

NEWS CONSUMPTION HABITS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

Siti Suriani Othman¹, Liana Mat Nayan², Kartini Kamaruzzaman³, Aruna Raj Devarajoo

¹Communication Programme, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia

²Department of Public Relations, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Perak

³New Media Communication Programme, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia

⁴Department of Public Relations, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Perak

Corresponding author: 1ssuriani3979@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The way of reading news has evolved especially since the advent of the internet. Reading news from printed newspapers has long been abandoned and the majority of the world's population today reads through gadgets. This study examines students from three public universities in Malaysia which are Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) and Xiamen University Malaysia (XMUM) in terms of interest in reading news and methods of reading. The students were randomly selected in this study and the selection universities are also by simple random sampling. Result showing that the majority of students do not read the news very often but if they do, they read it through a gadget. Meanwhile, international students tend to read news about their country of origin when continuing their studies in Malaysia.

Keyword: *News, Reading, Gadget, Students*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Readers come in all ages, which can be categorized from light readers to bookworms. According to survey, mainly reading habits are usually reflected based on the number of contents being read, the frequency of reading and the average time spent on reading by a person (Wagner, 2002). In recent times, it appears especially young adults' reading interest is decreasing and the motive of their reading is not the same as before. If you have a strong reading habit, definitely you will read frequently. In fact, the younger generation admitting the truth out loud saying they will only read the materials in line with their interest. Generally, developing a steady reading habit out of their academic requirements is known as developing a reading culture. You can be considered as having a reading culture if you read books in a routine manner and other resources like periodicals that are not strictly necessary for you to progress in your field (Ogunbodede & Sawyer-George, 2023).

The term newspaper has now been replaced by online news or electronic news but the purpose of reading the latter is the same, which is to keep us informed about the changes and updates in the world outside. Based on more the latest Newman et al (2023), it is clearly identified, how this shift is strongly influenced by habits of the youngest generations, who have grown up with social media and at the present time even to get news information they often pay more attention to influencers or celebrities than journalists. This study focuses on university students fundamentally to investigate the methods of news consumption among university students in Malaysia. One of the interesting facts found by this study is that 92% of the students admitted reading news from smart phone and confirming the shift from newspaper to online news.

1.1 Media Consumption Habits

Habits reflect automatic behavior tendencies developed during the past history of the individual, such that particular stimuli elicit the behavior even when the individual does not instruct himself or herself to perform it (Limayem & Hirt, 2003). Thus, media habits are developed by repeating media consumption behavior that is primarily goal directed (LaRose, 2010). Each repetition of media consumption behavior increases habit strength and with it the likelihood of future usage (Landis et al., 1978). Then, as habit strength increases, conscious control, predicated on consideration of the expected outcomes (or gratification expectations) of media behavior, decreases (LaRose et al., 2003).

Meanwhile, with the development of technology and Internet, the media consumption habits of people around the world also have been changed drastically (Miraru et al., 2019). In today's plural media environment, audiences are confronted with even wider choices of platforms that are used simultaneously and concurrently (Nee & Dozier, 2017). Within these platforms, media content converges between traditional and online media and across online platforms such as YouTube and social networking sites (Nggangashe, et al., 2022). Due to this convergence, variety media consumption habits can be seen through some of the trends that happening in the current environment of society.

One of the obvious changes in media consumption habits is the media users use certain media only to get certain desired information. A trend has been observed that the public has increasingly started turning to online media environments to retrieve scientific information. Although video is not a new format for communicating about science, video-sharing platforms have democratized the process, and individuals who wish to share information or ideas about science can use these platforms to connect with potentially large and diverse audiences (Rosenthal, 2020). Librarians from Purdue University also found that students wanted nearly all types of content from the libraries on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, but they did not want to receive business news or content related to library resources on Snapchat (Howard, et al, 2018). This result might be due to as what has been found by other studies which indicated that individuals utilized Snapchat more for fun, convenience, passing time, self-expression, and relationship maintenance (Zhang, et al, 2022).

Another media consumption habits found is the application of both new media and traditional media in handling unexpected sudden events. For example, in the study regarding the pandemic of COVID 19, it was found that news media, including online, social, and television, that offer faster and more immediate coverage experienced the increase while for example popular press experienced a decrease and this pattern might be attributed to the fact that the press did not keep pace with a pandemic that unfolded rapidly (Van Aelst et al, 2021). Previously, Park and Avery (2018) also found that regardless of crisis type, people who seek information about crisis using traditional media (e.g., TV and radio) reported higher intentions to follow directives than social media and website users did. That is, active dissemination of instructing information using TV and radio can be an effective tool for officials for managing crisis situations to promote adherence to response protocol.

The development of media technology also allows the media users to develop habit in controlling media influence. Sama (2019) found that newspapers advertisements are the only medium which affect all the five stages of consumer behavior (CB) which is awareness, interest, conviction, purchase, and post-purchase, compared to TV, radio, magazine and Internet advertisements. It can be concluded that digitalization did bring changes in consumers' media habits, however, there is a need for managers to design a media mix strategy, which will break through the chaos and create the necessary impact. Meanwhile, Birsen (2023), with the impact of digitalization, today's radio allows everyone to produce and broadcast their own content which has makes the audience more powerful. Although technological advances such as digitalization and internet were at first interpreted as threats to raise's popularity, radio has managed to benefit from these technological improvements and solve its chronic problems. Laor (2022) stated that radio now offers online radio on apps and websites, on-demand radiophonic content archives and content fragmentation features.

By looking into some of these media consumption habits, it is clear that current media companies need to think more strategically and flexibly about their relationships with multiple audience groups and to implement changes to better link with the media users (Villi & Picard, 2019). Furthermore, it is inevitable that there will be different habits on young people during these periods of intensive use of the internet and social media (Gurpinar & Yilan, 2019). Young people are part of the new audiences of the media environment, but they are not a homogeneous sector; they belong to different social groups and coexist in different contexts, a factor that must be taken into account when analysing the possible informative scenarios and the different degrees of interest in today's news (Perez, et al., 2019).

1.2 Media Consumption Habits Among University Students in Malaysia

Media consumption patterns in Malaysia, akin to those observed globally, have transformed significantly over time in response to technological advancements and shifting lifestyles. Statista (2023) reported that as of January 2023, approximately 78.5 percent of the Malaysian populace actively engaged with social media.

Furthermore, in 2020, the prevailing social media platforms among Malaysian users were such as Facebook, Instagram, Facebook Messenger, and LinkedIn. Since its inception in 2004, Facebook has emerged as the foremost choice among social media enthusiasts in Malaysia. Projections indicated that Facebook's market penetration in Malaysia was poised to expand, potentially reaching a range of 70 to 71 percent in the foreseeable future despite the contention that Facebook is considered an aging presence in the realm of social media. Furthermore, given the sustained surge in interest in Facebook within the social media community, it is anticipated that the number of Facebook users in Malaysia could approach approximately 24 million by 2023.

Following the Movement Control Order, social media utilization patterns experienced a notable upswing, primarily among university students (Kamisan & Abu Bakar, 2021; Al-Rahmi, 2022). As the shift to online learning became imperative, university students' consumption habits turned to social media as a multifaceted tool encompassing

communication, information dissemination, knowledge acquisition, collaborative learning, and a platform for seeking support and assistance. Existing research also shows that a significant number of students resort media for entertainment purposes during moments of leisure.

Nonetheless, media has impacted both negatively and positively towards university students (Sheng et al., 2022), depending on their needs and willingness to accept a particular media. University students who identified the value of particular technologies manage to improve their educational performance can be regarded as positive impact (Al-Rahmi et al., 2022). According to Sheng et al., (2022), other trends of media consumptions habits among university students tend towards information seeking, news search, educational purpose, shopping and reading. Most of the media consumptions among university students affect their skills in using digital media such as to acquire resource and ability to use specific new media tools all of which have the potential to enhance their knowledge and competencies in education (Shahrani et al., 2023).

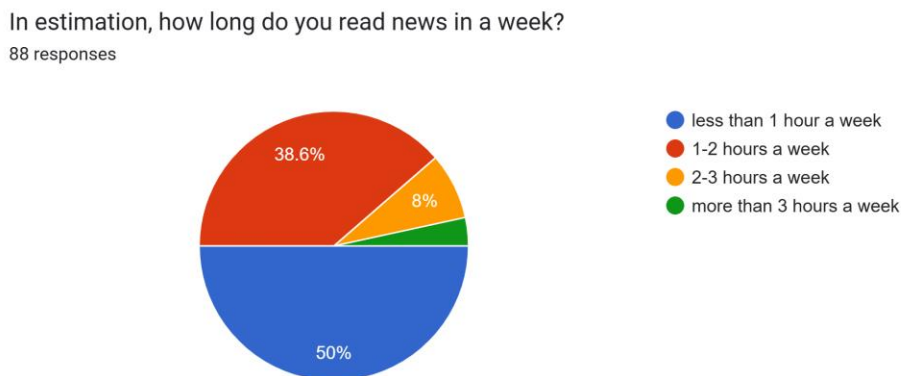
Media consumption habits among university students are also susceptible to the influence of their acceptance and the perceived ease of use of various media platforms. This implies that these habits are contingent upon the behavioral inclinations and intentions of university students in adopting specific technologies. According to Al-Rahmi et al. (2022), perceived ease of use can be defined as the degree to which an individual believes that social media can be adopted without incurring additional costs. In this context, media can indirectly shape the media consumption habits of university students if they perceive certain media tools or platforms as contributing positively to their academic performance. This perception can serve as a motivating factor and contribute to shaping their preference for particular media.

A recent study has also revealed a noteworthy shift in the media consumption patterns of university students, aligning more with civic participation. Increasingly, university students are using social media platforms as a means to voice their opinions and engage with campus and socio-political issues. This trend is significantly influenced by the accessibility of online resources, such as digital newspapers and social networks, which they have harnessed on social media platforms to facilitate the sharing and exchange of viewpoints among peers. It is worth noting, however, that while social media platforms are considered public spaces, the principles of freedom of speech are tempered by the provisions outlined in the University and College Act (AUKU), which serves as a guideline to prevent students from direct involvement in any form of political party activities (Wok & Mohamed, 2017).

2.0 FINDINGS

In this study, there are a total of 88 students responding to the questions asked via Google Form. Out of this number, 44.3% are from Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), 52% from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) and 13.5% from Xiamen University Malaysia Campus (XMUM). There are 65.9 female students and 34.1 % male students involved. They were asked four close-ended questions related to news consumption habit and an open-ended question to summarize their individual news consumption habit.

Figure 1: The result for Question 1

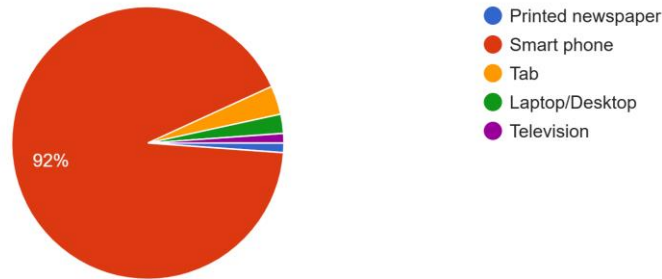


In terms of time allocated to read news in a week, majority of the students read less than an hour a week. Only 0.04 % of students read more than 3 hours a week.

Figure 2: The result for Question 2

What is the MAIN device you use to read news?

88 responses

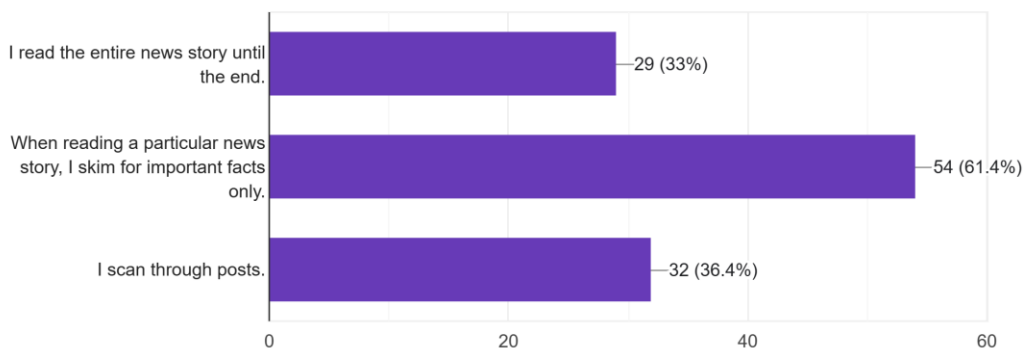


Based on the question, it is obvious that 92 % of the students agreed that they read news via smart phone.

Figure 3: The graph showing result for how usually the students read news

How usually do you read news? (tick only one)

88 responses

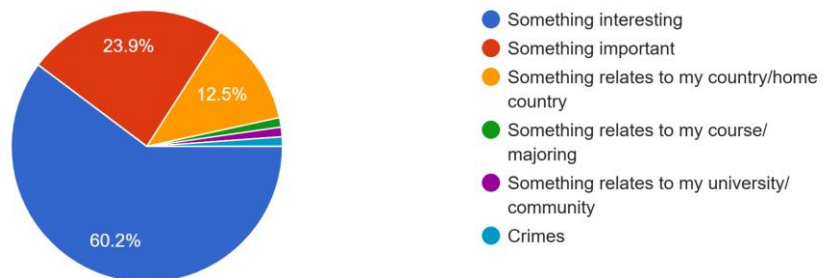


In terms of the way they read news, majority or 61.4 % of the students read by skimming for important facts. While 36.4% scan through posts and 33 % of the respondents read the entire news.

Figure 4: The result for the elements attracts student in reading a news

What elements that hold your attention when reading a news story?

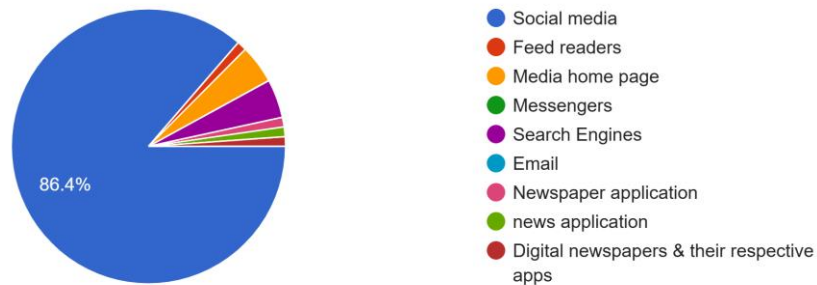
88 responses



When asked what hooked the students in reading a news story, majority or 60.2% said they read when there is something interesting to read about. 23.9 % read news they feel important while 12.5% read something relates with their home country. The third reason applies to international students.

Figure 5: The result for the main news platform used by students

What is the main news platform you usually use?
88 responses



86.4% of the students admitted that the main news platform they use to get access to news is social media. For an open-ended question, they were asked to summarize their news consumption habit. In general, we asked question, “how do you describe your news consumption habit?” and received 59 responses. The answers can be categorized into three categories: 1) those who perceive themselves as having a positive news consumption habit, 2) those who perceive themselves as having a low news consumption habit, and 3) dependent much on social media to access news.

The answers from the respondents are raw and unedited.

Category 1:

News consumption is positive/seeking for news:

1. Reading news is my daily task.
2. I'll catch up for every single news and share to others.
3. Keep up-to-date with news and current events is a main reason I use the internet.
4. I read news on official apps (Lumi/ Newswav/ sinchewdaily). Interesting news and political/country news are my usual content. It's very convenient to have latest and officially approved news reported and updated in such short time. I find it healthy because it's not like other social media platforms that gives me other unrelated/unimportant content.

Category 2:

Low habit/passively seeking for news:

Majority admitted that they don't look for news. They read only during their spare time. Most of them also agreed that their news consumption habit depends much on gadget to get access to news.

1. Passive and not actively looking for
2. Actually, I'm quite less reading news, and I only choose the topic I'm interested in, instead I'll ignore it. I think this is not that good as sometimes I missed some important news and I'm like "leave the track" of the trend and news.
3. I think my news consumption habit is still low since i read news only one hour or two a week but inconsistently
4. For me, it's depended on the news feature, if it's interesting, then I'll read it. If there is an issue that shock the world, then I'll read about it.
5. I love to read an interesting and unique news which it sparks me and when reading
6. Saya tidak begitu berminat dalam aktiviti membaca. Tetapi saya akan membaca jika news yang dikeluarkan berkaitan dengan minat saya.
7. Bad, because sometimes the assumption will getting worse just because we read the only title. News is not same like the novel, drama and etc. It's about facts, and the reality what is happening

Category 3:

Dependence to social media to access and read news:

1. I tend to read news through social media app “Facebook”, I only read the news when it pops up in my feed.
2. I just read the news from social media and didn't read it to details.
3. Usually scanning through social media like Instagram, but when discovered something interesting, will find the whole thing about the news.

4. Not so often to go through the news. Only if when I am scrolling social media, I will be aware about the news
5. just read new or old news that comes out through social media or other platforms.
6. I read news through Twitter and online news paper and mostly I read about politics and accident.
7. I only read news on social media through the news media's account.

From this finding, we can see that most respondents see themselves as low news consumer and do not actively seeking for news. If they read news, they skim and read only news they feel important. Most of them also admitted that they depend much on social media to have access and read news.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, somewhat we must agree that the students are basically reading news without realizing that they are reading news which is updating themselves the current issues happening around them. The early method of reading news was different as readers went and look for the news source by purchasing newspaper or subscribing news portal however nowadays news has been merged with social media feeds therefore the readers especially university unintentionally become a reader if the headlines or the contents of the news attract their interest. This finding clearly supporting the literature review which is one of the obvious changes in media consumption habits is the media users use certain media only to get certain desired information.

According to the updated Social Media Statistic for Malaysia (Howe, 2023), only 42.6% Malaysians are using social media to read the latest news stories. More than ever, we can conclude about mostly Malaysians turn to social media for everything, from checking out the newest fashion to reading the news. The reading duration based on the survey is disturbing for the time allocated to read news in a week by majority of the students is less than an hour a week. Only a very small number of students are reading more than 3 hours a week. This study concludes university students are searching for news from the most convenient platform where news are coming to them and the news providers may start focusing on what they can do for the next generation as individuals rather than for whole society.

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