RESEARCH PAPER

Peace Journalism in the Digital Age

Exploring Opportunities, Impact, and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The advent of modern means of communication opens up a wide range of possibilities for individual users, organizations, and governments to connect. This paper argues that the concept of peace journalism can leverage the potential of digital developments to maintain relevance in current times. Five areas of peace journalism's possible synchronization with media digitalization are deduced and elaborated from a pragmatic perspective to facilitate conceptual advancement: (1) digital distribution, (2) utility of the potential of two-way communication, (3) exploration of new forms of digital storytelling, (4) curation of various digital sources of conflict actors and fact-checking, and (5) incorporation of virtual training and digital skills into journalism curricula. By addressing these aspects of media digitalization, peace journalism outlets can receive acclaim within modern journalistic circles while also attracting wider audience support.

1   Introduction

Peace journalism has made noticeable progress since its inception as a concept toward the end of the previous century. There now exists abundant scholarly research pertaining to the effectiveness of peace journalism (e.g., Auwal & Ersoy, 2020; Kempf, 2003; Lee & Maslog, 2005) alongside output concerned with its practical implementation (Youngblood, 2017).

Peace journalism "as a special mode of socially responsible journalism" (Hanitzsch, 2004, p. 484) refers especially to the style of reporting and focus on highlighting narratives that emanate from non-elite sources. At the same time, it aims for a more wholistic and peace-promoting version of journalism when reporting on conflicts and wars (Babatunde et al., 2020). Although scholarly and journalistic circles demonstrate considerable admiration for the concept (e.g., Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005; Ottosen, 2010; Tehranian, 2002), it has also received substantial criticism. In particular, it has been labeled a practice running contrary to journalistic objectivity. For instance, Hanitzsch (2004) does not see it as "the task of journalism to engage in the peaceful settlement of conflicts" (p. 490) or to oblige journalists "to free the world from crises, conflicts and other evils" (p. 491), as advocated by peace journalism.

Nonetheless, peace journalism continues to advance. This scholarly effort considers the various avenues that can benefit the concept as it navigates its way through today's digitized world. By better understanding and effectively utilizing certain aspects pertaining to media digitalization, peace journalism can more successfully disseminate its message across modern networked audiences. Benefitting from the prompt and effective communication mechanisms enabled by modern technological advancement, peace journalism could maintain its relevance and evolve at a global scale in terms of its thought and practice. This approach means following Joseph Weizenbaum's (2001) rejection of the military use of computers and his advocacy for peace.

Against this background, this paper synthesizes the literature on peace journalism and digitalization to highlight developmental possibilities for peace journalism in the digital era. On this basis, the following five main areas have been identified: (1) digital distribution, (2) utility of the potential of two-way communication, (3) exploration of new forms of digital storytelling, (4) curation of various digital sources of conflict actors and fact-checking, and (5) incorporation of virtual training and digital skills into journalism curricula.

This paper contributes to the discussion about peace journalism by bringing together the primary postulates of the concept with digitalization. This enables it to add a new perspective to its understanding, highlight potentials for broader applicability, and, thereby, increase the relevance of the concept in a digitally connected world. This text's structure is as follows. The first section

addresses the impact of digitalization on journalism. Section two provides an overview of the concept of peace journalism. The third section brings both parts together to explore and elaborate on the various means by which peace journalism can benefit from media digitalization. The paper ends with a conclusion concerning the various ideas introduced and discussed.

2   Journalism in the Digital Age

Digital transformation, "a process that aims to improve an entity by triggering significant changes to its properties through combinations of information, computing, communication, and connectivity technologies" (Vial, 2019, p. 4), has impacted many aspects of society, including journalism. The path of digital transformation has seen various technical options tested, adopted, and institutionalized in the journalism context. This has produced new possibilities for the profession, including broader audience participation, two-way communication, the multimedia nature of presentation, and a greater diversity of space and time references, ultimately causing fundamental changes in the interactions between audiences and journalists (Robinson et al., 2019). Elsewhere, additional technical possibilities have been harnessed to design innovative models for public communication that depart from the approaches of traditional mass media (for a research overview, see Steensen & Westlund, 2021). Digital platforms have specific affordances that enable them to realize these possibilities (Neuberger et al., 2019). These affordances can be categorized in terms of five different developmental processes made possible for digital journalism, in particular, by digital transformation (which we discuss later with reference to peace journalism):

1)   The Internet enables the possibility of reaching a large, even global audience. The potential to create a *transnational public sphere* has been demonstrated several times in domestic conflicts, as seen in the case of the Indignados movement in Mexico ("Zapatista effect") and during the "Arab Spring" (della Porta & Mattoni, 2014). To maximize reach and address different target groups, editorial teams use multiple platforms. Such multi-channel communication requires substantial effort in terms of coordination.

2)   *Wider audience participation and two-way communication* can foster a diversity of voices and encourage dialogue between different actors. Nonetheless, the effects of eased participation and interactivity are mixed and uncertain. To combat forms of "dark participation" (Quandt, 2018), such as hate-speech, and ensure high-quality discourse, it is necessary to manage and moderate the journalistic community (Ziegele et al., 2018).

3) Multimedia enables new forms of *digital storytelling* to strengthen the delivery of the news (Kulkarni et al., 2022). Multimedia forms of storytelling can enhance the comprehensibility and appeal of news.

4) In the digital public sphere, journalism can also *check and correct third-party content*. As such, journalists take on the role of a "curator" or "gatewatcher" (Bruns, 2018), with fact-checking to combat disinformation becoming a common practice in digital journalism (Nieminen & Rapeli, 2019).

5) The Internet can also be used for *professional purposes* in journalism. Examples include the internal organization of journalists in communities (Mourão, 2015) and the sharing of professional knowledge in the context of virtual trainings offered by organizations such as Agence France-Presse[1], The Poynter Institute for Media Studies[2], and The Center for Media, Data and Society at the Central European University's Democracy Institute[3].

We intend to explore the opportunities and challenges associated with these five areas in the context of the digital transformation of peace journalism, having observed a deficit in research and a backlog in practice in the field. We do not overlook the fact that digitalization also contributes to the erosion of quality by encouraging the practice of "clickbaiting" (Molyneux & Coddington, 2019) and accelerating the news cycle (Haynes, 2021). The Internet, especially social media, can also contribute to the escalation of conflicts and become a part of warfare in the form of propaganda (Bahar, 2020). To this end, practitioners of peace journalism must also be aware that interested parties might use social media to foster their propaganda interests, such as by spreading disinformation. This demands they utilize the aforementioned potential to check and correct third-party content, one of the several potentials that peace journalism can exploit that this paper aims to identify.

The extent of the effectiveness of these areas of advancement varies according to ground realities, especially the unequal level of technological advancement across the globe, which demands both technical know-how and the presence of a functioning technical infrastructure (Robinson et al., 2015). Nonetheless, the nature of the issues being addressed and the potentialities for peace journalism's successful advancement in the digital age are of equal importance and relevance to countries at all stages of development, especially in the Global South and war-prone regions where the concept is most commonly practiced. There, as a result of advancements in digital and mobile infrastructures, novel media outlets are actively competing against legacy media organizations in terms of journalistic quality, diversity in topics addressed, and reaching new audiences (Salaverría & de-Lima-Santos, 2021). This suggests the possibility of efforts toward implementing measures from the identified areas for advancement.

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[1] https://digitalcourses.afp.com

[2] https://www.poynter.org/newsu

[3] https://cmds.ceu.edu/cross-border-investigative-journalism-online-course

3   Peace Journalism

Current meta-analyses of the concept (Doll & Moy, 2022; Gouse et al., 2019) show that definitions of peace journalism focus on the normative aspect. For example, Shinar (2007) classifies it as "a normative mode of responsible and conscientious media coverage of conflict, that aims to contribute to peacemaking, peacekeeping, and changing the attitudes of media owners, advertisers, professionals and audiences towards war and peace" (p. 2). Aligning with this, Hanitzsch (2004) sees peace journalism "as a special mode of socially responsible journalism" and "a [program] or frame of journalistic news coverage which contributes to the process of making and keeping peace respectively to the peaceful settlement of conflicts" (p. 484). An often-cited definition by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) also focuses on the implications for society offered by a nonviolent reporting style: "Peace Journalism is when editors and reporters make choices – of what to report and how to report it – that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value nonviolent responses to conflict" (p. 5).

The model of peace journalism originates from work by Johan Galtung, who distinguished between war/violence journalism and peace/conflict journalism. While he saw war/violence journalism as a zero-sum game oriented toward war/violence, propaganda, the elite, and victory, he characterized peace/conflict journalism as a win-win-situation oriented toward peace/conflict, truth, the people, and solutions (Galtung, 2003, p. 178; see also Galtung, 1998). In this respect, he saw the task of peace journalism as reporting "truthfully both war and peace […]. The task of peace journalism is serious, professional reporting and making these processes more transparent" (Galtung, 1998). Similarly, for Lynch and McGoldrick (2007), "Peace Journalism does not just mean 'reporting peace'[… but including] the sum of what is known and has been observed about conflict, its dynamics and the potential for transformation [in] the everyday jobs of editing and reporting the news" (p. 248).

Many researchers have discussed, adapted, or operationalized the concept of peace journalism (e.g., Auwal & Ersoy, 2020; Hussain & Siraj, 2019; Kempf, 2003; Lee & Maslog, 2005). Most empirical studies have observed the dominance of war-oriented reporting over peace journalism practices in the context of war and conflict situations (e.g., Hussain, 2020; Lee & Maslog, 2005; Ottosen, 2010; Shinar, 2009). However, importantly, the concept of peace journalism has been discussed beyond scholarly debates and research to see operationalization in journalistic training (e.g., Youngblood, 2017).

Nonetheless, peace journalism has received significant criticism for what is understood as an overly normative approach (Loyn, 2007) and for functioning as a practice contrary to journalistic objectivity (Hanitzsch, 2004) that blurs the boundary between journalism and public relations (Hanitzsch, 2007). In addition, critics have argued that it ignores the textual and discursive constraints that influence text production (Fawcett, 2002) and challenged the legitimacy of using journalism to establish peace (Hanitzsch, 2007; Olivera, 2022).

4   Peace Journalism and Media Digitalization

As a journalistic concept introduced decades ago – at a time when the dominant modes of public communication included only newspapers, magazines, radio, and television – peace journalism can be misunderstood as an outdated set of ideas with restricted application in digital settings. As the world continues to confront conflicts of varying intensities and dynamics (HIIK, 2022), it is vital that the principles of peace journalism be (re)introduced within relevant circles in a manner that not only facilitates understanding of the concept but also clearly highlights its potential for improving society. This paper concentrates on peace journalism because the concept entails elements and indicators relevant for practitioners performing their professional obligations in (or about) areas of unrest. Merging certain advantages of digitalization with peace journalism anticipates effective war and conflict reporting and the uplifting of the affected areas or communities.

It should be noted that certain other forms of journalism have already been taking advantage of digitalization's concrete solution to pressing problems: media outlets, including Perspective Daily[4], Relevanz Reporter[5], and Squirrel News[6], exclusively base their reporting on constructive or solutions(-oriented) journalism and offer readers the possibility of interacting with the news by means of dedicated smartphone apps. Several other constructive news start-ups and dedicated sections of news outlets, including Positive News[7], Future Perfect (Vox)[8] and Good News Magazin[9], maintain a vibrant digital presence through their websites and their social media profiles. By exploring the efforts made by adherents to other forms of journalism, peace journalism practitioners can learn a great deal about reaching out to audiences in the digital age.

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[4]   https://perspective-daily.de/

[5]   https://relevanzreporter.de/

[6]   https://squirrel-news.net/

[7]   https://www.positive.news/

[8]   https://www.vox.com/future-perfect

[9]   https://goodnews-magazin.de/

The following subsections see five areas for the further development of peace journalism in conjunction with media digitalization explored and elaborated: (1) digital distribution on various platforms to improve reach and attract a wide audience to advocate for peace; (2) utility of the potential of two-way communication to facilitate a multiperspectivity of voices and even dialogue between all sorts of actors in a conflict; (3) exploration of new forms of digital storytelling to strengthen the delivery of the news; (4) curation of various digital sources of conflict actors and fact-checking to show adversarial groups and perspectives and also fight disinformation; (5) incorporation of modes of virtual training and digital skills in curricula to spread the concept. As an amalgamation of the opportunities and risks discussed in the previous section concerning journalism in the digital age, combined with ideas pertaining to the advancement of peace journalism, these development categories serve as a stride toward conceptual advancement and the initiation of (scholarly) discourse concerning the practice of peace journalism in the digital age. These suggestions have thus far only been partially implemented by dedicated peace journalism outlets. "Everyday" journalism lacks the conditions for implementing peace journalism as a concept. Therefore, we focus on offerings specific to peace journalism. Often, only a few best-practice examples can be given, each of which requires further examination. This means that the digitalization of peace journalism represents a work in progress.

5   Digital Distribution

Given that news use increasingly takes place on news websites and social media platforms (Newman et al., 2022), peace journalism – like mainstream journalism – is challenged to embrace digital distribution. This implies the potential to reach new and wider audiences with peace journalism and engage them in the concept. Even social media users who do not visit social media platforms for news may still encounter peace journalism via incidental exposure (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018). Indeed, beyond continuing to rely upon traditional distribution channels, various global media outlets regularly maintain and upgrade their digital and social media offerings to attract audiences to achieve higher levels of interaction with the content they produce (Al-Rawi, 2016).

Beyond these opportunities, the switch to digital and especially social media platforms also entails risks. Generally, publishers worry about becoming too dependent on intermediaries, especially because the relationship is characterized by a power asymmetry (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018), an asymmetry represented by the power of algorithms and the demand to adopt particular formats offered, all of which has implications for publishing business models (Sehl et al., 2021). Furthermore, brand recognition is notably lower on social media (Kalogeropolous et al., 2019), and peace journalism exists in the same ecosystem as disinformation, an idea further explored later in this paper.

Although there exist certain digital media offerings exclusively concerned with reporting based on peace journalism (e.g., Peace Insight [10] and Social Media 4 Peace [11]), they are scarce in number and not updated regularly. Furthermore, these offerings must be complemented by an active and integrated social media presence to ensure comprehensive audience engagement (Thackeray et al., 2012). This means that digital media and social media platforms offer opportunities for peace journalism, but resources and regular engagement are required to establish a presence and grow an audience.

6   Utilizing the Potential of Two-Way Communication

Digital platforms enable two-way communication (Lee & Tandoc Jr., 2017), a potential that has been utilized in various forms of participatory journalism in newsrooms in the past, although mostly only in the form of post-publication comment sections (Domingo et al., 2008; Karlsson, 2011). Audience participation was less democratically than economically motivated, mainly by the motivation to build loyalty, increase traffic, or, sometimes, save costs (Vujnovic et al., 2010). Nonetheless, in terms of peace journalism, utilizing two-way communication offers the specific potential to include the voices of different actors in conflicts. This stresses the centrality of a multiplicity of voices and an opportunity for dialogue in the concept of peace journalism (Galtung & Fischer, 2013).

For example, Fondation Hirondelle, a Swiss non-governmental organization (NGO) that has created FM radios, multimedia programs, and digital-born media in countries facing major crises, promotes special dialogue formats in these countries (Fondation Hirondelle, n.d.a). These projects follow principles including producing programs in the languages of relevant groups, fair shares of speaking time between participants in debate programs, and making sure all voices are heard, especially those of marginalized communities. This suggests that dialogue programs pertain to the peacebuilding approach of Fondation Hirondelle in conflict countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan, among others (Fondation Hirondelle, n.d.b). In the DRC, for example, Fondation Hirondelle is especially targeting youth and women as audiences to motivate them to become more engaged and have an inclusive public debate (Fondation Hirondelle, n.d.c).

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[10] https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/

[11] https://articles.unesco.org/en/articles/social-media-4-peace

Another important possibility offered by digital media is the ease of gathering, analyzing, and adjusting based on audience feedback. Contrary to the one-way communication predominant in traditional media, today's digitized world substantially focuses on instant feedback, allowing for communication strategies and content quality to be gauged readily (Lee & Tandoc Jr., 2017). Whether in the form of likes or favorites, comments or retweets, modern-day digital media provides content producers with readily available audience insights that enable them to better connect with their publics and incorporate necessary changes in their engagement strategies (Cherubini & Nielsen, 2016).

In view of peace journalism's commitment to better connecting with publics, audience feedback can be used for insights into which content-related strategies work most effectively and to instantly respond to queries and feedback, contributing to the development of a meaningful relationship. Because a good understanding of audience preferences is key to ensuring successful communication, it is equally important to provide a sense of connectivity by valuing feedback (Yang & Coffey, 2014).

Utilizing two-way communication also requires that user contributions are regularly moderated by dedicated staff to ensure quality (Harrison, 2010) and emphasize best practices by, for example, highlighting user contributions and curating, thereby coaching and providing oversight, respectively (Domingo, 2011, pp. 89–91).

7   Exploring New Forms of Digital Storytelling

Defined as "short vignettes that combine the art of telling stories with multimedia objects including images, audio, and video" (Rossiter & Garcia, 2010, p. 37), digital storytelling offers new opportunities for journalists to present and for audiences to discover content. The format usually combines creativity, promptness, and a hint of personalization while also considering brevity to capture a share in the interest of modern audiences. Notably, different forms of digital storytelling have already been partly integrated into mainstream journalism (e.g., digital data journalism and multimedia stories) (Zayani, 2020).

International NGOs have also employed digital storytelling to foster peace in conflict regions, with examples including the Institute of War and Peace Reporting [12], Search for Common Ground [13], and PeaceTech Lab (PTL) [14]. PTL summarizes its mission as follows: "We are PeaceTech Lab. We reduce violent conflict using technology, media, and data" (PeaceTech Lab, n.d.). Their initiatives include fighting disinformation, hate speech, and COVID-19 violence tracking. Digital storytelling was also realized extensively at the Geneva Peace Week , which offered content about conflicts worldwide, primarily to Western audiences. More recently, the dominance of short-video-based initiatives such as YouTube Shorts, Facebook, and Instagram Reels, as well as the algorithmic brilliance of TikTok's For You page, have highlighted the potential of utilizing this novel format in the context of social media platforms (Cervi, 2021; Imran, 2022). Individual users, corporations, and certain media organizations actively use the engagement potential offered by these initiatives to reach larger and more diverse audiences. By adjusting their messages (or news reports) to the latest digital trend, peace journalism practitioners can not only get their word out to publics in distant parts of the globe but also serve as an important alternative to traditional reporting.

Because digital storytelling is utilized to raise awareness about various societal issues and their solutions (Planer & Godulla, 2020), the practice can be used to discuss the relevance of peace journalism in modern times and present it as an important supplement to extant journalistic practices. By highlighting personal accounts of those afflicted by conflicts and engaging elements of empathy and emotional appeal in conjunction with evidence of suffering in the form of eyewitness videos, powerful storytelling can initiate discussions concerning commonality and solutions that can pave the way for mitigating issues and crises.

However, limitations existing as a result of the global digital divide as well as journalistic competencies can hinder the production and dissemination of digital content (Jamil, 2023).

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[12] https://iwpr.net/what-we-do

[13] https://www.peacetechlab.org

[14] https://www.leapoffaithpeacebuilding.org/

8   Curating Various Digital Sources of Conflict Actors and Fact-Checking

Despite all the positives of digital media, one major challenge is the ease with which deliberately produced disinformation can spread on various platforms, which represents a critical obstacle to the functioning of modern democracies (Humprecht et al., 2020). This has led to several digital media companies being instructed to take active measures to identify and counter the spread of harmful disinformation (Iosifidis & Nicoli, 2019). Countering disinformation in the online sphere is not only essential to tackling hate speech. It is also vital because disinformation has the potential to spill offline, precipitating mayhem (Saurwein & Spencer-Smith, 2020).

Accordingly, many media organizations around the world have implemented dedicated fact-checking departments. On this, a recent report published by the International Fact Checking Network (IFCN) indicated a gradual increase in the number of organizations worldwide dedicated to fact-checking (IFCN, 2022), highlighting the significance of the issue at hand and efforts being made to address it effectively. Furthermore, various NGOs have established fact-checking in conflict regions to counter disinformation, with one example being Tech 4 Peace, which checks news being spread online, mostly on social media, in the Middle East, especially Iraq (Tech 4 Peace, n.d.). Another example is the Maharat Foundation in Lebanon, financed by organizations including the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, United Nations Development Programme, and German Deutsche Welle Akademie (Maharat Foundation, n.d.a). Maharat's fact-o-meter debunks fake news while aiming to develop media literacy (Maharat Foundation, n.d.b).

Because one of the key postulates of peace journalism concerns reducing misunderstandings among different actors to promote harmony, acting against the spread of online disinformation can represent an avenue worth exploring for modern-day journalists. Competencies that can facilitate effective verification of the credibility of online information represent a relevant addition to the skillset of modern journalists. Identifying and flagging content that might be fake or that has the capacity to cause social unrest due to its baseless nature serves as a starting point in the fight against disinformation. Although an approach based on manual fact-checking with support from automated analysis could prove crucial, progress needs to be made concerning the effectiveness of the latter (Graves, 2018; Zeng et al., 2021). That effort becomes even more important in conflict settings because belligerents can easily embark on online disinformation campaigns due to the lack of legislation or resources that might help the average online media consumer to question the reliability of the content they are exposed to.

It should be highlighted that modern media organizations, regardless of their size and structure, must be cognizant of the dangers associated with the spread of disinformation. This demands that they dedicate appropriate resources to spread awareness. A combined effort at an individual (journalist) and organizational level can ensure an effective response that curbs disinformation. Given that a key aspect of peace journalism is truth orientation – "exposing untruths on all sides; uncover all cover-ups" (Galtung, 2002, p. 261) – acting against disinformation is highly relevant.

9   Incorporating Virtual Training and Digital Skills in Journalism Curricula

Because peace journalism concerns developing relevant journalistic capabilities (Aslam, 2011), it can facilitate the digital transformation of journalism by "virtualizing" the training process. The COVID-19 pandemic discouraged personal contact and forced a global switch toward digitalization, adding to the relevance of conducting workshops or training sessions for journalists virtually. Other than proving to be time- and cost-efficient, developing relevant skills in peace journalism through digital means can provide an opportunity for increased interaction between trainees and trainers. Journalists undergoing training can learn from the expertise and experiences of experts and peers from other parts of the world. Such an initiative could better connect journalists reporting from around the globe, enabling them to open up about the challenges they faced and the solutions that worked for them in reporting conflicts.

Notably, post-traumatic stress disorder and ongoing traumatic stress disorder are highly relevant to journalists in conflict regions. This means that journalists are confronted during their working lives with traumatizing situations, sometimes even in a continuous way. For instance, a 2020 study of Afghan journalists revealed high levels of stress prevalent among journalists reporting for the various local news organizations in the country, with only a handful receiving organizational support to improve their condition (Osmann et al., 2020). Due to limited resources and lack of awareness, journalists from underdeveloped and developing countries seldom have access to quality resources that can facilitate improved mental well-being. This issue can be tackled effectively via online workshops and sessions that are tailored to the ground realities of journalists serving in different parts of the globe. Moreover, journalists are also confronted with the challenge of implementing peace journalism in their work as a result of individual or organizational shortcomings, including "information management […] inadequate access to information, unsatisfactory infrastructure" (Kempf, 2011, p. 4). Digitalization can benefit them in this regard in several ways: by providing ease in connectivity with different sources, quick verification of information, and the possibility of interacting with diverse audiences through various networking

platforms. Such efforts will provide professional journalists with ample opportunities to incorporate several peace journalism related elements in their reporting.

Furthermore, curricula based upon imparting an understanding of peace journalism should be updated to instill relevant digital media skills in journalists. Having a knack for digital media tools or applications not only enhances competence and provides a boost to an individual journalist's portfolio (Fahmy, 2008; Ureta & Fernández, 2017) but also contributes to the gradual evolution of the concept of peace journalism. Although cognizance of the elements of digital storytelling and the ability to identify and report disinformation are of utmost relevance for any modern-day journalist, these skills are all the more relevant for professionals involved in reporting from conflict areas.

As such, if peace journalism is to maintain its relevance, it must ensure the universal accessibility of its fundamentals. Digitalizing information pertaining to the concept would allow for enhanced interaction, encouraging the exchange of expertise and experiences between practitioners from various parts of the world. This could prove to be crucial, particularly in the context of training aspiring reporters eager to share stories from conflict areas or war zones, which can ultimately provide journalists and audiences with broader context and deeper insights.

10 Conclusion

The concept of peace journalism has witnessed gradual growth since its introduction in the twentieth century. This paper has argued that the concept can prosper even further if it opens itself to necessary changes and upgrades based upon digitalization and media advancement. In doing so, it would engage in the global switch from traditional to online communication, facilitating better understanding and broader dissemination of peace journalism's core ideas, not necessarily only within journalistic circles but also to the average modern-day media consumer.

Five avenues for peace journalism's potential advantageous synchronization with media digitalization have been identified here. First, *digital distribution* of information by means of a shift to online platforms can be fruitful for peace journalism practitioners, especially considering the large audience reach of these digital initiatives, which highlights their effectiveness and likeability. Considering each of the several aspects of peace journalism – non-elite oriented reporting, the transparency of conflicts, and a focus on violence and suffering experienced by all parties (Lynch & Galtung, 2010), newer initiatives can present deeper and more insightful stories to audiences through the effective use of digital media.

Second, peace journalism can explore a multiplicity of voices by *utilizing the potential of two-way communication* and making use of the feedback mechanisms provided by modern digital media to better understand audience preferences. Staying connected to audiences is not only vital for understanding their dynamics; it is equally significant for improving the message being sent out and for making audiences feel seen and heard.

Third, *exploring new forms of digital storytelling* in peace journalism-based reporting could increase audience approval via personalization, creativity, and brevity. Reporting issues that do not usually make it to the limelight and presenting a range of narratives by means of digital platforms using modern engagement techniques should ultimately increase audience approval.

Fourth, peace journalism practitioners can *curate various digital sources of conflict actors* and *fact-check* the information available in the online sphere. Developing the skills needed to identify and flag disinformation, a major drawback of digital media, is crucial to safeguarding social harmony. This is especially vital in the context of war and conflict reporting, where developments of any scale have massive consequences for all parties and publics involved. Hence, a proactive approach is recommended at the level of both the individual journalist and the media organization to counter the menace of disinformation.

Finally, a switch to *virtually training* journalists in skills relevant to the practice of peace journalism alongside the *incorporation of digital skills in the curricula* to ensure competency in digital media tools can benefit both individual journalists and the concept of peace journalism. Peace journalists across the globe can connect with others via digital networking, enabling them not only to better understand each other but also to share ideas and experiences related to reporting in challenging circumstances.

Although this article has aimed to provide an overview of the digitalization opportunities for the concept of peace journalism, it has not been possible to deeply analyze and evaluate each of the five aspects. As such, this overview offers various starting points for future research.

By exploring opportunities for peace journalism's digitalization, we also need to stress challenges and risks. As discussed in the second section of this text, the Internet and social media can be used as tools to spread propaganda in wars and conflicts (Bahar, 2020). This renders it crucial for peace journalism practitioners to ensure that their application of the concept through digital means does not entail elements of partisanship or propaganda. This requires a vigilant outlook toward not only professional reporting norms but also worldwide digital (media) trends.

Furthermore, technological advancement, which involves both technical know-how and the presence of a functioning technical infrastructure, is not evenly distributed in all parts of the globe (Robinson et al., 2015). This variance directly impacts not only individuals living within particular geographical territories but also the manner in which the organizations there operate. Although the inability to keep up with digital transformation trends should not hamper quality journalism, it does have the potential to limit the impact of the message being delivered to audiences. Peace journalism continues to be practiced in parts of the world that are marred by conflict and experience restrictions on their access to modern means of communication (Youngblood, 2017). Concerted efforts to technologically uplift these regions, especially for the benefit of journalists operating there, could have significant results for the conceptual evolution and widespread practice of peace journalism.

Connecting peace journalism with advancements in media digitalization can also provide a much-needed discursive boost to the concept. With discussions within academia and among professional journalists concentrated on novel and trending journalistic concepts (e.g., constructive journalism, data journalism, citizen journalism, and solutions journalism), peace journalism finds itself waning in terms of conceptual advancement and practice. Incorporating elements linked to modernity and innovation could increase discussions about what peace journalism represents and how the practice could be made more effective. Similarly, utilizing the digital revolution to (re-)introduce peace journalism to modern audiences as an alternative to traditional reporting could not only result in the concept's popularity but also promote greater awareness by encouraging news consumption, something that media organizations worldwide are struggling to maintain (Newman et al., 2022).

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