

Credibility of News on Social Media: A Perceptual Survey of Abuja Residents

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceptions of residents of Abuja on the news credibility of social media. Survey questionnaire was employed to collect data from 384 respondents drawn through stratified random sampling method. The response rate was 93%. Overall findings revealed that the majority 329(89.4%) respondents used social media. Also, the majority 102(28%) of the respondents believed that social media news are credible. In addition, finding has shown that the majority 207(56.3%) of the respondents believed that social media news are barely credible and 58(15.8%) believed that social media news are not credible at all. The study concludes that factors such as, accessibility, convenience, and ease of use have made it impossible for individuals to deliberate on the authenticity of the information that spread across social media, while most respondents admitted using social networks for both informative purposes as well as communication purposes and they prefer social media to traditional media for news dissemination. The study recommends that media literacy should be encouraged among the users of social media to enable them control and determine what they do with the information that they receive over the media, and that effort should be made on the part of the audience to compare information obtained from social media with other available news sources before accepting or even fleeing the same information to other helpless users.

Keywords: New credibility, social media, media interactivity, media perception

Aims Research Journal Reference Format:

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet has become integrated into our lives as an important, if not very essential tool for information and communication (Fallows, 2005). The large quantity of information available online combined with heavy reliance on the Internet by information seekers raise issues of the credibility or quality of information found online. Credibility in this context refers to the believability or reliability of some information or its source (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). A long history of research finds that credibility is a multifaceted concept with two primary dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness. Secondary factors affect credibility perceptions as well, including source attractiveness and dynamism, (O'keefe, 2002). It is assumed that the credibility of a message is a receiver-based judgment which involves both objective judgments of the information quality or accuracy as well as subjective perceptions of the source trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Recent concerns about credibility of news or content found on social media stem from the fact that internet and digitization technologies both lower the cost and have increased access to information production and dissemination. The result is that more information from more sources is available and easily accessible currently than ever before due to the rise in the use of social media like tweeter, Facebook, blogs, Whatsapp, yookos, Wechat, Instagram, Badoo, e.t.c.

In the past, substantial costs of information production and dissemination on a mass scale limited the number of sources to only those with enough power and capital to justify and sell an information product. In the digital environment, however, nearly anyone can be an writer, as authority is no longer a requirement for content provision on the internet or social media. This obviously raises issues of credibility, a problem that is exacerbated by the fact that many web sites operate without much supervision or editorial review. Unlike most traditional (i.e., print) publishing, information posted on the Web may not be subject to filtering through professional gatekeepers, and it often lacks traditional authority indicators such as author identity or established reputation there are no body or organization saddled with the responsibility of regulating their activities. Additionally, there are no universal standards for posting information online, and digital information may be easily altered, copied, misrepresented, or created anonymously under false pretenses.

The social media in Nigeria has become a steady source of news for Nigerians but the question of credibility of the contents from this various social media is the major bane of this study. Since the freedom the social media provides is being used as a tool most times against the government, and the rate at which content on social media spread is alarming, an example of how information spreads on social media is the #bringbackourgirls, using salt and water to cure Ebola the response generated by this trending topics was massive all thanks to the social media.

The credibility of news on social media is like a “border line” that mediates an organization and its strategic publics (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000), the public relations function essentially deals with the credibility of the organization and the communicated messages. Therefore, to manage organization-public communication strategically, credibility management is the key. In communication research, the credibility of the communicator has been widely suggested to influence the processing of the communicated content and the change of audience attitudes and beliefs (Burgoon & Hale, 1984; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). The credibility of the channel/medium of communication affects the selective participation of the audience with the medium. Accordingly, individual audiences are paying closer attention to the media that they perceive to be credible. When individual audiences rely more on a certain communication medium for information seeking, they are likely to rate the medium more credible than other media.

Fast-developing technology, especially in the digital media environment, has empowered individuals and other stakeholder organizations to be creators of communication messages rather than remaining as the stagnant receiver of communication content (McClure, 2007). As a result, unlike the old days when organizations were often the only senders of messages, the communication process has increasingly become multidirectional, amplifying horizontal influences among individual public members themselves. Additionally, as the influence of emergent social media continues to increase, individual members of publics are starting to demand participatory communication with and from organizations. In either case, gaining credibility from publics is essential. Instead of being passive recipients of messages, publics are now active enough to select communication channels, especially when they care about an issue (Rubin, 2002). Unlike traditional media such as radio or television, the use of social media by individuals is increasingly becoming “instrumental” (Rubin, 1984), depending on their motivation for communication that is why you want to communicate (functionality), purposive or intended nature of communicating that is the channel you intend using to communicate (intentionality), communication choice (selectivity), and involvement with media . Given such audience selective and active media use, communication without the creation and cultivation of credibility for better public engagement or brand-building can be hardly effective (Holtz & Havens, 2009).

1.1 Statement of Problem

Since the establishment of Abuja, traditional source of news only present current events and stories approved by the government (Hong, 2011). Now, independent online media such as social media websites and blogs allow anyone to publish stories on everything from on-the-spot news coverage and research to opinion and rumor. The effects of this increasing diversity of news sources are not fully known; but how credible and believable are this user generated contents? How trustworthy are the source of this news being posted? However, it is likely that not all segments of the population have been influenced equally due to the digital nature of the newer sources. Judging the credibility of the source and of the content on social media is a major issue among users of social media, with this credibility problem associated with social media news, it is necessary to determine the extent to which social media users believe the news content they carry from these social networks.

With the increase dependence of individuals on social media for news and the proliferation of social media sites by media houses e.g. CNN, Sahara reporters, e.t.c. Can the reliability or credibility of this news on social media sites be ascertained if yes to what extent? This study is embarked on to ascertain the views of residents of residents of Abuja on the credibility and reliability of news on social media and also discover the criteria they use to evaluate the credibility of various contents on social media.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

In this regard, the study aimed:

- 1). To find out if residents of Abuja considers news on social media to be credible.
- 2). To find out how residents of Abuja use the various social media.
- 3). To determine how residents of Abuja judge news credibility.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1) How do residents of Abuja perceive the credibility of current events information on social media?
- 2). What is the self-reported media use of residents of Abuja?
- 3). What are the criteria used by Abuja residents to judge the credibility of news on social media?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Media

Social media as a concept refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. The main examples are Facebook, Tweeter, Instagram, Foursquare, YouTube and Vimeo accounts, computer networking was initially envisioned in the glory days of The Beatles as a military-centric command and control scheme. But as it expanded beyond just a privileged few hubs and nodes, so too did the idea that connected computers might also make a great forum for discussing mutual topics of interest, and perhaps even meeting or renewing acquaintances with other humans. In the 1970s, that process began in earnest. Mulletts may have reigned supreme in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but as many will surely recall computers were a far fewer product.

The machines' language was confusing, and their potential seemingly limited. What's more, this whole sitting in front of a keyboard thing was so isolating. Put all this together and you have a medium where only the most obsessive enthusiasts and techno-babbling hobbyists dared tread. It was, in conclusion, a breeding ground for pocket-protector-wearing societal rejects, or nerds. And uninteresting individual at that. Yet it also was during this time, and with a parade of supposedly antisocial geeks at the helm, that the open notion of social networking would take its first steps towards becoming the common cultural phenomenon we know and love in 2014.

The term 'Social Media' has been defined in different ways by its users, ICT experts, and authors. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". It includes web-based and mobile based technologies that are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among individuals, organizations, and communities. Typical examples of social media platforms include websites such as Facebook, Tweeter, Flickr, Youtube and the interactive options on these websites, such as the "re-tweeting" option on Tweeter. These instruments are referred to as media because they are tools which can also be used for the storage and dissemination of information, however unlike the traditional media like Television and Radio, most of the social media tools allow their users to interact as "re-tweeting" on Tweeter and "comment" options on Facebook illustrate. Looking at social media from a more realistic point of view, (Sweeter & Lariscy, 2008) define social media as a "read-write Web, where the online audience moves beyond passive viewing of Web content to actually contributing to the content".

One thing that is common in most definitions of social media is the point that it is based on user-generated participation. The opportunity to enjoy user-to-user interaction distinguishes social media from the traditional media which is characterized by top-down news dissemination arrangement (Clark & Aufderheide, 2009). Another attribute of the social media which distinguishes it from the traditional media is the choice it accords to its users. Choice enables people to access the information they like to learn about through the social media, eliminating the gatekeeper role of traditional media. On one hand, the choice offered by social media reduces the shared experience that viewers of particular traditional media channels usually have; on the other hand, it creates a network of individuals with like interests and similar preferences.

Two primary tools that have enabled people to socialize and connect with each other online are social media sites and electronic messaging. More than half of America's teens and young adults send electronic messages and use social networking sites, and more than one third of all internet users engage in these activities (Jones & Fox 2009). In Nigeria, over 3 million people have Facebook accounts, while about 60,000 people are on Tweeter (Asuni and Farris 2011). Most people who use social media tools access them mainly through computers and mobile devices such as phones and Tablet PCs. Analysts suggest that majority of phone purchases in the coming years will be more for using online networks rather than making phone calls. Thus, phone communication is now tending toward one to-many sharing rather than the usual one-to-one conversation. Social media technologies take on different forms including magazines, internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, podcasts, pictures, and video. Considering that social media come in diverse forms (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010) tried to classify social media into six distinct, namely Collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), Blogs and microblogs (e.g. Tweeter), Content communities (e.g. YouTube), Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), Virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft), Virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life).

Out of these six categories of social media tools, three categories (blogs and microblogs, content communities, and social networking sites) are mostly used to news dissemination. Traditional media channels, particularly television and newspapers, try to expand their reach by using social media platforms for news broadcast. In Nigeria for example, many newspapers like Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Trust, and ThisDay as well as television stations like Channels, have Facebook and Tweeter accounts. A common trend among traditional media houses, especially the television stations, is to have i-reporters. I-reporters are individuals without professional experience of journalism, but who can utilize their dexterity in the use of social media tools to broadcast messages about events taking place around them through the traditional media. i-reporters share pictures and videos of events with the public through the television. In this way, the traditional media rely on users of social media for news, information and leads, the same way that social media utilize news and information emanating from newspapers, radio and television channels.

2.2 Social Media use in Nigeria

Studies suggest that when Nigerians go online (predominantly with their mobile phones) they spend much of their time on social media platforms (Facebook, Tweeter, YouTube and so on). Sending and reading e-mails, reading news and posting various articles, taking a look at one of the most common social media being used in Nigeria Facebook According to recent studies, (AP .2014) Facebook users in Nigeria have increased with over 1,4 million new users representing +83 % change in the last 3 to 6 months. Facebook the major social media platform worldwide and currently the most visited website in Nigeria has seen massive growth on the continent. The figure of Nigeria Facebook users now stands at over 7 million, up from 6 million in 2009, (AP.2014). More than 15 per cent of people online in Nigeria are currently using the platform, compared to Asia. Two other social networking websites, Tweeter and YouTube, rank among the most visited websites in Nigeria but due to the rise of new social media designed for mobile platform this mobile applications are cheaper and perform well on low bandwidth example of this applications are eskimi, whatsapp bbm,.

The social media platform Facebook have been proven to be an effective market to reach out to target audience as popular brands, celebrities, the media, politicians have taken advantage to improve on their presence, brand and products, Facebook page is where they connect with their customers but it has been discovered that the news page carry the highest numbers of subscribers this tells us that most of the users of Facebook in Nigeria apart from posting pictures and connecting with friends also goes to Facebook as a source of news. According to statistics from socialbakers.com this are the news sourcing Facebook pages in Nigeria with the highest number of subscribers.

Naij.com	879,181
INFORMATION NIGERIA	744,346
Vanguard News	693,185
THE BEAT 99.9FM	490,593
Daily Trust	391,334
CoolFM969	372,245

This statistics goes a long way to tell you that most of users of social media in Nigeria get news and various information from them, www.naij.com which has the highest number of subscribers in the country is a news media website.2go. Another very popular example of social media being used in Nigeria is the blackberry messenger (BBM) With over 2 million Blackberry users, Blackberry Messenger is another platform with high penetration in Nigeria. In October of 2013 according to socialbakers.com, BBM was released as a cross platform messaging service available to Android and iPhone users, which added an estimated 20 million users worldwide to the platform with total active user base globally reported to be 80 million.

2.3 Social Media Credibility

A lot of studies have been done on credibility and most investigate credibility by relying on definitions, approaches and presumptions that are field-specific (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007). In information science, credibility has been understood as one of the criteria of relevance judgment used when making the decision to accept or reject retrieved information (Rieh & Danielson, 2007). Communication researchers have, on the other hand, been examining credibility as a research program differentiating message credibility, source credibility, and media credibility. Management information systems (MIS) researchers have examined credibility issues in expert systems and decision support systems by querying people as to whether they believe the advice these systems provide. Consumer behavior researchers have addressed how consumers distinguish subjective and objective claims in e-commerce Web sites.

Consequently, previous studies of credibility have provided insights in relation to particular media such as the Web (e.g., Fogg et al., 2003; Rieh, 2002), precise information such as political information (Johnson & Kaye, 2009), news information (Sundar & Nass, 2001), and academic information (Liu, 2004) as well as particular settings such as schools. This approach is potentially problematic in that people may carry over strategies and criteria used for one type of information (e.g., political information) to another type of information (e.g., academic information) and vice versa. People also may rely on multiple types of media or resources in the course of a single information seeking episode. What is called for, it is a framework that identifies common aspects of credibility assessment regardless of media, type of information, and environment of information use. Credibility has been defined as believability, trust, reliability, accuracy, fairness, objectivity, and lots of other concepts and combination thereof. It also has been defined in terms of characteristics of persuasive sources, characteristics of the message structure and content, and perceptions of media (Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus, & McCann, 2003).

Some studies focus on the characteristics that make sources or information worthy of being believed, while others examine the characteristics that make sources or information likely to be believed (Flanagin & 2007). Regardless of the fact that communication researchers have been interested in source credibility since the 1950s, there is yet no clear definition of credibility. The main view across definitions is believability. Credible people are believable people, and credible information is believable information (Tseng & Fogg, 1999). Most credibility researchers agree that there are at least two key dimensions of credibility: trustworthiness and expertise (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953), both of which contribute to the concept of credibility. Trustworthiness is a key factor in credibility assessment. A person is trustworthy for being honest, careful in choice of words, and reluctant to deceive. Information is trustworthy when it appears to be reliable, impartial and fair. Expertise is “the perceived knowledge, skill, and experience of the source” Expertise is also an important factor because it is closely related to user perceptions of the ability of a source to provide information both accurate and valid.

When people find that sources have skill, they are likely to judge that information to be dependable. Assessment of sources' expertise come in multiple ways: people might have prior first-hand experience with a source; they might have heard about a source from other people; they might know that a source has a good reputation; and they might recognize expertise when a source has qualifications, among others (Rieh, 2002). People's credibility judgments are subjective and undeclared because they need to recognize expertise to conclude that the information is trustworthy. Credibility differs from cognitive authority and information quality, while being closely related to these two concepts. Cognitive authorities are those people who actually exert influence on other people's thoughts by being recognized as correct (Wilson & Wilson, 2001).

According to Wilson and Wilson (2001), an authority's influence is thought appropriate because “he is thought credible, worthy of belief”. Cognitive authorities are clearly among those who are considered to be credible sources. A person may be recognized as credible in an area even if not exerting influence on other people's thoughts. In their words, “those we think credible constitute the potential pool of cognitive authorities on which we might draw” (Wilson & Wilson, 2001). They claimed that people do not attribute cognitive power totally to individuals. Cognitive power can be found in books, instruments, organizations, and institutions. Information quality refers to people's subjective judgment of goodness and usefulness of information in certain information use settings with respect to their own expectations of information or in regard to other information available. Information quality is composed of five facets: usefulness, goodness, accuracy, currency, and importance. These facets of information quality are not necessarily always consistent. Information may be accurate but not useful, useful but not important, important but no longer current, current but inaccurate, and so forth. In such cases, one of the questions people ask themselves would be whether they can believe what the information says or, if not, whether they can at least take it seriously (Wilson & Wilson, 2001). Thus credibility is a principal aspect of information quality

Johnson and Kaye (1998) examined how individuals who used the Internet for political information and to purchase things, judged the credibility of several news media, including the Internet. They found that online newspapers and news magazines were judged as highly credible; more credible than traditional media. Credibility was more associated with reliance on the Web than with how much an individual was using the medium. Johnson and Kaye (2009) also discovered that online newspapers and news magazines were regarded as highly credible. According to Metzger et al., (2003), the Internet was deemed to be as credible as most other media, with the exception of newspapers. Kioussis (2001) found that people were cynical of online news sources. His survey showed that newspapers were found the most credible medium. International studies have also confirmed that the traditional news media were regarded as more credible than the online news media.

According to Yi Park (2005), Koreans considered traditional news media to be more credible than the online news formats. It was found that German media consumers rated newspapers as being more credible than television or online news. At the time that the study was conducted, the Web was relatively new to consumers and the majority of participants were non-Internet users. While newspapers were generally considered to be the most credible medium, the lines between television and online news media were blurred. Television was considered as more serious, well researched, critical, proficient and professional, whereas the Web was rated as more thorough and objective. Research has shown that age affects how audiences rate credibility. Bucy (2003) discovered that college students found television news and online news more credible than older media consumers. Older participants, however, found online news to be more credible than television news, whereas college students found television news to be more credible.

2.4 Perceptions of News Credibility on Social Media (Tweeter).

Perception can be defined as views or opinion of an individual while credibility is the believability or dependability of particular information. Shafiza, Xiuzhen and Mark (2014) studied news-related tweets, and used crowd-sourcing platform to judge the credibility of such tweets. They examining user judgments and comments, and discovered eight features, including some that cannot be automatically identified from tweets, are perceived by users as important for judging information credibility. Moreover, distinct features like link in tweet, display name and user belief consistently lead users to judge tweets as credible. They also find that users can not consistently judge or even misjudge the credibility for some tweets on politics news. They also discovered that as of May 2013, an average of 58 million tweets were posted per day on Tweeter. Currently Tweeter is not only acting as a social medium, it is also becoming a news media source. Tweeter citizens not only share news headlines from newswires, but also report real time events before they reach the press. News on Tweeter comes from a wide variety of sources: some from well-known news organizations and government departments, while most from members of the public.

Consequently, tweeterers often need to judge the credibility of tweets. A researcher discovered that tweeters' have poor judgment on the truth of information on Tweeter. Features such as the number of retweeters, information on users who post tweets and their relationship network (number of followers and followers) help little in determining the level of information credibility on Tweeter, Spammers exploit the anonymity feature of Tweeter to propagate their messages, retweeting them to increase their popularity rating. In a Tweeter dataset studied by a popular media researcher, nearly half of the tweets about an event were found to be spam. In the work by Castillo and Poblete (2011), it was discovered that the credibility of information on Tweeter is determined mainly by four types of features: message-based, content-based, user-based, and propagation-based. In most existing work, the features may need to be compiled by crawling the Tweeter space and extracting the link relationship between tweeters. The purposes of these features are for automatic prediction and may not necessarily be users' perception of important signals for credibility, focusing on the tweet-based features used by tweeters to determine credibility of tweet. It is discovered that it is relative to each individual.

2.5 Review of Empirical Studies

The use of the internet and subsequently social media has become widely recognized by people of all ages and geographical dispensations (Kim, 2010). People rely on the internet as a source of information, and as a way of getting fast information. The traditional media have been acknowledged for years as reliable way of getting credible news (Groneberg, 2007), but the same cannot be said of the social media. Recently, some stories spread like wild fire among Abuja residents. These rumors later turned out to be untrue. For example, a popular pop singer in Nigeria Tu Face Idibia, was said to have died and the longest bridge in Nigeria, Third mainland bridge, was also going to be blown up by the terrorist group known as boko haram. Social media users also circulated the stories that certain food items from northern Nigeria have been poisoned, causing panic among people. Since social media involves user generated contents, the source and credibility of these contents are hardly ascertained.

Oyero (2013) investigated the use and believability of social networks news among Nigerian youths, and their effectiveness as means of news dissemination. He also attempted to determine the preference of young people between the social networks and traditional mass media as news sources and the extent to which young people believe social network news/information. He defined Credibility as a facility for inspiring or installing belief. Also believability is a factor in the credibility of a source or medium, the study discussed credibility and source credibility based on three perspectives of communication which are medium credibility, and message/content credibility, and source credibility. Medium credibility is the perceived level of credibility that individual users have of a specific medium, such as newspapers, television, the internet or blogs, message itself, such as informational quality, accuracy, or currency (Sunder & Nass, 2001).

The study showed that media credibility deliberations have focused largely on source credibility. This study is related to my research work because they both seek to find out how credible are the contents found on social media and the perception of Nigerians about contents on social media an also understanding how Nigerian youths use and believes content found on social network as well as their personal views about the contents on social network. Two universities one private and one public was surveyed and was randomly selected and a close ended questionnaire, and 330 questionnaires was administered the respondents where between the ages of 16 and 25 and specifically those active in one social media or the other like Facebook, tweeter,Hi5, MySpace, etc. The major finding of this study (Oyero, 2013) discovered that social network has become a major source of news for young people. His study discovered that social networks have become a major source of news among Nigerian students.

Another article is the research conducted by Sutton, Palen, and Shklovski (2008). This study was conducted by first operationalizing the various social media outlets used, including photo sharing websites, personal blogs, web discussions and forums, and mobile phones. They then gathered information from respondents via an online questionnaire about information and communications technology use before and during disaster situations, and the perceived legitimacy of the social media and backchannel media outlets. The independent variables for this study (Sutton, et al., 2008) were the respondents' use of backchannel communication and the use of other social media outlets. The dependent variables were the prominence of social media and backchannel media outlets and the perceived legitimacy of the information gained using these types of media, both of which were measured using open-ended response questions on the online questionnaire. Similar to our own research question, this study focused on the perceived credibility of various social media outlets by the respondents. The overall results of this study (Sutton, et al., 2008) showed that the use of backchannel media outlets and social media channels, including web forums, blogs, photo sharing websites, etc is increasingly popular during times of disaster.

The accessibility of these outlets encourage citizens to use and rely on information gained from social media sources. The social media outlets seem both credible and reliable in disaster situations because the information is current and personal. Respondents complaining of incorrect information being broadcast through typical, larger media channels were appeased by the "close to home" nature of social media. Social media appears to be a credible source for spreading information during disaster situations, and may be an important tool in spreading news and other information quickly to a large number of people in various situations. This study (Sutton, et al., 2008) provides a basis for future research, in that it indicates that social media outlets are perceived to be reliable by the general population. They also appear to be an accessible and current source for breaking news and updates which can be an explanation for the reason as to why people may perceive social media as a credible source for news which is relevant to our study.

Johnson and Kaye (2009) investigated how traditional media and Internet reliance influenced the way blog users perceived the credibility of weblogs. A weblog is an example of social media where contents are user-generated. The independent variable for the study was the type of different news outlets and the dependent variable was how the weblog users viewed the credibility of the different outlets. Johnson and Kaye (2004) defined credibility for the study as worthiness of being believed, accuracy, fairness, and depth of information. A moderating variable was the participants' prior reliance on the different news outlets. The study discovered how different users of media sources view credibility and what prior experiences can shape their view of the news outlet. They administered a survey to Weblog readers, which was posted for a month in 2003. The survey was linked to 131 different Weblogs, 14 Weblog oriented bulletin boards, sent the survey to Weblog chat rooms and bloggers for them to post themselves. The major finding of this study (Johnson & Kaye, 2009) was that a participants' Reliance on Weblog use was a strong and positive predictor for the perception of Weblog credibility. Most Weblog readers viewed the medium as moderately to highly credible. Also the participants observed the Weblogs as more credible than any other news source. This guides us to believe that the more a person uses a source the more likely they are to view the source as credible.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Source credibility theory is an established theory that explains how communication's persuasiveness is affected by the perceived credibility of the source of the communication. The credibility of all communication, regardless of format, has been found to be heavily influenced by the perceived credibility of the source of that communication. The theory was by Hovland, C., Janis, I., Kelley, H. The Source Credibility theory states that people are more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible. The theory is broken into three models. The three models help to narrow the wide scope of the source credibility theory, while also making it a much more focused strategy to use when studying communication. The models are: the factor model, the functional model, and the constructivist model. The factor model (a covering laws approach) helps determine to what extent the receiver judges the source as credible. The functional model (a covering laws approach) views credibility as the degree to which a source satisfies a receiver's individual needs.

The constructivist model (a human action approach) analyzes what the receiver does with the source's proposal. The late Dr. James C. McCroskey at University of Alabama at Birmingham was known for his research in the measurements of source credibility. His scales for the measurement of source credibility have been widely used in communication research. He noted that "the available scales for the measurement of source credibility should not be assumed to be universally applicable measures of source credibility (McCroskey, 1976). However, his research and his proposed scale from 1975 are still foundations for source credibility research. According to the theory. Medium Credibility is the perceived level of credibility that individual users have of a specific medium, such as newspapers, television, the Internet, or blogs (Sundar & Nass, 2001).

Message credibility, on the other hand, is the perceived credibility of the communicated message itself, such as informational quality, accuracy, or currency (Metzger et al., 2003). Source credibility is seen as the expertise or trustworthiness of the source as the likelihood to provide credible information (Metzger et al., 2003). Media credibility discussions have focused largely on source credibility. The basic idea behind source credibility theory is that where a message comes from and who delivers it can be a major factor in how that message is perceived as credible. Rosenberry & Vicker (2009) state that there are three components of source credibility: knowledge, trustworthiness, and charisma or enthusiasm. To be believable, a source must demonstrate each of these characteristics.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research population of this study consists basically of all the residents in Abuja and the respondents consist of all active users of social media According to the last census in 2006 the population of Abuja was 778,567,000 and according to UNFPA estimations in 2014 the population of Abuja was estimated to be around 3 million people. The non-probability sampling method was used in selecting respondents from the entire population of study. The non-probability sampling method that was used in this research is a purposive sampling technique. A total of 384 respondents was selected for the study based on Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) table of sample size determination. The table established sample sizes against their corresponding population at 95% confidence and 5% sampling error. Abuja comprises of six area councils using the non- probability sample methods, 64 respondents were randomly from each of the six area council that make up Abuja.

The instrument used for data collection in this research was questionnaire. Its reliability was measured by carrying out a pre-test by administering the questionnaire on 15 respondents in Utako, an area council in Abuja which make up the population of the study. The split-half reliability of the research instrument was evaluated using Spearman Brown formula. The Spearman Brown reliability (r_{SB}) value of 0.73 was arrived at showing that the instrument had good reliability. Data collected were manually counted, coded, and presented using statistical tables and the research questions was answered in percentage.

4. FINDINGS

A total of 384 copies of the questionnaire were distributed. Out of these, 16 were not returned. Making the casualty rate of 16 (4.3%) leaving the researcher with the total of 368. For a better and clearer understanding of the figures used in this research, the researcher used tables to illustrate respondent's responses

Analysis of Demographic Data

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	106	28.8
Female	262	71.2
Total	368	100

Source: Field Survey 2015

Table 1 (above) displays the gender of respondents. According to the Table, the majority 262(71.2%) were females, while 106(28.8%) were males.

Table 2: Age of the Respondents

Age of Response	Frequency	Percentage
15-20	102	27.7
21-30	155	42.2
31-40	70	19.0
40 and above	41	11.1
Total	368	100

Source: Field Survey 2015

Table 2 (above) shows the age ranges of the respondents. According to the Table, the age range of the majority 155(42.2%) of the respondents is within 21-30. This is followed by respondents who were within 15–20 who number 102(27.2%), respondents within the age range of 31-40 numbered 70(19%), whereas respondents who were within 40 and above numbered 41(11.1%).

Table 3: Level of Education

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
SSCE	120	32.6
First degree	112	30.4
PGD/Masters	96	26.1
Others	40	10.9
Total	368	100

Source: Field Survey 2015

In terms of the respondents' level of education, Table 3 (above) displays the distribution of the respondents' level of education. According to the Table, the majority 120(32.6%) had obtained WAEC or NECO/SSCE, while 112(30.4%) obtained first degree, whereas 96(26.1%) obtained M.Sc. / PGD. However, only 40(10.9%) of the respondents obtained other qualifications, such as Diploma, OND, HND.

Table 4: Perception of Respondents on News Credibility on Social Media

Categories	Frequency	percentage
Yes	329	89.4
No	31	8.4
No opinion	8	2.2
Total	368	100

Source: Field Survey 2015

Regarding the responses of the respondents on news credibility on social media, Table 4 (above) shows that the majority 329(89.4 %) of the respondents claimed that they used social media, while 31(8.4%) claimed that they did not use social media, whereas 8(2.2%) of the respondents did not have any opinion at all.

Table 5: Credibility of Current Information On Social Media

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Very Credible	29	7.9
Credible	74	20.1
Barely Credible	207	56.3
Not Credible	58	15.8
Total	368	100

Source: Field Survey 2015

Concerning the respondents' responses on the credibility of current information on social media, Table 5(above) revealed that the majority 207(56.3%) of the respondents believed that social media news are barely credible, while 74(20.1%) of the respondents believed that social media news are credible, whereas 58(15.8%) of the respondents believed that social media news are not credible at all. Finally, only 29(7.9%) of the respondents believed that social media news are very credible. However, most of the respondents gave various reasons as to why they do not use social media. These reasons ranged from time constraint, social media is for children not adults, they don't know how to go about using it and other personal believes.

Table 6: Respondents' perception of social media as effective means of news dissemination

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	328	89.1
No	40	10.9
Total	368	100

Source: Field Survey 2015

With regards to respondents' perception of social media as effective means of news dissemination, Table 6(above) reveals that the majority 328(89.1%) of the respondents believed that social networks are effective means of news dissemination, while 40(10.9%) of the respondents said that social media is not effective in information dissemination at all.

Table 7: Social Media Usage

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Information	78	21.2
Communication	101	27.4
Both	189	51.4
Total	368	100

Source: Field Survey 2015

With reference to the respondents usage of the social media, Table 7 (above) shows that the majority 189(51.1%) of the respondents use social media for sourcing for information and communication, while 101(27.4%) of the respondents use social media for communication, whereas 78(21.2%) of the respondents use social media for out sourcing information only.

Table 8: Criteria Used In Judging News Credibility

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Source	62	16.8
Composition	68	18.5
Timeliness	56	15.2
Mode of presentation	45	12.2
Citations	40	10.9
Undecided	97	26.4
Total	368	100

Source: Field Survey 2015

Concerning the criteria used in judging news credibility of social media, Table 8 (above) shows that considerable number 68(18.5%) of the respondents claimed that they used the composition of the news to judge its credibility, while 62(16.8%) of the respondents declared that they used the source of a news to judge its credibility, whereas 56(15.2%) of the respondents admitted that they judged news credibility by its timeliness.

Meanwhile, 45(12.2%) of the respondents hinted that they judged credibility of news by the mode of presentation, while 40(10.9%) of the respondents mentioned that they use the citations in the news to judge its credibility. However, 97(26.4) of the respondents which constitutes the majority actually were undecided about how they judge news credibility on the social media.

6. DISCUSSION

The study has investigated on perceptions of Abuja residents' perception of news credibility on social media. Findings have shown that the majority of the respondents use social media and only few numbers did not use social media. Also, finding has revealed that the majority of the respondents believed that social media news are very credible. Also, another finding revealed that the majority of the respondents believed that social networks are effective means of news dissemination while only few numbers of them claimed that social media is not effective in information dissemination. Yet another part of the findings showed that the respondents use social media for information like news sharing and searching for specific information and for education e.t.c., while considerable number of them used social media for communication like charting sending text messages e.t.c., whereas substantial number of the respondents indicated that they used social media for both information and communication. These findings have shown that a higher percentage of the respondents used social media for both information and interaction.

The aim of this research question 'What are the criteria used by Abuja residents to judge the credibility of news on social media?' was to discover the criteria our respondents uses in judging the credibility of news content on social media and the Also, findings have revealed that adequate number of the respondents used the source of news to judge its credibility, while some of them used the composition of the news to judge its credibility, whereas considerable number of them judged news credibility by its timelines. Also, it is worth nothing that substantial numbers of the respondents judged credibility of news by the mode of presentation, while only few numbers of the respondents use the citations in the news to judge its credibility. But surprisingly, most of the respondents were undecided about how they judge news credibility on the social media. They indicated that they just consume every news contents they see on social media without verifying if the news is credible or not.

From the finding we discovered that the respondent believes that social media news are barely credible they do not have firm assurance in social media news. This level of credibility still leaves room for uncertainty and it is a sign of low-level credibility of the social media. This finding contradicts the submission of (Johnson & Kaye, 2009) that when individual users rely more on a particular medium for information, they consider it to be more credible than other media. Most respondents here use social networks as their primary means of information, yet they have varying degrees of doubts about the credibility of this social media. Social media often experience a lack of credibility in both their content and the source of their content. The reason for this is principally that most of the contents on a social media sites are user generated and are subject to the emotions and opinions of the users.

7. CONCLUSION

The use of social media is a phenomenon that is fast and easily spreading among the residents of Abuja and the country in general in spite of geographical location. Not minding the foundation values of news dissemination, social media have caught on with a speed that has not permitted for its alignment with the core values of news dissemination. Factors such as credibility, accuracy, news-worthiness and believability can sometimes be questioned in the use of social media. Factors like accessibility, convenience, and ease of use have however made it impossible for individuals to take into deliberate on the authenticity of the information that spread across social media.

Most respondents admit to using social networks for both informative purposes as well as communication purposes. They also seem to prefer social media to traditional media for news dissemination social media is more accepted, the traditional media is more trusted. Even though the use of social media has its challenges, it also has very important advantages that cannot be ignored. For instance, it is the best way to spread information among people in different geographical locations. It allows for interaction between users and therefore an exchange of information and ideas, while allowing for a wider coverage of people to get a message or information across.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above findings, it deems necessary that codes of conduct and ethics should be adopted by social media owners to guarantee credibility and accuracy of information, as well as for more credible news broadcasting. This study therefore recommends that:

- 1). Media literacy should be encouraged among the users of social media to enable them control and determine what they do with the information that they receive over the media.
- 2). It is recommended that effort should be made on the part of the audience to compare information obtained from social media with other available news sources before accepting or even fleeing the same information to other helpless users.

9. FUTURE WORK

This study focused on residents of Abuja only. The direction for the future work should be looking into comparing social media and traditional media in a comparable context to determine how the amount of time spent on a social media platform affects perceived credibility, if perceived credibility of social media as a news source depends on the amount of time a person spends on a specific social media platform.

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