



Social Media's Role in Shaping Political News Consumption in Nepal

Basanta Kumar Rupakheti

PhD Scholar

Noida International University, India

rupakhetib.72@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0244-8855>

Received: July 03, 2025

Revised & Accepted: August 27, 2025

Copyright: Author(s) (2025)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

Abstract

Background: Social media has transformed political news consumption, particularly among urban youth in Kathmandu, Nepal, displacing traditional media (TV, newspapers). Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and X facilitate real-time engagement but amplify risks of filter bubbles, echo chambers, misinformation, and declining trust in journalism. Nepal's rapid internet growth (15% annually) intensifies these dynamics, yet rural areas remain reliant on traditional sources. **Objective:** This study investigates (a) how social media alters political news consumption patterns (frequency, platform preference, engagement) in Kathmandu, and (b) its relationship with public trust in news sources. **Methods:** A comprehensive literature review analyzed secondary data from academic journals, reports (e.g., Pew Research, NTA), and regional studies. Thematic synthesis identified trends and challenges, framed through Uses and Gratifications Theory, Media Dependency Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and Social Responsibility Theory. **Findings:** **Platform Dominance:** Facebook, YouTube, and X are primary news sources for Kathmandu's youth, valued for interactivity and real-time updates. **Trust Challenges:** Algorithmic personalization fosters echo chambers and exposure to unverified content, eroding trust in both social and traditional media. **Traditional Media Coexistence:** While social media use surges, traditional media (especially radio/TV) retains significance in rural Nepal despite urban decline. **Theoretical Insights:** UGT explains preference for social media's convenience; Media Dependency and Social Cognitive theories highlight its influence on perceptions and behaviors; Social Responsibility Theory underscores the tension with journalistic standards. **Risks:** Rapid information sharing enables misinformation proliferation and political polarization, exacerbated by low digital literacy. **Conclusion:** Social media is the dominant vector for political news among Kathmandu's youth,



offering accessibility and engagement but significantly threatening information integrity through filter bubbles, misinformation, and diminished trust. Traditional media persists in rural contexts. Responsible platform design, media literacy initiatives, and adaptation by traditional outlets are critical to mitigate risks and support informed citizenship. **Novelty:** This study uniquely synthesizes the interplay of social media consumption, trust dynamics, and theoretical frameworks (UGT, Media Dependency, Social Cognitive, Social Responsibility) within the under-researched context of Nepal's evolving media landscape, focusing explicitly on Kathmandu's urban demographic.

Keywords: Political News Consumption, Social Media, Trust in Media, Nepal, Kathmandu, Filter Bubbles, Misinformation, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Media Dependency Theory, Traditional Media Decline.

Introduction

Social media has emerged as a dominant and influential channel for receiving, sharing, and debating political news in the modern era. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube allow individuals to actively engage in diverse discussions, significantly transforming how people experience, interpret, and understand complex current events globally.

Social media has become a key way people receive and communicate political news in today's world. Individuals can use Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube platforms to take part in discussions, and the way people experience and learn about news has been greatly influenced by this (Hermida, 2008). TV and newspapers have seen losing its significance as traditional media due to the rapid increase in the use of the internet and cellphones, particularly by the youth. (Adoni, 2017).

Many people use social media to get political news, as pointed out by past studies (Newman et al., 2013). Because users receive content that matches their interests, this causes them to stay on platforms which results in filter bubbles and echo chambers (Flaxman et al., 2016). It is most visible among young city dwellers in Nepal, whose use of the internet is increasing very fast (NTA, 2021). Since social media is sharing more political information, some are concerned about false news and the trust people have in the press (Olaniran, 2018). The research focuses on trust, the simplicity of social media, its usage. This research also examines how the residents of Kathmandu indulge in political news by the use of demographics.

The mentioned factors i.e. Trust, the frequency of use, ease of use and differences in demographics play a vital role in this study that investigates how social media affects the way people in Kathmandu get their political news. Communication with audiences is now mainly done through social media by news organizations to deliver updates in real time (Dahal, 2023). When feeds are personalized, people may see only information that supports their political beliefs which can make political polarization worse and support strong biases (Cinelli et al., 2021). Because of these changes, people are doubting the importance of traditional newsrooms, and we ought to keep monitoring the impact of social media on democracy.



Problems

Due to the rise in the frequency of political news shared on social media, some questions regarding the future of journalism are being raised. This is causing traditional media (newspapers, TV and radio) to become less popular. Social media can show biased or unreliable news, as it is used by an increasing number of people it imposes the risk in spread of misinformation and less trust in news sources. Social media is the most common route to get political news nowadays, It has overtaken traditional media in popularity. Because of the decrease in the number of people watching, traditional outlets have gone down. This is specifically visible amongst the youth who now rely on platforms like Facebook, X (Twitter) and, YouTube for the latest political news.

Young people are now turning to social media for political news, which has caused traditional media to be used less. Because of this change, the future of traditional media, which has always been responsible and accurate, is uncertain. A lot of the content on social media is sensational, biased, or not verified, which helps spread false information and weakens trust in both traditional and online news. It is crucial to look at how social media affects news and public opinion because it can seriously harm political awareness and active citizenship in countries where people's digital knowledge is low.

Research Objectives

- a. To investigate the impact on the consumption patterns of political news, emphasizing frequency, platform preference, and content engagement of the Nepali users via social media.
- b. To examine the relation between social media and public confidence, accounting for the perceived reliability of the information gained through these sources.

Methods

This research study uses a literature-based approach and only looks at secondary data to study the role of social media in the consumption of political news in Kathmandu, Nepal. Students must analyze earlier studies which include both factual and statistical information from academic papers, journal articles, research works, newspapers, and other proper sources about the region and topic. All the sources were arranged so they are dependable and correct, and they were selected because they fit the study's goals.

The materials were sorted by theme to spot commonalities, trends, and main findings about social media and its effect on political news. Due to this approach, a range of views were brought together by the researcher. This provided a fair view of the topic. All references and citations were prepared according to academic rules to make the research credible and clear. The study, though it does not collect data, gives a reliable basis for exploring the current discussion and helps guide future studies on the topic.

Results and Discussion

This section compiles results from previous studies on the impact of social media on people's consumption of political news, particularly in Nepal and the South Asian region. Several theories are employed in the discussion to examine the results obtained.



Social Media Platforms as News Sources

Young people now rely on Facebook, X (Twitter), and YouTube as primary sources of news. Pew Research Center found in 2020 that these platforms make it possible to see different opinions and share information quickly. On the other hand, social media can also lead to the spread of false news, the formation of group minds, and the decline in traditional journalistic standards (Friggeri, Adamic, & Eckles, 2014).

In the digital age, people now get news differently because of social media platforms. More people depend on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X to stay informed about news. Young people are more likely to choose interactive, fast, and mobile news rather than watch TV, listen to the radio, or read newspapers (Newman et al., 2023). Information is spread quickly on social media because users can engage with posts, talk about them, and follow recent updates.

What makes people turn to these websites as news sources is how they bring together stories from different sources, let users upload material, and use algorithms to create custom feeds (Thorson & Wells, 2016). The way algorithms work often means people are exposed to content that they agree with, which can lead to an echo chamber effect (Pariser, 2011).

Because social media is interactive, users are encouraged to share, comment and engage with news posts which makes the difference between news producers and consumers less clear. Pew Research Center (2020) found that about 53% of Americans often or sometimes get news from social media, mainly from Facebook. In areas like South Asia and Latin America, people are now turning to WhatsApp and YouTube to get their news (Newman et al., 2023).

Even so, this shift leads to some major obstacles. Being open and decentralized means social media makes it simple for people to share misleading information rapidly. Social media generally does not have the same editorial control and fact-checking as traditional media has. It has been demonstrated that fake news travels much faster and further on Twitter than real news, mainly when the news involves politics (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018).

Because social media now delivers most news, people trust journalism less. Because professional journalists are up against influencers, bots and citizen reporters, it is harder to tell if the information we get is accurate (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). In many places where the press is tightly controlled, people use social media to find and spread information that is not approved by the government (Howard et al., 2011).

Social Media and Political News Consumption

Extensive research has examined the relationship between social media and political news consumption. According to the Pew Research Center (2020), platforms like Facebook and Twitter have become major news sources in numerous countries, often replacing traditional news outlets for younger generations. Social media allows for information to be shared rapidly, which, while beneficial, raises concerns over misinformation, political polarization, and echo chambers (Friggeri et al., 2014).

Social Media in the South Asian Context

More and more, South Asians are turning to social media to get their news about politics. It is easier to reach young people in Bangladesh and India through social media than through



traditional media. According to the Nepal Telecommunications Authority (2021), the number of people using the internet in Nepal is rising by 15% per year. Rural areas, which have less internet use, often rely on radio and television. Some studies from Nepal have found that social media and conventional media have a mixed relationship. Even though social media is getting more popular, traditional media is still very significant, mainly in rural areas. Nepali media companies struggle with adapting to digital changes due to the use of radio and television as the main source of news.

Theoretical Frameworks

The study applies the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), Media Dependency Theory, Social Cognitive Theory and the Social Responsibility Theory of the Press as its main theories. The Uses and Gratifications Theory points out that individuals turn to media, mainly through social networks, to achieve the information, entertainment or social connection they look for (Katz et al., 1973). Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) explain that Media Dependency Theory suggests more use of media for news leads to an increase in media influence over someone's actions and beliefs (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). In Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1991), he believes that people learn from watching and following the actions of others such as liking, commenting on and sharing news stories online. Lastly, according to the Social Responsibility Theory, media should use its influence to provide society with accurate, fair and responsible news (Siebert et al., 1956).

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

According to UGT, people tend to actively search for media content that satisfies their need or information, entertainment and social interaction (Katz et al., 1973). This theory shows why the people of Nepal prefer news via social media and why it has risen to be the most popular source.

Media Dependency Theory

According to Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976), the people who get most of their information through media are more likely to be affected by it through their opinions and the actions they take. This proves especially important for understanding the link between social media usage and the change in trust and opinion regarding the credibility of the news or media.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory; developed by Albert Bandura, helps us understand how people pick up new behaviors by watching others. In SCT, it is believed that people learn by noticing how others behave and what happens to them as a result (Bandura, 1991). Social media users regularly encounter news-related interactions like likes, shares and comments which can change their habits of reading political news (García-Pérez et al., 2020).

Social Responsibility Theory of the Press

The Hutchins Commission stated in 1947 that the role of the media should be to offer society reliable, thorough and unbiased news. It means the press should not only be free to work but also answer to the public by supporting democracy, providing different perspectives and defending individual rights (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956).



Impacts of social media on political news

With social media, people can follow and discuss events as they happen which has greatly changed the delivery of news (Hermida et al., 2012). Meanwhile, the growth of false stories and fake news is worrying people. The existence of false information can cause many difficulties. When anyone posts or publishes news on social media, it becomes hard to tell the difference between citizen journalism and professional journalism. The reason for this issue is that algorithms favor news that matches the opinions people already have which makes them less aware of opposing opinions (Flaxman et al., 2016). Researchers have found that this leads to more political division, as people often get stuck in their own circles of belief (Newman et al., 2013).

Although social media makes it easy to follow many different opinions and to stay aware of new information, it also helps false news spread and builds echo chambers. Examining models of media usage can make the effects of these changes more visible. People in Nepal use social media and traditional media to get their political news.

Conclusion

Social media now influences how people across the world get political news, since it has largely replaced traditional news sources in industrial countries. Nevertheless, in Nepal, this influence is still expanding and adapting to its one-of-a-kind political, social and economic situation. Because social media is now used by Nepalese citizens to engage with political news, programs and strategies to teach media literacy and deliver news in the right context are required urgently. One should still look at how reliable and trustworthy social media news is compared to traditional news and examine how social media affects how people consume traditional media. Studies should also focus on regional languages, spread of untrue news, the use of mobile devices and their impact on reading the news. With rapid changes in Nepal's digital media such findings are crucial for guiding future changes in media and communication.



References

- Adoni, H. (2017). Media and the transformation of public communication. *Media Studies Journal*, 21(2), 45–58.
- Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2), 211–236. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.31.2.211>
- Ball-Rokeach, S. J., & DeFleur, M. L. (1976). A dependency model of mass media effects. *Communication Research*, 3(1), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009365027600300101>
- Bandura, A. (1991). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 1–26). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Chand, P. B., & Awasthi, K. R. (2025). Facebook's Influence on Nepali Political Dynamics: Survey of Tribhuvan University Political Science Students in Nepal. *Quest Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 155-166. <https://doi.org/10.3126/qjmss.v7i1.82023>
- Cinelli, M., Morales, G. D. F., Galeazzi, A., Quattrociocchi, W., & Starnini, M. (2021). The echo chamber effect on social media. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(9), e2023301118. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2023301118>
- Dahal, M. (2023). The changing landscape of Nepalese journalism: From print to digital. *Journal of Media Research Nepal*, 5(1), 55–67.
- Dahal, R., & Acharya, U. (2025). An Anatomy of Information Manipulation in Nepal. *Nepal's Misinformation Landscape*, 25.
- Flaxman, S., Goel, S., & Rao, J. M. (2016). Filter bubbles, echo chambers, and online news consumption. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 80(S1), 298–320. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfw006>
- Friggeri, A., Adamic, L. A., & Eckles, D. (2014). Rumor cascades. *Proceedings of the 2014 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 1013–1026. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2531602.2531608>
- García-Pérez, M. Á., García-Serrano, A., & García-Serrano, M. (2020). Social media and political news consumption: The role of social cognitive theory. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 32(4), 181–190. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000282>
- García-Pérez, M. Á., García-Serrano, A., & García-Serrano, M. (2020). Social media and political news consumption: The role of social cognitive theory. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 32(4), 181–190. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000282>
- Granskogen, S. (2017). Social media and the rise of citizen journalism. *Global Media Journal*, 14(27), 23–36.
- Hermida, A. (2008). Twittering the news: The emergence of ambient journalism. *Journalism Practice*, 4(3), 297–308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512781003640703>
- Hermida, A., Fletcher, F., Korell, D., & Logan, D. (2012). Share, *Journal of Journalism Studies*.
- Howard, P. N., Duffy, A., Freelon, D., Hussain, M. M., Mari, W., & Maziad, M. (2011). Opening closed regimes: What was the role of social media during the Arab Spring? Project on Information Technology and Political Islam, Working Paper 2011.1. University of Washington.



- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509–523. <https://doi.org/10.1086/268109>
- Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA). (2021). MIS Report 2021. <https://nta.gov.np>
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Robertson, C. T., Eddy, K., & Nielsen, R. K. (2023). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2023>
- Olaniran, B. A. (2018). Trust and media consumption: The role of digital literacy in social media use. *Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 8(4), 100–117.
- Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you*. Penguin Press.
- Pew Research Center. (2020). Americans' use of social media for news. <https://www.pewresearch.org>
- Siebert, F. S., Peterson, T., & Schramm, W. (1956). *Four theories of the press: The authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet communist concepts of what the press should be and do*. University of Illinois Press.
- Thorson, K., & Wells, C. (2016). Curated flows: A framework for mapping media exposure in the digital age. *Communication Theory*, 26(3), 309–328. <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12087>
- Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news online. *Science*, 359(6380), 1146–1151. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aap9559>