

## Social Media and the New Paradigm of the Global Public Sphere: Between Information and Influence

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the impact of social media on contemporary communication in comparison with traditional channels. The main objective is to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of social media, as well as their role in the rapid dissemination of information and the formation of public opinion. The research includes an analysis of relevant literature and survey data, confirming that social media enhance communication.

**Keywords:** information dissemination, digital communication, public opinion, global interaction

### Introduction

The advent of the digital era has transformed the dynamics of human interaction and the dissemination of information.

Danah M. Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison (2007) note that “*what makes social network sites unique is not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks.*” Social networks, as a modern manifestation of these transformations, have revolutionized the way individuals communicate and share information. With their widespread popularity and pervasive influence, social networks have become integral components of both personal and professional communication.

Martin (2005) defines digital literacy as the competence of individuals to access various digital tools and content, use them effectively, recognize and evaluate digital resources, produce new information in the process, and communicate efficiently through media.

This paper explores the complex relationship between social networks and the evolution of communication, examining how these platforms influence the ways in which information is shared and investigating their advantages and disadvantages within this context.

“*Information is power, and today a much larger part of the world’s population has access to that power.*” (Nay, J., 2005)

Social networks, encompassing platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others,



have brought individuals together in virtual spaces, transcending geographical boundaries. These networks have empowered users to create profiles, connect with others, and share a diverse range of content - from personal anecdotes to breaking news. Constance Duncombe (2017) argues that “the role of Twitter as a key part of negotiation strategy is a crucial demonstration of how social media can shape the struggle for recognition, and thereby legitimize political possibilities for change.” The transformative influence of social networks is evident in their ability to redefine interpersonal communication, enabling instant interactions and fostering a sense of connectedness.

The impact of social networks on communication and the dissemination of information is a multifaceted phenomenon that reshapes the structure of modern society. As Melissen Jan (2005) emphasizes, “official communication aimed at foreign publics is, after all, no new phenomenon in international relations.”

Cathy Sun (2020) observes that “the transformative power of social media in world politics has increasingly been recognized, but remains underexamined. As this new medium fundamentally changes the ways in which state identities are shaped and foreign policy conducted, we would do well to scrutinize the effects of social media in creating or limiting opportunities for diplomacy and global cooperation.”

The advantages of instant communication and access to information—alongside the challenges posed by misinformation-highlight the need for a nuanced examination of the role social networks play in shaping communication. Khan et al. (2014) argue that “the Internet and social media must have both positive and negative effects on users, but it all depends on the digital literacy of internet users.” Similarly, Arafah & Hasyim (2022) note that “the positive and negative impacts of the use of internet media (social media) are highly dependent on digital literacy,” which they define as the ability to understand and use information from a variety of digital sources.

### **Materials and methods**

The subject of this research is the analysis of the relationship between online social networks and the dynamics of information dissemination. This research begins with an analysis for examining the complex interrelationship between these digital networks and the dynamics of information sharing, focusing on the influence of popular topics and news. By sharing news articles or posts related to topics that are popular in everyday life, this research aims to discover the mechanisms underlying the choices made by individuals in a digital ecosystem saturated with information.

Zahra, A. A. et al. (2020) notice that in the rapid development era, the use of social media is indeed able to become a new forum for the community to express various criticisms of policy.

This research aims to systematically examine the complex interaction between online social networks, communication, and the dissemination of information. Through the survey method, which includes factors such as demographic attributes, the frequency of using social media, preferences for specific platforms, tendencies for seeking information related to prevailing topics or news, sharing behavior, the main factors influencing engagement choices, verification



habits, trusted sources of information, transformative effects on opinions, willingness to participate in online communication, the influence of visual content, and the relative effectiveness of visuals versus text-based information related to popular topics, this paper attempts to reveal the multilayered connections between individual behaviors, digital networks, and communication of information. By clarifying these relationships, the research attempts to enrich our understanding of how online social networks shape the contemporary landscape of information sharing and influence.

The main research question is: How do social media platforms influence the speed, reach, and perception of information dissemination in the digital era? The auxiliary hypotheses are that: 1.The influence of social media has a significant effect on the way of communication and dissemination of information on a global level; 2.News spread on social media affects more quickly the creation of public opinion, unlike traditional channels of communication; 3.The use of social media in communication significantly improves the speed, reach, and impact of information dissemination compared to traditional channels.

Within this research, a convenient sample consisting of 60 respondents was used, with an age distribution from 16 to 65+ years. The research was conducted in Skopje, during the period from August 1 to August 30, 2024, allowing enough time for the participation of all respondents. The procedure for data collection was precisely planned and implemented to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the results. The research was conducted in several phases, beginning with the selection and recruitment of respondents from different age groups, through an electronic form via the Google Forms platform. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The completed questionnaires were then collected and safely stored for subsequent analysis.

The measurement scale was developed to assess the complex interaction between online social networks, communication, and information dissemination. Its continuous use in research and practice provides ongoing refinement and adaptation to different age contexts, thereby increasing its usefulness and relevance in various fields.

## Results

The analysis of the demographic distribution of the research provides valuable insights into the age composition of the respondents and highlights the age-related patterns in their responses. The first question of the survey, “What is your age?”, facilitated the segmentation of respondents into different age groups, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the generational nuances that influence information-sharing behavior in the context of social networks.

Among the 60 respondents, the age distribution is as follows:

1. Age 16–24 years: A notable portion of the sample, comprising 18 individuals (30% of the total number of respondents), falls within the age range of 16 to 24 years. This segment represents the younger participants who are most likely digital natives and active users of social media platforms.
2. Age 25–40 years: The largest age group in the sample, consisting of 24 individuals (40% of the total number of respondents), falls within the age range of 25 to 40 years.



This demographic segment includes individuals who are likely part of the workforce and actively engaged in online interactions.

3. Age 40–65 years: Sixteen participants (26.7% of the total number of respondents) belong to the age group of 40 to 65 years. This segment represents a more mature demographic, potentially including experienced users of both traditional and digital media.
4. Age 65 years and above: The smallest age group in the sample, consisting of two individuals (3.3% of the total number of respondents), is composed of participants aged 65 or older. This demographic subgroup represents the older generation, which may have varying levels of familiarity and engagement with online social networks.

The distribution of respondents across different age groups sheds light on the demographic landscape of the research and indicates potential age-related variations in information-sharing practices. The prevalence of younger participants in the study may suggest that the younger generation is more actively immersed in the digital space, while the participation of individuals from older age groups indicates a broader adoption of digital platforms to remain connected and informed.

These initial findings lay the foundation for deeper research into the correlations between age, social media usage, and information-sharing behavior.

The second question in the research, “What is your gender?”, provides insight into the gender composition of the respondents and offers a basis for understanding how gender intersects with information-sharing behaviors in the domain of online social networks.

Out of a total of 60 respondents, gender distribution revealed a clear representation of both sexes. Among the respondents, 41 identified as female, representing 68% of the sample. This significant presence of female respondents suggests that women are actively engaged in using social media as a means of communication, information sharing, and participation in discussions on trending topics.

On the other hand, male respondents accounted for 19, comprising the remaining 32% of the sample. Although numerically smaller, the representation of this group demonstrates that men are also prominent contributors in the digital landscape, participating on online platforms to access and share information related to popular topics and news.

Understanding how gender intersects with social media usage and information sharing is crucial for comprehending the different ways in which individuals engage with digital platforms.

The third question in the research, “How often do you use social media platforms?”, provides insight into the cadence of respondents’ interaction with digital platforms. This aspect of the study offers a lens into the frequency with which respondents engage with social media, allowing for an examination of how their usage patterns correlate with their involvement in sharing information related to popular topics and news.



Among the 60 respondents, a diverse range of social media usage frequencies emerged. The majority of respondents, 43 individuals (71.7% of the sample), reported using social media platforms several times a day. This widespread pattern reflects the integral role of digital platforms in the daily routines of the participants, indicating that frequent access is a common behavior among the surveyed individuals.

Ten respondents (16.7% of the sample) indicated that they use social media platforms once a day, representing a moderate level of engagement. The responses of this group suggest a structured approach to social media use, potentially implying that they allocate specific time for engaging with digital content.

A smaller subgroup of respondents, 5 individuals (8.3% of the sample), reported using social media platforms several times a week. The responses of this group suggest a more intermittent pattern of engagement, likely influenced by work schedules or a deliberate choice to limit exposure to digital platforms.

Only two respondents (3.3% of the sample) indicated that they rarely use social media platforms. This minority response points to a reduced reliance on digital platforms for communication and information sharing, potentially reflecting a preference for alternative means of staying updated.

The frequency of social media use among respondents has significant implications for their interaction with information on popular topics and news. Frequent users are likely to encounter a larger volume of content and potentially play a more active role in sharing and discussing information. Conversely, those who engage less often may have different motivations for their online presence.

By analyzing the relationship between the frequency of social media use and information-sharing behavior, the research aims to uncover the complex interaction between digital habits and the dissemination of information in the digital sphere. The following sections will explore more deeply how the frequency of social media use influences respondents' tendencies to seek, share, and engage with news and discussions on trending topics. The fourth question of the research, "Which social media platforms do you use regularly?", reveals preferences regarding digital platforms for communication and information sharing. The responses to this question provide insight into the social media landscape with which the respondents actively engage, shedding light on the potential platforms through which information related to popular topics and news is disseminated.

Among the 60 respondents, the distribution of regular use of different social media platforms is as follows:

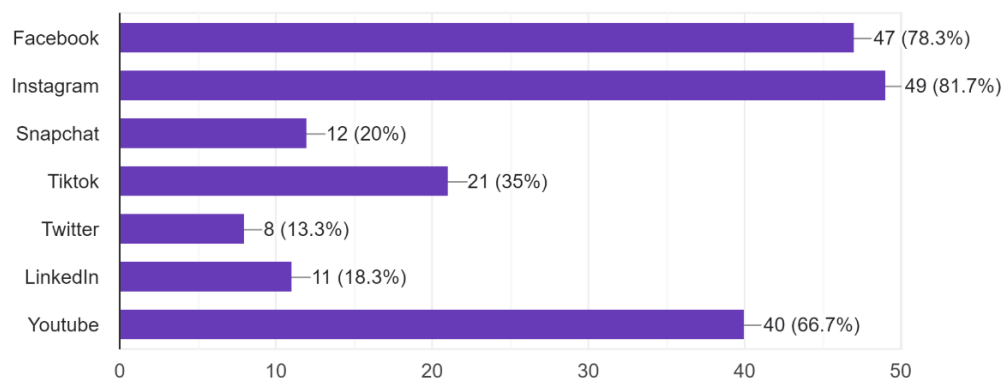
1. Facebook: An overwhelming majority of respondents, 47 individuals (78.3% of the total number of respondents), reported regularly using Facebook. This result highlights the enduring popularity of Facebook as a platform for social interaction and content sharing.
2. Instagram: Similarly, a significant number of participants, 49 individuals (81.7% of the total number of respondents), indicated that they use Instagram regularly. Instagram's



emphasis on visual content and storytelling appears to resonate with a substantial portion of the sample.

3. Snapchat: Twelve respondents (20% of the total number of respondents) mentioned that they regularly use Snapchat. Snapchat's focus on ephemeral messaging and multimedia sharing attracts a specific segment of participants.
4. TikTok: Twenty-one individual (35% of the total respondents) reported regular use of TikTok. The rapid rise in the platform's popularity, especially among younger demographics, is reflected in this response.
5. Twitter: Eight respondents (13.3% of the total number of respondents) stated that they use Twitter regularly. The real-time nature of Twitter and its emphasis on concise, text-based content are appealing to this subgroup of participants.
6. LinkedIn: Eleven individuals (18.3% of the total number of respondents) mentioned regular use of LinkedIn. LinkedIn's focus on professional networking and career-related content makes it a relevant platform for certain users in the sample.
7. YouTube: A significant number of respondents, 40 individuals (66.7% of the total number of respondents), reported regularly using YouTube. YouTube's diversity in offering a wide range of video content caters to the varied interests within the sample.

Chart 1: Author's own source



The distribution of responses reflects the dominance of well-established platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, which continue to attract a substantial user base. Additionally, the presence of newer platforms like TikTok indicates evolving preferences among participants, particularly within younger demographics. Understanding the popularity and usage patterns of these platforms is essential for comprehending how participants engage with social networks and how these platforms can influence communication and the dissemination of information related to popular topics and news.

The diversification of social media platform usage among respondents provides valuable insights into the channels through which information related to popular topics and news may flow. By examining the platforms with which respondents regularly engage, the research seeks to illuminate how different digital ecosystems influence the dissemination and consumption of information in the context of trending topics. The following sections will delve deeper into the correlations between platform preferences and information-sharing behavior, enriching our understanding of the complex interaction between social media usage patterns and information



dissemination.

The fifth question of the research, “When a popular topic or news appears, how likely are you to seek information about it on social media?”, examines respondents’ propensity to seek information on digital platforms when confronted with popular topics or news. This research investigates the role of social media in meeting respondents’ information needs and assesses the extent to which these platforms serve as sources of information regarding trending topics.

Among the 60 respondents, varying attitudes emerged regarding seeking information on social media in response to popular topics. The majority of respondents, 28 individuals (46.7% of the sample), indicated a higher likelihood, stating that they are very likely to turn to social media for information when a popular topic or news item arises. This result highlights the importance of digital platforms as channels for timely and relevant information, reflecting respondents’ trust in the capacity of social media to provide insight into current events.

Meanwhile, 24 respondents (40% of the sample) expressed a moderate level of likelihood, indicating that they are somewhat likely to seek information on social media when a popular topic or news item arises. This response suggests that social media platforms play a significant role in supplementing participants’ information-seeking behavior, especially when the subjects attract attention.

Seven respondents (11.7% of the sample) adopted a neutral stance, indicating that their likelihood of seeking information on social media in response to popular topics is neither high nor low. The responses of this group may imply a balanced approach to information sources, where social media represents just one of several ways to stay informed.

Notably, only one respondent indicated that it is very unlikely for them to seek information on popular topics or news on social media. This lack of responses in the “very unlikely” category suggests a general tendency among respondents to at least consider digital platforms as potential sources of information, even if not the primary ones.

The varying degrees of likelihood to seek information on social media in response to popular topics reflect the central role these platforms play in meeting respondents’ information needs. The following sections of the results will delve deeper into the factors influencing this behavior, examining the motivations behind respondents’ information-seeking tendencies and exploring how digital platforms contribute to shaping their understanding of trending topics.

The sixth question of the research, “How often do you share, post, or retweet news articles or posts related to popular topics?”, examines respondents’ engagement in disseminating information on their social networks. This inquiry reveals the frequency with which respondents contribute to the circulation of news articles or posts related to trending topics, shedding light on the extent of their participation in the information-sharing ecosystem.

Among the 60 respondents, varying patterns of engagement in sharing and disseminating news articles or posts on popular topics emerged. A significant portion of respondents, 26 individuals (43.3% of the sample), reported that they rarely share such content. This finding indicates that



a considerable number of respondents engage infrequently in information dissemination on social media, suggesting that they are relatively passive consumers of information.

Seventeen respondents (28.3% of the sample) indicated that they never share, post, or retweet news articles or posts related to popular topics. This result suggests that this subgroup of respondents primarily uses social media for personal interactions rather than information dissemination, potentially reflecting different motivations for their online presence.

In contrast, another group of 11 respondents (18.3% of the sample) stated that they occasionally share such content. This response implies an intermittent pattern of engagement, where respondents sporadically contribute to the flow of information on social media without making it a consistent habit.

Six respondents (10% of the sample) stated that they frequently engage in sharing, posting, or retweeting news articles or posts related to popular topics. The responses from this subgroup indicate active participation in the information dissemination process, suggesting a tendency to amplify discussions on trending topics within their digital circles.

The distribution of responses highlights the varying degrees of engagement demonstrated by respondents in sharing news and posts related to popular topics. The subsequent sections of the results will delve deeper into the factors that motivate respondents to share content, explore the types of content they are more likely to disseminate, and examine how their sharing behavior contributes to the broader dynamics of information flow on online social networks.

The seventh question of the research, “What factors influence your decision to engage with news or posts related to popular topics on social media?”, explores the motivations behind respondents’ choices to interact with content on digital platforms. This inquiry sheds light on the multilayered considerations that affect participants’ decisions to engage with news and posts related to trending topics, providing insight into the factors that shape their digital interactions.

Among the 60 respondents, varying considerations emerged as influential factors in their decision-making processes for engaging with news and posts on popular topics. A significant subgroup of respondents, 15 individuals (32.3% of the sample), indicated that personal interest is a key motivator. This result suggests that respondents are drawn to content that resonates with their individual curiosities, reflecting the importance of content relevance in driving engagement.

Eleven respondents (19.4% of the sample) highlighted the credibility of the source as a decisive factor in their engagement decisions. This response emphasizes the importance of trustworthy and reliable sources in guiding respondents’ interactions, reflecting a conscious effort to engage with content supported by reputable information providers.

An equal number of respondents, 11 individuals (19.4% of the sample), stated that their engagement is influenced by the alignment of content with their personal beliefs. This finding suggests that respondents tend to engage with content that reinforces their existing viewpoints,



reflecting the role of social media in strengthening echo chambers where like-minded perspectives are amplified.

Ten respondents (16.1% of the sample) emphasized the relevance of content to their friends or followers as a factor influencing their engagement decisions. This result highlights the importance of social connections in driving respondents' interactions, underscoring the role of content likely to stimulate discussions within their immediate networks.

Nine respondents (12.9% of the sample) indicated that emotional impact plays a role in their decision to engage with news or posts related to popular topics. This response suggests that emotionally resonant content has the potential to elicit active participation and responses from the respondents.

The distribution of responses illustrates the complex interplay of motivations influencing respondents' decisions to engage with social media content. By dissecting these factors, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychological, emotional, and social dimensions that contribute to the decision-making process, ultimately shaping the ways in which respondents communicate and contribute to the dissemination of information on popular topics.

The next research question, "How often do you verify information related to popular topics before sharing it on social media?", delves into respondents' practices of fact-checking before disseminating content within their digital networks. This study examines the frequency with which respondents demonstrate caution and discernment when sharing content related to trending topics, highlighting the role of information credibility in their online interactions.

Among 59 respondents, different patterns of fact-checking habits emerged as they reflected on their engagement with social media content. A significant portion of respondents, 17 individuals (32.3% of the sample), stated that they most often verify information before sharing it. This response suggests a conscientious approach to information sharing, reflecting the respondents' commitment to ensuring the accuracy of content prior to dissemination.

Fifteen respondents (29.0% of the sample) indicated that they always verify information related to popular topics before sharing it. This result highlights a strong commitment to information accuracy, demonstrating that these respondents prioritize responsible content sharing, even in the fast-paced digital environment.

Thirteen respondents (16.1% of the sample) stated that they sometimes verify information before sharing it. This response implies a more selective approach to verification, where respondents exercise discretion based on the perceived importance or relevance of the content.

Nine respondents (12.9% of the sample) indicated that they rarely verify information before sharing it. This finding points to a less stringent approach to verification, suggesting that these respondents may be more inclined to share content based on intuition or familiarity with the source.



Eight respondents (9.7% of the sample) stated that they never verify information before sharing it. While this group represents a smaller subgroup, their responses indicate a portion of participants who prioritize rapid content sharing over thorough fact-checking.

The distribution of verification habits among respondents highlights the varying degrees of caution exercised before sharing information on social media. The following sections of the results will delve deeper into the motivations and implications of these verification habits, examining how respondents' attitudes toward information accuracy contribute to the integrity of information dissemination on digital platforms.

The next research question, "Which sources do you trust the most for accurate information on popular topics?", delves into respondents' perceptions of reliable sources when seeking information related to trending topics. This investigation reveals the preferences respondents have for established information providers, highlighting the sources they consider trustworthy within the digital landscape.

Among 59 respondents, a diverse range of trusted sources emerged as participants considered their preferred means for obtaining reliable information. Specifically, both academic/research institutions and news websites garnered the highest levels of trust among respondents, with each selected by 16 individuals (27.1% of the sample) for academic/research institutions and 18 individuals (30.5% of the sample) for news websites. This finding underscores the importance of authoritative, fact-based sources in shaping respondents' information-seeking behaviors.

An additional 14 respondents (23.7% of the sample) expressed trust in traditional news sources such as newspapers and television broadcasts. This finding indicates that established media continue to hold credibility in the eyes of the respondents, despite the proliferation of digital platforms.

Seven respondents (11.9% of the sample) noted that they trust social media influencers as sources of accurate information on popular topics. This result suggests a recognition of the potential expertise and insights possessed by certain influencers, although it is noteworthy that this choice had a lower representation compared to more traditional sources.

Four respondents (6.8% of the sample) indicated that they trust government websites for accurate information. This response suggests a measure of confidence in official sources for information on popular topics, potentially reflecting reliance on authoritative bodies for factual content.

The diversity of trusted sources highlights the complex landscape of information credibility in the digital era. The following sections of the results will explore the implications of these preferences, shedding light on how respondents' trust in specific sources influences their engagement with information on popular topics and news, and how these perceptions shape their online interactions.

The next research question, "Have you ever changed your opinion on a popular topic based on



discussions or information encountered on social media?” investigates the potential influence of digital discussions on respondents’ opinions. This study seeks to understand whether social media interactions play a role in reshaping participants’ viewpoints, shedding light on the dynamics of opinion evolution in the digital sphere.

Among 60 respondents, a significant portion, 39 individuals (65% of the sample), admitted that they had indeed changed their opinion on a popular topic as a result of discussions or information encountered on social media. This response suggests that the digital arena serves as a space where individuals are exposed to diverse perspectives and information that can lead to changes in their viewpoints.

In contrast, 21 respondents (35% of the sample) stated that they had not changed their opinion based on discussions or information on social media. This result indicates a segment of respondents who remain steadfast in their views, potentially reflecting the influence of pre-existing beliefs or a limited range of exposure to diverse perspectives.

The distribution of responses highlights the potential influence of social media discussions and exposure to information on respondents’ opinions. The following sections of the results will delve deeper into the factors contributing to opinion changes, exploring the role of diverse perspectives, the nature of discussions, and the mechanisms that facilitate shifts in perception within the digital ecosystem.

The next research question, “How comfortable are you engaging in debates or discussions about popular topics on social media?” examines respondents’ willingness to participate in dialogues and conversations within the digital sphere. This study explores the level of comfort respondents experience when engaging in debates on trending topics, shedding light on their readiness to contribute to the exchange of ideas and perspectives.

Among the 59 respondents, the distribution of comfort levels is as follows:

1. Nine individuals (15.3% of the total respondents) reported feeling slightly comfortable engaging in debates or discussions about popular topics on social media. This response suggests a moderate level of readiness to express their views, accompanied by a certain degree of reservation.
2. A significant portion of the sample, 23 respondents (39% of the total respondents), expressed a neutral stance. Their responses indicate an absence of strong inclination toward either comfort or discomfort in participating in digital debates. This suggests that their willingness to engage in discussions may vary depending on the specific context or topic.
3. Eleven participants (18.6% of the total respondents) reported feeling very uncomfortable engaging in debates or discussions about popular topics on social media. This finding reflects a strong reluctance to enter potentially contentious exchanges or debates, possibly due to concerns about online confrontations or negative interactions.
4. Ten individuals (16.9% of the total respondents) indicated that they feel slightly uncomfortable participating in such discussions. This response suggests a certain level of apprehension, although participants in this group are not entirely opposed to engaging in debates on digital platforms.



5. Six respondents (10.2% of the total respondents) highlighted that they feel very comfortable engaging in debates or discussions about popular topics on social media. This result indicates a high level of confidence in their ability to navigate digital discussions and exchange diverse viewpoints without feeling overwhelmed or hesitant.
6. The next research question, “Do you think visual content is more appealing than textual content when it comes to news or information related to popular topics?”, investigates participants’ perceptions of the attractiveness of visual versus textual content in this context. This study aims to determine whether visual elements elicit greater engagement and facilitate more effective information transmission compared to traditional text-based content.

Among the 60 participants, a clear majority of 48 individuals (80% of the sample) indicated that they believe visual content is more appealing than textual content when it comes to news or information related to popular topics. This significant response suggests a widespread preference for visual elements as an effective means of capturing attention and conveying information, particularly in the context of rapidly evolving topics.

Conversely, 12 participants (20% of the sample) reported that they do not consider visual content to be more appealing than textual content in this context. This response suggests a belief that textual content remains a valuable means of conveying information, particularly for participants who prioritize in-depth analysis or comprehension of the material.

The distribution of responses underscores the significance of visual content in participants’ perceptions of engagement and appeal within the domain of news and trending topics. Subsequent sections of the results will examine the implications of this preference, exploring how the integration of visual materials in information dissemination aligns with participants’ content consumption habits and contributes to a richer understanding of trending subjects.

## Discussions

As Karman (2014) said the information technology, especially the internet, contributes significantly to social change. Social media is an application with the most users by which people can easily interact and communicate virtually without limited time and place.

The findings of the study illuminate the complex interplay between social media platforms, information dissemination, and participants’ engagement with popular topics and news. Analyzing the responses across various questions provides valuable insights into how digital platforms influence communication, opinion formation, and information-sharing behaviors.

The diversity in the choice of social media platforms by respondents for regular use emphasizes the multi-layered nature of digital interactions. As platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube dominate respondents’ preferences, it is evident that visually-centered platforms play a significant role in facilitating the sharing of information related to popular topics. The prominence of these platforms aligns with respondents’ recognition of the influence of visual content on their understanding of news and trending topics. When people are overwhelmed with the volume of information confronting them, they have difficulty discerning what to focus on. Attention rather than information becomes the scarce resource, and those who



can distinguish valuable information from background clutter gain power. (Nay J. 2005)

The frequent use of social media platforms by respondents several times a day highlights the integral role these platforms play in their daily routines. Usage patterns indicate the significance of social media as a primary source of information and communication. This pattern is reinforced by participants' tendencies to actively seek information on popular topics through social media. The continuous flow of content available on these platforms facilitates real-time updates, making them a convenient source for staying informed about current events and discussions.

A further point must be noted with regard to data, and that is user concerns about privacy and their rights to their own data. In many of the early web applications, copyright is only loosely enforced. (O'Reilly, 2005)

It is important to acknowledge that the study's findings are based on self-reported responses, which may be subject to bias or variations in interpretation. Future research could explore in greater depth the factors influencing respondents' decisions to verify information and the nuances of their engagement with visual content. Additionally, understanding how platform algorithms and content-sharing practices shape respondents' exposure to diverse perspectives could provide further insights into the dynamics of information dissemination on social media.

This paper and the analysis presented underscore the significant role of social media platforms in shaping communication, opinion formation, and information-sharing behavior related to popular topics and news. The prevalence of visual content, combined with the diversity of trusted sources, presents opportunities for robust information exchange. By examining this dynamic, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex landscape of digital interactions and their impact on the dissemination and comprehension of information in the digital era.

## Conclusions

The use of social media has become an inseparable part of community communication patterns in the digital age Mutsvairo, B. (2016). Social media serves as a fundamental catalyst for global communication in the digital era, playing a significant role in the dissemination of news and information essential for effective communication. Through platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and others, public figures and citizens can communicate directly with the public and with one another, enabling faster and more efficient message distribution. The digital nature of these platforms eliminates the barriers of traditional communication and allows news and diplomatic messages to reach a wide audience in a short time. Social media enables messages and information to be transmitted globally, transforming the dynamics of international communication. Through platforms accessible to millions of users, public figures, diplomats, companies, and organizations have a broader reach and can communicate directly with diverse communities. This facilitates not only faster news dissemination but also the promotion of topics of national and global significance. The impact of visual content, such as videos and infographics, further enhances the clarity and speed of message delivery. There are several social media platforms that are frequently used in the digital era, such as Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Social media also provides various benefits across multiple fields,



particularly in education and the economy (Manurung, A. A. et al., 2023). News circulated on social media spreads rapidly and has a swift impact on shaping public opinion. The real-time nature of news on these platforms allows users to respond to events as they unfold. This enables individuals to quickly become informed, react, and comment on developments, accelerating the process of public opinion formation. Social media eliminates traditional intermediaries, allowing information to reach the audience directly. Through social networks, messages and opinions can reach the public without the need for traditional mediators. Consequently, communication becomes more open and accessible, enabling information to reach the audience without interpretation or alteration.

### Conflict of interests

I declare no conflict of interest.

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