

Audiences' Perception and Evaluation of Online News Videos: A study on Chittagong University Students

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Abstract

While research on news quality has traditionally focused on print and broadcast media, limited attention has been paid to emerging forms such as online news video, especially from the audience's perspective. This study explored how university students perceive and evaluate online news videos, using a mixed-method approach. A structured survey (N=100), a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and two In-Depth Interviews (IDI) were conducted among students from the University of Chittagong. The analysis draws on Media Credibility Theory and Modality Interactivity Theory to understand students' content preferences, trust judgment and engagement behaviors. Finding showed that 61% student consume online news videos multiple times daily, primarily via social media platforms like Facebook and Youtube. As a result, recommendations from platforms and trending content significantly shape their viewing habits. Although 47% prefer online news videos over traditional formats, credibility remains a nuanced issue. The qualitative findings revealed that professionally produced content is more trustworthy than user-generated content used in the news video. Besides, visual elements and charts enhance engagement while poorly integrated music and lengthy advertisements deter it. These results highlight the central role of platform algorithms in shaping students' news consumption. The study offers practical implications for online news producers to understand digital news engagement among young audiences.

Keywords: Credibility, Digital Media, Multimedia journalism, News video, Online journalism

Introduction

The popularity of online news videos is increasing rapidly. With the advancement of digital technology and evolving media landscape, users' behavior has undergone significant changes. Both traditional media (television, print) and digital-born platforms are now adapting to meet changing demands of modern audiences.

The Internet is gradually changing the way of news gathering and consuming processes (Gillan & Cowden, 2007). A decade ago, digital news primarily consisted of text, now multimedia formats- especially videos- are

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increasingly employed to capture user attention (Robinson & Metzler, 2016). As users' demand for online news video continues to grow, legacy media (newspapers, television) are transitioning into digital first. Many have developed dedicated digital newsrooms and appointed video journalists to cater specially to online platforms.

Technological advancements, social media initiatives, and investments in new visual storytelling formats have all contributed to the widespread production and consumption of online news videos. Consequently, understanding audience behavior, including how they choose content, what features they prefer or find disruptive, and how they assess quality and credibility has become increasingly important.

Collapse of the advertising-based media model has forced organizations to reconsider their revenue strategies. It shifted from the two-way (traditional) media market to three-sided media market (involving content creators, platforms and users) (Couvering, 2017). Platforms like Facebook and Youtube act as intermediaries, generating revenue from both advertisers and users while influencing what content reaches audiences.

Properly crafted online news videos can help retain audience attention and foster trust, which are crucial for media sustainability. As user judgment increasingly influences editorial decisions, examining user perception and evaluation of this format is essential.

Many news organizations are turning to the Internet due to its mass reach and technical flexibility. The Web enables multi-modality, combining audio, visuals, text, and interactive features on a single page (Sundar, 2000). News organizations are adapting their production and distribution to leverage these capabilities. Given the substantial shift in the news ecosystem, it is important to examine how users perceive and evaluate online news videos. Prior research has shown that audience evaluation often diverged from journalistic assessment of quality (Tasfati et al. 2006 as cited in Koliska et al. 2021).

This study draws on the lived experiences of users to explore their evaluation and perception of online news videos. It especially examines the features that shape audiences' trust, attention and viewing preferences. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines survey data with qualitative insights to understand news consumption habits, credibility and content evaluation from the perspective of Bangladeshi university students.

Literature Review

Online news videos are a form of audio-visual content that is specifically designed and produced for distribution over the internet (Koliska et al., 2021). Though broadcast is also video there is a huge difference between online news videos and broadcast formats in terms of size, output, target audience, presentation style, interaction etc. Online news gives users a greater opportunity for real-time interaction with publishers. Online news videos include breaking news 'Raw' videos, live streaming videos, video from social media posts (news sources), and professionally produced news. (Chua & Lin, 2016). Audiences access these videos either directly on news websites (on-site) and via social media platforms (off-site) (Reuters Institute Digital News Project, 2024).

When visual news is given, its emotional and cognitive effects become particularly noticeable. Although television is still the most common medium for news in the US and Europe (Matsa, 2018; Mitchell, 2018), the percentage of people who consume online news at least once a week has surged from 24% in 2016 to 67% in 2020 (Dörr, 2016). Perception of trust and quality can vary widely depending on the content source (Kohring & Matthes, 2007). Newhagen and Nass (1989) argue credibility assessment differs across formats: for TV, the anchor, for print the organization. However, what determines credibility and quality in online news videos is still unclear, particularly in Bangladeshi context.

Two broad approaches help quantify the value of news videos: subjective value (how engaging, informative or entertaining the video is) and technical value (the quality of production and the effort involved) (Chen et al., 2011). News quality, as a journalistic standard, must include the audience's subjective evaluation (Meijer as cited in Chen et al., 2011). Low production quality is often interpreted by viewers as a sign of poor credibility. Because credibility and quality perception are interlinked, they play a key role in shaping user decisions. These relationships remain under-examined in Bangladesh, especially among young people- a demographic highly engaged with online news videos (Digital News Report, 2024)

With a proliferation of digital technology, many traditional media develop their own online platforms (Hallgren & Nylund, 2018). Most of them are in the experimental phase (Kalogeropoulou et al., 2016) and many of them are struggling to remain relevant to their audiences (Peer & Ksaizek, 2011). Online platforms are challenging legacy media by enabling cross-platform

content distribution, reducing barriers to entry and fostering greater interaction between producers and consumers (Ksaizek et al. 2014). This shift reflects a transition from "push" to "pull" model of communication (Hayes, 2008; Webster 2011). In visual consumption, the user's role is more influential than ever before (Wanta & Hu, 1994 as cited in Koliska et al. 2021) and it is important for democratic function of institutions (Shapiro, 2010). Credibility, a vital component for news quality and it differs –source credibility, media credibility and message credibility. There is no one right way to be credible; it depends on the person you ask. (Gass & Seiter, 2018 as cited in Koliska et al., 2021). Credibility often depends on the reputation of the news source, and low-quality videos make people less likely to believe what they're seeing. (Chen et al., 2017).

The early 2000s saw rapid evolution in online video. Legacy systems were time-intensive, while digital platforms face pressure to constantly generate content (Gannes, 2009). Automated tools have partly addressed this problem. Yet, the demand for online video appears driven more by platforms and technology than by user demand (Kalogeropoulos, 2016).

Audio-visual news relies on both auditory and visual channels. Viewers' attention is shaped by variables such as stimulus type, story length and use of visual aids (Drew & Grimes, 2015). In television news, the auditory channel plays a dominant role while in online formats, multimodal integration is key. Sundor (2000) showed that while multimedia enhances recall, poor integration can be distracting. According to Hoogveen (as cited in Sundor, 2000), multimedia involves a combination of text, graphics, audio, music and animation-what we call convergence journalism. This model aims to maximize user engagement (Wise et al. 2009).

A video news story may be positive, may be negative, or may be neutral. It affects emotion, attention, capacity and memory of the viewers. It is accepted that, when a news story contains negative video (usually defined as violent or horrible images), it changes the quality and quantity of viewers' memory (Lang et al., 1996). The same news video may affect several persons in several ways. It depends on their emotional arousal and valence. while valence ranging from positive to negative (interesting, uninteresting, amusing, dry, dull, sad, shocking, captivating, dramatic, engaging, boring, entertaining, immersive, distressing, funny, gripping, etc.) (koliska et al. 2021; Lang et al. 1996).

Common quality criteria in journalism include diversity, impartiality, relevance, comprehensibility, ethics and accuracy (Urban & Schweiger,

2014). Audience now expects internet news videos to be fair, unbiased, complete, and neutral (Koliska et al., 2021). However, most prior research has targeted general audiences or focused on traditional media. The unique evaluation criteria used by students in Bangladesh remain unexplored. This study aims to bridge that gap by examining how CU students perceive and assess the credibility, quality and relevance of online news videos.

Conceptual Framework

This study explores how university students perceive and evaluate online news videos by examining their consumption habits, credibility assessment and content preferences. To understand these complex interactions, the research is conceptually grounded in Media Credibility Theory (Kohring and Matthes, 2007) and Modality interactivity theory (Sundor, 2000).

Media Credibility Theory provides a basis for analyzing how students form trust in online news content. The theory posits that an audience's perception of a medium or content's trustworthiness, accuracy and believability directly shapes how they evaluate and engage with that medium. This framework helps explain the perception of online news videos versus other news formats, as well as the students' reliance on social media for discovering news.

Modality Interactivity Theory emphasizes the role of multimedia elements such as visuals, audio, music and length-in shaping user engagement and information processing. According to this theory, the combination of multiple modalities enhances audience attention and recall but also creates distraction if poorly integrated. This is particularly relevant in assessing how CU students respond to the presentation features of online news videos, including the use of charts, background music and advertisement interruptions.

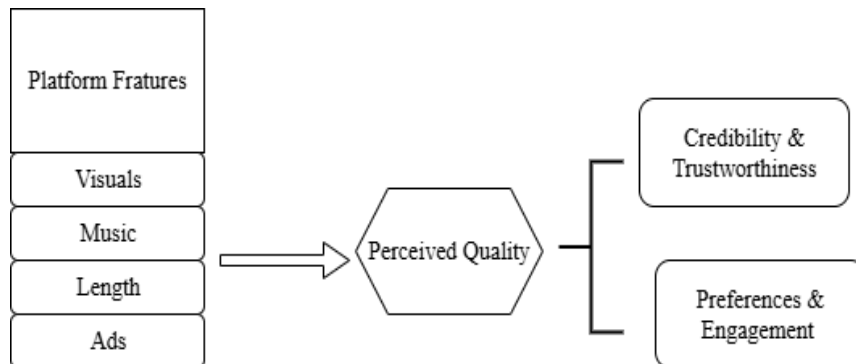


Figure 1: Diagram of the conceptual framework

By integrating this framework, the study seeks to explain not only what students prefer in online news videos, but also why and how such perceptions are formed.

Research objectives

The objectives of the present study were:

1. To assess the perception of CU students regarding online news videos;
2. To identify the factors influencing the preference of online news video over traditional news media;
3. To explore the level of trust and skepticism students have towards online news media.

Research Questions:

RQ1: To what extent do CU students rely on online news videos for their daily news consumption?

RQ2: What are the criteria for a Quality online news video?

RQ3: How do students evaluate the credibility of using user-generated content in news videos compared to professionally produced footage?

Methodology

Design and sampling

The study design employed in this research aimed to attain specific research objectives by utilizing a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methodology. The study carried out an in-person survey. Study settings included five different faculties of the University of Chittagong, Chittagong, Bangladesh.

This study used a non-random sampling approach for the survey involving two stages: cluster sampling followed by purposive sampling within each cluster. The objective was to ensure a targeted and representative sample relevant to different educational backgrounds.

Cluster sampling (Phase 1): The population (27,500+, as per the university website) was first divided into five distinct clusters based on their different study groups. For the science group, faculty of science and faculty of biological science were selected purposely because of the higher number of students than the other faculties. Faculty of arts and humanities and the

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faculty of social science were chosen to represent the students of the arts group. For the Commerce background, the faculty of business studies were selected because it is the only faculty representing this group.

Purposive sampling (phase 2): After the cluster was defined, purposive sampling was applied within each cluster. Respondents were selected based on the confirmation whether they watch online news videos. 20 participants were selected purposively from each cluster. Here, male accounted for 60% of the participants, whereas 40% of the respondents were female as per the gender ratio of the population.

Tools

(1) Questionnaire Survey

Using standardized questionnaires, all the survey respondents were asked the same questions. The questionnaire for this study was divided into four basic sections (Demographic information, Online news video consumption habits, perceptions of credibility and trustworthiness and Evaluation of content).

(2) Focus Group Discussion

As part of the qualitative component of this study, an FGD was conducted to gain deeper insights into students' perceptions and evaluations of online news videos. The FGD involved eight participants, purposely selected from undergraduate and postgraduate students, ensuring diversity in gender, academic discipline and media usage habits. The discussion was guided by a semi-structured question framework. The session was audio-recorded with participants' consent and lasted approximately 55 minutes. Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the process.

(2) In-Depth Interview

To complement the findings from the FGD, two in-depth interviews were conducted with individual participants who had extensive engagement with online news content. These student participants were selected purposively based on their high level of news video consumption and their ability to reflect critically on digital news trends. The interviews were semi-structured in nature, allowing flexibility while covering key areas. Ethical standards were upheld throughout the process.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The data collected from respondents were tabulated, processed and analyzed using MS Word and MS Excel. Furthermore, both nominal and ordinal metrics were used to examine the data.

Qualitative Data Analysis:

The audio recording from the FGD and in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim and anonymized for confidentiality. A thematic analysis was conducted manually using an inductive approach, allowing themes to emerge directly from the participants' narratives. Coding was performed and emerging themes were refined through multiple readings and cross-comparisons. While no software was used, codes were spreadsheets.

Findings

Online news video consumption habits

Frequent and Contextual Viewing

Survey results showed that 61% of students watch online news videos multiple times a day. Seventeen percent of students watch online news videos a couple of times a day. The findings from FGD and IDI revealed that students tend to watch news videos during transitional times (after waking up, during commutes or before sleeping) often as a part of social media scrolling rather than intentional news seeking. Sometimes it depends on the workload also. A participant shared,

‘Frequency depends on workload. During the weekend I watch online news videos multiple times, and on weekdays I watch in the morning and at night’. (Participant E, Female, Age 21, FGD).

Platform Preferences Driven by Convenience and Trust

This study found that students watch online news videos via both on-site and off-site, with 77% citing Facebook and 72% citing Youtube. The qualitative data also reinforce this trend: Facebook is used for casual or spontaneous viewing while Youtube is perceived as more trustworthy and suited for deliberate news consumption. This reflects the role of medium credibility is shaping platform trust. A participant mentioned:

‘Sometimes I search and watch on YouTube. But mostly I watch the videos that appear in front of me on Facebook’. (Participant, Male, Age 24, IDI-2)

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Algorithmic Recommendation Dominates

Only 12% of survey participants discover videos through friends, while platform suggestions (33%), social media trends (33%) are more influential. The same was found in qualitative findings. Students discover news through trending topics, suggestions from platforms, and social media feeds. While some of them rely on self-driven exploration. This aligns with the concept of platforms-driven exposure, suggesting that algorithms are central to shaping news consumption.

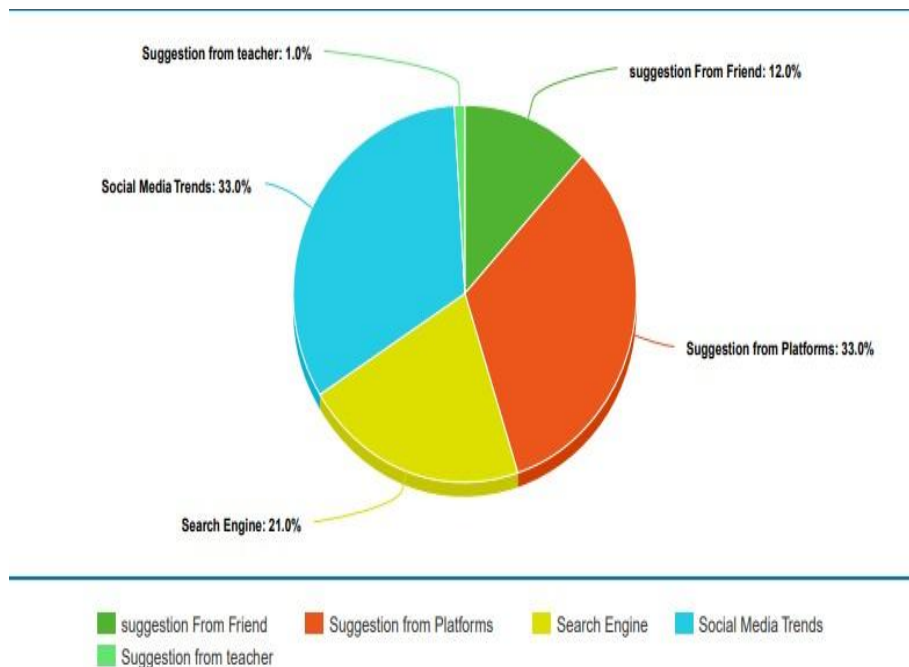


Table 1: Ways of discovering online news videos

A participant mentioned a different one:

'I mostly watch news videos from Facebook. Usually start watching from photocards (Participant B, Male, Age 24, FGD). Means photocards from the news page help them to attract audiences.

Perceptions of credibility

Skepticism Toward Ethical standards on online news video

Half of the survey participants believe online news videos are more credible than other formats, However, FGD and IDI participants were more critical.

They were critical of the sensationalism and perceived ethical decline in online news videos. Clickbait thumbnails and misleading headlines are common complaints. Many perceive mainstream print media as more credible due to detailed and verifiable information. About the trustworthiness of online news videos, a participant shared:

'Often, the thumbnail and title don't match the actual video. This is a cheap way to attract viewers. I usually skip those. I try to analyze some videos when I have doubts. Sometimes I feel that Bangladeshi journalists are biased, serving personal or political interests. Even mainstream media shows this behavior. I trust international coverage more' (Participant, Male, Age 26 IDI-1).

Participants also talked about the quality of the content and video. As another participant mentioned:

'Video quality of online news video is improving, but content quality is declining. Due to competition, news is published hastily. Unfamiliar media mostly serves specific agendas.' (Participant G, Male, Age 24, FGD)'

Participants shared about their preferences when it comes to credibility. One of them said:

'Most of them (online news video producers) follow government statements. Try to increase curiosity. Makes mountains out of molehills. Often exaggerates and distorts information. I mostly see print media as more credible' (Participant B, Male, Age 24, FGD).

Overall, FGD and IDI participants gave a skeptical view about credibility and trustworthiness of online news videos. They watch online news videos, as it comes while scrolling through social media, but prefer print media as a more credible source of information.

Trust in User-Generated Contents used in online news videos

More than half (54%) of the survey participants stand neutral about the use of UGC in online news videos and 40% of them think it is somewhat trustworthy.

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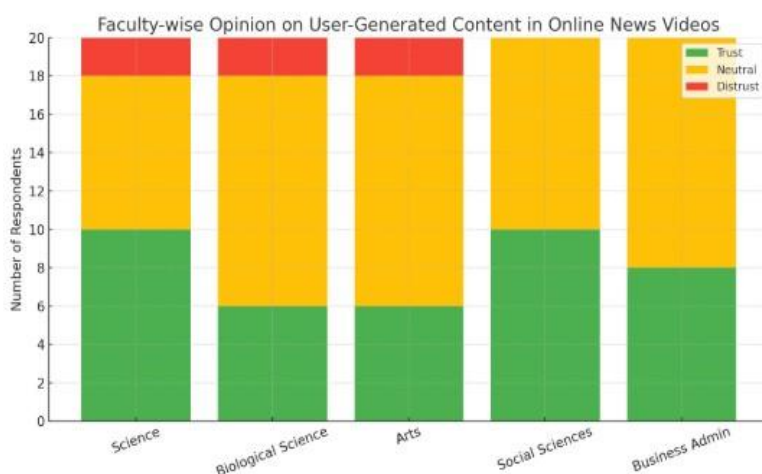


Table 2: Faculty-Wise opinion on user-generated content in news videos

Findings from FGD and IDI revealed a different stance. The overall theme was that trust in UGC is generally low. Respondents express greater skepticism towards content from unknown individuals. However, live videos or content shared by trusted peers are viewed with relatively more confidence. A participant mentioned:

'I Only trust users' live videos used on online news videos. Otherwise, I don't trust most of them. But if a known person shares something, I trust it' (Participant, Male, Age 26, IDI-1).

Some acknowledge the utility of UGC in events where traditional reporters lack access. This theme aligns with source and context-driven credibility under Media Credibility Theory.

Evaluation of content

Visual Aids Enhance Understanding

Big data can be presented in graphs that make it easy for the audience to understand the numbers. Most of the survey participants (75%) think that visuals enhance their understanding. Among the remaining participants, 20% get it as neutral and 5% get it as distracting. FGD and IDI participants gave a detailed answer for that. Overall theme of their discussion was visual richness significantly enhances credibility and engagement. Especially in topics like economics, budget or policy are highly appreciated. Excessive presenter visibility without visual support is criticized. A participant shared:

'Visuals are most important to me. BBC Bangla's videos with charts and analysis really help me understand the full story' (Participant A, Male, Age 22, FGD).

This supports Modality Interactivity Theory, where visuals aid in processing and recall.

Music Needs Contextual Relevance

Survey results showed that more than half (52%) of the participants find music to be annoying or distracting. Only 2% found it enjoyable. On the other hand, all participants from FGD say music is a key element for online news videos but it needs to be relevant. One of the participants said: *'music has to be relevant, if the news is sad, but music gives another vibe it annoys me' (Participant G, Male, Age 24, FGD).*

Another participant shared:

'Music helps me to engage with the videos. A serious topic with serious music helps evoke empathy' (Participant, Male, Age 24, IDI-2).

This emphasizes that modality mismatch reduces credibility and emotional engagement.

Topic Dominates Tolerance for Video Length

Survey data showed that a significant part of the participants (65%) said that they make their decision to watch online news videos depending on the topic. 32% of respondents prefer shorter videos. Qualitative data also match with survey findings. Participants' optimal video length ranges from 3-5 minutes. Videos beyond this duration are often skipped unless the topic is of high personal interest. A participant mentioned:

'If it's a topic I care about, I watch the whole thing even if it's long. Otherwise 3-5 minutes is best' (Participant, Male, Age 26, IDI-1).

The presence of a concise summary at the beginning also encourages greater engagement.

Advertisement Fatigue is a major barrier

Forty two percent survey participants feel that 3-5 second advertisement is acceptable while 6-10 second is accepted by 5% respondents. A mentionable number of participants (24%) said acceptance of advertisements depends on the topic. It is also worth highlighting that 26% participants switch to another video when advertisement starts. FGD and IDI participants unanimously dislike advertisements. Short, skippable ads

are tolerable, while longer and unskippable ads lead to video abandonment. Use of Youtube premium to avoid advertisement was also noted.

A participant shared:

'I get really irritated when I can't skip an ad, especially when I am trying to watch something important' (Participant, Male, Age 26, IDI-1).

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore how university students perceive and evaluate online news videos, focusing on their content preferences, trust judgment, and engagement behaviors. The study found that students are frequent viewers of online news videos, largely encountering through social media platforms like Facebook and Youtube. While many students appreciate the visual and interactive aspects of these videos, trust remains conditional. It is shaped by content source, presentation style and contextual relevance. Visual aids and concise summaries enhance engagement, while poorly matched music and excessive advertisement undermine user experience.

One of the key findings is that students frequently consume news videos not through active search but passively during routine social media use. This indicates a shift from intentional news seeking to algorithm-driven exposure. This behavior aligns with the notion of platform-mediated news consumption' and supports earlier observations by Kalogeropoulos et al. (2016), where algorithms significantly influence visibility and user engagement. However, this also raises concern about the role of digital platforms as gatekeepers of information, shaping news access beyond journalistic intention.

In terms of platform preferences, students heavily favored Facebook for spontaneous viewing and Youtube for more deliberate consumption. This finding is largely consistent with the Digital News Report (2024), which shows Facebook as a dominant source (47%) of off-site news video consumption globally. However, CU students' reliance on Facebook is even higher than the global average, as mentioned in the findings.

The present study also found that while online news videos are popular, credibility remains a nuanced issue. Though around half of the students perceive them as somewhat credible, qualitative insights reveal strong skepticism, particularly about sensationalism and political bias. This contrasts with the Reuters report (2024), which found higher global trust (40%) in Online news videos. The divergence may reflect local concern

about editorial integrity and the rise of low-quality or agenda-driven content in Bangladeshi online media.

When examining the use of user-generated content (UGC) in news videos, participants showed mixed feelings. While some appreciated its value in inaccessible or emergency contexts, overall trust in UGC remains low, especially when the source is unknown. This conditional trust aligns with Media Credibility Theory (Kohring and Matthes, 2007), where trust is shaped by perceived expertise, source reputation and situational factors.

The findings suggest that multimedia features such as charts and infographics were seen as enhancing understanding, particularly for complex topics like policy or economics. These results reinforce Modality Interactivity Theory (Sundar, 2000), which suggests that well-integrated visuals improve engagement and recall. However, when such elements are poorly executed, such as irrelevant background music or lengthy advertisements. They can reduce perceived quality and cause disengagement.

Video length was another factor in user evaluation. Because viewers' attention is shaped by variables such as stimulus type, story length and use of visual aids (Drew & Grimes, 2015). The findings of the study showed that short videos were generally preferred, students indicated they are willing to watch longer content if the topic is relevant and clearly presented. This finding echoes Koliska et al. (2021), who emphasized that content relevance often outweighs format preferences in determining viewer engagement. Similarly, un-skippable advertisements were widely disliked, with some students using ad-free subscriptions or skipping videos altogether, a trend that may challenge revenue models reliant on video ads.

Finally, this study offers an updated application of Media Credibility Theory and Modality Interactivity Theory in the digital age. Rather than solely evaluating content based on source and format, CU students assess credibility and quality dynamically, factoring in visual clarity, source transparency and platform trust. These insights underscore the importance of context and algorithmic influences shaping young audiences' relationships with digital news.

Implications

The findings of this study hold practical implications for digital news producers and journalism educators. First, News organizations should prioritize videos for social media platforms where more engagement occurs. Second, producers must emphasize source transparency and avoid clickbait strategies. A clear visual or

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verbal cue of source, verification methods and journalistic standards can help build credibility. Third, the integration of visual and audio elements must be contextually appropriate. Fourth, given the widespread frustration with unskippable advertisement, publishers should explore alternative revenue models or invest in more user-friendly advertising formats. Collaboration among highly appreciated media can establish a subscription-based app that will allow users to opt out of ads. Five, as platforms increasingly act as a gatekeeper, joint effort between news producers and platforms is essential to ensure that trustworthy and high-quality journalism is not overshadowed by sensational or low-credibility content.

Limitations

This investigation has several limitations that raise questions for future research. First, Future research should consider a larger and more diverse sample across multiple universities. Second, this research also could not explore all potential influencing factors such as political influences and media literacy. Further studies may benefit by unpacking these dynamics.

Conclusion

This study investigated how university students in Bangladesh perceive and evaluate online news videos, combining survey data with quantitative insights from FGD and IDI. The findings reveal that students are frequent and active consumers of online news videos, though their engagement is driven more by platform algorithms and social media trends than intentional news seeking. Their trust remains conditional, depending on the source context and presentation quality. The research also highlights that although a significant portion of students prefer online news videos over traditional formats, skepticism persists, particularly on the use of UGC and ethically questionable practices such as clickbait thumbnails and sensational headlines. Visual aids and relevant music enhance understanding and emotional engagement when used appropriately, but can also become distractions if poorly integrated. Preferences regarding video length and advertisement tolerance further indicate that audience expectations are evolving rapidly in a highly platform-driven media landscape. These findings not only deepened our understanding of student media behavior but also showed the necessary path about the future of digital journalism in an age of algorithmic exposure.

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