

## Exploration of Political News Consumption among Young Adults

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### Abstract

Political news is quite substantial, and it is even considered as core journalism. It is deemed significant because it affects the attitudes of citizens and political actors at work. This research aims to conduct a preliminary exploration of the study on media communication patterns of political news among youths. To achieve the objective of this research, the qualitative approach was used by conducting in-depth interviews with ten young adults who met the predefined criteria. The concept of quality journalism was chosen to observe how media consumption patterns and choices concerning political news are associated with the parameters of quality journalism. Although the current research does not examine media content, the research results show that young adults' media choice for political news is in line with the parameters of quality journalism. This standard of quality underlies their choices in consuming particular types of media about political news. Such consideration also serves as a basis for their consumption of political news on social media. A slight difference observed when using social media is that the audience needs to conduct their own verification actively. Nonetheless, the decision to verify is also based on the reasoning of meeting quality standards. Trust and transparency are aspects that respondents consider as most crucial when consuming political news. Consequently, not a lot of the respondents use social media to access the political information they need.

**Keywords:** *media consumption, political news, young adults, quality journalism*



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### INTRODUCTION

Mass media presence amidst the society, particularly as an information channel, is quite central. In the democratic era, news in mass media has at least three leading roles (Christians et al., 2009). First, the role of observing and informing as part of public service. In this case, public trust relies on public acceptance of media as competent and independent media. Second, the task of participating in social life by displaying critical comments, suggestions, advocacy, and channel for expressing opinions. Such function can also be well-implemented if an efficient and extensive information distribution collection system is available along with editorial intent to provide access to various sources and ideas. Third, the role of providing a channel as an extra media voice to reach public choices. This emerges from the involvement of journalism in acts of democracy and debates in the use of press freedom space in the context of public space.

Those three tasks and functions should remain to be met despite the currently changing media business environment and conditions. In Indonesia, for instance, in the Mapping the Landscape of the Media Industry in Contemporary Indonesia report, it is mentioned that Indonesia's media industry post reform has been mobilized by at least 12 media groups that dominate various media channels, be it broadcasting, print media, and online media (Nugroho, Putri and Laksmi, 2012). As a consequence, information diversity is not achieved, and this indirectly lessens citizens' rights to information. According to the research, the concentration of media ownership on a few capitalists have led to the media being run like an industry that merely chases after economic profit. As a result, viewers are treated like consumers instead of citizens. Media products are also based on ratings instead of quality and public interest.

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Mass media presence has always been associated with its capacity to serve the public interest, including political news. Political news or political journalism, in general, is considered an essential entity for several reasons. According to Jesper Stromback and Adam Shehata, political journalism is closely associated with politics and democracy; it even functions as a critical mediator between political institutions and actors. Second, political journalism is essential and tightly correlates with the normative conception of media and democracy. Third, political journalism affects how citizens understand the world. For political actors, political journalism is an arena that influences how institutions, actors, and political processes work (Strömbäck and Shehata, 2018).

Research by James M. Avery indicates that news media affects public trust in politics, both negatively and positively. Those with low political trust do not become more trusting upon reading the news. But those who have high political trust will become more convinced after being exposed to newspapers and less convinced after being exposed to television news (Avery, 2009). Iyengar and Kinder even state that the standards citizens use to assess a president can be determined substantially by which news is selected to cover. It influences the audience's consideration of their political choice (Miller and Krosnick, 2000). Avery and Iyengar's research shows that political news has quite a significant influence on the audience.

Based on the above, it is essential to understand what young adults use media choices to consume political news. This research is a preliminary exploration of a study on media consumption patterns that can be further developed and associated with local, national media, and various other alternative channels.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *The Concept of Quality Journalism*

According to Peter J. Anderson, quality journalism can be measured using 6 parameters, i.e. five Cs and one A (comprehensibility, context, causality, comparativeness, comprehensiveness and accuracy) (Anderson, 2014). Accuracy is the most important first principle. Inaccuracy may cause the news producer to lose the audience's trust and the reputation it relies on. Accuracy requires accurate source and verification. The range of news sources used should not be decided merely based on figures or numbers but it should as much as possible reflect an issue or at least represent a main concern and argument.

Comprehensibility means that the story construction and composition must be of a rather high quality in terms of logical structure and expositional clarity so that all readers/ listeners/ viewers can easily understand the news. Be it people with an average level of intelligence or education and those with high education levels, who are expected to be the audience for quality news journalism.

Next is context, which means that news should have sufficient context, either in the actual report or among the various statements/occurring backgrounds. This allows the audience to observe the issues raised in the main context, which are necessary for their understanding. Causality means that news should be able to convey elaborations properly to the readers. This includes the keys and causal factors of an event and the reported issues.

Comparativeness means that the reported issues should not only be told through a single perspective. More perspectives will provide alternative means for readers to observe other matters in the report for comparative purposes.

The following parameter is comprehensiveness, which relates to whether a piece of written news can provide a response to various key questions relating to the news topic. In terms of such assessment, media can be assisted by scholars or former correspondents who can browse representative news samples to monitor completeness.



## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach to understand how individuals create meaning from their social world. One of the key methods of the qualitative approach is by involving a reflection of values and listening to empower and give voice to the respondents' experiences (Hesse-Biber, 2010). The research began by creating criteria for the source persons and align them with the problem statement. Since this research is focused on young adults, the criteria for the respondents are determined based on such specifications along with the additional criteria of being an active consumer of political news.

Ultimately, 10 respondents (aged 18 to 24) were obtained in line with the given criteria. The next step was to conduct in-depth interviews, which explored the media choices made to consume political news. Once the in-depth interviews were conducted, the responses given by the respondents were mapped out by distributing them into particular categories. The mapping process is essential for classifying the responses given and facilitating the analysis.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research conducted interviews with ten respondents aged 18 to 24 to understand how they make their media choices when consuming political news. Table 1 demonstrates that generally speaking, the respondents' choice of media is based on three reasons. The first one is valid and transparent news quality that is delivered with ease so that the public can follow it without any difficulty. The second reason relates to access and format. The third reason refers to trust in the journalists. According to the respondents of this study, the quality of journalists is a highly defining aspect of news quality.

Table 1. Reasons for Media Choice

Reasons for media choice		Keywords
Reasons for media choice	News quality	Transparent and impartial Valid news Easy delivery Trustworthy
	Access and format	Easy access Nice visuals Enjoyable presentation format User-friendly application and frequently accessed
	Journalist quality	Trust in the journalists
Reason for trust	Transparent Constantly updated and actual news Trustworthy More detailed and clearer	
Reference for confusion	Online media	Trustworthy Many perspectives
	Social media	Can confirm with sources through their account
	Newspaper	Trustworthy Many perspectives
	Television	Everyone trusts it

Source: primary data



The reason for media choice also correlates with the respondents' trust in the political news produced by certain media outlets. According to Table 1, it is apparent that news quality is the primary reason for trusting political news broadcasted via various choice media. Political news should be transparent, actual, trustworthy as well as detailed and clear. Clarity relates to considerations that people have to learn about political issues informed by the media as audience. Given detailed information and transparency, the audience will find it easier to follow and assess whether the news is transparent and trusted.

Table 1 also shows an interesting result regarding the participants' opinion on reference for confusion relating to political phenomena or issues. The exploration carried out in the study indicates that although the respondents have various responses concerning their media reference, they all generally agree that the content's trustworthiness is a crucial factor. Even in the exploration of respondents' choice of social media as a reference, it is also stated that the confirmation process on social media is actually easier to do. This implies that the degree of trust is a considerably important aspect.

Table 2. Trust in Social Media

Trust in social media concerning political news	Trust	Distrust	Between trust and distrust
	-	Many hoaxes	There is partiality/bias
		Many confusions	Ensure truth first

Source: primary data

Table 2 demonstrates that respondents' trust in social media is shallow in terms of political news. According to the respondents, social media is also a source of confusion, making the verification process a necessary measure conducted by the public as an audience. This finding is an exciting indication at a time when young adults are considered heavily reliant on social media in their daily activities. All respondents demonstrate a very high level of distrust in social media. Some even suspect that social media is biased and partial, while news neutrality is necessary in political news.

Referring to the concept of quality journalism, 6 parameters can be used to assess whether a news content is of quality or otherwise. The six parameters are comprehensibility, context, causality, comparativeness, comprehensiveness, and accuracy. The subject of the study is not focused on news content, but the concept of quality journalism can be used to explore the choices young adults make when consuming political news. The findings indicate that young adults indirectly believe that quality news is worth finishing, particularly in terms of political news. Anderson states that accuracy is one of the parameters of quality journalism. Accuracy, for instance, deals with accurate verification and sources. The respondents realize this, and when they are confronted with the reality that not all political news contents have good accuracy, as media audience, they must then try to confirm and obtain better-trusted sources.

The second parameter is comprehensibility which refers to the quality of the narrative structure and news contents that are easy to comprehend. This also serves as a reference for the respondents of this study in choosing the media for their political news consumption. The next parameter is causability which deals with clarity. Causability directly correlates with comprehensibility. Clarity also indirectly correlates with how the audience can easily understand the news.

The following parameters are comparativeness and comprehensiveness, which relates to multi-perspective news content and its ability to respond to the audience's questions. This is also a reference the respondents turn to when asked about their reasoning when confusion occurs in a political phenomenon or issue.



Generally speaking, the current research findings show positive indications as it demonstrates that young adults consider quality as an aspect they consider when consuming political news in the media.

## CONCLUSION

This research indicates that young adults' media choice for consuming political news is based on quality criteria. Such quality standard underlies their reasoning in consuming particular types of media about political news. Such consideration also serves as a basis when they consume political news on social media. A slight difference is observed when using social media is that the audience needs to conduct their own verification more actively.

Trust and transparency are aspects that the respondents consider as most crucial when consuming political news. Consequently, not a lot of respondents use social media to access the political news they need.

The current research has not deeply explored the relationship between consumption patterns and confident attitudes towards political issues or events. Further exploration will be much needed to gain more exciting and comprehensive descriptions.

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