



The development of electronic journalism in Algeria... reality and bets

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Abstract:

Through this research paper, the researcher attempts to shed light on the developments witnessed by the press in Algeria from the stage of paper media to the stage of electronic media, while trying to describe the political, economic, technological and media characteristics that characterized each of these stages. This is by employing the survey approach to describe the phenomenon through observation tool and analyzing data related to the subject of the study.

The researcher concluded that electronic journalism in Algeria has made its way and has become more and more prominent, especially with the widespread spread of smart phones and social media networks through which tens of millions of Algerian citizens communicate and are divided between a producer of content and a mere receiver and consumer of news content.

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1. Introduction

Today the world is experiencing a massive technological revolution that has invaded all fields , it made its presence inevitable and imposes itself, crossing spatial and temporal boundaries, thus throwing aside the idea of the geographical and human dimension , it adopts Marshall McLuhan's idea that the world is a small village, and embodies this idea in all its dimensions , The inevitability of this technology and the extent of its impact on the media has led to the birth of a new media based on the electronic support , it combines the three characteristics of traditional media in one medium: image, sound and word , the printing and distribution process is replaced by electronic publishing.

What is striking in the case of Algeria is the coincidence of the signs of information and communication technology through working with computers in desktop publishing, smart phones and the Internet, completely coinciding with the turning point witnessed by the written press in Algeria with the adoption of the 1989 Constitution , which approved and established freedom, including economic freedom, which in turn opens ownership of media production to private investors in the print journalism sector.

From the above, we raise the following problem: **to what extent have global**

conditions contributed to the development of electronic journalism in Algeria?

To answer the problem, we can divide the study topics into the following sections:

2. Electronic journalism in Algeria and the circumstances of its development

Many factors contributed to adopting the idea of electronic journalism as a new media type , and benefit from all the services it provides to the media and the recipient thanks to its distinguished characteristics of its interactive electronic nature, which raises the ceiling of freedom in transferring and disseminating information with complete ease , Given the nature of technology associated with information and communication,

which imposes itself as an inevitability, and acting upon it becomes a duty and obligation, not a choice that can be abandoned, on the other hand, among the main factors for the birth and development of electronic journalism, which are numerous and diverse, can be summarized as follows:

2.1 The reality of the written press in Algeria:

The reality of written journalism is considered a fundamental and important factor that contributed to the development of electronic journalism in Algeria , during the 1990s, the private print press was considered a young experiment,

during which supervisors, workers, and media professionals in this sector worked to lay the basic foundations for the private print press, which emerged in very difficult political and security circumstances, which affected the national press in light of the lack of professionalism, during this period, the 1989 Constitution was also suspended, as was the media law dedicated to freedom of the press, the Supreme Media Council was also dissolved in October 1993, and on June 7, 1994, a decision was issued prohibiting the publication of any security news from unofficial sources, in light of the difficult security situation, the media hour witnessed the assassinations of a number of journalists, which strained the media space and disrupted the process of its development and prosperity. On the one hand, and on the other hand, the written press faced.

On the other hand, the written press has faced major financial problems since the opening of the print sector, given that the media institution has become an economic organization based on the idea of profit and loss, it has become necessary for the media organization to seek to increase the volume of sales and advertising, as they are its natural income, however, the written press in Algeria faced several obstacles related to the following:

-Printing establishments:

Printing institutions recorded a huge debt estimated at 178,339,852 DZD as an outstanding amount that private newspapers had to pay in the 1990s, this is the same reason that prompted many private newspapers to stop publishing, such as Algeria Week, Akhbar Al-Sharq in 1992, Alger républicain, which is published in French, Al-Euras, El Akidda in 1994, and Al-Hadaf, the weekly sports newspaper, Al-Hadath, Al-Hayat, Al-Arabiya and El Alam Assiassi (the Political World) in 1995, these financial reasons are the same that caused printing presses financial hardship due to non-payment, for example, Al-Wasat Printing Press (Central Region) recorded a financial deficit of 206 million, while Al-Mujahid Printing Press recorded a financial deficit of 541 million. (Kadim, 2003, p 97)

-Distribution:

Since 1991, there have been private institutions in Algeria responsible for distributing newspapers outside the state sector, however, newspapers experienced poor distribution resulting from poor service, this caused an increase in newspaper costs in remote areas, in addition to the absence of a legal regulation for the distribution sector and a national map for this purpose.

- Advertising:

Advertising has witnessed major problems due to the absence of a special law regulating this sector, although Article 100 of the Media Law of 1990 stipulates the necessity of creating a special law regulating advertising in Algeria, in order for any media organization to obtain publicity, it must follow one of two paths: either through public advertising through the publishing and advertising agency L'ANEP, or through private advertisers who choose newspapers that achieve a high readership rate.

2.2 Technological developments in Algeria:

Technology related to media and communication is considered one of the factors contributing to the emergence and development of electronic journalism, in Algeria, it can be limited to two basic elements: the Internet, fixed line telephone and smartphone.

2.2.1 The Internet in Algeria:

Algeria was officially connected to the Internet in 1993, under the guardianship of the Center for Scientific and Technical Research, which until 1997 remained the sole distributor of the Internet nationally to all official bodies, after 1997, Algeria took an important turning point in the Internet sector from a legal standpoint, it should be noted that the goal behind connecting Algeria to the Internet was due to a project in cooperation with UNESCO,

which aims to establish an information network called RINAF, so that Algeria will be the focal point in North Africa. (Karimi, 2020, p 15)

- Legal regulation of the Internet in Algeria:

The Internet sector was monopolized by the state during the first years of its entry into Algeria, but after that it witnessed several developments, which we review below: decree 98-257 issued on August 25, 1998, which stipulated the possibility of establishing intermediary distributors for the Internet, was actually implemented after 1999, therefore, in the year 2000, there were 18 Internet distributors that were actually active at the beginning of the year, and then the number rose in October of the same year to 65 distributors, today, the national Internet penetration rate is 70.9%, according to statistics in January 2023, compared to 60.6% in January 2022 (Kemp, 2023), the year 2000 is considered a pivotal year for the launch of the Internet in Algeria, during that period, efforts were made to achieve economic development in the country on two levels: creating a general climate for foreign investment that requires a strong communication structure, then, by amending the decree of August 1998 with a second decree issued on October 14, 2000, it allowed the conclusion of partnerships with foreign institutions that invest in the Internet, therefore, 74 Internet distributor files were accepted in

2002, but only a few of them were active. After that, in 2004, the number reached 80 Internet service organizations.

-Streaming internet speed:

After Algeria initially aimed to provide a back bone fiber-optic Internet connection line with a capacity of 34 MB/s, expandable up to 144 MB/s, the department of postal, information and communication technologies worked to establish a network to provide Internet services to individuals and institutions with a capacity of 10,000 lines for every 100,000 subscribers , today, the Internet in Algeria is experiencing new developments that we can see through current statistics and data provided by international reports stating the following: the number of Internet users in Algeria increased to 32.09 million users in 2023, compared to 27.28 million users in 2022, with an increase rate of 17.2% and an access rate of 59.6% in January 2021, internet speed has also increased , the average fixed Internet speed in January 2023 reached 11.01 MB/s compared to last year, which in the same period recorded an average speed of 9.78 MB/s, an estimated difference of 1.23 MB/s , as for the average mobile Internet speed, it also witnessed an increase estimated at 17.2%, reaching 11.44 MB/s in January 2022, and 13.40 MB/s in 2023.

-Internet difficulties:

The Internet in Algeria faces many difficulties, which can be summarized as

follows: technical difficulties: piracy is considered one of the most important technical problems facing the individual and organization in Algeria. In the year 2021, a number of Facebook user accounts were hacked locally and their personal data was hacked, with a number reaching 11.5 million users , from a legal standpoint, the Algerian legislator does not criminalize piracy unless it is accompanied by blackmail, defamation or slander, and therefore this point is considered a loophole in Algerian law , producing software in Algeria that would guide the use of the Internet on the one hand and develop the World Wide Web on the other hand, and this is still an unattainable ambition , the absence of a body supervising the process of linking and preparing a partnership between the Internet sector and providers, which would benefit obtaining high-speed Internet , the lack of websites in Algeria, given the size of small and medium enterprises active at home, estimated at 3,000, especially if we know that 75% of these websites are used from abroad.

In addition we find social and cultural difficulties, these difficulties are numerous and fluctuate between the socio-economic aspect on the one hand and the cultural dimension of the Algerian individual on the other hand, therefore, we can mention some of these difficulties as follows:

- ✓ Weak purchasing power of individuals
- ✓ Weak intellectual and scientific production, due to the lack of electronic content.
- ✓ The psychological and social structure that believes in realistic relationships in achieving the satisfaction of desires.

2.2.2 The situation of fixed and mobile telephones in Algeria:

The telephone sector in Algeria is witnessing many developments, which we can see through ranking indicators and subscribers , the number of fixed-line telephone subscribers in Algeria in the first quarter of this year 2023 reached 5.75 million subscribers, an increase of 10.69% over the previous year, when the number of subscribers was estimated at 5.20 million subscribers , as for Algerian families, the percentage of fixed-line phone callers reached 78.24% in March 2023, compared to 65.27% last year , thus, Algeria ranks second in Africa and third in the Arab world .

Analysts attribute the main reason for the increased demand for it to the desire of fixed-line telephone subscribers to have access to the Internet in their homes , as for the mobile phone, it also knows a set of changes that we record through the following data , 49.30 million subscribers were registered during the months of January - February - March 2023, an

increase of 3.43% compared to the previous year 2022, with a total of 47.67 million subscribers, distributed as follows: Mobilis has 21.36 million GSM, 3G and 4G subscribers, followed by Djezzy with 15.20 million subscribers and Ooredoo with 12.74 million subscribers.

All of this indicates that Algerian society has become more and more connected to fixed and mobile phones, mostly in order to communicate via the Internet, as a modern means that is popular and widespread within society, and this is merely a mechanism to achieve and satisfy the desires of its users for communication.

3. The stakes and challenges of electronic journalism in light of developments in Algerian cyberspace:

Electronic journalism in Algeria has a set of challenges and challenges that we can address after reviewing the following points:

3.1 The beginnings of electronic journalism in Algeria:

The beginning of electronic journalism in Algeria was in 1997 with the access of the first national newspapers to the web, and some electronic newspapers that also began operating electronically since 1996 , a website is no longer a difficult thing in light of the competition between the public and private sectors on the one hand, and between private individuals on the other hand , the process of benefiting from a website no longer requires many

conditions, from a legal standpoint, for those who wish to belong to the DZ electronic space .

All that is required a commercial registry, a central headquarters or a coordination office in Algeria, along with an annual subscription fee , as for the legal framework regulating the electronic media sector, it has suffered for many years of absence, because the Algerian legislator deals with this issue from a technical aspect that is mainly related to the Internet, especially with regard to distributors through approved decrees , it should be noted that through the recent organic media law No. 23-14 issued in December 2023, which now requires a permit system, in accordance with Article 54 of the 2020 Constitution and sets the legal frameworks that ensure the general features of media practices, including electronic ones, are drawn up , such as how to carry out the activity and establish the electronic newspaper in terms of form and content, as well as the structures and bodies accompanying it to achieve a regulatory framework that guarantees rights and duties.

3.2 Electronic media experiences from the national press:

Electronic journalism in Algeria is characterized by the presence of two types of electronic journalism, one that complements the paper version, and another that does not have a paper backing and is not an extension of a traditional

media outlet and is known as pure electronic journalism, this division comes due to the openness of the written sector only in that period , pure electronic journalism appeared in the mid-nineties with the first national experiment in 1996, which was the newspaper Algérie Interface, it was an electronic newspaper without a paper backing, it was initially bi-monthly, then it gained follow-up and achieved success that made it turn into a weekly, but it soon stopped due to most likely financial circumstances , it was active in Paris.

It should be noted that today, with the new laws, conditions have been set so that any news site can be legally accepted as an Algerian website. The first of these conditions is that the site obtain a permit , according to the Algerian Ministry of Communication, the number of authorized electronic news sites will be only 130 in 2023.(APS , 2023)

3.2.1 El-Watan newspaper experience:

El-Watan newspaper went through a stage that preceded the process of placing the newspaper entirely on the Internet, which was the stage of exploiting the Internet immediately after its entry into Algeria in 1993 , in the beginning, the newspaper used the Internet for research and viewing. After that, the newspaper's management contacted the Technical Research Center as a body in charge of the Internet, which provides a text service and undertakes the task of preparing content electronically on

a daily basis , the content was brought by the newspaper's editor, who often waited a long time to obtain the content, due to the delay in preparing it in written form, which did not allow him to create it daily , Until 2004, the transition was made from static content to animated content, which allows dealing with moving images in addition to tables and texts.

-Creating the newspaper website:

El-Watan newspaper website was created on November 30, 1997 after the website was designed by GECOS. The newspaper worked to make the process of using the electronic support a success, so it relied on:

- ✓ Developing a training plan in the field of automated media for all journalists and newspaper workers .
- ✓ Providing all work halls with the Internet to work from the newspaper's headquarters.
- ✓ Trying to download and update the website from the newspaper.
- ✓ Placing the content electronically, even if it is initially identical to the paper edition of news agency content.

In the year 2000, the newspaper succeeded in providing news on a daily and real-time basis in both HTML and PDF formats, and became an electronic archive, from which information and news can be retrieved at a time with the push of a

button and from anywhere , the newspaper sought to enhance electronic advertising by offering competitive offers with discounts of up to 20% on the one hand, and using the paper copy to inform those wishing to advertise on the website level on the other hand, by exploiting all electronic pages to publish advertisements of various sizes and spaces.(Bourekaa , 2018 , p 49)

3.3 Challenges of electronic journalism:

Electronic journalism in Algeria is exposed to a set of challenges and challenges, just like its counterparts in the world , electronic journalism, by its nature and interactive characteristics, makes it face special challenges imposed by cyberspace , electronic journalism does not differ in form and content from traditional journalism except through the publishing pillar. Printing, distribution or broadcasting is replaced by electronic publishing, while sharing with it all legal, academic, scientific and economic frameworks , however, electronic journalism in cyberspace finds itself facing challenges from social networking sites.

3.3.1 The relationship between electronic journalism and social networking sites:

Electronic journalism is linked to social networking sites through the following: (Al-Najjar , 2018 , p 75)

-Social networking sites as a source of news and events, a means of transmitting them, providing reading and analysis of them, and adopting positions resulting from them , how many videos, photos, statements or positions were obtained from social networking sites and were approved as a source of news by the electronic newspaper and published electronically.

-Social networking sites as an interactive feature: these sites allow communication between readers of a printed or electronic newspaper or any classical media and the electronic version of these media , the recipient expresses his opinions, ideas, and positions, and interacts with his electronic media , the latter continues to listen, sometimes respond, enrich the discussion, exchange opinions, and build bridges of interaction between itself and its audience.

Electronic journalism partners with social networking sites in the electronic support and the technical characteristics of this support, so electronic publishing and the characteristics it carries become the main point in common between them , however, professional electronic journalism is journalism based on academic foundations

and principles translated into journalistic templates, in the hands of professionals practicing the media profession, they are subject to judicial oversight and legal accountability, they are required to investigate and formulate news sources and are obligated not to challenge moral and customary boundaries , they are also known by their commercial register and names.

On the other hand, there is news that moves freely, without any scientific or legal restrictions, and is not professional, but it aims to achieve what the classical and electronic media seek, which is to reach the recipient of the information, obtain the truth, and achieve an influence on the public and gain it permanently and increasingly , its basis is trust gained from losing it in the old and new media, and this is what led to the emergence of what is known as citizen journalism.

3.3.2 Social networking sites in Algeria:

Algerians use social networking sites permanently and continuously, and the number of users recorded a significant increase in the year 2022 with 26.60 million users, while this number witnessed a decrease in January 2023 with a total of 23.95 million users, and Facebook recorded the largest percentage of decline in users with approximately 2.65 million users, at the beginning of 2023, 20.80 million Facebook users were counted, compared to 22.45 million users in 2022.(Kemp , 2023)

The rest of the sites were distributed as follows:

- ✓ YouTube has 22.70 million users
- ✓ Messenger has 13.60 million users
- ✓ Instagram has 8.40 million users
- ✓ Snapchat has 6.95 million users
- ✓ LinkedIn has 3.20 million users
- ✓ X website (Twitter) with 1.15 million users (an increase from 891 thousand users to more than 1 million)(Algerian Radio , 2023)

From our reading of these statistics, although Facebook recorded a decline this year compared to last year, it remains the most popular and used site , it is clear that Algerian society depends on YouTube a lot for its ease of use and benefiting from the audio-visual feature, which makes it more popular in Algeria , also, although Twitter is the most widely used site for official news and the most widely used by official figures and bodies nationally and internationally, it is not widely used in Algerian society.

Social networking sites in Algeria are not only linked to individuals as separate people, but even media institutions use them to connect bridges of dealing with their audiences , through the process of interaction, exchanging opinions and discussions, or through obtaining information and publishing it on the one hand, or selecting news from the electronic press and forming a public

opinion about it , the increase in the number of users of social networking sites shows the nature of the relationship between users who rely on electronic sources as it is part of daily practice, and moving away more and more from everything that is traditional media at the expense of approaching electronic media.

In addition to disseminating news in cyberspace and forming an interactive relationship between the sender (a professional journalist or a citizen journalist) and the recipient (a journalist or an ordinary citizen) , all of this shows the extent of the impact and impact between the electronic media and the electronic audience in Algeria, especially after the recent statistics confirmed by the Minister of Communications and the government spokesman that 70% of Algerians receive their news through electronic news sites.

4.Conclusion:

The factors for the development of electronic journalism in Algeria are linked to the technical factor, which is essentially a technological factor. Algeria's experience in independent written journalism was still a young experience being established, and a reality being prepared for it. Were it not for the technological imperative, the written press in Algeria would not have transitioned to electronic journalism .

Algeria's connection to the Internet and allowing the local and international

private sector to invest in it has facilitated and energized the process of responding to the increasing demands for the speed of Internet flow and increasing the growth of its penetration rate, the increase in the intensity of Internet use and users' connection to social networking sites also contributed to the creation and growth of the special Algerian experience in citizen journalism, in which the Algerian citizen contributes to various contents specific to Algerian society and its interests.

Regarding the relationship between the development of the Algerian electronic press and the legal and legislative environment in which it operates, the study concluded that Arab legislation and laws are slow to keep pace with the rapid development of electronic journalism. The reason is due to the complexity of the stages that laws and legislation go through during their formulation, and the large number of channels that they pass through. The researcher spoke about the necessity of developing an Arab regional code for electronic media to guide countries when setting their internal electronic media laws, which requires separating electronic media from paper media and publishing legally and legislatively.

Regarding the economic challenge faced by the Algerian electronic press, the study concluded that this press needs an economic model that is compatible with the communicative characteristics of the

web and human communication via the Internet, and responds to the developments that appear as the needs of recipients of media content change and their receiving habits change.

As for the role of the Arab electronic press in shaping and directing public opinion, the book concluded that it contributes to this formation and that guidance, but not through arguments and analysis, but rather through issuing judgments on issues, problems, and current events, which is something that still represents one of the challenges of the Algerian electronic press. .

By examining some cases, the study concluded that the electronic press in Algeria, for example, needs to create a "freedom-friendly environment" represented by the emergence of a new mentality that possesses experience in managing the media file. Instead of that mentality that is still conservative in rotating traditional leaders, and the trend towards enacting laws and legislation whose philosophy and spirit tend to restrict, criminalize and punish, as appears in the cybercrime law currently in effect.

Regarding the mechanisms of coexistence and competition between Arab electronic journalism and social media platforms, the state of competitiveness remains between the two types of electronic journalism and social media networks, with increasing preferential advantages in favor of the latter as a result of the development of

mobile phone technology, with the presence of some opportunities that, if electronic newspapers use them well, this may help in Restoring its luster, such as the ability to strike a balance between verifying the authenticity and accuracy of news and the speed of its publication, as well as using local networks of relationships through the integration of editors into communication groups with common general interests and using the ongoing dialogues therein to generate new ideas for creative journalistic content.

In addition to making an effort to attract distinguished producers of written or multimedia content via social media networks and integrating their production in an integrated way with the content of the newspaper's website.

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