

ACCEPTANCE OF NEWS STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY MASS COMMUNICATION UNDERGRADUATES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The imperative of this research was premised on the fact that social media have evolved over the years from being just platforms for networking to veritable media of Mass Communication, in spite of their interactional architecture. The research design was survey, while the population of the study comprised 2,899 undergraduates from the three selected tertiary institutions, out of which a sample size of 580, was drawn using stratified sampling technique. Furthermore, while the sampling techniques were purposive and stratified sampling techniques, the instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. Results of the study revealed that despite undergraduates' low acceptances of news on social media, majority of them (238:49.1%) still used the social media very frequently for news; and that Facebook was the most used social media platform. This confirms the assumption that youth especially undergraduates, are heavy users of social media, especially Facebook. The study also found that there is a significant relationship between the age of undergraduates and their acceptance of news on social media. It was recommended that in order to combat false news on their platforms, social media companies like the most prominent networks must start using feedback systems.

Keywords: Acceptance, mass communication, news stories, social media, platforms, undergraduates, tertiary institutions.

Introduction

The advent of social media marks a watershed moment in the development of human communication. People now use social media as a way to build relationships and share information in online groups. Through the use of online communities and networks, social media has developed into a method of interaction between individuals (Al-Rahmi & Othman, 2013). Due to the removal of barriers to communication and the creation of a decentralised communication channel, social media have made it possible for everyone, even those who reside in repressive countries, to express themselves and take part in democratic processes. The importance of social media as a communication medium for students, especially those pursuing higher education, is increasingly recognised and used. It is considered to have bridged the communication gap and having the power to instantly sway judgment (Fakokunde, 2020).

The rise of social media has changed how people communicate and how information and news are generally consumed. The growths of information sources and channels, as well as the enhanced options for consumer interaction and co-creation, have all had a big influence on how people consume news (Pentina and Tarafdar, 2013).

Since social media is so popular, it just takes a few clicks to read any news source from anywhere in the world and keep informed as opposed to the days when people had to buy newspapers to stay current on daily news stories. According to Nnaane (2023), social media usage has altered how people communicate globally as well as how they get and share information about their health, civic involvement, and news consumption, among others. Social media use has become more and more popular among college students. According to studies from Nigerian

institutions, adopting social media for news gathering and communication has several benefits (Siddhartha, Abdul, Sowmya, Mushir, Munazim, Fazlur, Kunwar, Suchismita, and Sumaiya, 2020). News stories may now be shared on social media platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and others. The people may simply get all the internet news they want via a number of social media venues. Currently, social media is seen as a crucial instrument for disseminating information and speeding up the reporting of breaking news stories (Olise, 2021).

Reading recent, relevant news stories is simple and fast because of the ability to access social media on a variety of devices, according to Adaja and Ayodele (2013). The gathering and sharing of news on social media is useful. Social media is distinct from other mainstream media because of its audience's extraordinary diversity and boundlessness (Boahene, Fang, and Sampong, 2019). Despite this, many people are still stunned and doubt the veracity of the news reports shared on social media. News on social media is seen as being publicly accessible since the bulk of the providers are unlicensed, untrained workers in journalism or mass communication. For instance, the last few years have seen a lot of news coverage in Nigeria about the many pandemics wreaking havoc on the country, including Lassa fever, Ebola, and the most recent COVID-19 virus.

More precisely, social media have increased the amount of unintentional news exposure, which occurs when individuals discover news as a consequence of their online activities, exposure to specific and exact sought-after information, and exposure to unwelcome content like news and advertising (Pentina & Tarafdar, 2013). However, certain studies have showed how journalists in different countries are using this new technology. There has not been much interest in studies on students' use of social media as a news source. Furthermore, the interpretation and acceptance of news pieces shared on social media by students studying public communication is given relatively little attention.

Furthermore, considering that the vast majority of students worldwide regularly access social media, it is important for us to evaluate the level of acceptance of news stories on social media platforms by these students in tertiary institutions. It is based on these backgrounds that this study seeks to examine the acceptance of news stories on social media by undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

It is believed that the effect of social media news stories is highly dependent on the extent of acceptability of such news stories by the consumers of social media content. The rising concern on the quality and truthfulness of news has been an integral part of the Fourth Estate. It is generally believed that the press and media hold other institutions responsible by covering their acts. By encouraging a virtual echo chamber, the Fourth Estate disseminates news stories in a way that allows viewers to be exposed to it more carefully. Less variation and the reinforcement of prejudice might arise from this. An echo chamber is created when individuals only find sources and information that confirm their own opinions while ignoring information that challenges them. Due to the absence of diversity and blatant attempts at balance in mainstream media, people choose to read those who have similar views to their own.

The proliferation of news articles on social media, however, has given rise to a new problem. In spite of the fact that breaking news on social media is not a new phenomenon, it has only lately piqued the curiosity of certain academics. According to Apuke (2016), students are the most common demographic to see news pieces on social media. This means undergraduates will be exposed to the pros and cons of news articles. It therefore becomes necessary to examine the acceptance of news stories on social media by undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Edo State.

Objectives of the Study

1. Find out the frequency with which Mass Communication undergraduates use social media in their consumption

- of news in Edo State.
2. Determine the level of acceptance of news stories on social media by masscommunication undergraduates in Edo state.
3. Discover the most acceptable social media platform for receiving news by undergraduates of mass communication in tertiary institution in Edo state.
4. Ascertain the relationship between age of Mass Communication undergraduates and their of news stories on social media.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

1. How frequently do Mass Communication undergraduates use social media for newsconsumption in Edo state?
2. What is the level of acceptance of news stories on social media by Mass Communicationundergraduates in Edo state?
3. What is the most acceptable social media platform for receiving news stories by undergraduates of Mass Communication in tertiary institutions in Edo state?
4. To what extent does age of Mass Communication undergraduates influence their level of acceptance of news stories on social media?

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no relationship between the age of undergraduates and the acceptance of news stories on social media.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarification: Social Media

Social media are online platforms that facilitate human connection and enable users to create, exchange, and virtually share knowledge. They have developed into a significant tool that has impacted not just the whole world but also our culture, economy, behaviour, relationships,etc. This is due to its functionalities, which are user-friendly. Social media have, in part, removed communication

barriers and established decentralised communication channels by providing a platform for everyone to engage in and contribute to society activities. Before social media took off, traditional/conventional media ruled for a very long time. People bought and read daily newspapers and magazines in order to remain up to speed on the most current news. However, social media, which have been around for a while, has made accessing news or information nowadays as easy as pressing a button. It is quick and simple to access news sources from anywhere in the world. Enterprises have grown tremendously as a result of the advertising of goods and businesses on social media, which draws endless millions of viewers. Garrelt (2019), reports that more than two-thirds of American adults use social media platforms, which have altered how people connect, work, and participate in politics globally. Possible discussion starters include parenting, dating, health problems, political participation, news intake, and so on.

The majority of university students in Kenya spend more time on socialmedia than in class, which has an effect on their behaviour and performance, according to Asibong, Okafor, Asibong, and Ayi (2020). According to Oberiri (2017), the organisation, communication, saving, and retrieval of learned content are all made simpler by these social media technologies. In order to reduce information overload in the area of news intake, social media applications have been developed. These programmes may be used to seek, choose, and distribute news among us as well as to find and interact with specific individuals. In other words, by bringing individuals together based on same interests and aspirations, it has improved interpersonal interactions; it also makes it simpler to establish information networks so that content providers and a group of information consumers may communicate in real-time about problems and concerns. There is no doubt that social media exposes users to a range of news sources, broadening their cognitive horizons. Also, Nnaane (2019), argues that the architecture of the social media has made it possible for their flexibility and

usage in all spheres of human endeavours. He noted further that these social media qualities such as connection, creation, conversation, and collaboration have made the social media to be ubiquitous.

Review of Empirical Studies

Olise (2021) did a study to gauge the level of acceptance of news stories on Nigerian youths' social media platforms to test the hypothesis that the profusion of news stories on social media facilitates the spread of both genuine and fake news. The data was analysed and presented using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Research shows that young people have a poor tolerance for news items published on social media, despite their significant exposure to social media and the news pieces they prefer reading. Umar, Wilson, and Rejoice (2019) used a case study at the University of Maiduguri to examine the similarities and differences in the ways in which students there utilise online and offline media. The research found that traditional media's legitimacy and validity cannot be questioned, even when consumers could pick relevant and interactive forms of content. From the empirical studies reviewed so far, this work will add to the gap in extant literature by focusing on the undergraduate students in tertiary institutions.

Furthermore, Ajoja and Nweanerizi (2020), studied the perception of youth concerning the acceptance of social media as credible sources of news. They found out that the youth frequently sourced for news on the social media, especially on Instagram and Twitter (now X) and that their view about the credibility of the news coming from the social media was moderate. Also, Osong and Egbe (2020), studied social media and their credibility as sources of news. They found out that apart from the use of the social media for news-gathering, they were also gaining more acceptability as credible news sources. Arising from the foregoing, the gap this research intends to fill is to find out if the algorithms and architecture of the respective social media platform engender their acceptability as news sources among students.

Theoretical Framework

The research relied on the Technology Acceptance Model and the Uses and Gratification Theory. The Needs and Gratification Theory (NGT) is another name for the Uses and Gratification Theory. Members of the audience are not only observers, but rather are expected to participate in what is being presented. They are free to pick and choose what they consume and from whom they take their information from the media. Inventors of the UGT were Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1974. A fundamental tenet of UGT is that it is the audience's responsibility to choose the kind of media that is most-conducive to the achievement of their goals. According to this theory, companies in the media industry compete with one another for viewers' attention. The U & G hypothesis might be used to the study of why students of mass communication believe the news they read on social media. It has been suggested that this concept, which was developed in the context of communication theory, may help us make sense of social media. One of the key premises of the theory is that if a media company can meet its customers' needs and leave them feeling content, those customers would prefer it over its competitors.

Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989), put out the Technology Acceptance Model, which states that if a technology is both beneficial and practical, then people will accept it. The more convenient and efficient a piece of technology is, the more likely it is that people will use it often and extensively. The hypothesis suggests that when individuals have access to new technology, they may or may not immediately decide to use it. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is the most well-known framework for the spread and usage of consumer technology. It is an expansion of Fishbein and Azjen's Theory of Reasoned Action from 1975. TAM is shown to have more logical coherence, predictability, and resilience than competing models. Individuals will act freely once they have made the decision to do so, despite the fact that there will be constraints in reality, as stated by the strong behavioral component of

TAM.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used in this study. Survey was chosen in this study because of the nature of the investigation. Surveys allow for the relatively easy collection of large amounts of data from a wide variety of people Wimmer and Dominick (2014). The population for this study was 2, 899. This figure which constituted the population of

this study was derived from three tertiary institutions in Edo state. These institutions were: University of Benin in Edo South, Samuel Adegboyega University in Edo Central and Federal Polytechnic, Auchi in Edo North. These tertiary institutions were selected basically because they represent the three Senatorial Zones in Edo State. The population of the respective tertiary institutions is presented in the table below:

Table 1: Population of the Selected Tertiary Institutions in Edo State

S/N	Tertiary Institutions	Population	Percentage
1	University of Benin	927	32%
2	Samuel Adegboyega University (Now Glorious Vision University)	57	2%
3	Federal Polytechnic Auchi	1,915	66%
4	Total	2,899	100%

The sample size for this research was 580 Mass Communication undergraduates selected to represent and reflect three (3) tertiary Institutions from Edo state. The Institutions are: (i) University of Benin, Benin City (Edo South), (ii) Samuel Adegboyega University, (now Glorious Vision University) Ogwa (Edo Central), and (iii) Federal Polytechnic, Auchi (Edo North). Furthermore, the sample size of this study was 576, derived by using the Nwana (1981) sample size formula. According to Nwana (1981) in Okoro (2001). If a population is a few hundreds, a 40% sample size will do, if many hundreds, 20% sample will do, if few thousands, 10% sample will do and so on. Also, purposive and proportionate stratified sampling techniques were adopted for the study. The purposive technique was used to select three major institutions based on the designated strata of three (3) senatorial districts (Edo South, Edo Central and Edo North) in Edo state. Proportionate stratified technique with used to spread the sample selected based on the total number of students in each of the selected tertiary institution. The

instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. The data that were gathered and produced for this study were analysed in an automated manner, using frequency tables, basic percentages, and mean scores.

Data Presentation

Out of a total number of 580 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 576 copies representing 99.3% were returned. Data from the research were computed, analysed, and presented using SPSS version 23 software. However, Table 2 shows data from the demographic representation of the respondents.

Table 2: Demographic Data of the Respondents

Variables	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	141	24.5
Female	435	75.5
Total	576	100
Age		
16-20 years	157	27.3
21-25 years	303	52.6
26-30 years	91	15.8
31 & above years	25	4.3
Total	576	100
Level of Study		
100	51	8.9
200	29	5.0
300	111	19.3
400	39	6.8
ND1	65	11.3
ND2	48	8.3
HND1	160	27.8
HND2	73	12.7
Total	576	100
Religion		
Islam	136	23.6
Christianity	350	60.8
Traditional	59	10.2
Others	31	5.4
Total	576	100
Marital Status		
Married	96	16.7
Single	461	80.0
Divorced	4	7
Separated	15	2.6
Total	576	100

The distribution of respondents by gender shows that the larger proportions of respondents are female (75.5%) when compared to male respondents (24.5%). The implication of this disproportionate gender distribution is that the findings may reflect more female perception and usage of social media in the analysis as they account for more respondents. Most of the respondents fall below the age of 26years, those who fall within

the age interval of 16 to 20 years make up 27.3% of respondents, while those who fall between the ages 21 to 25years are 52.6% of the entire sample. Cumulatively those below 26years are 79.9% of the entire sample.

The implication of this skewed demographic is that the perception and use of social media will reflect the facts of a very young demographic profile. Furthermore, respondents are distributed across tertiary

institution types. Those from the university account for cumulative 39.9% as 100 level students make up 8.9% of the sample, 200 level students make up 5%, 300 level students make up 19.3% and 400 level respondents are 6.8% of the entire sample. Respondents undergoing polytechnic education indicated a distribution of 11.3% in ND 1, 8.3% in ND 2, 37.8% in HND 1 and 12.7% in HND 2. This sample is dispersed across tertiary institution types.

The distribution of respondents by religious beliefs indicates that those who are of the Christian faith make up the largest group of respondents (60.8%). Respondents who are of the Islamic Faiths account for 23.6% of the

sample while the respondents who indicated others are 5.4% of the sample. The largest proportion of respondents are those who identify as single in their marital status (80%). This is expected as the larger proportion of respondents is youthful. Those who are married make up just 16.7% of the sample just as those who identify as divorced (0.7%) and separated (2.6%) are in the minority. The marital status is an important index of interest as respondents who are single and in tertiary education might yield some understanding about young people’s social media usage and preference reflecting lifestyles of the demographic.

Table 3: Frequency of social media use for news

Frequency of social media use	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very infrequently	22	3.8
Infrequently	41	7.1
Frequently	230	39.9
Very frequently	283	49.1
Total	576	100.0

According to table 3 above, the vast majority of respondents reported heavy involvement with social media. According to the previously established demographic profile, 49.1% of the overall sample is comprised of heavy social media users. Its regular users make up 39.9% of the sample and, taken together, they account for 89% of the total. The average score on a four-point scale of social media use is $\bar{x} = 4.3438$ with a standard deviation of .77340, suggesting that regular use is the norm. Therefore, it can be deduced that young college students utilise social media at a high rate in this field of study.

Table 4: Number of social sites used for news Consumption

Number of Sites	Frequency	Percent (%)
1-3	256	44.4
4-6	219	38.0
7 and above	101	17.5
Total	576	100.0

On the order of social media sites used for news consumption those who indicated that it is

between 1 and 3 sites make up 44.4%, those who considered between 4 and 6 sites are 38% of the sample while those who indicated 7 and above make up just 17.5% of the sample.

Table 5: Social media usage frequency in news consumption

Frequency of social media usage	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	67	11.6
2	120	20.8
3	134	23.3
4	114	19.8
5	141	24.5
Total	576	100.0

According to respondents, who were asked to rate how often they used social media to get their news, the average answer was $x \geq 3.2465$ (1.33704). On a scale from 1 to 5, the median is 3. It is reasonable to assume that college students rely heavily on social media as their primary means of keeping up with the news. Given the enormous monetary value placed on social media use, this makes perfect sense. Only 11.6% of the sample had a rating of 1 on the scale. Twenty-eight percent of the sample gave a rating of 2, and 23 percent gave a rating of 3. Of the whole population, 19.8% have a score of 4, whereas 24.5% have a score of 5.

Table 6: Acceptance of Social media for news

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
You prefer news on social media than the conventional media	2.9601	1.37688	Not significant
You are likely to use social media for news always	2.4566	1.22646	Not significant
Your level of acceptance of news stories is very high	3.2917	1.35454	Not significant
You consider news stories on social media as credible	3.2396	1.35450	Not significant
You share news stories on social media to your friends and family	4.4618	.87790	Significant

By using a five-point scale where 5 indicates strong agreement, 4 indicates agreement, 3 indicates uncertainty, 2 indicates disagreement, and 1 indicates significant disagreement, responses indicate a neutral value (rounded up to 3.00) on most indices. With a mean score of 2.9601 (1.37688), the typical response was "uncertain" when asked if social media or conventional media was the preferred source for news. Respondents are less likely to choose social media over conventional media for news, as shown by the statement's mean score of $x = 2.4566$ (1.22646), which translates to disagree. Indecisiveness is shown by the mean score of $x = 3.2917$ (1.35454) for assessing the degree of acceptance of news stories as extremely high. The average score for the trustworthiness of news reported on social media was 3.2396 (1.35450), again a neutral result that might be interpreted as doubtful. Finally, a majority of people (54%) say they agree with the statement "You distribute

news stories on social media to your friends and family," with a mean score of 4.4618. (or 8.7790). Despite respondents' low confidence in social media, they are nonetheless likely to share news stories within their networks.

Table 7: Most acceptable platform for receiving news

Social Media platforms	Most acceptable	Least acceptable
Twitter	415 (72%)	161(28%)
Facebook	507(88%)	69 (12%)
YouTube	403(70%)	173(30%)
Instagram	420(72.9%)	156(27.1%)
Whatsapp	437(75.9%)	139(24.1%)
Snapchat	193(33.5%)	383(66.5%)
More	171(29.7%)	405(70.3%)
LinkedIn	306(53.1%)	270(46.9%)
Quora	298(51.7%)	278(48.3%)
Reddit	116(20.1%)	460(79.9%)
Digg	98(17%)	478(83%)
Pinterest	290(50.3%)	286(49.7%)
Yelp	70(12.2%)	506(87.8%)

Facebook is a well-known social networking programme, and it is quite popular among young people, receiving the greatest value of acceptability (88%) based on the ranking of replies. Whatsapp (75.7%) comes in second, followed by Instagram (72.9%), and then Twitter (72%). YouTube is in fifth place with 70%, followed by LinkedIn in sixth with 53.1%, Quora in seventh with 51.7%, and Pinterest in eighth with 50.3%. Yelp (12.2%), dig (17%), Reddit (20.1%), Snapchat (33.5%), and more (29.7%) are among the many applications with user bases below 50%.

Table 8: Responses on Factors responsible for acceptance of news on social media

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
The credibility of the social media platform	4.4878	.92305	Significant
Credibility of the news stories	3.6285	1.32040	Significant
Credibility of the sender of the news stories	4.7326	.57909	Significant
The author of the news stories on social media	4.6944	.73215	Significant
Social Influence	4.5955	.73986	Significant
Influence from peers	2.6892	1.30109	Significant

According to the ordering of answers, the author of the news shops on social media ($x = 4.6944$; 73215) and the sender's trustworthiness are the two most important factors for acceptance. Both replies refer to the idea of source credibility, which argues that the source determines the reliability of news reported on social media (author & sender of stories). Social impact ($x = 4.5955$.73986) and the legitimacy of the social media site (4.4877.92305) are additional crucial variables. This is intriguing since it suggests that the platform's nature is crucial for acceptance.

Research Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no relationship between the age of undergraduates and their level of acceptance of news stories on social media. The test of association shows that there is a significant relationship between age of respondents and acceptance of news on social media ($X^2=179.551, P<.05$).

Table 8: Cross tabulation of age and level of acceptance of news stories on social media

	Your level of acceptance of news stories is very high					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
16-20 years	8	46	1	15	87	157
	5.1%	29.3%	0.6%	9.6%	55.4%	100.0%
21-25 years	14	106	1	143	39	303
	4.6%	35.0%	0.3%	47.2%	12.9%	100.0%
26 - 30 years	10	61	1	8	11	91
	11.0%	67.0%	1.1%	8.8%	12.1%	100.0%
31 - and above	3	8	0	9	5	25
	12.0%	32.0%	0.0%	36.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Total	35	221	3	175	142	576
	6.1%	38.4%	0.5%	30.4%	24.7%	100.0%

$X^2=179.551, df=12 P<.05$

Table 8 shows that among those who identified themselves as being between the ages of 16 and 20, 55.4% strongly agree that they trust news from social media. Those between the ages of 26 and 30 are much more likely to agree (67%) than those between the ages of 21 and 25 (35%). There is an undeniable connection between the gap in ages of acceptance and the acceptance gap. The null hypothesis has been refuted because of the strong association between students' ages and their openness to receiving information through social media.

Discussion of Findings

The study showed that the usage of social media by Mass Communication undergraduates was very high. Table 4 shows that the majority of respondents use social media heavily for news consumption, 39.9% and 49.1%, respectively, said they sometimes usually use social media for news. On a four-point use scale, the mean score is 4.3438 with a standard deviation of .77340. Thus, it can be concluded that young students who attend academic institutions often use social media. In table 3, respondents rating of frequency of social media usage for news consumption on a 5-point scale indicates an average of 3.2465 on average,

social media use for news consumption exceeds the mid-point value of 2.5 on a 5-point scale. Therefore, social media is a crucial news source for masscommunication students at postsecondary schools. Furthermore, it was discovered that despite having a significant exposure to news articles on social media, there was a low level of acceptance of those stories. The values in table 10 are not significant in four of five indices on acceptance.

The study also found out that Facebook is the most widely used social media platform for undergraduate students studying Mass Communication to get news material. Table

6 reveals that Facebook had the highest approval rating, followed by WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter. Fifth-placed YouTube is followed by sixth-placed LinkedIn, seventh-placed Quora, and eighth-placed Pinterest. This demonstrates how a social networking app's kind is important for acceptance. Facebook's feature promotes social networking among friends, which accounts for the platform's widespread use. This contradicts the findings of Akoja and Nweanerizi (2020), who found out in their own study that Instagram and Twitter (now X) were the most acceptable and credible social media platforms.

The findings of the study are similar to those of Head, Defrain, ~~Fix~~ and Macmillan's (2019) study, which found that many students (71% of the researchers' sample) often utilised Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat as news sources. From this, Facebook may be deduced. The platforms used to distribute news legitimately include WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube. In table 6 the credibility of the sender is the most important factor for acceptance of news on social media (4.7326/57090), followed by the author of the news stories on social media (4.6944/73215), social influence (4.5955/73986) and the credibility of the social media platform (4.4878/92305). This is interesting as the type of platform is also indicated as important for acceptance, justifying the Technology Acceptance Model as the theoretical basis of this research, as well as the findings of Nnaane (2019). An important factor is credibility of the news stories itself (3.6285/1.32040) influence from peers is not an important factor for respondents. This study has shown that the age of respondents had a way of influencing their disposition to news stories on social media. Lastly, the findings also show that the two theories used were validated in the sense that the ubiquity and architecture of the social media lend themselves to be used as platforms of news consumption among the undergraduate students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Social networking websites have allowed people to engage online in ways that are quite different from how they did in the past when they were physically there. This study has shown that social networking sites significantly affect news consumption in ways that are distinct from how news was previously consumed. This is happening in the midst of social media's invasion of every aspect of living. After it was established in this study that social networking sites are essential to the formation of news-consuming habits among tertiary level students, it is now obvious that social networking sites will facilitate increased involvement with politics and other topics covered by news organisations. In addition to serving as a route for news organisations to communicate with their audience, the aforementioned evidence shows that social networking sites will play an important virtual role in how young people get news in the future. Arising from the foregoing, the following are the recommendations of this research:

1. The acceptability of the social media as sources of news confers credibility, therefore technology giants must set a very high standard in order to avoid abuse.
2. To make social media more acceptable to news consumers, users must be able to employ the fact-checking tools available on social media platforms.
3. To combat false news on their platforms, social media companies like the most prominent networks must start using feedback systems.
4. There is a need for developers to use a score system that rates the reliability of news that is shared on social media sites based on the news source, the author, and the platform.

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