

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A CREDIBLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION

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**THE INFLUENCE OF MOVIES ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S BELIEFS,
OPINION AND BEHAVIOUR**

BY

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**A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELORS
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DECLARATION

This project is based on a study undertaken by **NWOSU DELIGHT NKIRUKA ART1901591** in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts under the supervision of in the Department of Mass Communication. All ideas are the products of my research where the views of others were used, they were duly acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was written and submitted by **NWOSU DELIGHT NKIRUKA (ART1901591)** to the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, and University of Benin, Benin City. Edo State

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Almighty God for his divine grace and strength in the completion of this program because without him it wouldn't have been possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My gratitude goes to God Almighty for guiding me throughout the process of this research work and for his grace to complete this project, He deserves all my thanks and praise.

My sincerest thanks go to my supervisor whose intelligence and expertise in research enlightened me through the course of this research. Thank you sir for pushing me to do this work with diligence and stress-free, your corrections and guidance made this work possible.

I will not fail to appreciate my parents Mr. and Mrs. Nwosu for their encouragement, motivation, and support to make sure I become a bag of success. To my sister Blessing whose footsteps I trace, I say thank you for your kind words and cheerleading I appreciate you from the depth of my heart.

I also acknowledge those who contributed to the completion of this work in one way or the other for their support, thank you, friends, and may God bless you all.

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on Social Media as a credible source of information and information dissemination with the view of UNIBEN students of the Department of Mass Communication. It aimed at examining the credibility of social media with UNIBEN students of the Mass Communication department as the population of the study. The objectives of the study were to find ways to differentiate between factual news and made-up news. To educate the public about the consequences of spreading unverified information, to educate the public on the importance of creating a safe social media environment, and to educate social media users about the possible practices or user behavior to make social media a credible source of information. For its theoretical framework, the study adopted the medium is the message theory by McLuhan to further buttress the point of the study. The survey research was used to gather the data used for this study. The findings of the study revealed that UNIBEN students of the mass communication department agreed that social media is not a credible source of information and that the information they receive on social media affects their personal decision as students. Findings also reveal the rate at which information is shared and received on social media and how this information can be verified. The study, therefore concluded that there is a necessity in ensuring that social media is a safe space for information dissemination. It was recommended that users of social media should be wary of some of the content they consume as mischievous users display misleading information that may be harmful, Social media users must see the need to verify the information they receive and share on social media from credible sources etc

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Information is knowledge that is derived from data which have been transformed, interpreted, stored and used for a purpose. Our society is now reliant on information as knowledge for influence, decision making, credibility and control. The world at large is dependent on information because it is essential for effective operations and decision making at all levels of life.

Without good information a right decision cannot be made in a man's life that is why human beings constantly seek more and better information to support their decision making. Social media over the years have been helpful in the dissemination of information across the world making information accessible to billions of people at the same time. The scope of which social media covers increases daily as more effective upgrades are regularly carried out to ensur this is possible. The era of social media in a world like ours where advancement and innovation are important has been able to break

barriers related to effective communication, awareness information dissemination etc with social media information dissemination is much faster, essential and possible. Information that is true and reliable helps in influencing proper and right decisions of individuals, group of people, community, nation and even the world at large. This is why pushing for social media to be not just the fastest means for information dissemination but a more reliable and credible source of information is very important because not mere information is power but good, vital and quality information is power and reverse is the case for unreliable information. This study seeks to proffer solutions to the widespread of fake news through social media thereby creating a safe social media environment so that social media can become a credible source of information.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The easy accessibility and usage of social media over time have made social media an easy channel for fake news. Rather than being a credible source of information, considering its coverage and impact globally, it has now become unreliable for users. This becomes worse by the day because of

the growing impact of social media on its users. Tackling this problem will help in proper dissemination of quality information to the world at large reducing fake news from spreading like wildfire? Spotting fake news and tracing news sources are some of the problems this study aims to tackle.

1.3 Objectives of the study

This study sets to unravel the following objectives;

1. To find ways to differentiate between factual news and made-up news.
2. To educate the public about the consequences of spreading unverified information
3. To educate the public on the importance of creating a safe social media environment.
4. To educate social media users about the possible practices or user behavior to make social media a credible source of information.

1.4 Research question;

The research questions in this study includes;

1. How relevant is social media to the dissemination of credible information?
2. How can we differentiate between fake news and credible news?

3. To what extent does the credibility of information we receive affect our decision making as individuals ?
4. What are the possible practices of social media users to reduce widespread of fake news?

1.5 Significance of the study

The research strongly believes that the outcome of this research will be of great help to social media users who find it difficult to spot fake news on social media. Just as education must march with bones position of intelligence, this work will further give relative accoutrements to scholars and experimenters who may wish to profit from the information handed herewith It is also believed that this study will help enhance good user behavior practices by individuals to make social media a credible source of information.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study will cover on the analysis of social media platforms and how their mode of usage has helped or damaged dissemination of credible information among users in recent times. It focuses on determining the extent

spread of fake news can affect users decision making and how it can be reduced.

1.7 Definition of Terms

CREDIBLE: Offering reasonable grounds for being believed.

DISSEMINATION: It is the process of spreading widely the accessibility and usability of knowledge. It is the process of sharing findings. It also means to spread or give out news, information, ideas, etc through various platforms

FAKE NEWS: News articles that are intentionally and verifiably false.

FACT- CHECKING: The process of verifying the factual accuracy of questioned reporting and statements. It is simply the act of analyzing information for truthfulness.

SOCIAL MEDIA: This refers to the means of interaction among people in which they create, share and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. It is an internet based form of communication. It can also be websites and applications that enable users to create and share

contents or participate in social networking. E.g, blogs, Facebook, Instagram etc

INFORMATION: This is a collection of data that has been processed, organized, or structured in a meaningful way to convey knowledge, ideas, or instructions. It is also structured to provide context, relevance and value to a user.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Preamble

No academic work can exist without input from other works. As research is a fundamental piece of achievement, this chapter aims at reviewing related literature to the study. It reviews literature based on the following sub-topics;

2.1. Social media as a channel of public communication

2.2 Social media and credibility

2.3 fact-checking as a means to foster social media credibility

2.1 Social Media as a Channel of Public Communication

Among other uses and clear importance of social media to its users, social media can as well serve the purpose of public communication which

enables users to share information, experiences, feelings, opinions etc through it platforms. The main purpose of Public communication is to deliver a message, news, a piece of information to the public in whatever form possible and social media has been the greatest channel for this to be accomplished. "People increasingly use social media to get first hand news and information, Abbasi and Liu,"(2012, P.1) little wonder why news spread briskly on social media either through social networking spots, blogs or other platforms similar as Facebook, Instagram twitter and indeed whatsapp than any conventional platform like television, radio, review or magazines as these social media platforms reach larger audience. According to Idakwo (2011) "Social media have also been an expression of the complexities between the media and the society." (Idakwo,2011,p.23) the emphasis of the work cited above is rested on the uses of social media and some of what they have ushered into the public as means of communication. In Nigeria, social media has helped revolutionize, influence and educate the public in different social issues raising a global voice for common good of its citizens. During the end sars protest of 2022 social media served as the main point of convergence for both agitations and funding of the protest. Segun Awosanya,

also known as segalinka human right activist, initiated the EndSARS campaign on twitter in 2016, in protest against police brutality. The origin, movement, mobilization, global reach and positive impact was fueled by social media. This shows social media as the new voice.

Social media also played its role in the global pandemic called corona virus which broke out in 2019 in the world at large key health information, development and policies were made known to the public during lockdown through social media. This helped with easy accessibility of relevant information for personal observation of the symptoms and preventive measure to take during the pandemic. Social media till date continues to play a fantastic role in making sure a larger audience is reached for proper communication purpose.

2.2 Social Media and Credibility

Proper communication and information dissemination will not fulfill its purpose information is not accurate. The effectiveness of communication is largely determined by the credibility of its source. "Hovland and Weiss (1951) cited by (Hellmueller & Trillia, 2012 p. 1). What is communication if its

audience cannot trust its source. There is a reasonable growth in the use of Social media sites as a means of communication among different categories of people across Nigeria. With its large audience, communication increase. Billions of people rely on social media as source of intonations that influence their decision making daily whether it has to do with movement policies, family welfare, school/work updates or any personal issue, the decisions one make is dependent on the credibility and truthfulness of the information they receive. Billions of people rely on social media as a source of information to influence their decision-making daily, whether it has to do with government policies, family welfare, school work, or any personal issue. Because of simple information on the internet, a student can decide on a carcer path it is that effective. However, the decision one makes is dependent on the credibility and truthfulness of the information one gets.

With the above, we must analyze and examine the users' view vis-a-vis the credibility of the media and its content because one wrong piece of information can affect the entire world and individual decisions. The easy accessibility of information on social media and the ability to share, repost, and even create individual content for the public has destroyed the credibility

of social media content because even none professionals become journalists on social media. (Quote ekili2013) NCC 2019,1 agrees that the unreliability of social media content has posed social and security risks that can impact society and national security negatively. Because of the reawakening of these social media problems, its users have been able to ascertain which social media is more credible than others. According to (Metzger et Al, 2003, cited by Kang 2010 p.3) it has been suggested that the credibility of the channel/medium of communication influences the selective involvement of the audience with the medium the status of being credible but the trustworthiness of a medium could determine the user's choice of consumption of the content or preference for another medium as a substitute. In traditional media as well as social media, the credibility of the source has a great effect on the process of acquiring the content and changing audience's attitude and belief (Abbasi and Liu, 2012,p.3)

2.3 Fact-checking as a means to foster social media credibility.

According to Olan et al (2022), misinformation has long existed in human history. Because of the smooth, easy, and accessible nature of social

media/the internet, it has been the greatest habitat of misinformation and fake news. The rapid growth of misinformation over the Internet can cause various types of including life, injury, income, business, information, emotions, trust and (tranTranal, 2021).

Identifying/detecting misinformation on social media is the first step to combat misinformation. However, Kumar and Shah (2018) a greet information such as context,

User - agreement and social behaviour may be key signals for misinformation detection as mere feature text may not do the trick. Swamped and misled by the enormous quantum of misinformation on social media, people are in critical need of further effective ways to pierce the verity. To counter the dissemination of misinformation is by no means an easy task and it calls an integrated strategy that combines efforts from multiple sides of our society (Rodrigo et al 2022). The main social media platforms have been implementing strategies to minimize fake news dissemination. These strategies include identifying, labeling, and penalizing via news feed ranking algorithm fake publication Alberto, Patricia and Carmen (2020). Facebook, the largest social network website in many countries, partners with different

fact checking institutions to stop this speed e.g through warning labels: Once a piece of content is found to be false, it's algorithms recommendation reduced and the misinformation receives a warning marker(Facebook. 2020). According to Roth and Pickles (2020) similar warning markers are also used by twitter.

Although, social media platforms are experimenting different ways to curb fake news spread. Users still become exposed to fake news as the minimization of fake news has not been possible. Moreover, findings suggest that some people may not intentionally spread made up news on social media but their reasons are not known. Baptist and Gradim, (2020) says that "one of the factors that drive the spread of fake news from the perspective of content and source includes click bait" headlines, exaggerated language, and graphics images to attract authentic This implies that social media engagement drives users and content creators to do whatsoever including spreading fake news to ensure large engagement goal is met. The credibility of se if fake news contents are not created in the first place. But from a user perspective, individuals of older ages or with lower levels of education are likely to be victims of misinformation (Allen et al, 2020, xiong and Zuo, 2019). If

contents containing fake news cannot totally be stopped because users are in control of what they post and how they post it. The spread of such contents can be reduced as well as the damage I users are mindful and conscious of what is spread.

In advanced countries like U.S. fact checking website like polifact.com has been established to analyze and investigate the accuracy of statement or claims by political figures and viral stories on social media. The technological aspect of this website has been effective, however its accuracy is being questioned. According to Jiexun Li (2022) prolific rates statements on it's trademarked truth-o-meter which includes; true, mostly true, half true, mostly false, false and pants on fire. Ratings like this may not give users the ability to tell whether a content is fake or not. A rather best rating would be either true or false. However, can have some atom of lies and truth at the same time, such contents cannot be labelled totally true or false,

The online fact-checkers may not be totally reliable which means users should be more responsible to how they react to contents and spread information. Reliability on proper investigation and fact checking on what content to share is key to curbing fake news spread.

2.4 Empirical Studies

Several researchers have conducted empirical research on the appraisal of the evaluation of social media credibility. This section reviews the works of such scholar as they relate to this current study.

Ignatius O. Edogor, Alice Al, Lucky O. Idawa(2015). Nigerian users' evaluation of the credibility of social media sites.

This study by Ignatius, Alice AJ, and Lucky O. Idowu examined Nigerian users' evaluation of the credibility of social media sites. The study employed the survey research method with a sample of three hundred drawn by the application of a multi-stage sampling technique. The instrument of data collection used was a questionnaire. The study found that social media sites were rated as credible means of communication in Nigeria. However, the study also found that Facebook is the most credible according to the rating of the respondents,

In another finding of the work, most contents of the social media sites that we're considered as riot credible have been ascertained with politically oriented content being the top-most on the ladder. This goes to show the awakening of Nigerians as social media users on what to believe and what not

to believe. Based on the findings, the study recommends that Nigerian users of social media should be wary of some of what they consume as unscrupulous users have been found to display misleading information that could be harmful to the public. The study also recommends that media practitioners and academics should devote time to educating people to avoid negative users of social media.

This study by Ignatus, Alice AJ, and Lucky O. Idowu (2015) is related to this research in that both studies used the survey design research method. Both studies seek the perception of the public on social media and its credibility. However, this study focuses on more recent analyses and ways to make social media credible.

Omutombe and Olley (2018). Utilization of social media for news gathering and dissemination by journalists in Edo state, Nigeria

. This study by Omosotombe and Olley (2018) sought to ascertain the place of social media in modern-day reporting. Questionnaires and Interview schedules were used to generate data from respondents drawn from different media houses across do state in south-south Nigeria. The results show that the majority of journalists today, now social media as an integral tool for news gathering and dispersion. This further means that most journalists

depend on the contents on social media which also means that if these contents are not credible enough, our Journalists will spread false news because of a wrong source. Furthermore, the study examined the avenue through which these contents are being verified before they can be used by journalists, this is because are ways to determine the credibility of media content sourced from a social media platform. According to the findings, 36% of survey participants posited that checking if the person posting such information is in a position to have it, is a great way to verify a source while others posited that checking with relevant authorities agencies if such an event occurred is a better way.

This study by Omosotomhe and Olley (2018) is related to this research work in that the study examined the utilization of social media for news gathering and dissemination by journalists which is the importance of this study to check the credibility of social media and proffer solutions. Both Omosotomhe and Olley's study and the current study used a questionnaire to generate data for the studies

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This paper finds expression in not of the theories of media effects called "medium is the message" McLuhan (1964-63) cited by Hasan (2013p.131) his Lohan's most famous idea is that the medium is the message. By this, he means that the important thing about media is not the messages they carry but the way the medium itself affects human consciousness and society at large. "McLuhan says each medium activates a particular mixture of the senses, which makes the form of the medium rather than the message, determine ways of perceiving and articulating understanding" Agha (2002, 255) The channel through which one passes his/her experiences, or advertises a product is a message itself. The meaning is that once the medium is not trustworthy, the message from it will equally not be trusted. Hellmueller & Enlling (2012.p. 7) states that "- the credibility of each message, the argument goes is directly influenced by the medium in which it appears. This indicates the importance of the medium through which the messages are delivered. For instance. This is why brands prefer to work with trustworthy influencers who potential customers consider credible enough to believe their marketing statements.

The point above gives the relationship between this study and the "the medium is the message theory as propounded by McLuhan. This has shown that the message's importance is hinged on the medium This justifies the effort on the emphasis of the credibility of social media as the popular sites of public communication at this time. The point is whether the users perceive the social media sites as credible channels of communication this accept their messages

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the research methodology of this study. This chapter explains the following.

3.1 Research Design:

The survey design was used for this study. Surveys are used as a tool by researchers to understand to a large extent individual or group perspectives related to a particular concept/ topic of interest. It is based on this that the appropriate research design for this study was survey research. This decision is in line with the view of Ohaja(2003,p.74) that states that whatever the major source of primary data for a study would be the views of.....any particular group a survey would be called for". The researcher adopted a descriptive research design which involves the administration of a questionnaire to respondents for data generation.

3.2 Population of the Study:

The population for this study was drawn from the students of the Department of mass communication at the University of Benin, Benin city. Full-time programs of the Department of Mass Communication consist of students of 100level-400level and they comprise both male and female students. It is revealed by the class representatives of all levels that the total

number of students in the department as of the 2019/2020 academic session is 909. Therefore the population of this study was 909.

3.2 Sample Size:

The sample size is 909. This figure was generated from the total population of students in the Department of mass communication, University of Benin. The number was selected following the guidelines given by the Taro Yamane formula. A sample size is a subset of the population which is usually representative of the entire population. This is necessary to make the research work easy as it would very cumbersome to use the entire population. This sample was derived using Taro Yamane's statistical formula which states;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + e^2}$$

Where;

n=sample size

N= population

e= sampling error

$$n = \frac{909}{1 + 909(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 909/1 + 909(0.0025)$$

$$n = 909/1 + 2.27$$

$$n = 909/3.27$$

$$n = 277.9 \sim 278$$

3.3 Unit of Analysis

The focus of this study is on social media. Observation of its content and users' perception to ascertain whether or not social media is a credible source of information is the bedrock of this study.

3.4 Method of Data Gathering

The method employed by the research for data gathering was the online distribution of questionnaires to various class group chats of students of the Department of mass communication of the University of Benin. This ensured easy accessibility of the questionnaire by students as it was filled effectively at their convenience and clear minds enabling the accuracy of the students' answers

3.5 Method of Data Analysis and Presentation

The data collected and collated for this study were analyzed and presented with the aid of frequency tables and simple percentages. Frequency tables were effective in presenting the data practically and helpful for better understanding of each variable.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The chapter presents the data collected through the questionnaire administered to the respondents. The findings explained below are based on the data collected which are presented and analyzed using frequency, percentage, and tables. All copies of the 278 questionnaires were retrieved by the researcher (resulting in a 100% return rate).

Therefore, this data presentation and analysis are based on this figure.

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis Based On Respondent's Bio-Data

TABLE 1: RESPONDENTS' GENDER

GENDER	NO RESPONDENTS	OF	PERCENTAGE
Female	146		52.5%
Male	132		47.5%
Total	278		100%

Source: field survey 2023

Table 1 above shows that the study comprises both male and female respondents. 146(52.5%) out of the total number of respondents (278) were female while 132 (47.5%) were male. This suggests that female respondents were more available to participate in this study.

TABLE 2: RESPONDENTS' AGE

Age	No Of Respondents	Percentage
15-17	18	6.5%
18-20	101	36.5%
21-23	127	45.5%
24 and above	32	11.5%
Total	278	100%

Source: field survey 2023

Table 2 shows the age distribution of respondents in this study. the data shows that 18 (6.5%) of the respondents were between the ages of 15-17 years, 101(36.5%) were between the ages of 18-20 years, 127 (45.5%) were between the ages of 21-23 while respondent aged 24 and above were 32 (11.5%). This shows that the majority of respondents are between the ages of 18-23

TABLE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY MARITAL STATUS.

Marital status	No Of Respondents	Percentage
Single	239	86%
Married	38	13.5%
Divorced	1	0.5%
Total	278	100%

Source: field survey 2023

Table 3 shows that 239 (86%) participants of this study are single while 38 (13.5%) are married. Only 1 (0.5%) participant is divorced. This means that the majority of respondents are single.

TABLE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY LEVEL.

Level	No Of Respondents	Percentage
100 level	43	15.5%
200 level	61	22%
300 level	95	34%
400 level	79	28.5%
Total	278	100%

Source: field survey 2023

Table 4 above reveals that 43 (15.5%) respondents are in 100 level, 61 (22%) of the total respondents are in 200 level, 95 (34%) are in 300 level and 79 (28.5%) of respondents are in 400 level. This implies that 300-level students participated more in this study than at any other level.

4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis Based On Other Items Of The Questionnaire

TABLE 5: HOW OFTEN STUDENTS RECEIVE INFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Frequency	No Of Respondent	Percentage
Very often	164	59%
Often	74	26.5%
Sometimes	39	14%
Not often	1	0.5%
Total	278	100%

Source: field survey 2023

Table 5 above suggests that out of 278 students who participated in this study, 164 (59%) of participants receive information very often on social media. 74 (26.5%) of the respondent receive often while 39 (14%) of respondents receive information on social media sometimes. Only 1(0.5%) of respondents receive not so often. This data implies that more than half of the students who participated in this study receive information very often on social media.

TABLE 6: FREQUENCY IN WHICH FAKE NEWS IS RECEIVED ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY RESPONDENTS

Frequency	No Of Respondents	Percentage
Very often	95	34%
Often	118	42.5%
Sometimes	60	21.5%
Not often	5	2%
Total	278	100%

Source: field survey 2023

Table 6 is in view that 95 (34%) respondents receive fake news on social media very often, and 118 (42.5%) receive fake news often. The table also suggests that 60 (21.5%) respondents receive fake news on social media sometimes while only 5(2%) of total respondents do not receive fake news as often on social media. This data insinuates that fake news reaches over 50% of students regularly.

TABLE 7: PERCEPTION OF RESPONDENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA AS A CREDIBLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION.

Perception	No Of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	57	20.5%
No	128	46%
Maybe	44	16%
Sometimes	49	17.5%
Total	278	100%

Source: field survey 2023

Table 7 data shows that 57 (20.5%) respondents argue that social media is a credible source of information. Contrary to this, 128 (46%) respondents

believe that social media is not a credible source of information. 44 (16%) respondents agree that social media may be a credible source of information while 49 (17.5%) believe that social media sometimes is a credible source of information.

TABLE 8: THE EXTENT TO WHICH INFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA AFFECTS THE PERSONAL DECISIONS OF RESPONDENTS.

Extent	No Of Respondents	Percentage
Very large extent	40	14.5%
Large extent	134	48%
Very low extent	75	27%
Low extent	29	10.5%
Total	278	100%

Source: field survey 2023

Table 8 shows that 40 (14.5%) respondents agree that information they receive on social media affects their personal decision to a very large extent while 134 (48%) respondents agree that such information affects their personal decision to a large extent. According to the data above, 75 (27%) respondents argue that information on social media affects their personal decision to a very low extent. 29 (10.5%) respondents believe that the information they receive on social media only affects their personal decisions to a low extent.

TABLE 10: MISTAKING FAKE NEWS FOR CREDIBLE NEWS BY RESPONDENTS

Response	No Of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	121	43.5%
No	61	22%
A few times	81	29%
Always	15	5.5%
Total	278	100%

Source: field survey 2023

Table 9 shows that 121 (43.5%) respondents have mistaken fake news for credible news on social media, the table also shows that 61(22%) respondents have never mistaken fake news for credible news while 81 (29%) respondents have done so a few times and 15 (5.5%) respondents have always mistaken fake news for credible news on social media. This indicates that 78% of total respondents have mistaken fake news for credible news on Social Media.

TABLE 10: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION ON HOW THEY DIFFERENTIATE FAKE NEWS FROM CREDIBLE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

Perception	No Of Respondents	Percentage
Through content quality	17	6%
Through the dates	18	6.5%
Through the source	175	63%
Through online comments	64	23%
All of the above	4	1.5%
Total	278	100%

Source: field survey 2023

Table 10 shows the different factors respondents use in differentiating between fake and credible news on social media. According to the data above, 17(6%) respondents differentiate between fake news and credible news through content quality while 18 (6.5%) respondents do so through the dates. However, 175 (63%) respondents agree that fake news and credible news can be differentiated through the source and 64 (23%) other respondents believe it can also be done through online comments. Only 4 (1.5%) respondents believe that all of the mentioned factors can be used to differentiate between fake news and credible news.

TABLE 11: CONTENT SHARING HABITS OF RESPONDENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Habit	No Of Respondents	Percentage
Very often	51	18.5%
Often	104	37.5%
Sometimes	115	41.5%
Never	8	2.5%
Total	278	100%

Source: field survey 2023

From Table 11 it is deduced that 51 (18.5%) respondents share social media content with friends and family very often. Similarly, 104 (37.5%) respondents share such content with friends and family often. Also, 115

(41.5%) respondents revealed that they share social media content sometimes but only 8 (2.5%) respondents never share content on social media. This shows that the majority of the respondents agree to share social media content with friends and family.

TABLE 12: PERCEPTION OF RESPONDENTS ON HOW TO CURB THE SPREAD OF FAKE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Perception	No Of Respondents	Percentage
Use of fact-checking sites	57	20.5%
Verify sources	122	44%
Ask Experts	43	15.5%
Check news facts	56	20%
Total	278	100%

Source: field survey 2023

Table 12 above reveal the perception of respondents on how the further spread of fake news on social media can be curbed. 57 (20.5%) respondents suggested the use of fact-checking sites for verification while 122(44%) respondents agree to verify sources of news content as a better method to curb the spread of fake news but, 43 respondents representing 15.5% of the sample size agreed that asking experts is best. 56 (20%) disagreed and checking news facts can help curb the further spread of fake news on social media.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

This section presents the discussion of findings which is based on the answers to the research question as generated from the items in the questions.

Research Question One: How relevant is social media to the dissemination of credible information?

Table 5 provided answers to this question by revealing the level at which students receive information through social media platforms. This is known from the fact that 164(59%) respondents agreed that they receive information very often on social media. With this fact, it is fair to say that a majority of students come across information on social media which makes it relevant for information on social media to be credible.

Table 11 also gives contribution to this research question by exposing the rate at which information on social media is shared among friends and family by respondents. The data from Table 11 reveals that students of the University Of Benin, Mass Communication Department share social media content very often, often, and sometimes with 51(18.5%) respondents, 104(37.5%), and 115(41.5%) respondents respectively. This indicates that the

majority of respondents actually share content on social media. If the majority of social media users share content, then there is a need for social media Information to be credible.

Research Question Two: How can we differentiate between fake news and credible news?

Item 10 of the questionnaire is used to proffer answers to this question. In the respondents' response to question (item) 10- How do you differentiate between fake news and credible news?

175 (63%) respondents confirmed that they do so through the source, while 64 (23%) respondents opined that they differentiate between fake news and credible news through online comments. Also, 18 (6.5%) respondents agree that they differentiate between both news through the dates while 17 (6%) respondents do so through content quality. Only 4 (1.5%) agree that all of the mentioned methods work for them.

Research Question Three: To what extent does the credibility of information received on social media affect our decision-making as individuals

Table 8 provided answers to this question by identifying the extent to which information on social media affects mass communication students of UNIBEN.

This is further revealed in the table where 134 (48%) admitted that their personal decisions are affected by information on social media to a large extent while 40 (14.5%) respondents admitted that their personal decisions are affected by social media to a very large extent.

Research Question Four: What are the possible practices of social media users to reduce widespread fake news?

Table 12 provided an answer to this question by revealing suggested practices by respondents that users of social media can emulate to reduce the widespread of fake news. The findings also revealed that 122 (44%) respondents believe that a possible practice of social media users is to verify sources while 57 (20.5%) respondents believe that for the reduction of widespread of Fake news to be possible users must use fact-checking sites. 43 (15.5%) other respondents agreed that asking experts is a better way while 56 (20%) respondents believe that checking news facts can help reduce the widespread of fake news on social media.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

This chapter summarizes the details of what the study is about, the method used in collecting data, and the finding of the collected data. The study was aimed at examining the credibility of social media with UNIBEN students of the Mass Communication department as the population of the study. The objectives of the study were to find ways to differentiate between factual news and made-up news. To educate the public about the consequences of spreading unverified information, to educate the public on the importance of creating a safe social media environment, and to educate social media users about the possible practices or user behavior to make social media a credible source of information.

The study was carried out using the survey research method. The survey research method for gathering data for the study made use of a questionnaire as the research instrument to gather data from the respondents which provided the findings of the study. The data collected through the use of a questionnaire were analyzed using percentage and frequency tables.

From the responses gathered from the respondents through the questionnaire, the following were the findings of the study;

5.2 Summary of Findings:

1. Information on social media affects the personal decision of UNIBEN Students in the Mass Communication Department which extends to youth in Nigeria.
2. We can differentiate between fake news and credible news through the source.
3. Verifying sources and using fact-checking sites are ways to stop the further spread of fake news.
4. It is necessary for social media content to be credible.
5. UNIBEN Students of the mass communication department believe that social media is not a credible source of information.

5.3 Conclusion

In the present day, the use of social media sites increases daily, especially by the youth of Nigeria. Both males and females have been

documented to be involved. Due to this increase, the researcher deemed it necessary to examine the credibility of social media. From the analysis of data it has been established that social media is not perceived as a credible source of information by UNIBEN Students of Mass Communication Department however, some contents have posed to be credible.

This study therefore argues that social media users must be mindful while conveying and sharing social media content as fake news remains an issue on social media. Deliberate effort must be made to ensure social media becomes a safe place for information dissemination.

5.4 Recommendations

With the knowledge derived from the data collected, the researcher posits the following recommendations:

1. Nigerian users of social media should be wary of some of the content they consume as mischievous users display misleading information that may be harmful.
2. Social media users must see the need to verify the information they receive and share on social media from credible sources.

3. Proper education by media practitioners and academics on the negative and positive usage of social media.

5.5 Suggestion for Further Research

The researcher suggests that further research should be done on a broader scope to explicitly give an in-depth study. Hence, the following topics are suggested:

1. Analyzing the impact of social media information on the cultural and moral values of students at the University of Benin.
2. An evaluation of the relationship between interaction with social media content and the social behavior of students at the University Of Benin.
3. An assessment of the effect of social media content on the academic performance of undergraduate students at the University Of Benin.

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Dear Respondent,

REQUEST FOR COMPLETION OF ITEMS IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE

I am Delight, a final year student of the above-named Department/ institution. I am conducting research on "**SOCIAL MEDIA AS A CREDIBLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION**".

This research is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Mass Communication.

You have been carefully selected for this study to provide reliable data. This study is strictly guided by research ethics which protects the anonymity of its respondents. All information you provide would be used for academic purposes only.

Thanks for your understanding and cooperation.

Yours Sincerely,

Nwosu Delight Nkiruka

Researcher.

Instruction: Please kindly tick (√) the appropriate option below

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender (a) Male (b)Female
2. Age group (a) 15-17 (b) 18-20 (c) 21-23 (d) 24 and above
3. Marital status (a) Single (b) Married (c) Divorced
4. Level (a) 100level (b) 200level (c) 300level (d) 400level

SECTION B: SOCIAL MEDIA RELEVANCE TO THE DISSEMINATION OF CREDIBLE

5. How often do you come across information on social media? (a) often (b) very often (c) sometimes (d) not often
6. How often do you come across fake news on social media (a)often (b) very often (c) sometimes (d) not often
7. Do you see social media as a credible source of information? (a) yes (b) No (c) Maybe (d) Sometimes
8. To what extent does information on social media affect your personal decisions? (a) Very large extent (b) Large extent (c) very low extent (d) low extent
9. Have you ever mistaken a fake news for a credible news on social media? (a) yes (b) no (c) a few times (d) always
10. How do you differentiate between fake news and credible news? (a) Through content quality (b) through the dates (c) through the source (d) through comments
11. How often do you share social media contents to friends and family? (a) Very often (b) often (c) sometimes (d) not often
12. What do you think users of social media can do to stop the further spread of fake news? (a) use fact-checking sites (b) verify sources (c) ask experts (d) check facts