



How to cite this article:

Behnood, V., Ghadami, M., Sajjadi, S. A., Soleimani, N., & Mohammadi, A. (2026). Analysis and Prioritization of Indigenous Strategic Thinking Indicators in Newsrooms of Iranian Media Organizations. *Journal of Historical Research, Law and Policy*, 4(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.61838/jhrp.110>



Article history:
Original Research

Dates:

Submission Date: 28 August 2025

Revision Date: 22 November 2025

Acceptance Date: 29 November 2025

First Publication Date: 30 November 2025

Final Publication Date: 01 March 2026

Analysis and Prioritization of Indigenous Strategic Thinking Indicators in Newsrooms of Iranian Media Organizations

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted with the aim of analyzing and evaluating strategic thinking in the newsrooms of media organizations. The primary objective of the study was to identify key indicators within four dimensions—vision-oriented thinking, time-oriented thinking, resource-oriented thinking, and improvisational thinking—and to prioritize them based on their importance for improving newsroom performance. This research was designed using a mixed quantitative–qualitative approach, and data were collected through standardized questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Friedman test to determine the mean ranks and priorities of the indicators, while qualitative data were examined through content analysis of interviews and field observations to verify and deepen the quantitative findings. The quantitative findings revealed that within the resource-oriented thinking dimension, the indicator content quality had the highest importance with a mean rank of 36.600, followed by capital waste (35.890) and human resources (35.570). In the dimension of time-oriented thinking, the indicators proactive and collaborative performance (35.860) and attempting to be the first news publisher (33.960) held high priority. Within the vision-oriented thinking dimension, the indicators broad objective (34.700) and goal setter (34.330) demonstrated the highest importance. In the dimension of improvisational thinking, the indicators instant decision-making (35.090) and striving to defend personal rights in crisis situations (34.880) ranked highest. The qualitative findings of the study indicated that the practical experiences of newsroom staff were consistent with the quantitative results, highlighting team collaboration, goal transparency, resource management, and the ability to make rapid decisions in critical situations as essential elements of strategic thinking. The overall conclusion of the research suggests that strategic thinking in newsrooms is a combination of long-term planning, optimal resource management, and swift decision-making under crisis conditions, and that resource-oriented thinking and improvisational thinking hold the highest priority for newsroom performance. This study may serve as a valid framework for analyzing and enhancing strategic performance in media organizations.

Keywords: *strategic thinking, newsroom, resource-oriented thinking, time-oriented thinking, improvisational thinking, vision-oriented thinking*



Introduction

In contemporary media ecosystems marked by rapid technological change, information abundance, shifting audience expectations, and intensifying competition, the capability of newsroom managers and editorial teams to employ strategic thinking has become a decisive factor for organizational survival and long-term performance. Strategic thinking equips media practitioners with the cognitive flexibility needed to navigate uncertainty, anticipate future developments, optimize resource usage, and make effective decisions under time pressure. This is especially crucial in news organizations where the dynamics of speed, accuracy, credibility, and innovation intertwine in complex ways (1). As scholars increasingly emphasize, strategic thinking is no longer an optional skill for media managers but a core organizational asset enabling the alignment of editorial practices with broader strategic objectives (2). Within the highly turbulent field of journalism—where challenge, contestation, and change continuously reshape professional boundaries—the capacity for strategic cognition forms the basis for sustainable competitive advantage, editorial integrity, and organizational resilience (3).

The Iranian media landscape is no exception to these global transformations. Over the past decade, structural shifts in technology, audience behavior, political conditions, and organizational cultures have confronted Iranian newsrooms with new managerial complexities. The emergence of digital journalism, the widespread use of social media, and the acceleration of information flows have made timely decision-making and strategic foresight indispensable competencies for newsroom leaders (4). Research in Iranian media management highlights that the traditional, intuition-driven editorial practices are insufficient within contemporary media environments that demand structured strategic processes, rapid situational assessment, and coherent long-term planning (5). As a result, developing a clear understanding of strategic thinking components relevant to newsroom operations has become an essential area of scholarly inquiry and organizational development.

Strategic thinking has been conceptualized in management literature as a multidimensional construct involving visioning, systemic insight, time sensitivity, resource allocation, and improvisation (6). Within media organizations, these dimensions operate under unique constraints, particularly the need for rapid responses to breaking news, the sensitivity of editorial decisions, and the necessity of balancing creativity with organizational discipline. Foundational perspectives on strategy emphasize the importance of linking future-oriented thinking with operational implementation, a relationship further elaborated in scenario thinking and strategic foresight theories (7). Such frameworks have proven valuable in guiding news managers toward preparing for uncertain futures, assessing risks, and creating flexible pathways for organizational adaptation.

In the Iranian context, earlier studies show that strategic thinking in media organizations often faces barriers such as rigid managerial hierarchies, insufficient training, and limited strategic autonomy for editorial teams (8). These structural challenges impede the development of strategic capabilities and restrict the practical application of strategic principles in newsroom operations. Nevertheless, recent advancements in management practices, increasing professionalization of media roles, and renewed emphasis on strategic planning in public and private media organizations have encouraged researchers to explore new models tailored to the contextual realities of Iranian newsrooms (9). This turn toward localized strategic frameworks represents an important step in reconciling global theoretical insights with the specific organizational culture and constraints of Iranian media systems.

One critical dimension of strategic thinking in newsrooms is vision-oriented thinking, which includes the ability to formulate clear long-term goals, align editorial decisions with organizational mission, and maintain transparency of

purpose. Media organizations depend on strong visioning processes to maintain credibility, ensure ethical standards, and articulate coherent narratives to the public. Existing studies emphasize that editorial leaders who can cultivate shared goals foster greater alignment, motivation, and accountability within their teams (10). Visioning has also been linked to strategic coherence, enabling managers to balance daily news pressures with long-term strategic imperatives (11). These insights underscore the importance of examining vision-related indicators as part of any comprehensive model of strategic thinking in media contexts.

Another fundamental dimension is time-oriented thinking, which plays a particularly crucial role in news production cycles. Timeliness is inherently tied to credibility, audience reach, and competitive advantage in journalism. The ability to manage deadlines, plan coverage efficiently, and react swiftly to emerging events requires a combination of anticipatory thinking and operational agility. Research has shown that effective time management is positively associated with news quality and organizational productivity (12). Moreover, given the increasing speed of information dissemination in digital platforms, the cultivation of robust time-thinking capabilities has become even more essential for modern editorial teams (5). Beyond operational speed, time thinking also includes the capacity to avoid impulsive decisions under pressure, ensuring that rapid responses do not compromise accuracy or ethical standards.

Closely related is the dimension of resource-oriented thinking, which focuses on optimal resource utilization including human capital, financial assets, technological tools, and operational infrastructures. In media organizations—many of which operate under significant budget constraints—strategic resource management can significantly influence organizational sustainability and content quality. Studies highlight that resourcefulness is a determinant of newsroom performance, affecting everything from workflow efficiency to innovation capacity (13). Moreover, Iranian media organizations have shown significant variation in their ability to harness both human and technological resources, making this dimension an important area for localized strategic assessment (14). Human resource allocation is particularly critical, as the expertise and creativity of journalists constitute the core value proposition of any news organization (15). Thus, resource-based indicators must be systematically examined in strategic thinking models tailored for editorial operations.

A further central component is improvisational thinking, which refers to the ability to make rapid, creative, and coherent decisions under crisis conditions. Because newsrooms frequently operate in unpredictable environments—including political crises, breaking news, and information uncertainties—improvisation becomes an indispensable competency for ensuring continuity of operations and maintaining editorial standards. Literature on media improvisation suggests that flexibility, emotional resilience, and adaptive decision-making differentiate effective news teams from those overwhelmed by situational pressures (16). Improvisational thinking is also linked to innovation and responsiveness, attributes that are increasingly required in digital journalism ecosystems characterized by high volatility and audience interactivity (17). These insights highlight why improvisation must be integrated into strategic frameworks for newsroom management.

While global studies provide broad conceptualizations of strategic thinking, the contextual specificity of media organizations—particularly in Iran—necessitates developing localized models grounded in empirical evidence. Cultural norms, regulatory environments, resource limitations, and organizational structures shape how strategic thinking is practiced in Iranian newsrooms. For example, constraints in managerial autonomy, hierarchical decision-making, and ambiguities in editorial independence influence how strategic principles are enacted on a daily basis (16). Similarly, inconsistent access to new technologies and varying levels of professional training affect the

development and deployment of strategic competencies (4). These contextual factors justify the need for empirical investigations aimed at identifying indigenous indicators of strategic thinking in Iranian news organizations.

The limited body of research exploring strategic models specifically for Iranian newsroom environments has underscored significant gaps in understanding how strategic thinking is internalized by journalists, editors, and managers. While earlier work on strategic planning in Iranian media organizations provided valuable insights into organizational-level strategy (9), less attention has been given to micro-level cognitive processes and decision-making patterns that shape editorial performance. Moreover, many Iranian studies adopt general management frameworks without tailoring them to the particularities of media work, such as the immediacy of news cycles, ethical considerations, and the balance between creativity and accuracy. Addressing these gaps requires a nuanced model that captures the multi-dimensional nature of strategic thinking within editorial contexts.

International scholarship contributes additional perspectives that enrich this inquiry. Learning-based models of strategic thinking argue that strategic cognition can be developed through systematic training and reflective practice (18). Performance management frameworks such as the Balanced Scorecard further illuminate the link between strategic planning, resource allocation, and operational outcomes (19). Emerging studies in journalism emphasize strategic action fields, where professional norms, power dynamics, and external actors shape the strategic behavior of media practitioners (2). Drawing on such insights allows for the construction of a more holistic model that captures both the internal cognitive dimensions and the external structural factors shaping strategic thinking in newsrooms.

Additionally, recent research highlights the importance of integrating technological literacy into strategic thinking frameworks, particularly in digital-first news environments. Digital technologies influence how news is gathered, verified, produced, and disseminated, thereby altering the competency requirements for strategic newsroom management (4). The incorporation of digital transformation indicators into strategic thinking models supports the alignment of editorial strategies with technological advancements and evolving audience behaviors. As Iranian media increasingly transition toward digital platforms, strategic thinking must encompass not only traditional managerial competencies but also adaptive capabilities suited for digital ecosystems.

Given this theoretical background and the empirical gaps identified in the literature, the present study seeks to contribute to strategic media management by developing a localized, empirically validated model of strategic thinking tailored specifically to Iranian newsrooms. By identifying and prioritizing indigenous indicators across the four key dimensions—vision-oriented thinking, time-oriented thinking, resource-oriented thinking, and improvisational thinking—this study aims to provide a practical framework capable of guiding managerial decision-making, improving newsroom performance, and supporting long-term strategic development in media organizations (1).

The aim of this study is to identify, assess, and prioritize the indigenous indicators of strategic thinking for newsroom operations in Iranian media organizations.

Findings and Results

After conducting semi-structured interviews with media experts and managers, the responses were thoroughly analyzed and initial codes were extracted. These codes indicate which components interviewees consider important in strategic thinking. Through analysis of the responses, initial codes related to the components of strategic thinking were extracted, reflecting managers' perceptions of the various dimensions of strategic thinking, characteristics of a successful manager, and factors influencing strategic decision-making in media organizations. Subsequently,

these codes were categorized into related themes and linked to the main concept. Vision-oriented thinking is considered one of the core principles of strategic thinking. In this section, interviewees' responses regarding the importance of vision, its role in organizational foresight, and its long-term impact on decision-making in media organizations were examined. "Codes related to vision-oriented thinking were extracted from managers' responses to identify their attention to long-term goals, media independence, and foresight. These codes were organized into categories and ultimately linked to the vision-oriented thinking theme.

Time-oriented thinking refers to paying attention to timing in making decisions and executing activities under normal and crisis conditions. To analyze this component, interviewees' responses on time planning, timely execution, team encouragement, and crisis management were reviewed. "For analyzing time-oriented thinking, codes related to time management, crisis planning, and interaction with the team when facing urgent news were extracted. These codes were categorized and linked to the time-oriented thinking theme.

Resource-oriented thinking refers to paying attention to optimal utilization of organizational resources—including human resources, financial credits, and equipment—in the decision-making process. Analysis of interviewees' responses shows how media managers allocate resources and maintain content quality. Improvisational thinking refers to managers' ability to make quick and creative decisions in unexpected or crisis conditions. In this section, interviewees' responses regarding crisis response, flexibility in decision-making, and adaptation to unpredictable conditions were analyzed. "Codes related to improvisational thinking reflect managers' reactions when facing emergencies, conflicting news, and immediate decisions. These codes were categorized and connected to the improvisational thinking theme.

Through analysis, 41 indicators related to strategic thinking were identified, including 13 indicators for vision-oriented thinking, 19 indicators for improvisational thinking, 14 indicators for time-oriented thinking, and 15 indicators for resource-oriented thinking.

Identification of Indigenous Vision-Oriented Thinking Indicators for Newsrooms in Media Organizations
To evaluate the identification of indigenous vision-oriented thinking indicators for newsrooms in media organizations, one of the key aspects is assessing the degree of influence of each sub-criterion (or concept) in measuring its corresponding main criterion (or category). This assessment is conducted through examining the "factor loadings" of the sub-criteria. In other words, a criterion used to measure vision-oriented thinking in newsrooms is considered appropriate when its factor loading is at least 0.50 and statistically significant.

The factor loadings of all identified concepts for the "vision-oriented thinking" category of strategic thinking in newsrooms were reported to be above 0.50. Additionally, the value of the T-statistic for examining the significance of these factor loadings exceeded 1.96, indicating statistical significance of the estimated factor loadings. These results suggest that the measurement model for the "vision-oriented thinking" category possesses acceptable confirmatory validity.

Table 1. Estimated Factor Loadings of the Vision-Oriented Thinking Construct for Newsrooms in Media Organizations and the Significance Test

Category	Concept	Code	Factor Loading	Standard Error	T-Statistic	P-Value
Vision-Oriented Thinking	Media Independence	S1P1	0.684	0.053	12.840	0.000
	Goal Setter	S1P2	0.697	0.056	12.531	0.000
	Hope	S1P3	0.733	0.043	16.981	0.000
	Broad Objective	S1P4	0.749	0.038	19.835	0.000

Clear Vision	S1P5	0.736	0.042	17.451	0.000
Accurate and Proper Programs	S1P6	0.695	0.062	11.286	0.000
Foresight	S1P7	0.741	0.040	18.484	0.000
Enlightenment	S1P8	0.731	0.039	18.667	0.000
Freedom of Action	S1P9	0.727	0.037	19.499	0.000
Final Decision by Senior Managers	S1P10	0.693	0.050	13.877	0.000
Horizon of Activity	S1P11	0.792	0.035	22.436	0.000
Optimism	S1P12	0.654	0.055	11.933	0.000
Restoring Government–People Relations	S1P13	0.640	0.052	12.195	0.000

To evaluate the reliability of the model constructs, two criteria—Cronbach’s alpha coefficient and composite reliability—were used and the results are presented. Values of 0.70, 0.80, and 0.90 respectively indicate good, very good, and excellent reliability for each construct. Based on the results, Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability coefficients for the “vision-oriented thinking” construct of strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations are higher than 0.70 and are at an acceptable level. Furthermore, to assess the convergent validity of the model constructs, two criteria—Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the rho_A coefficient—were used. An AVE value greater than 0.50 and a rho_A value greater than 0.70 indicate confirmation of the construct’s convergent validity. This means that the construct correlates well with its indicators and measures a single underlying concept. The results show that the AVE coefficient for the “vision-oriented thinking” category of strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations is greater than 0.50 and its rho_A coefficient is greater than 0.70. This indicates that “vision-oriented thinking” possesses convergent validity.

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Results for Vision-Oriented Thinking for Newsrooms in Media Organizations

Category	Cronbach’s Alpha	CR Coefficient	AVE	rho_A Coefficient
Vision-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations	0.920	0.922	0.931	0.510

The quality of the model constructs is evaluated using the CV.COM criterion. Positive values of this index indicate that the construct has an appropriate level of predictive power and that the observable variables are well explained by the values of their corresponding latent variable. The results in the table confirm the appropriate quality of the vision-oriented thinking construct for newsrooms in media organizations, given the positive value of its CV.COM coefficient.

Table 3. Convergent Validity and Quality of the Vision-Oriented Thinking Construct for Newsrooms in Media Organizations

	SSO	SSE	CV.COM
Vision-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations	1,976	1,160.607	0.413

To examine the presence of undesirable correlations among the input variables of the model, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) index was used. This index is employed in ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis to detect the severity of multicollinearity. None of the concepts related to vision-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations showed high correlations with one another, because all VIF values were below the permissible threshold of 5. This indicates that the regression model developed to analyze “vision-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” has appropriate statistical stability and that its results can be trusted.

Furthermore, the results of the significance test of the outer weights related to the components of the “vision-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” model show that the weights of the vision-oriented thinking concepts for newsrooms in media organizations are statistically significant. This level of significance indicates that the concepts used for vision-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations explain a substantial portion of its variance. In other words, these indicators act as valid and strong criteria for measuring the construct of “vision-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” and have good capacity to explain its variation. This finding strengthens the validity of the conceptual model of “vision-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations.”

Table 4. VIF Results and Significance Test of Outer Weights of the Concepts in the “Vision-Oriented Thinking for Newsrooms in Media Organizations” Model

Category	Concept	Code	Outer Weight	Standard Error	T-Statistic	P-Value	VIF
Vision-oriented thinking	Media independence	S1P1	0.109	0.008	14.112	0.000	1.972
	Goal setter	S1P2	0.113	0.009	12.641	0.000	1.911
	Hope	S1P3	0.116	0.008	14.410	0.000	2.584
	Broad objective	S1P4	0.116	0.008	14.521	0.000	2.302
	Clear vision	S1P5	0.108	0.008	13.433	0.000	2.167
	Accurate and proper programs	S1P6	0.097	0.012	8.267	0.000	1.996
	Foresight	S1P7	0.116	0.008	13.988	0.000	2.583
	Enlightenment	S1P8	0.117	0.009	12.864	0.000	2.726
	Freedom of action	S1P9	0.107	0.009	11.678	0.000	2.009
	Final decision by senior managers	S1P10	0.103	0.010	10.082	0.000	1.911
	Horizon of activity	S1P11	0.111	0.008	13.465	0.000	2.131
	Optimism	S1P12	0.086	0.010	8.858	0.000	1.933
	Restoring government–people relations	S1P13	0.097	0.010	9.362	0.000	2.294

Since the concepts related to the vision-oriented thinking construct for newsrooms in media organizations measure it positively and significantly, and possess convergent validity and appropriate reliability, as well as acceptable quality, and since all their outer weights are significant and they do not have high correlations with one another, it can be concluded that these concepts related to the “vision-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” category have been correctly selected and are well capable of measuring it.

Identification of Indigenous Improvisational Thinking Indicators for Newsrooms in Media Organizations
 These results mean that the measurement model for the “improvisational thinking” category has acceptable confirmatory validity.

Table 5. Estimated Factor Loadings of the Improvisational Thinking Construct for Newsrooms in Media Organizations and Significance Test

Category	Concept	Code	Factor Loading	Standard Error	T-Statistic	P-Value
Improvisational thinking	One-time decision-making	S4P1	0.624	0.050	12.466	0.000
	Non-publication of news contrary to the manager's view	S4P2	0.638	0.052	12.325	0.000
	Policy line	S4P3	0.629	0.054	11.698	0.000
	Examining short-term effects in crisis conditions	S4P4	0.600	0.067	9.015	0.000
	Publishing news in favor of the media	S4P5	0.723	0.041	17.657	0.000
	Ensuring the accuracy of news in crisis conditions	S4P6	0.887	0.016	55.462	0.000
	Fighting to defend personal rights in crisis conditions	S4P7	0.661	0.049	13.490	0.000
	Alignment with circumstances and performing duties in crisis conditions	S4P8	0.783	0.033	23.574	0.000
	Changing managers	S4P9	0.693	0.042	16.428	0.000
	Rational behavior in crisis conditions	S4P10	0.677	0.047	14.509	0.000

Highlighting news in line with personal views	S4P11	0.766	0.035	22.064	0.000
Controlling conditions in crisis	S4P12	0.764	0.035	21.798	0.000
Priority of media policy	S4P13	0.729	0.037	19.514	0.000
Fact-checking in crisis conditions	S4P14	0.789	0.030	26.005	0.000
Finding the primary source of the news and being aware of all its content in crisis conditions	S4P15	0.756	0.035	21.650	0.000
Publishing news contrary to personal views if beneficial	S4P16	0.902	0.012	74.662	0.000
Considering the views of senior managers in crisis conditions	S4P17	0.811	0.027	29.573	0.000
Ignoring commotion in crisis conditions	S4P18	0.797	0.032	25.108	0.000
More deliberation in crisis conditions	S4P19	0.726	0.046	15.625	0.000

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients for the "improvisational thinking" construct of strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations are higher than 0.70 and are at an acceptable level. Furthermore, the AVE coefficient for the "improvisational thinking" category of strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations is greater than 0.50 and its rho_A coefficient is greater than 0.70. This indicates that "improvisational thinking" possesses convergent validity.

Table 6. Reliability and Validity Results for Improvisational Thinking for Newsrooms in Media Organizations

Category	Cronbach's Alpha	CR Coefficient	AVE	rho_A Coefficient
Improvisational thinking for newsrooms in media organizations	0.953	0.955	0.958	0.546

The quality of the improvisational thinking construct for newsrooms in media organizations is evaluated using the CV.COM criterion, and given the positive value of this index, it is assessed as appropriate.

Table 7. Convergent Validity and Quality of the Improvisational Thinking Construct for Newsrooms in Media Organizations

	SSO	SSE	CV.COM
Improvisational thinking for newsrooms in media organizations	2,888	1,533.174	0.469

None of the concepts related to improvisational thinking for newsrooms in media organizations have high correlations with one another, because all VIF values are below the permissible threshold of 5. This indicates that the regression model developed to analyze "improvisational thinking for newsrooms in media organizations" has appropriate statistical stability and that its results can be trusted.

Furthermore, the results of the significance test of the outer weights related to the components of the "improvisational thinking for newsrooms in media organizations" model show that the weights of the improvisational thinking concepts for newsrooms in media organizations are statistically significant. This level of significance indicates that the concepts used for improvisational thinking for newsrooms in media organizations explain a substantial portion of its variance. In other words, these indicators act as valid and strong criteria for measuring the construct of "improvisational thinking for newsrooms in media organizations" and have good capacity to explain its variation. This finding strengthens the validity of the conceptual model of "improvisational thinking for newsrooms in media organizations."

Table 8. VIF Results and Significance Test of Outer Weights of the Concepts in the "Improvisational Thinking for Newsrooms in Media Organizations" Model

Category	Concept	Code	Outer Weight	Standard Error	T-Statistic	P-Value	VIF
Improvisational thinking	One-time decision-making	S4P1	0.087	0.007	13.355	0.000	2.528
	Non-publication of news contrary to the manager's view	S4P2	0.086	0.005	15.749	0.000	2.269

Policy line	S4P3	0.079	0.006	13.299	0.000	3.277
Examining short-term effects in crisis conditions	S4P4	0.068	0.006	12.076	0.000	3.151
Publishing news in favor of the media	S4P5	0.077	0.007	11.877	0.000	2.861
Ensuring the accuracy of news in crisis conditions	S4P6	0.087	0.005	18.319	0.000	3.225
Fighting to defend personal rights in crisis conditions	S4P7	0.077	0.006	13.124	0.000	3.184
Alignment with circumstances and performing duties in crisis conditions	S4P8	0.072	0.005	14.596	0.000	7.640
Changing managers	S4P9	0.059	0.006	10.504	0.000	3.434
Rational behavior in crisis conditions	S4P10	0.058	0.006	10.160	0.000	3.434
Highlighting news in line with personal views	S4P11	0.062	0.005	12.241	0.000	2.639
Controlling conditions in crisis	S4P12	0.063	0.006	11.431	0.000	2.639
Priority of media policy	S4P13	0.065	0.004	15.337	0.000	2.675
Fact-checking in crisis conditions	S4P14	0.070	0.004	16.567	0.000	2.264
Finding the primary source of the news and being aware of all its content in crisis conditions	S4P15	0.063	0.005	12.212	0.000	2.772
Publishing news contrary to personal views if beneficial	S4P16	0.083	0.004	20.168	0.000	7.292
Considering the views of senior managers in crisis conditions	S4P17	0.076	0.005	16.613	0.000	2.199
Ignoring commotion in crisis conditions	S4P18	0.071	0.004	15.837	0.000	3.149
More deliberation in crisis conditions	S4P19	0.056	0.006	10.149	0.000	2.319

Since the concepts related to the improvisational thinking construct for newsrooms in media organizations measure it positively and significantly, and possess convergent validity and appropriate reliability as well as acceptable quality, and since all their outer weights are significant and they do not have high correlations with one another, it can be concluded that these concepts related to the category of “improvisational thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” have been correctly selected and are well capable of measuring it.

Identification of Indigenous Time-Oriented Thinking Indicators for Newsrooms in Media Organizations These results mean that the measurement model for the “time-oriented thinking” category has acceptable confirmatory validity.

Table 9. Estimated Factor Loadings of the Time-Oriented Thinking Construct for Newsrooms in Media Organizations and Significance Test

Category	Concept	Code	Factor Loading	Standard Error	T-Statistic	P-Value
Time-oriented thinking	Hasty and thoughtless	S2P1	0.688	0.049	14.134	0.000
	Scheduling timely task delivery	S2P2	0.654	0.049	13.444	0.000
	Encouragement for timely task execution	S2P3	0.721	0.047	15.440	0.000
	Teamwork between managers and staff	S2P4	0.720	0.040	17.894	0.000
	Attempt to be the first to publish the news	S2P5	0.688	0.049	13.984	0.000
	Waiting for news from websites	S2P6	0.630	0.047	13.317	0.000
	Hasty and influenced by crisis conditions	S2P7	0.711	0.040	17.753	0.000
	Proactive and collaborative performance	S2P8	0.731	0.040	18.252	0.000
	Speed	S2P9	0.797	0.035	22.968	0.000
	Being dynamic	S2P10	0.721	0.048	15.132	0.000
	Encouragement for dynamism	S2P11	0.805	0.034	23.685	0.000
	Ensuring the accuracy of news	S2P12	0.739	0.049	15.027	0.000
	Timely delivery of work	S2P13	0.753	0.044	17.079	0.000

Staying away from commotion	S2P14	0.791	0.035	22.376	0.000
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Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients for the "time-oriented thinking" construct of strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations are higher than 0.70 and are at an acceptable level. Furthermore, the AVE coefficient for the "time-oriented thinking" category of strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations is greater than 0.50 and its rho_A coefficient is greater than 0.70. This indicates that "time-oriented thinking" possesses convergent validity.

Table 10. Reliability and Validity Results for Time-Oriented Thinking for Newsrooms in Media Organizations

Category	Cronbach's Alpha	CR Coefficient	AVE	rho_A Coefficient
Time-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations	0.931	0.932	0.940	0.528

The quality of the time-oriented thinking construct for newsrooms in media organizations is evaluated using the CV.COM criterion, and given the positive value of this index, it is assessed as appropriate.

Table 11. Convergent Validity and Quality of the Time-Oriented Thinking Construct for Newsrooms in Media Organizations

	SSO	SSE	CV.COM
Time-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations	2,128	1,209.089	0.432

None of the concepts related to time-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations have high correlations with one another, because all VIF values are below the permissible threshold of 5. This indicates that the regression model developed to analyze "time-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations" has appropriate statistical stability and that its results can be trusted. Furthermore, the results of the significance test of the outer weights related to the components of the "time-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations" model show that the weights of the time-oriented thinking concepts for newsrooms in media organizations are statistically significant. This level of significance indicates that the concepts used for time-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations explain a substantial portion of its variance. In other words, these indicators act as valid and strong criteria for measuring the construct of "time-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations" and have good capacity to explain its variation. This finding strengthens the validity of the conceptual model of "time-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations."

Table 12. VIF Results and Significance Test of Outer Weights of the Concepts in the "Time-Oriented Thinking for Newsrooms in Media Organizations" Model

Category	Concept	Code	Outer Weight	Standard Error	T-Statistic	P-Value	VIF
Time-oriented thinking	Hasty and thoughtless	S2P1	0.089	0.008	10.860	0.000	2.373
	Scheduling timely task delivery	S2P2	0.090	0.007	12.471	0.000	2.642
	Encouragement for timely task execution	S2P3	0.099	0.008	11.904	0.000	3.053
	Teamwork between managers and staff	S2P4	0.093	0.008	11.864	0.000	2.424
	Attempt to be the first to publish the news	S2P5	0.100	0.007	13.612	0.000	2.534
	Waiting for news from websites	S2P6	0.088	0.008	10.906	0.000	3.172
	Hasty and influenced by crisis conditions	S2P7	0.101	0.008	13.189	0.000	2.167

Proactive and collaborative performance	S2P8	0.109	0.007	14.633	0.000	2.088
Speed	S2P9	0.110	0.007	14.915	0.000	2.208
Being dynamic	S2P10	0.097	0.007	12.980	0.000	1.987
Encouragement for dynamism	S2P11	0.101	0.007	13.886	0.000	1.867
Ensuring the accuracy of news	S2P12	0.092	0.008	11.109	0.000	2.513
Timely delivery of work	S2P13	0.098	0.007	13.696	0.000	2.267
Staying away from commotion	S2P14	0.108	0.008	13.836	0.000	3.085

Since the concepts related to the time-oriented thinking construct for newsrooms in media organizations measure it positively and significantly, and possess convergent validity and appropriate reliability as well as acceptable quality, and since all their outer weights are significant and they do not have high correlations with one another, it can be concluded that these concepts related to the “time-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” category have been correctly selected and are well capable of measuring it.

Identification of Indigenous Resource-Oriented Thinking Indicators for Newsrooms in Media Organizations
These results mean that the measurement model for the “resource-oriented thinking” category has acceptable confirmatory validity.

Table 13. Estimated Factor Loadings of the Resource-Oriented Thinking Construct for Newsrooms in Media Organizations and Significance Test

Category	Concept	Code	Factor Loading	Standard Error	T-Statistic	P-Value
Resource-oriented thinking	Cost for resources	S3P1	0.770	0.040	19.286	0.000
	Human resources	S3P2	0.811	0.029	27.911	0.000
	Wasting resources by economizing on the cost of valid resources	S3P3	0.824	0.026	31.759	0.000
	Active and educated human resources	S3P4	0.800	0.034	23.309	0.000
	Balance in saving resources	S3P5	0.733	0.044	16.545	0.000
	Planned expenditure	S3P6	0.724	0.054	13.410	0.000
	Expenditure in unnecessary areas	S3P7	0.778	0.035	22.440	0.000
	Financial credits	S3P8	0.770	0.039	19.508	0.000
	Saving without reducing content quality	S3P9	0.808	0.033	24.311	0.000
	Eliminating paper in news dissemination	S3P10	0.763	0.039	19.552	0.000
	Focus on websites and virtual media	S3P11	0.834	0.027	30.955	0.000
	Content quality	S3P12	0.746	0.037	20.204	0.000
	Not sacrificing content quality for cost savings	S3P13	0.752	0.041	18.221	0.000
	Waste of capital	S3P14	0.754	0.045	16.660	0.000
	Separating the reporter role from the employee role	S3P15	0.799	0.031	25.464	0.000

Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability coefficients for the “resource-oriented thinking” construct of strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations are higher than 0.70 and are at an acceptable level. Furthermore, the AVE coefficient for the “resource-oriented thinking” category of strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations is greater than 0.50 and its rho_A coefficient is greater than 0.70. This indicates that “resource-oriented thinking” possesses convergent validity.

Table 14. Reliability and Validity Results for Resource-Oriented Thinking for Newsrooms in Media Organizations

Category	Cronbach’s Alpha	CR Coefficient	AVE	rho_A Coefficient
Resource-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations	0.953	0.954	0.958	0.606

The quality of the resource-oriented thinking construct for newsrooms in media organizations is evaluated using the CV.COM criterion, and given the positive value of this index, it is assessed as appropriate.

Table 15. Convergent Validity and Quality of the Resource-Oriented Thinking Construct for Newsrooms in Media Organizations

	SSO	SSE	CV.COM
Resource-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations	2,280	1,094.052	0.520

None of the concepts related to resource-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations have high correlations with one another, because all VIF values are below the permissible threshold of 5. This indicates that the regression model developed to analyze “resource-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” has appropriate statistical stability and that its results can be trusted.

Furthermore, the results of the significance test of the outer weights related to the components of the “resource-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” model show that the weights of the resource-oriented thinking concepts for newsrooms in media organizations are statistically significant. This level of significance indicates that the concepts used for resource-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations explain a substantial proportion of its variance. In other words, these indicators act as valid and strong criteria for measuring the construct of “resource-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” and have good capacity to account for its variation. This finding strengthens the validity of the conceptual model of “resource-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations.”

Table 16. VIF Results and Significance Test of Outer Weights of the Concepts in the “Resource-Oriented Thinking for Newsrooms in Media Organizations” Model

Category	Concept	Code	Outer Weight	Standard Error	T-Statistic	P-Value	VIF
Resource-oriented thinking	Cost for resources	S3P1	0.088	0.005	19.462	0.000	2.652
	Human resources	S3P2	0.088	0.005	18.426	0.000	2.425
	Wasting resources by economizing on the cost of valid resources	S3P3	0.089	0.005	18.158	0.000	3.222
	Active and educated human resources	S3P4	0.089	0.005	17.954	0.000	2.158
	Balance in saving resources	S3P5	0.080	0.005	16.668	0.000	2.670
	Planned expenditure	S3P6	0.080	0.005	17.221	0.000	2.625
	Expenditure in unnecessary areas	S3P7	0.085	0.005	17.672	0.000	2.916
	Financial credits	S3P8	0.083	0.005	17.292	0.000	3.473
	Saving without reducing content quality	S3P9	0.089	0.005	18.349	0.000	3.297
	Eliminating paper in news dissemination	S3P10	0.083	0.005	15.900	0.000	2.856
	Focus on websites and virtual media	S3P11	0.095	0.004	21.868	0.000	2.163
	Content quality	S3P12	0.086	0.005	18.140	0.000	2.327
	Not sacrificing content quality for cost savings	S3P13	0.081	0.005	16.411	0.000	2.753
	Waste of capital	S3P14	0.077	0.006	13.097	0.000	2.771
	Separating the reporter role from the employee role	S3P15	0.089	0.005	18.655	0.000	2.888

Since the concepts related to the resource-oriented thinking construct for newsrooms in media organizations measure it positively and significantly, and possess convergent validity and appropriate reliability as well as acceptable quality, and since all their outer weights are significant and they do not have high correlations with one another, it can be concluded that these concepts related to the “resource-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” category have been correctly selected and are well capable of measuring it.

Identification of the Strategic Thinking Model for Newsrooms in Media Organizations
After identifying the indigenous indicators of vision-oriented thinking, improvisational thinking, time-oriented

thinking, and resource-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations and ensuring the confirmatory validity, convergent validity, reliability, and adequate quality of these constructs as categories of strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations, they were evaluated for the purpose of proposing an overall appropriate model. To examine the relationship between the criteria of a construct and its sub-criteria, as well as to compare the strength of this relationship with the relationship of that criterion to other criteria, the heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) was used. The HTMT matrix is presented for the constructs of the “strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” model. Based on the results of this table, in this model, each construct or criterion has a much stronger relationship with its own sub-criteria compared to its relationship with other constructs. This result arises from the fact that the HTMT values for the relationships between constructs are all below 0.90. This finding indicates that the constructs of the strategic thinking model for newsrooms in media organizations are well distinguished from each other and that the model has acceptable discriminant validity. In other words, each construct is specifically explained by its own sub-criteria and not by other constructs.

Table 17. HTMT Index Values for the Constructs of the “Strategic Thinking for Newsrooms in Media Organizations” Model

	1	2	3	4
1 Improvisational thinking				
2 Time-oriented thinking	0.557			
3 Resource-oriented thinking	0.671	0.783		
4 Vision-oriented thinking	0.563	0.844	0.777	

To assess the extent of distinction and separation between constructs, in addition to the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) index, the Fornell–Larcker matrix was also used. In the Fornell–Larcker matrix, it is observed that the square root of the AVE of each variable is greater than its correlations with other variables, which are located in the cells below and to the right of the main diagonal. Therefore, in the strategic thinking model for newsrooms in media organizations, the constructs interact more strongly with their own indicators than with other constructs, and this confirms the appropriate discriminant validity of the model.

Table 18. Fornell–Larcker Matrix for the Constructs of the “Strategic Thinking for Newsrooms in Media Organizations” Model

	1	2	3	4
1 Improvisational thinking	0.739			
2 Time-oriented thinking	0.544	0.727		
3 Resource-oriented thinking	0.665	0.711	0.778	
4 Vision-oriented thinking	0.549	0.671	0.705	0.714

Next, the goodness of fit of the constructs of the “strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” model is assessed using the redundancy index, the coefficient of determination, the effect size of the endogenous constructs, and the overall goodness of fit (GOF) index. The redundancy index (CV.RED) is recognized as one of the best-known indices for evaluating the quality of structural models, and positive values of this index indicate high predictive power of the model. The analysis shows that all identified categories of strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations are confirmed in terms of the CV.RED index.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) measures the impact that exogenous variables have on endogenous variables and is considered the main criterion for evaluating latent endogenous variables in the confirmatory path model. Values of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 are respectively regarded as weak, moderate, and strong benchmarks for

R². The R² index for most of the constructs—vision-oriented thinking, improvisational thinking, time-oriented thinking, and resource-oriented thinking for newsrooms in media organizations—is at a substantial level.

Effect size is a metric that measures the extent of the influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable. In regression analyses and structural equation modeling, effect size shows how much the estimates of the dependent variables change if an independent variable is removed from the model. According to Cohen's classification (1988), values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are interpreted as small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively. It is observed that vision-oriented thinking, improvisational thinking, time-oriented thinking, and resource-oriented thinking have substantial effect sizes on strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations.

The overall quality of the “strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” model is determined by the model goodness-of-fit index, and values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 describe weak, moderate, and strong levels of goodness of fit, respectively. The reported results indicate that the overall quality of the “strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” model (0.644) is evaluated as strong according to the goodness-of-fit index.

Table 19. Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Constructs and Overall Model of “Strategic Thinking for Newsrooms in Media Organizations”

Construct (component)	CV.RED	R ²	Level	F ²	Level	GOF
Improvisational thinking	0.340	0.706	Substantial	2.398	Substantial	0.644
Time-oriented thinking	0.368	0.762	Substantial	3.206	Substantial	
Resource-oriented thinking	0.450	0.804	Substantial	4.101	Substantial	
Vision-oriented thinking	0.354	0.757	Substantial	3.109	Substantial	

Based on the results of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), all fit indices of the structural model for vision-oriented thinking, improvisational thinking, time-oriented thinking, and resource-oriented thinking show acceptable values, which indicates the desirable quality of the “strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” model. In addition, the results of the estimated path coefficients and their significance tests show that all four path coefficients related to the categories of vision-oriented thinking, improvisational thinking, time-oriented thinking, and resource-oriented thinking are positive and statistically significant ($P < 0.05$ and $T > 1.96$). These findings indicate that the mentioned categories have been correctly included in the model and are components of “strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations.” Given the appropriate fit of the model and the significance of the path coefficients, there is no need to modify the “strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations” model. The T-statistics corresponding to the significance tests of the path coefficients are depicted in the results. In summary, the findings of these analyses confirm the validity of the proposed model and show that this model is well capable of explaining “strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations.”

Table 20. Estimated Path Coefficients of the “Strategic Thinking for Newsrooms in Media Organizations” Model and Significance Test

Path	Standardized Coefficient	Standard Error	T-Statistic	P-Value
Strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations → Improvisational thinking	0.840	0.023	37.228	0.000
Strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations → Time-oriented thinking	0.873	0.026	33.871	0.000
Strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations → Resource-oriented thinking	0.897	0.017	51.445	0.000
Strategic thinking for newsrooms in media organizations → Vision-oriented thinking	0.870	0.023	37.771	0.000

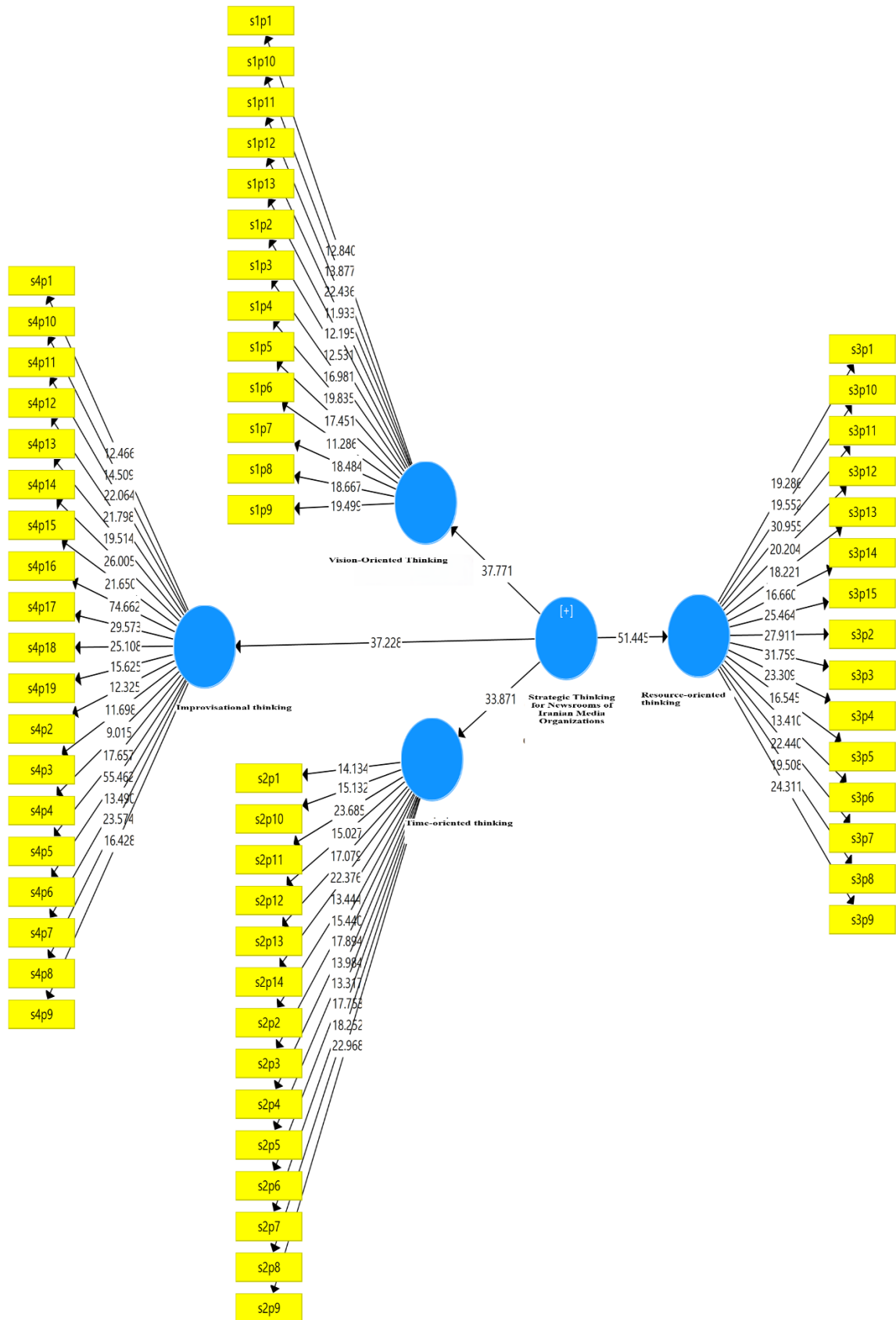


Figure 1. "Strategic Thinking for Newsrooms in Media Organizations" Model in the Significant Coefficient State

The results of the Friedman test for the overall indicators of the strategic thinking categories for newsrooms in media organizations are presented, and overall, these results show that among the concepts examined, “content quality” (S3P12) in the “resource-oriented thinking” category, with a mean rank of 36.600, has the highest priority. In the next ranks, “waste of capital” (S3P14) and “human resources” (S3P2) appear, both of which belong to the “resource-oriented thinking” category. This indicates that the main focus of the individuals studied is on the operational and managerial aspects of strategic thinking in media organizations. Concepts such as “publishing news contrary to personal views if beneficial” (S4P16), with a priority rank of 61, and “alignment with circumstances and performing duty in crisis conditions” (S4P8), with a rank of 60, show that some aspects of improvisation—particularly those associated with personal interests or lack of flexibility—have low priority.

Table 21. Friedman Test Results for the Overall Prioritization of Indicators of the Strategic Thinking Categories for Newsrooms in Media Organizations

	Category	Concept	Code	Mean Rank	Priority	
Strategic thinking	Vision-oriented thinking	Media independence	S1P1	28.630	48	
		Goal setter	S1P2	34.330	12	
		Hope	S1P3	33.720	18	
		Broad objective	S1P4	34.700	9	
		Clear vision	S1P5	34.250	13	
		Accurate and proper programs	S1P6	31.590	31	
		Foresight	S1P7	29.820	41	
		Enlightenment	S1P8	30.760	37	
		Freedom of action	S1P9	31.220	34	
		Final decision by senior managers	S1P10	32.040	30	
		Horizon of activity	S1P11	31.290	33	
		Optimism	S1P12	33.510	21	
		Time-oriented thinking	Restoring government–people relations	S1P13	32.320	28
	Hasty and thoughtless		S2P1	33.210	26	
	Scheduling timely task delivery		S2P2	32.200	29	
	Encouragement for timely task execution		S2P3	33.490	22	
	Teamwork between managers and staff		S2P4	31.390	32	
	Attempt to be the first to publish the news		S2P5	33.960	17	
	Waiting for news from websites		S2P6	31.110	35	
	Hasty and influenced by crisis conditions		S2P7	34.240	14	
	Proactive and collaborative performance		S2P8	35.860	3	
	Speed		S2P9	28.270	49	
	Being dynamic		S2P10	28.690	47	
	Encouragement for dynamism		S2P11	28.850	45	
	Ensuring the accuracy of news		S2P12	29.480	42	
	Timely delivery of work		S2P13	32.670	27	
	Staying away from commotion		S2P14	33.310	24	
	Resource-oriented thinking		Cost for resources	S3P1	29.910	39
			Human resources	S3P2	35.570	5
		Wasting resources by economizing on the cost of valid resources	S3P3	35.320	6	
		Active and educated human resources	S3P4	33.220	25	
		Balance in saving resources	S3P5	29.090	44	
Planned expenditure		S3P6	34.410	10		
Expenditure in unnecessary areas		S3P7	34.180	15		
Financial credits		S3P8	33.620	20		
Saving without reducing content quality		S3P9	33.640	19		
Eliminating paper in news dissemination		S3P10	34.400	11		
Focus on websites and virtual media		S3P11	33.970	16		
Content quality		S3P12	36.600	1		

Improvisational thinking	Not sacrificing content quality for cost savings	S3P13	33.480	23
	Waste of capital	S3P14	35.890	2
	Separating the reporter role from the employee role	S3P15	35.830	4
	One-time decision-making	S4P1	35.090	7
	Non-publication of news contrary to the manager's view	S4P2	31.060	36
	Policy line	S4P3	30.020	38
	Examining short-term effects in crisis conditions	S4P4	26.230	52
	Publishing news in favor of the media	S4P5	25.500	55
	Ensuring the accuracy of news in crisis conditions	S4P6	29.830	40
	Fighting to defend personal rights in crisis conditions	S4P7	34.880	8
	Alignment with circumstances and performing duty in crisis conditions	S4P8	24.310	60
	Changing managers	S4P9	24.900	58
	Rational behavior in crisis conditions	S4P10	29.260	43
	Highlighting news in line with personal views	S4P11	26.610	51
	Controlling conditions in crisis	S4P12	25.660	54
	Priority of media policy	S4P13	28.740	46
	Fact-checking in crisis conditions	S4P14	26.130	53
	Finding the primary source of the news and being aware of all its content in crisis conditions	S4P15	26.640	50
	Publishing news contrary to personal views if beneficial	S4P16	17.300	61
Considering the views of senior managers in crisis conditions	S4P17	24.960	57	
Ignoring commotion in crisis conditions	S4P18	25.100	56	
More deliberation in crisis conditions	S4P19	24.740	59	

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify and prioritize indigenous indicators of strategic thinking for newsroom operations in Iranian media organizations, focusing on four central dimensions: vision-oriented thinking, time-oriented thinking, resource-oriented thinking, and improvisational thinking. The results of the quantitative analysis—supported by factor loadings, reliability indices, model fit indices, and Friedman rankings—revealed that strategic thinking in Iranian newsrooms is a multi-layered construct in which resource-oriented indicators overwhelmingly carry the highest organizational priority, followed by improvisational and vision-oriented indicators, with selected time-oriented indicators also demonstrating meaningful influence. The qualitative findings further confirmed these patterns, showing strong alignment between empirical results and lived newsroom experiences. These results reflect broader patterns identified in international media-management research, where a combination of foresight, operational discipline, and adaptive decision-making has become essential for effective editorial leadership (1, 2).

One of the most striking findings of the study is the predominance of resource-oriented thinking, especially the high prioritization of *content quality*, *waste of capital*, and *human resources*. This outcome suggests that Iranian news organizations—like their global counterparts—consider strategic management of resources as the backbone of sustainable newsroom operations. The centrality of content quality aligns with prior studies emphasizing the strategic role of editorial output as the primary determinant of competitive positioning and audience trust (3). Moreover, the prioritization of resource stewardship corresponds with findings in Iranian media research, where financial constraints, outdated infrastructure, and limited technological investment have placed substantial pressure on managers to optimize resource allocation (12, 13). The emphasis on human resources further echoes longstanding arguments in media-management scholarship, which conceptualize journalists and editors as the organization's intellectual capital, whose expertise directly fuels organizational reputation and public value creation (15). Thus, the strong weight placed on resource-oriented indicators in this study is not only consistent with previous

findings but reinforces the idea that resource optimization is a foundational dimension of strategic thinking in media institutions.

The results also revealed that improvisational thinking, especially indicators related to crisis response, rapid decision-making, and adaptive behavior, is a vital component of strategic thinking in Iranian newsrooms. Indicators such as *one-time decision-making*, *fighting for personal rights in crisis*, and *controlling conditions in crisis* received relatively high priority ratings. This supports earlier qualitative findings showing that modern newsrooms operate in unpredictable and high-pressure environments requiring managers to make swift, context-sensitive decisions (16). The growing volatility in the media environment—driven by digital misinformation, audience fragmentation, political pressures, and technological acceleration—demands that editorial leaders exhibit improvisational agility consistent with models of strategic responsiveness noted in the global literature (6). Improvisation also plays an important role in managing high-stakes editorial challenges where immediate decisions shape newsroom credibility and public perception. This connection mirrors the insights of scenario planning scholars who argue that organizations must be capable of integrating improvisation with long-term strategy to maintain stability and adaptability (7). Overall, the study's findings confirm that improvisation is not a departure from strategic thinking but a complementary and essential dimension of it.

A third major dimension—vision-oriented thinking—also demonstrated strong internal reliability and conceptual validity, although in the final ranking many vision-related indicators exhibited medium-level priority. Indicators such as *broad objectives*, *goal setting*, and *clear vision* scored relatively high, confirming the importance of long-term orientation in sustaining structural and editorial coherence. The qualitative portion likewise emphasized that ambiguity of vision weakens team cohesion and strategic direction. These observations are consistent with prior Iranian studies showing that editorial teams without clear strategic vision struggle to maintain consistency in content quality, mission clarity, and ethical standards (10). The results also align with international research highlighting that visioning helps anchor organizational purpose, guides human resource efforts, and shapes strategic alignment in high-pressure professional fields such as journalism (11, 18). While not prioritized as highly as resource stewardship, visioning nonetheless remains a crucial element of newsroom strategy capable of influencing long-term performance and organizational resilience.

The findings related to time-oriented thinking present a nuanced picture. While indicators such as *proactive and collaborative performance* and *attempt to be the first news publisher* ranked highly, other time-related indicators such as *speed*, *dynamism*, and *staying away from commotion* ranked lower. These mixed results may be interpreted through the tension between speed and accuracy that characterizes contemporary journalism. As previous literature emphasizes, newsroom managers must balance the imperative of timeliness with editorial responsibility, particularly in crisis conditions where rushed decisions may compromise accuracy and credibility (5). The study's findings correspond strongly with research showing that Iranian media organizations—often operating under political and social sensitivity—prioritize caution and verification over pure speed, especially where reputational risk is substantial (4, 14). This helps explain why indicators related to accuracy and verification tended to receive moderate-to-high prioritization, while those associated with impulsiveness and reactionary behavior ranked lower. These patterns reinforce the argument that time-oriented thinking in Iranian newsrooms embodies not only temporal responsiveness but also strategic restraint.

Another significant insight from the structural model analysis is that all four components—visioning, time-thinking, resource-thinking, and improvisation—demonstrated high explanatory power and strong discriminant validity,

confirming that they represent distinct yet interconnected dimensions of strategic thinking. The high composite reliability and AVE values support the robustness of the model and align with methodological guidelines on instrument validity in social sciences (20). The strong and significant path coefficients also validate theoretical arguments that strategic thinking in organizational settings is a multidimensional construct that integrates analytical, creative, operational, and reflective processes (8). These findings provide further evidence that Iranian newsrooms engage in strategic cognition in ways that reflect broader global understandings of strategic thinking while also incorporating context-specific indicators tied to environmental uncertainty, resource limitations, and media-system constraints.

From a comparative standpoint, the study's findings resonate with the global literature that argues for the centrality of strategic thinking in managing contemporary newsroom complexities. International research asserts that strategic thinking enhances innovation, improves decision-making under uncertainty, and strengthens organizational adaptability across the media sector (2). The empirical results from this study, especially in terms of improvisation and resource allocation, reinforce these claims and demonstrate that Iranian media organizations face similar challenges to those documented in other regions, albeit shaped by local institutional and cultural conditions. At the same time, the emphasis on operational indicators such as content quality and resource efficiency reflects localized managerial realities in Iran's media system, where economic constraints, regulatory pressures, and technological gaps shape strategic imperatives (9). The integration of such indigenous indicators enriches the scholarly understanding of how strategic thinking manifests in non-Western media contexts and offers a valuable contribution to comparative media-management literature.

Finally, this study expands on theoretical perspectives by articulating a comprehensive model that encapsulates both the cognitive and operational dimensions of strategic thinking. By grounding the model in empirical data from Iranian newsroom practitioners, the study advances the argument that strategic thinking is not merely an abstract organizational ideal but a daily practical necessity embedded in decision-making, workflow coordination, crisis response, and long-term planning. These results strongly support earlier conceptual frameworks suggesting that strategy in media organizations is most effective when both foresight and adaptability are integrated into managerial cognition (6, 19). Thus, the findings of this study reinforce the need for continuous development of strategic capabilities in newsrooms as a means of enhancing resilience, sustaining credibility, and fostering innovation.

This study, despite its contributions, has several limitations. First, the sample size—though adequate for PLS-SEM analysis—was relatively small and based on purposive sampling, limiting statistical generalizability. Second, the study was conducted exclusively within Iranian media organizations, which means the findings may not fully reflect strategic thinking patterns in other cultural or regulatory contexts. Third, because the research relied on self-reported data and interviews, responses may have been influenced by social desirability or professional bias. Fourth, while the study identified and measured strategic thinking indicators, it did not assess long-term organizational performance outcomes or causal effects, which would require longitudinal data. Finally, the model focused primarily on cognitive and operational dimensions, leaving out potential external variables such as political pressures, ownership structures, or digital infrastructure constraints that may profoundly shape strategic thinking in newsrooms.

Future studies may expand this work by employing larger and more diverse samples, including private, public, and international media organizations. Comparative research across countries or media systems could help illuminate the cultural contingencies of strategic thinking in journalism. Longitudinal designs would provide insights

into how strategic thinking evolves over time or in response to major crises. Future research might also integrate technological, political, and organizational factors into the model to capture external influences on strategic cognition. Experimental or intervention-based studies could evaluate the effectiveness of strategic-thinking training programs for media professionals. Finally, exploring the link between strategic thinking and measurable newsroom performance outcomes such as audience engagement, accuracy rates, or digital innovation would provide valuable practical insights.

Newsroom managers should prioritize strengthening content quality and resource efficiency, as these emerged as the top strategic priorities. Training programs should focus on developing improvisational skills for crisis situations, enabling managers to balance rapid decision-making with accuracy. Organizations may benefit from articulating clearer long-term visions to enhance team alignment and morale. Developing internal systems that support time management—such as workflow automation, clearer deadline structures, and enhanced editorial coordination—can improve performance while reducing stress. Finally, adopting structured strategic-thinking workshops, scenario planning exercises, and cross-team collaboration initiatives can help institutionalize strategic thinking across the editorial workforce.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who helped us carrying out this study.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

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