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Original Article

INFORMATION INTEGRITY AND PUBLIC TRUST IN DIGITAL NEWS PLATFORMS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF ONLINE NEWS CONSUMPTION AND CREDIBILITY

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ABSTRACT

With the digitalization in the world, the access to consume information from digital and social media platforms have become cheap and easier. Now every household have smart phones from where they access any sort of information. With cheaper data and smart phone people devote more time on social media platforms as compare to TV or newspapers. However, there are serious concerns about information integrity and public trust in the wake of the widespread dissemination of disinformation, misleading headlines, unreliable sources, and AI-generated content.This research study examines the relationship between public trust in digital news platforms and information integrity.The study focuses on key aspects of information integrity, including information reliability, accuracy, source credibility, verification, transparency, and completeness of context.An empirical survey methodology has been utilized which features a standardized questionnaire comprising a total of eight assertions that have been calculated against a five-point Likert scale.An exemplary sample of 200 respondents was taken into consideration so as to illustrate the analytical framework.The results demonstrate that when it comes to evaluating digital news, respondents place a strong emphasis on source reliability, fact-checking, accuracy, and transparency.Moreover, the study demonstrates that users' level of trust in digital news platforms as well as their inclination to rely on such platforms for news consumption are strongly correlated with the perceived information integrity. This research paper concludes with the result that there is need to boost the public trust in the digital ecosystem by encouraging people to verify content, transparency of source and promoting digital media literacy.

Keywords: Information Integrity, Public Trust, Digital News, Online Journalism, News Credibility, Misinformation, Digital Media

INTRODUCTION

The traditional news environment has undergone a dramatic change due to the digital transformation of journalism. Newspapers, radio, and television are no longer the only ways through which people may consume news. Modern audiences now view news articles on digital news websites, smartphone applications, and social networking platforms, watch videos on video-sharing platforms, and read news aggregators. A news piece's speed, accessibility, interactivity, and ability to transcend geographical boundaries are its primary advantages. However, the same qualities that provide digital platforms with their own advantages present challenges to information integrity. It only takes a few seconds for an individual to create, edit, and publish, and disseminate news articles. Large audiences may be reached by false information, deceptive headlines, altered images, misinformation, disinformation, and artificially created content in this setting.

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The extent to which information is correct, genuine, trustworthy, transparent, well contextualized, and based on dependable sources is referred to as information integrity. Information integrity in journalism is directly linked to professional values including accountability, transparency, impartiality, accuracy, and verification. Flanagin and Metzger (2000). The ability of the journalism field to sustain itself depends in part on public trust. Audiences may be prompted to use and rely on news platforms when they believe that the information is reliable, transparent, accurate, and credible. On the other hand, audiences may lose trust in digital media if they are exposed to false or misleading information. As a consequence of this, research on the connection between public trust and information integrity has gained significance in modern mass communication and journalism. Newman et al. (2025). This paper seeks to analyze consumer perceptions of information integrity in digital news platforms as well as determine the relationships between these views and their level of trust in online news.

MOTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is:

To study the link between information integrity and public trust in digital news platforms, with particular reference to accuracy, source credibility, verification, transparency, and reliability of online news.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has the following objectives:

1) To investigate how audiences view the dependability and correctness of information found on digital news outlets.
2) To evaluate how crucial source credibility is to building online news trust.
3) To investigate how audiences see digital news providers' fact-checking and verification procedures.
4) To examine how openness affects public confidence in digital journalism.
5) To determine how much audience trust is impacted by false or misleading information.
6) To assess users' general degree of confidence in online news sources.
7) To determine the key elements affecting the public's trust in digital news.
8) To investigate the relationship between public trust in digital news outlets and perceived information integrity.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are the focus of this study:

RQ1: What impressions do viewers have of the veracity and correctness of material found on digital news platforms?

RQ2: How does the trustworthiness of a source affect the growth of confidence in online news?

RQ3: Does the public's perception of fact-checking and verification affect their level of trust in digital news?

RQ4: What is the impact of openness on audience confidence in digital journalism?

RQ5: Does public trust in digital news outlets correlate with perceived information integrity?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The current study examines public views of information integrity and trust in digital news sources using a quantitative explanatory research methodology.

AREA OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in Jammu and Kashmir. The study area includes respondents who reside in or have ties to the greater region of Jammu & Kashmir.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

People who regularly obtain their news from online news portals, news websites, mobile applications, social media platforms, and other online news sources comprise this group.

SAMPLE SIZE

For the study, 200 respondents were chosen.

Sample Size (N) = 200

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

In this study purposive sampling is done. On the basis of objective, purposively respondents were selected. People who consume news through digital platforms were the respondents selected for the sampling. Vosoughi et al. (2018). This was the appropriate sampling for the study because people who have experience can give us the better feedback with accuracy, transparency and trust.

DATA COLLECTION

Structured questionnaire was used to gather the main data. In this questionnaire eight declarations related to people trust in digital news portals and information integrity was considered.

A five-point Likert scale was used:

Scale	Response
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neutral
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected information may be examined by descriptive statistical techniques, including:

- Frequency
- Percentage
- Mean

Q.No	Statement
Q1	Digital news platforms generally provide accurate information
Q2	I consider the credibility of the source before trusting online news.
Q3	Fact-checking and verification increase my trust in digital news.
Q4	Digital news platforms should clearly disclose the sources of their information.
Q5	Transparency about corrections and errors increases my confidence in a news platform.
Q6	Misleading headlines and unverified information reduce my trust in digital news platforms.
Q7	I consider reliable digital news platforms an important source of information.
Q8	Overall, I trust digital news platforms that consistently maintain information integrity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the present era of digitalization, excess to information or news on digital and social media platform have become easy but with this trend of fake news is also very common. People cannot easily differentiate between real vs fake content. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017). So information integrity and public trust have becomes important topics for research.

In the current digital news landscape, public trust and information integrity have become significant research topics. The quick development of social media, search engines, smartphone apps, and online news platforms has altered how people obtain and assess news. Concerns about false information, the reliability of sources, verification, transparency, and algorithmic distribution have also presented journalists with new difficulties.

Tandoc et al. (2018) investigated the idea of "fake news" and created a typology of academic definitions. Their research showed that fake content can be presented in many ways, such as satire, manipulation, created content and false information. Because it emphasizes how people struggle to discern between trustworthy journalism and problematic digital content, the study is pertinent to information integrity.

Krishnan (2026) The Digital News Report 2026 revealed additional developments in India's digital news landscape. According to the report, 39% of Indian respondents believed news in general, while 58% relied on YouTube for news. It also emphasized the expanding usage of AI in news production as well as the growing significance of independent journalists and news producers. The transparency of sources, editorial protections, authenticity, and audience confidence in digitally disseminated news are all called into doubt by these developments. Wardle and Derakhshan (2017).

Additionally, a new line of research in India has started looking at the issues of trustworthiness related to digital transformation. In their analysis of the evolution of India's news landscape, Sharma and Kumar (2026) contended that worries about

false information, sensationalism, ideological influences, and journalistic trustworthiness have coincided with the growth of algorithm-driven digital platforms. According to their research, worries about dwindling ethical standards and reliability can coexist with the pace and accessibility of digital journalism.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1

Table 1 Demographic Data

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	112	56%
	Female	88	44%
Age	18-25	62	31%
	26-35	71	35.5%
	36-45	39	19.5%
	Above 46	28	14%
Daily Digital News Consumption	Less than 1 hour	32	16%
	1–2 hours	78	39%
	2–3 hours	55	27.5%
	More than 3 hours	35	17.5%

Chart 1 (A)

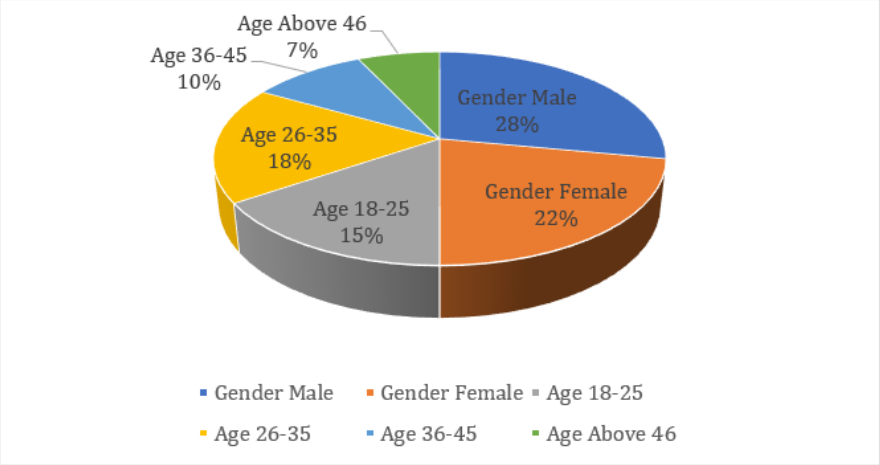
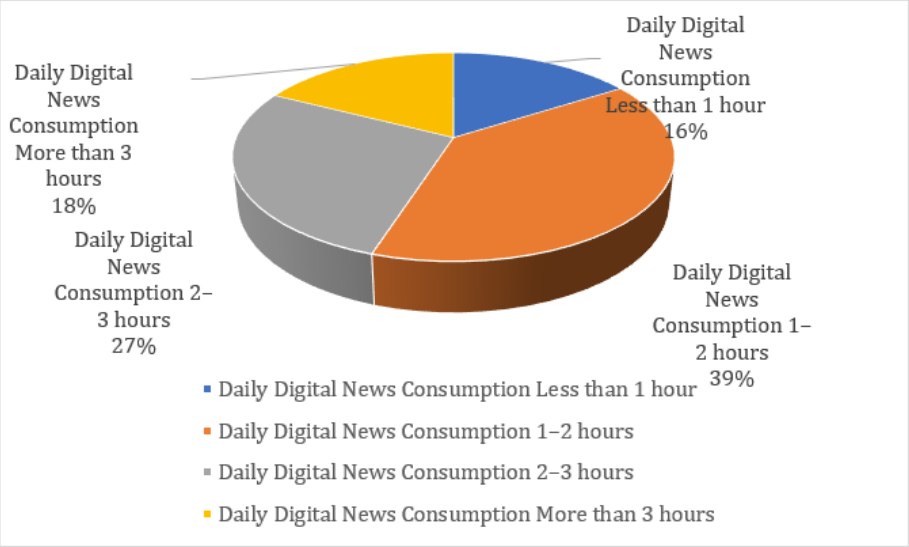


Chart 1 (B)



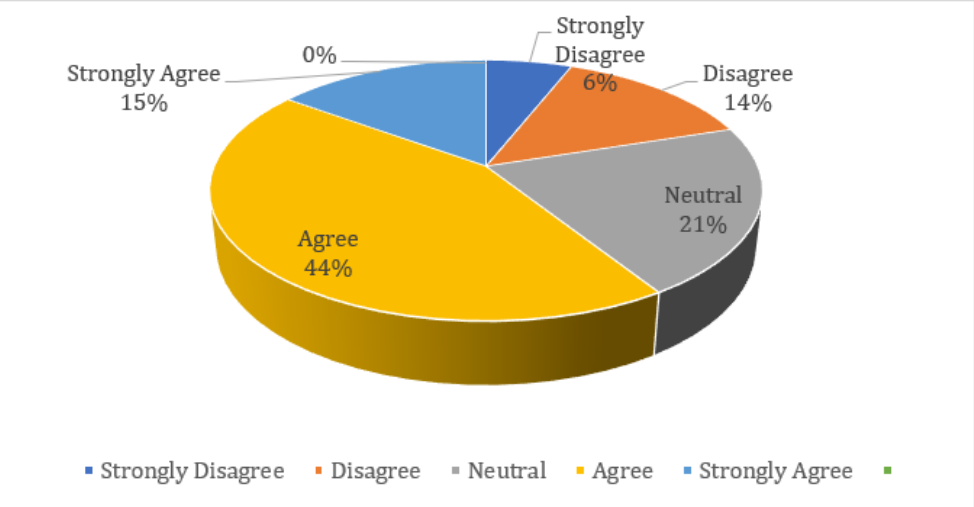
The Table 1 indicates that a substantial proportion of respondents regularly consume news through digital platforms. The 26–35 age group represents the largest category in the sample.

Q1. Digital news platforms generally provide accurate information.

Table 2

Response	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	12	6%
Disagree	28	14%
Neutral	42	21%
Agree	88	44%
Strongly Agree	30	15%
Total	200	100

Chart 2



Mean Score = 3.48

Interpretation

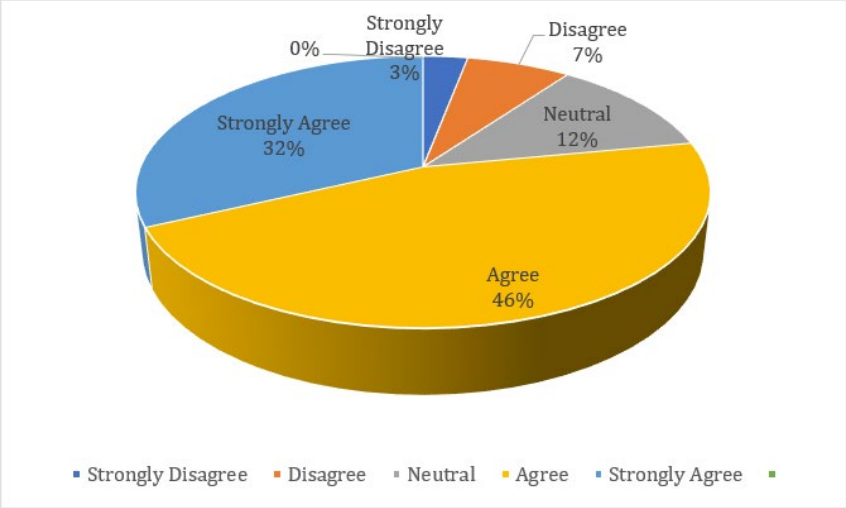
The Table 2 indicates that 59% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that digital news platforms generally provide accurate information. On the other hand, 21% respondents remained neutral, while 20% expressed disagreement. This means majority of people believe on digital news as accurate and less amount of percentage consider information or news on digital platform doubtful about accuracy.

Q2. I consider the credibility of the source before trusting online news.

Table 3

Response	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	6	3%
Disagree	14	7%
Neutral	24	12%
Agree	92	46%
Strongly Agree	64	32%
Total	200	100

Chart 3



Mean Score = 3.97

Interpretation

According to the Table 3 it shows that78% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that source credibility is taken into account before believing on online news. This results shows that source credibility is an important part of information assessment in the digital environment.

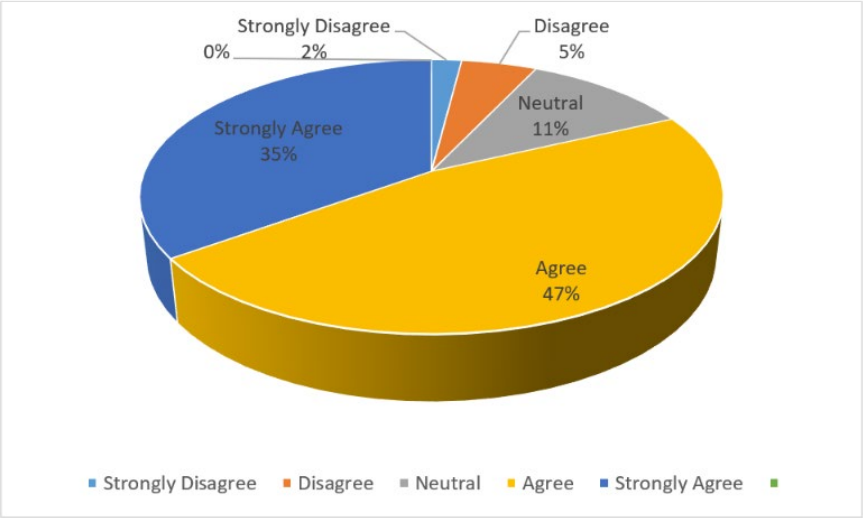
Q3. Fact-checking and verification increase my trust in digital news.

Table 4

Response	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	4	2%
Disagree	10	5%
Neutral	22	11%
Agree	94	47%

Strongly Agree	70	35%
Total	200	100

Chart 4



Mean Score = 4.08

Interpretation

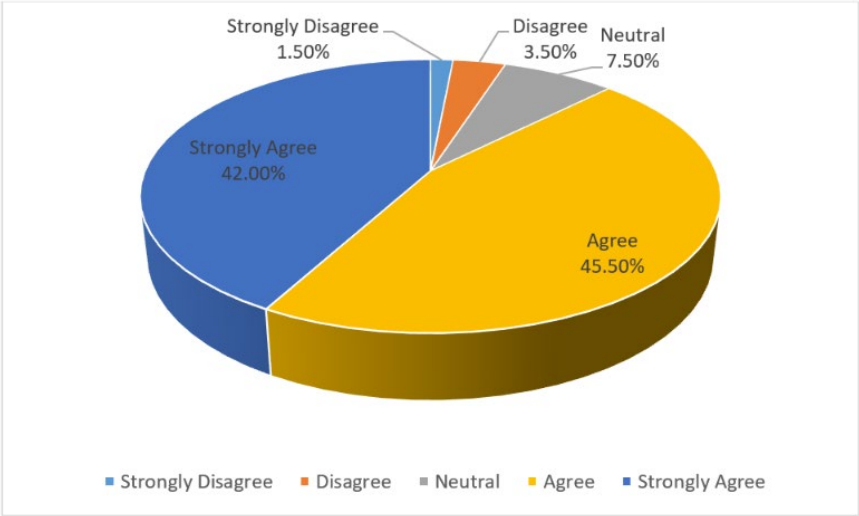
In this Table 4, 82% of people agreed or strongly agreed that by doing fact-checking and verification it increases people trust in digital news. This makes obvious that there is importance of verification method in sustaining the information integrity.

Q4. Digital news platforms should clearly disclose the sources of their information.

Table 5

Response	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	3	1.5%
Disagree	7	3.5%
Neutral	15	7.5%
Agree	91	45.5
Strongly Agree	84	42%
Total	200	100

Chart 5



Mean Score = 4.24

Interpretation

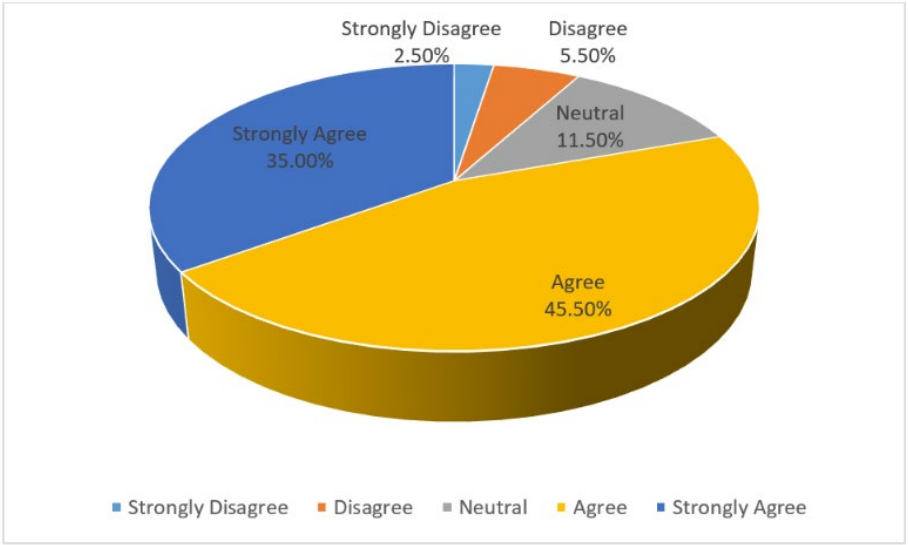
87.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that sources of information should be clearly disclosed by news platforms. The findings in the Table 5 indicates the importance of source transparency by respondents.

Q5. Transparency about corrections and errors increases my confidence in a news platform.

Table 6

Response	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	5	2.5%
Disagree	11	5.5%
Neutral	23	11.5%
Agree	91	45.5%
Strongly Agree	70	35%
Total	200	100

Chart 6



Mean Score = 4.05

Interpretation

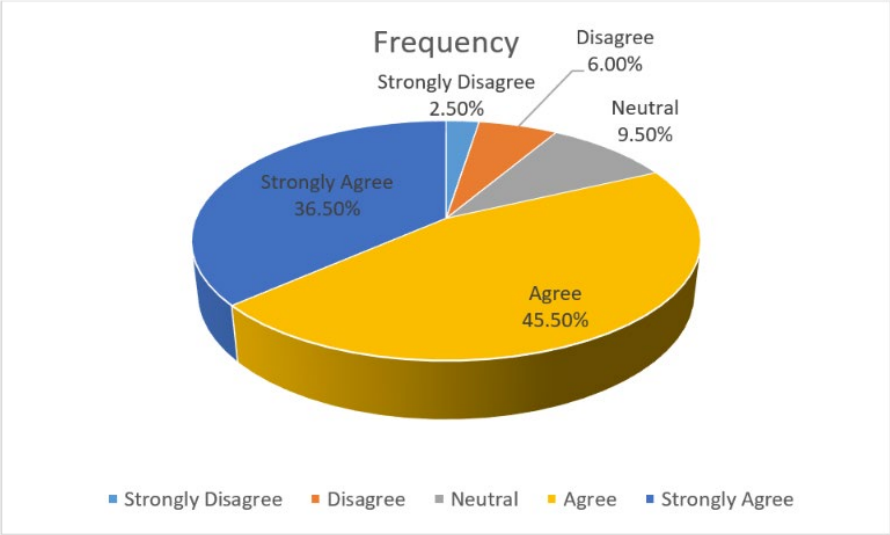
In this Table 6, findings shows that 80.5% of people agreed or strongly agreed that if there is transparency in the corrections and errors that result in their confidence. This shows that in the awareness of information integrity, responsibility and practice of correction plays an important role.

Q6. Misleading headlines and unverified information reduce my trust in digital news platforms.

Table 7

Response	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	5	2.5%
Disagree	12	6%
Neutral	19	9.5%
Agree	91	45.5%
Strongly Agree	73	36.5%
Total	200	100

Chart 7



Mean Score = 4.08

Interpretation

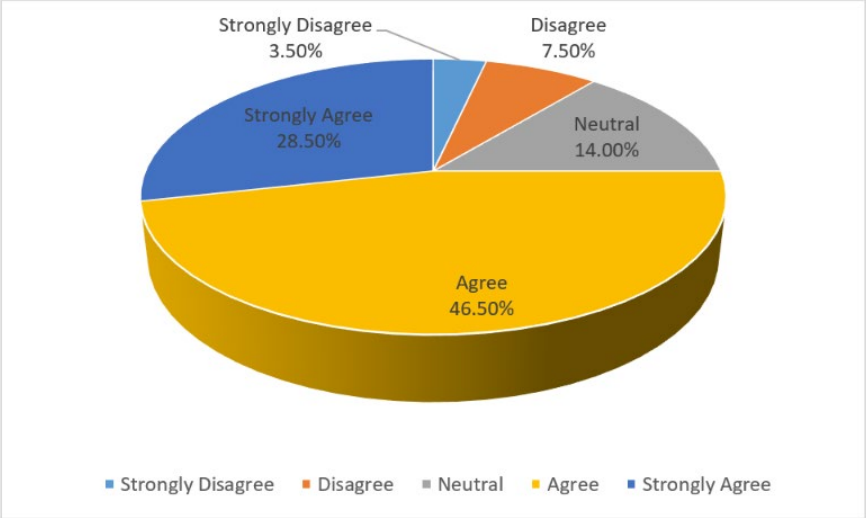
In this Table 7 it shows that 82% of people agreed or strongly agreed that their trust is reduced due to misleading content and unverified information. This study shows that if people encounter misleading content again and again it will result in negative impact on credibility of digital news.

Q7. I consider reliable digital news platforms an important source of information.

Table 8

Response	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	7	3.5%
Disagree	15	7.5%
Neutral	28	14%
Agree	93	46.5%
Strongly Agree	57	28.5%
Total	200	100

Chart 8



Mean Score = 3.89

Interpretation

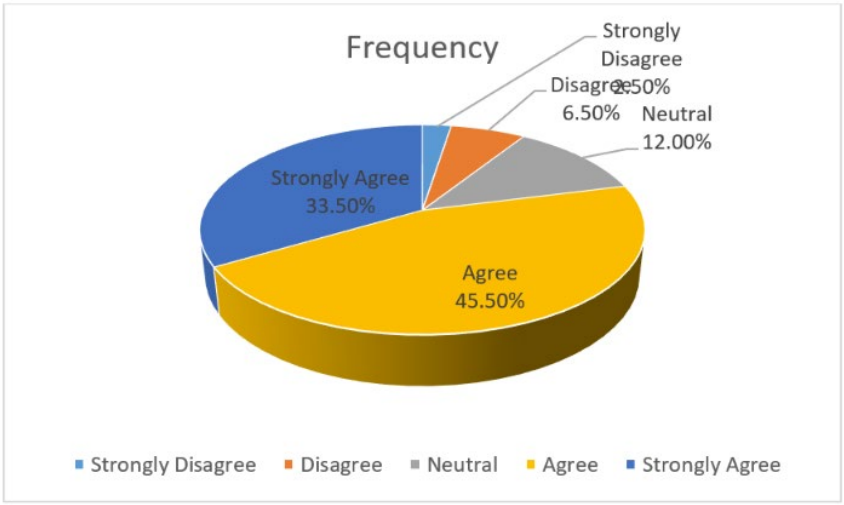
The findings in the Table 8 shows that 75% people agreed or strongly agreed that trust worthy digital news portals is important sources of information. The findings reveal that there is continuous importance of online news in contemporary information consumption.

Q8. Overall, I trust digital news platforms that consistently maintain information integrity.

Table 9

Response	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	5	2.5%
Disagree	13	6.5%
Neutral	24	12%
Agree	91	45.5
Strongly Agree	67	33.5
Total	200	100

Chart 9



Mean Score = 4.03

Interpretation

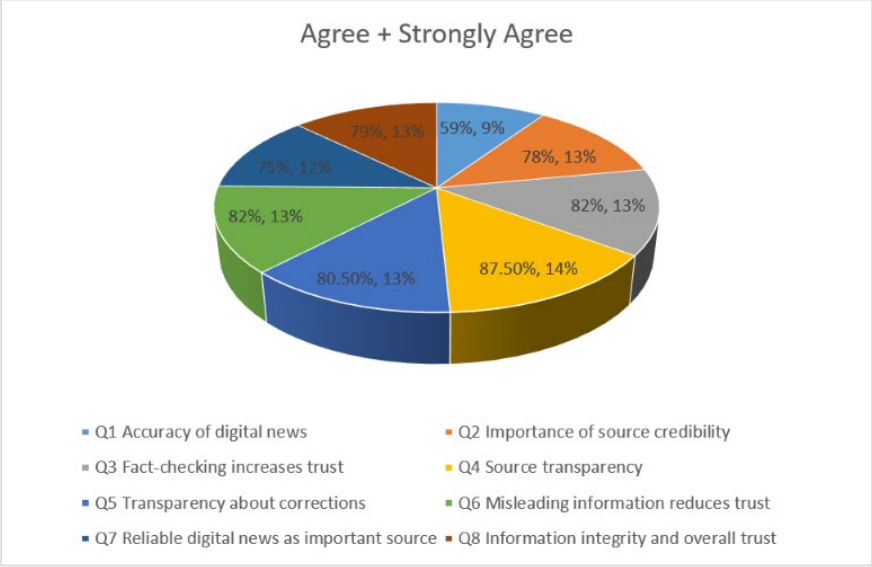
79% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they only trust on online news portals that continuously maintain the information integrity. The findings in the Table 9 directly supports the central intention of the study that apparent information integrity is strongly connected with public trust.

CONSOLIDATED ANALYSIS

Table 10

Question	Agree + Strongly Agree	Mean
Q1 Accuracy of digital news	59%	3.48
Q2 Importance of source credibility	78%	3.97
Q3 Fact-checking increases trust	82%	4.08
Q4 Source transparency	87.5%	4.24
Q5 Transparency about corrections	80.5%	4.05
Q6 Misleading information reduces trust	82%	4.08
Q7 Reliable digital news as important source	75%	3.89
Q8 Information integrity and overall trust	79%	4.03

Chart 10



OVERALL OBSERVATION

At 87.5%, source transparency had the highest level of conformity, followed by (82%) fact-checking and verification and negative impact of fake content on confidence (82%). The statement concerning the accuracy of digital news platforms overall had the lowest agreement at 59%. The fact that a substantially lower percentage of respondents agreed with the statement compared to others indicates that although people may be inclined towards online news, they are often skeptical about the accuracy of the information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion of the example survey analysis are as under

1) Accuracy is a must but rarely expected. Although 59% of the respondent's believed that Internet news sites typically provide accurate information, there is clearly an element of skepticism towards digital news in general.

2) Reliability is crucial when it comes to information. 78% of respondents would assess the reliability of the source before trusting any online news. 3. Verification helps build trust in digital news. As many as 82% of respondents agreed that fact-checking and verification improve the trustworthiness of digital news platforms.
3) Source transparency is important to most people. The disclosure of sources was the most positively accepted statement with 87.5% agreeing with its importance.
4) Corrective transparency also plays a significant role in building trust. 80.5% of respondents agreed that openness and honesty when rectifying mistakes increased their level of trust in a digital news outlet.
5) False information decreases trust in digital news. 82% of respondents agreed that false information and deceptive headlines make them less confident in digital news.
6) Internet news is an essential source of information. As much as 75% of respondents consider reliable online news sites to be an important source of information.
7) Trust in online news is dependent on information integrity.

DISCUSSION

The results suggest that the public evaluates digital news applying a variety of criteria instead of relying solely on the reputation of a news organization, and that information integrity comprises multiple areas. Emphasis was placed on the significance of source reliability, which suggests that the public does not necessarily consider all information on the internet to be equal.

The positive reception of fact-checking and verification demonstrates the perceived value of professional journalistic procedures. It was most crucial to be transparent. Respondents strongly supported source disclosure and correctional transparency. This suggests that viewers may value the ability to see how news is produced and updated in addition to receiving accurate information. Viewers are, however, cautious, evidenced by the slightly lower agreement on the accuracy of general internet news. While doubting the validity of particular items of information, digital users could still rely on online news. Thus, the results uncover that the availability of information is not the sole factor influencing the public's confidence in digital journalism. Rather, the viewer's trust is associated with sources, verifications, presentations, corrections, and contextualizations of information.

CONCLUSION

Access to information has grown as a consequence of the transition to digital journalism, but information integrity has additional hurdles. This paper's current study explored the relationship between public trust in digital news platforms and information integrity. The results of the aforementioned survey suggest that when analyzing internet news, audiences value accuracy, source credibility, verification, transparency, and accountability. The strongest agreement was expressed with source openness, while false information and misleading headlines were noted as key factors influencing trust. According to the report, maintaining information integrity is essential to maintaining audience trust as well as a professional obligation for digital news companies. Rigorous fact-checking, transparent source, clearly defined separation between news and opinion, contextual reporting, apparent correction rules, and responsible use of AI-generated or AI-assisted material are all strategies for enhancing information integrity in digital news organizations. Moreover, increasing audiences' digital and media literacy could help users evaluate sources and identify potentially fake material.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1) The survey design based on sample size of 200 respondents should be replaced by field data.
2) The study capacity for generalization can be restricted by the convenience sample approach
3) This study mainly focuses on audience perceptions rather than examine individual news content.
4) Digital news consumption patterns can be influenced by factors such as age, occupation, education, location and consumption of internet.
5) Future studies can include the content analysis and interviews with journalists, educators and experts in digital media.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study can be expanded upon by research scholars by investigating:

- News and information generated by AI
- Behavior of youth regarding fact-checking
- Information exposure and Social media algorithms
- The accurateness of information related to election

- The knowledge of Digital media and to encounter misinformation
- The reliability of News website as compared to versus social media news
- Visual misinformation: deepfakes and photographs

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