

# The Impact of Digital Media on Mass Communication: A Mixed-method Study

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**Abstract.** This exploratory study investigates how digital media platforms have revolutionized mass communication in contemporary society. The research primarily analyzes the accelerated distribution of information and expanded reach afforded by digital technologies. It also examines the effects of interactivity and fragmented content on audience trust and involvement, drawing comparisons with traditional media like print journalism and television broadcasts. A survey was administered to 500 participants, with quantitative data analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, correlational analysis, and regression modeling were employed to uncover relationships between factors such as media habits, confidence in digital versus conventional outlets, and how interactivity impacts user engagement across platforms. The findings suggest that while digital formats have enhanced participation, notably through interactive components, they have simultaneously contributed to decreasing trust due to dispersed information and overabundance of content. Respondents frequently expressed doubt about the accuracy and reliability of online platforms, citing difficulties distinguishing verified reports from misinformation. This skepticism is less prevalent for traditional media, despite slower dissemination processes. These results highlight the challenges digital media present in preserving belief in content while maximizing involvement. The paper concludes by offering recommendations for producers and acknowledging needs for future work, particularly related to media literacy and how audiences critically evaluate digital materials.

**Keywords:** Digital Media; Mass Communication; Questionnaire; Statistical Analysis.

## 1. Introduction

Digital media has transformed the ways in which information is created, shared, and consumed. Platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and various online news outlets have supplanted the unidirectional paradigms of traditional communication mechanisms with interactive, user-driven models [1-2]. This shift has affected almost every single facet of mass communication. Information is now disseminated at markedly higher speeds, and users perceive it in entirely novel ways while interacting with the data and its producers [3-5]. In previous models of mass communication, the information followed a single path from production to consumption [6-9]. Newspapers, radio, and television would supply people with carefully curated amounts of data they could consume passively [10-11]. New platforms, however, have adopted an interactive, many-to-many form of communication. While potentially making information universally accessible, this model could be defined as fragmentary, as digital media allows low-quality and incomplete intermediates to travel at great speeds.

The paper's goal is to investigate two related aspects of the digital platform's interaction with mass communication. The first is whether interactivity facilitates the formation of audience trust. The distinguishing feature of digital media in this regard is unlike virtually all traditional media, it facilitates two-way communication. Users can provide direct feedback and engage in conversations while consuming the data. While in many respects beneficial, this feature also allows the audiences to be exposed to inaccurate or misleading information on the same platform as the reputable sources. How does this interaction affect the trust levels of the users and their interactions with the social media platforms themselves?

The second question explored by the paper is how widespread information fragmentation affects users' impressions of the material they consume. Social media, in particular, have been criticized for

encouraging brief, shallow engagement with the content over deep, reflective analysis of the issues. How does this phenomenon relate to user trust in the issue under examination and the platform providing the information, especially when compared to the more comprehensive content provided by traditional media? The goal is to conduct a survey of digital media users, analyze the results using SPSS, and gain insights into the relationship between the new media and their audiences.

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1. Research Design**

A survey was conducted quantitatively; a structured one was used to obtain the required information from users of both online and typical types of mass media. It was composed of 30 questions and divided into four sections: habits of application, types of media, trust of authors, and interactivity and trust for division of data.

The study sample was drawn from 500 people. The sample was drawn mainly from the social media, and email distribution or both. The centre of the study sample was heterogeneous and included different educational and professional backgrounds as the majority of the participants fit in the age group of 18 to 65. Given that the sample was diverse, the most appropriate form of sampling technique would be convenience sampling or non-probability sampling. The survey's sampling technique took place through the available social media platforms. Thus, as they helped in reaching the sample population, the survey was posted on social media and the participants enabled sending emails to the identified sample. This became an advantage to the study as the study was able to come up with a list of traditional and digital consumers. The survey was able to collect its information from people who have content through traditional or both traditional and digital, as the main strategy in the collection of data. It is estimated that sample participants were in the range of 400.

The survey questionnaire was made up of both closed and open-ended questions. The close-ended questionnaire designed in such a way it used a Likert scale, which ranged from Strongly disagree, 1, to Strongly agree, 5, to measure the trust of the participants on various media, the nature of the participants exposure and perception about the fragmentation information. The survey contained up to seven close-ended questions, targeting response found in the particular social media sites.

Data collection for the study continued for a period of two weeks. The online collection of data took place using survey monkey. This was through sending of emails to the participants, as well as posting the survey on all social media platforms. Prior to the real survey study, a pilot study involving at least 50 participants was conducted to test the reliability of the survey once used. At the end of completing the survey collection process, the process of reopening the participation process stops. The most important aspect of the opening of the survey given directions to the participants on the completion of the study.

### **2.2. Data Analysis**

After the collection of data to completion and downloading the data to SPSS for analysis. Initially, the data was collected using the SPSS with the use of codes for the participants spread across the two forms of data collection and later converted to excel. Various forms of statistical analysis were carried out; on the summary of the presented demographic information after the survey such as age, and the summary data presented on the time of use of media and the close and open closeness of the information and trust of the media as well as exposure to fragmentation. Correlation analysis was also carried out as well as the regression analysis of the data collected.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Descriptive Analysis

Analysis of the results in Table 1 started with the central tendency variable the data of the 500 respondents showed that 75% of the sample consumed their news from digital platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Only 20% preferred physical sources such as newspapers and TV s their primary new source. The statistics show a big preference towards digital media, similarly, current trends place digital media as the in media development.

**Table 1.** Results of Descriptive Analysis

Age Group	Digital Media Users (%)	Traditional Media Users (%)	Total Respondents (%)
18-34	85	10	100
35-49	65	30	100
50-65	40	45	100

It was observed from additional descriptive statistics that 85% of the young users, between the ages of 18-34, consumed their news from their social platforms while only 45% of the older respondents, from 50-65, consumed their news from newspapers and TVs.

#### 3.2. Correlation Analysis: Interactivity and Trust

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to see if there would be a correlation between interactivity and level of trust in the site in Table 2. The results showed a direct positive medium correlation;  $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . They imply that interactivity from the user supporting comments and likes to sharing the posts led to a direct good relationship with the platform.

**Table 2.** Results of Correlation Analysis

Metric	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p)
Interactivity	0.52	< 0.01
Trust in Digital Media	-0.34	< 0.05
Engagement Level	0.52	< 0.01

The betas imply that there was no causation by trust. In fact, 60% of the trailees interact with their digital media more than their physical ones yet they also have a greater inclination towards distrust of the content. Thus, the more interaction by the user does not lead to more trust for them and in fact, many of the users are aware of the many unverified stories posted.

#### 3.3. Regression Analysis: Information Fragmentation and Trust

A multiple regression analysis in Table 3 was performed with the dependent variable being the trusting level by the users of the platform. The independents were the frequency of consumption of short fragmented news, independent of the source, and the depth to which it reached.

**Table 3.** Results of Regression Analysis

Variable	Regression Coefficient	Significance (p)
Fragmented Content Exposure	-0.34	< 0.05
Trust in Media Platforms	Dependent Variable	N/A

The results showed a reliable negative relationship; beta of -0.34,  $p < 0.05$ . Thus, people consuming information from platforms such as Twitter threads or small FB has more reason to be distrusting. This correlates with other literature suggesting that while fragmented news may lead to quicker more accessible news, it does little to provide the understanding of the information being provided.

### 3.4. Engagement Levels: Digital and Traditional

Digital and Traditional Media Command Attention in Distinct Ways To quantify the differing involvement stimulated by digital and analogue platforms, researchers gauged perceptions through a comparative analysis. Survey respondents rated their affinity for any media source on a 1 to 5 scale, with 5 signifying an intensely engrossing connection. Results found average scores of 4.2 for digital and 2.8 for traditional media, showcasing how the former more powerfully pulls users in. However, when asked about reliability of data from each, respondents believed traditional media more trustworthy at 4.0 versus 3.2 for digital. Bursting with functionality are new technologies, yet fail to foster the same faith as older means. Audiences remain highly engaged online yet reserve fuller faith for time-tested truth offscreen, revealing the imbalance between immersion and integrity across mediums.

Comparison of Engagement and Trust Levels: Digital vs Traditional Media

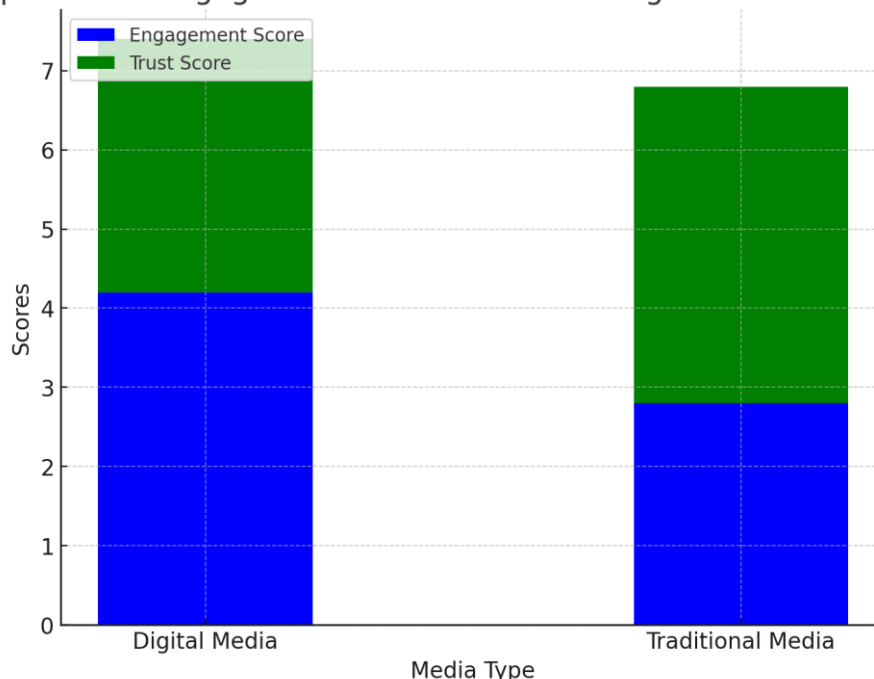


Figure 1. The Comparison of Engagement and Trust Level

### 3.5. Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative sources used to learn more about the respondents' impressions suggest that most of the participants found that traditional media seemed more credible and thus involved less trust and responsibility. Many of the participants also stated that digital media was too overwhelming and caused anxiety that they felt was related to the constant flow of information as well as the challenges of determining which side of the provided information was fact as well as the role of the aforementioned source of data in the current IT environment. One of the respondents even stated, "There's too much random stuff on platforms like Twitter. I can't tell what's true and what's just noise." The other respondent is convinced that "News on Facebook seem to be all about clicks. They might not be the truth, but at least traditional mass media check their facts. They might be slow, but at least they're reliable." Hence, when analyzing the effects of the level of engagement that digital media creates, one must consider both the quantitative and the qualitative aspects.

## 4. Conclusion

This extensive study has demonstrated the immense impact that digital media has possessed on mass communication, specifically regarding viewership trust and involvement. The discoveries reveal a intricate relationship between interactivity, data fragmentation, and belief. While electronic

platforms have succeeded in boosting user participation, they have simultaneously added to a decline in trust due to the prevalence of splintered content and the difficulty of validating the accuracy of information.

Traditional media, despite its slower dissemination process and lower engagement levels, remains to appreciate higher levels of trust among target markets. This implies that the editorial oversight and fact-checking procedures that characterize traditional media still play a crucial part in keeping credibility in an era of information glut.

For media makers, the challenge moving ahead will be to harness the strengths of digital platforms—particularly their interactivity—while addressing the issues of misinformation and content splintering. By adopting strategies for example fact-checking instruments and media literacy programs, digital media platforms can work toward building a more informed and trusting audience.

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