Research Article

Understanding Saudi Millennials News Consumption in a Digital World

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Understanding news consumption among young adults in a digital era that has witnessed drastic changes is imperative. While news consumption behaviors among the younger generations have been well documented in many countries, little or no research has been conducted on this phenomenon among young people in Saudi Arabia. In this context and through the lens of uses and gratifications theory, this study looked at how young Saudis consume news on traditional and social media platforms, which media they trust the most, and if there are any gender differences related to news consumption. The study used an online survey sent to a simple random sampling (N=840) at a large public university in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Different statistical analyses were conducted, including the nonparametric Kruskal Wallis test, Mann-Whitney test, and Chi-square test of independence. The study's findings suggest that Saudi millennials heavily rely on social media platforms, such as Twitter and WhatsApp, to obtain news using their smartphones. The study also indicates that young Saudis trust traditional media more than social media, but those who are more engaged in social media perceive the news as trustworthy. Other interesting findings suggest that females use various news platforms when consuming news more than males and are interested in different news topics. The implications of this study could be valuable for researchers and organizations when communicating with young Saudis. **Keywords:** news consumption, Saudi millennials, social media, uses and gratifications theory

INTRODUCTION

The abundance of news available on almost every platform has made it imperative to understand news consumption behaviors among young adults (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000; Barthel et al., 2020). The wide use of mixed platforms to obtain news information among young people (Pollard & Kavanagh, 2019; Yuan, 2011) has made it crucial to study how young Saudis consume news. According to Reuters Institute, young adults have become more attracted to social media news than any other media platform, raising enormous challenges for mainstream media in terms of brand loyalty and news habits (Newman et al., 2019). The Pew Research Center has reported that social media platforms have surpassed print newspapers as a news source, and that television remains the most preferred news platform (Shearer, 2018). Such findings indicate that the array of technologies available have made a significant impact on news habits (Barthel et al., 2020).

News habits among Americans, for instance, have been well documented (Barthel et al., 2019; Bialik & Masta, 2017; Mitchell et al., 2018; Rosentiel, 2008; Shearer, 2018); however, little is known about news consumption and media credibility among young Saudis. This study aims to understand how young Saudis consume news in an era that has witnessed an information explosion, in which different data, sources, and information are shared and exchanged instantly through traditional and social media (Fuller, 2010). Despite media pluralism, data shows that news organizations' credibility has declined since 2012, according to a Pew Research Center's (2012) study, an understudied subject among Saudi people.

Through the lens of uses and gratifications theory, this study aims to understand how young Saudis get their news, whether they trust the news they consume, and if there are any gender differences when

consuming news. This study sheds light on how researchers, policymakers, and news organizations disseminate information in Saudi society. It may also reveal news consumption patterns that are different from the rest of the world.

LITERATURE OF REVIEW

News Consumption in Arab Countries

Among few reliable studies of news consumption in Arab countries, a study conducted by Northwestern University in Qatar (2017) across 10 Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, found that most individuals in the Arab region checked the news online via smartphones once a day. The study found that most individuals in Arab countries relied on television (78%) to get their news, compared to the radio (49%) and newspapers (25%). Another study indicated that most Arabs trust their media and believe that news reporting quality has improved recently (Dennis et al., 2015). The study suggested that individuals in Gulf countries, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, viewed their media positively and believed that their media operated independently compared to other Arab countries, like Egypt, Tunisia, and Lebanon. Individuals in Saudi Arabia, for instance, were more likely to consider both the internet (76%) and television (75%) credible sources of information compared to newspapers (53%) and radio (51%) (Dennis et al., 2015).

Saudi society and media use

Saudi Arabia is considered a large media consumption market in the Middle East, mainly on social media (BBC, 2019). Most of the Pan-Arab satellite and pay-TV industry in the Middle East is owned and financed by Saudi investors (BBC, 2019). According to the General Authority for Statistics (2019), the Saudi population is estimated to be more than 35 million, and the majority of the people (67%) are under 34 years old. Hence, it triggers a need to examine how Saudi millennials, a force of progress and change, consume news in today's media environment. With the increase in internet accessibility reaching 90% of individuals in Saudi Arabia, people have become more exposed to different forms of information and news, according to a report released by the General Authority for Statistics (2018). The report indicated that most internet users in Saudi Arabia access the internet using their smartphones (93%) and use the Arabic language (87%) when browsing the internet, compared to English (17.5%) and other languages (7.4%). A report in Saudi Arabia found a drastic change in social media use in recent years, reaching around 60% of the population (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology [MCIT], 2019). The report found that Facebook and Twitter dominate social media regarding the number of users in Saudi Arabia, with 11 million and nine million users, respectively. YouTube is also increasing among Saudi residents, reaching around seven million users, placing Saudi Arabia second worldwide in using the platform (MCIT, 2019). This rapid increase indicates a massive amount of information being received, shared, and posted, including news media. Differences in demographic factors like age and gender may reveal some similarities and differences in how individuals consume news (Mitchell et al., 2018).

News Information and Demographic Factors

Studies have found that demographic factors, such as age and education, play vital roles in news consumption (Bakker & Sádaba, 2010; Bergström & Wadbring, 2010; Elvestad & Blekesaune, 2008). Age plays a significant role in whether people prefer a particular medium over another and how they get news from various media platforms (Shearer, 2018). The Pew Research Center found some attention-grabbing patterns related to age and consumption of news information. Older people were more likely to rely on one platform to get their news than young people, who used different mediums when getting news (Shearer, 2018). Millennials aged 18-29 were more likely to go online to get their local news (Barthel et al., 2019). Education level and race also played a significant role in how individuals consumed news (Barthel et al., 2019). For instance, less-educated individuals and African Americans preferred watching local news on television over other news platforms (Barthel et al., 2019).

Another crucial factor related to news consumption is gender. Studies have found that women are less likely to obtain news than men (Benesch, 2012), and they differ significantly in the way they consume news

(Rosentiel, 2008). For instance, women are more likely to watch early network shows than men (Rosentiel, 2008). Women are more interested in weather and natural disasters, safety and health, religion, entertainment, and tabloid news, while men are more interested in international affairs, politics, business, finance, technology, and sports (Rosentiel, 2008). Men are also more likely to use newspapers and radio than women (Rosentiel, 2008). Social status is also related to news consumption. A study conducted across 38 countries worldwide found that individuals in wealthier countries were more likely to get their news from the internet (Mitchell et al., 2018).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The uses and gratifications theory examines how and why individuals select a particular medium to satisfy their needs (Katz et al., 1973; McGrath, 2003). The theory tries to understand the psychological rewards of each medium, whether television, newspapers, radio or the internet (McGrath, 2003). It assumes that audiences are active media users, and their motives to use a particular medium to search for specific information to satisfy their needs vary and rely upon several factors, including psychological, sociological, and environmental factors (Katz et al., 1973; Severin & Tankard, 1997). The media source, the content, and exposure to different media can be primary sources of audience gratification (Katz et al., 1973). Thus, comprehending human needs and what the media provide can help us better understand whether an audience's needs are being satisfied (Katz et al., 1973). Different media types may serve and satisfy individuals' various needs and demands, whether they are looking for useful information in newspapers and magazines, seeking entertainment and escape in television and radio, or looking for local and national news information on television and in newspapers (McGrath, 2003). The use of traditional media, for instance, satisfies an audience's need to belong to society (Katz et al., 1973), but at the same time, others may use the same medium for a different purpose (Severin & Tankard, 1997).

Today, news organizations are struggling to provide interesting content that draws the attention of young people with different attitudes toward news (Newman et al., 2019). To overcome these challenges, news organizations need to use new rhetoric and produce quality news content that is relevant, useful, and interesting to meet the young population's expectations and, at the same time, shift from traditional to digital and social media platforms (Fuller, 2010; Newman et al., 2019). Recently, many news organizations, like the *New York Times*, have utilized new forms of technology to produce news, including audio podcasts and video series, to reach and attract more audiences (Barthel et al., 2020). Research by Shearer and Matsa (2018) found that young adults use social media news for different reasons, such as convenience, speed, interactivity, and up-to-date information.

Researchers have used the uses and gratifications theory to comprehend different phenomena, including the motives for using social networking sites (Pai & Arnot, 2013), smartphones (Park et al., 2013), tablets (Magsamen-Conrad et al., 2015), and educational apps during COVID-19 pandemic (Menon, 2022). However, most researchers have utilized the uses and gratifications theory when studying the news consumption phenomenon (Lee & Chyi, 2014). Individuals are motivated to use particular mediums for different reasons. Obtaining information is the primary reason individuals consume news (Shoemaker, 1996). Individuals' trust in the news they consume from different sources is another issue that has been widely investigated (e.g., Brenan, 2019, 2020; Gramlich, 2020).

Media Credibility

Scholars in mass communication research have yet to agree on a single definition of or measurement for media credibility (Gaziano & McGarth, 1986; Meyer, 1988; West, 1996). The early work of Hovland and Weiss (1951) emphasized expertise and trustworthiness as the main components of credibility. Scholars have contended that credibility encompasses different dimensions, like accuracy, believability, trustworthiness, completeness, and fairness (Austin & Dong, 1994; Meyer, 1988). Various factors play vital roles in how a message and source are perceived as credible, spurring individuals to form and change their perceptions and opinions (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). For instance, a message attributed to a high prestige source is perceived to be more credible than a low prestige source. An individual's judgment of credibility is influenced by the

type of messages, sources, pre-existing knowledge, or personal opinions presented (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Scholars have used trust and credibility concepts interchangeably (Hellmueller & Trilling, 2012). As Kohring and Matthes (2007) explained, when individuals trust particular news media, it means they trust the selection of topics, facts, and journalistic assessment. However, studies have found that trust in news media has been declining over recent years (Brenan, 2019, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2012). For instance, a recent Gallup poll found that only 9% of Americans trust the media a great deal and 31% a fair amount in regard to reporting full, fair, and accurate news (Brenan, 2020). Another study of 38 countries found that most people emphasized getting accurate and unbiased news (Mitchell et al., 2018). The study showed that most individuals worldwide preferred following national and local news about their countries closely rather than other countries (Mitchell et al., 2018). Hence, this study aims to understand how young Saudis consume news rather than why and examines Saudis' trust in the news. Different research questions were posed, as follows:

1. **RQ1:** How often do young Saudis consume news from different media channels, and what device do they use primarily to obtain news?

2. **RQ2:** What are the preferred media channels to obtain news among young Saudis?

3. **RQ3:** What news platforms do young Saudis perceive as the most credible?

4. **RQ4:** How often do young Saudis use social media, and what social media platforms do they use to obtain news?

5. **RQ5:** How do young Saudis interact and engage with news information on social media?

6. **RQ6:** What are the most common news topics young Saudis consume on different media platforms, and in what language?

7. **RQ7:** Are there any gender differences in media news consumption among young Saudis?

Similarly, different hypotheses were posed, as follows:

1. **H1:** Most young Saudis who use social media daily are more likely to expect news on social media to be largely accurate.

2. **H2:** Most young Saudis who use social media daily are more likely to trust the news they receive on social media.

3. **H3:** Young Saudis who prefer getting news on social media are more likely to expect the news to be largely accurate.

4. **H4:** Young Saudis who are more engaged in social media are more likely to expect the news on social media to be trustworthy and largely accurate.

5. **H5:** Gender plays a significant role in how young Saudis consume news.

METHODOLOGY

This cross-sectional study utilized an online survey sent via email to a simple random sampling of associate, undergraduate, and graduate students at a large public university in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Instruments

For many years, the Pew Research Center (2022) has been prominent in researching news media, credibility, and trust. Thus, the researcher adapted two Pew Research Center questionnaires on news consumption, credibility, and trust (Mitchell et al., 2016; Shearer & Matsa, 2018). A 4-point Likert scale and demographic questions were adapted to understand how young Saudis consume news. First, demographic questions regarding gender, age, and education level were asked at the beginning of the survey. Respondents were then asked to choose their favorite medium to get news from (e.g., *reading news in a print newspaper, getting news on social media sites like Twitter and Facebook, or do not get news from any platform*). Those who chose "*do not get news from any platform"* were skipped to the end of the questionnaire. Another 4-point Likert news engagement scale (*4=often and 1=never*) consisting of questions that measured engagement with news among participants was adopted (e.g*., How often do you click on links to news stories, share, post, repost, like, or comment on news stories?*). Multiple-choice questions about media trust were also included (e.g., *In general, do you trust the news you get on social media*? *Yes, no, sometimes*; *I expect the news I see on social media will be:*

largely accurate, largely inaccurate; In general, do you trust the news you get in mass media? Yes, no, sometimes; Which type of media do you trust the most: national/local news media, international news media). Other categorical and Likert scale questions about the frequency of social and mass media use and how individuals used it to obtain news were also included (Mitchell et al., 2016; Shearer & Matsa, 2018). The instrument was translated to Arabic by two experts in both languages and tested for ease of comprehension and accuracy. Few modifications were made based on the experts' feedback. The researcher then conducted a pilot study among five students to ensure the instrument's clarity. Participants had the option to choose between Arabic and English when taking the study.

Sample

The researcher recruited a simple random sampling of undergraduate and graduate students at a large public university. The university is located in Saudi Arabia's capital city, Riyadh, one of Saudi Arabia's most prominent and oldest universities. The selection of the university was due to the fact that it has more than 40,000 undergraduate and graduate students from diverse backgrounds, cities, regions, and social classes, which helped in having different perspectives about the topic under study. The university consists of science colleges, community colleges, health colleges, female colleges, and humanities colleges that offer a variety of a large selection of undergraduate and graduate programs. The number of students who participated in the study was 840, with a completion rate of 82%.

Procedures

The study was approved by the IRB at the same institution. The institution sent two email invitations to its students to participate in the study between Fall 2019 and Spring 2020.

Data Collection and Reliability

Data was collected via Qualtrics and transferred to SPSS for statistical analyses. Missing data were removed, and different statistical analyses were conducted, including the Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis test, and Chi-square test of independence. The adopted news engagement scale was analyzed for reliability using Cronbach's alpha and showed a score of .77.

RESULTS

Of the 840 respondents in the survey, 58.5% were female (n = 492) and 41.5% were male (n = 348). Regarding the level of education among participants, 57.8% were pursuing a bachelor's degree (n = 486), 30% a master's degree (n = 246), 8.9% an associate degree (n = 75), 1.4% a professional degree like an MD or DDS (n = 12), and 2.5% a doctorate degree (n = 21). Around 50% of participants were between 18-24 years old (n = 419), 37.8% were between 25-34 years old (n = 318), and 12% were over 35 years old (n = 101).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Seven research questions and five hypotheses were part of the study; and are reported below.

RQ1: How often do young Saudis consume news from different media channels, and what device do they use primarily to obtain news?

A 4-point Likert-scale question measured the frequency of use of different media platforms to consume news among participants (**Table 1**). The study found that the majority of respondents, 85%, never/rarely read any newspaper in print (M = 1.66, SD = .77), 74.7% never/rarely listened to the news on the radio (M = 1.88, SD = .88), 75% never/rarely watched international television news, such as CNN or BBC (M = 1.86, SD = .91), 66% never/rarely watched local television news (M = 2.10, SD = .90), and 60% never/rarely watched gulf television news, like Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera (M = 2.19, SD = .98). However, around 95% of respondents stated they often/sometimes get news from a social media platform, such as Twitter, Facebook, or Snapchat (M = 3.70, SD = .61), and half of the respondents sometimes/often get news from a news website or app (M = 2.46, SD = 1.18). The majority of respondents (93%) used their smartphones to get news (n = 641), 5% used computers (n = 40), and 2% used tablets or other devices (n = 10).

Table 1. Frequency of using various communication channels to obtain news (n=784)

Question	Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Read any newspapers in print?	1.79	14	13.27	104	34.18	268	50.77	398
Listen to the news on the radio?	4.21	33	21.05	165	32.91	258	41.84	328
Watch local television news?	6.12	48	27.68	217	36.10	283	30.10	236
Watch Gulf television news, such as Al-Arabiya, Al Jazirah etc.?	10.84	85	27.68	217	31.51	247	29.97	235
Watch international television news, such as CNN and BBC?	5.48	43	19.26	151	31.38	246	43.88	344
Get news from a social media website, such as (Twitter, Facebook, or Snapchat)?	77.55	608	16.71	131	4.34	34	1.40	11
Get news from news website or app?	26.79	210	22.70	178	20.15	158	30.36	238

RQ2: What are the preferred media channels to obtain news among young Saudis?

Respondents were asked about their favorite platform from which they get news. Around 68% of respondents preferred getting news from social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, or Snapchat (n = 521), while 13% preferred getting news on a website or app (n = 101), and 12% preferred watching the news on television (n = 97). Less than 3% of respondents preferred getting the news from the radio or a print newspaper (n = 23). Around 4% said they do not get news on any news platforms (n = 30).

RQ3: What news platforms do young Saudis perceive as the most credible?

Various questions were asked to assess how Saudis viewed news's credibility in mass media and social media. First, the study found that 60% of respondents expected the news they see on social media to be largely inaccurate (n = 420) compared to 40% who expected it to be largely accurate (n = 279). When asked if they trust the news on social media, 73% of respondents stated they *sometimes* trust the news on social media (n = 509), compared to 13.1% who said they trust the news on social media (n = 91) and 13.4% who do not trust the news on social media (n = 93). Second, when asked if they trust the news in mass media, 44.3% of respondents said they trust the news in mass media (n = 306), compared to 41.2% who said they sometimes do (n = 285) and 14.3% who do not trust the news in mass media (n = 100). Third, around 66% of respondents reported trusting national/local news media the most (n= 455) compared to 34% who reported trusting international news media the most (n= 236).

RQ4: How often do young Saudis use social media, and what social media platforms do they use to obtain news?

Respondents were first asked how often they use social media. It was found that 91.7% of respondents used it daily (n = 677), 6.4% used it several times a week (n = 47), 1% used it about once a week (n = 8), less than .03% used it several times a month (n = 2), and 0.5% never used social media (n = 4). Respondents were then asked *(yes/no questions)* if they ever get news or news headlines from various social media platforms. It was found that around 97% of respondents used Twitter to get news (n = 671), 72% used WhatsApp (n = 653), 64% used Snapchat (n = 467), 61% used Instagram (n = 442), and 45% used YouTube (n = 323). Around 92% of respondents said they do not get news from Facebook (n = 667) and 93% do not get it from LinkedIn (n = 673).

RQ5: How do young Saudis interact and engage with news information on social media?

Participants responded to a Likert scale that asked how often they click on news links, post links to news stories, share or repost links to news stories that someone else originally posted, "like" news stories, comment on news stories, and discuss issues in the news with others online (**Table 2**). Around 64% of respondents said they often/sometimes click on links to news stories (n = 448), and 32% share or repost links to news stories that were originally posted by someone else (n = 220).

In contrast, 85% of respondents stated they never/rarely comment on news stories (n = 582), 79% never/rarely post links to news stories (n = 557), 69% never/rarely "like" news stories (n = 482), 68% never/rarely share or repost links to news stories that were originally posted by someone else (n = 480), and 71% never/rarely discuss issues in the news with others online (n = 497).

Table 2. News engagement on social media (n= 700)

Question	Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	%	n	%	N	%	n	%	n
Click on links to news stories	14.71	103	49.29	345	25.43	178	10.57	74
Post links to news stories	3.71	26	16.71	117	28.71	201	50.86	356
Share or repost links to news stories that were originally posted by someone else	5.86	41	25.57	179	26.43	185	42.14	295
"Like" news stories	8.14	57	23	161	25	175	43.86	307
Comment on news stories	3.29	23	12.14	85	27.14	190	57.43	402
Discuss issues in the news with others on that site	9.71	68	19.29	135	24.29	170	46.71	327

RQ6: What are the most common news topics young Saudis consume on different media platforms, and in what language?

The study found that 26.3% of respondents were interested in political news (n = 182) and 25% in community news (n = 174) (**Figure 1**). Almost 55% of participants stated that they obtain news in Arabic (n = 381), around 43% obtain it in both Arabic and English (n = 294), and less than 3% consume news exclusively in English (n = 16). None of the participant reported consuming news in any other language.
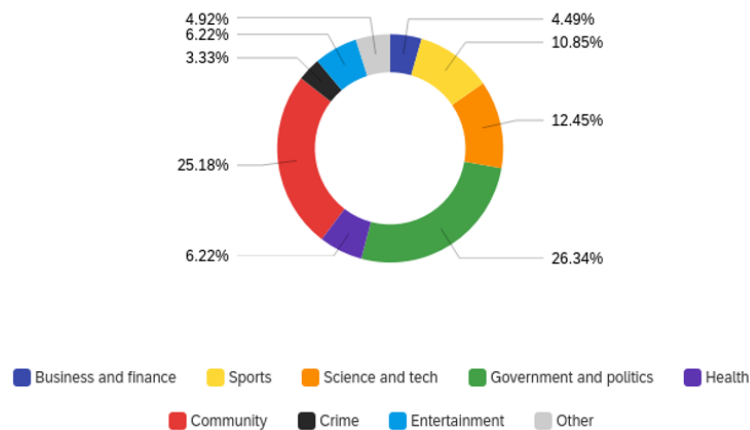

Figure 1. Young Saudis were interested in various news topics

RQ7: Are there any gender differences in media news consumption among young Saudis?

The study found that both males and females relied heavily on social media to get news. For instance, more than half (54%) of those who said they often get news from news websites were female (n = 114), and 58% of those who said they often get news from social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat were also female (n = 356). Similarly, 67% of females preferred getting news on social media (n = 306) over any other platform, and 67% of males (n = 215) also preferred getting news on social media. Furthermore, 91% of females reported using social media daily (n = 399), compared to 92% of males (n = 278).

H1: Most young Saudis who use social media daily are more likely to expect news on social media to be largely accurate.

A Chi-square test of independence indicated no significant relationship between the frequency of social media use and how respondents viewed the news on social media. H1 was not supported.

H2: Most young Saudis who use social media daily are more likely to trust the news they receive on social media

A Chi-square test of independence indicated a significant relationship between daily social media use and trusting the news, $\chi^2(6, n = 693) = 28.94$, p<.001. It means that among Saudis using social media daily (92.2%, n=639), only 13.6% stated they trust the news on social media (n = 87), compared to the majority (74.8%) who said they sometimes trust the news on social media (n = 478). Around 11.6% stated they do not trust the news on social media (n = 74). H2 was not supported.

H3: Young Saudis who prefer getting news on social media are more likely to expect the news to be largely accurate

A Chi-square test of independence indicated no significant relationship between a preference for getting news on social media and how respondents view news on social media. H3 was not supported.

H4: Young Saudis who are more engaged in social media are more likely to expect news on social media to be trustworthy and largely accurate

A Mann-Whitney U test indicated a significant relationship between social media engagement and the belief that news on social media is largely accurate (U = 47481.0), (p<.001). Respondents with higher levels of social media engagement (Mdn = 2) were more likely to view news on social media to be largely accurate than those with lower levels of engagement (Mdn = 1.8). A Kruskal-Wallis test also indicated a significant relationship between social media engagement and trust in social media news (p<.001), $\chi^2(2)$ = 16.545. Respondents with a higher level of social media engagement were more likely to trust the news on social media (Mdn = 2.12) than those who reported only sometimes trust it (Mdn = 2) or not trust it (Mdn = 1.6). H4 was supported.

H5: Gender plays a significant role in how young Saudis consume news

Different statistical analyses were conducted to determine the relationships between gender and news consumption among Saudis. Only significant findings are reported here. A Mann-Whitney U test indicated a significant relationship between gender and how often individuals get news from different news platforms (U =57,889.0), (p<.001); generally, females (Mdn = 2.9) were more likely to get news from different media outlets than males (Mdn = 2.6). Other significant results of the Chi-square test of independence are reported in **Table 3**. H5 was supported.

Table 3. Gender differences and news media consumption

Findings	Female (%)	Male (%)	Chi-square test of independence
News preferences			$\chi^2(5)$=23.95, N=772, p<.001
Social media	67.5	67.5	
Television	16.6	6.9	
News website or app	11.0	16.0	
Getting news from social media platforms			
Facebook	6.3	10.7	$\chi^2(1)$=4.61, N=726, p<.05
YouTube	36.2	56.4	$\chi^2(1)$=28.91, N=726, p<.001
Instagram	65.4	54.4	$\chi^2(1)$=9.02, N=726, p<.01
Snapchat	67.3	60.1	$\chi^2(1)$=3.99, N=726, p<.05
WhatsApp	65.9	79.9	$\chi^2(1)$=16.88, N=726, p<.001
Other social media platform	17.1	24.5	$\chi^2(1)$=6.05, N=726, p<.01
Never/rarely did the following			
Listen to news on radio	82.0	64.4	$\chi^2(3)$=47.79, N=784, p<.001
Watched gulf television news	67.1	53.5	$\chi(3)$=22.91, N=784, p<.001
Watched international television news	79.4	69.4	$\chi^2(3)$=22.40, N=784, p<.001
Get news from website or app	53.8	45.8	$\chi(3)$=14.61, N=784, p<.01
Trust on mass media			$\chi^2(2)$=7.83, N=691, p<.05
Yes	46.8	40.6	
No	11.5	18.9	
Sometimes	41.7	40.6	
Trust the most			$\chi^2(1)$=15.39, N=691, p<.001
Local/or national news media	71.7	57.3	
International news media	28.3	42.7	
Most news topics interested in			$\chi^2(8)$=137.63, N=691, p<.001
Community	36.6	8.3	
Government and politics	20.5	34.9	
Health	9.3	1.8	
Entertainment	8.3	3.2	
Science and technology	7.8	19.2	
Sports	5.6	18.5	
Crime	4.1	2.1	
Business and finance	2.9	6.8	
Other	4.9	5.0	

Table 3 (continued). Gender differences and news media consumption

Findings	Female (%)	Male (%)	Chi-square test of independence
Devices used the most to get news			$\chi^2(4)=11.55$, N=691, p<.05
Smartphones (Android, IOS)	92.4	93.2	
Laptop	5.4	2.5	
Desktop	0.5	3.2	
Tablet	1.0	0.7	
Other	0.7	0.4	

DISCUSSION

These remarkable results have revealed enticing information on news consumption among young Saudis. First, it was found that traditional media, like television, radio, and newspapers, struggled to attract young Saudis to their platforms, as around 95% of them often/sometimes used social media, like Twitter and Facebook, to get news. The study found that almost 92% of Saudis used social media daily, and more than 67% considered social media the preferred platform from which to get news, with traditional media being the least preferred platform to obtain news.

Twitter and WhatsApp topped the list of the social media platforms used most frequently to get news, followed by Snapchat and Instagram. Facebook and LinkedIn were the least popular places to get news among young Saudis. These findings are similar to a Pew Research study that found that around 62% of Americans get their news from social media (Mitchell, 2016) amid a decline in news consumption from traditional media like newspapers and television (Pew Research Center, 2012). This study is also comparable to a study that found that young adults use Instagram and Snapchat more frequently than LinkedIn (Shearer & Matsa, 2018). It is also consistent with Shearer's (2021) study that suggests young adults between 18-29 years old are more inclined to use social media platforms to procure news than any other age group. A belief that the news on social media is helpful could explain why young Saudis prefer and rely on these platforms. For instance, a recent study found that 68% of social media users perceived the news they got from news organizations on social media about the COVID-19 pandemic to be very helpful (Ritter, 2020).

This study also suggests that more than 73% of young Saudis sometimes trust the news they get on social media, compared to 13% who trust it and 13.4% who do not trust it. A Reuters Institute for the study of journalism report may provide some explanation. It found that bias, low-quality information, hidden agendas, and a failure to adhere to ethical and journalistic standards were the main reasons people, mostly the young, did not trust the news media, including the news presented on social media (Newman & Fletcher, 2017). In a study of media trust in 35 countries, Kalogeropoulos et al. (2019) found that individuals who used social media as a primary news source were less likely to trust the news. In contrast, those who used the traditional and alternative media as primary sources were more likely to trust the news. This is consistent with our findings, which show that young Saudis have more trust in traditional media than social media. However, this study also indicates that those more engaged in using social media were more likely to trust the news they consumed and consider it accurate. Moreover, young Saudis trust local news more than international news. This is also compatible with previous studies that found that most young individuals followed and trusted local news more than international news (Mitchell et al., 2016).

This study also explored how young Saudis are engaging and interacting with news information and news stories on social media, finding that a majority, 64%, often/sometimes clicked on news stories, more than a third shared and reposted news stories that had been posted by someone else, and a third clicked "like" in response to news stories. However, most respondents, 85%, never/rarely commented on news stories, 79% never/rarely posted links to news stories, and 71% never/rarely discussed issues in the news with others online. This may indicate that most young Saudis do not engage with news stories to the degree that they openly express their perspectives and opinions. Their role is mainly limited to receiving and sharing information. Additional investigation is needed to examine why young Saudis are less engaged with news on social media. Similarly, Mitchell et al. (2016) suggest that young adults are less likely to follow the news closely. One explanation for such a finding is that young adults may perceive the news as less appealing and relevant (Newman et al., 2019). This study also revealed significant gender differences among young Saudis in news

consumption. Saudi females were more likely to use multiple media outlets, such as Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and television when seeking news than males. Females were less likely to read any newspaper in print, listen to the news on the radio, watch Gulf television news, such as Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera news, and less likely to watch international news outlets, like CNN and BBC, than males. This study also found that news topic selections significantly vary between males and females. Females were more interested in community news, health, government, and politics, whereas males were more interested in technology, government and politics, and business. This is compatible with previous studies that found significant differences between males and females regarding media consumption behaviors (Rosentiel, 2008). Young Saudis use smartphones heavily to obtain news and access social media platforms almost every day. This is compatible with a study by Shearer (2021), who found that most adults access news using smartphones, especially young adults.

Limitations

The first limitation of the study is that it was conducted among college students at one university in Saudi Arabia. Examining news consumption across a broader range of young adults from different colleges and universities and in different regions, for instance, may provide more valuable data about how young Saudis, in general, consume news. The second limitation is that the study sample does not represent all Saudi youths; thus, the results cannot be generalized to the whole population. College students may have different characteristics and social classes from other Saudi youths. Therefore, future research should conduct a simple random sampling and explore news consumption habits among a larger and more diverse sample of Saudi youths. The third limitation is the use of an online survey, which may have overlooked young adults who do not use the internet and rely on other media platforms to get news. Other studies could use mixed-method research, like an online survey and focus groups, to obtain in-depth details about the topic of study. The fourth limitation is that this study mainly focused on how young Saudis use traditional and social media when consuming the news rather than why. Future studies may build upon this study's findings and examine why young Saudis consume news through traditional and social media.

CONCLUSION

This study unveiled significant patterns in how young Saudis consume news through traditional and social media. Most young Saudis rely heavily on social media to obtain their news using their smartphones but question the credibility of news on social media. Engagement with traditional media is declining among the younger generations, but they perceive it as more credible. Significant gender differences are evident in how Saudi males and females consume news.

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