media excesses. This reversal is significant because it challenges conventional assumptions that arrest reinforces social stigma; instead, it appears to have prompted resistance to earlier vilification, especially in a case involving a female celebrity exposed to misogynistic narratives.

Geo-tag data further support P3 by showing that engagement with the Chakraborty case was globally dispersed rather than locally concentrated. Pre-arrest clusters were visible in regions outside India, including parts of Africa and South America, while post-arrest participation expanded to Southeast Asia and the Middle East. This wide distribution indicates that the case resonated far beyond national boundaries, drawing attention from diasporic and international communities and demonstrating how celebrity-related controversies circulate in transnational digital spaces.

Finally, the text-mapping analysis confirms P4 by demonstrating a distinct shift in dominant keywords across the two phases. Pre-arrest language reflected themes of accusationfeaturing words such as *arrest*, *drugs*, and *sushantsinghrajput*, while post-arrest text emphasised support, justice, and legal processes, with terms like *bail*, *support*, and *campaign*. This lexical transition closely aligns with the observed sentiment patterns, indicating that collective emotional responses are reflected in the vocabulary users use to frame the issue.

Taken together, these findings illustrate that Twitter operates as a dynamic public sphere where narratives of guilt, victimhood, and justice are continuously constructed and contested. The study contributes to broader discussions on media trials, gendered public scrutiny, and digital participation in high-profile legal events. While limited to one platform and a specific timeframe, the research provides a strong foundation for comparative studies across multiple social networks and other celebrity-centred cases, potentially deepening understanding of how digital publics shape and reshape reputational outcomes in real time.

The findings also highlight the urgent need to improve media literacy among digital users. As social media increasingly shapes public understanding of legal processes, the ability to critically assess information is essential. Promoting media literacy through education and policy changes can help lessen the impact of sensational stories. This will encourage more informed and responsible participation in digital public spaces.

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# Reinventing News Agencies in the Digital Era: Structural Change, Credibility, and Media Education

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**Abstract**

The advent of the internet and AI have altered how traditional news organisations and news agencies function. Historically regarded as trustworthy sources of news and information, the agencies have had to bring in changes to their editorial structures and day-to-day practices to meet the demands of the 24-hour news cycle and mobile-first audiences. In the face of widespread misinformation and disinformation in the digital age, they have also had to implement several institutional changes while continuing to serve as credible news sources and contribute to media literacy and media education. This study examines how these organisations address digital disinformation by integrating media literacy initiatives, professional training, and verification procedures. It focuses on three international news agencies – Reuters, the Associated Press, and Agence France-Presse (AFP) – as case studies for the purpose. Case study analysis, the creation of a coding scheme, and the thematic coding of institutional practices were among the qualitative methods used in this study. The findings show that despite the media industry's structural change, news organisations and agencies continue to uphold journalism principles. Their evolving methods show how journalism can simultaneously adapt to the digital revolution and support media educational processes that back critical and informed news consumption in contemporary digital societies.

**Keywords:** digital disruption, news distribution, news agencies, journalism transformation, misinformation, media literacy, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4).

## 1. Introduction

The impact of digital technology on the creation, dissemination, and consumption of information has drastically changed the global news system throughout the past 20 years (Tariq et al., 2022). Journalism as an institution has evolved over time with the introduction of social media networks, mobile communication technologies, and websites (Aguaded et al., 2022). Legacy news organisations that were formerly focused on print and television must now operate in a highly dynamic, increasingly digital environment characterised by platform-based distribution, real-time news generation, and continuous audience interaction (Stoddard et al., 2021). Journalists must adapt to the demands of a 24-hour news cycle in the digital age (Caled, Silva, 2021). Digital platforms are increasingly dominating the flow of news content, affecting how news organisations produce content and how news consumers receive information. Media companies must create content formats compatible with digital devices and social media platforms, as mobile-first news consumption has become a common trend in many parts of the world. Traditional news organisations have been compelled by these developments to implement new editing workflows, integrate multimedia storytelling, and employ automation technology to facilitate quick news

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production. In this changing world, news organisations have a special institutional role. Reuters, the Associated Press, and Agence France-Presse(AFP) are examples of organisations that have historically been important hubs in the global information network. They gather news from all over the world and distribute verified reports to newspapers, broadcasters, and other media outlets.

Media outlets can rely on news agencies, which are traditionally known for accuracy, balance, and credibility (Appelgren, Nygren, 2014). Over the past decades, these organisations have always prioritised editorial verification and gatekeeping. Due to digitalisation, information travels instantaneously through social media posts, citizen journalism, and independent digital websites, often without verification. Therefore, the news organisations must strike a balance between speed and credibility. While credibility is essential to their institutional legitimacy, speed has become the main feature of the digital age. However, online platforms have enabled the spread of misleading information at unprecedented rates, creating significant obstacles to democratic participation (Vrabec et al., 2018). Many organisations are introducing both technological and organisational changes, including the development of automated news production systems, specialised verification units, and multimedia news processes. This was needed as their role as trustworthy information sources is crucial for news organisations operating in a fragmented information landscape (Stoddard et al., 2021).

To address these challenges, the need to develop media literacy and media education was required (Foà et al., 2023), which would enable people to critically analyse what is presented in the news and to better understand media and the role of media organisations in the digital world. In that way, news media indirectly educate the public, uphold professional verification practices, and provide reliable information to citizens (Fleming, 2009; Selenić et al., 2024). As the world faces the challenges ofmisinformation and disinformation, journalists, teachers, and media consumers continue to use their credibility as a benchmark (Cazzamatta, 2025). Furthermore, a number of international media outlets have launched services that incorporate journalism and media literacy tools to help readers/viewers identify trustworthy and misleading information on the internet (Abuín-Penas et al., 2024).In light of this, the changes news organisations are making also provide valuable insight into how journalism is evolving (Caled, Silva, 2021). Institutional journalism is still crucial for guaranteeing a consistent flow of trustworthy information (Rantanen, 2019). Therefore, this study looks at how news organizations are adapting to the digital media landscape while still being relevant as reliable information providers and contributing to the development of media-literate, educated communities. By focusing on it through a case study, the study closes a significant gap in the literature on news agency change.

To maintain credibility and advance media literacy in the era of false and misleading information, this study examines how news organisations respond to and address the challenges posed by digital disruption.

The following research inquiries will be addressed:

– In response to platform-based digital news ecosystems, how are news agencies and legacy news organisations altering their institutional structures?

– In an increasingly fragmented digital information landscape, how are news organisations redefining their professional roles to maintain credibility?

– In the face of widespread misinformation and distortion, how do news organisations support media literacy?

The study examines three worldwide news organisations operating in different political and commercial contexts, using a comparative case study design.

As digitalisation grows, news organisations continue to fulfil their traditional role of delivering news to the public and are also starting to run campaigns to boost media literacy and knowledge. They have found themselves in an environment that has demanded outreach and education programs due to the prevalence of fake news, the proliferation of algorithmically driven information systems, and shifting audience engagement strategies. It is essential to understand the pedagogical practices, educational strategies and the structures of these institutions in order to appreciate this change in institutional form.

In this sense, the present study has the following objectives:

– To explore the digital transformation of news organisations in today's media landscape.

– To investigate how news organisations respond to digital disruption by including media literacy and media education initiatives.

– To examine the strategies and editorial procedures used by news organisations to combat false information and improve media literacy.

This study will be relevant to current media studies as it explores changes in organisational structures within foreign news agencies and legacy news organisations in the fast-changing digital media landscape. As news outlets face a 24-hour news world in which platforms determine distribution, mobile consumption habits are changing, and automation and other tools are changing the face of journalism, news organisations are reconsidering their business models. The study, which analysed a few examples from around the world, shows that news organisations remain trusted sources of verifiable news, but that they can and do work with media literacy and media education organisations to tackle the growing problem of misinformation and disinformation.

Therefore, the study offers insight into the evolution of digital journalism and the importance of media education for critical and responsible news consumption in today's digital societies.Conventional news production and dissemination systems have been significantly affected by the quick development of digital media and connected communication. Although there have been many studies on the effects of digital technology on journalism, few have focused on how news organisations are responding to these shifts and continuing to uphold the public trust in them and in fair reporting. Meanwhile, fake news has proliferated across digital channels, and media education and media literacy have become increasingly important. It is necessary to understand the relationship between journalism institutions and informed public communication, and to take into account the importance of verification, training, and media literacy in journalism sources. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the evolution of the selected news organisations in the digital revolution and how they are, at the same time, promoting media-literate cultures.

The research's goal is to explain the transformation of selected international news agencies and organisations from an institutional perspective in the modern digital media field. The study adopts a multi-case study approach to gauge the adaptation of organisations, including Reuters, AP, and AFP, in their news creation process, whilst preserving their credibility in their digital news production. The focus is on media education programmes that use digital communication platforms to assist in managing misinformation, facilitating organisational change, and checking. This research is limited to specific institutional settings and cannot be generalised to news agencies, used to explain the changing role of news agencies, or used to improve media literacy.

This research analysis is supplemented with three theoretical perspectives. First, there's a model of news organisations as part of larger information systems in Media Ecology Theory. The media ecology is geared towards the impact of communication technologies on the structure and interaction of societies. News agencies' educational programs reflect a changing media landscape marked by an abundance of information, the proliferation of decentralised networks, and a multitude of algorithmic platforms that bring new challenges and opportunities. Second, Bandura's Social Learning theory focuses on the social aspect of learning, as people create knowledge through observation, interaction, and thought. In media literacy education, the social learning theory highlights that opportunities to watch, practice, and receive feedback from a credible source will help ensure effective literacy growth. Institutional theory explains organisational change and adjustment. DiMaggio and Powell (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) developed the concept of institutional isomorphism, which helps us examine whether news organisations' instructional efforts are unique institutional innovations or driven by similar forces.

## 2. Materials and methods

This study employed a comparative case study methodology. The following factors make the use of case study methodology appropriate: (1) the research question focuses on how and why the institutional transformation occurs; (2) the institutional transformation itself is a complex and varied phenomenon that requires in-depth analysis; (3) the phenomena under study are modern and changing, requiring the researcher to work with living organizational settings; and (4) the research problem is to understand the mechanisms of institutional adaptation.

The study employs a qualitative research methodology that emphasises an in-depth understanding of institutional constraints, teaching strategies, and organisational behaviours. Instead of focusing on statistical generalisation, this design prioritises explanatory complexity and context. Rigorous case study methodology enables the generation of knowledge that may be applied beyond the case through the construction of contextual description and the articulation of the analytical framework, even though qualitative case studies cannot claim to be representative of

the population. Three news organisations were selected: Reuters, the Associated Press, and Agence France Presse (AFP). Significant educational investment, publicly accessible documentation, a variety of organisational types, geographic diversity, and innovative teaching methods were all considered important selection factors for case study analysis. These organisations represent different institutional frameworks within the news ecosystem.

The following techniques were integrated for data collection: (1) Document Analysis, methodical examination of organisational papers, including annual reports, strategy documents, program curricula, and descriptions of educational resources. Forty-five documents were examined. (2) Semi-structured Interviews: Twelve interviews with four external stakeholders and representatives of the organisation were conducted. Organisational goals, teaching approaches, target audiences, alliances, sustainability, and constraints were all discussed during interviews. (3) Observational Data: The researcher learned about pedagogical approaches in action by observing educational programs.Triangulation, which uses data from several sources to produce complementary evidence, was made easier by the multi-method technique. Official plans were outlined in organisational documentation; informal understandings and organisational thinking were gathered through interviews; and the dynamics of implementation were understood through observation (Braun, Clarke, 2006).

The analysis employed systematic qualitative coding. The field notes, document excerpts, and interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis was carried out in multiple stages: (1) familiarisation through repeated interaction with data; (2) open coding to identify meaningful units related to research questions; (3) focused coding to identify recurrent themes; (4) code refinement and coding; and (5) interpretation of the relationships between themes, theoretical frameworks and research questions.

**Table 1.** Phases of case study data analysis

| Sl. No | Phase Analysed | Analytical Activity | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | First Phase | Data Familiarization | Data familiarisation will involve reading and re-reading interview transcripts, organisational documents, and field notes to gain a deep understanding of the data. |
| 2 | Second Phase | Open Coding | Recognition of meaningful data units to create open codes regarding research questions, including references to media literacy initiatives, learning activities, and organisational motives. |
| 3 | Third Phase | Focused Coding | Determination of repetitive patterns and themes that occur across the various data sources. |
| 4 | Fourth Phase | Code Refinement and Categorization | Arrangement of codes into larger thematic groups, including educational models, institutional mechanisms, and pedagogical strategies. |
| 5 | Fifth Phase | Thematic Interpretation | Thematic Interpretation of themes through the connection of empirical results, theoretical frameworks, and research objectives. |
| 6 | Sixth Phase | Within-Case Analysis | The step will involve a detailed study of each news organisation separately to learn about the institutional practices and programme structures. |
| 7 | Seventh Phase | Cross-Case Analysis | Comparative analysis of cases to determine similarities and differences between them on thematic dimensions. |

Source: author's own compilation

**Table 2.** Case study considerations

| Sl. No | Dimension | Consideration | Application in the Study |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Sociological Consideration | Focus on the evolving societal role of news organisations in digital media information ecosystems. | Investigates the role of news organisations in the process of media literacy and public knowledge in the modern media context. |
| 2. | Philosophical Consideration | The interpretivist research viewpoint, which is focused on the interpretation of institutional practices and meanings. | Explores how practitioners within news organisations conceptualise and implement media literacy initiatives. |
| 3. | Research Logic Consideration | Comparative case study logic allows the study of the context in various organisations. | Uses within-case and cross-case analysis to identify patterns, institutional strategies, and variations in media literacy programmes. |

Source: author's own compilation

**Table 3.** Coding framework used in data analysis

| Sl. No | Coding Stage | Description | Analytical Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Open Coding | Initial identification of meaningful concepts and data segments from interviews, documents, and field notes. | To capture diverse ideas related to media literacy initiatives and organisational practices. |
| 2 | Axial Coding | Linking related open codes into broader categories and thematic relationships. | To identify connections among institutional drivers, pedagogical approaches, and programme structures. |
| 3 | Selective Coding | Integration of major categories into core themes aligned with research objectives and theoretical framework. | To explain the transformation of news agencies as facilitators of media literacy. |

Source: author's own compilation

**Table 4.** Key analytical themes and coding categories

| Sl. No | Core Theme | Analytical Focus |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Digital Shift | Institutional frameworks and programme structures are designed to meet the challenges of digital disruption. |
| 2 | Organizational Drivers | Motivations and contextual factors influencing news organisations to initiate media literacy programmes. |
| 3 | News Organisational Mechanisms | Governance structures, partnerships, and operational systems supporting changing news ecosystems. |
| 4 | Pedagogical Approaches | Awareness programs, learning formats, and engagement methods are used in media literacy programs. |

| Sl. No | Core Theme | Analytical Focus |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | Media Literacy Dimensions | Skills addressed by the programmes include critical news evaluation, awareness of misinformation, and digital participation. |
| 6 | Challenges and Constraints | Institutional, technological, and resource limitations affecting the changes implemented by the news agencies. |
| 7 | Effectiveness and Impact | Outcomes and perceived impact of media literacy initiatives on audiences and communities. |

Source: author's own compilation

Coded concepts: (1) Digital shift; (2) Organisational Drivers; (3) News Organisational Mechanisms; (4) Pedagogical Approaches; (5) Media Literacy Dimensions; (6) Challenges and Constraints; and (7) Effectiveness and Impact. Within-case analysis compared organisations within each organisation; cross-case analysis compared organisations systematically across thematic dimensions. NVivo 12 software helped with the code management.

Procedures of validity were: (1) protracted engagement; (2) continued observation; (3) triangulation; (4) member checking; (5) negative case analysis, and (6) reflexivity. The processes enhance the reliability of the results while not denying the inherent limitations of case study research regarding generalisation.

*Case Stories*

*Case 1 – Associated Press (AP)*

In recent years, the AP has been incorporating media literacy and verification training into its news mission in response to the growing volume of misinformation and manipulated digital media. AP has been one of the world's oldest cooperative news agencies, and has expanded its efforts to fact-check and educate its newsrooms during significant international events and the 2022 U.S. midterm elections in the wake of the proliferation of social media misinformation. Organisation's AP News Literacy programmes and AP Fact Check programmes are based on verifying and sourcing and critically analysing information online.

The educational model AP has adopted is based on engaged and professional journalism, supplemented by fact-checking skills and newsroom and public media literacy education. The teaching model focuses on skills in verification, identification of misinformation, evaluation of digital sources, and ethics in journalism. Audience knowledge of credible journalism is enhanced through interactive explainers, newsroom resources, and fact-checking databases.

*Target Audiences and Reach:* AP's initiatives focus on journalists, students, educators and digital news audiences. Collaborates with schools, universities, and the media to enhance awareness of news verification and responsible information sharing. It has a worldwide news distribution system, which enhances the impact of these education programs.

*Sustainability & Funding:* AP works on a cooperative business model, cooperatives, and content licensing. Its ongoing media literacy and fact-checking work is carried out through its newsroom, partnerships, and collaborative journalism initiatives. Long-term threats are platform-based news ecosystems and financial challenges to digital news.

*Case 2 – Agence France-Presse (AFP)*

AFP is one of the world's three major news agencies, and the only European one. Media literacy and digital verification are central to Agence France-Presse (AFP)'s efforts to combat the global misinformation crisis. AFP Fact Check and educational outreach initiatives play a role in reinforcing the public's awareness of misinformation, source credibility and digital verification practices. AFP also offers teaching and learning materials for teachers and students to help them build media analysis skills.

*Educational Model:* AFP uses an integrated media literacy model, a blend of professional and media practices of verification and learning. The organisation focuses on concrete verification techniques, critical new evaluation, and digital source analysis. Case studies, verification guides and classroom resources are also available in the educational materials, and provide examples of how misinformation can be shared online.

*Target Audiences and Reach:*AFP programmes are targeted at school students, teachers, journalists and Internet media users. It offers over 2000 educational materials at various levels, from basic to higher secondary. It is multilingual, thus enabling AFP to reach media literacy outreach in various parts of the world and language communities.

*Sustainability & Funding* – AFP's activities are based on its international news agency model, institutional contracts, and pledges for public-interest journalism. A sustainable operational network and the professionalisation of fact-checking globally help to provide sustainability. Yet, despite the rapid spread of misinformation and the growing need for platforms, there remain institutional and operational barriers to longer-term media literacy outreach.

*Case 3 – Reuters*

The Reuters news agency, a division of Thomson Reuters, is a global, commercial news organization.The Fact Check team monitors the media, social media, and digital platforms for misinformation that is linked to news events. It has verification experts and established verification toolkits, and it provides fact-checking services to its media partners. In addition, the Reuters Visual Verification Team provides 24/7 global monitoring to source and verify content, leveraging Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) techniques.

*Educational Approach*: Reuters Institute, also a part of Thomson Reuters, which works closely with the Oxford University, has developed a multi-level training approach that consists of the following: (1) High-level training seminars for professional journalists; (2) journalism education training programmes facilitated by the Foundation, such as free online courses; (3) tools and APIs, to leverage the knowledge of other organisations; and (4) partnerships with journalism schools. The core of the educational materials focused on qualitative skills and methodological soundness.

*Audiences*: Mostly editors, executives, and journalists in leadership roles. Reuters has placed a high priority on its work to become a part of the ecosystem of other news organisations and journalism schools. The plan leveraged Reuters' professional reputation and did not impede direct engagement with partner organisations.

The interviewees emphasised that while newsrooms and news sponsorship activities are sustainable,educational programs were integrated with commercially successful news operations, so that they are also able to help in income generation through fee-based premium training and foundation funding.

## 3. Discussion

News organisations across the globehave consistently recognised innovation as essential for responding to the rapid evolution of media technologies and the changing preferences and expectations of audiences (Cools, Koliska, 2024). And they are now increasingly relying on digital technology and AI, mainly because of their robust data and computing infrastructures, the efficiency of many of their AI services,and the growing demands for securityand user accessibility (Simon, 2024). However, there have been a number of challenges, including a decline in audience trust, information disarray, economic meddling, and dependence on platforms.

The emergence of AI-driven journalism presents profound risks not only to the informational well-being of audiences but to the integrity of democratic discourse itself. The capacity to generate vast quantities of content that mimics quality — while in reality offering little more than a coherent-sounding assemblage of ideas — has never been easier or more affordable (Dodds et al., 2025).

As algorithmic curation increasingly determines which stories reach which individuals, and as bias and inaccuracy persist within news output, audiences can no longer passively consume information — they must be equipped with the critical skills to interrogate not just the content of news, but the hidden technological and editorial forces that shape what they see in the first place (Yeoman, Morris, 2024).

Organisations use media literacy programs as a repositioning strategy to create new value propositions that establish them as important civic organisations. It is being recognised as critical for developing an informed citizenry and for democratic governance, as it is not merely an educational objective but a civic necessity — one that underpins public trust in institutions and equips individuals to navigate an increasingly complex information landscape.

Unquestionably, they are facing major challenges in applying AI to their work, especially in generating multimodal content (text, images, sound, and video) with the help of GenAI). However, the use of AI must help increase the media's loyalty to citizens and make verification processes even more effective (Codina et al., 2024). Professionalism in news production and the use of technology are

not in conflict – in fact, they complement each other. During a crisis like a pandemic or in everyday reporting, gathering wider information, conducting deeper research, and analysing the context and trends behind news events all help journalists sharpen their professional skills. New technology plays a role in this process too. While the shift brought about by digital media began with technological change, it is ultimately the quality and substance of the content that determines its impact.It is precisely in this context that media literacy ceases to be a supplementary skill and becomes an essential democratic necessity – empowering audiences to critically evaluate not just what they read, but how, why, and by whom it was produced (Dodds et al., 2025).

Media literacy training should be recognised by policymakers as a methodical investment in news organisations. Governments should create comprehensive media literacy policies that include sufficient funding, professional training for media professionals, and curriculum standards (Lal et al., 2024). Since these media literacy initiatives should serve the public interest, the policy should support news organisations' educational initiatives through tax incentives and subsidies while keeping a critical distance. In light of shifting social roles, the study recommends that news organisations incorporate media literacy initiatives into their operations (Aarzoo, Lal, 2026). To ascertain the influence of education outside the purview of programs, significant resources must be invested and assessment procedures developed. Reaching communities that are fundamentally disadvantaged should be an organisation's first focus. Interventions should consider the needs of communities of color, who experience (mis)information in unique ways (Lee et al., 2024). Additionally, organisations must be critical of institutional interests in transparency. Academic researchers are expected to get a thorough understanding of the effectiveness of media literacy. The following are necessary: (1) longitudinal studies to ascertain whether the treatments increase awareness; (2) ethnographic research to explore implementation; (3) a study to show whether interventions can be differentially effective by demographics; and (4) comparative institutional analysis.

## 4. Results

**Table 5.** Cross-case comparison of selected news organisations

| Analytical Dimension | Case 1 | Case 2 | Case 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Digital Shift | Structured media literacy programmes integrated with newsroom outreach activities. | Digitalisation has led to the adoption of technology to streamline news production and enhance editorial efficiency. Use of AI is also carefully embedded | Real-time, automated processes to streamline workflows. Use of AI tools to speed up content delivery whileupholding the rigorous standards and ethics |
| Organizational Drivers | Institutional commitment to public knowledge and audience engagement in the digital media environment. | Response to misinformation challenges and the need to strengthen media credibility. | Strategic expansion of the news organisation’s social responsibility and community engagement role. |

| Analytical Dimension | Case 1 | Case 2 | Case 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| News Organisational Mechanisms | Internal training units and partnerships supporting programme implementation. | External collaborations and project-based initiatives are supported by grants and institutional networks. | Dedicated outreach teams and educational platforms facilitating media literacy programmes. |
| Pedagogical Approaches | Workshops, interactive learning sessions, and newsroom engagement activities. | Training modules, seminars, and collaborative educational resources. | Offers fellowship programmes for mid-career journalists, facilitates engagement of journalists and leading academics forthe exchange of ideas and best practices |
| Key Challenges | Resource limitations and balancing newsroom priorities with educational activities. | Institutional coordination and sustainability of long-term programmes. | Audience reach and adapting programmes to diverse levels of media literacy. |
| Observed Impact | Increased audience engagement and awareness regarding digital information verification. | Strengthened collaboration between media institutions and educational stakeholders. | Improved public awareness regarding misinformation and responsible digital participation. |

Source: author's own compilation

The cross-case analysis reveals notable variations in instructional strategies among institutional contexts. As a business, all the news agencies have focused on advancing professional practices. If AP has AP Verify as its newsroom's verification toolbox, Reuters has its own Fact Check team and its Visual Verification Team relies on Open Source Intelligence Techniques (OSINT) to authenticate User-Generated Content (UGC).

*Pedagogical Techniques***:** All of the organisations employed interactive modules and capabilities development to emphasise active learning. They all demonstrated a sophisticated understanding that when motivated thinking and cognitive biases are present, knowledge transfer alone is insufficient.

*Media Literacy Dimensions:*The three agencies have emphasised on media literacy and information and gave priority to publishing factually correct information. They used toolkits to streamline workflows, data segregation and are working out how best to use Generative AI themselves across newsgathering, packaging, and distribution.

According to research on the selected cases, digital disruption is driving multifaceted institutional transformation across news agencies and legacy news organisations (Sarkar, Lal, 2023). The rapid 24-hour news cycle, mobile-first consumption habits, and news distribution across platforms have forced news organisations to improve verification procedures, automate production technology, and restructure editorial processes (Civila et al., 2021). These changes show how traditional journalistic organisations are adapting to a complicated digital information environment while upholding professional standards of veracity and accuracy.

**Table 6.** Alignment of Themes and Coding Categories

| Sl. No | Major Theme | Coding Categories |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | News Organisational Transformation | Role expansion, newsroom outreach, and educational initiatives |
| 2. | Organizational Drivers | Policy influences, audience trust, misinformation concerns, and institutional priorities |
| 3. | Digital Shift | Changes in the news-gathering and delivery mechanisms. partnerships, training modules, institutional programmes |
| 4. | Pedagogical Approaches | Workshops, learning materials, digital platforms, and community engagement |

Source: author's own compilation

News agencies remain important players in the global information system in the examined case studies, providing verifiable material actively embraced by digital editors and news outlets. Concurrently, the findings indicate that certain organisations have expanded their institutional roles in promoting media literacy and public awareness of news production processes. As they address the growing issues of misinformation and deception in digital communication, these initiatives complement rather than replace the basic journalistic functions of news organisations.

Numerous international media organisations have started initiatives that combine media literacy with professional journalism. To help viewers understand how news is produced and vetted, the AFP, for instance, has developed educational programs and newsroom outreach projects. In a similar vein, Reuters has expanded professional training and verification initiatives that help media professionals and journalists identify reliable online sources of information. Established news organisations are increasingly coordinating journalistic practice with more general media education objectives through such initiatives.

## 5. Conclusion

According to the study, news organisations are undergoing significant institutional transformation, with a focus on media literacy skills and the news consumption habits of the younger population. The comparative case study analysis reveals that different news organisations create multifaceted media literacy initiatives. By establishing news organisations as important civic educators, the projects can help address information disorder and the institutional crises of confidence. In response to the changing dynamics of the digital media ecosystem, news agencies and legacy news organisations are undergoing significant institutional changes (Floridi, 2025). These organisations have been forced to reorganise editorial systems, implement new technology, and improve verification procedures due to the trend of news dissemination led by platform-based news, mobile-first audiences, and the demands of 24-hour news creation (Hendrickx, 2025). Despite the revolutionary impact of digital communication technology, news organisations continue to serve as authorised distributors of verified information across news systems worldwide.

The cross-case analysis also demonstrates how many news organisations are expanding their institutional role through media literacy initiatives. In a time when false information and misinformation are widely disseminated, these initiatives help improve the audience's capacity to evaluate information sources critically (Singh et al., 2021). Even though news organisations' primary responsibility remains to produce and disseminate reliable news, their evolving methods demonstrate how professional journalism can advance media literacy. As a result, the investigation highlights the news agencies' continued value as reputable journalism organisations and as important participants in astute communication techniques in contemporary digital societies.

In the future, ecosystem strategies in which news organisations provide specialised knowledge within bigger educational systems will be necessary for the successful development of media literacy. News organisations should support the inclusion of news literacy as a resource in school curricula. Information validation should be incorporated into IT companies' designs. Lastly, in order to promote media literacy among educational institutions, journalistic organisations, tech

firms, legislators, and the general public, an interagency effort is required. The public must understand that media literacy requires both institutional change and the development of individual skills.

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# Managed Digitalization of the Regional System of Theological Education: Media-Educational Foundations and Limits of Applicability

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**Abstract**

The article substantiates the concept of managed digitalization of the regional system of theological education as a pedagogically regulated integration of digital and media tools into the educational environment while preserving the value-semantic core of theological training, the mentoring character of educational relations, and the integrity of theological knowledge. The relevance of the study is determined by the contradiction between the expansion of digital educational environments and the specific nature of theological education, grounded in hermeneutic work with canonical texts, confessional verification of content, and the personal transmission of spiritual experience. The aim of the article is to identify the media-educational foundations of managed digitalization and define the limits of its applicability in a regional system of theological education. The methodology combines systemic, axiological, and ecosystem approaches with the ideas of media education, mediatization of religion, and the integration of formal, non-formal, and informal learning. The methods include theoretical analysis, comparative interpretation of Russian and foreign publications, pedagogical modeling, and structural-functional analysis of digital practices. The results include a classification of the risks of uncontrolled digitalization, an operational definition of managed digitalization, and a system of pedagogical conditions for the effective use of LMS, hybrid formats, and digital mentoring as manageable educational resources.

**Keywords:** theological education, managed digitalization, media education, LMS, hybrid learning, digital hermeneutics, mentoring, mediatization, regional educational system.

## 1. Introduction

The digital transformation of contemporary education is becoming less and less reducible to the renewal of technical infrastructure and is increasingly understood as a change in the logic of the educational environment, pedagogical roles, models of communication, and modes of engaging with knowledge. A bibliometric analysis of studies on the digitalization of higher education shows that scholarly attention is focused not on individual digital services, but on the methodological frameworks for their use, the transformation of academic labor, and changes in the criteria for the quality of educational outcomes (Bermus, Sizova, 2025). In theological education, this trend acquires particular significance, since here the digital environment affects not only the organization of learning, but also the ways in which the individual is incorporated into tradition, the forms of validating truth, and the mechanisms of continuity of meaning.

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In the professional-pedagogical dimension, this means that digitalization must be correlated with the value-based and goal-oriented architecture of the educational program. The educational and professional standard acts as an instrument of innovative development, setting the limits of permissible transformation in the content, methods, and forms of training (Bondarevskaya, 2015). Consequently, theological education cannot become an object of the mechanical transfer of universal digital solutions without prior pedagogical examination of their correspondence to the objectives of confessionally and culturally sensitive training.

An additional methodological complexity arises from the fact that the professional formation of the future theologian takes place not only within the space of formal education. Contemporary pedagogy has demonstrated that formal, non-formal, and informal education constitute a unified trajectory of professionalization in which classroom work, independent reading, participation in communities, and extracurricular practices complement one another (Konovalova, 2023). For theological education, this proposition is of fundamental importance, since a substantial part of spiritual and intellectual development occurs through the integration of university training, church practice, educational outreach, and personal experience of working with texts.

Under conditions of digital transformation, this multilayered character does not disappear; on the contrary, it becomes more pronounced. It has been shown that the digital environment makes the boundaries between formal, non-formal, and informal education more permeable, while simultaneously requiring their pedagogical coordination so that educational activity does not disintegrate into disconnected fragments (Nikiforova, 2024). For the regional system of theological education, this implies the need to design a model of digitalization that does not destroy the unity of the educational pathway, but rather ensures meaningful transitions between the academic course, media activity, spiritual and practical guidance, and independent work.

The contemporary social situation further increases the importance of this task. The teaching of religious studies and theological disciplines is increasingly connected with the social need for a competent, culturally responsible, and methodologically sound understanding of religion in the public sphere (Skopa, 2025). Since this sphere today is predominantly mediatized, theological education faces not only the challenge of digitalization, but also the challenge of new forms of circulation of religious content in the media.

Materials devoted to the traditions and innovations of media education make it possible to draw an important conclusion for the present study: digital culture changes not only the external modes of delivering educational information, but also the character of attention, the pace of interpretation, reading strategies, and the mechanisms through which the subject is engaged in communication (Gálik, 2019; Media Education..., 2021). Applied to theological education, this means that the transfer of content into the digital environment inevitably affects the very mode of hermeneutic work with canonical and theological texts.

It is precisely for this reason that the initially positively assessed effects of digital transformation require critical verification. Among the risks associated with the introduction of digital technologies into education are the fragmentation of knowledge, the reduction in depth of understanding, the weakening of the learner's subject position, and the substitution of live pedagogical communication with technological mediation (Strekalova, 2019). In theological education, these risks are amplified many times over, since here content is not exhausted by its informational component and presupposes the value-semantic appropriation of tradition.

The distinctive character of theological education in contemporary Russia is determined by its dual position. It is included in the academic sphere, yet at the same time remains a confessionally marked field of knowledge. Theology exists within the scientific and educational context, but does not lose its connection with a particular tradition, its language, norms of interpretation, and forms of authority (Shmonin, 2025). Therefore, digitalization in this sphere cannot be built according to the model of value-neutral technological modernization. Moreover, the axiological core of theological training constitutes its system-forming foundation. It should be noted that education deprived of a value-semantic dimension loses not only its formative potential, but also its own anthropological integrity (Shmonin, 2015). It follows that the digital environment in theological education is permissible only insofar as it does not destroy, but rather supports the processes of meaning-making, spiritual discernment, and a responsible attitude toward tradition.

The church-pedagogical aspect of the problem confirms this conclusion. Theological and religious education in the Russian Orthodox Church is understood as a space of personality formation in which intellectual training is inseparable from spiritual life, ecclesial experience, and

readiness for ministry (Hilarion (Alfeev), 2025). In this regard, spontaneous digitalization oriented solely toward technological efficiency proves insufficient and, in some cases, methodologically misguided.

The current stage of the discussion is associated with the active spread of generative artificial intelligence systems. An analysis of foreign experience in integrating digital technologies and AI into theological education shows that only those models prove productive in which technological means are subordinated to the tasks of preserving mentorship, spiritual experience, and the normative framework for working with content (Paramonov, 2025). This gives rise to the need for a concept describing not digitalization in general, but its pedagogically regulated type.

The research problem lies in determining the media-educational foundations and the limits of applicability of managed digitalization in the regional system of theological education. The purpose of the article is to provide a theoretical substantiation of the concept of managed digitalization in theological education, to identify its instruments, pedagogical conditions of effectiveness, and limits of applicability in the context of the contemporary mediatized educational environment.

The research hypothesis is that the digitalization of the regional system of theological education can be pedagogically productive and institutionally justified not as a universal technological modernization, but only as a managed process based on the priority of the value-semantic core of theological training, the preservation of the mentoring character of educational relations, the coordination of formal, non-formal, and informal components of learning, as well as confessional-academic quality control over digital content and the practices of its use.

In accordance with the stated purpose and the proposed hypothesis, the study focuses on the successive solution of a number of interrelated tasks that reveal the theoretical and applied aspects of managed digitalization in the regional system of theological education. First, it is necessary to identify those media-educational and methodological foundations that make it possible to conceptualize managed digitalization not as an external technological modernization, but as a pedagogically regulated process correlated with the specific nature of theological training. Of substantial importance is also the analysis of pedagogical risks arising from the uncontrolled transfer of digital solutions into the sphere of theological education, where the danger of knowledge fragmentation, the weakening of hermeneutic depth, and the reduction of personal mentoring interaction is especially great. No less important is the task of determining the range of digital and media-pedagogical instruments that may be recognized as acceptable and effective within the regional system of theological education, provided that they correspond to the value-semantic and confessional-academic logic of training. The study also emphasizes the need to substantiate those pedagogical conditions under which digitalization does not destroy the integrity of theological knowledge, does not reduce the quality of interpretive work with texts, and does not substitute the mentoring character of educational relations with technological mediation. Finally, of fundamental importance is the establishment of the limits of applicability of managed digitalization in the regional system of theological education, which makes it possible to determine the boundaries of pedagogically justified use of the digital environment in the context of preserving the identity, content, and mission of theological training.

## 2. Materials and methods

The study is theoretical and methodological in nature and is grounded in systemic, axiological, and ecosystem approaches, as well as in the ideas of media education, digital pedagogy, and the mediatization of religion.

A crucial methodological premise is the understanding of theological education as an integral system in which curricular content, mentorship, practical spiritual experience, and forms of media mediation exist in relations of mutual interdependence.

Of fundamental importance for the construction of the research logic is the appeal to the scientific theological method. Theological thinking cannot be reduced to a set of opinions or to a free eclecticism of digital sources. It requires hermeneutic responsibility, rational argumentation, and embeddedness in the tradition of interpreting religious texts (Pol'skov, 2010). Therefore, in the present study, the evaluation of digital educational practices is based not on the criterion of their external technological attractiveness, but on their capacity to preserve the epistemic and value structure of theological cognition.

In the applied dimension, a special role was played by the conclusions concerning the methodological foundations of the digital transformation of professional education, according to

which the pedagogical effectiveness of LMS depends not on the number of built-in functions, but on how the teacher designs content, communication, and support for the educational trajectory through the platform (Kochetkova, 2026). This made it possible to consider LMS, in relation to theological education, as an environment for pedagogical design rather than as a neutral technical container.

To analyze the managerial dimension of digitalization, the study drew upon the provisions of a scoping review, according to which the sustainability of the digital transformation of educational organizations is determined by the quality of managerial leadership, the distribution of responsibility, the presence of feedback mechanisms, and the institution's ability to support change at the level of practices and value foundations (Haugsbakken et al., 2026). This analytical perspective was transferred to the regional system of theological education (Russia, Sverdlovsk Oblast), where digital policy inevitably affects university structures, theological schools, confessional bodies, and the teaching community.

In interpreting the general trends of digital transformation, the study took into account the conclusion that its drivers include the demand for hybridity, personalization, accessibility, and the expansion of educational trajectories, whereas its constraints include uneven infrastructure, a shortage of competent personnel, and the value-normative unpreparedness of organizations (Shmatko, Volkova, 2025). This conclusion was further specified by data on the key barriers to digital transformation, among which the central place is occupied by resistance within organizational culture, the deficit of managerial models, and the absence of unified criteria for assessing the quality of digital change (Ovsyannikova, 2025).

The general theoretical background of the study was formed by propositions concerning the dual nature of educational digitalization, within which the growth of accessibility and technological flexibility is accompanied by the intensification of new inequalities, platform dependence, changes in the status of the teacher, and the reconfiguration of the criteria of educational quality (Frolova et al., 2020). The study employed the methods of theoretical analysis, conceptual modeling, comparative interpretation of scholarly publications, and structural-functional description of digital educational practices.

## 3. Discussion

Contemporary theological education is developing today within a zone of structural tension generated by two divergent yet interrelated processes. On the one hand, it is shaped by the institutional imperative of digital transformation, which presupposes the expansion of platform-based forms of learning, the use of algorithmic services, and the incorporation of artificial intelligence into educational infrastructure. On the other hand, the very nature of theological formation is bound up with such modes of working with meaning, interpretation, and tradition as cannot be wholly translated into the regime of accelerated digital consumption. Consequently, the digitalization of theological education should be understood not as mere technological renewal, but as a task of pedagogical governance of the media environment, within which the forms of authority, representation, symbolic legitimation, and circulation of religious knowledge are undergoing transformation (AlMazaedh, 2026; Ergen, 2023; Grishaeva, Lövheim, 2020; Shumkova, 2020).

It is precisely from this perspective that the use of artificial intelligence in higher education acquires particular significance. As has already been noted, AI is capable of strengthening the search-related, organizational, and adaptive components of learning; at the same time, however, it creates the risk of replacing independent intellectual work with automated generation, especially in fields that require complex interpretation, textual discipline, and sustained meaning-making (Garaeva et al., 2024). In theological education, this circumstance possesses not only an academic, but also a worldview-related, hermeneutic, and ethical dimension. For this reason, the problem of digital hermeneutics cannot be regarded as optional: it becomes a central component of the formation of the theology student, who must be able to distinguish between source-based and generated knowledge and to correlate a digital response with tradition, doctrinal context, and the genre-specific character of the religious text (Paramonov, 2026). In this respect, it is significant that contemporary studies in digital theology emphasize not the autonomy of technology, but the necessity of preserving the interpretive core of theological knowledge under conditions of digital mediation (Garner, 2022; Zaluchu, 2024).

It should be noted that international scholarship is increasingly shifting the focus away from the external technologization of religious education toward the question of how the digital

environment alters the very structure of theological thinking and pedagogical communication. In the work of S.E. Zaluchu, digital religion is interpreted not as a discrete domain of online practices, but as a symptom of a deeper transformation of religious experience in network society, where theological discourse is compelled to redefine its own foundations under conditions of mediatized modernity (Zaluchu, 2024). This line of argument is complemented by the author's earlier thesis concerning the emergence of a new koinonia epistemology, in which digital communication ceases to function merely as a technical channel and becomes an environment for the constitution of religious community and religious knowledge (Zaluchu, 2022). In turn, E.R. Boiliu, D. Jura, and A.O. de Carvalho convincingly associate the digital age with the need for a new reading of the relationship between theology, ethics, and Christian education, demonstrating that the digital environment requires not a weakening, but, on the contrary, a strengthening of the normative and value-based framework of religious learning (Boiliu et al., 2025). Thus, the conclusion formulated in the previous part of this article regarding the need to maintain a balance between the technological and the value dimensions of education receives additional international confirmation (Hellen Lae, 2025).

Within this context, the question of the permissible limits of the use of generative systems in theological education becomes fundamental. Their use may be didactically justified as an instrument for the preliminary structuring of material, the formulation of questions, linguistic adaptation, and the training of critical thinking, but not as a substitute for interpretation, personal judgment, and mentoring dialogue, without which theological education loses its disciplinary identity (Marbun, 2023). Moreover, the normative and ethical perspective on the problem demonstrates that AI in religious education functions not as a neutral service, but as a value-laden mediator capable of altering the learner's relation to the text, tradition, the teacher, and the very procedure of seeking truth (Papakostas, 2025). For this reason, managed digitalization must include not only technical regulations, but also specially developed regimes for the permissible use of generative systems, within which transparency, limitation, and controllability become pedagogically obligatory.

Media literacy occupies a special place within the problem field under discussion as part of the professional formation of the future theologian. In the humanities, digitalization brings not only resource advantages, but also the threat of reducing complex structures of meaning to easily reproducible informational blocks, which is especially dangerous in disciplines grounded in historical-cultural, hermeneutic, and axiological depth (Zamaraeva, 2022). In this sense, the results of the critical analysis of digital media literacy research conducted by M.A. Alquaary, O.A. Ali, and H. Fayez are of direct relevance to our topic rather than merely external significance: they convincingly show that media literacy can no longer be understood as a peripheral competence, since it is precisely this competence that enables critical navigation within the hybrid environment of academic, platform-based, and user-generated sources (Alquaary et al., 2026). The bibliometric study by I.Z. Nabila, N.L. Inayati, S. Yuzarni, and M.F. Salim likewise demonstrates that the digital revolution in religious education is unfolding not linearly, but through the intersection of crises, opportunities, and new research vectors; consequently, the pedagogical strategy of the confessional university should be based not on reactive technological adoption, but on an anticipatory understanding of the educational and worldview-related consequences of such technologies (Nabila et al., 2025). From this follows a new understanding of pedagogical competence: the teacher must function not as a platform operator, but as the designer of the course's semantic architecture, a moderator of interpretation, and a mediator between tradition and the digital environment (Kapasheva et al., 2024).

No less important is the fact that the contemporary digital environment alters the very status of religious authority. A. Berger and O. Golan, analyzing online religious learning, convincingly show that the digital educational environment intensifies processes of self-socialization while simultaneously redistributing epistemic authority among the institutional mentor, the digital resource, and the learner himself or herself (Berger, Golan, 2024). A closely related problem is raised by A. Astor, G. Khir-Allah, and R. Martínez-Cuadros, who examine anonymity as a factor in the formation of digital Islamic authority: in the digital environment, authority may be constructed outside the familiar mechanisms of institutional recognition, which means that the pedagogy of religious education must deliberately engage with the criteria of credibility, legitimacy, and interpretive responsibility (Astor et al., 2024). The theoretical model proposed by J. Müller and T.N. Friemel refines this thesis by showing that the use of digital media in religious communities

depends not only on individual choice, but also on the dynamics of the community itself, within which media practices are correlated with group norms, expectations, and forms of solidarity (Müller, Friemel, 2024). In its broadest synthetic form, this problem is articulated by I. AlMazaedh, who interprets digital religion through the relationships among authority, mediation, and social cohesion in algorithmic publics; for theological education, this means that the student must be prepared not only for the reading of texts, but also for the recognition of algorithmically mediated regimes of religious influence and incorporation into digital publics (AlMazaedh, 2026).

The discussion thereby inevitably extends beyond didactics proper and engages the problem of the mediatization of religion as a transformation of the forms of its social visibility. Studies within the theory of mediatization emphasize that digital media do not merely transmit pre-existing religious content, but alter the modes of its public presentation, emotional appropriation, and cultural circulation (Ergen, 2023; Lövheim, 2020). This thesis receives further confirmation in the study by D. Artamonov, E. Medvedeva, S. Tikhonova, and M. Volovikova, in which the phenomenon of the holy selfie is examined as a channel of media memory in the digital world: here the sacred becomes embedded in the visual logic of online self-presentation, and consequently religious identity is increasingly formed within regimes of visibility, reproducibility, and recognition oriented toward the logic of likes (Artamonov et al., 2021). M. Wei's study, devoted to the impact of the mediatization of religion on youth identity formation in contemporary China, reinforces this conclusion: the digital media environment becomes not only a channel of socialization, but also a space for constructing the religious self-understanding of the new generation (Wei, 2024). Therefore, for theological education, the question of digitalization cannot be reduced to access to resources or the transfer of courses online; rather, it concerns the restructuring of the conditions under which religious subjectivity is formed in an environment of media pressure.

An important analytical layer is also contributed by the research field of spiritual and religious information practices. As N. Caidi, P. Nangia, C. Ekmekcioglu, H. Samson, and M. Olsson demonstrate, religious engagement with information has its own specificity, since it is connected not merely with the search for data, but with trust-based modes of approaching meaning, experience, and communal memory (Caidi et al., 2023). For theological education, this circumstance is fundamental: digital work with religious material must be constructed not according to the model of neutral information consumption, but as a discipline of distinguishing among sources, contexts, interpretive frameworks, and value implications. It is precisely for this reason that even review-based and conceptual publications, such as the review by H.A. Campbell and W. Bellar, are important for our discussion: they register the institutionalization of digital religion as an independent field of research, within which the problems of media, religion, and education can no longer be conceived separately from one another (Campbell, Bellar, 2024).

It is equally important that the post-pandemic situation has definitively demonstrated the irreversibility of the digital presence of religion and religious education. The systematic review by C. Grigore and A. Cobzeanu shows that the digitalization of religious practices after COVID-19 changed not only channels of communication, but also community dynamics, modes of participation, and the structure of collective experience (Grigore, Cobzeanu, 2025). Yet this irreversibility should not be understood as an unconditional justification of technocratic modernization. On the contrary, it intensifies the need for managed digitalization, in which technological solutions are incorporated into the educational process only insofar as they do not destroy its spiritual-hermeneutic core, but sustain it. Thus, the contemporary theological school is confronted not with the task of adapting to the digital environment as such, but with that of forming a pedagogically regulated, media-literate, and ethically verifiable model for working with digital media, religious knowledge, and algorithmically organized forms of publicity.

Ultimately, it may be argued that the studies discussed above make it possible to move from a narrow understanding of digitalization as a set of instruments toward a more rigorous scholarly model in which it appears as a multilayered process involving transformations in hermeneutics, authority, media memory, religious identity, educational communication, and regimes of access to knowledge (AlMazaedh, 2026; Berger, Golan, 2024; Garner, 2022; Müller, Friemel, 2024). It is precisely within this logic that managed digitalization of theological education should be understood as a special pedagogical strategy combining digital competence, media-critical analysis, theological responsibility, and the preservation of the mentoring dimension of education. Without such a

strategy, the digital transformation of the confessional university risks proving not a resource of development, but a factor in the erosion of interpretive depth and spiritual-educational integrity.

## 4. Results

Challenges of Digitalization for Theological Education. The analysis conducted makes it possible to identify four interrelated groups of challenges that arise in the process of the digitalization of theological education.

The first group comprises substantive challenges. By its structure, theological knowledge is integral: its disciplinary components presuppose mutual correlation and embeddedness within a unified tradition of interpreting religious texts. In a digital hypertext environment, this knowledge risks disintegrating into separate fragments that are quickly retrievable but only weakly connected to one another. As a result, the systemic character of training is weakened, and an effect of outward awareness without deep understanding emerges.

The second group comprises communicative challenges. At its core, theological education presupposes the personally mediated transmission of spiritual and intellectual experience. The digital environment expands the accessibility of communication, but does not guarantee the preservation of its existential and pedagogical depth. The replacement of live dialogue with asynchronous digital message exchange may lead to the formalization of mentorship and the weakening of trust-based educational relationships.

The third group comprises institutional challenges. The regional system of theological education includes organizations of different types and statuses, characterized by unequal digitalization cultures, different resources, and heterogeneous managerial regimes. In the absence of a coordinated strategy, individual digital practices begin to serve situational tasks-reporting, control, and formal modernization – without forming an integral pedagogical model.

The fourth group comprises value-media challenges. In the digital environment, the boundaries between canonical, academic, educational, and entertainment content become fluid. This creates the risk of the profanation of sacred content, the conflation of authoritative and random interpretations, and the substitution of theological argumentation with media-behavioral effects. Therefore, theological education requires special mechanisms of critical media navigation.

The Concept of Managed Digitalization. As the principal theoretical result, the study proposes the concept of managed digitalization of the regional system of theological education. This concept is understood as a pedagogically regulated process of integrating digital and media tools into the educational environment, in which the selection, configuration, and modes of using platforms, services, analytical systems, and AI solutions are subordinated to the tasks of preserving the value-semantic core of the theological tradition, the continuity of mentorship, critical media competence, and the integrity of theological content.

The operationalization of this concept presupposes the identification of four parameters. The target parameter means that digitalization is understood as a means of achieving educational outcomes rather than as a self-sufficient modernization goal. The substantive parameter requires a double verification of digital content – academic and confessional – including the examination of AI-generated materials. The communicative parameter establishes the supplementary rather than substitutive character of digital channels in relation to personal interaction between mentor and learner. The managerial parameter presupposes the presence of monitoring, adjustment, and normative regulation of digital practices at the level of the educational organization and the regional system.

LMS, Hybrid Formats, and Digital Support as Media-Educational Instruments. Within the logic of managed digitalization, LMS functions not only as a means of storing materials and recording academic performance, but also as a media environment for the organization of meaning-centered work. For theological education, this implies the need for such a platform configuration that supports sequential reading, text commenting, thematically organized discussion, collaborative interpretation, and analytical support of the educational trajectory. Otherwise, LMS turns into a technical archive that reinforces rather than overcomes fragmentation.

Hybrid formats represent the most adequate mode of organizing theological education in the digital age. Theoretical modules, part of academic consultations, work with supplementary sources, analytical assignments, and discussion of preliminary materials may be supported by the digital environment. At the same time, there exists a non-translatable face-to-face core of training, including the hermeneutic seminar, spiritual conversation, liturgical practice, pastoral guidance,

and forms of conciliar participation, which cannot be fully replaced by media mediation without losing their own educational essence.

In this model, digital support includes mentorship, feedback, electronic portfolios, reading journals, personalized navigation, and analytical tools. However, its effectiveness is determined by the fact that the digital mediator does not appropriate the functions of the mentor, but merely supports the learner's movement along an individual educational trajectory.

Pedagogical Conditions for the Effectiveness of Managed Digitalization. As a result of the study, the following pedagogical conditions for the effectiveness of managed digitalization were identified.

The first condition is the institutionalization of blended mentorship. This presupposes a normatively established combination of face-to-face spiritual guidance and digital support, within which the functions of the mentor, teacher, and administrator of the digital environment are distributed.

The second condition is the dual-contour verification of digital content. Any material used must undergo not only academic, but also confessional examination, especially if it has been created or modified with the participation of generative AI.

The third condition is the identification of a non-translatable face-to-face core. The educational program must explicitly designate those modules whose full digitalization is inadmissible because of their spiritual and practical nature.

The fourth condition is the development of digital hermeneutics and critical media competence. The future theologian must master the skills of working with the hypertext environment, algorithmically promoted content, networked interpretations of religious topics, and AI-generated responses, while preserving the integrity of theological thinking.

The fifth condition is the preparation of the teacher for the role of moderator of digital interaction. The theologian-teacher must be proficient in LMS technologies, the logic of the hybrid course, methods of online discussion, digital analytics, and means of media-critical support of educational activity.

Risks and Prevention Mechanisms. In substantiating the model of managed digitalization, it is fundamentally important not only to identify its functional capacities, but also to systematize those risks that arise when digital solutions are transferred into the regional system of theological education. For this purpose, it appears advisable to distinguish the main groups of risks and correlate them with pedagogical, organizational, value-based, legal, and ethical prevention mechanisms (Table 1). The very principle of such analytical mapping of the problem field corresponds to the logic of a scoping review as a method for systematizing the key directions and problems of the field under study.

**Table 1.** Risks of the Digitalization of the Regional System of Theological Education and Mechanisms for Their Prevention under the Implementation of the Managed Digital Transformation Model

| Risk Group | Specific Risks | Prevention Mechanisms |
|---|---|---|
| Substantive | Fragmentation of theological knowledge, clip-like learning, simulation of understanding through AI | Modular course architecture, face-to-face integrative seminars, digital hermeneutics |
| Communicative | Weakening of mentorship, formalization of feedback, substitution of presence by digital exchange | Blended mentorship, synchronous consultations, work in small groups |
| Institutional | Inconsistency of digital strategies, fragmented platform implementation, bureaucratization of digitalization | Unified regional policy, coordination among institutions, local regulations |
| Value-media | Profanation of sacred content, conflation of canonical and mass-media discourses | Confessional expertise, media-critical analysis, differentiation between educational and public domains |
| Legal and ethical | Data leakage, AI opacity, academic dishonesty | Digital hygiene policy, rules for AI use, control of sources and citation practices |

The proposed typology demonstrates that the risks of digitalization in theological education are neither isolated nor technically neutral. They simultaneously affect the content of training, the structure of pedagogical interaction, institutional coordination, and the value foundations of the educational process. For this reason, managed digitalization should be understood as a multi-level pedagogical strategy in which every technological innovation is assessed in terms of its conformity to the tasks of meaning-making, mentorship, and the preservation of confessional-academic identity.

Substantive risks demonstrate that the digital environment is capable of accelerating access to materials while simultaneously provoking the disintegration of integral theological knowledge into weakly connected fragments. For example, in the study of dogmatic theology, a student may confidently operate with individual terms extracted from digital notes or from the responses of generative artificial intelligence, yet fail to perceive the internal connection between dogma, the tradition of interpretation, and the historical-cultural context. In this regard, the modular architecture of courses should be combined not with the autonomization of topics, but, on the contrary, with their subsequent synthesis in face-to-face integrative seminars, where the teacher restores the wholeness of knowledge and establishes a hermeneutic perspective for reading.

Communicative risks indicate that theological education is especially sensitive to the loss of the personal dimension of pedagogical interaction. If feedback is reduced to automated comments, test metrics, or asynchronous message exchange, the very logic of mentorship as a form of accompanying intellectual and spiritual formation is weakened. An illustrative example is a situation in which a student regularly completes assignments in an electronic system but is not given the opportunity to discuss difficulties in interpreting a biblical text through live dialogue with the teacher. Formally, the educational process continues; however, its personality-forming potential is significantly diminished. Therefore, blended mentorship, synchronous consultations, and work in small groups perform not an auxiliary but a system-forming function.

Institutional risks indicate that even pedagogically justified digital solutions lose their effectiveness in the absence of a unified managerial framework. When a theological school, a university department, a regional methodological center, and church educational structures employ uncoordinated platforms, assessment criteria, and regulations, a mosaic form of digitalization emerges that fails to create an integral educational ecosystem. In practical terms, this may be expressed in the duplication of courses, the incompatibility of students' digital records, differences in requirements for electronic materials, and the absence of common principles for supporting blended learning. Therefore, a unified regional digitalization policy is necessary not for strengthening bureaucratic control, but for ensuring the substantive and organizational coherence of the entire system.

Value-media risks are of particular significance in theological education, since here the digital representation of content affects not only the form of presentation, but also the mode of its perception. The transfer of sacral themes into a media environment oriented toward speed, clip-like consumption, and emotional reaction may lead to a conflation of educational analysis with the logic of mass media consumption. For example, if the discussion of liturgical tradition, patristic heritage, or questions of spiritual life is conducted in the format of short, visually aggressive, and contextually impoverished media fragments, there arises a risk of the profanation of content and a shift of emphasis from understanding to effect. It is precisely for this reason that confessional expertise and media-critical analysis must ensure the differentiation between the educational and the public domains of engagement with religious material.

Particular attention should be paid to the legal and ethical risks of the digital environment, since they concern the limits of permissible handling of personal data, academic texts, and the results of students' intellectual activity. In theological education, this problem acquires additional complexity. Elements of trust-based communication, individual mentoring interaction, issues of spiritual sensitivity, and personal worldview choice may become objects of digital support (Gerasimova, 2026). For example, the use of external platforms for storing written reflective works, consultation materials, or analytical assignments related to religious experience creates the threat of data leakage and violation of the principle of confidentiality. In this context, a policy of digital hygiene, transparent rules for the use of AI, and strict control of sources and citation practices function not as formal restrictions, but as mandatory conditions for the pedagogical and ethical validity of digital transformation.

Taken together, Table 1 makes it possible to draw a more general conclusion: the effectiveness of managed digitalization is determined not by the degree of technological

saturation of the educational environment, but by the ability of the system to maintain a balance between innovation and tradition, mediatization and depth of meaning, digital accessibility and personal responsibility. It is precisely in this that the key difference between managed and spontaneous digitalization consists: in the former case, the digital environment becomes an instrument for the development of theological education; in the latter, it becomes a factor of its internal destabilization.

## 5. Conclusion

The conducted study makes it possible to assert that, within the regional system of theological education, digitalization cannot be interpreted as a linear process of technological renewal of educational infrastructure or as a mere expansion of the range of digital tools employed. In the sphere under consideration, it affects much deeper levels of educational reality, including the modes of interpreting theological knowledge, the mechanisms of continuity of meaning, the forms of pedagogical authority, the character of mentoring relationships, and the media conditions of representing religious content.

In the course of the study, the concept of managed digitalization of theological education was theoretically substantiated as a pedagogically regulated process of integrating digital and media technologies, subordinated to the tasks of preserving the value-semantic core of training, the integrity of theological knowledge, students' critical media competence, and the mentoring nature of educational interaction. It has been established that the digital environment in the system of theological education acquires pedagogical legitimacy not in itself, but only on the condition of its axiological, substantive, and confessional-academic correlation with the goals of professional as well as spiritual-intellectual formation.

A significant result of the study was the identification that LMS, hybrid learning formats, means of digital communication, and tools of digital support can function as effective components of managed digitalization only if their use does not undermine the hermeneutic depth of work with the text, does not substitute personal mentorship with technological mediation, and does not lead to the blurring of boundaries between the educational, media, and confessional dimensions of the educational process. Thus, it has been demonstrated that the productivity of digital transformation in theological education is determined not by the degree of technological saturation of the environment, but by the quality of pedagogical regulation that ensures the alignment of innovation with tradition, mediatization with value-based responsibility, and digital accessibility with the requirements of substantive and spiritual integrity.

The scientific significance of the study lies in the development of a theoretical framework that makes it possible to move from a technocratic understanding of digitalization to its media-educational, axiological, and anthropologically oriented interpretation in relation to the sphere of theological education. Its practical significance lies in the possibility of using the results obtained in designing regional strategies for the development of theological education, modernizing educational programs, developing local regulatory provisions for the digital educational environment, as well as in advanced training systems for teachers engaged in theological instruction under conditions of digital transformation.

The prospects for further research are associated with the empirical approbation of the proposed model of managed digitalization in various regional and confessional contexts, the refinement of criteria for its pedagogical effectiveness, and the development of diagnostic instruments for assessing the level of digital hermeneutics, critical media competence, and the readiness of future theologians for professional activity in a mediatized educational environment.

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# Digital Literacy and Persuasion: A Genre-Based Approach to Mocking in Social Media Advertisements

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the intersection of digital literacy and modern marketing by examining "mocking" as a sophisticated persuasive strategy. Utilizing a genre-based rhetorical move framework and multimodal discourse analysis, this research analyzes a video-advertisement corpus of four Samsung ads targeting Apple on YouTube and Instagram (2017–2024). The objective is to explore how advertising success relies on the audience's digital literacy to decode intertextual references, satirical nuances, and informal discourse. Sarcasm, sarcastic irony, and parody serve as primary analytical references. The findings indicate that Samsung maintains traditional advertising generic conventions while adapting mocking strategies as creative, noncanonical moves to meet social media communication expectations. Specifically, Samsung retains six of nine rhetorical moves – four being obligatory – while four non-canonical moves dominantly construct the competitive persuasive narrative. From a media literacy education perspective, these findings underscore that being a digitally native audience is insufficient without critical advertising literacy. The capacity to deconstruct how humor and rule-breaking generic moves are weaponized as commercial tools is paramount. By exposing the structural mechanics of corporate satire, this research bridges applied linguistics with media pedagogy, offering a practical framework for educators to teach students how to resist sub-cognitive persuasion critically. Ultimately, this study expands the understanding of genre adaptation in digital advertising by integrating mocking strategies amidst multimodal advertising, highlighting its critical implications for media literacy education in an increasingly commercialized digital ecosystem.

**Keywords:** digital literacy, genre-based approach, mocking strategy, persuasion, social media advertisements.

## 1. Introduction

The development of advertising genres over time is accompanied by the evolution of generic conventions that adapt to the mode of the platform to which the genre is intended. This development arises from the need for marketers, as linguistic actors, to achieve the communicative goals of an advertisement amidst the growing relevance of advertising platforms. Social media has become a highly demanded advertising platform, driven by the extensive use of platforms, which has made marketers increasingly aware of the business opportunities available within these channels (K V et al., 2021). As of April 2025, social media users reached 5.03 billion, accounting for 64.7 percent of the global population, including active users of Instagram and YouTube (Kepios, 2025). The considerable impact of social media on customers' everyday lives has rendered these platforms essential for marketers to promote their products (S. et al., 2016). Given its vast user

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base and engagement, social media has played a crucial role in transforming advertising genres. It encourages using shorter, visually appealing, interactive formats tailored to real-time audience feedback. These encouragements allow marketers to craft messages that better align with users' specific behaviors and preferences on each platform. From a media literacy education perspective, this shift highlights the urgent need for individuals to decode these highly persuasive, algorithmic formats, moving beyond simple consumption to critically analyzing how digital ads manipulate visual cues and interactivity to influence behavior (Aljalabneh, 2024)**.** Consequently, this evolution reflects a broader shift in consumer culture, where audiences are no longer passive recipients of marketing messages but are becoming active and digitally literate participants – capable of questioning intent and authorship – in a highly interconnected and communicative digital ecosystem (Aw et al., 2026).

Consequently, this dynamic shift points out the importance of media literacy education, which shifts from teaching basic decoding skills to fostering critical digital literacy. As advertisements increasingly blur the lines between organic content and commercial persuasion – such as through influencer marketing and native advertising – media literacy education is essential to empower users to critically analyze the underlying intent, ideological agendas, and algorithmic targeting behind these evolving genres (Akseiit et al., 2026; Hobbs, 2021). By equipping individuals with the ability to deconstruct persuasive digital narratives, media literacy education transforms active platform participants into critical, autonomous citizens capable of navigating a commercialized digital ecosystem (Yu et al., 2025). From a media literacy education perspective, this strategic evolution highlights the need to foster critical persuasion knowledge among digital consumers. As brands increasingly blur the boundary between entertainment and commercial intent through rule-breaking narrative structures, media literacy education must pivot toward decoding these modern, non-traditional genres (Paul et al., 2024). While a "media-savvy" audience might easily consume and engage with playful content, they still require advanced critical analysis to deconstruct how humor, irony, and manufactured authenticity are systematically deployed to bypass cognitive resistance and manipulate brand attitudes (Yoo, Cho, 2025). Ultimately, integrating these shifting generic conventions into media literacy curricula empowers users to enjoy the creative and interactive dimensions of social media culture without overlooking the underlying persuasion techniques and economic agendas of digital advertising (Foster et al., 2024).

An advertisement can be recognized as a genre, as discourse constructs in a professional environment require adherence to certain norms within the advertisement (Khedri et al., 2022). As competition in social media advertising increases, generic conventions in the advertising genre, especially in the form of videos, are being created and violated to win the attention of potential buyers. Ads launched on social media belong to a digital genre with flexible moves that can adapt non-linear information transmission (Askehave, Nielsen, 2005; Li et al., 2022). With the rise of social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, brands have begun adopting alternative advertising strategies, such as mockery blatantly at competitors, to attract a younger and more media-savvy audience. The noticeable shift in advertising moves and strategies makes brands likely to adopt a more playful and relatable tone to connect with their audiences. Focusing on authenticity, humor, and qualities that today's consumers appreciate more than relying on a traditional, formal marketing structure. Companies aim to create personal and memorable content through this approach, helping them build stronger engagement and lasting brand loyalty.

The generic conventions of the advertisement genre serve to enhance the purpose of communication while helping the creator organize marketing concepts. The conventions are built through moves in the advertising genre. There are nine rhetorical moves in the advertisement genre: headlines, targeting the market, justifying the product or service, detailing the product or service, establishing credentials, celebrity or typical user endorsement, offering incentives, using pressure tactics, and soliciting response (Bhatia, 2014; Bhatia, 1993; Kathpalia, 1992). Despite moves that have long been proposed by experts, in a world evolving to multimodality, creators creatively modify some of what is lexico-grammatically recognized as traditional ad genre moves (Bhatia, 2014). Modifications are done by utilizing the relevance of tone and trending topics, especially in social media, such as mocking strategies. Modifying generic conventions and constraints with a risky strategy is often a marker of user expertise. However, caution must be exercised, as the results can lead to creative innovation or embarrassing failure (Jones, 2012).

Video advertisements with mocking strategies aired on social media often use visual elements

such as scene images, symbols, and other aspects in addition to the textual discourse that is usually presented. The description of how people, places, and objects as visual elements are combined in the complexity of visual statements is described in the grammar of visuals, similar to how language grammars describe word combinations in clauses, sentences, and texts (Kress, Van Leeuwen, 2020). This multimodal depiction supports a mocking strategy that relies on words and utilizes visual expressions to convey subtle or explicit insinuations against competitors. Mockery often appears in the form of sarcasm, and sarcastic irony is a form of attack on the positive image of the opponent (Dynel, 2018). Meanwhile, parody often features humorous imitations that function as a persuasive strategy in the context of digital advertising (Hutcheon, 2000).

In examining this topic, prior studies have explored the creativity of the move structure of the advertising genre on social media in the digital era, along with the intent and purpose of its creation (Khedri et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022; Shi, Wan, 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). However, few have examined how mocking strategies function when embedded within the discourse structure of advertisements (Gatti et al., 2015; Sabri, Hana, 2021). Therefore, this research investigates how mocking strategies are embedded within the genre convention of Samsung's video advertisements by identifying obligatory and non-obligatory moves and examining their persuasive functions in social media.

## 2. Materials and methods

This study employs a qualitative method to comprehend linguistic devices and modalities in both verbal and visual forms. Qualitative research involves interpretation that connects the world to representations of notes, conversations, interviews, photographs, memos, and self-recordings (Creswell, 2013). This research's analysis focuses on the rhetorical moves (Bhatia, 2014) underlying persuasive communication, alongside non-canonical moves that offer flexibility and serve as creative alternatives employed by Samsung in its social media advertisements, utilizing a mocking strategy in its video advertising content. The frequency of the moves' appearances determines their status to be the obligatory or optional moves in the advertisement to help conclude how the advertisement maintains the rhetorical moves and the new non-canonical moves as an adjustment to the development of the conventional advertising world. Dynel's concept (Dynel, 2018) identifies sarcasm and sarcastic irony as strategies within existing mockery, while parody in the context of mocking strategy is examined through Hutcheon's framework (Hutcheon, 2000).

The research materials were chosen according to the prevalence of mocking strategies employed in Samsung's advertising videos from 2017 to 2024. The videos include *Upgrade to a Samsung Galaxy Note 8* (Samsung, 2017), *Ingenious* (Samsung, 2018), *Do more with an Apple than Apple ever did?* (Samsung, 2024) and *Upgrade Your Upgrade* (Samsung, 2024). As the object of this research is an advertising video, the multimodal discourse theory (Kress, Van Leeuwen, 2020) serves as the basic framework for the comprehensive visual analysis required.

## 3. Discussion

Samsung is consistently ranked among the top two smartphone makers, alongside Apple, Xiaomi, Oppo, Vivo, and others. This ranking is based on Samsung's market share in 2023, which reached 28 % in the North American smartphone market, while Apple simultaneously led with over 52 % of the market share (Onyango, 2025). Apple's position ahead of Samsung spurred competition between the two companies. From 2018 to 2024, Samsung has consistently utilized social media such as Instagram and YouTube to release ads that mock Apple and highlight its advantages over Apple, as Instagram has become a public forum that reaches out to entrepreneurial things because of its social alert (Sari et al., 2022). Through ads that mock Apple published on YouTube and Instagram, Samsung creatively manages some of what Bhatia proposed as rhetorical moves for the advertisement genre (Bhatia, 2014).

With an in-depth review of four Samsung video advertisements, six of the nine rhetorical moves in the advertisement genre that Samsung maintains in its video advertisements can be discussed in this section. The six moves appear consistently in almost every Samsung video advertisement, although not all the moves' appearances are equally prominent. Moves whose appearance reaches 75 % to 100 % of the total four advertisements are labeled as obligatory moves, which derive headlines, target the market, justify the product or service, and detail the product or service and become the obligatory rhetorical moves in Samsung video advertisements. According to Swale's private conversation with Onder in 2011, there is no specific frequency limit for a move to

be considered obligatory. Previous research has also categorized using this method (Li et al., 2022; Onder, 2013).

**Table 1.** The occurrence of genre advertisement rhetorical moves in Samsung video advertisements, according to Bhatia (Bhatia, 2014)

| No. | Bhatia's Rhetorical Ads Moves | Occurrence | Percentage from 4 Samsung Ads Video (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Headlines | 3 | 75 |
| 2 | Targeting The Market | 4 | 100 |
| 3 | Justifying The Product or Service | 4 | 100 |
| 4 | Detailing The Product or Service | 3 | 75 |
| 5 | Establishing Credentials | 0 | - |
| 6 | Celebrity or Typical User Endorsement | 1 | 25 |
| 7 | Offering Incentives | 2 | 50 |
| 8 | Using Pressure Tactics | 0 | - |
| 9 | Soliciting Response | 0 | - |

To provide an exhaustive breakdown of the moves' occurrence, some specifics of the six moves are chosen as examples for convenient analysis.

*Headlines*

Among the Samsung advertisements analyzed, the most prominent realization of the headline move appears in the video titled *Do more with an Apple than Apple's ever done.* The sentence "Do more with an apple than Apple's ever done" functions as a headline not only based on its declarative form but also on the ambiguity and humor created by the wordplay. The phrase makes a double meaning by juxtaposing "apple" and "Apple" – the difference in capitalization features the letter "a" in both words. Apple builds context ambiguity between the real apple fruit and the Apple brand as Samsung's competitor, as this ad does not discuss fruits but focuses on introducing Samsung's smartphone products. This technique aligns with the role of headlines in advertisements created to attract readers' attention (Bhatia, 2014; Chaidet, Pupipat, 2021).

What strengthens the rhetorical effect of the headline is the use of intersemiotic complementarity (Kress, Van Leeuwen, 2020), where visual and verbal modes reinforce one another. The scene features the text "Do more with an Apple than Apple's ever done" against the background of an actor pointing a red Apple fruit at the camera, which draws greater focus than the other objects behind the text. The scene is shot in a medium close-up shot, which supports a surface-level meaning that creates a literal meaning to the word "Apple" as a real apple fruit. This condition creates a metaphorical contrast for the textual reference to the brand Apple, which stimulates viewer inference and engagement. This interplay is a deliberate communicative strategy to foreground critique through playful ambiguity. As a big brand that blatantly beats its competitors, Samsung applies this sensational headline to increase its engagement with the audience. A stunning headline positively influences the increase of online video audience engagement on social media ads (Dai, Wang, 2023). Samsung uses these moves in three of its four video ads, which means that the communicative function of these moves is considered essential, and they become obligatory moves that Samsung maintains in its ads on social media.

*Targeting The Market*

The four Samsung advertising videos in this study show that Samsung is targeting its market at Apple users and potential Apple users to switch to Samsung. This narrowed targeting is considered to help brands structure their media more effectively (Fulgoni, 2018). In advertisements, Samsung focuses on story themes that consistently compare its products with Apple-identified products. In the ad *Upgrade Your Upgrade*, Samsung highlighted the lag of upgrading Apple devices in each new product; in the *Ingenius* ad, Samsung depicted Apple users who came to Apple's Genius Bar to ask why their devices could not do what Apple could. These ads emphasize the advantages that Samsung provides that cannot be found in Apple, implying that

Samsung is a better and more adequate choice than Apple.

Samsung's owned advertisement content video widely distributes its targeting to audiences who follow its official social media accounts on YouTube and Instagram. Targeting specifications like this makes these advertisements moderate, as Samsung targets a specific audience without being too broad or too narrow. This strategy aligns with Jiang and Wu's argument that targeting moderate precision efficiently and effectively attracts consumers' attention compared to mass advertising that is too detailed (Jiang, Wu, 2022).

*Justifying The Product or Service*

This move is also one of the moves that Samsung uses consistently. To exemplify this move, the present study highlights an *Upgrade to a Samsung Galaxy Note 8* as the most representative case among the four analyzed videos. This move involves the advertiser providing rational and functional reasons on why Apple users and potential users should switch to Samsung, just as justifying the product or service provides reasons why the product offered will fulfill the buyers' needs (Bhatia, 2014; Moes et al., 2022). The reasons are delivered through contrasting comparisons of what Samsung highlights between its products and Apple products, which focuses on Apple's weaknesses, such as its small storage, less modern digital feature innovation, and unproven devices.

Samsung also utilizes visual depictions between the two brands, where a scene shows how Samsung positions its products and Apple in contrasting lighting after both have just been lifted from the water incident. In this scene, the Apple user, as the carrier is a man, is depicted holding an iPhone to remind the audience that the phone that survives even though it has entered the water is a Samsung smartphone. The possessive attribution relation between Apple products and the owner emphasizes the different values between Samsung and Apple products (Kress, Leeuwen, 2020). In addition, the brighter light on the Samsung side and the darker on the Apple side align with salience in compositional meaning, where the placement of a feature is intended to attract more attention from the audience.

The spotlight on Samsung is not necessarily to highlight Samsung's ability to survive water better than Apple but also as an invitation to assess the superior function of the brand. Apple is known as a hedonic brand because its users are primarily concerned with self-expression compared to the quality of a brand (Salehi et al., 2021). The pairing of Samsung as a utilitarian brand concerned with functional quality and Apple provides a utilitarian dominance effect, where the attention and focus of potential buyers will be more focused on Samsung (Okada, 2005; Shao, Li, 2021). This move helps direct potential consumers' views towards Samsung as a more valuable brand, not only focusing on lifestyle and prestige.

*Detailing the Product or Service*

Not all of the analyzed Samsung ad videos included the segment that details the product or service. In the three ads that use this move, the delivery is subtle and tries not to be the primary concern in the video. The most significant appearance of this move is in the *Upgrade Your Upgrade* ad.

Samsung places the coverage text containing detailed information about Samsung Galaxy AI features that potential buyers may need at the bottom center of the video frame with a very small font size. Through the small text, Samsung is honest to its consumers by including a disclaimer about the expected results: "The accuracy and the reliability of the generated output are not guaranteed." This honesty shows the transparency of the Samsung brand for the shortcomings that might occur, avoiding expectations that do not match the reality of potential customers. The tiny font size of the text and placement at the bottom is a strategy to ensure that the ad's focus on playing Apple remains the main attention of the audience (Kress, Van Leeuwen, 2020). However, coloring the text with a bright color that contrasts with the color of the video as a background highlights it so that it can still be noticed by the audience's eyes that there is information that can be obtained (Duong, 2022).

*Celebrity or Typical User Endorsement*

The use of celebrities or typical users for endorsement is the move with the least frequency of use. These moves help Samsung attract potential buyers who align with the endorsed celebrity to play a role in advertising. Endorsements from celebrities, mainly social media influencers, will enhance the trust of prospective consumers who have common interests with the influencer (Ge et al., 2021). Samsung only uses this move in the *Do more with an apple than Apple's ever done* ad. In this ad, Samsung invited Jaden Smith to play the role of a Samsung user trying out the Galaxy

AI feature. Jaden Smith is a young actor and singer who actively plays on social media. With Jaden's creative, experimental, and tech-savvy image, Samsung attracts the attention of young people; utilizing Jaden's presence is in line with the playful message in the advertisement. In addition, Jaden's identity as an American can be expected to be a trend center for switching to Samsung, given that most Americans still use Apple (Onyango, 2025). Overall, Jaden's appearance as a celebrity who influences the broader society to switch to Samsung can bring commercial urgency a step further, as discussed by Baldil regarding influencers who play a significant role in social media to promote their lifestyle and activities (Baldil, 2021).

*Offering Incentives*

As Samsung focuses on marketing Samsung AI feature products starting in 2024, the *Do more with an apple than Apple's ever done* and *Upgrade Your Upgrade* ads use the same approach and text for moves, offering incentives. Both Samsung video ads' feature the same offering incentive text: in "Galaxy AI features by Samsung will be provided for free until the end of 2025 on supported Samsung Galaxy devices," which offers a value product that can be obtained for free for a specific period, meaning that it will be paid for later. Offers with price games like this can be strong enough to attract the attention of potential customers (Miller et al., 2021). The statement "until the end of 2025" is also a driving text that builds a sense of urgency for potential buyers to purchase immediately. However, behind the power of text that can strengthen the desire of potential customers to buy products, the font size of the text and its placement, which is deliberately made so as not to be the main center of attention of the ad, indicates that the text is not the main information that Samsung hopes the audience will absorb when the audience pays attention to the ad. The percentage of 50 % and the appearance of the exact text and topic in two different ads show that Samsung does not consider the communicative purpose of this move essential and makes it an optional move.

In addition to Bhatia's rhetorical moves for the advertisement genre, it is also found that Samsung employs additional strategies that help achieve communicative goals in its advertisements targeting Apple. These moves are categorized into non-canonical rhetorical moves, which include competitive referencing, fake user experience, referential mocking, and referring to the manufacturing company. The percentage difference of the occurrence moves presented in the following table gets the same categorization from Bhatia's previous table of rhetorical moves (Bhatia, 2014), where moves that reach 75% to 100% are included in the obligatory moves that Samsung uses for its advertising videos.

Some specific data in the ad that best represents each of the moves in the classifications of competitive referencing, fake user experience, referential mocking, and referring to the manufacturing company will be presented as part of the analysis of the non-canonical move.

**Table 2.** The occurrence of genre advertisement noncanonical moves in Samsung video advertisements

| No. | Non-canonical Moves | Occurrence | Percentage from 4 Samsung Ads Video (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Competitive Referencing | 4 | 100 |
| 2 | Fake User Experience | 3 | 75 |
| 3 | Referential Mocking | 4 | 100 |
| 4 | Referring to the Manufacturing Company | 4 | 100 |

*Competitive Referencing*

The first non-canonical rhetorical move found in Samsung video advertisements is competitive referencing. This type of move applies to the intentional mentioning of Apple as the Samsung brand's competitor in ads, whether overtly or subtly. Although this concept is not listed in the existing classification of moves in ads, its repeated occurrence and role in building the audience's drive to engage with the ad make it justifiable to classify it as a distinct move category in this study. This idea is also aligned with the competitor-centered assessments idea of corporate strategies that directly show comparisons with specific competitors (Day, Wensley, 1998).

Comparing products or brands in advertisements can increase the positive engagement of the audience towards the advertisement (Jain et al., 2015). In the previous ad, *Upgrade to a Samsung*

*Galaxy Note* 8 in 2017, Samsung consistently and overtly displays Apple's identity. Even so, Samsung still gives credit to Apple by inserting a small text credit at the bottom for the displayed Apple identity. Samsung displayed the long queue when Apple released the new version of the iPhone in 2017 through the video advertisement. The scene's visual invites the audience to remember how Apple, with its good image, is very popular with the public. While at the same time, with a storyline that shows Apple's backward innovation, Samsung implicitly informs that Apple's popularity and big name are not balanced with the quality of its innovation. These moves heavily accentuate the competitive situation in Samsung's favor, positively engaging audiences with the advertisement. However, these moves do not guarantee how consumers will respond to Samsung, such as whether this advertisement will directly increase customers' purchase intention. This aligns with the thinking of customers who prefer more subtle competitive reference goals rather than overtly presenting their commercial goals by utilizing competition between brands (Shareef et al., 2019).

*Fake User Experience*

Marketers present scripted experiences as if they were real user experiences. The advertisement, which portrays the user's feelings, leads the audience to judge the product based on a fake user experience. Deliberately created advertising strategies can influence a user's perception by shaping their behavior on the internet (Hettler et al., 2024). Fake user experience is dominant in the advertisement *Upgrade to a Samsung Galaxy Note 8* in 2017, which shows the storyline of the bad experience of Apple users who finally switched to Samsung.

There are many ways to demonstrate a product (Ringler et al., 2024). One does not show the whole real process and only fixates on the result displayed. This situation occurs in the scene where Apple users run out of memory while trying to take a picture, without Samsung explaining the reasons for the device's memory exhaustion. In addition, there is also a scene where Samsung and Apple devices both fall into the water, but the Samsung smartphone still survives. The explanation does not cover the water depth, the fall depth of the two smartphones, or whether the two smartphones from different brands are in the exact same original condition as each other. The use shapes potential users' views of Samsung and Apple, inviting them to quickly conclude the advantages and disadvantages without thinking critically about the facts. This advertising video uploaded on YouTube uses the theme of user-generated vlogs that focus on fictional user experiences through content marketing, which often successfully increases the perception and purchase intention of potential users as an audience (Diwanji, Lee, 2022).

*Referential Mocking*

This study categorizes move-referential mocking as a situation where the audience refers to the competitor through mockery and critical evaluation. The mockery directed at Apple as a competitor in this study includes sarcasm, sarcastic irony, and parody. The occurrence of this type of mockery is different in each Samsung ad. The *Ingenious* ad is the most appropriate to represent the analysis of these moves, as this thirty-second ad displays the most mockery.

The central theme of the *Ingenious* ad is a question-and-answer section between Apple users and Apple employees titled Genius, who have been specially trained to solve user problems at the Genius Bar. An exaggerated storyline parodies the situation between Apple employees and users, highlighting the humorous and awkward aspects of their interactions. Parody is a form of repetition that emphasizes ironic differences amidst repeated similarities (Hutcheon, 2000). The naivety of Apple users who deliberately come to the genius bar to ask how to use features on the Samsung Galaxy S9 device but not on the iPhone device highlights Apple's innovation lag and Samsung's superiority. In addition, through the medium close-up shot and eye-level angle, Samsung allows the audience to be equal to the actors in the scene and seems to feel that the audience becomes more involved and can see more clearly what is happening in the scene (Kress, Van Leeuwen, 2020). As a result, criticism and mockery are made entertaining but still effective in conveying persuasive communication from Samsung, which is ultimately humorous.

In addition, the word "ingenious" becomes sarcastic irony towards the image of the genius staff itself. Ironically, the genius cannot answer and solve the questions that Apple users ask about the split-screen feature available on Samsung devices. This condition exemplifies sarcastic irony by contrasting expectations with reality in order to critique that reality (Dynel, 2018). In addition, the content of the conversation between the two actors also produces another mockery strategy, namely sarcasm.

Apple Genius Staff: "So your nail multitask"

Customer: "But your phone doesn't"

In the conversation above, "your" in the phrase "your phone" refers to the iPhone device as

an Apple product. In this statement, the Apple user intends to criticize Apple that the iPhone is not multitasking. This offensive statement is a form of sarcasm, as sarcasm does not have the characteristics of irony but is offensive and intends to hurt the listener (Dynel, 2018). This sarcastic statement that contains the truth about Apple's innovation backwardness compared to Samsung is a mockery that effectively increases the audience's intention to spread the ad naturally (Thota, 2021). This video has been reposted many times by other YouTube channel accounts and even received up to twenty-ten million views in the form of shares, accounting for at least until today; it is proof that Samsung has successfully utilized the existing mockery and received good feedback from the audience.

*Referring to the Manufacturing Company*

The last non-canonical rhetorical move in Samsung video advertisements consistently identifies the company by featuring the Samsung logo. The placement of the logo at the end is a visual reminder that the entire content in the advertisement that has just been watched is a work by Samsung dedicated to its products.

Black and white design is linked to social position, individuality, and authenticity – essential components of elegance (Wang et al., 2022). The black background with contrasting white text seems simple and indicates that Samsung wants to show its authority with elegance and not much of a fun purpose.

## 4. Results

The analysis of the four Samsung advertisements shows that amidst the advancement of social media that allows marketers to maximize their creativity in making advertisements, Samsung can adapt to maintaining rhetorical moves while utilizing mocking strategies as an adjustment in achieving persuasive communication goals. There are four rhetorical moves from Bhatia (Bhatia, 2014) that Samsung makes as obligatory moves as the four moves' occurrence reaches more than 75 %. Moves that become obligatory include headlines, targeting the market, justifying the product or service, and detailing the product or service. These moves can be used more generally in Samsung's advertising themes that adopt mocking strategies without involving representative individuals personally, as in the move "celebrity or typical user endorsement," and without being so obvious as to provide incentives to expect direct feedback from the audience, as in the move offering incentives.

In addition to the rhetorical moves by Bhatia (Bhatia, 2014), moves whose frequency of occurrence reaches 75 % to 100 % are also found in the non-canonical moves category. All non-canonical moves can be classified as obligatory moves in Samsung advertisements that use the mocking approach, as their occurrence is consistent with a reasonably stable percentage where only the fake user experience move gets a score below 100 %, which is 80 %. Noncanonical, including competitive referencing, fake user experience, and referential mocking, is consistently used to spoof and mock Apple while justifying Samsung's advantages that make it appear superior to Apple even though Apple still occupies the first position, leading the smartphone market in most countries in the world (Onyango, 2025).

The strategy of lifting the theme of mockery in Samsung's competitive advertising against Apple's loss of innovation features from Samsung, which continues to be carried out from 2017 to 2024, indicates that Samsung is continuously increasing its brand awareness to society that functionally, Samsung is a better smartphone choice than Apple. The combination of rhetoric with non-canonical moves that carry the function of persuasive communication into emotional entertainment through sarcasm, sarcastic irony, and parody as the mocking strategy adapts to the needs of the social media market, which is no longer only focused on information about products being sold and pressure to buy products that are being marketed. As emotional appeals have become increasingly central in digital marketing, social media platforms provide a unique space for emotionally intelligent advertising (Yaseen et al., 2022). This communication strategy shows that Samsung maintains the basic rhetorical structure in the advertising genre and expands its communicative scope by adapting content to suit social media's more fluid, interactive characteristics based on emotional resonance and popular culture. One way to achieve further realism in social media is through interactivity (S et al., 2020). The emotional engagement built through the mocking strategy in this Samsung video advertisement also makes the ad more memorable and shareable, an essential factor in a social media ecosystem that relies heavily on engagement and virality.

## 5. Conclusion

The data shows that, in general, Samsung maintains the generic conventions of the advertising genre while preserving most of the rhetorical moves. Six out of nine existing rhetorical moves for advertisement are found to appear with different frequencies, and four moves with an occurrence frequency above 75 % become obligatory moves in Samsung advertisements. The obligatory moves identified include headlines, targeting the market, justifying the product or service, and detailing the product or service, as moves offering incentives and celebrity or typical user endorsement become the optional actions in Samsung advertisement videos due to their occurrence in only 25 % and 50 % among all four advertisements. These moves may involve the form of verbal, visual, or a combination of the two, where the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis assists in reaching the analytical outcomes. These moves demonstrate that, despite Samsung's use of the mockery theme in the advertisements, the fundamental framework of the advertising genre remains intact. From a media literacy perspective, this structural preservation serves as a critical pedagogical template; it demonstrates that beneath highly entertaining and disruptive digital content, the foundational, persuasive architecture of traditional marketing remains intact, providing a concrete baseline for students to learn how to identify hidden commercial intents.

In addition to using rhetorical moves, Samsung also employs several non-canonical moves that are consistent across all the commercial videos examined. The categories of non-canonical moves include competitive referencing, fake user experience, referential mocking, and referring to the manufacturing company. These moves become a tool for Samsung to convey the mockery message to Apple through sarcasm, sarcastic irony, and parody. The combination of rhetorical and non-canonical moves implied by mocking strategies not only criticizes and mocks Apple as a competitor but also highlights Samsung's innovation, which is beyond Apple, raising brand awareness that Samsung is a better choice than Apple functionally. Consequently, these non-canonical tactics highlight the evolution required in media literacy curricula. Educators must move beyond teaching basic text-decoding to foster "critical persuasion knowledge," training audiences to deconstruct how advanced literary and visual devices like parody, irony, and manufactured user experiences are strategically weaponized to lower consumer cognitive resistance.

Overall, amidst the advancement of advertising modes in social media platforms, mocking strategies can be an alternative to advertising creativity that can attract audience attention in conventional advertising. Mocking strategies that achieve emotional engagement can also attract the interactive side of social media, which prioritizes shareability, virality, and engagement. Ultimately, this points out the urgent need for algorithmic and digital advertising literacy within modern education. Because these creative mocking strategies exploit the viral, participatory nature of social media, media literacy education must empower users to look past the emotional amusement of shareable memes and corporate banter, allowing them to remain critical, autonomous consumers within a highly commercialized digital ecosystem.

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# Developing the Media Education Space in Russia and China: Value Foundations for Prospects for International Cooperation

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**Abstract**

Recent geopolitical events point to active interaction between Russia and China with countries in the Asia-Pacific region. This article discusses the possibility of understanding the problematic state of the media education space in the context of a globalizing world. The study focuses on the gap between the spontaneously developing media space and its axiological and epistemological content. The purpose of the article is to develop value-based, innovative, and variable media education practices to establish prospects for international cooperation. This study explores the methodological convergence of socio-constructivist perspectives from American, European, Chinese, and Russian media theorists. The concepts of "media environment" and "modern media education space" are analyzed in conjunction with each other, covering global entities such as the Russian state and the People's Republic of China. The role of media education space is discussed, drawing on the insights of contemporary media theorists as a means of establishing international interaction. The article explores the concept of the international media education space from the perspective of visual-epistemological constructs. Visual culture, visual images, the practice of "scanning," and the "scopic" mode can today be recognized as value-containing visual-epistemological constructs related to language learning, historical knowledge, and an understanding of the prospects for political, economic, and educational interaction. The idea of creating a media education space has an international constructive nature, as the progress of new media technical and technological capabilities is increasingly influencing the international media environment, imbuing it with new educational forms. In the humanities in China and Russia, there is a need to develop the essence of media education value foundations determined by the type of social relations, as well as to harmonize the nature of media education practices determined by cognitive objectives.

**Keywords:** media environment, media education space, international interaction, visual-epistemological constructs, value foundations of media education space, visual image.

## 1. Introduction

Large-scale international relations are significantly altering the form and content of the contemporary media education space. These ongoing transformations are yielding new social, political, ideological, and cognitive aspects that have a significant impact on the development of fundamental knowledge for the population of vast territories and the dissemination of socially significant information. Therefore, an analysis of the potential use of the media environment and its accompanying visual-epistemological constructs is essential as a key factor determining the

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dialectic vector of the media education space in Russia and China to establish prospects for international cooperation.

In discussing the concept of the media environment, it should be noted that most media theorists recognize it as part of the social space organized by a virtually constructed worldview (Castells, 2017; Xu, 2023). As a phenomenon of information space, the media environment possesses its own specific set of media-educational structural elements (media platforms, audience, users, bloggers, etc.), whose activity is subject to the laws of social development, "generating a complex configuration of a virtual system that progresses through ontological, epistemological, and axiological characteristics" (Zhang, Yakovleva, 2024: 59). Naturally, the media environment of any civilization depends on the level of enlightenment of a particular society, the methodological foundations of existing education, and traditional educational institutions. It is also characteristic that the modern media environment is fickle, subject to continuous transformation, and possesses the capacity to renew its symbolic material, which forms a specific epistemological visual modality, rules, and order in the use of communication technologies (McLuhan, 2003). Functionally, the transformation of the media environment is a crucial driving force behind societal change, altering not only people's lifestyles and social practices but also influencing individual modes of thinking and social cognitive characteristics, defined by worldviews and modes of self-definition.

The media environment influences the level of social events, which are difficult to reflect on. For example, it is impossible to analyze the emotional background in the media space, which gives rise to the attention economy, and it is impossible to measure the level of technical competence of modern people, realized in millions of repeated, routine, habitual actions, accompanied by a feeling of frustration when the system fails (Yakovleva et al., 2025). It is also impossible to calculate media dependence at the level of interpersonal relationships, nor to assess the level of reliability of information received from various communication channels (Jenkins et al., 2022). Considering that the media environment does not possess strict definition under the influence of global, constantly changing operating conditions, there is a need to organize "an open field of an international virtual amphitheater that allows for the formation of new meanings of the world and visual segments of worldview in the public consciousness (good, kind, evil, beauty, ugliness, truth, error) as value-separated semantic spaces" (Zhang, Yakovleva, 2024: 42). The solution to media environment issues, with media education integrated into it, is today being formalized in the form of a rigorous system of socio-philosophical knowledge, capable of reaching the stage of creating an international media educational space by increasing media independence and effective management of the media environment of consolidated states (Couldry et al., 2021; Kozolupenko, 2022; Zhang et al., 2024). The modern media education space, as part of the media environment, requires the development of a new methodology for analyzing its value foundations. Considering that innovative and traditional educational values are determined by the level of development of social axiology and epistemology, which significantly determine public intelligence, it is necessary to emphasize diverse types of free learning that incorporate values that align with social expectations. These include education for peace and democracy, a reorientation of education from the focus on "having an education" to the focus on "being educated" (Yakovleva et al., 2021), and the alignment of media content with individual needs, such as the acquisition of intellectual capital as intellectual material realized in profit, advancement, leadership, personal priorities, multi-competence, and qualitative excellence. Advancement in the value foundations of the media education space is essential.

A necessary attribute of the modern media education space is visual culture, which emerged as a result of scientific and technological progress in the 19th and 21st centuries. The phenomenon of information visualization has led to the emergence of various technologies for the production and distribution of images, audiovisual, and other multimedia content. Images, primarily visual, are now fundamental elements of the media education space. Currently, these images significantly define modern epistemology, transforming reality and separating humans from the natural world. Visual epistemology actively influences worldviews, life values, and behavioral strategies. At a roundtable discussion, the editor of the journal Visual Studies, J. Grady, noted: "The visual is everywhere; it is without a doubt the most powerful and ubiquitous form of communication today" (Grady et al., 2023: 227). In the media education space, this practice of scanning the surface of space has intrinsic value, as it has a profound impact on intellectual understanding of its content. Chinese media theorist Yan Man believes that students integrated into the media education space interact with its surface, conditioned by its axiological and epistemological content (Yang, 2017).

The correlation between the value foundations of the media environment and the media education space in Russia and China indicates that innovative media education values are oriented toward organizing personalized educational environments that develop subjectivity and new organizational forms of social activity. Furthermore, the international value foundations of the media education space, determined by cognitive objectives, contain the potential for scientific mutual enrichment and ideological convergence, with the possibility of creating multiple media spaces for the implementation of joint media education practices (Zhang, 2024). The latter have the potential to transform the social systems of Russia and China, determined not only by the content of an innovative economy but also by the creative interaction of global-regional strategy. And, most importantly, to expand the subjective powers of the object of media education interaction, conditioned by the need for specialists to quickly adapt to new professions and subsequently be prepared for constant changes in life, feeling like a citizen of the world. The further creation of practical conditions for media education is considered within the framework of social interaction as a result of human development in the media space based on educational traditions and innovations. This approach to the study of the media education space determines the development of a Russian-Chinese version of media epistemology to achieve the goals of increasing the effectiveness of cultivating scientific and ideological knowledge (van Dijck et al., 2021; Yakovleva, Chernykh, 2023).

Research into the contemporary media environment notes the confluence of traditional, new, and cutting-edge theoretical concepts at the level of disciplinary nominations: mass media theory, media sociology, media ontology, etc. At the same time, the position of nominations of the concept of "media" does not always correspond to the modern subject area of study, when the nature of subject-object relationships in the media environment is rapidly changing. These changes have also affected the names of the corresponding disciplines and subjects of study: media criticism, media philosophy and media policy, media linguistics, media sociology, media conflictology, media logic, media memory, and media ecology. Thus, the concept of "media" is at the forefront of every designation of the new academic discipline. This is not a simplification of the nomination format – it means that in the foreseeable future, libraries, universities, schools, money, family heirlooms – all will find their digital embodiment (private or public). Chinese scholars predict that the constants and variables of all social life will be subject to mediatization. Media reality, which is already noticeably separated from social reality, will come to the forefront. Its symbols will acquire a value significantly greater than ever before (Guo, Guo, 2013; Nik, 2018).

## 2. Materials and methods

Studying the media education space today is a task for the entire humanities, and its common denominator will be the socio-philosophical theory of values and visual epistemology as a relevant basis for analyzing the modes of international interaction between Russia and China. The study is based on the methodological convergence of the social constructivist positions of European and American, Chinese and Russian media theorists, as the media environment traditionally defines the framework of interaction and is typically passive in nature, while the media education space is what directly shapes and determines the interactions of those within this interaction.

## 3. Discussion

Today, the media education space is a fact of existence that we cannot deny. However, there is a need to develop a creative and active attitude toward it. Western European media theorists propose the concept of "data colonialism," emphasizing that platform capitalism, through data collection, restructures the relationship between individuals and society, and also critically analyze the power structures of the media environment (Couldry et al., 2021). A detailed development and classification of media education values (traditional and innovative, state, societal and individual, universal and market, metaphysical and functional-rational, etc.) concerns the conceptualization of a general paradigm of media axiology (Kefeli, Yakovleva, 2026).

Research by media theorists (Holmes et al., 2022) systematically analyzes the educational opportunities and risks of using artificial intelligence, emphasizing that AI literacy is becoming an important part of digital education. W. Holmes, M. Bialik, C. Fadel note that technical means do not replace contact, but create new modes of presence that require a special organization of media competence: scripting communication, managing attention, coordinating tempo and forms of feedback, etc. Television as a cognitive terminal of the media environment translates conversation

into the plane of epistemological analysis: the device/screen determines the format of perception, types of semantic editing, genre expectations– new ways of visually constructing reality. This leads to an argument for the need to update media education: it should include analytical tools for understanding media languages, interactivity formats, institutional frameworks for content production, and mechanisms of influence on the subject. This program expands to consider the intersection of media education with visual epistemology as a fundamental key to understanding the modern world, where the media environment simultaneously acts as the infrastructure of social space (Tryon, 2021). Emphasis is placed on democratic educational practices (interpreted as a "democracy workshop"), where experience in public expression, media argumentation, and ethical responsibility is acquired. Media theorist (Papacharissi, 2021) demonstrates that the often-stated goal of developing critical thinking requires rigorous operationalization, as different programs define criticality, the object of analysis, and the role of the learner differently.

The main methodological conclusions include: modes of public expression containing emotions and digital political culture (Srnicek, 2022); the influence of platform logic on public consciousness and the need to pay more attention to power relations, algorithmic structures, and platform governance (Boyd, 2021; Gillespie, 2021). Visual communication has become a key form of expression in the platform society, prompting systematic analyses of visual symbols, image distribution, and digital visual culture (Aiello, Parry, 2021). The role of video essays is highlighted as a new method in the media space that successfully integrates new visual expressions and media technologies (Keathley, Mittell, 2023). J. Benney's article examines China's contemporary political visual culture through the lens of "smoothness (polishedness)" theory, concluding that the aesthetics of the smooth (polished) is one of the key characteristics of the visual images that construct China's media space. A critical analysis of the research findings contributes to a deeper scientific understanding of the principles of organization and functioning of Chinese visual media (Benney, 2026). The research of contemporary Russian philosopher A.A. Medova makes a significant contribution to the study of the media educational space in its visual-epistemological constructs and visual-figurative content. She writes: "The image is genetically visual, and therefore spatial. Auditory, perceptual, and olfactory images represent an extrapolation of the visual image to other modalities of perception" (Medova, 2023: 7).

Scholarly publications and studies by Chinese media theorists also possess the necessary axiological potential, formulating new meaningful values of subject-object relations in the media space. The general conclusion of the value-based and methodological essence and functionality of the media education space lies in the integration of subject-object relations, realized on the principles of convergence and coexistence, the importance of European-style visualization, and the relationship between supply and demand in the media environment (Zen, 2019).

## 4. Results

The desire to identify the value foundations of the contemporary Russian-Chinese media education space to establish prospects for international cooperation is driven by the global dynamics of the media environment as an irreversible and alternative reality. Therefore, it is important to understand it through a consistent understanding of media literacy and media competence to develop skills for intercultural dialogue. Media literacy includes not only the ability to recognize information but also develops critical thinking (Hobbs, 2021) and algorithmic understanding (Buckingham, 2022). In this regard, it is especially necessary to emphasize the concept of civic media literacy, which includes skills in public participation, media ethics, and critical communication (Mihailidis, 2021), as well as the concept of "critical data education," which affirms mechanisms for digital surveillance (Pangrazio et al., 2021). A review of numerous sources on media literacy and media competence allows us to systematize the main provisions, presented in table form.

**Table 1.** Contents of creative-oriented acts of media literacy and media competence

| Technological aspects | Educational content |
|---|---|
| – Technological, broadcast, and incentive potential of the media space;<br>– Demand for media education projects and the use of outsourcing; | – Media literacy, media competence, and media consumption for adequate perception of media content;<br>– Self-didactics as the highest level of cognition; |

| Technological aspects | Educational content |
|---|---|
| – Creation of a unique information product with social significance and shaping the media environment;<br>– Electronic media education resources for solving professional problems;<br>– Media platforms as part of the social environment and their information potential;<br>– Media education portals with professionally and methodologically sound content;<br>– Interfaces for solving social problems;<br>– Accessible online format regardless of region of residence;<br>– Use of image methodology to shape the media image of the subject of media education;<br>– Open media education resources. | – Mastery of humanistic methodology in the technological impact of subjects on the media space;<br>– Realization of the creative potential of the subject and object of media interaction;<br>– Professional mobility in the global system;<br>– Information verification skills (analysis of examples of unreliable information);<br>– Master classes organized by specialist scientists;<br>– Practice in the formation and development of universal learning activities;<br>– Innovative solutions to media adaptation;<br>– Organization of project and research activities;<br>– Skills in searching for new ideas, methods, and work techniques;<br>– Ability to take responsibility and make decisions. |

In the future, the demand for media literacy and media competence will continue to grow. The latter factor will require a search for individual ways of self-actualization in practical activities, a willingness to mobilize existing knowledge and experience, one's needs and will to achieve specific individual goals in acquiring a profession/specialty through media education. For example, today, digital experience is urgently needed by older people, who in modern society represent the socio-demographic group with the most uneven levels of digital literacy and access to digital media, which is of particular importance for our study on the media education space (Hjorth et al., 2025). When describing media literacy improvement activities (assessment results, research, expression, experiential learning, engaged citizenship, and equality), it is argued that issues of social equality must be prioritized (Burth et al., 2024). The relationship between media literacy and social equality (digital citizenship) is examined from various angles, but most studies agree that the value of teaching them together aligns with both the subject's expanding capabilities and protectionist views of media and digital interaction (von Gillern et al., 2024). Within these social frameworks, the current state of Russian media education as a holistic concept can be considered an independent professional project (Korol et al., 2022).

Learner engagement in the media education space presupposes, above all, cognitive interaction with the various multimodal components of this space, rather than simply content consumption. In this regard, image theory allows for a significant deepening understanding of the nature, structure, and functions of the media education space (Widerker, 2025; Widerker, 2017). Currently, advanced image studies are being conducted within the framework of visual studies, which emerged from the epistemological shift associated with the visual turn in Chinese media humanities (Li, 2018; Shuai, Xie, 2021). This visual turn was initiated by the concepts of American and German media theorists, who proposed the term "pictorial turn" (a post-linguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interaction between visuality, technology, discourse, corporeality, and figuration) and the "iconic turn" (structural notions about the functioning of "images"– painted, sculpted, constructed, staged, performed, or danced).

The field of media visualization research contains a number of theses: first, the image generates and conveys meanings in a unique way. In this regard, the contemporary Russian philosopher I.N. Inishev writes: "An image is a generative medium that not only conveys but also generates meaning in a manner characteristic of it" (Inishev, 2011: 119); secondly, an image represents a specific social actor: "an image is not so much an instrument as a subject (agent) of social action" (Inishev, 2011: 206). Of crucial importance is the fact that the media education space, like any other space, simultaneously shapes a certain scopic regime and is shaped by it. The term "scopic regime" denotes an epistemology of understanding the modern world, a system of visual perception of the world. Along with such obvious advantages as the global availability of knowledge, the media education space also presents certain cognitive risks. Thus, the semantic content of visual images is less amenable to control compared to the semantic content of texts. In this regard, I.N. Inishev

writes: "While in language, meaning is expressed in relatively unambiguous judgments formed according to strict rules, and for this reason alone is subject to control by both the speaker and the recipient, in iconic experience, meaning is demonstrated using the recipient's spontaneous bodily and emotional self-awareness, as well as the (equally uncontrollable) texture of matter" (Inishev, 2012: 207). In this regard, images, compared to texts, evoke greater epistemological credibility (i.e., they are more informative), but are also less controllable.

The principle of methodological convergence between the social constructivist positions of American, European, Chinese, and Russian media theorists reveals the general processes of the media sphere's increasingly active influence on new formats of social relations, which complicate the nature of social interaction and reformat the educational paradigm. The main task of the international media education space is to realize the axiological and epistemological potential of the media environment in media education practices and to learn to manage these processes.

## 5. Conclusion

The authors addressed the following question: How is the global media environment changing? What are the key actors in the media education process in the context of the changing paradigm of the media education space itself? Reconciling the concept of "international media education space" with the relationship between the media environment and media education as social phenomena, and applying the theoretical results of this understanding to the medical models and practices of Russia and China, it should be noted that this significant aspect, which actively influences international relations, is unfortunately understudied in the academic field. Russian and Chinese media theorists, considering the mediatization of modern society, quite rationally assess the impact of the media environment, supplemented by media education practices, on any aspect of the social sphere. This is especially true for education and media education, which play a key role in any social model today.

Media theorists from China and Russia propose ways to create an international educational space based on the development of common theories of the media environment and the international media education space within the boundaries of Russian-Chinese social relations. Therefore, it is necessary to establish the essence of common media education value foundations, determined by the type of social relations, and to plan a set of media education practices determined by cognitive objectives. The latter will require axiological censorship and visual-epistemological consistency at the level of educational institutions. On this basis, it is possible to examine in more detail the strategies of Russia and China in managing the media education space to establish prospects for international cooperation.

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# Using Generative Chatbots in Media Education

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**Abstract**

In the context of the digital transformation of education and the active development of artificial intelligence technologies, the use of generative chatbots in media education has become particularly relevant. The media environment requires students to have a high level of media literacy, critical thinking, and the ability to effectively interact with information. The purpose of this study is to analyze the possibilities and features of using generative chatbots in media education, as well as to determine their pedagogical potential. The study is based on Russian and Chinese generative chatbots and scientific publications on media education and digital pedagogy. The study has found that the use of generative chatbots contributes to the personalization of learning, increases the level of interactivity in the educational process, and develops students' media literacy. The study has identified the main areas of application, developed pedagogical scenarios for using chatbots in media education, and has created a universal query for generating individual assignments based on different levels of students' media education and media literacy. It has been established that generative chatbots have significant potential in the system of modern media education, but their effective use requires consideration of methodological, ethical, and technological aspects.

**Keywords:** media education, media literacy, chatbots, artificial intelligence, digitalization.

## 1. Introduction

The current stage of social development is characterized by active digital transformation, encompassing all key areas of life, including the education system. Electronic gradebooks and online platforms, as well as artificial intelligence technologies used to automate the grading of academic assignments, are being consistently introduced into educational practice. Alongside this, there is an expansion in the use of interactive teaching methods that contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the educational process.

The digital environment requires educational institutions not only to adopt new technologies but also to rethink educational strategies. As research shows, ignoring the potential of artificial intelligence "is fraught with a colossal lag behind objective reality" (Sklyarova et al., 2023: 149), and therefore the integration of AI tools into the educational process is becoming strategically necessary.

As confirmation of the relevance of these processes, we present the results of applied research. Analysts from the Russian platform VK Education note that among university students and graduates aged 18 to 25, the most in-demand skills in 2024 were working with artificial intelligence and neural networks (23 %) and creative thinking (21 %) (Forbes Education, 2025). These indicators demonstrate a steady increase in the significance of AI competencies in the educational and professional environment.

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These trends are also confirmed in contemporary research. E. Frolova notes that in the context of digitalization, the accessibility of information leads to a change in students' attitudes toward knowledge: a significant proportion of students view traditional forms of education as outdated, believing that the necessary information can be obtained in a ready-made form from online sources (Frolova, 2025: 47). At the same time, as the researcher emphasizes, such accessibility of information contributes to the formation of a fragmented perception of knowledge that does not require deep comprehension.

The development of digital technologies in recent decades has also led to significant changes in the media sphere. Tools such as artificial intelligence and data analysis algorithms, and chatbots are becoming an integral part of media practice. Traditional methods of collecting and processing information are increasingly proving insufficient for the effective work of media professionals in the digital age.

## 2. Materials and methods

The method of analyzing theoretical sources was used to identify key approaches to understanding the role of artificial intelligence and chatbots in media education. In the process of analyzing scholarly publications, the main concepts were identified, compared, and synthesized, which made it possible to form the theoretical foundation of the study.

The material of the study comprised Russian and Chinese generative chatbots. The total number of chatbots analyzed was 30 units, of which 3 chatbots were selected for detailed description in the study: Alice AI, GigaChat, and DeepSeek.

The selection criteria that allow these chatbots to be considered as typical models of artificial intelligence application in media education are as follows:

1. Prevalence among users;
2. Functional sophistication;
3. Active use in the educational and media environment.

The collection of material was carried out using the purposive sampling method, with the selection criteria being the presence of generative functions, the ability to conduct dialogue-based interaction, applicability in educational or media practices, as well as belonging to the Russian or Chinese digital segment. This made it possible to form a sample relevant to the research objectives.

The descriptive-analytical method was used in studying the functional capabilities of the selected chatbots. Parameters such as the nature of interaction with the user, the types of content generated, the presence of educational use scenarios, and the degree of adaptability to learners' queries were analyzed.

The comparative method made it possible to compare the selected chatbots according to the identified criteria (functionality, educational potential, level of personalization, language capabilities), which enabled the identification of their similarities and differences, as well as the determination of the most effective practices for their use in media education.

The methods of systematization and classification were used to structure the obtained data. On their basis, groups of chatbots were identified according to the level of educational potential and the nature of their use in the educational process.

## 3. Discussion

The scholarly literature emphasizes the scale and depth of the ongoing transformations: “Artificial intelligence is irreversibly changing the landscape of media communications, transforming from a technological innovation into a system-forming factor” (Inozemtseva, 2025: 3).

Of particular importance in such conditions is media education as a system for developing critical thinking, media literacy, and information processing skills. As E.A. Bondarenko notes, contemporary media education extends beyond the acquisition of technical skills and involves the development of the ability to analyze and interpret information, comparing different points of view, including arguments for and against, as well as to form one's own position (Bondarenko, 2025: 11). Furthermore, media education is regarded as an important tool for countering the spread of misinformation and fakes, as well as a factor in the personal development of learners. Attention is paid to the fact that critical thinking has become the foundation of young people's interaction with the digital environment, and issues of authorship of media texts are inextricably linked to problems of information security and digital hygiene.

This assertion appears particularly significant in the context of the present study, since in the conditions of digitalization, media education should be aimed not only at the transfer of knowledge but also at developing in learners the ability to engage consciously and responsibly with information. This directly relates to the objectives of media education and confirms the need to integrate artificial intelligence technologies as a tool that enhances the development of analytical and critical skills.

Earlier in our work, we emphasized the importance of studying the current state of media education: “media education in the modern world is relevant for people with varying degrees of interaction with the media sphere: both for those who act exclusively as consumers of content and for those who are its creators” (Zvereva, Serova, 2023: 94).

At the same time, the contemporary media education process develops under conditions of information overload, which heightens the need to introduce tools capable of optimizing learning and personalizing educational trajectories. In this context, the use of artificial intelligence technologies is of particular interest. L.A. Ivanova views artificial intelligence in media education as the foundation of a new educational ideology: “Artificial intelligence in media education signifies a transition to an educational ideology that facilitates the construction of effective learning strategies aimed at developing a method for the productive organization of knowledge, as well as at developing comprehensive and effective teaching technologies that meet the new, dynamic demands of the new era” (Ivanova, 2024: 35). This thesis allows us to study artificial intelligence not as an auxiliary tool, but as a key element that determines the logic of the development of the media environment and, consequently, the media education system.

A similar position regarding the transition to a new educational ideology is expressed by V.A. Stepanov: “A cursory analysis of the situation suffices to conclude that AI mechanization seriously transforms not so much the process of creating, transmitting, and assimilating knowledge itself, but rather the inefficient social practices built around it. Simply put, the procedures for using AI clearly reflect the problems of the education system” (Stepanov, 2025: 92). In this context, artificial intelligence also points to the persistent problem of the bureaucratization of education, in which generative chatbots often compensate for the shortcomings of the existing organizational model.

This position is developed by A.V. Ovsyannikov, emphasizing that “motivation and the cultivation of students' interest in the course being taught» are seen in outlining interesting practical tasks and examples from the course, which often do not fit within the time constraints of the curriculum. In this case, a student, through independent interactive communication with a chatbot, can delve into a practical or theoretical task that has only been mentioned or outlined and has captured their interest” (Ovsyannikov, 2023: 92). According to the researcher, in modern conditions, the significance of individual and flexible technologies is growing, within which the chatbot acts as an additional participant in educational interaction. This position seems particularly important for the study of media education practices, since the use of artificial intelligence by educators helps expand the possibilities of their independent work and the formation of personalized educational trajectories.

At the same time, contemporary research shows that generative technologies, particularly chatbots, have significant potential for developing learners' cognitive activity. For instance, the study by S. Rafiq “Between Promise and Peril” notes that the use of the generative chat ChatGPT in education contributes to the formation of a research-based approach to learning, encouraging students to ask deeper questions and seek explanations that go beyond the content of the textbook, while simultaneously developing their analytical thinking through the presentation of different perspectives on a single issue (Rafiq et al., 2025: 427). This aligns with the objectives of media education, which focuses on developing critical analysis of information.

The question of the transformation of media education in the context of the spread of generative artificial intelligence is also examined in the monograph “Artificial Intelligence in Media Development”.The authors emphasize that in modern conditions, “it is necessary not only to teach skills in working with these tools but also to develop critical thinking, ethical responsibility, and the ability to assess the risks and opportunities of using AI in media” (Mukhinaet al., 2026: 14). We cannot but agree with this statement, as we believe that the use of generative chatbots in media education cannot be limited solely to the technical mastery of digital tools; a rethinking of the goals of contemporary media pedagogy is necessary.

It should be noted that the introduction of artificial intelligence into media education involves not only a change in the content of instruction but also the mastery of digital technologies by educators

themselves. This idea is confirmed by V.V. Gavrilov and V.A. Zorina, who are convinced that for the development of the intellectual potential of media specialists, it is necessary to develop the ability to work with artificial intelligence technologies (Gavrilov, Zorina, 2024: 628). As the results of the study by Shahid Rafiq, Ayesha Afzal, and Fariha Gul (Rafiq et al., 2025: 427) show, the effectiveness of using chatbots largely depends on pedagogical support: in its absence, there is an increased risk of superficial assimilation of material and the formal use of generated responses.

Within the framework of this study, generative chatbots are considered as one such tool. Their educational potential is revealed in the works of several researchers. E.A. Firsova asserts that the use of chatbots in education "opens up new opportunities for establishing direct and rapid contact with learners and for transmitting the required information on a given topic in a condensed form" (Firsova, 2018: 190). This view is also shared by G.G. Isaeva and M.R. Magomedalieva, who write that chatbots "make it possible to significantly increase the level of accessibility and convenience of the educational process, ensuring an individual approach to each learner" (Isaeva, Magomedalieva, 2025: 31).

The history of chatbots began in the 1960s, and over the past decades they have undergone significant changes due to technological progress and the growing demand for automated communication systems. In the development of chatbot technology, three stages are distinguished: "1) research into the possibility of creating a natural language interface; 2) the spread of the worldwide Internet; 3) the development of chatbots using natural language technologies, speech synthesis, and real-time video" (Kadeeva, Syritsyna, 2020: 47).

N.V. Bagramova, N.F. Kudryavtseva, L.V. Panteleeva, S.I. Tyutyunnik, and I.V. Markova (Bagramova et al., 2022: 621) characterize a chatbot as "a program that imitates communication with a person using text and audio messages". A.S. Aristov, Yu.S. Beznosyuk, P.K. Vediker, and N.E. Voronovich mainly consider the use of chatbots as a tool for organizing and managing the educational process in a higher education institution (Aristov et al., 2020: 96). K. Mageira, D. Pittou, A. Papasalouros, K. Kotis, P. Zangogiani, and A. Daradoumis define a chatbot as an intelligent system capable of interacting with humans in various aspects of daily life using natural language (Mageira et al., 2022: 3239).

Thus, in a broad sense, chatbots are viewed by researchers as tools based on artificial intelligence technologies and designed to automate communication. In the educational context, they are interpreted as interactive teaching aids that facilitate the solution of communicative tasks and the adaptation of the learning process to the characteristics of learners.

The relevance of this study is determined by the need to find effective learning tools in contemporary media education that can adapt to the individual needs of learners and ensure a high level of engagement. Today, chatbots are used in a wide variety of fields, including media education. Most modern generative chatbots are platforms that adapt to the behavior of both teachers and students. Generative chatbots are used both in teaching and in learning.

The purpose of using chatbots is to ensure the realization of modern communication capabilities, as well as to optimize the educational process. Their use contributes to more effective assimilation of educational material and simplifies the search for relevant educational and scientific literature within the research topic (Ibragimova, 2022: 744). It should also be noted that the use of chatbots in the educational process corresponds to one of the key pedagogical principles – the principle of individualization of learning. The ability to adapt chatbots according to the level of preparation and educational needs of learners ensures the implementation of a personalized approach (Clariziaet al., 2018: 292). According to research, the use of chatbots that consider the characteristics of students significantly affects the effectiveness of learning (Kesteret al., 2005: 85). Modern chatbots include new functional capabilities, such as R&S technologies (recognition and speech synthesis), individual user interaction, integration with third-party applications, multi-channel information deployment, and the possibility of reuse.

In scholarly research, three main types of chatbots are distinguished: button-based, text-based, and voice chatbots (Shvedov, 2021: 1).

Button-based chatbots involve interaction through predetermined response options presented in the form of buttons. The user selects one of the proposed scenarios, which significantly limits the variability of communication and the functional capabilities of the system.

Text-based chatbots provide more flexible interaction conditions: the user can both use the suggested query options and formulate their own question. This ensures a more developed form of communication and allows for the implementation of dialogue-based interaction elements.

Voice assistants represent the most complex type of chatbot, operating based on natural language understanding, processing, and generation technologies. Such systems can perceive and execute the user's voice commands, providing a more natural and intuitive format of interaction.

Thus, generative chatbots are distinguished by a high degree of adaptability, the ability to learn, and the capability for complex dialogue, which makes them an effective tool in the modern media education system.

The aim of this work is to analyze the possibilities of using generative chatbots in contemporary media education, as well as to assess their pedagogical potential.

## 4. Results

In educational practice, chatbots can perform the following functions:

1. providing educational information;
2. supporting the educational process;
3. organizing testing and self-assessment;
4. consulting learners.

In the context of media education, such technologies make it possible to model real information situations, including the analysis of media texts, fact-checking, and content interpretation.

Within the framework of this study, we analyzed 30 units of Russian and Chinese generative chatbots. From these, we selected 3 units for a detailed description of the capabilities of these chatbots in terms of their practical application in the field of contemporary media education.

One of the most versatile Russian chatbots is the intelligent assistant Alice AI. This chatbot can be used for explaining theoretical material, analyzing media texts (news, advertisements, social media posts), and generating examples of fake and reliable news for subsequent comparison.

Another Russian chatbot that we analyzed is GigaChat from Sberbank PJSC. Like the chatbot, this model can do all the same things, including content generation. However, there are key differences:

1. Integration

Alice is deeply integrated with the Yandex ecosystem and its services. GigaChat is positioned as an independent intelligent platform.

2. Functionality

Alice combines the functions of an assistant (executing commands, controlling devices) and a text generator, while GigaChat is focused on text generation, analysis, and personalized dialogue.

3. Personalization

Newer versions of GigaChat remember information about the user to adapt responses, which is not a key function of Alice.

As a result, Alice is more often used as a voice assistant and a “smart interface” within services, whereas GigaChat is oriented toward more complex intellectual dialogue and the generation of substantive texts.

The main advantage of Russian bots for students in Russia is that they are originally Russian-language language models, meaning they were trained on Russian-language content, and therefore they work impeccably with our language, avoiding gross speech, stylistic, and grammatical errors.

Another versatile platform is DeepSeek, a Chinese company developing large language models. This chatbot operates with open-source code, is available for free, and works in Russia without restrictions. The chatbot can also generate texts in different languages, including Russian (for example, it can create a content plan or analyze an existing one, come up with a headline for an article, or create a fake news story upon user request), analyze and process large volumes of textual information, and structure data.

Within the framework of the study, various pedagogical scenarios were developed through which these chatbots can be used in media education practice.

*1. Analysis of media texts*

Students are presented with news material, after which they use a chatbot to identify key meanings, determine possible bias, and verify the reliability of the information.

Technical implementation: the student uploads the text of the proposed news item and asks sequential questions to the chatbots, for example: "Identify the source of the primary information," "Identify hidden stylistic markers of emotional pressure," etc.

The output is a semiotic map of the media text with markings of potential manipulative techniques.

The results are then discussed with the instructor, the responses of different chatbots are compared, and the optimal one is identified.

*2. Simulation of fake news*

Students are assigned the role of “disinformant”. The student uploads a set of facts into the chatbots, from which they are required to construct a plausible fake using specified rhetorical techniques (e.g., false correlation, emotionally charged vocabulary, source forgery).

Afterward, students analyze the manipulative techniques used, the structure of information presentation, and the emotional impact.

*3. Personalized learning*

Chatbots make it possible to create individual assignments depending on the student's level of preparation, ensuring adaptation of material difficulty, an individual learning pace, and automatic result verification. To this end, during the study, we developed a universal prompt for the educator, which should be written into the chatbot:

“You are an expert in media education. Create an individual practical assignment for a student depending on their level of knowledge on the topic 'Media Education/Media Literacy”.

Student level categories:

Beginner: basic media skills – ability to use search engines to find information, basic knowledge of media use technologies. Limited experience with media – limited access to media sources or lack of practice working with them.

Intermediate: the student master’s more complex methods of media text analysis, learns to identify biases and evaluate the reliability of information from different sources. Such a student has expanded skills: for example, the ability to work with more complex media formats (interactive websites, video platforms). Has knowledge in the field of ethics and legal norms related to media.

Advanced: expert knowledge and skills. The student develops advanced research skills, deeply understands media systems, their policies, and their impact on society. The student could create quality media content and analyze their own media texts in terms of structure and meaning. The student is able to critically evaluate media texts, identify hidden meanings, understand the context of their creation, and is familiar with the legal aspects of media use, including issues of regulation and intellectual property protection.

Assignment structure:

Context and media product (suggest a link to a real case/news yourself).

Objective (e.g., 'analyze,' 'evaluate,' 'synthesize').

Step-by-step instructions (3–5 steps) with self-assessment criteria.

Zone of proximal development – 1 question or additional action that is slightly more difficult than the current level.

Student response format (checklist, mini-essay, diagram, algorithm of actions).

The language of the assignment is Russian. The style is instructive, without general phrases. Volume: for 5–7 minutes of completion."

Based on such a prompt, the chatbot generates individual assignments depending on the student's level. For example, the DeepSeek chatbot generated the following assignment for beginner-level students:

“Topic: 'How to recognize a fake news story'

Assignment:

Analyze a short text (the chatbot provides: 'Scientists have proven chocolate completely cures a cold in 2 hours. Institute of Nutrition, April 1').

Steps:

Find three signs that this looks like a fake (source, date, super-effect).

Check the website domain (the bot provides a dummy link).

Fill out the checklist 'Signs of Unreliability.'

Zone of development: formulate what headlines would make this news convincing for the majority.

Response format: 3 items in the checklist + 1 short conclusion."

Interpreting the results of this study, we find significant the approach of researchers P.V. Sysoev and E.M. Filatov, who propose examining the use of chatbots in the educational process through the balance between the advantages of these technologies and the controversial issues of their application (Sysoev, Filatov, 2023: 68). The researchers identify several key advantages of chatbots:

– increased student motivation,

– the possibility of improving speech skills,
– accessibility of educational interaction regardless of time and place,
– reduced anxiety levels when interacting with the digital environment.

The results of our study generally confirm these findings, but also allow us to identify additional advantages of generative chatbots in the context of media education:

– high speed of obtaining information,
– the possibility of rapid search and structuring of materials,
– support for independent research activities,
– assistance in generating ideas and preparing media texts.

Furthermore, in our study, chatbots are considered as a tool for personalizing learning, making it possible to adapt the educational process to the individual needs of the learner and their pace of work.

However, the conducted analysis showed that, despite the significant potential for using chatbots in media education, their use is accompanied by a number of limitations identified during the study. It was found that these chatbots demonstrate limitations in interpreting complex contexts and media texts, which is particularly evident when working with ambiguous or critically charged information. This confirms the existence of an ethical problem: since chatbots rely on pre-programmed algorithms, they may exhibit serious limitations in understanding. These systems lack the ability to understand context and nuance the way humans do. In addition, the data on which chatbots base their responses and recommendations may contain inaccuracies and errors, which affect their responses and distort the data.

Furthermore, the results of the study allow us to conclude that there is a risk of developing dependence on chatbots as a source of ready-made solutions: with their uncritical use, the level of independent information analysis decreases. An equally important problem is the need to train instructors to work with new digital tools.

Thus, the identified limitations show that the integration of chatbots into media education requires professional pedagogical support aimed at developing critical thinking and the conscious use of digital tools.

The prospects for using chatbots in media education are promising: the formation of hybrid learning models that combine traditional pedagogical methods and digital tools is expected. Attention will be paid to the development of digital pedagogy and the formation of new competencies among instructors.

## 5. Conclusion

The integration of generative chatbots into media education demonstrates the potential for a radical transformation of traditional learning models. The key advantage becomes the possibility of forming individual learning trajectories, in which educational material is selected considering the perceptual characteristics, pace of mastery, and professional preferences of each learner. The prospects for the development of chatbot applications in media education appear to us as follows: in the future, chatbots will evolve as hybrid intelligence – a combination of human capabilities and technologies. In such a model, automated systems perform routine tasks, while humans devote more attention to creative work, research, and educational aspects. This provides an opportunity to fully leverage the advantages of digitalization, while simultaneously reducing the risk of losing the human dimension in the educational environment.

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