

The Influence of Digital Media Proliferation on Journalistic Practice and Professional Standards in Delta State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how digital media proliferation influences journalistic practice and professional standards in Delta State, Nigeria, using a mixed-methods approach and responses from 220 media practitioners. Findings show that 54.55% of journalists reported poor or very poor access to digital tools, while only 7.27% had excellent access. A significant 60% believed digital platforms negatively affected audience reach. Confidence in using digital tools was uneven, with 36.36% lacking confidence. Regression analysis revealed that 92.6% of the variance in journalistic opportunities was explained by challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, low digital literacy, and cybersecurity gaps. Increased competition from non-professionals showed a negative influence ($\beta = -0.506$, $p < 0.001$), while poor infrastructure had the highest positive coefficient ($\beta = 1.010$, $p < 0.001$). These results suggest that digital transformation in journalism is occurring under structural and professional constraints. The study implies that unless these constraints are addressed, digital media will continue to erode journalistic standards and audience trust. It is recommended that media organizations and policymakers invest in digital infrastructure, enhance journalist training in digital literacy and cybersecurity, and implement regulatory frameworks that support ethical digital journalism while mitigating the impact of unregulated content producers.

Keywords: Digital media, Journalistic practice, Professional standards, Literacy, Delta State



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INTRODUCTION

The rise of digital technologies has transformed the global media landscape, democratized information access and reshaping journalistic practice (Dovbysh, 2021). This has led to instantaneous news delivery, real-time audience

engagement, and a participatory journalism model. This has sparked debates on the implications for journalistic norms, ethics, gatekeeping authority, and the sustainability of professional journalism in a networked society (Mellado

& Hermida, 2022; Riedl, 2023). Globally, the digitalization of newsrooms and media convergence has challenged traditional media monopolies, requiring journalists to work across multiple platforms, adopt multimedia storytelling techniques, and engage with audiences in real time. This transformation has created opportunities for innovation but also introduced challenges related to content credibility, editorial independence, and erosion of journalistic gatekeeping (Ratnaningtyas & Adiyanto, 2025). Professional standards like accuracy, objectivity, accountability, and fairness are now under scrutiny due to algorithmic influence and shifting audience expectations (Paik, 2025).

Digital media has both facilitated and disrupted the African media landscape (Ugo et al., 2023). In Nigeria, digital platforms have expanded access to information and increased citizen participation in public discourse (Okafor et al., 2024). However, they have also contributed to the spread of misinformation, the decline of investigative journalism, and weakening editorial oversight. The shift to digital platforms has transformed the journalistic environment, creating new dynamics of production, competition, and regulation. Nigeria's media industry has experienced rapid digital integration, with social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp playing a crucial role in news circulation. Journalists now operate in a hybrid media system, requiring new skills and ethical orientations. However, challenges remain, such as a lack of standardized digital journalism training, inadequate technological infrastructure, and pressure to prioritize speed over accuracy. Media outlets' monetization strategies often prioritize sensational content, compromising journalistic integrity and public trust (ur Rahman, 2023; Aiko, 2024; Oyinloye et al., 2024). Regulatory frameworks have struggled to adapt to the rapid digital media evolution, leading to ambiguities around professional accountability and journalistic ethics.

Delta State, in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, is a prime example of how digital media is influencing journalistic standards. The state's diverse media landscape includes government-owned broadcasters, private radio stations, online news platforms, and local newspapers. The rise of digital media in the state is influenced by factors like economic inequality, political interests, infrastructural disparities, and cultural diversity. Journalists in Delta State rely on digital tools to gather, report, and disseminate news, but often face limited training, job insecurity, and political pressures. This raises questions about the influence of digital media on journalistic conduct and the integrity of news content. The rise of social media influencers, bloggers, and citizen journalists in the state challenges traditional media professionals' authority, blurring the lines between news, opinion, and propaganda. Commercial pressures also force journalists to conform to digital audiences, potentially reducing investigative rigor and editorial scrutiny.

These trends have profound implications for the credibility and societal role of journalism in Delta State. This study examines the impact of digital media on journalistic practice and professional standards in Delta State, Nigeria. It explores how digital tools and platforms have altered journalistic routines, ethical commitments, and the media's role in society. The study highlights the potential for innovation and threats to professionalism, particularly in Delta State, where digital empowerment and erosion pose significant challenges. It provides an empirical and theoretical foundation for understanding journalism's reconfiguration in a rapidly digitizing media environment.

Theoretical Issues

Gatekeeping theory is fundamental to the study of mass communication and journalistic practice. It offers an analytical lens through which media content selection, processing, and dissemination are examined (Blanchett, 2021; Gondwe et al., 2023). The theory explains the process by which information is filtered before reaching the public (Norikin & Byström, 2024). The traditional gatekeeping model in journalism, where editors, producers, and reporters decide newsworthy stories, is increasingly contested in digital media, particularly in regions like Delta State, Nigeria. The rise of digital media technologies has disrupted this model, allowing a broader network of actors to participate in content creation, curation, and dissemination, including bloggers, influencers, amateur content creators, and the audience itself (González-Tosat & Sádaba-Chalezquer, 2021). The decentralization of information control in Delta State has led to a transformed communication environment, undermining professional gatekeeping and compromising standards like fact-checking and ethical reporting. Digital platforms prioritize speed over accuracy, virality, and audience engagement, causing concerns about misinformation and sensationalism (Kostarella & Palla, 2024). The participatory culture of digital media also forces journalists to adapt content strategies to compete with non-professional providers, compromising investigative journalism and traditional gatekeeping roles (Brogi et al., 2024).

Despite these challenges, gatekeeping theory remains relevant in the digital age, albeit in a modified form. Scholars have proposed the concept of "networked gatekeeping," which recognizes the multiplicity of actors and the dynamic interplay between traditional journalists and digital users in shaping news flows (Wilkinson, 2021; Santos, 2022). In this framework, journalists no longer operate in isolation but interact within a complex ecosystem where algorithms, audience feedback, and platform policies co-determine content visibility. In Delta State, this model is observable in the hybrid roles journalists play as both content creators and digital influencers. They actively use social media to share stories, engage audiences, and respond to feedback,

thereby participating in an ongoing negotiation of gatekeeping authority. These affordances, if properly integrated into professional practice, can enhance the quality of journalism. For instance, the use of digital verification tools and fact-checking platforms can strengthen editorial integrity.

However, reclaiming gatekeeping authority in the digital age requires strategic interventions at both the institutional and policy levels. Media organizations in Delta State must invest in capacity building, digital literacy, and ethical training to equip journalists with the competencies necessary for digital gatekeeping. Regulatory bodies and professional associations must also update codes of conduct to reflect the complexities of digital media operations. Without such reforms, the erosion of gatekeeping roles will continue to jeopardize journalistic standards, thereby weakening public trust in the media. Gatekeeping theory provides a critical framework for understanding the influence of digital media proliferation on journalistic practice in Delta State. While the theory originated in a pre-digital context characterized by centralized media control, it remains analytically useful in examining how the diffusion of information control in the digital era impacts professional standards. The transformation of gatekeeping roles from centralized editorial control to distributed networked interaction underscores the urgent need to renegotiate journalistic authority, reinforce ethical standards, and adapt institutional practices to the realities of digital communication. Addressing these challenges is vital for safeguarding the credibility and societal function of journalism in the region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a mixed-methods research design. This approach enabled a comprehensive analysis by combining quantitative dimensions such as access, usage patterns, and digital literacy with qualitative insights into perceptions, challenges, and evolving professional dynamics. The integration of survey data and inferential analysis facilitated a nuanced understanding of the technological, institutional, and individual factors shaping journalistic experiences amid digital media transformation (Table 1). The study population comprised 478 media practitioners across various subdivisions in Delta State, Nigeria, including correspondents, government information personnel, broadcasters, and print media staff. To determine the appropriate sample size for the study, Yamane Taro's (1967) formula was applied, resulting in the participation of 220 journalists. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation from both urban and semi-urban media establishments across Delta State. This sampling technique facilitated the inclusion of diverse experiences with digital media, reflecting infrastructural and organizational variations across localities. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire that captured key variables

including access to digital tools, frequency of social media use, digital literacy levels, perceptions of digital media reliability, and the perceived impact of citizen journalism. The instrument was validated through expert review and pretesting with a separate group of journalists who were excluded from the final analysis. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, with findings presented in frequency tables and regression models. Ethical clearance was secured from the appropriate institutional review board. Participants were informed of their right to confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, and informed consent was obtained before data collection commenced. This methodological approach enabled a rigorous empirical assessment of how digital media proliferation interacts with infrastructural, professional, and perceptual factors to shape journalistic practice in Delta State. The strong statistical relationships identified in the data affirm the validity of the analytical framework and provide a credible foundation for interpreting the regional dynamics of media digitization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 reveals critical insights into the extent of access to digital media tools and technologies among journalists in Delta State. A significant proportion of respondents, representing 45.91%, reported poor access to digital media tools. Additionally, 8.64% of the journalists rated their access as very poor. Combined, these figures indicate that more than half of the respondent's experience substantial limitations in digital media access. In contrast, only 7.27% reported excellent access, while 12.73% and 25.45% rated their access as good and fair respectively. This distribution suggests a generally limited diffusion of digital technologies within the journalistic environment in the region. Limited access to digital tools hinders the timeliness and breadth of journalistic output, and adherence to professional standards. This issue is similar to sub-national media contexts, with uneven distribution of digital infrastructure and infrastructural deficits in peripheral areas. These limitations limit the professional development of media practitioners. This situation aligns with earlier research that has documented similar challenges in sub-national media contexts. Vitalis et al. (2025) found that the uneven distribution of digital infrastructure across Nigerian regions significantly hinders the full integration of digital practices in newsrooms. Such disparities necessitate policy interventions aimed at infrastructural development, digital training, and equitable access to technology to ensure that journalistic practice evolves in line with global standards and technological advancements.

Table 3 presents a striking assessment of the perceived impact of digital media proliferation on audience reach among local journalists in Delta State. According to the data, 60% of respondents indicated that the proliferation of digital media platforms has affected audience reach very negatively, while 20% reported a negative impact.

Table 1: Population of Study.

Subsets of Media Practitioners as at October 2020	Number of Journalist
Correspondents	
Asaba	31
Warri	22
Ughelli	26
Sapele	12
Ika	27
Indigenous	27
Isoko	15
Sub Total	160
Information	
State Ministry of Information	77
Local Government Information	67
Field Information	37
Federal Information	12
Sub Total	193
NTA/DBS	
Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Asaba	10
Delta Broadcasting Service (DBS) Asaba	27
Delta Broadcasting Service (DBS) Asaba	46
Sub Total	83
Print	
Pointer	29
Truth	13
Sub Total	42
Total	478

Table 2: Access to Digital Media Tools and Technologies among Local Journalists.

Access to digital media tools and technologies	Respondent	Percentage
Excellent	16	7.27
Good	28	12.73
Fair	56	25.45
Poor	101	45.91
Very poor	19	8.64
Total	220	100

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Table 3: Impact of Digital Media Proliferation on Audience Reach Among Local Journalists.

Proliferation of digital media platforms audience reach	Respondent	Percentage
Very positively	44	20
Positively	0	0
Neutral	0	0
Negatively	44	20
Very negatively	132	60
Total	220	100

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

In contrast, 20% believed the impact to be very positive, with no respondents reporting a simply positive or neutral effect. These findings suggest a highly polarized and predominantly adverse perception of digital media's influence on audience engagement within the local journalistic context. This overwhelmingly negative assessment may be attributed to several structural and operational challenges faced by journalists in Delta State. Among these challenges are the limited access to digital tools, insufficient digital literacy, and the inability to compete effectively with the speed, interactivity, and accessibility of alternative digital content providers such as

bloggers and influencers. As such, traditional journalists may perceive digital media not as a platform for expansion but as a disruptive force that fragments their audience base and undermines their professional relevance. Moyo (2023) observed that in environments where digital media literacy and infrastructure are weak, the proliferation of digital platforms often exacerbates professional challenges rather than enhancing journalistic output or reach. This pattern indicates that the influence of digital media proliferation on journalistic practice is contingent on contextual factors such as infrastructure, training, and institutional adaptation. In Delta State, the data suggest

Table 4: Perceived Opportunities and Challenges of Digital Media Among Local Journalists in Delta State.

Digital media provides more opportunities	Respondent	Percentage
More opportunities	66	30.00
More challenges	13	5.91
Both opportunities and challenges	127	57.73
Neither	14	6.36
Total	220	100

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Table 5: Digital Literacy and Journalists' Confidence in Using Online Platforms.

Digital literacy and ability to use online platforms	Respondent	Percentage
Very confident	34	15.45
Confident	89	40.45
Neutral	17	7.73
Not confident	44	20.00
Not confident at all	36	16.36
Total	220	100

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Table 6: Prevalence of Technical Challenges Faced by Journalists in the Use of Digital Media in Delta State.

Technical challenges while working with digital media	Respondent	Percentage
Always	29	13.18
Frequently	82	37.27
Occasionally	45	20.45
Rarely	41	18.64
Never	23	10.45
Total	220	100

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

that journalists have yet to leverage digital platforms to broaden their audience reach effectively, which ultimately hinders both professional advancement and the overall democratic function of the media.

Table 4 highlights the nuanced perceptions of digital media among local journalists in Delta State, emphasizing its dual character as both an enabler and a disruptor. A majority of respondents, accounting for 57.73%, acknowledged that digital media presents both opportunities and challenges. Meanwhile, 30% viewed digital media as providing more opportunities, whereas only 5.91% perceived it as presenting more challenges. A smaller group, 6.36%, reported that digital media offers neither opportunities nor challenges. These results suggest that most Delta State journalists acknowledge the complexity of digital media, viewing it as both advantageous and challenging. They acknowledge the potential for speed, audience reach, and diverse storytelling formats. This duality aligns with the findings of Ratnaningtyas and Adiyanto (2025), who noted that while digital media enhances journalistic innovation and interactivity, it also generates instability in newsrooms due to shifting audience expectations and reduced gatekeeping. The study suggests that digital media's impact on journalistic practice is influenced by local factors like technology access, institutional support, and evolving journalist roles, necessitating strategic interventions.

Table 5 provides important insights into the level of digital literacy and confidence among journalists in Delta State regarding the use of online platforms. According to

the statistics, 40.45% of respondents reported being confident, while 15.45% claimed having extremely high levels of confidence. In contrast, 20% said they were unconfident, and 16.36% said they were really unconfident. A lesser fraction, 7.73%, were neutral. These findings indicate a split professional landscape in which a sizable proportion of journalists believe they are prepared to handle digital platforms, while a sizable part lack the required abilities or certainty. This pattern demonstrates the unequal integration of digital media capabilities into the Delta State journalism profession. Some journalists' relatively high levels of confidence indicate that digital literacy is becoming a more recognized and developed ability. However, the notable proportion of respondents lacking confidence highlights a persistent gap in training and professional development. This disparity impacts the ability of journalists to produce timely, interactive, and credible content that meets contemporary professional standards. Furthermore, Onwe (2021) emphasized that journalists' confidence in using online tools is strongly influenced by access to consistent training, technological infrastructure, and organizational support. Delta State's digital media proliferation hinders journalistic practice due to inconsistent digital literacy. Prioritizing capacity-building initiatives is crucial for enhancing professional standards in the digital era.

Table 6 provides a critical assessment of the frequency of technological obstacles that journalists face while accessing digital media in Delta State. According to the research, 37.27% of respondents reported frequent

Table 7: Perceived Reliability and Credibility of News Shared on Digital Platforms by Journalists.

Reliability and credibility of news shared on digital platforms	Respondent	Percentage
More reliable	55	25.00
Equally reliable	72	32.73
Less reliable	21	9.55
Not sure	72	32.73
Total	220	100

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Table 8: Perceived Impact of Citizen Journalism on Professional Journalism Among Journalists in Delta State.

Citizen journalism affects Journalism	Respondent	Percentage
Yes, positively	50	22.73
Yes, negatively	26	11.82
No impact	12	5.45
Not sure	132	60.00
Total	220	100

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

technical issues, while 13.18% had such obstacles on a regular basis. An additional 20.45% met them occasionally, and 18.64% encountered them seldom. Only 10.45% of respondents stated that they had never encountered technical difficulties. These findings indicate that technological constraints remain a significant impediment to the effective use of digital media in journalistic practice across the state. The prevalence of frequent and ongoing issues indicates structural flaws in digital infrastructure, unstable internet connectivity, restricted access to contemporary devices, and insufficient technical help. Barriers to productivity and news dissemination hinder journalistic quality, delay dissemination, and reduce time-sensitive demands, impacting professional standards and accuracy in reporting. This observation is consistent with the findings of Nwankpa et al. (2021), who noted that journalists in several parts of Nigeria face persistent technical difficulties, which constrain their capacity to effectively utilize digital tools. The prevalence of technical challenges underscores the need for targeted investments in digital infrastructure, ICT upgrades, and professional training to enhance journalistic practice and maintain professional standards in the evolving media landscape.

Table 7 reveals journalists' assessments of the dependability and credibility of news conveyed through digital platforms in Delta State. According to the study, 25% of respondents said news published on digital platforms was more credible, while 32.73% thought it was just as dependable as conventional news channels. In contrast, 9.55% thought such news was untrustworthy, while 32.73% were unsure. These findings indicate journalists' cautious optimism about the legitimacy of digital news, balanced by strong scepticism and ambiguity. Over half of respondents believe digital news is reliable, but a high percentage express uncertainty and perceive it as less reliable. This highlights concerns about misinformation, editorial oversight, and unverified content,

reflecting broader journalistic standards in a rapidly digitizing media environment. However, Delta State's digital media adoption is gaining traction, but concerns about reliability and credibility persist, necessitating ethical standards, digital verification practices, and media literacy promotion.

Table 8 investigates Delta State journalists' perceptions of citizen journalism's influence on professional journalism. According to the findings, 11.82% of respondents think citizen journalism has a negative impact, whilst 22.73% think it has a favourable impact. The majority, 60%, expressed ambiguity about its impact, while a minor percentage, 5.45%, claimed no impact. This distribution indicates a complex and changing view of citizen journalism that is characterised by both scepticism and cautious embrace. According to the statistics, a greater percentage of journalists in Delta State are still unclear about the ramifications of citizen journalism, even though some of them recognise its benefits, such as enabling real-time reporting, promoting civic involvement, and diversifying news sources. Salaudeen (2022) found that despite citizen journalism promoting participatory communication, many professionals remain sceptical about its accuracy and accountability standards. Delta State journalists face uncertainty due to tension between traditional journalistic values and digital media's participatory culture, requiring adaptive strategies to integrate user-generated content without compromising professional standards.

Table 9 shows the frequency of social media usage among journalists in Delta State, providing insight into how digital platforms are integrated into professional routines. The results show that 10.45% of respondents use social media constantly, 24.55% use it frequently, and 44.55% use it occasionally. Only 15.45% of people use social media seldom, and 5% never use it at all. According to these figures, social media is acknowledged as a useful tool by Delta State journalists, although their use of it is

Table 9: Frequency of Social Media Usage among Journalists in Delta State.

Use social media platforms	Respondent	Percentage
Always	23	10.45
Frequently	54	24.55
Occasionally	98	44.55
Rarely	34	15.45
Never	11	5.00
Total	220	100

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Table 10: Model Summary of Digital Media Challenges Predicting Journalistic Opportunities in Delta State.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.962 ^a	.926	.924	.428	.926	532.764	5	214	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Lack of Cybersecurity Awareness, Limited Digital Literacy, Inadequate Digital Infrastructure, Increased Competition from Non-professionals, Information Overload and Verification Difficulties

Source: SPSS Computation

Table 11: Regression Coefficients Predicting the Impact of Digital Challenges on Digital Media Proliferation in Delta State Journalism.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Correlations		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial Part
(Constant)	-2.938	0.144		-20.467	.000		
Inadequate Digital Infrastructure	1.001	0.030	1.010	33.169	.000	0.785	0.915
Limited Digital Literacy	0.353	0.033	0.292	10.733	.000	0.252	0.592
Information Overload and Verification Difficulties	0.370	0.038	0.302	9.635	.000	0.510	0.550
Increased Competition from Non-professionals	-0.468	0.026	-0.506	-18.203	0.000	0.424	-0.779
Lack of Cybersecurity Awareness	0.479	0.032	0.396	14.869	.000	.302	0.713

Source: SPSS Computation

mostly sporadic rather than regular or systematic. The low frequency of social media use among Delta State journalists suggests that despite their awareness of its importance, they may not fully integrate it into their daily activities due to factors like inconsistent digital literacy. Journalists in Nigeria acknowledge social media's usefulness for news sourcing but face obstacles, such as lack of institutional support and uneven access to digital resources, hindering its consistent use. The study reinforces that digital media's impact on Delta State's journalism is moderate, requiring targeted interventions to enhance digital competence, promote ethical engagement, and support strategic news use.

Table 10 presents the model summary of a regression analysis examining how digital media-related challenges predict journalistic opportunities in Delta State. The model shows a very high coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.926$), indicating that approximately 92.6% of the variance in journalistic opportunities can be explained by the combination of predictors: lack of cybersecurity awareness, limited digital literacy, inadequate digital infrastructure, increased competition from non-professionals, and information overload with verification difficulties. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.924 confirms the model's robustness, and the significance level ($p < 0.001$) demonstrates that the relationship is statistically significant. This result underscores the substantial impact that digital media challenges exert on shaping journalistic opportunities in Delta State. Although digital media

proliferation presents possibilities for expanded reach and innovation, the findings reveal that systemic issues significantly condition the extent to which journalists can exploit these opportunities. Inadequate infrastructure, low digital literacy, and competition from unregulated content producers dilute the professional gains offered by digital transformation. The study reinforces the notion that while the digital environment is promising, it requires strategic interventions in capacity building, regulation, and infrastructural support to enhance its positive influence on journalistic practice. Table 11 presents the regression coefficients used to predict the impact of digital challenges on the proliferation of digital media platforms in journalism within Delta State. The results indicate that all predictor variables except increased competition from non-professionals positively influence the proliferation of digital media platforms. Specifically, inadequate digital infrastructure has the strongest positive effect ($\beta = 1.010$, $p < 0.001$), followed by lack of cybersecurity awareness ($\beta = 0.396$, $p < 0.001$), information overload and verification difficulties ($\beta = 0.302$, $p < 0.001$), and limited digital literacy ($\beta = 0.292$, $p < 0.001$). Increased competition from non-professionals, however, shows a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.506$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that it hinders the professional uptake and effectiveness of digital media proliferation. These results highlight a critical paradox in the media environment of Delta State: while structural and knowledge-based constraints such as poor infrastructure and digital illiteracy are positively associated with the

growing use of digital platforms, their influence may reflect a forced adaptation rather than optimal integration. Journalists are increasingly relying on digital tools even amid limitations, likely because traditional models are no longer sufficient to meet the demands of contemporary journalism. The negative influence of competition from non-professionals reflects concerns over the erosion of professional standards, content saturation, and misinformation, which collectively disrupt journalistic credibility. The regression coefficients affirm that digital media proliferation in Delta State journalism is occurring within a constrained ecosystem. Although digital platforms are increasingly adopted, their integration is complicated by structural, educational, and ethical barriers, necessitating focused policy and institutional support to align digital growth with professional journalistic standards. The findings reveal limited access to digital media tools among journalists in Delta State, with nearly half reporting poor access and only a small fraction indicating excellent availability. This restricts effective digital reporting and reflects broader infrastructural deficiencies in the region. Most journalists (60%) viewed digital media's impact on audience reach negatively, citing challenges such as competition from unregulated sources and low digital literacy. However, a majority acknowledged that digital platforms offer both opportunities and challenges. Confidence in digital media use varied, with a significant number lacking the skills needed for optimal use, underscoring the need for training and support. Frequent technical issues, including poor connectivity and outdated equipment, further hinder digital journalism. Perceptions of reliability were mixed, with concerns about misinformation prevalent. Views on citizen journalism were mostly uncertain, highlighting tensions between professional standards and participatory media. Social media use was inconsistent, indicating underutilization of key digital platforms. Regression analysis confirmed that digital media challenges strongly predict the extent of journalistic opportunities, with infrastructure and competition from non-professionals significantly influencing use. These results align with previous research emphasizing the need for systemic investment in infrastructure, training, and regulatory frameworks to enable effective integration of digital tools in journalism (Kirchhoff, 2022; Nwakoby & Iloka, 2025).

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the digital transformation in Delta State's media sector is a complex process influenced by both promise and constraints. While digital media has introduced new formats and platforms, its adoption is hindered by infrastructural deficits, inadequate digital literacy, and limited institutional support. Journalists in Delta State have limited access to digital tools, compromising their ability to meet modern reporting demands and compromising the timeliness, depth, and

interactivity of their outputs. The impact of digital media on audience reach is largely perceived as negative, largely due to competition with non-professional content creators and the erosion of audience trust. Technical challenges, such as connectivity issues and lack of contemporary tools, further constrain effective media production. Journalists express cautious optimism about the reliability of digital news while remaining wary of misinformation and diminishing editorial accountability boundaries. The study suggests that without intentional policy and institutional interventions, the profession may face a decline in standards, relevance, and public trust. To address this, targeted investment in digital infrastructure, capacity-building programs, and the integration of citizen journalism are needed. A balanced, inclusive, and strategic approach is needed to align journalistic practice in Delta State with global trends and ensure its credibility, relevance, and professional resilience in the digital era.

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