

Artificial Intelligence and Technological Change in Public Service Media: Insights from a Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Public Service Media (PSM) organizations are facing increasing pressures from digitalization, market competition, and changing audience behaviors, raising concerns about their long-term sustainability and public relevance. This study aims to examine how PSM institutions manage these challenges through leadership practices, innovation strategies, audience engagement, cultural responsibilities, and financial management. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with senior executives and managers, the research applies thematic analysis to explore organizational responses to technological, economic, and societal change. The findings indicate that PSM sustainability depends on the strategic alignment of interconnected organizational dimensions rather than on isolated managerial actions. Leadership, digital innovation, audience-centered practices, cultural missions, and financial stewardship function as mutually reinforcing elements that support institutional resilience, legitimacy, and adaptability. The study further demonstrates that public service values can be maintained alongside market-oriented and technological pressures, challenging assumptions that digital transformation undermines public media missions. By proposing an integrated framework of sustainable PSM, this research extends theories of media governance, organizational resilience, and public value. It also offers practical insights for policymakers and media managers seeking to strengthen public media performance in complex and rapidly evolving media environments.

Keywords: Public Service Media, Digital Transformation, Organizational Sustainability, Audience Engagement, Cultural Responsibility, Financial Management, Media Governance, Innovation Strategies

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the media landscape, transforming how content is produced, distributed, curated, and consumed [1]. From algorithmic recommendation systems and automated journalism to audience analytics and content personalization, AI-driven technologies are increasingly embedded in media infrastructures, newsroom workflows, and strategic decision-making processes [2]. These developments reflect a broader shift toward data-driven and platform-oriented

media environments in which algorithms play a central role in structuring visibility, engagement, and value creation. While much of the existing literature has focused on commercial digital platforms and private media corporations comparatively less attention has been paid to how Public Service Media (PSM) institutions are navigating and interpreting this technological transformation [3-5].

Public Service Media (PSM) organizations occupy a distinctive position within democratic societies, operating under public mandates that emphasize universality, editorial independence, accountability, cultural representation, and public value. Unlike purely market-driven media actors, PSM institutions are tasked with serving broad public interests across diverse audiences, often under legal or normative frameworks that prioritize democratic goals over commercial imperatives. Historically rooted in broadcasting traditions, many PSM organizations are now undergoing profound technological change as they adapt to digital platforms, data-driven environments, and algorithmic systems. The integration of AI-related technologies presents both opportunities and tensions: opportunities for innovation, operational efficiency, and enriched audience engagement; and tensions related to professional norms, organizational governance, public trust, and institutional identity as media work becomes increasingly mediated through algorithmic and datafied infrastructures [6].

Technological change within Public Service Media (PSM) cannot be understood solely as a matter of infrastructure modernization. Rather, it involves broader organizational transformation, shifts in professional practices, evolving skill requirements, and reconfigurations of power both within and beyond media institutions [7,8]. AI and algorithmic systems influence newsroom workflows, content visibility, audience analytics, and strategic decision-making processes, reshaping how editorial work is conducted and how audiences are reached. At the same time, public media organizations must reconcile technological adoption with long-standing normative commitments to impartiality, transparency, inclusivity, and democratic responsibility. This creates a complex socio-technical environment in which technological innovation intersects with public service values.

Although scholarship on digital transformation in media has expanded considerably, empirical research examining how AI and related technological changes are experienced, interpreted, and negotiated within Public Service Media (PSM) institutions remains limited. There is a particular need for qualitative insights into how media professionals, managers, and institutional actors understand and respond to AI, including the ways it shapes newsroom practices, strategic decisions, and organizational routines. Key questions include: How do they frame technological change? Do they perceive AI primarily as a strategic opportunity, an organizational challenge, or a structural disruption? And how does technological adoption interact with existing institutional cultures, mandates, and public service values?

This article addresses these questions through an in-depth qualitative study based on extensive interviews with media professionals and organizational actors within the public media sector. Drawing on thematic analysis of rich interview data, the study examines how Artificial Intelligence and related digital technologies are reshaping institutional practices, professional identities, and strategic orientations in Public Service Media. Rather than treating AI as a purely technical phenomenon, the analysis conceptualizes it as a socio-organizational force embedded

within broader processes of technological change [9].

By foregrounding the perspectives of practitioners and institutional leaders, this study contributes to three areas of scholarship. First, it advances research on AI in media by moving beyond commercial platform contexts to examine public service institutions. Also, it enriches debates on technological change by highlighting how innovation is negotiated within organizations that operate under public mandates rather than market logics alone. Finally, it provides empirically grounded insights into the evolving relationship between technology, institutional identity, and public responsibility.

To address these questions, the article proceeds as follows. The next section reviews the literature on Artificial Intelligence and technological change in Public Service Media, followed by the methodology describing the qualitative design and data analysis. The findings are then presented and discussed in relation to existing scholarly debates.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Artificial Intelligence and Technology in Media

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly shaping media practices across content production, distribution, and audience engagement. In journalism, AI has been applied to automate routine tasks such as news writing, sports summaries, and financial reporting, enabling faster and more scalable content production [10]. Beyond efficiency, these systems influence how journalistic work is organized, prioritized, and evaluated, affecting both professional practices and perceptions of journalistic value.

At the distribution level, algorithmic recommendation and personalization technologies play a central role in shaping what audiences encounter and how they interact with media content. Rather than merely reflecting audience preferences, these algorithms actively construct patterns of attention, visibility, and engagement. Media professionals must therefore continuously interpret algorithmic outputs, responding to metrics and performance indicators that influence editorial decisions and organizational priorities. AI is also widely integrated into audience analytics and data-driven decision-making. Through monitoring user behavior and predicting consumption patterns, media organizations adapt content strategies and allocate resources in ways that were previously impossible. These capabilities alter newsroom routines and professional responsibilities, requiring media practitioners to negotiate between data insights, editorial judgment, and organizational expectations.

The adoption of AI in media raises important ethical and professional considerations, including algorithmic bias, transparency, accountability, and potential threats to editorial independence and public trust. From a qualitative perspective, these issues are not merely technical; they are matters of interpretation, negotiation, and organizational meaning-making. How media professionals perceive risks, responsibilities, and legitimacy is central to understanding the practical consequences of AI adoption.

Critically, AI in media cannot be treated as a purely technical phenomenon. Scholars increasingly adopt a socio-technical perspective, highlighting that technological outcomes are co-constructed through the interactions of digital tools, human practices, institutional norms, and platform architectures [11]. AI technologies are thus embedded within organizational routines, professional cultures, and institutional frameworks, and their effects emerge through ongoing processes of adaptation, negotiation, and sense-making. This perspective provides a conceptual foundation for examining how AI-driven technological change unfolds in contexts such as Public Service Media, where normative values, professional ethics, and organizational mandates are central.

2.2. Digital Transformation in Public Service Media

Public Service Media (PSM) organizations operate under mandates that prioritize universality, cultural representation, editorial independence, and public accountability [12]. In recent years, these institutions have faced growing pressures to adapt to digital platforms, data-driven systems, and algorithmic technologies. Unlike commercial media, which primarily respond to market incentives, PSM must integrate technological innovations while maintaining normative commitments to public service values. This dual demand creates distinctive challenges in their digital transformation [13].

Digital transformation in PSM encompasses multiple interrelated dimensions, including content production, distribution channels, audience engagement strategies, and organizational workflows. AI technologies—such as automated news generation, predictive analytics, and recommendation systems, are increasingly incorporated into these processes, reshaping traditional practices and decision-making structures. Their adoption is not merely technical; it involves continuous negotiation among media professionals, managers, and institutional actors, who interpret the implications of AI for editorial priorities, professional roles, and organizational routines.

The integration of AI often necessitates reskilling personnel, redefining responsibilities, and addressing institutional resistance to change. These processes illustrate how technological innovation intersects with organizational culture, professional identity, and public service norms. Media professionals and leaders actively mediate the effects of AI, negotiating how it aligns with the principles of inclusivity, transparency, and democratic accountability central to PSM.

Research emphasizes that digital transformation in PSM is best understood as a socio-technical process rather than a simple adoption of new tools. Technology adoption reshapes relationships among media professionals, audiences, and institutions, influencing how public service values are interpreted and enacted in practice. Examining these dynamics requires qualitative insights into the experiences, perceptions, and strategies of those embedded within PSM organizations, an approach that forms the basis of the present study.

2.3. Organizational and Socio-Technical Perspectives

Artificial Intelligence and digital technologies in Public Service Media (PSM) operate within complex socio-technical systems, where technological tools, professional practices, and institutional norms are mutually constitutive. The adoption of AI often transforms newsroom workflows, content production processes, and audience engagement strategies. Journalists and editors must navigate automated reporting, data analytics, and algorithmic content curation, which can reshape responsibilities, required skills, and hierarchical relationships within media organizations.

Technological change is closely intertwined with organizational culture and institutional mandates. PSM institutions are required to balance innovation with public service obligations, creating tensions between efficiency-driven adoption of AI and the maintenance of editorial independence, transparency, and inclusivity. Resistance to new technologies often emerges at both individual and organizational levels, reflecting concerns over professional autonomy, ethical implications, and potential disruption of established practices. Leadership, training, and participatory decision-making are therefore critical in shaping how AI is interpreted, adopted, and integrated.

From a socio-technical perspective, AI should be understood not merely as a set of tools but as a force that mediates interactions among humans, technologies, and organizational structures. Examining these dynamics requires attention to how media professionals interpret, negotiate, and enact technological change in everyday practice. By foregrounding the perspectives of practitioners and institutional leaders, qualitative research can illuminate how AI-driven innovation intersects with professional culture, organizational identity, and the normative mission of public service. This approach provides a holistic understanding of technological transformation in PSM and sets the foundation for analyzing the empirical findings of this study.

2.4. Gaps and Research Focus

Despite growing scholarship on AI and digital transformation in media, relatively few studies have examined how these technologies are experienced and negotiated within Public Service Media (PSM) institutions. Most existing research foregrounds commercial media or platform contexts, emphasizing algorithmic effects on audiences, revenue, and market structures. For example, studies on automated journalism often focus on newsroom efficiency and production workflows in commercial newsrooms, and research on recommendation systems primarily addresses audience behavior and platform ecosystems [14]. While these contributions are valuable for understanding AI's broader impacts, they do not directly attend to how AI is interpreted, governed, and embedded within the institutional and normative frameworks of public service organizations.

Work on digital transformation in PSM highlights the tension between technological adoption and public service values, but such research tends to address digital change broadly rather than AI specifically. Studies on PSM's adaptation to data analytics

and platform competition often note organizational pressures without providing in-depth empirical insight into AI-related practices, meaning-making, or professional negotiation. Likewise, research on ethical and professional implications of AI in media (e.g., concerns about bias, transparency, and trust) tends to use conceptual or normative lenses, rather than qualitative exploration of how practitioners themselves understand and manage these issues.

There is therefore a clear need for empirical studies that centre on how AI is experienced, interpreted, and negotiated by media professionals, managers, and organizational actors within PSM contexts. Qualitative research that investigates the situated practices, perceptions, and sense-making of those who live and work with AI remains limited. Studies that adopt a socio-technical lens but focus on commercial or platform environments do not directly extend to the distinct normative missions, organizational mandates, and accountability structures of PSM.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the socio-technical dynamics of AI adoption in PSM through in-depth interviews with practitioners and organizational leaders. It explores how AI-driven technologies are interpreted and integrated into everyday professional practices, organizational workflows, and strategic orientations, and how these processes interact with normative

commitments to public service values. By foregrounding practitioner perspectives, this research provides an empirically grounded understanding of both the opportunities and challenges of AI integration in public media institutions.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and technological change are experienced and interpreted within Public Service Media (PSM) institutions. Given the exploratory nature of the research, an interpretive approach was adopted to capture the perspectives of media professionals and organizational actors regarding the integration of AI-driven technologies into institutional workflows and organizational decision-making processes [15].

Participants were purposively selected to represent a diverse range of roles and responsibilities within PSM organizations. The aim was to capture multiple perspectives on AI adoption and technological transformation. A total of 20 participants were interviewed, representing a range of sectors, seniority levels, and professional expertise within the study area and PSM organizations. Table 1 summarizes the sample characteristics of the study population. The participants were selected based on their direct involvement in AI-related projects, digital platform management, public media initiatives, or strategic decision-making.

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	4	20%
	Male	16	80%
Age group	40–49	2	10%
	50+	18	90%
Professional experience (years)	11–15	4	20%
	16+	16	80%
Sector	Private	2	10%
	Public	18	90%
Organizational level	Non-managerial employee	5	25%
	Middle management	3	15%
	Senior management	12	60%

Table 1: Samples Characteristics (N = 20)

- As shown in the table, the sample was predominantly male (80%), with female participants representing 20% of the sample. The age distribution indicates that the majority of participants were aged 50 and above (90%), while the remaining 10% were between 40 and 49 years old. In terms of professional experience, most participants had extensive careers in the sector, with 80% reporting more than 16 years of experience and 20% reporting between 11 and 15 years. Regarding sectoral affiliation, the sample was primarily drawn from the public sector (90%), with a smaller proportion representing private organizations (10%). Participants also varied in terms of organizational hierarchy: 60% held senior

management positions, 15% were in middle management roles, and 25% occupied non-managerial positions. This diversity ensured the inclusion of both strategic and operational perspectives on AI integration and organizational change within PSM environments.

- Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted between July 2023 and December 2025. Each interview lasted 60–120 minutes and was audio- and video-recorded with participants' consent. Interview questions were designed to elicit participants' experiences, perceptions, and strategies related to AI and technological change in their

organizations. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the HEC–University of Montreal, and participants were assured of the confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary nature of their participation.

- All interviews were transcribed verbatim and imported into NVivo 12 for systematic coding and analysis. Thematic analysis followed a multi-step process designed to capture the breadth of organizational, technological, and social dimensions of AI integration in PSM institutions:
- Open coding: Initial coding of transcripts identified significant concepts, actions, and phenomena related to AI and technological change, including leadership practices, digital innovation, audience engagement, and organizational challenges.
- Node creation: Codes were organized into NVivo nodes, representing discrete ideas, processes, or challenges observed across the interviews. For example, nodes included vision setting, decision-making, digital platform adoption, workflow adaptation, audience research, trust-building strategies, and risk management.
- Thematic grouping: Related nodes were grouped into higher-order themes corresponding to the research focus, reflecting both organizational practices and institutional mandates. Themes included leadership and governance, digital transformation and innovation, audience engagement and trust, cultural and social roles, and market and financial sustainability.
- Iterative refinement: Themes were iteratively refined through comparisons across transcripts to ensure consistency, depth, and alignment with the research questions.
- This approach allowed for a structured yet flexible analysis, capturing both anticipated and emergent aspects of AI integration within PSM institutions. While the methodology describes the coding process, detailed tables of codes, factors, and nodes are presented in the Results section to illustrate the comprehensive thematic structure that emerged from the data.

Several strategies were employed to ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the study. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with participants, multiple rounds of data collection, and iterative review of transcripts, allowing the researchers to accurately capture participants' perspectives and reduce potential biases. Dependability was ensured by maintaining an audit trail within NVivo that documented all coding decisions, node creation, and theme development, enabling transparency in the analytic process. Confirmability was enhanced through peer debriefing, collaborative discussions among the research team, and reflective memos to ensure that findings were grounded in the data rather than researcher assumptions. Finally, transferability was addressed by providing rich, detailed contextual descriptions of participants, organizational settings, and PSM practices, enabling readers to evaluate the applicability of findings to other public media contexts.

4. Results

4.1. Overview

This section presents the findings from the interviews conducted with media executives and managers, focusing on how public service media organizations manage operations, engage audiences, and respond to emerging challenges. The goal is to provide insights into organizational practices, leadership approaches, and audience-oriented strategies in the context of digital transformation and societal responsibilities.

A thematic analysis was applied, systematically coding the interview transcripts to identify recurring patterns, which were then grouped into 15 factors and organized under 5 overarching themes. The analysis yielded dozens of distinct codes and numerous illustrative examples. These themes including, Leadership & Governance; Digital Transformation & Innovation; Audience Engagement & Trust; Cultural & Social Role; and Market & Financial Sustainability, capture the core dimensions of management, audience engagement, cultural and social responsibilities, and financial sustainability in public media.

4.2. Main Themes and Analytical Findings

4.2.1. Leadership & Governance

The analysis of interview data (Table 2) indicates that leadership and governance constitute a central dimension in shaping how Public Service Media (PSM) organizations manage digital transformation and organizational change. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of strategic leadership in articulating and sustaining a long-term vision for innovation and public service delivery in an increasingly digital environment. This vision was reflected in initiatives such as the development of programs targeting younger audiences and efforts to strengthen regional services for minority and cross-border communities. These practices illustrate how organizational values, technological priorities, and public service mandates are translated into concrete operational strategies.

Several participants described vision-setting as a deliberate and ongoing process through which organizational leaders sought to align digital innovation with institutional identity. Rather than pursuing technological change as an end in itself, managers framed innovation in relation to broader social and cultural responsibilities. As one senior executive explained:

“Our goal has always been to modernize our platforms while staying faithful to our public mission and diverse audiences” (Participant #7).

This perspective highlights how strategic leadership in PSM is oriented toward maintaining legitimacy and public trust while responding to competitive and technological pressures.

Decision-making processes were commonly described as collaborative and multi-layered, involving governing boards, regulatory bodies, and internal professional groups. Participants emphasized that major strategic initiatives typically require consultation across multiple organizational levels in order to ensure regulatory compliance, financial sustainability, and editorial

independence. This participatory structure was seen as both a safeguard and a source of organizational stability. One interviewee noted:

“Before any major digital project is approved, it goes through several layers of discussion with the board, legal teams, and editorial departments” (Participant #12).

At the same time, some participants acknowledged that such inclusive procedures could slow organizational responses to rapidly evolving technological environments. Nevertheless, they generally viewed collaborative decision-making as essential for preserving accountability and institutional credibility.

Change management emerged as another key dimension of strategic leadership. Participants described continuous adjustments to production routines, distribution infrastructures, and programming formats in response to digital trends and audience expectations. These changes often required renegotiating professional roles and redefining established workflows. Managers frequently emphasized the importance of communication and training in facilitating these transitions. As one producer explained:

“Whenever a new system is introduced, management organizes workshops and discussions so everyone understands how their work will be affected” (Participant #4).

Such practices were perceived as crucial for reducing uncertainty, minimizing resistance, and fostering organizational commitment during periods of technological transformation.

Alongside strategic leadership, stakeholder engagement constituted a core component of governance practices within PSM organizations. Interviewees consistently highlighted the importance of maintaining close relationships with funding authorities and regulatory agencies. These interactions were described as necessary for securing financial resources, legitimizing innovation projects, and ensuring compliance with public service obligations.

One participant stated:

“We are in constant contact with our funders and regulators. Without their support, many digital initiatives would not be possible” (Participant #9).

Through these ongoing exchanges, PSM organizations sought to balance institutional autonomy with external accountability.

Communication with oversight boards was also identified as a central governance mechanism. Participants reported that boards regularly reviewed strategic plans, monitored audience performance, and evaluated organizational risks. This oversight function was viewed as both a source of guidance and a form of institutional control. As a board liaison officer remarked:

“The board expects detailed reports on digital performance and audience reach, and they closely follow our long-term strategy” (Participant #15).

These interactions reinforced transparency and reinforced the alignment between managerial initiatives and institutional mandates.

Internal communication further emerged as a key element of effective governance. Participants emphasized the importance of keeping staff informed about organizational changes, technological investments, and strategic priorities. Opportunities for feedback and dialogue were widely perceived as essential for sustaining professional trust and organizational cohesion. One journalist reflected:

“We are encouraged to raise concerns and share ideas, especially when new technologies affect our daily routines” (Participant #3).

Such communicative practices were seen as instrumental in clarifying expectations, addressing anxieties, and supporting professional adaptation.

Theme	Factor	Codes	Example / Evidence
Leadership & Governance	1.1. Strategic leadership	1.1.1. Vision setting	- Organization emphasizes digital transformation and innovation as strategic priorities. - Launch of new programs targeting younger audiences to expand reach. - Regional stations managed to serve minority and cross-border audiences effectively.
		1.1.2. Decision-making	- Strategic decisions involve multiple stakeholders, including governing boards and oversight bodies. - Management balances input from staff and regulatory authorities in planning initiatives. - Organizational decisions consider partnerships with external platforms while maintaining public service goals.
		1.1.3. Change management	- Organization adapts production and distribution systems to align with digital trends. - Adjustments made to programming to address diverse audiences. - Internal processes encourage staff engagement and discussion to reduce resistance to change.
	1.2. Stakeholder engagement	1.2.1. Government liaison	- Management maintains regular communication with funding authorities. - Strategies presented to oversight bodies for approval. - Coordination with regulatory agencies to ensure compliance with public service requirements.

		1.2.2. Board communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boards review and approve organizational strategy and key initiatives. - Strategic plans communicated clearly to governing bodies. - Reports on audience metrics and performance shared with oversight committees.
		1.2.3. Internal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff are informed about organizational changes and digital initiatives. - Teams encouraged to share feedback and raise concerns about operational adjustments. - Internal discussions used to clarify roles and responsibilities during transitions.

Table 2: Analytical Framework for Leadership and Governance

Overall, the findings suggest that leadership and governance in PSM organizations are characterized by a combination of strategic vision-setting, collaborative decision-making, structured change management, and systematic stakeholder engagement. Digital transformation is not driven solely by technological imperatives but is shaped through ongoing negotiations among managers, staff, boards, and regulatory actors. Through these governance arrangements, PSM organizations seek to pursue innovation while maintaining alignment with public service values, professional norms, and institutional responsibilities.

4.2.2. Digital Transformation & Innovation

The analysis of interview data (Table 3) indicates that digital transformation and innovation constitute a central dimension in shaping how Public Service Media (PSM) organizations respond to evolving audience behaviors, technological developments, and platform-oriented media environments. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of strategic digital initiatives in guiding organizational priorities, integrating new technologies, and fostering a culture of innovation. This emphasis was reflected in activities such as adopting digital platforms to reach younger audiences, introducing integrated production systems, and developing new content formats tailored to digital consumption patterns. These practices illustrate how organizational values, technological priorities, and public service mandates are operationalized through concrete innovation strategies.

Several participants described digital strategy as a deliberate and ongoing process through which organizational leaders aligned platform adoption, technology integration, and audience engagement initiatives with institutional identity. Rather than pursuing digital transformation as an isolated technical goal, managers framed these initiatives in relation to broader organizational missions and public service objectives. As one senior executive explained:

“We have prioritized VOD and digital platforms not just to be modern, but to reach audiences who otherwise would not access our content, while keeping our public service mission intact” (Participant #5, Senior Executive).

This perspective highlights how digital strategy in PSM is oriented toward balancing technological innovation with audience needs and institutional responsibilities.

Digital Platform Adoption emerged as a major factor in participants’ accounts. Interviewees described strategic efforts to strengthen platforms such as RaiPlay, launch video-on-demand (VOD) offerings, and expand reach beyond traditional broadcasting. One digital manager noted:

“VOD strategies allow us to reach younger audiences who no longer watch linear television, and we’ve invested heavily in making RaiPlay a central channel for all age groups” (Participant #6, Digital Manager).

Participants reported that platform adoption was guided not only by audience data but also by strategic priorities that included cross-border accessibility and inclusivity for minority communities.

Technology Integration was consistently highlighted as a necessary component of transformation. Participants described the introduction of integrated digital production and distribution systems, adaptation of newsroom workflows for cross-media content creation, and increased reliance on data analytics to inform programming decisions. A senior editor explained:

“We had to reorganize the newsroom so stories could be produced for TV, web, and social media simultaneously. Analytics tell us which platforms work best for which content” (Participant #11, Senior Editor).

These efforts were reported as essential to ensure efficiency, timely delivery of content, and alignment between technological capabilities and audience expectations.

Innovation Culture was frequently emphasized as shaping the success of digital initiatives. Participants described management promoting internal discussion forums to address concerns about technological change, encouraging debate, and allowing staff to contribute ideas for innovation. One producer commented:

“We are encouraged to voice concerns and share suggestions for digital projects. This engagement helps everyone feel part of the transformation process” (Participant #8, Producer).

Theme	Factor	Codes	Example / Evidence
2. Digital Transformation & Innovation	2.1. Digital Strategy	2.1. Digital Platform Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organization emphasizes digital transformation as a strategic priority in response to changing media consumption patterns. - Launch of VOD strategies targeting younger audiences through digital platforms. - Strengthening of RaiPlay as a core channel for audience expansion beyond traditional broadcasting.
		2.2. Technology Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of integrated digital production and distribution systems. - Adaptation of newsroom workflows to support cross-media content creation. - Increased reliance on data analytics to inform programming and distribution decisions.
		2.3. Innovation Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management promotes internal discussion to address concerns related to technological change. - Staff encouraged to engage in debate and share perspectives on digital innovation. - Organizational culture aims to reduce resistance and build confidence in transformation processes.
	2.2. Content Innovation	2.2.1. New Content Formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch of new content formats adapted to digital consumption habits. - Series such as Mare Fuori distributed on VOD prior to linear broadcast. - Experimentation with release strategies to maximize audience engagement.
		2.2.2. Platform-Specific Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of platform-specific content tailored to different audience segments. - Production of shorter and more dynamic formats for younger digital users. - Maintenance of differentiated strategies across linear and digital platforms.
		2.2.3. Collaboration with OTTs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic collaboration with OTT platforms such as Netflix. - Co-production agreements aimed at expanding international reach. - Partnerships designed to increase visibility while preserving public service objectives.

Table 3: Thematic Structure of Digital Transformation and Innovation

Also, interviewees highlighted that fostering such a participatory culture helped reduce resistance to change, strengthened confidence in new systems, and reinforced collective responsibility for innovation.

Content Innovation constituted a complementary dimension of digital transformation, encompassing new approaches to program formats and platform-specific strategies. New Content Formats were described as tailored to digital consumption habits, with examples such as Mare Fuori being released on VOD prior to linear broadcast. A content manager explained:

“We often test new series on digital platforms first to gauge audience engagement before they air on TV. It allows us to refine release strategies and content presentation” (Participant #14, Content Manager).

Participants indicated that experimentation with formats and timing was ongoing, aimed at meeting evolving viewer preferences.

Platform-Specific Content was reported as a critical strategy for addressing different audience segments. Participants described creating shorter, more dynamic formats for younger digital users while maintaining traditional programming for linear channels. As one digital producer noted:

“Content is tailored to each platform. Social media and streaming audiences expect different pacing, length, and style than traditional TV viewers” (Participant #6, Digital Producer).

Such differentiation was reported to optimize engagement while respecting the diversity of audience behaviors.

Collaboration with OTTs emerged as a strategic factor in content innovation. Participants highlighted partnerships and co-productions with OTT platforms, including Netflix, aimed at increasing international reach and visibility. A strategy director explained:

“Partnerships with OTT platforms allow us to distribute our content globally, but we ensure everything reflects our public service values” (Participant #10, Strategy Director).

These collaborations were reported as complementing internal digital initiatives and as a means to leverage external expertise while preserving public service objectives.

Overall, the findings indicate that digital transformation and innovation in PSM organizations are driven by a combination of strategic digital initiatives, integrated technology, participatory innovation culture, and platform- and content-specific practices.

These activities collectively illustrate how PSM institutions negotiate technological change, align operational practices with audience needs, and implement innovation while maintaining adherence to public service mandates and organizational identity.

4.2.3. Audience Engagement & Trust

The analysis of interview data indicates (Table 4) that audience engagement and trust represent central pillars of Public Service Media (PSM) management. Participants consistently emphasized that understanding audiences and maintaining trust are essential for aligning programming, distribution strategies, and institutional communication with public service objectives. Practices such as audience research, demographic targeting, structured feedback mechanisms, transparency initiatives, reliable information provision, and coordinated crisis communication were highlighted as fundamental organizational strategies. Collectively, these efforts demonstrate how PSM organizations operationalize their mission to serve diverse audiences while sustaining credibility, relevance, and public confidence.

Several participants described audience research as a deliberate and ongoing process used to measure engagement, monitor viewing behaviors, and inform programming and distribution decisions. Surveys, digital analytics, and audience performance metrics were widely used to identify trends and guide strategic adjustments. One research coordinator explained:

“We use surveys and digital analytics to see who is watching, when, and how they interact with our content. This helps us make decisions about both scheduling and the type of content we produce” (Participant #2).

In addition, interviewees highlighted a demographic focus, particularly on audiences under 35, as a critical element of strategic engagement. Participants described targeted programming, adaptations in content format, and distribution through digital platforms to meet the consumption habits of younger viewers. A content manager noted:

“For our under-35 viewers, we create shorter, more dynamic programs and release them on digital platforms where they are most active” (Participant #7).

Feedback mechanisms were also reported as essential tools for understanding audience preferences and perceptions. Corporate reputation indices, structured evaluation systems, and the integration of audience response indicators into decision-making processes were widely used to ensure that organizational strategies

reflected audience needs. A senior manager explained:

“Audience feedback is systematically monitored and discussed in strategy meetings. It shapes our content choices and helps us stay relevant to viewers’ expectations” (Participant #11).

Trust building emerged as an equally significant dimension of audience engagement. Transparency initiatives were described as mechanisms for communicating editorial processes, production standards, and organizational decision-making in order to reinforce public confidence. A journalist emphasized:

“We try to show audiences how we make decisions and the standards guiding our reporting, which strengthens trust in our work” (Participant #3).

The provision of reliable and impartial information was consistently highlighted, particularly in relation to crisis reporting, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic. Accuracy, verification, and adherence to public service responsibilities were described as essential for maintaining credibility and legitimacy. A news editor explained:

“During the pandemic, every story had to be double-checked and sourced properly. Our audience relies on us to provide accurate information” (Participant #9).

Finally, participants emphasized coordinated crisis communication as a critical component of trust-building. PSM organizations aligned messaging across platforms and ensured the rapid dissemination of verified information during national emergencies. A communications officer noted:

“When a crisis happens, we coordinate our messages across all platforms to ensure clarity and timeliness. Consistent and reliable communication is essential for maintaining public trust” (Participant #12).

Overall, the findings indicate that audience engagement and trust in PSM organizations are deeply interconnected. Audience understanding is operationalized through research, demographic targeting, and feedback mechanisms, while trust is reinforced through transparency, reliable information provision, and coordinated crisis communication. These practices illustrate how PSM institutions navigate the interplay between audience needs, digital transformation, and public service mandates. Digital strategies are not implemented in isolation but are embedded within broader organizational efforts to ensure that engagement and credibility remain central to institutional mission and public value.

Theme	Factor	Codes	Example / Evidence
3. Audience Engagement & Trust	3.1. Audience Understanding	3.1.1. Audience Research	- Organization conducts audience surveys to measure engagement levels. - Use of digital analytics tools to monitor viewing patterns across platforms. - Data used to inform programming and distribution strategies.
		3.1.2. Demographic Focus	- Development of programs specifically targeting under-35 audiences. - Strategic emphasis on attracting younger viewers through digital platforms. - Adjustments in format and content style to match youth consumption habits.

		3.1.3. Feedback Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of corporate reputation indices to assess public perception. - Monitoring audience feedback through structured evaluation systems. - Integration of audience response indicators into strategic discussions.
	3.2. Trust Building	3.2.1. Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing aspects of the editorial process to strengthen public trust. - Public communication regarding content production standards. - Efforts to clarify decision-making procedures in news production.
		3.2.2. Reliable Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of impartial and verified news during the COVID-19 pandemic. - Emphasis on accuracy and fact-checking in news reporting. - Reinforcement of public service responsibility during health crises.
		3.2.3. Crisis Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinated institutional messaging during national emergencies. - Alignment of communication strategies across platforms. - Rapid dissemination of verified information during crisis situations.

Table 4: Analytical Structure of Audience Engagement and Trust

4.2.4. Cultural & Social Role

Analysis of the interview data (Table 5) shows that cultural and social responsibilities constitute a central dimension of Public Service Media (PSM) operations. Participants consistently emphasized that cultural programming, minority representation, educational initiatives, civic awareness, and public health communication are integral to fulfilling the organization’s mission. These practices demonstrate how PSM organizations translate their normative obligations into concrete operational strategies, balancing public service values with audience engagement in a digitally evolving landscape.

Participants highlighted cultural programs as a core aspect of institutional responsibility. Music and orchestras were frequently mentioned, with symphonic concerts and national orchestral performances serving as flagship initiatives that promote classical music and cultural heritage. One programming manager noted: “Broadcasting orchestral performances allows us to maintain a strong connection with national culture and offer content that is not commercially driven” (Participant #5).

Similarly, literary events were described as essential for fostering cultural engagement. Book fairs, literary competitions, and coverage of cultural festivals were widely reported, illustrating the organization’s commitment to supporting national authors and reading initiatives. A senior editor explained: “Our literary coverage, from book fairs to competitions, is a way to ensure that cultural literacy and national literature remain accessible to all audiences” (Participant #8).

Minority programs were identified as another key element of cultural responsibility. Participants described programming tailored to Hungarian and Romanian communities, including content produced in minority languages and initiatives reflecting minority cultural traditions. As one producer emphasized: “We actively produce programs for minority communities, not only in their languages but also showcasing their traditions and perspectives” (Participant #13).

In addition to cultural preservation, public service and social responsibility emerged as closely connected dimensions of PSM work. Educational initiatives were widely reported, including high school literature quizzes, curriculum-aligned programming, and youth engagement through cultural events. A coordinator highlighted:

“Through educational programs and events like literature quizzes, we aim to complement school curricula and support learning beyond the classroom” (Participant #6).

Civic awareness was consistently emphasized, with participants noting content addressing climate change, social inequality, and employment security. These programs were described as mechanisms for fostering informed citizenship and encouraging public engagement. One journalist reflected:

“Our civic programs are designed to help audiences understand societal issues and take an active role in their communities” (Participant #11).

Finally, participants reported the organization’s role in health and safety communication, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Verified medical information, public health campaigns, and coordination with authorities were highlighted as essential for ensuring accurate dissemination of life-saving guidance. A communications officer explained:

“During the pandemic, our priority was clear: provide accurate health information, coordinate with authorities, and reach audiences quickly to protect public safety” (Participant #14).

Overall, the findings indicate that cultural preservation and social responsibility remain central to PSM organizations’ identity. Cultural programs (music, literary events, minority content) and public service initiatives (education, civic awareness, health and safety) are strategically integrated into organizational practice, reflecting a commitment to serving diverse audiences, promoting societal values, and fulfilling public mandates. These practices demonstrate that the cultural and social mission of PSM is operationalized through structured, intentional programming and coordinated engagement across multiple platforms and community contexts.

Theme	Factor	Codes	Example / Evidence
4. Cultural & Social Role	4.1. Cultural Programs	4.1.1. Music & Orchestras	- Broadcasting symphonic concerts as part of cultural programming. - Coverage of national orchestral performances. - Promotion of classical music through public broadcasting platforms.
		4.1.2. Literary Events	- Organization and media coverage of book fairs. - Support for literary competitions and cultural festivals. - Promotion of national authors and reading initiatives.
		4.1.3. Minority Programs	- Production of programs dedicated to Hungarian and Romanian minorities. - Broadcasting content in minority languages. - Representation of minority cultural traditions within programming schedules.
	4.2. Public Service & Social Responsibility	4.2.1. Educational Initiatives	- Organization of high school literature quizzes during book fairs. - Development of educational programming aligned with school curricula. - Support for youth learning initiatives through cultural events.
		4.2.2. Civic Awareness	- Production of programs addressing climate change and environmental concerns. - Coverage of social inequality and employment insecurity. - Discussions on civic responsibility and public engagement issues.
		4.2.3. Health & Safety	- Public health campaigns during the COVID-19 pandemic. - Broadcasting safety guidelines and verified medical information. - Coordination with public authorities to disseminate health-related updates.

Table 5: Thematic Structure of Cultural and Social Role

4.2.5. Market & Financial Sustainability

The analysis of interview data (Table 6) indicates that market orientation and financial sustainability are critical dimensions in shaping how Public Service Media (PSM) organizations navigate digital transformation, strategic planning, and resource management. Participants emphasized that, although PSM institutions are mission-driven, financial management and market awareness are essential for sustaining operations, enabling innovation, and fulfilling public service mandates. The interviews revealed that these practices are highly structured, integrated with organizational strategy, and closely tied to audience engagement and technological initiatives.

Revenue diversification emerged as a key strategy for reducing dependency on any single funding source while maintaining organizational flexibility. Participants described alternative income streams such as co-productions, licensing deals, and partnerships with other media organizations to supplement public funding. Strategic funding planning was emphasized as an ongoing process, involving monitoring government grants, regulatory contributions, and philanthropic support to anticipate gaps and ensure sustainability. Additionally, participants reported taking deliberate steps to mitigate revenue risks, including contingency strategies to avoid overreliance on a single source and balancing commercial activities with public service values. One of the participants explained:

"We work constantly to diversify income so that no single funding stream threatens our ability to innovate or deliver public value" (Participant #6).

Participants highlighted structured multi-year budget planning to align financial resources with long-term strategic objectives

and innovation priorities. Budget allocation decisions were often performance-based, using audience engagement, project impact, and strategic goals to determine where resources should be directed. Resource optimization was described as a deliberate effort to maximize efficiency, ensuring that both human and technological resources were deployed effectively across initiatives. One manager noted:

"When planning budgets, we look at how every investment contributes to both innovation and our public mission. Nothing is arbitrary" (Participant #10).

Managing costs was an ongoing priority for participants. Investment prioritization was highlighted as a key practice, with leaders carefully weighing the expected benefits of new initiatives, including AI adoption, against implementation costs. Efficiency measures were implemented to streamline workflows and reduce operational waste while maintaining quality standards. Participants also stressed expenditure monitoring as an essential practice, with regular tracking of project expenses, financial reporting, and adjustments to ensure alignment with strategic and fiscal goals.

Strategic collaborations were central to sustaining both innovation and financial viability. Media collaborations included co-productions with other broadcasters and joint content initiatives to expand reach. Participants also emphasized technology partnerships, such as working with AI providers or analytics platforms, to access expertise and implement new systems cost-effectively. Finally, cultural and institutional collaborations were leveraged to enhance diversity, serve niche audiences, and reinforce public value commitments. As one interviewee explained:

"Collaborating with cultural institutions and tech partners allows us to innovate responsibly and reach audiences we could not serve

alone" (Participant #13).

Participants consistently used engagement analytics to guide investment decisions, programming strategies, and resource allocation. KPI-based evaluation was applied to assess the success of initiatives, monitor reach, and ensure accountability for projects. Moreover, performance-informed planning ensured that future investments were aligned with audience response and engagement trends, enabling dynamic adjustment of content and strategy. One executive remarked:

"We constantly review metrics not just for reporting, but to decide which projects get priority funding" (Participant #11).

PSM organizations also consider their competitive position in the media landscape. Participants reported using competitive analysis to benchmark initiatives against other media providers and identify market opportunities. Platform strategy involved aligning content distribution with audience behavior on digital

platforms to maximize reach and impact. Leaders also emphasized long-term strategic vision, ensuring that market positioning efforts complemented public service goals and sustained organizational relevance over time.

Finally, participants described robust practices for managing financial uncertainty. Risk assessment involved evaluating potential financial risks of new investments, including AI projects, collaborations, or technological upgrades. Contingency planning was implemented to prepare for funding fluctuations, regulatory changes, or unexpected operational challenges. Investment safeguards were emphasized to prevent initiatives from compromising long-term fiscal stability, balancing innovation ambitions with prudence. As one manager explained:

"Every major initiative is assessed for risk, and we always have contingency plans to protect both our finances and public mission" (Participant #14).

Theme	Factor	Codes	Example / Evidence
5. Market & Financial Sustainability	5.1. Funding & Budget	5.1.1. Government Subsidy	- Annual budget allocation provided by the government. - Subsidy covers staff wages, infrastructure, and broadcasting operations. - Government funding forms the main source of revenue for the organization.
		5.1.2. Advertising Revenue	- Limited ad slots permitted between programs. - Revenue generated from sponsorships and small-scale commercial promotions. - Advertising revenue is supplementary to public funding.
		5.1.3. Revenue Challenges	- Risk of budget reduction if market position declines. - Dependence on political approval for funding levels. - Financial planning constrained by regulatory and public service requirements.
	5.2. Competition & Positioning	5.2.1. Market Share	- Maintaining top position in news and current affairs. - Monitoring audience ratings and reach to benchmark competitors. - Competition with commercial and musical stations.
		5.2.2. Branding & Credibility	- Reputation as a trustworthy media in Romania. - Audience perception of impartiality and reliability. - Maintaining credibility in public service reporting.
		5.2.3. Benchmarking Competitors	- Comparison with commercial and music-focused stations. - Monitoring programming, audience engagement, and innovations. - Adapting strategies to respond to competitor trends.
	5.3. Strategic Partnerships	5.3.1. European Broadcasting	- Exchange programs with European Broadcasting Union. - Sharing musical and cultural content with international stations. - Collaboration in joint production initiatives.
		5.3.2. OTT Collaboration	- Partnership with streaming platforms for broader reach. - Coordinated content delivery for digital and linear platforms. - Targeting younger audiences through VOD services.
		5.3.3. Cross-Platform Synergy	- Coordination of TV, radio, and digital content. - Integrated marketing and promotional activities. - Harmonizing scheduling and content themes across channels.
	5.4. Audience Monetization	5.4.1. Subscriptions	- Growth of digital platform subscribers. - Subscription services linked to online and VOD content. - Paid offerings as supplementary revenue.
5.4.2. Young Audience Engagement		- Targeted campaigns for audiences under 35. - Programs designed specifically for younger demographics. - Cross-platform initiatives to increase engagement.	

		5.4.3. Data-Driven Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of analytics for programming decisions. - Audience insights inform scheduling and content development. - Feedback mechanisms integrated into content strategy.
5.5. Organizational Capacity		5.5.1. Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training programs for digital transformation. - Upskilling staff to manage new technologies. - Aligning workforce capabilities with strategic goals.
		5.5.2. Leadership Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Executive coaching and mentoring programs. - Succession planning for key managerial roles. - Development of digital and innovation competencies.
		5.5.3. Competence Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring skills match strategic priorities. - Periodic assessments of staff performance and skills. - Strategic alignment of workforce capabilities.
5.6. Risk Management		5.6.1. Political Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dependence on government approval for budget. - Influence of political changes on organizational strategy. - Monitoring political environment to mitigate funding threats.
		5.6.2. Market Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competition with commercial stations and OTT platforms. - Shifts in audience preferences and digital consumption patterns. - Strategic adjustments to maintain market relevance.
		5.6.3. Operational Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technology adoption and process failure. - Risks in digital platform deployment. - Internal controls to minimize operational disruption.
5.7. Monitoring & Evaluation		5.7.1. Audience Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ratings, reach, and qualitative feedback. - Tracking audience engagement across platforms. - Benchmarking performance with competitors.
		5.7.2. KPI Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-financial reporting and corporate indices. - Monitoring progress on strategic goals. - Regular evaluation of organizational initiatives.
		5.7.3. Performance Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual evaluation against strategic targets. - Review of program success and organizational efficiency. - Identification of areas for improvement.

Table 6: Thematic Structure of Market and Financial Sustainability

Overall, the findings indicate that Market & Financial Sustainability in PSM organizations is characterized by a structured, multi-dimensional approach that integrates revenue strategies, budget planning, cost management, partnerships, audience metrics, market positioning, and financial risk management. Each factor is operationalized through concrete codes, reflecting the nuanced and deliberate practices leaders use to balance innovation, public service obligations, and financial stability.

5. Discussion

5.1. Overview of Key Findings

The findings of this study reveal that Public Service Media (PSM) organizations navigate digital transformation, audience engagement, cultural responsibilities, and financial sustainability through a combination of strategic leadership, structured innovation, and audience-centered practices. Across the interviews, five interrelated themes emerged: Leadership & Governance, Digital Transformation & Innovation, Audience Engagement & Trust, Cultural & Social Role, and Market & Financial Sustainability. Strategic leadership was consistently identified as central to aligning organizational vision with public service mandates, balancing innovation with professional norms, and maintaining legitimacy and trust.

Digital transformation was operationalized not only through technology adoption and platform-specific strategies but also through fostering a culture of innovation and collaborative content development. Audience engagement and trust were reinforced through systematic research, demographic targeting, transparent practices, and coordinated crisis communication. Cultural and social responsibilities were operationalized through educational initiatives, minority-focused programming, and civic and health-related campaigns, demonstrating the multifaceted public service mission of PSM organizations. Finally, financial and market strategies emphasized revenue diversification, strategic partnerships, risk management, and data-driven decision-making to sustain operations and innovation while remaining accountable to stakeholders.

Overall, these findings illustrate that PSM organizations manage digital and societal challenges through interconnected strategies that simultaneously address technological, organizational, audience, cultural, and financial dimensions, forming the foundation for the subsequent discussion.

5.2. Key Insights from the Findings

The findings of this study illustrate that Public Service Media (PSM)

organizations operate in a complex and dynamic environment where technological, social, and market pressures intersect. Across the five thematic areas, leadership and governance, digital transformation and innovation, audience engagement and trust, cultural and social responsibility, and market and financial sustainability, the interviews reveal a consistent emphasis on strategic integration, adaptability, and alignment with public service mandates. Rather than functioning in isolated domains, these dimensions interact to shape how PSM organizations navigate digital disruption while maintaining societal relevance.

Strategic leadership emerged as a foundational element in this integrated model. Participants consistently highlighted the importance of vision-setting, collaborative decision-making, and structured change management. Leaders articulated long-term goals for innovation and public service delivery, ensuring that digital initiatives, programming strategies, and organizational transformations were aligned with institutional identity and societal responsibilities. This approach supports existing research emphasizing the role of strategic leadership in sustaining legitimacy and trust in public media [16]. Importantly, leadership practices were not confined to top executives; the data indicate participatory governance structures involving boards, regulatory bodies, and professional teams. Such mechanisms promote accountability, editorial independence, and alignment between managerial initiatives and public mandates, while also mitigating resistance to technological and procedural change.

Digital transformation and innovation are tightly coupled with leadership practices. Participants described deliberate strategies for digital platform adoption, integrated production workflows, and content innovation tailored to diverse audience segments. This includes launching video-on-demand services, adapting newsroom processes for cross-platform content, and fostering a participatory culture that encourages staff engagement in innovation. These strategies align with literature emphasizing that successful digital transformation in PSM requires both technological investment and cultural adaptation, where innovation is framed in service of institutional missions rather than as an isolated technical goal [17]. Moreover, platform-specific content strategies and collaborations with OTTs demonstrate how PSM organizations leverage external expertise while maintaining public service values, reflecting a nuanced balance between innovation, audience reach, and editorial integrity.

Audience engagement and trust were highlighted as central to both digital and traditional operational strategies. Interviewees emphasized systematic audience research, demographic targeting, and feedback mechanisms to inform programming, distribution, and communication. Trust-building practices, including transparency in editorial processes, provision of reliable information, and coordinated crisis communication, were consistently mentioned as essential for sustaining credibility. These findings underscore the reciprocal relationship between audience understanding and organizational legitimacy: robust engagement strategies not only enhance reach and responsiveness but also reinforce public

confidence in the institution. The alignment of audience-centric approaches with digital transformation initiatives illustrates that innovation and audience responsiveness are mutually reinforcing rather than competing priorities, echoing prior research on audience-focused public media management.

Cultural and social responsibilities were reported as equally integral to PSM identity. Participants emphasized programming aimed at preserving national culture, promoting minority representation, and supporting educational, civic, and public health initiatives. Music, literary events, minority-language content, and civic awareness programs serve both to strengthen societal cohesion and to extend the public value of PSM. These initiatives demonstrate that organizational commitment to cultural and social missions is operationalized through structured programming and cross-platform engagement, reflecting theoretical perspectives that public media's normative obligations require deliberate translation into concrete practices [18]. Furthermore, the interviews highlight how cultural and social programming is interwoven with digital and audience engagement strategies, ensuring that public service objectives are not sidelined in the pursuit of technological modernization or market expansion.

Market orientation and financial sustainability were consistently framed as enabling conditions for achieving these strategic and societal objectives. Participants described multi-dimensional financial practices, including revenue diversification, multi-year budget planning, cost management, strategic partnerships, audience monetization, workforce development, and risk management. Revenue diversification through co-productions, licensing, and partnerships allows PSM organizations to reduce reliance on government funding while maintaining operational flexibility, corroborating prior scholarship on mixed revenue models in public media. Budgeting and resource allocation are closely aligned with performance metrics and innovation priorities, indicating that financial management is not a separate administrative task but an integral component of strategic decision-making. Strategic partnerships with other broadcasters, OTTs, and cultural institutions provide both resource leverage and opportunities to extend public value, confirming research on collaborative strategies in multi-platform media landscapes.

The interviews further reveal that financial strategies are increasingly audience-driven. Subscription growth, targeted engagement campaigns, and data-informed programming illustrate how audience insights guide revenue generation while reinforcing public service relevance. Comprehensive risk assessment—encompassing political, market, and operational dimensions—ensures that financial sustainability supports both innovation and mission delivery. This integrated approach reflects theories of resilient organizational design, where strategic foresight, monitoring, and performance evaluation underpin long-term viability and adaptability [19].

Overall, the results indicate that effective PSM management relies on the interconnectedness of leadership, innovation, audience

engagement, cultural mission, and financial stewardship. Strategic leadership provides direction and legitimacy, digital and content innovation enables responsiveness to changing consumption patterns, audience engagement ensures credibility and relevance, cultural and social programming fulfills normative obligations, and robust financial management secures sustainability. This integration highlights a central insight: PSM organizations achieve public value not through isolated practices but through the alignment of operational, technological, audience-oriented, cultural, and economic strategies. These findings confirm and extend existing literature by demonstrating that contemporary PSM can harmonize market-oriented and public service objectives, fostering both innovation and normative accountability in complex digital and competitive environments.

5.3. Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several important theoretical contributions to the understanding of Public Service Media (PSM) management. First, it demonstrates that effective PSM management is multi-dimensional, integrating leadership, digital transformation, audience engagement, cultural and social responsibilities, and financial sustainability. Unlike prior research that often treats these elements in isolation, this study shows how they interact to create a holistic approach to public value, balancing operational, technological, normative, and market priorities. Also, the findings

extend theories of strategic leadership by highlighting the central role of leaders in orchestrating participatory governance, managing organizational change, and aligning technological innovation with public service obligations. Leadership in PSM is thus not only about vision-setting but also about sustaining legitimacy, public trust, and adaptive capacity in dynamic media environments.

The research provides new insights into the integration of audience engagement, innovation, and financial sustainability. It reveals that audience understanding drives both content innovation and resource allocation, challenging traditional assumptions that market strategies and public service values are separate. This supports emerging theoretical perspectives that economic viability and normative responsibilities can be harmonized in practice. Furthermore, the study advances theories of digital transformation by showing that technology adoption alone is insufficient. Successful transformation requires a participatory innovation culture, cross-platform strategies, and active staff engagement, ensuring that digital initiatives align with organizational missions. Finally, the findings deepen understanding of cultural and social responsibilities, illustrating that minority programming, educational initiatives, and civic awareness campaigns are strategically operationalized rather than treated as symbolic obligations.

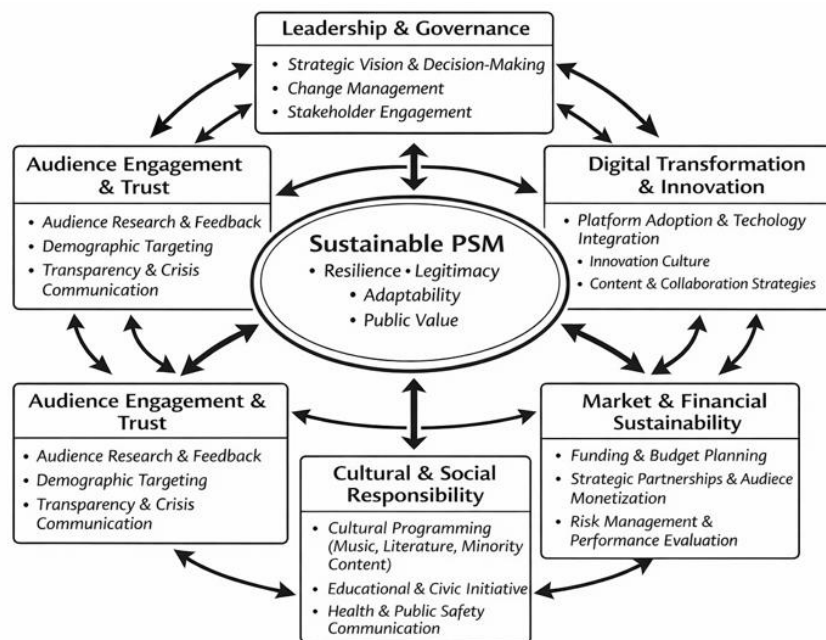


Figure 1: Integrated Framework of Sustainable Public Service Media

Overall, the study proposes an integrated framework of sustainable PSM, in which leadership, innovation, audience engagement, cultural mission, and financial stewardship are mutually reinforcing. This framework contributes to theories of resilience and adaptability, demonstrating how PSM organizations maintain legitimacy, operational stability, and public relevance while

navigating digital, competitive, and societal challenges.

5.4. Practical implications

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for managers, policymakers, and stakeholders in Public Service Media (PSM) organizations. First, media leaders should adopt a

holistic management approach that integrates digital innovation, audience engagement, cultural responsibilities, and financial planning within a unified strategic framework. Rather than treating these domains as separate functions, organizations should promote cross-departmental coordination to ensure that technological investments, content strategies, and resource allocation mutually reinforce public service objectives. Second, the emphasis on participatory leadership and transparent governance suggests that managers should strengthen internal communication, staff training, and stakeholder consultation to enhance organizational commitment and adaptability. Third, the growing importance of audience-centered strategies highlights the need for systematic audience research and data analytics to inform programming, platform development, and monetization initiatives. Fourth, policymakers and funding authorities should recognize the operational pressures faced by PSM organizations in competitive digital markets and design regulatory and financial frameworks that support long-term innovation and institutional autonomy. Finally, the study underscores the value of revenue diversification, strategic partnerships, and risk management practices in sustaining organizational resilience, indicating that PSM managers should actively pursue collaborative ventures and performance monitoring systems to balance financial stability with public value creation. Collectively, these implications provide actionable guidance for strengthening the capacity of PSM organizations to remain relevant, accountable, and sustainable in rapidly evolving media environments.

5.5. Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the findings are based on qualitative interviews with a limited number of media executives and managers, which may restrict the generalizability of the results to other public service media contexts. While this approach provides rich and in-depth insights, future studies could employ larger samples, and mixed method designs to enhance external validity. Second, the study focuses primarily on managerial perspectives, which may underrepresent the views of employees, audiences, and external stakeholders. Incorporating multiple viewpoints in future research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of organizational dynamics and public value creation. Third, the cross-sectional design captures organizational practices at a specific point in time and does not fully account for long-term changes in digital strategies, governance arrangements, and financial models. Longitudinal studies could therefore offer valuable insights into how PSM organizations adapt to evolving technological, political, and market conditions. Finally, this research concentrates on institutional and managerial processes rather than directly measuring audience outcomes or societal impact. Future research may benefit from linking organizational strategies to audience trust, civic engagement, and cultural influence through quantitative and comparative approaches. Addressing these limitations would deepen theoretical understanding and further strengthen evidence-based policy and management practices in public service media.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the sustainability of Public Service Media in the contemporary digital environment is not determined by isolated managerial, technological, or financial decisions, but by the coherence and alignment of organizational practices across multiple domains. The findings highlight how public media organizations continuously negotiate between public value, institutional legitimacy, and market pressures, developing adaptive strategies that enable them to remain socially relevant and operationally resilient. Rather than viewing digital transformation and market competition as threats to public service identity, participants portrayed them as contexts within which public missions can be rearticulated and strengthened.

By adopting an integrated and context-sensitive approach to management, PSM organizations are shown to sustain trust, innovation, and public engagement while preserving their normative responsibilities. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how public media can navigate structural constraints and rapid technological change without compromising their foundational values. Ultimately, the research suggests that the future viability of Public Service Media depends on its capacity to function as a flexible, learning-oriented institution, capable of evolving with societal needs while maintaining its distinctive role within democratic and cultural ecosystems.

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