




Original Article

Identifying and thematically analyzing the challenges of the health sector in managing the local press in Iran: a qualitative study

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Abstract

Background: This study aimed to identify the management challenges of the health sector in the local press of Iran.

Methods: A qualitative design was employed using thematic analysis to explore the data. Participants included university professors, award holders, responsible managers, chairpersons, and editors of local Iranian press outlets. Purposeful sampling continued until theoretical saturation was reached (20 participants). Data were analyzed using the constant comparison method with MaxQDA Pro software. Thematic analysis was chosen to systematically identify, organize, and interpret patterns (themes) within the data, providing both depth and clarity to the findings.

Results: The analysis identified 83 unique basic themes and 9 organizing themes as challenges facing the health sector in the local press. These challenges encompassed economic issues, transportation, public interest, content creation, human resources, facilities, education, legal frameworks, and stalls. Additionally, 41 unique basic themes and 6 organizing themes were identified as strategies, which included content development, human resources, infrastructure, economic improvements, legal reforms, and strategic planning. Two overarching themes—challenges and strategies—were extracted to provide a holistic understanding.

Conclusion: The local press serves as a vital tool for advancing health, cultural, and social development, particularly within specific geographical and socio-cultural contexts. To ensure their economic sustainability and survival amidst current challenges, strategic planning is crucial. Moreover, comprehensive support from cultural institutions is essential to empower the press in fulfilling its developmental role effectively.

Keywords: Analysis; Health; Mass Media; Product Line Management.

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Introduction

The evolution of new information and communication technologies and the increasing access to various media have created unique challenges and opportunities for the press, including the local press (1). Local media face structural

and operational challenges that affect their ability to serve their communities effectively. Identifying and addressing these issues are crucial for strengthening the role of local press. For instance, the lack of professional expertise among media

franchise owners and managers has been identified as a significant barrier to progress (2).

The local press plays a pivotal role in reflecting regional events and addressing community-specific issues, particularly in areas like public health, where tailored communication is essential. Unlike national media, which often focus on broader national and international concerns, the local press is uniquely positioned to address the specific health needs and challenges of their communities. This includes highlighting regional health inequities, promoting health education, and advocating for policy changes to improve public health outcomes (3).

However, the ability of the local press to perform these functions effectively is often hindered by economic constraints, limited technical knowledge, and insufficient journalistic resources. These limitations weaken the press's capacity to contribute meaningfully to public health communication and undermine their role in fostering informed and health-conscious communities (4).

Given these challenges, the purpose of this study was to identify the management challenges facing the health sector in the local press of Iran and to explore strategic solutions that could enhance their effectiveness. By focusing on the intersection of health communication and local media, this study aims to provide insights that could inform policies and practices to strengthen the role of local press in promoting public health.

Methods

Study population

This qualitative study aimed to design a model of the challenges and strategies faced by the local press in Iran using thematic analysis. To extract concepts, collections of articles and books in the field of local press in the period of 2011 to 2021 were used. After the texts had been reviewed and the

concepts had been determined, the statistical population consisted of a group of university professors, raters, and editors of local Iranian newspapers who commented on the concepts extracted from open and axial coding to determine whether these concepts had the necessary importance and efficiency in the present study. This process continued until all of participations reached consensus and theoretical saturation.

The researcher's indicators for sampling from the statistical community are:

People familiar with local press literature (media professors)

People familiar with the local press

People with managerial experience in the local press

People with work experience in local press concessionaires

People with work experience as the manager of local press

People with work experience in local press editor

The purposeful sampling method was employed to conduct in-depth interviews. A list of individuals meeting the specified criteria was prepared, and they were contacted for participation. Out of 35 potential participants, 25 expressed their willingness to take part in the interview process. The interviews continued until theoretical saturation and adequacy were achieved. Ultimately, interviews were conducted with 20 participants from the statistical population, ensuring that theoretical saturation was reached.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the interviews, all participants were provided with a detailed information sheet outlining the purpose and scope of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and the assurance of confidentiality. Written consent was obtained from all participants. To protect privacy, pseudonyms were used, and any

identifiable data were anonymized. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences.

Furthermore, given the potential power dynamics between researchers and participants (e.g., academic experts and practitioners), efforts were made to create a comfortable environment during interviews. This included conducting interviews in settings preferred by the participants and ensuring a non-judgmental approach to their responses.

Gender Imbalance and Its Implications

Out of the 20 participants, there was an underrepresentation of female participants, which may have influenced the findings. The gender imbalance reflects the male-dominated nature of leadership roles within local press organizations in Iran, which itself is a subject worth further exploration. While this limitation may result in a narrower perspective, it also highlights the structural challenges in ensuring diverse representation in media management. Future studies could specifically target a more balanced sample to capture gender-based nuances in the challenges and strategies discussed.

Data collection method

Before conducting the interviews, a letter was sent along with the interview questions, bearing the researcher's signature. The letter outlined the ethical obligation to maintain confidentiality regarding the interview content and the participants' details, with a commitment not to disclose any of this information. Also, with the knowledge of the participants, all the interviews were recorded and analyzed to extract key points. After the agreement was announced, the interviews were held in person and in some cases by phone due to the long distance and corona virus. In the conducted interviews, the respondents expressed their opinion to the question about presenting a new component or index or confirming the collected components and

indicators. After interviewing and collecting qualitative data, thematic analysis was used to analyze them. Thematic analysis, in fact, is a type of content analysis and inference from qualitative data that is based on theorizing thematic units. This strategy tries to improve the research findings by finding the underlying and hidden pattern(s) in the data or by rereading the diagnosis and perspective of the researchers about the data. Therefore, there are generally three types of basic, organizing and inclusive themes (5).

To check validity, the results were presented to the participants and the text of the interview was studied by them and their views were applied. There are three methods of pluralism, including pluralism in the method (retesting the work method), pluralism in the researcher (reliability test between identifiers) and participant pluralism (using new interviewees to test the ability model reliability) has been used to verify the validity of the research. The interview agreement and data analysis were used in full for three new interviewees. To calculate the test-retest validity percentage among new interviewees, two tests were compared. In each of the research sections (main research and validation research), identifiers that are similar in two-time intervals were identified as "agreement" and non-similar identifiers are identified as "disagreement".

The total number of codes in two stages of research was 83, the number of agreements between codes was 39 and the number of non-agreements was 5. Using Formula 1, the validity percentage of the pluralism method in the interviewee was equal to 94%. Considering the fact that this reliability rate was more than 60%, the interviewees had good credibility and the method of selecting the interviewees was also confirmed.

Kvale, believes: to calculate the reliability of the test among the interviews, several interviews were selected as samples and

each of them was identified twice in a short and specific time interval; Then, the identified identifiers were compared in two-time intervals for each of the interviews (6). The retesting method was used to evaluate the stability of the researcher's identification. In each of the interviews, identifiers that were similar in two-time intervals were identified as "agreement" and non-similar identifiers as "lack of agreement".

Formula 1. Calculating test-retest reliability percentage:

$$\text{Reliability percentage} = \frac{\text{Number of agreements} \times 2}{\text{Total number of codes}} \times 100\%$$

In the pluralism in the method, in the research, to calculate the test-retest reliability, three interviews were selected from among the interviews and each of them was coded twice in a 15-day interval by the researcher. The coding results are given in the Table 1.

The total number of codes in two 15-day intervals is 140, the number of codes of agreement between the codes in these two times is 59, and the number of disagreements in these two intervals is 22. The test-retest reliability of the interviews in the pluralism in the method using the mentioned formula is 84.3 percent, which is much higher than 60 percent, and the reliability of the coding is confirmed.

Also, for the pluralism in the researcher method, to calculate the reliability of the interview with the intra-subject agreement method of two coders, one of the doctoral students was asked to participate in the research as a coder. The necessary training and methods for coding were provided to him, and then 3 interviews were coded by both the researcher and the person in question, and the percentage of agreement between the coders is shown in the below.

The total number of codes recorded by the researcher and the colleague is 160, the number of agreements between the codes is 72, and the number of disagreements is 16. Using the aforementioned formula, the inter-coder reliability for the interviews in this study is 90 percent. Considering that it is higher than 60 percent, the reliability of the coding is confirmed.

In order to analyze the data obtained from the interview, the interview text was recorded on paper and then thematic analysis was conducted to identify the concepts. Using MaxQDA Pro software, content analysis was conducted in order to design the research model.

Results

Out of the total 20 expert samples included in the study, 17 were male (85%) and the rest were female, and their average age was 35.44 years, and 5 of them were university professors, 5 were franchisees, 4 were responsible managers, and the rest were journal editors Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Expert Participants

| Category | Number | Percentage |
|-----------------------|--------|--------------|
| Total Experts | 20 | 100% |
| Male | 17 | 85% |
| Female | 3 | 15% |
| Mean Age (SD) | - | 35.44 (3.64) |
| University Professors | 5 | 25% |
| Franchisees | 5 | 25% |
| Responsible Managers | 4 | 20% |
| Journal Editors | 6 | 30% |

Health Sector Challenges in Iranian Local Press

After the concepts were identified, thematic analysis was conducted to obtain the components, the results of which are presented in Table 2. Initially, an example of the coding of the interviews conducted is given in Table 3.

Table 2. Interview coding of Iranian local press challenges

| Row | Propositions | Basic themes |
|-----|---|---|
| 1 | The most important challenge facing local press in the country is the lack of a special and appropriate position in the eyes of public opinion due to the expansion of online and virtual spaces, as well as the lack of public acceptance of written publications by society, and ultimately the low level of reading, etc., which has caused written publications to decline since the 1980s and now continue their activities with a limp. | Lack of a special and appropriate place in the eyes of public opinion |
| 2 | | Expansion of online and virtual spaces |
| 3 | | Lack of public acceptance of written publications |
| 4 | | Low level of reading |
| 5 | | Lack of audience |
| 6 | The lack of an audience, which itself has several reasons: 1. Mistrust between the government and the nation. 2. Lack of content production in the media and adherence to the repetitive copy-paste method. 3. The lack of analytical reports and promising news in the media. 4. The tendency of people to new means of communication and the impact of cyberspace on the lack of acceptance of the media, especially the written type, and in the next step, news agencies and news sites. 5. The lack of attraction of the audience and the general public in terms of psychology and weakness of nerves to read long or useless texts unrelated to issues related to the people. | Distrust between the government and the nation |
| 7 | | Lack of content production in the media |
| 8 | | Adherence to the method of repetitive copy-paste |
| 9 | | Vacancy of analytical reports |
| 10 | | Vacancy of promising news |
| 11 | | People's tendency towards new means of communication |
| 12 | | The impact of cyberspace |
| 13 | | Lack of appeal of audiences and the general public in terms of psychology and weakness of nerves to read long texts |
| 14 | | Lack of appeal of audiences to read materials unrelated to people's issues |
| 15 | The challenge for local newspapers can be considered a lack of facilities and financial resources. The lack of sustainable economic resources, coupled with high printing costs, has made the situation worrisome. | Lack of facilities |
| 16 | | Lack of financial resources |
| 17 | | Lack of sustainable economic resources |
| 18 | | High printing costs |
| 19 | The significant increase in human resources wages has caused local media, especially print media, to be depleted of capable human resources and to turn more to republishing materials published in news agencies, etc. | Significant increase in human resources wages |
| 20 | | Local media outlets are becoming depleted of capable human resources. |

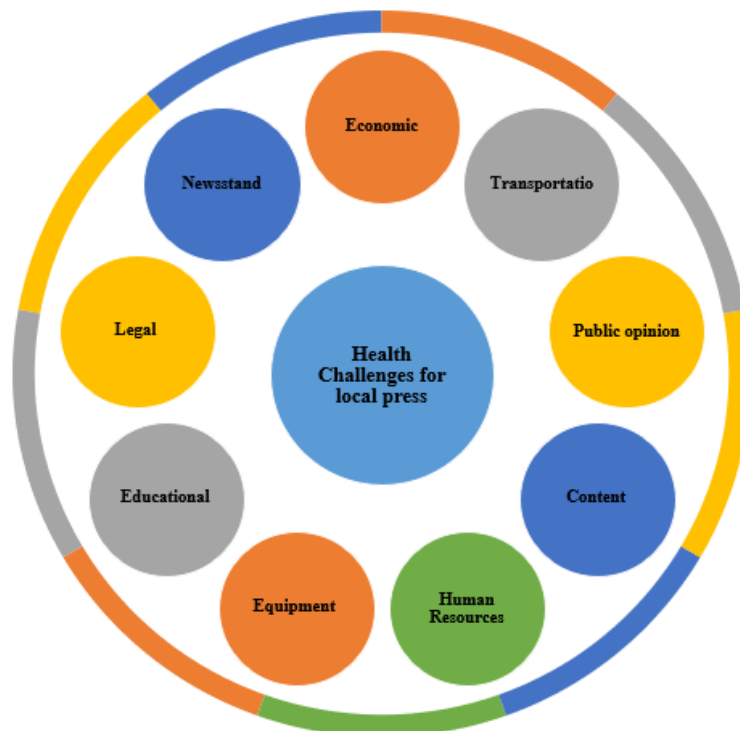


Figure 1. Health sector challenges in local press

Table 3. Content Analysis of Health Sector Challenges in Iranian Local Press

| Row | Organizing Themes | Basic Themes |
|-----|--|--|
| 1 | Economic | Lack of financial resources |
| 2 | | Lack of sustainable economic resources |
| 3 | | High printing costs |
| 4 | | Significant increase in human resources wages |
| 5 | | Incompatibility of costs with income |
| 6 | | Lack of appropriate equipment and supplies due to financial weakness |
| 7 | | Inability to upgrade and update equipment and facilities |
| 8 | | Inability to provide appropriate computers |
| 9 | | Inability to provide appropriate cameras for journalism |
| 10 | | Inability to afford adequate internet bandwidth |
| 11 | | Lack of appropriate space for media activities |
| 12 | | Renting non-standard locations for media activities |
| 13 | | Elimination of subsidies for various publications |
| 14 | Transportation | High transportation costs |
| 15 | | Intra-provincial distribution costs |
| 16 | | Shipping and receiving costs from printing houses |
| 17 | | Transportation challenges in border provinces |
| 18 | | Transportation challenges in mountainous provinces |
| 19 | | Transportation challenges in coastal provinces |
| 20 | Public Access | Lack of public trust in written publications |
| 21 | | Expansion of online and virtual platforms |
| 22 | | Low public acceptance of print media |
| 23 | | Decrease in reading habits |
| 24 | | Lack of audience engagement |
| 25 | | Public preference for new communication methods |
| 26 | | Distrust between government and citizens |
| 27 | | Lack of interest in long texts |
| 28 | | Over-issuance devaluing media credibility |
| 29 | | Insufficient content production |
| 30 | | Repetition and copy-paste practices |
| 31 | Lack of analytical reports | |
| 32 | Absence of positive news coverage | |
| 33 | Unattractiveness of local publications | |
| 34 | Poor quality of local journalism | |
| 35 | Weak editorial quality | |
| 36 | Content | Lack of in-depth and engaging interviews |
| 37 | | Overuse of praise and flattery in interviews |
| 38 | | Failure to report on community problems |
| 39 | | Long and unappealing headlines |
| 40 | | Insufficient use of modern news styles |
| 41 | | Over-reliance on website materials |
| 42 | | Printing outdated or repetitive news |
| 43 | Neglect of provincial issues in favor of national ones | |
| 44 | Human Resources | Lack of skilled personnel |
| 45 | | Insufficient managerial experience |
| 46 | | Lack of training in media economics for managers |
| 47 | | Low income leading to unprofessional behavior |
| 48 | | Brain drain to larger cities |
| 49 | | Minimum staffing levels |
| 50 | | Ethical issues among press experts |
| 51 | Facilities | Limited availability of advanced printing equipment |
| 52 | | Lack of resources for production and distribution |
| 53 | Education | Insufficient and short-duration training programs |
| 54 | | Inaccessibility of local journalists to advanced training centers |
| 55 | | Trial-and-error approach to journalism |
| 56 | Legal | Non-implementation of approved media laws |
| 57 | | Discrimination in allocating advertisements and subscriptions |
| 58 | | Lack of accountability from officials |
| 59 | Newsstand | Unattractive and poorly designed kiosks |
| 60 | | Limited profitability of local publications |

The results of the thematic analysis showed that 83 unique basic themes and 9 organizing themes were identified as health sector challenges from Iranian local press. These themes include economic, transportation, public acceptance, content, human resources, facilities, education, legal, and newsstand. The following, Figure 1, shows the health sector challenges model of local press.

Health Sector Management Strategies in Iranian Local Press

In order to analyze the data obtained from the interview, the interview transcript was recorded on paper and then thematic analysis was conducted to identify the concepts. After the concepts were identified, thematic analysis was conducted to obtain the components, the results of which are presented in Table 4. First, an example of the coding of the interviews conducted is given in Table 5.

Table 4. Coding of Health Sector Management Strategies Interviews in Iranian Local Press

| Row | Propositions | Basic Themes |
|-----|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Emphasis on producing local content and utilizing local potential and talents, and producing content based on important local issues; and being able to be an important source of news in the region and cover the news in its entirety. | Local Content Strategy |
| | Using local potential and talent | Utilizing Local Talents |
| | Productions based on important local issues | Focus on Local Issues |
| | Comprehensive news coverage | Comprehensive Coverage |
| 2 | Becoming an important news source in the region | Regional News Authority |
| | Since local newspapers are considered the main cultural foundations of a country and play an important role in the development of each province, the government must provide the infrastructure in the provinces to enable their activities; such as building a printing house that, in terms of printing, would be at least equal to the cost of printing outside the province, if not less, and the cost of transporting it would be a benefit to them than the in-province printing house. | Infrastructure Development |
| | Providing infrastructure in the provinces for local press | Infrastructure Support |
| | Establishing printing houses | Local Printing Facilities |
| 3 | In terms of intra-provincial transportation, the roads of most provinces, especially mountainous areas, are very expensive, costly, and time-consuming to send mail. A country that values public reading must ensure timely delivery of publications to remote areas through equipped postal services. | Affordable Transportation |
| | Making postage for media items cheaper | Reducing Postal Costs |
| | Improving access to remote areas | Supporting Public Reading |
| 4 | In the field of equipment and tools related to journalism (e.g., cameras, recorders, computers), providing affordable tools through specific authorities or customs collaboration can strengthen the media. | Equipment Accessibility |
| | Providing media tools at lower prices to local press | Affordable Media Tools |
| | Increasing interactions with the customs department | Customs Collaboration |
| | Using equipment from other organizations | Organizational Resource Sharing |

Table 5. Content Analysis of Health Sector Management Strategies in Local Iranian Press

| Row | Basic Themes | Organizing Themes |
|-----|--|-------------------|
| 1 | Emphasis on producing local content | Content |
| 2 | Productions based on important local issues | |
| 3 | Complete news coverage | |
| 4 | Becoming an important news source in the region | |
| 5 | Conducting in-depth interviews with experts | |
| 6 | Preparing reports on local events | |
| 7 | Preparing and editing content in line with the time | |
| 8 | Acting in a timely manner by the media | |
| 9 | Using humor | |
| 10 | Using regional literature | |
| 11 | Adding variety to content | |
| 12 | Paying attention to local audiences | |
| 13 | The front page photo and headline should be related to the province | |
| 14 | The province's interest in national issues in the news | |
| 15 | Preparing specialized content for specific audiences (e.g., women, children, athletes) | |
| 16 | Using local potential and talents | |
| 17 | Identifying interested parties for citizen journalists | |
| 18 | Using honorary journalists | |
| 19 | Using a professional team | |
| 20 | Full support for the work team | |
| 21 | Job security for journalists | Infrastructure |
| 22 | Providing infrastructure in the provinces for local press | |
| 23 | Establishing a printing house | |
| 24 | Using equipment from other organizations | |
| 25 | Constructing press complexes | |
| 26 | Making the postage of media items cheaper | Economic |
| 27 | Providing media tools at lower prices to local press | |
| 28 | Distribution and payment of publications' claims from government advertisements | |
| 29 | Payment of paper subsidies | |
| 30 | Allocation of subsidies based on the quality of the publication | |
| 31 | Interaction with customs | Legal |
| 32 | Strict implementation of the law on distribution and payment of claims | |
| 33 | Monitoring the implementation of laws | Planning |
| 34 | Planning for empowerment | |
| 35 | Defining management strategy | |
| 36 | Defining roadmap | |
| 37 | Drawing future horizons | |
| 38 | Knowing time | |
| 39 | Knowing geographical location by the media | |
| 40 | Using your media's virtual space | |
| 41 | Connecting official media with virtual space | |

The results of the thematic analysis showed that 41 unique basic themes and 6 organizing themes were identified as the strategies of the local press of Iran. These

themes include content, human resources, infrastructure, economic, legal, and planning. The following, Figure 2, shows the model of local press strategies.



Figure 2. Local press management strategies

Discussion

This study aimed to design a model of challenges and management strategies for local press in Iran. The content analysis revealed 83 unique basic themes and 9 organizing themes as challenges faced by local press, including economic factors, transportation, public acceptance, content quality, human resources, facilities, education, legal issues, and kiosks. Additionally, 41 unique basic themes and 6 organizing themes were identified as strategies, such as content development, human resources, infrastructure, economy, legal framework, and planning.

While the findings identify the primary challenges of local press in Iran, a more critical examination of how these challenges interconnect and affect each other is required. For instance, the economic challenges are not only limited to financial limitations but also tie into other areas like content production, audience engagement, and human resource sustainability. As Esmail Tabar et al. (1) noted, economic problems are exacerbated by factors such as cyberspace competitors, political restrictions, and insufficient training of human resources. Furthermore, the study highlights the weak support mechanisms from governmental bodies,

which quietly extinguish the potential of local publications.

The analysis of local press challenges can also be applied to the health sector, where communication strategies must address the gaps identified here. A deeper understanding of the interdependencies between economic, human resource, and content challenges can help to tailor effective health communication strategies. For instance, local media's limited reach due to economic difficulties directly impacts the dissemination of public health messages. If local press can be empowered through better economic support and training, it can serve as a critical channel for health communication, particularly for marginalized communities

In the context of economic factors Jiang & Kong, stated that economic problems have led to a move towards attracting more advertising in local newspapers (7). Adnan et al., also argued that economic problems have led to an increase in unethical behavior in local newspapers (5). Alim et al., introduced public acceptance and up-to-date facilities as challenges for the public press. However, at the current stage of Iranian history, the financial weakness of local publications and the lack of serious and effective financial support mechanisms from governments are among the most

important factors that quietly extinguish the lights of these types of publications. Economic death, unlike political death, is a silent death! The number of publications that have been closed due to economic problems is greater than the number of publications that have suffered political death. No publication in the world is born with the speculation and personal taste of its editors. Although the creators of each publication start their journey based on journalistic knowledge, they know their audience before they start and turn the key to planning. Planning based on audience knowledge in every field of journalistic activity is the basis and foundation of publishing publications (8).

In our society, about two thousand publications are published, but their number in a country with a population of seventy million and at least 50 million literates does not exceed 2 million in total. This is because first the publication is published and then its managers look for customers, and this vicious circle continues (9). Technological changes, in addition to the direct effects they have had on the evolutionary cycle of societies; can also affect their industries and products through the effects they have on their behavior and lifestyles. The emergence of digital media has changed and transformed the media consumption style of societies. Today, mobile devices have changed the way audiences' access and consume content (10). These changes have undoubtedly had an impact on the consumption habits of newspaper and magazine audiences (11). The Internet offers journalists new opportunities to gather and produce reports. Using lightweight digital tools and recording equipment, they can produce more and more timely reports for devices such as smartphones, digital cameras, and laptops. Data mining and visualization tools enable journalists to examine large data sets, attractively present the results, and easily find ways to access new stories (12). Traditional service providers are increasingly leveraging the potential of the

Internet and social media. Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter are interesting for disseminating news and information. Twitter has used people as a means of communicating quickly and easily. Much of the information, especially images and videos, comes from eyewitnesses or victims, who are often faster than traditional news reporters. Many journalists use Twitter as a source. Newspapers such as The Guardian, USA Today, and The New York Times have made efforts to open their data to the public so that others can develop new services or information based on this data (13-15). In addition, with the support of free and easy content management tools such as WordPress, the number of user-generated websites and blogs has expanded significantly. However, local press is one of the socio-cultural development tools that can affect a specific geographical and socio-cultural location and therefore requires support and backing from governmental and cultural institutions.

Based on the results, it was determined that there are 41 unique basic themes and 6 organizing themes as strategies for local press in Iran. These themes include content, human resources, infrastructure, economy, law, and planning. In the field of content, it is suggested that emphasis be placed on producing local content, producing products based on important local issues, covering news in full, conducting in-depth interviews with experts, preparing reports on local events, using regional literature, adding diversity to the content and preparing specific content for a specific audience (e.g. women, children, men, athletes, etc.). In the field of human resources, it is recommended to use local potentials and talents, identify those interested in citizen journalism, use honorary journalists, use a professional team, and fully support the work team. In the field of infrastructure, it is recommended to provide infrastructure in the provinces for local press, build a printing house, use equipment from other

organizations, and build press complexes. In the field of economic factors, it is recommended to make the postage of media items cheaper, provide media tools at a lower price to local press, distribute and pay for publications from government advertisements, pay paper subsidies, allocate subsidies based on the quality of the publication, and interact with customs.

Innovative Approaches and Tools:

Beyond existing strategies, novel approaches are necessary to address these challenges. Some possible innovative solutions include:

1. Leveraging Digital Tools for Content Creation and Distribution:

Incorporating mobile journalism tools and social media platforms can enable local press to reach a wider audience at a lower cost. This could involve the use of citizen journalism, where local residents contribute content, providing more authentic and relevant coverage of community health issues.

2. Partnerships with Tech Companies:

Local press outlets could form partnerships with technology companies to gain access to affordable tools for data visualization and news dissemination. For instance, open data platforms can be used to engage citizens in public health campaigns by providing transparent, real-time health data.

3. Crowdsourced Funding Models:

To address the economic challenges, local press could explore alternative funding models, such as crowdfunding or subscription-based services, especially for specialized health content. This approach can be applied to support in-depth reporting on health issues and improve the financial sustainability of local press.

4. Government Incentives for Local Health Communication:

Governments could incentivize local press to cover public health issues by offering subsidies or tax breaks for publications that

produce content aimed at improving community health awareness. This would also require a reform in how government advertisements are allocated, ensuring that local media outlets receive adequate support for these critical tasks.

5. Educational Programs for Journalists:

Developing specialized training programs for journalists in health communication and digital media can enhance the quality and relevance of reporting on health topics. By incorporating health-specific content into journalism curricula, future journalists will be better prepared to tackle the unique challenges of health reporting.

While the identified challenges in the local press are significant, the strategies proposed must be coupled with innovative, technology-driven solutions. Only by combining traditional methods with modern digital tools and collaborative models can the local press overcome its current limitations and contribute more effectively to health communication. The findings suggest that both governmental support and the development of new communication channels are essential to fostering a more sustainable and impactful local press system.

Conclusion

Local press is recognized as an effective tool in the development of health, cultural, and social sectors. These media have significant effects on the specific geographical and socio-cultural of communities. Strategic planning is important for the economic development of press outlets and their preservation in the current challenging conditions. Considering the key role of local press outlets in the sustainable development of societies, joint efforts are required from governments, cultural institutions, and the media themselves so that they can be effective in the path of economic and social development.

Authors' contribution

Massoumeh Ghasemi Gorbandi and Hamideh Molaei developed the study concept and design. Akbar Nasrollahi and Masoomeh Ghasemi Gorbandi acquired the data. Massoumeh Ghasemi Gorbandi and Hamideh Molaei analyzed and interpreted the data, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. All authors contributed to the intellectual content, manuscript editing and read and approved the final manuscript.

Informed consent

Questionnaires were filled with the participants' satisfaction and written consent was obtained from the participants in this study.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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