EDITORIAL

Between Old and New Media: Continuity, Transformation, and Research Challenges

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Communication media have undergone profound transformations since the emergence of the Internet in the 1990s, the rise of social media in the 2000s, and the launch of YouTube in 2005. By the 2010s, digital media had become firmly established as the dominant mode of communication and content consumption (Han, 2024). Several critical shifts can be identified as a result of the rise of new media. First, the role of professional media institutions as "gatekeepers" has significantly diminished. Users themselves have increasingly become the new "gatekeepers" of information (Rianto, 2016). Second, the long-standing idea of the active audience found its most radical expression in the digital media era (Rianto, 2016), characterized by the principles of interactivity and participation inherent in user-generated content (Lister et al., 2009). This participatory turn has blurred the boundaries between professional and user-generated content (Yu et al., 2024).

These transformations at both the media and audience levels have triggered further social consequences. They have paved the way for what scholars call the "post-truth era" (Kalpokas, 2018) or even the "death of expertise" (Nichols, 2017). The widespread circulation of disinformation has deepened public distrust, producing what might be termed a "distrust society." While such phenomena are not entirely new, their scale and intensity have profoundly intensified in the digital age.

In the field of journalism, the advent of digital technology has challenged not only audiences but also journalists in their ability to verify the accuracy and credibility of information (Yu et al., 2024). Conversely, what has emerged is a proliferation of more sensational news content, driven by audience engagement metrics and the influence of artificial intelligence. AI-driven journalism has become a significant factor in the resurgence of news sensationalism and, in some cases, a revival of yellow journalism. In such a situation, political institutions, governments, businesses, and even individuals face unprecedented forms of vulnerability. The reputations of government agencies, corporations, and individuals can collapse at any time due to sousveillance or citizen surveillance (Ganascia, 2010; Mann, 2017), cancel culture (Tandoc et al., 2022), and other forms of digital activism. All of these dynamics are the consequences of transformations brought about by the rise of new—or, to use a more precise term, newer—media. Chaffee and Metzger (2009) summarized these changes, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1.

Changes between the Era of Mass Media and the Era of Communication Media according to Chaffee and Metzger (2009)

	Mass Communication	*Media Communication*
Channels	Few	Many
Audience	Unified	Diverse
Control	Sender	User
Transmission	One-way, time-specific	Interactive, at convenience
Research paradigms	Content analysis, effects on audience	Interface design, information search
Typification	Television	Video games, Web sites
Motivation	Arousal	Need satisfaction
Ego concept	Identification	Self-actualization
Social control	Laws, professional ethics, public education	Technical devices, monitoring
Learning	Social modeling	Experiential
Scare statistic	Number of murders a child sees by age 18	Number of murders a child commits by age 18

Sumber: Chaffee and Metzger (2009, p. 373)

Transformations at the media level have had far-reaching implications for society, influencing multiple dimensions of social life. However, it is essential to emphasize that these transformations do not represent a complete break with the past. As Briggs and Burke (2000) remind us, many media phenomena are much older than often assumed. The serialized television format, for instance, follows the model of serialized radio dramas, which in turn drew inspiration from serialized stories in nineteenth-century magazines. While scholars frequently emphasize technological disruptions and the novelty of new media, the aspect of "continuity" must not be overlooked. As Briggs and Burke (2000, p. 6) aptly stated, "when new media are introduced, the old ones are not simply abandoned; rather, they coexist and interact with the newcomers." Media should therefore be understood as an ever-evolving ecosystem in which older and newer forms continuously reshape one another's roles and functions.

The perspective offered by Briggs and Burke is particularly relevant for framing the research findings published in Jurnal Komunikasi, Vol. 19 No. 3 (2025). The studies featured in this issue reflect two interconnected dimensions: the continuity of media development and the coexistence and interaction of old and new media. The study by Tripalupi and Irawan in this issue exemplifies this interplay, while continuity can be observed in the research conducted by Lawelai et al. Their study employs InfraNodus analysis—an artificial intelligence–based text analysis tool designed for research and exploration. By utilizing GPT-3 technology and natural language processing algorithms, InfraNodus visualizes textual data as network graphs, enabling users to understand the relationships among topics and identify knowledge gaps that remain underexplored. Although network analysis as a method is not entirely new, InfraNodus clearly provides a deeper and more sophisticated level of analysis and visualization compared to what was possible in the era of conventional media.

The Imperative for New Theories and Methods?

One of the most pressing questions arising from the transformations outlined above is whether they call for new ways of theorizing and methodological innovation to grasp their complexity.

Using the principles of change and continuity, this article argues that some areas of transformation necessitate new approaches, theories, and methods to account for digital media phenomena and the changes they bring about. Some of these developments have given rise to entirely new theoretical concepts—ideas that were previously unknown or unnecessary in earlier media eras—such as the network society (Dijk, 2006), platform society (Van Dijck et al., 2018), participatory culture (Jenkins et al., 2007; Rosalen, 2019), and the culture of connectivity (Van Dijck, 2013), among others. However, in many other domains, these changes can still be explained through well-established theoretical frameworks. Specific theories, however, may require adaptation to be more effectively applied in explaining newly emerging phenomena.

For instance, audience research traditions such as uses and gratifications and reception analysis represent two of the most significant approaches in audience studies. These theories were developed during the era of mass media. Stuart Hall's (1996) Encoding/Decoding theory, for instance, was formulated at a time when television had become a dominant medium. In this theory, Hall (1996) argues that communication is a circular process of meaning production. In the first stage, message producers generate meaning, which materializes in the form of television programs as meaningful discourse. This process of meaning production is referred to as encoding. In the second stage, the resulting discourse is interpreted by the audience—a process known as decoding.

According to Hall, both processes are shaped by three interrelated elements: frameworks of knowledge, relations of production, and technical infrastructure.

Several scholars have applied reception theory in their research. However, its application within the context of social media immediately raises several questions: How can the theory be operationalized in this setting? How might researchers reconcile Hall's concept of encoding in the production of television programs with the notion of encoding in the creation of social media messages? Unlike traditional media, social media are not always managed by institutions—individuals often drive them. This raises further questions: how does the ideological construction embedded in the production of meaningful texts operate in such a decentralized environment? These questions do not imply that Hall's theory is inapplicable to digital media studies, particularly social media research. Instead, they emphasize the need to adapt Hall's ideas to contemporary contexts by considering the specific characteristics and conditions of both media platforms and their users as research subjects.

The uses and gratifications theory has followed a developmental trajectory not unlike that of Hall's framework. Emerging during the era of television and print media, the theory conceptualized media as neutral channels and audiences as active agents who select media to satisfy their psychological and social needs (Katz et al., 1974). However, the dynamics of new media have inverted this foundational assumption. In the digital context, media are no longer merely instruments for fulfilling user needs; they have become active agents that shape new desires through interactivity, personalization, and algorithmic design (Sundar et al., 2013). From this evolution emerged Uses and Gratifications 2.0, which posits that user motivation and gratification are, in many

cases, generated by the technological affordances of digital platforms themselves (Rathnayake & Winter, 2018; Sundar et al., 2013). This represents an epistemological renewal in how communication scholars conceptualize audience behavior amidst the disruptions of the digital era.

Beyond theoretical considerations, research methodologies have become equally challenging in times of media transformation. Fundamentally, the choice of method depends on two key factors: the nature of the research subject and the research questions posed (Yin, 2014). Although both traditional and digital media fall under the broad category of "communication media," they differ substantially in their characteristics. This raises a critical question: do studies of digital media require entirely new methodological approaches, or can they meaningfully evolve from the methods previously employed in mass media research?

The new media era, however, has given rise to increasingly hybrid approaches that combine quantitative precision with qualitative depth. On the quantitative side, the emergence of big data tools such as Hadoop, NodeXL, Python, R, and Drone Emprit has opened vast opportunities for researchers to examine digital communication patterns on a large scale. Social media analysis techniques— such as opinion mining, sentiment analysis, network analysis, and hashtag tracking—enable scholars to uncover public discourse, collective perception, and patterns of social media user behavior across massive datasets.

The most substantial potential of *big data analysis* lies in two primary capacities. First, its ability to capture perceptions and communication behavior in real time; and second, its capacity to tailor messages to audience characteristics and even predict the effectiveness of messages and communication campaigns.

However, these advantages in time and cost efficiency come hand in hand with ethical and interpretive challenges. Large volumes of data do not necessarily guarantee a deep understanding; thus, integrating them with communication theory remains an indispensable foundation. On the qualitative side, approaches such as *netnography* and virtual ethnography have developed rapidly. *Netnography* conceptualizes online communities as cultural spaces where values, identities, and communicative practices are continually negotiated. Through multilayered analytical procedures—ranging from coding and digital fieldnote collection to abstraction and theory construction—this method enables researchers to uncover the meanings embedded within virtual interactions. For example, studies of K-pop fandoms, gaming communities, or digital activism can be conducted through *netnography* to reveal how collective identities are constructed through symbolic online practices.

In addition, methods such as *Systematic Literature Review (SLR)* and *bibliometric analysis* have become increasingly vital in today's information-rich research environment. These approaches not only map research trends but also synthesize theoretical insights from dispersed bodies of literature. In the context of digital communication, *bibliometric* studies can be employed to track the evolution of *mediatization theory*, *actor-network theory*, and *affective publics* across disciplines and national boundaries. Thus, these methodologies function as bridges connecting classical research traditions with contemporary academic needs.

The new media era has also fostered the emergence of computational communication research (CCR)—an approach that integrates communication science with data science. This inter-

disciplinary framework enables the analysis of millions of communicative data units—ranging from text and images to metadata—through machine learning algorithms that detect patterns of meaning and public behavior (Zhu et al., 2025). For instance, by employing topic modeling and sentiment analysis, researchers can trace how political, environmental, or popular culture issues resonate within digital spaces. However, as mediatization theory reminds us (Couldry & Hepp, 2013), computational methods must remain grounded in the social and symbolic contexts that underlie communication practices. Consequently, research methodologies in the new media era should no longer be viewed through a quantitative–qualitative dichotomy, but rather as part of a complementary spectrum. The combination of large-scale data analytics and qualitative interpretive depth offers new opportunities for communication science to remain relevant amid the accelerating current of digitalization. The greatest challenge for researchers, therefore, is not merely mastering analytical technologies but ensuring that every finding remains anchored in the fundamental questions of meaning, power, and social relations in communication. Ultimately, the methodological innovations born in the age of new media reaffirm that communication research is not merely about following technological progress—it is about reinterpreting how humans connect, communicate, and construct realities through media. In an era of boundless data, communication scholars must remain critically engaged, reflexively aware, and ethically grounded—for behind every *click* and *like* resides a human narrative that deserves to be understood.

Highlights from the October 2025 Issue

The October 2025 issue of Jurnal Komunikasi comprises twelve empirical and conceptual studies addressing key challenges and innovations in communication research amid digital transformation. The first article, by Balqis & Rahayu (2025), investigates social media detox practices among Generations Y and Z in Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta, through an exploratory survey of 153 respondents. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from Franks et al., Soliman and Rinta-Kahila, and Nguyen, the study identifies the motivations, challenges, benefits, and strategies underlying detox behavior.

The following article, by Nuryati et al. (2025), examines the transformation of Islamic da'wah communication through the use of animated media on Instagram. This qualitative case study examines how visual aesthetics and narrative strategies influence the construction of religious meaning and audience engagement, utilizing in-depth interviews, observational methods, and content analysis from four purposively selected Instagram accounts.

Anshori's research analyzes the concession speeches of Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar following their defeat in Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election. Using Aristotelian rhetorical theory, the study examines six speeches delivered between February and March 2024 to identify rhetorical patterns and strategies.

Another study, conducted by Aji et al. (2025) explores the relationship between photography and urban space through the works of photographer Erik Prasetya. Using Gillian Rose's visual methodology, the research focuses on the representation of working-class communities on one hand and women on the other.

Lawelai et al. (2025) analyze how public perceptions of Anies Baswedan are shaped across YouTube, Twitter, and Google using textual, network, and sentiment approaches via InfraNodus. Data were collected through the official APIs of each platform, focusing on the keyword "Anies Baswedan." Meanwhile, Tripalupi and Irawan explore media transformation management strategies in the context of the multiplatform era through a case study of Tribun Network. Employing a qualitative descriptive case study method, they apply Henry Jenkins' media convergence theory and a cross-media approach to analyze patterns of channel integration and content distribution.

Sari et al. (2025) examine representations of male virility as a form of social coercion in two Indonesian films: Test Pack (2012) and Seperti Dendam, Rindu Harus Dibayar Tuntas (2021). Drawing on Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's multimodal discourse analysis, the study explores how these films construct and critique the pressures imposed on men to prove their masculinity through sexual performance.

Nurrahmi et al. (2025) investigate digital skills and digital safety across Generations X, Y, and Z in the context of online fraud. The study involved 300 respondents from Aceh aged 17–60. Data were collected via an online survey distributed through Google Forms and analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Kruskal–Wallis test in SPSS version 22.

Chasana et al. (2025) analyze how crisis information spreads on social media and triggers activism in response to brand controversies. The study examines the Whitelab brand's collaboration event with K-pop idol Sehun, which sparked public criticism and the viral hashtag #whitelabapologize on Twitter. Using a qualitative approach combined with social network analysis (SNA), the researchers identified the social networks and actors surrounding the online discourse. A dataset of 10,000 tweets containing the hashtag was extracted using Netlytic on the key dates of the event.

The following article, by Nurhajati et al. (2025) examines how local journalists balance their coverage of sensitive issues with professional ethics amid political and economic pressures. The qualitative research employs focus group discussions (FGD) with four print journalists and one television journalist. Pratiwi et al. (2025) analyze how Indonesia's 2024 presidential and vice-presidential candidates utilized Instagram for personal branding, focusing on the use of visual content to build voter engagement and support.

Finally, the twelfth article, by Guru et al. (2025) examines the influence of trust values associated with brand ambassadors Prilly Latuconsina (X1) and Bryan Domani (X2) on the lifestyle of Generation Z in using traditional textile products, particularly through interactions on the Instagram account @padupadantenun. The study employs a quantitative survey method, with data collected via questionnaires and analyzed using t-tests and SPSS.

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