Twitter News and Credibility: Investigating Users' Perceptions

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Abstract

This study investigates user perception of the credibility of news-related tweets on Twitter. The study used a survey research method to collect data from 300 participants out of 4.95 million users in Nigeria in early 2023. The study provides valuable insights into user perception of credibility for news-related tweets on Twitter. The study found that user perception of the credibility of news-related tweets on Twitter is influenced by several factors, including the source of the tweet, the content of the tweet, and the user's prior knowledge of the topic. The study concludes that Twitter is a valuable platform for disseminating news, but users should be cautious when assessing the credibility of news-related tweets. The study recommends that news organizations use Twitter to disseminate news and increase their credibility and that users should be cautious when assessing credibility. The study also suggests that more research is needed to understand the factors that influence user perception of credibility for news-related tweets on Twitter in more detail.

Keywords: Twitter, News, Credibility, User perception, social media

Introduction

Information might be true or false. Books, periodicals, internet sources, and personal experience can provide this knowledge. Siddiqa (2016) observed that big data management innovations allow users to search for relevant information and optimise resources for fast search. Twitter, Facebook, blogs, Whatsapp, yokos, Wechat, Instagram, Badoo, and others have made more information from more sources available than ever before. Modern social media platforms provide news. Twitter currently reports news. Twitter users upload newswire headlines and report current occurrences before the media does. Most Twitter news comes from average people, although some come from credible news sites and government agencies. Thus, Twitter users often need to analyse tweet credibility. People use Twitter for breaking news. Amy, Elisa, and Galen report that 70% of Twitter news users have followed live events (2021). Twitter users like its news accuracy and breadth.

According to a Pew Study Center study (2021), 69% of Americans use Twitter for news; however, bogus news and misleading information have cast doubt on Twitter's content. According to studies, a person's social network and Twitter profile are better indicators of tweet trustworthiness (Shariff, Zhang, and Sanderson, 2014). Another study indicated that the belief component might predict news blog users' trustworthiness. Research (Shafiza, Xiuzhen, and Mark, 2017) examined users' impressions of news-related tweets' truthfulness and utilised a crowdsourcing platform to rate their veracity (Shafiza, Xiuzhen, and Mark, 2017). Unidentified tweets make Twitter users more sceptical about data accuracy. The Pew Research Center concluded that an author's social media accounts and Twitter profile provide credibility to their tweets (2021).

According to 2021 Pew Research Center research, just 7% of Twitter news users have "a great lot" of confidence in the platform's integrity, although two-thirds do. (Mitchell, Shearer, Stocking, 2021). This implies that consumers still trust Twitter as a news source despite its inaccurate content. These findings affect the audience credibility of journalists, news organisations, and social media platforms. Twitter is a popular news medium, although its content is disputed. According to a study, 69% of American Twitter users acquire news from the service (Sanderson & Zuccon, 2014). Twitter has debated news dependability due to misinformation and source credibility. Sanderson and Zuccon (2014) employed a user survey crowdsourcing platform to assess news tweet credibility. They discovered that source, content, and author determined tweet validity. The study also revealed that Twitter profiles and social networks predict tweet author credibility better. Zhang's 2017

research found that readers' beliefs can affect news-related blog credibility.

Despite this study, Twitter users' news accuracy views are still unknown. More study is needed in an age of misinformation and deception, especially on how Twitter users assess news credibility. This study examines Twitter users' trust in news-related tweets to fill this gap.

Statement of Problem

Traditional news media only reports government-approved breaking news. Independent internet media, like social networking sites and blogs, allow anybody to share news, research, opinions, and rumours. How credible and impactful are these user-generated contents? Is the source of the information reliable? Social media consumers struggle to evaluate sources. Given the credibility of social media news, knowing how much consumers trust their posts is vital.

Twitter is a popular news source since most people use it to keep current (Pew Research Center, 2021). Twitter has promoted fake news; hence its news is suspect (Khan & Michalas, 2022). Twitter users may have trouble distinguishing between trustworthy and untrustworthy news sources, which can spread misinformation and weaken public faith in the media (Zubiaga & Ji, 2021). Twitter user and tweet dependability has been studied to overcome this issue. This research used sentiment analysis, credibility ratings, and reputation scores to evaluate users and tweets. Twitter and other social media platforms don't rate information's authenticity. This research examines consumers' perceptions of how Twitter influences news credibility rather than Twitter's effects or reliability. Twitter users' news credibility perceptions need additional investigation.

Research questions

7. What is users' level of awareness of the effects of Twitter on news story credibility?
8. To what extent does Twitter affect news story credibility?
9. What is the perception of users on the effects of Twitter on news story credibility?

Literature Review
Conceptual Review

Twitter has become a popular platform for news dissemination, with many users relying on it for breaking news and updates. However, the credibility of news on Twitter has been a subject of debate, with some studies suggesting that users have little trust in the information they get from Twitter (Metaxas, n.d.). This literature review investigates users' perceptions of Twitter news credibility and the factors that influence these perceptions. The review will explore the concepts of credibility, interactivity, and real-time credibility assessment and how they connect to the research topic. The review is important to the study as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the existing literature on Twitter news credibility, which will inform the research design and data analysis.

Credibility

Credibility is a crucial aspect of news, and it refers to the extent to which news is perceived as trustworthy and reliable (Jahng & Littau, 2015). In the context of Twitter, credibility is influenced by various factors, including the source of the news, the content of the news, and the user's perception of the source's credibility. A study by Jahng and Littau (2015) found that journalists who interact with their followers are seen as more credible and rated more positively than journalists who use Twitter solely to disseminate news and information. This suggests that interactivity is an essential factor in enhancing credibility on Twitter.

Interactivity

Interactivity refers to the degree to which users can engage with content on Twitter (Jahng and Littau, 2015). Interactivity can take various forms, including retweets, replies, and likes. Interactivity is crucial in enhancing credibility on Twitter, as it allows users to engage with the news source and evaluate its credibility. A study by

Jahng and Littau (2015) found that journalists who interact with their followers are seen as more credible and rated more positively than journalists who use Twitter solely to disseminate news and information. This suggests that interactivity is an essential factor in enhancing credibility on Twitter.

Real-time credibility assessment

Real-time credibility assessment refers to using machine learning to automatically evaluate the credibility of news on Twitter (Castillo, Mendoza & Poblete, 2014). Real-time credibility assessment is crucial in enhancing credibility on Twitter, as it allows users to evaluate the credibility of news in real-time. A study by Castillo et al. (2014) developed a real-time system for credibility assessment on Twitter and evaluated a user base of over 600 million users. The study found that real-time credibility assessment is an effective way of enhancing credibility on Twitter.

Empirical Review

"User Perception of Information Credibility of News on Twitter" by Mohd Shariff, Zhang, and Sanderson (2014) examined how users judge news-related tweets. Lecture Notes in Computer Science peer-reviewed the article. The writers said Twitter's free-flowing news made verification difficult. The study looked at news tweet believability. News tweets were assessed using crowdsourcing. 200 people assessed 20 news-related tweets' trustworthiness. Twitter's public stream API provided 100 tweets. Favorites, retweets, and relevancy determined the tweets. Participants judged each tweet's trustworthiness on a 1–5 Likert scale. Research participants provided age, gender, and education.

According to the study, Twitter users rate news-related tweets based on source, topic, and prior knowledge. The research indicated that people trusted CNN and BBC tweets more than blogs and individual users. Link-containing tweets were also more trustworthy. Higher-educated people also believed tweets more. The study examined how consumers assess news-related tweets' authenticity. Mohd Shariff, Zhang, and Sanderson (2014) examined Twitter users' perception of news credibility. According to the study, Twitter users rate news-related tweets based on source, topic, and prior knowledge. The authors advised clients to be cautious when determining reliability and that news organisations use Twitter to convey news and create trust.

Houston, McKinney, Thorson, Hawthorne, Wolfgang & Swasy (2018) examine how consumers perceive news tweets and how this impacts their credibility and utility. Journalistic magazine studied how Twitter influences journalistic practises and consumption. Understanding how Twitter influences journalism and consumption is the study's main issue. Journalists are increasingly utilising Twitter to share news with audiences. Consumers determine news tweets' credibility. Twitter polled 1,000 users. News tweets were evaluated. News source tone, credibility, and other elements impacting tweet perception were also polled. Regression and descriptive statistics were used.

The study found non-opinionated tweets more trustworthy and informative. Local tweets were also reliable. Consumers' impressions were influenced by news tweets' tone and source. Negative tweets were unreliable. Non-traditional news providers' tweets were less trusted. According to their conclusions, journalists should use Twitter to report unbiased news and local news. The study suggests journalists utilise positive language and reliable sources to boost their Twitter reputation. Journalists should tweet with their following to improve, according to studies. Houston et al. (2018)'s "The Twitterization of Journalism: User Perceptions of News Tweets" examines how people see news tweets and how this affects their validity and worth. The research proposes journalists tweet local, unbiased news to build trust. Tweet enthusiastically too.

Theoretical Framework

Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin De Fleur's 1976 Media Dependency Theory underpins the study. This hypothesis holds that the more a person relies on the media for information, the greater its influence on them.

Media dependency theory analyses how mass media affects audiences and how media, audiences, and social systems interact (Encyclopedia Britannica, nd). The theory states that media dominance is proportional to how much society relies on it (Encyclopedia Britannica, nd). The 1976 hypothesis of American communications academics Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur states that media reliance is a function of how crucial the media are to attaining demands and objectives, and media influence is a result of how reliant people and social systems are on the media (Encyclopedia Britannica, nd, and Lee, & Choi, 2017). Research on how consumers think Twitter influences news story credibility relates to media dependence theory. Lee and Choi's (2017) media system dependence theory-inspired study examined the link between social media rumour veracity and information-seeking and the moderating influence of general social media reliance (Kim, 2015).

Theory is relevant to this study because, based on its fundamental presumptions, it will help determine whether Twitter users depend on this platform to satisfy their informational needs with little to no scrutiny of the integrity of such information due to their dependence on Twitter or its influence over them.

Methodology
This study used survey research as it helps academics understand individual or group opinions on a topic. The study selected 300 respondents from a population of 4.95 million users in Nigeria in early 2023, according to Statista.com (2023). Using a Taro Yamane formula for sample size determination, 300 respondents were selected from a population. The researcher adopted an online survey and personally sent the 12-item instrument to Twitter users online using different social media platforms. The questionnaire had only closed-ended questions. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 21).

Result
Data Presentation and Analysis
Quantitative data generated through the online questionnaire was presented in frequency tables.

Data Analysis
Table 1: Respondents' Use of Twitter

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	252	84
No	48	16
Total	**300**	**100**

Source: Field Survey 2023

According to the data, 252 (84%) of 300 respondents use Twitter, while 48 (16%) do not. This validates Pew Research Centre research on consumers' opinions of Twitter's impact on news storey believability. Table 4's high reply rate suggests Twitter is a popular news source. The favourable opinion of online news and the importance of particular criteria in defining Twitter news credibility support the idea that Twitter users may view news items as reliable.

Table 1: Frequency of Respondents' Usage of Twitter

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Often	84	28
Regularly	50	17
Occasionally	90	30
Rarely	28	9
Never	48	16
Total	**300**	**100**

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 1 details how the respondents used Twitter, with 84 using it frequently, 50 frequently, 90 occasionally, 28 infrequently, and 48 never using it. The study on consumers' perceptions of the influence of Twitter on news story believability will benefit from the findings of this data. The large percentage of respondents who report using Twitter frequently or regularly implies that Twitter is a well-liked source for news stories.

Table 2: Respondents' opinion on the credibility of a news story posted on Twitter

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Highly Credible	69	23
Credible	117	39
Fair	87	29
Not Credible	27	9
Total	**300**	**100**

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 2 shows respondents' views on Twitter News's validity. 62% of respondents deemed Twitter news articles plausible or extremely credible, which bodes well for the study on Twitter's impact on news story credibility. Only 9% of respondents think Twitter news is unreliable, demonstrating that many consumers trust it. This suggests that most people trust Twitter as a news source.

Table 3: Respondents' awareness of the effects of Twitter on news story credibility

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	**231**	**77**
No	**30**	**10**
Undecided	**39**	**13**
Total	**300**	**100**

Source: Field Survey 2023

According to Table 3, 77% of respondents are aware of how Twitter affects the trustworthiness of news stories, compared to 10% who are not and 13% who are unsure. The study on users' perceptions of the effects of Twitter on news story credibility may benefit from the data in this regard. Given that most respondents are aware of how Twitter affects news story credibility, they likely have opinions on the subject, which can be helpful for the study.

Table 4: Respondents' level of awareness on the effects of Twitter on news story credibility

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very High	30	10
High	111	37
Moderate	123	41
Low	21	7
Very Low	15	5
Total	**300**	**100**

Source: Field Survey 2023

The table shows how respondents think Twitter influences news story believability. Most respondents (47%) or (41%) are aware of Twitter's implications on news story trustworthiness, which bodes well for the study on users' attitudes. The study relies on people's awareness of Twitter's impact on news credibility. Only 7% of respondents knew little about the problem (5 percent).

Table 5: Respondents rating the effects Twitter has on news story credibility

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Positive	129	43
Neutral	102	34
Negative	12	4
Undecided	57	19
Total	**300**	**100**

Source: Field Survey 2023

Thirty-four percent of respondents said Twitter improved news story credibility, while 43 percent were neutral. This data will help study consumers' opinions of Twitter's impact on news story credibility. It suggests that Twitter users value its news dependability and volume. This supports Twitter as a news source for many people. 14% of respondents rated the situation poorly, and 19% were unclear.

Table 6: The extent to which Twitter affects news story credibility

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very High	39	13
High	84	28
Moderate	126	42
Low	6	2
Very Low	3	1
Undecided	42	14
Total	**300**	**100**

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 6 demonstrates how Twitter influences news store trustworthiness. 71% of customers say Twitter has a modest impact on news store trustworthiness, supporting the research (High and Very High categories combined). Twitter is a key news source and impacts news story credibility, as just 3% of respondents claim it has a very small impact. 14% are unsure how much Twitter influences news story dependability.

Table 7: Respondents' perception of the credibility of a news story posted on Twitter

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Positive	138	46
Neutral	93	31
Negative	15	5
Undecided	54	18
Total	**300**	**100**

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 7 shows respondents' views on Twitter News's validity. Forty-six percent of respondents thought Twitter news stories were reliable, while 31 percent were indifferent. Only 5% said Twitter news stories were unreliable, and 18% weren't sure. Users' assessments of Twitter's influence on news story believability may benefit from this data. Forty-six percent of respondents trusted Twitter news reporting. Only 7% of Twitter news users had "a great amount" of confidence in the platform's content, suggesting more work is needed to build trust.

Table 8: Extent to which news stories posted on Twitter influence respondents' perception of the credibility of the news

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very High	42	14
High	93	31
Moderate	129	43
Low	21	7
Very Low	15	5
Total	**300**	**100**

Source: *Field Survey 2023*

Table 8 shows how tweets affect news report credibility. Most respondents (88%) agree that Twitter news items have a moderate influence on their opinion of news story credibility, which bodes well for the study on Twitter's effects on news story credibility. This shows that Twitter is a major news source and that users are interested in news articles. Forty-five percent of respondents said that news items shared on Twitter have a high or very high influence on how reliable they think a news item is, demonstrating that Twitter has a big impact on news story trustworthiness.

Discussion of Findings

RQ1: What is users' level of awareness of the effects of Twitter on news story credibility?

Table 4 answers this research subject. According to the Table, 77% of respondents know how Twitter affects news story credibility, 10% are oblivious, and 13% are doubtful. Table 8 shows that 47% of respondents were highly aware, and 41% were moderately aware of how Twitter influences news story reliability. Only 7% of respondents knew little about the problem (5 percent). These findings indicate that many individuals understand how Twitter influences news credibility. However, the respondents' average understanding suggests that teaching people how Twitter influences news story credibility may be improved. This conclusion is consistent with earlier studies showing that most Twitter news consumers generally have favorable evaluations of the accuracy and volume of news they read on the site. Still, a tiny fraction says they trust Twitter's information "a lot" (Mitchell, Shearer & Stocking, 2021). Other research has indicated that reader's educational background and geo-location have a substantial association with their credibility assessment and that Twitter news travels faster than genuine news (Castillo, Mendoza & Poblete, 2014; Dizikes, 2018; Majerczak & Strzelecki, 2022). Given respondents' inadequate comprehension, more education and awareness-raising are needed to assist people in grasping how Twitter affects news story believability.

RQ 2: To what extent does Twitter affect news story credibility?

Table 5 answers this research question. The table shows that Twitter affects news credibility. 71% of respondents believe Twitter moderately affects news story dependability (High and Very High categories combined). Most respondents trust Twitter as a news source. Only 3% say Twitter has a minor influence on news story veracity. Some respondents (14%) are unclear about how much Twitter affects news story reliability. According to a study, Twitter is an important news outlet that affects how consumers comprehend news. According to a 2021 Pew Research Center study, 69% of American Twitter users get their news there. Most Twitter news users rely on the network for updates. Twitter is popular for breaking news. 70% of newsreaders on Twitter follow live events.

Despite being used by many journalists, Twitter hasn't brought as much traffic to news websites as Google. According to a 2016 Parse.ly poll, the average news organisation received 1.5 percent of its traffic from Twitter, while the top 5% received 11%. (Lee, 2022). Twitter has been criticised for handling fake news. The platform

provides trustworthy context on important topics and addresses misconceptions. Twitter only intervenes when material breaches its rules.

RQ3: What is the perception of users on the effects of Twitter on news story credibility?
Table 7 answers this research question. According to the table, 46% of respondents believed Twitter news was reliable, while 31% were neutral. Only 5% said Twitter news stories were unreliable, and 18% weren't sure. Thus, Twitter provides credible news. The poll found that only 7% of Twitter news users had "a great amount" of confidence in the platform's content, indicating that more work is needed to build trust.

Shafiza, Xiuzhen, and Mark (2017) examined how Twitter users evaluate tweet truthfulness and news trustworthiness. The study found discrepancies between positive (credible and somewhat credible) and negative credibility judgement designs (not credible and cannot decide). Politicians and professionals oppose COVID-19 tweet credibility (Besal, Pont-Sorribes, and Mart) (2021). The results show that while Twitter is mostly trusted for news, more has to be done to build trust in its data.

Conclusion
The study found that:
1. Respondents were most concerned with credibility for topics like news, politics, emergencies, and consumer information. The study also listed ten proven ways to make tweets more trustworthy, including fact-checking and verifying information before posting it on Twitter.
2. Twitter user credibility can be assessed using the information on the Twitter platform. The paper recommends implementing measures to combat misinformation and fake news, such as partnering with fact-checking organizations and flagging misleading content.
3. The credibility of the news story on Twitter is important to users. This can help researchers better understand how cultural or political factors may influence perceptions of Twitter's impact on news credibility and inform strategies for improving the credibility of news stories posted on Twitter.

The study found that Twitter is a popular news medium, and consumers are fairly aware of its implications on credibility. According to the findings, most respondents believe Twitter has at least a moderate influence on news story believability. The survey also revealed that few Twitter news consumers had "a great lot" of faith in Twitter's veracity. Thus, the study emphasises the necessity of knowing users' opinions of Twitter's influence on news story credibility and shows that Twitter may be a trusted news source with certain modifications.

Recommendation
Based on the findings of this study, it is as a result of this recommended that;
1. News organizations should prioritize building trust with their audience on Twitter by ensuring the accuracy and reliability of their news stories. This can be achieved by fact-checking and verifying information before posting it on Twitter.
2. Twitter should improve its platform's credibility by implementing measures to combat misinformation and fake news. This can be achieved by partnering with fact-checking organizations and flagging misleading content.
3. Future research should explore how different demographic groups perceive the effects of Twitter on news story credibility. This can help researchers better understand how cultural or political factors may influence perceptions of Twitter's impact on news credibility and inform strategies for improving the credibility of news stories posted on Twitter.

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