

The Significance of Local News Sources for Libyan Students: A Case Study of Tripoli University



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Abstract

This study seeks to identify the main local news sources used by students and to determine which of these are considered the most important. It also aims to measure and evaluate the perceived trustworthiness of these sources, as well as to investigate the key factors influencing students' preferences for local news outlets. The study further explores the reasons behind choosing specific media—whether television, radio, print, or new digital platforms, particularly social media—as primary sources of local news.

The Study

The study sought to measure the extent of students' reliance on each type of media, the importance of following local issues, and their preferred types of news (political,

sports, cultural). It employed the Uses and Gratifications framework to understand the motives for media use, patterns of trust and verification, in addition to addressing the technological transformation that has made new media a major competitor to traditional media.

The study was carried out using the field survey method, through a questionnaire distributed to a stratified representative sample of university students. The sample size was 78 respondents. The analytical tools included descriptive statistics, which showed that the average reliance on new media was (3.8), far higher than traditional media (2.3). This indicates a convergence of students' opinions about the superiority of digital media in

providing local news quickly and effectively.

Keywords: Local news, university students, traditional media, digital media, social media.

* Introduction

Media is considered one of the fundamental pillars in transmitting information and news and shaping public opinion, particularly in societies undergoing continuous political and social transformations. With the rapid technological advancements of the last two decades, the nature of media and patterns of news consumption have undergone radical changes. A large segment of the audience has shifted from reliance on traditional media—such as print press, radio, and television—to digital media and social networking platforms.

University students are at the heart of these transformations, as they represent a youth group characterized by adaptability to modern technologies, awareness of the importance of following local and international news, and interest in community and political issues that affect their daily lives. However, the relationship between students and local news sources, the degree of their reliance on traditional versus new media, and the types of news they prefer remain in need of precise

academic study that sheds light on their patterns of information consumption.

The study aimed to identify the most important local news sources among students at the University of Tripoli, measure their reliance on traditional versus new media, and analyze the types of news they prefer and the importance of following local issues. The study also seeks to provide a scientific understanding that enriches media studies in Libya and offers a knowledge base to help develop local media in line with the needs of young students.

* Problem Statement

In recent years, the media environment has undergone a significant transformation due to rapid technological developments and the rise of new media, especially social networking platforms, which have become strong competitors to traditional media such as radio, television, and print press in transmitting news and information.

One of the advantages of new media is that it gives audiences greater freedom and flexibility to choose what news to follow and when, as noted by McAdam and Hess (2024): “The digital environment allows people to engage with local news without being physically present and enables reporters to

produce news from ‘anywhere.’”
McAdam, A., & Hess, K. (2024).

The shift toward new media has created many advantages, but it has also generated drawbacks and problems, particularly when it comes to fake news, rumors, and similar issues.

This shift has raised many questions about the extent to which university students—as a segment of the youth population—rely on different media to follow local news, their level of interest in local issues, and the types of news they prefer.

Given the lack of sufficient studies on this phenomenon in the Libyan context, there is a clear need for an academic investigation that explores the most relied-upon local news sources among University of Tripoli students, and the relative importance of traditional and new media in shaping their awareness of local events and issues.

*** Importance of the Study**

This study derives its academic significance from its contribution to filling a knowledge gap regarding the behavior of Libyan university youth toward local news sources, in light of rapid technological changes and the emergence of digital media and social networks.

It also provides a scientific perspective on the relationship

between students’ use of traditional and new media and their reliance on them to follow local issues, as well as the types of news they prefer.

*** Objectives of the Study**

Every scientific study seeks to achieve specific objectives to answer research questions and fulfill its main purpose. This study aimed to: -

- 1- Identify the most important sources of local news among University of Tripoli students.
- 2- Measure the level of reliance on traditional media versus new media.
- 3- Determine the types of local news most followed by students (political, sports, or cultural).

*** Previous Studies**

1- Libya and News Media: Production and Consumption Media news.(2)

This study highlighted the importance of satellite channels in providing Libyan audiences with news. It extensively addressed the structure and development of Libyan media and its institutions. It also examined student news consumption and the role of different media outlets in delivering local news. Results showed that around half of respondents (46%) follow local news through television, 20% through radio, about 10% through newspapers, 13% rely on friends, and 10% rely on family as a source.

2- University Students' Use of Social Media and Its Impact on other media .(3)

Conducted on a sample of 443 students from Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca and the University of Business and Technology in Jeddah, this descriptive (survey-based) study found that social media platforms ranked first among sources of news and information, followed by satellite channels, online newspapers, radio stations, and finally print newspapers. Results showed a noticeable decline in reliance on traditional media, with statistically significant differences between the two universities studied.

3- Motivations for Using Twitter by Libyan University Students to Obtain Political Information and Resulting Gratifications. (4)

This study explored students' motivations for using Twitter to access political information and the gratifications obtained. Results showed that Twitter enhanced students' political and social awareness, helped them follow and discuss political developments, and could contribute to reconciliation, development, security, and promoting fair elections in Libya.

4- Attitudes of Libyan University Youth Toward Online Journalism. (5)

This study examined the reading habits of Libyan university students regarding online newspapers, their trust in them, and the degree of interaction with their content. Conducted on 300 students (117 males, 183 females), the study revealed a growing reliance on online newspapers as a primary source of information compared to print newspapers. It also showed that students valued online newspapers for their speed and interactivity.

5- The Localization of Global News Brands and the Symbolic Power of CNN in Latin America by Pablo Sebastian Morales. (6)

I also refer to the study by Morales (2024), which examines local news in Latin America. It focuses on CNN, exploring its symbolic power and the impact and contributions of its localized channels on the media systems and journalism cultures in Chile and Brazil. The study is based on 34 semi-structured interviews with both established and trainee journalists working for CNN and other news media in these countries.

Comments on Previous studies: -

Previous research forms a cornerstone for any academic inquiry. For the current study, they provided valuable theoretical foundations, helped identify research gaps. (7) (e.g., lack of focus on local news sources and comparative reliance on traditional vs. digital media in Libya), and informed the development of objectives, questions, and methodology.

*** Research Questions**

- 1- What are the main sources of local news relied upon by University of Tripoli students?
- 2- To what extent do students rely on traditional media (radio, television, newspapers) for following local news?
- 3- To what extent do students rely on new media (social networking platforms, online news sites) for following local news?
- 4- What factors influence students' choices of local news sources?

*** Population and Sample**

- 1- The study population consisted of University of Tripoli students from all faculties and specializations. They represent an important youth segment characterized by academic awareness and interest in local issues, and form a primary audience for both traditional and new media.
- 2- The sample included 78 students selected through stratified random

sampling, ensuring representation across faculties and disciplines. The questionnaire was distributed randomly to capture diverse opinions and patterns of media use.

*** Methodology**

The study employed the descriptive-analytical method, suitable for describing students' media consumption behaviors, analyzing their reliance on various news sources (traditional and digital), and exploring relationships between these patterns and other variables. (8)

*** Theoretical Framework**

Since the early 2000s, the world has witnessed a radical transformation in information flow. The internet and smartphones created open platforms for communication and news dissemination, reducing reliance on traditional media and fostering an interactive communication environment characterized by speed and constant information flow. (9)

The study adopts the Uses and Gratifications approach, which assumes that audiences are active and choose media that satisfy their cognitive, social, and entertainment needs—making it essential to understand students' motivations for following local news.

* **Technological Transformation in Media**

In the past two decades, audiences have shifted away from print, radio, and television toward online news and social networks. Consumers are no longer passive but active participants in producing and sharing news. (10) This transformation is most evident among young people, especially university students, who increasingly rely on digital platforms for both local and international news.

* **Traditional Media**

Traditional media still retain credibility among many individuals, especially for local news coverage. In Libya, traditional media continue to play an important role, particularly during times of crisis. (11) Print newspapers, radio, and television remain long-standing institutions that have shaped public opinion for decades. Despite declining reliance in favor of digital media, they still hold relative credibility for major issues

* **New Media and Social Media**

With rapid technological development and widespread internet access, new media and social networks have become an integral part of students' lives. Online news sites, blogs, podcasts, and platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are increasingly

preferred. They provide immediacy, interactivity, and personalization, allowing students to follow news that matches their interests and share it with peers. (12)

Studies show that university youth clearly prefer these platforms as primary sources for local news compared to traditional one-way communication channels.

* **Presentation and Discussion of Findings**

The following section presents the results of this study, illustrated in the tables below: -

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Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	42	53.8%
Female	36	46.2%
Total	78	100%

Table 1 shows that the sample is almost evenly distributed between males and females, with males comprising 53.8% and females 46.2%. This balanced distribution enhances the credibility of the findings for both genders.

Table 2. Reliance on Local News Sources

Source	High reliance	Medium reliance	Low reliance	Percentage
TV	25	30	25	78%
Radio	10	25	10	78%
Print Media	8	20	8	78%
Social media	40	28	40	78%
Electronic Media sources	35	30	35	78%

Table 2 highlights that social media and online news websites are the most relied-upon sources among students, with 40 respondents reporting high reliance on social media and 35 on online news websites. In contrast, traditional media (television, radio, print press) showed medium to low levels of reliance. These results point to a clear shift toward digital media as the primary means of following local news

Table 3. Preferred Types of Local News

Type of News	Frequency	Percentage
Political	38	48.7%
sports	20	25.6%
cultural	12	15.4%
social	8	10.3%
Total	78	100%

The table (3) shows that political news tops the list of interests at 48.7%, followed by sports news at 25.6%, with cultural and social news at lower percentages. This focus on political news reflects students' interest in local social and political

issues, indicating their awareness of matters affecting their environment.

Table 4. Sample Evaluations of the Pursuing of Local News

Value	frequency	Percentage
Very important	32	41%
Relatively important	30	38.5%
Less Significant	10	12.8%
Not important	6	7.7%
Total	78	100%

According to Table 4, most students consider following local news to be very important or somewhat important (79.5% combined). This finding indicates students' awareness of the significance of staying informed about local issues and their impact on daily life.

Table 5 the main sources of local news

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	22	28.2%
Official websites	12	15.38%
Tv channels	11	14.10%
Radio	9	11.53%
Friends &relatives	24	30.76%
Total	78	100%

Table 5 shows that a high percentage of people get local news from relatives and friends, which means that personal communication is quite a reliable source of news. On the other hand, social media and official websites, such as institutional and governmental websites, are also

among the main sources of local news.

Table 6. Comparison of Reliance on Traditional vs. New Media

Type of Media	Mean reliance	Standard deviation
Traditional media	2.3	0.9
New media	3.8	0.7

Note: 1 = low reliance, 2 = medium, 3 = high, 4 = very high.

Table 6 shows that the average reliance on new media (3.8) is much higher than on traditional media (2.3), with a relatively low standard deviation. This indicates broad consensus among students regarding the superiority of digital media in providing local news quickly and effectively. Overall, the results reveal that respondents rely more heavily on new media (social media and online news websites) than on traditional media.

* Study Findings

The shift toward digital media has in fact created a set of new challenges. While it has provided speed, diversity, and greater audience control over what news and information to consume or ignore, this transformation has also raised issues related to heavy reliance on social media platforms, which are often fraught with risks and concerns regarding the quality and credibility of news. Moreover, it has fragmented

audiences into different groups united only by specific interests, while the kind of media that once gathered large masses around official sources—such as traditional linear media controlled by the state—has largely disappeared.

The historical roots of this transformation in Libya can be traced to the study by Ibrahim Ali Omar on news reception in Libya, which documented the early stages of the public's shift toward foreign media, new media, and social networking platform. (13)

From this study, we can draw several important conclusions that reflect students' patterns of reliance on local news sources and the nature of their media interests.

- 1- The results showed that students rely more heavily on new media (social media and online news websites) than on traditional media (television, radio, print press).
- 2- A total of 79.5% of students considered following local news very important or somewhat important, reflecting strong awareness of the importance of local issues and their impact on daily life.
- 3- Political news was the most followed category at 48.7%, followed by sports (25.6%), with cultural and social news ranking lower.

4- The study revealed medium to low reliance on traditional media, with television maintaining a relatively higher position compared to print press and radio, though still less than digital platforms.

5- Respondents tended to assign greater trust to new media and online news websites for following local news, despite the continued relative credibility of traditional media in covering major issues.

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