



Ethnic Newspapers as Transcultural Spaces: A Case Study of The Korea Daily Chicago

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Abstract. This study examines how The Korea Daily Chicago, a Korean ethnic newspaper with more than 40 years of history in the U.S. Midwest, fulfills its journalistic mission while navigating organizational and economic challenges. Following the closure of its parent company's Chicago branch in 2018, the newspaper has operated independently, offering a unique case for understanding ethnic media survival strategies amid declining print readership, limited staffing, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Using participant observation of newsroom practices and semi-structured interviews conducted in September 2021, this qualitative case study found that the newspaper maintains transnational partnerships with The Joongang Daily Seoul and The Korea Daily Los Angeles to secure stable news content, while also relying heavily on advertising from Korean-owned businesses to sustain local operations. These practices illustrate how ethnic newspapers serve not only as business enterprises but also as transcultural and glocal spaces. The case of The Korea Daily Chicago sheds light on the precarious yet adaptive role of ethnic newspapers in the U.S., positioning ethnic media as vital cultural institutions

Keywords: ethnic media; glocalization; hybridization; *The Korea Daily Chicago*; transculturality.

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1. Introduction

In an unrelenting wave of globalization, communication technologies have served as one of the driving forces to shape immigrants' ethnic identities because they could have enabled ethnic groups to maintain their own languages, values, and cultures (C. Lee, 2009; Lule, 2021; Matsaganis et al., 2011; Yoon, 2018). Ethnic media have helped immigrants understand and interpret the issues and events surrounding them as well as the world itself (Campbell et al., 2017). Overall, ethnic media "function as one of the principal vehicles of socialization and communication within immigrant communities" (Viswanath & Arora, 2000, p. 41). Consequently, ethnic communities have been vibrantly sustained by means of public spheres which ethnic media have created (Johnson, 2000).

Many print publications in the U.S. are having difficulties maintaining their businesses profitably since younger people rush to social networking services to obtain news and information (Croteau & Hoynes, 2019). Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic in the early of 2020 has remarkably dwindled the advertising-dependent ethnic publications which had

been already in decline due to the advent of digital media channels (Hess & Waller, 2021). This is largely because "advertising is the main source of revenue for most of these outlets and is as much a source in crisis for ethnic media as it is for the nation's mainstream news media" (UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media, 2021).

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, globalization in the last several decades has already upended the news business by the ethnic media (Matsaganis et al., 2011). Global media corporations in the developed nations have taken advantage of globalization in order to infiltrate new markets in other nations (Hanson, 2019). Media corporations in non-Western nations have also globalized their businesses to serve ethnic communities in the Western developed nations (Ju & Lee, 2015; Matsaganis et al., 2011; Pieterse, 2020; Yang, 2007). These rapid flows of media businesses from the East to the West showed that the globalization of media could be reciprocal between the West and East. The non-Western media corporations' inroad into the West has been further facilitated by the development of communication technologies as well as the increase of immigrants overseas (Croteau & Hoynes, 2019; Yang, 2007).

One example to display this transnational media globalization – from the East to the West – is South Korean newspaper companies which have vigorously established their own ethnic subsidiaries in major cities in the United States and Canada since the 1970s (J.-Y. Kim, 2013; Matsaganis et al., 2011). These companies sought to serve a rapidly increasing Korean population abroad and expand their business opportunities. Specifically, starting at the 1970s, *The Korea Times* (Hankook Ilbo) and *The Joongang Daily*, the dailies based in Seoul, established ethnic newspaper subsidiaries in American and Canadian cities with a relatively large number of Korean populations. The Korean ethnic newspapers in North America have published news content not only from the parent-corporation in Seoul, but also created by local journalists. The local production of news content was possible due to the localization strategy adopted and field-centered by local media professionals.

This dual strategy of globalization and localization by Korean ethnic newspapers in the U.S. has considerably succeeded in terms of both business and journalism creativity. This accomplishment has not only made their parent-corporations in the home country proud of their foreign media branches, but has also induced their competitors in the home country to build similar subsidiaries in the U.S. In this regard, *The Korea Times* and *The Joongang Daily* have been the model for their Korean competitors which were also eager to advance to the U.S. market (J.-Y. Kim, 2013). However, as the information technologies have spread across borders, the Korean ethnic newspapers abroad have been impacted negatively, and their business models started to decline due to the shrinking readership and advertising revenues. Moreover, the immigration boom from South Korea to the U.S. has gradually cooled down. On top of that, as younger people are less willing to read the printed newspapers, these Korean ethnic dailies have also had difficulties in increasing their readership among young generations.

Reflecting these challenges for Korean ethnic dailies, in the early of 2018, *The Joongang Daily Seoul* decided to shut down its own branches in some cities, such as Chicago, Washington D.C., and San Francisco, among its U.S subsidiaries. Accordingly, the ethnic dailies at these locations were closed in April 2018. Thus, Korean people in these regions lost their ethnic newspapers serving as an information provider as well as a cultural conduit among them. However, some Korean journalists in these locations made a special request to *The Joongang Daily* headquarters in Seoul so that they can continue to publish the parent-corporation's news content in their respective regions. Accordingly, *The*

Joongang Daily Seoul and Korean ethnic newspapers in the U.S. respectively reached a deal that journalists in these regions can be given a right of reprinting the news content of *The Joongang Daily Seoul* if they can pay for *The Joongang Daily Seoul*'s news content and, at the same time, provide their local news content to *The Joongang Daily Seoul*. As a result, *The Korea Daily Chicago* started to publish its own newspaper again as a franchise in September 2018. *The Korea Daily Washington DC* and *The Korea Daily San Francisco* started to print their own ethnic newspaper in the fall of 2018.

The survival of these ethnic dailies was possible since not only did local journalists strive to restore Korean ethnic newspapers, but also there had been a reciprocal trust between Joongang Daily Seoul and Korean journalists in those foreign locations. Consequently, for example, The Korea Daily Chicago became a locally owned and operated independent newspaper without The Joongang Daily Seoul's supervision, though The Korea Daily Chicago is still reliant on both the news content and brand value of The Joongang Daily Seoul. Currently, The Korea Daily Chicago and The Joongang Daily Seoul maintain a cooperative relationship. The Korea Daily Chicago publishes its own media content customized to the needs of the Chicago area and its Korean communities. However, The Korea Daily Chicago has faced significant challenges, not only in regaining subscribers lost during the five-months suspension of publication in 2018, but also in securing sustainable revenues without the support from the parent corporation. Another pressing issue for this ethnic newspaper is expanding its readership amid an aging Korean immigrant population and the overall decline in newspaper readership.

This study examines how *The Korea Daily Chicago* manages its media operations with a small staff in order to ensure the survival of an ethnic newspaper. It also explores the influence of globalization and digitization on contemporary ethnic newspapers, with particular attention to *The Korea Daily Chicago*. This study employs both observations and interviews to analyze the newspaper's journalism and business practices. Beyond offering a descriptive account of journalism practices, this study aims to provide a conceptual analysis of ethnic newspapers as transcultural survival projects. It also sheds light on how immigrant media institutions negotiate global and local forces, sustain cultural identity, and adapt to the fundamental challenges of the digital era. In doing so, the study not only extends the literature on ethnic media but also contributes to broader debates in cultural theory, globalization studies, and media survival strategies.

Thus, the examination of the Korean ethnic newspaper outlet can be a precious opportunity to examine the current status quo of media globalization in today's digital media environment. In this regard, this study will explore not only how one Korean ethnic newspaper is conducting journalistic and business-related activities, but also how it is serving Korean ethnic communities and local journalism. In this background, this study selected *The Korea Daily Chicago* as a case to examine Korean ethnic media in a broad context.

This study examines the survival strategies of small and ethnic media. Community and ethnic outlets often face structural challenges due to limited audiences, declining print circulation, and challenges in adapting to digital environments. Survival strategies may include revenue diversification, niche audience targeting, or digital migration. These strategies are not only economic but also cultural, as they involve preserving community identity and maintaining the voice for minority populations in multicultural societies. The case of *The Korea Daily Chicago* illustrates how survival is negotiated at both levels: economically, through dependence on ethnic business advertising; and culturally, through

sustaining Korean diasporic identity in the Midwest. In this context, this study seeks to connect ethnic media's survival strategies with transcultural and globalization theories, offering a multidimensional account of how ethnic newspapers navigate an increasingly digital media landscape.

2. Literature Review

While prior research on ethnic media has largely emphasized either cultural maintenance or adaptation paradigms, this study seeks to explore how transcultural practices emerge in the everyday journalism of *The Korea Daily Chicago*. This approach adds nuance by revealing how Korean ethnic media in the U.S. not only preserve identity but also create hybrid media practices shaped by global flows, local advertising practices, and community needs. Most existing studies have theorized transculturality and globalization in broad terms. Communication research that focuses on the content and organizational strategies of a single ethnic media outlet remains scarce. This study seeks to situate transculturality and hybridization theories within the practical realities of ethnic journalism. It also examines the dual role of ethnic newspapers: serving immigrant populations through localized services while maintaining transnational ties through content syndication. This dual positioning is underexplored in communication studies.

2.1. Ethnicity and Ethnic Media

Ethnicity "involves the use of the social aspects of a group's cultural background to separate themselves from others" (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997, p. 93). Ethnic identity is "a form of social identity" and is maintained through a vigorous process of social construction; it fluctuates and evolves over time (Matsaganis et al., 2011, p. 5). Ethnic media refer to "media produced for a particular community" (Matsaganis et al., 2011, p. 5). They are important because ethnic identity is generally shaped and reinforced through communication, and ethnic media serve as one of the most vital channels for facilitating and accelerating communication among members of a specific ethnic community.

The term 'ethnic media' is frequently mingled and used with other terms to describe other types of media, such as minority media, community media, and diasporic media (Matsaganis et al., 2011). The usage and preference of these terms depend on "how different countries understand differences between people based on their ethnic or racial background" (Matsaganis et al., 2011, p. 8). For example, firstly, the term 'minority media' is preferred when "the group of people these media are produced for are in fact a minority among the general population" (p. 8). Second, while the term 'immigrant media' reflects that many ethnic media "are focused on the concerns and interests of immigrant populations" (p. 9), it tends to exclude many racial and ethnic groups, such as African American media and native populations in America, Canada, and Australia. Third, the term 'diasporic media' is also used in describing ethnic media because it focuses on "a particular ethnic group" with "a common history of a shared injustice" and the purpose of "maintaining and or restoring a homeland" (pp. 9-10). Accordingly, the term of 'diasporic media' does not cover a variety of media used by a number of ethnic or racial groups. Similarly, the terms 'local media' and 'community media' put an emphasis on a specific local space and, thus, are not sufficient to describe the emergence and development of media in a particular ethnic community compared to that of 'ethnic media'. Overall, ethnic media are particularly "sensitive to the ongoing negotiation of ethnic identity, culture, and race" (Matsaganis et al., 2011, p. 15).

2.2. Transculturality and Hybridization

Ethnic newspapers have long been recognized as critical sites of communication for immigrant communities. These papers generally function both as information providers and as vehicles of cultural maintenance. However, as Welsch (1999) pointed out that in his theory of transculturality, cultures are not isolated entities, but dynamic constructions shaped by exchanges, migrations, and interconnectedness across borders.

Thus, ethnic newspapers, such as *The Korea Daily Chicago*, should not be viewed merely as preservers of a fixed 'Korean culture' within the U.S. diaspora. Rather, they function as transcultural media spaces where hybrid forms of identity and community are continuously constructed. Their content and practices illustrate how immigrant journalists negotiate among homeland traditions, host-society norms, and global media flows. This study provides empirical grounding for Welsch's theoretical claim by demonstrating how transcultural negotiations unfold in the everyday journalistic practices of a Korean ethnic newspaper.

The theoretical literature on globalization further deepens this perspective. Robertson (1994) introduced the concept of glocalization, emphasizing the mutual constitution of global and local processes. Rather than eliminating the local, globalization reshapes it, producing hybrid cultural forms. Similarly, Pieterse (2020) framed globalization as hybridization, highlighting how local practices and global forces interact to generate cultural innovations rather than homogenization. In the case of *The Korea Daily Chicago*, the newspaper exemplifies these dynamics by relying simultaneously on global news flows from *The Joongang Daily* in Seoul and Los Angeles, and on deeply localized advertising revenue from Korean businesses in Chicago. This dual strategy positions the newspaper as a glocal media institution, balancing transnational news flows with local immigrant community needs. Accordingly, this study contributes to globalization theory by illustrating how ethnic media embody both glocal and hybrid forms of journalism practice.

2.3. Roles and Functions of Ethnic Media

A great deal of research by social scientists has found that in immigrants' adjustment to American society and culture, mass media perform their own role in three ways (Johnson, 2000; C. Lee, 2004). First, mass media serve as the agent of 'assimilation' which refers to someone taking one culture while giving up another culture. The paradigm of assimilation prevailed in the early 20th century among scholars who viewed the assimilation into American culture as desirable for immigrants (Park, 1950, 1970). Second, during the 1960s, communication scholars paid their attention to the concept of 'acculturation' (Berry, 1980) which refers to "gradual adaption to the new culture by replacing some norms and values of the old culture with those of the new" (Johnson, 2000, p. 232). This 'acculturation' paradigm stresses reciprocal processes between the majority culture and the new culture (Johnson, 2000; Y. Y. Kim, 1988).

Third, the 'pluralism' paradigm became popular since the late 1970s and was largely accepted as a useful theoretical framework to describe ethnic identities of immigrants in local communities. Pluralism refers to the recognition and acceptance of ethnic differentiation and heterogeneity as well as multiple group membership according to a variety of cultural circumstances and contexts (Johnson, 2000, p. 232; Subervi-Velez, 1986). Currently, immigrants have more opportunities to meet the cultural products of their home country because of the globalization of technologies. Strong ethnicity and vigorous cultural

identity have enabled the pluralism paradigm more plausible than the assimilation paradigm (Glazer & Moynihan, 1970).

Ethnic media perform multiple functions in ethnic communities, including to "educate and orient newcomers to their new community and its resources", to "teach more subtle rules about correct behaviors and what the new society values", and to "participate in policy discussions affecting ethnic communities" (Matsaganis et al., 2011, pp. 15–16). After conducting participant-observation and interviews with Korean college students born in the U.S., Jung & Lee (2004) found that "Korean videos, mobile phones, and the Internet were the main media through which these Korean Americans learned about Korean culture and society, and increased intra-ethnic communication within the diasporic Korean American community context" (p. 146). That is, ethnic media can serve as a potent agent of social change since they are able to shape ethnic identities, public opinion, cultural practices, and political mobilization within and beyond ethnic communities.

3. Method

This study was conducted as a qualitative case study of *The Korea Daily Chicago* in order to explore the organizational strategies and journalistic practices of a long-standing ethnic newspaper. The researcher visited *The Korea Daily Chicago* for four days in September 2021. During this visit, participant observations of newsroom operations and newspaper productions were carried out. The researcher witnessed not only how news items were selected for publication, but also how staff members performed their daily responsibilities related to newspaper publication, advertising procurement, subscription marketing, and other organizational tasks. Observation of several meetings, including the newsroom conference, was also conducted.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were held with members of *The Korea Daily Chicago* during this visit to provide further insights into their perspectives and strategies, including the publisher (editor-in-chief), three reporters, two layout designers, two marketing staff, and one multimedia strategist. As mentioned earlier in this paper, *The Korea Daily Chicago* became a locally published, independent newspaper in September 2018, several months after its publication was suspended by *The Joongang Daily Seoul* in the spring of that year. It currently maintains a strategic, cooperative relationship with *The Joongang Daily Seoul*. *The Korea Daily Chicago* receives two main types of news content: one from *The Joongang Daily Seoul* – primarily covering events and issues in South Korea – and another from *The Korea Daily Los Angeles*, which serves as the U.S. headquarters for *The Joongang Daily Seoul*. The latter produces news content on topics such as immigration, politics, crime, and education, all of which are relevant to Korean communities in the U.S.

To situate the case study within the broader historical context, this study investigates the history of Korean immigrant in the U.S. as well as the history of Korean ethnic newspaper. In addition, this study also situates the case of *The Korea Daily Chicago* within Korean media landscape in Chicago, the researcher collected and examined other Korean media periodicals produced in the area. Within the Chicago media market, there are several Korean ethnic media outlets. In addition to *The Korea Daily Chicago*, *The Korea Times Chicago* has published a daily newspaper since 1971. Together, these two outlets primarily serve Korean ethnic communities in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana, although most subscribers and advertisers are concentrated in Chicago and its suburbs. Other ethnic media outlets in the area include television broadcasters such as *Korean Broadcasting Chicago* (KBC), *Korean Christian Broadcasting System* (KCBS), and *Win TV Chicago*, as well as

weeklies like *Chicago Times* and advertisement-specialized media such as *Chicago Kyocharo*. This research project was reviewed and approved in July 2021 by the Human Subjects Review Officer at the University of Illinois Springfield.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. History of Korean Immigrants in the U.S.

According to the Pew Research Center Analysis of 2017-2019 American Community Survey (IPUMS), the Korean population in the U.S. was 1,908,000 in the year of 2019 (2021, April 21). Over the last several decades, the number of Korean populations has steadily increased: 1,228,000 in 2000; 1,707,000 in 2010; 1,822,000 in 2015. Among Koreans, including Koreans with the U.S. citizenship, about 56% were born in Korea; the ratio of Koreans born in the U.S. was rapidly approaching half of the Korean population in the U.S. (Yonhap, 2023). The top five U.S. metropolitan areas inhabited by Korean population are Los Angeles (326,000), New York (220,000), Washington D.C. (96,000), Seattle (67,000), and Chicago (62,000).

The immigration of Koreans into the U.S. can be summed up into three periods: "the first wave from 1903 to 1949, the second wave from 1950 to 1964, and the contemporary period" (Chung, 2021; E. Lee, 2015; Yu, 1985). The first wave began on January 13, 1903, when Korean immigrants arrived in Hawaii via ship in order to work at pineapple and sugar plantations. In 1905, more than 7,000 Koreans moved to Hawaii. In addition, between 1905 and 1924, about 2,000 Koreans immigrated to Hawaii and California. However, the influx of Koreans to the U.S. ended when the U.S. Congress enacted the Oriental Exclusion Act in 1924 with the purpose of banning immigration from Asia. However, since the act did not forbid the admissions of Asian students by American academic institutions, Korean refugees from Japan's colonial rule from 1910 to 1945 were able to study at American universities.

The second wave started with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. During this second wave (1950 to 1964), about 15,000 Koreans immigrated to the U.S. This was possible because the McCarran and Walter Act in 1952 allowed Asian immigrants' application for citizenship. Korean immigrants in this period were composed of three groups: "Korean wives of American soldiers, known as war brides; war orphans adopted by American families; and around 27,000 people composed of students, businessmen, and intellectuals" (Chung, 2021). The third wave of Korean immigration started when the Immigration Act of 1965 "abolished the race-based discrimination in assigning immigration quotas and gave equal opportunity for U.S. immigration to all countries" (Byeong-gap, 2011, p. 196). About one million Koreans immigrated to the U.S. between 1965 and 2009. During the period of 1976 to 1990, Koreans "sent the second largest immigrant group next to the Philippines among Asian countries" (Byeong-gap, 2011, p. 220).

However, the immigration of Koreans to the U.S. began to decline in the early 1990s due to South Korea's economic development as well as the end of a military dictatorship that had lasted for almost three decades. The annual number of Korean immigrants dropped to 12,840 in 1999 from 34,222 in 1989. Overall, a deepening globalization induced the decline of Korean immigration in the 1990s. Byeong-gap (2011) stated, "the media exposure in South Korea of Korean immigrants' adjustment difficulties in the United States discouraged Koreans from seeking U.S.-bound emigration. In particular, the victimization of more than 2,000 Korean merchants during the 1992 Los Angeles riots was widely publicized in Korea" (pp. 201-202).

However, starting in 2000, the annual number of Korean immigrants began to rise again from 12,880 in 1999 to 15,830 in 2000, reaching 25,859 in 2009. This increase was also boosted by the push and pull factors of immigration as well as globalization. There are two reasons for the increase of Korean immigrants since 2000 (Byeong-gap, 2011). First, the financial crisis in 1998 and its accompanying unemployment crisis prompted Korean people to move to other nations. Second, the number of temporary Korean residents rapidly increased in major Korean immigrant communities at the U.S. These non-immigrants, including international students and visitors, altered their status to that of permanent residents in the U.S. This trend has been consistent and continued so far. It also indicates that "the globalization of education, travel, and the media has played as important a role as economic globalization" (Byeong-gap, 2011, p. 199). Korean immigrants have largely settled at the metropolitan cities of the U.S., including Los Angeles (LA), New York, Chicago, and Atlanta, Houston, etc. In particular, Los Angeles has become the center of the Korean diaspora in the U.S.

4.2. Korean Ethnic Newspapers and Their Roles

Korean ethnic media in the U.S. started and developed in major cities, such as Los Angeles and New York. The growth of Korean ethnic media was spearheaded by Korean newspaper dailies. *The Korea Times (Hankook Ilbo* in Korean) in Seoul established its subsidiary at LA in 1969 and has expanded its subsidiaries to other big cities across North America, such as New York, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Chicago, Seattle, Denver, Dallas, Hawaii, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Toronto, and Vancouver (J.-Y. Kim, 2013). With regard to *The Korea Times*' role in Korean communities in the U.S., Kim stated, "The newspaper gained feverous welcome from Korean people as a passage delivering news of their home country consoling the tiring immigrants [sic] lives" (J.-Y. Kim, 2013, p. 69). In the case of *Korea Times Chicago*, its office was established in 1971. The newspaper presents itself as "a major community leader in this region with strong support from the Korean-American community organizations" (2022). It also adds, "Along with the excellent liaison from major news media such as *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-times* and editorial affiliation from the New York Times, *The Korea Times Chicago* provides a vital and active reading influence to our community".

On the other hand, *The Joongang Daily Seoul* found its LA branch (*The Korea Daily LA*) as an American headquarter in 1974. *The Korea Daily LA* has expanded its influence by establishing its branches in other cities, such as Atlanta, Chicago, New York, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. *The Korea Daily Chicago* was established in 1979, and it has served the Korean community in the Chicago area. *The Korean Daily Chicago* and *The Korea Times Chicago* have been competitors in both readership and advertising; these papers provide Korean businesses with a space for advertisement and deliver news on domestic and international issues as well as the home country.

During the last several decades, in order to expand their profit and influence, Korean newspapers have aimed to reach global audience. Korean newspaper media have perceived Korean ethnic communities as a great opportunity to develop their media business. The growth and decline of Korean ethnic newspapers in the U.S. reflect the history and process of media globalization as well as economic globalization. At the same time, the case of Korean newspaper media in the U.S. also shows that media globalization can assist not only the immigration from the home country to the U.S., but also the Korean immigrants'

assimilation and adaptation to a new country and culture. Thus, the examination of the Korean ethnic newspaper outlet can be a precious opportunity to examine the current status quo of media globalization in today's digital media environment. In this regard, this study explores not only how one Korean ethnic newspaper is conducting journalistic and business-related activities, but also how it is serving Korean ethnic communities and local journalism.

4.3. Newsroom Operation of the Korea Daily Chicago

In September 2021, the researcher observed how *The Korea Daily Chicago* was conducting its media and journalistic operations. At 7:30 am from Monday to Friday, one layout designer normally arrives at the newspaper's office. This member logs in to the computer and starts to download the news content from the internal network of *The Korea Daily LA* which serves as the center of the U.S. operation by *The Joongang Daily Seoul*. This content is composed of three kinds of newspaper printouts: (1) *The Joongang Daily Seoul* (32 pages); (2) *The Daily Sports* (owned by *The Joongang Daily Seoul*, 20 pages); (3) *The Korea Daily LA* (32 pages on the first section). This layout designer prints the PDF files of this content and then leaves them on the desk of the editor-in-chief who is also a publisher of *The Joongang Daily*. The editor-in-chief has worked for 30 years as a journalist in both Seoul and Chicago. He selects important news items for *The Korea Daily Chicago* among this news content.

The Korea Daily Chicago is currently publishing two sections. The first is the Chicago section (16 pages) which are made by combining Chicago's local news content (mainly Chicago's regional news and advertisements) as well as the media content produced by The Korea Daily LA. The second is The Joongang Daily Seoul section (8 pages) composed of news articles selected among the news content produced by The Joongang Daily Seoul. The Korea Daily Chicago publishes 24 pages from Tuesday to Saturday, 5 times in a week.

In deciding the newsworthiness of each news article, The Korea Daily Chicago considers newness, relevance, significance, and impact as important criteria to be considered. In particular, The Korea Daily Chicago seeks to publish local and national news stories which might animate and inspire Korean ethnic people in Chicago and its surrounding area. For doing this, on the Chicago section's front pages (specifically, page 1 to page 3), the newspaper carries local news stories produced by journalists at *The Korea Daily* Chicago. For example, on September 11, 2021, the top story on the newspaper's front page was about the completion of the newest runway at the O'Hare International Airport. The second story was about President Joe Biden's vaccination order for federal employees. This was produced by South Korea's Yonhap News Agency, South Korea's national wire company. The third story was an interview with a Korean pastor. This interview article was part of a feature story series (normally published in the Saturday newspaper) and was produced by means of conducting interviews with Korean immigrants in the Chicago area. On the same day, on page 2 and page 3 of the Chicago section, there were mostly stories related to the Chicago area and its suburbs. These stories were largely written by reporters at The Korea Daily Chicago. They included the performance of sports teams based in Chicago, entertainment events in Chicago, major Korean organizations, Korean celebrities (including scholars, entrepreneurs, and politicians), and press releases from local governments, cities, and courts. On page 3 of the newspaper on September 11, the story about the first female president at Lincoln Park Zoo was published. This story was provided by South Korea's Yonhap News Agency.

Three reporters, including the editor-in-chief, worked for *The Joongang Daily Chicago* in September 2021. These reporters cover many areas and beats, so they are quite limited in their ability to prepare for in-depth investigative stories. It should be also noted that *The Korea Daily Chicago* had more than 30 employees before *The Joongang Daily Seoul* stopped the operation of its Chicago subsidiary (*The Korea Daily Chicago*) in Spring of 2018. Now, the number of employees at *The Joongang Daily Chicago* is around 10 people. In this context, publishing a quality newspaper with such a small staff is quite challenging for *The Korea Daily Chicago*.

These reporters send their preferred news items to the editor-in-chief at around 7 am. These reporters maintain the contacts with state and city governments, Korean American Association of Chicago, school districts, and other Korea-related organizations in Chicago and its suburban areas. They regularly monitor the news websites of local and national news outlets in order to catch interesting news items suited to *The Korea Daily Chicago*. The editor-in-chief selects a list of news items that he thinks are significant and relevant to its newspaper readers among news items passed to him. In addition, when two reporters propose the same news items simultaneously, the editor-in-chief gives his directions on which items he wants each reporter to cover. The editor-in-chief also checks the press releases delivered to the newsroom. Based on these releases, he and other reporters write short news stories.

After following this process, the news stories are completed and submitted for layout by 10:30 am. Two layout designers are involved in this layout process. The editor-in-chief works closely with these designers for the preparation and completion of the headlines of news stories, related images, photo captions, and others. In the case that each story's length is either too short or long for each page's layout, the editor-in-chief makes a final decision on which parts of each story should be expanded or removed. At around 1:30 pm, the layout of news stories on 24 pages is finalized. Now, the data files ready for printing is electronically sent to the printing company. Around 4 pm, this printing company finishes newspaper production. After picking up the printed newspapers, two delivery men, hired by *The Korea Daily Chicago*, transport these papers to the *Chicago Tribune* headquarter downtown for the next morning's delivery. The *Chicago Tribune* is currently delivering local and national newspapers to the households in Chicago and its surrounding areas as it has its own delivery network system in the region. Also, these delivery men put the printed papers inside the newsstands in Chicago and its neighboring cities, where Korean immigrants are regularly visiting and passing through. The price of each newspaper is 75 cents.

4.4. Business Sustainability of Ethnic Newspaper

When *The Korea Daily Chicago* stopped publishing its newspaper due to the closing of the Chicago branch by *The Joongang Daily Seoul* in April 2018, it was a big surprise to Korean immigrants as well as the employees at *The Korea Daily Chicago*. It was largely because it means the end of a Korean ethnic newspaper with 40 years history in the Midwestern area of the U.S. The shutdown of the Chicago branch was also understood as reflecting not only the crisis of the newspaper industry in the U.S., but also the decline of a Korean ethnic community in Chicago.

In early September 2018, Jae-Won Roh (editor-in-chief and new owner of *The Joongang Daily Chicago*) was able to start the publication of *The Korea Daily Chicago* again by purchasing news content from *The Joongang Daily Seoul*. However, Mr. Roh has faced

multiple challenges in making *The Korea Daily Chicago* continue to survive commercially without the financial support from the parent-corporation in Seoul. These challenges include, but are not limited to, securing newspaper subscribers again from scratch, operating a news organization with only a small staff, attracting local Korean advertisers to buy advertisement space in the newspaper, producing a good quality of newspaper content with several reporters, and revitalizing the newspaper business in the midst of a declining newspaper readership. However, it was a great relief and advantage on the part of Mr. Roh that *The Korea Daily Chicago* could stably acquire a variety of news content from *The Joongang Daily Seoul* and *The Korea Daily LA*.

Indeed, expanding newspaper subscriptions was one of the major challenges for *The Korea Daily Chicago*. Aeja Kwon, the director of subscription and advertisement at this newspaper, said, "Due to a sudden suspension of newspaper publication, we lost all the subscribers at the same time. Since we began to publish our newspaper again at the fall of 2018, we had to attract subscribers from the beginning. However, it has never been an easy process in retrospect. Even though previous subscribers have gradually returned to our newspaper, the subscription rate remained at about 60 to 70 % of the past" (interview, September 2021). In particular, advertisements are much more important than subscriptions in terms of revenue. *Korea Daily Chicago* annually publishes "The Korea Daily Business Directory", a kind of yellow pages which contain the telephone and address of Korean businesses. The newspaper gains more revenue by acquiring a variety of advertisements in this directory book.

However, it needs to be mentioned that the loyal readers are still enjoying the printed Korean newspapers. Ms. Kwon said, "Our readers have expressed their gratitude to our newspaper. They said to me, we do not feel satisfied and fulfilled if there are not morning newspapers like *The Korea Daily Chicago*" (interview, September 2021). Ms. Kwon has also found that many subscribers have moved to social media and internet and are less inclined to come back to the printed newspapers. Ms. Kwon added, "Many Korean immigrants are already using new media, such as Facebook, YouTube, news websites, and messaging applications (such as Kakao Talk and WhatsApp). So, they are not enthusiastic to read Korean ethnic newspapers as much as they did before" (interview, September 2021).

To make matters worse, since the early of 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has damaged the newspaper business to a considerable degree. *The Korea Daily Chicago* has been expanding its advertising and subscription revenues until early 2020. However, the pandemic has weakened the newspaper's financial sustainability. Ms. Kwon said that "The advertisements toward our newspaper have been declining since local Korean businesses, such as restaurants, have lost a stable profit as well as their customers" (interview, September 2021). Moreover, increasing its newspaper subscription has not been an easy task in the era of this economic crisis. "When a local economy is not in a good condition, we are not able to enhance our subscription rate," Ms. Kwon said (interview, September 2021).

In addition, there are two other reasons that Korean ethnic newspapers have been struggling. The first is the decreasing immigration from South Korea. This kind of trend is more conspicuous in Chicago than other big cities in the U.S. Ms. Kwon stated, "The Korean community in Chicago and its surrounding cities are not growing nowadays compared to the previous decades. We are feeling this to be real in our business activities. In pursuit of business and job opportunities, many Koreans have been moving to other cities, such as Dallas, Houston, Atlanta, with big Korean populations" (interview, September 2021). The second is that young Korean people are less likely to read the printed newspapers while the

older generation is shrinking due to their natural death as well as the decline of immigration to the Chicago areas from the home country. In short, the digital media environment, dominated by the internet and social media, is weakening the viability of *The Korea Daily Chicago*. In this regard, now is the time for *The Korea Daily Chicago* to prepare a significant breakthrough for its continued service to the Korean ethnic community as an information provider as well as the survival of the newspaper itself.

4.5. Survival Strategies of Ethnic Newspaper

The primary goal of *The Korea Daily Chicago* is to continue a quality and viable newspaper for the Korean ethnic community in the Chicago area. To do this, The Korea Daily Chicago has pursued three media strategies. The first is to provide a good quality of news content. Its editor-in-chief, Jae-Won Roh, is a veteran journalist who has worked as a journalist since the early 1990s. In particular, he is one of the Korean journalists who has a clear understanding of the Chicago Korean community since he has worked as a news reporter, editor-in-chief, and the director of advertising at *The Korea Daily Chicago* for 17 years. Mr. Roh said, "Our newspaper is not aimed to simply convey information to our readers. Our primary purpose is to interpret local events and public issues in consideration of Korean immigrants' needs. In order to do this, our reporters try to locate topics and events which can impact the lives and future of Korean immigrants. That is what distinguishes our newspaper from other news media outlets" (interview, September 2021). The Korea Daily Chicago seeks to customize information and news to local readers and the Korean ethnic community. Roh stressed, "Our reporters are expected to play various roles as a reporter, editor, writer, informationgatherer since our newspaper is a small organization. I have always emphasized that the production of news content adapted to the circumstances and wishes of our Korean immigrants is, in fact, the raison d'être of our newspaper. Thus, we present news stories related to Korea, Chicago, and immigrants at the front pages of the newspaper" (interview, September 2021).

Second, *The Korea Daily Chicago* is in a great position for a transnational cooperation with *The Joongang Daily Seoul* and *The Korea Daily LA* which are producing decent news content for South Korea and the U.S., respectively. Roh stated, "It is important to maintain a strategic collaboration with quality information providers. Happily, we also provide *The Korea Daily LA* with our local news contents" (interview, September 2021). The transmission of news content from Seoul through LA to Chicago is a good case of how media professionals and news organizations can maximize the synergy effects in the era of globalization and digital revolution. The case of *The Korea Daily Chicago* shows that globalization and localization can go hand in hand in serving ethnic communities, even though *The Joongang Daily Seoul* and *The Korea Daily Chicago* are now separate business entities. Roh added, "The quality contents by *The Joongang Daily* are a great asset to us. I believe that this business collaboration would result in supporting Korean immigrants in the long run" (interview, September 2021).

Third, this collaboration model can be pursued in the areas of advertisement and subscriptions. When the advertisements of some products or services are published in *The Korea Daily LA*, the employees at *The Korea Daily Chicago* often contact the advertisers to check possible advertising opportunities in their paper. Through this process, *The Korea Daily Chicago* can increase its revenue further. There is one example of this kind of collaboration. On 14 September 2021, David Yonggi Cho, a renowned pastor who found one

of the largest megachurches in the world, passed away in Seoul, South Korea. His megachurch has been operating its branches in the major cities of the U.S. At the time of his passing, *The Korea Daily LA* published an advertisement of the funeral with the obituary article of Pastor Cho. After finding the funeral advertisement in *The Korea Daily LA*, one employee at *The Korea Daily Chicago* contacted the local pastor at the Chicago branch of this Korean megachurch regarding the possibility of an advertisement for the funeral. After this process, *The Korea Daily Chicago* could publish the funeral advertisement in its newspaper. Ms. Kwon, the director of advertising, said, "We closely work with not only *The Korea Daily LA*, but also other branches of *The Korea Daily* in the U.S.'s major cities for any potential opportunities. We feel the employees in other branches of *The Korea Daily* are like reliable friends. We are proud of this human network among Korean news organizations in the U.S." (interview, September 2021). In the end, this kind of partnership cannot be underestimated for the Korean ethnic community as well as *The Korea Daily Chicago*'s continued survival.

Fourth, social media's negative impact on the business of Korean ethnic newspapers is troubling, and it should be minimized. If strong countermeasures against the internet and social media are not taken, it is likely that The Korea Daily Chicago can face a severe crisis in the coming years. In fact, Roh has found that due to social media, *The Korea Daily Chicago*'s news content is being easily shared and spread. In order to enhance the online visibility of The Korea Daily Chicago, the staff at this newspaper shared its news stories on its website as well as on the newspaper's Facebook page. Later, they found that the sharing and distribution of news content might not be a good thing since news sharing can decrease the value of news content. Roh explained, "If people can read the news stories of The Korea Daily Chicago on the internet and various social networking sites with no trouble, who will have a motivation to have a paid subscription of The Korea Daily Chicago?" (interview, September 2021). In addition, when *The Korea Daily Chicago* shared its news stories on the internet, it has witnessed a distressing situation like an infringement of copyright. One employee of The Korea Daily Chicago said that "It is disconcerting to see that some Korean media competitors copy our news stories and pretend to be their own news content" (interview, September 2021). Nowadays, by minimizing the sharing of news content, The Korea Daily Chicago seeks to protect the copyrights of news content produced by its local journalists. This case of *The Korea Daily Chicago* shows that news sharing can negatively affect the news outlet's revenue.

Fifth, *The Korea Daily Chicago* needs to establish a great digital strategy to survive in the current digital media environment since its subscribers are mostly from the older generations. This is so true of ethnic newspapers. Besides, if *The Korea Daily Chicago* lost its subscribers gradually due to the natural death of older Korean people, this circumstance can impact its advertisement business negatively. In this regard, Mr. Roh is regularly having meetings with a digital media strategist who is hired by *The Korea Daily Chicago*. Roh said, "In the current media environment, our media business can face a crisis anytime if there is not a great blueprint for the future" (interview, September 2021). He added, "We want *The Korea Daily Chicago* to be a dominant media player in the Chicago area. If not, we cannot secure a stable advertising avenue. Currently, we are carefully maneuvering to survive in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic" (interview, September 2021). Since the resurgence of newspaper publication in September 2021, *The Korea Daily Chicago* expected that, within two years, it could reach the breakeven point which refers to the level at which the costs of newspaper publication equal the revenues for its publication. However, due to the Covid-19

pandemic, *The Korea Daily Chicago* has not achieved its business goal to become a viable and profitable newspaper company.

Overall, *The Korea Daily Chicago* has tried to produce a quality newspaper with a strong connection to *The Joongang Daily*. Currently, the newspaper's yearly paper subscription fee is \$300. Mr. Kwon said, "I am so touched when the elderly people visit our office to pay for their yearly subscription membership with check or cash. It seems that they perceive our newspaper not only as a window to understand the world, but also as a companion of their American life" (interview, September 2021). In this respect, Mr. Roh stressed, "Newspaper for us is a record of present history, which means recording the history of Korean immigrants living in Chicago. Thus, we are supposed to provide lively and essential information to the Korean community in the Chicago area" (interview, September 2021). He added, "In the future, I would like our descendants to understand our lives and history while reading our newspaper" (interview, September 2021). When it was asked why he did not give up the Korean ethnic newspaper in 2018, he said, "I feel a calling in publishing the newspaper for the Korean community. I thought somebody should do this work. Why not me?" (interview, September 2021).

5. Conclusion

Ethnic identity is socially constructed and mediated through communication, with ethnic media playing a central role in sustaining cultural connections, identity, and belonging (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Matsaganis et al., 2011). Prior studies show that ethnic media overlaps with terms such as minority, immigrant, diasporic, and community media, each emphasizing different dimensions of culture, migration, and locality (Matsaganis et al., 2011). Scholarship has also traced shifting paradigms, from assimilation (Park, 1950, 1970), to acculturation (Berry, 1980; Johnson, 2000), to pluralism (Subervi-Velez, 1986), and adaptation (Y. Y. Kim, 1988), positioning ethnic media as both buffers against assimilation and facilitators of cultural pluralism. Theoretical frameworks of transculturality (Welsch, 1999), glocalization (Robertson, 1994, 2000), and hybridization (Pieterse, 2020) further conceptualize ethnic media as dynamic sites of negotiation rather than static preservers of heritage. The present study reinforces these insights, showing ethnic media's roles in cultural continuity, political mobilization, public discourse, and community orientation (Johnson, 2000; Matsaganis et al., 2011; Seo & Moon, 2013).

The findings of this study affirm that ethnic newspapers are not merely technical enterprises of journalism or business management, but cultural and communicative spaces embedded within broader theoretical debates. Consistent with Welsch (1999) concept of transculturality, *The Korea Daily Chicago* functions as a transcultural space where immigrant communities negotiate identity through a blending of heritage, host-society norms, and global media flows. This highlights journalism's role as a site of cultural interaction across borders.

The findings also resonate with globalization theories that emphasize the interplay between the global and the local. Robertson (1994, 2000) notion of glocalization is evident in how the newspaper adapts media technologies and journalistic practices to immigrant audiences. Moreover, *The Korea Daily Chicago*'s media strategies reflect Pieterse (2020) concept of hybridization, as its journalism and advertising practices emerge from transnational and hybridized interactions between local ethnic groups and global forces. In this way, this case of Korean ethnic newspaper illustrates globalization as a process of hybrid and glocal cultural production, rather than mere homogenization or localization.

In addition, this study contributes to scholarship on media survival strategies. *The Korea Daily Chicago* demonstrates a dual approach: pursuing economic adaptation to sustain its business model while maintaining cultural resilience to safeguard immigrant identity and voice within a globalized media landscape. Its survival strategies are therefore not merely managerial but integral to the cultural mission of ethnic media operating in transcultural and glocal contexts. Specifically, this study examined how *The Korea Daily Chicago* serves Korean immigrants in the Chicago area while sustaining itself as an independent ethnic newspaper since the parent company, *The Joongang Daily Seoul*, ended its Chicago operations in 2018. This moment offered a unique opportunity to explore how an ethnic newspaper survives without corporate backing amidst industry decline, small staffing, and the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The findings reveal that *The Korea Daily Chicago* combines globalization and localization strategies to sustain its journalism. On the global side, it collaborates with *The Joongang Daily Seoul* and *The Korea Daily LA* to secure daily news content, demonstrating that transnational cooperation can strengthen ethnic media. At the same time, its heavy reliance on local advertising from Korean businesses highlights the central role of community ties. Yet these ties also expose vulnerabilities. The pandemic, generational shifts away from print, and growing dependence on digital and social media, have weakened its advertising base and readership.

This study underscores that the survival of an ethnic newspapers depends not only on financial adaptation but also on maintaining their mission as community news outlets. For *The Korea Daily Chicago*, located in a significant Korean hub with cultural and diplomatic institutions, continuity will hinge on embracing digital innovation while sustaining credibility with its ethnic readership. In a competitive and shrinking advertising market, the capacity to integrate print with digital and social platforms will determine long-term viability.

In the end, the case of *The Korea Daily Chicago* illustrates the precarious but adaptive nature of ethnic media in the U.S. It highlights both the risks of declining resources and the potential of transcultural and glocal strategies that blend global content, local community service, and innovative survival practices. This moves beyond assimilation vs. pluralism debates, positioning ethnic media as cultural institutions that negotiate identity, sustain community cohesion, and adapt to globalization.

Notes on contributor

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