

# Artificial Intelligence and the Quest for Truth: Navigating Misinformation in Digital News Environments

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## ABSTRACT

In an age where artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping communication and media landscapes, the challenge of discerning truth from misinformation has intensified. This paper explores the intersection of AI and digital news consumption, focusing on how audiences navigate the complexities of information in the digital realm. Utilising a problem-solution framework, the study investigates AI's role in perpetuating and combating misinformation and proposes strategies for enhancing digital literacy and critical thinking among news consumers. This paper reveals users' experiences as they grapple with the overwhelming influx of information through a descriptive phenomenological research approach, including in-depth interviews and thematic analysis. The findings underscore the necessity of integrating AI tools in media literacy initiatives, fostering a more informed public capable of navigating the digital information environment effectively.

**Keywords:** *Digital Realm; Credibility; News Truth; Journalism; Social Media*

## INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation has led to overwhelming information (information overload), making it increasingly difficult for individuals to distinguish between credible news and misinformation. In this context, the role of artificial intelligence becomes pivotal. The rise of AI-driven algorithms often exacerbates the spread of misinformation by prioritising engagement over accuracy. The urgency of this inquiry is underscored by the proliferation of fake news (Dell, 2019), which poses significant risks to public trust in journalism and informed decision-making. As digital platforms become the primary news source for many, understanding the interplay between AI and information consumption is critical for fostering a more literate and discerning audience.

In the contemporary digital landscape, the proliferation of information presents both opportunities and challenges. While the internet serves as a vast repository of knowledge, it

also harbors significant threats, particularly in the form of misinformation and disinformation. Misinformation is defined as false information shared without malicious intent, while disinformation is deliberately misleading (UNESCO, 2019; Murphy, 2023). The urgency of understanding these phenomena is underscored by the increasing complexity of news consumption, where audiences must navigate a sea of content that often lacks verification and ethical standards. Recent studies indicate that the digital divide persists, complicating the ability of various demographics to discern credible information (Geers, 2020).

This topic's relevance within the Communication Science framework is profound, especially in an era dominated by Artificial Intelligence (AI). As AI technologies increasingly influence how news is generated and disseminated, the potential for enhancing and undermining journalistic integrity becomes apparent. The digital public sphere has transformed how audiences engage with news, often leading to a decline in trust towards traditional media sources (Toff, B., et al, 2021; McKelvey & Hunt, 2019); Ceppa, 2022). This shift necessitates critically examining how AI can be leveraged to combat misinformation while fostering a more informed public.

Moreover, the theme of this conference emphasises the need for rigorous academic inquiry into the intersection of AI and misinformation. Two primary justifications for this research are: first, the critical need to develop frameworks that enhance digital literacy among users, enabling them to navigate the complexities of information in digital environments (Phippen, 2024). Second, addressing the research gap concerning the efficacy of AI in mitigating misinformation is essential, as current literature primarily focuses on traditional media without adequately addressing the implications of AI-driven platforms (Musi & Reed, 2022). This paper aims to contribute to the discourse by exploring these dimensions, drawing on previous studies while presenting novel insights into the evolving relationship between AI, communication, and the quest for truth in digital news environments.

## **RESEARCH GAP AND NOVELTY**

Despite extensive research on misinformation and its impact on public perception, there remains a notable gap in understanding the specific role of AI in this context. Previous studies have concentrated mainly on the ethical dimensions of journalism and audience trust without fully exploring how AI can be utilised to enhance information verification (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2021). This research seeks to fill this gap by investigating the experiences of sceptical audiences in navigating truth on digital platforms, employing a descriptive phenomenological approach to gain deeper insights into user behaviours and perceptions. By doing so, the study not only builds upon existing literature but also introduces a fresh perspective on the interplay between technology and truth in the age of AI.

In summary, the urgency of this research is underscored by the pressing need to understand and address the challenges posed by misinformation in digital news environments. By examining the role of AI and the importance of digital literacy, this study aims to

contribute valuable insights to the field of Communication Science and inform strategies for fostering a more informed and discerning public. This paper addresses the following research question: How can AI be leveraged to enhance truth navigation in the digital news environment?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a crucial role in navigating misinformation in digital news environments. AI technologies, particularly algorithms used by social media platforms, significantly influence news distribution. These algorithms often favour sensational content, leading to the spread of misinformation (Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Robertson, C. T., Eddy, K., Nielsen, 2022). This literature review synthesises existing research on the challenges of misinformation and the potential of AI to mitigate these challenges, drawing on key findings from previous studies.

### *The Challenge of Misinformation*

The prevalence of misinformation in digital spaces has been extensively documented. Ido Prijana Hadi, IP et al. (2025) highlight that "the digital space creates a cornucopia of information," where misinformation and disinformation thrive due to the rapid spread of unverified content across social media platforms (Hadi, 2024). They emphasise that the "urgency of this research is to find out the subject's experience when the quantity of information is abundant," noting that users often struggle to discern credible sources from misleading ones.

Moreover, the study by (Kalogeropoulos, Antonis, 2019) indicates that "social media as a primary source of news correlates with lower levels of trust in news," suggesting that the very platforms designed to disseminate information may contribute to the erosion of trust in journalism. This erosion is exacerbated by users' tendency to rely on non-mainstream news sources, which often lack rigorous verification processes.

### *The Role of AI in Mitigating Misinformation*

The post-truth era is characterised by a decline in trust in traditional news sources, exacerbated by the rise of alternative facts and misinformation (O'Keeffe & Munk, 2017; Lewandowsky et al., 2017). Moreover, Chalikkuzhi states that the post-truth era is characterized by the blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction (Chalikkuzhi, 2023). Understanding this phenomenon is essential for addressing the challenges posed by AI in the news landscape.

Artificial Intelligence has emerged as a potential tool for combating misinformation in digital news environments. Hadi et al assert that "users have not fully used artificial intelligence to ward off false information," (Hadi, 2024) indicating a gap in deploying AI

technologies that could enhance news verification processes. The authors advocate for a critical approach to AI, urging users to "think critically in a quick check of grey areas," underscoring the necessity for digital literacy in an era dominated by rapid information exchange.

In a related vein, Murphy discusses the efficacy of credible sources in reducing trust in misinformation, stating, "sources that are considered more credible are more effective in reducing trust in misinformation." (Murphy, 2023) This finding suggests that AI-driven tools that can assess the credibility of news sources may significantly improve users' ability to navigate the complex landscape of digital news.

### ***The Importance of Digital Literacy***

Digital literacy is a critical component in the fight against misinformation. It encompasses the skills required to evaluate and engage critically with digital content. In AI, enhancing digital literacy is crucial for empowering users to navigate misinformation effectively (Phippen, 2024; de-Lima-Santos et al., 2025).

Hadi et al. (2024) state that "someone with good literacy skills can help fight fake news, alternative facts, and the spread of disinformation in society." (Dell, 2019; Hadi, 2024). Kozyreva et al. (2023) echo this sentiment, arguing that "media literacy teaches critical thinking skills," which are essential for discerning the reliability of information encountered online (Kozyreva et al., 2023). As the digital landscape evolves, the intersection of AI and digital literacy becomes increasingly vital. The integration of AI tools in news consumption practices and enhanced digital literacy can empower users to make informed decisions and navigate the complexities of misinformation more effectively..

## **METHODOLOGY**

This paper has been written based on research data with an interpretive paradigm, employing qualitative approaches and descriptive phenomenological methods to explore individual experiences and consciousness, a concept referred to as intentionality. Each conscious act and experience is directed towards an object, highlighting the significance of perception in understanding human behaviour (Drummond, 2015). Descriptive phenomenology aims explicitly to capture the richness and depth of participants' lived experiences (Streubert, 2011). The methodological process consists of four key steps: bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and describing (Polit, 2010; Rohayati et al., 2023).

The experience, or consciousness, encompasses awareness of various phenomena, including seeing, remembering, and judging. It represents an interaction with a "real" object or is influenced by memory and creativity (Jonathan A. Smith, 2021). The data collected reflects the lived experiences of the participants, offering meaningful insights into their perspectives rather than an outsider's (emic perspective). The focus of the study is on the

utilization of social media platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube), messaging applications (including WhatsApp, Line, and Snapchat), and search engines (like Google).

A total of 14 participants were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring a diverse representation across various professions and educational backgrounds, all within the productive age range of 15-64 years. All possess diverse educational backgrounds and a willingness to share their experiences. To maintain anonymity, participants were assigned P codes during the interview process, which documented their experiences. P1 (50 years old / Sports Teacher at High School), P2 (44 years old / Self-employed), P3 (53 years old / Librarian at Private University), P4 (51 years old / Navy Officer), P5 (56 years old / Manager), P6 (48 years old / Lecturer at Private University), P7 (20 years old / Entrepreneur / Student), P8 (44 years old / Laboratory at Private University), P9 (52 years old / Lecturer at Private University), P10 (43 years old/ Private Driver), P11 (45 years old/ Lawyer), P12 (32 years old/ Private Employee), P13 (31 years old/ Head of Library at Private High School), P14 (48 years/ Interior Design Administration). This selection criterion aims to capture a broad spectrum of experiences related to navigating truth in the digital news environment.

### ***Data Collection Techniques***

Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences and perceptions regarding their interactions with digital news platforms. This qualitative technique facilitates a deeper understanding of individual narratives and the complexities of their media consumption behaviours.

### ***Data Analysis***

The data analysis employed thematic coding to identify recurring themes and patterns, illuminating the participants' experiences with the Colaizzi technique (Praveena K.R & Sasikumar S, 2021; Braun & Clarke, 2006). This involved extracting and categorising significant statements to interpret the phenomenon's essential meanings, culminating in the researcher's comprehensive understanding and articulation.

### ***Triangulation Narrative to Enhance Trustworthiness***

Triangulation was employed to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Ahmed, 2024). This approach involved cross-verifying data from multiple sources, including participant interviews, existing literature, and relevant digital media practices. By integrating different perspectives, the research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study, thereby reinforcing the validity of the conclusions. Triangulation is a critical strategy to mitigate bias and ensure the findings reflect the participants' lived realities.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's participants came from diverse occupational and professional fields (self employed individuals, private sector employees, military personnel, lawyers, sports educators, university lecturers, librarians, marketing professionals, personal drivers, and interior design administrators), varied in age, education, and experience, reflecting the broad scope of this research topic concerning individuals' skepticism in discerning the truth of news on digital platforms. This research aims not to generalise but to explore the significance of news truths perceived by each participant residing in Surabaya and its vicinity. The group of fourteen included nine females and five males. Detailed interviews occurred in workplaces, manufacturing sites, cafeterias, and residences.

### *Theme Findings*

This section describes the themes identified in the research results, which are grouped into several categories.

Based on the findings from the topic of Artificial Intelligence and the Quest for Truth: Navigating Misinformation in Digital News Environments, the thematic findings can be categorised into several key areas. Below is a table summarising these themes:

**Table 1 : Thematic Findings Key Areas**

Category	Theme Findings
Misinformation & Disinformation	The digital environment is rife with misinformation (unintentional falsehoods) and disinformation (intentional falsehoods), complicating the quest for truth.
Trust in News Sources	Trust in journalism is declining due to the proliferation of online media, which often neglects ethical standards. This leads to scepticism among audiences regarding news credibility.
Digital Literacy	Digital literacy is essential for navigating the complex information landscape, enabling individuals to evaluate, create, and communicate information effectively.
Use of Social Media	Audiences use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to verify news, often waiting for confirmation from multiple sources before accepting information as accurate.

Category	Theme Findings
Impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI)	AI has not been fully leveraged to combat misinformation, highlighting the need for critical thinking and verification in news consumption.
Role of Context	Contextual understanding is crucial; audiences consider the background of news stories and their sources to assess credibility.
Ethical Violations in Journalism	High rates of ethical violations in online journalism, including unverified reporting and sensationalism, contribute to public distrust.
Audience Engagement	Increased audience engagement with non-mainstream news sources reflects a shift in news consumption habits, often correlating with lower levels of trust in traditional media.

Source : Data Processed by Author

This table encapsulates the main themes identified in the study, addressing the complexities of navigating truth in an AI-influenced digital news environment. If there are specific aspects you would like to explore further or if additional information is needed, please let me know!

### ***The Importance of Contextual Consideration and Cross-Referencing Information From Multiple Outlets***

This study's findings reveal the complexities individuals face navigating the truth in the digital news environment. Participants, drawn from diverse professional backgrounds, reported utilising various social media platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, to verify the credibility of news sources, including factors influencing individuals' judgments of information credibility (Lee & Shin, 2021; Ou & Ho, 2024). They emphasised the importance of contextual consideration and cross-referencing information from multiple outlets before forming conclusions about the news. This verification method is particularly evident in significant events, such as the 2024 general election that has already passed in Indonesia, where users preferred to wait for corroborative information from reliable sources. The research highlights the challenges posed by the overwhelming volume of online information and the necessity for critical engagement with digital content to discern truth from misinformation.

### ***Artificial Intelligence and Human Cognition Necessitate a Critical Examination***

From the perspective of Artificial Intelligence and the Quest for Truth: Navigating Misinformation in Digital News Environments, the discussion can be framed within the Digital Literacy and Post-Truth theories. Digital Literacy encompasses the skills necessary to navigate the vast information landscape effectively, enabling individuals to evaluate and create content responsibly (Falloon, 2020; Lewandowsky et al., 2017). In contrast, the Post-Truth framework elucidates the manipulation of emotions and subjective beliefs that often overshadow objective facts in contemporary discourse (Vieira Rodrigues, 2025). Previous studies indicate that the proliferation of misinformation, particularly during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbates the challenges of discerning truth, as individuals increasingly rely on emotional resonance rather than factual accuracy in their information consumption (Musi & Reed, 2022). This interplay between *artificial intelligence and human cognition necessitates a critical examination of how AI tools can either mitigate or exacerbate the spread of misinformation in digital environments.*

A comparative analysis of this study with previous research on "Navigating Truth in the News Environment on Digital Platforms" reveals a consistent theme of scepticism among audiences regarding the reliability of news sources. Earlier studies have shown that trust in news media is declining, particularly in digital platforms, where misinformation thrives (Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Robertson, C. T., Eddy, K., Nielsen, 2022). This current research builds upon those findings by providing qualitative insights into how individuals actively engage with news content, employing strategies to verify information and mitigate the effects of misinformation. The emphasis on user agency in navigating digital news environments distinguishes this study from prior quantitative approaches, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of audience behaviour in the face of pervasive misinformation.

Scientific interpretations emerging from "Artificial Intelligence and the Quest for Truth: Navigating Misinformation in Digital News Environments" suggest that integrating AI in news dissemination can lead to positive and negative outcomes. On one hand, AI technologies can enhance the verification process by filtering out unreliable information and promoting credible sources. On the other hand, the same technologies can be exploited to amplify misleading narratives, thereby complicating the quest for truth. The duality of AI's role in shaping public discourse necessitates ongoing research into its implications for information integrity and audience trust.

### ***The Implications for Practices and Policies***

The implications of these findings for practices and policies in the field of Digital Communication and AI are significant. As misinformation continues to proliferate, there is a pressing need for enhanced digital literacy initiatives that equip users with the skills to assess information critically. Policymakers should consider implementing regulations that promote transparency in AI algorithms used for news curation, prioritising credible sources and

factual reporting. Furthermore, collaboration between media organisations and educational institutions can foster a culture of scepticism and critical thinking among news consumers, ultimately strengthening the integrity of digital communication in an increasingly complex information landscape. Validated references for these discussions include works by Musi & Reed, 2022; Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Robertson, C. T., Eddy, K., Nielsen, 2022; UNESCO, 2019), among others.

## CONCLUSION

The study, *Artificial Intelligence and the Quest for Truth: Navigating Misinformation in Digital News Environments*, explores the complex interplay between artificial intelligence (AI) and the dissemination of truth in the digital news landscape. It emphasizes the challenges posed by misinformation and disinformation, particularly in the post-truth era (Lewandowsky et al., 2017), where subjective interpretations often overshadow objective facts.

The paper highlights that digital platforms have transformed how audiences engage with news, leading to a sceptical approach among users. Participants in the study expressed a need to verify information from credible sources and to cross-check facts before accepting them as accurate. This scepticism is fueled by the rapid spread of misleading information, particularly during significant events such as elections, where emotions and ideologies often distort perceptions of reality.

Key findings indicate that while AI has the potential to enhance the accuracy of information dissemination, users have not fully realized its current application. The study underscores the importance of digital literacy, which encompasses the skills necessary to navigate and evaluate information effectively. Participants noted that enhanced media literacy can empower individuals to combat misinformation and develop critical thinking skills. In light of these findings, the study recommends further research in the field of Communication Studies to address the following areas :

1. **Enhanced Digital Literacy Programs:** Investigate the effectiveness of various educational initiatives to improve digital literacy among diverse populations, focusing on critical evaluation skills and the ability to discern credible sources. Moreover, critical thinking involves evaluating the reliability and credibility of digital content.
2. **AI's Role in News Verification:** Explore the development and integration of AI tools designed to assist users in verifying news content and identifying misinformation, assessing their impact on public trust in digital news.
3. **Audience Engagement Strategies:** Examine innovative approaches for media organisations to engage audiences in discussions about misinformation, fostering a culture of scepticism that encourages verification and critical

analysis. Attention to ethical online behavior, such as respecting privacy, acknowledging copyright, and engaging in responsible social interactions.

4. **Cultural Differences in Misinformation Navigation:** Conduct comparative studies across different cultural contexts to understand how various demographics navigate misinformation and the role of cultural factors in shaping media consumption behaviours.

By focusing on these areas, future research can contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics between AI, digital news, and the quest for truth, ultimately enhancing the capacity of individuals to navigate the complexities of the digital information landscape.

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