

## Why we need mainstream media now more than ever



Monitor Publications Limited, a subsidiary of Nation Media Group-Uganda, published the final edition of the *Sunday Monitor* last month. The decision represents the latest attempt by one of Uganda's leading media houses to adapt to changing times in order to remain relevant. A few months earlier, the *New Vision* had taken a similar step. These developments have revived an ongoing debate: the growing challenge social media poses to mainstream media.

The rise of social media has ushered in an era of citizen journalism, where the term "content creator" has become part of everyday language. Stories once exclusively produced and disseminated by traditional media institutions are now readily available online, curated and shared by virtually anyone with Internet access.

This transformation has democratized storytelling, creating a vast and interconnected web of information. However, while access to publishing tools has expanded, professional training in information gathering has not necessarily followed. Many content creators lack the journalistic grounding required to collect and present information while carefully considering accuracy, context, and ethical responsibility.

A trained journalist, when tipped off about a story, is expected to verify facts through multiple sources, interrogate the credibility of information, and weigh the public interest before publication. Such rigor is not always present in informal digital spaces, where speed and visibility often take precedence over verification and reflection.

In what many describe as the information age, an overwhelming volume of content circulates online daily. Alongside credible reporting exists misinformation and disinformation—terms that have become increasingly familiar. Much of this problematic content stems from individuals who share information without applying the principles central to professional journalism: truthfulness, accuracy, fairness, and balance.

Mainstream media, with its structured and often cautious approach to news gathering, remains uniquely positioned to separate fact from falsehood. In a newsroom, a reporter pitching a story must answer fundamental questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? These questions, guided by established journalistic ethics, determine whether a story meets publication standards.

Importantly, mainstream media institutions do not merely rely on trained professionals; they continuously train and retrain their journalists to uphold these values. This culture of accountability and editorial scrutiny distinguishes professional journalism from the largely unregulated flow of online content, where anyone can record, publish, and distribute information without adhering to basic reporting standards.

Now more than ever, amid an increasingly complex information landscape, society needs mainstream media to help navigate the noise—to separate truth from distortion and provide citizens with reliable, verified information.