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Youth Trust in the Era of Digital News: Evidence from Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

Sahil¹, Vijay Kumar²

¹Research Scholar, ²Associate Professor, IEC University Baddi, India

Abstract-- The increasing use of digital technology has changed the way young people access news and information. In Shimla District of Himachal Pradesh, many young individuals now depend more on digital platforms than on traditional sources such as newspapers and television. Social media platforms, online news websites, and mobile applications allow users to receive news quickly and conveniently. Because most young people regularly use smartphones and the internet, digital media has become an important part of their daily information consumption.

The findings of this study show that although digital media is widely used for news, the level of trust among youth is not completely stable. Many respondents expressed concern about the presence of misinformation and misleading content on digital platforms. Due to the rapid spread of unverified information, some young people feel uncertain about the accuracy of online news. As a result, several respondents mentioned that they try to confirm news by checking other reliable sources before believing or sharing it. The study is the role of awareness and media literacy. Youth who are more familiar with digital media tend to be more careful while consuming news online. They are more likely to question the credibility of information and verify the authenticity of the source. This shows that knowledge about digital media helps young audiences develop a more critical approach toward news content.

The study highlights that digital platforms play a major role in the news consumption habits of youth in Shimla district. However, improving media literacy, encouraging responsible journalism, and promoting accurate information are important steps for strengthening trust in digital news among young audiences.

Keywords: Digital News, Youth Media Consumption, Media Trust, Misinformation, Social Media Platforms, Media Literacy

I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern digital age, the way people receive and consume news has changed significantly. Traditional forms of media such as newspapers, radio, and television were once the primary sources of information for the public. However, the rapid development of digital technology and the widespread use of the internet have transformed the media landscape.

Today, digital platforms such as online news websites, social media platforms, and mobile news applications have become major sources of information for many people. Among all age groups, youth are the most active users of digital media and are greatly influenced by the information available on digital platforms.

The growth of smartphones and affordable internet services has played an important role in increasing the consumption of digital news. In India, the expansion of internet connectivity over the past decade has enabled millions of people to access online information easily. As a result, young people increasingly depend on digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and online news portals to stay informed about national and international events. Digital news platforms provide instant updates, multimedia content and interactive features that make them attractive and convenient for young audiences.

However, while digital media has made information more accessible, it has also raised concerns regarding the reliability and credibility of news. Unlike traditional media, where information usually goes through editorial and professional verification processes, digital platforms allow almost anyone to create and share content. This openness has made it easier for misinformation, fake news, and unverified information to spread quickly across the internet. As a result, questions about the level of trust people place in digital news have become increasingly important, especially among young audiences who rely heavily on online sources.

Trust is a crucial factor in the relationship between audiences and media. When people trust a news source, they are more likely to believe the information it provides and share it with others. On the other hand, when trust is low, audiences may question the credibility of the information they receive. In the context of digital media, trust becomes even more complex because news can come from a wide variety of sources, including professional news organizations, independent bloggers, influencers, and ordinary social media users. This diversity of sources makes it difficult for audiences to distinguish between reliable and unreliable information.



Youth represent one of the most important groups in the digital media environment. They are often early adopters of new technologies and tend to spend a significant amount of time online. Young people use digital platforms not only for entertainment but also for communication, education, and information gathering. Because of their high engagement with social media and online platforms, youth are frequently exposed to large volumes of news and information every day. This makes their attitudes toward digital news and their level of trust in online sources an important area of research.

In India, the youth population forms a large and influential segment of society. According to demographic estimates, a significant proportion of the Indian population falls within the youth age group. This group plays a key role in shaping public opinion, social change, and democratic participation. Their patterns of news consumption and their trust in media sources can influence how information spreads within society and how people respond to political, social, and economic issues. Therefore, understanding how young people perceive and evaluate digital news is essential for understanding the broader impact of digital media on society.

The state of Himachal Pradesh, located in the northern part of India, has also experienced significant growth in digital communication and internet usage. Although the state is known for its mountainous geography and rural population, technological development and improved connectivity have increased access to digital media in recent years. Smartphones and internet services have become widely available even in smaller towns and semi-urban areas. As a result, the younger generation in Himachal Pradesh has increasingly adopted digital platforms as a primary source of information and communication.

Shimla district, the capital region of Himachal Pradesh, provides an important setting for studying youth engagement with digital news. Shimla is not only an administrative center but also an educational hub with several colleges, universities, and educational institutions. The presence of institutions such as Himachal Pradesh University attracts students from different parts of the state and contributes to a vibrant youth population in the district. The high literacy rate and the strong presence of students and young professionals make Shimla an ideal location for examining patterns of digital media use among youth.

Youth of the Shimla district are actively engaged with digital technologies. The increasing use of smartphones, social networking sites, and online communication platforms has changed the way they access and interact with information.

Digital media provides them with quick updates on current affairs, social issues, politics, and entertainment. Through social media platforms, youth not only consume news but also participate in discussions, express their opinions, and share information with their peers. This interactive nature of digital media makes it a powerful tool for shaping public awareness and opinions among young people.

At the same time, the growing influence of digital media also brings challenges. The spread of misleading information and fake news on social media has become a major concern across the world. Since digital platforms allow rapid sharing of information without strict verification processes, inaccurate or biased news can reach a large audience within a short period of time. Young people, who are highly active on social media, may encounter such information frequently. This situation makes it important to understand how youth evaluate the credibility of digital news and what factors influence their trust in online sources.

Another important factor affecting youth trust in digital news is media literacy. Media literacy refers to the ability of individuals to access, analyze, evaluate, and critically interpret media content. Young people who are more aware of how digital media works and how misinformation spreads are more likely to question and verify the information they encounter online. On the other hand, those with limited media literacy may accept digital news without careful evaluation. Therefore, studying the relationship between media literacy and youth trust in digital news is essential for understanding how young audiences navigate the digital information environment.

Given these developments, it is important to explore how youth in Shimla district perceive digital news and how much they trust the information they receive from online platforms. The present study focuses on examining the level of trust that young people place in digital news sources and identifying the factors that influence their trust. By analyzing the news consumption habits and attitudes of youth in Shimla district, the study aims to provide insights into how digital media is shaping the information behavior of the younger generation.

This research is particularly relevant in the current digital era, where information spreads rapidly through online networks and plays a significant role in shaping public awareness and decision-making. Understanding youth trust in digital news can help educators, media professionals, and policymakers develop strategies to promote responsible news consumption and strengthen the credibility of digital media.



Furthermore, the findings of this study can contribute to a broader understanding of how regional youth populations interact with digital news in an increasingly connected world.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed the global media landscape. The growth of online platforms, social networking sites and digital news portals has significantly changed the way people access and consume information. In recent years, scholars have increasingly focused on examining the relationship between digital media usage and audience trust, particularly among young people who are among the most active users of digital platforms. This section reviews previous research related to youth, digital news consumption, media credibility, misinformation, and media literacy.

Young people are often referred to as “digital natives” because they have grown up in an environment surrounded by the internet, smartphones, and social media technologies. Research indicates that youth are gradually shifting from traditional media sources to digital platforms for news and information. Online news websites, social networking platforms, and mobile applications provide immediate access to information and enable users to interact with content in real time. However, the speed and volume of information circulating through digital platforms have also raised concerns about the accuracy and credibility of online news.

Studies examining youth trust in digital news highlight that this relationship is complex and influenced by multiple factors. Research on teenagers’ interaction with online information suggests that trust plays a crucial role in how young people interpret and respond to news shared on social media. Adolescents who place greater trust in the information they encounter online tend to feel more informed and engaged with current events. In contrast, lower levels of trust may lead to confusion, skepticism, or anxiety when consuming digital news. These findings underline the importance of educating young audiences on how to assess the credibility of online information sources.

Another important theme in the literature is the growing concern about misinformation and fake news in the digital media environment. The expansion of social media platforms has created opportunities for anyone to create and share content, which makes it difficult to control the accuracy of information. Scholars argue that the widespread circulation of misleading or false information can significantly influence public perceptions and reduce trust in media institutions.

Studies examining the effects of fake news among youth indicate that repeated exposure to biased or misleading information can weaken confidence in both traditional and digital media sources.

Several researchers have also highlighted the significance of media literacy in shaping young people’s trust in digital news. Media literacy refers to the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and critically interpret media content. In the contemporary digital environment, individuals are exposed to a vast amount of information from diverse sources, making media literacy an essential skill. Research conducted among Malaysian youth demonstrated that individuals with stronger media literacy skills were better able to identify misleading information and distinguish credible sources from unreliable ones. Such studies emphasize that media literacy education can enhance critical thinking and enable young audiences to make informed judgments about digital news.

Research on misinformation in digital environments further demonstrates how the rapid spread of false information can influence public opinion and media trust. Scholars have observed that misinformation spreads quickly through social media networks and can shape people’s beliefs about important social and political issues. This phenomenon may lead to confusion and reduce public confidence in news media. Young people who rely heavily on social media for news may find it particularly challenging to differentiate between authentic and misleading information.

Another line of research focuses on how young people perceive the credibility of information in the digital age. Studies suggest that many young users believe they possess the ability to identify trustworthy information sources. However, research also indicates that this confidence can sometimes lead to an overestimation of their actual ability to detect misinformation. In many cases, youth may depend on popularity indicators, influencers, or emotional appeal rather than systematically verifying the credibility of sources. As a result, they may become more vulnerable to misinformation and manipulation in digital environments.

International studies have also explored various factors that influence youth trust in media. Research involving university students has found that many students prefer established and well-known news organizations when seeking reliable information. Nevertheless, the level of trust in media often varies depending on factors such as source credibility, personal media experiences, and the broader social or political context in which news is produced and consumed.



In the Indian context, scholars have observed that the relationship between audiences and news organizations has been evolving in recent years. The increasing commercialization of media and the competition for higher viewership and online engagement sometimes lead to sensationalism or inadequately verified reporting. Such practices can affect the credibility of media institutions and influence the level of trust that young audiences place in news sources. Therefore, examining youth perceptions of media credibility has become an important area of research within communication studies.

Another issue discussed in the literature is the role of social media algorithms in shaping news exposure. Digital platforms frequently use algorithms to recommend content based on users' interests and online behavior. While these systems help users receive personalized information, they can also create "filter bubbles," where individuals are primarily exposed to content that reinforces their existing beliefs. This may limit exposure to diverse viewpoints and contribute to the spread of misinformation or biased narratives.

Scholars have also discussed the social and psychological consequences of misinformation for young people. Exposure to false or misleading information can influence attitudes, beliefs, and even emotional well-being. Studies show that repeated exposure to inaccurate information may increase its perceived credibility over time. As a result, individuals may unintentionally accept incorrect information as factual, which can affect their understanding of important social issues.

Although numerous studies have explored youth engagement with digital media and the challenges associated with misinformation, relatively limited research has focused on regional contexts, especially in smaller cities and districts. Most existing studies have been conducted in metropolitan areas or at the national level. However, regional contexts may present distinct patterns of media consumption and trust, shaped by cultural, educational, and socio-economic factors.

In this context, examining youth trust in digital news in Shimla district of Himachal Pradesh is particularly relevant. Shimla serves as an important educational and administrative center and hosts a large youth population due to the presence of universities and colleges. Young people in the region increasingly access digital platforms through smartphones and internet connectivity. Despite this growing engagement with digital media, there is limited academic research investigating how youth in this region perceive digital news and the extent to which they trust the information they encounter online.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The research design of this study provides a clear framework to understand media literacy among youth in Shimla District, Himachal Pradesh. A mixed-methods approach is used, which includes both quantitative and qualitative methods. Surveys help collect measurable data about the media sources used by youth and their ability to evaluate information, while interviews and focus group discussions provide deeper insights into their experiences and opinions. Purposive and stratified sampling methods are used to include participants from different social and geographic backgrounds. The research tools were also pilot tested to ensure clarity and reliability, and ethical guidelines such as informed consent and confidentiality were followed throughout the study. Overall, this research design helps in collecting reliable information and offers a balanced understanding of how young people in Shimla district interact with and evaluate media in the digital age.

B. Data Collection Method

Primary data collection was employed for this study, gathering information directly from respondents through a structured questionnaire. This method ensured the data was current, relevant, and specific to the research objectives, allowing the researcher to obtain firsthand insights into media literacy among youth in Shimla District.

C. Sampling Design

This study focuses on youth aged **eighteen to nineteen years** studying in higher educational institutions of **Shimla District, Himachal Pradesh**. Shimla was selected as the study area because it has the largest number of colleges and universities in the state, which makes it suitable for studying youth media behavior. For this research, a **stratified random sampling method** was used to ensure proper representation of different groups. The district was divided into **Municipal Area and Block Area**, and institutions were further categorized into **government and private colleges**. In total, **44 higher educational institutions** were considered for the study. The **sampling frame** includes students from different academic streams such as **Arts, Commerce, and Science** studying in these institutions. From these groups, respondents were selected using **random sampling**, giving every student an equal chance of participation and reducing bias in the research.

To determine the sample size, **Cochran’s formula for an infinite population** was applied with a **95% confidence level and 5% margin of error**. Based on this calculation, the required sample size was **approximately 384 respondents**. Data were collected from **17 government colleges and 6 private institutions** in Shimla district.

D. Sampling Technique

Within each stratum, the researcher employed random sampling to select respondents. This method provides every eligible individual within the defined population an equal chance of being chosen, supporting the reliability and validity of the study. Random sampling also reduces the risk of researcher bias and ensures that the collected data reflects genuine variations within the population.

E. Data Analysis and Statistical Techniques Used

Data analysis and statistical techniques play a crucial role in research studies by helping researchers organize, summarize, and interpret data to draw meaningful conclusions. In this research study, descriptive statistics are used to provide a clear summary of the data, such as measures of central tendency (mean, median) and variability (standard deviation), which help in understanding the overall pattern and distribution of the data collected. These statistics make complex data easy to comprehend and present in a concise way. Additionally, parametric tests are employed to analyze the data more deeply, as they allow testing of hypotheses by assuming the data follows a certain distribution, usually normal distribution. Tests, such as Cross-Tabulation determine whether observed differences or relationships in the data are statistically significant, providing stronger evidence for research findings. Using both descriptive statistics and parametric tests enhances the reliability and validity of the study by ensuring that data are accurately summarized and relationships are properly tested. This combination empowers researchers to make informed decisions based on data, supporting robust and credible conclusions. Overall, these statistical techniques are foundational to turning raw data into valuable insights, making the research study systematic, transparent, and impactful. The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, and standard deviation were used to summarize and interpret the responses of youth regarding media awareness and literacy.

SPSS software is primarily used in this research study for data analysis due to its user-friendly interface and powerful statistical capabilities. It simplifies the process of organizing and analyzing large datasets efficiently.

SPSS supports a wide range of statistical tests, including descriptive statistics and parametric tests, ensuring accurate and reliable results. Its importance lies in helping researchers interpret data clearly, make informed decisions, and present findings effectively, making it an essential tool for rigorous and systematic research analysis.

Table 1.1:
Summary of Media Trust and News Consumption among Youth

Variable	Major Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Key Insight
Difficulty in Trusting Media	Too Much Misinformation	215	51.2	Misinformation is the biggest reason youth find it difficult to trust media.
Method to Verify Media Truth	Verify the Source	161	38.3	Most youth check the original source to confirm news authenticity.
Encounter with Fake News	Yes	330	78.6	A large majority of youth have experienced fake or misleading news.
Regular Media Use	Social Media	223	53.1	Social media is the most common platform for news consumption.

News Preference	Local News	182	43.3	Youth prefer local news that directly affects their community.
Opinion on Selective News	Agree	257	61.2	Most respondents believe media often presents selective or biased news.
Newspaper Readership	Yes	312	74.3	A significant number of youth still read newspapers.
Reason for Not Reading Newspapers	Not Interested	178	42.4	Lack of interest and preference for digital media reduce newspaper readership.
Newspaper Language Preference	Hindi	261	62.1	Hindi is the most preferred language for reading newspapers.

IV. RESULT INTERPRETATION

The overall findings of the study reveal important patterns in the media consumption habits and trust levels of youth. The majority of respondents indicated that misinformation is the main reason they find it difficult to trust media content.

Many young people also believe that media outlets often present selective or biased news, which further reduces their confidence in news sources.

At the same time, the data shows that youth are becoming more cautious when consuming information. Most respondents reported that they verify the source or cross-check information with multiple sources before trusting news. This indicates growing awareness about misinformation and the importance of verifying information in the digital era.

The study also highlights a significant shift toward digital media platforms, particularly social media, which is the most widely used source of news among respondents. However, traditional media such as newspapers still maintain relevance, with a majority of youth reporting that they read newspapers, mainly in Hindi language.

In terms of news preferences, young people show a stronger interest in local and national news, while international news receives comparatively less attention. Overall, the results suggest that while youth actively consume news from multiple platforms, concerns about misinformation and biased reporting continue to shape their trust in media.

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The present study aimed to examine the level of trust youth place in digital news and media sources in the context of increasing misinformation and digital media consumption. Based on the analysis of questionnaire responses collected from youth respondents, several important findings have emerged regarding their media usage patterns, trust levels, and methods of verifying information.

One of the major findings of the study is that misinformation is the most significant factor affecting trust in media information. More than half of the respondents indicated that the presence of excessive misinformation makes it difficult for them to trust news content. This reflects the growing concern among young audiences about the accuracy and reliability of information circulating on digital platforms. Additionally, biased reporting was also identified as an important issue affecting media credibility. Many respondents believe that media organizations sometimes present information in a selective or partial manner, which reduces their trust in news sources.

Another important finding is that a large number of youth have encountered fake or misleading news during their media consumption. The majority of respondents reported that they have experienced fake news at some point, which highlights the widespread nature of misinformation in the digital media environment.



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This suggests that young people are regularly exposed to inaccurate or misleading information while accessing news through various platforms.

The study also reveals that social media has become the most widely used platform for accessing news among youth. More than half of the respondents reported that they rely on social media platforms for news updates and information. This indicates a significant shift from traditional media sources toward digital media. Although television and newspapers are still used by some respondents, their usage is comparatively lower than social media platforms. This trend reflects the growing influence of digital technology and mobile internet in shaping the news consumption habits of young audiences.

Despite the growing popularity of digital media, the study finds that traditional media such as newspapers still maintain a certain level of relevance among youth. A large number of respondents reported that they read newspapers to stay informed about current events. However, among those who do not read newspapers, the main reasons include lack of interest and a preference for social media platforms. This suggests that convenience, accessibility, and speed of digital media are influencing young people to move away from traditional print media.

Another significant finding relates to the strategies used by youth to verify the truthfulness of media information. The majority of respondents indicated that they verify the original source of information before trusting a news story.

Many respondents also cross-check information with multiple sources to confirm its accuracy. These practices show that young people are increasingly aware of misinformation and are trying to adopt basic verification techniques when consuming news. However, the use of specialized fact-checking websites and techniques such as verifying photo authenticity or identifying bias is comparatively less common.

The study also highlights youth preferences in terms of the type of news they consume. The results indicate that most respondents prefer local news, followed by national news. International news attracts comparatively less attention among youth respondents. This finding suggests that young audiences are more interested in news that directly affects their local communities and national environment.

Language preference is another important finding of the study. The majority of respondents prefer to read newspapers in Hindi, while a smaller proportion prefer English newspapers. This indicates that regional or native languages continue to play a significant role in media consumption patterns among youth.

Hindi-language media appears to be more accessible and relatable for many respondents.

The study further reveals that a majority of youth believe that media sometimes presents selective news. Most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that media outlets often highlight certain stories while ignoring others. This perception indicates that young audiences are aware of possible bias or agenda-setting in media reporting.

Overall, the findings of the study suggest that while youth actively engage with various media platforms, particularly digital media, their trust in media information is influenced by factors such as misinformation, biased reporting, and lack of credible sources. At the same time, the results show that many young people are developing basic media literacy skills by verifying information and cross-checking sources before accepting news as credible.

These findings highlight the importance of promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills among youth, so they can effectively navigate the rapidly evolving digital news environment and make informed judgments about the information they encounter.

VI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand the level of trust youth place in digital news in the context of increasing media consumption and the spread of misinformation. The findings of the study reveal several important insights about the media habits, trust levels, and information verification practices of young people.

One of the most significant findings of the study is that misinformation plays a major role in shaping youth perceptions of media credibility. A large number of respondents indicated that excessive misinformation is the biggest reason they find it difficult to trust media information. This suggests that the digital news environment is often perceived as unreliable due to the rapid spread of unverified or misleading content. In the era of social media and instant information sharing, false or distorted news can circulate quickly, making it challenging for audiences to differentiate between credible and unreliable sources. This situation has increased skepticism among young people toward media information.

Another important aspect highlighted by the findings is the widespread exposure of youth to fake or misleading news. The majority of respondents reported encountering fake news at some point while accessing information. This indicates that misinformation is not an isolated issue but a common experience in the digital media landscape.



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The frequent exposure to misleading content may influence how young audiences evaluate and interpret news, making them more cautious and critical when consuming media.

The study also shows that social media platforms have become the most dominant source of news for youth. A significant proportion of respondents rely on social media for their daily news updates. This trend reflects the broader transformation in media consumption patterns, where digital platforms are gradually replacing traditional media sources. Social media provides quick access to information and allows users to share news instantly, which increases its popularity among young audiences. However, the open nature of these platforms also makes them vulnerable to misinformation and unverified content.

Despite the strong presence of digital media, traditional sources such as newspapers still maintain some level of relevance among youth. A majority of respondents reported that they read newspapers, suggesting that print media continues to be a trusted source for certain segments of young audiences. Newspapers are often perceived as more reliable because they follow established editorial standards and verification processes. However, the study also indicates that many young people prefer social media due to convenience and ease of access, which is gradually reducing the influence of traditional media.

The findings further reveal that youth are not completely passive consumers of information. Many respondents reported that they verify the source of news or cross-check information with multiple sources before believing it. This behavior demonstrates a growing awareness about misinformation and the importance of verifying information in the digital age. Such practices reflect the development of basic media literacy skills among youth, which are essential for navigating the complex media environment.

However, the study also shows that more advanced verification practices, such as using fact-checking websites or checking the authenticity of images, are less commonly used by respondents. This suggests that although young people are aware of the need to verify information, they may not always have the necessary tools or knowledge to conduct thorough fact-checking. Therefore, there is a need to promote stronger media literacy education that can help youth critically analyze media content and recognize misleading information.

Another important aspect discussed in the findings is youth perception of selective news reporting. Most respondents believe that media outlets sometimes present selective or biased news.

This perception may arise from the way certain issues receive extensive coverage while others are ignored or underreported. Such practices can influence public opinion and shape audience perceptions of reality. The awareness of selective reporting among youth indicates that they are becoming more critical of media content and are questioning the motives behind certain news narratives.

The study also highlights youth preferences regarding the type of news they consume. The majority of respondents prefer local and national news over international news. This pattern suggests that young people are more interested in information that directly affects their daily lives, communities, and country. Local news helps them stay informed about issues that have a direct impact on their environment, while national news keeps them updated on major political, economic, and social developments.

Language preference also plays an important role in news consumption patterns. The majority of respondents prefer reading newspapers in Hindi, which indicates that regional languages remain highly influential in media communication. Hindi-language media is often more accessible and relatable for a large section of the population, making it a preferred medium for receiving information.

Overall, the discussion of findings indicates that youth today live in a highly dynamic media environment where digital platforms dominate news consumption. While these platforms provide easy access to information, they also create challenges related to misinformation, biased reporting, and credibility. At the same time, young audiences are gradually developing awareness about these issues and are adopting basic verification practices to evaluate media content.

These findings highlight the importance of strengthening media literacy among youth so that they can critically analyze news information and make informed decisions. Encouraging responsible journalism, promoting credible news sources, and educating young audiences about fact-checking techniques can help build greater trust in media and reduce the impact of misinformation in the digital era.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study examined the level of trust youth place in digital news in the contemporary media environment, focusing specifically on Shimla District in Himachal Pradesh. In today's rapidly evolving digital era, young people are constantly exposed to a vast amount of information through multiple media platforms.



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This study aimed to understand how youth access news, how much they trust media sources, and how they deal with misinformation in the digital landscape.

The findings of the study reveal that digital platforms, particularly social media, have become the most common source of news among youth. The majority of respondents reported that they regularly access information through social media platforms, which indicates the growing dominance of digital media in shaping news consumption patterns. Social media offers quick access to information, making it highly convenient for young audiences. However, this accessibility also increases the risk of misinformation and unverified content being widely circulated.

One of the most important findings of the research is that misinformation is a major factor affecting youth trust in media. Many respondents expressed that the presence of too much misinformation and biased reporting makes it difficult for them to trust media information. The widespread exposure to fake or misleading news further reinforces skepticism among young audiences. This situation highlights the challenges that digital media environments present in maintaining the credibility and authenticity of news content.

Despite these challenges, the study also shows that youth are not entirely passive consumers of information. Many respondents reported that they verify news sources and cross-check information from multiple platforms before accepting it as true. This behavior indicates the development of basic media literacy skills among young audiences. However, the research also reveals that more advanced verification methods, such as using fact-checking websites or checking visual authenticity, are still less commonly practiced.

The findings also indicate that traditional media such as newspapers still maintain a certain level of relevance among youth. A large number of respondents reported reading newspapers, particularly in Hindi, which suggests that regional language media remains an important source of credible information. However, the preference for digital platforms shows that media consumption habits are gradually shifting toward online environments.

Another important observation from the study is that youth tend to prefer local and national news over international news. This indicates that young people are more interested in issues that directly affect their communities and the country. Such preferences highlight the role of media in shaping awareness and engagement with local and national developments.

The study concludes that youth trust in digital news is influenced by several factors, including misinformation, credibility of sources, media bias, and accessibility of information. While digital media has significantly transformed how young people consume news, it has also created challenges related to trust and reliability. At the same time, the growing awareness among youth about misinformation indicates a positive shift toward more critical media consumption.

Therefore, the study emphasizes the importance of promoting media literacy among young people so that they can better evaluate the credibility of news content and make informed decisions. Educational institutions, policymakers, and media organizations must work together to encourage responsible journalism, strengthen fact-checking practices, and create awareness about identifying misinformation. Such efforts will help build a more informed and responsible generation capable of navigating the complex digital media environment.

In conclusion, while digital media continues to dominate news consumption among youth, strengthening media literacy and promoting credible journalism are essential steps toward improving trust in media and ensuring that young audiences engage with information in a responsible and critical manner.

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