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QUALITY NEWS CONTENT IN TWITTER AND NEWS READING INTEREST

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Abstract

This research is to examine the relationship between the quality of news content on Twitter and the news reading interest of its users. After Twitter was introduced in 2006, certain changes can be detected in people's behavior especially in Malaysia in gathering information. Unlike before, the public had no choice in consuming news from traditional media such as newspapers and television. This research seeks to identify the relationship between using Twitter as a news source and news reading interest. Moreover, this research also seeks to identify the relationship between information quality and news reading interest. In addition, the theory that is being applied on this research is the Uses & Gratification (U&G) theory. Quantitative methods were applied in this study and about 120 volunteer respondents are required to answer the questionnaire given. Based on the findings, researchers found that there is a relationship between social media and news reading interest since it is available to access by multiple devices such as smartphones or tablets. In addition, users are increasingly using Twitter as a medium of never-ending updates about current news, which is leading to an increase in their news reading interest.

Keywords: Information Quality, News Reading Interest, News, Social Media

1. Introduction

Twitter is known as a micro-blogging program that lets people across the globe share their opinions, feelings, and ideas. Since its official launch, it has supported about 600 million users since 2007 (O'Reilly, 2007). With the limitation of 280 character of message, Twitter users often utilize this tool to post important information and development with each other, which has caused exchange mechanism to develop.

Throughout the years, as the internet slowly gained its popularity, social networks impending to be an imperative to disseminating and receiving information. Research has pointed to Twitter as a source of knowledge among the most popular social networks that offers useful real-time data for decision-making (Shearer & Matsa, 2018).

Twitter has provided a chain of news services but most of them expressed their concern about the credibility and the sources of information (Shearer & Matsa, 2018). Despite of this issue, Twitter users still use this platform as a medium for them to gain information. Moreover, based on this finding, the researchers found that most recent studies concentrated exclusively on Facebook rather than Twitter. Despite of this limitation, the researchers wanted to examine the consistency that Twitter has capable of enticing most news users to use this platform for news reading.

In this research, information refers to any information, signal or stimulus that has the potential to respond (Weissinger, 2005). It could be something that is potentially useful for decision-making and answering questions with similar thoughts, facts and imaginative works of creativity and data value. This research uses news content consumption in Twitter as the main source of information.

On the website, anyone can publish information. They could be journalists, politicians, or just the general public. However, to know if the information provided is truthful, it is up to the end users to do the analysis whether on the information is accurate or not (Kandari et al., 2011). This is the problem faced by society today as too many misleading, or worse fake information penetrates the news related content.

In addition, interest is a motivation for people to learn and improve their understanding about what they have learn previously (Ross, 2009). The subject matter is generally focused on a topic of uncertainty, and also denies them some hint of the potential danger that could enhance the knowledge seeking interest in them. It is necessary for researchers to recognize that motivation is capable of growing the reader's effort. Reading can act as a tool that through sharing ideas and opinions that form a social connection between processes, can connect the reader to other readers.

2. Problem Statement

Back in the 1900s, people were able to focus solely on traditional media like television, radio and newspaper. However, with the introduction of Social Networking Sites (SNS) by Cyworld in 2001, one-by-one of the virtual services started to surface on the market. Through this innovation, it has given major effect in the way people obtain information.

Given the fact that newspaper rates and internet subscriptions are at a fair level, people would choose a medium that would not require a single coin to be spent on it. Specifically for media

organisations, this issue prompted the collapse of publishing firms. Through the decline in purchasing activity on such physical outlets, it would give certain organizations negative impacts.

Moreover, most of the information on social media is coming from questionable sources. Previously, it's only hired journalists who are responsible for giving the public news. However, nowadays, anyone can give information. This caused certain content faced difficulties to reach its proper target audience. Due to the abundance of info available, slowly, the interest of consuming news content could be jeopardised.

Not to mention, the audience will have a hard time understanding the details in this behaviour, whether it comes through the unclear source or from the reliable website. Gatekeepers, no matter how controversial, played an important role to ensure society received poignant information compared to unimportant content available. This is a double edge sword as gatekeepers could insinuate traditional media as bipartisan but lack of filtering content made it difficult to know which are important and which are not.

In addition, in research conducted by Shearer and Matsa in 2018, most users are aware of the accuracy of the information provided on these social media platforms. However, it does not stop them to use it. The aim of this study is to investigate whether the quality of social media can impact their motivations to read news.

Based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the researchers are developing a conceptual theory for this problem. In addition, this theory helps to achieve the research objectives and questions of this study. The objectives of this research are as below.

RO1: To determine the relationship between social media usage and the news reading interest.

RO2: To determine the relationship between information quality consumed and the news reading interest.

3.   Significance of Study

This section explains about the importance of the study to conduct in Malaysia. The findings of this research would be valuable to communication practitioners to understand more on the people's behaviours in consuming content in social media. This is because, in this research, there will be a discussion about the qualities of social media, especially Twitter. This is important in order deal issues effectively by providing the right information to reach a large number of audiences. Moreover, this research would also benefit research students from choosing the right communication medium, especially in relation to the behaviour of news consumption.

Moreover, the study can be an add on to media organisations to have a look on ways to increase the number of news readers and how the society slowly shifting its ways in consuming news content. The study at the same time, focusing on quality of information as this can be reference to companies in determining what type of content considered to of quality. Lastly, this research can help in developing some effective campaign that could grow the number of Malaysian readers, thus beneficial in becoming a more media literate society.

4. Scope of Study

The research focused primarily on the relationship between Twitter's social media qualities and users' interest in reading news. The data collection will take place in the capital city of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. In addition, as mentioned above, this research focuses Malaysians whom red news on Twitter only. The other respondents who did not consume news this specific platform will be excluded. The research will be carried out by the dissemination of questionnaires as a survey and reference for data collection in the future.

5. Literature Review

Today, social media has attracted more users and several different types of target platforms. Many individuals are actively interested in producing content and creating value for social networks. Users may contribute content to social media platforms, change opinions and build communities for different needs. Among other aspects, these features add a new dimension to the evaluation of social media services, and render a high-quality social media service usable (Becker et al., 2021).

In terms of quality news in the social media space, it is more of a personal source of information and less formal. The formality of traditional media made the general public less keen to pay attention to its content (Fahmy et al., 2022). The social media also provide different sets of visual narrative that made the media consumption effective as compare to the passive ways of consuming traditional media content. The communities build alongside the social media platform also made the participation more personal and thus generates more interest.

According to Hunt et al. (2013), entering the 2010s social media had a rapid growth which cultivated a culture of connecting information and communication in a largely no need to pay search engines and the high rate of accessibility in social networks. As part of technological growth, social media has become a popular urge to connect with each other in a moment for networking.

Furthermore, according to Wang et al. (2012), the curating details about the issues being addressed is another significant part of holding a conversation with followers on social media. This is shown in context of sharing information on Twitter with the easy access of topics based on hashtags provided. The community of a topic can easily follow the current news by looking at what is trending. However, this also encourage the masses to be alliterate, where people choose not to read a certain topic despite being able to.

On top of that, there are elite sources in the social media that can lead to higher interest in high quality information (Gehrke & Benetti, 2020). These elite sources have a variety of source content that can be from local celebrities, athletes, politicians and at some time even journalists could become part of these online elitists. Due to the popularity of micro-blogging some time back, this cause aftereffects that sums of the influx of social media influencers.

This leads to certain news content being thrown around in the Twitter platform which is one of the top social network sites of the day (Westerman et al., 2014). Twitter users usually micro-blogging in the platforms as it is easy to write and read about less than 200 characters in one post. It is enough to piques the followers' interest. In addition, short enough for followers to scroll it up in less than a minute which

made the information being disseminate quickly. This helps the news net to catch stories fast and users to receive bite size information.

On the other hand, reading interest or reading habits highly dependent on personal interest in consuming specific topics (Ross, 2009). This is supported by Harnett (2013) that reading similar topics create a sense community that enable this group to relate and connect with other readers by sharing opinions that could form a social bond in between the process. This creates an echo chamber. Slowly, echo chambers that gathers like-minded content based from similar social media algorithms (Vendeville et al., 2023). Reading interest increase as the belief of façade that a lot of people share similar interest despite being in an echo chamber of content.

Social networking platforms and online communities such as Twitter provide users with social news. This content is posted by users, and then they and others like it, share it, and comment on it. When they come from friends, social annotations will make news more important than from strangers and make content more persuasive (Freeman, 2013). Social networking sites and some news sources already accompany content with a variety of indicators, representing how others engage with news articles by likes, shares, or comments.
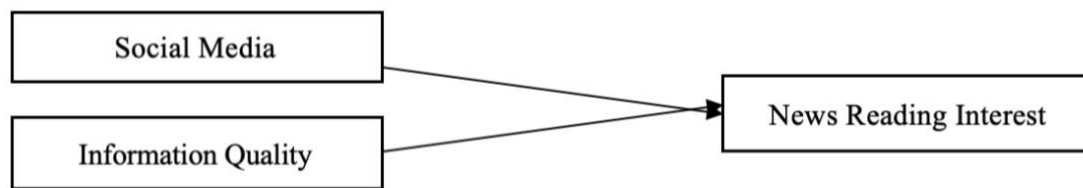

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework as according to Shackel (2009)

For this research, the main theory used as the baseline framework is the Uses and Gratification (U&G) theory as shown in Figure 1 above as according to Shackel (2009). Figure 1 shows an audience-centred approach that focuses on what people do with the media, as well as on what the media did to people. Incorporating with that, the variables in the proposed model theory were well defined. Referring to Shackel (2009), the theory that was studied was based on the primary needs of social media qualities.

The hypotheses proposed:

H1: There is a relationship between the social media with news reading interest.

H2: There is a relationship between information qualities with news reading interest.

6. Methodology

In order to find the relationship between the social media qualities in twitter and news reading interest, the researcher use the quantitative method. According to Aliaga and Gunderson (2002), he mentioned that the quantitative research method, which gathers data in numerical form and analyses with the aid of a mathematical method to explains the quantitative research method. This method deals with quantifying and analysis variable in order to get results. Therefore, the method involves the analysis of numerical data utilizing specific statistical techniques to answer questions.

Statistical methods are known to accurate and extremely effective and this is the advantageous effects that quantitative research design may have. Besides that, it is relevant for situations where systematic, consistent comparisons are needed. Quantitative research design is using larger sample sizes often make the conclusions from quantitative research generalizable.

This research collects data by sending our surveys in Google Form via Whatsapp and Twitter applications since it will help to reach a large number of respondents, especially for users of Twitter in Malaysia. Moreover, this research focuses on Twitter users who use this micro-blogging platform as a tool to satisfy their news consumption needs.

The survey consists of 19 questions, categorized into three sections; A, B and C. The questions are taken not only from previous researches, but also from the scholars' statement on the topic. As for the first section, the researchers' asked about demographic of the respondents. The questions include user or non-user of the platform, frequency of using Twitter and whether using the social media platform to receive news.

Meanwhile, for sections B and C there are ten questions for each variable. The respondents were given a scale to determine from Agree to strongly disagree in each of the statements given. The scale is to ensure respondents can give an opinion on each statement despite not being an open-ended question or the researcher probe form answers. This gave some kind of insights as to what the respondents feel about the statement.

Due to the research survey questions distributed by using Google Form, this method reduces the expense and time consumption of the data collection process. This research will be targeting 150 respondents. The respondent must volunteer that have experience with Twitter usage from any ages including both male and female to answer the questionnaires.

For the sampling, the researcher will be using non-probability sampling and it is using voluntary technique to determine the questionnaire. Simple random sampling techniques is where every individual in the population is likely to be chosen as a sample. Due to time and means constraint, the sampling is used to gain a significant number of questionnaires efficiently.

7. Discussion

This chapter will discuss on data analysis which is to focus on reliability and validity analysis and hypothesis testing. This section discussed about Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted based on that variable of this study. Overall, Cronbach's Alpha for variable social media usage was significant and accepted for the purpose of this study therefore, no changes have been made to this purpose. The analysis is summarized in the Table 1.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted for variable social media usage

Items	Cronbach's Alpha
I use social media in profession	.707
I use social networking sites to share new ideas	.716
I use social networking sites to get information regarding current social events	.726
I use social networking sites for reading news	.729

I use social networking sites for sharing pictures	.705
I use social networking sites to do research work	.706
I use social networking sites for getting jobs related information	.712
I face difficulty in finding exact information for academic via social networking sites	.724
I usually postpone my academic task for spending more time on the social networking sites	.715
While using social networking sites it is difficult for me to concentrate on my studies	.710

In addition, the overall Cronbach's Alpha for variable social media quality was significant and accepted for the purpose of this study, therefore no changes have been made to this purpose. The analysis is summarized in the Table 2.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted for variable social media quality

Items	Cronbach's Alpha
I always found that the information on social media is accurate	.866
I can easily access the content on social media whenever I needs	.841
I can obtain the information very quickly via social media	.845
I can easily understand all of the information given on the social media	.848
I can get a widespread information about the world via social media	.840
I share content on social media because I want to remind other people so that they are alert about it	.839
I share content on social media because I think it is important to share the information	.836
I share content on social media because the information from social media is faster and updated than information from TV and news	.840
I will share if the social media content was from reliable original author	.851
I will share content on social media if the information is a positive thing	.850

Moreover, overall Cronbach's Alpha for variable news reading interest was significant and accepted for the purpose of this study, therefore no changes have been made to this purpose. The analysis is summarized in the table 3.

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha for variable news reading interest

Items	Cronbach's Alpha
I am interested in the news headline published on social media	.883
Communicating with other users make me understand about the world event	.887
Information published on social media is always interesting	.882
I often open the link about the news on social media and read the article	.877
I share the link of articles created by news website to my social media page	.887
I read various kind of reading texts	.883
I read e-text a lot in my daily reading practices	.876
I check my understanding when I come across new information	.878
I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading	.888
Reading selections enhance the understanding and comprehension of people	.883

Therefore, the analysis above can conclude on two hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 is to study the relationship between social media usage, which in this study emphasis on Twitter and the news reading interest. Hypothesis 2, on the other hand, is to study the relationship between information quality and news reading interest. The discussions on these hypotheses can be summarized in the two tables below.

Table 4. Relationship between social media usage and news reading interest

Social Media Usage	News Reading Interest
r	.436**
n	132
p	.000

r significant at 0.01**

Hypothesis 1 discussed on relationship between social media usage and news reading interest. Table 4 shown that there is a relationship between social media usage and news reading interest. This supports that people are aware that social media do have news content and this attracted them to reading news. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 5. Relationship between information quality and news reading interest

Information Quality	News Reading Interest
r	.679**
n	132
p	.000

r significant at 0.01**

Hypothesis 2 discussed the relationship between information quality available and the users' news reading interest. According to Table 5, there is relationship between the information quality and news reading interest. This supports that the general social media user are aware that good information quality available can increase their news reading interest in social media platforms, in this case, Twitter. Based on this, the hypothesis proposed is accepted.

8. Conclusion

Based on the finding, this research succeeds in achieving its objectives. First objective in this study is to identify the relationship between social media usage and news reading interest. The hypothesis is there is a relationship between the social media with news reading interest.

In addition, the researcher found that there is relationship between the social media with news reading interest since it available to access by multiple devices such as smartphones or tablets. Social media makes it easier to connect and reach out to people from all over the world. This due to social media platforms today has become an essential platform that benefits mankind because of the accessible information that could be easily spread out to the masses. In addition, on its accessibility, social media platforms are also fast in disseminating information. Social media is not just as information provider, but also as a communication platform where people can share their thoughts regarding current issue which has created an impact when the issue go viral.

Moreover, based on the finding, this research succeeds to achieve the second objective, which is to identify the relationship between information quality and news reading interest. The hypothesis proposed also seen to have a relationship between information quality and news reading interest. Once a particular user had scan through a content and seems to have enough content, thus, increase the news reading interest.

As the hypothesis proposed that information quality affect news reading interest. The information quality and news reading interest has a correlation. The quality of information consumed and news reading interest correlated with each other. Based on this, it can be concluded that information with higher quality will lead to higher the motivation from the public such as Twitter users to read the news on the platform.

Based on the situation in Malaysia, things were different because most of the social media users is always curious about event-oriented topics. Research by Chatfield and Brajawidagda in 2012, found that the tweet on tsunami early warning spread faster within thirty minutes which has effectively informed 4, 102, 730 Twitter users in Indonesia as a result from the case found in 2011 where there was a prediction on the extreme earthquake and tsunami occurrence in West Coast of Northern Sumatra. It shows that social media like Twitter can be a good source of information for the public to get an instant information regarding natural disaster.

As a result of the current findings, users are increasingly using Twitter as a medium of never-ending updates about current news, which leads to an increase in their news reading interest. This shows that the relationship between two variables has a significant correlation.

In conclusion, social media, in this case Twitter as a social networking site enables users to socialize online but at the same time share news as content. The user friendliness of the platform supports a missing niche in the online platform, specifically in delivering well produced news content. In the public eye, the platform manages to pull interest in engaging news despite being an unpopular subgenre.

The functions of social media include not just the exchange of thoughts and ideas, but also the growth of a business by the endorsement of promotion through it for an instant like among social media users. Besides, in today's technological age, a lot of information gained through social media is considered to be reliable and on first eye witness of what is going on in the world for newsreaders interested in expanding the knowledge.

Lastly, this study is believed to prove the relationship between social media qualities in Twitter and news reading interest. The researcher's test was valid and reliable because it answered the problem statement, objective, hypothesis and methods of study. The study's findings and discussion have been presented regarding the social media, information quality, website usability and news reading interest.

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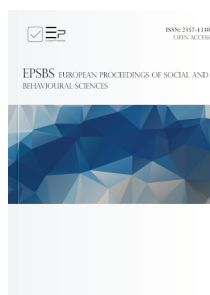and Behavioural Sciences

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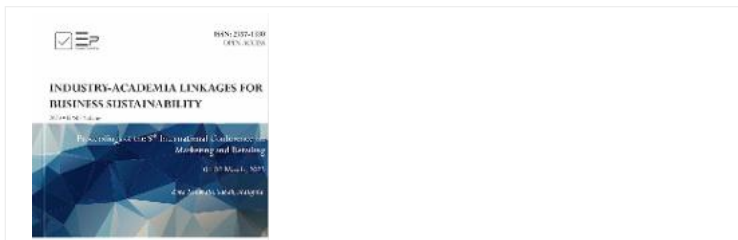
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