

PAPER

Reinventing Trust: Traditional Media Credibility and Audience Engagement in the Mobile-First Era

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ABSTRACT

The media landscape has undergone significant transformation due to the rapid development of digital technology. This has seriously threatened the legitimacy of traditional media. Given the emergence of new media platforms, this study investigated the variables affecting public confidence in traditional media. Using the uses and gratifications theory, the study examined how media audiences perceived news credibility, content quality, and technological adaptation. In-depth interviews with media professionals and regular news audiences revealed important themes pertaining to trust, bias, content depth, and audience engagement. The study provides insights into the necessity of digital transformation tactics to preserve audience trust, as well as the importance of fact-checking, investigative journalism, and balanced reporting in preserving credibility. The study also suggests ways to strengthen the position of traditional media in the digital information ecosystem.

KEYWORDS

traditional media, news credibility, digital transformation, audience perception, uses and gratifications theory

1 INTRODUCTION

Traditional media plays an essential role in disseminating information and influencing public opinion. Examples of traditional media outlets are radio, television, and newspapers, all of which uphold journalistic integrity through strict editorial control. However, the rapid development of digital platforms has changed how news is created, shared, and consumed. The instantaneity and accessibility of digital news sources have increased competition between new and traditional media, with the former frequently prioritizing speed ahead of accuracy [1]. This change has sparked worries about decreasing levels of public trust in mainstream media due to corporate control, selective reporting, and perceived biases [2].

In particular, the widespread adoption of smartphones and mobile news applications has drastically altered how audiences access and engage with news content.

Tai, C. H., Alivi, M. A. (2025). Reinventing Trust: Traditional Media Credibility and Audience Engagement in the Mobile-First Era. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies (IJIM)*, 19(15), pp. 81–96. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijim.v19i15.55685>

Article submitted 2025-04-03. Revision uploaded 2025-05-29. Final acceptance 2025-06-03.

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Push notifications, social media integration, and on-the-go news updates have made mobile platforms a primary source of news for many users, especially younger demographics. This shift has induced traditional media to adopt mobile-friendly formats and strategies to retain audience attention.

The changing media consumption patterns mean that audiences now evaluate news credibility based on accessibility, involvement, and transparency, rather than simply an institutional reputation [3]. Additionally, audience expectations have changed due to interactive digital formats. Social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, which usually reach larger audiences than traditional broadcasters, enable information to spread swiftly. According to research, digital platforms also enable participatory journalism, in which audiences create and share content in addition to consuming news, thereby contributing to a changing media ecosystem [4], [5]. Therefore, it has been suggested that traditional media must implement participatory processes in order to remain relevant.

Greater public participation is made possible by this change, but it has also created disinformation issues. This was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the extensive transmission of misleading material on social media damaged public confidence in digital sources [6], [7]. Moreover, algorithm-driven information filtering encourages selective exposure and echo chambers, adding to ideological polarization. The rise of alternative news sources has led to the rise of citizen journalism, which frequently lacks expert editorial oversight and exacerbates the erosion of trust in traditional media [3], [8]. The ability of traditional media to strike a balance between accuracy and speed is also threatened by the growing need for immediacy. Even when following strict fact-checking protocols, legacy media cannot compete with the real-time updates available on digital platforms.

The purpose of this study was to empirically examine elements that affect public trust in traditional media in the digitalization age. It specifically examined how the competitive media environment and the difficulties presented by digital disruption influence credibility judgements. Furthermore, the study explored how traditional media adapt to these developments while upholding journalistic standards. To achieve these objectives, the following research questions were addressed:

1. Which factors influence public trust in traditional media?
2. How do perceptions of credibility and digital challenges shape audience behavior?
3. What opportunities exist for traditional media to leverage their credibility while adapting to the digitalization age?

By addressing these questions, the study augments the current discussion on media trustworthiness. The findings provide useful advice for media companies negotiating digital change, guidance on preserving journalistic integrity among policymakers and public broadcasters, and confidence in an increasingly fractured media environment.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional media have undergone significant transformations over the past century, requiring their adaptation to new technological advancements while maintaining journalistic integrity. Historically, print dominated the media landscape by setting the foundation for journalistic ethics and reporting standards [9]. As broadcasting emerged, radio and television introduced new dimensions of immediacy and accessibility, allowing media to reach broader audiences with real-time

updates [10]. To some extent, each era has shaped how information is disseminated and consumed, from newspapers through to radio and television. However, with the advent of the Internet, legacy media face increasing competition from digital platforms that offer real-time news updates and interactive engagement [8], [11].

Despite the efforts, traditional media are struggling to engage younger audiences who now favor personalized and interactive content via social media [12], placing these outlets at risk of losing relevance and influence. Furthermore, online paywalls and digital advertising tactics have replaced print subscriptions and television adverts, compelling conventional media to reevaluate their income models in order to adapt to digital environments [5]. According to Nguyen [3], the rapidity of online disinformation propagation frequently raises doubts about the legitimacy of traditional media. Simultaneously, Casero-Ripollés [1] notes that the rise of mobile apps and smartphones has created a more fragmented and personalized media environment, where news intake is curated through mobile news aggregators and social media feeds. This mobile-centric paradigm facilitates real-time updates, instant notifications, and algorithm-driven content delivery, thereby reshaping long-standing notions of belief and credibility in news.

To better understand these evolving dynamics, this study introduces the 'Mobile-First Trust Model,' which integrates key components such as media credibility, mobile technology adoption, audience engagement, and the challenges posed by digital platforms.

Despite the extensive scholarly discussion on how mobile technologies affect news consumption, less is known about the significance of digital addiction, especially with regard to media trust. A thorough mapping of studies on digital addiction was presented by Karakose et al. [13], who also highlighted the complex psychological and behavioral ramifications of this issue. Tülübaş et al. [14] expanded on this by illustrating how digital dependency might affect, in addition to their academic performance, the cognitive engagement of users with digital content. These findings are especially pertinent to news environments that prioritize mobile devices, where users' perceptions of reliability and interactions with traditional media may be changed by constant connectivity and algorithm-driven feeds. By inserting digital addiction into the broader discussion of audience trust in mobile-driven media systems, this study helps bridge this gap.

The framework shown in Figure 1 illustrates how these elements are interrelated and how they guided the analysis.

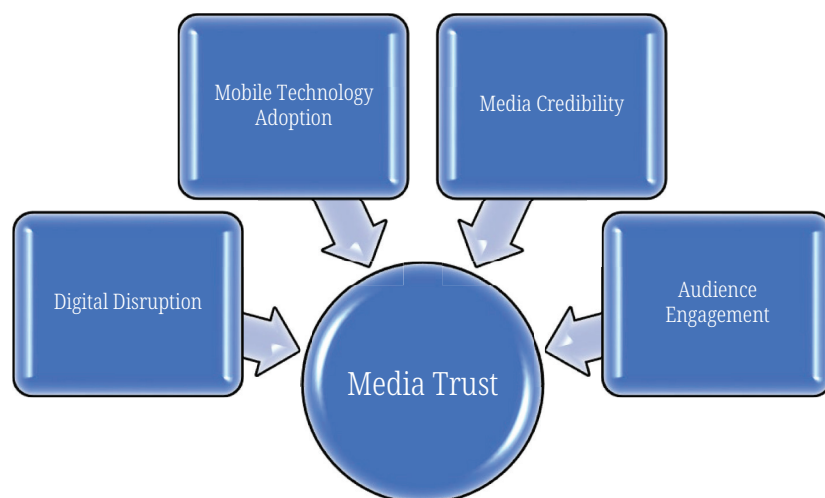


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework visualizing the mobile-first trust model

This conceptual model outlines the interrelationships between key elements that shape trust in traditional media within a mobile-first information ecosystem. The four core dimensions—media credibility, mobile technology adoption, audience engagement, and digital disruption—reflect the integrated findings of this study.

Accuracy, impartiality, transparency, and adherence to journalistic ethics are the criteria frequently used to evaluate media credibility [15]. According to studies, audiences are more likely to believe news outlets with a solid track record of displaying these qualities [2]. However, this public sense of media credibility has been impacted by concerns about political interference, corporate ownership, and bias [16], [17]. According to studies, the reasons why audiences read online news are greatly impacted by how satisfied these readers are with their government and how they vote, which evokes questions about the function of traditional media in political communication [18].

Technology has completely changed journalism, giving conventional forms of media the means to counter false information but also creating new difficulties. Among these is the need to strike a balance between attaining engagement and upholding journalistic ethics, as sensationalized content frequently trumps factual reporting. Although certain media operations have incorporated automated fact-checking, blockchain-based verification, and artificial intelligence to increase their credibility, concerns remain over whether dependence on technology can completely replace editorial judgement. In addition to interactive features and fact-checking, technology has popularized data-driven journalism. Big data analytics allow legacy media companies to predict content preferences, examine audience behavior, and customize news for certain recipient groups. Furthermore, the incorporation of virtual and augmented reality into news narratives offers immersive experiences that enable novel forms of interaction with news. While these developments offer benefits, they also raise moral concerns about news personalization, data privacy, and the potential for algorithmic bias to strengthen echo chambers.

3 METHODOLOGY

In this study, a qualitative research design was utilized to better understand public impressions of the credibility of traditional media in today's fast-changing digital context. This strategy was chosen because qualitative methods are excellent for gathering subtle insights into the attitudes and actions of audiences, which quantitative methods may not capture [19]. The qualitative methodology was founded on the uses and gratifications theory [20], enabling a detailed examination of individual experiences, viewpoints, and attitudes.

3.1 Research design

Data was gathered using a semi-structured interviewing technique involving individuals who represented an audience with a range of media consumption patterns. While giving informants the opportunity to expound on individual experiences and viewpoints, the interviews were also open-ended, so this method guaranteed flexibility in examining important issues concerning audience attitudes towards digital transformation, perceptions of media bias, and faith in traditional media.

3.2 Sampling and informants

Ten informants were chosen using a purposive sampling technique. They included journalists, media professionals, and regular news audience members with a range of demographic backgrounds. A balanced representation of viewpoints was ensured by selecting informants based on their interaction with both traditional and digital media. More specifically, the sample included five journalists with direct experience in traditional media. It comprised five media professionals and five audience members, all regularly engaging with news via both traditional and digital platforms. In other words, the informants were all regular users of both forms of media. Their demographic backgrounds are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of the informants

Informants (n=10)	Gender	Age Group	Informant Classification
MP1	Female	30–39	Media Professional
MP2	Female	30–39	Media Professional
MP3	Male	40–49	Media Professional
MP4	Male	30–39	Media Professional
MP5	Female	20–29	Media Professional
NMA1	Male	40–49	Non-media Professional
NMA2	Male	30–39	Non-media Professional
NMA3	Female	30–39	Non-media Professional
NMA4	Male	30–39	Non-media Professional
NMA5	Male	40–49	Non-media Professional

3.3 Data Collection

A semi-structured interview approach was utilized to examine the important topics being studied. This allowed the informants to offer detailed views on credibility perceptions, media trust, and how digital platforms influence news consumption patterns. To ensure the data was comprehensive and clear, follow-up questions were posed in response to the initial answers. Following the informants' consent, in-person and online video conferencing systems were used for the interviews, depending on the informant's availability. Between 45 and 75 minutes of material was videotaped with each informant. Each interview was then transcribed for analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was applied to the interview transcriptions to identify common themes and patterns. NVivo software was used to code the transcripts in order to make the data classification and interpretation more methodical. The four primary themes of the investigation were perceptions of media trustworthiness, difficulties presented by digital platforms, interaction opportunities, and the function of fact-checking in preserving confidence. An iterative coding process approach

ensured that new concepts were thoroughly recorded. Two researchers examined separately the coded transcripts and discussed any differences to improve the reliability of the analysis.

In addition, comparative analysis was performed to find similarities and discrepancies among the responses given by different informant groups. This integration of many viewpoints provided comprehensive insights into the changing dynamics of trust in traditional and digital media. For instance, journalists frequently underlined the difficulties of converting traditional media techniques into the Internet sphere, while general audience members raised questions about the accuracy of information found online.

3.5 Ethical considerations

This study received ethical approval from the University of Malaya Research Ethics Committee before data collection commenced. All procedures involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committee, as well as with the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all the individuals included in the study. The participants were briefed about the study objectives and told that their participation was entirely voluntary. They were informed of their right to decline or withdraw from the interview at any point without suffering any consequences.

4 RESULTS

In a developing digital ecosystem, the findings highlight important aspects that impact the opinions of audiences regarding the reliability of traditional news. Four primary themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the interview data: audience content preferences, the potential for digital engagement, the problems presented by digital platforms, and the legitimacy of traditional media. Each of the four illuminates how audiences regard conventional media and their function.

4.1 Theme 1: Credibility of traditional media

One of the main concerns highlighted by the informants was the dependability of traditional media. When contrasted with digital platforms, many informants believed that traditional media was a more reliable source of news. The strict fact-checking methods used by established media outlets were a major factor in this expression of trust. As stressed by MP2:

Traditional media follow strict editorial standards, and the news undergoes a fact-checking process. This is something I appreciate, especially when compared to the speed and sometimes unreliable information from social media. (MP2)

This statement emphasizes the significance of institutional credibility in establishing audience confidence. The systematic editorial monitoring maintained by legacy media organizations ensures better credibility than can be achieved by digital

media, whose content is frequently user-generated and unverified. While traditional media outlets were generally deemed more trustworthy, concerns were raised regarding editorial bias. Several informants questioned the objectivity of news coverage, particularly in state-funded media. According to earlier research, corporate and political forces have frequently undermined public trust in traditional media by influencing how news is presented and conveyed [2], [17]. As MP3 mentioned:

Traditional media, while more reliable than social media, sometimes fail to present a full picture due to government and corporate influence. (MP3)

Similarly, another informant highlighted the following:

Because the national public broadcaster only airs news from the ruling party, ... I can only hear one side of the story. I want to see what the other side thinks so that I can have a more balanced view and better judge the news. (MP2)

The conflict between independence and credibility is a broader problem in media discussions, as reflected in this study. Although strict editing standards improve dependability, audience perceptions of impartiality may be impacted by the possibility of outside influence.

The trade-off between immediacy and accuracy was another important theme. The strict verification procedures followed by conventional media boosted credibility and caused the slow dissemination of news. Some informants expressed irritation with these delays in reporting, especially compared to the real-time updates accessible on internet platforms.

Traditional media is slower in its reporting because it waits for official confirmation. While this makes the news credible, it's not always fast enough compared to the instant updates available on digital platforms. (NMA3)

Traditional media would never report without verification. The advantage is that traditional media news will never spread false information, but the downside is that it takes longer to report because they have to wait for official confirmation. So, while it's highly reliable, it's often slower. (NMA1)

Accordingly, this study revealed that audience expectations for immediacy in news consumption were changing, which helped traditional media outlets stay relevant in the fast-paced digital age.

4.2 Theme 2: Challenges posed by digital platforms

The increasing power of digital platforms and their effects on traditional media consumption were generally recognized by informants. The benefit of the speed of digital media, which enables real-time updates, was a recurrent topic. For example, numerous informants mentioned using social media to find breaking news:

When something important happens, like an election or a major event, I turn to social media because the news is almost instant. Traditional media is just too slow. (NMA5)

There are now too many sources of news, so there is no longer a “first choice” or “second choice.” The news source could be whatever I come across online. As long as it appears on my Facebook, it will be my source of news. (MP1)

Back then, it was basically just TV [news]. But now, times have changed. The vast majority of news I get comes from online media, such as Facebook, independent media, and online platforms, because they are more convenient. (NMA1)

The answers indicate a change in how media audiences consume news, with accessibility and ease of use taking precedence over traditional factors related to trustworthiness. However, despite their speed, digital media possess the potential for sensationalism and false information. Informants highlighted the frequency with which false information was encountered and expressed worries about the absence of verification in digital news:

I often see sensationalized and misleading headlines on social media, making it difficult to separate facts from rumors. (NMA4)

The advantage is that they [new media] speak freely; they dare to write about anything. But the downside is that you don't know if it's true or not. There might be mistakes because they want to be quick with their reporting, so they don't verify or fact-check before publishing, and they might just report it first. (NMA2)

Additionally, conventional media frequently appeared to lack the two-way interaction that was encouraged by digital platforms. Engagement between the media and the audience is crucial, according to one informant:

People want interaction and engagement. Without real-time updates and audience interaction, traditional media risk becoming obsolete. (MP1)

Traditional media seemed to experience difficulties in responding to audience preferences in a digital world that was becoming more participatory, as shown in this research. These responses reflect a broader transition towards mobile-first consumption patterns. Informants frequently described scrolling through news on smartphones during commutes, breaks, or while multitasking; this indicates that mobile access has become the default mode for news interaction. As mobile usage supports speed, convenience, and customization, it has also conditioned users to expect real-time information, making traditional news formats appear slow and less responsive [21].

4.3 Theme 3: Opportunities for digital engagement

Informants believed that traditional media organizations could improve their audience engagement through digital innovation, in spite of the inherent obstacles. They believed that social media and live-streaming services could be used to close the gap between digital and traditional media.

Traditional media should use platforms like Instagram or Twitter to interact with viewers. It's a missed opportunity to engage with younger audiences who are active on these platforms. (MP3)

I do think the comment feature [on digital media] is quite important. If someone needs to file a complaint, the comment section is the most important place. (NMA2)

Improving Internet accessibility was another important point raised. According to informants, audience retention was greatly influenced by the user experience.

If traditional media optimized their websites and mobile apps, more people would probably use them. Digital engagement is crucial, but it needs to be easy to access and navigate. (NMA2)

The comment section is necessary because some people need a platform to voice their opinions and get feedback from others. (NMA3)

Recommendations were also made to incorporate interactive elements like audience surveys, comment areas, and social media conversations in order to encourage more participation. Additionally, informants emphasized the potential of multimedia storytelling, such as short films, live streaming, and infographics, to make news content more engaging for younger readers. For instance, two informants stated:

If traditional media allowed for more audience participation, people would feel more connected and engaged. (NMA3)

They [traditional media] could try using reels, summarizing news in a minute and a half. It would attract new viewers and increase anchor visibility. (MP5)

4.4 Theme 4: Audience preferences for content

The content preferences of the audience formed the fourth theme. Informants stressed that material quality and relevancy were important elements for attracting and keeping audiences, regardless of the media. One informant observed that some preferred the formal, structured tone of traditional news:

I like the formal language used in traditional Mandarin news. It's clean and professional, and it's a good source for learning proper Mandarin. (NMA1)

Nonetheless, several informants wanted in-depth reporting and analytical information. NMA1 and MP4 stated similar opinions:

TV news coverage often feels surface-level. There should be more investigative reporting, and they should address a broader range of topics that matter to people. (MP4)

I think TV news should provide more opinions and analysis. They should guide the public in how to think about the news. In today's open society, it's more important than ever to lead people in critical thinking. (NMA1)

The informants also mentioned the necessity for diverse coverage beyond merely political news:

Traditional media focus heavily on government and political issues, but there's not much coverage on everyday concerns like education or healthcare. That's what young people care about. (MP5)

I believe new media should leverage the characteristics of new media and shouldn't rely on the traditional media's standard approach to reporting news. Traditional media presents news [in a way that is] like feeding you what you need to know for the day, and you have to follow its structure. (MP1)

The interview findings illustrated the evolution in news consumption. Even if their stringent editorial standards continued to afford them respect, conventional media were under increasing pressure to adapt to the mobility and interactivity of digital platforms. According to prior research, media audiences opted for online news due to its convenience, interactivity, and diversity of opinions, which influenced their media trust and consumption patterns. For this reason, traditional media entities must use more interactive tactics to retain their audience [18]. Accordingly, considering that audiences prefer trustworthy but interesting material, these organizations must adopt digital tools to maintain their relevance. In short, conventional media could improve their standing in a rapidly changing news ecosystem by balancing engagement, accessibility, and credibility.

5 DISCUSSION

The findings of the current study demonstrate that traditional media outlets are still regarded as more trustworthy than online platforms due to their stringent journalistic standards. However, maintaining public trust while adjusting to the demand for real-time news updates is difficult, regardless of the ongoing concerns about editorial bias and selective reporting. Although legacy media benefit from institutional legitimacy, audience trust can be eroded by perceived corporate and political biases [2], [17]. Given the rapidly evolving media landscape, traditional media entities must enhance their reputation through investigative reporting. According to research, audience trust is influenced by various criteria, as outlined above [15]. Without these steps being taken, audiences who value accountability and transparency, especially younger and technology-proficient news recipients, may become even less trusting of conventional media.

Additionally, these findings indicate that mobile technologies—particularly smartphones and mobile news applications—have significantly influenced audience engagement with and assessment of conventional media. Informants frequently reported using mobiles to access real-time updates via social media feeds and news apps, reshaping their expectations for immediacy and interactivity [22]. For instance, the convenience of receiving breaking news through push notifications or browsing items on social media while on the go has created a preference for mobile platforms, especially among younger audiences. This shift challenges legacy media to adapt their delivery methods and enhance mobile engagement to maintain their relevance and trust. Informants noted that failure to optimize this type of presence and responsiveness would mean that older forms of media risk losing visibility and credibility in a mobile-first information environment. This supports a mobile-first strategy not only in delivery but also in content format and user engagement design.

The results of this study align with more extensive worldwide research on audience trust in and news consumption on mobile devices. Nelson [23], for instance, contends that the goal of audience interaction has emerged as a hallmark of contemporary journalism, particularly as media companies strive to restore confidence in a fragmented digital landscape. His concept of a new “media regime” helps explain why responsiveness and interaction are becoming increasingly important in

legacy media. The importance of openness and involvement in maintaining credibility is further reinforced by Coatney's [24] analysis of how prominent digital news sources, such as The New York Times, strategically convey trust through transparency and interactive features. In support of these theoretical understandings, Rath et al. [25] offer empirical proof that audience engagement behaviors are strongly influenced by the perceived credibility and social media activity of a news outlet. Taken collectively, these studies demonstrate the global significance of mobile strategy, credibility signaling, and interactive design while also bolstering the Mobile-First Trust Model's international foundation.

A complex relationship links digital disruption and the credibility of conventional media. However, the increasing need for immediacy and interactivity continues to pose disadvantages for traditional media. Research indicates that audience feedback methods must be incorporated into digital journalism in order to preserve confidence [3]. In addition, direct audience engagement has been found to increase believability, highlighting how orthodox media entities need to include social media participation and interactive storytelling. This is supported by the results of the interviews, which illustrated that participants preferred two-way communication with news organizations.

Furthermore, interactive features like audience polls, question-and-answer sessions, and real-time feedback systems are essential for older forms of media to remain relevant. Nonetheless, they appear to be threatened by algorithm-driven news delivery approaches. The young now favor algorithm-driven feeds over conventional scheduled broadcasts, deepening the generational divide in media consumption [26]. To ensure information reaches audiences without being overtaken by sensationalism-driven digital platforms, conventional media must actively manage their visibility in algorithmic systems while upholding editorial standards. As social media overtakes them to become the main source of news, these older entities must also address automated curation that puts interaction ahead of journalistic integrity.

Misinformation remains a major problem. Even with their dedication to fact-checking, traditional media entities often fail to prevent the rapid spread of misleading material on the Internet. According to research, cooperative fact-checking across conventional and digital media can reduce the degree of false information and increase confidence in reliable sources. Furthermore, digital literacy programs enables audiences to assess news items critically and discern between trustworthy and untrustworthy sources. The new findings support these ideas, with informants emphasizing the need for media literacy education to reduce the vulnerability of the public to false information.

Another important issue in news reporting is diversity. Informants argued that corporate and political interests frequently shape standard media narratives, underscoring the need for more thorough and objective journalism. For example, Alivi [27] revealed that an audience's pleasure with online news greatly impacts their interaction with political issues and, subsequently, their political behavior. This assertion is supported by research demonstrating that varied and representative reporting is essential to public trust. One effective way to combat perceptions of bias in news coverage is to improve investigative journalism and offer a variety of viewpoints.

Legacy media must reconsider their audience interaction tactics if they are to stay relevant in the digital market. A workable strategy would be a hybrid paradigm combining older styles of journalism with digital interaction. Research indicates that cross-platform partnerships, in which digital influencers and citizen journalists collaborate with traditional media, can increase audience reach and build trust.

This study supports these results, with informants indicating their greater trust in news outlets that adopted open, cooperative reporting methods.

Lastly, the key component of media trust is transparency. Most informants desired increased transparency with regard to editorial policies and funding sources. This aligns with prior research suggesting that openness greatly enhances media trustworthiness, such as by revealing sources and fixing mistakes [7]. Trust could be restored in conventional news organizations by establishing explicit correction procedures and encouraging candid conversations with audiences. These findings highlight how open editorial procedures are required to reassure readers about the journalist's objectivity.

In conclusion, traditional media entities—despite their credibility—must adapt to meet evolving audience demands and incorporate technological breakthroughs. The current study reveals that for these organizations to maintain long-term credibility and viability in the digital age, they must display openness, embrace audience participation, and incorporate cutting-edge digital tools, all while adhering to strict journalistic standards [28].

6 CONCLUSION

The current study examined in depth the difficulties encountered by traditional media in preserving their credibility in the digital age. Although these media channels are still deemed trustworthy, the results revealed how they need to address issues with editorial bias, delayed reporting, and low audience participation in order to maintain public confidence. In addition, audience perceptions of fairness, transparency, and interaction are as important as accuracy in determining credibility. While maintaining their journalistic integrity, established media institutions must adapt as digital media continue to change how information is consumed.

As mobile technologies become increasingly dominant in shaping media consumption, conventional media must adopt a mobile-first approach. This would include optimizing mobile apps, leveraging real-time notifications, and integrating with mobile-based social platforms to maintain engagement and trust.

Digital transformation is becoming a necessity rather than an option, with younger audiences demanding more customized, interactive, and rapid news formats. Consequently, this study highlights the importance of technology integration in traditional media operations. For example, prior studies have underscored the importance of incorporating digital technology and following hybrid strategies—such as live streaming, multimedia storytelling, and audience engagement tools—if older forms of media are to maintain their competitiveness [11], [8]. In addition, enhanced audience trust and retention may be enabled through the use of AI-powered fact-checking technologies, social media involvement, and multimedia storytelling strategies. Nonetheless, digital adaptations must not compromise journalistic integrity or fuel sensationalism, so a careful balance is required between innovation and commitment to journalistic standards.

The current study also emphasizes the need to address corporate and political pressures on news reporting. Credibility building requires openness in editorial decision-making and introducing initiatives to broaden viewpoints. To give audiences confidence in their independence, conventional media entities should be transparent about their affiliations, editorial stances, and financing sources. Increasing investigative journalism and emphasizing stories serving the public interest over commercial or political goals are other ways to strengthen public confidence.

These actions would help traditional forms of media regain their reputations as trustworthy providers of objective, truthful material.

The findings of the current study also highlight the necessity of an audience engagement strategy that would prevent passive content intake. Traditional media companies could improve their relationships with their audiences by interacting with them through live question-and-answer sessions, interactive content, and open editorial conversations. This would represent creative engagement tactics to attract younger people who desire a participatory media experience. Conventional media entities can benefit from deploying digital media, which can allow additional user participation while upholding their editorial standards.

In the future, these organizations must integrate journalistic integrity with innovation. As they adjust to digital innovations, they must ensure that fundamental principles such as truthfulness, equity, and responsibility are upheld. Future studies ought to investigate, firstly, the long-term effects of digital integration on the legitimacy of traditional media and, secondly, audience engagement patterns among various demographic groups. Studies on media literacy instruction may highlight other methods for bolstering audience confidence in an information-rich environment. Moreover, cooperation between academic institutions, media outlets, and policymakers may produce more successful tactics for thwarting disinformation and bolstering public confidence in journalism.

In conclusion, traditional media could adapt and prosper in the digital age by embracing new technologies, encouraging openness, and interacting with the public in a more proactive manner. By doing this, they could maintain their status as reliable and authoritative information sources in a media environment that is becoming increasingly fragmented. Yet the future of media trust will rely on the industry's capacity to adjust to changing audience expectations as much as journalistic ethics. A comprehensive approach that strategically combines audience participation, innovation, and accountability is needed to maintain audience trust. Older forms of media will only continue to play crucial roles as gatekeepers of truth and social watchdogs in the global information ecosystem if they can adapt to the changes brought about by the digital age and apply a comprehensive strategy, as the current study suggests.

7 STUDY IMPLICATIONS

These findings have significant implications for academic research, media organizations, policymakers, and society. Academically, this study enhances the conversation about media credibility and trust by emphasizing how audience perceptions are affected by digital disruption. By applying the uses and gratifications theory, the study expands the knowledge of how audiences assess the credibility of both traditional and digital media. In addition to offering fresh viewpoints on audience involvement, bias perception, and the function of interaction in news credibility, these new findings support the conclusions concerning media trust that are evident in the existing body of research. Future studies could expand on these outcomes by investigating the long-term impacts of the digital adaptation tactics of conventional media.

This report emphasizes how traditional media must embrace hybrid strategies that combine digital innovation and journalistic integrity for media organizations and policymakers. Interactive elements like multimedia storytelling and real-time audience response must be incorporated into orthodox media to improve digital

engagement. In addition, it is critical to maintain credibility while accelerating news distribution, which demands the use of AI-driven verification tools without sacrificing accuracy. Furthermore, resolving audience concerns about selective reporting and prejudice through a variety of news coverage could boost confidence. Fortifying media literacy programs, encouraging journalism transparency, and facilitating cooperation between traditional and digital media using standardized optimal ways are crucial in maintaining public trust. In short, if they are to restore public trust and remain relevant in the rapidly changing digital landscape, conventional media must embrace innovation while upholding ethical journalism standards.

The implications for mobile technology adoption are particularly significant. Traditional media must prioritize the development of mobile-responsive platforms, integrate interactive features within mobile apps, and tailor content for consumption via smartphones. As mobiles become the primary medium for news engagement, embracing a mobile-first strategy will likely be a more effective way for media organizations to build trust and sustain audience attention in a competitive digital environment.

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