

# **Newsroom Convergence in Saudi Press organisations**

A qualitative study into four newsrooms of traditional newspapers <sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This is the first study of its kind about newsroom convergence and multi-skilled journalists in Saudi newspaper organisations and aimed to fill a gap in the literature about this particular issue in the Saudi context. The study investigated transformations, implications and consequences of technological convergence at four Saudi traditional newspaper organisations; *Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum*, and *Alwatan*. This thesis has explored the particular impacts of online journalistic production in traditional newspaper organisations to identify changes and perhaps challenges occurring in newspaper newsrooms. The study used the observation method in the four newsrooms and in-depth interviews with open ended questions with 60 professionals. The findings confirmed that there are ongoing transformations in the newsrooms. Yet, these transformations are challenged by regulatory, business, and cultural forces. *Alyaum* was the only newsroom to introduce new integrated newsroom. Journalists are observing and using new communication technologies in the workplace. However, there are difficulties in this process such as tensions in the newsrooms and shortage of qualified and trained journalists in the Saudi media market especially, multiskilled journalists. Despite embracing online and digital technology in news production and disruption, the four Saudi newspapers are still prioritising the traditional print side as it is generating more than 95 % of the annual revenue. Yet, the full integration of newsrooms between online and print newsrooms does not exist in Saudi press organisations.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	2
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	3
<b>Table of contents</b> .....	4
<b>Figures list</b> .....	10
<b>Abbreviations</b> .....	12
 <b><u>Part One: background of context and concepts for the study</u></b>	
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	13
1.1 Introduction .....	14
1.2 Rationale and Significance of the Study .....	17
1.3 Conceptual Framework of the Study .....	19
1.4 Research design and questions .....	22
1.5 Structure of the Thesis .....	24
<b>Chapter 2: Print Journalism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</b> .....	27
2.1 Introduction .....	28
2.2 Emergence and development of print journalism in Saudi Arabia .....	29
2.2.1 Individual Press Ownership stage .....	30
2.2.2 Press merging stage .....	34
2.2.3 Organisational Ownership Press Stage.....	36
2.2.4 Online-only Press Stage .....	40
2.3 Media Regulations in Saudi Arabia .....	41
2.3.1 Printed Materials and Publication Law.....	42
2.3.2 Press Establishments Law .....	44
2.3.3 Executive Regulations of Electronic Publishing .....	45
2.3.4 Copyright Law .....	47
2.4 Circulation of Saudi Newspapers .....	50
2.5 The Internet and newspapers' newsrooms .....	52
2.6 Saudi Newspaper Management and Newsrooms .....	53

2.8 Summary .....	56
<b>Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review .....</b>	<b>57</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	58
3.2 News production as a sociological perspective .....	59
3.3 Economics of newspaper organisations .....	65
3.4 The Internet and newspaper industry .....	74
3.5 Technological Convergence and media .....	89
3.6 Convergence and changing newsroom: map of related studies .....	94
3.7 Summary .....	109
<b><u>Part two: Research design, fieldwork, and findings</u></b>	
<b>Chapter 4: Research Methods .....</b>	<b>112</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	113
4.2 The aim and the importance of the Study .....	113
4.3 Research methods and design .....	116
4.3.1 Observation .....	116
4.3.2 Interviews .....	118
4.4 Sampling and Selection Procedure .....	120
4.5 Cases studies.....	122
4.5.1 Al-Madina Newspaper .....	122
4.5.2 Alriyadh Newspaper .....	123
4.5.3 Alyaum Newspaper .....	124
4.5.4 Alwatan Newspaper .....	124
4.6 Research Questions .....	125
4.7 Research Ethics: procedures and practices .....	127
4.8 The fieldwork .....	128
4.9 Summary .....	132
<b>Chapter 5: Findings at Al-Madina .....</b>	<b>133</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	134

5.2 background of Al-Madina newspaper .....	135
5.3 Newspaper management and newsroom structure .....	135
5.4 Electronic Publishing Department .....	138
5.5 Workflow and daily routine .....	140
5.6 Editing and content management software packages .....	142
5.7 News circulation for traditional and digital users .....	145
5.8 Main transformations at Al-Madina .....	148
5.9 Main challenges face Al-Madina .....	152
5.10 Strategies of Al-Madina in the online age .....	158
5.11 Journalists and current transitions .....	161
5.12 Summary .....	165
<b>Chapter 6: Findings at Alriyadh .....</b>	<b>166</b>
6.1 Introduction .....	167
6.2 background of Alriyadh newspaper .....	167
6.3 Newspaper management and newsroom structure .....	168
6.4 Electronic Publishing Department .....	171
6.5 Workflow and daily routine .....	173
6.6 Editing and content management software packages .....	176
6.7 News circulation for traditional and digital users .....	177
6.8 Main transformations at Alriyadh .....	178
6.9 Main challenges face Alriyadh .....	183
6.10 Strategies of Alriyadh in the online age .....	187
6.11 Journalists and current transitions .....	189
6.12 Summary .....	194
<b>Chapter 7: Findings at Alyaum .....</b>	<b>195</b>
7.1 Introduction .....	196
7.2 background of Alyaum newspaper .....	197
7.3 Newspaper management and newsroom structure .....	197

7.4 New Media Department .....	202
7.5 Workflow and daily routine .....	204
7.6 Editing and content management software packages .....	207
7.7 News circulation for traditional and digital users .....	208
7.8 Main transformations at Alyaum .....	210
7.9 Main challenges face Alyaum .....	215
7.10 Strategies of Alyaum in the online age .....	222
7.11 Journalists and current transitions .....	225
7.12 Summary .....	228
<b>Chapter 8: Findings at Alwatan .....</b>	<b>229</b>
8.1 Introduction .....	230
8.2 background of Alwatan newspaper .....	231
8.3 Newspaper management and newsroom structure .....	232
8.4 New Media Department .....	235
8.5 Workflow and daily routine .....	235
8.6 Editing and content management software packages .....	237
8.7 News circulation for traditional and digital users .....	237
8.8 Main transformations at Alwatan .....	238
8.9 Main challenges face Alwatan .....	241
8.10 Strategies of Alwatan in the online age .....	244
8.11 Journalists and current transitions.....	246
8.12 Summary.....	247
<b><u>Part Three: analysis and discussion of the findings and conclusions</u></b>	
<b>Chapter 9: Cross-case study analysis and Discussion .....</b>	<b>249</b>
9.1 Introduction .....	250
9.2 Existing managerial structure in Saudi newspaper organisations.....	254

9.3 Existing newsroom models at the four newspapers.....	259
9.4 The role of new media departments/ online newsrooms.....	261
9.5 The relationship between online and print newsrooms in Saudi newspapers.....	266
9.6 Implications for news production and distribution at Saudi newspapers.....	270
9.6.1 speeding up news production.....	270
9.6.2 Reducing costs and efforts .....	274
9.6.3 Expansion of news distribution .....	277
9.7 Implications regulatory environment in Saudi newspapers industry.....	280
9.7.1 Commercial and market implications.....	280
9.7.2 Regulation and policy implications.....	287
9.8 Implications for strategies in responding to digital transformations.....	291
9.8.1 From newspaper organisation to the new media house.....	292
9.8.2 Print-first strategy .....	293
9.8.3 Policies in selecting news for multiple platforms .....	294
9.9 Journalists and accepting new changes in new digital transformation.....	295
9.10 Journalistic skills and training in a digital transformation .....	300
9.10.1 Underqualified graduates .....	300
9.10.2 Ongoing training .....	302

9.10.3 Multi-skilled Journalists .....	303
9.11 Journalists and pressures in the newsrooms.....	306
9.12 Journalists and the use of social media.....	308
9.13 Profession and the future of newspapers in Saudi Arabia.....	310
9.14 Summary.....	314
<b>Chapter 10: Conclusion</b> .....	<b>316</b>
10.1 Introduction .....	317
10.2 The aim and design of this study .....	317
10.3 The importance of this research .....	318
10.4 Research questions .....	318
10.5 Summary Findings of this Study .....	320
10.6 The limitations of this research .....	330
10.7 Suggestions for further studies .....	331
10.8 Summary .....	333
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>333</b>
<b>Appendix</b> .....	<b>352</b>
The Law of Press Establishments .....	352
The Law of Printed Materials and Publication .....	357
The Copyright Law.....	364

### Figures List

<i>Figure</i>	<i>page</i>
Figure 2.1 First Printer in Riyadh	32
Figure 2.2 Estimated Average of daily circulation of Saudi newspapers	51
Figure 2.3 Traditional Saudi newspaper website start dates	52
Figure 3.1 Average change in circulations of British newspapers	71
Figure 3.2 Newspaper circulations in the Arab region, 2007-2011	73
Figure 3.3 Growth of the internet users over 20 years	78
Figure 3.4 Development of Saudi Internet users in millions	79
Figure 4.1 Observations into the Newsrooms	128
Figure 4.2 List of interviewees in the four newspapers	129
Figure 4.3 Completed Interviewees List	130
Figure 5.1: The organisational structure of Al-Madina Newspaper	136
Figure 5.2: Al-Madina main newsroom	137
Figure 5.3: Layout of Al-Madina's Newsroom	137
Figure 5.4: Another lounge which includes some proofreaders	138
Figure 5.5: Workflow and relations between divisions at Al-Madina newspaper	139
Figure 5.6 Diagram of Al-Madina news production process for print and online	141
Figure 5.7: News Press main page	143
Figure 5.8: News Press building news story	144
Figure 5.9: News Press news sources/news agencies	144
Figure 5.10: Annual unique visitors of Al-Madina's website	146
Figure 5.11: Al-Madina's accounts on SMSs	147
Figure 6.1 : Organisational structure of Alriyadh Newspaper	169
Figure 6.2: Future structure of Alriyadh 's newsroom	171
Figure 6.3: The new lounge of the Electronic Media Department	172

Figure 6.4: Al-Yamamh Printing House	174
Figure 6.5 Diagram of Alriyadh news production process for print and online	175
Figure 6.6: Rapid Browser main page and inside page for some stories being processing	176
Figure 6.7: Alriyadh accounts on Social Media	177
Figure 6.8: Annual unique visits to Alriyadh 's website	178
Figure 7.1 : Organisational structure of Alyaum Newspaper	198
Figure 7.2: New Alyaum News Centre	199
Figure 7.3: Many screens at Alyaum News Centre	200
Figure 7.4: The first counter at Alyaum News Centre	201
Figure 7.5: The second counter of Alyaum News Centre	201
Figure 7.6: New Media Manager is located within the new News Centre	203
Figure 7.7 Diagram of Alyaum news production process for print and online	205
Figure 7.8: The office of Deputy Editor-in-Chief separated from the new newsroom	207
Figure 7.9 : Annual unique visits to the Alyaum website	208
Figure 7.10: Alyaum's accounts on social media	209
Figure 8.1: Structure of Alwatan newspaper	233
Figure 8.2 : Alwatan's newsroom in Abha	234
Figure 8.3 Diagram of Alwatan news production process for print and online sides	236
Figure 8.4: Alwatan accounts on social media	238
Figure 9.1 Unique visits to three newspapers' websites in last five years	277
Figure 9.2 Newspapers' social media accounts	278

## **Abbreviations**

AOL: American Online

CMS: Content management System

CTP: Computer-To-Plate

DTP: Desktop Publishing

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

HTML: Hyper Text Markup Language

The lounge / editorial lounge: Newsroom

RSS: Rich Site Summary

SMS: Short Message Service

SNSs: Social Networking Sites

Tadawul: Saudi Stock Exchange

Web: World Wide Web

# **Chapter One:**

# **Introduction**

## 1.1 Introduction

This was an empirical study that aimed to investigate transformations, implications and consequences of technological convergence at four Saudi traditional newspaper organisations. It explored how newsrooms and journalists of traditional newspaper organisations are responding to online and digital technologies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It in particular examined how Saudi journalists are managing news production in the technological convergence age in traditional newspapers. The study also focused on transformations in the newsrooms, managing news production over multiple platforms, production processes and workflows, and the role and relationship of new media departments within traditional newsrooms. It furthermore studied changes and challenges to the newspaper journalists' routines and practices in the Saudi Arabian context.

The study used media economics and newsroom convergence as the main conceptual approaches to address the research inquiry. This is qualitative research using two main research methods to collect the necessary data. These research techniques were observation in the four newsrooms and in-depth interviews with open ended questions with 60 professionals at the four newspapers. The four newspapers that were the focus of this study were *Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum*, and *Alwatan*.

The four press organisations studied are represent 40% of Saudi newspaper organisations that are currently working under the Press Establishment Law. This indicated that the current study and its results are limited to those newspapers that are licensed and working inside the kingdom. Therefore, it excluded any other newspapers that have foreign

licences, that may or may not be printed in Saudi Arabia but are working and circulating in the Saudi market.

Moreover, the study is concerned with newspapers organisations and their online publishing. However, there are terms such ‘online newspapers’ or ‘electronic newspapers’ can mean different things in Saudi Arabia and don not refer to the online publishing side of the traditional print newspapers. Thus, the researcher introduced the term *Online-only-newspapers* to distinguish between traditional newspapers and the online newspapers or electronic newspapers, the terms that are widely used in Saudi Arabia to refer to online based news that has no link to print or broadcasting media. This is a significant issue in the Saudi Arabian market because of big changes that happened in the second decade of this century.

Following the appearance of the Internet, the Saudi traditional newspapers launched their websites as follows: *Al-Jazerah* newspaper (April 1997), *Alriyadh* newspaper (March 1999), *Alwatan* (November 2000), *Okaz* (June 2001), *Alyaum* (April 2002), *Al-Madina* newspaper (January 2003) , *Alsharq* (November 2011), and *Makkah* newspaper (January 2014). However, since, 2011, a new wave has flooded the Saudi news market with more than 2000 online-only newspapers. Despite the professionalism of those news outlets, it has some implications for online journalism in the kingdom. Most of these types of newspaper are under individual ownership and only less than half have been licensed.

The traditional press organisations that are licensed and working in the kingdom under the Press Establishment Law and other media related regulations are as follow:

- 1- Albilad Organisation for Printing and Press has two prints; *Albilad Newspaper* and *Iqraa Magazine*. It is located in Jeddah and has a printing house.
- 2- Al-Madina Organisation for Press and Publishing is located in Jeddah, where it has been publishing the *Al-Madina* newspaper since 1937.
- 3- Makkah Organisation for Media and Printing is located in Makkah (Mecca), where it printed the *Al-Nadowah* Newspaper. *Al-Nadowah* experienced difficulties in terms of management and financial aspects and consequently stopped publishing. However, in January 2014, the Makkah organisation replaced *Al-Nadowah* with the *Makkah* newspaper.
- 4- Al-Jazirah Organisation for Press, Printing, and Publishing is located in Riyadh and prints the *Al-Jazirah* newspaper that has been published since April 1960.
- 5- Al-Daawah Press Organization owns the *Al-Dawaah Magazine*, an Islamic publication that focuses on religious, cultural and literary subjects. *Al-Daawah*, which has been in publication since May 1965, started as weekly newspaper and, over time, was transformed into a weekly 54-page magazine,
- 6- Okaz Organisation for Press and Publishing, an organisation that publishes two important daily prints, is located in Jeddah. *Okaz* is an Arabic print and since October 1964 it has been issued as a daily paper. The Okaz Organisation has also published the *Saudi Gazette*, an English publication since April 1976.

- 7- Al Ymamah Press Organisation is located in Riyadh and has published two prints: *Alriyadh* newspaper and *Al Ymamah Magazine* since May 1965.
- 8- Dar Alyaum for Press, Print, and Publishing is located in Dammam and publishes the *Alyaum* newspaper and it has published since 1965.
- 9- Asser Organisation for Press and Publishing has one daily publication, the *Alwatan* newspaper. It was founded in September 2000 and is located in Abha city in south-eastern Saudi Arabia.
- 10- Al Sharqiah Organisation for Printing, Press, and Media is the most recently licensed press organisation in Saudi Arabia. It is located in Dammam, in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, and has published the *Alsharq* newspaper since December 2011.

## **1.2 Rationale and Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this research was to investigate how technological convergence and the Internet in particular are affecting newsrooms of Saudi newspapers and how Saudi journalists are managing news production and perceiving transformations in the newsroom. The study focused on changes in the news production process, newsroom structure, managing news production between traditional and digital formats, workflow, and the roles and relationship of the online newsroom in print newspapers.

In other words, the study intended to identify transformations, implications and consequences of digital communication technology in Saudi traditional newspapers' newsrooms. This existence of multiple production and publishing has raised questions about efficiency of traditional newsrooms in terms of structure, workflow and journalists' skills and roles. This study investigates the challenges, transformations and new strategies that are affecting Saudi newspaper organisations. Identifying the responses to digital communication technologies will help to have better understanding of current transformation and future direction of Saudi traditional press organisations

There are two perspectives to the significance of this study. Firstly, it is the first study of its kind about newsroom convergence and multi-skilled journalists in the Saudi Arabian context. The emergence of digital and communication technologies such as the Internet has created an increasingly competitive news market. To cope with these trends, Saudi newspapers embraced digital technologies within newsrooms to publish both digital and print simultaneously. Secondly, there are no official statistics available that relate to the circulation of Saudi newspapers in addition to poor literature about Saudi media transformations in general and newsrooms in particular. The need for new and continued studies about these transformations and implications comes from the fact that traditional media outlets are facing challenges at different levels. These levels are: business models, organisational and structural factors, news production processes and workflow, managing multiple productions for multiple platforms, and journalists' roles, practices and identity. Thus, the

significance of this study is to bridge the gap in the literature about these issues and contribute to the global literature from Saudi Arabian context.

### **1.3 Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The concept of convergence can be approached for instance, from a technological, economic, management, ownership, or even multimedia production. Singer defined media convergence by referring it ‘to some combination of technologies, products, staffs and geography among the previously distinct provinces of print, television and online media’ (Singer, 2004: 3).

Convergence can be seen, as Quinn claimed that it is the endpoint for mass communication around the world but the speed of this transformation toward convergence can be varies from country to another. There are different definitions of convergence and theses differences, as Quinn (2005) points out, reflect the fact that convergence can vary according to differences of country, organisations and culture.

The first use of the term “convergence of modes” was by Pool (Pool, 1983: p.24). Media convergence has become an interesting topic for researchers in the field of media and communication studies. The impact of digital communication technologies on the media industry is visible in new digital journalistic production, new management structures in newsrooms and new business models. The importance of studying the changes in the news industry can help solve issues and problems that may appear in media businesses. For example, in the practice of journalism, news production and

management in the digital age is now a critical issue, especially in traditional media organisations. This issue can become even more difficult within the context of newspaper organisations. (Quinn 2005; Quinn,2005b; Dupagne & Garrison, 2006; Pavlik, 2008; Picard, 2010; Kaye & Quinn, 2010; Zhang ,2009; Zhang, 2012; Picard, 2015)

The impact of media convergence on organisational structure could be also seen in reorganising the newsrooms and introducing new positions to cope with changes in news production process. Technological developments and media economics are driving media converging process. Yet, full digital convergence in news organisations requires technical developments and changes in the communication and information infrastructure. This includes both reshaping ways of engaging and dealing with information formats and reshaping the relationship between workers inside newsrooms and with audience. (Pavlik 2000; Quinn, 2005; Quinn, 2005b; Pavlik, 2008; Saltzis and Dickinson,2008; Zhang ,2012; Tameling and Broersma,2013; García-Avilés et al., 2009; García-Avilés et al, 2014)

Newsrooms have been affected by technology especially online practices of news production. Newspapers organisations, for instance, are concerned about how to adapt technological convergence into news production process and newsroom daily practice to cope with traditional and online production. The structure of newsrooms is transforming from a very strict hierarchy to having less of a gap between the top and bottom in the news production process. These changes have also created what Pavlik calls a “combined newsroom” which can be seen for instance in CNN and The Tribune. (Pavlik, 2000: 234; Herbert, 2000; Pavlik, 2001)

The borders between media have become blurry. Factors such as place and time in the media production became challenges for traditional media. The news production time in digital environment needs to speed up production process and workflow across media types. This is because the Internet challenged news production in the traditional print and broadcasting outlets. Another issue also is that journalists have experienced some difficulties transferring their final journalistic products to different platforms. Multiskilled journalists will be essential, as the changes in journalistic practices will continue and media organisations will be more likely to move towards convergent journalism. News companies share some doubts about convergent newsrooms such as differences in journalists' abilities to work on cross-platform tasks or other multi-skilled job requirements. (Klinenberg; 2005; Saltzis & Dickinson, 2008; Vobic, 2009)

Newspaper newsrooms are adopting technologies and the Internet, in particular, is the most useful information tool and platform. Newsroom also are merging roles of journalists and technicians and changing the hierarchical power structure of newsrooms by creating new positions and roles for a multi-skilled workforce. This has affected traditional print journalists with low technical skills and left them isolated in the new convergent newsrooms. In some newspaper organisations, technicians have been moved to the middle of the newsrooms and become more connected with journalists. (Garrison, 2001; Robinson, 2011)

Indeed, advanced digital communication technologies have a significant impact on how a journalist carries out tasks in newsrooms. This can be seen, for instance, where developments in hardware and software

technologies are helping journalists and reporters to do their jobs smoothly and effectively. News content now becomes possible in multimedia formats (Pavlik, 2000; Pavlik 2001; Kawamoto, 2003). For example, news stories on the web now use text, audio, video and pictures, whilst hyperlinks connect the story to different sources and to more information or related news on the same webpage. Journalists are now using the web for searching, newsgathering, and they are engaging with their readers. They have to produce multiform content for multiple platforms in a short time and yet are expected to maintain the quality and accuracy of news stories. All these challenges can be seen as putting more pressure on journalists or create tensions in the newsroom. (Pavlik, 2000; Pavlik 2001; Kawamoto, 2003; Weiss and Joyce, 2009)

Despite above literature and appreciable efforts by scholars regarding convergent newsrooms, especially between online and print production of press organisations, literature focusing on the Saudi Arabian context is missing. The aim here was to address this gap by conducting an empirical study in four traditional newspaper newsrooms in Saudi Arabia.

#### **1.4 Research design and questions**

This study used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research methods allow researchers to formulate flexible, simple research questions that can be further developed at any point during the research process. In contrast, there is less flexibility in quantitative research, as research questions must be arranged beforehand. In addition, qualitative research techniques make it

possible to begin gathering notes and sorting some of the collected data while still in the midst of the research process. This is not the case with quantitative research, which generally requires that the researcher finish the entire data collection process before analysis can begin (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 118).

The study therefore used two qualitative research techniques. The first was non-participative observations in the four newsrooms of *Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum*, and *Alwatan* to answer related research questions that the interview method cannot address. The second was 60 in-depth semi-structured interviews with the Editor-in-Chief, general managers, deputy editors-in-chief, managing editors, online or new media managers, and journalists or reporters in Saudi newspapers.

The research questions, in line with the main aim of this research, explored how newsrooms and journalists of traditional newspapers are responding to online and digital technologies in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, there were two main research questions, with some supporting questions, as follows:

- (1) How are newsrooms of Saudi traditional newspaper organisations responding to the emergence and developments of online and digital communications technologies?

The first main research question is about the newsroom structure and the management of news production; the supported questions are: what is the existing status of the managerial structure and newsroom structure in Saudi newspaper organisations?, what is the existing newsroom model in Saudi

newspapers and is any restructuring planned ?, what are the existing roles and relationship of new media divisions/online newsrooms in Saudi newspapers in conjunction with tradition print newsrooms?, what is the existing production process and workflow between online and print newsrooms?, what are the main implications of digital communication technology for news production and distribution at Saudi newspapers?, what are the main implications of digital technology on the commercial and regulatory environment?, and what are the main implications on strategies in responding to digital transformations?

(2) How are Saudi newspaper journalists responding to digital transformations and how do they perceive changes in the newsroom?

The second main research question is about the journalists and the supporting questions are: what are the main implications for journalistic skills and training?, what are the main implications for working pressures and practices?, what are the main implications for the profession?, how do journalists perceive their profession and the future of Saudi newspapers in middle of continuing developments in digital communication technology?.

## **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is contained ten chapters and can be outlined as following:

### Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the research project and the design of this thesis.

### Chapter 2: Journalism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

This is a contextual chapter and will focus on print journalism in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It will particularly focus on the emergence and development of journalism in Saudi Arabia, Saudi media regulations, circulation of Saudi newspapers, the Internet and newspapers' newsrooms, newspaper management and newsroom structure.

### Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

This will be focused around a review of the current literature including a range of issues discussed in relation to the current study. It will cover the following themes: the economics of newspaper organisations, the Internet and the newspaper industry, technological convergence and media, and convergence and changing newsroom: map of related studies.

### Chapter Four: Research Methodology

This chapter will include the aim and importance of this study and will address the research problem. The chapter will also explain the research questions and the sampling and selection procedures.

### Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8: Findings of individual case studies of the four newspapers.

Chapters 5 to 8 will present the findings of the study, generated through the two research methods, by individual newsrooms of *Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum*, and *Alwatan*. In each of the four chapters findings are presented

around 10 themes. These are: case-study background, newspaper management and newsroom structure, electronic publishing department, workflow and daily routine, editorial software packages, news circulation for traditional and digital, main transformations, main challenges, strategies, and status of journalists in the digital transformation.

#### Chapter 9: Cross-case study analysis and discussion

This chapter will analyse and compare the findings across the four case studies and discuss them in conjunction with related literature. This chapter includes discussion of the following themes: the managerial and structural changes in Saudi newspapers, the role of new media departments, and their relationship with print newsrooms, the production process between online and print newsrooms. This chapter, in addition, will look at the implications of digital technology for news production and distribution in the Saudi context the current challenges being faced by the Saudi newspapers, the implemented and planned strategies in the newsrooms, and the positions of Saudi journalists of traditional newspapers in the digital age.

#### Chapter 10: Conclusion

The chapter will summarise and conclude the study and present the main findings, the main limitations, and offer suggestions for further research.

# **Chapter Two:**

## **Print Journalism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

## 2.1 Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is located in the southwest region of the Asian continent where it serves as a linking point between the continents of Asia and Africa. The Kingdom occupies approximately 80% of the Arabian Peninsula, which is equivalent to more than two million square kilometers. The country is bound on the west by the Red Sea, by Yemen and the Sultanate of Oman to the south, by the Arabian Gulf, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar to the east, and by Kuwait, Iraq and Jordan to the north (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2015; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015).

The latest statistics indicate that the total population of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is more than 31,000,000, of whom two thirds are Saudis nationals (GaStat, 2016).

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, oil and its related industries represent the main economic resources. The Kingdom owns the largest oil reserves in the world and it is one of the largest producers of oil and gas. In 2016 the gross domestic product (GDP) of Saudi Arabia was recorded as a total of around 1679 Billion USD, with GDP growth amounting to around 5.5%. These figures place Saudi Arabia 14<sup>th</sup> in the world on the International Monetary Fund list (IMF, 2016).

In order to obtain a better understanding about Saudi newspapers and their transformations and challenges, it is important to look at the wider context. This will prove helpful in appreciating and understanding the findings of the current research on how newsrooms and journalists of Saudi

traditional newspaper organisations are responding to the emergence and developments of online and digital communications technologies.

Therefore, this chapter will cover five sections; 1) emergence and development of print journalism in Saudi Arabia, 2) media regulations in Saudi Arabia, 3) circulation of Saudi newspapers; 4) the internet and newspapers' newsrooms; and 5) newspaper management and newsrooms' structure.

## **2.2 Emergence and development of print journalism in Saudi Arabia**

This section covers the development of the print journalism industry in Saudi Arabia, from its beginnings to its present position. A historical approach will be employed in this section in order to generate a comprehensive understanding of today's newspaper industry and developments over the past years. This includes the struggles and opportunities that this industry has experienced since the establishment of the third state of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Printing in the Arabian Peninsula was initially introduced in 1877 in Sana'a at the early stages by the Ottoman Empire. Then, in 1883, the Ottoman government introduced Dar Alwilaiah Printing in Makkah Al-Mukarramah (Mecca) (Alshamik 1982; Alshebaili, 2003). Three main stages of Saudi journalism have previously been identified by scholars (Alshamik, 1982; Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information, 1993; Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information, 1999; Alhabbab, 2001; Al-Hazmi, 2002; Alshebaili, 2002; Alshebaili, 2003; Izaat, 2008). These are the stages

of individual press ownership, of press merging, and of organisational press ownership.

However, a fourth stage, online-only journalism, must be added for its importance. These four stages of Saudi journalism will be discussed in four detailed sections. The importance of these stages to the current research is to see how the Saudi newspapers have been developed over decades to become the current media landscape in the Kingdom.

### 2.2.1 Individual Press Ownership stage

This is the first stage of the Saudi newspaper industry, which took place between 1924 and 1964. In this period, any individual was able to establish a newspaper or a magazine with little effort; all one required was the will to do so. The newspapers and magazines in that period were concentrated in the western part of Saudi Arabia, formerly called Hijaz. This region includes Makkah (Mecca or Makkah Al-Mukarramah), Jeddah and Madinah. The main newspapers published during this period can be summarised as below: (Alshamik, 1982; Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information, 1993; Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information, 1999; Alhabbab, 2001; Alshebaili, 2003; Izaat, 2008).

- 1) *Um Al-Qura* is a weekly publication that was issued in 1924 in Makkah as the first Saudi newspaper under the current Saudi regime. *Um Al-Qura* is the Saudi government's official publication, where all new decrees and royal decisions must be published to be confirmed. The *Um Al-*

*Oura* therefore has served as the main reference for all governmental declarations and rules from this point.

- 2) *Saout Alhijaz* is a private, weekly, individual ownership newspaper that was established in April 1932 by Mohammed Saleh Nasif. The paper was located in Makkah (Mecca) and printed at Alsalfiah printing then printed at Al-Arabiyah Printing. Mr. Nasif appointed Abdul-Alwahab Ashi as the first Editor-in-Chief. *Saout Alhijaz* was the first paper other than *Al-Madina* to use photographs in Saudi journalism. The ownership of *Saout Alhijaz* was sold in 1935 to the Arabic Company for Printing and Publishing. However, in 1946, the paper was renamed to *Albilad Alsaudia* newspaper.
- 3) *Al-Madinah Almonawarah* is located in Al Madinah City in the western region of Saudi Arabia. It was launched in 1937 by Othman Hafiz and Ali Hafiz. Ameen Madani acted as the first Editor-in-Chief. The paper printed four pages weekly but halted operations between 1941 and 1947 on account of the Second World War.
- 4) *Al Ymamah* was established in Riyadh in August 1953, first as a monthly print then as a weekly print. Although it was licensed as a newspaper, *Al Ymamah* had been published as a magazine with a total of 42 pages in each print until 1955. Owner and Editor-in-Chief of *Al Ymamah*, Hamad Al Jaser, was a well-known Saudi intellectual. As no printing services were available in Riyadh at that time, *Al Ymamah* was

initially printed in Cairo then moved its print to Jeddah, then it was printed in Beirut and finally it moved back to Riyadh.

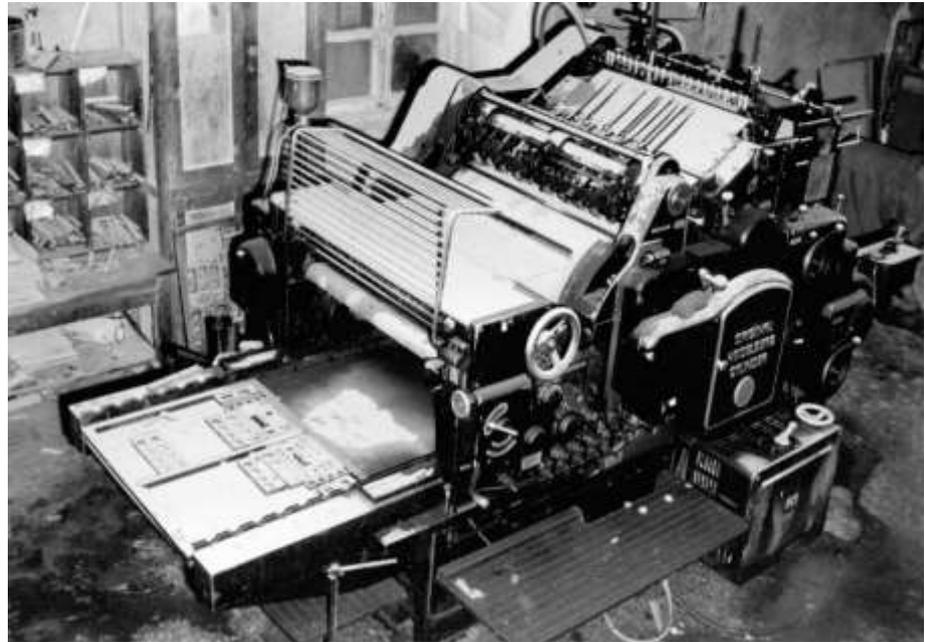


Figure (2.1) First Printer in Riyadh – Source: Alriyadh Newspaper

- 5) *Akhbar Al-Dhahran* (Al-Dhahran News) was published in 1954 in Dhahran city as the first newspaper in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia. The paper was first published twice monthly and, following this, on a weekly basis. *Akhbar Al-Dhahran* was initially printed at National Printing in Dammam. The first editor-in -chief was Abdullah Almulhaq, who was succeeded by a well-known journalist and intellectual, Kareem Al Jhaiman .
- 6) *Al Fajr Aljadeed* was a weekly paper that was launched in 1954 in Dammam by Ahmed Yaqub. The newspaper was printed at Saudi Printing in Dammam and only lasted for three issues.

- 7) *Heraa Newspaper* was established in December 1956 in Makkah. The owner and Editor-in-Chief was Saleh Mohammed Jamal. *Heraa* Newspaper printed weekly for two years and, following this, began to print four pages daily on a regular basis.
- 8) *Al-Adwaa* was the first paper to publish in Jeddah city under the Saudi regime. The first issue was printed on 4th June 1957 at Printing & Publishing Co. in Jeddah, and Mohammed Saeed Ba Ishan was the first Editor-in-Chief. The primary topics covered related to financial and business news and, additionally, to related opinions. *Al-Adwaa* continued to publish daily until January 1959 when it was stopped.
- 9) *Arafat* was published in Jeddah in 1957 as a weekly paper by Hassan Qazzaz. The newspaper only lasted for one year until it merged with *Albilad Alsaudia* to create the current *Albilad Newspaper*.
- 10) *Al-Nadowah* started printing weekly, progressing to twice weekly publication, and, following this, to daily publication. The first issue of *Al-Nadowah* was published on 26th Feb 1958 by Ahmed Al Sibai. After one year of operation, the paper was merged with *Heraa*.

### 2.2.2 Press merging stage

The second important phase of Saudi journalism history is called the newspapers merging stage, where the ownership of certain papers was merged resulting in the creation of new names. In this period, between 1959 and 1964, a number of papers ceased operations and a number of others established themselves on the market. This wave can be attributed to the fact that the Saudi government considered that the number of newspapers was too large; at this point, 40 newspapers and 100 other publications were requesting new licences.

The government felt that there were too many newspapers and magazines in relation to the Saudi population and the contemporaneous literacy rates. Another reason was the weakness of many of those prints in terms of low production quality or financial issues (Alshamik, 1982; Al-Hazmi, 2002; Alshebaili, 2002; Alhabib, 2004; Izaat, 2008).

The Saudi government did not intervene directly in order to merge individual newspapers. Instead, the process of converging newspapers and magazines was left to press owners (Alshamik, 1982; Khayat, 1996; Izaat, 2008). The nature of the landscape of the Saudi press at this time can be described with reference to a summary of the results of ownership convergence, as shown below. The names of newspapers and magazines are similar across Saudi journalism development stages. However, it was deemed essential to distinguish between the various publications according to the phases and places the publications had connections with.

The results of merging individual ownership newspapers can be summarised as follows. In 1959, *Albilad Newspaper* in Jeddah was founded as a result of merging *Albilad Alsaudia*, which used to be *Saout Alhijaz*, with *Arafat*. *Al-Nadowah* in Makkah was merged with *Heraa*, and the name of *Al-Nadowah* was used for the newly formed newspaper. In the Madinah region, *Al-Madinah* newspaper continued to publish during the merging period as it was the only publication in the region. In the same year, *Al Rayed Magazine* was published in Jeddah as a weekly literary magazine that was owned and managed by Abdulfattah Abu Madyan, a distinguished Saudi literary critic (Alshamik, 1982; Izaat, 2008).

In a similar manner, in 1959, the *Al Rawdah* and *Quraish* magazines were published in Makkah and printed in Jeddah city. *Al Rawdah* was owned and edited by Tahir Zamakhshari; being full of pictures, cartoons, and comics, the magazine targeted children. *Quraish* was a weekly magazine, owned and managed by Ahmed Al Sibai, which covered most subjects with a primary focus on sports (Alshamik, 1982).

In 1960 *Okaz Newspaper* was launched in Taif city by Ahmed Attar. It was a weekly paper printed in Jeddah, and the first Editor-in-Chief was Aziz Diaa. Shortly after the first issue was printed, *Okaz* received a governmental licence from the Saudi authorities which granted permission for the organisation to become a daily publication. Despite this, the paper continued to appear weekly every Saturday (Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information, 1993; Al-Hazmi, 2002). A distinction should be made between *Okaz* in the press merging stage and *Okaz Newspaper* in the press organisational stage.

*Al Jazerah Magazine* was first issued in Riyadh City in April 1960 by Abdullah Bin Khamis. The monthly publication covered art, culture, and literary affairs, and printed around 44 pages per issue at Riyadh Printing (Alshamik, 1982; Al-Hazmi, 2002; Alhabib, 2004; Izaat, 2008). *Alriyydah (Sport) Newspaper* was the first specialised sport newspaper in Saudi Arabia. The first copy of *Alriyydah* was published in 1960 by Mohammed Milibari and Fouad Angawi. The paper lasted for four years until operations were terminated in March 1964 (Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information, 1993).

*Alasbu Altijari* (Weekly Business) was first published in 1962 as a weekly print. It was located and printed in Jeddah. *Alasbu Altijari* was the first business newspaper in Saudi Arabia that specialised in economics, finance, business, and industry. The owner and Editor-in-Chief was Abdul-Aziz Muaminh.

### 2.2.3 Organisational Ownership Press Stage

In 1964 the Saudi government withdrew all rights to individual ownership of newspapers. On 13th January 1964 Press Establishments Law was issued in an attempt to regulate the newspapers market in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Under the Saudi Press Establishments Law, only ten newspaper organisations were licensed and seven of those newspapers have kept their old names from the previous two stages of the Saudi newspaper development.

The new press organisations can be summarised below (Alshamik, 1982; Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information, 1993; Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information, 1999; Alhabbab, 2001; Al-Hazmi, 2002; Alshebaili, 2002; Alshebaili, 200; Izaat, 2008). In order to answer the main research inquiry four from the below newspaper were selected; *Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum*, and *Alwatan* and more details about those case studies are provided in Chapter 4, Section 4.5 and in Chapters 5,6,7 and 8.

The ten press organisations that are currently working in Saudi Arabia are as follow. Albilad Organisation for Printing and Press has two prints; *Albilad Newspaper* and *Iqraa Magazine*. It is located in Jeddah and has a printing house. The *Albilad* daily paper has continued from the prior press merging stage and *Iqraa* is a monthly magazine that has been issued since December 1974. Also, Al-Madina Organisation for Press and Publishing is located in Jeddah, where it publishes the *Al-Madina* daily paper. This publication has been printed since 1937. However, under the new press law, it was sold to the Al-Madina Organisation for Press and Publishing (Al-Madina.com, 2015). Additional details relating to the *Al-Madina* daily paper will be discussed in future chapters as it is one of the case studies for the current research.

Makkah Organisation for Media and Printing is located in Makkah (Mecca), where it printed the *Al-Nadowah Newspaper* that, as previously mentioned, was in publication in the early stages of Saudi media history. *Al-Nadowah* has experienced difficulties in terms of the management and financial aspects of the organisation and, as a consequently, the ownership board committee stopped the operations. However, in January 2014,

Makkah organisation replaced the *Al-Nadowah* print with a new newspaper, the *Makkah newspaper* (Makkah Newspaper, 2015). Moreover, Al-Jazirah Organisation for Press, Printing, and Publishing is located in Riyadh. This organisation prints the *Al-Jazirah Newspaper* which was first issued on a monthly basis (from April 1960), then weekly (from June 1960), and, finally, daily (from September 1972) (Al-Jazirah, 2015).

Al-Daawah Press Organization owns the *Al-Dawaah* Magazine, an Islamic publication that focuses on religious, cultural and literary subjects. *Al-Daawah*, which has been in publication since May 1965, started as weekly newspaper and, over time, was transformed into a weekly 54-page magazine, with a size of 21x29 cm. in addition, Okaz Organisation for Press and Publishing, an organisation that publishes two important daily prints, is located in Jeddah. *Okaz* is an Arabic print and, since 17<sup>th</sup> October 1964, it has been issued as a daily paper. The Okaz Organisation also publishes the *Saudi Gazette*, an English publication that has been in print on a daily basis since April 1976.

Al Ymamah Press Organisation is located in Riyadh and is considered to be one of the largest newspapers in Saudi Arabia. The publication has an annual revenue of approximately 140 million USD. Al Ymamah Press publishes two prints: *Alriyadh Newspaper* and *Al Ymamah Magazine*. From 1st May 1965, *Alriyadh* newspaper has been issued on a daily basis. *Al Ymamah*, as previously mentioned, commenced operations in March 1964 first as weekly newspaper and, in May 1965, was changed to a weekly magazine with the name *Alriyadh* newspaper (Alriyadh.com, 2015).

*Alriyadh* will be discussed in greater detail in later chapters as it is one of the case studies for the current research.

Dar Alyaum (Alyaum House) for Press, Print, and Publishing is located in Dammam. This organisation owns the newspaper *Alyaum*. *Alyaum* was first issued on a weekly basis in 1965 and, three years after this, became a daily print. Further details of *Alyaum* will be discussed in later chapters as it is one of the case studies for the current research. Furthermore, Asser Organisation for Press and Publishing has one daily publication, the *Alwatan Newspaper*. It is located in Abha city in south-eastern Saudi Arabia. *Alwatan* is considered to be a relatively new newspaper organisation in comparison to those previously discussed; it was founded in September 2000. *Alyaum* will be discussed in further detail in due course as it is one of the four case studies for the current research. Finally, Al Sharqiah Organisation for Printing, Press, and Media is the most recently licensed press organisation in Saudi Arabia. It owns the *Alsharq* newspaper, which has been in publication since the 5th December 2011. The operational location is Dammam in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia (Alsharq.net, 2015).

However, this does not mean these are the only newspapers in Saudi media market. There are foreign licensed prints and some of them are printing inside the Kingdom whereas others are printed outer and are sent to the Saudi market in a regular basis. This type of newspaper can be divided into two groups. The first is those publications that have foreign licences but which are owned by registered Saudi establishments; an example is the Saudi Research and Publishing Company. This company owns more than 13

regular newspapers and magazines such as *Arab News*, *Asharq Al-Awsat*, and *Sayidaty*. The second group is those prints that are licensed and owned by foreign-registered establishments; examples include *Al-Ahram*, *Akhbar El-Yom*, *Al-Seyassah*, and *Al-Arabi*. These two groups are not included in this study but have been mentioned here to emphasize the limitation of the current study on Saudi licensed press organisations only.

#### 2.2.4 Online-only Press Stage

After the emergence of the internet, the Saudi traditional newspapers launched their online appearance as follows: *Al-Jazerah* newspaper (April 1997), *Alriyadh* newspaper (March 1999), *Alwatan* (November 2000), *Okaz* (June 2001), *Alyaum* (April 2002), *Al-Madina* (January 2003), *Alsharq* (November 2011), and, *Makkah* newspaper (January 2014).

However, increased availability of the internet has had another impact on the Saudi journalism market. In addition to the appearance of traditional media outlets on the Internet, a new type of newspaper has been launched by individuals who operate online media outlets. Thus, it is important to include a new stage to the popular 'three stage' view of Saudi journalism history: the so-called Online-only newspapers. This type of web-news-sites is primarily targeted towards online users and has no any connections with current Saudi traditional media such as newspaper, TV, radio or news agencies. This type is restricted to those building their entire business online by launching their websites. The practice of using social media in news is not limited to those online-only newspapers but all prints have participated in social media sites to varying degrees. Nowadays, there

are more than 2000 online-only newspapers operating in Saudi Arabia. These are individual ownerships and only 750 organisations have been licensed (Alkhatrawi, 2015). Further discussion of these types of electronic newspapers, traditional newspapers, and the Internet can be found in the section on Saudi newspapers on the Internet.

### **2.3 Media Regulations in Saudi Arabia**

The Saudi media market is regulated by five media laws and executive regulations. Laws are issued by royal decrees and executive regulations are issued by ministerial resolutions. As it is relevant to the current research, the following laws and executive regulations will be discussed in this section: Media Policy, Printed Materials and Publication Law, Executive Regulations of Printed Materials and Publication Law, Press Establishments Law, Executive Regulations of Electronic Publishing, and Copyright Law.

The Media Policy in Saudi Arabia contains thirty articles and is formulated according to four perspectives: Islamic values and principles, society and Arabic culture, the Saudi political system, and nationalistic philosophy. It is argued that the key aspects of the Media Policy focus on media duties and responsibilities; they state that media outlets should undertake to play a key role in society to inform, promote literacy, educate and entertain.

Articles 1-4 and 22-23 in the Media Policy Law insist that the media must perform according to moderate Islamic values in such a way that

preserves the local, regional and international interests of the Kingdom. Articles 5-7 and 24 focus on the importance of the image of Saudi Arabia regionally and globally, and serve to strengthen the relationships among Saudis by raising awareness of Saudi Nationalism. Articles 8-11 relate to the value of family and the associated gender requirements (women and men), and age requirements (children, young people and elderly). The policy describes how to build a healthy society. Other articles deal with the importance of the proper Arabic language in media outlets, the respect of individual rights, and the press's right to freedom in accordance with Islamic and nationalistic values (Alqarni, 2013)

### 2.3.1 Printed Materials and Publication Law

The current Printed Materials and Publication Law was first issued in 1928 and has been updated 5 times during its existence (in 1939, 1958, 1982, 2000 and, most recently, on 29 April 2011) with each version being issued by royal decree. The latest update of the Printed Materials and Publication Law is formatted into 49 articles (Alshamik 1982; Alshebaili, 2002; Alwatan, 2011). The new updated articles aimed to make sense of developments digital communication technology, particularly in regard to the Internet and its impact on terminologies in the articles. The updates tried to make sense of many articles within the law which attempted to take account of the power of globalisation which has made it more difficult to enforce governmental censorship on media and communications.

Other notable changes were put in place is establishing new national committees for any disputes. The two committees are the Primary Committee and the Appeal Committee. Additional notable alterations directed to relieve censorship by the Ministry of Culture and Information on Saudi mass media and to empower professional journalistic criticism (Alshebaili, 2002; Alfirm, 2011).

Finally, Dr. Khoja, former minister of Saudi Culture and Information, confirmed that the updated 2011 law of Printed Materials and Publication will protect freedom of speech in the Kingdom (Saud, 2011). This highlights the power of the internet in media censorship in Saudi Arabia and how government officials have understood that they had to respond to the impact of the internet in the society. Awad (2010) pointed out that media censorship in Saudi Arabia has been reduced and Saudi newspapers are now able to tackle issues that they have not touched on before. These issues include criticising government organisations, the religious police and human rights. However, this does not mean that Saudi newspapers are not censored. There are still issues regarding freedom of the press but these are far fewer than existed before the emergence of the internet.

It is also equally important to point out that the Printing and Publishing Law is combined with Executive Regulations in order to provide details, procedures and interpretive approaches to the law. The Executive Regulations of Saudi Printed Materials and Publication Law have seven main parts (99 articles) in which the first four parts are related to this

research. The main ideas and themes of these four parts are briefly described in the following paragraph in order to establish a broad understanding.

The first part relates to the conditions and requirements for obtaining media licences, which are required for all mass media activities ranging from small photography studios to large media establishments. The second part has 18 chapters are related to organisation of media production and; publishing, practices, and producers. The third part has 4 chapters and covers provisions for printed materials and publishing activities. The fourth part deals directly with journalism affairs and has 3 chapters; it provides information related to newspapers and magazines and offers details of standards and responsibilities for journalistic activities.

### 2.3.2 Law of Press Establishments

One of the most important media related laws is the Press Establishment's Law as it deals directly with the newspaper organisations which are the focus of this research. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of press organisations in Saudi Arabia, it will be necessary to explain this law in considerable detail. The Law of Press Establishments contains 6 parts and 30 articles. Given its importance and relevance to the study of Saudi Arabian newspaper organisations, specifically in regard to central newspaper structures, business models, and organisational practices, it will be meaningful to consider the articles of this law within the current research.

The 30 articles of the Saudi Law of Press Establishments have been agreed by the Bureau of Experts in the Council of Ministers (Bureau of Experts, 2015). The full version of this law is provided in an appendix (12.1) of this thesis. As this study is concerned with responses of Saudi traditional newspapers towards digital communications technology, it is equally important to address related issues that may affect transformations and changes in these newspapers. One of the main factors in the Saudi press organisations is the regulations side.

The Saudi Press Establishments' Law controls Saudi newspapers. Article 3 retains the right of approving a licence for any new newspapers in the hands of President of the Council of Ministers. Article 6 sets out the conditions of the members of the new press establishments. Articles 10 and 11 specifies the Board of Directors in all Saudi newspapers, and their requirements and roles. Most important are articles 16 and 18 in which the division of power inside Saudi newspapers between the General Manger and the Editor-in-Chief is defined as follows:

**Article Sixteen:** The general manager shall satisfy the following conditions:

- (a) Be a Saudi national.
- (b) Work on a full time basis.
- (c) Hold a university degree, with experience not less than five years in administrative or journalistic work. A person with a distinguished intellectual and administrative ability may be exempted from the requirement of the university degree.

**Article Eighteen:** Every paper shall have an Editor-in-Chief to be responsible for what is published therein. He shall have the following tasks and powers:

- (a) Directly supervising, managing and directing all editorial affairs of the paper in order to achieve the goals and objects of the establishment.
- (b) Representing the paper in its relations with others regarding journalistic affairs.
- (c) Preparing plans and programs for the development of the paper.

(d) Exercising the authorities given to him by internal regulations which enable him to carry out his duty in a suitable and competitive manner.

Therefore, the decision-making power in the Saudi newspapers is split between the editorial and management sides with the Editor-in-Chief responsible for editorial activities and the General Manager responsible for financial operations. This division of power can lead to conflict in any transformations process at those newspapers. The impact of all having the same management model will be explored further in the case studies.

### 2.3.3 Executive Regulations of Electronic Publishing

The Executive Regulations of Electronic Publishing is an important and recent media publication law in Saudi Arabia when compared to others. In January 2011, the Ministry of Information and Culture launched new regulations for electronic and digital publishing activities to organise the online and electronic media market in Saudi Arabia. Although the Executive Regulations of Electronic Publishing has not been promoted by royal decree, it is a significant regulation that was a specific response to chaos the online-online newspapers. The Ministry of Information and Culture, when issuing the regulations, confirmed that there were approximately 2000 online-only newspapers operating on the Internet. The law has 19 articles that cover the main aspects of online activities (Alqarni, 2013).

Alkhatrawi, the Director of Electronic Media at the Ministry of Information and Culture, points out that, although the Executive Regulations of Electronic Publishing has been in force for over 4 years, only

750 online-based newspapers out of 2000 have been licensed. Alkhatrawi (2015) confirms that the majority of the online-only newspapers are individual ownerships that are lacking in journalistic experience and are suffering from financial problems. A large proportion of these outlets has been closed or is beginning to consider terminating their journalistic activities.

Therefore, the number of these journalistic enterprises in Saudi Arabia is declining both as a result of business problems and due to the Ministry enforcing the new Executive Regulations of Electronic Publishing. However, there is still a considerable number of such news providers compared to other traditional news organisations, and, consequently, they play a significant role in the Saudi media market. The Executive Regulations of Electronic Publishing has 19 articles that include definitions, licence requirements and regulations, allegations and crimes, and other general articles about procedures and standards.

#### 2.3.4 Copyright Law

The Copyright Law in Saudi Arabia is the most recent that is related to the media industry and, thus, an overview will be provided. The Copyright Law is a significant factor, not only in the media industry but also in the context of all creative activities and trades. The Copyright Law was introduced on 30th August 2003 with 7 chapters and 28 articles. The law protects original and derivative works as in articles 2 and 3 (Bureau of Experts, 2015):

### **Article 2: Original Works**

This Law shall protect the works created in the fields of literature, art and sciences, irrespective of their type, means of expression, importance or purpose of authorship, such as:

- (1) Written materials like books, booklets and others.
- (2) Works which are verbally delivered like lectures, speeches, poetry, songs and the like.
- (3) Dramatic works, plays, shows and similar presentations which involve motion, sound or both.
- (4) Works which are especially prepared for broadcasting or are presented through broadcasting. (5) Drawings, works of plastic arts, architecture, decorative art, artistic embroidery and the like.
- (6) Sound and audio visual works.
- (7) Applied art works, whether handcrafted or manufactured. (8) Photographic works and the like.
- (9) Illustrations, geographical maps, designs, plans, sketches and sculptured works related to geography, topography, architecture and science.
- (10) Three dimensional works of geography, topography, architecture or science.
- (11) Computer programs.
- (12) Protection shall include the title of a work, if it is of creative nature, and not a common expression indicating the subject matter of the work.

### **Article 3: Derivative works**

This Law shall also protect:

- (1) Works of translation.
- (2) Works of abridgement, modification, illustration, editing or any other forms of alteration.
- (3) Encyclopedias and anthologies which are deemed creative with respect to the selection of their content or arrangement, whether they are literary, artistic or scientific works.
- (4) Compilations of folkloric works and expressions and selections therefrom, if such compilations are creative as to selection or arrangement of their contents.
- (5) Databases, whether they are mechanically readable or can be read in any other manner, if they are creative as to selection or arrangement of their contents. Copyright protection enjoyed by the authors of the works mentioned in the above paragraphs shall in no way jeopardize the protection enjoyed by the authors of the original works.

However, the law excludes certain works from its protection, as explained in the following article (Bureau of Experts, 2015):

### **Article 4: Works excluded from protection:**

Protection prescribed by this Law shall not cover the following:

(1) Laws and Judicial judgments, decisions of administrative bodies, international agreements and all official documents, as well as the official translations thereof, subject to the provisions concerning the circulation of these documents.

(2) What is published in newspapers, magazines and periodicals, or broadcasted in daily news or newslake events.

(3) Ideas, procedures, work methods, concepts of mathematical sciences, axioms and abstract facts.

The second point in article 4 has excluded ‘what is published in newspapers, magazines and periodicals, or broadcast in daily news or news like events’. The article can be seen as contentious insofar as the question of whether items produced in the aforementioned documents are or are not original; this can affect news organisations’ positions and interests. Specifically, this issue should be discussed in light of points 3 and 4 in article 3, which state that original works include ‘dramatic works, plays, shows and similar presentations which involve motion, sound, or both’ and works which are especially prepared for broadcasting or are presented through broadcasting’.

Thus, falling outside the copyrights news and journalistic production of newspapers in Saudi Arabia created challenges for newspaper industry (this is discussed in further detail in the Findings of Chapters 5 to 8 and Discussion of Chapter 9. the journalistic productions in Saudi newspaper organisations are being circulated among other online-only newspapers and, for the most part, with no reference to the original. This can be for two reasons, the first of which is the lack of a clear articulation of the copyright laws for news production. This loophole makes it easy for those online-only news services to support their daily production by plagiarising news items from the original source. This is a serious dilemma for traditional newspapers as the traffic of online readers is decreasing over time,

especially when there are more than 2000 Saudi online-only newspapers.

The second reason is the lack of professionalism among workers at the online-only newspapers which can result in the prevalence of unprofessional practices in journalistic activities (MJB, 2014; AZS, 2014; SGD, 2014; MQZ, 2014; AMJ, 2014).

#### **2.4 Circulation of Saudi Newspapers**

Approximately 200 newspapers are published in the Arabic region and more than three-quarters are aimed at Arabic readers. Between 2007 and 2011, circulation of newspapers in the Arab world witnessed a steady increase of approximately 20% in total. The circulation of Arabic newspapers was recorded at 10.25 million in 2007, which increased to around 11.50 before it jumped to 12.59 million copies in 2011 (Arab Media Outlook, 2012). However, according to findings of current studies of newspapers circulations in Saudi Arabia it is estimated that there has been a dramatic drop of 50% in the last five years (see Findings and Discussion chapters).

However, no official statistics are available that relate to the circulation of Saudi newspapers. This can be attributed to the very conservative view of newspaper organisations, as they consider that this sort of information relating to circulation should not be disclosed. This strategy might have been adopted for competitive purposes, as newspapers do not want competitors and advertisers to anticipate any changes that may affect their market position. Muaminh (2013), former General Manager of *Alwatan Newspaper*, confirms that a drop of approximately 30% in Saudi newspapers'

circulation has taken place in the three years between 2010 and 2013 . Muaminh stresses that this can be attributed to the expansion and increasing popularity of the Internet and digital media technologies.

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Estimated Average of Daily circulation</b>
<i>Alriyadh</i>	155,0000
<i>Al-Jazerah</i>	142.000
<i>Okaz</i>	120.000
<i>Alyaum</i>	80.000
<i>Al-Madina</i>	60.000
<i>Alwatan</i>	55000
<i>Albilad</i>	30.000
<i>Saudi Gazette</i>	25.000
<i>Figure 2.2: estimated Average of daily circulation of Saudi newspapers from the three sources (WikiLeaks, 1991; Alhabbab; 2001;Rough, 2004)</i>	

Having said that, Alhabbab (2001) and Rugh (2004) identified circulations of Saudi prints in a different study based on estimated statistics. These can only be considered as estimated figures as there is no proper independent source able to provide such accurate information. However, this can provide some indication of the capacity of Saudi media markets. Additionally, a document has been found on WikiLeaks relating to Saudi newspaper circulation, dated from 1991, and it displays slightly different figures. An average of those sources can be seen in Figure 2.2. However, these statistics are very out-of-date now considering the time they were published and developments in digital information and communication technologies.

## 2.5 The Internet and newspapers' newsrooms

The use of computers and new technology in communications provides an opportunity for newspapers to expand their geographical coverage. Worldwide, the Internet has been rapidly taken up by news organisations as a form of communication that allows media firms to publish news content online with wider access. The Saudi papers are no exception to these developments. The Internet has become a main player in the newspaper market, and Saudi traditional newspapers have been developing their websites for the past two decades. The online appearance of Saudi papers can be seen in Figure 2.3.

Newspaper	Start Date	Online address	Note
<i>Al-Jazirah</i>	1997	<a href="http://www.al-jazirah.com/">www.al-jazirah.com/</a>	Daily print news
		<a href="http://www.al-jazirahonline.com">www.al-jazirahonline.com</a>	24/7 news
<i>Alriyadh</i>	1999	<a href="http://www.alriyadh.com/">www.alriyadh.com/</a>	
<i>Alwatan</i>	2000	<a href="http://www.alwatan.com.sa/">www.alwatan.com.sa/</a>	
<i>Okaz</i>	2001	<a href="http://www.okaz.com.sa/">www.okaz.com.sa/</a>	
<i>Saudi Gazette</i>	2001	<a href="http://saudigazette.com.sa/">http://saudigazette.com.sa/</a>	In English
<i>Alyaum</i>	April 2002	<a href="http://www.alyaum.com/">www.alyaum.com/</a>	
<i>Al-Madina</i>	January 2003	<a href="http://www.al-madina.com/">www.al-madina.com/</a>	
<i>Albilad</i>	Not available	<a href="http://www.albiladdaily.com/">http://www.albiladdaily.com/</a>	
<i>Alsharq</i>	2011	<a href="http://www.alsharq.net.sa/">www.alsharq.net.sa/</a>	
<i>Makkah</i>	2014	<a href="http://www.makkahnewspaper.com/makkahNews/">http://www.makkahnewspaper.com/makkahNews/</a>	

Figure 2.3 : Traditional Saudi newspaper website start dates

However, another term of journalism in Saudi Arabia tends to be called electronic newspapers, which, in this thesis, are called online-only newspapers to distinguish between them and the traditional newspapers' websites. The online-only newspapers use the Internet as the main and only platform for journalistic production. The term 'electronic newspapers' in Saudi Arabia is primarily used to denote online-only news providers that have no connection with traditional media firms such as newspapers, TV, radio, or news agencies. As mentioned earlier, by

October 2015, more than 2000 electronic newspapers were operating in Saudi Arabia, only 750 of which were licensed (Alkhatrawi, 2015).

Alkhatrawi (2015), the Director of Electronic Media at the Ministry of Information and Culture, confirms that the majority of online-only newspapers are individual ownerships that are lacking in journalistic experience and suffering from financial problems. Most online-only news providers have been closed or have considered terminating their journalistic activities. Therefore, the number of such news providers in Saudi Arabia is witnessing a decline, both as a result of business problems and due to their need to comply with the new Executive Regulations of Electronic Publishing.

## **2.6 Saudi Newspaper Management and Newsrooms**

The structure of Saudi newspaper organisations is similar to model that is enforced by the Saudi Press Establishment's Law in Saudi Arabia. In this way, all newspaper organisations must adhere to one structural model. Saudi newspaper management can be categorised into three main levels of administration. The organisational structure is constituted of the general assembly, the board of directors, and the Editor-in-Chief for editorial and journalistic affairs; and the general manager for financial and administrative affairs.

Moreover, article 8 of the Press Establishment's Law states the responsibilities of the general assembly as follows:

- (a) Formulating the general policy of the establishment.
- (b) Selecting and appointing members of the board of directors.
- (c) Approving the appointment and dismissal of the general manager and the Editor-in-Chief.
- (d) Approving the budget and closing accounts of the establishment.

- (e) Appointing a certified auditor.
- (f) Issuing the internal regulations of the establishment as well as the other regulations that regulate the conduct of its business.

Additionally, the board of directors in a newspaper organisation consists of the general manager, the Editor-in-Chief and at least 6 members of the general assembly. The board of directors, according to article 11 of the Press Establishment's Law, is required to engage in the following activities:

- (a) Proposing the internal and other regulations that regulate the conduct of business.
- (b) Approving the necessary plans to increase the resources of the establishment.
- (c) Approving the draft budget and closing account of the establishment before presentation to the general assembly.
- (d) Proposing new publications and applying to the Ministry for approval.
- (e) Nominating the general manager and the Editor-in-Chief for each paper and obtaining the approval of the Minister for the nomination and dismissal of the Editor-in-Chief.

Responsibilities of the Editor-in-Chief and the general manager of the Saudi traditional newspapers firms were also formulated by the Press Establishment's Law. In section 4, articles 15-21, it is stated that the newspaper's general manager must act as a representative of the organisation in finance and management affairs, both within and outside the newspaper.

The role of the Editor-in-Chief revolves around editorial and journalistic activities, where the individual is responsible for all material published in the paper. Article 18, cited below, details the specifics of the role:

- (a) Directly supervising, managing and directing all editorial affairs of the paper in order to achieve the goals and objects of the establishment.
- (b) Representing the paper in its relations with others regarding journalistic affairs.
- (c) Preparing plans and programs for the development of the paper.

(d) Exercising the authorities given to him by internal regulations which enable him to carry out his duty in a suitable and competitive manner

The popular structure of Saudi newspapers, is that the Editor-in-Chief is at the top of the hierarchy in which exercises control over the newspaper. However, this authority is shared with the general manager who handles management and financial activities. Owing to this structure, decision-making power is divided between these two figures and, therefore, in order to approve decisions, management and editorial leaders need to concur.

The typical newsroom structure in Saudi news organisations is organised around two main themes: news subjects and the news production process. The subjects include, but are not limited to, sports, business, local affairs and international news. The news production process includes news gathering, news treatment and verification, news proofreading, publishing approvals, design and final production on news computers programs, and, finally, dissemination processes through traditional print or digital publishing.

However, the organisation at the level of newsrooms is flexible and can be different from newspaper to another due to several factors, including the implementation of new technologies, financial positions, developments and training of professionals, the transformation of newsroom culture and the mind-set of journalists.

Newsrooms are being restructured and, in accordance with these developments, the roles of journalists are changing. The extent of these changes differs from one media organisation to another. Journalists' tasks

have expanded, requiring new skills. The dual publication of news in the online age requires changes that may bring new challenges to journalistic practices, and many questions might surface regarding the appropriate structure for future newsrooms in media organisations.

## **2.7 Summary**

In order to provide a broad understanding of the Saudi media market, this chapter covered six main aspects relating to the journalism industry in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As mentioned, this study aims specifically to address the transformations and challenges that have occurred in traditional newspaper newsrooms in response to developments in the online and digital communication technologies in a Saudi Arabian context.

Therefore, the chapter discussed; the emergence and development of journalism in Saudi Arabia, The media regulatory in Saudi Arabia; circulation of Saudi newspapers; the Internet and newsrooms, and the newspaper management and newsrooms' structure.

The next chapter of this thesis will review literature relating to the developments and transformations in newsrooms. In addition to this, an investigation of the management of news production at traditional news organisations will take place in light of the expansion of information and digital communication technologies.

# **Chapter Three: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is concerned with the background and literature related to the current research. There are two major approaches for studying newsrooms; sociological and managerial perspectives. In the current thesis, the managerial and media economics is the primary approach. Thus, the theoretical formwork of this study was built around; media economics, media convergence, and media technologies. However, it is useful to introduce this chapter with a separate section on sociology of news production as there is a strong connection between these two perspectives in the context of research undertaken within newsrooms. Having said that, the main focus throughout the existing research is on managerial and media economics perspective and the sociological one is used only when is needed. This can help to explore social elements in the existing study when addressing the research questions.

The main inquiry of the research is to investigate how newsrooms and journalists of traditional newspaper organisations are responding online and digital technologies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It additionally explores how Saudi journalists are managing news production in the technological convergence age in the traditional newspapers. The study explores transformations in four Saudi print newsrooms including managing news production over multiple platforms, production processes and workflows, and the role and relationship of new media departments within traditional newsrooms.

In recent years, digital communication technologies have had considerable influence on newsrooms and journalists of traditional news

media. Digital technology has directly affected newsrooms, their news production and their distribution processes and methods. However, as there is limited literature concerning newsroom transformations and media economics in Saudi context, this chapter will discuss too related concepts in the global literature. This chapter is divided into Five main themes: news production as a sociological perspective, the economics of newspaper organisations, the Internet and the newspaper industry, technological convergence and media, and finally, convergence and changing newsroom: map of related studies.

### **3.2 News production as a sociological perspective**

There are extensive scholarly studies around news production and journalistic working practices that have covered different approaches including sociological perspectives (Epstein, 1973, 2000; Roscho, 1975; Tuchman, 1978, 2002; Golding and Elliott, 1979; Schudson, 1982, 1989, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2011; Schlesinger, 1987; Soloski, 1989; Cottle, 2000; Harrison, 2000, 2006; Saltzis, 2006; Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008). Sociology has long tradition within the journalism field ((Zelizer, 2004). The core theory to the sociology of journalism is that ‘social structure is the major influence on the content’ of media outlets (Roshco, 1975:5). The need to understand journalism from a sociological perspective is to gain better understanding of changes in media industry. The sociology of news production can be seen in collaboration between journalists and how they are dealing with sources when gathering and assessing information in order to

produce news. This includes pressures or motivations that make journalists select perspectives and approaches into journalists stories (Manning, 2001).

Michael Schudson (1989; 2000; 2005; 2010) Observed four perspectives to understand news production; economy, politics, sociology, and culture. The first and second elements are studying content of news production from a political and economic approach. This is related to the relationship between; news productions, constriction of the political system, and economics structure. The third perspective has sociological roots concerning news making at an organisational level, or what is called a social organisational approach that covers the study of occupations and the professionalism of journalists. The third approach looks at making news from cultural perspective which focuses on constrains factors of 'cultural traditions' and 'symbolic system' (Schudson, 2010:165).

Also, Schudson (2011) pointed out that an understanding of news combines two main views. The first view is cultural and is focused on storytelling and is orientated to what journalists receive and not what they produce. The cultural approach can help to understand for example stereotyping and generalization of images in news journalism. The second view socio-organisational which sees news as manufactured products. These products are made in relation to news organisations, the marketplace, and other variables in society.

Moreover, Cottle (2000) suggested that studying news production within a news workplace and beyond to include news's relationship to society, economy and politics have focused on the mechanisms and meanings

of news and news access (Cottle, 2000). The study of news production itself has been influenced by two popular paradigms; the sociological and cultural study approaches. The sociological study of news production concerns of 'strategic and definitional power, examining patterns of news access, routines of news production and processes of source intervention' (Cottle, 2000: 427). On the other hand, the cultural approach of studying news production concerns 'cultural and ritual power, are sensitized to the symbolic role of news actors and how they perform/enact within the conventions and textual structures of news representation ritual, story, narrative' (Cottle, 2000: 427-428).

As a social product, news is shaped and influenced by different factors within society. The social environment shapes journalism in any society through epistemological values, symbolic culture, and phenomenology. Therefore, the making of or production of news cannot be seen outside the context of social construction in which journalism is a cultural product of society, which is both influencing the society and is influenced by society. It is clear that this approach plays important role in scholars' works in media and journalism studies (Tuchman, 1978, 2002).

In this perspective, reporting and producing news in media outlets are "constructed reality" as Tuchman stated:

To say that a news report is a story, no more, but no less, is not to demean news, nor to accuse it of being fictitious. Rather, it alerts us that news, like all public documents, is a constructed reality possessing its own internal validity. A selective reality, rather than a synthetic reality as in literature, news reports exist in and of themselves. (Tuchman, 1976: 97)

Epstein (1973 and 2000) claimed that news stories are not a 'mirror' of the real events, it is rather a result of journalists' and reporters' judgement and of decision-making process (Epstein, 2000; 25). Similarly, Schudson (1982) argued that news is related to reality but it does not necessarily reflect the real world, it is constructed by different forces and relationships to fit into the new reality that is seen to be 'conventional'. He argues that:

News is not fictional, but it is conventional. Conventions help make messages readable. They do so in ways that "fit" the social world of readers and writers, for the conventions of one society or time are not those of another. (Schudson, 1982: 98)

In terms of journalistic working practices in the newsroom, Schlesinger (1978) argued that routines in the newsroom can be organised and structured in a way that make outcomes of news production predictable. Schlesinger's study of the BBC between 1972 and 1973, introduced the term putting 'reality' together. He stated that journalists are working in a systemic working culture within newsroom. These routinized practices make the news and the news production processes predictable. Likewise, Golding and Elliott (1979) argued that production of news is 'mechanical, routine, passive and systematic' (1979:12).

In particularly, Schlesinger (1978) stressed that:

the news we receive on any given day is not as unpredictable as much journalistic mythology would have us believe. Rather the doings of

the world are tamed to meet the needs of a production system in many respects bureaucratically organised (Schlesinger, 1978:47)

Within newsroom, the sociological and cultural perspectives can help when studying relationships between journalists and ways of dealing with pressures and their responses to changes that are taking place within the workplace and beyond. Newsrooms have high level of standardized routines that control journalists' behavior in newsgathering and selecting stories for publishing (Tuchman, 1976; 1978). This can be see for instance on story selection by journalists which result in routinisation inside the press organisation which is 'influenced by organisational requirements' (Gans, 2004:78).

Harrison confirmed that a routinized working culture can be shared across different newsrooms. Harrison argued that there is a 'shared culture' across newsrooms in different aspects of journalistic practices. The common journalistic culture has been passed on among journalists from one generation to another over the years. This culture within newsrooms includes 'common-sense values', traditions, and mythology. Finally, the shared journalistic culture provides journalist with 'a clear and identifiable set of skills, practices and expectations within which they work' (Harrison, 2000: 108-109)

This shared journalistic culture leads us to point out that the term professionalism is one that is used in relation to media working practices inside newsrooms. Soloski (1989) claimed that news outlets use news policies and procedures, and news professionalism as a tool of control journalists'

behaviours in a structural way. This type of control can be seen in the setting of 'standards and norms of behaviour' and through the establishment of 'the professional reward system' within a single news organisation (Soloski, 1989:208 and 212).

In relation to the news production process 'cycle' within newsrooms, Golding and Elliott identified four steps which occur regardless of the type of media outlets concerned. Planning is the first element which includes pre-planning news events and planning for breaking-news coverage. Gathering is the second element in the news production cycle where journalists and reporters gather information about news stories. The third element is selection where journalists select news materials from the collected journalistic materials. Production is the fourth and final element where selected stories are approved to establish their final shape for convenient presentation whether for broadcast or print media. (Golding and Elliott,1979: 92)

All the above discussion around the sociology of news production is to illustrate the importance of this perspective in studying newsrooms and help to contextualize the current research of studying news production in the four Saudi newspaper organisations . However, the research in this thesis gives more attention to the managerial and organisational perspective and it is this that is primarily focused on throughout. Despite, the interplay between those two approaches; sociological/cultural, and managerial/economics, the following sections are focusing on the second approach. This includes media economics, technology and digital communications, and convergence. This is due to their specific relevance to the main research inquiry of this study.

The main inquiry of the current thesis is how newsrooms of Saudi newspapers are responding to online and digital communication technologies.

### **3.3 Economics of newspaper organisations**

The challenges and transformations in newspaper newsrooms cannot be fully understood without considering the bigger picture of media economics and the newspaper market. The current study looks at the influence of digital communication technology, and the Internet in particular, on the newsrooms and journalists of four Saudi traditional newspapers. And to understand the transformations and challenges that these newspapers face we need to observe the economic environment within that these newspapers are functioning. For this purpose, media economics and newspapers industry in particular, newsroom convergence are the appropriate approach to tackle conceptual framework of this study.

Media economics as a concept emerged from the fields of media studies and economic studies. The term, as Owers et al (2004) put it, “.. is concerned with what is produced, the technology and organization of how it is produced, and for whom it is produced” Owers et al (2004: p.5). In other words, media economics refers to what media organisations are producing, how they are producing it and for whom the final product is intended. This process includes different issues, which are organisational, operational and technological, and financial. Thus, media economics also refers to the business and financial activities of media companies. Media firms are producing products that are distributed to readers or audiences to achieve

revenues that contribute to their profits. These practices are shaped and influenced by social, political, technological and capital changes within society. (Albarran, 2002; Owers et al, 2004).

The concept of a traditional newspaper as a medium is defined by McQuail (1994), who identifies its characteristics such “regular and frequent appearance; commodity form; information content; public sphere functions; urban secular audience, and relative freedom” (McQuail, 1994: 14). This definition implies that traditional format newspapers have a certain number of pages containing a variety of information, are printed at a particular time and frequency, are considered a commercial product sold in outlets or via subscriptions and serve the community in a free environment.

The newspaper can be categorised, for instance, by their editorial focus, paper size, and their publishing region. The subject categories can be: business, such as *The Financial Times* in the United Kingdom and *Al-Eqtisadiyah* in Saudi Arabia, political such as *Al-Seyassah* in Kuwait, and sports, such as *Ar-Riyadiyah* in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, traditional newspapers can be categorised by their size, such as tabloid or broadsheet. However, all Saudi newspapers are broadsheet in size except for *Alwatan* is between tabloid and broadsheet. In terms of categorising newspapers by their region, i.e. local, regional, national or international, all Saudi newspapers can be seen as regionals. Although, the Saudi newspapers focus are regional but they are available nationally.

In terms of newspapers’ revenues, globally, the newspaper industry has produced revenue of around \$160 billion dollars in 2013 from sales of

advertising space, circulation, and digital activities that only \$1.7 billion dollars from digital means. The daily circulation of printed newspapers recorded 533 million globally with a readership figure of more than \$2.5 million adult readers whereas digital readership was around 800 million online users (WAN-IFRA 2014). Globally, the greatest media revenue comes from advertising and circulation sales. According to the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers, newspapers industry revenues for 2013, documented in the biggest media markets, were as follows: United States, \$35 billion , 27% from circulation and 73% from advertising; Japan, \$17 billion dollars, 70% from circulation and 30% from advertising; China, \$14 billion dollars, 56% from advertising and 44% from circulation; Germany, \$11 billion dollars, 43% from advertising and 57% from circulation; and finally, United Kingdom, 8 billion dollars, 41% from advertising and 59% from circulation (WAN-IFRA).

In the Arab world, there is some optimistic growth in the media and entertainments sectors and around 50% of this growth is in three countries: Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. In addition, the rate of advertising spending will increase by 6% between 2014 and 2019, from \$5.6 billion to \$7.6 billion in all the Arab world states. This positive figure is supported by some facts such as continuous growth of population in the Arab world of 1.9% (between 2014 and 2019) from 318 million to 350 million people. This will be reflected on increasing of spending rate by 10.6% to be at around 2 trillion dollars by 2019 on all economic sectors and media are one of these business sectors. (Bhargara and Alkaabi, 2014: p. 4-7)

However, advertising in the print media sector has been falling in recent years (2011-2014). The print advertising in the Arab gulfs, and Saudi Arabia one of them, used to secure 40% out of all media advertising. Things have now changed and there is a decline in advertising in the print media which is the main revenue generator for the press organisations. This decline can be attributed to readers moving away from printed newspapers in favour of the online digital news. Having said that, individual share in the advertising rate is still weak in the Arab media compared to other media markets such as the USA and Japan. In 2004 for instance, individual share in media advertising market is only around 34 USA dollars in Saudi Arabia, whereas it is around 520 USA dollars in USA and 313 USA dollars in Japan. (Bhargara and Alkaabi, 2014: p.10-12)

Moreover, precise information about newspapers' revenues in Saudi Arabia is not available. The capital and financial information of the Saudi newspaper organisations is not disclosed and Saudi licensed newspapers are not listed in the Saudi stock market (Tadawul), therefore there is no law to force them to reveal such information to the public. One of main reasons for Saudi newspapers keeping such information secret is for market competition reasons. The Saudi press organisations want to cover up any drops or declines from other competitors and from advertisers so that would not affect their advertising share in the market. However, SAH (2014), Deputy Editor-in-Chief at *Alyaum*, estimated that the total revenue of the top three Saudi newspapers, including *Alyaum*, in 2013 was around 1.3 billion SAR (equivalent to around 346 million USA dollars). The net profit from that total income is around 300 million SAR, almost 80 million USA dollars.

The traditional newspapers are funded through two traditional means: selling content to readers and selling space to advertisers. Pricing newspapers and their contents at a fair point for producers and consumers is a vital process for the press organisations. The model of traditional newspapers is producing interesting content that consequently attracts as many readers as possible; they then invite advertisements for profitable returns (Picard, 2015, p.154-155). In Saudi Arabia, newspapers are no different from this model. However, one key difference is that all Saudi newspapers are priced at same amount by law. Also, the current price of 2 SAR of newspapers is well below the production costs. SAG (2014) confirms that copies of the Alriyadh newspapers can cost more than 5 SAR (around 1.4 USA dollars) and this is the case for most Saudi newspapers. Another difference is that Saudi newspapers rely primarily on advertising and then on other incomes from sales and subscriptions.

However, the current business model of traditional news organisations is in doubt as traditional media firms are moving out of a time of stability and into more uncertain circumstances. This has been happening due to more financial pressures, new competitors, and increasing costs of labour and media production in today's media landscape. It is becoming more and more difficult to maintain the current business model of news organisations and this need rethinking about new and better practices to sustain the growth (Picard, 2010; p.27) . The newspaper firms moved from single print circulation to publishing other free features and magazines which include adverting supplements to widen their revenues. They also moved to online and smartphones services and other forms of digital information

services that would retain new online users. This has been achieved in addition to their traditional print productions. The main reason for all these activities is trying to develop new sources of revenue that can support and strengthen the current business model (Picard, 2010; p.32).

There are five main changes in today's media environment which have alerted leaders in the media firms to reconsider their business models. The first is the abundance of media in which the growth of media platforms, units, feeds, and frequency are more than average growth of media consumption. The second is polarisation and fragmentation of media audiences between traditional mass media such as newspapers and television, and new media such as online platforms. The third is the development of new media product portfolios in the digital environment. The fourth is the weakening of media firms in the current online and digital era. The fifth is the power shift in the communications process between media organisations and their audiences, readers, and users. In today's media landscape, consumers are increasingly gaining more power over media firms through growth of interactivity and participation such as user-generated-content model (Picard, 2011: p.2-5).

In recent decades there has been a substantial drop in circulation of newspapers across the industry worldwide. Some owners of British newspapers have implemented three strategies to retain the glory of the traditional press: increased circulation; developing a free paper strategy; and trying to buy up shares in competing newspaper organisations (Franklin and Murphy, 1991). The newspaper industry used to be one of the most profitable among other mass media businesses (Franklin, 1997; Picard, 2004).

Newspapers used to enjoy stability in the media market with high numbers of readers and advertising that reflected a very good revenue in general. However, things have changed in light of changes in digital information technologies (Gade and Lowrey, 2011).

Circulations of British national newspapers have dropped over the last decade with varying levels of decline across all national titles. For instance, the *Daily Telegraph* dropped from an average daily circulation of 920,745 in 2006 to 479,290 in March 2015; *The Guardian*'s circulation fell from 394,913 in 2006 to 174,941 in 2015; *The Sun* from 3,319,337 in 2006 to 1,858,067 in March 2015; the *Daily Mail* from 2,389,011 in 2006 to 1,626,322 in March 2015; and *The Independent* dropped sharply from 258,387 in 2006 to 58,751 in 2015. (Greenslade, 2014; PressGazette, 2014; and Ponsford, 2015)

Newspaper	Average Circulations	Percentage change
Daily Mirror	897,786	-6.74
Daily Record	200,127	-10.22
Daily Star	424,453	-10.91
The Sun	1,858,067	-10.23
Daily Express	445,245	-8.81
Daily Mail	1,626,322	-4.78
The Daily Telegraph	479,290	-8.37
Financial Times	213423	-7.40
The Guardian	174941	-9.46
i	273853	-6.47
The Independent	58751	-8.07
The Times	390962	-0.88
Daily Star - Sunday	256131	-12.39
The Sun on Sunday	1474959	-12.56
Sunday Mail	218463	-12.09
Sunday Mirror	835181	-9.96
Sunday People	329757	-10.96
The Mail on Sunday	1444397	-7.17
Sunday Express	384969	-9.15
Sunday Post	182779	-12.18
Independent on Sunday	96571	-3.96
The Observer	194054	-9.59
The Sunday Telegraph	374283	-10.60
The Sunday Times	790442	-5.80

Figure 3.1 Average change in circulations of British newspapers between 2014 and 2015- Source ABC March 2015 and Ponsford 2015

Although there was a drop in the circulation of all British national newspapers the percentage of change is different from year to year. According to the March 2015 figure, the lowest change from March 2014 was in *The Times* circulation by - 0.88 whereas the biggest change was in *The Sun on Sunday* by -12.56 (ABC; *PressGazette* 10 February 2006; *The Guardian* 10 October 2014 and *PressGazette* 10 April 2015 Press). More details of circulation changes can be seen in Figure 3.1.

In the United States of America there are about 1480 daily newspapers and more than 900 Sunday newspapers, with annual sales totaling nearly 50 billion American dollars (Picard, 2004). However, the *Newspaper Association of America* (2015) has suggested that the number of US daily newspapers dropped in 2014 to 1331. In addition, total circulation decreased from more than 55,000 in 2000 to about 40,000 in 2014. The circulation of Sunday newspapers also fell, from about 60,000 in 2000 to about 42,000 in 2014 (Newspaper Association of America; March 30, 2015).

In the Arab region, there are around 200 newspapers published in Arabic, English, or French, of which more than 75% are for Arabic readers. Circulation figures in the Arab world witnessed increases for five consecutive years between 2007 and 2011 of approximately 20% in total (Figure 3.2). Circulation of Arabic newspapers was recorded at 10.25 million in 2007 then increased to around 11.5 million and then jump to 12.59 million copies in 2011 (Arab Media Outlook, 2012).

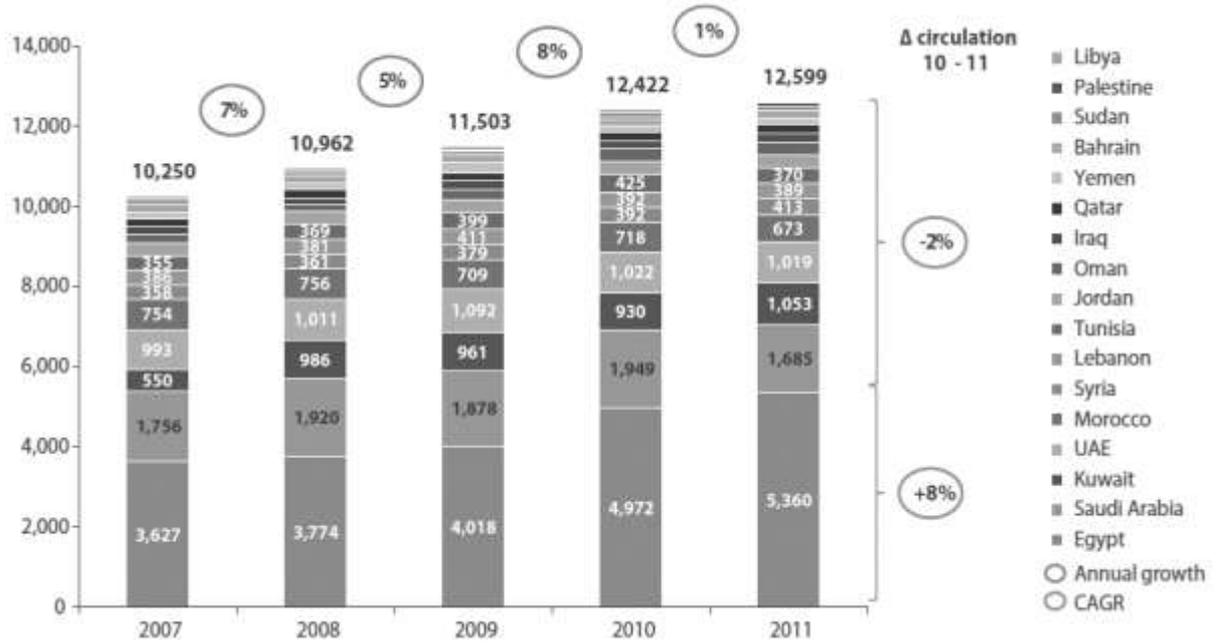


Figure 3.2 Newspaper circulations in the Arab region, 2007-2011 (000s) –

Source: WAN, MENA media guide (2009-2012, and Arab media outlook (2011-2015).

These are approximate figures, not based on accurate data as is acknowledged by same study of Arab Media Outlook, 2012. For example, there are no official statistics about Saudi newspaper circulation and this could be due to the very conservative view of newspaper firms that this kind of information should not be disclosed. As has been said earlier in this chapter, this strategy might also be for competition reasons that the Saudi newspapers want to hide any falls or declines from their competitors and advertisers.

However, in terms of percentage out of whole circulation of national Saudi newspapers that is around 500,000 copies (HSB, 2014) some drops have been noticed. Muaminh (2013), former General Manager of *Alwatan*, stated that there was a fall in of Saudi newspapers’ circulation of 30% in recent years, with particularly dramatic drops between 2007 and 2012. MAZ

(2014), Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Al-Madina* spoke of an estimated average drop of 40% in the print circulation in the Saudi market in the period between 2010 and 2014. Similarly, AZS (2014), Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Alwatan*, confirmed drops in Saudi newspapers circulation at about 40%, but in the last three years, which he considered to be worse. Some of the key causes of drops in circulation of Saudi newspapers are diffusion online, communication technology, and expansion of the uses of their implications such as social networking sites (HSB, 2014; AMJ, 2014; SGD, 2014; AWF, 2014; FFY, 2014; AQZ, 2014; AZS, 2014)

### **3.4 The Internet and newspaper industry**

The Internet is a technology that enables networks around the world to be connected in one global network; it allows personal computers, laptops and smart phones to communicate with each other. Within the current context, it should be noted that discussing the Internet as a technology in the media industry should also consider three main factors; technology, communication, and organisation. Boczkowski (2004) stressed that any of the three elements should be linked to the other two to be make sense of its roles and effects. Technology, communication, and organisation should be seen as a triangle to understand developments and transformations within media industries (Boczkowski, 2004:11)

The internet was first developed in the 1960s by a research unit in the United States military, called the Advanced Research Projects Agency, and access was limited at that time to certain staff within the Department of

Defence. In the late 1980s, a new computational programme named the Mosaic interface as the first browser to be available for graphical users to use (Carlson 2003: 49)

However, the term ‘Internet’ should not be confused with the term ‘World Wide Web’ (the web for short) which revolutionised the Internet and made it an extremely powerful tool. Tim Berners-Lee, with his colleagues, invented the Web in 1990 when he developed the computer language Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML), which is still used today for designing webpages and allowing users to connect to the Internet via personal computers (Carlson, 2003:49). Berners-Lee is also invented other languages within HTML such as URI, HTTP. Berners-Lee and his colleagues continued improving web technologies to develop what is called Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 or semantic web. Another considerable development in Internet technology was the arrival of the Web 2.0 system in 2004 which can be seen as a second wave of web advanced technology. However, there are differing views about the definition of Web 2.0 and whether it is a new term and need a new definition or is just a continued development of Web 1.0 technologies (O’Reilly :2005; O’Reilly :2006; Strickland:2007; O’Reilly and Battelle:2009)

O’Reilly (2005) points out that Web 2.0 technologies can be considered as a platform of applications that emphasise a collective culture of work or so-called “Harnessing Collective Intelligence” (O’Reilly and Battelle 2009) . This platform (Web 2.0) works in a democratised environment where information flows freely horizontally and vertically between web users through new tools of information distribution. The main

features of Web 2.0 focus on usability, interoperability, interactivity, and a collective work culture of generating content or so-called user-generated content.

Moreover, Web 3.0 or the '*Semantic Web*' is a revolutionary technology that is built upon Web 2.0 technologies and based on the idea of hyper-connectivity. Nova Spivack defines Web 3.0 as

“The third-decade of the Web (2009 – 2019), during which time several key technologies will become widely used. Chief among them will be RDF and the technologies of the emerging Semantic Web. While Web 3.0 is not synonymous with the Semantic Web (there will be several other important technology shifts in that period), it will be largely characterized by semantics in general”. (Spivack, October 4th, 2007)

It should be clear that Web 3.0 technologies are meant to be functional, function almost at human level, understand, and interpret context. For instance, the Web 3.0 search engine should find and identify keywords in the search, understand them and then deal with them accordingly. It is like having a personal assistant who helps through online browser by finding keywords and based on habits and preferences that are build time by time on individual users of the web browsers. (Strickland, 2008)

Moreover, and related to the internet revolution, many changes have taken place in the telecommunications industry in the last decade. Big computer and mobile telephone companies have launched smartphones. Many mobile telephone companies have launched touchscreen phone technology in new devices which enable them to be connected to the internet. These devices, called smartphones, enable the spread of media productions in

all formats for users and take availability, accessibility and connectivity to new higher level. (Westlund, 2013). In the digital information age, where the internet is a key player, people are becoming more engaging with smartphones and tablets devices become more and. The smartphone has become an indispensable component of people's lives in a way that has created changes in the landscape of social and cultural communications within society (Ling and Campbell, 2011).

This also leads to changes in how people access and consume information, in particular, how they obtain news and keep up-to-date with new and developing stories. Smartphones play an important role in people's lives in terms of changing viewing habits, for example, watching video clips and online television. The use of laptops and desk computers are no longer necessary to access the web. The mobile phone has changed people's social activities and ways of interaction. It changes relationships between people and within their circle of family, friends and business contacts. The smart Mobile phones have changed the way we organise our time socially and at work (Green and Haddon, 2009).

Smartphones nowadays have the ability to access the Internet and obtain information, which includes reading, watching, and listening to news stories anytime and anywhere. In the news industry smartphones are used by news organisations as platforms in which to prompt news publishing. Smartphones as mobile platforms can be used through SMS, news applications, social network sites apps, or even accessing news websites via the internet explorers. Mobile phones have been used in different ways in news publishing and consumption (Westlund, 2011; Westlund, 2014)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Global Internet Users</b>	<b>Annual Growth (%)</b>
<b>2015*</b>	3,135,972,050	<b>6.6</b>
<b>2014</b>	2,925,249,355	<b>7.9</b>
<b>2013</b>	2,712,239,573	<b>8.0</b>
<b>2012</b>	2,511,615,523	<b>10.5</b>
<b>2011</b>	2,272,463,038	<b>11.7</b>
<b>2010</b>	2,034,259,368	<b>16.1</b>
<b>2009</b>	1,752,333,178	<b>12.2</b>
<b>2008</b>	1,562,067,594	<b>13.8</b>
<b>2007</b>	1,373,040,542	<b>18.6</b>
<b>2006</b>	1,157,500,065	<b>12.4</b>
<b>2005</b>	1,029,717,906	<b>13.1</b>
<b>2004</b>	910,060,180	<b>16.9</b>
<b>2003</b>	778,555,680	<b>17.5</b>
<b>2002</b>	662,663,600	<b>32.4</b>
<b>2001</b>	500,609,240	<b>21.</b>
<b>2000</b>	413,425,190	<b>47.2</b>
<b>1999</b>	280,866,670	<b>49.4</b>
<b>1998</b>	188,023,930	<b>55.7</b>
<b>1997</b>	120,758,310	<b>56.0</b>
<b>1996</b>	77,433,860	<b>72.7</b>
<b>1995</b>	44,838,900	

*Figure 3.3 Growth of the internet users over 20 years - source:, ITU, world meters, and internet live stats)*

Internet usage worldwide has taken off over the last 20 years (Figure 3.3) from around 44 million users in 1995 to over one billion users in 2005 and then trebled to more than three billion in 2015., The world population at May 2015 was around 7,318,425,388, meaning that more than 42% of people around the world have an internet connection (WorldMeters, 2015; InternetLiveStats, 2015). In Saudi Arabia there are more than 17 million Internet users out of a total population of around 31 million whom two thirds are Saudis nationals (GaStat, 2016). This means that more than 54% out of the total population have an Internet connection and can reflect strength of the Internet accessibility.

The Internet services in Saudi Arabia started in 1998 through connecting universities and a number of hospitals with the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology. The KACST is an independent body for communications, technology and scientific research, and it plays a central role as it is the main Internet provider in Saudi Arabia to the Internet companies. Internet technologies have gone through different stages of development in line with global information technologies. In 2006, the role of providing the Internet in Saudi Arabia was transferred to the Communications and Information Technology Commission. However, the KACST retains the supervisory and control role of information flowing through the Internet in Saudi Arabia (The Internet Division KACST, 2015).

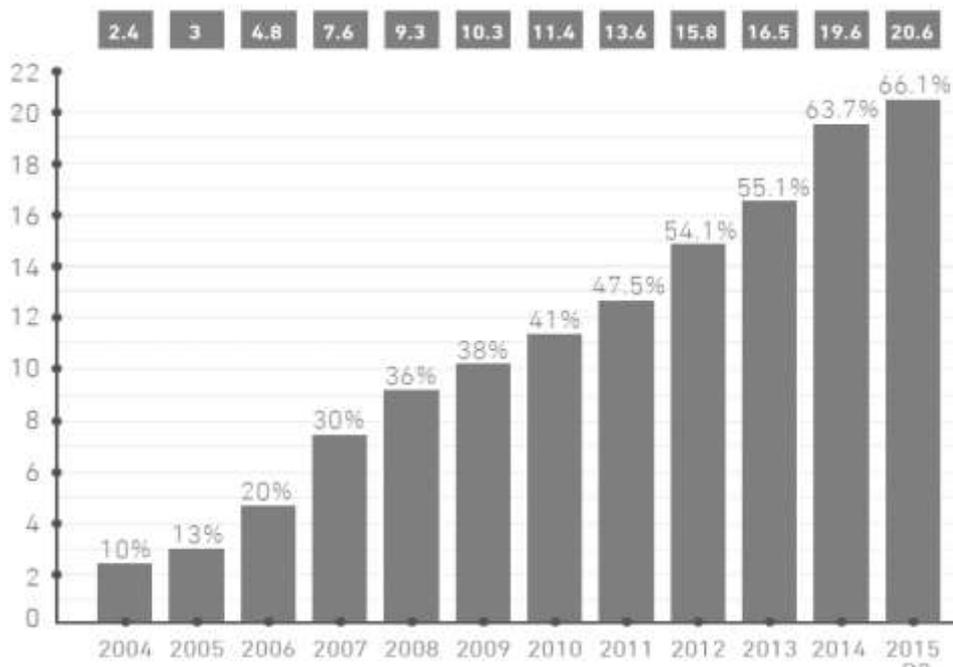


Figure 3.4: Development of Saudi Internet users in millions.

Source: Indicators Q1-2015 Communications and Information Technology Commission

The number of Internet users in Saudi Arabia has rapidly increased over the past few years, as evidenced in Figure 3.4, from approximately 2.4 million in 2004 to around 20 million in 2015. Moreover, the annual growth of Saudis using the Internet has been consistently increasing over the last decade. The figures show that the number of Internet users increased as follows: from 3 million in 2005 to 7.6 million in 2007, 10.3 million in 2009, 13.6 million in 2011, and a jump to 16.5 million in 2013. As of 2015, 20.6 million users were actively using Internet services (Communications and Information Technology Commission, 2015).

In addition, by the first half of 2015, there were approximately 53 million active subscriptions for mobile communications with prevalence rate of 170% Saudi Arabian population. Around 38.2 million of these subscriptions have Internet access, which represents an approximate prevalence rate, 113.2%, of the Saudi population. Likewise, there are 3.74 million landline subscriptions, 70% of which are individual subscriptions and 30% of which are institutional subscriptions. Three million of the established landlines have Internet access and this represents a prevalence rate of approximately 53% of Saudi households (Communications and Information Technology Commission, 2015).

The importance of the information provided about the Internet to this research can signal to a high involvement of the Saudi society online. This includes information consumption whether this information is related to news or other forms of information such as entertainment or shopping but the substantial number of Internet users is reflected in the media landscape on a number of levels, including the consumption of information. In

particular, it can show the transformation of how information is produced, archived, distributed and consumed. In the context of journalistic practices, it can provide an indication of how Internet technologies have emerged as significant players in the transformation of news production, distribution and consumption.

All the previous discussion about the development of the Internet and its related implications is essential to the current study into the way that today's newspapers are subject to changes and challenges in their business model, structure, management of news production, and journalists' roles and practices. The introduction of new media technology and changes in media market forces have implications for traditional press organisations and how they perform. There are many ways that newspaper firms are responding to new technological and economic developments. These can be in improving newsroom in structure or management, embracing advanced technologies, reducing costs, cutting back on employees and other approaches depending on the particular circumstances of the media firms. The effect of these changes, to some extent, depends on whether the organisations see them as negative or positive.

Inside the newsrooms of typical newspapers, the editor is in the senior position of the hierarchy and exercises control over the newspaper. The editor has assistant managers or directors, each of whom is responsible for a separate department with some decision-making power. Additionally, these managers may hold positions such as deputy manager. On the production side of the organisation there is usually a production manager and a deputy, with several assistants, in addition to the night manager of news production. Although the

editor has primary control in the hierarchy, most editorial managers or directors enjoy some decision-making power as well. In this environment, it is important that all individuals communicate frequently to avoid problems in production and to facilitate a smooth process (Herbert, 2000; Garrison, 2001; Quinn, 2005b; Robinson, 2011).

With the arrival of the Internet, newspapers around the world created their own websites to publish online news stories. As a clear demonstration of how newsrooms have been affected by technological developments, many print organisations have organised separate newsrooms for online activities (Pavlik, 2001, p. 101). The use of the Internet by media organisations as a medium of communication has risen rapidly, allowing media companies to publish news content online with wider access. In terms of newsroom structure, the Internet has transformed it from the traditional, strict hierarchy to a structure with less distance between the top and bottom in the news production process. These changes have created what Pavlik (2000) has called a “combined newsroom,” which can be seen, for instance, in *CNN* and *The Tribune* (p. 234).

Yet, the biggest and well-known effect of technology on the labour sector was the *Wapping dispute* in the mid-1980s when thousands of people lost their jobs. Rupert Murdoch, a media tycoon who owns many newspapers, as well as television and radio stations, across the United Kingdom, the USA, and Australia, made the decision in 1986 to embrace new printing technology in his four British newspapers: *The Times and The Sunday Times; News of the World; The Sun*. Subsequently, more than five thousand workers were

made redundant in the printing industry (Littleton, 1992; Lang and Dodkins, 2011).

This is one example of the ways in which technology can be used by powerful players in the news industry and how such use can then impact on all sectors of the media. Labour reduction is one of negative impacts of technology within newsrooms. This, in turn, has implications for the future of the profession of journalism. Journalists are experiencing some fears about losing their jobs due to the embracing of new technologies or the implementation of new strategies in news production process that eliminate some of their roles within the news making process.

This action of reducing numbers of news workers was welcomed by the management of newspapers as it cuts some costs and increases revenue in some point. The main influence of technology in the newspaper industry can be seen in changes in advanced technologies in both production and printing which have led to critical changes in newspaper companies at both structural and operational levels. The attention has to be paid towards reduction of people working within newspaper organisations as they are replaced by technologies (Picard, 2004).

Another example of the power of digital communication technology is the changing nature of competition in the newspaper industry. Competition in the media market is not a new threat for print journalism; it has been always there, particularly between newspapers themselves, or between them and radio and television broadcasts. However, since the late 1990s, the Internet as

a medium has challenged newspapers to find the best ways to deal with this revolutionary communication technology.

The growth in use of the Internet has also made it a competitive medium for advertising revenue, as well as producing many niche markets. In turn, however, it has also exacerbated the perception and reality of a more fragmented market. Media managers want to control and protect their audiences in a fragmented market, the ability to retain the audience changes. Changes in consumers' lifestyles and habits regarding the way they access the media may be one of the main driving forces behind convergence; the rapid development of digital technology is another important factor (Quinn, 2005).

Moreover, the Internet has new advertising markets. It has

“.. provided a way to reach specific niche markets with advertising messages. Agencies and major advertisers were quick to realize the benefit from the synergy of the new technological delivery system and the traditional media. Advertising strategy has long calculated the maximum number of impressions and the cross-audience reach in using a number of differing media to deliver the same message for a client or product” (Shaver, 2004: p.260)

The appearance of the Internet has put newspapers their greatest challenge since the arrival of television. The industry is struggling to maintain a balance between embracing this technology and keeping circulation at a good level. The Internet was introduced into the Saudi newspaper industry in 1997. Newspapers slowly started to develop their online presence; first the

paper was published as a PDF version on the Internet, and then text and photos were introduced. But the big jump was the introduction of Web 2.0 technology where the newspapers relaunched their website with more interactive features. And finally they reintroduced to be more content – sharing and user-generated content. All these changes in the use of the Internet in the media industry have made the competition more difficult for the newspapers.

The web is a fundamental shift in the nature of communication. It offers a new form of communication that had not existed before. Gillmor (2006; p.13) summarised the importance of this transformation as follows:

Communications had completed a transformation. The printing press and broadcasting are a one-to-many medium. The telephone is one-to-one. Now we had a medium that was anything we wanted it to be: one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many. Just about anyone could own a digital printing press, and have worldwide distribution.

The Internet, alongside other (new) technologies offers many new opportunities for the news production industry: in news production process and flow, for delivery or circulation, expansion of reach, and new ways and platforms for consuming the news. Newspapers and other forms of media are taking advantage of these new technologies within their workplace and their strategic plans. However, responses of media organisations to technological changes in today's media landscape vary around the world. This is due to the different forces such as political, economic and socio-cultural, that shape the media in a particular society. Yet, commercial factors are key to any

transformations at private media firms around the world (Goggin, 2012; p.98).

Although there are different media operation types around the world, such as private, governmental, and public services, all Saudi newspaper organisations that perform under Saudi print and press laws are similar. This is because of restrictions of those press institutions by media regulations. However, the commercial and financial positions of these newspaper organisations are different. Therefore, the responses of Saudi newspaper organisations to technological changes are more directly related to the commercial and economic perspective. Thus, the importance of this study comes from this track to capture the transformations and challenges that newsrooms and journalists of Saudi newspapers that are facing in today's changing media landscape.

There are currently about 10 press organisations in the Saudi media market that are licensed and located in the state. In addition, there are newspapers that have foreign licences but are printed and sold in Saudi with which the Saudi newspapers compete. However, and most importantly, the Internet has allowed new media businesses to emerge and grow in recent year. These can be called *Online-Only-Newspapers* that have no printed version. Many individuals have started up their own newspapers online with less requirements than the traditional newspaper organisations which need a royal decree to be licensed. Nowadays, there are more than 2000 *Online-Only-Newspapers* in the Saudi market of which two-thirds have been licensed and recognised by the Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information.

These are also considered as new competitors for the traditional newspapers and have to cope with more changes in competition.

Moreover, the Internet is particularly attractive because of the capabilities it can offers traditional newspapers all in one platform. Early engagement by newspaper organisations with the Web was in 1994 when *Palo Alto Weekly* was the first newspaper to publish online. The *Palo Alto Weekly* began publishing its content free twice a week. Following that, other newspapers began to publish online such as *Gazette Telegraph*, *The News* and *Star Tribune*, (Carlson, 2003). In the United Kingdom, *The Guardian* was first British newspaper to be available online (Harrison, 2006; p.77) whereas Cole and Harcup claimed to be the *Telegraph* (Cole and Harcup, 2010; p.183). The British newspapers had had continued to have their online presence since mid-1990s and continued to developed to retain their readers. (Harrison, 2006; p.77)

As mentioned previously, the early Saudi newspapers to be available online did not differ from the print versions. They suffered from poor interactive services and the absence of mechanisms and features for rapid modernisation. In addition, these services failed to take advantage of multimedia technology, choosing instead to copy the print versions. Nevertheless, the Saudi press continued to grow and develop electronically. In addition, several challenges faced the Arab market in terms of electronic media, including poor market returns and a lack of professional journalists and qualified staff to manage works for multiple news production. Other challenges were strong competition from online-only newspapers within Saudi Arabia and from around the Arab world. (Alhomod and Alaskar, 2002).

However, expansion of the Internet has provided new opportunities for Saudi newspaper organisations. It has encouraged all newspapers to have their own websites. Most daily newspapers in the Arab world manage their own websites and produce electronic versions of their journalistic publications, though with different levels of engagement. In September 1995, *Asharq Al-Awsat* became the first Arabic-language newspaper on the Internet. Then, the daily *Annahar* newspaper followed in February 1996. Moreover, *Al-Jazirah* newspaper (not the *Aljazeera* television channel) was the first Saudi Arabian newspaper to publish online in 1997. The next Saudi Arabian newspapers that published online were *Alwatan* in 2000, *Okaz* in 2001, *Alyaum* in 2002, and *Almadina* in 2003. The remaining Saudi newspapers have followed this path towards online publication in addition to the traditional print format, and their websites are at various stages of progress (Alfirm, 2009; Alhabib, 2004).

Saudi newspaper newsrooms continued to benefit from advanced digital communication technologies. Awad (2010) observed two newsrooms between 25 December 2007 and 23 January 2008 at *Alriyadh* and *Aleqtisadiah* newspapers, as part of his research on the Internet and media censorship in Saudi Arabia, and journalists were found to benefit from advanced communications technologies. The newsrooms of both newspapers were provided with television screens and the journalists were provided with free access to subscription channels, and to local and international news sources; they also frequently used smartphones at work. Awad saw the Internet as a main player in news production and delivery.

Both newspaper organisations had their own websites, through which they offered their journalistic services online, regularly updating news stories.

### **3.5 Technological Convergence and media industry**

The discussion about the development of the Internet and other digital communication technologies leads to the issue of convergence in the media industry. The term *convergence* initially meant a growing communication between two or more media technologies, outlets or platforms, which could lead to them merging into a single entity (Quandt and Singer, 2009; p.130). This convergence has been approached from different perspectives in media literature. Most importantly is the way that convergence is changing communications.

Pool (1983) pointed out that “*convergence of modes*” is blurring the borders between mass communication lines of television, radio, and print journalism, and at the individual level of communication between people (1983: p.23). At the journalism level, Deuze (2007: p.144) observed that today’s journalism is ‘coming to an end’ where borders are becoming more blurred between mass communication and other types of human communications. The Internet and other forms of new digital communications, such as smartphones, have created new challenges for journalism in digital media age.

Fidler also introduced a term: *mediamorphosis* to explain the ongoing changes in media and communications technologies. He stated that the term *mediamorphosis* is:

‘The transformation of communication media, usually brought about by the complex interplay of perceived needs, competitive and political pressures and social, and technological innovations’ (Fidler, 1997; p. xv)

In addition, Singer understands media convergence as referring ‘to some combination of technologies, products, staffs and geography among the previously distinct provinces of print, television and online media’ (Singer, 2004: 3).

The different arguments for understanding convergence is its approaches into the term itself. Despite many terminological definitions and approaches of convergence, yet the most important in this process is the cultural approach of the convergence. This is due to the significant power of media consumers which has seen a great shift in recent years in the way people are consuming information in the digital age. Nevertheless, the term ‘convergence’ can mean different things in different situations and perspectives. The term should be primarily seen and understood as a cultural process and not simply as technological developments. (Jenkins, 2006: p.3)

As well as of the cultural perspective, convergence can be understood from other perspectives. It can be approached, for instance, with a focus on technologies, economics, management, ownership, or even multimedia production. Convergence might be seen as the endpoint for news mass communication around the world, but the speed of the process can differ from one country to another. Some news organisations have welcomed convergence, seeing it as the future of media. However, other companies have

preferred to wait to see what this phenomenon might bring. There is no single definition of convergence, as each definition reflects the perspectives and practices of different people, countries, organisations, and cultures (Quinn, 2005a, 2005b).

In an attempt to summarise these perspectives in the field of media, Gordon (2003: p.63–70) has identified five approaches to convergence:

1. Ownership convergence: concerns the concentration of ownership; media companies can merge, but it is not essential to have one editorial workplace or share distribution channels;
2. Tactical convergence: requires sharing strategies and tactics between media organisation types; most obviously, this could be partnerships between newspapers and television (but it is not limited to this);
3. Structural convergence: changes in organisational structure inside a media company to create a new type of corporation that allows people to cooperate more, sharing content across platforms;
4. Information-gathering convergence: focuses more on multiple newsgathering tools, such as mobile journalist workstations; it is expected that journalists do multiple tasks alone (write news, take photographs, make videos) before producing journalistic content suitable for multiple platforms;
5. Presentation convergence: relates to the final stage of the news production process; the Internet creates a convergent platform for all media types, giving the ultimate space and time for multiple storytelling formats through which to engage audiences.

In addition, convergence in media organisations' structure can be seen in the reorganisation of the newsrooms and in the introduction of new positions to cope with the changes in the news production process. Indeed, the ways of applying and adopting technological convergence among media organisations often vary. Quinn (2005b) stressed that media convergence can be wider than classical understanding of collaboration of multi-industries such as; broadcasting, print, and online and multi-platforms such as using online for videos, texts, podcasts, photos, and hypertexts or sharing content across media outlets. The full converges rather

... (It) involves a radical change in approach and mindset by both managers and journalists. It involves a shared desk where the key people, the multi-media editors, assess each news event on its merits and assign the most appropriate staff for the story. ((2005b, p. 32)

Pavlik (2000, 2008) pointed out that media convergence is driven by technological developments and media economics. Indeed, technological convergence is continuously evolving, as seen in the increased availability of information sources and greater number of choices for media users to access news in different forms and through multiple platforms. Full digital convergence in media organisations requires technical developments and infrastructural changes in how information gets into and out of media companies. Thus, digital and communications technologies affect journalism along different dimensions, including newsgathering, news editing and processing, news presentation, news storage, and accessibility.

However, Vobic (2009) suggested that newsroom convergence is not only technology-driven but is also complexity of goals and conflicts on social, political, economic and cultural levels. Nevertheless, Quinn (2004) recommended that convergence should not lead to any conflict between journalism goals and business goals if effective convergence practices are undertaken which meet the requirements of both good journalism and successful business.

Technological convergence has also impacted individuals' ability to access information from many public and private sources, such as electronic databases, spreadsheets, and statistical packages. This can apply to all forms of communications that affect how media users receive and interact with information. In the industrial context of making news, media organisations can benefit from the changes brought about through technological convergence, such as multi-skilled journalists who can do more in journalistic production. With such journalists on hand, the media company can reduce the organisation's workforce, allowing for budget cuts. However, at the same time, the labour of highly skilled journalists who are able to do multiple tasks is expensive. News organisations can also benefit from convergence in cross-market advertising at the management level, thereby creating a balance between attractive journalism and profit (Quinn, 2005).

The newspaper industry is leading the way in the transformation towards convergence ahead of other media industries. This is because nowadays traditional newspapers are the most affected media industry (Cole and Harcup, 2010; p.8). Convergence can be seen in the integration of television channels and newspapers, which can raise both productivity and

audience size for both types of media through mutual promotion, the use of both brands, and the involvement of journalists in newsgathering for both news organisations. However, the application of convergence in media organisations can also result in conflict between the quality of news and revenue. This kind of conflict generally results from a clash of opinions among journalists, who perceive the new media and technical convergence as potentially improving journalism, and the business perspective, which aims to take advantage of this new digital, networked environment to enhance news productivity, thereby improving revenue through new platform use (Quinn, 2005b, pp. 29–30).

Media convergence has thus brought about as many new difficulties as opportunities in both media academia and the media industry. Professionals and scholars in the journalism field are facing new complications in both theoretical and practical levels. These issues are such as the complexity of analysis tools and techniques or practising journalism in the digital age (Quandt and Singer, 2009; p.140). What is most relevant to this study is the connection between technological convergence and changes in newsrooms and journalists' practices in the Saudi Arabian context.

### **3.6 Convergence and the changing newsroom: map of related studies**

Digital communication technologies are transforming journalism in various ways. In journalism practice, which is the main focus of this study, online and communication technologies play a huge role. Newsrooms are being restructured and journalists' roles are changing. The extent of these

changes differs from one media organisation to another. Journalists' tasks have expanded, requiring new skills. The dual publication of news in the online age requires changes that may bring new challenges to journalistic practices, and many questions may arise regarding the appropriate structure for future newsrooms in media organisations.

Hence, digital communication technologies influence how journalists are doing their tasks within newsrooms. Additionally, digital communication technologies have directly affected the news production process. Developments in hardware and software technology have helped journalists and reporters carry out their jobs more smoothly and effectively. It is now possible to offer news content in multimedia formats. For example, news stories on the Internet now incorporate text, audio, videos, pictures and hyperlinks. The stories can also provide more information, sources or related news information. Advanced technology affects traditional ways of newsgathering and processing, and journalists are now using the Internet to find new stories and as a source of information, images and other documents. Another change in journalistic practices is that journalists are interacting directly with images and video content to adapt stories to different platforms (Pavlik, 2000, 2001; Kawamoto, 2003).

There has been growing interest from scholars on studying newsrooms changes and the challenges of media convergence in the last decades. These studies have been concentrated mostly in the USA and Europe and a few studies have been conducted in Africa and Asia. However, studies about newsroom convergence in Saudi Arabia are lacking

in the literature .The current study tackles this issue and tries to address and will be presented in the results and discussion chapters later in the thesis.

As the transformations in newsrooms are an ongoing process and as most of these changes are related to technology which is characterised by rapid change, the literature review is limited to the past decade. Media convergence itself as a term is not a new phenomenon and changes and developments in newsrooms a continuous process.

However, transformations and understanding of these changes can vary from time to time and from one place to another. This means that the context of newsroom convergence studies is important to evaluate the differences and the similarities of those changes from one side and to assess the changing powers in terms of political, cultural and economic perspectives. This argument strengthens the importance of the current study in terms of its context as the cases studies are located in in Saudi Arabia which it has its own circumstances and characteristics.

Singer (2004) studied the newsroom convergence in four American newsrooms: *Dallas Morning News*, *Tampa Tribune*, *Herald Tribune*, and *Lawrence Journal-World*. It was suggested that transformation of convergence into the newsrooms is impeded by several influences. These factors are technological and cultural attitudes by journalists towards the newsgathering and distribution process, and lack of training among professionals to overcome complexities of new technologies in the newsrooms. The journalists of those four newsrooms saw the new newsroom

convergence experience as a profession booster. However, cultural tensions in newsrooms slow down the process of convergence transformation.

Dailey et al (2005) offered another approach to convergence through introducing the term *convergence continuum* in order to define convergence of newsrooms. It was suggested that convergence in this context is the process of increasing activities of human behaviors of news workers in way that leads to a rise in collaboration and communication levels across media partnerships. This is because cross-media cooperation encourages news staff in the newsroom to reconsider organisational and cultural aspects of differences in the new environment across platforms.

Klinenberg (2005) examined changes in the newsroom at the Metro News organisation. The study showed that changes resulted in a full redesign of newsroom structure. This change, in turn, affected the working culture of journalists in newsrooms across different media (television, radio, print, and Internet production). Additionally, the borders between media types have become blurred, as well as the place and time for such work. As mentioned in the introduction, the time that production tasks take in this new digital environment has sped up across media types, as the Internet has changed the characteristic daily news cycle for print, and morning or nightly news has moved to broadcasting 24/7 to deliver breaking news. Another issue that has arisen is that journalists experience some difficulties in moving their final journalistic products between different platforms. In this light, journalists need to develop their skills to ensure that their reports can transition easily across platforms

Dupagne and Garrison (2006) conducted a study at the Tampa News Center that aimed to explore three main points regarding new convergent newsrooms: the meaning of convergence, changes in newsroom culture, and new job skills required. The *Tampa News Center* would be a good example of a fully convergent newsroom model. The centre was launched in 2000 to serve three different news platforms: *Tampa Tribune*, *WFLA-TV*, and the *Tampa Bay Online* service. The study found that the journalists at the Tampa News Center experienced convergence as manifested in the ability of the news workers to share news resources and work across multiple platforms. The study also pointed to an extra workload for journalists as a result of this type of convergence. However, convergence had also enhanced productivity in the newsrooms and changed how information was gathered for news stories.

Saltzis and Dickinson (2008) examined the media convergence in British media organisations. The study aimed to identify the impact of media convergence on journalism practices, journalists' work and newsroom structure and management. The cases studied were two broadcasting news organisations the *BBC* and *Sky News*, and two newspaper organisations, *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*. The study revealed that the convergence process of news production was not yet completed. The study suggested that many technical and organisational challenges needed to be resolved before this would be possible. Online newsrooms at the studied organisations were separate from the main newsrooms in the year of conducting the research.

In addition, Saltzis and Dickinson (2008) stated that the main challenge has been resistance from the journalists themselves; that the

journalists' skills are not readily transferable and that multimedia coverage is not suitable for all journalists yet. Multi-skilled journalists across the newsrooms are struggle arrived. The study maintained that the exchange of information across different channels in all media institutions has effectively increased journalists' ability to work in more than one medium. It was found that there were considerable changes in journalism practices, including a breakdown of the separation between traditional print reporting and the Internet. Additionally, broadcasting was found to be decreasingly important for journalists' careers. At the same time, the demand for multi-skilled journalists is growing, as journalistic practices will continue to change, and media organisations are more likely to move toward convergent journalism (Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008, p. 11).

Thurman and Lupton (2008) examined attitudes and perceptions of news professionals towards convergent production of the British online websites of *Sky News*, *BBC News*, *The Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *Mirror*, *The Telegraph*, *Times Online*, and *The Sun Online*. The results show that decision makers at these newsrooms are consistently embracing new technologies in the newsrooms in response to drops in print circulations and television viewers. The study revealed that degree to which newsrooms are converging varies between broadcasting and print outlets. It indicated that the multiskilled factor in newsrooms is a competitive advantage for a multimedia production environment. The study also revealed that uncertainty about the future success was dominant concern for editors of newspapers about future successful of web multimedia technologies .

García-Avilés and Carvajal (2008) studied convergence and newsroom models at two multimedia groups in Spain; *Novotécnica* and *La Verdad Multimedia*. The study identified two newsroom convergence models, an integrated newsroom model and a cross-media model. The cross-media model is related to the strategy of sharing resources and platforms which is seen as a tool, not a final goal of transformation. The integrated model is aimed at creating a convergent culture that can be shared across traditional media borders. The study also revealed different levels of newsroom structure, multi-skilling among journalists, media production system, and business strategy. Despite difficulties in implementing either of these two convergence models, the role of the managers at the media organisations and their confidence in the proposed model is essential for successful transformation.

Carvajal and García-Avilés (2008) examined newly implemented multimedia and convergence strategies at *Vocento* and *Prensa Iberica* media groups in Spain. The study revealed that new multimedia newsrooms are producing new content for integrated platforms: print, television, radio and online contents. Strategic trends among Spanish newspapers are implementing a cross-media strategy, using the Internet as a multimedia platform, introducing advertising packages and cross-promotion, merging newsrooms and sharing journalistic content, and changing competition to cooptation in printing and distribution market.

In Slovenia, journalists have different views about convergent newsrooms and their practices. Vobic (2009) studied two Slovenian news organisations, *Delo* and *Zurnal*. He revealed that most *Zurnal* journalists

believed that a convergent newsroom constituted an appropriate practice within news production processes, structure, and management. However, journalists working at *Delo* mentioned that the difficulties in integrated newsroom could create in daily working practices outweighed any contributions it made in terms of smoothing out the process. Additionally, journalists and editors from both news companies shared some doubts about convergent newsrooms, such as unevenness in journalists' abilities across platforms and in other multi-skill job requirements. These contradictory findings show that convergence is a complex topic that requires further investigation, especially since it is undergoing continuous transformation as it emerges within journalism practices in the media industry. The complexity comes from the fact that newsroom convergence is not only technology-driven but is also complexity of goals and conflicts on social, political, economic and cultural levels.

In a comparative study, García-Avilés et al. (2009) investigated media convergence models in six media companies undertaking some degree of newsroom convergence in Germany, Austria and Spain. They found three different basic models of convergence: a full integration model, a cross-media model and a 'co-ordination of isolated platforms' (p. 299). *El Mundo* and *Die Welt/Berliner Morgenpost* were found to come closest to full integration convergence. The full integration in the study meant that "architecture and infrastructure for multi-channel production are combined in one newsroom and controlled via a central news system with workflow management" and "full integration also means that training for all journalists is provided in order to ready them for multimedia production" (p. 299). The study also determined

that none of the six case studies could be unequivocally assigned to any of the three models of convergence. In all of the abovementioned models, the conditions of the newsroom organisation and journalistic work were found to be changing in different ways throughout the news production process.

Likewise, Zhang (2009) compared models of convergent newsrooms in *Nordjyske* (Denmark) and *Beijing Youth Daily* (China) . The *Beijing Youth Daily* was found to be linked to a newspaper-based model of separate newsrooms but was sharing content with its allied newspapers under its media company. On the other hand, *Nordjyske* was found to be focusing on a multimedia-based model where a strategy of sharing is implemented in content, platforms, resources, and cross-promotion as the *Nordjyske* runs print, television, radio and website activities. The study mentioned that media convergence has changed the relationship between media producers and audiences. The new relationship allows more participation in producing content and making the content available whenever, however, and wherever.

In South Africa, Verweij (2009) conducted observations at *Die Burger* in Cape Town and *The Sunday Times* in Johannesburg to observe the convergence process in the newsrooms. The study revealed that the content in the newsroom is produced and covered news for multiplatform purposes through technological and social arrangements. The completed integrated newsrooms have reduced the power of hierarchical management in newsrooms and increased the level of communication between news workers.

Metykova and Cisarova, (2009) conducted a study on journalism practices in Hungary; the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The study noticed some changes in the culture of journalistic practice that journalists felt were prompted by advances in digital technologies. The journalists named the Internet as the main force behind these changes. They also indicated that work routines had become easier and quicker, increasing news production. However, the need for speed in decision making, newsgathering, and processing creates a new pressure that these journalists must cope with in the heavy competition of the news media market (p. 733). Unfortunately, in this environment, advanced digital communication technologies and increased speed in journalistic production can negatively affect the quality of final news products.

Weiss and Joyce (2009) studied the transformation of journalists' roles and practices in the online age; the online journalists interviewed were from North and South America and Europe. The results showed that the relationship between these online journalists and their audiences was prompted by the online technology. However, time pressures have increased due to online technologies and multiple platforms. Online journalism has brought new challenges for media professionals, who may feel that they are working under greater pressure of limited time and pressure of audience. This can be seen in the 24/7 news cycle in broadcasting, which is now required if they are to remain competitive. Online journalists today must work quickly to ensure that their stories are published as soon as possible. At the same time, they must maintain quality and accuracy amidst a flood of

information. The final change is that journalists are now more easily kept under surveillance by their newsrooms.

Robinson (2011) recorded newsroom transitions in American newspapers from print to digital and online practices. The study revealed a degree of tension among journalists and editors in relation to embracing new communication technologies in the workplace. It was also noted that this transitional process, which included the launching of new positions and roles for a multi-skilled workforce, required changes in the hierarchical power structure. This has affected traditional print journalists with low technical skills, resulting in their isolation in the new convergent newsrooms. Also, places of technicians have been moved to the middle of the newsrooms, to help them become more connected with managers and editors, as they are needed for consultation.

Vobic (2011) returned to the newsrooms that were studied (Vobic, 2009) in Slovenia, *Delo* and *Zurnal*, to examine the vision of online multimedia production in traditional print media. Both case studies were found to work towards more implementation of multimedia production and shared an increasing culture of cooperation and collaboration. However, a lack of vision was noticed in terms of developing shared guidelines and procedures for the online production formats in both *Delo* and *Zurnal* media. The study proposed that decision makers in both editorial teams had not yet formulated a solid strategy for developing the online multimedia news production nor its format for the future.

Similarly, Zhang (2012) examined four Chinese news organisations and their website productions in Beijing to identify a business model for online news and newsroom convergence. The study revealed that there are two types of online news services in China, a commercial news website model and an official website which is only online production and has neither print nor broadcasting allied services. The online news sites have five main revenue generators: governmental subsidies, advertising, wireless services, website building and design services, and sales of data. The study pointed out that online newsrooms are separated from print newsroom in Chinese newspapers. Collaboration between online newsrooms and newspapers is achieved in four ways: sharing content and labour force, cross-media reporting, collaborative journalistic works in certain projects, and live webcasts. The study identified three new roles for Chinese journalists in these four case studies, i.e. multi-skilled journalist, webcast host and forum manager.

Wallace (2013) explored related issues with convergence in regarding the need for multi-skilled journalists. The study was conducted among journalists who work for the BBC in regional newsrooms in the United Kingdom. This longitudinal study, carried out in 2009, 2010 and 2011, identified that different strategies were in place for supporting journalists to work for multiple platforms of broadcasting and online services. The idea of multiskilling journalist in a convergent newsroom was combined with cutting costs by reducing the labour force and increasing quality of content production.

Bulck and Tambuyzer (2013) conducted research at the VRT media group (Flemish Public Services Broadcasting) in Belgium on the impact of newsroom convergence on journalists. The study reported that three clashes between management and news professional cultures were noticed. The first tension was around observing convergence and multimedia skilling from a global perspective and ignoring the local identity of the newsroom. The second clash was caused by the gap between embracing new technology in the newsroom and capability of journalists and their responses to these innovations. The third was in the relationship between journalists and management in terms of understanding new changes in the newsrooms from different perspectives.

Tameling and Broersma (2013) conducted a study on the newsroom of *de Volkskrant*, a Dutch newspaper, following changes in its newsroom model. The *de Volkskrant* implemented a convergent newsroom model and embraced multimedia within journalism practice in the newsroom. Five years later, after changes in management and ownership, the newspaper changes its strategy, leading to separate newsrooms, one for print and another for online. In this study, Tameling and Broersma introduced the term ‘de-convergence’ to explain the return to a strategy of separate newsrooms. There are two reasons for this decision: the first was difficult to apply the business model that was applied and second was because of cultural resistance among journalists. Tameling and Broersma claimed that convergence is not the last destination for media platforms nor the answer for proper development of today’s newsroom. This claim, based on the *de Volkskrant* case study, is contrary to the belief of some scholars who have suggested that the model of

convergent newsrooms is the right way to improve them. These scholars include Quinn (2005A, 2005b), Dailey et al (2005), Dupagne and Garrison (2006), Carvajal and García-Avilés (2008), García-Avilés et al. (2009), Vobic (2009), and others.

García-Avilés et al. (2014) revisited three newsrooms out of six (García-Avilés et al., 2009), selecting one newspaper from each country: *Der Standard* in Austria, *Die Welt* in Germany, and *El Mundo* in Spain. The result of this follow-up study confirmed the existence of the same three identified models of convergent newsrooms in last study: full integration, cross-media, and ‘co-ordination of isolated platforms’. There are some differences in these three models. In the full integration model, the convergence is essential in the media company as a strategy for growth. In the cross-media model convergence is optional and newsrooms may have different strategies depending on individual cases. The third model is co-ordination where the media organisations has variety of economic strategies that is clear but has separate platforms with different editorial strategies in newsrooms.

Moreover, García-Avilés et al. (2014) recognised five areas which play main role in the process towards convergence. These areas are market conditions, the organisation of newsrooms, production process and workflows, changes in workforce in their skills, and finally, participation level of audiences. The study concluded that newsrooms are in a remodeling process in order to respond to complex and continuous changes that are taking place in the market and digital economy.

Larrondo et al (2014) conducted a comparative study in five European broadcasting newsrooms; the *BBC* in Scotland, *CCMA* and *EITB* in Spain, *NRK* in Norway and *VRT* in Belgium. The study aimed to identify challenges that these newsrooms are facing from convergence and from the perspective of their journalists. The findings showed that media professionals in all the case studies perceived convergence in newsrooms as an unavoidable and determine progression. This does not mean they welcome the process as some resistance to this change has been noticed despite long time of the implementation. The study suggested that there are difficulties in developing innovation in journalism as many complex implications such as journalistic culture, business strategies, and workplace flexibility will play a fundamental role in any transformation.

Larrondo (2014) also carried out a study about the effects of convergence on the newsroom of BBC Scotland as a public service broadcaster. The study reported that the result of a convergent newsroom of the BBC Scotland should be considered in relation to a change in cultural, management, and budget plan as proactive response to changing of audiences' attitude in the media landscape. Although new changes in the newsroom were planned for a considerable time, some resistances by news workers were evident. That was because the introduction of a new convergent newsroom challenged long-established working style, culture and values.

Vobic (2015) offered a historical account of online newsroom development in Slovenian newspapers through two case studies; *Delo* and *Dnevnik* . The study identified three stages of development: one-man team

for the period between the mid-1990s to the beginning of the 2000s, organisation and standard working culture in separate online newsrooms between the early 2000s and the late 2000s, and a convergent newsroom from the late 2000s until now. These development stages are prompted by innovations, the uncertainty of technological developments and the economic implications of the new innovations.

In India, Mishra (2016) examined the opinions of Indian journalists on media convergence at nine news organisations: *The Times of India*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Hindu*, *Times Now*, *Headlines Today*, *CNN-IBN*, *Mint*, *NDTV 24/7*, and *Tehelka*. The study suggested that convergence is not an urgent matter for the Indian journalists at the current time. There is no desire amongst journalists to embrace convergence strategies in the Indian newsrooms. The only convergence tactic that is applied formally in the newsrooms is for breaking news where all platforms are used at the same time for publishing urgent stories. Instead, Indian news organisations are continuing to embrace cross-media promotional coordination strategies. The limited reach of the Internet in India is one of causes. The print circulation figures among leading newspapers are in a good shape compared to worldwide condition of print media. Thus, any effort toward converging media should consider this factor.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter reviewed two main perspectives in the literature relating to studies of news production; sociological and managerial

perspectives. However, more consideration was given to a managerial and economic approach as it is the primary focus of this research. Thus, this chapter covered four main sections; the sociology of news production, the economics of newspaper organisations, the Internet and newspapers industry, technological convergence and media, and the mapping of related studies around convergence and changing newsrooms. The importance of these approaches in newsroom studies is that; the managerial perspective is concerned with the management of newsroom and news production as an effect method taking into consideration the business aspects of newspapers. The sociological perspective is concerned with the study of professionals and social values of news production.

Today's press organisations are no longer single print as they have become multiple producers for print and digital operations. Hence, newspapers are now in need of transformations to fit into the digital environment to widen their reach and find new revenue streams. The emphasis of this literature is around responses of newsrooms and journalists at traditional news organisations to continuous developments in digital communication technology. The responses bring about changes and challenges in newsroom structure, workflow and journalists' roles.

Finally, the main themes of this literature were: structure and management of newsrooms structure and trends in current models of those newsrooms, roles and relationships between online and production, implications of digital technology on news production and distribution,

journalists and observing digital transformations, managing workloads and pressure in the newsrooms, journalists and multiskilling, future of traditional newspapers, and the occupation of journalism in the digital age.

# **Chapter Four: Research Methods**

## **4.1 Introduction**

The past two chapters discussed print journalism in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the literature review and concepts related to this study. It has been clear that rapid changes in digital communication technologies have impacted on newsrooms and the management of news production within news organisations. These changes and, also responses to those changes, can be viewed from different perspectives. The main aspects of these changes can be seen as it has been pointed out in the previous chapter; sociological and economic and managerial approaches. The primary focus in this research is the economic and managerial, organisational, and economics view over the sociological one to answer the research questions of the study. Thus, more attention in the existing research has been given to managerial perspective in order to fully address the research enquiry, and the sociological one is used only when it is relevant in the context.

This chapter will present the current research; aim, questions, methods and design. This includes details of the aim and importance of the study, the sampling and selecting procedure, research methods and design, research ethics and procedures, and research practices in the fieldwork. The study uses a qualitative research approach by carrying out observation and in-depth interview techniques to collect the required data.

## **4.2 The aim and the importance of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to investigate how newsrooms and journalists of traditional newspaper organisations are responding to online and digital technologies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It additionally explores how Saudi journalists are managing news production in the

traditional newspapers in the technological convergence environment. The study was conducted in four newsrooms of Saudi newspapers and focused on transformations in the newsrooms, managing news production over multiple platforms, production processes and workflows, the role and relationship of new media departments within newsrooms. The study furthermore investigated the changes and challenges to the newspaper journalists' roles and practices in the Saudi Arabian context.

The importance of this study stems from the fact that it is the first study of its kind about newsroom convergence and multi-skilled journalists in the Saudi newspapers. It is particularly significant as, in the digital age, traditional newspapers are facing challenges at different levels: business model, organisational and structural factors, news production processes and workflow, managing multiple production for multiple platforms, and journalists' roles, practices and identity.

The emergence of digital and communication technologies such as the Internet has created an increasingly competitive news market. The Saudi newspapers have started to embrace digital technologies within newsrooms to publish both online and print editions simultaneously. This existence of multiple production and publishing has raised questions about the efficiency of traditional newsrooms in terms of structure, workflow, and journalists' skills and roles. Identifying those responses to digital communication technologies in Saudi traditional news organisations will bridge the knowledge gap of the literature around this topic in the Saudi context.

This existence of multiple production and publishing has raised questions about efficiency of traditional newsrooms in terms of structure, workflow, and journalists' skills and roles. This study investigates the challenges, transformations, and new strategies that are taking

place in four Saudi newspaper organisations. Identifying those responses to digital communication technologies will help to have better understanding of current transformations and the future directions of Saudi traditional news organisations

Saudi newspapers have had a presence on the Internet for less than two decades. The existence of these newspapers on the web started with very limited PDF copy of the actual newspaper and then progressed to become multi-platform-production nowadays. In 1997, *Al-Jazirah* newspaper was the first Saudi Arabian newspaper to go online. Other Saudi newspapers also began to establish an online presence, including *Alwatan* in 2000, *Okaz* in 2001, *Alyaum* in 2002, and *Al-Madina* in 2003. During this time, the Internet and other digital communication technologies became the principal players in the news production process and newsroom culture. The resulting changes are evident in different areas, including the journalistic production process, newsroom structure and practice, journalists' roles and routines, and news delivery and presentation (Alfirm, 2009; Alhabib, 2004; Alhomod & Alaskar, 2002; Awad, 2010).

The second important aspect of this study is that, despite the impressive and varied scholarly work in this area around the world (e.g., Dupagne & Garrison, 2006; Garrison, 2001; Klinenberg; 2005; Pavlik, 2000, 2001, 2008; Quinn 2005, 2005b; Robinson, 2011; Saltzis & Dickinson, 2008; Vobic, 2009; Weiss & Joyce, 2009; Wallace, 2013; Gracia Aviles, et all, 2014; Usher, 2015; Vobic, 2015; Larrondo et all, 2015) the impact of digital communication technologies on traditional newspaper newsrooms, and how Saudi journalists are managing news production in a technological convergence environment within the Saudi context, have yet to be addressed in the literature. This study aims to contribute substantial knowledge to this field and bridge this gap with this current empirical study.

### **4.3 Research methods and design**

This study used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research methods allow researchers to formulate flexible, simple research questions that can be further developed at any point during the research process. In contrast, there is less flexibility in quantitative research, as research questions must be set beforehand. In addition, qualitative research techniques make it possible to begin gathering notes and sorting some of the collected data while still in the midst of the research process. This is not the case with quantitative research, which generally requires that the researcher finish the entire data collection process before analysis can begin (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 118).

This study used two qualitative research techniques. The first was to conduct non-participant observations in newsrooms to answer related research questions that the interview method cannot address. The second was data collection via in-depth semi-structured interviews with the Editor-in-Chief, general managers, deputy editors-in-chief, managing editors, online or new media managers, and journalists or reporters in Saudi newspapers. The reason behind combined of these two methods in the current study is that they work to inform each other.

#### **4.3.1 Observation**

Mason (2002) defines observation as: “*methods of generating data which entail the researcher immersing herself or himself in a research setting so that they can experience and observe at first hand, a range of dimensions in and of that setting.* p.84”. The study uses non-participant observation in which the researcher is in the setting (newsrooms in this case) but not a participant in the setting process (Tuchman, 1978).

The research uses observation in the newsrooms as it is the most appropriate technique for this type of micro-level research (Brewerton & Millward, 2001). Additionally, Harrison suggested that the observation method is “*the only method by which the normally invisible world of journalistic activity and media production can be recorded and analysed*” (Harrison, 1995:180). Similarly, Hansen et al insist on the significance of the observation technique in newsrooms to study how news is produced; the observation goes “behind the scenes of media output to help reveal the complex of forces, constraints and conventions that inform the shape, selections and silences of media output” (Hansen et al, 1998: 44).

The observation method involves “*more than just looking, it is purposeful looking, and recording the results*” (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005, p. 82). The observation method is central to qualitative research as it explores complicated interaction (among journalists, managers, photographers, and editors-in-chief in this case) in an ordinary social setting (newsrooms in this study) where body language, words, tone of voice, communication skills, and other human interaction become noticed (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, p188).

In the current research, observation has been used to identify the news production process, workflow and managing journalistic production between traditional print and other digital forms, and interactions between journalists within newsrooms to provide valuable data. The observations were conducted in the newsrooms of *Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum* and *Alwatan*. All observations were carried out prior to or within the time of conducting the interviews in each case study, depending on the newsrooms peak times and taking into consideration of convenient times for interviewees. This tactic helped the researcher develop and adjust some sub-research questions, where applicable and appropriate to the different

newsrooms, for journalists, managers and editors-in-chief, depending on their roles and positions in the newsroom.

#### **4.3.2 Interviews.**

The study uses in-depth semi-structured interviews with Saudi newspaper journalists as the primary source of data. The interview is a dialogue between an investigator who is keen to obtain some information about a certain topic and a knowledgeable person of the topic. (Berger, 2011, p.135). The interview as a research method, according to Berger, (2011) is “one of the most widely used and most fundamental research techniques...they enable researchers to obtain information that they cannot gain by observation alone” (p. 135). The interview also has seven key features as stated by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) : “interview knowledge is producing, relational, conversational, contextual, linguistic, narrative and programmatic”( Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.53).

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions allow in-depth exploration of critical points during the interview process, which, depending on the individual interviewee’s answers, may open new directions of enquiry (Priest, 1996, p. 26). This type of interview allows the researcher to extend the enquiry and glean more information in line with interviewee responses; at the same time, it gives interviewees the opportunity to clarify and explain their answers as needed (Brewerton & Millward, 2001, p. 70).

Obviously, the interview method, like any other research method, has both advantages and disadvantages. Some of the weaknesses of interviews as a data collection method are that they can be time-consuming, subject to bias, and costly; in addition, they can require a certain

amount of luck. At the same time, interviews have many strengths: they provide ample, rich data, are flexible when combined with other methods such as observation, availability of the researcher to the interviewees, result in high levels of cooperation, and can build rapport for addressing sensitive issues (Brewerton & Millward, 2001, pp. 73–74).

Using the interviews method, or combining interview with observation methods, has been central to qualitative media research and in particular in related newsrooms studies. For instance, a study carried out by Dupagne and Garrison (2006) aimed to explore three main points regarding new convergent newsrooms: the meaning of convergence, changes in newsroom culture and new job skills required. Dupagne and Garrison used a combination of in-depth interviews and document analysis methods in this qualitative research of the *Tampa* newsroom. Saltzis and Dickinson (2008) also used interviews and observations in five British newsrooms to investigate media convergence within these newsrooms and how journalists were responding to newsrooms changes. Similarly, García-Avilés and Carvajal (2008) used a combination of qualitative research methods, observation and interviews, to examine on going changes in two Spanish newsrooms at *La Verdad Multimedia* and *Novotécnica*.

Moreover, García-Avilés et al. (2009) employed observation and interviews when conducting a comparative study about convergent newsrooms in six media organisations that are located in Spain, Germany and Austria. Five years later, García-Avilés et al. (2014) also followed up their study of 2009 and revisited three of the six newsrooms, one from each country; *Der Standard* in Austria, *Die Welt* in Germany and *El Mundo* in Spain. The study also used interviews, observation, and written records to collect required data.

In addition, Usher (2015) used observation and interviews for her inquiry around newsrooms spaces, culture and places at American newspapers. Vobic (2015) looked at online

newsrooms arrangements in the Slovenian context and employed both interview and observation in addition to document analysis tools. Larrondo et al. (2015) used qualitative methods (interviews and participant observation) to investigate the main challenges of convergence in five European broadcasting newsrooms; *BBC* Scotland, *EITB* and *CCMA* in Spain, *NRK* in Norway and *VRT* in Belgium.

#### **4.4 Sampling and Selection Procedure**

To ensure a systematic approach in the selection of newspaper organisations used in this study, certain criteria had to be set. The first was that the newspaper had to be Saudi Arabian licensed and based, as this study is limited to the Saudi context. This, therefore, excluded newspapers that are distributed and in some cases printed in Saudi Arabia, but that are licensed and originate from abroad. This condition had to be set ensure appropriate findings as the study is limited to newspapers that must comply with Saudi media regulations. The second criterion was that the newspaper must have dual publishing, i.e., both online and printed versions. This condition is necessary because the focus of this research is on the impact of online and digital communication technologies on Saudi Arabian newsrooms where they have cross production and their journalists are producing news in multi-formats for multi-platforms.

A pilot investigation of the Saudi newspaper market revealed that the following nine newspapers, listed here in alphabetical order, met the abovementioned selection criteria:

1. *Albilad Daily*, located in Jeddah, has been publishing since February 1964 (Alhazmi, 2002);

2. *Al-Jazirah*, located in Riyadh (in the central region), and established in 1964 (Alhazmi, 2002);
3. *Al-Madina* in Jeddah (in the western region), established in 1937. However, in 1964 it was sold to the Al-Madina organisation for press and publishing (Al-Madina.com, 2012);
4. *Alriyadh*, established in 1965 in Riyadh (in the central region), the capital city of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Alriyadh.com, 2012);
5. *Alsharq*, established online on 11 November 2011; the print version was established 5 December 2011 in Dammam, in the eastern region;
6. *Alwatan*, founded in September 2000 and located in Abha city, in south-eastern Saudi Arabia (Alhazmi, 2002);
7. *Alyaum*, established in 1965, and located in Dammam (in the eastern region);
8. *Makkah*, founded in November 2012 as a replacement for *Alnadwah*, which was first started as a single-ownership entity in January 1958 and then as a commercial company in March 1964 (Alhazmi, 2002);
9. *Okaz*, located in Jeddah (in the western region), the second largest city in Saudi Arabia. This newspaper was established in 1964 (Alhazmi, 2002).

All these newspapers were approached with a request to be granted permission to observe their newsrooms, four newspapers consented: *Alriyadh*, *Al-Madina*, *Alyaum*, and *Alwatan*. These four newspapers are from different regions and are located in the capitals of the four largest regions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Riyadh: Riyadh Region; Jeddah: Makkah Region;

Dammam: Eastern Region; and Abha: Asir Region). In terms of ownership, every Saudi newspaper organisation is owned by a group of people under an organisational system that is licensed and regulated by the Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information. Different groups of people own the four selected newspapers; thus, it is likely that each of these newspapers would approach digital and online communication technologies in newsrooms with a different philosophical view.

Even though the research includes case studies on four newspapers that represent around half of the traditional Saudi licensed newspaper organisations, this study does not claim to generalise the results; it is recognised that it is limited to those four newspaper organisations. Some findings can be generalised whilst others cannot as they are sharing same market, political and cultural context, media laws and regulations. Similarly, this study does not intend to make comparisons with other non-Saudi case studies but is restricted to the Saudi Arabian context. However, the results and findings of this research will be discussed in light of similar studies, discussed in the literature review (Chapter 3), which have been conducted elsewhere around the globe. This will help identify the knowledge gap that this study seeks to fill and will place this Saudi-specific study within the international research relating to newsroom transformation, challenges and future trends.

## **4.5 Cases studies**

### ***4.5.1 Al-Madina Newspaper***

*Al-Madina* newspaper had been publishing since 1937 under the name of *Al-Madina Almonawarah*, owned and edited by Othman and Ali Hafiz (Izaat, 2008). However, since 1964

*Al-Madina* paper has been produced and published under the Al-Madina Organisation for Press and Publishing, whose headquarters are located in Jeddah on the western coast of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Al-Madina* has also regional and some international offices that are connected through the digital network in addition to the global internet network (Al-Madina.com, 2016).

*Al-Madina* is a medium-large-size media organisation with an estimated average daily circulation of around 46,000 copies (Rugh, 2004: p.61) and an estimated annual revenue of around 300 million Saudi Riyals (USD 80 million). However, there is no information available about the capital and financial activities of the Saudi newspapers, nor was the newspaper of *Al-Madina* willing to provide such materials. Saudi newspaper organisations are not listed in the Saudi stock market (Tadawul) therefore there is no law to make their financial information publicly available. More about the *Al-Madina* organisation and its newsroom and journalists will be detailed in Chapter 5 .

#### **4.5.2 *Alriyadh* Newspaper**

*Alriyadh* newspaper has been published since 1 May 1965 as daily print. It is issued by the Al-Ymamah Press organisation that is located in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia. Al-Ymamah Press is a large size newspaper organisation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with an average annual revenue of 140 million US dollars. The newspaper has an estimated average daily circulation of between 155,000 to 170,000 copies. (Rugh, 2004: p.61; Alriyadh.com, 2015)

The organisation is a large-sized company in the Saudi press market with more than 1500 employees who work in editorial, management, and technical departments. The Al-Ymamah Press organisation owns two publications in print: *Alriyadh* newspaper and *Al-Ymamah* magazine (Alriyadh.com, 2015). Information about the capital and financial activities are not

available and the newspaper of Alriyadh preferred not to provide such materials. More about *Alriyadh* and its newsroom and journalists will be covered in Chapter 6.

#### ***4.5.3 Alyaum newspaper***

*Alyaum* newspaper has been published since 1965. The print is issued under Dar Alyaum (Alyaum House) for Press, Print and Publishing that is located at Dammam and the *Alyaum* paper was published weekly for many years and then became a daily publication. The main headquarters of *Alyaum* organisation are located in Dammam on the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia. The paper dominates circulation in the eastern region with an estimated average daily circulation of 80,000 (Rugh, 2004: p.61).

In addition, Dar Alyaum has an advertising print that is called *Almobawabah*. It is a free weekly copy that is meant to generate some income through selling additional advertising space and can then be circulated free with the main newspaper. The financial and capital details of *Alyaum* are not available. More about *Alyaum* and its newsroom and journalists will be presented in Chapter 7.

#### ***4.5.4 Alwatan newspaper***

*Alwatan* newspaper is comparatively new compared to the other Saudi newspapers. In 2000 *Alwatan* was launched as a daily print in Abha City in the south-west of Saudi Arabia. The newspaper is owned by the Asser Organisation for Press and Publishing. The *Alwatan* tries to adopt a different stance in its editorial line than the other Saudi papers. The paper has been subject to several aggressive campaigns, “liberal editorial lines”, from some conservative clerics. The paper had a very good start for the first four years. However, as *Alwatan* has liberal stream in the

editorial line (Rugh. 2004, p.82), the editorial and management sections have faced some difficult situations and the position of Editor-in-Chief has been an unstable position.

*Alwatan* is a medium-large-size newspaper with an estimated average daily circulation of about 50000 copies (Rugh. 2004, p.61) . The financial value of the Asser Organisation for Press and Publishing, which is the owner of Alwatan newspaper, was around 200 million SAR (53.3 million USD) when it was launched in 2000 in the southern of Saudi Arabia. It is the eighth licensed newspaper in recent history of the Saudi newspaper industry. However, its annual financial activities have not been disclosed since then. More about the *Alyaum* case study and its newsroom and journalists will be considered in Chapter 8.

#### **4.6 Research Questions**

As stated previously, the aim of this research is to explore how digital communication technologies, and the Internet in particular, are affecting newsrooms of Saudi newspaper organisations and how print journalists are handling news production in the technological convergence environment between traditional and digital practices. Therefore, research questions have been divided into two main research questions and eleven sub-questions and they focus on two central themes.

The first covers the current conditions of newsrooms in terms of structure, news production process, workflow, and the transformations, challenges, and new strategies of journalistic productions and publishing that are currently taking place. The second is focused on how Saudi journalists in newspaper organisations are managing the multiple news production and publishing in convergent environment. It also explores how print journalists perceive

technological changes and transformation in their workplace and whether or not they are facing new challenges or threats in their journalistic profession.

Therefore, the two primary research questions and sub-questions of this study are formulated as follows:

**How are newsrooms of Saudi traditional newspaper organisations responding to the emergence and developments of online and digital communications technologies?**

- What is the existing status of the managerial structure and newsroom structure in Saudi newspaper organisations?
- What is the existing newsroom model in Saudi newspapers and is any restructuring plan?
- What are existing roles and relationship of new media divisions/online newsrooms in Saudi newspapers in conjunction with tradition print newsrooms?
- What is existing production process and workflow between online and print newsrooms?
- What are main implications of digital communication technology in news production and distribution at Saudi newspapers
- What are main implications of digital technology on commercial and regulatory environment?
- What are main implications on strategies in responding to digital transformations

**How are Saudi newspaper journalists responding to digital transformations and how do they perceive changes in the newsroom?**

- What are main implications on journalistic skills and training?

- What are main implications on working pressures and practices?
- What are main implications on the profession?
- How journalists perceive their profession and the future of Saudi newspaper in middle of continuing developments of digital communication technology?

#### **4.7 Research Ethics: procedures and practices**

Research ethics are an essential part of conducting research especially when human subjects are involved. The researcher must take additional care to ensure the safety of all participants and that no harm is caused by the interviews questions (Fontana & Frey, 2008: p.142). In this study, the researcher has complied with regulations of the University of Sheffield: a University Research Ethics Application Form for Staff and PGRs has been obtained, signed by the research supervisors, and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC).

This research used in-depth interviews with Saudi journalists and observations in Saudi newsrooms. Thus, the researcher managed to obtain written approvals from four newspapers (*Al-Madina, Alriyadh, Alyaum and Alwatan*) to conduct observation in their newsrooms. Furthermore, a Participant Consent Form was signed prior to each interview and the researcher ensured that all interviewees were informed about the purpose of the research, understood that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at anytime during the interview process, and that their identity would be protected if they preferred to be anonymous.

As this study was carried out in Saudi Arabia where Arabic is the main spoken language, the researcher had to translate the questions of the semi-structured interviews into Arabic. In addition, to ensure accuracy of the research questions, both the Arabic and English versions were

sent to two referees; one is an assistant professor of Linguistics who specialises in English/Arabic translation and another is an assistant professor of Media and Communications. By using this method, the translation of the research questions was revised and its precision and accuracy confirmed.

#### 4.8 The fieldwork

Using research questions in the fieldwork is an important and sensitive process. The fieldwork took place between the beginning of January and the end of March 2014. The three months spent in Saudi newsrooms was divided between the four case studies, *Alriyadh*, *Al-Madina*, *Alyaum* and *Alwatan*. All observations and interviews were carried out during this three-month period except three interviews, as specified in the interviewee list (Figure 4.3)

As mentioned, the researcher planned all observations to be carried out prior conducting the interviews, depending on the newsrooms busy times and taking into account when was convenient for the participants. The researcher spent between two to three weeks in each newsroom (Figure 4.1) based on access and timing opportunities.

The visits to the four newsrooms of the selected newspapers were as follow:

No.	Newsroom	Date
1	<i>Al-Madina</i>	1/1/2014 – 17/1/2014
2	<i>Alriyadh</i>	18/01/2014 – 31/01/2014
3	<i>Alyaum</i>	16 /02/2014 – 11/03/2014
4	<i>Alwatan</i>	12/03/2014 – 31/03/2014

Figure 4.1 Observations into the Newsrooms

The researcher successfully managed to conduct 60 in-depth interviews (59 face-to-face and one via Face Time and emails) across the four newspapers (Figure4.3) with Editors-in-Chief, General Managers, Deputy Editors-in-Chief, Managing Editors, Online or New Media Managers, and Journalists or Reporters. The number of interviewees per case study was as follows:

No.	Case Study	Samples
1	<i>Al-Madina</i>	13 participants
2	<i>Alriyadh</i>	14 participants
3	<i>Alyaum</i>	16 participants
4	<i>Alwatan</i>	17 participants
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60 participants</b>

Figure 4.2 List of interviewees in the four newspapers

The researcher conducted 57 interviewees within the three months fieldwork between 1 January 2014 and 31 March 2014. However, three interviews with general managers of *Al-Madina*, *Alwatan* and *Alyaum* were carried out later. That was due to the fact that the researcher allowed some time to go back and look through the interviews, identify related management issues, and also read the notes of the newsroom observations, in order to prepare appropriate sub-questions about management and strategies.

Two of these interviews with general managers were face-to-face; MTH (GM of Al-Madina Newspaper on 14 August 2014) and AQZ (GM of Alwatan newspaper on 19 August 2014). The interview with SHW (GM of Alyaum was conducted on 1 November 2014) via Face Time and the use of email to exchange some documents.

The full list of interviewees including name code, date of the interview and position can be seen in the table below (Figure 4.3):

No	Name code	Date	Newspaper	Position
1	MTH	14.08.2014	<i>Al-Madina</i>	General Manager
2	SKT	14.08.2014	<i>Al-Madina</i>	The Consultant
3	MAZ	07.01.2014	<i>Al-Madina</i>	Deputy Editor-in-Chief
4	MSH	09.01.2014	<i>Al-Madina</i>	Electronic Publishing Manager
5	MHM	10.01.2014	<i>Al-Madina</i>	Deputy Editor-in-Chief
6	AYZ	07.01.2014	<i>Al-Madina</i>	Managing Editor – Local affairs
7	HSB	09.01.2014	<i>Al-Madina</i>	Managing Editor – Business and Economic affairs
8	BBD	14.01.2014	<i>Al-Madina</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
9	AAZ	14.01.2014	<i>Al-Madina</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
10	SYZ	10.01.2014	<i>Al-Madina</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
11	SAD	13.01.2014	<i>Al-Madina</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)
12	HAD	13.01.2014	<i>Al-Madina</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)
13	IJM	15.01.2014	<i>Al-Madina</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
14	SAS	19.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Editor-in-Chief
15	AMJ	20.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Managing Editor
16	SGD	19.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Managing Editor – Political affairs
17	HNG	19.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Director of Electronic Media
18	ADH	20.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Editorial system Manager
19	YAB	21.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
20	AGW	23.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)
21	NAM	23.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
22	MSH	22.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
23	ASH	22.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
24	AMB	21.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
25	NWY	21.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)
26	NZD	24.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
27	AMZ	24.01.2014	<i>Alriyadh</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)
28	SHW	01.11.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	General Manager

29	AWF	11.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Editor-in-Chief
30	SAH	10.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Deputy Editor-in-Chief
31	FFY	10.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Managing Editor – Local affairs
32	EGK	10.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Managing Editor – Sport
33	BSB	10.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Managing Editor
34	AAK	10.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Managing Editor – Business and Economic affairs
35	MQZ	10.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Managing Editor - International affairs
36	ARG	11.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Managing Editor - Cultural affairs
37	OSD	11.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Managing Editor - Quality affairs
38	SUT	10.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	New Media Manager
39	KHS	11.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)
40	MSZ	04.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
41	AHH	10.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
42	AAI	10.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
43	MFD	11.03.2014	<i>Alyaum</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)
44	AQZ	19.08.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	General Manager
45	TAS	13.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Former Editor-in-Chief
46	MJB	13.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Deputy Editor-in-Chief
47	AZS	17.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Deputy Editor-in-Chief
48	AGH	13.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Managing Editor
49	TSH	17.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	New Media Manager
50	AHN	14.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Information Centre
51	SAK	13.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)
52	KMF	13.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
53	FHW	17.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
54	JHQ	17.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Journalist (Full-Time)
55	FJO	14.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)
56	MJT	14.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)
57	MJU	15.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)
58	MJO	15.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)
59	MJR	15.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)
60	MJS	17.03.2014	<i>Alwatan</i>	Journalist (Part-Time)

Figure 4.3 Completed Interviewees List

## **4.9 Summary**

This chapter described the research methods used and the design of the study, including details of the sampling and selecting procedure, research ethics and procedures, and research practices undertaken in the fieldwork. The qualitative research approach and, in particular, implementation of observation and in-depth interview methods to collect the data required to address the research questions.

# **Chapter Five:**

## **Findings at Al-Madina**

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from the observation of the newsroom (from 1-17 January 2014) and from 13 interviews conducted with deputy editors-in-chief, managing editors, journalists, the electronic publishing manager, and the general manager of *Al-Madina* newspaper. These methods were used in order to answer the main questions of this study, specifically:

1) how is *Al-Madina* newsroom responding to the emergence and developments of online and digital communication technologies?

2) how are journalists at *Al-Madina* responding to digital transformations and how do they perceive the changes in the newsroom?

In order to address these two main research questions and their associated supporting questions, (as set out in Chapter 4, Section 4.5), this chapter is presented in 10 sections. These sections are viewed from a managerial and media economics perspective. These aspects are; case-study background, newspaper management and newsroom structure, Electronic Publishing Department, workflow and daily routine, editorial software packages, news circulation for traditional and digital users, main transformations, main challenges, new strategies, and the status of *Al-Madina* journalists in the digital transformation. However, in sections of transformations and journalists' responses a sociological approaches were used to explore some aspects such as the tensions between professionals and the challenges in the working culture within newsroom.

## **5.2 Background of Al-Madina Newspaper**

*Al-Madina* newspaper first started publishing in 1937 under the name of *Al-Madina Almonawarah*, owned and edited by Othman and Ali Hafiz (Izaat, 2008). Since 1964 *Al-Madina* paper has been produced and published under the Al-Madina Organisation for Press and Publishing, whose headquarters are located in Jeddah on the western coast of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Al-Madina* also has regional and some international offices that are connected through the digital network (Al-Madina.com, 2016). *Al-Madina* is a medium-sized media organisation with an estimated average daily circulation of around 60,000 copies and estimated annual revenue of around 300 million Saudi Riyals (USD 80 million). However, *Al-Madina* were not willing to provide any additional financial information about their organisation. Saudi newspaper organisations are not listed in the Saudi stock market (Tadawul) therefore there is no legal requirement to make their financial information publicly available.

## **5.3 Newspaper management and newsroom structure**

The structure of the *Al-Madina* organisation consists of three main power functions: the General Assembly, the Board of Directors, and the interior management of the newspaper, see Figure 5.1. The interior management is divided into two equal power sections: editorial and management. At the top of each section there is an Editor-in-Chief for editorial activities and a General Manager for business and financial operations. Senior management is supported by deputies and managers on each side, who play a core role in maintaining this hierarchical model of management and control of the top-down information flow, or from the bottom of the organisational level to the higher leadership level.

The newsroom is structured by news departments in separate rooms. The journalists call the newsroom sometimes *The Editorial lounge* or *The Lounge*. (When this term is used this thesis, it refers to the newsroom unless stated differently). In *Al-Madina*, the main lounge is the location of the local, business, and political news departments. In this newsroom, there are around 42 desks, half of which are provided with desktop computers and telephones (see Figure 5.2).

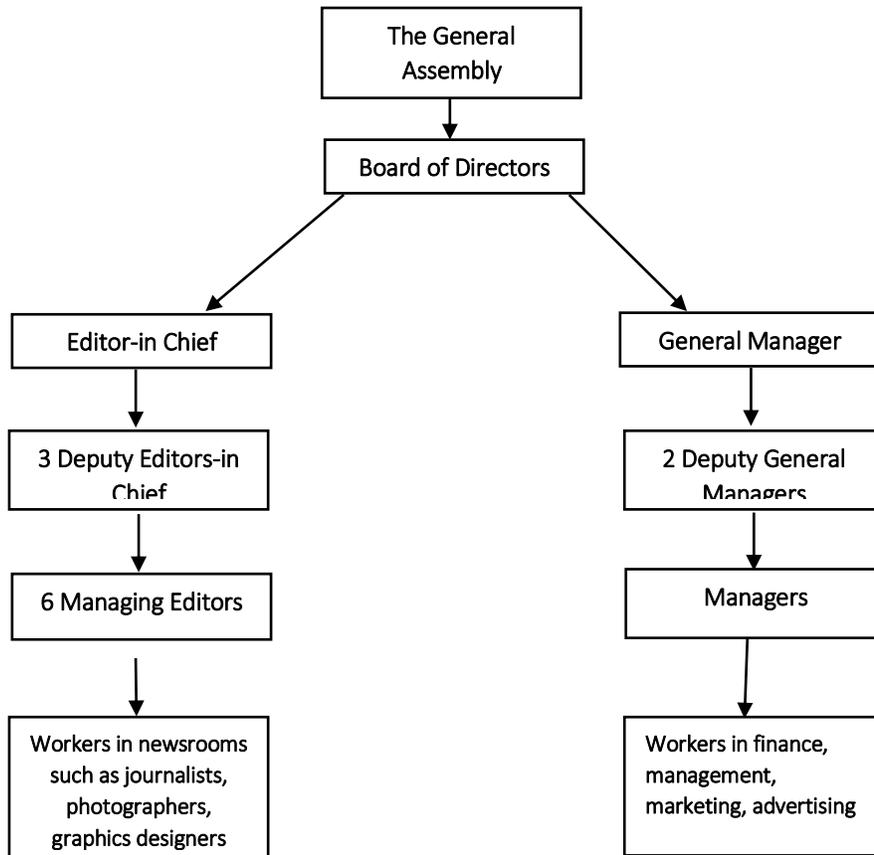


Figure 5.1: The organisational structure of Al-Madina

There is only one television screen in the middle and a big fax machine in the corner. The offices of the managing editors of these divisions are located within the room with no difference in size or technological equipment. There are two separate editorial lounges (newsrooms) located in the same building for other news divisions, such as sports and culture.



Figure 5.2: Al-Madina main newsroom (2014)

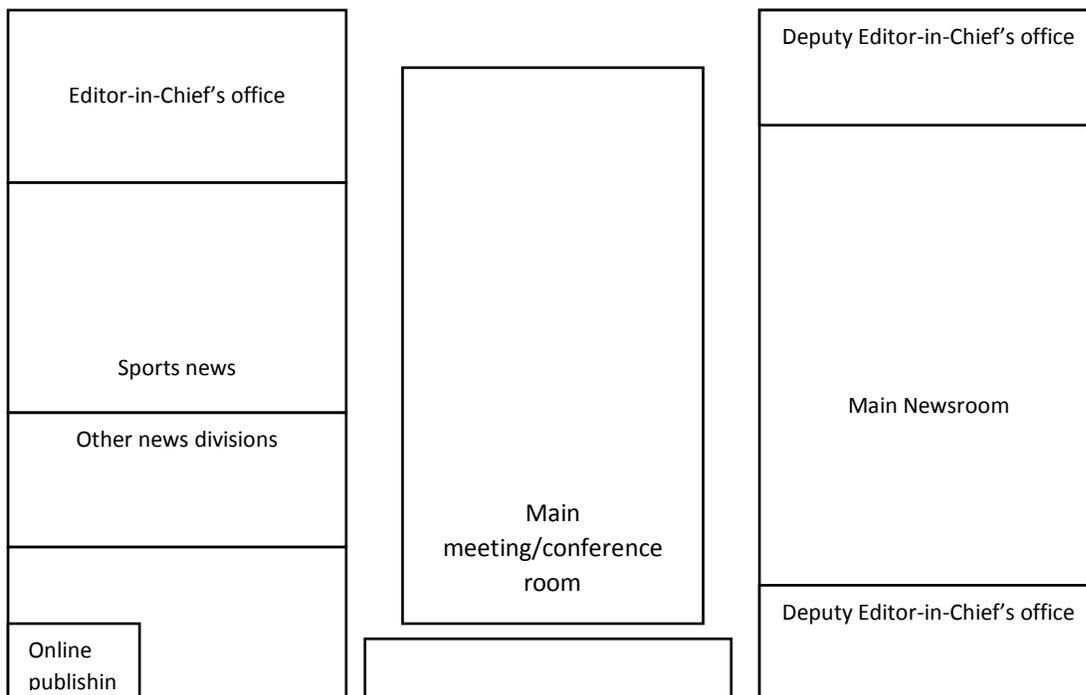


Figure 5.3: Layout of Al-Madina's Newsroom in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor (2014)

There is an Electronic Publishing Department, which is located in a small, separate room that is located in one of the corners of the building. The tiny room has three desks, including that of the Electronic Publishing Manager and there is nothing exceptional about it: only three computers, two landline phones and armchair.



*Figure 5.4: Another lounge which includes some proofreaders at Al-Madina (2014)*

#### **5.4 Electronic Publishing Department**

The Electronic Publishing Department, as can be seen from the workflow diagram (Figure 5.5: Workflow in *Al-Madina*), and newsroom structure (Figure 5.3: Floor plan of *Al-Madina's* Newsroom 2014), is located at the end-of-news production workflow and in a tiny room that is disconnected from the main newsroom. The Electronic Publishing Department does not contribute significantly to the news production in the early stages, nor does their staff attend morning editorial meetings. Although the main newsroom uses advanced digital communication technologies, the online publishing department is treated as an end production point. In other

words, the main role of the online department is to transform the content of traditional print into web-friendly content. There are other roles that this division may play, such as circulating news online through social network sites, updating newspaper apps on iOS and Android, and keeping the main newsrooms up-to-date with new events that need to be considered for follow up.

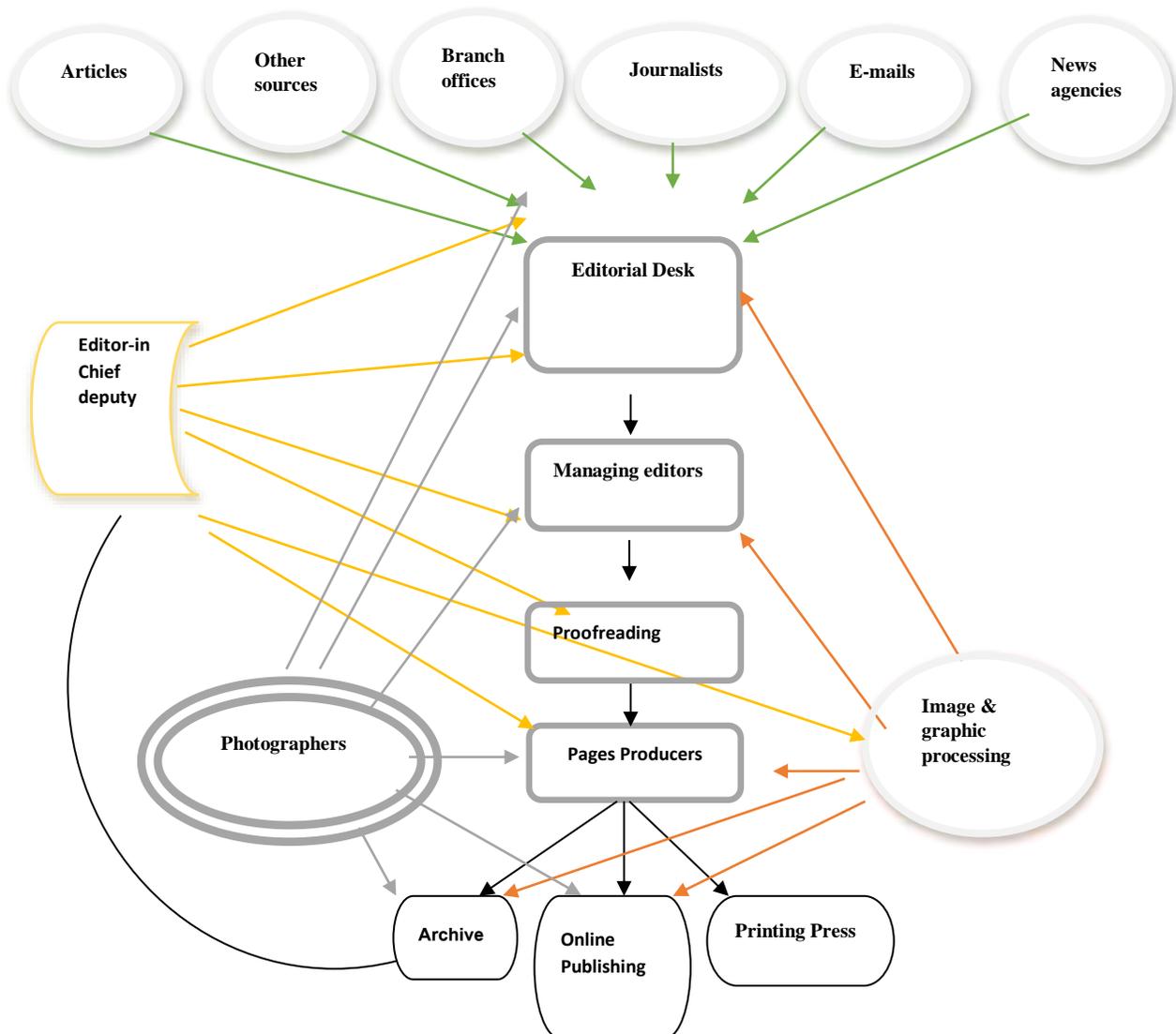


Figure 5.5: Workflow and relations between divisions at Al-Madina newspaper. Source: Al-Madina (2014)

## 5.5 Workflow and daily routine

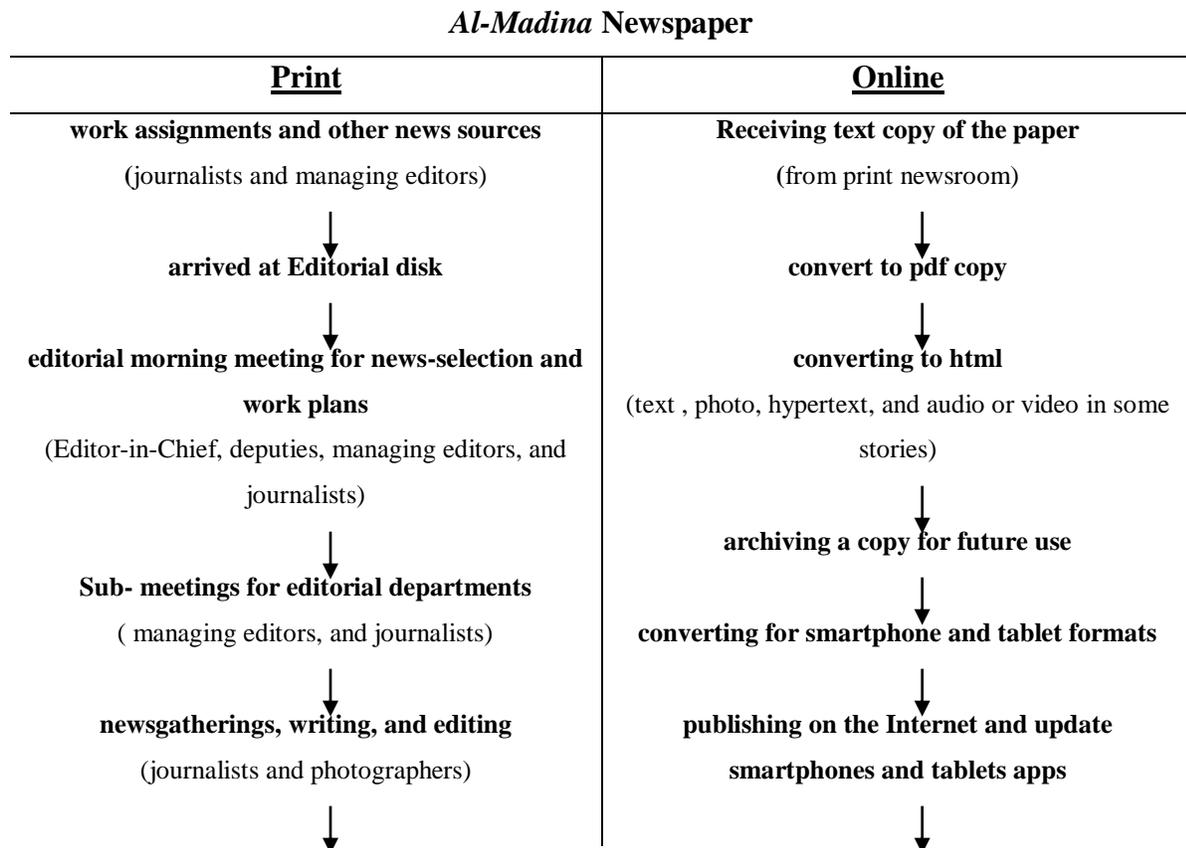
Workflow (Figure 5.5 and 5.6) at *Al-Madina* operates in top-down power model. That means that the Editor-in-Chief holds the main decision-making power. Therefore, journalists report to the managing editors, the managing editors report to the deputies and the deputies report to the Editor-in-Chief.

In the daily routine there are two editorial meetings: the first is in the morning at around 09:00 to set a plan for the day's news agenda, and then an evening meeting at around 17:00 to finalise and approve the final copy. The morning meeting is usually attended by the Editor-in-Chief, deputies, managing editors, and around 10 journalists. This meeting is followed by individual editorial division meetings. For instance, the local news division has morning meetings attended by one of the deputies responsible for this department, the local news managing editor, journalists, and photographers in the local news department. Likewise, this daily routine is applied to other editorial departments that have their own editorial morning meetings. The evening meeting is to finalise and approve individual pages of the paper, is usually attended by the deputies of the Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editors, and the producer from the production division who is responsible for the design and graphic functions.

Apart from the news stories coming from the daily journalistic assignments, *Al-Madina* also has other news sources that are taken into account in the editorial meetings when considering how to develop themes and news stories for the following day's copy. These feeds come from news agencies, social network sites and apps. For instance, the newspaper has subscriptions to a wide range of news agencies, such as Associated Press, Reuters and AFP.

*Al-Madina* uses the electronic network in the daily workflow within the newsroom. News stories flow between editorial departments and other graphics and production departments through News Press and Rapid Browser packages via the interior network. A7 Pro Pack is used by the archive and graphics departments to manage the archiving of information, photos and news stories. However, workers at *Al-Madina* are still using paperwork on some occasions, such as approving work assessments for journalists and a signed final copy of the newspaper’s pages.

The flow diagram (See Figure 5.6 below) explains the steps in the news production process for print and online newsrooms at *Al-Madina* newspaper. The diagram shows the respective power of the traditional print newsroom and the electronic publishing department in news production. This confirms the idea discussed in previous sections concerning the lower contribution of the electronic media department in news production.



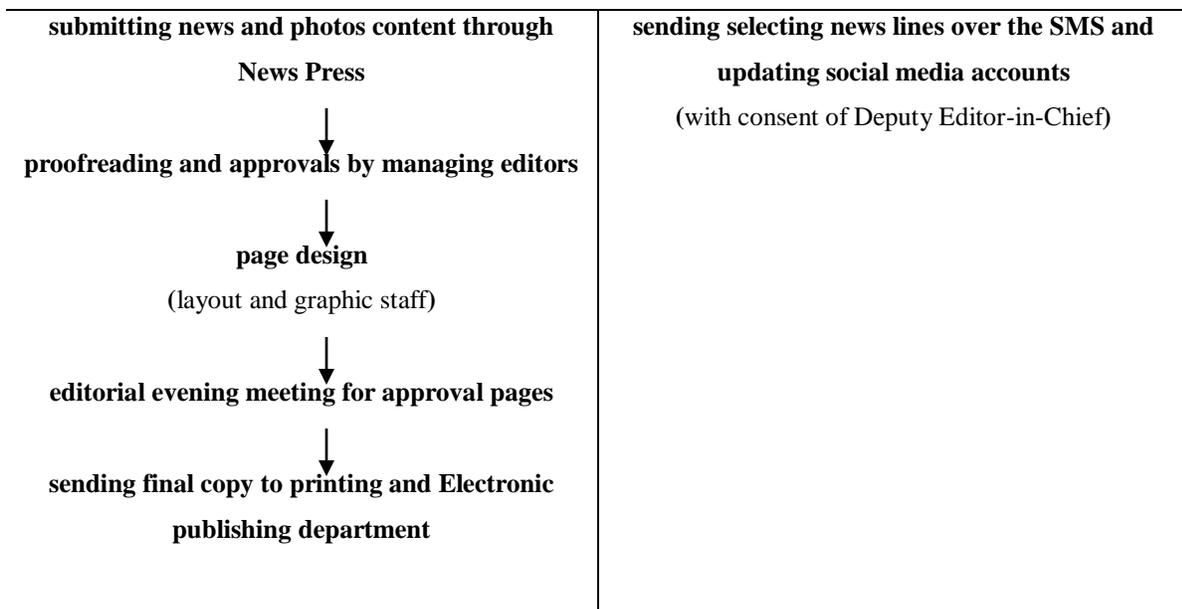


Figure 5.6 Diagram of Al-Madina news production process for print and online sides

Finally, *Al-Madina* has a studio for a video production of some news stories to contribute to the paper's channel on YouTube and this is linked to the newspaper's website at [www.al-madina.com](http://www.al-madina.com). This is the first experience Saudi newspapers using YouTube as a platform for video-format productions, including news headlines, video news stories, and interviews. However, at *Al-Madina*, this type of video news production is not used on a regular basis. The first video clip was uploaded six years ago, (16 May 2010) and the average use since then has been just one video clip per month.

## 5.6 Editing and content management software packages

The Staff at *Al-Madina*'s newsrooms are using several computerised programs and web-based applications. In its editorial section the News Press and MS Office packages are used to produce and edit news stories. For archiving information, including text, images and audio clips,

A7Pro Pack software is currently in use. Additionally, Adobe software packages are heavily used in the newsroom for several purposes. Adobe InDesign is used for designing newspaper pages, Adobe Photoshop is used for editing images, and Adobe Illustrator is used for editing graphics.



*Figure 5.7: News Press main page*

Journalists at *Al-Madina* use this type of computational technology for creating and managing news production. However, there is lack of multi-skilled journalists who can use the full packages of editorial related applications and software as there are always technicians to assist with using this technology in the newsrooms.

For the technicians themselves, there are occasionally some issues when using these editorial software packages. These problems appear to be due to trying to apply these packages in non-English speaking environment. The Arabic version of the software sometimes suffers from poor translation or from a shortage of Arabic technical terminologies incorporated into the programming. The software is used the English interface with using Arabic content inside the boxes (Figures 5.8 and 5.9).

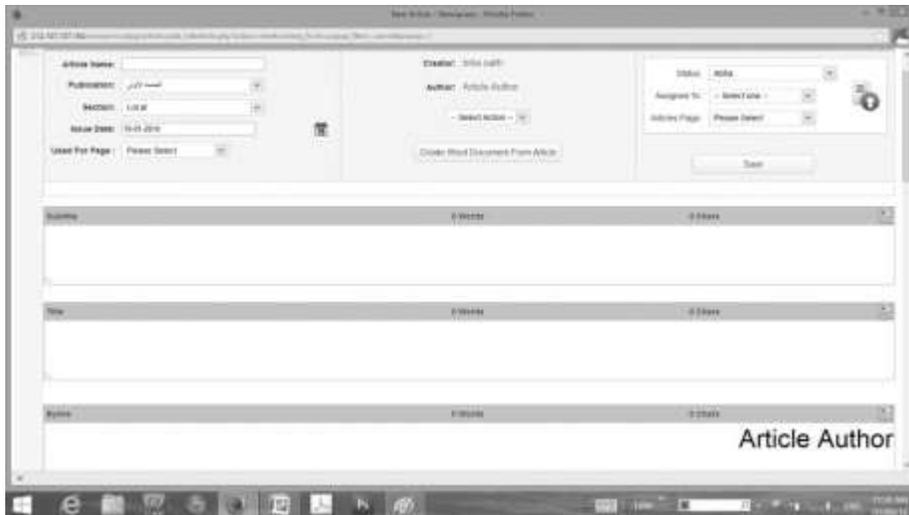


Figure 5.8: News Press building news story

Another issue concerning these editorial packages arises from the differences between hardware and computational operating systems of computers within the newsroom's network. In other words, using both Windows and Macintosh systems limits the potential to use either of the editorial programs to their full capacity in news creation and production. The management of *Al-Madina* has plans in place to upgrade all network computers to the Macintosh system to get maximum benefit from these packages and for more efficient use.



Figure 5.9: News Press news sources/news agencies

## 5.7 News circulation for print and digital productions

*Al-Madina*, along with other Saudi newspapers, has suffered from a dramatic drop in print circulation in the last five years. Although there is no reliable data provided about Saudi newspaper circulation on a regular basis, as discussed in the contextual chapter about Saudi Arabia, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Al-Madina*, MAZ, (2014) estimated that the national average fall in national Saudi newspapers' circulation has been around 40% in the last five years.

*Al-Madina* uses digital communication technology extensively to maximise its accessibility for its readers, especially when this does not incur additional costs. *Al-Madina* has an online presence at <http://www.al-madina.com/> as its main website. The website was originally launched in 2003 with only PDF content published online as there were some problems publishing other content forms on the newspaper's website. MSH, Director of the Electronic Publishing Department at *Al-Madina*, pointed out that most of these difficulties were related to content-management applications and some detailed technical issues of exporting texts and photos to the website. Transforming the newspaper content to the website used to require so much time and effort that it could only be used for a single news story. Since 2010, online publishing has been improved by introducing the new department of Electronic Publishing and recruiting new IT staff. In addition, a new content-management and new editorial system have been bought. A substantial improvement to the website has been witnessed and the speed of transforming content from print into a multiple publishing format of text, photos, and sometimes video, has been increased.

The website of *Al-Madina* has witnessed dramatic annual increases over the last eight years, from about 4 million visits in 2008 to more than 23 million visits in 2014 (Figure 5.10).

However, in 2015, unique visits dropped from around 23 million to 15 million. MSH, Director of the Electronic Publishing Department, anticipates a further decline in online readers due to various factors, such as the emerging new players in the market and the changing behaviour of online readers.

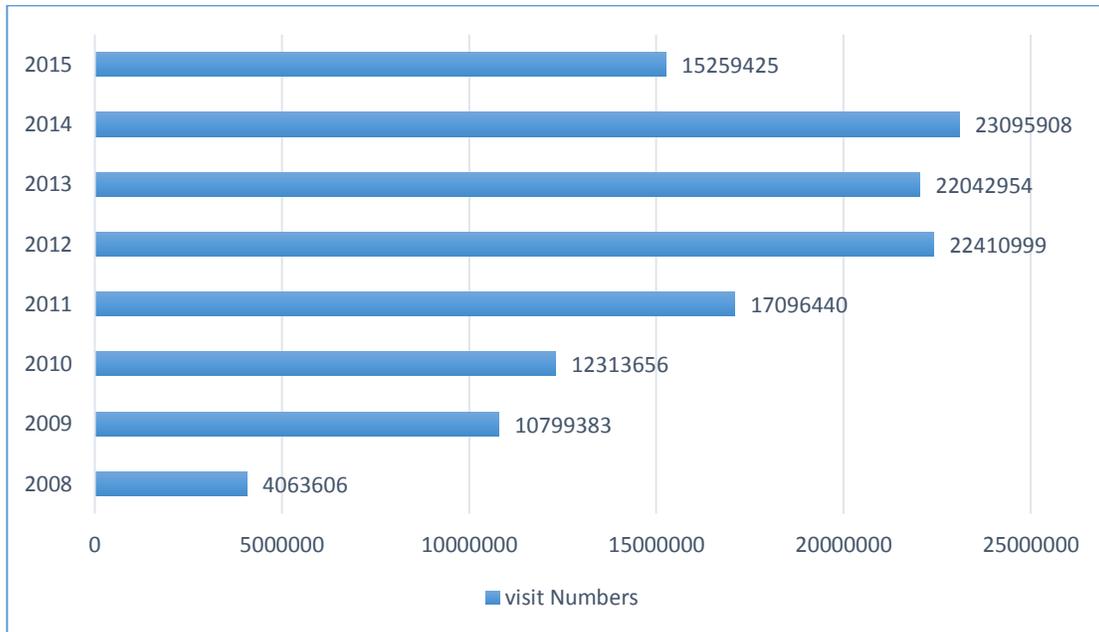


Figure 5.10: Annual unique visitors of Al-Madina's website

Moreover, *Al-Madina* has multiple accounts on social media sites (Figure 5.11). For example, *Al-Madina* has more than 413,000 followers on Twitter, 331,000 likes on Facebook, and more than 21,000 subscribers to its YouTube channel with 17 million viewers, and a variety of SMS channels that provide news stories by sending texts to subscribers on individual channels. There are about 15 SMS channels at *Al-Madina* that are divided around news types, such as Sports News SMS and Business News. Additionally, there is an SMS channel for breaking news, working 24/7 to keep the paper's readers informed. *Al-Madina* had been using mobile text services for circulating news since 2009 for only one text channel. The frequency of texts sent for this channel used to be just one to three messages a day. The frequency of SMSs



## 5.8 Main transformations at *Al-Madina*

The structure of *Al-Madina*'s newsroom, as explained above, is a traditional newsroom layout. It is a walled construction divided into several editorial rooms with the main lounge for local, business, and political affairs departments. Digital communication technology is deployed at a minimal level, such as one TV screen in each room and some desktop computers. Journalists use smartphones and tablets in their daily work for the purpose of sending and receiving calls, messages, and mini-blogging of audio, text and videos in various applications. These applications are applied to different operation systems and journalists are able to use this technology in news production process, especially in the newsgathering.

Using digital technology has become an essential part of daily journalistic practice within newsrooms. Managing news production and distribution have become easier less time-consuming and less costly. The Internet has helped journalists gain access to new sources for stories and provided new ways of newsgathering. Most journalists of *Al-Madina* use social media for personal and business activities. Journalists have multiple accounts on social network sites such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Use of social media can include the involvement of journalists with online users as sources for news stories.

MAZ (2014) emphasised the benefits of using online and digital communication technologies in journalism practices as saving time, costs and efforts in news production. He added that digital technology saves time by significantly reducing the news production process, cutting the average time taken to produce a single news story from 3–4 hours to 20 minutes. Digital communication technology especially online technology has affected the rush-hour of the newsroom. MAZ (2014) stated that:

The rush-hour of the newsroom used to be from 11am to 8pm but has now been reduced to only two hours between 3-5pm when all editorial managers and journalists have to physically be in in the newsroom to finalise the next day's paper.

Moreover, the technology has reduced the cost and effort of news production as the newsroom relies on the digital technology for newsgathering, editing, producing, and distributing. AAS (2014) said that the news production is managed through software with which all news stories are created, edited, proofread, designed on the page, and then approved through one digital editorial network. All journalists, Managing Editors, deputies, Editors-in-Chief, and technicians are connected to the editorial network. The workflow of the news production flows through the computerised and digital network and saves a lot of printing by avoiding the need for paper drafts or the use of pens. Consequently, the newspaper has reduced its use of paper, pens, and printer ink within the newsroom.

Likewise, the effort of producing news has been reduced as journalists have become increasingly dependent on online technology to investigate news stories via the Internet or using social applications, such as WhatsApp. The journalists also use digital technology such as smartphones to gather news and facts by checking the stories through different sources. HSB (2014) mentioned that the use of social networking sites helps journalists in many cases to verify sources by checking information against multiple sources to gain a broader picture of the story and to filter out false information. This process both helps to shape the final version of news stories and to improve the reliability of the news. Using these methods in news production makes some journalists rely heavily and constantly on the internet for their newsgathering.

In this respect, MAZ (2014) claimed that there are two downsides to depending on online technology in news production. The first is that total dependence on the internet in creation of news reports and newsgathering has transformed journalism into a somewhat lazy and dependent task, relying on others' efforts to produce news stories. This can, over time, kill their 'journalistic creative sense'. Some journalists have not out in the field for some time, but now sit in the office waiting for emails, using SMS, or surfing other online sites for news stories. The second downside is that total reliance on digital communication technology in producing news means journalists can be easily misled or become victims of propaganda or online campaigns of any type, such as political, social or commercial. .

A further transformation that the journalists of *Al-Madina* have noted is that freedom of the press in Saudi Arabia has been improved, influenced by the introduction of online technologies. The Internet also has improved the freedom in terms of how journalists (gatekeepers) of *Al-Madina* understand the freedom of expression. In the print newsroom, journalists acknowledge that online publishing has extended their freedom considerably in that censorship of some news stories is pointless as they will find their way online either via online-only newspapers or through social media accounts. It is clear that media freedom in Saudi Arabia has been empowered by digital technology. However, SKT (2014) pointed out that there is a misunderstanding of media freedom by editors-in-chief in the Saudi newspapers that freedom level is considered to be lower than the online-only newspapers in Saudi Arabia are having. This might be because those editors-in-chief have been selected by the Saudi Ministry of Information and Culture so they avoid any disruption that may lead to them being removed from their post or may affect their contract renewal in the future.

Another transformation that has been noted through the interview answers is that using technology for speeding up the news production process can, at the same time, be damaging to the quality of news stories. Journalists nowadays are under pressure to produce news in a certain time that pushes them to speed up the process of news production, which may have some effect on the news quality. Speed itself is important in today's journalism but the risk is that it can be a major factor reducing the quality of journalistic production.

MAZ (2014) pointed out that quality of news production suffered from the introduction of the online and communication technologies because speed has become the most important characteristic of the digital age. This necessity for speed in news production can result in omitting key elements of the production process, such as verification of news sources, in favour of getting the scoop. However, HAD (2014) said that the quality of photos and video production has been improved and digital and online technology offers journalists the ability to share and circulate these audio and video productions over multiple platforms alongside the main news stories.

Furthermore, MAZ (2014) added that digital communication technology has transformed the ways of how, when and where a newspaper can be printed. The printing time used to be pressure for journalists of missing this deadline which used to be an extra pressure on the journalists to meet the deadline every day. *Al-Madina* used to have an earlier print run to enable it to send regional copies by air cargo on a daily basis. Nowadays, *Al-Madina* has three print runs simultaneously in three different cities. *Al-Madina* uses different printing houses around the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the same time: Alwatan Printing in Abha city (southern part of the kingdom), Arabia Printing in Riyadh City (central part), Al-Madina Printing in Jeddah (western part), and is planning to print at Alyaum Printing in Dammam (eastern part).

The idea of simultaneous printing is a significant step for traditional newspapers for three main reasons. The first is that they have stopped using the expensive method of delivering copies by discontinuing the use of air cargo. Consequently, newspaper organisations have economised on circulation costs. The second reason is that synchronous printing delays the printing deadlines so that the final copy of the newspaper can be updated as late as possible. The third reason is that synchronous printing has reduced the pressure on journalists to meet earlier deadlines. *Al-Madina* uses the Internet and other digital technology, such as some software applications, to send the documents of the printed copy of the newspaper in a certain format to other printing houses. It also sometimes sends copy that has to be updated more than once in response to important new events or developments in an existing story.

### **5.9 Main challenges facing *Al-Madina***

There are several challenges facing the *Al-Madina* newspaper. The first is the loss of some of its print readers; *Al-Madina* suffered from a dramatic drop in print circulation in the last five years. Although there are no accurate figures, MAZ (2014) estimated that in 2104 circulation had dropped by 40% as compared to the circulation figure five years previously. Likewise, MHM (2014) and HAD (2014) expressed the additional fear of losing not only print readers, but online readers too.

This is due to different factors that affect the media environment. The first is the crisis that has hit news journalism in which traditional newspapers are suffering the most. Another factor is that the news market in Saudi Arabia has seen the launch of more than 2000 online-only newspapers in the last four years. Also, the circulation of news through social networking sites

has transformed the behaviour among readers who now are relying on the SMS alerts to follow up new news stories and not bothering to surf the websites of the traditional newspapers.

Thus *Al-Madina*, as MSH(2014), Director of Electronic Publishing Department said, has multiple accounts on the all social networking sites; the aim is either to keep redirecting loyal readers who quit the print and go online or, to attract potential new online readers by linking them to the *Al-Madina* online website. MSH stressed that it is a real dilemma working in digital environments as traditional media organisations have many online media competitors who attract and inform online users via different formats such as websites and social media.

This challenge leads to another issue that *Al-Madina* faces which is the transformation of the competitive nature of the media market among traditional print media in light of the rapid spread of digital communication technology in Saudi Arabia. *Al-Madina* is competing not only against traditional media organisations but also against the most competitive medium, the Internet and its associated technology. Today, as has been mentioned, there are more than 2000 online-only newspapers in the Saudi media market, in addition to other traditional media, which has led to a huge rise in competition for *Al-Madina* to deal with. Most of these online-only newspapers are owned by individuals. The nature of the competition has changed from only media organisations to online organisational and individual competition and from only traditional media to traditional and new or digital competition.

Despite *Al-Madina*'s wide use of the Internet as a platform, journalists in the newsroom still feel they are behind the competition. The nature of the competition has changed from traditional media firms' competition to online organisational and individual competition. Today's online users can use any platform to publish information, audio, video, and text formats

with no need to go through the gatekeepers in the traditional media. Similarly, *Al-Madina* is suffering also from the online-only newspapers, smartphone and tablet apps that are ‘stealing’ (both directly and indirectly) their news and circulating it through their platforms with no acknowledgement of *Al-Madina*.

This can lead to another issue that traditional newspapers are facing in the digital age, which is the new workload of managing news production copyright. There have been many incidences where some of *Al-Madina*’s production has been subject to recycling and reproduction in other different online news outlets with no reference to *Al-Madina*. MAZ (2014) confirmed that the newsroom has paid some efforts to challenge those news outlets, but it was too much time and effort. That does not include those incidences of recycling of news stories when *Al Madina*’s copyright was actually acknowledged. The main problem is with those outlets that have lack of understanding of journalistic ethics in the Saudi media market. *Al-Madina* spent time and money taking those organisations to court, but this was a long and exhausting road to take. This is happening on the top of the pressure from practices of aggregation model by big media companies such as Google and Yahoo.

Moreover, competition within the organisation, between the management and the editorial teams, is another challenge at *Al-Madina*. The tensions result from having two different perspectives on managing the newspaper. For instance, development and improvement projects can be a main cause of conflict: the editorial department sees these projects as urgent, whereas the management sees them as unnecessary spending. These tensions have always existed but changes brought about by developments of digital technology have put extra pressure on both sides.

In this respect MHM (2014), Deputy Editor-in-Chief, pointed out that five years ago they had difficulties in convincing the management team to move towards the transformation to more digitalisation of news production and new circulation methods, but that had now been resolved. The management side had been concerned about the need for further funding for this transformation, especially for the new Electronic Publishing Department and the associated need for equipment and staff. The management side was focusing on the cost and those on the editorial side were more concerned about making improvements in their journalistic production.

Additionally, journalists are being lost to other media outlets, especially well-experienced journalists who are ready to take on more senior positions or because they can get a better income elsewhere. *Al-Madina* is facing the dilemma that it cannot keep journalists for a long time, especially those journalists who start as recent graduates but only stay for two years or so in the newsroom. One of the reasons for this could be that management does not agree to improve salaries and fails to create attractive training and development programmes to keep those journalists at *Al-Madina*.

A further challenge is to find qualified online journalists and then pay them a fair salary. Salaries for journalists posts below deputy level are capped so once they have gained some experience they seek out better opportunities to improve their income. This situation became more serious for the Saudi newspapers when new media companies were introduced to the market. For example, MAZ (2014) pointed out that in the last three years two new Saudi newspapers were established: *Alsharq* and *Makkah*. The two new newspapers have increased the demand for experienced journalists who are well-trained and ready for new posts. *Al-Madina* have lost some of their journalists as they could not compete with the salaries that journalists were offered by the new newspapers. That was because the new newspapers prefer to employ

well-qualified journalists rather than training up inexperienced journalism graduates as this takes time and money. Therefore, finding qualified and skilled journalists in the Saudi media market is hard and keeping them is even harder.

In addition, there is another challenge in *Al-Madina*'s newsroom, which is finding the right balance between digital and traditional production. *Al-Madina* is trying to catch up with all the new digital technologies but it is difficult balancing this against the return they bring. The editorial team has a good appreciation of the many changes in the digital communication technology that need also attention for new reforms in the newspapers.

However, the journalists of the *Al-Madina* newsroom feel that print production is still a priority as the majority of the newspaper's annual revenue comes from this traditional production section. MHM stressed that the annual revenue of the newspaper varies from year to year. He estimated that around 95% of revenue comes from the traditional print side and only 5% from the digital production. This difficult balance is thus an important challenge that concerns both the editorial and the management departments as they want to maintain the advantages of both productions. The advantages of having both digital and traditional news productions are the good income from traditional print, the increasing number of online readers, and the increase of interactivity through digital communications.

The traditional print income usually comes from advertising, circulation and print subscriptions. Although digital production is free to online users, *Al-Madina* sells digital advertisements on its website and collects fees from SMS subscriptions. Annual subscriptions to the *Al-Madina* SMS channels are about 12 SAR (about 3.2 USD) a year. All income from digital

production, which is around 5%, contributes to the annual revenue of the *Al-Madina* organisation. MSH, Manager of the Electronic Publishing Department, maintained:

The annual income from online advertising in 2007 was 200,000 SAR (53,000 USD) and this amount has doubled many times to reach around 3 million SAR in 2013 (around 800000 USD).’ Additionally, the income from the SMS subscriptions annually is around one million SAR (375,000 USD) ... all digital income represents around 5% of total annual income compared with traditional print income.’

There are some technical challenges too, the most concerning of which is keeping the *Al-Madina* website secure. *Al-Madina* online had been subject to several online threats, particularly the wave of attacks and online viruses, some of them due to the political stance of the paper, others due to dissatisfaction with coverage of certain topics. However, since 2011, all online attacks have been unsuccessful thanks to the implementation of several online security tools. However, implementing these security packages comes with an extra cost and so finding the funds to maintain the necessary levels of security is also a challenge. A further technical challenge is the lack of capacity to improve the speed of the internet cable, as it is related to complex factors. Web hosting prices in Saudi are yet another technical issue as these are considerably higher than international web hosting fees.

A final challenge is that the newsroom of *Al-Madina* has seen a reduction in its interaction with readers across both traditional and digital sections in recent years. MHM stated: ‘We used to receive around 300 letters daily from our print readers. Nowadays we barely receive 10 to 15 letters a week .’ In the digital section, loss of interaction can be demonstrated by the online traffic on the newspaper’s website and the amount of comments by online readers. MSH pointed out that a couple of years ago they used to have thousands of comments on the website

on a daily basis, whereas today the average is around only 60 to 70 comments a day. Most of these comments are in response to opinion articles, not news stories. MSH (2014) explained that the reason for this is the emergence of new online-only websites and new social networking sites in which people tend to participate rather than the traditional newspapers' organisations.

#### **5.10 Strategies of *Al-Madina* in the online age.**

*Al-Madina* is broadly using digital communication technology to produce and circulate news stories. Besides traditional print, *Al-Madina* publishes its news production through the main website, multiple accounts on social media sites, and smartphone and tablet versions. However, digital communication technology also has affected the print circulation of *Al-Madina* as discussed previously. At the same time more the 95% of the annual revenue is generated through the traditional print production by the print advertising, sales and subscriptions. The drop in circulation has led to more pressure for *Al-Madina* to deal with. Thus, *Al-Madina* has put a strategy in place that prioritises the print production over the online and digital activities.

Consequently, *Al-Madina* is trying to find an appropriate balance in its news production across print, online, SMS and other platforms. This balance between traditional and digital production maintains a focus on the print production. For instance, print production withholds exclusive news stories which are not published online until the middle of the following day. Some of these stories are very briefly reported through the SMS or WhatsApp groups and readers are directed to the print version. Likewise, some news is promoted through social network sites or email groups directing readers via hyperlinks to the online newspaper site. The

nature of some news stories, like breaking news, means they are treated differently by publishing them through all digital platforms at the same time.

Moreover, the news selecting is publishing channels is organised by the time, nature, and importance of news stories. Some news is published immediately, such as news agency, not only for its importance, but for its urgency. This type of story cannot wait and needs to be published as soon as possible due to the competition factor. This strategy is in place at *Al-Madina* newsroom to keep readers informed and their interests served in the competitive market. Other types of story that are published straight away because of the importance of timing, include weather alerts and breaking news, or updates to these.

In line with the strategy of prioritising the tradition print *Al-Madina* tends to keep exclusive news stories for the print version only. The newsroom tends to publish 90% of its news production online and withholds the other 10% as exclusive production for traditional print readers. On the other hand, MSH (2014) pointed out that news selected for digital production varies from one platform to another. For example, political, local and sports news are published through Twitter social and cultural matters are published on Facebook; breaking news is published on the website, via SMS, and sometimes on Twitter. MSH added that this strategy is used because of the nature of platforms and their users. That means the nature of online platform is considered by the newsroom when they circulate their news on the Internet. For example, on Twitter, *Al-Madina* tends to publish short news items because of the platform capacity of only 140 words, whereas on Facebook some news stories are published in full, with photos and sometimes video. Video clips, for news stories produced only in video format, are published first on YouTube and then shared across all other platforms.

The circulation crisis and other difficulties in the newspaper market have driven *Al-Madina* to look for new ways of generating revenue. The first move was to transform its printing lines into a separate printing house firm owned by a long-standing newspaper organisation. This has created a degree of flexibility in terms of opening up new opportunities to deal with private projects in the printing and publishing industry. The printing house now has a variety of printing projects and is generating good revenue that can cover the running costs of the printing house itself. Likewise, *Al-Madina* has introduced a new magazine on industrial and construction themes and is planning to introduce another magazine about video games, as there is growing interest in these areas nowadays in Saudi Arabia. *Al-Madina* expects that this step will be generating new revenue from advertising and circulation.

MHM (2014) insists that following successive drops in circulation in recent years, the newspaper industry has come to the conclusion that all necessary actions will be taken in order to maintain a steady revenue.. There are new investment projects being undertaken, which are not related to the journalistic business, in order to fund the main business. Some of these investments are in estates and informational logistics services. Similarly, MSH pointed out that another strategy under consideration is to transform the whole business of the newspaper organisation into a media house business. This will allow new firms to participate in new commercial activity, especially in the digital economy. For instance, the media house can provide digital marketing activities like domain services, including selling, housing, designing and maintenance service. It can also provide other services in property, tourism sectors and other services that can generate new revenue. In other words, the news production business can be transformed to a news and services business to face new threats and survive by taking advantage of new opportunities.

Finally, it seems that *Al-Madina*'s main strategic vision is to maintain the competitiveness of their print version as the main generator of their revenue, and, at the same time, participate in the online environment as long as it does adversely affect the main traditional print activity. The second and related vision is to find alternative methods to fund the newspaper in the digital age, such as turning the press organisation into a media house firm where they can run other media businesses in order generate more revenue.

### **5.11 Journalists and current transitions**

Journalists in the *Al-Madina* newsroom are working under the pressure of managing deadlines for daily assignments. The majority of their work is targeted towards the traditional print production. The journalists see the traditional production as their main workload and the digital formats as an extra load for them which they are not greatly bothered about. Thus, in the *Al-Madina* newsroom there is an extra reward for journalists who add to the digital news production in the Electronic Publishing Department. This, of course, does not include their journalistic production for the traditional paper that has been transformed to digital format for multiple platforms, as that is a task for the Electronic Publishing Department. But journalists sometimes work on news stories which are purely intended for the digital publishing department. The best examples of such stories is when a journalist gets a source through social media and completes all the research, verification, and editing of the story online with no need to leave the office.

The provision of journalists' training is limited to news organisations and academic media schools in Saudi Arabia. MAZ (deputy), MTH (general manager), and other managing

editors agree that graduates fresh from academic journalism departments are not ready yet for the journalistic field. The graduates lack any journalism training and newspapers have to train them from scratch. Senior journalists argue that can be due to out- dated curricula and a focus on theoretical approaches in the teaching provided by journalism and media courses at universities.

Likewise, as for current journalists at *Al-Madina* suffer from a lack of ongoing training, particularly for digital production and online publishing. Multi-skilled journalists, who can deal with both traditional and digital production and can work with all the required tools, do not exist at *Al-Madina*. This problem links back to some of the previous challenges of the of training and career development plans. The dilemma in this respect is thus finding multi-skilled journalists in the first place and then preventing them from wanting to move to the competition.

This issue can be linked to different causes, both within and outside the newspaper organisation, such as a lack of a specialised national training centre for journalism in Saudi Arabia. However, journalists also pointed out in the interviews that salaries are not sufficient in today's media market. The journalists feel that current salary levels do not encourage them to stay and feel confident about their future career. The salaries for journalists and technicians who work at *Al-Madina* depend on qualifications and experience and fall into three groups. These are: the beginners group with 0 to 4 years' experience, the intermediate group with 5 to 9 years' experience, and the advanced group for those with 10 or more years' experience in the field. The average journalists' salaries are between 1800 to 2400 USD for the basic level, 2600 to 4000 USD for the intermediate group, and from 4500 USD upwards for the advanced group.

MTH (2014) stressed that the management understands that there is a high demand for qualified and high-skilled journalists in the media market. However, the organisation believes

that the current journalists' salaries are adequate and at a fair level. M H T (2014) suggested that these thoughts about salary should be considered in the context of the current media market circumstances, especially for the traditional media organisations where Saudi newspaper are experiencing some difficulties in changing media environment.

The management also understands that finding Saudi journalists who are well experienced and highly qualified is very difficult in the present Saudi media market. For the last eight years the media market has been affected by the introduction of new news organisations and this has resulted in a high demand for journalists ready to deliver in the markets soon as possible. These media organisations include local and international media outlets looking for Saudi journalists who can cover local and regional events. For instance, there has been a recent trend whereby some international news firms (American, European, Chinese and Japanese outlets) have launched an Arabic service. This has increased the demand for experienced journalists, attracting them with levels of salary that did not exist before. *Al-Madina* has lost some journalists in this way.

Journalists indicated some fears about the future of newspapers in Saudi Arabia and some of them clearly expressed their views about the disappearance of traditional newspapers in Saudi Arabia. They expressed this fear relation to their future career in journalism and what are future directions will be. However, most of *Al-Madina*'s journalists did not see this day as being imminent, as they still appeared to believe in a golden era of Saudi newspapers. Most of the journalists interviewed expected more than 20 years to pass before that point of closing down the newspaper organisations might be reached. The rationale for this is that the *Al-Madina* newsroom is working on both traditional and digital news productions and both are delivered to

an acceptable degree. The involvement of the traditional newspaper organisation in print and digital production can support each other.

MAZ (2014) stated that although traditional newspapers are witnessing some difficulties, the position of the press organisations is still good. He indicated that some of the online-only newspapers are relying on the traditional newspaper productions for a high proportion of their news stories. Some of these news stories are directly or indirectly referenced but sometimes the original source is not referenced. MAZ added that surely it seemed a downside for *Al-Madina* regarding copyright, but also it signals that the traditional newspapers are still creating a very good standard of news production. This is how it is viewed from one side; from the other it could signal the weak position of some digital news organisations in their media business models and a lack of professionalism.

MSH (2014) Manager of Electronic Publishing went further as, by commenting on the idea of the vanishing of Saudi newspapers by saying: ‘We have no fears about the traditional newspapers’ future in Saudi Arabia. We exist in both worlds offline and online and if we lose the traditional offline world we assuredly will win in the digital world. We have the professionalism, credibility and experience and will use all possible means to stay in the media market, active and successful.’ However, one year later, MSH left his position for another job, in a totally different field from journalism.

## 5.12 Summary

The newsroom of *Al-Madina* newspaper is embracing digital communication technologies in its news production process and practices. However, the newsroom retains a traditional structure and the online newsroom is rather small, mostly occupied by technicians whose main job is transforming production of the print newsroom into digital formats for online circulation. On other hand, the journalists of *Al-Madina* are using digital technology and the Internet in particular, in their journalistic routine for producing news stories. However, the journalists lack training and career development plans. They are also are not fully satisfied in their professional career. Finally, *Al-Madina* newspaper is challenged in its business model and has suffered big drops in its print circulation. Any transformation to press organisations in response to digital and market forces is tied to the Saudi media laws and regulations.

# **Chapter Six:**

## **Findings at Alriyadh**

## **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents findings from observation in the newsroom (from 18-31 January 2014) and from 14 interviews which were conducted with deputy Editor-in-Chief, managing editors, journalists, and the electronic media manager at *Alriyadh* newspaper. This was in order to answer the main research questions which are, in this case:

1) how is newsroom of *Alriyadh* newspaper responding to the emergence and developments of online and digital communications technologies?

2) how are journalists at *Alriyadh* responding to digital transformations and how do they perceive changes in the newsrooms?

This chapter covered 10 sections. These sections are viewed from managerial and media economics perspective. These aspects are; case-study background, newspaper management and newsroom structure, Electronic Media Department, workflow and daily routine, editorial software packages, news circulation for traditional and digital users, main transformations, main challenges, new strategies, and the status of *Alriyadh* journalists in the digital transformation. However, in sections of transformations and journalists' responses sociological approaches were used to explore and contextualize some aspects such as tensions between professional and challenges in working culture within newsroom.

## **6.2 Background of *Alriyadh* newspaper**

*Alriyadh* newspaper has been published since 1 May 1965 as a daily print. It is issued by the Al-Ymamah Press, a large organisation that is located in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi

Arabia. The organisation has an average annual revenue of 525 million SAR (140 million USD) and the newspaper has an estimated average daily circulation of 155,000 copies. The organisation is a large-sized company in the Saudi press market with more than 1500 employees who work in editorial, management and technical departments. The Al-Ymamah Press organisation owns two print publications: *Alriyadh* newspaper and *Al-Ymamah* magazine (Alriyadh.com, 2015). As mentioned before, the information about the capital and financial activities of Saudi newspapers are not publicly available and *Alriyadh* management were not willing to provide such data.

### **6.3 Newspaper management and newsroom structure**

The structure of the newspaper organisation shares the main characteristics of other Saudi print organisations in terms of having two main sections: management and editorial. However, there are small differences, such as the number of positions in both sections and the creation of new positions for temporary or permanent needs that may affect information flow between decision-makers and the rest of the workforce (Figure 6.1).

In 2015 *Alriyadh* created a new position between the Board of Directors and the Editor-in-Chief, namely ‘General Supervisor’<sup>3</sup>. The position itself does not exist in any other Saudi newspaper organisation and was given to the incumbent for long service and is effectively an

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<sup>3</sup> The post has been awarded to the former Editor-in-Chief, Mr Turki Abdullah Al Sideri, who served the newspaper as Editor-in-Chief for more than 40 years.

emeritus position. It should be noted that the Saudi Printed Materials and Publication Law, which frames how a newspaper should be organised, does not recognise such a post.

Moreover, *Alriyadh* has one Deputy Editor-in-Chief and six Managing Editors in the editorial section. On the management side there is no Deputy General Manager and all managers of the different divisions and departments report to the General Manager.

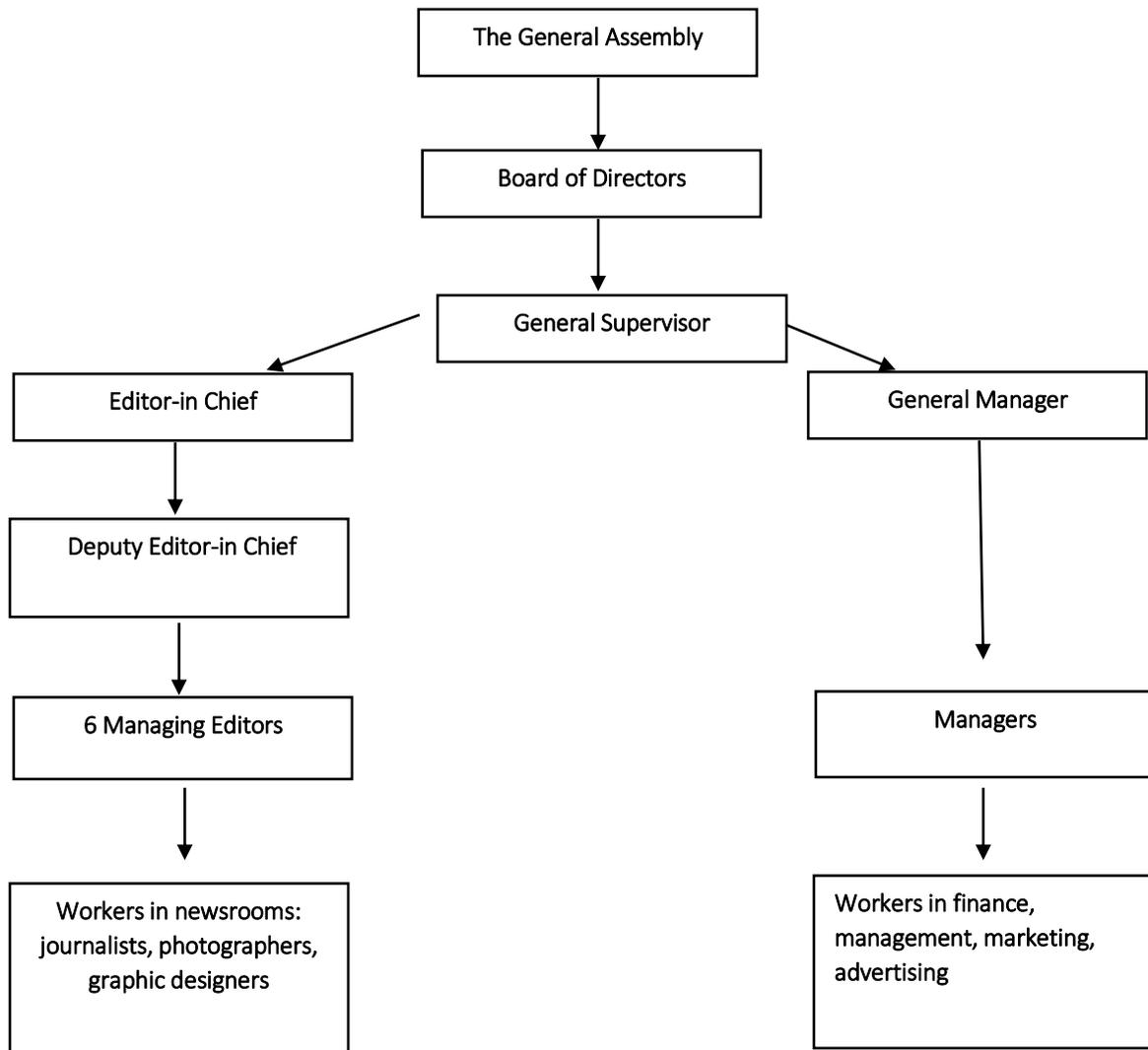


Figure 6.1 : Organisational structure of Alriyadh Newspaper

Overall, this model should be easier for its information flow compared to *Al-Madina*'s organisational structure. At *Al-Madina* there are three Deputy Editors-in-Chief whereas *Alriyadh* has only one, which can facilitate and speed up the journalistic work flow, especially when taking decisions in editorial meetings and later in the news production process. On the management side, *Alriyadh* has no deputies but managers who are connected to the General Manager, which reduces time and costs, whereas *Al-Madina* has two deputies and five managers all of whom are involved in the flow of information

The newsroom structure at *Alriyadh* is similar to *Al-Madina*'s but on a larger scale. There is a main editorial lounge in which are located the editorial divisions of local, business and political news. The workspace of the managing editors of these divisions is in the lounge but separated with glazed partitions. There are more than 80 desks, well equipped with desktop computers, laptops, phones, and have access to; printers, scanners and faxes. But, there is only one flat television screen in the middle of the space. In addition, there are other smaller newsrooms for the rest of the editorial divisions, such as sport, culture, investigations and caricature.

However, *Alriyadh* has a plan to transform the current newsroom into a new convergent one. The new newsroom structure has been approved by both the management and the editorial side and now is awaiting final approval by the Board of Directors. The future layout of *Alriyadh*'s newsroom as can be seen in Figure 6.2 is an open-plan newsroom with no walls or any other partitions, except for two small meeting rooms that have glazed walls. It can be noticed that, to some extent, in terms of layout. This model has been organised to take account of the process of news production, newsgathering, news editing, and then producing the news for multiple platforms. The news centre model is an open layout in which all newsgathering and verification teams, journalists, managing editors, graphic and designers, and other technicians and producers

are located in the same place. The model provides the benefit of easy interaction between staff and a smooth workflow of news production between departments.

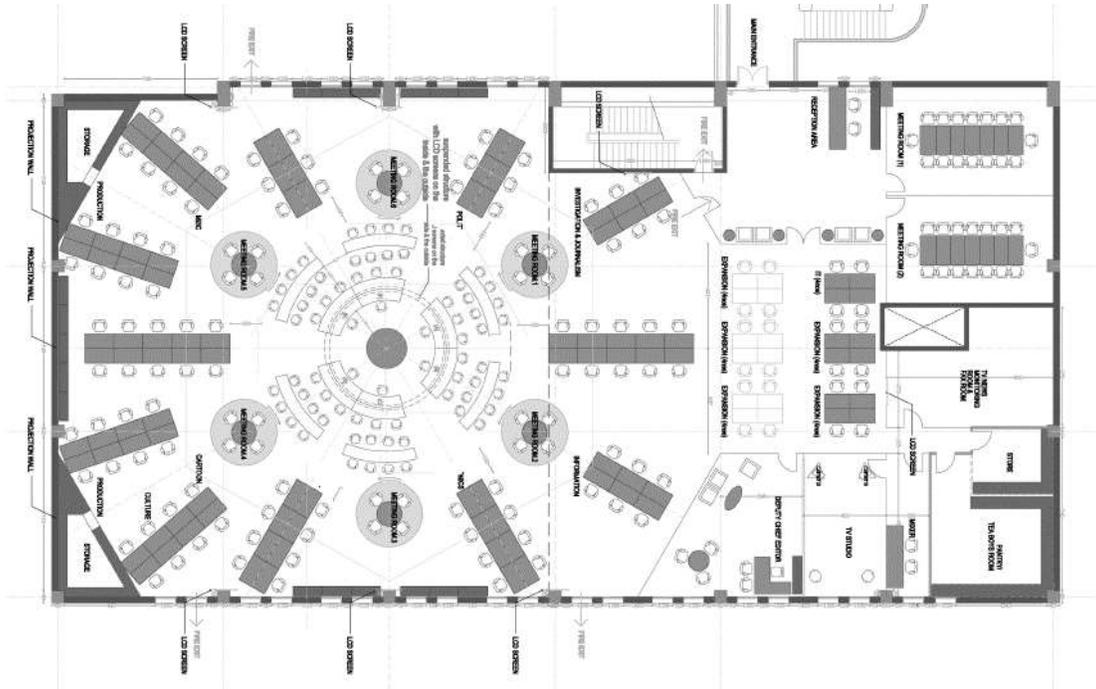


Figure 6.2: Future structure of Alriyadh 's newsroom

Having said that, *Alriyadh* 's new newsroom is still in the planning phase and the current newsroom, in reality, is a traditional newsroom model where main newsroom and other editorial divisions' lounges are divided by walls and are placed in different areas of the building.

## 6.4 Electronic Media Department

*Alriyadh* has a large Electronic Media Department with several subdivisions. The subdivisions include *Alriyadh* Phone News, which is responsible for SMS Production, *Alriyadh* Online which is responsible for A-Riyadh's website content and its updates; Interactive Services, which are able to engage with online users and monitor their activities; Development, which is

deals with software and app developments; and finally, the Marketing Division for online products.



*Figure 6.3: The new lounge of thr Electronic Media Department*

The Electronic Media Department at *Alriyadh* has a large lounge (Figure 6.3) in the building that is well organised and equipped with large wall television screens, computers, faxes, printers and phones. The department employs more than 15 workers, including designers, programmers, technicians and two online-only journalists. These journalists work online with new stories from the newsgathering to the final product stage.

The Electronic Media Department plays several roles in the daily routine, besides managing online services. One of the main roles is to transform the printed newspaper content into multiple digital products for a range of platforms. These platforms include Arabic and English website versions, a PDF version, tablet and smartphone versions for iOS and Android,

13 SMS channels, and social networking sites accounts. The department also manages some services, such as managing real-time news and updating 24/7 news tape, online advertisements, social media accounts, voice auto-reader and other interactive services.

## **6.5 Workflow and daily routine**

Workflow at the newsroom of *Alriyadh* is similar to *Al-Madina*'s, which is a top-down model where power resides with the Deputy Editor-in-Chief and the Managing Editors. There is a daily meeting including all editorial departments and the Electronic Media Department with the Editor-in-Chief and his deputy. In the normal daily routine there are morning and evening meetings attended by around 26 professionals. The morning editorial meeting sets out a daily agenda for the next day's news stories and an evening editorial meeting finalises and approves the final newspaper copy.

The local, intentional and business news divisions are placed in one lounge. They interact with each other while conducting their journalistic assignments within the newsrooms. Managing editors of those divisions are constantly interacting and moving around the newsroom, speaking to journalists on a regular basis. In the same way, the staff of the Electronic Media Department also have their own morning meeting to develop a daily plan for the websites and other digital production platforms.

Late afternoon journalists make final preparations for their news stories and then sit with the producers to agree appropriate positioning of the stories, with photos if needed. At the same time, journalists are also checking other news sources, such as news agencies and social network

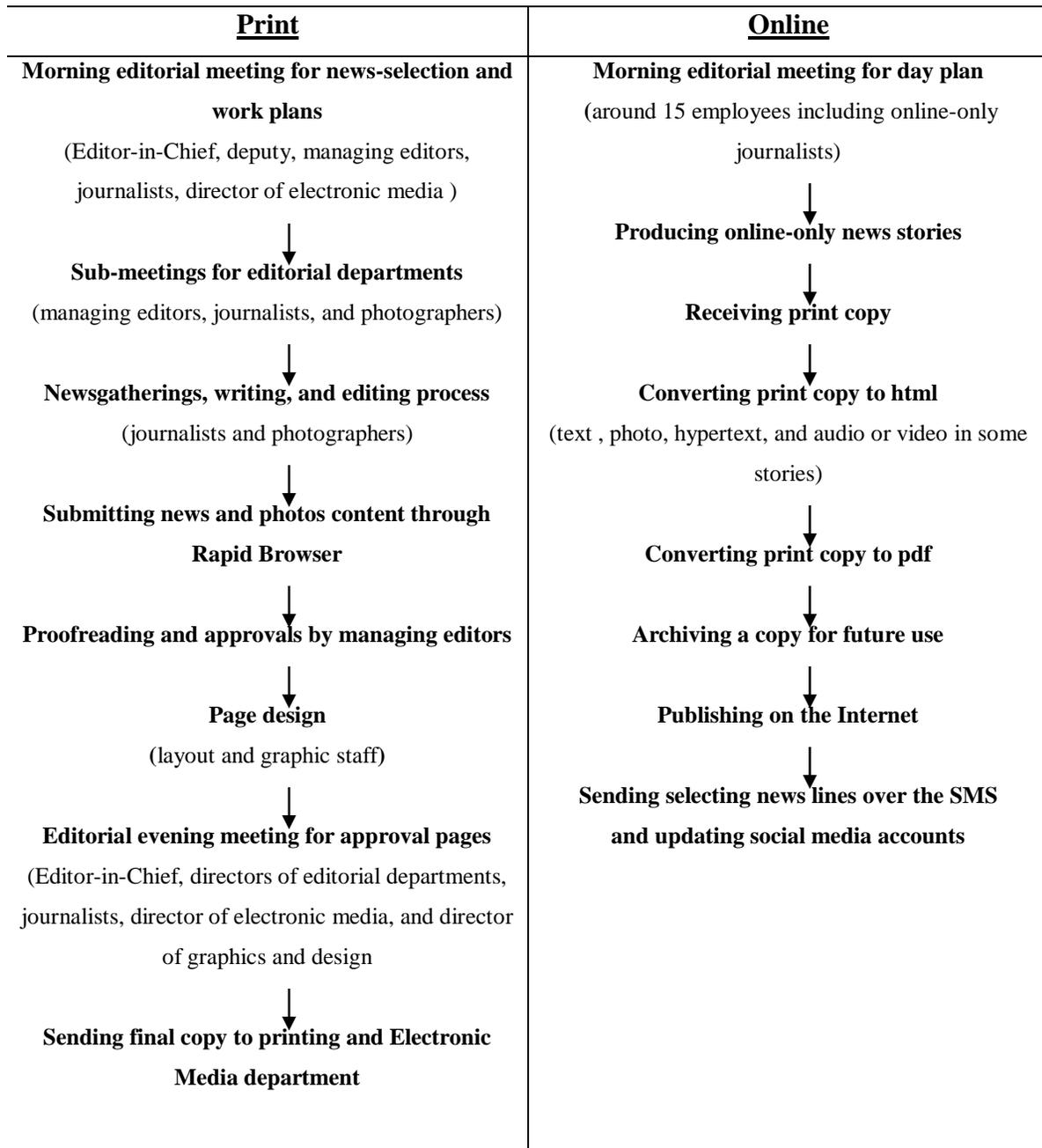
sites, for any updates before they can finalise their articles. By the early evening, the editorial team has a final meeting to look at all pages from other journalistic departments and to finalise the pages for the final approval. By late evening the final copy is sent to the production line at the printing house (Figure 6.4) for the first print round. Then, after midnight, there is a second printing round and finally, in the very early morning, there is a third and final round of printing.



*Figure 6.4: Al-Yamamh Printing House. Source: Alriyadh Newspaper (2014); Alzahrani (2014).*

A final newspaper copy is sent to the Electronic Media Department early in the night and workers start transforming the traditional print content into multiple digital versions. These digital products then are sent to the appropriate subdivisions to be circulated at the set times. The flow diagram (See Figure 6.5 below) explains the steps in the news production process for print and online newsrooms Alriyadh newspaper

## Alriyadh Newspaper



*Figure (6.5) Diagram of Alriyadh news production process for print and online sides*

During the night, any updated news or new breaking news will be treated differently according to importance and urgency. If the decision is to proceed with publishing, either in print

or online, or both, the news story is prepared and then sent to the traditional print and electronic teams accordingly. The print producer places the story on the page and corrects the newspaper copy for the next printing round, depending on when it is ready to be published. On the digital side, it seems more straightforward as the new story arriving at the Electronic Media Department of both *Alriyadh's* websites, in Arabic and English, will be updated immediately and then sent to other platforms.

## 6.6 Editing and content management software packages

Regarding editorial software packages, Rapid Browser (Figure 6.6) is heavily used in *Alriyadh* newsroom, among other text- and photo-processing packages, such as Adobe.

Regarding digital news circulation, *Alriyadh* has apps on Android iOS systems for smartphones and tablets. The Electronic Media Department newspaper uses also RSS feed service and provides daily news headlines through different email groups and SMS channels.



Figure 6.6: Rapid Browser page and some stories being processing

## 6.7 News circulation for print and digital productions

As has been explained above, *Alriyadh* has a large digital media department. The Electronic Media Department contributes to news production on the newspaper websites. Half of the online production of *Alriyadh* is produced by the Electronic Media Department (HNG, 2014). This online news production can be higher than that of other cases studied in the current research. In other words, half of *Alriyadh*'s online journalistic content is produced by print journalists and the other half comes from the online journalists; this reveals the increasing value placed upon the use of digital communication technology.

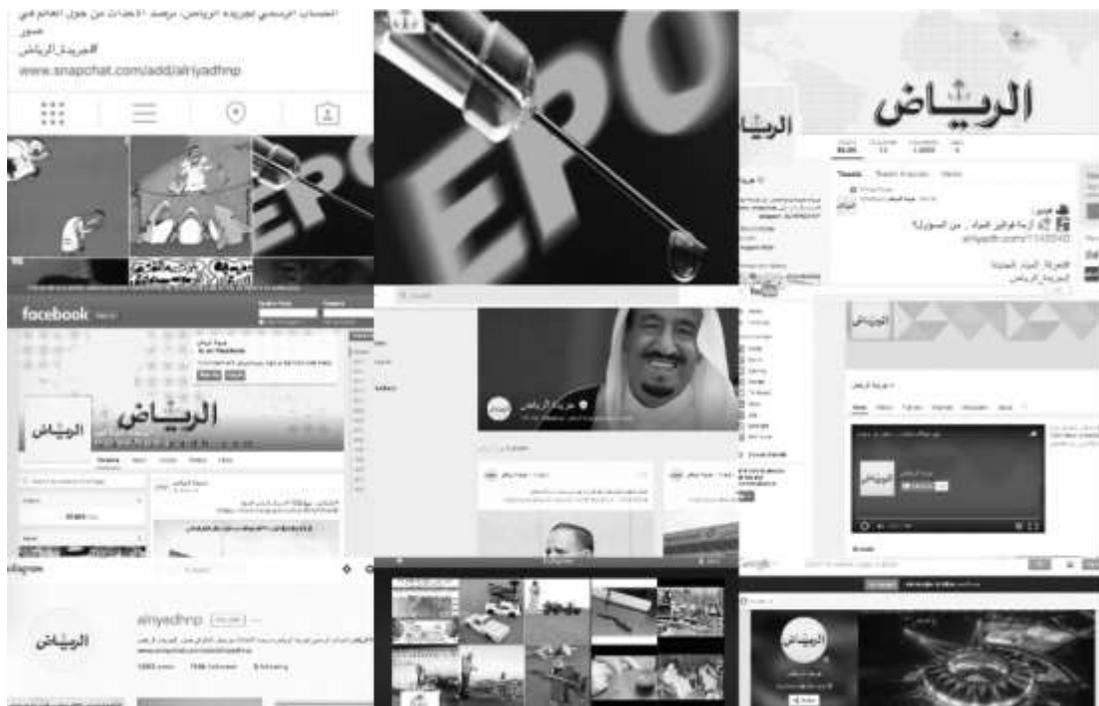


Figure 6.7: Alriyadh accounts on Social Media (2016)

Furthermore, *Alriyadh* has multiple accounts on most social media sites (Figure 6.7). The paper has more than 2.06 million followers on Twitter, around 200,000 on Google+, 14,000 on Instagram, more than 41,000 on Facebook, and more than 14,000 subscribers on YouTube.

*Alriyadh* circulates more than 50% of its journalistic production through these SNSs and uses them as news platforms.

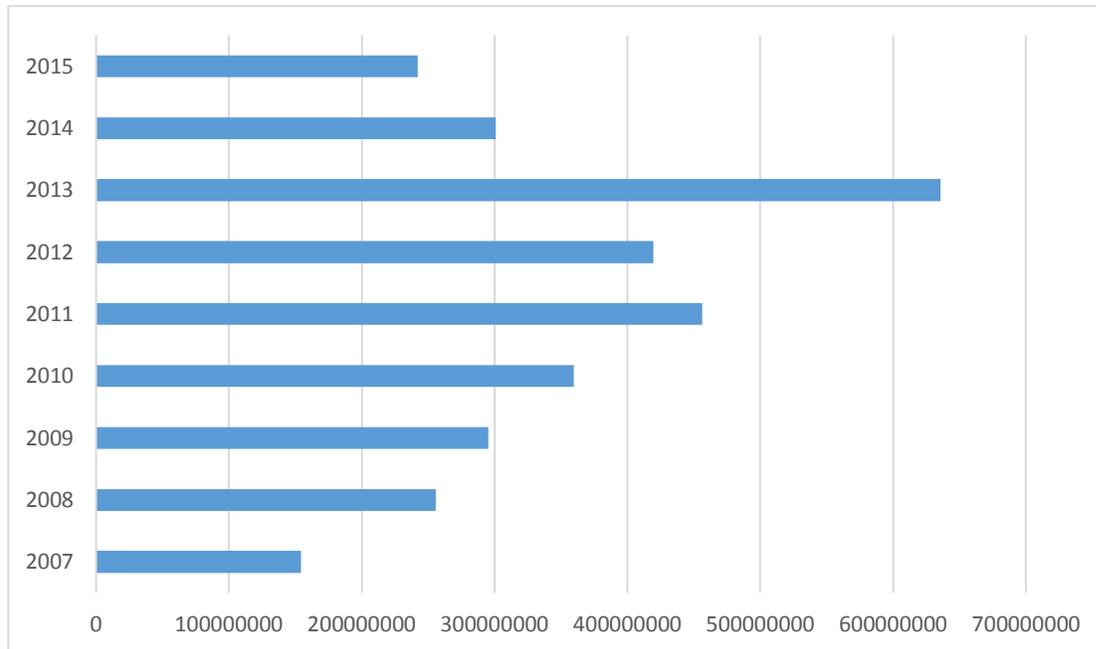


Figure 6.8: Annual unique visits to *Alriyadh* 's website

Additionally, *Alriyadh* 's online sites have witnessed heavy traffic over the past few years (Figure 6.8). In 2007, there were around 154 million unique visits; the highest annual number of unique visits was in 2013, reaching more than 600 million. The average number of annual unique visits over the last nine years (from 2007 to 2015) has been in the region of 47 million.

## 6.8 Main transformations at *Alriyadh*

As discussed above, the *Alriyadh* newsroom has a similar structure to *Al-Madina*'s, but on a larger scale, with a main newsroom and other smaller editorial lounges. The main current transformation at *Alriyadh* is the new large lounge for the Department of Electronic Media that has a size similar to the main newsroom. The new electronic media lounge is well equipped with large television screens, computers, faxes, printers and phones. The management of *Alriyadh* has

allocated a generous budget for digital production and the publishing side and has supported the Electronic Media Department by employing more staff in all areas. The new staff have different specialties, including designers, programmers, technicians and online-only journalists. The online journalists work on new stories online from newsgathering point to the final product.

SAS (2014), Managing Editor<sup>4</sup>, stressed that the power of new media technology is reshaping traditional newspaper practices. The management of *Alriyadh* is well aware of this fact and thus is taking all possible action to improve its news production operations on both the traditional and digital sides. In the last five years, media industries have witnessed many developments. These changes in digital technology can be seen as either threats or opportunities for the traditional newspaper depending on the different points of view. SAS (2014) stated that *Alriyadh* is ranked at the top of the newspaper organisations in the Saudi and Arab world media markets; this is reflected in the sum of annual sales of advertising spaces and the annual revenue financial position. Thus, the management supports any transformations in the newsroom to retain *Alriyadh*'s position in the media market.

Similarly, the management of *Alriyadh* has a firm plan to transform the current newsroom into one new convergent newsroom (See Figure 6.2). The floor plan has been designed and has just been approved. The new newsroom model is an open layout in which all journalists, managing editors, electronic media staff, other technicians and producers are located together. However, transforming this plan into reality may take some time as it will cause some disruption in the newsroom and may face some difficulties in building process.

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<sup>4</sup> In September 2015 was appointed as Editor-in-Chief. A year later he resigned from his post with unknown reasons.

However, AMJ (2014), Managing Editor<sup>5</sup>, pointed out that a full transformation towards a convergent culture in the newspaper is a three-stage process. The first is a preparation period in which digital and technical training and equipment is fully completed. The second is an integration period in which journalists and other workers make a real transition from traditional practices to a convergent media culture; this entails changing the culture and the mindset of journalists from traditional print to a digital approach to suit the new newsroom environment (this is covered in more detail in Chapter 9 Section 9.2). The third stage is full integration when journalists are functioning very well in the new convergent culture of the integrated newsroom. This final stage is anticipated to lead to a lot of conflict between traditional working culture, and digital culture. The expected battles would be different views about the digitalisation of the news production culture within a traditional newspaper organisation.

AMJ (2014) confirms that *Alriyadh* newspaper is in the second period and is working towards fully convergent newsrooms, both physically and culturally. In 2014 the Board of Directors approved a new budget for developing the project of the Electronic Media Department that is now in place. The transformation is in progress and this is evidence of a change in the ownership's attitude concerning the importance of digital communication technologies and the need for new integrated newsrooms. This had not been exhibited in the past as traditional production was always of the focus of any decision-making and the digital side was secondary. Nowadays, the mindset of owners has changed and they have reached the conclusion that equal attention must be given to both traditional and digital production in order to maintain their business in the new competitive media market.

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<sup>5</sup> In September 2015 was appointed as Deputy Editor-in-Chief. However, a year later he resigned from the post with unknown reasons.

However, full integration of the newsroom and culture will take some time to be accomplished as there are various complications that would be anticipated. These complications will affect the speed of progress of transformation in newsrooms and can be summarised into four factors. The first factor is the advertisers' culture, which still leans towards print advertising and is concerned about using the online advertising. The second factor is that media policy and regulations are centred around traditional media outlets and do not fully address digital and online journalism. This includes the new, recently introduced online regulations, which are weak and cannot be called "law" as they are not enforced by royal declaration.

The third factor that AMJ (2014) believes is affecting the process of transformation relates to the values and culture of Saudi society regarding the use of digital and online products in which it has been seen as a positive with developments of digital communication technology. In the past five years, there have been many increases in online users and a substantial growth has been witnessed in the number of smartphones and tablets in Saudi Arabia. This can be seen as a supporting factor in the process of moving to fully digital convergent newsrooms. The final factor is the pressure and influence on some decision-makers pushing them to keep traditional mass communication as the focus of their attention and rejecting any online media interactions, due to possible fears about new digital media. However, this is seen as rather a weak factor; the overwhelming changes in the way readers have turned to online and digital formats mean that any reservations have been removed.

Another transformation that journalists in the newsroom at *Alriyadh* pointed out is the increasing level of freedom because of the Internet. SAS (2014) confirmed that in the last ten years, freedom of speech has been improved in the Saudi Arabian media for two reasons. The first is because developments in information and communication technologies, especially the

Internet, have changed how people access information. This has destroyed ideas about the ability of the government to control the flow of the information via the traditional mass media. The Internet maximises new methods of news consumption among people at all levels within society. The second reason is that during the reign of King Abdullah, former King of Saudi Arabia, the level of media freedom has been extended so it is now possible to see how much criticism there is in the Saudi media about governmental institutions and ministries; this imply did not exist before. In fact, King Abdullah ordered all government organisations and bodies to respond to all media criticisms and to answer journalists' questions.

In recent years, AMJ (2014) added that journalists have realised there is a distinction between the limits and margins of press freedom. The freedom limits are the political and media law boarders and margins are the understanding gatekeepers of the freedom ceiling. Some Editors-in-Chief had previously chosen to keep any criticisms well below the acceptable freedom level, for their own peace of mind. Digital technology has had a direct impact on improving media freedom in Saudi Arabia, but the way that gatekeepers in the Saudi press has also changed in the last five years. This change of attitude is empowered by digital technology and has resulted in changes to newsroom practice in the way newspapers can tackle controversial news stories. For instance, harsh criticism of governmental ministries and organisations has become normal daily practice.

In addition, there has been another transformation that has been noted by journalists, which is the influence of readers on the newsroom. The relationship between traditional print newsrooms and readers has been subject to some changes, one of the most of which is the transforming of readers from absent subjects to an active participant in today newsrooms. Online and digital communication technology has had a direct impact on this transformation. Nowadays,

online users have a direct impact on the newsrooms, shaping or reshaping stories, and changing journalists' attitudes towards some news stories. The influence of online readers on journalists at *Alriyadh*'s newsroom can be clearly noticed through the contributions they make in providing journalists with new stories, new photos, and new videos that help develop a news story. The journalist can also use online comments on a story as sources of new stories or updates to the current item.

Additionally, most journalists in the *Alriyadh* newsroom have their own accounts on social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. The journalists use social media sites for newsgathering and interacting with online readers about particular new stories or updating existing ones. They share their news production by means of their SMS accounts after publishing it in the newspaper. The influence of online users on newsrooms continues once a story has been circulated through social media, not only by providing new information but also due to criticism of how journalists have tackled the stories.

## **6.9 Main challenges facing *Alriyadh***

The *Alriyadh* newspaper relies on its strong financial and operational position which gives a level of confidence that enables it to overcome any challenges it may face. Nevertheless, there are some challenges that the journalists of *Alriyadh* have pointed out. The first is the one faced by most Saudi newspapers, a drop in circulation. All journalists in the *Alriyadh* newsroom confirmed that they are aware of this but that it has had no impact so far on the print production. SAS (2014), Managing Editor, confirmed that *Alriyadh* has had some drops in circulation in print but not in print subscriptions, and this would not affect traditional production. He justified this

confidence by stating that drops will not directly affect their operations and they will continue printing as usual, as print advertising has grown in the last five years and is the main source of the newspaper's revenue. The second challenge that journalists face in the *Alriyadh* newsroom brings together two related issues: the right sort of preparation for graduates and ongoing training for journalists. New journalism graduates lack any practical preparation to enable them to pursue journalistic tasks. SGD (2014) stated:

Unfortunately, we have real problems with people coming to the newsroom who want to be journalists, yet they have neither knowledge nor talent and some of them have journalism and media qualification but struggle in the practical side.

SGD (2014) also pointed out that the current curricula in journalism schools are in need of reform in order to at least cover the practical basics of the journalism industry. He clearly added:

The capabilities of Saudi graduates from journalism schools are insufficient. For example, I have some media students who came here for a practical experience module and last academic term I had eight students in the newsroom for three months; only three students out of eight passed the practical part. I see this happening time after time and journalism schools should take the blame for these shortcomings.

Journalists in the newsrooms lack ongoing and onsite training. The importance of ongoing training comes from the fact that journalism today is closely linked to technology which is rapidly changing and journalists need to keep up-to-date. For instance, editorial applications and other software packages are updated from year to year and journalists need to keep track of those changes as well as being able to apply the use of online technology that may help in their

daily journalistic assignments. Finding a new generation of journalists who are well qualified and well prepared is thus a real challenge for *Alriyadh* newspaper and the creation of an ongoing training plan is a real need for *Alriyadh*'s existing journalists.

The third challenge is to embrace new communication technology among some of the older generation of journalists, some of whom are still using pen and paper, and the newsrooms are doubling their workloads in the editorial systems. Despite their significant journalistic experience, these journalists are refusing any changes in the workplace as well as rejecting new methods incorporating digital technology. The newsroom is in need of their experience but, at the same time, there is belief that they are one of the reasons for slow progress in the digital transformation in the newsroom.

The fourth challenge that the newsroom of *Alriyadh* faces is the non-professional practices of outsiders, people who enter the journalism market with no qualifications or training and start up their online-only newspapers for personal benefit. AMJ (2014) (Managing Editor) and SGD (2014) (Managing Editor) pointed out that there are many non-professional people who have entered the Saudi media market for personal and not professional goals. These people are non-journalists and, over the last five years, they have flooded the market with thousands of online-only newspapers, fishing for online users. This has been happening since new regulations of electronic media introduced in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have allowed anyone to open and register their own individual newspaper with no conditions or requirements. SGD also stated that most of these types of online-only newspapers 'are doing everything but indeed not journalism' and that this type of website tends to steal and recycle traditional media news.

The fifth challenge follows on from the previous challenge, and relates to the loss of control of the newspaper's protection in terms of copyrights of their journalistic production. Some online-only newspapers are stealing and recycling *Alriyadh* news stories in different formats but managing this issue is really problematic for traditional newspapers as it is time-consuming and very difficult to tackle. The legal route is too long as the related media regulation is weak and procedures can take months or years to overcome the problem. In the newsrooms of *Alriyadh*, journalists believe that this is a disturbing issue for the journalism industry in Saudi Arabia, and they need to find proper ways to manage this crisis.

The final challenge reported by *Alriyadh*, is the loss of some interactive readers on the online website who used to comment on stories.; the level of interactivity has dropped in the last five years. The main reason for this decline reported by most of the interviewees was that social media sites have redirected online readers traffic by changing methods of consuming news from direct newspaper websites to other social networking sites and news applications. The best-known website medium for consuming news in Saudi Arabia, as HNG (2014) stated, is Twitter and the most popular social application used for accessing new information is WhatsApp.

Additionally, some interviewees referred to the new technique of news consumption in the Saudi news market, via a particular news distribution software programme especially for smartphone users, known as Nabd App. The Nabd App provides a free application to download for smartphones and is designed to work for both popular iOS and Android operational systems. The main idea of this application is that users are freely able to personalise when, where and how news will be delivered. The application is organises news sources around location, news subjects and news types (breaking news/live stream). The users are also able to choose and change news sources and manage notification with no restrictions.

Likewise, HNG (2014), the Director of the New Media Department at *Alriyadh* newspapers, pointed out that two stages of interactivity of the online readers with the main newspaper's website were noted. The first was between 2005 and 2010 when a peak of interactivity was witnessed and the average number of online comments was around 7000 per day. The second period started after 2010 when *Alriyadh*'s online site saw gradual drops in the online comments on news stories. HNG (2014) believes that Twitter has had a major effect on this drop in comments, as people now are interacting and commenting on news through Twitter. The Twitter networking site as a platform provides the ability to consume, share and comment on the news with no need to visit the original story on the traditional news websites. Finally, the Director of New Media Department estimated the daily online visitors to *Alriyadh* online via all platforms to be about one and a half million, more than half of which access the website through their smartphones. The peak times for such access are around midday and between 9-11 pm.

#### **6.10 Strategies of *Alriyadh* in the online age.**

The newsroom of the *Alriyadh* newspaper manages news production across multiple platforms. There is the traditional print production, and there is digital production for the main website, smartphones, tablets, SMS channels and RSS feed, email groups, and social media platforms. The Electronic Media Department contributes half of the digital media production and controls the entire digital platform. Managing news production throughout multiple platforms has created challenges that have been discussed above in accordance with the strategic vision of prioritising the print production as the main profitable side for the newspaper and participating in the online productions at the same time but without affecting the traditional newspaper.

The strategy of managing exclusive news stories in the newsroom tends to be kept strictly for the print production. However, these news stories are treated differently; in some cases one or two summaries are provided about them through the online site the night before, others are published online on the same day, and some never appear on digital media.

One of the new strategies is that the Editor-in-Chief gives the Director of the Electronic Media Department the authority to approve the online-only news stories that are created and published by online journalists. The Electronic Media Department at *Alriyadh* has online journalists who work on online news stories from newsgathering to the final product. The online journalists work separately from traditional journalists and contribute to the digital news production on a daily basis. However, the Electronic Media Department has other sources for online news production in addition to the output of online journalists.

HNG (2014), Director of Electronic Media, identified its five news production sources. The first is the traditional newspaper, which includes the typical daily news production for the traditional print. The department can also communicate with traditional journalists on some occasions to follow up new events or updates, especially in remote and rural areas where the journalists are located. Usually this interaction happens late in the day after traditional print production has finished and it urgently needs update digital side. The second source is through traditional and digital media outlets, such as television news channels and the online news website. The third source is online raw material information, such as videos on YouTube or photographs on social media sites. The fourth source is translations from foreign language news, whether through media outlets or via an organisation's website. The fifth source for the Electronic Media Department is through official spokespersons of governments and private

organisations. The department follows these people on social networking sites, such as Twitter, which are being used as a main platform to deliver news.

In terms of finances, *Alriyadh* has varied its sources of income through different means. Besides a very healthy revenue from advertising in print, which represents an annual total of 97% of the newspaper's revenue, the electronic media contribute approximately 3% of annual revenue. The revenue through the Electronic Media Department comes from online advertising, both on the main newspaper website and through smartphone and tablet advertising. The electronic media provides some other services that generate some income. For example, The department offer special services to some companies in following their interests of news stories in the media outlets and provide a daily report about company's brand name in the media. Another way to generate considerable income is by selling full access to archives online at different rates, depending on different categories of subscriptions. The SMS channels' subscriptions are contribute to the organisation's annual revenue too; *Alriyadh* has 13 SMS channels and sells subscriptions separately or as a package .

### **6.11 Journalists and current transitions**

Journalists of *Alriyadh* often think that journalism is a well-established tradition, regardless of delivery formats. Most of the interviewees insist that journalism values and traditions should remain in place technological transformation moves on. Moreover, workers in the newsroom perceive these changes and the process of transformation of digitalisation as a essential change to enable newsrooms to succeed in the new media market. The journalists in the middle of this continuing transformation towards full digital transformation face some new

challenges and must manage the extra pressure. The interviewees indicated that journalism in the internet age has created an ongoing battle between speed and the changing requirements of news production on one side and maintaining the quality of journalistic production at the highest level possible on the other. Balancing speed and quality in news production puts great pressure on journalists trying to maintain a strong newspaper in face of competition from other news organisations. In the news market, the *Alriyadh* staff are competing against both new media players, traditional media outlets and digital media news organisations.

Another issue that journalists are facing in this period of transition is that their requirements, enabling them to work and compete in the digital newsroom environment, have slightly changed. Currently journalists have to be able to deal with the basic components of digital newsrooms. The journalist needs to have the ability to use computers and several software packages, such as Office and other editorial and content-management programs. In *Alriyadh*, the qualification of a BA in Journalism has become preferable, as there numbers of journalists who, although having good experience, do not have a relevant degree. Additionally, journalists need to improve their writing skills especially following plans to minimise the news production process by eliminating the proofreading division from the newsroom. However, this is still only a plan; currently there are some proofreaders who check the news stories prior to passing them to the final production stage. The final preferable requirement for new journalists is to have basic English skills and be able to use editorial and content-management programs.

Due to the digital technology and the Internet in particular, print journalists are losing their lead in journalistic scoops in today's media industry. There are new players in the industry, digital news organisations and individuals using online platforms to produce and share new news stories. Therefore, several of *Alriyadh*'s journalists have commented that breaking news and

availability of wide sources of information have challenged traditional newspapers, despite their involvement in online journalism. Instead, some journalists stated that they have switched from covering events and conferences to producing reports, interviews, and investigative material in their fields. This change has led to rise in creativity and competition in the newspaper industry. Exclusive journalistic production and maintaining high quality in all other news production are essential for newspaper organisations.

In addition, journalists have some concerns about the identity of their profession, asking 'Who are the journalists nowadays?'. Some of the interviewees indicated that a definition of who really is a journalist needs to be formulated. AMJ (2014) stressed that the Printed Materials and Publication Law stretched the definition of a journalist in a way which may affect the quality of the profession. The limitations of this description allows non-professionals to enter the Saudi journalism industry, with no qualification or training, to use it for personal benefits. Likewise, SGD (2014) indicated that there are many non-professional people who have entered Saudi journalism 'through the back door' for personal and not professional goals. These people are not journalists and yet some of them have launched their online-only newspapers.

Uncertainty of the definition of a journalist in the current Printed Materials and Publication Law and Press Establishments Law has direct implications for the journalism industry in Saudi Arabia. This matter is a concern for most of *Alriyadh's* journalists. They indicate that the huge impact could be noticed aftermath of online-only newspapers began five years ago. Anyone can set up an online news organisation and describe himself/herself as the Editor-in-Chief of his/her online publication. The quality of journalism can be affected by these practices if the definition and identity of true journalists is not protected.

A related issue is the uncertainty of the role of multi-skilled journalists in the newsroom. There is a struggle to manage the idea of multi-skilled or “comprehensive journalists” as most of interviewees wanted to call between needed skills in the news production process and the knowledge of different news-subject specialties. The multi-skilled journalist in the news production process is the journalist who is able to manage a news story from its creation to the completion of its final production on the newspaper’s page. That means that the responsibilities of a journalist in the newsroom are extended to include all the tasks of journalists, technicians, photographers and page designers at the same time. Another view of multi-skilled journalists or “comprehensive journalists” is having the ability to write about any news subject. That means that the journalist can write about sports, business, politics, and any other features in the newspaper. This results in the end of specialty writing in the news production and no need for different editorial sections in the newsroom.

AMJ (2014) and SGD (2014) indicated that the newsroom of *Alriyadh* carried out an unsuccessful experiment on the idea of a comprehensive newsroom and comprehensive journalists (see *Chapter 9, Section 9.10.3 for more information about comprehensive journalists*). The structure of a comprehensive newsroom had one news-desk manager for all editorial subjects, with all journalists from different departments being in one place and dealing with all news stories. Journalists worked on stories outside their specialism, such as a sport journalist covering political events. The experiment also included taking on extra roles in managing part of the production process, such as proofreading and giving final approval to stories.

However, the experiment of a comprehensive newsroom did not succeed and the management changed its strategies not long after. SGD (2014) stated that the experience had

resulted in some issues like the duplication of news stories in different sections of the newspaper and a delay in workflow as all production tasks were in one place. But the worst result was losing some very well-experienced senior journalists because of the organisational restructuring in the newsroom. AMJ (2014) stated that the most difficult stage of the process to get right in the comprehensive model was the proofreading stage. The quality level that is needed for writing are vital and without having pure proofreaders are less pressured are difficult to accomplish. The proofreading section at Alriyadh is crucial and all news stories need to be approved by this section in terms of typographical mistakes, style and grammatical errors.

AMJ (2014) confirmed that multi-skilled journalists do not exist yet and remain only a dream for the newspaper. It was a real problem for most journalists to be effective proofreaders of their work and resulted in some errors that affected news production quality. AMJ indicated that it would not have been possible to continue with that experiment as the results did not improve the quality of the newsroom. However, AMJ also believes that journalists working with other sections or features should always be encouraged, but in addition to their specialised area. It would not cause problems, for example, if a sports journalists wanted to write a story for a culture feature or if a business journalist wanted to publish a piece in the culture and art section.

There is a claim that there are some journalists who come from an IT background and are practising journalism with no or few journalism ethics. Examples of non-ethical issues include fabrication of stories or stealing news and photos from the Internet with no reference to, nor permission from, the main copyright holders. SGD (2014) pointed out that the heavy dependence on the Internet as a news source has resulted in an unhappy ending for some journalists. There have been some incidents in the newsrooms when journalists took their stories from the Internet

with devastating consequences. Investigations into those incidents at Alriyadh newsroom have resulted in making some journalists redundant.

## 6.12 Summary

*Alriyadh's* newspaper is embracing digital communication technologies in the newsroom. The Electronic Media Department is a large and well equipped workspace that occupies a similar area to the main print newsroom in the main building. However, the newsroom model is still the traditional structure where online is separate from print activities. The convergence model that is applied at *Alriyadh's* newsroom is cross-media convergence and the new media division is contributing to some extent to the daily news production. Yet, the main role of the Electronic Media Department is still transforming print production of the traditional newsroom into digital formats. On the other hand, *Alriyadh's* journalists are using the Internet, and other advanced technologies such as smartphones, in their journalistic production a great deal. Nevertheless, multi-skilled journalists who can carry out all news production processes for online and print do not exist in contemporary newsroom. Although *Alriyadh* newspaper is experiencing drops in print circulation their financial position is still strong and the organisation is considered to be one of the top three wealthiest newspapers in the Saudi media market. Finally, transformations in the response of the Al-Ymamah press organisation (*Alriyadh's* owner) to digital and market forces are restricted by media and regulations laws in Saudi Arabia and the newspaper is limited by those regulatory factors.

# **Chapter Seven:**

## **Findings at Alyaum**

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents key findings that emerged from observation in *Alyaum*'s newsroom between 16 February - 11 March 2014, and from 16 interviews that were conducted with the Editor-in-Chief, the deputy Editor-in-Chief, managing editors, journalists, and the New Media Manager. This was done in order to answer the main research questions of this study:

1) how is *Alyaum* newsroom responding to the emergence and development of online and digital communication technologies?

2) how are journalists at *Alyaum* responding to digital transformations and how do they perceive the changes in the newsroom?

To answer these main research questions, this chapter is organised around 10 themes. These sections are viewed from managerial and media economics perspective. These aspects are; case-study background, newspaper management and newsroom structure, New Media Department, workflow and daily routine, editorial software packages, news circulation for traditional and digital users, main transformations, main challenges, new strategies, and the status of *Alyaum*'s journalists in the digital transformation. Yet, the sociological perspective is used to explore some aspects of transformations and changes around of journalists' responses.

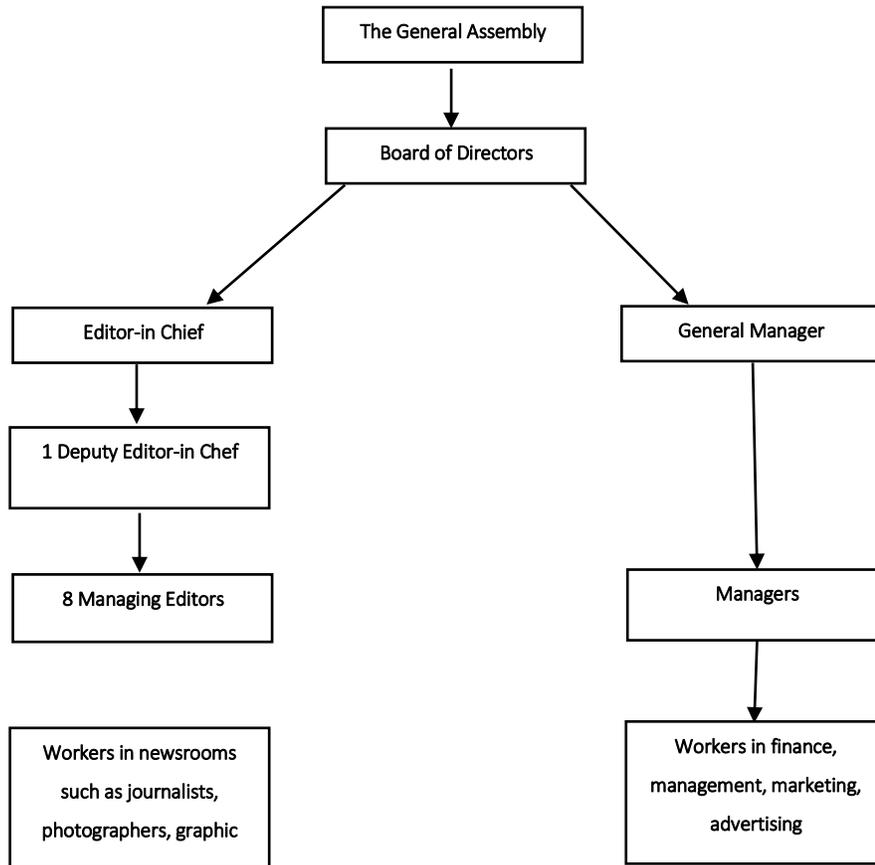
## **7.2 Background of *Alyaum* newspaper**

*Alyaum* newspaper has been published since 1965. The print is issued under Dar Alyaum (Alyaum House) for Press, Print, and Publishing that is located in Dammam and the *Alyaum* paper was published weekly for years and then became a daily publication. The main headquarters of *Alyaum* organisation is located in Dammam on the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia. The paper dominates circulation in the eastern region with an estimated average daily circulation of 80,000. In addition, Dar Alyaum has an advertising print that is called *Almobawabah*. It is a free weekly copy that is meant to generate some income through selling additional advertising space and can then be circulated free with the main newspaper. The financial and capital information of *Alyaum* is not known and, as was mentioned in Chapter 5, Section 5.2 and in Chapter 6, Section 6.2, accurate information regarding capital and financial activities of Saudi newspapers is not publicly available.

## **7.3 Newspaper management and newsroom structure**

The structure of the *Alyaum* newspaper organisation (Figure 7.1) is like that of *Alriyadh* and *Al-Madina*, formed by three main divisions of power; the General Assembly, the Board of Directors, and the internal management of the newspaper. The internal management is divided into two sections: editorial and management. An Editor-in-Chief heads up the editorial section and a General Manager is responsible for other management and financial activities. The General Manager has no deputies but has five managers reporting to him. The Editor-in-Chief is supported by only one deputy and eight Managing Editors, including a New Media Manager who comes from a journalistic background but has wide technological knowledge.

The overall organisational structure is a hierarchical model of top-down power where control is in the hands of senior management on both sides. Another fact is separation between the management and the editorial side, where both Editor-in Chief and General Manager have equal power over their sections and are connected to the Board of Directors. This is a common



*Figure 7.1 : Organisational structure of Alyaum Newspaper*

model in Saudi newspaper organisations, as explained in the contextual chapter about journalism in Saudi Arabia. This similarity can be attributed to the restrictions that are imposed by media laws that specify such a structure, the relationship between the management and editorial sides, and the responsibilities of each side in all newspaper organisations.

However, the newsroom structure at *Alyaum* newspaper is different from the other three Saudi newspapers, and perhaps it is different from all other Saudi print newsrooms as it is the first convergent newsroom in this perspective (see Figure 7.2). In 2013 *Alyaum* organisation introduced a new structure and rename the newsroom to be *Alyaum News Centre* (Figures 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4). The new news centre replaced the old one in the same building and has a new layout similar to the BBC News Centre but smaller in size. The newspaper faced some problems with the construction of the building that meant some views were restricted in parts of the centre. This was due to some concrete pillars, an elevator, and stair walls that could not be removed or replaced.

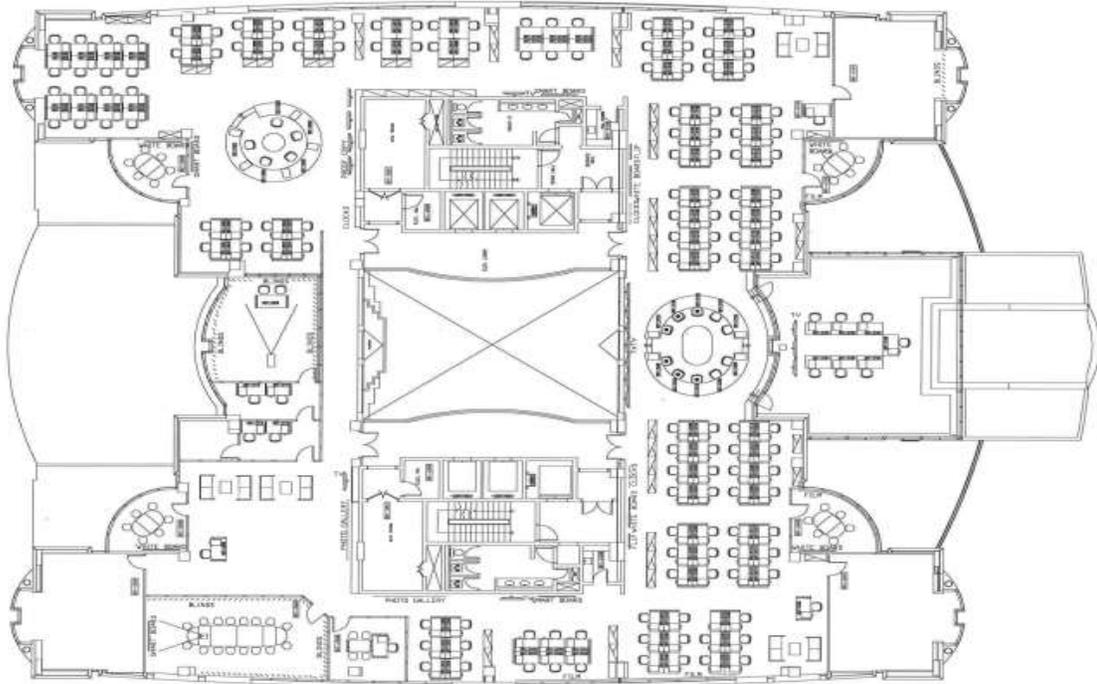


Figure 7.2: New Alyaum News Centre

However, the new Alyaum News Centre is exceptional in terms of being fully equipped with new digital and information communication technology. There are more than 25 large TV screens used for 3 main purposes: to watch local, regional, and international news television channels; to show *Alyaum*'s social media accounts, such as Twitter, and to provide live updates of these accounts; and to provide all journalists with live updates on the progress of news production on the paper's pages (see photos of Alyaum News Centre; Figure 7.3, Figure 7.4, Figure 7.5).



*Figure 7.3: Many screens at Alyaum News Centre*

The news centre is provided also with new computers, both Macintosh and Windows operating systems. The layout is organised around two main round counters (Figures 7.4 and 7.5), one for newsgathering, editing and final preparations of news stories, and the second counter where designers and producers work on the newspaper's pages. The news centre is provided with all information technology such as phones, faxes, printers and two Wi-Fi channels.



*Figure 7.4: The first counter at Alyaum News Centre*



*Figure 7.5: The second counter of Alyaum News Centre: pages' production progress is displayed on the three screens with some printed drafts on the wall*

Moreover, the new building has set aside some rooms for meetings and a medium-sized room as a studio. The studio room is provided with cameras, sound and a lighting system. The purpose of the studio is to produce video and audio clips for *Alyaum* online to meet the needs of

digital users. However, since the introduction of the studio there have as yet been no real activities. This, the observer was told, is due to the shortage of qualified labour and it takes a time to obtain approval from the management side to recruit specialists who can carry out this kind of work.

Additionally, in this new layout, all managing editors are located in an open-plan area which is shared with all other journalists, photographers, technicians, and producers. Managing editors move between desks, speaking to graphic designers, photographers and journalists; the journalists interact with each other and with technicians.

Finally, the new structure of Alyaum News Centre has introduced new approaches into the journalistic environment within the Saudi context, either creating a new position or identifying a new requirement for that position. For example, the position of Head of the New Media Department has been assigned to a journalist who has related technical skills, whereas other newsrooms have to appoint an IT expert to deal with digital production side. Another example is that the new structure has introduced a new position of Managing Editor for Quality Affairs who comes from a journalism background, but his role is to ensure the quality of the final journalistic product.

#### **7.4 New Media Department**

*Alyaum* has a New Media Department whose staff are located at journalists' desks in the new news centre. Some of the online content workloads of the New Media Department have been assigned to editorial departments, who are responsible for managing and updating news in the

online sections such as business, sports and local news. For instance, editorial departments have access to the online content and are responsible for managing and updating news in each editorial department individually in the news sections on the main website, such as business, sports, and local news sections.



*Figure 7.6: New Media Manager is located within the new News Centre*

The main role of New Media Department is to transform the newspaper print content into multiple digital formats that can be delivered via multiple platforms. These platforms include the main website, smartphone apps and tablet apps for both Android and iOS systems. However, the New Media Manager indicated that in the near future they may dispense with all these applications and introduce a new responsive design for the website that would provide user-friendly via tablets and smartphones. Other roles of this department are to manage and monitor the newspaper's website, which includes developments and security, updates, maintaining smartphone and tablet apps, managing the WhatsApp service for traditional journalists and citizen journalists, updating social media accounts, and sometimes interacting with online users.

The interaction with online users can take different forms, such as managing online comments, following up with updates on published news and responding to complaints.

### **7.5 Workflow and daily routine**

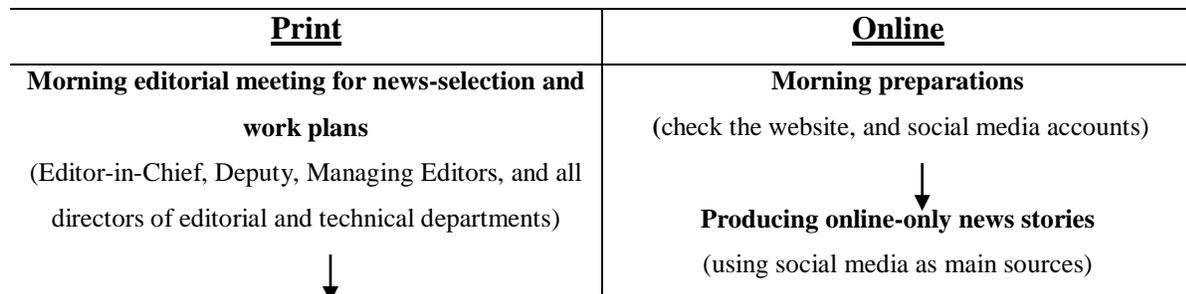
Workflow in the *Alyaum*'s newsroom is slightly different from the other ones in the study. The top-down power model is still applied but the decision-making power has been spread between managing editors. Since the introduction of the new centre the online publishing workloads have been assigned to editorial departments. Although there is a New Media Department and a manager who comes from a journalism background, all managing editors have been given access to their departments' news on the newspaper websites. Thus, they can manage online content and update it when needed. Having said that, some managing editors have delegated this role to one of the departmental journalists. The most important reason for transferring this access is the lack of IT experience among managing editors.

The normal daily journalistic routine is that the journalists attend a morning editorial meeting with the managing editors. In this meeting an agenda is set for the gathering of news stories and formal plans are agreed to achieve daily targets. Some journalists do not attend as they have been assigned to out-of-the-office tasks like local and business journalists who catch up on morning events and some morning conferences too. Likewise, this can apply to evening editorial meetings as some journalists have evening events to cover, such as sport journalists who attend football matches.

The evening editorial meeting is at the end of the day to agree the final approved pages of the newspaper. The evening meeting is usually attended by the deputy and managing editors. The reasons behind that are that the evening editorial meeting is just agreeing approved pages and does not approve individual news stories. At the News Centre, news stories flow smoothly through the digital network from creation point to final approval. The journalists create the story on the editorial digital content system and add pictures. Then the story gets checked by proofreaders and flows to the managing editor for approval, who can approve it on the production counter side. Once the story is approved it is sent to the producer, who allocates it to the appropriate place and page.

Near the round production counter, there is a wall with live production screens that show the progress of pages being constructed, as well as many drafts of pages for different editorial sections or supplements. Everyone in the newsroom can see the work-in-progress on constructing the different pages on the production screens and can contribute if any mistakes or errors are noticed. The Editor-in-Chief monitors the progress from his office in which he has the ability to access the editorial network from anywhere in the world. The Editor-in-Chief and his deputy can give their final approval, or not, to news stories on an ongoing basis during the working day. The flow of news between print and online production can be seen in Figure 7.7.

***Alyaum Newspaper***



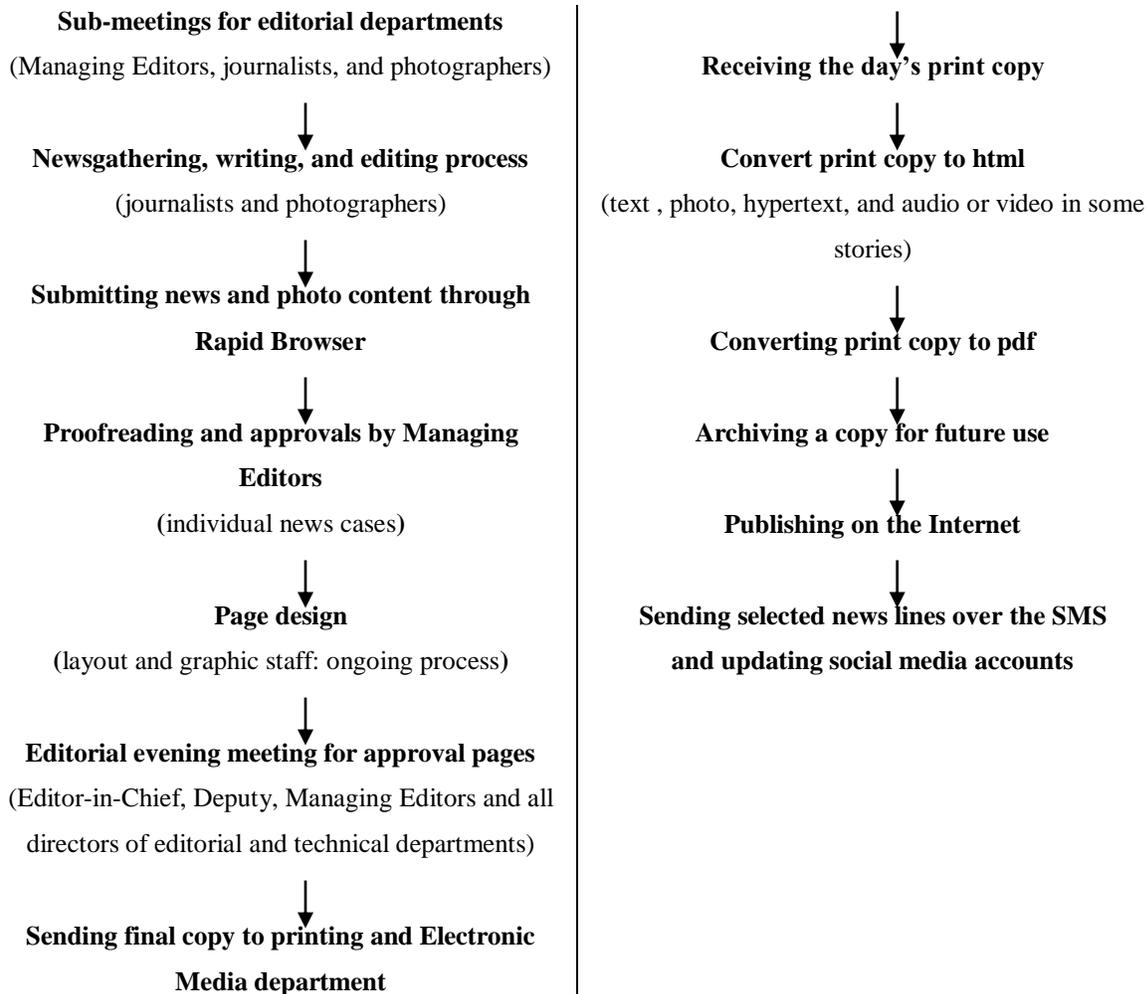


Figure (7.7) Diagram of Alyaum news production process for print and online sides

Overall, the journalists of *Alyaum* are using advanced digital communication technology when conducting their daily journalistic work. Smartphones, laptops and tablets, as well as desktop computers, both Macintosh and Windows, have been observed in working practices. However, some older journalists (those with over 20 years' experience) have been observed using paper and pen alongside their computer usage. Another important observation is that, despite the new open-plan layout of the newsroom a few senior journalists have kept closed and walled offices (Figure 7.8), all of them have been working in journalism for more than 30 years.



*Figure 7.8: The office of Deputy Editor-in-Chief separated from the new newsroom by walled office on the same floor<sup>6</sup>.*

## **7.6 Editing and content management software packages**

In the Alyaum News Centre journalists and technicians are using various editorial software packages: Rapid Browser, CMS VIVO, MS Office packages, Adobe packages, and some old web-based applications. The new news centre is supported by a powerful digital network which both connects all these programs and links all journalists and technicians together.

Besides that, the Electronic Media Department is using some specialised programs to manage *Alyaum* apps on different operating systems, such as Android, iOS, Windows systems

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<sup>6</sup> The editor-in-chief's office is on a different floor whereas the deputy and some managing editors are located on the same floor of the newsroom but kept their offices out of the restructuring of the new News Centre (closed partitioned offices)

for tablets, and smartphones. Using a combination of text, photo, video, processing package programs, and web applications makes journalistic workflow easier and smoother.

### 7.7 News circulation for print and digital productions

*Alyaum*, like other Saudi newspapers, has been experiencing some drops in its traditional print circulation, although it is widely using online communication technology to increase its reach to online-only readers. The online site of *Alyaum* at <http://www.Alyaum.com> has been subject to different development projects to attract more traffic; the website records a monthly average of around 2 million unique visits, whereas the annual average unique visits (Figure 7.9) have been around 22.4 million in the last four years.

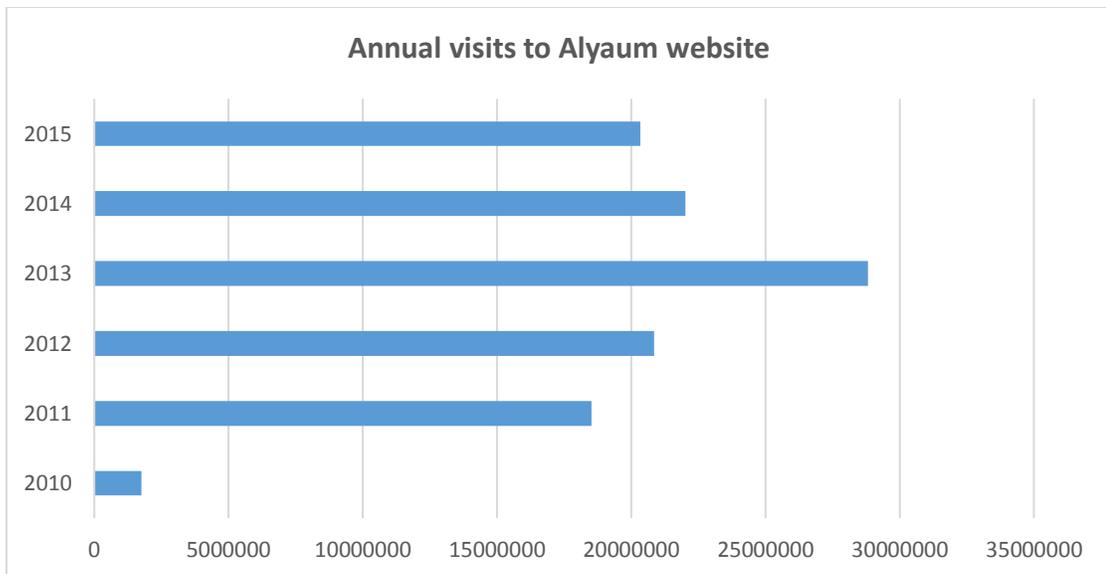


Figure 7.9 : Annual unique visits to the Alyaum website

Moreover, the website has a similar layout to *The Guardian's* and is connected by hyperlinks to all the social media accounts of *Alyaum*. *Alyaum* online also has a partnership with *Bloomberg News* that has resulted in a special section on *Alyaum.com* for Bloomberg news stories in Arabic translation.



Figure 7.10: *Alyaum's* accounts on social media (2016)

In addition, *Alyaum* is using most social media sites and apps (Figure 7.10) to widen its reach to online users. For instance, *Alyaum* has more than 261,000 followers on Twitter, 34,000 on Facebook, more than 341,000 subscribers to its channel on YouTube with millions of views, and 8,500 followers on Instagram. Moreover, *Alyaum* uses SMS to send breaking news, and mailing groups and WhatsApp to circulate news among those subscribers.

## **7.8 Main transformations at *Alyaum***

The main transformation at the *Alyaum* newsroom was the physical re-design of the newsroom. *Alyaum* was the first Saudi newsroom to apply the idea of an integrated or convergent newsroom. By the introduction of the newsroom in 2013, the name was changed to the Alyaum News Centre. The new convergent newsroom is located in the same place as the old one. However, there have been difficulties with the construction so the open-plan layout has not been full achieved. Some views are blocked due to some concrete pillars, an elevator, and stair walls that cannot be removed or relocated. The new layout has two main central counters; one for editorial activities and another for design and production activities.

Within the new news centre there are many large television screens, laptops, and desk computers both Windows and Macintosh systems. All journalists that were interviewed had smartphones and some were carrying tablets. The first use of the large television screens was watching and monitoring television channels. The second use was monitoring the accounts of *Alyaum* on social networking sites and provided live feeds and update on accounts such as Twitter. The third and final use of the screens was to provide journalists and other workers in the news centre of progress about news production in the ongoing updates of pages.

The second transformation was that journalists believed that digital technology developments had contributed to news production by changing the speed and space factors of news production. In the digital age, space has become less of a problem for news production, whereas speed has become a crucial factor. Digital space on the Internet provides more space to locate longer news stories and more photos, whereas the printed newspaper has limited space, which can be an issue, especially with advertising contenders. Additionally, in the digital sphere

journalistic production can be delivered with more features, such as hypertexts, video and audio. On the other hand, speed has become an important factor and it can be a pressure for the newsrooms of traditional newspapers to speed up their news production process for online publishing, to compete with other online and digital news outlets.

AWF (2014), Editor-in-Chief, pointed out that the introduction of online and digital communication technology in the journalism industry has expanded the space available for journalistic production. The Internet, for instance, enables the newspaper to expand news stories with additional information, and with features such as photos and videos. *Alyaum* is using all online and digital platforms to publish its news, which is seen as giving added value to journalistic production. Likewise, digital communication technology has saved time and effort in daily news production and minimises some of the news production process too. In this sense *Alyaum* is using all digital tools available to improve news production, widen media market reach, expand services, and increase any new possible revenue through these digital environments.

The third transformation in the newsroom that was identified by the interviewees is the changing nature of competition. The competition with media outlets has become more difficult; in particular, the nature of the competition has changed totally since the arrival of the Internet. With the existence of digital communication technology, competing with rival providers has become more difficult for traditional newspapers. EGK (2014), Managing Editor, confirmed that the Internet has raised the level of competition in news production for traditional newspapers in a way that television and radio never did.

The fourth transformation at *Alyaum* is that digital communication technology has helped simplify the news production process and has shortened the workflow cycle. SAH (2014), Deputy Editor-in-Chief with more than 30 years' experience, remarked that digital communication technology affects the journalistic production and journalists' practices both directly and indirectly. Digitalisation has simplified the news production workflow in the newsrooms where journalists are using more effective tools in newsgathering, editing, production and publishing. For instance, at *Alyaum* newspaper the newsroom has eliminated data-entry jobs that used to make up important stages in the workflow of daily news production. *Alyaum* journalists are now typing their news stories and entering them into the editorial and content-management systems.

However, the Deputy Editor-in-Chief has reservations about the extent to which digital and online communication technology can affect traditional journalism, stating:

Digital technology may change tools, ways of production, and ways of publishing, but will never change journalism as a profession in newsgathering and news production ... so I can say that the newspapers as print journalism may be in danger in the future but journalism as a profession should not be. (Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Alyaum* newspaper, 2014).

Similarly, AAK (2014), Managing Editor of Economic and Business News Section confirms that digitalisation of news production has speeded up the workflow in daily journalistic work. The speed has been noticed by using available digital and communication technology tools in the daily practices. The concept of newsgathering has been changed whereby journalists are now using online technology to feed and update news stories on a continual basis. The news stories on the *Alayum* website are ongoing. Likewise, SUT, New Media Manager at *Alyaum*, commented that in the last ten years. Journalistic production has benefited significantly from the

technology which has enhanced the speed and accuracy of the news production and workflow in the *Alyaum* newsroom.

The fifth transformation has been that, within the new structure of the *Alyaum* News Centre, a new position of quality management has been created. The Managing Editor for Quality Affairs, comes from a journalism background and is intended to improve news production on both the traditional and digital sides. The position of the Managing Editor for Quality Affairs has been assigned to a journalist who has relevant IT skills.

OSD (2014), the Managing Editor of Quality Affairs, justified it because it affects all aspects of editorial spaces in news production. Improving quality news production in both the traditional and digital departments by using all available and related technologies will make the final products more appealing to the readers. The quality of news production keeps readers engaged with in the highly competitive news market. Thus, having journalists in these positions who are highly skilled in digital technological products can add to the quality of final media products.

Similarly, *Alyaum* appointed a New Media Manager who came from a journalism background but also had knowledge of information technology. *Alyaum*'s new strategy, when employing people in technology-related posts, is to focus on recruiting those who have both journalistic expertise as well as IT skills . Some Saudi newsrooms are appointing IT experts to deal with the digital production side, no matter how familiar they are with the journalism industry.

The sixth transformation is that interactivity between the newsroom and its audience has been enhanced by online communication technology. *Alyaum* has increased its appearances on

the Internet by means of the main website, smartphone and tablet applications, and several accounts on social networking sites such as Twitter and Instagram. The journalists feel that they have become more connected with their audience through digital platforms. Most of the interviewees were using social media to interact with online users in their daily practices.

MSZ (2014), journalist, said that levels of interactivity with readers have improved due to social media. Journalists nowadays can see the reactions of online users in real time, as soon as their work has been published. On the main website, readers' comments on news stories are an example of this immediate reaction by readers. On the social media sites, most *Alyaum* journalists have personal accounts on Twitter, for example, and are using those to interact with people about new or existing news stories. So interactivity has been improved between the newsrooms and the audience. For Instance, EJK (2014), Managing Editor of Sports confirmed:

Twitter gives me pointers and links to new sports news that my division journalists may miss out on ... also my account on Twitter has more interactivity through hundreds of comments by online users than my column on the main newspaper website. (EJK, Managing Editor of Sports News, *Alyaum* newspaper, 2014).

However, both EGK (Managing Editor) and SUT (New Media Manager) stressed that although social networking sites can raise the interactivity they can also badly affect the interactivity on the newspaper website. At *Alyaum* online the monthly average comments on news stories was around 300,000 but there is a steady drop in the number of comments because of the redirection of traffic to social media sites where people are commenting and interacting more actively.

## **7.9 Main challenges facing *Alyaum***

At *Alyaum* newspaper, transforming the newsrooms to the News Centre has created new opportunities but also brought new challenges. Interviewees discussed some of the challenges that the News Centre is facing.

The first challenge that the new *Alyaum* News Centre is facing is that, in the new digital environment, some journalists are still managing their work with the traditional mindset of print journalism. Some of these journalists occupy senior management posts and play a significant role in the news production management (see Chapter 9, Sections 9.2 and 9.7.3 for further discussion). FFY, Managing Editor, pointed out that the process of transformation to a full digital newsroom can be held back by the traditional mindset. He stated: “The old guards of traditional journalism school are controlling some leadership positions and are not enthusiastic about digital transformation in the newsroom” (FFY, 2014). One of the reasons behind this lack of enthusiasm can be explained by the new digital skills requirements that mean training is necessary which those journalists are not willing to undertake.

Similarly, AWF (2014) observed that the *Alyaum* News Centre has been built upon the idea of a convergent newsroom. However, there are some difficulties in transforming the newsroom culture and the mindsets of journalists to embrace the concept of convergent journalism. Full digital transformation needs more than restructuring the geographical location or rearranging the organisational structure. Rather, the main issue to be taken into account when transforming a traditional newsroom into a digital convergent workplace is the transformation of the mindset of all workers in the newsroom to adopt those new changes, another way in which these changes will take effect in the news production environment.

Inspired by that challenge, the second identified challenge at Alyaum News Centre is the need for training, re-skilling and development for under-skilled journalists to fulfil the requirements of the new newsroom. The revolution of online and digital communication technology requires journalists with digital skills in the new digital environment. The new transformation at *Alyaum* has resulted in an urgent need for those multiskilled journalists who are able to deal with multiple news production tools. *Alyaum* has recruited new journalists for the new news centre, some as managing editors such as the Managing Editor for Quality Affairs, the New Media Manager, and additional journalists.

However, the majority of staff has come from the old newsroom. Some of those journalists are still managing news production with a print mindset. Those journalists need more training and preparation to actively contribute to the new news centre culture which has not been acquired prior to the restructuring. Training issues and change management as part of the transformation process are the responsibility of the management side of the organisation. That is due, on one hand, to the extra costs needed for training and development plans, and on the other to the capacity of management leadership to lead this digital transformation within the traditional newspaper. In this respect, AWF (2014) says:

Leadership is an important factor in successfully completing digital transformation in newsrooms because it needs new: investments in human resources, logistical support, training and mindsets. All these things are needed to help to tackle some issues that may appear in the new newsroom environment. Moreover, this will help in generating new multiskilled journalists who are able to cover the story, edit it, and produce it for multi-platform production. (Editor-in-Chief, *Alyaum* newspaper, 2014).

The training and preparation of today's journalists is a great challenge in all newspaper organisations. At *Alyaum*, MQS (2014) and OSD (2014), Managing Editors, confirmed that finding qualified journalists to work full-time for the newspaper has been a great challenge. Journalism graduates are not ready for the fieldwork and need some training. Current journalists are in need of such training for the new news centre, and new highly skilled journalists are very expensive to recruit and retain.

The third challenge that the *Alyaum* newsroom is facing is the online migration of readership from one platform to another. OSD (2014) identified that managing news production on online platforms creates new challenges in the newsroom. The challenge comes from the fact that online users, for example, are migrating from one platform to another in the social media era. Managing news production between online platforms with an unstable online readership is a real issue in attempting to keep loyal readers for the long term.

The fourth challenge identified by interviewees of *Alyaum* was technical problems. There are occasions when some of the editorial and content-management systems are shut down due to operational faults. Moreover, there are some technological issues about connecting journalists to the Rapid Browser software. These technological issues inevitably have some effect on the news production process and the normal workflow. Furthermore, the *Alyaum* website is in ongoing need of support and technological developments. This support includes creative design and ongoing updates to the connection as well as securing the website from any online threats.

The fifth challenge is the culture of advertisers in Saudi Arabia who are still closely connected to print newspapers for publication of their advertisements. The traditional print production is still a priority for the management, even with the transformation of the new news

centre. This can affect the process of full digitalisation within the newsrooms of traditional newspaper organisations. It can slow down the speed of the process of full digital transformation as there is still an attractive revenue to be gained from print advertising. Despite drops in the circulation figures of *Alyaum*, the majority of its annual revenue is still generated by the traditional print production.

OSD (2014) referred to traditional print advertising as being dominant in the Saudi newspaper industry, and can be only attributed to personal culture and attitude of the advertisers and not related to market status. AWF (2014), the Editor-in-Chief of *Alyaum*, confirmed that there have been some drops in *Alyaum*'s circulation and subscriptions. However, the reasons behind that could be the low quality of marketing, distribution and sales policy that have been in place in the Saudi newspaper industry for over 20 years. There is clearly a lack of professionalism in marketing and sales-policy management of media products in the Saudi Arabian market.

The sixth challenge that *Alyaum* journalists have mentioned is the tension between management and editing that is caused by having two equal powers, with different perspectives, managing the newspaper (more detail is provided on this in Chapter 9, Sections 9.1 and 9.7). For instance, training and development plans can be a key cause of conflict between the two sides: the editorial department considers them to be vital, whereas the management sees them as unnecessary spending. AWF (2014) expressed this challenge:

The main problem of the tension between the editorial side and management side of the newspaper is caused by the differences of the two mindsets and a lack of understanding between each side to

work naturally with another. This misunderstanding can affect the growth and development of the press media industry in Saudi Arabia. (Editor-in-Chief, *Alyaum* newspaper, Dammam, 2014).

That leads on to the next challenge, which is the uncertainty of the future of the newspaper industry in Saudi Arabia and what might, or might not, be threat in a commercial context. There are a number of separate challenges that could be discussed separately but they all lead to the same issue which is the future of print journalism industry. The interviewees indicated that some of the slight fears they had about newspaper organisations were based on what they had heard about the international media industry in a global context. In particular the, case of Newsweek came up as an indication of the decline of newspapers. However, this issue seems to have little relevance to the Saudi newspaper industry; *Alyaum* newspaper organisation, according to SAH (2014), is still enjoying a strong financial position and is considered one of the top three wealthiest press organisations in the Saudi media market.

However, some journalists are still not convinced there will not be a dramatic downturn for the newspaper industry. Some of the interviewees gave several reasons for their concerns. The first is the mentality of the ownerships of the Saudi newspaper organisation in general, and *Alyaum* in particular. Most owners of press organisations, whether they are on the Board of Directors or in the General Assembly, have not come from a journalistic background. This leads to the view that their primary interest is in making money and that they have no understanding of the media industry. This is obvious from the lack of awareness of the new needs of the newspaper industry to continue and grow in the digital age. Media technology is moving fast but the owners of Saudi newspaper organisations are slow to absorb this fact. The implications of

changes in digital communication technology require urgent action in order to keep the organisations operating effectively in a highly competitive media market.

Moreover, AWF (2014), the Editor-in-Chief, summarised the threats to the newspaper industry in Saudi Arabia by stating:

The real threats to the print journalism industry in the Saudi market are within the industry more than outside it. These threats might include a lack of journalistic content quality, an unsuitable journalistic work environment, a lack of training and development in Saudi newspaper organisations, and a lack of understanding of readers' needs and behaviours. (Editor-in-Chief, *Alyaum* newspaper, Dammam, 2014).

This quote not only outlines current threats for *Alyaum* newspaper but may be shared with other newspaper newsrooms in the Saudi context. These challenges, as are summarised in the above quote, include losing journalistic quality, the difficulty of making cultural changes in the new newsroom environment, lack of ongoing media training, and not keeping up with readers' changing habits in the digital age.

The eighth challenge that has been identified is the difference in thinking between the Editor-in-Chief, managing editors and journalists in terms of understanding the need for transformation in the newsroom. The differentiation of understanding can lead to conflict and in this case has led to ignorance by the management for preparation of editorial team of the new transformation of the new newsroom. Many of the journalists did not know about the new news centre until it had been completed. And some of the interviewees doubt the importance of this transformation in the workplace in the news production.

The final challenge that journalists of the *Alyaum* newsroom mentioned was the outdated media-related laws that need to be revised to reflect new journalism practices in the digital age. The media laws in Saudi Arabia need to be updated regularly in line with developments and changes in the media and information technology industries. The Printed Materials and Publication Law and the Press Establishments Law are the most relevant regulations to the newspaper organisation industry in Saudi Arabia. the Press Establishments Law in particular has not been updated for the last 16 years despite many developments in the media and information industry.

However, in January 2011, the Ministry of Information and Culture published new regulations for electronic and digital publishing activities, called the Executive Regulations of Electronic Publishing. some journalists have reservations about the extent to which this regulation can support the media industry in Saudi Arabia as it cannot be called a law. This is because the Executive Regulations of Electronic Publishing have been signed by only the Minister of Information and Culture and have not been endorsed by royal decree. The differences between such terms in the Saudi Arabian context are explained in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.

There are two areas that have been referred to by interviewees in relation to the need for updates in the Printed Materials and Publication Law and the Press Establishments Law. The first concerns the concept of journalist and the need to protect its identity. This can be accomplished by providing more information and a precise definition of journalism in the laws' articles. The second relates to the ownership of newspaper organisations. There is a new generation of owners who have inherited their shares and have no interest in journalism except for the revenues of newspaper organisations that does not represent a big profits comparing with income from other businesses they have.

AWF (2014) warned that in the last ten years there have been some changes in the ownership sharing percentages of the newspaper organisation. Some members own about 20% but have no interest in the media industry and have not turned up for the Board of Directors' meetings for years, whereas there are some people who own only 1% or less but they are in the media industry and well informed about current changes in the media market. However, because of the small number of shares those people own, they cannot bring about real transformation to respond to current developments, despite their knowledge of the industry.

### **7.10 Strategies of *Alyaum* in the online age**

The first strategy is to respond to technological convergence and changes in the media market landscape by considering alternative business model. AWF (2014) pointed out that *Alyaum* has a plan to transform the newspaper into a media house that will allow the organisation to improve the profitability of the newspaper organisation by widening its publishing activity. There are eight new projects in the plan, such as offsetting up a new department for programming digital applications for both systems, Android and iOS, and to then selling them on or managing them at the house. The cost of the new development plan is approximately 10 million SAR (266,640 USD) and has been approved by the editorial side but is awaiting the go-ahead from management.

The second and obvious response to the changes of digital communication technology is the introduction of the new integrated newsroom, the *Alyaum News Centre*. The digital news production and distribution has been enhanced by using digital communication technology tools in newsgathering, editing and news circulation. This is a big step taken by the *Alyaum*

organisation as it is the first and only convergent newsroom in the Saudi newspaper industry and it is a costly project for a traditional newspaper.

This transformation is intended to firstly serve the digital news production and secondly to support the traditional print. Through this transformation, *Alyaum* has introduced a New Media Department and recruited new staff who mostly come from journalism backgrounds, but with electronic expertise. The staff of the New Media Department work alongside the journalists in the convergent newsroom. Some of the online content workload of the New Media Department has been assigned to editorial departments.

However, the digital media department is still unprofitable in the *Alyaum* newspaper organisation. SAH (2014) confirms that 99% of *Alyaum*'s revenue comes from the traditional production side. He concluded:

We prioritise the print production over the digital production because of the 99% granted revenue coming from it, whereas 1% revenue comes from the digital side. Therefore, we see the digital production as a complementary part for the traditional print only. (Deputy Editor-in-Chief, *Alyaum* newspaper, 2014)

Hence, another strategy needs to be put in place to achieve the right balance and ensure that online production does not affect the profitability of the traditional newspaper. SUT stated:

We are benefitting from new digital communication technologies at all stages of the journalistic production in the newsroom but keeping the priority not to disrupt the print production too much as this may be reflected in the organisation's revenue ... the reasons for this are the rapid changes in those technologies and the difficulty in making a profitable

business from online and digital production for traditional newspaper organisations. (New Media Manager, *Alyaum* newspaper, 2014)

This dilemma of achieving a balance between digital and traditional production at *Alyaum* is replicated in most Saudi newspapers. This can be due to the fact that advertising in traditional newspapers is still the main source of revenue. The digital revenue at *Alyaum* that is generated through the website, smartphone and tablets is still very low and cannot be counted for risking the print production. For this reason, *Alyaum* is publishing only 50% (AWF, 2014) of the print production on its website and maintains publishing priority for the print until the afternoon of the next day.

In addition, *Alyaum* has another strategy which it has started to implement within the new news centre; this involves moving away from news journalism and concentrating on exclusive and in-depth analytical stories. The terms of news journalism in Saudi Arabia include a plan stories with current information of the event and do not include long journalistic reports , investigative journalism, interviews, and features supplements. Coverage of breaking news and headlines of events and conferences have their place in *Alyaum* news production but they want to focused on data journalism with rich information. However, AWF (2014) pointed out:

Our new strategy of news production in the digital age is to focus on news stories that are rich in information, highly gathered, highly edited, diverse, and exclusive (Editor-in-Chief, *Alyaum* newspaper, Dammam , 2014).

Moreover, there is a new policy for using social media sites and as each editorial department now has its own accounts on sites such as Twitter. There is also a digital journalist in each of those departments, who is responsible for dealing with related content on the main website and updating social media accounts too. This can give the editorial divisions some independence in managing the digital content differently from the traditional print production but according to the previously mentioned publishing strategies. For example, breaking news is published as soon as possible through online and other digital channels such as SMS, and updating them is essential too by those digital journalists in all editorial departments.

Focus on local event is another strategy at *Alyaum* with the newsroom giving priority to publishing news from the region where the newspaper is based. *Alyaum* is based in Dammam, the biggest city in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, it covers and promotes events in most cities around the region. This strategy is aimed at satisfying and maintaining the loyalty of local audiences ahead of others and online readers.

### **7.11 Journalists and current transitions**

Within the new news centre, journalists at *Alyaum* are using digital communication technology within their daily journalistic work. The new digital equipment at the transformed newsroom has helped the journalists to carry out their daily routine. However, journalists are still under some pressure of producing news for multiple platforms for; print and online. The journalists at *Alyaum* feel that traditional production is the main load. Having said that, there is a journalist in each department who manages news of the department on the website as discussed earlier.

Journalists at *Alyaum* perceive the transformation in the newsroom differently, with interviewees noting a number of advantages and disadvantages. Some advantages are that the recent transformation has facilitated the news production process and workflow and ensures there is no duplication of news stories between the editorial divisions. However, the open-plan layout of the editorial lounge has had an effect on the privacy, which is considered a disadvantage by some journalists. The new layout offers small meeting rooms but journalists are not happy with the experience yet as these rooms are not available all the time.

For instance, MSZ. (2014) stressed that the new *Alyaum* News Centre has some weaknesses such as a loss of privacy for journalists when they are on the phone with sources or want to record interviews; both these activities are difficult in an open-plan workplace. In addition, FFY (2014) indicated that the new structure of the news centre meant a lower level of privacy for journalists in conducting confidential interviews and may expose some of their news sources. The culture in the workplace has been affected by the transformation as it has eliminated the privacy factor from the newsroom. That could be due to the fact that the new newsroom structure has been imported from foreign culture and resembles Western newsrooms. This view has been confirmed by OSD (2014), by stating: “The new design of *Alyaum* News Centre is imported from a foreign workplace culture that does not take into account aspects of local newsroom culture such as loud conversation within newsroom”

Moreover, *Alyaum*'s journalists need to continue to develop specific journalistic and technical skills in order to meet the requirements of the new news centre. AWF summarised the skills that are needed in the new convergent newsroom environment at *Alyaum* by saying:

The journalist needs to have combined journalistic and IT skills. The journalist, for example, needs to have journalistic basic skills such as dealing with information and sources, and the ability to do journalistic editing. And at the same time the journalist should be able to deal with editing audio and video, and re-editing the news story in accordance with the needs of multiple production platforms. (Editor-in-Chief of *Alyaum* newspaper, 2014).

In this respect, OSD (2014), Managing Editor of Quality Affairs, pointed out that multi-skilled journalists are needed, not only because that would be cost-effective, but also because it would promote the quality of the journalistic production in the long term. The availability of online and digital communication technologies creates a need for multi-skilled journalists who can tackle all news production steps, including technical and graphical skills. Currently, these multiskilled journalists do not exist at *Alyaum*, but the editorial leadership is aware of this important issue and is working to address it by training and development. The Managing Editor-in-Chief justified the delay in finding multi-skilled journalists by explaining that the integrated newsroom at *Alyaum* was relatively new and had been launched less than a year ago (at the time of the interview) and that it would take some time to achieve the changes required.

In addition, journalists at *Alyaum* have concerns about their future careers in the print journalism industry. These concerns were linked to the expectation of dramatic drops in the newspaper's profitability. The fear comes from the fact that full digital transformation in the traditional newspaper organisation may affect the newspaper's revenue in the competitive media market. Nevertheless, this is not an immediate concern as most of the interviewees suggested that the *Alyaum* organisation would still be in a strong position in the Saudi media market for the next 10 years.

In relation to that point, the majority of the journalists interviewed expressed another concern that might affect their performance and their work quality in the newsrooms. They believe the average salary for journalists in the newspaper needs to be improved as it is currently at an unfair level. Interviewees specified that a fair salary for journalists in the newspaper organisations should be around 7000–9000 SAR for graduates and new journalists, about 10000–20000 SAR for journalists with some experience, and 20000+ SAR for expert journalists.

## **7.12 Summary**

In conclusion, the *Alyaum*'s newspaper is the most transformed newsroom toward convergence among the other three case studies in terms of restructuring and embracing digital communication technologies. By introducing an integrated newsroom in 2013, *Alyaum* became the first Saudi newspaper to restructure its newsroom around the concept of a convergent newsroom. However, there are difficulties in transforming culture of journalists from a print mindset to a digital mindset in order to maximise the benefits of convergent journalism. The staff of the New Media Department at *Alyaum* are alongside the journalists' desks in the new News Centre. Some roles of managing online content have been assigned to print journalists within the editorial departments (more discussion about this point will follow in Chapter 9, Section 9.5.4). Finally, Dar Alyaum Organisation for Press, Print, and Publishing (*Alyaum* owner) is no different from *Al-Madina* and *Alriyadh* in terms of the limitations on responding to digital and market forces on the press organisational level due to media and regulations laws in Saudi Arabia.

# **Chapter Eight:**

## **Findings at Alwatan**

## 8.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present findings that were generated from observation in *Alwatan*'s newsroom between 12-21 March 2014, and from 17 interviews conducted with the General Manager, the Editor-in-chief, deputy Editors-in-chief, managing editors, journalists and the New Media Manager. This was in order to answer the main research questions of this study which are:

1) how is *Alwatan* newsroom responding to the emergence and developments of online and digital communication technologies?

2) how are journalists at *Alwatan* responding to digital transformations and how do they perceive the changes in the newsroom?

In order to address these two questions, this chapter is organised around 10 themes. These sections are viewed from managerial and media economics perspective. These aspects are; case-study background, newspaper management and newsroom structure, Electronic Media Department, workflow and daily routine, editorial software packages, news circulation for traditional and digital users, main transformations, main challenges, new strategies, and the status of *Alwatan*'s journalists in the digital transformation. Nonetheless, in journalists' responses to transformation, a sociological perspective was applied to explain related elements in these changes such as tensions and pressures in the workplace.

## 8.2 Background of Alwatan newspaper

*Alwatan* newspaper is comparatively new to the Saudi market and the newest among the four studied. It was launched in 2000 as a daily print in Abha City in the south-west of Saudi Arabia. The newspaper is owned by the Asser Organisation for Press and Publishing. *Alwatan* tries to take a different approach in its editorial line from the other Saudi papers and it has been subject to several aggressive campaigns from some conservative clerics.

The paper had a very good start for the first four years. However, as *Alwatan* has liberal stream in the editorial stance (Rugh. 2004, p.66), it has been through some difficult situations in the editorial and management sections. In the editorial section, the Head of Editorial at *Alwatan* has been an unstable position with 12 Editors-in-Chief during the last 15 years. That means the average time an Editor-in-Chief stays in the position is about 15 months. This instability can create other problems in strategies and future planning and may slow down any planned transformations. *Alwatan* is a medium-sized newspaper with an estimated average daily circulation of about 50,000 copies (Rugh. 2004, p.61).

*Alwatan* newspaper has suffered from difficulties both on the management and editorial sides. There have been significant drops in circulation, subscriptions and advertising. In the last five years *Alwatan* witnessed a decline in traditional print circulation of 40% which has resulted in the decrease in annual revenue, forcing the organisation to deal immediately with the crisis. At the beginning of 2014 *Alwatan* cut its staff by 50%, including journalists, technicians and other management staff, making more than 100 of its more than 200 workers redundant. (AZS, 2014; Deputy Editor-in-chief; *Alwatan* Newspaper). The financial value of Asser Organisation for Press and Publishing, was around 200 million SAR (53.3 million USD) when it was launched 16

years ago, in the southern of Saudi Arabia. It is the eighth Saudi licensed newspaper in the contemporary history of Saudi newspaper industry. However, its annual financial activities have not been disclosed since then. This is due, as mentioned in previous chapters to accurate information regarding capital and financial activities about Saudi newspapers not being publicly available.

### **8.3 Newspaper management and newsroom structure**

The organisational structure of *Alwatan* (Figure 8.1) is like other Saudi newspapers, split into two main power bases: the editorial and the management sections. In the editorial section, the Editor-in-Chief is supported by two deputies and four managing editors, one of whom is the Head of the Electronic Media Department. The General Manager on the management side does not have any deputies but is supported by managers of two departments. The structural model maintains the hierarchical top-down model of management, in which information flowing from the top through the organisation.

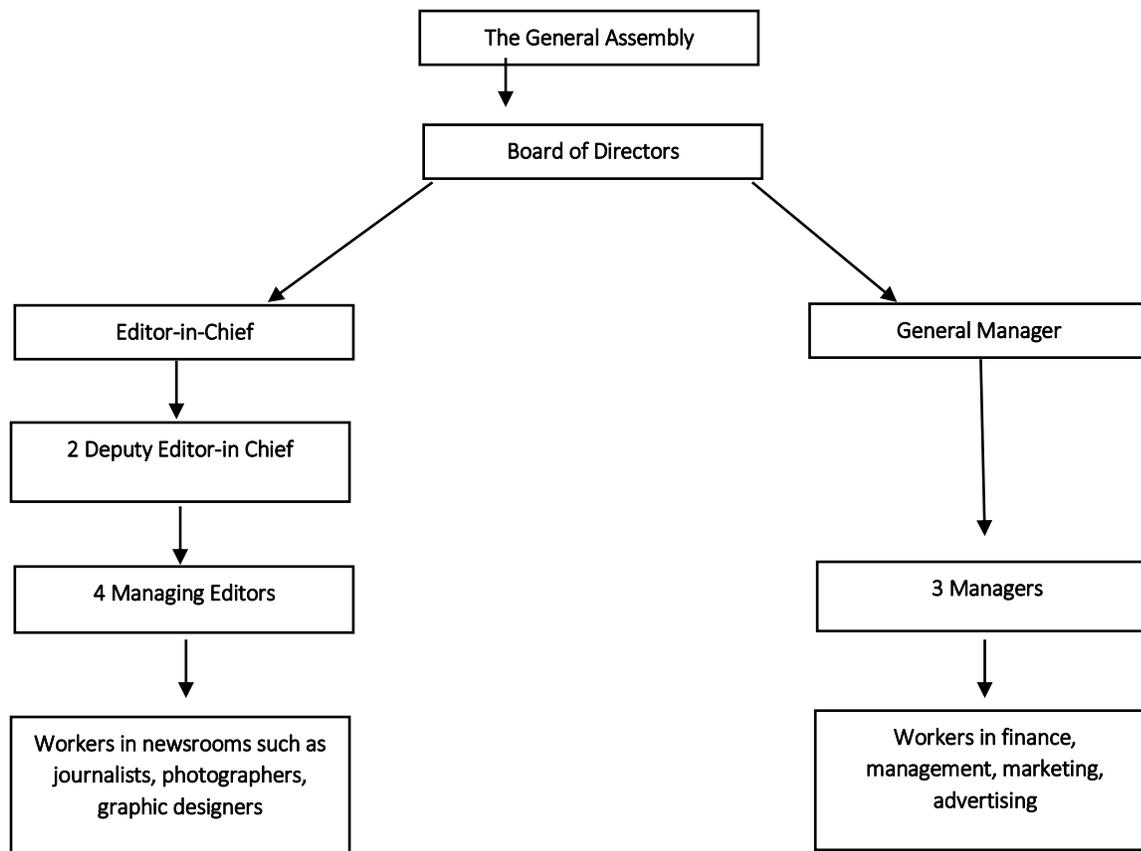


Figure 8.1: Structure of Alwatan newspaper

*Alwatan* was established in 2000, more than three decades after the previous Saudi newspaper organisation had been founded. The management team visited some newspaper newsrooms in Europe and the United States to get an insight into the latest newsroom structure at that time. They decided to draw their structure of the newsroom (Figure 8.2) from the *New York Times* newsroom prior the building floor plan was designed.



*Figure 8.2 : Alwatan's newsroom in Abha in 2014*

The new structure of the newsroom is an open-plan huge room and more than 60 partitioned desks are located in an enormous lounge in the middle. The partitioned desks are surrounded by glazed walled offices belonging to the Editor-in-Chief, deputies, Head of Production, and an information centre. The desks are provided with desk computers, phones, and the newsroom has only two television screens. However, this newsroom used to be full of journalists and technicians working, especially when it started operating 16 years ago. During the observation that took place in March 2014 the newsroom seemed empty whether in the morning or the evening. The photo was taken at around 3pm, which was considered to be a busy time, but there were less than 10 people there including the Deputy Editor-in-Chief. This can be due to three reasons: reduction in the workforce for financial issues as mentioned in Section 8.2, a dependence on part-time journalists as for the majority of Saudi newspapers, dependence of journalist on web-access CMS for the Easy Browser to carry out their news production process.

This last point means the majority of journalists do not need to be physically in the newsroom as they can be ‘virtually’ present by using the content management system on the web.

#### **8.4 Electronic Media Department**

The Electronic Media Department that *Alwatan* has was just introduced in 2014. It is quite new but could be considered to be very late given the fact that *Alwatan* started online. The leadership of the new department has been given to a journalist who is from the print newsroom but has IT experience. Prior to the Electronic Media Department, the online and other digital formats used to be monitored by one of the technicians. The main role for the new department, as it used to be for former IT staff, is to digitalise print materials to be web-friendly and suitable for online publishing. The observer was told that the New Media Department is not located in the main headquarters in Abha but in the capital city of Riyadh. This is due the importance of two branches of *Alwatan* in Riyadh and Jeddah that are contributing significantly to news production because of their locations in the two big cities.

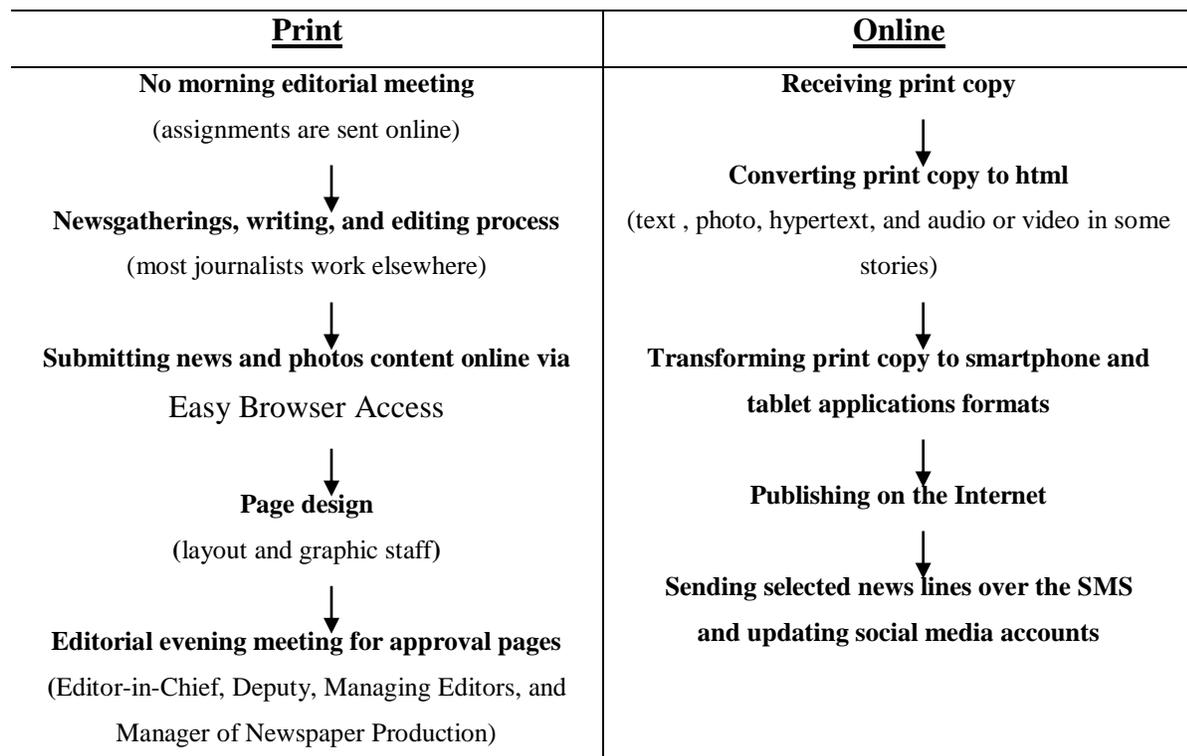
#### **8.5 Workflow and daily routine**

The newspaper uses Easy News software in the editorial content-management and journalists use this to create, edit and produce their news stories. The software has a web-access application (Easy Browser Access) that enables journalists to log in when out of the newsrooms and to carry out all the news production process virtually. Most of the journalists use laptops and smartphones in the news production process. More than 65% of the journalists at *Alwatan* are using this advance technology virtually in their daily working practice (AGH, 2014). The

journalists do not need to be physically present in the newsroom as long as s/he has logged into the system and is producing their allocated tasks.

At around 5pm there is an editorial meeting attended by the Editor-in-Chief, his deputy, the Managing Editor, and the Manager of Newspaper Production. The meeting is organised to finalise and approve individual pages of the paper in its first draft. The Managing Editor discusses the news stories page by page to get approvals on them or to send them back to the responsible journalists for any amendments. Two hours later they have another meeting for final approvals and then send a copy to the New Media Department to transform the content into digital friendly formats for multiple digital platforms. The workflow of news production between print and digital side can be seen in the flowing Figure 8.3.

***Alwatan Newspaper***



↓  
**Sending final copy to printing and New Media  
department**

*Figure (8.3) Diagram of Alwatan news production process for print and online sides*

## **8.6 Editing and content management software packages**

The Easy News software package is used in *Alwatan*'s newsroom in news production. *Alwatan*'s journalists also use computerised software and web-based applications. The MS Offices package is used in editing news stories. There is also an information centre for archiving text, images and audio clips and the 7Pro Pack software is in use. The Information Centre is located within the main newsroom and has about four employees. The Adobe InDesign is also used for designing newspaper pages, Adobe Photoshop is used for editing images, and Adobe Illustrator is used for editing graphics.

## **8.7 News circulation for print and digital productions**

*Alwatan* has two printed versions of the paper; the first one is printed around 8:30pm for local region and the second version is printed around 12:30am for all regions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, *Alwatan* has experienced a drop in its traditional print circulation and subscriptions, particularly in 2013 when they fell by 40%.

*Alwatan* started focusing on online and digital platforms to bring new online users. The website at [www.alwatan.com](http://www.alwatan.com) attracts a monthly average of around one million unique visits, 50% of them accessing the online site through smartphones (TSH, 2014). Moreover, *Alwatan* has multiple accounts on social media (Figure 8.4) to keep its online users informed. The newspaper

has more than 1.2 million followers on Twitter, 9,500 followers on Instagram, more than 45,000 on Facebook, thousands more on Google+, and other app subscribers. Finally, *Alwatan* reaches more digital readers through smartphone and tablet applications.



Figure 8.4: Alwatan accounts on social media

## 8.8 Main transformations of *Alwatan*

The newsroom of *Alwatan* has an open-plan structure and is located in a huge lounge. The newspaper is comparatively new in the Saudi print media market and was only launched at the beginning of the last decade. Therefore, the newsroom was relatively new amongst its peers. The main and only newsroom has a huge open space which occupies the centre of the organisation's building. The main lounge has partitioned desks in the middle that are surrounded by glazed walled offices.

The first transformation that can be noticed in *Alwatan* newsroom is that the physical presence of journalists has started to disappear. The average number of daily journalists who were working at the same time in the newsroom during the observation period (March 2014) was approximately 7 to 10 people. This can be attributed to two main factors. Firstly, the introduction of online communication technology in the newsroom, and particularly some online content-management applications, now allows journalists to work remotely online.

The second reason is that the newspaper organisation has decided to reduce employee numbers due to financial problems. Mr AZS, Deputy Editor-in-Chief, commented that in the last five years (2009–13) the paper had been facing financial difficulties that had forced the management to cut the number of employees of *Alwatan* by 50%, including journalists, technicians and other management staff. More than 100 of *Alwatan*'s staff were made redundant in the period up to 2014 in order to manage the financial issues

The second notable transformation is that digital technology has simplified and speeded up the news production process. This revolution in information and communication technology has been embraced within the *Alwatan* newsroom and helped journalists in their daily routine. Journalists are using their smartphones in their daily practices in the newsgathering and editing of news stories via online content-management applications and using their phones as digital cameras too. This transformation has implications for in the newsroom.

MJB, Deputy Editor-in-Chief, observed:

Implementation of new digital communication technology in the last five years in the newsroom has resulted in speeding up and minimising the news production process. We do not need staff who carry out data entries any more as journalists are responsible for this step

and photographers here are less needed as journalists use smartphones to take photos and attach them to news stories ... but the most important thing that we benefit from with digital communication technology is providing the newsroom with the digital and connected environment. (Deputy Editor-in-Chief, *Alwatan* newspaper 2014).

This points to less reliance on the physical presence of journalists in the newsroom and less importance of photographers in *Alwatan* newspaper. However, to have a better understanding of the issue of the half-empty newsroom at *Alwatan* there are other aspects to be considered. The first thing is that *Alwatan* newspaper is going through severe financial issues. In 2014, in response to drops in print circulation and funding difficulties, *Alwatan* has reduced its staff by 50%, including journalists, photographers and people from the management and IT sections. The second thing is that the newsroom of *Alwatan* is reliant on part-time journalists which can be seen as cost-saving strategy. The result of this strategy can be seen in fewer journalists turning up in the newsroom. The third matter is that *Alwatan*'s newsroom is employing web access for the content management system where journalists can produce news online anytime and anywhere without needing to work actual newsroom.

The fourth explanation for the empty newsroom at *Alwatan* is the fact that (as mentioned in Section 8.4) the headquarters of *Alwatan*, where the main newsroom is, is located in Abha city. The city of Abha is the capital of the Asir region but this is not one of the big or main regions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, *Alwatan* has two big regional offices in Riyadh and Jeddah. The two cities are important because Riyadh is the political and the capital city and Jeddah is the commercial and trade city. The two regions of those two cities are inhabited by around half of the Saudi population (Cidsi, 2016). The importance of these two

cities forced *Alwatan* to have two parallel newsrooms with the main one in Abha to be close to political and economic events and decisions makers in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Thus, there are some journalists working in these two offices in Jeddah and Riyadh.

Finally, the half-empty newsroom or the reliance on a virtual newsroom practices at *Alwatan* are not only related to the development of the online and other digital technologies. It should be rather read to specific circumstances of *Alwatan* also include other issues such as financial, management, geographical location and difficulties of the press organisation.

## **8.9 Main challenges facing Alwatan**

*Alwatan* is facing different challenges, the first and most important of which is financial and management difficulties. *Alwatan*'s circulation, as indicated above, is facing financial issues which are reflected the annual revenue over the last three years. AZS said that in 2013 *Alwatan* experienced significant drops in the print circulation of 40%. This has resulted in the fall in annual revenue, which has forced the organisation to deal immediately with the crisis by trying to cut its operational costs.

Another challenge for *Alwatan* is that the rapid changes in technology have created problems in understanding and facing these new changes. TAS (2014), the Editor-in-Chief (replaced one year after the interview) believed that one of the most notable characteristics of digital technology is its rapid changes. That created an issue for the newsroom of *Alwatan* regarding how these changes should be understood, what the future trends will be, and then how the newspaper will tackle these issues.

Two other important related challenges are journalism graduates who are not qualified to do the job and a lack of training for current journalists. Finding journalists who are qualified and ready to work in the field is difficult and keeping them there is even more problematic. MJB (2014), Deputy Editor-in-Chief, alluded to the fact that ‘media schools do not provide a journalist but rather an employee.’ Graduates of journalism schools have been subject to criticism by most of the interviewees at *Alwatan* who felt that they were not able to get involved in the work immediately following graduation. AZS (2014), Deputy Editor-in-Chief, also mentioned that the current working journalists in the Saudi media market who have journalism qualification are few. The same point was picked up by AGH (2014), managing editor, by saying: “We have a real problem in recruiting journalists who are ready and prepared for fieldwork”. The newsroom provided onsite training for recent graduates, but this was only on a small scale.

Keeping journalists working in the newspaper is a related challenge for *Alwatan*. Journalists are moving to competitors for better offers and a good future career. However, journalists are leaving not only to other media employers but also following ‘... a trend that journalists in the print industry are leaving to non-journalism occupations’ (Managing Editor for Economy News). This is because of uncertainty in the print media market might have an impact on their jobs in the future. They thus decide to leave for more stable occupations instead. Moreover, there is another reason why some journalists leave the industry. Some journalists are experiencing threats that can lead to losing their jobs with no support from the newspaper, nor from the Saudi Journalists Association. This issue is only a fear at *Al-Madina* but it is reality at *Alwatan* as some journalists already lost their jobs. MJB (2014), Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Alwatan*, confirmed that “journalists are facing several threats and losing some rights such as

management and financial threats when they also have been let down by the Saudi Journalists Association”.

In addition, *Alwatan*, like other Saudi newspapers, is losing its lead with scoops in the journalistic production due to competition from online news and other news companies. *Alwatan* is facing the serious challenge of competing with other digital media outlets for the breaking news and finding exclusive news stories.

The copyright of journalistic production is another challenge facing *Alwatan*. In a digital publishing environment, there are unprofessional practices of online-only newspapers in Saudi Arabia, in which the news stories of traditional newspapers are being recirculated with no permission or references. Interviewees were worried that the newspaper is affected by these practices by some online media sites. MJB said: “There is an issue around the copyrights of our journalistic production ... there are some electronic newspapers stealing the news on a regular basis and we need new regulations to stop this”.

There is a Copyright Law but it seems that most journalists of *Alwatan* are not satisfied with it. The current media regulations do not protect the journalistic copyright nor enforce any slandered of practicing journalism. There are some non-ethical practices that have been noticed in the Saudi journalism industry in recent years. These can result from the flood of new online-only websites in the last five years. The reason for this phenomenon is related to the limitations of articles in the current media laws and regulations in Saudi Arabia (see Chapter 9, Section 9.7.2 for more information on this).

MJB (2014), deputy Editor-in-Chief pointed out that the media regulations concerning the copyright of journalistic publishing are still weak and need some improvements. Additionally, AZS (2014), Deputy Editor-in-Chief, felt that the law articles are not sufficient and he stressed:

The regulations in this respect are not adequate and the legal process for each case can take up to three years ... Imagine this is happening on an almost daily basis ... where can I get the money, time and effort to pursue all these cases in order to protect the production of newspaper (Deputy Editor-in-Chief, *Alwatan* newspaper 2014).

The last challenge mentioned by *Alwatan* journalists is that Twitter has become a new pressure for journalists and newspapers as it has affected readership for both online and print production of the traditional newspaper organisation. TSH (2014), New Media Manager, remarked that online users on Twitter have started to read, comment and interact with news via the Twitter platform. The engagement level of readers with the newspaper has seen a gradual drop in the last five years as the online readers have changed from commenting on news on the main newspaper's website to engaging with news on the Twitter news links, either via *Alwatan*'s account or on other accounts on the Twitter.

### **8.10 Strategies of *Alwatan* in the online age**

As explained in the last two sections the case study shows *Alwatan* is having some difficulties on the management and the editorial sides. These difficulties affect setting any

comprehensive and steady strategies for the newspaper in the information age for the long term . AZS (2014) confirms this by stating that

To respond fully to changes in the new media age the newspaper is suffering from instability in the newspaper's leadership. Over the last 14 years we have had 11 editors-in-chief<sup>7</sup>... this rapid changes in *Alwatan*'s leadership has been reflected in having no proper strategies for the newspaper in the online age environment. This instability can damage any implemented strategy during any period of those editors-in-chief as each editor may have another views and want to implement a new strategy.

However, the fact remains that more than 99% of *Alwatan*'s revenue is from print production whereas around only 1% or less is generated from digital production. The revenue from the digital activities is mainly generated from SMS and online adverts. Thus, the key strategy applied by all the editors-in-chief was to protect the print production revenue that represents the 99%. In order to support this strategy there are some practices that have been noted via managing news production between online and print has some practices in place at *Alwatan*.

Firstly, exclusive news reports, interviews and investigative reports are kept only for the traditional print with a small hint lines on the website the next day. Secondly, updates on the paper's website for the next day production should be made after the print has been delivered to the sale points. Thirdly, breaking news should be published as soon as possible via online and

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<sup>7</sup> Now is 12 editors-in-chief as the current one at the time of fieldwork has been replaced in the following year.

SMS reports and not published in print unless there are extra details that have not been published digitally.

At the same time *Alwatan* wanted to support its online presence so, in 2014 as has been mentioned earlier, the newsroom introduced a new, separate Electronic Media Department. The online and other digital publishing used to be monitored and managed by technicians. There is no physical presence of the department or the staff in the newsroom. The New Media Department is not located in the main newsroom in Abha but in the capital city of Riyadh. The Editor-in-Chief declared that the New Media Department should be independent and have its own staff and web production. However, he stressed that this independence should not affect traditional print and must ensure that full cooperation with the main newsroom is in place.

Finally, cross-media convergence practice has been noticed as the *Alwatan* newsroom has some partnerships with other media outlets. For instance, *Alwatan* has a partnership with *Al-Aan* TV (Arabic television channel) for live broadcasting for five hours a week (one hour a day on weekdays). A journalist of the *Alwatan* newsroom appears as a guest to provide and discuss news stories in a live broadcast. A similar partnership is in place with *Alif Alif* Radio (Saudi radio station) to provide exclusive news stories via live broadcasts.

### **8.11 Journalists and current transitions**

Journalists at *Alwatan* are embracing new digital communication technology in the workplace by using computers and smartphones in their daily practices. This leads to virtual newsroom practices where most of the journalists are working online. However, they do not deal

with online production or transform the news products into different digital formats; editing is the New Media Department's role. The level of the perceived new digital communication technology varies from person to person. There are still some journalists resisting any digital transformations in the newsroom that require additional tasks or training.

*Alwatan's* journalists are working under the pressure of managing deadlines for daily assignments and monitoring news scoops in the presence of online journalism. The majority of their work mainly is targeted towards traditional print production. This is because the journalists perceive traditional production as their main workload and are not bothered about online activity that is being dealt with by IT professionals. However, journalists are working on news stories using the internet on a daily basis.

Moreover, *Alwatan* journalists have some doubts about their job security and the future of the newspaper, as *Alwatan* has been through some financial difficulties. The newspaper has reduced its staff by 50% recently (2014) and 100 people have lost their jobs, including journalists. This was in order to tackle financial issues in the newspaper and this can send signals about the security of the current journalists' jobs. Thus, journalists are in need of more job security, and more training and development plans. This will provide them with better conditions in the newsrooms to improve the quality of news production in the future.

## **8.12 Summary**

*Alwatan* newspaper, as discussed, is going through financial difficulties. In addition, redundancies of interviewees' responses are reflected in the limited outcomes of this case study.

However, the newspaper is embracing digital communication technologies in its news production process and practices. The journalists of *Alwatan* also are using digital technology and the Internet in particular, in their journalistic routine for producing news stories. Having said that, the newsroom retains a traditional structure and the journalists lack training and development career plans. They are also are not fully satisfied in their careers and are afraid that new plans to deal with the financial issues might affect their jobs. Finally, *Alwatan* is challenged in its business model, as are other Saudi newspapers, and has seen big drops in the print circulation. Any changes in reaction to digital and market forces on the press organisation level are restricted by the Saudi media regulations.

**Chapter nine:**

**Cross-case study analysis and  
Discussion**

## 9.1 Introduction

Journalism and media organisations are undergoing change and are subject to reshaping by the forces of convergence. The structure of newsrooms, journalists' roles and practices, the relationships between professionals within the newsroom and between them and their audiences or users, are commonly targeted for changes and transformations in the current media landscape (Pavlik, 2004; Singer, 2004). Digital technology has directly affected news production and the distribution process and methods. Advanced technological developments in hardware and software have helped journalists and reporters to carry out their daily routine smoothly and effectively and journalistic production is offered in multimedia formats for multi-platforms (Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008; Weiss and Joyce, 2009; Vobic, 2009, 2011)

The news stories on the Internet incorporate text, audio, videos, pictures and hyperlinks and they can also provide more information, sources or related news information. Advanced technology affects traditional ways of newsgathering and processing, and journalists are now using the Internet to find new stories and as a source of information such as new ideas, images and other documents. Another change in journalistic practices is that journalists are interacting directly with images and video content to adapt stories to different platforms (Pavlik, 2000, 2001; Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008; Weiss and Joyce, 2009,

Digital and communication technology affects journalism in different dimensions, including newsgathering, news-editing and processing, news presentation, news storage and accessibility. The implications of digital media technology can be seen in traditional media organisations in terms of working culture, management, structure, and operational activities. The restructuring of newsrooms is one examples of how newspapers are responding to technological

convergence. Some of the results of this restructuring are integrated newsrooms and virtual newsrooms. The convergent newsroom needs a new working culture for successful transformation (Klinenberg (2005; Dupagne and Garrison, 2006; Pavlik, 2008, p. 5, 6, Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008;).

Newsrooms and journalists of the traditional newspaper organisations are affected by technological convergence in the new media age. The term ‘convergence’ can be seen from a variety of different perspectives: industrial convergence, platform convergence and media products convergence. Causes of contemporary convergence are varied and are centred around computerisation, digitalisation, networks, the power of the Internet, increased space and capacity, and deregulation in multiple industries. The management of change and the responses of traditional media organisations are also varied, based upon political, economic, social and cultural factors (Kung, 2008, pp. 91–105).

Moreover, online communication technology has also led to the relationship between journalists and audiences becoming interactive. This kind of interactivity can be seen as giving the audiences power, and it has a direct impact on newsrooms. It has begun to drive changes in newsroom practices. Hence, new developments in communication technology transform journalistic practice processes from both inside and outside newsrooms. The Internet is key in changing journalism practices and media organisations’ relationships with their users (Steensen, 2009).

The Internet has been noted as a main player in today’s news production, editing and distribution. Journalists are benefitting from online technologies in their daily routines. Newsrooms in traditional newspapers are able to provide large television screens and other digital

products such as computers and tablets to enhance connective environments for better media practices (Awad, 2010).

In addition, newspaper organisations are no longer single print producers in the digital age; they have become multiple producers who have expanded their online operations to satisfy online users who are looking for free information sources. They are also improving other digital services for smartphone and tablet users. Those are not restricted to providing only the news but can include other services that build on their main roles of gathering information, editing and distribution. All this transformation widens the newspapers' reach and generates new revenue. Thus, these changes are raising many questions about newspapers' transformations and the necessary business model that they are seeking to be developed (Picard, 2010: p. 31, 32).

Therefore, newspapers are now in need of reform to survive in the digital age environment. During this process, newspapers should be able to acclimatise to much-needed necessary transformations, be able to improve structures, adaptability, and flexibility to suit the ongoing changes in media and communication industry. The main support for these needs in the transformation process comes from networked communication and digital-technology-based factors, and knowledge-based factors for the organisations and among their workers (Sylvie and Witherspoon, 2010: pp. 15, 16).

All the discussions above around digital communication technologies, convergence and changing newsrooms are some trends in some societies in western literatures. The main idea is that newsrooms and journalists in traditional news organisations are responding to continuous developments in online and digital communication technologies which is technological convergence is result of these developments. These responses bring about changes and challenges

in newsrooms structure, workflow and journalists' roles, which will be reviewed in the following section.

The main inquiry of this study is how newsrooms and journalists of Saudi traditional newspapers are responding to the emergence and development of online and digital communications technologies. The main inquiry is combined with supporting research questions that cover the following themes: the existing status of the managerial structure and newsrooms structure in Saudi newspaper organisations, newsrooms models in Saudi traditional newspapers, the roles and relationship between online and print newsrooms in the traditional newspapers, the main implications of digital communication technology for news production and distribution at Saudi newspapers, the main challenges that are facing Saudi newspapers in the digital age, journalists of Saudi newspapers and their perceiving of digital transformations, managing workloads and pressure in the newsrooms, How are the journalists of newspapers evaluating their practices with newsroom convergence?, traditional newspapers and the profession of journalism, and future of newspapers in Saudi Arabia.

By taking a comparative account across the cases studies of this research in conjunction with related literature, this chapter will discuss the findings of this study about changes and transformations affecting the newsrooms and journalists of four Saudi newspapers. This will incorporate their responses to the introduction and development of online and other digital communication technology.

Therefore, the chapter will discuss the findings along the following themes: the managerial and structural changes in Saudi newspapers, the role of new media departments and their relationship with the print newsrooms, and the production process between online and print

newsrooms. This chapter, in addition, will look at the impacts of digital technology on news production and distribution in the Saudi context, the current challenges facing the Saudi newspapers, the implemented and planned strategies in the newsrooms, and the position of Saudi journalists of traditional newspapers in the digital age.

This discussion is based on findings that were generated through observation in the newsrooms of *Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum*, and *Alwatan* newspapers, and also through in depth semi-structured interviews with journalists, managing editors, editors-in-chief, new media managers, and general managers at these four newspapers organisations. The discussion also is combined with related concepts and literature that were presented in Chapter 3 (Conceptual Framework and Literature Review).

## **9.2 Existing managerial structure in Saudi newspaper organisations**

According to the findings, the Saudi newspapers share similar managerial and organisational structure. The Saudi newspaper organisations consist of three main decision-making powers: the General Assembly, the Board of Directors, and the internal management. The internal management is divided into two equal power sectors, the editorial side and the management side, which are headed up by; an Editor-in-Chief for editorial activities, and a General Manager for business and financial operations. Senior managers of the internal management are supported by deputies and managers on each side, who play an essential role in maintaining this hierarchical model of management and the control of information flow both up and down the management chain. Although the structure of the internal management shares the main characteristics with other Saudi newspaper organisations in terms of having two main

sections (management and editorial), there are some differences, such as the number of positions in both sections and the creation of new positions to meet temporary or permanent needs.

The organisation structures of *Alyaum*, *Alwatan*, and *Al-Madina* share equivalent internal management structures. However, in *Alriyadh* a new position of General Supervisor has been introduced between the Board of Directors and the Editor-in-Chief. The post has been awarded to the former Editor-in-Chief who had worked for the paper in that role for more than 40 years. This new position does not exist in any other Saudi news organisations and it is believed that it is an emeritus one.

The overall organisational structure is a hierarchical model of top-down power in which control is in the hands of the higher levels over the lower management level on both sides. Another factor is that management is a separate control zone from the editorial side, whereby both the Editor-in Chief and General Manager have identical power over their sections. This is a common structural model in Saudi newspapers which is due to restrictions that are enforced by media laws and regulations. These media laws also determine the relationship between the management and editorial side, and the responsibilities of each side.

Articles 15 and 18 in Chapter Four of the Press Establishments Law divide the leadership of Saudi press organisations into two equal power posts, the General Manager and the Editor-in-Chief. These articles have framed the responsibilities of those two positions as follows:

**Article Fifteen:** Every establishment shall have a General Manager to run its financial and administrative affairs, in accordance with the governing policies and instructions, and represent it in its relations with other bodies regarding financial and administrative

matters. The internal regulations of the establishment shall specify his authorities and powers.

**Article Eighteen:** Every paper shall have an Editor-in-Chief to be responsible for what is published therein. He shall have the following tasks and powers:

- (a) Directly supervising, managing and directing all editorial affairs of the paper in order to achieve the goals and objects of the establishment.
- (b) Representing the paper in its relations with others regarding journalistic affairs.
- (c) Preparing plans and programs for the development of the paper.
- (d) Exercising the authorities given to him by internal regulations which enable him to carry out his duty in a suitable and competitive manner.

Thus, the focus of these two articles is that the Editor-in-Chief is responsible for the editorial side and the General Manager is responsible for finance and administrative elements. However, these equal leadership powers in the newspapers can result in some tensions between the management and editorial departments and can also slow down or limit any new transformation.

This tension results from having two equal powers between the Editor-in-Chief and the General Manager in Saudi newspapers. Tensions appear when the editorial side wants a budget for new projects or when the management interferes in editorial activities. For instance, development and improvement projects can be the central cause of conflict between the two sides, with the editorial department seeing them as urgent whilst management sees them as unnecessary spending. Although these tensions have always been there because of the nature of

Saudi newspapers' structure, digital technology has intensified it, putting extra pressure on both sides.

Rapid changes in technology and the media market have created new challenges for newspapers. Tackling these challenges from a different editorial and managerial perspective may result in tensions and, sometimes conflicts, between the two teams. For instance, MHM (2014) pointed out that tensions may be noticed when trying to convince the management to implement changes such as more digitalisation in the newsroom as management is concerned about the need for further funding for this transformation. The management always looks at the cost and those in the editorial department are looking for new improvements in their journalistic production.

AWF (2014) confirmed that this kind of tension between the management and editorial departments also exists at *Alyaum*. For instance, plans for improvement projects can be the cause of conflict between the two sides. The editorial department sees the plan as vital, whereas the management sees them as another unnecessary expense. AWF expressed this challenge by saying:

The main problem of the tension between the editorial side and management side of the newspaper is caused by the differences between the two mindsets and a lack of understanding between the sides to get along with each other. This difference in perspective can affect the growth and development of press media industry in Saudi Arabia. (AWF, Editor-in-Chief, *Alyaum* newspaper, Dammam, 2014).

The tension between the management and editorial sides in the Saudi newspapers has three characteristics. The first is that it is caused initially by regulatory factors in the Saudi media laws and by not technological transformations. The second is that it will be a permanent

situation in the Saudi newspapers for as long as Articles 15 and 18 in the Press Establishments Law are in place. This means that it is not a temporary cultural tension in response to the introduction of new cultural or technical transformations in the newsroom but is an on-going clash because of the complete separation between editorial and management departments. Third, this tension is not just between the journalists in the newsroom; it is between the two main groups, that is the editor-in-chief and the general manager with their respective teams. There are some calls to address this matter in Saudi newspapers in terms of reconsidering the newspaper organisations in general and bringing about some flexibility in the structure of media firms. MTH (2014), General Manager of *Al-Madina*, stressed:

I believe that the best structure for the newspaper (leadership) is to have one position for the editorial and management sides who acts as the General Manager and the Editor-in-Chief with one deputy for each side ... this will help to avoid tensions and problems that can result from one party's lack of awareness of the other's needs.

Such flexibility is crucial in that it can help Saudi newspapers not only to overcome such tensions in the newspapers but also provide them with wider opportunities in terms of responding to any other transformations and challenges in a way that will meet their individual needs.

Changes in today's media landscape may alert organisations to the need for transformation of the traditional newspapers to comply with changes in media market and new technologies. SHW (2014), General Manager of *Alyaum*, pointed out that a restructuring of current Saudi newspaper organisations is needed for a healthier future. A new leadership structure would be beneficial in addressing challenges that are facing the newspaper industry in the Saudi market.

Thus, the four studied newspapers are limited by Saudi media and print laws and regulations in respect of the changes they can make to their organisational structure. The intervention of these regulations on the internal management of Saudi newspaper organisations restricts any possible future transformations in response to technological and market forces.

For instance, the development of Internet technologies and the growth of online users has created niche markets (Quinn, 2005) that need particular advertising messages and strategies (Shaver, 2004: p.260) and traditional newspaper organisations need to adapt to this new market. They might do this by revising their both organisational and managerial structures, management, and strategies. This option is not available to Saudi press organisations of the restrictions enforced by the current Saudi Press Establishments Law.

### **9.3 Existing newsroom models at the four newspapers**

The newsrooms of the four newspapers have varied organisational set-ups, depending on their individual circumstances. However, newsrooms studied are all in the process of transforming the layout of the newsroom into convergent ones. The idea of an integrated newsroom is becoming the trend amongst Saudi managerial and editorial decision makers.

The process of implementing the convergent newsrooms is at different stages. *Alyaum* is the only Saudi newspaper organisation that has already embraced a new convergent newsroom, which has been renamed as the *Alyaum* News Centre. *Alriyadh* has a clear plan in place for a new newsroom layout but it still needs approval from the management and the Board of Directors as the budget for the proposed newsroom needs to be secured.

On the other hand, *Alwatan* and *Al-Madina* have no existing plans for a convergent newsroom. However, decision makers in both the editorial and the management departments have ideas about a transformation into an integrated newsroom. Some staff from editorial and management teams at both newspapers have visited convergent newsrooms in the region and abroad in order to have a wider knowledge about the current trends. It is clear that both *Alwatan* and *Al-Madina* are in the process of transforming the existing newsrooms but are going through some financial issues that are delaying any potential new plans.

Based on the findings of this study, current newsrooms of Saudi newspapers have one of three structural models which reflect different ways of thinking by the managements of those newspapers in the digital age. The first model has wall-divided offices with two or more main editorial lounges. The second model has one main editorial lounge but with partitioned desks and glazed-wall offices for senior journalists that open into the same newsroom. The third model is an integrated newsroom model of a large open space provided with high-tech products that are fully connected.

However, a fully convergent newsroom has not yet been achieved because the culture has not yet changed. AWF (2014), the Editor-in-Chief, confirmed that although there is a new convergent newsroom in place, no major transformation has been noticed in the working culture. AWF believes that the main transformation should be in the mindset of journalists in the newsrooms, not in the geographical location or the structure of newsrooms.

This confirms similar findings in some literature that state that any transformation in the newsroom should affect newsroom culture first (Klinenberg (2005). The convergent newsroom needs a new working culture (Dupagne and Garrison, 2006) as well as new need multiskilling

journalists to be adapted for successful transformation (Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008). Thus, changing the mindset of journalists is a key factor in the process of the change from print culture to digital culture (see Section 9.6.3). Having a different layout with no change in the journalists' approach to news production can result in an unsuccessful transformation to convergent newsroom.

*Alyaum* has a new layout in the newsroom into which the management wanted to introduce a convergent approach of working. However, the focus of the current transformation at *Alyaum* from a newsroom into a convergent news centre “*Alyaum* News Centre” was mainly in response to trends in global newspapers and for increasing commutations within the newsroom. SAH (2014), Deputy Editor-in-Chief at *Alyaum*, clearly stated that the transformation of the newsroom into the News Centre was firstly to update the newsroom structure in line with new trends in the global media newsrooms in the United States and Europe, and to improve internal communication between news workers inside the editorial workplace. This can be explained by the fact that online production existed before the new News Centre and the digital revenue is as little as 1% and has not increased after the introduction of new newsroom.

#### **9.4 The role of new media departments/online newsrooms**

Online newsrooms (or new media departments) are separated from traditional print newsrooms in three of the newspapers, *Alriyadh*, *Al-Madina*, and *Alwatan*, but integrated in the case of *Alyaum* which has the new News Centre (convergent newsroom). The separation of print and online newsrooms comes from the fact that print newsrooms are well established whilst online departments as separate units are less than ten years old in the Saudi newspaper organisations.

Having separate newsrooms is a common model among traditional newspapers. For example, Saltzis and Dickinson (2008) recorded that the online newsrooms for *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times* were separate from main newsrooms and Zhang (2012) similarly pointed out that online newsrooms are separated from print newsroom in Chinese newspapers. This model remains in place even after of those newsrooms were restructured and the convergent newsroom model was introduced.

The main role of the online department in Saudi newspapers is to transform the news produced by traditional newsrooms into digital and web-friendly products. The contribution of the new media department in the news content varies from one newsroom to another in the four case studies. other differences included names, size, role, structure, and relationships with print newsrooms.

These differences in the new media departments (online newsrooms) reflect different managerial perceptions of the roles of this department in traditional newspapers. It may also be a sign of uncertainty about the future of these traditional newspapers in the age of the internet between unprofitable online production and the decline in print circulation. The dilemma here is finding the right balance between online production, with more readers but tiny profits, and traditional production with decreasing numbers of readers but still very profitable (more than 95% of annual revenue). Finally, the differences in size and role of these online newsrooms in the four newspapers definitely reflect their financial position and success. In order of size of newsroom and their role in news production the four case study newspapers are as follows: *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum*, *Al-Madina*, and *Alwatan*.

At *Al-Madina* the department is called Electronic Publishing, is small and is placed at the end point of the news production process. There are only four people working at the department who are mainly technicians. The department plays the main role in transforming traditional print content into web-friendly formats, managing social media accounts and updating tablet and smartphone apps.

In contrast, *Alriyadh* has a large Electronic Media department with a mixed team of 15 employees who are either technicians or journalists. The department plays an important role in the daily news production. Converting news content into html format is still the main role for the department, in addition to other tasks including responsibility for managing and monitoring SMS production, maintaining *Alriyadh*'s websites (Arabic and English), engaging with online users, updating and developing related software applications, managing real-time news, and updating 24/7 news tape, online advertisements, social media accounts, voice auto-reader, and other interactive services. All in all, the department contributes substantially to the editorial side as it has its own journalists who carry out the journalistic tasks. However, those journalists are online-only journalists, which mean that they work only for online production from newsgathering through to final news products. The online-only journalists at *Alriyadh* rely on online sources and use online tools for producing their journalistic works.

At *Alwatan* the Electronic Media department is relatively new, having been set up in late 2014. However, related work in transforming print into digital formats used to be the role of the IT staff in another department. The newly appointed head of the department is a journalist. Having said that, technical issues are still managed by technicians and the key role of the manager of the Electronic Media department is to manage and update social media accounts and the SMS service. However, there is no physical location for the new media activity within the

newsroom. This can be explained by the fact that the department is in its early stages and most of the work is carried out by IT staff who also work in other departments, such as the Information Centre, and have other tasks too. The Information Centre is located within the main newsroom in a glazed partitioned room and has four employees. The head of the department is located in another city (Riyadh) where he also works as a full-time journalist. Communication between the head of department and his staff is by phone, email, content-management system, and a daily video conference. In addition the new media manager plays an important role in managing *Alwatan.com.sa*. Finally, the department relies considerably on the print newsroom and does not contribute to the news production, apart from breaking news.

The final case study, *Alyaum*, has an integrated newsroom. The New Media Department is slightly different from those in the other case studies. Staff of the New Media department are located at journalists' desks within the new News Centre. Some roles of managing online content have been assigned to traditional journalists within the editorial departments. The editorial divisions such as sport and business departments have access to *Alyaum.com* and are responsible for managing and updating news themselves. As with other departments in Saudi newspapers, the key role for the staff of the New Media Department is to transform traditional newspaper print into multiple digital formats. In addition, the New Media Department manages the newspaper's website, maintaining smartphone and tablet apps, managing the WhatsApp service, updating social media accounts and interacting with online users by, for example, responding to online comments and publishing updates on news stories.

In summary, there are five roles identified in this study which the new media departments have in the four newspapers. The first role is to convert the newspaper content into html and other digital formats to fit applications for smartphones and tablets.

However, *Alriyadh* and *Alyaum* are in the process of disabling applications for smartphones and tablets because they have introduced a responsive website that allows users to access the online version through their smartphones and navigate more easily, making it more compatible and faster to use. They took the step of developing access for smartphones for two reasons. The first was in response to the increased of online unique visits to the websites via of these smartphones. For instance, 80% of online users accessing *Alriyadh.com* use smartphones and 20% use computers (HNG, 2014). The second reason for deciding to disable applications for tablets and smartphones is financial; the budget for developing, maintaining, and managing those applications has been cut and staff efforts were redirected towards the newspaper's website.

The second role is to manage the websites in terms of technical and security matters. This role includes control of website activities and development of the capability of the website to face any online threats.

The third role is to manage social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram, Instagram, Snapchat and WhatsApp. The use of social media is varied and depends on the nature of the platform. The main uses are distributing news stories, following up and update stories, and live coverage of some events.

The fourth role is to manage the SMS service, which is an important role; *Alriyadh*, for example, has an independent subdivision to manage more than a dozen SMS channels. The importance of this service for all the newspapers studied, and for *Alriyadh* in particular, is the financial income it provides; it is a paid service and newspapers are making some margin of income, from the other 3% that the digital publishing is making, toward the annual revenue.

The fifth role of the new media divisions is participation in news production. However, the overall contribution of new media staff in journalistic content is limited to breaking news and transforming the print production for online content at *Al-Madina* and *Alwatan*, and contribution is even lower at *Alyaum* and *Alriyadh*. The reason behind this is that the majority of the employees are technicians and have no journalistic background. Only *Alriyadh* has online-only journalists, as discussed above.

### **9.5 The relationship between online and print newsrooms in Saudi newspapers**

Observations of online newsrooms (new media departments) and print newsrooms in the four Saudi newspapers have found that there is collaboration between them but that at quite a low level. This collaborative culture between journalists in print newsrooms and staff in online newsrooms is limited to sharing content and sometimes sources. Journalists and technicians working in the new media departments do not have regular direct interaction with journalists in the main newsrooms. The daily routine at the workplace is that of traditional newsrooms carrying out the various stages of news production from newsgathering to the final task of designing pages. The final product is then passed to the online newsrooms to convert it into digital and web-friendly formats.

However, there are some exceptional cases, such as the New Media department at *Alriyadh*, where there are some digital journalists who carry out online tasks, and in the New Media department of *Alyaum*, where staff are located within the main newsroom.

The online divisions at the four case study newspapers are dependent on the print newsrooms for news production for online and other digital formats, although in some cases there is limited amount of active contribution. In the managerial structure, online newsrooms are often connected to the Deputy Editor-in-Chief. Locations of the four online departments are placed in the same building of the newspapers but separate from print newsrooms. However, the new media department at *Alyaum* is located within the same new convergent newsroom.

Directors of the new media departments have a closer relationship than the rest of their staff with editorial team in the print newsrooms, as they attend editorial meetings. Having said that, a greater collaborative culture is developing through in-house computerised networks as they use the same content-management system. Online and print staff share information and comments on the news production in process and about news stories or news sources as necessary. However, this relationship is not likely to be developed further especially at *A-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, and *Alwatan*. In *Alyaum*, as staff of the New Media Department alongside journalists' desks, this relationship may witness some improvements.

The best description of this relationship between new media and print newsrooms at *A-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, and *Alwatan* is perhaps expressed by AMJ (2014):

It is a disconnected and non-harmonious relationship which can be called a correlation relationship, as we share the same name of the newspaper ... the reasons behind this sort of relationship are associated with the lack of journalistic practice and the lack of full integration between traditional and online newsrooms. (*Alriyadh* newspaper).

Likewise, HSB (2014), Managing Editor at *Al-Madina*, stated that the relationship between the print newsroom and the electronic publishing department was 'very poor'. He added

that there was no culture of integration or strong connections between the staff. Moreover, AMJ (2014), the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Alriyadh* went further by preferring the idea of total separation of the whole New Media department from the traditional newspaper including both editorial and financial budget. However, AMJ maintained that the new separate department should stay under the Al-Yamamah Press Establishment which owns the *Alriyadh* newspaper.

The same point was made by FFY (2014), Managing Editor, who argued that the new structure of the *Alyaum* News Centre should not include the new media staff with the print team as this might slow down the online news production process. He reasoned that there were different characteristics between traditional and digital news production. AAK (2014) mentioned in particular that technicians should have separate offices away from the newsroom and that the website of *Alyaum* should be an independent body as it is an online news and should be treated as a news-only website.

It is clear that despite embracing new media technologies such as the Internet, smartphones, tablets, desktops and laptops, and other editorial content-management systems, new media departments are still struggling to integrate themselves with the traditional print newsrooms in Saudi newspapers; the online newsroom is still subordinate to the traditional print activity. Most practices in these new media departments are IT activities and online management which rarely add to news production content.

This lack of full integration of the online and print newsrooms can be due to shortage multi-tasking journalists who have adequate skills, and the industry lacks a clear vision for these departments in newspaper industry. The four Saudi newspapers still treat online publishing as separate divisions and this even includes the only convergent newsroom in the Saudi newspapers

market. The strategies that have been implemented by the four newsrooms are maximising the advantages of the Internet as a platform but there is a lack vision about transforming the newsroom culture from a print culture to a multimedia and digital culture. Multimedia here relates to changing the way that newsrooms deal with information, archives, formatting, practices and the management of the news production.

Journalists at the four case study newsrooms are, to slightly different extents, still conducting their daily working practices from the perspective of a traditional print culture, treating the online publishing as of secondary importance. Of course, breaking-news is exceptional in the newspapers in which they are published once get them, via online and other means such as Twitter and SMS. Indeed, this understanding of online publishing as a secondary platform is also carried by the online staff themselves. This can be seen in the way main roles are defined; online newsrooms/departments are described as *content transformers* from print to digital and not as a *content producers* and provider (this is explained further in the following sections 5.5; 6.5; 7.5; and 8.5).

Lack of multi-skilled journalists and the separation of online and print newsrooms have been mentioned by Saltzis and Dickinson (2008) and Zhang (2012) as barriers to full convergent journalism. A lack of vision around online newsrooms and the absence of multiskilled journalists in the traditional newspapers are not limited to the Saudi context, rather it is a global concern being noted, for example, in the European and Chinese newspaper industry (Saltzis and Dickinson,2008; Zhang ,2012; Tameling and Broersma,2013; García-Avilés et al., 2009 and2014).

However, this does not mean that these online departments are less important to the management than the main traditional print newsrooms. Traditional newsrooms are in need of the new media staff skills for technical issues and digital conversion. Overall, the relationship between traditional and digital newsrooms is a mutually beneficial one in which print newsrooms need the new media departments for their technical skills and the new media newsrooms need traditional newsrooms for their journalistic skills regarding news production. The future of this relationship could be developed by newsroom staff observing each other's newsroom and gaining a better understanding of the other's skills and requirements. This could help progress towards full integration of digital and traditional newsrooms.

## **9.6 Implications for news production and distribution at Saudi newspapers**

Digital communication technologies, especially the Internet, computer-assisted reporting devices, and software, have offered many opportunities for newspaper newsrooms. The Saudi newspapers have been taking advantage of this technology in their newsrooms and have embraced digital communication technology in news production and distribution, as has been discussed in the prior sections.

### **9.6.1 Speeding up news production**

Speeding up the news production process in the four newsrooms of *Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum and Alwatan* has been noted by journalists as the main impact that digital technology has had on news production. Additionally, in the digital age, the Internet offers more space to publish longer news stories and more photos, whereas space in a printed newspaper is limited.

AAK (2014) pointed out that digital communication technology in news production has speeded up the workflow of a journalist's daily work. The concept of newsgathering has changed among journalists, who are now using online technology to submit and update news stories on a continual basis.

According to AWF (2014), Editor-in-Chief of *Alyaum*, the introduction of online digital communication technology in the journalism industry has expanded space for the journalistic production. The Internet, for instance, enables the newspaper to expand news stories with additional information and features such as photos and video. *Alyaum* is using all online and digital platforms to publish its news productions which can be seen as an adding value to journalistic production. Similarly, AAK (2014) stated that digitalisation of news production has speeded up the workflow in daily journalist work and journalists have been using online tools that makes the process of producing news quicker and easier.

In addition, saving time in news production is related to the previous point about the implications of digital technologies on the Saudi newsrooms. MAZ (2014), Deputy Editor-in-Chief at *Al-Madina*, highlights that diffusion of online and all digital communication technology has resulted in saving time in the journalists' daily routines. It saves time by reducing the overall news production process greatly, and it cuts the average time taken in producing a single news story from 3–4 hours to 20 minutes.

This average, as stated by MAZ (2014) should only be seen as an indication of the average production time for a single news story from the journalist's account on the content management system (CMS) to the allocated space in the newspaper. It does not include any of

the process prior to entering the story into CMS such as gathering information and speaking to sources. (See section 9.6.3.4 about the impact of such speeding-up on news production).

Similarly, MAZ pointed out that digital technology has saved time by reducing the rush hour in *Al-Madina*'s newsroom. MAZ specified:

The rush hour of the newsroom used to be longer, from 11am to 8pm but has now been reduced to only two hours between 3 – 5pm when all editorial managers and journalists have to physically attend the newsroom to finalise the next day's paper.

Digital technology also saves journalists' time by allowing them to cover some events by following them on social media or watching live television coverage, especially in cases of press conferences. Journalists also use their smartphones, anytime, anywhere, to update stories without the need to travel; this saved time can be spent on other journalistic tasks (AGH., 2014).

Similarly, use of some social media such as WhatsApp, enables journalists to get in touch with more than one source about news stories at the same time. MHM. (2014) Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Al-Madina*, confirmed:

It was difficult sometimes for journalists to obtain information or cover more than one event in different places because of time and place constraints. The process of obtaining such information used to be time-consuming, travelling around the city by car to attend events at certain times ... journalists today can use digital communication technology to gather more information in a shorter time. For example, at *Al-Madina* our journalists nowadays are using smartphones and social networking sites to access individuals' and

organisations' accounts to obtain the information they need for their stories from their office.

However, such speed has a direct impact on the quality of news production in both positive and negative ways. In a positive way, HAD (2015) indicated that the quality of photos and video production has been improved; digital and online technology offers journalists the ability to share and circulate these audio and video productions over multiple platforms. Also, OSD (2014) pointed out that digital communication technology and electric publishing tools have a positive effect on traditional newspapers in terms of improving their graphics and design in print and online production.

Balancing the speed and quality of journalistic production is still a great challenge for newsrooms seeking to maintain a lead position in news-coverage in competition with other press organisations. The four Saudi newspapers are using technology to speed up the news production process, but this may have side effects, damaging the quality of production. The newsrooms are under pressure to speed up the news production process to compete with news media outlets and social media but this can have a negative impact on quality.

For instance, verification of a news stories may get overlooked in the rush to meet deadlines or by getting a new scoop for the newspaper. Too much speeding up of news production may affect the quality of the news by neglecting related features such as the news history background, infographics, hypertexts, videos or audio. This dilemma has become more obvious through the practices of the digital news production on newspapers' websites, or other dissemination channels like SMS or social media platforms.

MAZ (2014) remarked that quality has suffered from the introduction of the online and communication technologies in news production. This was because speed is the most important characteristic of the digital age. AZS (2014) confirmed that the implications for speeding up the news production are that it can directly affect directly the quality of production. Metykova and Cisarova (2009) confirmed similar concerns that the increased speed in journalistic production can have negative a impact on the quality of news production.

Likewise, A.D.H. (2014) stated that today's journalist, in the age of the Internet, faces a continuous struggle between meeting journalism standards and the need for quick news production. He stressed that news production in the digital environment depends on time, since newsrooms require the speed of journalistic production to meet the competitive media market's needs of traditional and digital news outlets.

### **9.6.2 Reducing costs and efforts**

Reducing the cost of production and distribution of news at Saudi newspapers is one of important opportunities for traditional newspaper organisations that has resulted from the introduction of digital communication technology. Saudi newspapers have a tradition of having two or three printing rounds each day. The first printing round starts at 6pm for some newspapers, which can be considered to be very early as events after that time cannot be covered. The reason for the early print is that the first two printing rounds are sent by airmail or by cars to different regions within Saudi Arabia which is a geographical area of more than 2.1 million km<sup>2</sup>.

Online communication technology makes synchronous printing possible, which is substantially step in the Saudi newspaper industry. The main consequence of this is that the

newspapers have stopped using expensive methods of delivery, for example, discontinuing the use of air cargo. The newspapers consequently have extended their printing deadline and have economised on circulation costs. Nowadays Saudi newspapers are using synchronous printing methods in the main biggest regions, i.e. the newspapers are printed in three separate printing houses at the same time in those three districts and then delivered to sales points and subscribers' homes. Additionally, the extended deadline allows the daily prints to be more up-to-date.

The impact on the newspaper industry of the technology which supports synchronous printing is seen in reductions in costs, labour, time, and in the production process. Furthermore, it enhances the newspapers' performance in a competitive media environment in a way that the newspapers become more relevant to readers than they used to be. The Saudi newspapers usually have between two to three visions, that the so-called *first printing* and *second printing*. The *first printing* is intended for remote destinations whereas the final printing is for distribution in same region where the newspaper is located.

In other words, prior to *synchronous printing* the *first printing* version used to be fed by news stories from the previous day that had not been included due to time restrictions; then stories from the current day would be added in the time available before the copy was rushed to the printing house in order to meet air cargo deadlines. With *synchronous printing* technology Saudi newspapers have extended their printing deadlines and have parallel printing in the three different regions in the Kingdom. This leads to reduced delivery costs and, most importantly, make the print more relevant for the reader compared to before.

*Al-Madina* uses a new imaging technology method by which the final copy of the newspaper is sent as a PDF from Desktop Publishing (DTP) to Computer-To-Plate (CTP) in

three printing houses in three cities at the same time with no need to use a photographic film method. *Al-Madina*, which is based in Jeddah City in the western region of Saudi Arabia synchronously prints its paper in Abha City in the southern region, Riyadh City in the central region, and Dammam in the eastern region. It also appears that *Al-Madina* is using *Alwatan*'s printing house and *Al Jazirah* is using *Al-Madina*'s printing house in a model of cross-printing cooperation to keep down printing costs.

Moreover, at the four Saudi newsrooms digital technology is in extensive use for newsgathering, editing and distributing. The news production is managed through software and computerised digital networks whereby news is created, edited, proofread, designed on the page, and then approved. Thus, news flows via this editorial cycle, which saves paperwork and time throughout the process. Therefore, the newspaper has reduced its usage of paper, pens and printer ink.

Equally, reduced staff effort in news production is one of the characteristics of producing news in the digital environment. Saudi journalists have become dependent on the Internet for journalistic works by using available tools such as social media like Twitter and WhatsApp, through their smartphones. For the newsgathering process, fact-checking, editing, publishing, and sharing of the stories can be done through different platforms. This results in a reduction of the work for those journalists who can manage all these tasks via their laptops or smartphones with far less time and effort. Use of these technologies have improved journalists work in terms of time spent on the news production process and workflow in newsrooms. However, this does not guarantee an improvement in production quality as these new technologies bring other issues such as time pressure. The pressure to deliver breaking news instantly, for instance, can cause journalists to rush their work in a way that may affect journalistic quality (see Section 9.6.1).

### 9.6.3 Expansion of news distribution

In the digital age, Saudi newsrooms are using multiple digital platforms for distribution of news to maximise their reach to readers. They all have their online version in addition to news delivery channels such as SMS and smartphone and tablet applications. The Saudi newspapers are trying to expand their reach online to compensate for the drop in print circulation. The Internet is the greatest medium for Saudi newsrooms, as for others in the world, to distribute their digital news. The main motivation for traditional newsrooms to have an online presence is to bring in new readers or retain loyal print readers who may change their readership habit from print to online.

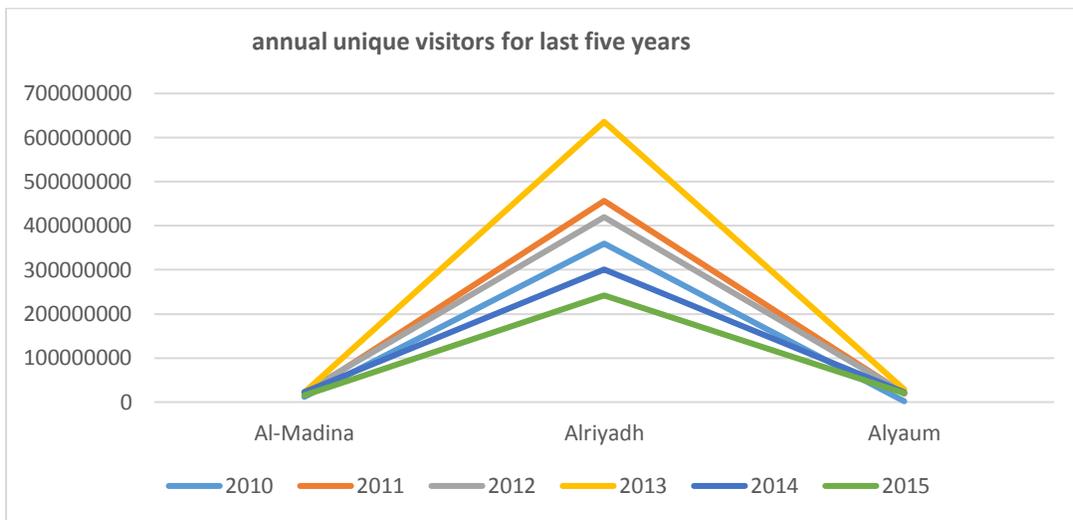


Figure 9.1 Unique visits to three newspapers' websites in last five years

For instance, three newspapers (*Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh* and *Alyaum*) have witnessed a dramatic annual increase of online unique visits over years. However, since mid-2012, as can be seen in Figure 9.1, there has been a dramatic decline. HNG (2014) explained that there were two

notable changes in the numbers of visits: the first was between 2008 and 2010 when a peak of online visits was witnessed and the second was the start of the decline in 2012. One of the significant reasons behind the drop of online readers as pointed out by MSH (2014), HNG (2014), and SUT (2014), was the introduction of some social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Twitter, for example, provides a platform for online users to consume, share and comment on the news with no necessity to visit the original source.

In addition, and drawn from the first point of the expansion of news distribution, social networking sites are another method of distributing news to online users. All Saudi newspapers have their online accounts in social media and it has become essential for the news production process to update these accounts (See Figures 9.1 and 9.2).

Social Media	Al-Madina	Alriyadh	Alyaum	Alwatan
Twitter	413K	2.06M	288k	1.2M
Facebook	331K	41K	34k	45.7k
YouTube	21K	14K	250	
Instagram	23K	14k	8.6K	11.9k
Snapchat	Yes	Yes	No	No
Telegram	4k	7k	3k	4
Google+	684	200K	376	1M
SMS channels	15	13	8	8

Figure (9.2) Newspapers' social media accounts (correct as Mar 2016)

As shown in Figure 9.2, *Al-Madina* has multiple accounts on social media sites. For example, *Al-Madina* has more than 413,000 followers on Twitter, 331,000 likes on Facebook,

and more than 21,000 subscribers to its channel on YouTube with more 17 million views. *Al-Madina* also has accounts on Snapchat, Telegram and Instagram for sharing news, photos and videos. *Alriyadh*, furthermore, has more than 2.06 million followers on Twitter, around 200,000 on Google+, 11,600 on Instagram, more than 37,000 on Facebook, and more than 14,000 subscribers on YouTube. *Alyaum* has more than 288,000 followers on Twitter, 34,000 on Facebook, more than 341,000 subscribers to its channel on YouTube with millions of views, and 8,500 followers on Instagram. *Alwatan* has multiple accounts on social media too with more than 1.2 million followers on Twitter, 11,900 followers on Instagram, more than 45,000 on Facebook, and finally, more than 1 million on Google+. Finally, the use of social media varies across the different papers and across the different platforms. More discussion about the use of social media by Saudi newsrooms will be considered later in this chapter.

There are other methods that Saudi newspapers use in online distribution, such as RSS (Rich Site Summary), SMS, and smartphone and tablet applications. *Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum* and *Alwatan* have SMS channels that are dedicated to particular news types such as sports and breaking news. In particular, smartphone and tablet applications are one of the news distribution methods in the Saudi newsrooms; however, this is not interactive as it only provides a PDF copy of the newspaper. These applications are now beginning to disappear as some Saudi newspapers, including *Alriyadh* and *Alyaum*, have begun new to develop web responsive designs, which serve smart devices. RSS is another channel to deliver news stories to which users can subscribe through the newspaper's website and Saudi newspapers are using this technology in news distribution.

## **9.7 Implications for commercial and regulatory environment in Saudi newspapers industry**

The Internet and its implications have brought as many challenges for newspapers worldwide as the opportunities these technologies offer (Conboy and Steel, 2009; p.28). Some of these challenges directly affect the newsrooms of those newspapers. The newsrooms of Saudi newspapers are also facing some of those challenges in the digital and networked age, especially when it comes to ways and degrees of responding to the expansion of digital communication technology. This section will discuss these implications under two main subsections: commercial and regulation challenges.

### **9.7.1 Commercial and market implications**

#### Drops in circulation

Drops in the print circulation of Saudi newspapers are one of the most important challenges facing the traditional press in the digital age. This is an important issue for Saudi print organisations, as between 95 to 99% of their annual revenue comes from the print-production side. Saudi newspapers tend not to disclose their circulation figures for commercial reasons related to marketing their advertising space.

However, in terms of percentage, circulation of national Saudi newspapers, which was approximately 500,000 (HSB, 2014) of the whole print market, have witnessed some drops. Muaminh (2013) stated that there had been dramatic drops in circulation of the Saudi newspapers of 30% in last three years. MAZ (2014), Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Al-Madina* spoke of an estimated average drop of 40% in the print circulation in the Saudi market in the period between 2010 and 2014. Similarly, AZS, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Alwatan* (2014), confirmed drops in

Saudi newspapers' circulation of 40%, but in the last three, not five years, which he considered to be worse. The key causes of circulation drops in Saudi newspapers are diffusion online, communication technologies, and expansion of the uses of these technologies such as social networking sites (HSB, AMJ, SGD, AWF, FFY, AQZ, AZS, 2014).

It is evident that there has been a decline of Saudi newspaper circulation in recent years. This is similar to what is happening worldwide as drops in circulation have also been noticed in the European and American newspapers ((Newspaper Association of America; March 30, 2015; ABC March 2015; Ponsford 2015). For the Saudi newspapers this decline raised many question about the future of those prints in the age of the Internet.

This is causing difficulties for decision-makers of those newspapers regarding the future of the industry in Saudi Arabia. Uncertainty about the future is putting more pressure on newsrooms regarding the appropriate transformations to deal with this challenge. Similarly, their journalists are questioning their profession in the current industry and are concerned about their jobs. Although there is a degree of optimism among Saudi newspapers about print advertising, but this confidence is based on culture not on evidence. The risk here is that any change in this culture will be dramatic for the Saudi newspapers because the switch in advertisers' behaviour could be quick and sudden. This is a predicted threat and is challenging the newspapers to maintain an ongoing evaluation of their print advertising.

#### Unprofitability of digital production

Related to the above discussion, online publishing is still unprofitable for the Saudi newspapers; the annual digital revenue for Saudi newspapers organisations is still less than 5%. Digital revenue is generated from website advertising, smartphone and tablet app advertising,

and SMS services. The online paid content is not implemented in Saudi Arabian newspaper organisations, as AWF (2014) explained, ‘It is not acceptable among our readers in the current time.’ The four Saudi newspapers do not rely on online and other digital advertising and consequently give priority to traditional production.

At *Alyaum*, online and digital production generates only 1% a year from online and digital products and 99% comes from the traditional side. SAH (Deputy Editor-in-Chief) said:

We prioritise the print production over the digital production because of the 99% guaranteed revenue coming from it, whereas 1% revenue comes from the digital side. Therefore, we see the digital production only as complementary to the traditional print. (Deputy Editor-in-Chief, *Alyaum* newspaper, 2014).

Similarly, at *Al-Madina*, digital revenue is less than 10% and the particular generators of that income were specified by MSH (2014), Manager of the Electronic Publishing:

The income from online advertising annual income in 2007 was 200,000 SR (533,000 USD) and this figure has doubled many times to reach around 3 million SR in 2013, which is around 800,000 USD. Additionally, the income from the SMS subscriptions annually is around one million SR (375,000 USD) ... all digital income represents around 5% compared with traditional print income.

Likewise, *Alriyadh*'s annual revenue through the Electronic Media department is around 3% of the total and the vast majority of revenue comes from advertising in print, which contributes 97% of the newspaper's total. The revenue from the digital side comes from online advertising through the website, smartphones and tablets.

The unprofitability of digital production means that newspaper organisations have a preference for print. For instance, *Alyaum* balances the online production in a way that does not affect the profitability of the traditional newspaper production. SUT (2014) stated:

We are benefitting from new digital communication technology in all steps of journalistic production in the newsroom but are maintaining our priority on not adversely affecting the print production as this may be reflected in the organisation's revenue ... reasons behind that are the fast changing nature of those technologies and the difficulty in creating a profitable business from online and digital production for traditional newspaper organisations. (New Media Manager, *Alyaum* newspaper, 2014)

These two issues of uncertainty and unprofitability raise questions about any transformation in the newsrooms. For example, there are questions about the extent to which Saudi newsrooms should shift to online and digital publishing. The management of traditional newspapers are dubious about proposals by the editorial team for new transformation projects in the current newsrooms (*Alriyadh* and *Al-Madina*). This includes changing from the current model into convergent model as this needs a large budget and, yet, online publishing does not generate that level of profit. In other words, there is a real challenge for the editorial team in convincing management about change towards online production or in the layout of the newsroom, for as long as these change so fail to generate sufficient income. This may delay these needed transformations until it is too late. This wait intensifies concerns of uncertainty and can lead to more fear among editorial team in a way that may be reflected on their work.

It is important to note that all of the four case study newsrooms have some new development projects for improving digital publishing or transforming current newsrooms

into convergent newsrooms. However, most of these projects have been delayed or rejected by management. This is because they do not see the potential for sufficient profits and have therefore given these projects less priority. Overall, the importance of this issue is that the unprofitability of online and digital production could lead to delay further transformations in the newsrooms of the four Saudi newspapers.

### Changing nature of competition

The nature of competition in the media industry has been subject to changes in recent years due to the introduction of new communication technologies and rapid increases in online users. The traditional competition used to be between traditional newspapers, then against the radio and then against television. However, with the introduction of online technologies, and especially the Internet, the landscape of media communication has changed and made it more difficult for traditional newspapers to survive in the new competitive environment.

In addition to the Internet revolution there are many other changes that took place in the telecommunications industry in the last decade. Big computer and mobile phone companies have launched smartphones. Many mobile companies have launched touchscreen phone technology in new devices and enabled connectivity to the internet. These devices, which are called smartphones, enable the distribution of media productions in all formats for users and take availability, accessibility and connectivity to a new higher level (Westlund, 2013).

The introduction of the Internet is a fundamental shift in the nature of today's communication; it offers a new form of communication that did not exist before. Over the years, the nature of communication has witnessed several changes: from one-to-one in personal

communication, to one-to-many in mass communication, and finally to new flexible sort of communication that offers all previous types and adds a many-to-many mode (Gillmor,2006; p.13).

The new nature of communication that the Internet brings together all the communication types in one place and can be used by anyone, at anytime and anywhere. This change has implications for the nature of media competition particularly in the newspaper industry. Competition in the media market is not new factor, however the Internet has created further challenges for the newspapers to find new ways to keep their business going.

As discussed in Chapter 3, newspapers are subsidised in two main ways: production sales and advertising. Pricing newspapers and their contents at a fair level for producers and consumers is a vital process for the press organisations (Picard, 2015). However, all Saudi newspapers have the same price as set by the regulations. The current price of 2 SAR well below the production costs. SAG (2014) confirms that a copy of the *Alriyadh* newspaper can cost more than 5 SAR (around 1.4 USA dollars) and this is the case for most Saudi newspapers. Another difference is that Saudi newspapers rely primarily on advertising and then on other incomes from sales and subscriptions. This leaves advertising as the main income generator to allow Saudi newspapers to maintain their business

However, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the Internet has created a competitive means of advertising revenue and many niche markets. Newspaper managers worldwide want to protect their position in the fragmented market by keeping their audiences. (Quinn, 2005). However, advertising in the print media sector has been falling in the last decade (Bhargara and Alkaabi, 2014). Growth of online communities and rapid increases in online users that has led to the

readership moving from print to digital means that traditional newspapers have been facing the challenge of keeping readers in order to attract new advertisers.

Since the introduction of the Internet and other digital communication technologies, Saudi newspapers are being challenged by new forms of competition. The traditional competition for readership and content still exists but the Internet has brought an additional level of competition. Saudi newspapers are anxious about how the Internet, and its potential in connectivity, simplicity, productivity and capacity, is changing the standards of this competition and may badly damage the print industry.

SHW (2004), General Manager of *Alyaum*, argued that journalism is not disconnected from the rapid changes and developments in online and digital communication technology. The technological revolution has contributed to changes in the news industry that have resulted in an increase in competition among all media players in Saudi Arabia. Thus, a Saudi newspaper, as one of these players, has to compete among other traditional news organisations. Digital communication technology has raised the level of competition by adding digital environment players such as online-only newspapers and social networking sites.

The result of the changing nature of competition is that the Internet with its implications has raised the volume of competition in news production for traditional newspapers in a way that television and radio never have (EGK, 2014). The nature of competition has changed from competing with traditional media organisations competing with online organisations and individuals. More specifically, *Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum* and *Alwatan* are suffering competition from the online-only newspapers, SNSs, and smartphone and tablet apps as much as

the traditional press firms. In short, coping with competitors since the development of digital communication technology has become more difficult for the Saudi traditional newspapers.

### Increasing operational costs

One of the challenges that the Saudi newspapers face is the increasing costs of news production and the traditional print production has suffered the most from these increases. Paper rolls and ink for the printing houses are a main concern at this point for the management of the four case study newspapers. SHW (2014) commented that nowadays the Saudi newspapers are struggling to supply rolls to the printing lines. This is because prices of paper rolls have witnessed an increase of 80% compared to prices five years ago. Likewise, MQ (2014) and AQZ (2014) argued that the challenge of increases in operational costs in the Saudi newspapers could turn into a real threat if the costs of printing papers and ink keeps rising over the next years and could lead to the newspapers' operations being terminated.

### **9.7.2 Regulation and policy implications**

Media regulations and laws are at the centre of any development or transformation in the Saudi newspaper industry. As has been discussed in Chapter 2 the Saudi media market is regulated by five media laws and executive regulations. The impact of the media regulatory laws on transformation in the Saudi newspaper industry is one of the main challenges facing newspapers seeking to respond to changes in digital communications. The challenge in this respect are the limitations that the Saudi newspapers have in responses they want to do in response to changes in the market and technology in terms of organisational and managerial structure of the newspaper and failing to protect their journalistic production by the Copyright Law.

### Limited responses in organisational structure

The structural model of Saudi newspaper organisations is restricted, as discussed in previous sections, by Articles 15 and 18 in Chapter Four of the Press Establishments Law. The leadership of the Saudi newspaper organisations is divided into two equal power posts, the General Manager and the Editor-in-Chief, whose responsibilities are defined by the articles. Thus the similarity of this model across the industry is a result of restrictions which are imposed by the media laws that specify such a structure, the relationship between the management and editorial sides, and the liability of each side, in all Saudi newspaper organisations.

With the above restrictions Saudi newspapers are not allowed to change their managerial structure. There are demands for changes to the structure to enable it to operate more successfully in the digital age, but they fall under this regulation. MTH (2014), General Manager of *Al-Madina*, demanded:

I believe the best managerial structure to run the newspaper nowadays is to have one person who runs the organisation and acts as Editor-in-Chief and General Manager at the same time and one deputy for each side. This will eliminate any tensions between management and editorial teams and will cut down some cost.

Less flexibility in the structure of the Saudi newspaper organisations can lead to a dilemma in terms of responding to changes in the media industry and need to adapt the business model. The newspapers in Saudi Arabia need more flexibility in their business structure to adapt to new challenges and changes in the media market. This is particularly true when considering new forces in the media industry such changes in the digital economy and business models of news firms to cope with the digital-media environment.

## Journalistic copyright

The four Saudi newsrooms are concerned about the copyright of their journalistic work as the Copyright Law does not protect their production in a way that satisfies them. The efforts of journalists are highly abused by some online media practitioners who steal their news stories and circulate them on other online-only newspapers. This point does not concern aggregating content by automotive selective tools but rather individuals and organisations using other works for themselves and their websites without consent and with no reference to the original source.

MAZ (2014) confirmed that at *Al-Madina* there had been many incidents when news stories were subject to recycling and reproduction on other online-only newspapers with no acknowledgement given to *Al-Madina*. The newsroom has put some effort into suing those news outlets, but took too much time and effort. *Al-Madina* has spent time and money taking those organisations to court, but this became a long and exhausting road. Equally, acknowledgement given. (2014) mentioned that there are some online-only newspapers which are stealing and recycling *Alriyadh* news stories on different platforms. This issue is extremely challenging as it is very time-consuming and difficult to tackle. The legal route is too long as the regulations for electronic content are weak and can take months or years to overcome the problem.

*Alwatan* newspaper shares the same concern regarding the digital publishing environment. MJB (2014) and AZS (2014) confirmed that there are unprofessional practices by some online-only newspapers in Saudi Arabia. News stories of traditional newspapers are being recirculated with no permission or references. MJB said:

There is an issue around the copyright of our journalistic production ... there are some electronic newspapers stealing the news on a regular basis and we need new regulations to stop this.

MJB (2014) also pointed out that the media regulations regarding copyright of news production are still weak and need some improvement. Additionally, AZS (2014) argued that Media Law articles for this purpose are not sufficient and he stressed:

Regulations in this respect are not adequate and the process of each case can take up to three years for the lawful path ... Imagine this is happening on an almost daily basis ... where can I find the money, time and effort to pursue all these cases in order to save the newspaper's copyright

This issue, as SGD (2014) stated, is caused by people who claim to be journalists but have no concept of journalistic ethics. AMJ (2014) and SGD (2014) pointed out that there are many non-professional people who have entered Saudi journalism with no qualification or training and have opened their online-only newspapers for personal benefit. These people are not journalists and they have flooded the Saudi media market with thousands of types of websites, fishing for online users; this flood has increased over the last five years. This has been happening since the new regulations of electronic media introduced in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have allowed anyone to open and register their own individual online-only newspaper with no conditions or requirements, so they 'are doing everything but indeed not journalism' and rely on traditional media news production for their content.

Overall, newsrooms of the traditional newspapers in Saudi Arabia are worried about this threat and solving the problem is crucial to maintaining the position of print newspapers. HSB

(2014) claimed that improving copyright problems in Saudi Arabia in terms of protecting journalistic production from piracy, would support the journalism industry in general and benefit traditional news organisations both financially and professionally.

## **9.8 Implications for strategies in responding to digital transformations**

News media outlets need some time to rework their strategies in response to different forces such as economic and technological. In recent years, there has been an ongoing debate about technological convergence and its implications for news organisations. One of the areas that has been studied in the literature is how strategies and policies of the media firms are changing at different levels. These can be at the organisational and senior managerial level, in newsroom layout, in multiskilling journalists, and at the productions level. The common approach when studying these changes is to look at how much convergence and other market forces are impacting on strategies in those news organisations and whether the changes are macro, micro, or meso organisational level.

The literature revealed different changes to these strategies in the newsrooms in responding to developments in innovation and economic forces. For instance, implementing multimedia and convergence strategy in the news firms has resulted in implementing a cross-media strategy, multi-platform production, cross-promotion strategy (Carvajal and García-Avilés, 2008). For the newsrooms there are different models that are used to respond to convergence such as full integration, cross-media, and ‘co-ordination of isolated platforms’ (García-Avilés et al., 2009; 2014).

In this study, some changes put in place in response to developments in digital communication technology by the four Saudi newspapers were discussed in Sections 9.6 and 9.7. Management began to make changes in their policies and implemented new strategies to overcome challenges such as drops in print circulation, online readers and revenue. These newsrooms are managing news production across multiple platforms and the distribution environment, activities that did not exist in traditional print newsrooms prior to the emergence of the new information and communication technologies. Today the role of the newsrooms include producing news for multiple platforms as well as print and publishing via many channels, such as main websites, multiple accounts on social media, and smartphone and tablet applications.

### **9.8.1 From newspaper organisation to the new media house**

Traditional Saudi newspaper organisations are challenged by today's changing environment of the news industry in the digital age. There is a trend in Saudi newspapers to transform these traditional print organisations into media house corporations to give their business model more flexibility to accommodate a new related media industry.

MHM. (2014) commented that following the continuous drops in circulation over the last five years, *Al-Madina* has come to the conclusion that action is necessary order to maintain a steady revenue for the newspaper. MSH (2014) said specifically that there is a new strategy being considered to transform the whole business of the *Al-Madina* organisation into a media house business. This will allow new firms to participate in new commercial activity, especially in the digital economy. For instance, the prospective new media house model will be able to provide digital marketing activities like domain services, including selling, housing, designing,

and maintenance service. It could also provide other services in property, tourism, and other sectors that will generate new revenue.

Likewise, AWF (2014) mentioned that that *Alyaum* has a new plan to transform the newspaper from a press organisation into a media house which will allow the firm to improve its profitability by widening its media activity. There are eight new projects in the plan, such as setting up a new department for programming digital applications for both Android and iOS systems, and then selling them or managing them in-house. The cost of this new development plans is approximately 10 million SAR (266,640 USD); it has been approved by the editorial side but awaits the go-ahead from management.

### **9.8.2 Print-first strategy**

Following on from the previous point, and as discussed in Section 9.1.7.1., between 93 to 99% of the annual revenue of Saudi newspapers is generated by the print production side. Therefore, the four Saudi newspapers have put strategies in place to prioritise print-production interests above digital forms.

S.A.H. (2014) maintained that *Alyaum* News Centre has implemented the print-first policy in a way that does not affect the profitability of the newspaper organisation. S.U.T. (2014) and confirmed that embracing any new technology in news production and distribution at *Alyaum* is prioritizing and protecting the revenue that continues to flow from print production (*Print-first strategy*). This is because print production still represents the majority of *Alyaum*'s annual revenue.

### 9.8.3 Policies in selecting news for multiple platforms

As current Saudi newsrooms are operating cross-production and cross-publishing they need to set a policy for selecting news stories for multiple platforms. The selecting of news stories according to *what-can-fit-where* takes into account several factors. First, it can be drawn from the previous point that, given the print-first strategy, selecting news for digital production should not affect the print operation. Secondly, news is selected according to the nature of the news stories; in traditional print, exclusive news stories are kept for the print only and are not published online, even the next day. *Al-Madina*, for instance, tends to keep 10% of its news stories exclusively for traditional print-readers. This approach seeks to maintain a leading position for print-production. Another example of selecting news for its nature is breaking news, which Saudi newsrooms tend to publish as soon as possible online and by other digital means, like SMS.

Thirdly, news is selected for the nature of the platform. MSH (2014) pointed out that at *Al-Madina*, selecting news for digital circulation can vary from one platform to another. For instance, political, local and sports news is published through Twitter, and social and cultural articles are published on Facebook. Breaking news is published on the website, SMS, and sometimes on Twitter. MSH justified this use of different online platforms because of the nature of platforms and their users. As for the platforms' nature, Twitter has the capacity for only 140 characters so is only used for distributing brief news. Facebook has more features and more space so that news stories can be published in full, including photos and videos. The video production, that is, news stories produced only in video format, are published first on YouTube and then shared across all other platforms.

## Localising the news

The Saudi newspapers are regional organisations spread over Saudi's biggest areas; central, eastern, western and southern. The newsrooms tend to cover news and events in their own regions because of geographical constraints, although all Saudi newspapers have local offices in other cities for covering and publishing events in most cities around the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, the prioritisation of local over national news seems to more defined in the *Alyaum* newsroom. The online publishing, for example, has a local news strategy in place by which the newsroom gives publishing priority to all news of the region where the newspaper is based. *Alyaum* is based in Dammam, the biggest city of the eastern region of Saudi Arabia. This strategy is aimed at keeping local audiences loyal and satisfied ahead of others and online readers.

## **9.9 Journalists and accepting new changes in new digital transformation**

Introducing new changes in the newsroom culture through embracing new technologies, or new structures such as convergent newsrooms, can result in some tensions and resistance. The current study identified two types of tensions in the four studied newspapers. The first tension is between the management and editorial sides. This type was discussed in section 9.6.2 as it is caused by regulatory factors, not by changes in technology or by transformations in the newsroom. The second tension is what happens in the newsroom between two different mind-sets; those who are willing to accommodate the changes in the newsroom, and those who resist them.

The journalists of the four Saudi newspapers are using digital communication technology in their daily journalistic work and has become an essential part of the daily journalistic practices within newsrooms. *Al-Madina*'s journalists are using computers, smartphones and tablets in their daily news production routine for the purpose of sending and receiving calls, messages, and mini-blogging of audio, text, and videos in various applications. The journalists are embracing new practices in newsgathering, such as using the social media for gathering new stories and verification of sources.

Likewise, journalists at *Alyaum* perceive the new transformation of the newsroom differently too. The digital transformation has facilitated the news production process and workflow and avoids duplication of news stories across the editorial divisions. The journalists of *Alwatan* have different perceptions of adopting new digital communication technology in the workplace by using computers and smartphones online in their daily routines. These can be described as “virtual newsroom” practices as most of the journalists are working online.

The journalists at these newspapers do not get very involved with online production or transforming the journalistic products into multiple digital formats. In addition, each individual has a different perception of the value, impact, benefits, ability (skills) of the various and thus level of embracing technology is different from case to another. There are some journalists resisting any digital transformation in the newsroom because of the additional tasks it entails and consequentially tensions are created within the newsroom.

This kind of tension in the newsroom is between journalists from the old and new schools of journalism. It can also be seen as a conflict between generations that is centred around the idea of transforming newsroom cultures. In other words, this type of tension can be seen through

journalists' attitudes towards changes in the newsroom's structure, practice, working routines, or training for new skills. Transforming print newsrooms into digital newsrooms requires the transforming of the journalist's mindset from print to a digital. This digital mindset is required for a digital culture in news production and the distribution or sharing of news. This includes a new collaborative culture in the digital environment among journalists in newspaper newsrooms. The digital mindset may exist once journalists are not only able to use digital technology in the news production process, but also understand the concept of the digital environment in the media industry and recognise its opportunities and limitations.

Tension between journalists and managers in newsrooms is not new and has different causes. For example, Singer (2004) noticed tensions in transforming newsrooms among journalists in forms of resisting new changes toward convergence. In other words, this was working tensions in accepting new transformation of convergent newsrooms. Similarly, Robinson (2011) noted tension amongst journalists while implementing new technology in the newsroom that affected the news production process. Van den Bulck and Tambuyzer (2013) recorded tensions amongst journalists, both between themselves and between them and managers, in accepting on-going transformations in the newsroom.

The best example of this type of tension can be seen at the *Alyaum* News Centre, as the newspaper has introduced a new integrated newsroom., This introduction of new newsrooms, and integrating the new media departments within the newsroom, has alerted the industry to some difficulties, such as getting journalists to adapt to the new environment in the convergent newsroom. Some journalists at the *Alyaum* News Centre are still managing their work with a print mindset. Some of these journalists are in senior management posts and play a significant role in the news production management.

FFY (2014) pointed out that the process of full digital transformation in the newsroom is slowed down by the traditional print mindset. He stated:

The old guards of the traditional journalism school hold some leadership positions and are not enthusiastic about digital transformation in the newsroom which is reflected in low process of training and developing of employees' journalistic and technical skills that are needed to survive with new revolutionaries of the information and communication technologies (FFY, Managing Editor, 2014).

AWF (2014) confirmed this point by indicating that the *Alyaum* News Centre has been built upon the idea of a convergent newsroom. There are some difficulties in transforming the newsroom culture and the mindsets of journalists to observe the concept of convergent journalism. Full digital transformation needs more than a restructuring of the physical location or a rearrangement of the organisational structure. Rather, the main issue when transforming a traditional newsroom into a digital convergent workplace is to transform of the mindset of journalists in the newsrooms to ensure that any transformations are effective.

However, there are journalists who are able to deal with technological developments and have a broad understanding of how to use online and digital tools in news production. Those journalists are more likely to accept changes in the newsroom, but implementing new skills and routines in the workplace can result in some tensions with other print mindset journalists. It is clear that any successful digital transformation in the newsroom is depends on overcoming these kinds of tensions. This point becomes more obvious when the print mindset or “the old guard” occupy leading positions in the newsroom and reject any changes or transformations. The lack of enthusiasm of the old guard towards change can be due to any or both of; a fear of change and not wanting to spend time or effort on updating and developing their technological skills.

The new *Alyaum* News Centre experienced other challenges in addition to those mentioned above. Some journalists have reservations about accepting the new integrated newsroom, for various reasons, despite their good IT skills and a general willingness to accept change in the workplace.

BSB (2014) pointed out that the new News Centre is open-plan and some journalists find the noise levels distracting when they carrying out certain tasks like writing news stories or making phone calls. OSD (2014) and AAI (2014) also criticised the new structure of the newsroom as it has been copied from a foreign journalism culture. The national culture in the newsroom still leans toward private offices in which journalists feel more comfortable in conducting their work, making private calls to sources, and receiving visitors.

M.S.Z. (2014) stressed that the new *Alyaum* News Centre is a good move towards improving the workplace of the traditional newspaper in Saudi Arabia. However, he has some reservations about the implemented structure, stating:

The new newsroom's lack of privacy for journalists may expose news sources that the journalist is dealing with ... and the open plan newsroom does not allow journalists to record any journalistic conversations with sources whether these conversations are over the phone or face-to-face. That is because of the high level of noise in the newsroom. True, we have meeting rooms we can use but they are not always available, especially at busy times.

## **9.10 Journalistic skills and training in a digital transformation**

The newsrooms of the four Saudi newspapers are finding recruitment difficult. There is a scarcity of trained and qualified journalists which means that they are having to rely on in-house training. The problems of training are two-fold: underqualified graduates from Saudi journalism schools and the lack of ongoing training for current journalists.

### **9.10.1 Underqualified graduates**

When newly graduated journalism students are recruited they are not considered, by the vast majority of the staff at the four newspapers studied, to be suitably qualified to undertake the role of practising journalists as their education is considered too academic. At the same time there is limited cooperation in training between newspapers and journalism schools in Saudi Arabia.

M.A.Z. (2014) and MTH. (2014) at *Al-Madina* newspaper confirmed that the new journalism graduates are not yet equipped to do the job. The issue graduates not able to undertake practical work can be blamed on out-of-date curricula and a focus on theoretical approaches by the Saudi academic departments. SGD (2014) at *Alriyadh* newspaper shared this view, stating:

Unfortunately, we have real problems with people coming to the newsroom who want to be journalists, yet they have no knowledge nor any talent, despite holding journalism qualification by some of them

SGD (2014) argued that the current journalism schools in Saudi Arabia need improvements in their curriculum. He clearly maintained:

Journalism schools' outputs are insufficient. For example, I have some media students who come here for practical experience for one of their modules. Last academic term I had eight students in the newsroom for three months and only three of them passed the practical part, whereas the rest failed. I see cases like this time after time and journalism schools should take the blame for these shortcomings.

MQS (2014) and OSD (2014) confirmed this point at *Alyaum* newspaper, claiming that finding a qualified graduate for journalism to work full-time for the newspaper is a huge task. Journalism graduates are not ready for the field and need more training. MJB (2014) at *Alwatan* agreed with the fact that 'media schools don't provide a journalist but rather an employee.' Graduates of journalism schools are not able to get involved in the job immediately following graduation.

Finally, Mr AZS (2014) referred to the attempts find qualified graduates to work in the Saudi newspapers industry, by declaring that: "media graduates who are working in Saudi journalism industry are so few in number". This difficulty of finding qualified and skilled journalists in Saudi Arabia will have a direct impact on any digital transformation that the Saudi newspapers seek to implement in their newsrooms.

### **9.10.2 Ongoing training**

A subject related to recruiting new journalists who are qualified and ready for the fieldwork is that of ongoing training for current journalists in the newsrooms. These journalists, for example at *Al-Madina* lack ongoing training, particularly for online production and publishing. Multi-skilled journalists who can deal with both traditional and digital production at the same time, with the ability to deal with all the required tools, do not exist in Saudi

newspapers. Finding a new generation of journalists who are well qualified and well prepared is a real challenge for the print Saudi press organisations too and to the creation of an ongoing training plan is a real need for all existing journalists.

TAS (2014), former Editor-in-Chief of *Alwatan*, admitted that there is no organisational body responsible for journalists' training and qualifications. Despite some newspapers' efforts in training journalists, this has been on a very small scale and not on a continuous basis. Overall, there is no recognised effort by Saudi newspapers to tackle this issue by establishing professional training centres for Saudi journalists.

The importance of ongoing training is that today's journalism is attached closely to the technology which is rapidly changing, and journalists are in need of continuing their training to improve their skills. The best example of this point is that editorial and other software packages are updated annually and journalists need to keep track of those changes. A similar need is to apply the use of online technology that may help in their daily journalistic assignments. management needs to support training and development with the necessary funding. AWF, Editor-in-Chief of *Alyaum*, stressed:

Leadership is an important factor in successfully completing digital transformation in the newspaper newsrooms because there are new requirements: investments in human resources, logistical support, training, and mindsets. All these things will help to tackle some issues that may appear in the new newsroom environment. Moreover, this will help in generating new multi-skilled journalists who are able to cover the story, edit it, and produce it for multi-platform formats production. (AWF, the Editor-in-Chief, *Alyaum* newspaper, 2014).

### 9.10.3 Multi-skilled or “comprehensive” journalists

Multi-skilled journalists who can carry out multiple tasks in news production are becoming more essential in today’s newsrooms. This is because media outlets can reduce their workforce to keep budgets low but highly skilled journalists are expensive (Quinn, 2005; Wallace, 2013). In the current transitional process there is a need to introduce new positions and roles for multi-skilled professionals (Robinson, 2011; Zhang, 2012). Yet, at the same time, multi-skilled journalists are difficult to find (Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008). This issue slows down any transformation into convergent newsrooms in today’s changing professions and causes a lot of problems (Vobic, 2009). Having multi-skilled professionals in their newsrooms is a competitive advantage for a convergent production environment in the media outlets (Thurman and Lupton, 2008).

The findings of this study confirmed the importance of this factor and revealed a shortage of multiskilled journalists in the newsrooms of the four newspapers. For instance, the digital transformation at *Alyaum* has resulted in an urgent need for multiskilled journalists who are able to deal with multiple news production tasks. However, multi-skilled journalists who can deal with both traditional and digital production at the same time, with the ability to deal with all the required tools, do not exist at any of the four studied newspaper newsrooms.

The lack of clarity about what is meant by a ‘multi-skilled’ journalist was noted in the interviews with the journalists. Indeed, in the four newsrooms, understanding and ideas for managing the concept were very blurred. Most of the journalists interviewed preferred to describe the phenomenon as “comprehensive journalists” those who are conducting news

production for multiple platforms and processes and those who cover stories for cross-editorial departments.

The first assumption is that a multi-skilled journalist in the news production process is the one who is able to manage a news story from its creation to the completion of the final product for multiple platforms. That means that the responsibilities of a journalist in the newsroom are extended to include all the tasks of journalists, technicians, photographers, and page designers at the same time. The second assumption about multi-skilled journalists is that they are able to write news stories that cover all subjects.

However, the concept of comprehensive journalist goes beyond journalists' skills to the knowledge and awareness of the uses of new media technologies, their implications for users and newspapers, and the nature and characteristics of online users for each individual platform which the journalists use to publish their stories.

SKT (2014) believed that the comprehensive journalist needs first to have technical skills to using the full range digital media technologies and to employ them in news production and distribution. Secondly the journalist needs to have deep awareness of these platforms and their users. This includes dealing with social networking sites and their users' needs and characteristics. This will ensure that journalists maximise the benefits of digital communication technology and enhance the newspaper's impact.

Regarding the necessary skills for journalists in the digital age, AWF (2014) summarised these skills in conjunction with the needs of the new *Alyaum* News Centre by stating:

The journalist needs to have combined journalistic and IT skills. The journalist, for example, needs to have basic journalistic skills such as dealing with information and sources, and the ability to carry out editing. And at the same time the journalist should be able to deal with editing audio and video, re-editing the news story in accordance with the needs of multiple production platforms. (Editor-in-Chief of *Alyaum* newspaper, 2014).

HNG (2014) and FFY (2014) pointed out that the skills that are necessary for journalists to have in the multiple production environment are firstly journalistic sense, and then IT skills. The technological skills are needed to make better use of all tools available to look for and manage information and sources, and to improve the ability to deal with digital components in news production and distribution for multiple platforms, such as the print's website and social media accounts.

AHH. (2014) stressed that IT skills are important for today's journalism, but most important is that the journalist is able:

To search and investigate news stories and their sources

To check the credibility of the news and verify sources

To follow up on current events and news stories

To speed up decision-making about selecting news

To not compromise the identity and nature of the news.

In addition, AMJ (2014) argued that comprehensive journalists do not exist yet and remain only a dream for the Saudi newspapers. For instance, there is a problem at *Alriyadh*

around most journalists not being effective proofreaders of their work which has resulted in some errors that have affected news production quality. AMJ also believes that journalists contributing to more than the editorial sections should be welcomed. However, this role should be viewed as extra to their original specialty in their editorial departments.

Similarly, OSD (2014) stressed that comprehensive journalists currently do not exist at *Alyaum*. However, they are needed, not only because that would be a cost-saver, but also because it would promote the quality of journalistic production in the long term. The availability of online and digital communication technologies creates a new need for those multi-skilled journalists who can tackle all news production steps, including technical and graphic skills. Finally, failing to address the issue of multi-skilled journalists in the digital age will delay any successful future transformations towards convergent newsrooms for the Saudi newspapers.

### **9.11 Journalists and pressures in the newsrooms**

The introduction of online and other digital technologies has increased time pressures in current newsrooms. Online journalism has brought new challenges for journalists by increasing competition in an already pressured and hugely competitive news media market (Weiss and Joyce, 2009; Metykova and Cisarova, 2009). The result of this study supports this perspective as described in some of the literature. The journalists at the four newspapers are already gathering information, editing, interviewing sources, covering events, and so on so when newsrooms ask them to take on extra tasks this takes them away from, or has to be in addition to, their existing workloads. These extra pressures are caused mainly by the need of respond to digital technology in news production and distribution.

The journalists in the middle of this ongoing move towards digital transformation face new tasks and must manage the extra pressure to be able to survive in the new media environment. The interviewees indicated that journalism in the Internet age has created an ongoing battle between speed and the requirements of news production on the one side, and maintaining the highest possible levels of quality in their journalistic production on the other. Journalists of Saudi newspapers acknowledge that they are experiencing new pressure in producing news as the emergence of the Internet has created a more competitive media environment.

In this new competitive environment, journalists are competing against both traditional mass media and digital media outlets. The print journalists are working under pressure to manage deadlines for daily assignments. They see the print production as the main workload and the digital side as an extra load for them. However, the emergence of the Internet in the news industry has created time challenges and has increased the value of speed in traditional newspaper organisations in Saudi Arabia. Speed itself is becoming more important in today's print journalism, but the risk is that it can present more pressure for journalists in their daily routine leading to detrimental effect on the quality of news production, as discussed in section 9.6.1.

Moreover, journalists are working under the other pressure of producing news for multiple formats as Saudi newspapers nowadays are managing news production for traditional print, the main website, multiple accounts on social media sites, and smartphone and tablet versions. For instance, *Alyaum*'s journalists considered traditional production as their main workload, but some journalists have been assigned extra tasks to manage news content on the

main website. *Al-Madina*'s journalists too are managing news production across multiple platforms which places them under extra pressure.

### **9.12 Journalists and the use of social media**

Journalists at the four newspapers are using social network platforms for multiple uses: newsgathering, news sources, and verification, sharing and distribution of stories. Social media are a result of the development of the online technology which have helped journalists widen their opportunities to find new sources and new ways of newsgathering.

The journalists of *Al-Madina* use social media in their work such as Twitter and Facebook. They use Twitter to publish news headlines with links to the main website of *Al-Madina*. The same practice is used on Facebook where news stories are published in full with photos and sometimes video. In addition, journalists at *Alriyadh* also have their own accounts on the social networking sites Twitter and Facebook which they use for newsgathering and interacting with their followers in order to obtain new stories or to update existing stories. Also, journalists tend to share their news stories through SNSs, although only after they have been published by the newspaper.

Most journalists of *Alyaum* have personal accounts on Twitter and Facebook. They use SNSs to interact with people about new or existing news stories. EJK (2014), for instance, stated:

Twitter gives me pointers and leads to new sports news that my colleagues may miss out on ... also my account on Twitter has greater interactivity, generating hundreds

more comments from online users than my column in the main newspaper website.

(EJK, Managing Editor of Sports News, *Alyaum* newspaper, 2014).

Additionally, apart from the individual use of social media by journalists using their personal accounts, the editorial departments also have their own accounts. In *Alyaum*, for example, there is a digital journalist in each editorial department who is responsible for managing the department's SNS accounts. Those people are responsible for dealing with related content on the main website and updating social media accounts too. This can give some independence to the editorial divisions in managing the digital content differently from the traditional print production.

Social media has also increased the interactivity between the newsrooms of Saudi newspapers and online readers. Journalists nowadays can see the reactions of online users in real time, as soon as their work has been published. On the main website, readers' comments on news stories have the same immediate effect. This development is changing the relationship between newsrooms and audience to more active one. It also transforms the role of readers from only receiving content to participating in news production and providing valuable information. This is a clear move towards a user-generated-content model where online users are contributing to the production of the news media outlets.

However social media is shifting interactivity away from newspaper websites into social media platforms by pushing them into other formats or domains. For example, HNG (2014) pointed out that Twitter has had a significant effect on the decline in comments on *Alriyadh's* main website. He gave the reason that people are now interacting and commenting on news through Twitter. TSH (2014) shared the same view that social media has negatively affected the

interactivity on *Alwatan's* website. Despite the opportunities that Twitter can offer, AZS (2014) pointed out that it can also put additional pressure on today's journalists who are faced with active 'tweeters'. These Twitter users monitor journalists' activities, judge them, and sometimes challenge them about their stories.

### **9.13 Profession and the future of newspapers in Saudi Arabia**

Innovations in the news and communications industry have impacted on the ideas and definition of what journalism is and who is a journalist (Zelizer, 2004, p.23). The newsroom and the role of a journalist have been subject to change in the last decade because of innovations in online and digital communication technologies. New tools for newsgathering and researching stories have been provided to journalist in their daily work. The Internet in particular has offered a new form of communication and new platforms for news organisations to use in their production and distribution. (Witschge and Nygren; 2009: p.41).

Among these developments, there is ongoing debate about whether journalism is a craft or should be considered as a profession like any business ((Tumber and Prentoulis, 2005). Profession can be approached from two main perspectives; self-built value system, and ideology in the work within single profession (Evet, 2003: pp.399-402). Shaping the profession (any) is controlled in several ways: monopoly of knowledge within the occupation and rejection of outside intervention, division of labour and power to exclude others people from outside the profession, professional education and training, professional ethics and standards, and ideology for working obligation to the profession (Freidson, 2001).

However, there are reservations for understanding the journalism as a profession as it may affect freedom of speech. This is because journalists may claim ultimate legitimacy of interpretation of information and stories from other people outside the field of journalism. Thus, there is an ongoing debate around excluding non-professionals from the media industry. (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; McQuail, 2000; Witschge and Nygren, 2009). Taking this view even further, there are some voices calling for the de-professionalisation of journalism due to a loss of trust among the community, a loss of standards and values because of economic pressures, and a blurring in the division of labour in today's media ((Freidson, 2001; Evett, 2003; Witschge and Nygren; 2009).

Journalists at the case study newspapers have some concerns about the impact on their profession from unprofessional people entering the field. The definition of who is a journalist needs to be formulated and specified. The current Printed Materials and Publication Law defines a journalist in Article 1, Section 3 as: “Anyone practising journalistic editing as a profession, either on a full-time or part-time basis”. However, there are no conditions, requirements, or professional accreditation for anyone to become a journalist. This creates a challenge for newspapers and other media outlets to determine who is a journalist or qualified to be one.

AMJ (2014) observed that the Printed Materials and Publication Law stretched the definition of a journalist in a way that could affect the quality of the profession by not defining precisely; the meaning, standards, and the qualification for anyone to be a journalist. The broad description leads to non-professionals entering the Saudi journalism industry, with no qualification or training, to use it for personal benefit. AMJ asserted that a journalist should be defined as professionally collecting stories, professionally editing, and professionally distributing that news.

Similarly, SGD (2014) indicated that there are many non-professional people who have entered the industry “via the back door” for personal and not professional goals. These people are not journalists and some of them have launched online-only newspapers. SGD stated that most of these types of online-only newspapers ‘are doing everything but indeed not journalism’ and that this type of website tends simply to steal and recycle traditional media news.

MQZ (2014) shared the same concern that journalism in Saudi Arabia has started taking an unprofessional route following this flood of online-only newspapers. This has resulted from the lack of clarity in defining who is a journalist. Nowadays there are many unprofessional people who are outsiders to the profession but who are practising journalism in the Saudi media industry. He stressed that real journalists must maintain professional journalistic values and standards, whatever methods or platforms they are using.

Another issue that was noticed in the findings of this study regarding the profession is that more than half of the Saudi journalists work part-time and produce more than 60% of the total media production in the Saudi journalism market. The reason behind this may be the shortage of qualified journalists because of the poor investment in the workforce and the lack of professional stability. However, that does not mean that these part-time journalists are not well qualified or trained. The idea of part-time journalists in the Saudi media market is neither organised nor professionalised. There are no conditions or requirements for being a part-time reporter as for the full-time journalists (AWF, 2014; TAS, 2014).

Finally, the future of each of the newspapers included in this research will depend on their individual circumstances and the way they respond to the challenges of digital transformation. There are some newspapers that have been damaged by all the changes in the

media and technological industry. There are around an average of 40% drops in Saudi newspapers' circulation figures (AZS, 2014; TSH, 2014; MTH., 2014). The risk of the collapse and the threat of the disappearance of some Saudi newspapers will remain and will become clearer in the next five years (TAZ., 2014; AZS, 2014).

However, the drops in print circulation are not the only reason for the threatened future of the traditional newspapers in Saudi Arabia. AWF (2014) summarised the threats to the newspaper industry by asserting:

The real threats to print journalism industry in the Saudi market are internal rather than external factors. These factors that can threaten the newspaper industry include a lack of journalistic content quality, a lack of suitable journalistic work environment, a lack of training, and a lack of understanding of readers' needs and behaviours. (AWF, Editor-in-Chief, *Alyaum* newspaper, Dammam, 2014).

On the other hand, there are other Saudi newspapers that are enjoying a steady income. Although there are drops in print circulation in the Saudi market, the business model of Saudi newspapers relies on print advertising, which is the back bone of newspapers' revenue. For instance, SAS (2014) declared:

Though there is a slight drop in *Alriyadh*'s circulation, there is no such effect on the operations and profitability of the newspaper up to now ... it is funny to say that printed journalism will vanish in 5 to 10 years because there is simply no retreat in advertising or in subscriptions and therefore the financial position is still solid. (Managing Editor, *Alriyadh* newspaper).

Finally, the profession of journalism in Saudi Arabia is suffering from lack of a clear definition, specified standards and shortage of qualified and trained journalists. Addressing this dilemma is one of the biggest issues for the future of Saudi newspapers. Yet, whilst there are drops in circulation, this is not sufficient to threaten the newspapers as it is not the main income-generator in the Saudi Arabian context. The main threats are; difficulties in finding qualified staff, new transformed newsroom culture, and new appropriate business model as income strength of print advertising is limited to the culture of advertisers, not to the market principles.

#### **9.14 Summary**

This chapter discussed the findings of the current study about transformations and their implications for the newsrooms and journalists of four Saudi newspapers. This sought to answer the main research inquiry: How are newsrooms and journalists of Saudi traditional newspaper organisations responding to the emergence and developments of online and digital communication technologies? The four newspaper organisations covered by this research were; *Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum*, and *Alwatan*.

As emphasised in the literature review and was indicated in the methodology and analysis chapters; this study has two main approaches managerial and economic; and sociological. The significance of these perspectives in newsroom studies is that; the managerial perspective is concerned about the management of newsroom and news production which is taking into consideration the business aspects of newspapers. The sociological perspective is concerned with

the study of professionals and social values of news production. Nowadays, newspapers are no longer single media products, rather, they have become multiple producers of print and digital operations. Hence, newspapers are now in need of transformations to fit into the digital environment to widen their reach and to find new revenue streams. These changes and responses in the newsrooms were viewed in the current thesis from an economic and managerial perspective as primary approach. However, as they interlinked and interplay in some points the social perspectives was used to discuss these changes and transformation in light to answer the main research inquiry when it was needed through the discussion chapter.

This chapter discussed findings of this study over 12 sections. These sections are: the existing managerial structure in Saudi newspaper organisations; the current newsroom structure in the four Saudi newspapers; the role of new media/online departments the main newsrooms; the relationship between online and print newsrooms; the impact of innovations on the news production and distribution; the consequences of commercial and regulatory environment in the Saudi print media industry; and the implications for strategies in responding to digital transformations. It also discussed the position of journalists in the midst of these digital transformations as follows: journalists and accepting change in the newsroom; journalistic skills and training in a digital transformation; journalists and pressures in the newsroom; journalists and the use of social media; and the profession of journalism and the future of newspapers in Saudi Arabia.

# **Chapter Ten: Conclusion.**

## **10.1 Introduction**

This final chapter will summarise the research undertaken for this thesis. This study has been around the role and effects of online and digital communication technologies on newsrooms and journalism of traditional newspaper organisations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The thesis is divided into three main parts. The first includes the introduction, the contextual background, a review of related literature and concepts, and an overview of the research design and methodologies. The second part, consisting of four chapters, covers the findings of observations and interviews from the four cases studies. The third part presents a discussion of the findings and the conclusion. This chapter in particular will summarise the aim and design of the study, the main findings, the limitations, and suggestions for further research.

## **10.2 The aim and design of this study**

The main aim of this study is to investigate how newsrooms and journalists of traditional newspaper organisations are responding to online and digital technologies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It additionally explores how Saudi journalists are managing news production in the technological convergence age in traditional newspapers. The study was conducted in four newsrooms of Saudi newspapers and focused on transformations in the newsrooms, managing news production over multiple platforms, production processes and workflows, and the role and relationship of new media departments within traditional newsrooms. The study furthermore investigated changes and challenges to the newspaper journalists' roles and practices in the Saudi Arabian context.

### **10.3 The importance of this research**

The importance of this study stems from the fact that it is the first study of its kind about newsroom convergence and multi-skilled journalists in Saudi newspaper organisations. It is of further importance given that, in the digital age, traditional newspapers are facing challenges at different levels. These levels are: business models, organisational and structural factors, news production processes and workflow, managing multiple productions for multiple platforms, and journalists' roles, practices and identity.

The emergence of digital and communication technologies such as the Internet has created an increasingly competitive news market. The Saudi newspapers have started to embrace digital technologies within newsrooms to publish both online and print editions simultaneously. This existence of multiple production and publishing has raised questions about the efficiency of traditional newsrooms in terms of structure, workflow, and journalists' skills and roles. Identifying those responses to digital communication technologies in Saudi traditional news organisations will address the current gap in the literature around this particular topic in the Saudi context.

### **10.4 Research questions**

The research questions, in line with the main aim of this research, explored how newsrooms and journalists of traditional newspapers are responding to online and digital technologies in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, there were two main research questions and some support questions as follows:

How are newsrooms of Saudi traditional newspaper organisations responding to the emergence and developments of online and digital communications technologies?

- What is the existing status of the managerial structure and newsroom structure in Saudi newspaper organisations?
- What is the existing newsroom model in Saudi newspapers and is any restructuring planned?
- What are existing roles and relationship of new media divisions/online newsrooms in Saudi newspapers in conjunction with traditional print newsrooms?
- What is the existing production process and workflow between online and print newsrooms?
- What are the main implications of digital communication technology in news production and distribution at Saudi newspapers?
- What are the main implications of digital technology on the commercial and regulatory environment?
- What are the main implications on strategies in responding to digital transformations?

How are Saudi newspaper journalists responding to digital transformations and how do they perceive changes in the newsroom?

- What are the main implications on journalistic skills and training?
- What are the main implications on working pressures and practices?
- What are the main implications on the profession?
- How do journalists perceive their profession and the future of Saudi newspapers in the middle of continuing developments of digital communication technology?

## **10.5 Summary Findings of this Study**

### ***10.5.1 Newsrooms' status and responses***

The transformations in the newsrooms from the four newspaper organisations in Saudi Arabia are similar in some areas and different in others. This is because there are another forces other, than digital communication technology, playing fundamental role in these transformations. For instance, media regulations in Saudi Arabia and the commercial and financial positions of individual cases, are affecting transformations to different extent, not only in four newsrooms in this study, but all Saudi newspapers. These transformations and implications are summarised in insight sections which are organised around the themes addressed by the supporting questions.

#### Organisational and managerial structure of Saudi newspaper organisations

The findings indicate that the four Saudi newspapers share a similar business model. Current Saudi press organisations consist of three main power levels: General Assembly, Board of Directors and the internal management. The internal management is divided into two equal power sections, the editorial side and the management side. At the top of both sections there is an Editor-in-Chief for editorial activities and a General Manager for business and financial operations. Although the structure of the internal management shares the main characteristics across all Saudi newspaper organisations in terms of having two main sections, there are small differences, such as the number of posts on each side. The management side is a separate control zone from the editorial side, whereby both Editor-in Chief and General Manager have the same power. This is a common structural model that is restricted by the media and regulations laws.

Any transformations in the structure of the Saudi newspaper organisations are also limited by Saudi media regulations. The impact of these regulations on the organisational and

managerial structure prevents any possible future changes in response to digital technology and other forces. Therefore, any changes in the organisational structure of Saudi newspapers are unattainable without adjustments in the current Saudi Press Establishments Law, which forces Saudi press organisations to adopt one organisational structure model.

Moreover, Saudi newspapers share the same business model in that their main revenue is generated through advertising, print subscriptions and circulation sales. However, there are some press organisations which have investments as well, for example *Alyaum*, which invests in real estate to support its main journalistic operations. Finally, online paid content does not yet exist in the Saudi newspaper industry.

#### Newsroom models of the four newspapers

The newsrooms of these newspapers are varied in design depending on individual circumstances and the process of implementing a convergent model is at different stages. *Alyaum* is the only Saudi newspaper that has already fully introduced a new convergent newsroom, which has been renamed the *Alyaum* News Centre. In contrast, *Alriyadh* has a clear plan in progress for its new layout. However, the plan needs approval from the management and the Board of Directors as the budget has to be secured to cover the costs of the proposed newsroom. The idea of an integrated newsroom for Saudi newspapers is becoming the trend for the management and editorial decision-makers but the process of implementations at different stages.

Therefore, the current status of Saudi newspaper newsrooms can be split into three structural models. The first model has wall-divided offices with two or more main editorial lounges. The second model has one main editorial lounge but with partitioned desks and glazed-

wall offices for senior journalists that open into the same newsroom. The third model is an integrated newsroom with a large open space furnished and well-equipped advanced communication technologies.

#### The role of online newsrooms in newspapers

The primary role of the online department in Saudi newsrooms is to transform the content of the main (printed) newspaper into digital and web friendly material. The participation of the new media departments in the news production varies between the four newspapers; *Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum*, and *Alwatan*. There are also differences in the name, size, role and structure of these departments. The second role that has been identified for the new media departments is to manage the website of the newspapers in terms of technical and security matters. This role includes control of website activities and development of the capability of the website to face any online threats.

The third role is to manage social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram, Instagram, Snapchat, and WhatsApp. The fourth is to manage the SMS service, which plays an important role in Saudi newspaper newsrooms as it generates some income. The fifth and final role of new media departments is participating in news production. However, the overall contribution of new media staff in journalistic content is limited at *Al-Madina* and *Alwatan* and at a low level at *Alyaum* and *Alriyadh*. The reason behind this is that the most of the employees are technicians and have no journalistic background. Only *Alriyadh* has few online-only journalists.

#### The relationship between online and print newsrooms

The current relationship between online and print newsrooms in the Saudi newspapers can be described as dependent. Notwithstanding the small contribution of the online newsrooms or new media divisions in the news production in some cases, the print newsroom is still the main source of news production. Directors of new media departments have a closer relationship than their staff with the editorial team in the print newsrooms, as they attend editorial meetings. However, a degree of collaborative culture is emerging through the internal network of content management systems. The staff of the new media departments are sharing and commenting on news production throughout the production process.

It is evident that although they are embracing digital technologies such as the Internet, smartphones, tablets, desktops and laptops, and other editorial content-management systems, online departments are still struggling to work in harmony with traditional newsrooms in Saudi newspapers. The status of these online newsrooms is still subordinate to traditional print. Most practices at these new media departments are IT activities and online management and rarely add to news production content. However, this does not mean that these online departments are less important than the main newsrooms of traditional print. Traditional newsrooms are in need of the new media staff skills for technical issues and digital conversion.

Overall, the relationship between traditional and digital newsrooms is partnership in which print newsrooms need to have new media departments for their technical skills and the new media newsrooms need traditional newsrooms for journalistic skills in producing news. The future of this relationship could be developed by developing skills and requirements of current and new news workers. This development could result in full integration of digital and traditional newsrooms.

Implications of digital communication technology for news production and distribution

Digital communication technologies, especially the Internet, computer-assisted reporting devices, and software, have offered many opportunities in the news production. The Saudi newsrooms have taken advantage of this technology and have embraced digital communication technology in news production and distribution, as has been discussed in previous sections.

The first implication is a speeding-up of the news production process at the four newsrooms of *Al-Madina*, *Alriyadh*, *Alyaum* and *Alwatan*. In the digital age, space for stories has become less important than content as the Internet provides unlimited space for news production, including text and photos, whereas the printed newspapers are limited on space.

The second implication is the reduction in costs of production and distribution at Saudi newspapers which is an important opportunity for traditional newspaper organisations. Online communication technology makes synchronous printing possible, which is substantially development in the Saudi newspaper industry. The main consequence of this is that the newspapers have stopped using expensive methods of delivering copies, by, for example, discontinuing the use of air cargo. Another consequence is extended deadlines newspapers' printing houses. The implications of synchronous technology printing for the newspaper industry are reductions in cost, staff and time and make the daily print more relevant to the readers in the today's competitive media environment.

The third implication is the expanding of news distribution. The Saudi newsrooms are using multiple digital platforms for distribution of news to maximise their availability to readers. All the Saudi newspapers have an online version in addition to news delivery channels such as SMS and smartphone and tablet applications. The Saudi newspapers are trying to expand their reach online to compensate for the drop in print circulation. The Internet is the greatest medium

for Saudi newsrooms, as for others around the world, to distribute their digital news. The main motivation for traditional newsrooms to have an online presence is to bring in new readers or retain loyal print readers who may change their reading habit from print to online.

#### Implications of digital technologies for the commercial and regulatory environment

The findings showed that there has been a severe drop in the print circulation of Saudi newspapers in the last five years. This is an important issue for Saudi print organisations, as 95% or more of the annual revenue comes from the print-production side. There is no Law can force Saudi newspapers to reveal their daily print circulation figures as they tend not to disclose circulation figures for commercial reasons related to marketing their advertising space.

This decline of newspaper circulation in the Saudi context also confirmed findings in the literature regarding this issue in a global context (Newspaper Association of America; March 30, 2015; ABC March 2015; Ponsford 2015). For the Saudi newspapers this decline raised many questions about future of print production in the age of the Internet. Yet, this did not combine with drops in print advertising that generate about or more than 95% of annual revenue but brought many question of the current business model.

This leads to another issue which is the unprofitability of online production in the Saudi newspapers. The annual digital revenue in Saudi newspapers organisations is around 5% or less. The digital revenue is generated from website advertising, smartphone and tablet app advertising, and SMS services. The online paid content does not exist in any Saudi Arabian newspapers. The four Saudi newspapers in this study do not rely on online and other digital advertising and, consequently, they give priority to traditional production.

In addition, the changing nature of media competition is noted as having implications. The competition for newspapers used to be against alikes traditional newspapers then against the radio and then against television, and for decades, newspapers managed to survive. Nevertheless, since the introduction of the Internet and associated technologies, the landscape of media communication has changed and it has become more difficult for traditional newspapers to survive in the new competitive environment.

The four Saudi newspapers are being challenged by new forms of competition. The competition for readers and content production with other traditional media organisations still applies, with the Internet now being the most competitive player. Saudi newspapers are anxious about how the Internet and its potential in connectivity, simplicity, productivity, and capacity are changing the standards of this competition and may badly damage the print industry.

On the other hand, media regulations are at centre of any transformation in the Saudi newspaper organisations. The impact of the media regulatory on transformation in the Saudi newspaper industry consists of two points; restructuring of newspaper organisations and insufficient current copyright law to protect news production of those newspapers. The Press Establishments Law restricts Saudi newspapers from any transformation in organisational structure they may want to make for technological or commercial reasons. The challenge, therefore, is the limitations that the Saudi newspapers have in responding to these types of changes. There is a concern at the four newsrooms about copyright of the journalistic production as the Copyright Law does not provide sufficient protection.

Implications for strategies in responding to digital transformations

The management began to make changes in their policies and implemented new strategies to overcome challenges such as drops in print circulation, online readers and revenue. The Saudi newsrooms are managing news production across multiple platforms in the digital environment. The first strategy that seems to be popular is to reshape the business from traditional print organisations into media house companies. This is in order to allow more flexibility in their business model to accommodate new related media activities in today's industry. However, this strategy is still only a plan as it needs final approval from the Saudi authorities. This is because that the current business model for those newspapers is controlled and restricted by media regulations as explained earlier.

The second strategy at the four newspapers is the *Print-first strategy* in which print publishing has priority over online and digital production. The main reason here is that more than 95% of the annual revenue of the Saudi newspapers is generated through traditional print production. Therefore, the four newspapers are putting in place a strategy to prioritise print-production interests over digital production.

The third, a policy rather than a strategy, related to selecting news for multiple platforms. This means that selecting particular news stories for particular platforms should take three things into consideration. Firstly, it respects account of the *print-first strategy* in selecting news for publishing that will not affect the print operation. Secondly, selecting news for publishing is dependent on the nature of the platform. For example, brief and breaking news should be published first through Twitter and SMS, whereas other platforms, such as Facebook, are used for longer stories with photos. Thirdly, the local community is prioritised in news coverage despite the global medium of the Internet.

### ***10.5.2 Journalists in middle of this transition***

#### **Journalists and accepting change in the digital transformation**

The journalists of the four newspapers are embracing digital communication technology in their daily journalistic work to different extents. The new digital equipment in the transformed newsrooms has helped journalists carry out their daily routine and. using digital technology has become an essential part of their practice. However, the Saudi journalists at these newspapers do not get very involved in online production and publishing. Additionally, the level of the perceived impact digital communication technology varies from one individual to another.

Yet, embracing new digital technology in the newsrooms has resulted in some tensions between journalists from old and new schools of journalism. It can be seen as a conflict between the generations that is centred around the idea of changing and transforming newsroom cultures. In other words, tension can be seen in journalists' attitudes towards changes in the newsroom's structure, to practices and working routines, or in training for new skills. Transforming print newsrooms into digital newsrooms requires a change in the journalist's mindset from print to a digital. This digital mindset is necessary for a digital culture in news production and distribution or sharing. This includes a new cooperative culture in the digital environment among journalists in the newsroom. The digital mindset may exist when journalists are not only able to use digital technology in the news production process, but also understand the concept.

#### **Journalistic skills and training in a digital transformation**

The findings revealed that the newsrooms of the four Saudi newspapers are finding recruitment difficult. There is a scarcity of trained and qualified journalists which means that they are having to rely on in-house training. The problems of training are two-fold: under-qualified graduates from Saudi journalism schools and a lack of ongoing training for current journalists. The findings of this study confirmed that there is shortage of multi-skilled journalists, able to deal with both traditional and digital production, in the newsrooms observed.

#### Journalists and pressures in the newsroom

Saudi journalists are working under pressure in the new competitive media environment, competing against both traditional media and online news outlets. The print journalists are also working under the pressure of managing deadlines for daily assignments. They see the traditional production as their main workload and the digital section as an extra workload about which they are not particularly bothered. The journalists, in addition, are working under pressure of producing news for multiple formats since Saudi newspapers nowadays are managing news production for traditional print, the main website, multiple accounts on social media sites, and smartphone and tablet versions.

#### Journalists and the use of social media

Saudi journalists are using the social media for personal and business activities; they have multiple accounts on social network sites such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The use of social media might include the interaction of journalists with online users and the generating of new stories by searching these sites. The newsroom tends to use Twitter to publish brief news with a link to refer readers to the newspaper's website. The same approach is used when using

the Facebook platform, where full versions of news stories are published with photos and sometimes video clips.

### Journalism as profession and the future of newspapers in Saudi Arabia

The findings showed that there is a concern among Saudi journalists about the threat to the professionalism of journalism from unprofessional people entering the field. The definition of who is a journalist needs to be formulated and specified; there are currently no conditions, requirements or professional accreditation to become a journalist. This creates a challenge for newspapers and other media outlets for recruiting right qualified people. In addition, another issue is that more than half the Saudi journalists work as part-time and they produce around 60% of the total media output in which rise many questions about health of working environment in Saudi media market The profession of journalism in Saudi Arabia lacks a clear definition; specified standards need to be imposed, and qualified and trained journalists. Addressing this dilemma is one of the biggest issues affecting the future of Saudi newspapers.

The future of these four particular newspapers will depend on their circumstances and how they respond to the challenges Yet, the main threats to the future of Saudi newspapers can be summarised as: not being able to recruit qualified staff, not adopting a new transformed newsroom culture and not developing an appropriate business model.

### **10.6 The limitations of this research**

It is important to note that this study, as with any research, has some limitations. The first and most important limitation is that any research into technology and its impact must

acknowledge the rapid pace of change in its findings. The study of the four Saudi newsrooms took place in 2014 and 2015 and the researcher has updated the findings where possible to take into account of changes made in the newspapers leadership or in their strategies and working practices. However, more studies will be needed to follow up on future transformations in the Saudi newsrooms.

The second limitation, perhaps better described as a difficulty, is carrying out an investigation in a context where there is limited literature available and a lack of access to independent data relevant to this research such as accurate numbers and statistics. A key example of this limitation is the lack of information regarding circulation figures and of accurate data about the financial operations of the Saudi newspapers. Instead, the researcher has used estimated figures and percentages provided by interviewees of those newspapers, and some data from the literature where possible.

These limitations above can highlight a need for this research and other future empirical studies. This point can indicate the importance of this thesis as it adds and contributes to the literature that fills a gap in knowledge about Saudi Arabia, and indicates areas for further study in the Saudi context.

### **10.7 Suggestions for further studies**

The current research has been based around transformations in the newsrooms and in journalistic practice of four Saudi newspapers. It sought to respond to main research questions: *How are newsrooms of Saudi traditional newspaper organisations responding to the emergence and development of online and digital communications technologies* and *How are Saudi*

*newspaper journalists responding to digital transformations and how do they perceive changes in the newsrooms.* Therefore, as explained in the section on limitations, the findings quickly become out-of-date; similar studies, to capture the continuing transformation process in the newsrooms and changes in the journalists' roles and practices, will be needed.

Further research should also look into the relationship between Saudi newspapers and their readers in the digital age. This should include how Saudis consume news online and how they evaluate the future of newspapers in Saudi Arabia. Another area that needs further investigation is use and role of social media in news production, not only within the newspaper industry but on bigger scale to include broadcasting journalism, print journalism and web journalism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Other research could also be focused on Saudi journalists' roles and the journalism profession in the age of media convergence. This could embrace cultural, political and economic factors. One of the key findings of this current study is that more than 50% of Saudi journalists are working part-time and contributing to more than 60% of media production in Saudi journalism. There are questions to be addressed about the shortage of full-time journalists and around the desirability of the journalism as a profession for the Saudis. In addition, it is worth mentioning the question of how Saudi newspapers will survive with its current model in years to come in the context of a rapidly changing journalism environment. The finding of this study confirmed that news production has benefited from technology in speeding up the process of the production. Therefore, further research can be directed into the potential impact of such speed-up on matters of quality and ethics in the Saudi newspaper industry.

Finally, literature about Saudi journalism is still limited and more quantitative and qualitative studies are required. Therefore, there are many opportunities for more research set in

the Saudi Arabian context in order to address knowledge gap in global literature about the Saudi journalism and the wider media industry.

## **10.8 Summary**

In summary, it is important to conclude that Saudi press organisations are undergoing transformation due to the forces of technological convergence and there are implications at social, political and industrial levels. The Saudi newspapers have started rethinking the efficiency of their business models in today's digital age. Declines in print circulation and diversification of media platforms have pushed the leadership of the newspapers to consider a new strategy of multimedia houses instead of the current press house model. The new trend of reshaping these traditional organisations is allowing more flexibility in their business model to accommodate a new related media industry. This will allow new firms to participate in new commercial activity, especially in developing the digital economy. For instance, the multimedia house model will open up the opportunity to provide digital marketing activities like domain services, including selling, housing, designing, and maintenance service. Unfortunately this option seems to be difficult to reach out as the press organisations law controls structures of the Saudi press organisations. .

However, the four Saudi newspapers studied are applying print-first strategy that looks to go against the digital-first strategies that are applied by of many European and American media organisation. This strategy is due, as explained earlier, to a need to maintain the 95% of annual revenue that comes from print production. This indicates that any transformations at the Saudi newspapers that are not profitable can be withheld. In other words, failing to find a profitable

model of digital production can delay or prevent any full transformation of those traditional newspapers toward convergent journalism. Indeed, this will raise other questions about the future of the press organisations in Saudi Arabia on how newspapers will survive in the digital age once the print advertising starts to decline.

In addition, the findings of this research have confirmed that there are multiple tensions in the Saudi newspapers that may limit transformation toward convergence, confirming that the reality on the ground in the newsrooms does not necessarily always match either what the newspaper employers think they want nor what the literature implies. Importantly, these findings in the Saudi case studies show that taking into account contextual factors such as specific geographical location are very important when studying transformation in news organisations.

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## Appendix

### **The Law of Press Establishments (Saudi Arabia) (Bureau of Experts, 2015):**

**Article One: Definitions:** The following terms, wherever mentioned, shall have the meanings following them unless the context requires otherwise:

- (1) License: The official approval that permits the formation of a press establishment.
- (2) Full time commitment: Not being engaged in any governmental or non-governmental job for a wage in other than the establishment.
- (3) Establishment or establishments: The press establishment or press establishments.
- (4) Member of an establishment: The person who owns part of the capital of the establishment.
- (5) The paper: The newspaper or magazine.
- (6) Publications: Newspapers and other published materials of the press establishment.
- (7) The Ministry: The Ministry of Information.
- (8) The Minister: The Minister of Information.

#### Part One

#### Formation of the Establishment

**Article Two:** (a) This Law stems from the information policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and achieves its goals.

(b) An establishment is a private entity that aims at publishing periodicals to serve society by disseminating culture and knowledge, committed to truth and objectivity in all its publications. It may make reasonable profits in a way consistent with its object, within the provisions of this Law.

(c) An establishment shall be formed pursuant to the provisions of this Law and shall have a distinctive name.

**Article Three:** (a) The Minister shall issue the License to form an establishment upon the approval of the President of the Council of Ministers based on an application submitted by a number of Saudis, not less than thirty, stating the goals of the establishment, names of founders, their qualifications, professions and ages, the name of the establishment, the publications to be issued by it, the language or languages of its publications, its capital, head office and other data specified by the Ministry.

(b) An establishment may be permitted, by a decision of the Minister, to issue additional periodicals.

**Article Four:** The head office of the establishment shall be in the city specified in the license, and some of its publications may be issued in places other than the head office upon the approval of the Ministry.

**Article Five:** (a) The capital of the establishment shall be a sum sufficient to achieve its goals.

(b) The establishment shall have a corporate personality and an independent financial responsibility, and the financial liability of the members shall be limited to their respective shares in the capital of the establishment.

(c) Each establishment shall publish its closing accounts and annual budget, certified by a licensed auditor.

(d) A sufficient percentage of the annual profits shall be set aside for the purposes of training and the

procurement of modern technological means necessary for improving journalistic work.

(e) A statutory reserve of not less than 10% of the annual profits shall be set aside. The general assembly may decide to discontinue allocating to such reserve when it reaches half of the capital.

## **Part Two Members of an Establishment**

**Article Six:** A member of an establishment shall meet the following conditions:

- (a) Be a Saudi national.
- (b) Not be a member of another press establishment.
- (c) Be a holder of a university degree at a minimum, a man of learning, intellect and the media or a businessman with interest in culture. Membership of corporate persons of intellectual, cultural and scientific nature may be accepted.

**Article Seven:** (a) Members of an establishment shall enjoy equal voting and candidacy rights to the board of directors.

- (b) New members may join the establishment through increasing its capital or by a member selling his shares or part thereof or assigning his shares or part thereof or by inheritance.
- (c) In case of inheritance, the heirs shall nominate one of them. If the nominated heir does not meet membership requirements the shares may be sold to one or more of the members of the establishment or to persons from outside.

## **Part Three The General Assembly and the Board of Directors**

**Article Eight:** The general assembly shall be comprised of all the members of the establishment, and it shall be the highest authority. It may take the necessary resolutions to realize the purposes for which the establishment was formed, particularly the following:

- (a) Formulating the general policy of the establishment.
- (b) Selecting and appointing members of the board of directors.
- (c) Approving the appointment and dismissal of the general manager and the editor-in-chief.
- (d) Approving the budget and closing accounts of the establishment.
- (e) Appointing a certified auditor.
- (f) Issuing the internal regulations of the establishment as well as the other regulations that regulate the conduct of its business.

**Article Nine:** General assembly meetings shall convene in accordance with the following rules and procedures:

- (a) The general assembly shall meet once annually upon invitation by the chairman of the board of directors. It may also be invited, when necessary, by the chairman of the board of directors, at the request of three members of the board of directors, or at the request of at least a quarter of the members.
- (b) The chairman of the board of directors shall preside over the meetings of the general assembly.
- (c) The general assembly shall convene with the attendance of the majority of members. If there is no quorum in the first meeting, the second meeting shall be deemed valid if attended by one third of members, personally or by proxy. The Ministry may assign a representative to attend the

meeting.

(d) Voting in the general assembly shall be on the basis of membership, and every member may vote on his own behalf or on behalf of another member by proxy. The resolutions of the general assembly shall be adopted by absolute majority of the members attending the meeting in person or by proxy. In case of a tie, the chairman shall have the casting vote.

(e) Minutes shall be written for every meeting of the general assembly recording the names of members attending in person and those represented by proxy, in addition to the agenda and resolutions adopted, as well as an adequate summary of the deliberations that take place during the meeting. These minutes shall be recorded regularly after every meeting in a special register signed by the chairman of the assembly and the secretary of the meeting. Copies shall be distributed to the members of the general assembly.

**Article Ten: Board of Directors:** Each establishment shall have a board of directors to be comprised of:

(1) A number of members of the establishment, not fewer than six.

(2) The general manager and the editors-in-chief of the establishment provided that their number shall not exceed one third of the total number of the members of the board of directors.

(3) The members of the board shall elect, by absolute majority, from amongst themselves in their first meeting a chairman for the board, provided that he is not the general manager or the editor-in-chief.

**Article Eleven:** Subject to the powers given to the general assembly, the board of directors may adopt the resolutions and take the measures necessary to achieve the objects of the establishment, particularly the following:

(a) Proposing the internal and other regulations that regulate the conduct of business.

(b) Approving the necessary plans to increase the resources of the establishment.

(c) Approving the draft budget and closing account of the establishment before presentation to the general assembly.

(d) Proposing new publications and applying to the Ministry for approval.

(e) Nominating the general manager and the editor-in-chief for each paper and obtaining the approval of the Minister for the nomination and dismissal of the editor-in-chief.

**Article Twelve:** (a) The board of directors shall meet upon invitation by its chairman at least once every three months.

(b) A meeting of the board shall not be valid unless attended by at least half of its members, including the chairman or whomever he deputizes.

(c) Resolutions of the board shall be adopted by absolute majority vote of members present. In case of a tie, the chairman shall have the casting vote.

(d) Minutes shall be written for each meeting, recording the place and date of the meeting, the names of the members present and absent, the reason of absence, if any, the agenda, topics discussed and the resolutions adopted. The minutes shall be signed by the chairman of the board, the secretary and the members present.

(e) The chairman of the board may – in case of his absence – deputize a member of the board to represent him for a specified period.

**Article Thirteen:** Membership of the board shall expire in the following cases:

- (a) The expiration of the board term as specified in the internal regulations of the establishment.
- (b) Resignation or physical disability.
- (c) Removal of the member from the board pursuant to a resolution by the general assembly.
- (d) If the member appointed to the board by virtue of his position in the establishment loses his post.
- (e) If the member is convicted of a crime impinging his religion, honor or honesty.

**Article Fourteen:** If the post of a member of the board other than the ex officio members in the establishment becomes vacant, the board may appoint a replacement, provided that this is presented to the general assembly in its following meeting. The new member shall continue the term of his predecessor on the board.

#### **Part Four Management and Editing**

**Article Fifteen:** Every establishment shall have a general manager to run its financial and administrative affairs, in accordance with the governing policies and instructions, and represent it in its relations with other bodies regarding financial and administrative matters. The internal regulations of the establishment shall specify his authorities and powers.

**Article Sixteen:** The general manager shall satisfy the following conditions:

- (a) Be a Saudi national.
- (b) Work on a full time basis.
- (c) Hold a university degree, with experience not less than five years in administrative or journalistic work. A person with a distinguished intellectual and administrative ability may be exempted from the requirement of the university degree.

**Article Seventeen:** In case the post of the general manager becomes vacant, his deputy shall assume responsibilities. If there is no deputy, the board of directors shall choose one of its members to perform the duties for a period not exceeding three months. In both cases, a general manager shall be chosen during the said period to be appointed temporarily until the matter is presented to the general assembly in its following meeting for approval.

**Article Eighteen:** Every paper shall have an editor-in-chief to be responsible for what is published therein. He shall have the following tasks and powers:

- (a) Directly supervising, managing and directing all editorial affairs of the paper in order to achieve the goals and objects of the establishment.
- (b) Representing the paper in its relations with others regarding journalistic affairs.
- (c) Preparing plans and programs for the development of the paper.
- (d) Exercising the authorities given to him by internal regulations which enable him to carry out his duty in a suitable and competitive manner.

**Article Nineteen:** The editor-in-chief shall satisfy the following conditions:

- (a) Be a Saudi national.
- (b) Work on a full time basis.
- (c) Hold a university degree with adequate intellectual and journalistic abilities.

**Article Twenty:** Service of the general manager and the editor-in-chief shall terminate in one of the following cases:

- (a) Acceptance of resignation or physical disability.
- (b) If a reasoned recommendation by two thirds of the members of the board of directors is issued to relieve any one of them of his post and the same is approved by the general assembly.

**Article Twenty One:** If the post of editor-in-chief becomes vacant, the board of directors shall assign one of the employees of the establishment to perform the tasks of editor-in-chief. The board of directors shall take the legal measures to appoint an editor-in-chief within a period not exceeding three months from the date of such vacancy.

**Article Twenty Two:** The paper shall have full-time editors appointed by the editor-in-chief. Their tasks shall include:

- (a) Working to achieve the goals and objects of the establishment.
- (b) Working to achieve the excellence required for the paper.
- (c) Properly representing the paper in functions, meetings and conferences.
- (d) Observing the provisions of the Copyright Law.

**Article Twenty Three:** Service of an editor shall terminate in the following cases:

- (a) Acceptance of resignation or physical disability.
- (b) If a reasoned recommendation is issued by the editor-in-chief and the same is approved by the board of directors.

## **Part Five**

### **Dissolution and Liquidation of an Establishment**

**Article Twenty Four:** An establishment shall be dissolved and the license for its formation revoked in the following cases:

- (a) If the losses of an establishment amount to fifty percent of the capital unless the general assembly decides the continuation of the establishment with the approval of the Ministry.
- (b) If the general assembly decides to dissolve it by a majority of two thirds of the members.

**Article Twenty Five:** In the event that an establishment is dissolved, the following measures shall be taken:

- (a) The general assembly shall determine the manner of liquidation and shall appoint a liquidator whereupon the functions of the board of directors and the general manager shall terminate.
- (b) The activities of the establishment shall end except as necessary to carry out the liquidation process.
- (c) The liquidation process shall be carried out under the supervision and responsibility of the liquidator in his capacity as a representative of the owners, monitored by the Ministry.
- (d) The Ministry shall call for a meeting of the general assembly to approve the results of the liquidation.

## **Part Six**

### **General Provisions**

**Article Twenty Six:** An establishment shall, within one year from the beginning of its activity, prepare the following:

- (a) An organizational chart indicating departments, sections and units of the establishment and showing their tasks and administrative relations.
- (b) Work regulations stating the duties and rights of the employees of the establishment.
- (c) Rewards and penalties regulations.
- (d) Pay scale insuring the employees of the establishment of their rights to promotion and annual increments.
- (e) Regulations for assignment, allowances, compensation and the like.
- (f) Internal regulations which determine the functions of the establishment's departments and powers of its officers. They also regulate relationships among them, in addition to other relevant organizational matters.

**Article Twenty Seven:** An association of Saudi journalists of an independent corporate personality concerned with the journalists' affairs shall be established in accordance with the provisions of this Law. The implementing regulations shall specify its tasks and powers.

**Article Twenty Eight:** Existing establishments shall, within one year from the date of this Law's coming into effect, adjust their affairs to conform to its provisions.

**Article Twenty Nine:** The Minister shall issue the implementing regulations necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this Law within one year from the date of its promulgation.

**Article Thirty:** This Law shall supersede the Private Press Establishments' Law issued by Royal Decree No 62 dated 24 / 8 / 1383 هـ and shall become effective thirty days after the date of publication in the Official Gazette.

## **The Law of Printed Materials and Publication (Saudi Arabia) (Bureau of Experts, 2015):**

### **Article One:**

#### Definitions:

The following terms, wherever mentioned in this Law, shall have the meanings attached to them.

#### (1) Circulation:

Putting the printed material at the disposal of a number of people through free distribution or presenting it for sale, fixing it to walls or displaying it on store facades or billboards or road signs and so forth.

(2) Press: The profession of editing journalistic printed materials or their publication.

(3) Journalist: Anyone practicing journalistic editing as a profession, either on full-time or part-time basis.

(4) Newspaper: Any printed material with a fixed title, published periodically or on regular or irregular occasions, such as newspapers, magazines and brochures.

(5) Printer: Anyone in charge of the printing press, whether the owner or his representative.

(6) Printing Press:

any establishment designed to print words, sounds, drawings or pictures for the purpose of circulation.

(7) Printed Material: Any means of expression printed for circulation, whether a word, drawing, picture or sound.

(8) Bookstore:

A place prepared for the display of books, newspapers or the like for the purpose of sale or rent.

(9) Distributor:

The mediator- an individual or a company- between the author or the publisher, the distribution centers and the beneficiary.

(10) Author:

Anyone who prepares an academic, cultural or artistic material for the purpose of circulation.

(11) Publisher: Anyone in charge of issuing any academic, cultural or artistic production for the purpose of circulation.

(12) Ministry: The Ministry of Information

(13) Minister: The Minister of Information

#### **Article Two:**

The following activities shall be subject to the provisions of this Law: (1) Printed materials.

(2) Preparation services before printing. (3) Printing press. (4) Bookstores. (5) Drawing and calligraphy.

(6) Photography. (7) Import, sale or rent of films and video tapes. (8) Sound recordings and records. (9)

Radio, television, movie or theatrical artistic production. (10) Television and radio studios.

(11) Foreign media offices and their correspondents.

(12) Publicity and advertisement. (13) Public relations. (14) Publication. (15) Distribution. (16) Press services.

(17) Production, sale or rent of computer programs. (18) Information studies and consultations.

(19) Copying and duplication. (20) Any activity suggested to be added by the Ministry and

approved by the President of the Council of Ministers.

#### **Article Three:**

Of the objects of printed materials shall be the call to Islam, good moral standards, guidance to all that is good and right, and the dissemination of culture and knowledge.

#### **Article Four :**

(1) It is not allowed to exercise any activity mentioned in Article Two, except by permission of the Ministry, and this shall not exempt from obtaining any other license required by other laws.

(2) The Implementing Regulations shall determine the duration of the license for each activity and specify the appropriate grace period for renewal of the license prior to its expiry after ensuring the licensee's practice of the profession.

#### **Article Five:**

(1) With due consideration to the requirements of laws and agreements, the licensee shall satisfy the following: (a) Be a Saudi national.

(b) Not be less than twenty five years old. The Minister at his discretion may waive the age requirement.

(c) Be well-known for good conduct and behavior with regard to undertaking this activity. (d) Have an appropriate qualification as specified by the Implementing Regulations.

(2) In case of companies, the previous conditions shall apply to their representatives.

(3) The Implementing Regulations shall specify the conditions necessary for the work of foreign media offices and their correspondents.

#### **Article Six:**

Government bodies, educational and research institutions, academic associations, literary and cultural clubs and private press establishments may publish non-periodical printed materials in the field of their specialization and under their responsibility.

#### **Article Seven:**

The fee of the license or its renewal for the headquarters or the branch shall be determined according to the following: (1) Two thousand riyals (2000) for any of the following activities:

(a) Printing press. (b) Preparation services before printing.

(c) Publication. (d) Distribution. (e) Radio, television, or movie artistic production.

(f) Television and radio studios. (g) Information studies and consultations. (h) Press services.

(i) Publicity and advertisement. (j) Public relations. (k) Import, sale or rent of films and video tapes.

(l) Production sale, or rent of computer programs. (2) One thousand riyals (1000) for any of the following activities: (a) Bookstores. (b) Sound recordings and records. (c) Drawing and calligraphy. (d) Photography.

(e) Copying and duplication.

#### **Article Eight:**

Freedom of expression is guaranteed through all means of publication within the provisions of Shari'ah and law.

#### **Article Nine:**

For approval, the printed material shall observe the following:

(1) Not be in violation of the provisions of Shari'ah.

(2) Not lead to jeopardizing the country's security or its public order or serve foreign interests in conflict with national interest. (3) Not lead to inciting feuds and spreading dissension among citizens.

(4) Not lead to encroachment on people's dignity and freedom or to their extortion or defaming them or their trade names. (5) Not lead to encouraging crime or its incitement.

(6) Not be detrimental to the country's economic or health status. (7) Not disclose facts of investigations or trials, unless permitted by the competent authority. (8) Be committed to objective and constructive criticism leading to public good, based upon true facts and evidence.

#### **Article Ten:**

All printed materials within the Kingdom shall have the necessary bibliographical data, as specified by the Implementing Regulations.

#### **Article Eleven:**

The license may be assigned, rented or shared with others after approval of the Ministry, pursuant to the provisions of this Law.

#### **Article Twelve:**

If the licensee dies, the heirs shall notify the Ministry within two months of the date of death. They have the right to continue the activity after the Ministry's approval, pursuant to the provisions of this Law.

#### Domestic Printed Materials

##### **Article Thirteen:**

Any author, publisher, printer or distributor desiring to print or distribute any printed material shall provide the Ministry with two copies for approval before printing or circulation. The Ministry shall approve the printed material or reject it, giving the reasons for rejection within thirty days. The party concerned may file a grievance with the Minister against the rejection decision.

##### **Article Fourteen:**

Every printing press shall keep a record of all materials printed therein. The record shall be declared to the authorized personnel upon request, and the Ministry may, through the Implementing Regulations, exempt any printed material from the record requirement.

##### **Article Fifteen:**

The author, publisher and printer are responsible for any violation in the printed material if printed or set for circulation without approval, and if it is not possible to identify either of them, the distributor shall be held responsible. Otherwise, the responsibility shall fall upon the seller.

##### **Article Sixteen:**

The Ministry shall demand the author or the publisher, according to the deposit system, to submit the copies required for deposit of whatever is printed inside the Kingdom.

##### **Article Seventeen:**

Advertisement and publicity materials shall not be added to films, tapes or the like on which artistic or sports materials are recorded and for which contracts are concluded for their use in the Kingdom, except through local advertisement and publicity establishments or companies and after approval by the Ministry. The Implementing Regulations shall determine the duration period of advertisements in every work.

#### Foreign Printed Materials

##### **Article Eighteen:**

Foreign printed materials shall be approved if they are free of any thing offensive to Islam or the system of government, detrimental to the high interest of the State, or in violation of public decency and morals.

##### **Article Nineteen:**

Foreign printed materials shall be approved or rejected with a statement of reasons thereof within thirty days from the date of receiving the application. Papers shall be treated according to the Implementing Regulations.

##### **Article Twenty:**

Every Saudi who publishes a non-periodical printed material outside the Kingdom and submits an application to the Ministry for approval shall attach to his application proof of deposit of the required copies, in accordance with the deposit system.

**Article Twenty One:**

The Ministry's censorship shall not apply to printed materials imported by government bodies, educational and research institutions, academic associations, cultural and literary clubs and private press establishments for their own use.

**Article Twenty Two:**

The Implementing Regulations – within the provisions of this Law - shall regulate importation and distribution of foreign printed materials. It shall also specify the procedures necessary to facilitate bringing in and subscribing to books and other printed materials by researchers and scholars for their academic purposes and for their personal possession.

**Article Twenty Three:**

Upon approval by the President of the Council of Ministers, foreign papers may be printed in the Kingdom as specified by the Implementing Regulations and in accordance with the provisions of this Law.

Local Press

**Article Twenty Four:**

Local papers shall not be subject to censorship, except under extraordinary circumstances determined by the President of the Council of Ministers.

**Article Twenty Five:**

(1) Outside the domain of private press establishments, private bodies or individuals may publish papers by license from the Ministry and upon approval of the President of the Council of Ministers.

(2) The Ministry's approval shall be sufficient for publishing the following: (a) Brochures of limited circulation published by private bodies and not intended for sale, provided that they be limited to serving the activities of the publishing body.

(b) Specialized academic and professional journals, published by private bodies or individuals. (3) Publishing papers and academic journals by public educational institutions and government bodies, after informing the Ministry.

(4) The Supervisor of any printed material mentioned in this Article and the director of the agency publishing it are responsible for what is published therein, according to the provisions of this Law.

**Article Twenty Six:**

The name of the licensee, name of the editor-in-chief, issue number, place of publication, date, price, and name of the printing press shall be placed in a prominent position in the paper.

**Article Twenty Seven:**

1) The name of any paper which was published and then discontinued may not be used except after the lapse of ten years from the date of its discontinuation, unless the persons

concerned relinquish the name before the expiry of that period.

2) It is not allowed to give a name to a paper that may cause confusion with the name of another paper.

**Article Twenty Eight:**

The Implementing Regulations shall specify the rules regulating the annual subscription to papers, the price of a copy as well as the advertisement affairs.

**Article Twenty Nine:**

The Ministry may withdraw the license or cancel the approval to publish a paper in one of the following two cases: (1) If not published within a maximum period of two years from the licensing notification. (2) If publication is discontinued for an unbroken period exceeding one year.

**Article Thirty:**

It is prohibited for papers and their staff to accept any benefit such as donations, subsidies or the like from domestic or foreign parties, except with the approval of the Ministry.

**Article Thirty One:**

Publication of a paper shall not be banned except under extraordinary circumstances and with the approval of the President of the Council of Ministers.

**Article Thirty Two:**

(a) Editorial advertisements for establishments and individuals may be published, provided that it is indicated that they are advertisement material. (b) Editorial advertisements for countries may be published with the approval of the Ministry, provided that it is indicated that they are advertisement material.

**Article Thirty Three:**

(1) The editor-in-chief of the paper or whoever acts on his behalf in his absence, shall be responsible for whatever is published therein.  
(2) Without prejudice to the responsibility of the editor-in-chief or whoever acts on his behalf, the writer shall be responsible for the content of the text.

**Article Thirty Four :**

Um-Al-Qura newspaper is the official gazette of the state.

Penalties

**Article Thirty Five:**

Any paper that attributes to someone an incorrect statement or publishes incorrect news, shall rectify that by publishing the correction free of charge, upon the request of the party concerned, in the first issue after the request for correction, and it shall be in the same place where the news or statement was published or in a prominent position in the paper. Those harmed shall have the right to claim compensation.

**Article Thirty Six:**

The Ministry, when necessary, may withdraw any issue of a paper without compensation, if it includes any violation of the provisions of Shari'ah, pursuant to a decision by the committee provided for in Article Thirty Seven.

**Article Thirty Seven:**

Violations of the provisions of this Law shall be reviewed by a committee formed pursuant to a decision by the Minister. It shall be chaired by the competent Deputy Minister and its members shall not be less than three, of whom one shall be a legal counselor. Its decisions shall be issued by majority after summoning the violator or his representative and hearing his statements. It may summon whomever it desires to hear his statement. It may also seek help from whomever it may deem necessary. The Committee's decisions shall not be considered valid except after the approval of the Minister.

**Article Thirty Eight:**

Without prejudice to any other harsher punishment provided for by another law, anyone who violates any of the provisions of this Law shall be punished by a fine not exceeding fifty thousand riyals, the closure of his place of business or establishment for a period not exceeding two months, or by permanent closure of his place of business or establishment. A decision of the punishment shall be issued by the Minister pursuant to a proposal by the committee provided for in Article Thirty Seven of this Law.

**Article Thirty Nine:**

The Ministry may withdraw domestic or foreign printed materials displayed for circulation in the following two cases:

(1) If they are banned from circulation. (2) If they are not licensed and contain some of the banned materials specified in Article Nine or Article Eighteen. The body authorized to review these matters is the Committee provided for in Article Thirty Seven. The Committee shall decide what it deems appropriate either by destroying the printed materials without compensation or requiring the person concerned to send them back outside the Kingdom at his own expense, if they are foreign materials.

**Article Forty:**

Anyone against whom a punishment is rendered, pursuant to the provisions of this Law, may file a grievance before the Board of Grievances, within sixty days from the date of notification of the decision issued in this regard.

**Article Forty One:**

If the Ministry licenses a printed material and something unexpectedly occurs requiring its withdrawal, it shall compensate the party concerned for the cost of the copies withdrawn.

**General Provisions**

**Article Forty Two:**

For the approval of academic and intellectual works, the Ministry shall assign those who are qualified, competent, specialized and acquainted with the laws and publication instructions. It may, as it deems appropriate, seek help from part-timers, outside the Ministry.

**Article Forty Three:**

In coordination with the bodies concerned, the Ministry shall set the regulating rules for holding book exhibitions by private publication and distribution houses, and supervising them.

**Article Forty Four:**

Pursuant to a decision by the Minister, associations for the activities provided for in Article Two may be established in order to deal with their issues and coordinate their tasks. Every association shall set regulations to be approved by the Minister, clarifying its objectives and regulating its work.

**Article Forty Five:**

The Ministry shall be the body authorized to follow up the implementation of this Law and to hold accountable those violating it, pursuant to its provisions.

**Article Forty Six:**

The Minister shall issue the Implementing Regulations of this Law within a maximum period of eighteen months from the date of its publication, and they shall be published in the Official Gazette.

**Article Forty Seven:**

Any party engaged in any of the activities governed by this Law shall adjust his status, pursuant to the provisions provided, within a period of two years from the date of its implementation.

**Article Forty Eight:**

This Law shall supersede the Law of Printed Materials and Publication issued by Royal decree No (M/17) dated 13 / 04 / 1402 هـ and shall nullify provisions that contradict it.

**Article Forty Nine:**

This Law shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall be effective after ninety days from the date of its publication.

**The Copyright Law (Saudi Arabia) (Bureau of Experts, 2015):****Article 1: Definitions**

The following terms, wherever used in this Law, shall have the meanings following them, unless the context requires otherwise.

Work: Any literary, scientific or artistic work.

Joint Work: A work composed by two or more natural or corporate persons whether the contribution of each is separable or not.

Collective Work: The work collectively composed by a group at the instruction of a person, natural or corporate, who undertakes its publication under his name or administration, where the

work of the contributors is integrated in the general objective sought by that natural or corporate person, so that no contribution of any of the participants may be separated or singled out.

Audio Work: Any audio fixation of a specific performance or sound, regardless of the means of fixation.

Audio-Visual Work: Any work produced for simultaneous audio and visual use, consisting of a series of related images, accompanied by sound and recorded on an appropriate means and shown by suitable devices.

Derivative Work: Work based on a pre-existing work.

Author: The person who creates a work.

Performers: The persons who act, recite, sing or play roles or participate in performing by any other means in literary or artistic works.

Publication: Making copies of a work to meet public need.

Copying: Producing a copy or more of one of the literary, artistic or scientific works on a material means, including any sound or visual recording.

Folklore: All literary, artistic or scientific works which are assumed to have been created on Saudi territory and transmitted from one generation to the next and constitute part of the traditional Saudi cultural and artistic heritage.

Broadcasting: Transmission of a work, performance or an audio or visual recording to the public, using wires or wireless methods or any other means of transmission, to be received by the public, including transmission via satellite.

Committee: The competent committee formed to review violations resulting from the implementation of the provisions of this Law.

Ministry: Ministry of Culture and Information.

Minister: Minister of Culture and Information.

Implementing Regulations: Implementing Regulations of this Law.

## **Chapter One: Protected Works**

### **Article 2: Original Works**

This Law shall protect the works created in the fields of literature, art and sciences, irrespective of their type, means of expression, importance or purpose of authorship, such as:

- (1) Written materials like books, booklets and others.
- (2) Works which are verbally delivered like lectures, speeches, poetry, songs and the like.
- (3) Dramatic works, plays, shows and similar presentations which involve motion, sound or both.
- (4) Works which are especially prepared for broadcasting or are presented through broadcasting.
- (5) Drawings, works of plastic arts, architecture, decorative art, artistic embroidery and the like.
- (6) Sound and audio-visual works.
- (7) Applied art works, whether handcrafted or manufactured.
- (8) Photographic works and the like.

(9) Illustrations, geographical maps, designs, plans, sketches and sculptured works related to geography, topography, architecture and science. (10) Three dimensional works of geography, topography, architecture or science. (11) Computer programs. (12) Protection shall include the title of a work, if it is of creative nature, and not a common expression indicating the subject matter of the work.

### **Article 3: Derivative works**

This Law shall also protect:

(1) Works of translation. (2) Works of abridgement, modification, illustration, editing or any other forms of alteration. (3) Encyclopedias and anthologies which are deemed creative with respect to the selection of their content or arrangement, whether they are literary, artistic or scientific works. (4) Compilations of folkloric works and expressions and selections therefrom, if such compilations are creative as to selection or arrangement of their contents. (5) Databases, whether they are mechanically readable or can be read in any other manner, if they are creative as to selection or arrangement of their contents. Copyright protection enjoyed by the authors of the works mentioned in the above paragraphs shall in no way jeopardize the protection enjoyed by the authors of the original works.

### **Article 4: Works excluded from protection:**

Protection prescribed by this Law shall not cover the following:

(1) Laws and Judicial judgments, decisions of administrative bodies, international agreements and all official documents, as well as the official translations thereof, subject to the provisions concerning the circulation of these documents. (2) What is published in newspapers, magazines and periodicals, or broadcasted in daily news or news-like events. (3) Ideas, procedures, work methods, concepts of mathematical sciences, axioms and abstract facts.

## **Chapter Two: Owners of Rights**

### **Article 5: Authors**

(1) An author is any person who publishes a work attributed to himself by mentioning his name on the work or by any other means used to attribute works to their authors, unless there is evidence to the contrary. (2) The publisher whose name appears on the work shall be the representative of the author, if the work is published under a pseudonym or anonymously. (3) The authors of the audio work and the audio-visual work shall be the persons who participated in the creation of this work, such as:

(a) Author of text. (b) Scenarist. (c) Dialogue writer. (d) Director.  
(e) Composer.

### **Article 6: Joint and Collective Works**

(1) When two or more persons participate in the authorship of a work in such a way that the contribution of each in the work cannot be separated, they shall all be considered equal partners in the ownership of the work, and none of them may independently exercise the author's rights prescribed by this Law, unless otherwise agreed in writing. Each of the participants in the

authorship shall have the right to protective and summary procedures upon infringement on the work and shall have the right to claim for compensation for his share, against the damage he has incurred as a result of such infringement.

(2) When two or more persons collectively participate in the authorship of a work in such a manner that their contributions to the collective work can be separated, each party shall have the right to individually exploit his part, provided that no damage is caused to the exploitation of the collective work, unless otherwise agreed. (3) A natural or corporate person who directed or organized the creation of such a collective work shall alone exercise the copyright.

#### **Article 7: Folklore**

(1) Folklore shall be the property of the state, and the Ministry shall exercise the copyright pertaining thereto. (2) The import or distribution of copies of folklore works, copies of their translations or others which are produced outside the Kingdom without a license from the Ministry shall be prohibited.

### **Chapter Three: Rights**

#### **Article 8: Moral Rights**

(1) The author shall have the right to exercise any of the following:

(a) Attributing the work to himself or publishing it under a pseudonym or anonymously. (b) Objecting to any infringement on his work and preventing any deletion, change, addition, distortion, corruption or any other form of tampering with the work itself.

(c) Making any amendment to or deletion from his work, at his discretion. (d) Withdrawing his work from circulation.

(2) The moral rights provided for in paragraph (1) of this article are permanent rights of the author and are not subject to waiver or lapse by prescription. (3) The moral rights shall be retained by their owner and shall not be forfeited by granting the right of exploiting the work in any manner. (4) Moral rights provided for in this Law shall pass to the Ministry upon the death of the owner who has no heirs.

#### **Article 9: Financial Rights**

First: The author, or whoever he delegates, shall have the right to exercise all or any of the following, as per the nature of the work:

(1) Printing and publishing the work in a reading format; recording it on audio or visual tapes, compact disks or electronic memory or any other means of dissemination. (2) Translation of the work into other languages, quoting or altering it and the redistribution of the sound or visual material. (3) Communicating the work to the public via any possible means, such as displaying, acting, broadcasting or data transmission networks. (4) All forms of material exploitation of the work in general, including permissible commercial rental.

Second: The authors of artistic and literary works, their performers, composers and producers of sound recordings and broadcasting organizations shall enjoy their financial rights, as prescribed by the implementing regulations.

#### **Article 10: Compensation upon Withdrawal of the Work:**

The author shall refrain from performing such deeds that may prejudice exploitation of the authorized right of third parties. Nevertheless, the author may withdraw his work from circulation, amend, delete from or add to it, upon agreement with the party authorized to exercise said right. Should there be no agreement, the author shall be obligated to compensate the said person according to the decision of the Committee.

#### **Article 11: Assignment of Copyright**

(1) Copyrights provided for in this Law shall be transferable, in whole or in part, either through inheritance or by lawful disposal, which shall be recorded in writing and shall limit the scope of the transferred right in terms of both time and place.

(2) The rights provided for in this Law shall be passed to the author's heirs, with the exception of performing any amendment to or deletion from the work. (3) If the author instructed in his will that the publication of his work be barred or if he specified a date for such publication, his will shall be carried out within its limits. (4) If the work is produced by an individual and its author dies, or it is a joint work and one of the authors dies with no heirs, his share shall be passed to those entitled to it according to the provisions of the Islamic Shari'ah.

#### **Article 12: Assignment of Future Production**

An author's assignment of all his future intellectual production is deemed null and void.

#### **Article 13: Arrangement of Contractual Relations**

(1) The rights' owners shall make arrangements for their relations and their rights with the establishments of production, printing, publishing and distribution, broadcasting organizations and other entities licensed to perform their activities, pursuant to certified contracts that specify all rights and obligations of the parties concerned. (2) Establishments of production, printing, publishing and distribution as well as broadcasting organizations and others shall not engage in any activity related to copyright except after concluding a contract with the copyright's owners or their attorney-in-fact, where the rights and obligations of each party shall be specified.

#### **Article 14: Continuity of Contracts**

The author's heirs are obligated to abide by the contracts concluded by their testator during his lifetime, including the rights and obligations of third parties.

### **Chapter Four: Lawful Use**

#### **Article 15: Exceptions**

The following uses of the copyrighted work, in its original language or in translation, are lawful without obtaining the permission of the copyright owner. These forms of use are:

- (1) Copying the work for personal use, excluding computer software, audio and audio-visual works.
- (2) Quoting passages from the work in another work, provided that such quotation be consistent with the conventional practice and within the limits justified by the intended objective, and provided that the source and name of author shall be mentioned in the work where the quotation is cited. This shall also apply to journalistic summaries abstracted from newspapers and

periodicals. (3) Using the work by way of clarification for educational purposes, within the limits justified by the intended objective, or making a copy or two for public libraries or non-commercial documentation centers on the following conditions:

(a) Shall not be commercial or for profit. (b) Copying shall be restricted to the requirements of activities. (c) Shall not impair the material benefit of the work. (d) The work is out of print or is lost or damaged. (4) Citing or copying articles published in newspapers or periodicals dealing with current subjects or broadcast works of similar nature, provided that the source and name of the author, if known, are clearly given. (5) Copying any broadcast work that may be viewed or listened to during presentation of current events by means of still or motion pictures, provided that copying remains within the intended objective with the source clearly given. (6) Copying public speeches, lectures, judicial proceedings or any other similar works made in public, if such copying is made by the media, provided that the name of the author is clearly mentioned. The author shall retain the right to publish such works in the manner he sees fit. (7) Production of temporary recordings by broadcasting organizations and through their own means – without impairing the author's copyright – in one copy or more for any protected work, for which they are licensed to broadcast and show, provided that all the copies be destroyed within a period not exceeding one year from the date of their preparation, or a longer period agreed to by the author. A copy of this recording may be kept with official archives, if the recording is a unique documentary work.

(8) Music playing, acting, performing or showing any work, after publication, by government troupes or public corporate entities or school theater, as long as such playing, performance or acting does not lead to direct or indirect financial gains. (9) Copying short quotations from published works, drawings, pictures, designs or maps in school books prepared for educational curricula or in books of history, literature and art, provided that copying is within the limits of necessity and that the title of the work and the name of the author are mentioned. (10) Taking new photographs of any previously photographed object or work and publishing these pictures, even if the new pictures have been taken from the same vantage point and under the same circumstances of said pictures. (11) Citing parts of scientific articles and works by research institutions for their internal use or to fulfill the requirements of those who are conducting studies and research, provided that the source be mentioned. (12) Making one reserve copy of computer programs for the persons possessing the original copy for the purpose of protecting the original, while keeping the original with the user, to show upon request. The implementing regulations shall detail the circumstances required for these exceptions to apply.

#### **Article 16: Mandatory Licenses**

(1) The Minister may grant a publication license for the work after the lapse of a period to be specified by the implementing regulations for each case, if he sees that publication of this work serves public interest, in the following cases:

(a) If no copies of the published work in its original language are made available in the Kingdom by the copyright owner to satisfy the general needs of the public or school or university education, at a price comparable to the price of similar works in the Kingdom, upon the author's declining to make available copies of that work. (b) If all editions of the original work or its Arabic translation are out of print, with the copyright

owner's failure to make it available upon request. (c) If no translation has been published for this work by the owner of the translation copyright or with his permission, provided that the purpose is to make use of this translation in educational curricula. (d) If the heirs of the Saudi author or his successors decline to exercise the rights passed to them pursuant to Article (11) of this Law, within one year of the date of the request without valid excuse. (2) The license shall terminate upon publication of the work or the translation by the copyright owner, or with his authorization. (3) The Minister may specify the remuneration to be paid by the licensee to the copyright owners for every license issued, and they shall have the right to appeal his decision to the Board of Grievances. The implementing regulations shall determine the procedures and conditions required for the application of the mandatory license.

#### **Article 17: Prohibited Use of Certain Works**

(1) Whoever produces pictures shall not publish, display or distribute the originals or copies thereof without permission of the individuals pictured or their heirs. This provision shall not apply if the pictures were published on the occasion of public events, if they are pictures of officials or public figures, or if publication is permitted by public authorities in the service of public interest. The person represented in the picture may give permission for its publication in newspapers, magazines and the like, even without the permission of photographer. Such provisions shall apply to the picture, regardless of the way the picture has been produced.

(2) Only the author shall have the right to publish his letters. However, this right shall not be exercised without the permission of the addressee, if publication may harm him.

### **Chapter Five: Scope and Duration of Protection**

#### **Article 18: Scope of Protection**

Provisions of this Law shall cover the following:

First: (1) Works of Saudi and Non-Saudi authors published, produced, performed or displayed for the first time in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (2) Works of Saudi authors published, produced, performed or displayed for the first time outside the Kingdom.

Second: Works of broadcasting organizations and of producers of sound recordings and performers.

Third: Works copyrighted pursuant to international agreements or treaties for protection of copyright to which the Kingdom is a party.

#### **Article 19: Duration of Protection**

First: (1) The period of copyright for the author of a work shall be for the duration of his life and for a period of fifty years following his death. (2) The period of copyright for joint works shall be computed from the date of the death of the last surviving author. (3) Protection period for works where the author is a corporate entity, or if his name is unknown, shall be fifty years from the date of the first publication of the work. If the name of the author becomes known before the end of the fifty years, the duration of protection shall be the period specified in paragraph (1) of this article. (4) If the work consists of several parts or volumes, published se

parately or over a period of time, each part or volume shall be considered an independent work for the purposes of the computation of its protection period. (5) Protection period for sound works, audio-visual works, films, collective works and computer programs is fifty years from the date of the first show or publication of the work, regardless of republication. (6) Protection period for applied art (handcrafted or manufactured) and photographs shall be twenty five years from the date of publication. Computation of the period starts in this case on the date of the first publication of the work, regardless of republication.

Second: (1) Protection period for broadcasting organizations shall be twenty years from the date of the first transmission of programs or broadcast materials. (2) Protection period for the producers of sound recordings and performers shall be fifty years from the date of performance or its first recording, as the case may be.

#### **Article 20: Validity of Protection to Works Antecedent to the Law**

Literary, artistic and scientific works, acoustic recordings and broadcasting programs published before the date this Law is effective, pursuant to the periods specified in Article (19) of this Law, shall be protected, provided that the protection period under the previous Law has not expired and that protection was not terminated in the countries of origin which are parties with the Kingdom to international agreements or treaties for the protection of copyright.

### **Chapter Six: Provisions of Infringements and Penalties**

#### **Article 21: Infringements**

The following acts shall be deemed infringements on the rights protected by the Law:

(1) Publishing a work not owned by the publisher, publishing it under the pretense of its ownership or without obtaining a written authorization or a contract with the author of the work, his heirs or their representatives. (2) Amendment of the contents of a work, its nature, subject or title without the knowledge of the author and his prior written consent thereof, whether the amendment is made by the publisher, the producer, distributor or anyone else. (3) Reprinting the work by the producer, the publisher or the printer without obtaining prior written consent of the copyright owner, or having the documents authorizing the reprint. (4) Removal of any written or electronic information that may lead to forfeiting the owner's copyrights. (5) Removing and cracking any protective electronic code that guarantees the use of the original copies of the work, such as coding or data recorded by the use of laser or other means.

(6) Commercial use of intellectual works through deception, which is not permitted by the owners of the copyright, such as using copied software or receiving coded broadcasting programs through illegal means. (7) Manufacturing or importing tools – for the purpose of sale or rental- of any means which facilitate receiving or exploiting works through means other than those determined by owner of the rights. (8) Copying or photographing parts of a book or a collection of books or parts of any work, with or without compensation, without obtaining the written consent of the copyright owners and the competent authorities of the Ministry, with the exception of cases of lawful copying specified in Article (15) of this Law. (9) Import of counterfeit, imitated or copied works. (10) Keeping non-original wo

rks at the commercial establishment, its warehouse or any other facility owned by it, whether directly or indirectly and under any pretense. (11) Infringement on any of the protected rights specified in this Law or violation of any of its provisions.

## **Article 22: Penalties**

First: Any person who violates a provision of this Law shall be subject to one or more of the following penalties:

- (1) Warning.
- (2) A fine not exceeding two hundred and fifty thousand riyals.
- (3) Closing the violating establishment or the one which has participated in the violation of the copyright, for a period not exceeding two months.
- (4) Confiscation of all copies of the work along with the materials used or intended for use in the infringement on the copyrights.
- (5) Imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months.

Second: Upon repetition of the infringement on the same work or any other work, the maximum limit of penalty, fine and closure may be doubled.

Third: If the Committee sees that the violation entails imprisonment or a fine exceeding one hundred thousand riyals or cancellation of the license, the case shall be submitted to the Minister for referral to the Board of Grievances.

Fourth: The Committee may decide on financial compensation for the benefit of the owner whose right has been infringed upon and who files the complaint. Compensation shall be consistent with the size of infringement and the damage incurred.

Fifth: The Committee may include in its decision the punishment of defamation against the person who commits the infringement. Publication of such shall be at his expense and by the method the Committee deems appropriate.

Sixth: The Committee may include in its decision suspension of participation of the infringing establishment in the activities, occasions or exhibitions, if the infringement is discovered during a commercial event, provided that the period of suspension shall not exceed two years.

Seventh: The Committee may issue an injunction against the printing of the work infringed upon, its production, publication or distribution, in addition to protective impounding of the copies, materials and pictures made from it. It may take any temporary measure it finds necessary to protect the copyright till a final decision is reached regarding the complaint or grievance.

The implementing regulations shall specify the protective impounding procedures.

## **Article 23: Grievance**

Anyone against whom a decision is made by the Committee shall have the right to file a grievance with the Board of Grievances within sixty days from the date of notification of the decision.

## **Article 24: Investigation of Violations**

The officers concerned at the Ministry shall investigate the violation and visit media and commercial facilities, warehouses and public institutions and private establishments that use intellectual works in their activities and investigate them. They shall have the power of judicial investigation and protection of evidentiary proofs.

The implementing regulations shall specify the rules and procedures to which these employees shall adhere.

**Article 25: Violation Review Committee**

- (1) A Committee to review the violation shall be formed by the Minister's decision, with a minimum of three members, provided that one of them is a legal advisor and the other a Shari'ah advisor.  
(2) Decisions of the Committee shall be made by majority vote, which shall be endorsed by the Minister.

**Chapter Seven: General Provisions**

**Article 26: Issuance of implementing regulations**

The implementing regulations of this Law shall be issued by the Minister within six months and shall be published in the Official Gazette.

**Article 27: Superceding other laws**

This Law shall supercede the Copyright Law issued by the Royal Decree No. M/11, dated 19/05/1410 H.

**Article 28: Validity of this Law**

This Law shall be published in the Official Gazette, and it shall be effective six months after the date of its publication.