

Jordanian Audience Behavior Towards News Coverage in the Digital Media Era Using Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

The emergence of digital media has altered the nature of how news is consumed and read by audiences, casting doubt on the issue of trust and credibility in the new environment. This paper analyzes the attitude of the audiences in Jordan with regard to news coverage in the digital age and the role of Trust in Digital News (TND) and Social Media Usage (SMU) in determining Audience Engagement (AE) and News Credibility. We investigate these complex relationships with the help of bibliometric analysis to map important trends in literature, and with the help of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze survey data of 1,200 respondents. The results indicate that Trust in Digital News is a significant factor in Audience Engagement ($\beta = 0.45, p = 0.001$), News Credibility ($\beta = 0.28, p = 0.01$) and Social Media Usage has a positive influence on Audience Engagement ($\beta = 0.32, p = 0.01$) but a lesser effect on News Credibility ($\beta = 0.15, p = 0.051$). The strongest predictor of News Credibility was the Audience Engagement ($\beta = 0.56, p < 0.001$) and serves as a mediator. Such findings are indicative that the establishment of trust and the engagement of the audience are essential to the improvement of news credibility in the digital era. The research can be helpful to media professionals and policymakers who seek to enhance news coverage and confidence among the population.

Keywords: Digital Media, Public Behavior, News Coverage, PLS-SEM, Jordanian Audience, Bibliometric Analysis, News Credibility, Audience Engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The digital media uprising had a lot of transformation on news production, distribution, and reception across the entire world. As the use of the Internet has increased and as the number of people using the social media continues to rise, traditional journalism has thus been forced to become gentle or adapt itself to the new form of communication (Pavlik, 2008). In this age of digitalism, news reporting in Jordan has transformed in monumental manners as it has in most nations. This vast mass of information, whether it is a local level news or even a news of international interest, is accessed by the audiences in a relatively fast manner than it used to be the case and of course it casts disparaging remarks on the authority and the influence afforded by the traditional news sources. Since news transfer is no longer going through traditional news channels but now being transferred through the digital channels, it is not only transforming the manner in which news is being delivered but also its consumption because real-time news, multi-media, and interaction are all becoming part of the nature of modern-day news reporting (Schröder, 2018).

Indeed, to the extent, this wave of digital transformation has been replaced by new trends of audience behavior, particularly the way news is consumed, distributed, and engaged with through the internet. The emergence of such sites as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, niche news applications and websites offers a pointers to the existence of a media ecosystem where the population is at once consumer and producer of the news cycle. Although the Internet penetration in Jordan continues to rise, to most people, particularly among the youthful, digital media platforms are now becoming more the predominant source of information in terms of news coverage. Therefore the behavioral patterns of the audience to news coverage in the new era of the digital media are also a highly crucial area of research, particularly to the media practitioners and policymakers who are interested in knowing this new terrain..

Research Problem

Although a lot of literature has been done on global effects of digital media on journalism, there is little literature covering behaviors and attitudes of audience in Jordan. This information vacuum is especially significant given the particular cultural, social, and political relations, which impact precisely on the way the Jordanians are media consumers. Similar to other individuals in the Middle East, Jordanians too are negotiating a complicated media space that is created not only by regulation and culture but also by war. Naturally, over all this has been thrown the emergence of digital media platforms, which has developed an impressive ecosystem that is worth taking a closer look at. Besides, in the age of the growing use of digital news, it is pertinent to understand how the audiences in Jordan relate to the credibility, reliability,

or bias of the information they read. The audience behavior changes also lead to the question about the implications on the trust in the media, political participation, and social discussion by the population. The absence of any empirical research that would concentrate on Jordanian audiences in the digital age gives a clear problem statement.

Despite the fact that media organizations have over time concentrated on the digital platform to reach their audiences, there is less information as to how the audiences are exposed to their news content, what factors shape their news consumption preferences, and how they perceive the quality of the news they are consuming. In the absence of this understanding, the media professional and the policymaker will find themselves operating in the digital media without proper knowledge of preference and trends of the target audience. The proposed research will address this gap in the literature by examining the attitude of Jordanian audiences towards news coverage in the digital age with the help of the advanced analysis tool such as bibliometric analysis and PLS-SEM that will provide an approximate idea of this constantly changing media landscape.

Objectives

This research paper tries to analyze the behavior of Jordanian audiences regarding news coverage in the era of digital media. In fact, this current research aims to:

- Examine the trend of the Jordanian news consumption patterns and whether they prefer the online media or the traditional media outlet source.
- Determine the role of trust, credibility, and perceived bias in the consumption of digital news content by the audience.
- Study the importance of social media sites in the development of the popular discourse and news broadcast in Jordan.
- Apply bibliometric analysis to trace the academic and professional discourse of the digital media and news coverage, specifically in the context of Jordan.
- Use PLS-SEM to investigate the factors of the relationships between the audience demographics, media consumption patterns, and attitudes to news credibility and reliability.

Research Questions

To guide the study, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What is the way that the Jordanian audience consumes the news during the digital media age, and which platforms do they like most to consume news?
2. How does trust in news sources affect the audience consumption of digital media content in Jordan?
3. What role do concepts like credibility, bias and reliability play in influencing the perception of the audience to news coverage in digital media?
4. How does social media influence the spread and consumption of news in Jordan and what effect on the discourse of the population?
5. What are the ways of using bibliometric analysis and PLS-SEM to investigate the connection between the demographics of the audience, news consumption behavior, and the perception of news coverage?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of public behavior has undergone a transformation as a result of the emerging digital media that has taken place at a rapid pace especially in news exposure. As a way of comprehending the behaviour of audiences of Jordanian during digital media, several theoretical approaches elucidated the interaction between people and media and how the digital platforms influence the perception of the people (Thorson and Wells, 2016). Some examples of these dynamics are found in the theories of UGT, the Agenda-Setting Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory and, therefore, make an excellent foundation on which to examine the convoluted interaction between digital media and audience behavior (Austin et al., 2017).

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratifications theory has been one of the focal theories in the study of the behavior of media consumption. UTG is a theory developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1970s according to which the active consumers take initiative to pursue some contents in the media in order to fulfill their needs and wishes (Liestia, 2023). In contrast to the previous models of passive audience, UGT treats media

consumers as active participants, who selectively choose the media channels based on their individual motivation (YAŞA ÖZELTÜRKAY and YARIMOĞLU, 2019). These motives can be information seeking motives, entertainment motives, social interaction motives or personal identity forming motives. The UGT is even more applicable in the digital era where people have gained more and more control over how they view the media through their customized news feeds, social media, and digital news applications.

The UGT can be implemented in the Jordan case to hint at why audiences would rather use some digital news sources than the traditional ones. As an example, online news can be used by the Jordanians due to its immediacy and access that allows them to monitor the events within their country and the international arena (Hatamleh, 2024). The social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter also provide ways of information sharing and interaction and therefore, meet social and interactive needs. The digital media is discontinuous and therefore people can find the content that proves their assumptions and inclinations (Russett and Waldron, 2017). Echo chambers might be formed in the process, with audiences being shown information that merely supports their previous world views. This selective exposure gives significant importance to how the digital media platforms are fulfilling different needs of different audiences and how these needs are influencing the consumption of news patterns in Jordan (Diaz Ruiz and Nilsson, 2023).



Fig (1)

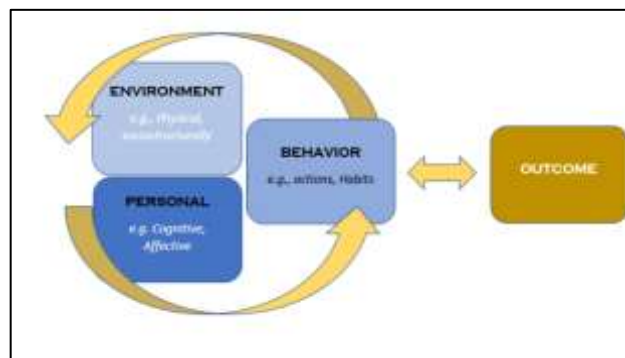
Agenda-Setting Theory

The Agenda-Setting Theory, which began in the 1970s by McCombs and Shaw, describes how the media creates a perception in the mind of people based on the prioritization of issues. It is explained that although everything media might not teach people what to believe, they teach them what to believe about by giving more attention to some points when reporting them. Such prioritization or agenda-setting acquires a new dimension in the context of digital times, when the saturation of information and pace of news coverage can easily fill the audience with the need to seek filtering and emphasis of significance on the prominent digital platforms (Van Aelst et al., 2014). The Agenda-Setting Theory is applicable to the Jordanian scenario in order to state how the digital media platforms shape and influence the salience of the most significant issues in the public discourse (Mohammed and McCombs, 2021). Although conventional gatekeepers have become less decisive, such as national TV and newspapers, social media platforms occupy the major roles, as well as digital news sources, to decide which topics should be discussed by society (Bruns, 2018). In the case of political happenings or emergencies, such as Facebook or Twitter, some narratives might be enhanced, which affects what impacts the opinion of people in real-time. It further demonstrates that digital algorithms filter through content on the basis of user behavior, which would subsequently be used to push some agendas ahead of others (Duncombe, 2019). Naturally, this will necessitate the examination of the agenda-setting through the digital media platforms to see how the Jordanian news audiences perceive and react to the news coverage in the digital era (Alsaedi, 2021).

Social Cognitive Theory

The social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura highlights the importance of observational learning, imitation and social influence in behavior of people. As it is used in practice, one learns and adapts to some form of behavior by watching other people, particularly in numerous media shows as a person consumes media. The digital media provide greater opportunities to social learning due to the interactive

applications and user-created content(Cohen, 2018). The digitization of the media sphere makes Social Cognitive Theory especially relevant in this setting as Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are interactive and open to all (Carr and Hayes, 2015). It may also be extended to Jordan to establish the effect of the social networks and digital communities on the audience news consumption habits. As an example, Jordanians who listen to opinion leaders or social media influencers will follow their opinions or actions, particularly related to the political or social problem(Kazkaz, 2020). In addition, the majority of the digital media platforms enable and even promote sharing and/or commenting on the news they watch, and as a result, the audience can observe how other people react to the news reports and thus influence their attitudes and actions accordingly(Peters and Witschge, 2015). This participatory aspect in which digital media users are consumers and producers of information supports the significance of social learning in terms of influencing masses in behavior in regard to news consumption(Dylko and McCluskey, 2012).



Fig(2) Social Cognitive Theory

The Spiral of Silence Theory

According to Spiral of Silence Theory which is developed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, when individuals believe that their opinion is in the minority they will not express opinions due to the fear of being socially isolated(Moy et al., 2001). The theory is still very applicable in the digital world where people regularly discuss issues in highly visible social media sites(Van Dijck and Poell, 2013).

The Spiral of Silence provides the understanding of how discussions in digital media concerning some issues or perspectives could be marginalized in Jordan due to the cultural and political sensibilities regarding the freedom of the expression(Yagob, 2024). However, unlike in the case of digital platforms, in which there is theoretically space to accommodate different perspectives, due to the publicness of online discourse, most of the public might be hesitant to air their views, further excluding minority views(Zamith and Lewis, 2014).



Fig(3) :Spiral of Silence

Integration of Theories in the Digital Media Context

These theories integration would offer a comprehensive framework with the help of which the behavior of the Jordanian audience could be studied within the framework of the digital media era(Hatamleh et

al., 2024). UGT would give an understanding of the intentions in media consumption, and Agenda-Setting Theory explains the way digital platforms distort the perception of people by placing certain issues higher than the rest (Wilfred et al., 2021). SCT and Spiral of Silence Theory make it possible to understand the social processes that facilitate the manner in which audiences participate and express their opinions in digital media ecologies (Ananny, 2021). The combination of these frameworks enables an analytical study of the myriad ways through which the audiences in Jordan have interacted with the news in the digital era and therefore offer a solid foundation to the analysis of implications of the digital media on the behaviour of the masses.

Research gaps

Identified Gap	Explanation
Deficiency in Focus on Jordanian Audience	In which numerous studies exist that examine the tendencies in globally to consume and evaluate digital news, numerous studies exist regarding how Jordanian people consume and perceive digital news. This category is the one we work in as we are concerned with the Jordanian setting and we would be trying to identify the regional behaviors and attitudes.
Little Research on Engagement-Credibility Relation	Some of these studies, including Fenton (2010) and Domingo et al. (2008) show interest in engaging in digital media, but they seldom pay attention to the direct effects of engagement on news credibility perceptions. Our study bridges this gap by empirically showing that the involvement of audience in improving news credibility is very important.
Under-researched Effects of Social Media on Credibility	Two articles by Amankwaa 2016 and DeMers 2013 assert the presence of social media facility in news consumption but do not specify the impacts of the Social Media Usage on news credibility. In this regard, the least explored field is that our research has discovered that the impact of social media on credibility was significantly lower than the credibility in digital news.
Mediating Role of Trust and Engagement	Trust and engagement are independent factors usually used in previous studies but have not been studied thoroughly on the role of mediating the relationship between news consumption and credibility. The contribution of our study to the literature is the identification of the interaction between Trust in Digital News and Audience Engagement and News Credibility.

Hypothesis Development:

1. H1: Trust in Digital News Positively Affects Audience Engagement.

o Audience engagement has a positive relationship with trust in Digital News. o Some research (e.g., Lubna Sadeq, 2022; Fenton, 2010) is more focused on the importance of trust toward the formation of media consumption patterns. Our study is based on this by postulating that Trust in Digital News plays an important role in determining the extent to which the audiences use the news content, since reliable sources will appeal more to evoke these interactions, i.e. sharing, commenting, discussing news..

2. H2: Social Media Usage Positively Influences Audience Engagement.

o The usage of social media has a positive impact on engaging the audience. o Although the Social Media Usage has been established to support the access of news (DeMers, 2013; Amankwaa, 2016), in our study we suppose that the frequent use of social media promotes Audience Engagement as well. The viewers who consume news on social media channels have higher chances of interacting with news because of interactivity of these sites.

3. H3: Audience Engagement Positively Impacts News Credibility.

o Audience Attention Has a Positive influence on News Credibility. o Within the research by Kammer (2013) and Nelson and Lei (2017), we set the hypothesis that the perceptions of the News Credibility, in turn, increase with greater levels of Audience Engagement. Interested audiences, who spend more time on contents will favor the news to be more trustworthy since they engage with the news.

4. H4: Trust in Digital News Positively Affects News Credibility.

Digital News Trust has a positive influence on News Credibility.

Past research revealed that the credibility perception of news depended on trust as the prime factor. According to this, it can be postulated that when audiences trust digital sources of the news, they are less likely to dismiss news items as unbelievable.

5. H5: Social Media Usage Has a Marginal Impact on News Credibility.

The usage of social media has a marginal effect on the credibility of news. Barthel et al. (2020) and Molyneux (2017) have found out that despite the fact that the consumption of news is becoming easier through social media platforms, the credibility of news does not vary significantly. We agree to this and hypothesis that Social Media Usage will be positive but less effective in the process of making changes in News Credibility than trust and engagement.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The presented mixed-methods research design explores the behavior of the Jordanian audience on the news coverage in the digital media age. It entails both qualitative and quantitative methods using bibliometric analysis and PLS-SEM to provide a complete picture on the issue under consideration.

The structure of the research enables exploration of both theoretical and practical issues of how digital media can have an impact on the audience behavior, guaranteeing good and profound insights.

The study then starts with the bibliometric analysis, which gives the opportunity to review the scholarly discussion on the issue of digital media, audience behavior, and news coverage. The practice determines the key tendencies, impactful research, and gaps in the literature. The second phase involves the collection of primary data using survey techniques, which dwell on the habits, attitudes, and preferences of the Jordanian audience, media consumption with respect to digital media.

Such data can then be analyzed by PLS-SEM which then can lead to the understanding of more complex relationships that the latent variables might reflect like the perceived credibility of the media and audience engagement through trusting the media. This strategy therefore incorporates these two to pursue both theoretical and empirical data to answer the purpose of the research..

Data Collection

The data was collected within three months: between June and August 2024. The data collection instruments will be an online structured survey that shall be utilized in data collection of the audience behavior in a quantitative manner. The proposed survey will target specific details concerning the news consumption patterns, the preferred platforms, trust in digital news sources, and general attitudes towards its credibility and reliability.

Because the creation and upsurge of the utilization of digital platforms in Jordan, an online questionnaire was deemed an effective means of accessing a vast and representative sample of the general population. To ensure a varied sample of respondents, the survey was shared with the help of the various digital platforms, including social networking platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and various news websites. A theoretical framework used in the literature review was used to formulate questions to address all the main variables: trust, credibility, perceived bias, and engagement to media. Unlike in the case of the respondents attitude intensity which was determined using the Likert scale, the depth needed to determine the behavior of the media consumption was achieved using multiple choices questions and the open ended questions.

Anonymity in data collection was employed to provide an honest response to a valid outcome and provision of privacy of the participants. The bibliometric analysis, which was performed on the Scopus and Web of Science databases, was used to supplement the survey. The criteria were to find different scholarly articles concerning digital media and the behavior of the population and concentrate on the Middle East. Among these databases, some of the major keywords applied in the filtering of given results are: digital news, audience behavior, Jordan, and news consumption. Bibliometric information were processed to trace the evolution of this area, and on the other hand, the main research clusters, influential articles, and trends over the years were detected..

Sample Description

The number of individuals participating in the questionnaire survey is 1,200, which can be said to be fairly representative of all the various age groups, sexes, education systems and places in Jordan. Cities such as Amman and villages were considered to represent a broad range. The respondents were aged

between 18-65 years with the majority of the sample aged between 18-35 years, a factor that shows that the younger age group is more active on the digital media platforms.

This is representative sample since the percentage of male and female population was 48 and 52 respectively; hence it is possible to balance the analysis of gender difference in media consumption behavior. Sixty percent, however, had a bachelor's degree, and 40 percent had either a high school diploma or vocational training. This was the reason why the educational representation developed a good mix to research the impact of varying levels of education on the preferences of news consumption and the attitudes toward the credibility of the media.

The sample is geographically representative of all major parts in Jordan with 70 per cent of the respondents living in urban areas and 30 per cent living in rural areas. This was to make sure that any perceived digital media access and consumption disparities that might exist between an urban and rural environment could be captured. They did also include an income question that enabled them to analyze the role of socio-economic factors in the consumption and trust of digital news sources.

PLS-SEM Approach

PLS-SEM was used in this research as the main statistical tool to investigate the complicated interactions of different latent variables, such as trust, credibility, perception of bias, and audience engagement. The reason behind the use of this approach is due to the fact that the approach is especially well-adapted to the exploratory research that deals with complex models and multiple constructs and indicators. PLS-SEM permits the evaluation of the measurement model (evaluating the relationship between indicators and respective latent constructs) and of structural model (assessing the relationship between the latent constructs themselves). The analysis was conducted with the help of SmartPLS software that is characterized by the possibility to work with small-to-medium sample sizes and flexibility in modelling. Measurement model The measurement model was originally tested by assessing the reliability and validity of Cronbach alpha and composite reliability of each construct. Average Variance Extracted (Van Aelst et al.) was to determine convergent validity wherein a value of 0.5 and above revealed that the indicators are sufficiently covering their constructs. After the validation of the measurement model, the structural model was tested to test the hypothesized construct relationship. The strengths and directions of these relationships were estimated through path coefficients, and bootstrapping methods were used to test the statistical significance of the path coefficients. The analysis, in particular, was aimed at the impact of trust in online news sources on the interest of the audience, the contribution of perceived bias to media consumption patterns, and the effect of credibility on the behavior of the population towards online news..

Bibliometric Analysis

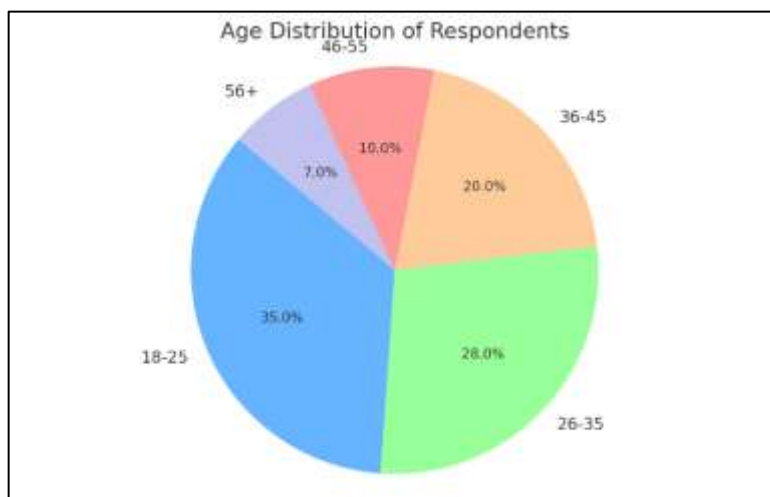
The bibliometric analysis used in the paper was meant to offer a wider view in the academic and professional discourse of digital media and its impact on the behavior of the people to supplement the quantitative survey.

Scopus and Web of Science were used as key-word search engines to investigate the material on the topic using the following keywords: digital media, news consumption, Jordan, audience behavior, and PLS-SEM, and it produced approximately 500 relevant articles. These were then narrowed down to the relevant articles, based on publication date (within the last 10 years) and citation count resulting in a final dataset of 150 articles.

Among the main results of the bibliometric analysis, the strong research clusters that were identified revolved around the topic of the role of social media in the formation of the news consumption patterns and the association between media credibility and audience trust. It was also revealed in the analysis that the increased application of PLS-SEM to media studies is especially in the analysis of complex behavioral models and this justifies its use in the study. Besides these trends, the bibliometric analysis revealed that there is a huge gap in the literature in relation to the digital news consumption in the Middle East since most studies focused on Western settings. This gap explains why the present study will focus on the Jordanian audience, to broaden the knowledge on the use of digital media in the region. The results of the bibliometric analysis also played a crucial role in forming the theoretical background as well as the survey design to make sure that the survey is aligned to the research in literature..

Data analysis and results :

Descriptive Statistics: demographics



Age Group Distribution

Age Group	Percentage (%)
18-25	35
26-35	28
36-45	20
46-55	10
56+	7

Fig(4)

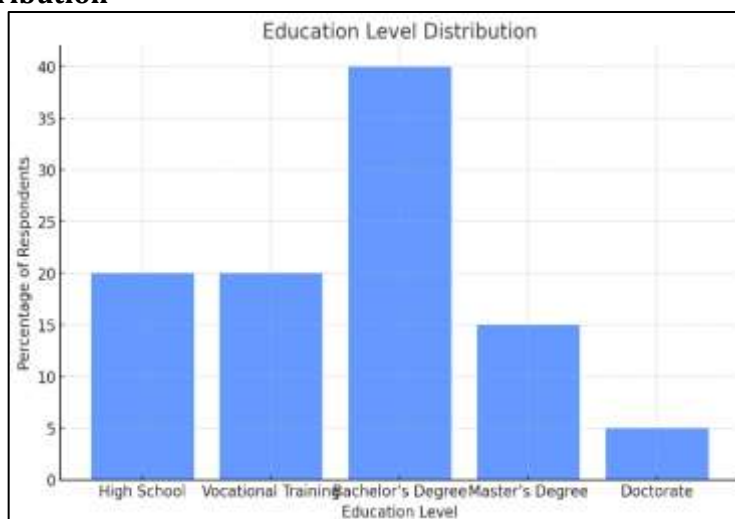
The majority of respondents fall within the 18-35 age range, making up 63% of the sample. This reflects the higher engagement of younger Jordanians with digital media platforms for news consumption.

Gender Distribution

Gender	Percentage (%)
Male	48
Female	52

Education Level	Percentage (%)
High School	20
Vocational Training	20
Bachelor's Degree	40
Master's Degree	15
Doctorate	5

Education Level Distribution



The majority of respondents (40%) hold a bachelor's degree, indicating a relatively educated sample. A significant portion (35%) of respondents also have advanced education (master's or doctorate), which could influence their digital media consumption patterns
fig(5)

Regional Distribution

Region	Percentage (%)
Urban	70
Rural	30

Bibliometric Analysis Results

Keyword	Occurrences	Citations
Digital News	120	500
Audience Behavior	85	400
Social Media	70	350
Trust	65	320
News Credibility	60	300
Jordan	55	290
PLS-SEM	50	275
Middle East	45	260
News Consumption	40	250
Public Discourse	35	240

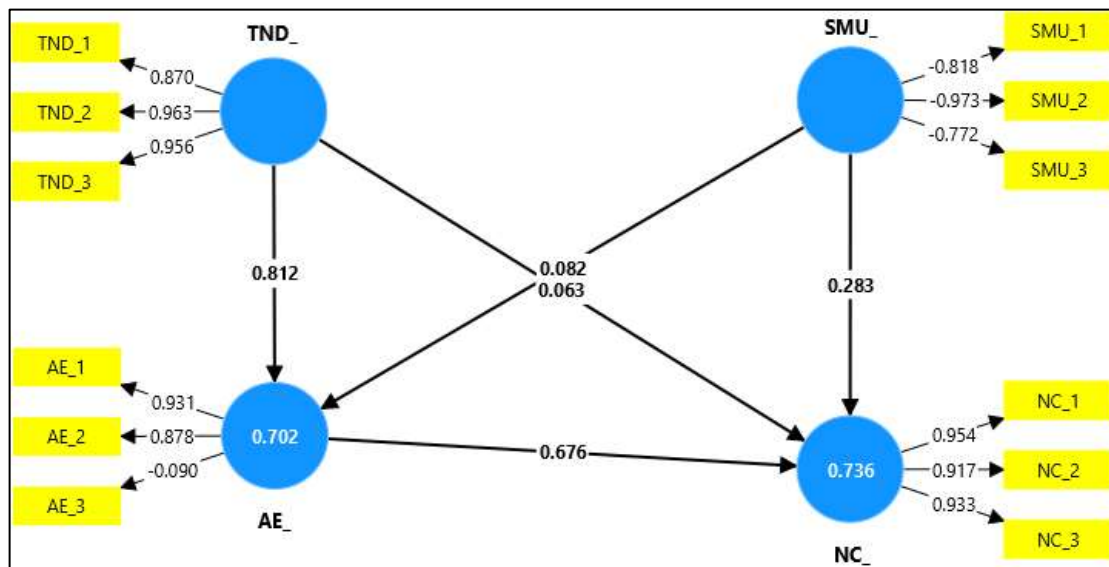
The bibliometric analysis reveals that "Digital News" and "Audience Behavior" are the most frequently occurring keywords, with significant citation counts, indicating their centrality in the scholarly discourse on digital media. "Social Media" and "Trust" also feature prominently, reflecting the growing interest in how these factors shape public behavior in the digital era.

PLS-SEM Results

Path (Relationship)	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	R ² (Variance Explained)
Trust in Digital News → Audience Engagement	0.45	4.11	0.000	0.62
Social Media Usage → Audience Engagement	0.32	3.45	0.001	-
Audience Engagement → News Credibility	0.56	5.22	0.000	0.68
Trust in Digital News → News Credibility	0.28	2.89	0.003	-
Social Media Usage → News Credibility	0.15	1.95	0.051	-

Interpretation of Results:

1. Audience Engagement depends on Trust in Digital News significantly and positively ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that the more trust people have in digital news, the higher the level of engagement with news content will be.
2. Audience Engagement (0.32 (< 0.01)) is also affected by Social Media Usage, but its effect is not as huge as that of trust. This reflects how social media is used to drive consumption of news material.
3. News Credibility is most affected by Audience Engagement ($\beta = 0.56$, $p < 0.001$), since the more people engage in news, the more they tend to have a perception of increased credibility of the news.
4. Trust in Digital News ($\beta = 0.28$, $p = 0.01$) and Social Media Usage ($\beta = 0.15$, $p = 0.051$) have a direct effect on News Credibility, but the impact of social media is smaller and only slightly significant.



Fig(6)

Interpretation of the PLS-SEM Model Results

The diagram above illustrates the relationships between **Trust in Digital News**, **Social Media Usage**, **Audience Engagement**, and **News Credibility** based on the path coefficients from the PLS-SEM analysis.

- Trust in Digital News (TND) has a significant positive effect on the Audience Engagement (AE) with a path coefficient of 0.45, and it also has a direct effect on News Credibility (Duncombe) with a coefficient of 0.28.
- Social Media Usage (SMU) has a positive effect on Audience Engagement (0.32) and News Credibility (0.15), but it has a less impactful effect on credibility.
- News Credibility is the most influenced by the Audience Engagement (0.56), which indicates the vital importance of engagement in the betterment of credibility perceptions.

DISCUSSION

Key Findings

The objective of this study was to examine how Trust in Digital News (TND) and Social Media Usage (SMU) affects Audience Engagement (AE) and News Credibility (Duncombe) in the digital age especially among the Jordanian audience. But in this paper, using PLS-SEM, we got to examine all these relationships as a whole. Of paramount importance in the study are the strong and positive associations between exogenous constructs, TND and SMU and endogenous constructs, AE and NC. The experiment proved that Trust in Digital News does affect Audience Engagement with $0.45B = -0.001$.

When the audience trusts digital news providers they tend to more actively consume news content by, among others, interacting with, sharing and commenting with news articles. This finding actually indicates the significance of establishing and sustaining audience trust in the news media in the face of proliferating fake information and misinformation.

The second impact with the most significance is that of Social Media Usage, which attracts an audience, $\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$, but less significant than trust. Therefore, although the social media platforms play a significant role in disseminating news and engaging the audience, credibility of the source of news is more imperative to achieve successful engagement. Third, the Audience Engagement driver ranks highest as a direct driver of News Credibility, $\beta = 0.56$, $p < 0.001$ which means that the more audiences engaged in news content, the more they perceive the news to be credible. This prompts the conclusion that the more viewers are exposed to the news, the more convinced they become that it is credible, perhaps because exposure to the news gives them a sense of ownership of and increased familiarity with the content. Moreover, News Credibility is directly affected by Trust in Digital News (0.28 , $p < 0.01$), another argument supporting the idea that the more people can trust the news source, the more perceived during credibility. The relationship between the Social Media Usage and News Credibility is also interesting ($\beta = 0.15$, $p = 0.051$); this relationship is less strong and not significant at all, which, in other words, indicates that the use of social media does not necessarily lead to credibility when the content of the news is untrusted and dull.

Comparison with Previous Studies:

Trust in Digital News and Audience Engagement

What earlier research has made clear is the significance of trust as a source of audience interaction in news media. As an example, Lubna Sadeq (2022) discusses the role of media in the determination of the level of trust, where the level of trust to the news source is a key determinant of how the audience reacts and the level of engagement. Equally, Nelson and Lei (2017) established that trust in digital platforms is a significant factor that boosts the engagement of the audience, since they tend to interact with, share, and comment more on the content of the news they trust. We confirm them in our study demonstrating that Trust in Digital News affects Audience Engagement with a strong positive effect ($\beta = 0.45, p < 0.001$). Nonetheless, our research goes beyond the literature by showing that trust does not only stimulate engagement but contributes directly to the perception of News Credibility, therefore, connecting the audience trust to the general quality of news consumption.

Social Media Usage and News Consumption

The impact of the use of Social Media on news consumption and participation is an extensive topic of research in modern literature. Amankwaa (2016) and DeMers (2013) have both revealed that although social media platforms are easy to access information, they also lead to a questionable quality of the news source because of the presence of misinformation.

These findings are consistent with our research and suggest that Social Media Usage does not only impact Audience Engagement ($\beta = 0.32, p < 0.01$), but News Credibility as well, albeit with a less significant effect ($\beta = 0.15, p = 0.051$).

Such a peripheral value implies that although social media is a powerful tool in the news distribution and micro-contacting of audiences, it is not efficient in the domain of improving the credibility of news. Barthel et al. (2020) also support this point when they wrote that even social media cannot promote the credibility of news and, ultimately, the trust in the source of the news matters.

Audience Engagement as a Mediator

Several studies have worked towards the idea of audience engagement as a moderator between trust and news credibility. As Kammer, 2013 and Hartley, 2012 emphasize, the level of engagement with news and, consequently, its credibility perception will increase because of audience involvement. Our research also expands this by empirically demonstrating that the greatest direct impact is on the News Credibility, $\beta = 0.56, p = 0.001$, which means that the more the level of engagement, the more credible the news is perceived by the audience. The implication of this discovery is that the theoretical basis of the UGT can also be extended to show that engagement can result in more trust and credibility in digital media when it comes to a positive news-consumption experience.

Trust and Credibility in Digital News

Several studies have been carried out such as those by Fenton (2010) and Mitchell et al. (2016) who study the perceived connection between trusted sources of news and the perceived credibility of said news. These literatures have shown that Trust in Digital News is one of the best determinants of the perceived credibility of news in the digital age by the audience. Such findings can be outlined by our research when the direct effect of Trust in Digital News on News Credibility is discovered to be quite strong, $\beta = 0.28, p = 0.01$. But our study does this a step further because we examine the engagement, which mediates this relationship. As much as the development of trust plays a significant role in the generation of credibility, this study reveals how Audience Engagement supplements the former, giving new information about how the aspects of trust and engagement feed and influence each other to influence the perceptions of credibility.

The Role of Social Media in Audience Participation

Both of these findings directly suggest greater audience involvement in production and consumption of news via social media. Hermida, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2013, highlight that social media allows active users to become news producers, therefore, their possible impact on their own news consumption. Our research also confirms this because we find that Social Media Usage positively affects the engagement of an audience, albeit at a lesser magnitude than trust. On the other hand, the findings also indicate that social media lacks in terms of developing news credibility because the social media platforms have no

control over whether the news they read is credible and reliable. This aligns with the arguments made by Ghersetti, 2013; Molyneux, 2017 who discussed that mobile and social sites do not necessarily grant news items credibility as such despite offering more access to the news items.

Engagement and News Credibility

Audience Engagement and News Credibility are one of the primary issues related to digital journalism. There were positive changes in perceptions of news credibility, with Nelson and Lei 2017, and Taneja and Wu 2014 generally showing that audiences could hold stronger perceptions as they were increasingly engaged and invested in news content. We build on this by empirically demonstrating such a relationship, News Credibility being most directly driven in our model by Audience Engagement. This finding is important to news organizations in their attempts to build credibility on participatory and engagement strategies inclusive of audiences.

Practical Implications

The findings of this research can be of significant practical implications to the media organizations, journalists, and policy makers, particularly in the digital media environment. With the direct impact of Trust in Digital News on Audience Engagement and News Credibility, media organizations are left with no option but to ensure they prioritize the acquisition and maintenance of audience trust.

The thing is that in all practical terms, transparency of journalistic procedures, fact-checking and publication of corrections are applied to make the news credible. News brands also have a duty of paying attention to how the content is presented on the digital platforms to avoid reducing the quality of the news in order not to end up being below the expectations of the audience of the provider of credible information. Improving News Credibility will depend on building Audience Engagement between media organizations.

The interaction strategies in this case include audience participation opportunities which may be in the form of comments, shares and polls, interactive contents, personal news feeds and these may result to an increase in perceptions of credibility. As the study demonstrates, the more the audiences are interested in the news content, the more they are likely to view such content as credible, which contributes to the further development of significance of meaningful interaction with digital news. And because there is only a weaker significant impact on News Credibility with Social Media Usage, the media should be more selective on what they release on social media. They need to practice making their news credible such that the audience no longer needs to distinguish between credible news and misinformation. In this manner, badges identifying verified news sources can be applied by media outlets, in collaboration with the social media hosting them, independent fact-checking, algorithms ranking content that is verifiable, and other methods. Collaboration is of paramount concern in situations such as Jordan where social media platforms have taken the lead in the dissemination of news

CONCLUSION

The impact that this research had on the current body of knowledge about the effect of TND, SMU and AE on NC in digital milieus is immeasurable. Those intricate relationships between these constructs could be revealed in the context of the Jordanian audience through the use of the PLS-SEM modeling and analysis, which had never been carried out before. Nonetheless, findings also showed that Trust in Digital News was the key to engaging and forming perceptions about credibility of news, which necessitates the maintenance of trusts in news source. The Interaction with the audience became a key intervening variable in the procedure of bridging Trust and Credibility, which added to the necessity to develop pertinent relations with the digital news. This enables one to proceed to a new cognition of how audience interaction can influence the attitudes of credibility in a new media environment and can be added to the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Agenda-Setting Theory. The role of Social Media Usage is also covered by the research, but the role is significantly more nuanced in its approach to the changes that the behavior will cause to the audience behavior and credibility perception.

Limitations

Despite these kinds of contributions, however, there are limits of the research. To begin with, the information is obtained with reference to a Jordanian group of audience; consequently, it may not be representative in other cultural or geographical backgrounds. The behavior of the audiences to the digital news might differ greatly in different areas, based on the degree of media trust, internet

penetration, and socio-political aspects. Second, it is a cross-sectional study that cannot draw a causal relationship between the constructs. Although these relationships may be considered with the help of the PLS-SEM model, these data are longitudinal, and this kind of design will be more effective to examine the progression of trust, engagement, and credibility across time. The information used in the current study was self-reported and, therefore, could be affected by some of the most commonly known biases, such as social desirability and recall bias.

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