



Exploring Youth's Perception of Social Media as Credible News Source in Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract: The media play a prominent role as an information provider to enable citizens to make informed decisions and participate in governance. The influence of the traditional media as providers, despite their credibility, is diminishing, especially among the youth who rely more on the internet for news content. This study examined youths' perceptions of social media credibility as a news source using the data generated from 308 respondents who emerged via multi-stage sampling. The study found that youths frequently source for news on social media, especially *Instagram* (84.9%) and *Twitter* (79%), and view their credibility as moderate (*Instagram*: \bar{X} =3.90; 4.18) and *Twitter* (\bar{X} =3.74; 3.18). The increasing dependence on social media as new sources and the youth's growing trust can serve as impetus for online news providers to step up the ethical principles of truthfulness, fairness, and accountability.

Keywords: News source, social media, source credibility, youths, perception, Lagos, Nigeria.

Introduction

A news medium may be as important as the news. McLuhan (1964; Igbinoaba et al., 2020; Okon et al., 2018, Odiboh, 2017) had asserted that medium is the message, thereby underscoring the importance of both. This assertion has put in the limelight social media platforms and the news consumers' source's credibility. Statistics show a growing number of social media users from a mere 200 million people five years ago to 3.2 billion, which is about 42 percent of the world's population (Mohsin, 2019; Lindsay, 2019). A significant component of this demography, especially the youth, uses social media as their preferred news source.

Social media platforms like *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Twitter*, and *Instagram* have become news sources, thereby breaking the traditional media's monopoly and making people producers and consumers of content. Aja (2011:4) notes that "traditional media organizations such as radio, television, newspapers, and magazines seem to have lost prominence and their audience." In the late 20th century, social media sites were used mainly to upload profiles and make friends (Sylvia, Moonhee & Sangwon, 2012; Amodu et al., 2019, Folayan et al.,

2018). *Six Degrees*, created in 1997, could go as the first significant platform, followed by *MySpace* and *LinkedIn* in the early 2000s (Drew, 2013).

Amateurs and non-professionals now generate and distribute content for public consumption, thereby altering the traditional newsgathering, packaging, and delivery process. This alteration has elicited a lack of credibility, misrepresentation, disinformation, intrusion of privacy, and other vices. Although traditional news media now have online news websites, people still subscribe more to social media platforms for news. Social media stifle the traditional systems, forcing them to find new shapes and positions. Most people no longer subscribe to the idea of waiting 24 hours for breaking stories.

The increased subscription to social media is global, with Nigeria blazing Africa's trail (Idakwo (2011). In 1996, internet services were introduced to Nigeria, paving the way to create blogs and other platforms. As of 2016, Nigeria had 13 million Facebook subscribers. Today, the number has tripled. The astounding amount of fake news in social media makes news credibility an issue. This study examined the profile of social media news credibility, especially among the

youth who constitute the largest democratic patrons.

The Problem Statement

Over half of the Nigerian population is under 30 years of age and is the most frequent internet users in Nigeria (NIRA, 2019). There has been considerable concern over the authenticity of news sourced from online sources, especially social networks. The preponderance of citizen journalism in social media means that narrative producers can disseminate content without due process, usually demanded of professionals. The upshot of this calls to question the credibility and authenticity of news on social media. In a 2018 study, Watson (2019) revealed that social media is the least trusted news source globally. Unfortunately, many youths tend to believe what they read online and forward it to other users, leading to the spread of news, much of which is fake. Notwithstanding the spread, the youths continue to subscribe to social media platforms. This development calls for investigation, and specifically, the current study tried to figure out the perception of youth on the credibility of the news sourced from social media.

This study is significant. The current Nigerian government, headed by Mr. Mohamadu Buhari, has noised considerably regulating social media use. The purported

regulation may be complicated because the government does not have the requisite facts and figures about how social media operates, especially concerning the profile of news credibility. Most narratives about fake news peddling on social media have always been conjectures and will need a study like this to unravel. The study's findings would be useful to government and multilateral agencies; it also adds to the existing literature on the subject.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What social media platforms do youths use in getting news?
2. How often do youths get news on social media?
3. How do youths react to news sourced from social media?
4. Why do youths source for news on social media?
5. To what extent do youths consider social media to be a credible source of news?

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Social Media: Types and Benefits

Blackshaw and Nazzaro (2004), Manning (2014) and Carton (2009) define social media as bearers of a variety of sources of online

information with which content producers inform, educate, and entertain. They are social networks, which have evolved over the years to platforms that are powered digitally.

Social media foster open communication among individuals and serve as an efficient platform for public discussions. It is a platform for sending messages across long distances and promoting more than just texts, such as videos and pictures. Social media enables users to share ideas for deliberation, develop social skills, and function as a useful public forum (Edosomwan, 2011).

Social Media and Youths

Youth may be regarded as the period between childhood and adulthood. In Nigeria, anyone between the ages of 15 and 49 can claim to be a youth. Youths globally spend 27 hours per week on social media, which is higher than the average time spent generally (Hitesh, 2019). According to Adebayo Shittu, a former minister of communication in Nigeria, 75 percent of Nigerians who use the internet are on social media, and the number keeps growing. The youths are the most active because it creates the platforms for expressing themselves (*The Punch*, 2017).

According to Hitesh (2019), youths use social media more than any other demographic. One of the

youth's main reasons for using social media is to make new friends. The author adds that more than 50 percent of people worldwide get breaking news from social media. Akintayo and Adebola (2015, p.66) aver that "youths devote their time to watching or being on one media platform or the other," which exposes them to different content online - good or bad. A significant chunk of this content is news. Youth's perception of news credibility, therefore, becomes a research attraction owing to their preponderant social media access.

Public Perception of Social Media as Source of News

According to Sutton, Palen and Shklovski (2008), social media is growing in importance. Determining its credibility is, therefore, essential for policymaking and continued usage. Many social media users perceive social media as useful and easy to access. Lin (2007) notes that the ease-of-use of social media implies that the user finds it easy to achieve the desired objectives.

Users are more likely to accept social networking sites that they perceive to be easier in terms of use than any other web-based application (Davis, 1989). Perceptions about social media are different, based on the platforms involved and users' high or low usage levels. According to Li and Bernoff (2008), various studies

highlight that frequent social media users trust blog posts written by friends, whereas only a few individuals trust independent blogs/bloggers. Heinrichs, Lim and Lim (2011) observe that frequent social media users showed more positive perception than people who recorded low usage. Further, they discovered that individuals perceive blog posts and *Facebook* updates as credible when they are sent from people known to be credible.

According to Umar (2015), news is the unpublished account of human activity that seeks to interest, inform or educate the readers. Although the internet existed initially for scientific use, non-scientists within universities and executives from companies outside universities now see it as a new and speedy way to communicate with others worldwide (Turow, 2010). According to Martin (2018), social media has become the leading news source with more than 2.4 billion internet users, 64.5 percent of whom receive news from *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *Instagram* instead of the traditional media.

A recent survey shows that 50 percent of users hook up to social media for breaking news before the version from the traditional media (Martin, 2018). "People extensively use social media to get first-hand news and information" (Abbasi & Liu 2013, p. 441). The advent of social media has made it possible for individuals to seek information

from several news sources beyond traditional media (Manning, 2014). Nigerian Internet Registration Association (2019) records that youths are the dominant users of social media. Nigerians spend an average of 197 minutes on social media daily, which is higher than the global average of 194 (Inemesit, 2019).

Idakwo (2011) affirms that social media has evolved from a strictly interactive platform to a form of mass media and has been recognized as a channel for public communication. However, social media news's credibility remains a big concern because of the unverified source of information shared. As social media usage increases in Nigeria, it is needful to determine its credibility as a news source among the youth.

Source Credibility in News Reporting

Credibility is the power to inspire belief, while credible sources disseminate information that one can believe to be true. Described as the life-blood of the press by Hassan (2013), a news source's reliability and authenticity is a significant characteristic that influences an individual's perception of a message. If a medium is not credible, the content will be affected and will have little or no effect on the audience it is meant for (Nwabueze, 2006). In

communication, the credibility of information source or medium for disseminating media content is very salient and cannot be overlooked or overemphasized. This fact is further reinforced by Kang (2010), who notes that the channel/medium of communication's credibility influences the audience's selective involvement with the medium.

Further, Abbasi and Liu (2013) assert that source credibility significantly affects changing audience attitudes and beliefs. Edogor, Jonah and Ojo (2015) affirm this view, stating that a medium's trustworthiness could influence users' preference for a substitute medium. Amjad, Nik and Rosli (2016) stress that today's online information is scrutinized based on its credibility, among other factors. Meanwhile, Flanagin and Metzger (2000) had argued that it is crucial to differentiate between online sources type because the results of credibility evaluation by information receivers may be different depending on which source attributes are salient when they are evaluating the given information.

Wajid and Taimur (2016) examined 164 individuals' perceptions of social media's credibility in Pakistan in five dimensions - local, national politics, international politics, disaster and relief activities, and entertainment news in the social media. Findings showed that people now accept social media as an essential and

viable news source, unlike in the past. This study concluded that social media's acceptance is rising speedily in Pakistan, and the credibility of the medium is becoming attractive in terms of online marketing and advertising businesses.

The use and believability of social network news among 330 Nigerian youths is the title of another study carried out by Oyero (2013). The study examined the use of social network news and their level of believability among youths in Nigeria. This study also found out that most respondents crosscheck news from social media with news obtained from traditional media. Although social media is more accepted, traditional media is more trusted. This study recommended that proper codes of ethics be put in place to ensure credibility and accuracy on social networks.

Vinod, Khushboo and Anita (2018) explored the Indian perspective to determine the extent to which social media information is reliable and authentic among 150 students. The finding showed that the teenage population believes that the information they get on social media is mostly authentic. Results also showed that students, parents, and teachers rely on social media for help and research. This study concluded that social media is essential, authentic, and helpful to its users and could develop and grow societies.

Edogor, Jonah and Ojo (2015) examined the level of credibility ascribed by Nigerians to social media sites. The respondents comprised 300 graduate students of the University of Nigeria resident on campus. The findings showed that most social media sites that were considered not credible had political orientation. The study recommended that social media users verify the information they get from these sites to avoid sharing false news.

Theoretical Framework

This study anchors on the *medium is the message* and *source credibility* theories. The former, propounded by Marshall McLuhan in 1964, argues that the medium influences the mind of audiences' perception or comprehension of a message. Agba (2002, Okorie, Loto & Omojola, 2018) posits that the attention an audience pays to mass-mediated messages relates to the medium's nature through which the message disseminates. Adding further, Edogor, Jonah and Ojo (2015) believe that on the one hand, if the medium is not trustworthy, the message from it will not be trusted. This theory emphasizes the significance of the medium used in disseminating messages and its influence on the message's credibility. Consequently, the theory puts some pressure on news publishers to consider their outlet's integrity when publishing. This

theory justifies this study's aim to determine the perception of the youth social media's credibility as a news source.

Hovland, Janis, and Kelly put forward the source credibility theory in 1951. They argued that people were more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible. The audiences' perceived credibility of a source could determine how the audience would react to the message. A source with high credibility leads to more usage of the medium. Once a medium is perceived to be credible, there is a high possibility for its retention as a trusted source of information. Murphy and Auter (2012) assert that source credibility involves determining how communicators' characteristics influence receivers' message processing. This theory also justifies this study's objective to determine the extent to which youths view social media as a credible source of news.

Method

This study adopted the descriptive survey method to gain insight into youths' opinions on social media news credibility. The study population was 416,465 male and female youths, aged 10-39 years, in the Kosofe local government area of Lagos State, Nigeria. The sample size, calculated using the Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill

formula, yielded 308 respondents. The local government area was chosen as the archetype because the youths possess all the requisite attributes for the investigation, including a substantial and notable subscription to social media, adequate literacy, and being well-informed about the investigation subject. Some of the characteristics had been determined via preliminary investigation and pre-test.

The multi-stage sampling at both the wards and streets was implemented to select the respondents. The wards and the streets emerged through random sampling, while convenience sampling was adopted to locate the 308 respondents. The convenience system became expedient and useful to help determine those youths who had the knowledge required of the subject matter. The research instrument was the questionnaire used to generate data.

The questionnaire had a 97.5 percent return rate. Of the 302 copies returned, 291 were valid, while 11 did not have sufficient items to qualify for coding. The reasons for the lethargy or non-response in the case of the 11 copies are not obvious. However, respondents' disinterestedness, absence of financial incentives, poor survey timing, and the like

are factors that elicit a low response rate.

Analysis and Results

Demographic Presentation

This section shows the demographic details of the respondents.

Table 4.1.1: Respondents' Demographic Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>% (n=291)</i>
<i>Age</i>	18-20	63.2
	21-23	22.7
	24-26	10
	27-29	.7
	30-32	2.7
	33-35	.7
Total		100
<i>Gender</i>	Male	60.8
	Female	39.2
	Total	100
<i>Religion</i>	Christianity	78
	Islam	20.3
	Traditional	1.7
	Total	100
<i>Employment Status</i>	Employed	15.5
	Unemployed	6.2
	Student	68.7
	Self-employed	9.6
	Total	100

Table 4.11 shows a preponderance of students with 68.7 percent of the population. The age categories corroborate this fact as those aged between 18 and 23 constitute most of the respondents. Undergraduate students and senior secondary pupils are in this range universally. While this study is not about students, the data recorded was considered suitable for the study.

RQ 1: What Social Media Platforms Do Youths Use as News Sources?

Table 4.1.2: Social media platforms youths use as news sources

Item	Yes (%)	No (%)
I source for news on <i>Instagram</i>	84.9	15.1
I source for news on <i>Facebook</i>	32.6	67.4
I source for news on <i>Twitter</i>	79.0	21.0
I source for news on <i>Lindalkeji Blog</i>	33.7	66.3

Table 4.1.2 shows a preference of the foreign over the local. Lindalkeji Blog is the only locally owned of the four listed sources. Instagram,

Facebook, and Twitter all hailed from the United States of America.

Table 4.1.3: Other specified news sources

Items	% (n=232)
Whatsapp	27.5
Pulsing	3.8
Google	8.2
Tv	10.7
Kingschat	1.4
Opera	.3
Pintrest	.3
CNN	2.7
Nairaland	4.8
SITES	1.7
Radity	1.4
News	2.1
Instablog	4.1
YouTube	10.7
Total	79.7

Table 4.1.3 indicates other sources of news as specified by youths. Some of which include; *WhatsApp* having the highest percentage (27.5%), followed by YouTube and TV (10.7% each), Google (8.2%), pulseNG, Radity, other sites such as Kingschat, Nairaland, CNN, Instablog, opera, and Pinterest being the lowest percentages. It is important to note that Nairaland is also locally owned and had been in existence for nearly 20 years.

Table 4.1.4: Most preferred news source

Item	5 n(%)	4 n(%)	3 n(%)	2 n(%)	1 n(%)	Mean \bar{X}	SD
Instagram	183 (62.9)	27(9.3)	51(17.5)	9(3.1)	21(7.2)	4.18	1.246
Facebook	51 (17.5)	17(5.8)	3(1.0)	30(10.3)	190(65.3)	2.09	1.629
Twitter	125(43.0)	23(7.9)	14(4.8)	95(32.6)	34(11.7)	3.87	1.355
LindaIkeji blog	31(10.7)	11(3.8)	20(6.8)	44(15.1)	185(63.6)	2.05	1.508
Average weighted mean						3.048	1.434

Key: 5=Highest, 4=High, 3=Moderate, 2=Low, 2=Lowest. Decision rule if mean is: 1-1.49= Lowest; 1.5-2.49= Low; 2.5-3.49= moderate; 3.5-4.49, High; 4.5-5= Highest

Table 4.1.4 shows that *Instagram* is the most preferred source of news (\bar{X} =4.18, SD=1.246), followed by *Twitter* (\bar{X} =3.87, SD=355). This table indicates that respondents moderately prefer *Instagram* and *Twitter* as news sources compared to

LindaIkeji blog and Facebook, which had a low value of about 2.05 and 2.09, respectively. Most participants have a low level of preference for *Facebook* and *LindaIkeji* blog as news sources

R/Q 2: How often do youths source news from Social Media?

Table 4.1.5: Frequency at which news is received from social media platforms

Item	VO n (%)	O n (%)	S n (%)	R n (%)	Mean	SD
I source for news on Instagram	205 (70.4)	27 (9.3)	29 (10.0)	30 (10.3)	3.40	1.030
I source for news on Facebook	57 (19.6)	16 (5.5)	19 (6.5)	199 (68.4)	1.76	1.213
I source for news on Twitter	84 (28.9)	66 (22.7)	95 (32.6)	46 (15.8)	2.65	1.061
I source for news on LindaIkeji blog	37 (12.7)	40 (13.7)	22 (7.6)	192 (66.0)	1.73	1.113
Average weighted mean					2.385	1.104

Key: VO=Very Often, O= Often, S= Sometimes, R= Rarely. Decision rule if mean is: 1-1.49= Lowest; 1.5-2.49= Low; 2.5-3.49= moderate; 3.5-4.49, High; 4.5-5= Highest

Table 4.1.5 generally shows that youths moderately source for news on social media (\bar{X} = 2.38). They very often (\bar{X} = 3.40) source for news on Instagram, followed by Twitter (\bar{X} = 2.65) They rarely source for

news on Facebook (\bar{X} = 1.76). The result also shows that youths source for news on Twitter more often than on Facebook and LindaIkeji blog (\bar{X} = 1.73). Most youths rarely source for news on LindaIkeji's blog.

RQ3: How do Youths React to News received from Social Media?

Table 4.1.6: Reaction of Youths to News received from Social Media

Item	SA n (%)	A n (%)	D n (%)	SD n (%)	U n (%)	Mean	SD
I share the news I get with friends on social media	147 (50.5)	116 (39.9)	14 (4.8)	10 (3.4)	4 (1.4)	4.35	0.834
I repost the news I get from social media.	153 (52.3)	99 (34.0)	7 (2.4)	13 (4.5)	19 (6.5)	4.22	1.129
I like the news I receive from social media.	78 (26.8)	145 (49.8)	35 (12.0)	9 (3.1)	24 (8.2)	3.84	1.110
I comment on the news I receive on social media.	70 (24.1)	107 (36.8)	49 (16.8)	28 (9.6)	37 (12.7)	3.50	1.301
I participate in online discussions on the news I receive from social media.	43 (14.8)	65 (22.3)	85 (29.2)	81 (27.8)	17 (5.8)	3.12	1.147
Average weighted mean						3.80	1.104

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, U=Undecided Decision rule if mean is: 1-1.49=Lowest; 1.5-2.49=Low; 2.5-3.49=Moderate; 3.5-4.49=High; 4.5-5=Highest.

Table 4.1.6 generally shows a mean value of (\bar{X} = 3.80, SD=1.104), which implies that youths react to news received from social media to a significant extent. Respondents strongly agreed to share news received from social media with friends (\bar{X} = 4.35). Also, many strongly agreed that they repost news from social media (\bar{X} = 4.22). The respondents like the news they

get from social media (\bar{X} = 3.84), while some would add comments to news received from social media (\bar{X} = 3.50). Respondents, however, moderately participate in online discussions on the news received from social media (\bar{X} = 3.12). The result shows that most youths share the news they get from social media rather than online discussions.

RQ4: Why do Youths Source for News on Social Media?**Table 4.1.7: Reasons for using social media as a news source**

Item	SA n (%)	A n (%)	D n (%)	SD n (%)	U n (%)	Mean	SD
I source for news items on social media because they are based on facts	106 (36.4)	71 (24.4)	39 (13.4)	4 (1.4)	71 (24.4)	3.47	1.574
I source for news on social media because of the ease of access	202 (69.4)	70 (24.1)	14 (4.8)	3 (1.0)	2 (1.0)	4.60	0.694
I source for news on social media because of past referral	143 (49.1)	77 (26.5)	44 (15.1)	6 (2.1)	21 (7.2)	4.08	1.172
I source for news on social media for entertainment purposes	173 (59.5)	99 (34.0)	14 (4.8)	3 (1.0)	2 (0.7)	4.51	0.702
I source for news on social media because they are unbiased	81 (27.8)	49 (16.8)	117 (40.2)	11 (3.8)	33 (11.3)	3.46	1.252
Average weighted mean						4.02	1.079

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, U=Undecided Decision rule if mean is: 1-1.49=Lowest; 1.5-2.49=Low; 2.5-3.49=Moderate; 3.5-4.49=High; 4.5-5=Highest

Table 4.1.7 shows that most youths source news on social media based on different reasons. Most participants (\bar{X} =4.60) agreed that they source for news on social media because of the ease of access, whereas few participants disagreed, with some not deciding. The table also shows that most participants

strongly agreed they source for news on social media from referrals (\bar{X} =4.08). Youths (\bar{X} =3.47) also agreed they source for news on social media because they are factual. Others: (\bar{X} =4.51) strongly agreed that they do source for entertainment purposes, while some (\bar{X} =3.46) agreed because the sources were unbiased.

Research Question 5: To what extent do youths consider social media to be a credible source of news?

Table 4.1.8: Credibility of the Social Media

Item	5 n (%)	4 n (%)	3 n (%)	2 n (%)	1 n (%)	Mean	SD
Social media is credible because of its accuracy in information gathering	96 (33.0)	71 (24.4)	74 (25.4)	13 (4.5)	37 (12.7)	3.60	1.326
Social media is a trustworthy news source	98 (33.7)	47 (16.2)	66 (22.7)	45 (22.7)	35 (12.0)	3.44	1.399
Social media disseminates reliable news	100 (34.4)	39 (13.4)	79 (27.1)	37 (12.7)	36 (12.4)	3.45	1.392
Social media disseminates factual news	99 (34.0)	31 (10.7)	78 (26.8)	39 (13.4)	44 (15.1)	3.35	1.446
Social media news is well investigated	93 (32.0)	45 (15.5)	57 (19.6)	59 (20.3)	37 (12.7)	3.34	1.428
Social media news is balanced	98 (33.7)	57 (19.6)	52 (17.9)	46 (15.8)	38 (13.1)	3.45	1.424
Average weighted mean						3.44	1.683

Key: 5=Highest, 4= High, 3= Moderate, 2= Low, 1= Lowest Decision rule if mean is: 1-1.49= Lowest; 1.5-2.49= Low; 2.5-3.49= moderate; 3.5-4.49=High; 4.5-5= Highest.

Table 4.1.8 indicates that youths moderately ($\bar{X} = 3.44$) consider social media to be a trustworthy news source. Youths ($\bar{X} = 3.60$) highly agreed that social media is credible because of its accuracy in information gathering. Social media news was considered to be moderately ($\bar{X} = 3.45$) reliable.

Most respondents see social media news as moderately ($\bar{X} = 3.35$) factual, a few disagree with this. Some believe social media news is well investigated ($\bar{X} = 3.34$) and balanced ($\bar{X} = 3.45$). These results indicate the credibility and reliability of social media news sources.

TABLE 4.1.9: Rank These Social Media Platforms According to Level of Credibility

Item	5 n (%)	4 n (%)	3 n (%)	2 n (%)	1 n (%)	Mean	SD
Instagram is a credible news source	139 (47.8)	56 (19.2)	56 (19.2)	7 (2.4)	33 (11.3)	3.90	1.335
Facebook is a credible news source	46 (15.8)	42 (14.4)	36 (12.4)	53 (18.2)	114 (39.2)	2.49	1.509
Twitter is a credible news source	98 (33.7)	95 (32.6)	48 (16.5)	24 (8.2)	26 (8.9)	3.74	1.254
LindaIkeji blog is a credible news source	39 (13.4)	42 (14.4)	61 (21.0)	25 (8.6)	124 (42.6)	2.47	1.484
Average weighted mean						3.15	1.396

Key: 5=Highest, 4= High, 3= Moderate, LOW= Low, LWST= Lowest

Decision rule if mean is: 1-1.49= Lowest; 1.5-2.49= Low; 2.5-3.49= moderate; 3.5-4.49, High; 4.5-5= Highest

Table 4.1.9 generally indicates that social platforms' credibility is moderately high, with a mean value of 3.15, SD= 1.396. Youths revealed to a high extent that *Instagram* is a credible news source (\bar{X} =3.90). *Twitter* is, to a

great extent, perceived to be credible. Respondents consider *Facebook* (\bar{X} =2.49) and *LindaIkeji* blog (\bar{X} =2.47) to be credible news sources to a low extent.

TABLE 4.1.10: Rank These Social Media Platforms According to Timeliness of News

Item	5 n (%)	4 n (%)	3 n (%)	2 n (%)	1 n (%)	Mean	SD
Instagram disseminates timely news	109 (37.5)	103 (35.4)	49 (16.8)	2 (0.7)	28 (9.6)	3.90	1.197
Facebook disseminates timely news	66 (22.7)	42 (14.4)	39 (13.4)	43 (14.8)	101 (34.7)	2.76	1.593
Twitter disseminates timely news	118 (40.5)	54 (18.6)	11 (3.8)	75 (25.8)	33 (11.3)	3.15	1.505
LindaIkejiBlog disseminates timely news	71 (24.4)	38 (13.1)	39 (13.4)	17 (5.8)	126 (43.3)	2.69	1.677
Average weighted mean						3.12	1.493

Key: 5=Highest, 4= High, 3= Moderate, 2= Low, 1= Lowest

Decision rule if mean is: 1-1.49= Lowest; 1.5-2.49= Low; 2.5-3.49= moderate; 3.5-4.49, High; 4.5-5= Highest

Table 4.1.10 generally shows that social media moderately disseminates timely news ($\bar{X}=3.12$, $SD=1.493$). Participants, to a great extent, find *Instagram* to be more timely in news dissemination ($\bar{X}=3.90$), followed by *Twitter* ($\bar{X}=3.15$) at a moderate level, followed by *Facebook* and *LindaIkeji* blog equally considered timely at a moderate extent. The findings also connote that most youths adjudge social media to be timely in news delivery.

Discussion of Findings

The ubiquitous youths' subscription to social media for news is supported by Samir's (2013) findings, which show a similar pattern with those exhibited in the current study. Besides the four major social media platforms that serve as news sources (*Instagram*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *LindaIkeji* blog), respondents also looked up news on other social media platforms such as *WhatsApp*, *YouTube*, *Instablog*, *PulseNG*, and *Pinterest*. Respondents also indicated that *Instagram* was their

most preferred news source. Both studies also align with that of Martin (2018) and Mesole (2014), whose findings prove that social media has become the primary source of news online for the youth, with Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as more visible than the traditional media.

The youths ($\bar{X}=3.60$) highly agreed that social media is credible because of its accuracy in information gathering. This finding is surprising and may have been influenced by the respondents' lack of exposure to what accuracy in newsgathering entails. The youths moderately consider social media to be a trustworthy news source, well-investigated ($\bar{X}=3.34$), balanced ($\bar{X}=3.45$). The credibility of social platforms as news sources is moderately high, with a mean value of 3.15, $SD= 1.396$. Specifically, the respondents had a high regard for *Instagram* as a credible news source ($=3.90$). *Twitter*, to them, is more credible than *Facebook* and *LindaIkeji* blog. Respondents consider *Facebook* ($\bar{X}=2.49$) and *LindaIkeji* blog ($\bar{X} =2.47$) low to be credible as news sources.

The findings of Vinod, Khushboo and Anita (2018) on Indian students show that the teenage population regard news on social media as most authentic. The findings are in sync with the findings of the current study. Many youths consider social media the

best platform for news and the latest happenings and trends. Meanwhile, Watson (2019) had concluded that social media users around the world do not trust social platforms either as media sources or as a way to get news. The current study has shown that Nigeria's situation regarding social media news credibility is significantly an extension of a universal.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the importance of the source to the recipients of media messages. While the previous studies have emphasized this importance in other parts of the world and the growing relevance of social media to media audiences generally, this study focused on youths who constitute half of the Nigerian populace. It established that youths source news from different social media platforms because of the ease of access, among other reasons. Most youths share and repost news, while only a few participate in online discussions of the news. Social media is perceived to be unbiased, factual, entertaining, and reliable, and for these reasons, youth depend on them. Although youths are positively disposed towards using social media as news sources, inherent in those sources are

shortcomings that cannot be ignored.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following are recommended regarding government, social media users, and the media:

1. Since youths perceive social media platforms to be credible news sources generally, stakeholders, including online news providers, should imbibe ethical journalism principles of truthfulness, fairness, and accountability to reduce the cases of

misrepresentation of facts and misinformation.

2. To encourage youths' involvement in online news discussion, social media news providers must be more intentional about providing engaging news content.
3. The need exists for intensified efforts by the government and its agents to sensitize youths on the dangers of fake news and how to manage it. Fake news thrives because most social media users do not verify the information before reposting.

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