

MASS COMMUNICATION TRANSFORMATION IN THE DIGITAL MEDIA ERA: CHANGES IN INFORMATION PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

Ijang Faisal ^{1*}, Agung Tirta Wibawa ²

^{1 2} Communication Science Study Program, Faculty of Social and Humanities,
Muhammadiyah University of Bandung (UMBandung), Bandung, Indonesia

¹ ijangfaisal@umbandung.ac.id, ² agungtirta@umbandung.ac.id

Abstract

Background: Digital media have altered the basic architecture of mass communication. Professional media are no longer the only institutions that produce, select, distribute, and frame public information; platforms, algorithms, creators, and audiences now participate in a continuous circulation process. **Aims:** This article examines how digital media transform the production and consumption of information and proposes an integrated framework for understanding the shift from linear mass communication to platform-mediated communication. **Research Method:** The study uses an integrative literature review that prioritizes peer-reviewed scholarship on digital journalism, media convergence, platformization, algorithmic gatekeeping, audience participation, and news consumption, complemented by current evidence from the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2026 and Indonesia-specific studies. **Results and Conclusion:** The synthesis identifies six connected transformations: newsroom production becomes continuous and multimedia; gatekeeping becomes hybrid; distribution becomes platform-dependent; consumption becomes mobile, personalized, video-oriented, and partly incidental; audiences increasingly act as redistributors and co-producers; and behavioral data feed back into editorial and commercial decisions. In Indonesia, 64% of respondents in the 2026 Digital News Report said they used social media for news, illustrating the growing importance of third-party platforms in the information chain. Yet this expansion of access also intensifies problems of verification, context loss, commercial pressure, algorithmic opacity, and declining trust. **Contribution:** The article develops a six-stage circular model of digital mass communication that connects production, platform formatting, algorithmic distribution, audience interpretation, recirculation, and data feedback. The model clarifies why contemporary mass communication should be analyzed as a negotiated system involving journalistic institutions, technology companies, content creators, and active audiences rather than as a one-way transmission process.

Keywords: Mass Communication, Digital Media, Platformization, News Production, News Consumption, Algorithmic Gatekeeping, Indonesia

Introduction

Mass communication was historically organized around a relatively clear institutional sequence: professional media organizations gathered information, editors selected and framed it, technical infrastructures distributed it, and large audiences consumed the resulting message. The model was never completely one-directional, yet the cost of publication and broadcast created a strong asymmetry between producers and receivers. Digitalization has weakened that asymmetry. A smartphone user can receive a news alert, comment on it, remix a fragment, add a personal interpretation, and redistribute the material to a new network within minutes. At the same time, an algorithm may determine whether that act of redistribution becomes nearly invisible or reaches hundreds of thousands of people.

This change is not simply the replacement of newspapers, radio, or television by websites and social media. It represents a reorganization of the communication process itself. Newsrooms now monitor online conversations as potential sources, publishers format content for multiple channels, platforms rank and recommend information, creators compete with established brands for attention, and audiences move between text, short video, messaging applications, podcasts, search engines, and increasingly AI interfaces. The boundaries between production, distribution, and consumption have therefore become more porous.

Indonesia provides a particularly relevant context for examining this transition. The Reuters Institute's Digital News Report 2026 reports internet penetration of 73% in its market profile and shows that social media and video networks have become central gateways to news. Sixty-four percent of Indonesian

respondents said they used social media for news, while WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram were among the most frequently used platforms for news-related access (Steele, 2026). The report also records an overall news-trust figure of 32%, indicating that expanded access does not automatically produce stronger confidence in the information environment.

Existing Indonesian research captures several parts of this transformation. Studies of television journalism show that social media increasingly shapes issue discovery and agenda formation during production (Humeira & Ramadhan, 2022). Research on digital journalism business models shows that platform-based distribution has changed not only editorial routines but also revenue structures and the economic sustainability of news organizations (Masduki et al., 2024). More recent work on generative AI in Indonesian newsrooms indicates that algorithmic systems are beginning to enter editorial decision processes themselves, raising new questions about accountability and professional responsibility (Pamuji & Sari, 2026).

The central problem is therefore conceptual as well as practical. If communication is no longer adequately described as a stable flow from sender to receiver, how should mass communication be understood when professional media, platforms, algorithms, creators, and users all intervene in the circulation of information? This article addresses that question through an integrative review. It focuses on two linked dimensions: changes in the production of public information and changes in the ways audiences discover, select, interpret, and recirculate it.

The article argues that digital mass communication is best understood as a circular, platform-mediated system. Production decisions are influenced by audience metrics; distribution depends on both editorial choice and algorithmic ranking; consumption often occurs outside the publisher's own environment; and audience behavior produces data that become inputs for subsequent production. This circularity has important consequences for journalistic autonomy, media economics, information diversity, public trust, and communication education.

Literature Review

From Mass Communication to Networked and Platform-Mediated Communication

Classical mass communication models emphasized institutional senders, standardized messages, technological channels, and large audiences. Digital media do not eliminate these components, but they rearrange the relationships among them. Jenkins (2006) used the concept of convergence to describe how content moves across media systems and how audiences increasingly participate in that movement. Bruns (2008) extended the idea of participation through the concept of produsage, emphasizing that digital users can simultaneously consume and produce content. Together, these perspectives anticipated a communication environment in which the distinction between producer and consumer becomes less stable.

Platformization adds another layer. Digital platforms are not neutral pipes; they organize visibility through technical rules, recommendation systems, interface design, monetization structures, and data collection. Van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal (2018) describe the platform society as one in which social and economic interactions become increasingly organized by platform infrastructures. In journalism, this means that the ability to publish no longer guarantees the ability to reach an audience. Visibility is negotiated through search engines, social feeds, messaging networks, app stores, and recommendation systems.

That distinction matters for mass communication theory. In the broadcast model, distribution capacity largely belonged to media organizations. In the platform model, media organizations may produce the message while another institution controls discovery. The communication chain therefore includes at least two different forms of editorial power: professional selection inside the newsroom and computational selection at the point of distribution.

Gatekeeping, Gatewatching, and Algorithmic Selection

Gatekeeping remains a useful concept, but its location has multiplied. Karlsson, Van Couvering, and Lindell (2022) distinguish three online gatekeeping logics: publishing by news organizations, sharing by social actors, and spreading by platform algorithms. This framework explains why the most visible story is not necessarily the story a newsroom considered most important. A report may pass the editorial gate

yet receive limited algorithmic distribution, while another item may gain exceptional reach through social sharing and recommendation.

The transformation also changes journalistic practice. Humeira and Ramadhan (2022) show that Indonesian television journalists use social media across pre-production, production, and post-production and that online public conversations can influence the media agenda. The direction of agenda setting consequently becomes less linear. Journalists still select and verify information, but they also monitor the issues, personalities, and discussions already gaining momentum within digital networks.

Algorithmic selection creates additional normative questions. Scheffauer, Goyanes, and Gil de Zúñiga (2024) found that audience preferences for professional journalistic gatekeeping remain relevant to news trust, even as algorithms increasingly mediate news selection. Shin and Zhou (2024) likewise show that recommendation systems can be designed to encourage exposure to diverse viewpoints, demonstrating that algorithmic architecture can influence not only efficiency but also media pluralism. The issue is therefore not whether algorithms select information - they already do - but what values are embedded in that selection and how transparent those values are to users.

Audience Participation and the Reconfiguration of Consumption

Digital consumption is characterized by abundance rather than scarcity. Audiences encounter news through direct visits, search, social feeds, messaging groups, push notifications, creator accounts, aggregators, and AI chatbots. Napoli (2011) argues that digitization transforms audience measurement and the economic meaning of audience behavior because increasingly granular data make attention observable and actionable. In contemporary platforms, clicks, completion rates, shares, watch time, comments, and subscription behavior can all become signals that influence future distribution and production.

Participation further complicates the traditional receiver role. Hermida's (2010) concept of ambient journalism captures how continuous streams of small updates create a persistent informational environment. Audiences do not always make a deliberate decision to 'read the news'; they may encounter fragments while performing other activities. Social feeds intensify this incidental exposure, while messaging applications transform private interpersonal networks into channels of mass recirculation.

Indonesia-specific evidence shows both continuity and change. Earlier research found that social media was an important but not necessarily dominant destination for deliberate news seeking (Veronika & Raharjo, 2021). By 2026, however, the Reuters Institute reports that platforms and video networks are deeply embedded in news access, and globally they have overtaken publisher websites and apps as the most widely used route to online news (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2026). The difference illustrates the speed at which consumption practices can change.

Table 1. Contrasting Logics of Mass Communication and Digital Media

Dimension	Conventional mass-media logic	Digital/platform logic
Production	Periodic, newsroom-centered, format-specific	Continuous, multimedia, cross-platform, metric-aware
Gatekeeping	Primarily editorial and institutional	Editorial + audience sharing + algorithmic ranking
Distribution	Owned channels and scheduled circulation	Owned, search, social, video, messaging, aggregators, AI interfaces
Audience role	Mainly receiver with limited feedback	Receiver, commenter, sharer, creator, verifier, data source
Temporal pattern	Edition or broadcast schedule	Real-time, asynchronous, on-demand, continuously updated
Measurement	Circulation, ratings, broad audience estimates	Clicks, watch time, shares, retention, subscriptions, behavioral traces
Primary risk	Concentration of institutional control	Opacity, fragmentation, misinformation, platform dependency, attention pressure

Research Method

This article employs an integrative literature review. The method is appropriate because the research problem spans communication theory, journalism studies, platform studies, audience research, and media

economics rather than a single homogeneous empirical literature. The purpose is not to calculate a pooled effect size but to synthesize recurring mechanisms that explain how digital media reshape information production and consumption.

The review prioritizes peer-reviewed publications from 2019 to September 2026 that directly address digital journalism, media convergence, platformization, gatekeeping, news recommendation, audience participation, social-media news use, newsroom transformation, or Indonesian media. Selected foundational works are retained where they define concepts that remain necessary for interpreting current developments, including convergence, produsage, platformization, and audience evolution. Institutional evidence is used only to describe the contemporary media environment, with particular reliance on the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2026 and its Indonesia market profile.

Sources were interpreted through four analytical questions. First, what changes in organizational routines and professional roles can be observed in information production? Second, which actors now participate in gatekeeping and distribution? Third, how do digital interfaces change the temporal, social, and behavioral patterns of information consumption? Fourth, what consequences emerge for trust, verification, diversity, business sustainability, and communication education? Findings were compared across the literature rather than treated as interchangeable measurements.

The review uses a mechanism-based synthesis. A claim is included when the source provides empirical or theoretically grounded support for a specific process, such as social media entering newsroom sourcing, algorithms influencing visibility, audience metrics shaping editorial attention, or users encountering news incidentally. Indonesia-specific evidence is given interpretive priority. International studies are used to clarify processes that are not yet extensively documented in the Indonesian literature, but their findings are not presented as direct estimates of Indonesian behavior.

The method has limitations. Digital platforms change faster than conventional publication cycles, and proprietary algorithms are difficult to observe directly. Survey results also measure reported behavior rather than all actual behavior. In addition, the same platform can support deliberate information seeking, incidental exposure, entertainment, and interpersonal communication simultaneously. These constraints make a process-oriented interpretation more defensible than a claim that digital media have produced one uniform pattern of production or consumption.

Table 2. Current Indicators of the Indonesian Digital News Environment (2026)

Indicator	Reported value	Interpretive relevance
Internet penetration in the Reuters Institute market profile	73%	Digital access is extensive, although not universal.
Use of social media for news	64%	Third-party platforms are central to information access.
Overall trust in news	32%	Greater access coexists with concerns about credibility and the wider information environment.
Pay for online news	17%	Audience monetization remains limited relative to free-access habits.
Top platforms used for news	WhatsApp 56%; YouTube 47%; Facebook 44%; TikTok 43%; Instagram 34%	News consumption is distributed across messaging, video, social networking, and creator-oriented environments.

Results and Discussion

1. Production Becomes Continuous, Multimedia, and Platform-Sensitive

The first transformation occurs inside production. Digital newsrooms no longer work only toward the deadline of a printed edition or scheduled broadcast. News is updated continuously, and a single event can generate a live blog, text article, short video, social post, infographic, podcast segment, push notification, and follow-up explainer. Convergence therefore changes not only the number of channels but also the rhythm of work.

Research in Indonesia supports this shift. Studies of journalistic convergence describe reporters who are expected to combine writing, visual production, mobile reporting, and social engagement rather than perform one format-specific task. Humeira and Ramadhan (2022) further show that social media enters

the production process before an item is published, functioning as a source of signals about public discussion and potential story relevance. In this environment, the newsroom listens to the network while producing for it.

Metrics add another layer to production. The availability of real-time audience data means that editors can observe which headlines generate clicks, which videos retain viewers, which topics trigger comments, and which stories convert readers into subscribers. These signals can improve responsiveness, but they can also narrow editorial priorities if short-term engagement becomes a substitute for public relevance. The professional challenge is therefore not whether to use metrics but how to interpret them without surrendering news judgment to attention indicators.

Platform requirements also influence form. A headline written for search may differ from a caption written for Instagram or a short opening written for TikTok. Vertical video, subtitles, thumbnails, short hooks, and platform-native storytelling become part of editorial competence. The message is not merely distributed through a new channel; it is re-authored for the affordances and attention patterns of that channel.

2. Gatekeeping Becomes Hybrid Rather Than Disappearing

Digital media are often described as eliminating gatekeepers because almost anyone can publish. The literature suggests a more precise interpretation: gatekeeping has multiplied. Professional editors still decide what an organization will report, but users decide what they will share, and platforms decide what they will amplify. Karlsson et al. (2022) describe these as different gatekeeping logics that interact rather than replace one another.

This hybrid structure changes the meaning of editorial authority. In a conventional system, the publication decision was closely connected to distribution. In a platform system, publication is only the first gate. A story may be carefully reported but remain invisible because it performs poorly in recommendation systems; another may spread rapidly because it produces strong emotional engagement. The resulting visibility hierarchy can diverge from the newsroom's hierarchy of importance.

Professional journalism remains significant precisely because platform selection is not equivalent to verification. Scheffauer et al. (2024) found that preferences for journalist-led selection remain associated with trust, suggesting that audiences continue to value professional judgment even when they encounter information through digital intermediaries. This helps explain why established media brands can retain symbolic authority while losing control over the route through which audiences reach them.

Generative AI introduces a newer form of hybrid gatekeeping. Pamuji and Sari (2026) show that Indonesian newsrooms are beginning to confront accountability questions related to AI-supported editorial processes. AI can assist transcription, summarization, translation, research, and content adaptation, but it can also introduce errors that are difficult to detect if responsibility becomes diffused across software, journalists, and organizations. Editorial accountability therefore has to remain attached to identifiable human decision makers even when production is technologically assisted.

3. Distribution Shifts from Owned Channels to Intermediated Visibility

The third transformation concerns distribution. Publishers still maintain websites, apps, newspapers, television channels, and radio stations, but a growing share of discovery occurs elsewhere. Search engines, social platforms, messaging applications, video platforms, aggregators, and AI interfaces now stand between publishers and audiences. The Reuters Institute reports that in 2026 social media and video networks became the most widely used route to online news globally, ahead of news organizations' websites and apps (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2026).

For media organizations, this creates a strategic paradox. Platforms provide reach that would be expensive to reproduce independently, yet they also reduce publisher control over visibility, audience data, advertising, and the conditions of access. Masduki et al. (2024) describe an Indonesian digital-journalism ecosystem in which business models remain unsettled and dependence on free news creates sustainability challenges. The economic problem is therefore tied directly to the communication problem: when distribution is intermediated, the organization that produces the information may not capture the full value of the audience relationship.

Intermediation also affects branding. A user may remember a creator, platform, or shared message more clearly than the original publisher. This is particularly important in environments where content is copied,

screenshot, reposted, or stripped of context. Platformization can expand circulation while weakening source recognition. For journalism, the strategic task is to make verification cues, authorship, and brand identity visible even when content travels beyond owned channels.

4. Consumption Becomes Mobile, Personalized, Video-Oriented, and Often Incidental

The audience side of the transformation is equally substantial. News consumption is no longer organized primarily around a common schedule such as the morning newspaper or evening bulletin. Users check information repeatedly throughout the day, often in short sessions embedded in other activities. Smartphones collapse news, entertainment, work, interpersonal communication, and commerce into the same device, creating competition for attention within a single interface.

Personalization changes what each user sees. Recommendation systems use behavioral and contextual signals to rank content, meaning two individuals may receive very different information environments even when they use the same platform. This can reduce search costs and increase relevance, but it also makes exposure less transparent. Shin and Zhou (2024) show that recommender design can influence intentions to consume diverse news, indicating that diversity is partly an architectural choice rather than simply an individual preference.

Video is increasingly important. The 2026 Digital News Report identifies continued growth of online news video and creator-led formats. In Indonesia, the prominence of YouTube and TikTok as news sources demonstrates how audiovisual consumption now extends far beyond television. Short-form video favors immediacy, personality, visual evidence, and compression. These characteristics can improve accessibility, but they may also reduce context when complex issues are forced into highly condensed formats.

Incidental exposure has become normal. A person may encounter a headline inside a family WhatsApp group, a news clip between entertainment videos, or an explanation from a creator without having intentionally sought news. Hermida's (2010) idea of ambient journalism is useful here: information becomes part of the background flow of digital life. The benefit is broader exposure; the risk is that users may receive fragmented information without the contextual cues that accompany deliberate reading.

5. Audiences Become Redistributors, Interpreters, and Co-Producers

The traditional distinction between sender and receiver is weakened by participation. A recipient can add commentary, attach a competing source, crop an image, translate a statement, create a reaction video, or combine fragments into a new narrative. Bruns (2008) describes this productive role of users as produsage, while convergence theory emphasizes the circulation of content across media and communities (Jenkins, 2006).

This does not mean that professional production and user production are equivalent. Newsrooms generally operate with formal verification routines, legal responsibilities, editorial hierarchies, and correction mechanisms that individual users may not possess. The important change is that professional content now enters an interpretive network in which meaning can be reinforced, challenged, reframed, or distorted after publication.

Audience participation also feeds back into production. Comments reveal questions, search trends reveal demand, user-generated images can provide leads, and social reactions can turn a previously marginal issue into a national story. Humeira and Ramadhan's (2022) findings on reversed agenda setting illustrate this feedback process in Indonesian television journalism. The audience is therefore not located only at the end of the communication chain; it can re-enter at the beginning of the next production cycle.

6. Information Abundance Increases the Value of Verification and Context

Digital media dramatically lower the cost of producing and distributing information. That abundance changes the competitive advantage of journalism. Speed remains important, but speed alone is no longer scarce. What becomes scarce is verified, contextualized, attributable information that users can trust. This is why the declining cost of publication does not eliminate the social function of professional media.

The challenge is intensified by content that mimics journalism without following journalistic processes. Indonesia's 2026 Reuters Institute profile notes the growth of social-media accounts that scrape or repackage content, making it difficult for some audiences to distinguish legitimate news organizations from imitative sources (Steele, 2026). When authorship and provenance become ambiguous, the burden of verification shifts toward users who may lack time, expertise, or motivation to perform it.

Trust must therefore be treated as an outcome of the whole information environment rather than a property of a single message. The Reuters Institute reports overall news trust of 32% in Indonesia in 2026. That figure should not be read as a direct evaluation of every individual media brand, but it signals a broader credibility challenge. Verification practices, corrections, transparency about sources, clear separation of reporting and opinion, and disclosure of AI assistance become increasingly important trust infrastructures.

7. The Emerging Role of AI in Production and Consumption

Artificial intelligence intensifies all of the previous transformations because it operates on both sides of the communication process. In production, AI can support transcription, translation, summarization, tagging, archive search, headline testing, and content adaptation. In consumption, AI chatbots can summarize stories, answer questions, compare sources, and increasingly function as intermediaries between users and original publications.

The 2026 Digital News Report records growing use of AI chatbots for news globally, especially among younger users. This development adds another gate between publisher and audience. A user may receive an AI-generated synthesis without clicking the original source, which can improve convenience while weakening publisher traffic and obscuring the boundaries between original reporting and machine-generated interpretation.

For communication scholarship, AI therefore cannot be studied only as a production technology. It is also a consumption interface and a distribution actor. The central normative questions concern source attribution, accuracy, accountability, diversity, and the economic sustainability of original reporting. The same technology that can help journalists process information can also separate audiences from the organizations that paid to gather it.

Table 3. Synthesis of the Digital Mass-Communication Transformation

Stage	Main transformation	Key actors	Primary opportunity	Primary risk
1. Issue discovery	From newsroom-led scanning to networked monitoring	Journalists, publics, creators, search/social trends	Faster detection of emerging issues	Popularity signals can displace public relevance
2. Production	From single-format cycles to continuous multimedia workflows	Newsrooms, creators, AI tools	Speed, adaptation, richer formats	Workload, automation errors, homogenization
3. Platform formatting	Content tailored to interface and audience conventions	Editors, social teams, platform designers	Higher accessibility and engagement	Message oversimplification
4. Distribution	From owned channels to hybrid algorithmic visibility	Publishers, users, platforms, recommenders	Expanded reach	Platform dependency and opacity
5. Consumption	From scheduled reception to personalized, mobile, incidental use	Audiences, creators, platforms, AI interfaces	Convenience and choice	Fragmentation, context loss, unequal exposure
6. Recirculation & feedback	Audience activity becomes new content and production data	Users, communities, newsrooms, analytics systems	Participation and responsive journalism	Virality pressure, misinformation, metric capture

A Six-Stage Circular Model of Digital Mass Communication

Based on the synthesis, this article proposes a six-stage circular model: issue discovery, production, platform formatting, distribution, consumption, and recirculation/data feedback. The stages are analytically distinct but operationally connected. A newsroom may discover an issue through social media, produce a verified report, adapt it for several platforms, receive algorithmically mediated distribution, observe audience reactions, and use the resulting data to determine the next update. Communication is therefore recursive.

The model differs from a simple sender-message-channel-receiver sequence in three ways. First, more than one actor can perform gatekeeping. Second, the channel has agency because platform architecture influences visibility and form. Third, the receiver generates feedback that is sufficiently immediate and measurable to change the next production decision. Digital mass communication is thus a negotiated system in which editorial, technological, commercial, and participatory logics operate simultaneously.

This framework also helps distinguish digital transformation from technological substitution. Replacing a printed article with a web article is digitization. Reorganizing editorial workflows around continuous

updates, audience data, social sourcing, video formats, recommendation systems, and creator competition is transformation. The latter changes roles, power relationships, and institutional incentives.

Implications for Indonesian Media and Communication Education

For Indonesian media organizations, the first implication is the need to reduce the false choice between professional standards and platform adaptation. News organizations have to understand platform formats and audience behavior, but the reason to maintain distinctive journalistic standards is precisely that the wider digital environment contains abundant unverified and decontextualized content. Verification, attribution, context, and correction are not obstacles to digital competitiveness; they are potential sources of differentiation.

Second, newsroom performance indicators should combine attention metrics with public-value indicators. Clicks and watch time can describe audience behavior, but they cannot determine importance on their own. A more balanced dashboard could combine reach, completion, source diversity, correction rate, subscription conversion, and the proportion of original reporting. This would reduce the risk that short-term platform signals become the only practical definition of editorial success.

Third, communication education should treat platform literacy as a core professional competence. Students need to understand how recommendation systems, analytics, search, social-video conventions, data collection, and AI tools influence communication outcomes. At the same time, technical competence should be paired with source verification, media law, ethics, audience research, and the political economy of platforms. The profession increasingly requires people who can move between editorial reasoning and technological systems without confusing one for the other.

Fourth, media literacy for audiences should shift from a narrow emphasis on identifying false content toward a broader understanding of information circulation. Users need to recognize that visibility is produced by a combination of editorial choice, social sharing, and algorithmic ranking. Knowing why a message appears in a feed is part of understanding the message itself.

Finally, media sustainability must be included in discussions of communication quality. If original reporting is expensive but distribution and advertising value are captured elsewhere, the capacity to produce verified information can weaken even as the volume of available content expands. The future of mass communication therefore depends not only on new technologies but also on institutional arrangements that allow credible information production to remain economically viable.

Theoretical Implications for Mass Communication

The review has three theoretical implications. First, the concept of a mass audience needs to be separated from the assumption of simultaneous exposure to the same message. Digital communication can still reach very large populations, but exposure is increasingly individualized by platform ranking, network position, subscription choices, language, device, and prior behavior. Mass communication therefore persists at the level of scale while becoming more heterogeneous at the level of experience. The same public event can generate millions of exposures without producing one shared sequence of information.

Second, the channel can no longer be treated as a passive component of the communication model. In platform environments, the channel sorts, ranks, recommends, removes, monetizes, and measures. These functions make technological infrastructure part of the meaning-making process because the route through which information appears affects what is encountered, in what order, and with which contextual signals. A platform's recommendation logic can privilege novelty, recency, predicted engagement, or personal relevance, while a newsroom may prioritize verification, consequence, or public importance. Contemporary theory therefore needs to account for the interaction between editorial and computational criteria.

Third, feedback has moved from the margin to the center of mass communication. Traditional models acknowledged audience response, but feedback was often delayed, partial, and difficult to quantify. Digital systems generate immediate traces of attention that can be connected to particular headlines, formats, and distribution channels. This creates a recursive relationship: producers observe audience behavior, revise content, and then receive another round of behavioral data. The result is not a closed technological loop, because professional values and organizational goals continue to matter, but the speed and visibility of feedback can alter editorial judgment more quickly than in earlier media systems.

These implications suggest that the most productive unit of analysis is no longer a single message moving from one sender to many receivers. A more appropriate unit is the circulation episode: a sequence in which information is produced, adapted, ranked, encountered, interpreted, shared, and converted into new data. This perspective allows researchers to examine where power enters the process and how responsibility changes when several actors influence the final information environment.

A Practical Governance Framework for Digital Information Production

For media organizations, the six-stage model can be translated into a practical governance framework. At the issue-discovery stage, social and search trends should be treated as leads rather than evidence. Journalists can use network signals to identify questions that matter to audiences, but verification standards should determine whether those signals become publishable claims. This distinction prevents popularity from being confused with factual reliability.

At the production stage, organizations should define which tasks may be assisted by automation and which require explicit human approval. Low-risk functions such as transcription, tagging, archive retrieval, or first-pass translation can be separated from higher-risk functions such as factual synthesis, source evaluation, legal interpretation, and final publication decisions. When generative AI is used, responsibility should remain attached to an editor or journalist who can explain how the output was checked.

At the distribution stage, publishers need a portfolio approach rather than dependence on one platform. Owned websites and applications remain important because they preserve a direct relationship with audiences, while search, social, messaging, and video platforms provide reach. The strategic objective should be to use third-party channels for discovery without allowing the organization's identity, subscription relationship, and archive to disappear behind those channels. Consistent source labeling, canonical links, recognizable visual identity, and platform-specific calls to visit the original report can help maintain provenance.

At the consumption and feedback stages, analytics should be interpreted with context. A high completion rate on a two-minute video, a long reading time on an investigation, and a low click rate on a public-service explainer describe different audience behaviors and should not be reduced to one performance score. Editorial dashboards can distinguish reach, depth, loyalty, conversion, source diversity, correction history, and original reporting. Such a balanced approach makes data useful without allowing the easiest-to-measure behavior to define all editorial value.

Finally, transparency should travel with the content. Corrections, source attribution, author identity, date of update, and disclosure of material AI assistance are especially important when information is likely to be copied or recirculated outside the publisher's own site. In a fragmented environment, trust depends partly on making the chain of responsibility visible. The practical goal is not to recreate the old one-way media order, but to preserve accountability within a communication system that is inevitably networked and participatory.

Conclusion

Digital media have transformed mass communication by changing the roles, timing, and power relationships that organize information. The most important shift is not from analog to digital format, but from a largely linear institutional process to a circular, platform-mediated system. Professional media remain important producers of verified information, yet they no longer control every stage between production and audience attention.

The review identifies six connected transformations. Information production becomes continuous and multimedia; gatekeeping becomes hybrid; distribution depends increasingly on platforms and recommendation systems; consumption becomes mobile, personalized, video-oriented, and often incidental; audiences act as redistributors and interpreters; and behavioral data feed back into editorial and commercial decisions. AI adds a new layer by entering both production workflows and audience interfaces.

In Indonesia, these changes are visible in the high use of social media for news and the growing importance of video and messaging platforms. At the same time, the digital environment creates pressure around trust, source recognition, verification, platform dependency, and business sustainability. Expanding access is therefore only one dimension of communication quality.

The six-stage circular model proposed in this article - issue discovery, production, platform formatting, distribution, consumption, and recirculation/data feedback - provides a framework for analyzing these changes without assuming that one actor has replaced another. Contemporary mass communication is better understood as a negotiated system in which media institutions, platforms, algorithms, creators, and audiences continuously shape one another.

Future research should test this model empirically in Indonesian media organizations and audience communities. Comparative newsroom studies could examine how editorial metrics influence topic selection; audience research could distinguish deliberate news seeking from incidental exposure; and platform studies could investigate how recommendation systems affect source diversity and recognition. Research on AI should also examine whether chatbot-mediated consumption changes trust, traffic to original sources, and users' ability to evaluate provenance.

References

Note: To maintain an English-only manuscript, Indonesian-language article and journal titles are presented in English translation. Original DOIs are retained for source traceability.

- Ariestyani, K. (2021). Reviewing automated journalism: Challenges and opportunities in the Indonesian media industry. *Convergence: Journal of Communication Science*, 2(2), 51-65.
- Braun, J. A., & Eklund, J. L. (2019). Fake news, real money: Ad tech platforms, profit-driven hoaxes, and the business of journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 7(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1556314>
- Bruns, A. (2008). *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: From Production to Prodsusage*. Peter Lang.
- Casero-Ripolles, A. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on journalism: A set of transformations in five domains. *Comunicacao e Sociedade*, 40, 53-69. [https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.40\(2021\).3283](https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.40(2021).3283)
- Deuze, M., Bruns, A., & Neuberger, C. (2007). Preparing for an age of participatory news. *Journalism Practice*, 1(3), 322-338.
- Gillespie, T. (2018). *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media*. Yale University Press.
- Harcup, T., & O'Neill, D. (2017). What is news? News values revisited (again). *Journalism Studies*, 18(12), 1470-1488. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1150193>
- Hermida, A. (2010). Twittering the news: The emergence of ambient journalism. *Journalism Practice*, 4(3), 297-308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512781003640703>
- Humeira, B., & Ramadhan, A. (2022). The uses of social media in journalism practices: The reversed-agenda setting on television news production. *Journal of Journalism Studies*, 4(2), 19-34. <https://doi.org/10.15408/jsj.v4i2.28964>
- Indainanto, Y. I. (2021). The future of mass media in the digital era. *Muqoddimah Scientific Journal: Journal of Social Sciences, Politics and Humanities*, 5(1), 24-37. <https://doi.org/10.31604/jim.v5i1.2021.24-37>
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York University Press.
- Karlsson, M., Van Couvering, E., & Lindell, J. (2022). Publishing, sharing, and spreading online news: A case study of gatekeeping logics in the platform era. *Nordicom Review*, 43(2), 190-213. <https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2022-0012>
- Masduki, M., Prastya, N. M., Yusuf, I. A., & Ningsih, I. N. D. K. (2024). Understanding the business model of digital journalism in Indonesia. *Journalism Studies*, 8(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jkj.v8i1.54220>
- Napoli, P. M. (2011). *Audience Evolution: New Technologies and the Transformation of Media Audiences*. Columbia University Press.
- Pamuji, E., & Sari, R. P. (2026). Algorithmic gatekeeping in transition: Generative AI and accountability in Indonesian newsrooms. *Journal of Communication Studies*, 10(2), 414-423. <https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v10i2.11777>
- Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. (2026). *Digital News Report 2026*. University of Oxford.
- Rosemarwati, T. U., & Lindawati, L. (2019). The use of social media as a news source by online journalists in Indonesia. *Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 23(2), 101-114. <https://doi.org/10.31445/jskm.2019.1744>
- Scheffauer, R., Goyanes, M., & Gil de Zuniga, H. (2024). Social media algorithmic versus professional journalists' news selection: Effects of gate keeping on traditional and social media news trust. *Journalism*, 25(4), 755-778. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849231179804>
- Shin, D., & Zhou, S. (2024). A value and diversity-aware news recommendation systems: Can algorithmic gatekeeping nudge readers to view diverse news? *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10776990241246680>
- Shin, D., Zaid, B., Biocca, F., & Rasul, A. (2022). In platforms we trust? Unlocking the black-box of news algorithms through interpretable AI. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 66(2), 235-256. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2022.2057984>
- Steele, J. (2026). Indonesia. In *Digital News Report 2026*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford.
- Syamsuddin, A. K., & Sonni, A. F. (2025). A literature review of the transformation of television journalism practices in the era of media convergence in Makassar. *Journal of Innovative Research*. <https://doi.org/10.54082/jupin.1490>
- van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & de Waal, M. (2018). *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. Oxford University Press.
- Veronika, V., & Raharjo, A. E. (2021). Profiling news consumption on social media. *Journal of Professional Communication*, 5(4). <https://doi.org/10.25139/jkp.v5i4.3794>