

The Impact of New Media on Communication and Engagement in the Digital Age

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Abstract: Digital technologies and platforms have altered how people communicate, engage with content, and consume news. So the paper analyzes the impact of new media on communication and engagement in the digital age. This study investigates the intricate relationship between new media attributes, user engagement, and the transformation of news dissemination. Despite progress in research, a gap persists in understanding how attributes like communication, collaboration, convergence, creativity, and community synergize to enhance user engagement, shaping news consumption habits and fostering a socially-driven news culture. The research uses mixed methods to comprehensively explore this connection, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively understand the relationship between new media, engagement strategies, and news consumption behaviors. Specifically, a Likert-scale questionnaire is administered to 500 participants across various age groups, educational backgrounds, and professions in the quantitative phase. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews are conducted with selected participants, capturing their experiences, attitudes, and behaviors concerning new media, engagement, and news consumption. The findings demonstrate that new media attributes wield significant influence over user engagement, resulting in transformative changes in news consumption and dissemination. User engagement emerges as a pivotal mediator in this context. Furthermore, the seamless integration of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, with news promotion plays a crucial role in nurturing virtual communities and reshaping news dissemination practices.

Keywords: digital technologies, user engagement, news dissemination, social media integration, media practitioners

1. Introduction

Within the current rapidly changing digital landscape, it is evident that new media significantly impacts communication and engagement strategies. The widespread adoption of digital technologies and platforms has brought about fundamental changes in communication patterns, content engagement, and news consumption behaviors. This study addresses these dynamic changes by exploring the complex relationship between new media attributes, user engagement, and the transformation of news dissemination in the digital age. Despite advancements in understanding the impact of new media on communication, a significant research gap exists — a nuanced exploration of how interconnected attributes such as communication, collaboration, convergence, creativity, and

community synergistically enhance user engagement to shape news consumption habits and cultivate a socially-driven news culture. While previous studies have examined user engagement in digital environments, a comprehensive analysis of how these diverse attributes amplify engagement is missing. This study uses a mixed-methods research approach to address this gap, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to present a comprehensive perspective on the relationship between new media, engagement strategies, and news consumption behaviors.

Based on the identified research gap, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: The interconnected attributes of communication, collaboration, convergence, creativity, and community embedded within new media technologies significantly influence user engagement in news consumption and dissemination. H2: User engagement is a mediating force between new media attributes and the transformation of news consumption behavior, facilitating the creation of a socially-driven news culture. H3: The seamless integration of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, with news promotion significantly impacts audience engagement, fosters virtual communities, and redefines news dissemination practices. H4: Effective utilization of new media attributes, combined with user engagement strategies, can enhance audience interactions with news content, thereby bridging the gap between traditional news consumption and the digitally-driven news culture.

This research contributes to a profound comprehension of new media's role in our society, uncovering its transformative potential. It highlights how new media platforms can democratize information, empower citizen journalism, and influence the way individuals consume news.

2. Literature Review

According to Granic et al., the landscape of new media is characterized by attributes such as communication, collaboration, convergence, creativity, and community [1]. According to Kent & Li, platforms like social media facilitate teamwork, and the rise of user-generated content exemplifies enhanced creativity [2]. Additionally, social media platforms encourage communities, fostering connections and shared interests [3]. While some scholars emphasize communication practices, technological mediums, and social contexts, contemporary perspectives expand the definition to encompass the impact of digital technologies on communication [4]. New media technologies, such as emails, social media, and instant messaging, have engendered a universally networked society, fostering global dialogues and socio-political interactions [1]. Communication is intrinsic to these technologies, from interactive blogs to real-time interactions on platforms like Google Docs [2].

Furthermore, social media platforms have fundamentally altered communication practices across sectors, revolutionizing news dissemination and fostering virtual communities [5]. These platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, seamlessly integrate news promotion with user engagement [5]. Due to interactivity and participation, engagement serves as a bridge between new media and user interaction. Platforms like social media foster User Generated Content (UGC), transforming passive consumers into active content creators [6].

Engagement manifests as blogging, reposting, commenting, recommending, reshaping news discourse, and facilitating civic engagement [7]. These platforms empower audiences to engage with news content, fostering a transformative shift in news consumption behavior. As news organizations embrace social media, preserving editorial integrity and avoiding bias becomes a priority [8]. The potential for social media networks to compromise journalistic standards highlights the need for vigilant usage [8]. As per Boursier et al., balancing accountability while navigating potential threats is an ongoing challenge in the digital era [8].

The above literature extensively explores new media's impact on communication and engagement in the digital age. However, it fails to show how communication, collaboration, convergence, creativity, and community interact with user engagement to shape news consumption and foster a

socially-driven news culture. Furthermore, the literature does not thoroughly investigate the potential challenges and opportunities arising from the integration of new media platforms, mainly social media, in the realm of news promotion, audience engagement, and the preservation of journalistic integrity.

3. Methodology

This study uses a mixed-methods research approach to explore the impact of new media on communication and engagement strategies in the digital age. The survey uses 500 participants across various age groups, educational backgrounds, and professions. By combining both quantitative and qualitative data, this study aims to provide a clear perspective on the complex relationship between new media, user engagement, and news dissemination. While quantitative data can offer numerical insights and trends, qualitative insights from interviews allow for a deeper exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions which would ensure the validity and reliability of the study's findings.

To gather quantitative data, a Likert-scale questionnaire is administered to a diverse sample of 500 participants drawn from various age groups, educational backgrounds, and professions. Diversity of the sample is essential to ensure that the study's findings are representative of a broad spectrum of individuals, considering factors such as age, education, and professional background. The Likert-scale questionnaires are administered to the selected participants only once, and their responses are collected for analysis. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with selected participants to allow flexibility in the interview process, enabling participants to provide detailed narratives and insights. The selected sample would also ensure diversity in responses and perspectives, as participants are purposefully selected based on their varied responses to the quantitative survey.

Quantitative Sampling: The survey targets participants of various age groups, educational backgrounds, and professions. **Qualitative Sampling:** Purposeful selection from survey respondents will ensure a diversity of perspectives in the qualitative phase. The selection criteria include diverse responses and a willingness to engage in interviews.

Quantitative Analysis: Descriptive statistics, including means and frequencies, will elucidate participants' perceptions of new media attributes, engagement, and news consumption. **Qualitative Analysis:** Thematic analysis will uncover patterns in interview transcripts. Themes will emerge that capture participants' experiences, attitudes, and behaviors concerning new media, engagement, and news consumption.

The study strictly adheres to ethical guidelines. Survey participants are informed of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw. Informed consent is secured before interviews. Anonymity and confidentiality are maintained for interviewees through the anonymization of identities.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. Participants Perceptions of New Media Attributes

Table 1 presents the participants' perceptions of new media attributes on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Table 1: Participants' Perception of New Media Attributes (Likert Scale: 1-5).

| New Media Attributes | Strongly Disagree(%) | Disagree(%) | Neutral(%) | Agree(%) | Strongly Agree(%) |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| Communication | 5 | 10 | 20 | 40 | 25 |
| Collaboration | 8 | 15 | 18 | 30 | 29 |
| Convergence | 12 | 9 | 22 | 25 | 32 |
| Creativity | 7 | 14 | 19 | 28 | 32 |
| Community | 6 | 11 | 25 | 35 | 23 |

Table 2 illustrates the participants' engagement strategies in the digital age based on their survey responses.

Table 2: Participants' Engagement Strategies (Likert Scale: 1-5).

| Engagement Strategies | Rarely Engage (%) | Occasionally Engage (%) | Neutral (%) | Frequently Engage (%) | Always Engage (%) |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Content Sharing | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 10 |
| Commenting | 10 | 18 | 28 | 32 | 12 |
| Interaction | 18 | 14 | 30 | 32 | 16 |
| Social Media Sharing | 12 | 22 | 24 | 28 | 14 |
| User-Generated Content | 6 | 15 | 20 | 34 | 25 |

Table 3 provides insights into the news consumption behaviors of the participants.

Table 3: Participants' News Consumption Behaviors.

| News Sources | Online News Websites (%) | Social Media (%) | Television (%) | Print Newspaper (%) | Radio (%) |
|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Daily Consumption | 45 | 35 | 15 | 8 | 5 |
| Weekly Consumption | 28 | 40 | 20 | 5 | 7 |
| Occasional | 15 | 20 | 25 | 15 | 25 |
| Rare Consumption | 12 | 5 | 40 | 72 | 63 |

The quantitative analysis also revealed correlations between new media attributes, engagement strategies, news consumption behaviors, and demographic factors. These findings offer valuable insights into the dynamic relationships between new media, engagement, and communication strategies in the digital age. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews identified key themes in participants' attitudes, behaviors, and experiences related to new media and engagement. The themes ranged from the empowerment of users through content creation to the challenges of maintaining journalistic integrity in the digital world.

4.2. Discussion

Tables 1, 2, and 3 illuminate participants' perceptions of new media attributes, engagement strategies, and news consumption behaviors, providing insights into the intricate relationships in the digital age. New Media Attributes and Engagement: Table 1 reveals broad consensus on the significance of communication, collaboration, convergence, creativity, and community attributes. This highlights participants' recognition of new media's potential to transform interactive online spaces and reshape communication dynamics.

Engagement Strategies: Participants in the study displayed varying levels of engagement with digital content, reflecting the evolving participatory culture facilitated by new media attributes.

- Content Sharing: A notable 30% of participants reported frequently sharing content, indicating an active role in disseminating digital content.
- Commenting: Approximately 32% of participants expressed frequent engagement through commenting, highlighting their willingness to interact with online content.

- **Interaction:** With 32% of participants frequently engaging in interactive activities, such as discussions and feedback, the results underscore the dynamic nature of online engagement.
- **Social Media Sharing:** Social media platforms played a significant role, with 28% of participants frequently sharing content, indicating the integration of new media into their daily interactions.
- **User-Generated Content:** 34% of participants reported frequent engagement in creating user-generated content, showcasing their active participation in digital content creation.

These findings collectively emphasize participants' active roles in content sharing, commenting, interaction, social media sharing, and user-generated content. This reflects the evolving participatory culture where users create, share, and collaborate on digital content.

News Consumption Behaviors: Participants' news consumption behaviors provide valuable insights into their preferences and habits in the digital age, which can be explained using the data from Table 3.

- **Online News Websites:** A significant 45% of participants reported daily news consumption from online sources, highlighting the prominence of digital platforms for accessing news.
- **Social Media:** Social media emerged as another influential news source, with 35% of participants indicating daily consumption. This illustrates the role of platforms like Facebook and Twitter in news dissemination.
- **Television:** Traditional television remains a substantial news source, with 15% of participants reporting daily consumption, indicating its enduring relevance.
- **Print Newspapers:** While less frequently consumed daily (8%), print newspapers still maintain a presence in participants' news consumption routines.
- **Radio:** Radio was the least frequently consumed news source daily, with 5% of participants indicating its use.
- **Weekly Consumption:** Weekly consumption patterns reveal that 28% of participants access news from online sources, 40% through social media, 20% via television, 5% from print newspapers, and 7% through radio.
- **Occasional Consumption:** Occasional news consumption patterns show that 15% rely on online news websites, 20% on social media, 25% on television, 15% on print newspapers, and 25% on radio, demonstrating a diversified approach.
- **Rare Consumption:** In rare cases, 12% of participants access news from online sources, 5% through social media, 40% from television, 72% from print newspapers, and 63% from radio. This suggests that while some sources are less frequently used, they may still serve specific purposes for participants.

These findings collectively indicate that participants exhibit diverse news consumption behaviors, significantly relying on digital platforms, especially online news websites and social media, for their daily news intake. Additionally, traditional media sources like television, print newspapers, and radio continue to have their place in participants' news consumption routines, albeit with varying frequency.

Implications and Contributions: The findings of this study hold several significant implications for understanding the impact of new media on communication, engagement strategies, and news consumption in the digital age.

New Media Attributes and Engagement. The study's results affirm the importance of communication, collaboration, convergence, creativity, and community in new media. As per Priporas et al., participants widely recognized the transformative potential of these attributes, acknowledging their role in reshaping online communication dynamics [9]. This recognition has practical implications for content creators and media practitioners [9]. It suggests the need to harness these attributes effectively to foster user engagement and create vibrant digital spaces for information exchange and interaction.

Engagement Strategies. Participants' varying levels of engagement with digital content indicate the evolution of a participatory culture facilitated by new media. The active roles played by participants in content sharing, commenting, interaction, social media sharing, and user-generated content emphasize the importance of user engagement in the digital space [1]. According to Granic et al., content creators and media professionals should recognize this active participation and create strategies that encourage and facilitate user engagement, enhancing digital content's reach and impact [1].

News Consumption Behaviors. The diverse landscape of news consumption behaviors among participants highlights the multifaceted nature of news consumption in the digital age. While online news websites and social media have become prominent sources for daily news intake, traditional media sources like television, print newspapers, and radio remain relevant, although with varying frequency levels. These findings emphasize the coexistence of digital and traditional media in individuals' news consumption routines. Media organizations should consider this diversified news ecosystem when crafting content distribution strategies, ensuring that they effectively cater to the preferences of their audiences across various platforms [5].

Meeting the Hypotheses H1: The study findings support the hypothesis that interconnected attributes of communication, collaboration, convergence, creativity, and community within new media technologies significantly influence user engagement in news consumption and dissemination. Participants' recognition of these attributes' importance aligns with this hypothesis. H2: The results also align with the hypothesis that user engagement mediates between new media attributes and the transformation of news consumption behavior. The active engagement strategies exhibited by participants highlight the role of engagement as a bridge between new media and user interaction. H3: The findings confirm the hypothesis that the seamless integration of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, with news promotion significantly impacts audience engagement and fosters virtual communities. The high percentage of participants indicating daily news consumption through social media platforms reinforces this hypothesis. H4: The study findings support the hypothesis that effective utilization of new media attributes, combined with user engagement strategies, can enhance audience interactions with news content, bridging the gap between traditional news consumption and the digitally-driven news culture. Participants' active engagement in content sharing, commenting, and user-generated content creation aligns with this hypothesis.

Future research could use longitudinal studies to track changes in news consumption behaviors and engagement strategies as new media technologies grow. Examining how new media attributes and engagement strategies vary across different cultural contexts could also provide valuable insights into the global impact of digital technologies on news consumption. Furthermore, researchers can examine audience segmentation to understand how different demographic groups engage with news content in the digital space, allowing media organizations to tailor their strategies accordingly.

5. Conclusion

The research has illuminated the complex dynamics between new media attributes, user engagement, and news consumption and dissemination transformation in the digital age. The findings show the profound influence of new media on communication practices, engagement strategies, and news consumption behaviors. The broad consensus on the significance of communication, collaboration, convergence, creativity, and community attributes highlights the transformative potential of new media in shaping interactive online environments. Active participation in content sharing, commenting, interaction, social media sharing, and user-generated content signifies a paradigm shift toward a participatory culture where users actively participate in content creation and dissemination. The dominance of online news websites and social media as news sources reflects the changing

landscape of news consumption. Leveraging new media attributes and engagement strategies bridges traditional and digital news consumption, nurturing a dynamic news culture.

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