



Comparative Analysis of Social and Conventional Broadcast Media News Consumption by Residents of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Radio and television once dominated news consumption in Nigeria, but social media now claim a growing share of the news audience. This study compared the two as news sources among residents of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, in terms of the extent of use, the motivations behind choosing one over the other, and perceived credibility. It was guided by Uses and Gratifications Theory and Media System Dependency Theory. A structured questionnaire was administered to 384 respondents selected through multi-stage sampling across the state's three senatorial districts, and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics and a paired-samples *t* test. Social media were used daily by 77.6% of respondents against 37.0% for broadcast media, and the difference was statistically significant, $t(371) = 18.42$, $p < .001$. Respondents turned to social media for convenience, speed and interactivity, and kept to broadcast media for their credibility, professional standards and fact-checking. Broadcast media, though used less, were trusted more: 88.6% of respondents rated them credible, compared with 46.6% for social media. The most heavily used source was therefore the one trusted least. The study recommends that broadcast organisations in Akwa Ibom State strengthen their digital presence while keeping the editorial discipline that distinguishes them.

Keywords: conventional broadcast media, news consumption, credibility, social media, Uses and Gratifications Theory

Introduction

For decades, radio and television dominated news delivery in Nigeria as gatekept channels that audiences had little option but to trust (Dominick, 2002). The internet, and social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, X and Instagram in particular, have loosened that arrangement. Anyone with a smartphone can now gather and publish “breaking news” without passing through an editor (Tayo et al., 2019). News travels faster as a result, but much of it comes from sources that sit outside the ethical checks around which conventional journalism was built.

In this study, social media news consumption refers to news encountered on Facebook, WhatsApp, X and Instagram. It covers posts from professional news organisations' own accounts, citizen journalism and user-generated content, influencer commentary, and news shared between individuals, such as a story forwarded in a WhatsApp group. The definition is deliberately broad because respondents seldom separate these sources when asked where they saw a piece of news. The consequence is that the study measures exposure to news through these platforms, not the credibility of any single kind of social media source, and the credibility findings under Objective Three should be read with this in mind.



Akwa Ibom State illustrates this shift. The state is urbanising quickly, literacy is rising, and smartphone and internet access have expanded. Studies of its residents suggest heavy social media use, with Facebook and WhatsApp the platforms most often used for sharing information and discussing politics. Broadcast stations, both government-owned and private, have nevertheless remained part of how people get their news, largely because of the credibility and regulatory oversight associated with them, even though social media beat them on speed and interactivity.

Nigerian scholarship has shown that broadcast preference (Obot, 2013), the commodification of news (Nkana & Nkana, 2019) and social media misinformation (Aondover et al., 2024) each deserve attention. What these studies do not do is place social media and broadcast media side by side in one sample and compare them on three points: how often residents use each, why they choose one over the other, and how far they trust what each provides. Without such a comparison, broadcasters, regulators and journalism practitioners in Akwa Ibom State have to infer audience behaviour from studies that look at one medium at a time. This study addresses that gap. Knowing how usage, motivation and credibility move together, or fail to, matters to broadcasters deciding where to invest, to regulators weighing the risk of misinformation, and to scholars interested in how Nigerian news audiences actually behave.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do residents of Akwa Ibom State use social media for news consumption compared with conventional broadcast media?
2. What are the key motivations and gratifications that drive residents' preference for either social media or conventional broadcast news?
3. How do residents of Akwa Ibom State perceive news from social media compared with news from broadcast media in terms of credibility?

Research Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in the extent of social media use and conventional broadcast media use for news consumption among residents of Akwa Ibom State.

Conceptual Clarification

Social Media and Conventional Broadcast Media

Conventional broadcast media operate on a one-to-many basis. A small number of editors and journalists decide what counts as news and pass it down a single channel (Lewin, 1947; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Social media reverse this arrangement. They are many-to-many, built on interaction and user-generated content (Davis, 2015), and the gatekeeping once exercised by editors has moved to users and algorithms, a process Barzilai-Nahon (2008) describes as network gatekeeping. This opens the way to citizen journalism and a wider range of viewpoints. It also removes much of the verification that used to stop bad information before it spread, which is why news on social media can reach respondents faster yet with less editorial checking. That trade-off between speed and accuracy runs through all three objectives of this study.

Nigerian broadcast news runs along two lines. Radio is cheap and portable enough to reach almost everywhere, while television, through national and state broadcasters such as the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Akwa Ibom State Broadcasting Corporation (AKBC), offers a more structured and regulated form of delivery. Audiences tend to stay with broadcast stations because they regard them as trustworthy, relevant and accountable (Yekinni & Olugbuyi, 2017), although commercial pressure has pushed some Nigerian newsrooms towards commodified content that complicates that trust (Nkana & Nkana, 2019).



Literature Review

The shift away from broadcast media is well documented worldwide. The Reuters Institute's Digital News Report (2024) records a steady decline in broadcast news use and a growing reliance on social media and instant messaging, especially among people under 30, a trend that Mitchell et al. (2023) and Newman et al. (2022) also report. The same reports note a contradiction: audiences trust social media news less even as they use it more, and many return to conventional outlets to check what they have seen.

Nigerian studies show a similar pattern, though not to the same degree everywhere. In Benue State, Apuke and Ayih (2020) found that conventional media were still ahead in overall use, although a growing share of the audience was moving to social media and low media literacy left many people exposed to misinformation. Ogunjimi and Adetayo (2018), who studied university students in Ibadan, found heavy use of social media for quick updates but greater trust in conventional outlets. Both studies point to a split between immediacy and credibility, which the present study examines in a general adult population rather than a student sample.

Closer to Akwa Ibom, Obot (2013) found that Uyo residents had historically preferred foreign broadcasters such as VOA and BBC to domestic stations for coverage of political crises, because they judged them more credible. This suggests that credibility has shaped media choice in the city for a long time. Nkana and Nkana (2019) showed how commodification pressures influence what Akwa Ibom broadcast stations choose to run, which complicates any simple comparison of credibility. In Lagos State, Aondover et al. (2024) identified Facebook as the leading source of social media misinformation, with WhatsApp close behind. Anyanwu, Imiti and Anyanwu (2024) describe conventional media as “agents of authenticity” and point to a Nigerian habit of turning to television to confirm something first seen on social media.

Social Media and Broadcast News Consumption

Ayanwale and Babatunde (2023) examined the effect of social media on news consumption among undergraduates at Kwara State University and the University of Ilorin, using a Uses and Gratifications framework. WhatsApp and Instagram emerged as the dominant platforms, more than half of the respondents spent five hours or more a day on social media news, and digital literacy, demographic characteristics and perceptions of credibility together shaped how people consumed it. They called for media literacy interventions and more diversified, credible sourcing, a concern this study shares, though their sample was limited to university students. Banigo (2024) surveyed media professionals at Passion FM and NTA Uyo, both within the present study's catchment area, and found that social media had a real influence on how COVID-19 news was reported, with speed often winning out over verification during the pandemic. Because these were practitioners who produced and consumed news at once, the study gives a production-side view of the authenticity concerns that audiences raise.

Ogbette et al. (2019) trace Nigeria's fake news problem to four causes operating together: the pursuit of visibility, deliberate fabrication by hostile political and social actors, weak regulation of the internet, and the money to be made from sensational falsehoods. They recommend that people verify sources habitually and that outlets spreading fabricated content face stronger sanctions. Anyanwu, Anyanwu and Ibagere (2023) push the critique further, arguing that Nigerian platforms have taught users new ways of “living a lie” by blurring fact and fabrication. They also note a complication: because broadcast content now often reaches audiences as soft copies shared on social media itself, cross-checking is not always a clean way out of the platforms under



suspicion. They nonetheless conclude that conventional media “stand tall and above social media in all ramifications, especially as it concerns reliability”.

Anyanwu and Ibagere (2021) earlier described social media as a “necessary evil” in Nigeria, because they extend freedom of expression to marginalised, semi-literate and rural populations while eroding face-to-face interaction and weakening professional journalistic authority. That ambivalence matters for Akwa Ibom State, where the sample spans an urban centre such as Uyo and rural areas such as Itu, Ukanafun and Onna, since residents with different levels of access to formal, gatekept news channels may not value the convenience of social media in the same way. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) place these Nigerian patterns in a longer global story. They argue that the fragmentation of the mass audience and the race to publish “breaking news” first have squeezed out much of the editing, fact-checking and cross-verification that once defined professional journalism, and they describe news moving from a “carefully prepared lecture” to an “open-mike conversation”.

The studies above agree on two points. Social media use is rising across Nigerian populations of different ages and locations, and audiences do not trust social media as they trust broadcast media, even as they use it more. The literature is thinner in two respects: research on the general adult population outside university samples (Ayanwale & Babatunde, 2023; Ogunjimi & Adetayo, 2018, both of which sampled students), and studies that measure usage, motivation and credibility for social media and broadcast media together among the same respondents instead of treating them as separate questions. This study addresses both.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G)

Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1973) saw audiences as active participants who choose media to meet particular needs for information, identity, social connection or entertainment, not as passive recipients of whatever is broadcast to them. This view underlies the second objective of the study. It helps explain why a resident might turn to social media because it is immediate and interactive, or stay with broadcast media for its depth and reliability.

Media System Dependency Theory (MSD)

Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) argued that people become more dependent on the media systems that are most useful for achieving their goals, and that this dependency grows in times of social instability or uncertainty. The theory informs the first and third objectives. As social media become more central to daily communication, particularly among younger residents, reliance on them for information deepens, while broadcast media may keep a credibility advantage where verified, in-depth understanding is needed. The theory also sorts audience needs into cognitive (surveillance and understanding), affective (arousal and escape) and behavioural (action and interaction) categories. Credibility falls mainly under the cognitive category, since how far residents trust a source shapes how confidently they act on what it tells them.

The two theories complement each other. Uses and Gratifications Theory explains the choice of medium at a given moment, while Media System Dependency Theory explains the pattern of reliance that builds up through repeated choices. Residents may therefore keep choosing social media for convenience, which is consistent with U&G, while their dependency for high-stakes or verification-sensitive information remains anchored in broadcast media. The third objective examines this expectation.



Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative survey design, which allowed standardised data to be gathered from a large number of respondents and supported a statistical comparison of social media and broadcast media use. The target population was adult residents (18 years and above) of Akwa Ibom State who actively consume news. A respondent counted as an active news consumer if they reported encountering news from any source at least occasionally, and a screening question to this effect preceded the main questionnaire. Sampling was done in stages. The state was first divided into its three senatorial districts: Akwa Ibom North-East, Akwa Ibom North-West and Akwa Ibom South. One urban and one rural local government area (LGA) was then purposively selected from each: Uyo and Itu for North-East, Ikot Ekpene and Ukanafun for North-West, and Eket and Onna for South. Within the six LGAs, respondents were approached through convenience sampling in markets, bus stops and community squares. This introduces some selection bias, because residents who seldom visit such places, for example those who work office hours away from markets and motor parks or who rarely leave home, had a lower chance of being included. The findings should be read with that limitation in mind.

The target of 384 respondents was derived from Taro Yamane's (1967) formula. The formula is meant for probability samples, but respondents here were selected through purposive and convenience sampling, which are non-probability techniques. It was therefore used only to set a benchmark for an adequate sample size, and the achieved sample is not claimed to be statistically representative of the adult population of Akwa Ibom State. The findings indicate patterns among the people sampled and are not precise population estimates. A study that required strict representativeness would need a probability-based sampling frame.

Data were collected with a structured, self-administered questionnaire in four sections: Section A (demographics); Section B (frequency and duration of news consumption from each media type); Section C (motivations for media choice, measured on a four-point Likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree); and Section D (perceived credibility and verification behaviour). Experts in Mass Communication and Sociology assessed the face validity of the instrument, and its internal consistency was checked using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951), with 0.70 as the acceptable threshold. The University of Uyo Research Ethics Committee granted ethical clearance before data collection began.

Data were analysed with SPSS. Frequency counts and percentages summarised usage patterns, motivations and credibility ratings. A paired-samples *t* test compared each respondent's reported frequency of social media news use with their reported frequency of broadcast media news use, both measured on the same five-point scale (Daily to Never, as in Table 2). Since both measures came from the same respondents on a comparable scale, a paired design was appropriate. Participants were told the purpose of the study and that participation was voluntary; consent was obtained, responses were anonymised, and the data were stored securely with access restricted to the researcher.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents findings from 384 copies of the questionnaire administered across the three senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State. All 384 were sufficiently complete for the descriptive analyses of usage, motivation, credibility, verification and exposure to fake news. Two analyses rest on smaller samples after data cleaning. Of the 384 respondents, 381 had complete demographic records and are reported in Table 1, and 372 of these gave complete responses to



both frequency items and were included in the paired-samples *t* test. The remaining nine were excluded from that test through pairwise deletion because they had a missing value on one of the two measures.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1. *Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 381)*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	198	52.0
	Female	183	48.0
Age	18–25 years	142	37.3
	26–35 years	128	33.6
	36–45 years	71	18.6
	46–55 years	28	7.3
	56 years and above	12	3.1
Education	Secondary or below	118	30.9
	OND/NCE	94	24.7
	HND/Bachelor's Degree	132	34.6
	Postgraduate Degree	37	9.7

As Table 1 shows, gender was fairly evenly split, with a slight male majority (52.0%). Most respondents (70.9%) were between 18 and 35 years old, a young sample consistent with the generally youthful active population of the state, and 69.0% held an OND or a higher qualification.

Table 2. *Extent of Social Media and Broadcast Media Use for News*

Indicator	Social media	Broadcast media
<i>Frequency of news use (%)</i>		
Daily	77.6	37.0
Several times a week	16.1	33.3
Occasionally	4.7	22.7
Rarely	1.3	6.0
Never	0.3	1.0
<i>Daily time spent on news (%)</i>		
Less than 1 hour	20.3	49.2
1–2 hours	43.5	37.0
3–4 hours	26.8	10.9
5 hours and above	9.4	2.9
<i>Primary source of news, n (%) (N = 384)</i>		
Named as primary source	267 (69.5)	73 (19.0)
Both equally	44 (11.5)	
<i>Mean frequency of news use (1–5 scale; N = 372)</i>		
Mean (SD)	4.09 (0.89)	2.97 (1.24)
Paired-samples <i>t</i> test: $t(371) = 18.42, p < .001$; mean difference = 1.12, 95% CI [1.00, 1.24]; $dz = 0.96$.		
Decision: reject H_0 .		

Table 2 sets out how much respondents use each medium for news. Daily use was reported by 77.6% of respondents for social media and 37.0% for broadcast media. Time spent pointed the same way: 79.7% spent an hour or more a day on social media news, against 50.8% for broadcast media. Social media were named the primary news source by 69.5% of respondents and broadcast media by 19.0%, while 11.5% relied on both equally. The paired-samples *t* test confirmed the difference in frequency of use, $t(371) = 18.42, p < .001$, with a mean of 4.09 ($SD = 0.89$) for social media and 2.97 ($SD = 1.24$) for broadcast media. The mean difference of 1.12 on the five-point scale (95% CI [1.00, 1.24]) corresponds to a large effect ($dz = 0.96$). The null hypothesis is

therefore rejected: residents of Akwa Ibom State use social media for news significantly more often than they use broadcast media.

Table 3. *Motivations for Using Social Media and Conventional Broadcast Media for News (% Agreement, SA + A Combined)*

Motivation	n	SA + A (%)
<i>Reasons for using social media for news</i>		
Convenient and accessible anywhere	367	95.6
Immediate and fast news updates	360	93.7
Can interact through comments/shares	340	88.6
Diverse perspectives from many sources	334	87.0
Can discuss news with friends/peers	323	84.1
Personalised content based on interests	323	84.1
<i>Reasons for using conventional broadcast media for news</i>		
Verified and fact-checked news	363	94.5
More credible and trustworthy	362	94.2
Professional journalism standards	357	92.9
In-depth analysis and context	354	92.2
Balanced and objective reporting	331	86.2
Local community issue coverage	323	84.0

Note: SA + A = Strongly Agree and Agree combined; n is derived from the reported percentages against N = 384.

The reasons respondents gave for each medium differ markedly (Table 3). For social media, the most common were convenience and accessibility (95.6%) and the speed of updates (93.7%), followed by interactivity (88.6%), diversity of perspectives (87.0%), and the chance to discuss news with peers and receive personalised content (84.1% each). For broadcast media, respondents most often cited verified, fact-checked news (94.5%) and credibility (94.2%), then professional standards (92.9%), depth of analysis (92.2%), balanced reporting (86.2%) and coverage of local community issues (84.0%).

Table 4. *Perceived Credibility, Verification Practices and Exposure to Fake News*

Indicator	Social media	Broadcast media
<i>Perceived credibility of news (%)</i>		
Very credible	6.0	51.6
Somewhat credible	40.6	37.0
Neutral	33.3	8.3
Not very credible	17.4	2.3
Not credible at all	2.6	0.8
<i>Credible (very + somewhat)</i>	<i>46.6</i>	<i>88.6</i>
<i>Verification of social media news, n (%) (N = 384)</i>		
Always verify with broadcast media	89 (23.2)	
Sometimes verify with broadcast media	167 (43.5)	
Verify through multiple social sources	98 (25.5)	
Rarely/never verify	30 (7.8)	
<i>Frequency of encountering fake news on social media, n (%) (N = 384)</i>		
Very frequently	78 (20.3)	
Frequently	189 (49.2)	
Occasionally	98 (25.5)	
Rarely/never	19 (4.9)	

Table 4 shows that broadcast media were rated credible (very or somewhat) by 88.6% of respondents, against 46.6% for social media. The difference is widest at the top of the scale: 51.6% rated broadcast media very credible compared with 6.0% for social media, a ratio of more than



eight to one. At the other end, 20.0% rated social media not very or not at all credible, against 3.1% for broadcast media. Fake news was a common experience, with 69.5% of respondents encountering it on social media frequently or very frequently. Most nevertheless did something about it. In all, 92.2% reported verifying social media news in some way, either by checking it against broadcast media (66.7% always or sometimes) or by cross-referencing several social media sources (25.5%), and only 7.8% rarely or never verified.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: Extent of Social Media Use Relative to Conventional Broadcast Media

The results show that social media have overtaken broadcast media as the channel through which most Akwa Ibom residents encounter news. Daily use was more than twice as high for social media (77.6%) as for broadcast media (37.0%), and the heaviest-use bracket of five hours or more was over three times larger (9.4% against 2.9%). Seven in ten respondents named social media as their main source, against fewer than one in five for broadcast media, and the paired-samples *t* test showed that the gap in frequency of use is statistically significant (Table 2). This gap is wider than in some earlier Nigerian work. Apuke and Ayih (2020) found that conventional media still held the majority of use in Benue State even as social media adoption grew, whereas the Akwa Ibom sample leans further towards social media. The sample's urban, youthful and tertiary-educated profile (70.9% aged 18–35; Table 1) may be part of the explanation, but urbanisation and education were not tested as predictors of media choice, so this remains a conjecture. A regression or correlation analysis linking demographic variables to media preference would be needed to test it. The heavy daily use of social media news that Ayanwale and Babatunde (2023) found among Kwara State university students also appears here in a broader adult population, which suggests the pattern is not confined to students, although the two studies sampled different populations and cannot be compared statistically.

Media System Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976) offers a plausible account. As social media become more central to residents' daily surveillance and information-seeking, dependency on them deepens and draws attention away from scheduled broadcast bulletins. The displacement is nevertheless partial. A sizeable minority named broadcast media as their primary source (19.0%) and another 11.5% relied on both equally, 30.5% in all (Table 2). That fits Complementarity Theory (Amaku, 2012; Ottway, 2021) better than simple substitution.

Research Question Two: Motivations and Gratifications Driving Media Preference

The two media attract different sets of reasons, with little overlap (Table 3). Social media are used because they are convenient and fast, with interactivity, diverse perspectives, discussion and personalised content following behind. Broadcast media are used because they are verified, credible and professional, with depth, balance and local coverage in support. Trust-related reasons head the list for broadcast media and convenience-related reasons head the list for social media. Residents appear to choose a medium according to the need at hand and not to settle on one platform for everything. This split is consistent with Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1973). The convenience and speed behind social media use resemble the surveillance and immediate-gratification needs described by the theory, and the credibility and depth behind broadcast use resemble a cognitive need for reliable understanding. This supports the theory's central claim that audiences make active, need-driven choices. The study did not test U&G propositions directly, for example by comparing gratifications sought with gratifications



obtained, so the data fit the theory's general framing and do not amount to a test of it. Olasehinde (2024) found that speed, immediacy and interactivity were the main drivers of platform use among youth social networkers in Uyo, and that speed and immediacy pull people away from broadcast media. The same cluster appears here in a broader adult sample, which suggests these motivations may be structural rather than generational, although only a study comparing age groups could confirm this.

That broadcast media keep their credibility-linked motivations despite lower usage is consistent with Anyanwu, Imiti and Anyanwu's (2024) description of conventional media as "agents of authenticity", kept for situations where accuracy matters more than speed. Read with Media System Dependency Theory, this suggests that residents are not abandoning broadcast media but reserving them for a particular function, although the data show a pattern consistent with this reading and cannot establish it as a causal mechanism. The two theories work at different levels here. Uses and Gratifications Theory speaks to the moment-to-moment choice of platform (Table 3), and Media System Dependency Theory to the wider reliance on broadcast media for verification (Tables 2 and 4). Both are used as interpretive frameworks and not as propositions the design set out to test.

Research Question Three: Perceived Credibility of Social Media Compared to Broadcast Media

The credibility results run opposite to the usage results (Table 4). Social media are used far more often, yet broadcast media are trusted far more: 88.6% of respondents rated broadcast media credible (51.6% very, 37.0% somewhat), against 46.6% for social media (6.0% very, 40.6% somewhat). The gap is starkest at the extremes. Broadcast media's "very credible" rating is more than eight times that of social media, and 20.0% of respondents rated social media not very or not at all credible, against 3.1% for broadcast media. The medium respondents use most is therefore the one they trust least. The survey measured usage and credibility in the same respondents but did not test why the two move in opposite directions, so the explanations that follow are offered as plausible readings and not as established causes.

One reading involves exposure to fake news. Almost seven in ten respondents (69.5%) met fake news on social media frequently or very frequently, and most responded by verifying (Table 4): 92.2% checked social media news in some way, usually against broadcast media (66.7% always or sometimes), and a further 25.5% cross-referenced several social sources. Only 7.8% rarely or never verified. High exposure to fake news, low credibility ratings for social media and widespread verification occur together. This is consistent with the idea that unreliable content leads residents to rate social media lower and to check it against broadcast media, but it does not prove it. Another reading is that the two media are not competing for the same audience at all but serve different informational purposes, social media for speed and breadth and broadcast media for confirmation and depth. A cross-sectional design cannot rule this out. Either reading sits comfortably with earlier work: the "when-in-doubt-watch-the-television" habit described by Anyanwu, Imiti and Anyanwu (2024), Anyanwu, Anyanwu and Ibagere's (2023) conclusion that conventional media "stand tall and above social media... especially as it concerns reliability", Obot's (2013) finding from the same city that perceived credibility shapes audience exposure and source choice, and Ogbette et al.'s (2019) recommendation that habitual source-checking is the main defence against fabricated content.



Both theories offer lenses on this pattern, not a tested mechanism. In U&G terms, convenience and speed can drive routine consumption even toward a source known to be less reliable. In MSD terms, residents may lean on broadcast media in higher-stakes situations, such as understanding a complex issue, confirming a startling claim or acting on consequential information, because it is the source with which they have built a stronger credibility relationship over time. The design is consistent with this interpretation but did not test it, since respondents were not asked to distinguish routine from high-stakes information needs. Read this way, the finding fits the general expectation that cognitive dependency stays anchored in broadcast media even as everyday surveillance needs move to social media, although the data do not prove it.

Conclusion

This study compared social media and conventional broadcast media as sources of news among residents of Akwa Ibom State, in terms of how much each is used, what motivates the choice and how credible each is thought to be. The picture is of a media environment in transition and not of complete displacement. Social media were used more often and were named the primary source by 69.5% of respondents, but broadcast media kept a distinct role as the place residents turn to for verification. Convenience and speed were the reasons most often given for using social media, and credibility and professional rigour for staying with broadcast media despite its lower frequency of use. That heavy social media use coexists with comparatively low trust in it suggests that the news audience in Akwa Ibom State is neither credulous nor ready to abandon conventional journalism. Because the study is cross-sectional, it describes this pattern without explaining it, and a design built to test the explanations offered here would be a natural next step.

Recommendations

1. Broadcast organisations in Akwa Ibom State should strengthen their presence on the platforms that existing studies identify as those residents use most for news, namely Facebook and WhatsApp. They should publish verified, clearly branded and fact-checked content there and develop mobile-friendly, on-demand formats such as short updates, live streams and push alerts, so that their credibility advantage reaches audiences through the channels those audiences prefer for speed and convenience.
2. Media literacy campaigns should target the verification gap identified here: the 7.8% of residents who rarely or never verify social media content. This group is the most exposed to the fake news that 69.5% of respondents meet frequently.
3. Regulators and policymakers should consider incentives that support the digital transformation of local broadcast organisations, since the authenticating role of broadcast media remains a public good even as its status as a primary source declines.

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AI Use Declaration:

None
