

# Rethinking the social relevance of mass communication in the era of digital communication

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In recent times, there has been a remarkable change in the world regarding how news and information are circulated through digital technologies. This article assessed the social relevance of mass communication in the digital communication era. This study was anchored on the technological determinism theory. A survey research design was adopted for data collection. A sample size of 385 was drawn at random from the population of 3,267,837. It was found that (66.8%) respondents said that mass communication is efficient in the digital communication era, (48.8%) respondents said that mass communication is effective because of their news localization in this digital communication era, (66.8%) respondents maintained that digital communication has influence in news reporting because of its global reach in this digital communication era, (27.6%) respondents said that mass communication has the pace for wide reach in this digital communication era, and (26.3%) respondents, which is the majority, said that digital technologies aid mass communication to carry out investigations in this digital communication era. Some of the recommendations are: Journalists should always be abreast of news events in society and not report stale news. Journalists should also get breaking news from social media and other digital or virtual-enabled platforms and carry out investigations for more details before reporting the news. Media houses should strive to employ staff with more skills on how to explore virtual or digital technologies to enable them to be updated with events.

**Keywords:** rethinking, social relevance, mass communication, era, digital communication

## Introduction

Mass communication is a major social force that shapes modern individuals' social personalities and makes them predictable participants in the discourse of a capitalist society.

Mass communication creates a working reality that establishes relationships between individuals and events. It has increased perspectives in the world as a factor in social and political realities. Additionally, as a media practice, mass communication incorporates socio-political and economic motivations that redefine its conventional function in a democratic society (1).

For access to information about the world and themselves, people need the mass media. The ever-increasing numbers

of television channels now enable the media to spread their message across a variety of platforms and increase exponentially their ability to reach more people than ever before (2). The Internet creates many challenges for mass media because mass media are carefully thought of as "spoon-fed" sources of information, a one-way conversation where some media outlets or publishers say, "Here you go," "This is it" (3).

With the development of virtual realities, mainstream communication is being undermined. Mass communication sets the parameters of societal knowledge and determines reality. For more than a century, analogue technologies have shaped audience skills. The vertical communication approach (from one point out to many points), which

created a receptive mass audience, characterized the pre-digital period (4).

What distinguishes those days from the digital era? Interactivity, momentariness, mass authorship, shrinking physical locations, and cost-cutting are the characteristics listed by Josephe (5). Images today contribute to the construction of reality and impose expectations based on ideologies (6).

There are myriad ways in which digital technologies have impacted on the practice of journalism, from the way reporters gather information and present news stories to how news organizations structure themselves and do business. Digital technologies have expanded quickly, permeating society with new formats and possibilities of communication (7). Advertisers and viewers both need to support media sites that publish high-quality content.

Although some of messages on digital technology always appear realistic on the surface due to the structure of the information and the related story sources, findings exposed some elements of disinformation from them (8). Anyone can create a website, Facebook page, blog, or Twitter account and begin creating and circulating contents. We have experienced a change from a total centralized system with only a few active information producers to a highly decentralized system with massive producers of information. This great number of information producers makes it very difficult to differentiate the truth from false information (i.e., information pollution) (9).

Governments, independent agencies, and technology companies should work together not only to combat the fake news industry but also to promote media organizations or audience communities that create high-quality content, do in-depth research, and offer correct data and facts. To survive and defeat the fake news tsunami, healthy journalism should be encouraged (3). Digital media literacy and developing skills to critically evaluate information are essential skills for anyone navigating the internet (10).

The vast amount of information available online and the rise of fake political news highlight the need for critical thinking (11). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the users' acts of verification in spotting and curbing fake news on social media. A revolution in communication is currently underway.

The widespread use of fiber optic cables, satellites, and wireless technologies contributed to the constant and significant gains in telecommunications bandwidth, which made it easier and less expensive to distribute information internationally and interact instantly across great distances. In the mid-to-late 1990s, new technologies and the excitement they inspired about their economic and social potential sparked an incredibly dynamic period of innovation, investment, and growth (12).

Mass communication and technology have always sort of competed. This is because the mass media have a way of incorporating new forms of technology into

common mass communication activities. New forums and opportunities have been opened by various technologies for the field of mass communication, and they are constantly developing (13).

Social networks, with their extensive selection of blogs and portals, which have a high degree of subjectivism in their approaches and contents and tremendous permeability within journalistic genres, are another source of pressure. The employment of increasingly integrated technologies, which is now apparent, will bring about yet another significant development in the future, leading to the eventual usage of the same pieces of equipment by journalists for all tasks because they have a lot of work to do (14).

However, the public at large has access to the new multimedia technologies, and many people are currently working in news production for both traditional media outlets and the recently established online media outlets. In this setting, the future of mass media presents itself with a provocative and difficult appearance. An important point must be emphasized regarding the opportunity provided by digital media, which translates into the speed at which signals are transmitted and the creation of connections between people in large or small communities who are driven by interests (14).

A brand-new digital communication technology is now available. This can work like voice, video, and data collide and create a new basket of digital multimedia, and interactive communication technologies, an electronic superhighway is starting to encircle the world. The media, telecommunications, and information technology sectors around the world are going through a period of dramatic transformation that is unprecedented.

Globalization, market liberalization, and significant technological advancements have all contributed to the digital revolution (1). Thus, mass communication seems to be losing relevance in society.

## Statement of problem

Mass communication is a powerful social force that directs modern individuals' social personalities and makes people reasonable individuals, especially in a capitalistic economy. It creates a trusted reality that enhances connections among people and events. Mass communication has created great impacts in the whole world as the major factor for socio-economic and political development. The Internet created many adjustments to mass communication because mass communication is carefully thought of as "spoon-fed" information, a one-way conversation where some media outlets or publishers say, "Here you go," This is it."

However, mass communication has experienced a great revolution with the arrival of digital technologies in recent times. This is because digital technologies have developed different types of virtual platforms for

human communications, reducing the value of mass communication. Mass communication and technology have always been in constant competition.

The employment of increasingly integrated technologies, which are now apparent, will bring about yet another significant development in the future, leading to the eventual usage of the same pieces of equipment by journalists for all tasks. Formerly, people gained access to global information through the mass media. With the development of digital technologies, the mainstream of communication is being undercut, especially among youth across the globe.

In this regard, the future of mass communication stands in a pitiable but difficult situation. It should be believed that technological development in the digital technology and the growing transmission efficiencies are speedily accelerating with time. This is likely going to kick mass communication out of practice. Thus, the nexus of this study is to ascertain the social relevance of mass communication in the era of digital communication.

## Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Determine the efficiency of mass communication in the era of digital communication
2. Ascertain the influence of digital communication in news reporting in the era of digital communication
3. Find out the pace of mass communication in the era of digital communication

## Literature review

The goal of the mass media is to communicate with a large audience through a variety of media. Different technologies are used for this communication. Radio, recorded music, movies, and television are examples of broadcast media that electronically communicate their contents.

Print media provide information using tangible items, such as a book, magazine, newspaper, pamphlet, or comic book. Billboards, signs, and placards posted within and outside of commercial buildings, sporting venues, retail establishments, and buses are examples of outdoor media. Blimps, skywriting, and flying billboards are examples of additional outdoor media (15). Mbachu (16) asserts that technology has always been necessary for mass communication to increase its influence and reach from prehistoric to modern civilizations, with the history of mass communication being one of changes brought about by advancements in technology (17).

The relationship between corporations, people, and society at large has changed over time because of an

ever-evolving and diverse technical system. Aside from the conventional communication methods still in use, technology advancement has made a variety of other mechanisms indispensable in our daily lives. For brands interacting with their target audiences, this transition has taken center stage.

With the power of the Internet and social media, different facets of advertising also exist in addition to the use of conventional communication tools like television, radio, and print media. These include mobile advertising, location-based services, advergames, blogs, online content, viral advertising, and virtual reality (18). What has changed recently in terms of social media and new media?

The surroundings were almost unrecognizable after more than a decade. Initially, mobile phones changed the way we communicated, followed by laptops, wireless technology, and tablets. The living room or bedroom television (TV), the office computer, and the study computer all made way for the newcomers. It was a fresh take on convergence that altered both the public and private spheres, especially with the integration that social media provided (14).

Continued dramatic improvements in computer memory and processing speed per unit of cost led to steady increase in affordability and ubiquity of computers. Computer affordability and ubiquity increased steadily because of ongoing, substantial advances in memory and processing performance per unit of cost. It became more and more feasible and desirable to record and preserve information, entertainment, and other types of important information and contents in digital forms, because of advancements in storage technology. This has made it simpler to reuse, repurpose, manipulate, and mix these contents anywhere, at any time, for the user's specified objectives, using a variety of electronic techniques (12).

People may now create content much more actively thanks to digital media. Anyone with access to computers and the Internet can use social media, add their own contents to the Internet (including writing, art, videos, photography, and commentary), and do business online (19). A democratization of content creation as well as the emergence of new forms of content, such as blogs, memes, and video essays, have resulted from the drastic decrease in the costs associated with producing and disseminating materials.

In the digital age, change happens at an extraordinarily fast rate. In the first decades of the twenty-first century, the following innovations and their associated products emerged and gained popularity: high-speed and mobile Internet, blogs, podcasts, really simple syndication (RSS), Google News engines, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, iTunes, mobile phone apps, touchscreens, high-definition (HD), three-dimension (3D), wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi), global positioning system (GPS), iPod, iPad, iPhone, smartphones, tablets, e-readers, Internet TV, and image storage. These platforms of

technologies for transmitting information changed the world quickly (4).

Traditional media's communication and identity issues, the audience's growing professionalism in communication, and their growing capacity to produce original materials demassify the media or have replaced the mass media with a mass of media. The Internet made it easier for businesses to disseminate materials; newspapers cannot match the speed at which Internet news outlets publish their stories (19). The most recent information is readily available online, but one can also read various publications in mass media to get a better understanding and consider various viewpoints.

Not only has the Internet allowed consumers to contribute to the news, but it also allows them to personalize their news experience. The customers do not have to buy a whole newspaper to read the selected number of articles that interest them. Now they can go online and skip the other articles and the payment (19).

As digital convergence continues to have an impact on the format, contents, and operations of the media, the production and consumption of conventional forms of mass media will be put to the test. Due to the increasingly dispersed nature of their audiences, traditional media are continuously striving to adapt their business models to the current digital environment. By allowing contents to instantly flow live to the World Wide Web, digital networking has significantly expanded reach beyond a local audience.

Live blogs and news feeds make it possible to regularly update the contents and add new articles and comments. While these features of new media and social media networks have greatly aided mass media, they have also tremendously benefited consumers and changed the connection and power dynamics between media producers and their audience members (20).

## Theoretical framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is Technological Determinism Theory by Thorstein (21). This study is based on the idea that the use of technology in any given culture determines what that society looks like. A society's culture is said to be driven by technology, which also shapes the path of its history.

According to Karl Max, when technology advances, different modes of production emerge in that society, which in turn affect its cultural, political, and economic facets and inevitably transform the society. He explained the gradual transformation of a feudal society using a hand mill, which later resulted in an industrial capitalist society with the invention of the steam mill, to illustrate this point. There is a belief that says technology affects the decisions we make, and that a changing society can be linked to a changed technology.

Different levels of technological determinism show themselves. When modern technologies are first introduced, different changes are brought about, and occasionally these changes can also result in the loss of prior practices. For instance, the spread of more modern agricultural tools and techniques has resulted in a progressive loss of understanding of conventional farming techniques. As a result, technology also has an impact on a society's degree of knowledge.

## Examples of technological determinism

Numerous instances from history provide justification for the idea that technology shapes the society in which we live. The invention of the gun altered how disagreements were resolved and altered how warfare looked. A gun could be successfully used with the least amount of effort and expertise and from a safe distance.

This resulted in a significant change in the types of weaponry employed in warfare when compared to prior conflicts fought with swords and archers. Future battles will be fought with nuclear weapons, thanks to the discovery of nuclear energy today. Every new discovery results in a shift toward a new society. The invention of steam power contributed to the growth of industrial society, and the advent of computers ushered in the information age.

## Technological drift

Sometimes undesired or unanticipated repercussions and effects are also caused by technological changes. It is called "technological drift" when people begin to float more and more in a sea of unpredictably bad outcomes. Humans are not the slaves of technology; rather, they are made to conform to their technological surroundings, which make them the loyalists of technology.

## Technological determinism and media

Because new media are new technologies as well as extensions of existing media, they do have deterministic elements. The famous quote from Marshall McLuhan goes, "The medium is the message." This indicates that the method of communication has an impact on the recipient's psyche. The development of the Internet, social media, and online capabilities have all demonstrated how the information and communication culture in the society in which we live is impacted by technological advancements.

## Research method

This study adopted a survey research design, and the data were generated through a questionnaire. Firstly, a simple random technique was used in selecting three local government areas from the existing three senatorial districts in Enugu State. This is to give every LGA the opportunity to be selected as part of the sample.

Out of 3,267,837 population of Enugu State, the sample of 385 respondents was selected. In Enugu East Senatorial District, the researcher selected Nkanu East LGA; in Enugu North Senatorial District, the researcher selected Nsukka LGA; and in Enugu West Senatorial District, Udi LGA was selected. However, Amagunze and Ama-Nkanu communities were further selected from Nkanu East LGA; Obukpa and Opi communities were selected from Nsukka LGA; and Ngwo-Asa and Ngwo-Uno communities were selected from Udi LGA.

Copies of the questionnaire were randomly administered, thus: Amagunze community: 64 copies; Ama-nkanu: 64; Obukpa: 65; Opi: 64; Ngwo-Asa: 64; and Ngwo-Uno: 64 copies. A simple random sampling technique was used in the selection to give every community a chance of being selected. In the end, 373 copies were retrieved, from which the data for this study were extracted.

## Data presentation and analysis

**Table 1** records that 247 (66.2%) respondents, which is the vast majority, answered that mass communication is efficient in this era of digital communication, 15 (4.0%) respondents reported that mass communication is inefficient in the era of digital communication, 31 (8.3%) ticked that mass communication is average in the era of digital communication, 35 (9.4%) of them believed that mass communication is adequate in this era of digital communication. However, 13 (3.5%) respondents maintained that mass communication is slack in this era of digital communication; 11 (2.9%) of the respondents said that mass communication is poor in this era of digital communication; 14 (3.8%) ticked that mass communication is remiss in this era of digital communication; and 7 (1.9%) of the respondents ticked that they can't say about the efficiency of mass communication in this era of digital communication.

**Table 2** depicts that 182 (48.8%) respondents, which is the majority, said that mass communication is effective because of their news localization in this era of digital communication; 31 (8.3%) respondents believed that mass communication is effective based on their language flexibility in this era of digital communication; 18 (4.8%) ticked that mass communication is effective in the area of editorial/commentary values in this era of digital communication; and 43 (11.5%) of them said that mass communication is effective looking at illiterate adaptation

**TABLE 1** | Efficiency of mass communication in the era of digital communication.

Variables	Frequencies	Percent
Efficient	247	66.2
Inefficient	15	4.0
Average	31	8.3
Adequate	35	9.4
Slack	13	3.5
Poor	11	2.9
Remiss	14	3.8
Can't say	7	1.9
Total	373	100

Source: Field survey.

**TABLE 2** | Effects of mass communication in the era of digital communication.

Variables	Frequencies	Percent
News localization	182	48.8
Language flexibility	31	8.3
Editorial/commentary values	18	4.8
Illiterate adaptation	43	11.5
Facts and figures	17	4.6
Concrete information	16	4.3
Entertainment for both kids and adults	52	13.9
Can't say	1	0.3
Total	373	100

Source: Field survey.

in this era of digital communication. However, 17 (4.6%) respondents ticked that mass communication is effective considering the facts and figures in news reports in this era of digital communication; 16 (4.3%) respondents expressed that mass communication is effective judging from their concrete information in this era of digital communication; 52 (13.9%) respondents said that mass communication is effective based on their entertainment for both kids and adults in this era of digital communication; and 1 (0.3%) of the respondents ticked that they can't say about the effectiveness of mass communication in this era of digital communication.

The data presented in **Table 3** depict that the majority of the respondents 173 (46.8%), said that digital communication has influence in news reporting because of its global reach in this era of digital communication. In contrast, 78 (20.9%) respondents maintained that digital communication has influence in news reporting based on its quick delivery in this era of digital communication. However, 6 (1.6%) reported that digital communication has enhanced news reporting in the area of quality stories in this era of digital communication; 55 (14.7%) respondents ticked that digital communication has influence in news reporting based on response-enabled activities; 52 (13.9%) of the respondents

**TABLE 3 |** Influence of digital communication in news reporting in the era of digital communication.

Variables	Frequencies	Percent
Global reach	173	46.4
Quick delivery	78	20.9
Detailed stories	6	1.6
Response-enabled	55	14.7
Interactivity	52	13.9
Picture and video presentations	4	1.1
Editing	3	0.8
Can't say	2	0.5
Total	373	100

Source: Field survey.

**TABLE 4 |** Weaknesses of digital communication.

Variables	Frequencies	Percent
Unedited stories	78	20.9
Unreliable sources	79	21.2
Lack of details	41	10.10
Unsuitable for illiterates and old age	40	10.7
Esthetic illusions	11	2.9
Fake news and gossips	59	15.8
Network challenges	64	17.2
Can't say	1	0.3
Total	373	100

Source: Field survey.

reacted that digital communication has influence in news reporting because of interactivity in this era of digital communication; further, four (1.1%) respondents said that digital communication has influenced news reporting based on their picture and video presentations, only three (0.8%) respondents were of the opinion that digital communication has influenced news reporting based on the level of editing in this era of digital communication, while an insignificant two (0.5%), ticked "can't say."

The data presented in **Table 4** depict that 78 (20.9%) of the respondents reported that digital communication has the weakness of reporting unedited stories; the slight majority of the respondents 79 (21.2%) reported that digital communication has the weakness of unreliable sources of information; 41 (10.1%) of them indicated that digital communication has weaknesses considering the lack of details in their reportage; 40 (10.7%) respondents said that digital communication has weaknesses, stating that their contents are unsuitable for illiterates and the elderly; 11 (2.9%) respondents were of the opinion that digital communication has weakness of esthetic illusions; 59 (15.8%) of the respondents maintained that digital communication has weaknesses in reporting fake news and gossip; 64 (17.2%) of them said that digital communication has

**TABLE 5 |** Pace of mass communication in the era of digital communication.

Variables	Frequencies	Percent
Wide reach	103	27.6
Quick reporting	66	17.7
Detailed stories	56	15.0
Response-enabled	3	0.8
Esthetic qualities	45	12.1
Investigations	63	16.9
Editing standard	36	9.7
Can't say	1	0.3
Total	373	100

Source: Field survey.

**TABLE 6 |** Digital technologies aiding mass communication in the era of digital communication.

Variables	Frequencies	Percent
Quick coverage	53	14.2
Quick transmission	63	16.9
Wide reach	51	13.7
Investigations	98	26.3
Information storage	48	12.9
Esthetic standard	21	5.6
Get in touch with news sources	32	8.6
Can't say	1	0.3
Total	373	100

Source: Field survey.

weaknesses because of network challenges; and only one (0.3%) respondent said, "I can't say."

The data presented in **Table 5** express that the majority of the respondents (103 or 27.6%) said that mass communication has the potential for wide reach in this era of digital communication; 66 (17.7%) respondents reported that mass communication has the pace for quick reporting in this era of digital communication; some of them 56 (15.0%) ticked that mass communication has the pace for detailing stories in this era of digital communication; a few of them 3 (0.8%) respondents said that mass communication has the pace for response enabled activities; 45 (12.1%) were of the opinion that mass communication has more esthetic qualities in this era of digital communication; 63 (16.9%) of the respondents believed that mass communication has the pace for carrying out investigations about their stories in this digital communication, 36 (9.7%) of them maintained that mass communication has the pace for editing stories to standard in this era of digital communication; and only insignificant 1 (0.3%) respondent said, "I can't say."

The data presented in **Table 6** portrays that some of the respondents (53 or 14.2%) believed that digital

technologies aid mass communication by providing quick coverage in this era of digital communication; 63 (16.9%) respondents reported that digital technologies aid mass communication by way of quick transmission in this era of digital communication; 51 (13.7%) respondents were of the opinion that digital technologies aid mass communication by reaching a wide audience in this era of digital communication; 98 (26.3%) respondents, which is the majority, said that digital technologies aid mass communication to carry out investigations in this era of digital communication; 48 (12.9%) respondents indicated that digital technologies aid mass communication by storing information in this era of digital communication; 21 (5.6%) respondents said that digital technologies aid mass communication on an esthetic level; 32 (8.6%) respondents maintained that digital technologies aid mass communication by providing a way to get in touch with news sources in this era of digital communication; and an insignificant 1 (0.3%) respondent said can't say much about digital technologies aiding mass communication in the era of digital communication.

## Discussion of findings

The data placed in **Table 1** state that (66.2%) respondents said that mass communication is efficient in the era of digital communication, (4.0%) respondents reported that mass communication is inefficient in the era of digital communication, (8.3%) reacted that mass communication is average in the era of digital communication, and (9.4%) of them expressed that mass communication is adequate in this era of digital communication. However, (3.5%) respondents maintained that mass communication is slack in this era of digital communication, (2.9%) of the respondents said that mass communication is poor in the era of digital communication, (3.8%) ticked that mass communication is remiss in this era of digital communication, whereas (1.9%) of the respondents ticked can't say about the efficiency of mass communication in this era of digital communication. This result shows that mass communication is efficient in this era of digital communication. This is in line with the view expressed by Zhiyuan et al. (2), which state that the ever-increasing numbers of TV channels now enable the media to spread their message across a variety of platforms and increase exponentially their ability to reach more people than ever before.

The data presented in **Table 2** depict that (48.8%) respondents said that mass communication is effective because of their localization of news in this era of digital communication; (8.3%) respondents were of the opinion that mass communication is effective looking at their language flexibility in this era of digital communication; (4.8%) respondents reported that mass communication is effective in the area of editorial/commentary values in this era of

digital communication; and (11.5%) respondents believed that mass communication is effective based on illiterate adaptation in this era of digital communication. However, (4.6%) of them said that mass communication is effective considering the facts and figures in news reports in this era of digital communication; (4.3%) respondents expressed that mass communication is effective judging from their concrete information in this era of digital communication; (13.9%) respondents said that mass communication is effective because of its entertainment for both kids and adults in this era of digital communication; and (0.3%) of the respondents ticked can't say.

The results that have been discussed so far imply that mass communication is effective in this era of digital communication. This agrees with Vineet (1), which avers that mass communication is a major social force that shapes modern individuals' social personalities and makes them predictable participants in the discourse of a capitalist society. Mass communication creates a working reality that establishes relationships between individuals and events.

It has increased perspectives in the world as a factor in social and political realities. Additionally, as a media practice, mass communication incorporates socio-political and economic motivations that redefine its conventional function in a democratic society. Mass communication sets the parameters for societal knowledge and determines reality (1).

The data presented in **Table 3** depict that 46.8% of respondents maintained that digital communication has influence in news reporting because of global reach in this era of digital communication; 20.9% of respondents said that digital communication has influenced news reporting because of its quick delivery in this era of digital communication; 1.6% of respondents reported that digital communication has influenced news reporting in the area of quality stories in this era of digital communication; 14.7% of respondents indicated that digital communication has influence in news reporting based on response-enabled activities; 13.9% of the respondents reacted that digital communication has influence in news reporting because of interactivity in this era of digital communication; a few of them (1.1%) ticked that digital communication has influence in news reporting looking at their picture and video presentations in this era of digital communication; 0.8% respondents were of the opinion that digital communication has influence in news reporting based on the level of editing in this era of digital communication; and an insignificant number of the respondents (0.5%) ticked can't say. Generally, these results reveal that digital communication has influenced news reporting in this era of digital communication.

The data recorded in **Table 3** portray that 20.9% of the respondents believed that digital communication

has a weakness in reporting unedited stories in this era of digital communication; 21.2% of them reported that digital communication has weaknesses because its sources of information are unreliable in this era of digital communication; 10.10% of them indicated that digital communication has weaknesses considering the lack of details in their reportage; 10.7% of them said that digital communication has weaknesses stating that their contents are unsuitable for illiterates and the elderly in this era of digital communication; 2.9% of them were of the view that digital communication has weakness of esthetic illusions in this era of digital communication; 15.8% of them maintained that digital communication has weaknesses in reporting fake news and gossip in this era of digital communication; 17.2% of them said that digital communication has weaknesses because of network challenges in this era of digital communication; and 0.3% respondent ticked can't say.

These results show that digital communication has some weaknesses that do not allow it to take over the duties of mass communication in this era of digital communication. This finding is in the same direction with the finding of Burkhardt (11), which maintains that the vast amount of information available online and the rise of fake political news highlights the need for critical thinking. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the users' acts of verification in spotting and curbing fake news on social media.

Also, Koblwe and Karimah (8) adduce that although some of the messages on digital technology always appear realistic on the surface due to the structure of the information and the related story sources, findings exposed some elements of disinformation from them.

The data presented in **Table 5** express that 27.6% of the respondents said that mass communication has the potential for wide reach in this era of digital communication; 17.7% of them reported that mass communication has the potential for quick reporting in this era of digital communication; some of them, (15.0%), ticked that mass communication has the potential for detailing stories in this era of digital communication; a few of them, (0.8%), said that mass communication has the potential for response-enabled activities; 12.1% of them were of the opinion that mass communication has more esthetic qualities in this era of digital communication; 16.9% of them believed that mass communication has the potential for carrying out investigations about their stories in this era of digital communication; 9.7% of them maintained that mass communication has the potential for editing stories to standard in this era of digital communication; and only an insignificant (0.3%) respondent said can't say.

These results depict that mass communication is relevant because of qualitative reports in this era of digital communication. These results are in the same direction as the assertion by Ifeanyi et al. (3), with the statement that "the Internet creates many challenges for mass media because

mass media is carefully thought of as a spoon-fed source of information, a one-way conversation where some media outlets or publishers say, "Here you go," "This is it."

The data recorded in **Table 6** portray that some of the respondents (14.2%) believed that digital technologies aid mass communication by the way of quick coverage in this era of digital communication; 16.9% of them reported that digital technologies aid mass communication by way of quick transmission in this era of digital communication; and 13.7% of them were of the opinion that digital technologies aid mass communication by reaching a wide audience in this era of digital communication. However, 26.3% of the respondents, which is the majority, said that digital technologies aid mass communication and carry out investigations in this era of digital communication; 12.9% of them indicated that digital technologies aid mass communication by storing information in this era of digital communication; 5.6% of them said that digital technologies aid mass communication on an esthetic level; 8.6% of them maintained that digital technologies aid mass communication by providing a way to get in touch with news sources easily in this era of digital communication; and an insignificant (0.3%) respondent said can't say much about digital technologies aiding mass communication in the era of digital communication.

These results indicate that digital technologies aid mass communication in different ways in this era of digital communication. It agrees with the expression by Alao (13), which avers that the mass media have a way of incorporating new forms of technology into common mass communication activities. New forums and opportunities have been opened by various technologies for the field of mass communication, and they are constantly developing.

Relatively, Vineet (7) adduces that there are myriad ways in which digital technologies have impacted on the practice of journalism, from the way reporters gather information and present news stories to how news organizations structure themselves and do business. Digital technologies have expanded quickly, permeating society with new formats and possibilities of communication.

## Conclusion

In line with the data gathered, this study has concluded that digital technologies help journalists carry out the functions of mass communication in this era of digital communication. Inasmuch as digital communication is trending, mass communication still draws strength from digital technologies to explore more opportunities in news gathering and reporting. Thus, the socio-relevance of mass communication in this era of digital communication is more formidable than ever before. This is because, with the aid of digital technologies, the media get the news



so easily and report it so easily, with much accuracy, facts, and figures.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. To maintain the values of mass communication in this era of digital communication, journalists should always be abreast of news events in society and not report stale news.
2. Journalists should also get breaking news from social media and other digital or virtual-enabled platforms and carry out investigations for more details before reporting the news.
3. Any news materials gotten on social media or digital platforms should be properly edited for public consumption.
4. Every media organization should have a virtual or digital platform where they can easily get breaking news.
5. Media houses should strive to employ staff with more skills on how to explore virtual or digital technologies to enable them to be updated with events.
6. Media outfits should employ more staff and place them on different beats to enable them to get first-hand information and cover events before they are reported on social media and the Internet.

## Author contributions

MN conceived, planned, gathered relevant materials, and wrote the research manuscript. AN contributed to structuring the manuscript, the methodology, and the organization of the manuscript. HG proofread the entire work for grammatical corrections.

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