NEWS CONSUMPTION IN THE DIGITAL AGE: AN EXAMINATION OF CROSS-PLATFORMS MEDIA USAGE AMONG OSUN CIVIL SERVANTS

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Abstract

In an environment characterised by fluctuating information dynamics, individuals increasingly opt for a variety of media platforms to get news. Consequently, scholars have adopted a more thorough methodology to assess news consumption across many platforms. This approach involves analysing news media repertoires, as well as investigating the production and dissemination of news content. Internet-based technologies, which mark a revolutionary period in journalism, have revealed new understandings in journalism. The rapid advancement of digital technology has led to a transformation in the way news is consumed, shared, and perceived. This research aims to explore the intricate patterns of news consumption among civil servants in Osun state, Nigeria, with a specific focus on their utilization of various digital platforms. The study seeks to identify the preferred sources of news, the factors influencing platform choices, and the impact of digitalization on news consumption behaviours within this specific demographic. By examining the cross-platform media usage habits of Osun civil servants, this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of how individuals adapt to the digital age's evolving news landscape. The theoretical foundation of this research rests upon concepts such as media multitasking, selective exposure, and the digital divide. The anticipated findings will shed light on the information-seeking behaviours of Osun civil servants and offer a nuanced understanding of their cross-platform news consumption habits. The research outcomes are expected to have implications for media organizations, policy makers, and public administration, guiding them in tailoring news content delivery and accessibility to suit the preferences and needs of civil servants in the digital age.

Keywords: News consumption, Digital Age, Cross platforms, Media usage and Civil servants.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital age, the consumption of news has undergone profound transformations due to the proliferation of various digital platforms. The emergence of smartphones, social media, and online news outlets has reshaped the ways individuals access, engage with, and respond to news content. As society becomes increasingly connected, the consumption of news has become more dynamic, interactive, and personalized.

In the past several decades, traditional forms of media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television had a dominant role in the distribution of information and mass communication. These platforms relied on skilled journalists who were responsible for the dissemination of news and other relevant content. The previously established exclusivity held by mainstream media and professional journalists was disrupted by the emergence of new media technologies (Bruns et al., 2012). The dissemination of news and information, previously subject to rigorous professional evaluation and selective control, has been accelerated by the widespread availability of the Internet, enabling near-instantaneous access for the public (Jurrat, 2011). With the proliferation of internet-connected gadgets, individuals who were formerly passive consumers of media have now transformed into active producers of media material (Bowman & Willis, 2003). The activities carried out by those who are not professional journalists, commonly

known as "citizen journalism," are facilitated through digital media, online media, or new media platforms (Bowman & Willis, 2003; Dare, 2011).

The historical trajectory of media evolution demonstrates that the emergence of a novel medium does not necessarily entail the obsolescence or demise of a preexisting medium. The argument is supported by the sustained growth and expansion of the media industry throughout the past century. The credibility and significance of traditional media formats have not diminished, as they continue to be sought out by individuals for the purpose of consuming news. This phenomenon occurs due to the emergence of newer forms of communication media, whereas the older forms tend to undergo evolutionary changes and adaptations rather than becoming obsolete. Digital media forms are not generated freely and autonomously from traditional media; instead, they exhibit a relationship and connection to traditional media.

The global diffusion of digital technology has led to an unprecedented level of media convergence, where individuals engage with news across a spectrum of platforms, ranging from traditional television and radio to social media feeds and mobile news applications (Chyi & Lasorsa, 2002; Newman et al., 2019). The shift towards digital media is fundamentally altering not only the channels through which news is delivered but also the patterns of news engagement and the ways information is shared and consumed (Kümpel et al., 2015).

In the current media environment, individuals have the option to either actively engage with every news occurrence or completely abstain from consuming information pertaining to societal and political affairs. There exists a diverse array of media platforms that are accessible through various channels, encompassing both digital and traditional formats. Previous studies have examined news consumption across several platforms to categorise distinct sorts of news consumers (Taneja et al., 2012; Lee & Yang, 2014; Strömbäck, Falasca, & Kruikemeier, 2017). Although the aforementioned studies offer valuable insights into the diverse news consumption patterns of young individuals, there has been a relative lack of research focusing on the news repertoires of middle-aged individuals.

Osun state, with its diverse population of civil servants, provides an intriguing context to study news consumption habits. These civil servants, representing a range of professional backgrounds and age groups, may exhibit unique preferences and behaviours in their consumption of news due to factors such as access to technology, work responsibilities, and personal inclinations. Investigating news consumption habits among this specific demographic can offer insights into how digitalization is shaping news consumption practices in both urban and rural settings.

The constant proximity of a mobile device has significantly altered the fabric of daily existence. Upon reflection, it becomes evident that the mobile phone has experienced widespread dissemination on a global scale throughout the 1990s and 2000s. The advancement in technology has facilitated the emergence of mobile communication, enabling individuals to engage in phone conversations and text messaging. Consequently, this aspect of

communication has been ingrained in the routine of daily existence, sometimes overlooked or undervalued (Lung, 2012). The pervasive integration of the internet into various aspects of human existence encompasses a wide range of everyday activities. The advent of digital communication and information technology has ushered in a transformative era in the realm of journalism. These personal and portable mobile devices offer widespread connectivity through computer-like capabilities.

The origins of mass communication and media technology can be traced back to the invention of the printing machine by Gutenberg. Currently, communication has undergone a significant and profound metamorphosis. The proliferation and advancement of new media technologies have resulted in their extensive dissemination and utilisation, thereby amplifying their economic and social influence. The current prevailing phenomenon is notably distinguished by the amalgamation of many media formats, as evidenced by the use of several channels for accessing news, encompassing both classic and emerging media.

Theoretical underpinnings of this research draw from concepts such as media multitasking, selective exposure, and the digital divide. Previous studies have shown that media multitasking is a common behaviour among individuals, involving simultaneous use of multiple devices and platforms (Al-Rawi & Elwalda, 2020). Selective exposure theory suggests that people tend to seek out information that reinforces their existing beliefs (Garrett & Stroud, 2014), which could influence the types of news sources individuals choose on digital platforms. Moreover, the digital divide theory highlights disparities in access to digital technology and online content among different demographic groups (Van Dijk, 2019).

This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of news consumption behaviours among Osun civil servants, focusing on the factors driving platform preferences and the implications of digitalization. By delving into the intricate interplay between traditional and digital media usage, this research contributes to the broader understanding of how news is consumed and engaged with in the digital age.

Research Objectives

1. The overarching purpose of the research is to gain an understanding of the manner in which government employees consume online news across various platforms. In order to effectively achieve the desired outcome, the primary aim is subdivided into a set of distinct and measurable objectives.
2. To identify the primary sources of news among Osun civil servants.
3. To explore the factors that influences the choice of news consumption platforms.
4. To examine the role of digitalization in shaping news consumption behaviours.
5. To understand the impact of cross-platform media usage on the perception and understanding of news content.

Research Questions

1. The present study aims to address the following research inquiries.

2. What are the primary sources of news among civil servants in Osun state?
3. What factors influence the platform choices of Osun civil servants for their news consumption?
4. How does the process of digitalization impact the news consumption behaviours of civil servants in Osun state?
5. How does the utilization of various digital platforms affect the perception and understanding of news content among civil servants in Osun state?

Statement of Problem

In the era of rapid digital transformation and the proliferation of cross-platform media usage, understanding the dynamics of news consumption behaviours among civil servants in Osun state, Nigeria, has become increasingly crucial. This study seeks to address several critical issues that stem from the evolving landscape of news consumption in the digital age and it includes media multitasking and news consumption, selective exposure and platform preferences, digital divide and news accessibility, news consumption in the digital age and digital transformation and news engagement.

Review of Literature

The advent of digital media has led to a surge in user-generated material, which appears to rival content produced by mainstream media (Jack, 2010), in terms of its rapid transmission, ease of access, and widespread use. Moreover, the internet media's bottom-up and participatory characteristics appear to pose a challenge to the top-down and hegemonic framework of traditional media (Kramp, 2015). The diverse nature, structure, and implementation of digital media and mainstream media have elicited a broad range of interest and concerns within many segments of society. There is an ongoing discourse among media practitioners over the ethical and professional aspects of media platforms (Keen, 2007). Concurrently, media consumers express apprehension regarding the credibility of the vast amount of information disseminated on a daily basis through these platforms (Banda, 2010). The proliferation of information produced on a daily basis by mainstream and digital media, particularly within the Nigerian media landscape, has engendered scepticism among the Nigerian audience regarding the veracity of this information and the dependability of the media platforms responsible for its generation. The increasing pace of advancements in new media technologies, along with the emergence of partisan reporting and the widespread prevalence of fake news, has underscored the importance of examining public perceptions regarding the credibility of the media. This inquiry has taken on heightened social significance and historical importance.

The contrasting perspectives of the professional practise of journalism in traditional media and digital media, as well as the assessment of the reliability of information communicated through these platforms, have garnered significant attention from scholars in the field of media and communication. Over time, empirical studies examining audience perception of the credibility and professionalism of mainstream media and digital media have produced conflicting findings. Some studies indicate that digital media are perceived as more credible (Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Wilson et al., 2011), while others suggest the opposite (Kiousis, 2001; Kovaic et al., 2010; Mehrabi et al., 2009). Previous studies have examined the potential correlation between public exposure to the media and their impression of media credibility and trustworthiness (Tsfati, 2010; Tsfati & Cappella, 2005; William, 2012).

While prior studies have successfully demonstrated a connection between media consumption and the assessment of credibility, there has been limited academic investigation into the potential impact of information choice on the evaluation of media credibility and the perception of news and information across traditional and digital media platforms. The objective of this study is to make a scholarly contribution to the field of research by examining the dynamic nature of news consumption, specifically within the framework of digitalization and the utilisation of many media platforms among those employed in public service. This part incorporates fundamental topics such as media multitasking, selective exposure, and the digital divide while examining pertinent studies to establish a theoretical foundation for the research.

Media Multitasking and News Consumption

The phenomenon of media multitasking, where individuals engage with multiple media sources simultaneously, has gained prominence in the digital age (Al-Rawi & Elwalda, 2020). The integration of smartphones, tablets, and computers has enabled users to consume news content across various platforms concurrently. Previous research has demonstrated that media multitasking impacts attention span, cognitive processing, and media preferences (Ophir et al., 2009).

The proliferation of digital, social, and mobile media has facilitated the ability to engage in many media activities while consuming news in a more efficient and simultaneous manner compared to previous methods. The increased use of digital, social, and mobile media and gadgets has led to a rise in the phenomenon of media multitasking. Individuals utilise both physical and online media when engaging in a core task. Listening to music or radio shows while operating a motor vehicle is a prevalent practise. While engaged in studying, a student may opt to divert their attention towards many forms of entertainment, such as watching television shows either on traditional broadcast or online platforms, listening to music, engaging in text message conversations with friends, or even perusing the status updates of their acquaintances on the social media platform Facebook. While engaging with a television news programme, individuals may opt to utilise a laptop for the purpose of preparing business-related papers, rather than dedicating their complete attention to the news content. The ubiquity of media has facilitated a greater ease in engaging in media multitasking compared to previous times. Media multitasking has become a prevalent occurrence in contemporary society. Media multitasking is commonly defined as engaging in multiple media-related tasks simultaneously without disengagement or task switching (Jeong and Fishbein, 2007; Sanbonmatsu et al., 2013). The simultaneous participation in web

browsing and music listening, without experiencing disengagement in either activity, can be observed in real time and is an illustration of concurrent involvement.

The growing incidence of concurrent media consumption among consumers has clear ramifications for media providers, planners, and advertisers, as their content is frequently seen with divided attention. Individuals are required to distribute their cognitive resources across several media content streams. However, the allocation of resources to a specific stream is constrained by the employment of resources by other tasks. Consequently, an increasing amount of scholarly study has focused on this subject matter, examining the effects of media multitasking behaviour on the cognitive processing and outcomes of media consumption, particularly in relation to embedded persuasive information. While a minority of the research conducted by this group centres on examining the impact of media multitasking behaviours on the cognitive processing, enjoyment, and retention of media content (e.g., Katsyri et al., 2016; Nee & Dozier, 2017; Rubenking, 2017), the majority of the studies focus on exploring its consequences for the processing and outcomes of persuasive and advertising messages (Jeong & Hwang, 2012; Segijn & Eisend, 2019).

Two meta-analyses have examined the growing body of research on media multitasking and its impact on advertising content. These studies indicate that the effects of media multitasking differ for cognitive outcomes (such as attention, comprehension, and retention) compared to attitudinal outcomes (such as persuasion, likeability, and acceptance) in advertising. Furthermore, these effects may be influenced by various additional factors, as suggested by Jeong Hwang (2012) and Segijn and Eisend (2019). It has been posited that the limited availability of cognitive resources not only hinders individuals from effectively encoding, processing, and retaining advertising messages but also impedes their ability to engage in critical evaluation, thereby resulting in more favourable attitudes towards the advertisements (Jeong Hwang, 2012; Segijn et al., 2016).

Several studies have found that media multitasking has detrimental effects on consumers' ability to recognise advertisements, remember brands, and recognise brands (Duff and Sar, 2015; Angell et al., 2016). However, other studies have shown that this behaviour of consuming media simultaneously has positive outcomes in terms of brand attitudes and intention to make a purchase (Kazakova et al., 2016; Srivastava et al., 2016). Nevertheless, similar to other subject matters, a number of contradictory results might be observed across the papers that were examined. According to the findings of Segijn et al. (2017), there were no observed disparities in brand memory between individuals who engage in multi-screening and those who use a single screen, provided that the individuals possess adequate cognitive capacity. In addition to the findings of Segijn et al. (2016), it has been observed that multi-screening, which refers to the practise of media multitasking with two displays, can have a detrimental impact on consumers' emotive advertising outcomes. Hence, scholars contend that the distinctive attributes of various media combinations and environments may function as moderating factors, elucidating the

varying influence that media multitasking behaviour can exert on advertising outcomes (Wang et al., 2015; Segijn and Eisend, 2019).

In the existing body of literature, several factors have been identified as moderators that can account for the inconsistent findings. These factors include the relationship between two media activities (Van Cauwenberge et al., 2014; Segijn et al., 2017b), the incorporation of advertisements into a narrative (Yoon et al., 2011), different types of advertising appeals (Kazakova et al., 2016), and individuals' perceptual processing styles (Duff and Sar, 2015). These moderators have been found to provide explanations for the variability in results observed thus far. Moreover, several scholars endeavoured to elucidate the fundamental mechanisms in order to gain a deeper comprehension of the impacts of media multitasking on the efficacy of advertising. An illustrative instance involves a recent meta-analysis conducted by Segijn and Eisend (2019), which shown that attention allocation, perceived enjoyment, and resistance to persuasive messages function as underlying mechanisms that elucidate the influence of multi-screening on advertising memory and persuasion. In conclusion, it is worth noting that within this particular group, there exists another subcategory of study that particularly examines the effects of media multitasking on individuals' attitudes towards and the persuasiveness of political media material. This line of inquiry has been explored by researchers such as Ran et al. (2016), Gottfried et al. (2017), and Liu et al. (2020).

Selective Exposure and Platform Preferences

According to Garrett and Stroud (2014), the selective exposure theory posits that individuals have a tendency to actively seek information that is consistent with their pre-existing ideas and attitudes. The aforementioned issue holds considerable significance for the behaviours around news intake, as individuals have a tendency to choose interact with news sources that align with their existing viewpoints. Examining the correlation between government servants' ideological inclinations and preferences and their platform selections may provide insights into the degree to which they are exposed to a range of perspectives.

The proliferation of online social media platforms has given rise to apprehensions regarding the excessive exposure of individuals to politicised news. Nevertheless, it is important to note that social media platforms constitute merely a fraction of the overall media consumption of the typical individual (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Allen et al., 2020). The study conducted by Gentzkow and Shapiro (2011) is the initial endeavour to examine the influence of cross-platform news consumption on individuals' selective exposure to diverse perspectives. Drawing upon existing scholarly literature on racial segregation, the authors of this study establish a clear definition for the isolation index, which is subsequently employed to analyse patterns of American news consumption. According to their findings, individuals tend to absorb a greater amount of news that aligns with their own perspectives online compared to offline sources, despite the overall quantity being relatively modest. Multiple studies have demonstrated a rise in the inclination to engage with online partisan content in recent years, as evidenced by replications of the isolation index (Levy, 2021;

Peterson et al., 2021). Furthermore, there has been a particularly notable surge in the consumption of such content on social media platforms (Halberstam and Knight, 2016; Levy, 2021).

In contemporary times, the media landscape has become increasingly diverse, characterised by a multitude of media organisations and a proliferation of news outlets. As a consequence, the media audience is now confronted with an abundance of options in terms of media platforms and content. This has led to a pervasive sense of doubt regarding the credibility of these media platforms and the accuracy of the information they disseminate (Banda, 2010). The emergence of this contemporary occurrence has generated a resurgence of scholarly attention towards the investigation of media trustworthiness. Existing literature indicates that individuals have a tendency to direct their attention towards media platforms that they trust and absorb media content that aligns with their preexisting beliefs, while actively avoiding media sources that they perceive as untrustworthy (Kiousis, 2001; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003). This behaviour is consistent with the idea of selective exposure.

Selective exposure, media characteristics, and information preference

The increasing number of major media companies offers individuals the opportunity to select media outlets that align with their individual preferences, and the emergence of digital media has further expanded these options (Bruns et al., 2012). The initial perspectives on media studies depicted the media audience as passive recipients who were subject to the influence of media and frequently manipulated by media messages (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). However, contemporary academic research has contested this conventional understanding by asserting that the audience actively engages with media content and exercises agency in determining which media messages to attend to. This shift in perspective has given rise to communication theories such as uses and gratification theory and selective exposure theory (Katz et al., 1973). Previous studies utilising the uses and gratification approach have extensively examined the proactive engagement of audience members and have contributed to the comprehension of the underlying motivations that drive audience decisions to consume media (Defleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989).

The existing body of literature pertaining to selective exposure posits that individuals engage in a deliberate process of media selection, wherein they actively choose the media platforms they consume and purposefully opt for certain media content that captures their attention. The theoretical foundation of selective exposure can be attributed to Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory. This notion posits that individuals tend to seek out media content that aligns with their pre-existing opinions, while actively avoiding information that contradicts their established viewpoints. This theory suggests that individuals engage in a conscious decision-making process when it comes to picking and avoiding media platforms and material, driven by their own personal choices and preferences. Consequently, this grants the media audience the agency of choice, shifting the locus of power from the mass media. Nevertheless, scholarly research has

demonstrated that individuals have a tendency to consciously focus on information that aligns with their previous beliefs, but they also unintentionally encounter material that contradicts their views (Stroud, 2011; Tewksbury et al., 2001; Valentino et al., 2009).

Weeks et al. (2017) argue that inadvertent and fortuitous encounters with information can serve as a catalyst for media consumers to actively pursue further content that aligns with their existing attitudes. The theory of selective exposure places focus on the discerning decisions and preferences made by individuals. Individuals utilise various media outlets, both online and traditional, for distinct goals and preferences, as indicated by their particular choices and inclinations (Daramola, 2003). An individual may exhibit a preference for obtaining political news content from traditional media sources such as newspapers or television while opting to consume amusement information through online platforms such as social media sites or weblogs.

The Digital Divide and News Accessibility

The term "digital divide" typically refers to the disparity between individuals who possess and lack access to various forms of information and communication technologies. The predominant mediums encompassed within these forms are computers and the Internet. Occasionally, mobile devices, specifically smartphones and other digital hardware and software, are also encompassed within the category of cell phones. The notion is present in discussions pertaining to disparities in social and informational contexts. The concepts of inclusion and exclusion within specific social units are frequently seen in this context. The word emerged around the mid-1990s within the United States. The initial occurrence of its publishing may be traced back to an official document released by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration of the United States Department of Commerce in 1999. Regrettably, the concept of the digital divide has engendered some perplexity. Indeed, this metaphor has served as the source of at least four misconceptions. The metaphor employed in the statement implies a clear dichotomy between two distinct factions, characterised by a significant disparity between them. Additionally, it implies that closing this gap poses a significant challenge. Thirdly, it can suggest the existence of absolute disparities between those who are encompassed inside a particular group and those who are not, while inequalities typically have a more comparative nature. Ultimately, the digital divide is a dynamic and transitory state. The subsequent parts will serve to elucidate these misunderstandings.

Research history of digital divide

Research on the digital gap emerged as an interdisciplinary endeavour in the early 2000s, with a predominant focus in the fields of communication science, sociology, psychology, economics, and education science. The field of communication science primarily centres around the examination of individuals' access to and utilisation of digital media. Sociology places significant emphasis on the examination of social inequality with regards to various forms of resources, diverse types of capital, and levels of engagement within society. The field of psychology encompasses the examination of attitudes and motivations related

to the use of digital media, as well as the exploration of phenomena such as computer anxiety and technophobia. The field of economics emphasises the dissemination of innovations under consideration. Education science places significant emphasis on the development of information or digital literacy.

During the initial period of digital divide study (1999-2002), scholars mostly focused on examining the topic through a limited lens of access. The process involved in acquiring physical access encompasses the procurement of both the hardware and software components of digital media, as well as establishing a connection to the Internet. There existed a correlation between physical access and general demographic factors, including income, educational attainment, age, gender, and race. The frames utilised in this study encompassed sociological aspects, specifically focusing on social capital, as well as economic factors, such as the dissemination of a technology within the market and the decision-making processes of customers in terms of adaption.

Subsequently, scholars specialising in communication and media studies began to draw attention to concerns that extended beyond mere access. These concerns encompassed the necessary skills for users, as identified by Hargittai (2002), the various ways in which the Internet is utilised, as explored by Bonfadelli (2002), and the intricate nature of access, which was reconceptualized as a comprehensive adoption of technology that goes beyond physical access, as proposed by Van Dijk and Hacker (2003). The phrase "second-level division" was introduced by Hargittai (2002) to describe the redirection of research in question. Van Dijk (2005) employed the concept of the "deepening divide" to underscore the notion that the issue of digital inequality persists beyond the mere attainment of physical access, but rather commences when the integration of digital media into everyday existence takes place. During the period spanning from 2005 to 2015, the research on the digital divide predominantly shifted its attention towards the second-level divide.

However, prior until about 2005, the predominant focus of digital divide research was primarily descriptive in nature (Van Dijk, 2006). The absence of theoretical framework was evident. The study placed emphasis on the demographic factors of income, education, age, gender, and ethnicity, and examined their correlation with (physical) access. The correlations observed in relation to access were insufficient in determining the underlying causes of access, let alone comprehensively examining the associated effects, which were indeed disregarded. Alternatively, it was postulated that the absence of access would result in social disadvantage or deprivation. The field of digital divide research lacks a heritage of examining media effects. It was not until 2005 that some scholars began to examine the impact of access and usage on social behaviour, relationships, and broader societal consequences. The present analysis will center on these consequences.

News Consumption Patterns in the Digital Age

The formation of news consumption patterns is influenced by socialisation during early stages of development (Lee et al., 2013; York and Scholl, 2015). During the process of socialisation,

various factors such as family ties, parent traits, schools, peer groups, and the political and media environment play a significant role in shaping individuals' habits of news consumption (Čuvalo and Peruško, 2017; Diehl et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2013; York and Scholl, 2015). The behaviours and practises that are deemed acceptable during the developmental stages of infancy and adolescence have a high likelihood of enduring into adulthood (Čuvalo and Peruško, 2017; York and Scholl, 2015). Comparative study has revealed disparities and distinct trends in news intake across various age cohorts. According to Kalogeropoulos (2019), individuals in older age cohorts exhibit a predilection for conventional forms of media while seeking news, with television being the primary medium of choice. The younger demographic predominantly depends on digital news platforms, social networking platforms, and messaging applications as their primary sources of information, with a particular preference for video-based content. Furthermore, individuals exhibit less engagement with news brands, frequently relying on algorithmic suggestion and personalization systems for news selection (Kalogeropoulos, 2019). According to Blekesaune et al. (2012), individuals in question are frequently observed to have limited engagement with news. Additionally, their exposure to news tends to occur inadvertently and in a casual manner, primarily due to their continuous involvement with social media platforms (Boczkowski et al., 2017).

Habits and News Consumption

Based on the recent theory of media attendance, individuals frequently resort to established routines of media consumption when faced with a wide range of media options, with the intention of preserving cognitive resources (LeRose & Eastin, 2004; Diddi & LaRose, 2006). Another motive for this behaviour is to fulfil persistent or recurring needs (Tewksbury, Hals & Bibart, 2008, p. 258). According to media attendance theory, individuals tend to actively seek news coverage from the same sources they rely on in traditional media. This behaviour is attributed to the self-reinforcing nature of habitual patterns (Rosenstein & Grant, 1997, p. 326, emphasis added). Furthermore, it is plausible that these offline news consumption habits extend to online platforms. The concept of individuals forming media consumption patterns has been widely acknowledged by scholars in the field of Communication. Nevertheless, it has frequently been overlooked in empirical investigations (Rosenstein & Grant, 1997). For instance, previous scholarly discourse has explored the relationship between habits and news consumption, as demonstrated by Tewksbury's work in 2005. However, the concept of "habitual news consumption" has not been defined or investigated in any earlier research, until the present study. In the realm of general media consumption, the topic of habits is frequently addressed within the Uses & Gratifications literature as a specific form of "gratifications." Consequently, it is not the primary focus of examination in these studies (Rubin, 1984; Didi & LaRose, 2006). In accordance with the methodology proposed by Rosenstein and Grant (1997), this research considers habit as a fundamental component of the underlying process that contributes to the formation of individual media dependency relationships (p.324).

Digital Transformation and News Engagement

The digital transformation of news consumption has led to increased interactivity, personalization, and user engagement. Features like comments likes, and sharing options encourage active participation and the formation of digital communities around news content (Kümpel et al., 2015). The digital transformation has revolutionized nearly every aspect of modern life, and news engagement is no exception. The seamless integration of technology into daily routines has reshaped how individuals access, consume, and engage with news content. This transformation has profound implications for the dynamics of news engagement, audience interaction, and the role of traditional media outlets in the digital era.

Theoretical Framework: News Consumption in the Digital Age

The theoretical framework for this research draws on three interrelated concepts: Media Multitasking, Selective Exposure, and the Digital Divide. These concepts collectively provide a lens to examine the complex dynamics of news consumption in the context of the digital age and cross-platform media usage among civil servants.

Media Multitasking

Media multitasking refers to the simultaneous consumption of multiple media sources (Al-Rawi & Elwalda, 2020). In the digital age, individuals frequently engage with news content across various platforms, such as social media, news websites, and mobile applications. This behaviour is driven by the availability of devices like smartphones that enable seamless access to multiple sources of information simultaneously. Media multitasking impacts cognitive processing, attention allocation, and media preferences (Ophir et al., 2009). In the context of this research, media multitasking provides insight into how Osun civil servants navigate the cross-platform news landscape, potentially influencing their exposure to diverse news sources.

Selective Exposure

Selective exposure theory posits that individuals seek out information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs and attitudes (Garrett & Stroud, 2014). In the realm of news consumption, individuals may be more inclined to engage with news sources that reinforce their existing viewpoints. As civil servants access news content from various platforms, their choices could be influenced by their ideological inclinations. Understanding how selective exposure operates within the digital news ecosystem can offer insights into the extent to which civil servants are exposed to diverse perspectives.

The Digital Divide

The digital divide theory highlights disparities in access to digital technology and online content among different demographic groups (Van Dijk, 2019). This divide can be influenced by factors such as socioeconomic status, education, and geographic location. In the context of news consumption, the digital divide impacts individuals' ability to access and engage with news content across platforms. Investigating how the digital divide manifests among Osun civil servants can provide insights into how technological accessibility influences their choice of news sources and platforms.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study necessitates the utilisation of a survey approach. The survey approach is considered highly appropriate for gaining insights into the beliefs, motivations, and views of users. In this study, the researcher employed the online survey approach. The utilisation of online electronic surveys facilitates the opportunity to carry out extensive data collection on a broad scale. The technology offers a cost-effective means of administering internet surveys. The prevalence of electronic surveys is on the rise, and recent study comparing electronic and postal surveys suggests that the content results of both types of surveys may be comparable. However, electronic surveys offer distinct advantages in terms of rapid distribution and response cycles. According to Andrews, Nonnecke, and Preece (2003),

The population under investigation in this study comprises the whole workforce of Osun state. According to the official documentation, the Osun state civil service employs a total of 16,290 individuals. The study employed the SurveyMonkey online calculator to determine the appropriate sample size. Therefore, employing a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5% on the overall population of 16,290, the sample size was determined to be 376. A total of 361 people completed the questionnaire.

The chosen approach for doing the analysis The data obtained in response to the study inquiries are presented via the Likert scale and subsequently examined employing the SPSS statistical software. Responses are classified as either acceptable or rejected depending on the calculated weighted mean for each individual response. A threshold of 3.51 and above is considered acceptable, a range of 3.50 to 2.50 is considered neutral, and a threshold of 2.49 and lower is considered unacceptable.
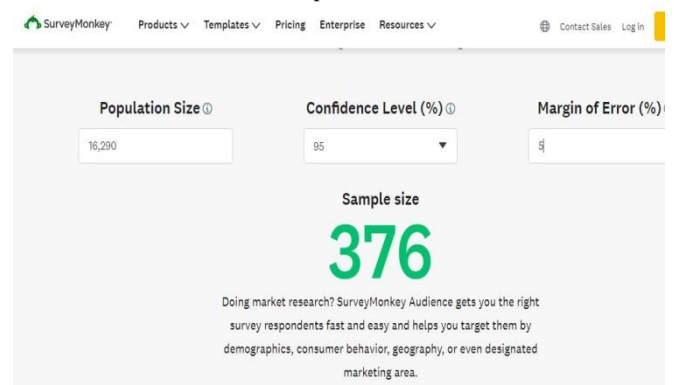
Presentation of Data

The participants in the study spanned an age range of 13 to 65 years and older. The population of respondents in the age bracket of 13-17 years of age constituted only 6.9% (n=13) of the total sample. The majority of respondents, 129 in total, belonged to the age bracket of 18-24. Respondents falling within the age bracket of 25-34 accounted for 17.20% (n=32) of the sample. A small

proportion of respondents, 1.61% (n=3), fell within the age bracket of 35-44. Similarly, 3.76% (n=7) of respondents were in the age bracket of 45-54. Only one respondent, representing 0.54% (n=1), fell within the age bracket of 55-64. Lastly, there was one respondent in the age range of 65+ (n=1, 0.54%).

Data analysis

Table 1: The primary sources of news among civil servants

	Frequency	Percentage %
Traditional newspapers	99	27.4
Television news broadcasts	78	21.6
Radio news broadcasts	73	20.2
Online news websites	49	13.6
Social media platforms	37	10.2
Mobile news applications	25	6.9
	361	100

Table 1 shows respondents responses on the primary sources of news among civil servants. Majority said they used traditional newspapers (27.4%), television (21.6%), and radio news (20.2%).

Table 2: Engagement on news consumption

	VF	F	O	R	N	Mean
How often do you engage with traditional newspapers for news consumption?	97 (26.9%)	151 (41.8%)	61 (16.9%)	39 (10.8%)	13 (3.6%)	3.53
How often do you engage with social media platforms for news consumption?	89 (24.6%)	148 (40.9%)	57 (15.8%)	32 (8.9%)	35 (9.7%)	3.50
How often do you engage with television news broadcasts for news consumption	103 (28.5%)	182 (50.4%)	41 (11.3%)	29 (8%)	6 (1.6%)	3.59
How often do you engage with mobile news applications for news consumption	93 (27.8%)	101 (27.9%)	69 (19.1%)	66 (18.3%)	32 (8.9%)	3.54
Grand Mean						3.55

Table 2 shows respondents responses on the Engagement on news consumption. The table has a grand mean of 3.55, which signifies that respondents agree with all the statements.

Table 3: factors most important to you when choosing a platform to consume news.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
Convenience and accessibility	101 (27.9%)	183 (50.7%)	14 (3.9%)	34 (9.4%)	29 (8%)	3.55
Trustworthiness of the source	118 (32.7%)	164 (45.4%)	21 (5.8%)	39 (10.8%)	19 (5.3%)	3.58
Personalized content recommendations	81 (22.4%)	189 (52.4%)	20 (5.5%)	41 (11.4%)	30 (8.3%)	3.50
Interactivity and multimedia features	123 (34%)	191 (52.9%)	12 (3.3%)	18 (4.9%)	17 (4.7%)	3.69
Social recommendations from friends/peers	90 (24.9%)	179 (49.6%)	15 (4.1%)	49 (13.6%)	28 (7.7%)	3.52
						3.56

Table 3 shows respondents responses on the factors most important to you when choosing a platform to consume news. The table has a grand mean of 3.56, which signifies that respondents agree with all the factors stated.

Table 4: Utilisation of digital news has affected my use of online sources for news

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	339	93.9
No	22	6.1
	361	100

Data from Table 4 presents data on respondents' Utilisation of digital news has affected my use of online sources for news. Data shows that out of 361 respondents that participated in this study, 339 (93.9%) agreed that utilisation of digital news has affected my use of online sources for news.

Discussion of findings

The primary sources of news among civil servants in Osun state varied depending on individual preferences and access to different media platforms. Majority of civil servants rely on traditional sources such as newspapers, television, and radio, while others prefer digital sources such as social media, news websites, and mobile applications.

Convenience and accessibility, trustworthiness and reliability, and Interactivity and multimedia features were identified as key factors influencing the choice of news consumption platforms among Osun civil servants. This highlights the importance of convenience and trust in news consumption behaviours. This is not consistent with the study of Al-Rawi & Elwalda, (2020) who found that the factors influencing the platform choices of individuals for their news consumption include age, education level, job responsibilities, and personal interests. For example, younger civil servants may be more likely to use digital platforms for news consumption due to their familiarity with technology, while older civil servants may prefer traditional sources. Additionally, civil servants with higher levels of education may be more likely to seek out diverse sources of news, while those with more demanding job responsibilities may have less time to consume news and may rely on easily accessible sources (Van Dijk, 2019).

The role of digitalization in shaping news consumption behaviour was evident in this study, with a significant increase in the use of online news sources among Osun civil servants. This could be attributed to the ease of access and abundance of information available on digital platforms. With the rise of digital platforms, there has been a significant shift in how news is accessed and consumed. The convenience and speed of digital news have made it a popular choice among civil servants who may have limited time to keep up with current events. However, this has also led to concerns about the credibility and reliability of information shared on these platforms (Van Dijk, 2019).

Furthermore, the utilization of various digital platforms has greatly affected the perception and understanding of news content among civil servants in Osun state. The constant flow of information on social media and other digital platforms can make it challenging for civil servants to filter out accurate and unbiased news from fake or biased sources. This can potentially lead to a skewed understanding of current events and issues, which can have implications for decision-making within their roles as civil servants. According to Kümpel et al., (2015), the impact of digitalization on news consumption behaviours can also be seen in the rise of personalized news feeds and algorithms that tailor content based on an individual's interests and browsing history. This can create echo chambers where civil servants are only exposed to news that aligns with their beliefs and perspectives, potentially limiting their understanding of diverse viewpoints and leading to polarization.

Conclusion

In the dynamic landscape of news consumption within the digital age, this research has delved into the intricate cross-platform media usage habits among Osun civil servants. Through a comprehensive exploration of sources, preferences, and behaviours, this study contributes to the understanding of how individuals engage with news content and adapt to evolving communication technologies.

The findings of this research provide valuable insights into the news consumption patterns of civil servants in Osun state. By identifying the primary sources of news, uncovering factors influencing platform choices, and examining the impact of digitalization, this study paints a comprehensive picture of the diverse ways individuals access and engage with news. The cross-platform approach highlights the complexity of news consumption behaviours, where traditional media and digital platforms coexist and interact in shaping individuals' information environment.

The theoretical framework of media multitasking, selective exposure, and the digital divide has enriched the analysis by offering lenses through which to interpret the findings. The exploration of media multitasking sheds light on the simultaneous engagement with news content across diverse platforms, providing insights into the attention allocation patterns of civil servants. The theory of selective exposure underscores the potential impact of ideological inclinations on platform choices, deepening our understanding of how individuals curate their news consumption experiences. Furthermore, the examination of the digital divide theory emphasizes the importance of equitable access to technology in shaping news preferences and habits.

The implications of this research extend beyond academia. Media organizations can glean insights into tailoring content for diverse platforms to meet the preferences of civil servants. Policymakers can consider these findings to bridge potential digital divides and ensure equitable access to news content, especially among demographic groups with varying technological accessibility.

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, this study provides a snapshot of news consumption behaviours among Osun civil servants. It offers a foundation for future research to explore longitudinal trends and further investigate the interplay of factors that influence news consumption across changing media environments.

In conclusion, this research advances our understanding of news consumption behaviours in the digital age, contributing insights that can inform media strategies, policy decisions, and further scholarly exploration.

Recommendation

The insights gained from this research provide valuable recommendations for media organizations, policymakers, and civil servants themselves, aimed at enhancing news consumption experiences in the digital age. These recommendations are informed by the findings of the study and are aligned with the evolving dynamics of cross-platform media usage.

1. Media Organizations:

Diverse Content Formats: Media organizations should continue diversifying their content formats to cater to different platform preferences. Balancing textual, visual, and interactive elements can engage a wider audience.

Customized Delivery: Providing options for tailored news alerts and personalized content recommendations can enhance user engagement and satisfaction.

Fact-Checking and Verification: Given the potential influence of ideological inclinations, media organizations should prioritize rigorous fact-checking and unbiased reporting to foster trust among audiences.

2. Policy Makers:

Digital Inclusion Initiatives: Policymakers should focus on bridging the digital divide by promoting access to affordable and reliable internet services, especially in areas with limited connectivity.

Media Literacy Programs: Implementing media literacy programs can equip civil servants with the skills to critically evaluate and navigate news content across platforms.

Open Data Initiatives: Facilitating the availability of government information through open data initiatives can empower civil servants to engage with accurate and timely news.

3. Civil Servants:

Diverse Source Engagement: Encourage civil servants to actively explore news content from various sources and perspectives, fostering a well-rounded understanding of current events.
Selective Exposure Awareness: Make civil servants aware of the potential bias introduced by selective exposure and encourage them to engage with diverse viewpoints to gain a comprehensive perspective.

Digital Security Awareness: Educate civil servants about online security measures to ensure safe engagement with digital news platforms and protect personal information.

4. Future Research:

Longitudinal Studies: Conduct longitudinal studies to track changes in news consumption behaviours over time, capturing the evolution of cross-platform media usage.

Comparative Analysis: Extend research to compare news consumption habits across different demographic groups, exploring variations in digital access and platform preferences.

Global Perspectives: Explore news consumption behaviours among civil servants in different regions to understand how local contexts shape cross-platform media usage.

The recommendations outlined here aim to foster informed, responsible, and inclusive news consumption behaviours among civil servants in Osun state. By implementing these suggestions, media organizations, policymakers, and civil servants can contribute to a media landscape that is adaptive to technological advancements while promoting access, diversity, and critical engagement with news content.

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