



The Power of Media: How News and Social Media shape public perception on Social Issues of Nashik City

Ms Ainain Kudai¹, Ms Soniya Chaudhari², Mrs Sakshi Wani³

^{1,2,3} Ashoka Centre for Business and Computer Studies, Nashik

Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune University.

Email ID: sakshiw.acbcs@aef.edu.in

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how news-media and social-media have influenced public opinion regarding social issues in Nashik city. As digital platforms proliferate and media use increases, media consumption is increasingly a factor in how people come to understand, engage and respond whether it is dealing with unemployment, educational disparities, traffic congestion, pollution or water shortages. This is a descriptive based research and both primary and secondary data were collected by using a questionnaire to a sample of 201 respondents of various age groups. The results demonstrate that social media, in particular Instagram and YouTube, is the main source of data for young adults (18–25) when shaping their views and attitudes. Media coverage influences public opinion and frequently causes opinion shifts, but concerns about misinformation, sensationalism, and little fact checking indicate the necessity of increased media literacy. A Chi-square test showed that social media has statistically significantly impact on people's opinions although there is a low trust in the traditional media as well. The study argues that media does have an undeniable influence on public discourses, but indicates the importance of critical thinking and information checking in constructing a knowledgeable and involved public.



INTRODUCTION

In the upgrading era of information, media is most power over how people think and respond to the surrounding around them. from daily broadcasts to viral media posts, the content we consume plays an essential role in shaping our thoughts, opinions, and understanding of social issues. this influence is especially important in cities like Nashik, where social, economic, and environmental challenges are constantly evolving. Nashik, known for its rich cultural heritage and rapid urban development, faces a wide range of issues such as water scarcity, unemployment, education gaps, traffic congestion, and pollution. how these problems are reported in the news or discussed on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or x (formerly twitter) can significantly affect public awareness and engagement.

Media doesn't just inform—it also frames the narrative. the choice of words, images, headlines, and even the angle of a story can influence how seriously people take an issue or what solutions they support. for example, a local news channel highlighting rising crime rates without discussing root causes can create fear, while a social media post showing a community cleanup drive can inspire hope and action. similarly, social media can give a voice to citizens who are often unheard in mainstream media, allowing grassroots movements and local concerns to reach wider audiences.

However, this power also comes with responsibility. with the rise of misinformation, sensationalism, and biased reporting, it becomes increasingly important to understand how media shapes our perception—not always accurately, and not always fairly. in the context of Nashik, where digital access is growing and more people are turning to online sources for news, examining the role of media in shaping public views on local social issues is more relevant than ever.

This topic invites us to explore how news outlets and social media platforms influence the way Nashik's citizens see and respond to their city's most pressing challenges—and why media literacy is essential for a healthier, more informed society.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The power of media in shaping public perception on social issues in Nashik city is a significant area of study, focusing on how news and social media influence understanding, engagement, and discourse among the city's residents.

1. Influence on Public Perception: How do news and social media shape the way people in Nashik perceive and engage with social issues?



2. Potential for Misinformation: To what extent does media coverage contribute to the spread of misinformation or biased narratives about social issues in Nashik?
3. Impact on Community Engagement: How does media representation of social issues affect community discussions, awareness, and actions in Nashik city?

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the impact of media on public perceptions and its influence on daily life.
2. To analyse the role of media framing.
3. To identify the factors that moderate media effects on common people's perceptions.
4. To discuss the implications for media literacy and critical thinking.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Ausat, A. M. A.:
Their work examines the influence of social media on public opinion and economic decisions, revealing the far-reaching consequences of online discourse.
2. Chen, S.:
By investigating the impact of social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram on self-identity, Chen's research provides valuable insights into the ways in which online environments shape our sense of self.
3. Greenhow, C., & Askari, E.:
Their decade-long review of research on social network sites in K-12 education highlights the potential benefits and challenges of integrating social media into learning environments.
4. Alt, N. P., & Phillips, L. T.:
This research duo has explored how people perceive groups and individuals on social media, revealing the complex social dynamics at play in online environments.
5. Ansari, J. A. N., & Khan, N. A.:
Their work on the role of social media in collaborative learning highlights the potential benefits of online platforms in facilitating knowledge-sharing and teamwork.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Type	Descriptive research
Scope of Research	People from age group of (18 to 35 and

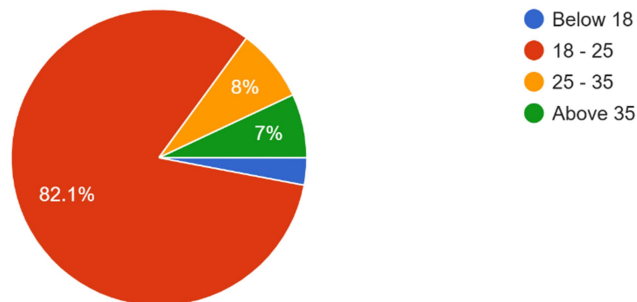


	above) of Nashik city
Data Collection	Primary source: In the primary source of collecting data, we formed google form of around 10-15 questions to gather the responses. Secondary source: Already existing research papers, articles, websites and journals.
Population	People from age group of (18 to 35 and above) of Nashik city
Sample Size	201
Sampling Techniques	Random sampling
Data Analysis Tools	Excel sheets, pie charts, and graphs, chi square test

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

TOOLS: Google Forms

1. AGE

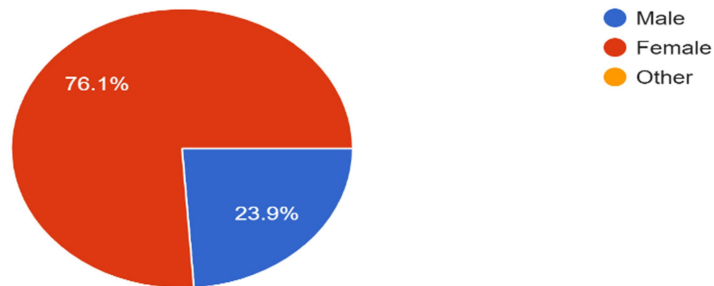


The chart is based on 201 responses and categorizes the ages into four distinct parts: Below 18, 18-25, 25-35, and Above 35. A closer look reveals that a whopping 82.1% of the respondents fall within the category of 18-25 age . This suggests that the survey has a strong presence of young adults, which could be due to various factors such as the survey's topic, the medium used to distribute it, or the overall appeal of the survey to this age group.



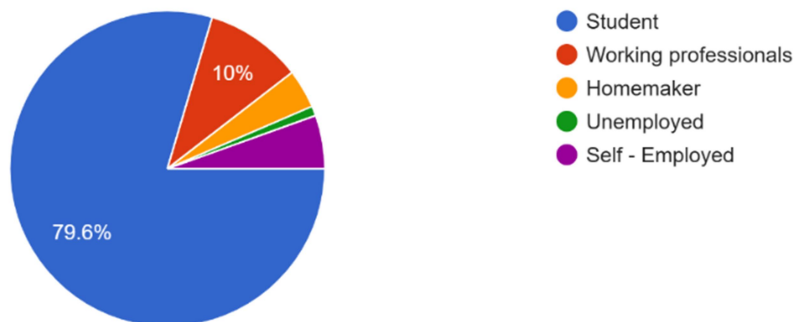
The remaining age categories have significantly smaller portion. The Above 35 group makes up around 7% of the respondents, while the 25-35 category accounts for 8%. The Below 18 age group is the smallest, with a nearly 4%portion of all.

2. GENDER



The pie chart displays 201 respondents' gender distribution with a clear majority being female. The chart has three categories named as Male, Female, and Other, shown by the colors blue, red, and orange, respectively. What is notable is that the Female category overtakes the chart at 76.1%, followed by the Male category at 23.9%. The other percentage is not specifically indicated for the "Other" category, but it is likely that it is a fairly small percentage of the overall responses. The chart as a whole gives a concrete visual display of the gender distribution among the population surveyed.

3. CURRENT OCCUPATION



- Student: 73.6% (blue)
- Working professionals: 19% (red)
- Homemaker: 4% (orange)

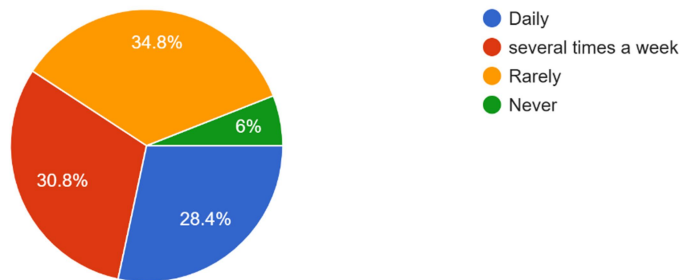


- Unemployed: 1% (green)

- Self-Employed: 2.5% (purple)

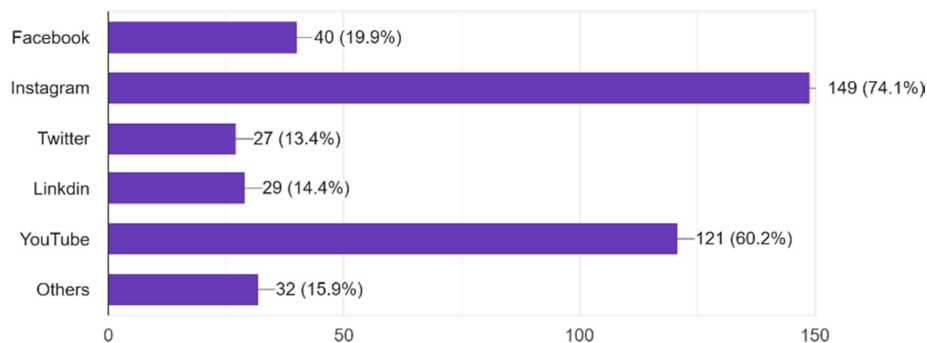
The graph reveals that most of the respondents (73.6%) are students, then professionals who are working (19%). The rest have lower percentages, where homemakers account for 4%, those who are unemployed 1%, and self-employed individuals 2.5%.

4. MEDIA CONSUMPTION HABITS



The chart reveals, about many points related to the media consumption, which seems to be about media watching habits, namely how frequently respondents watch news on television. Majorly people are not interested in watching news on television or from other sources. The ratio of these people is 34.8%. Among others, the second category is, people who all watch news sometimes a week is 30.8%. Daily news watching is a habit of only a few percent of people and that is 28.4%. The last category is followed by the ones who never watch news on any of the platforms is 6%.

5. WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA DO YOU USE MOST FREQUENTLY



The survey indicates that the most used platform by the respondents is Instagram, with 149 participants (74.1%) using it for updated information and news.

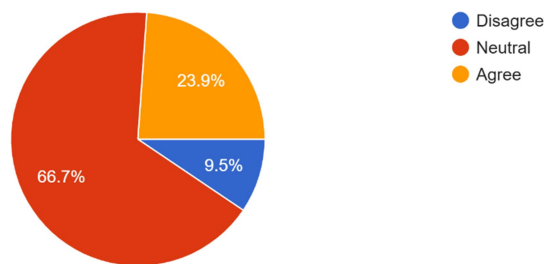


YouTube comes next, with 121 participants (60.2%) using it for news and updates.

Third is Facebook, with 40 participants (19.9%) using it for being informed.

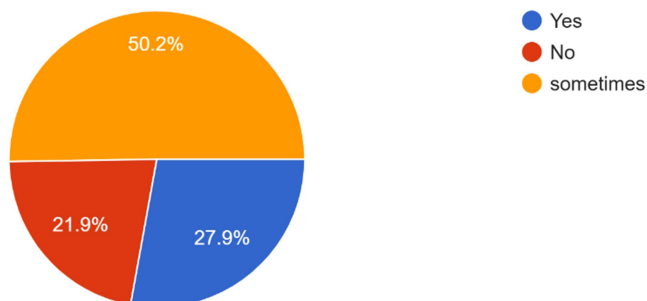
The survey identifies the varied tastes of respondents regarding social media sites for news reading and daily updates. It indicates that photo- and video-centric sites like Instagram and YouTube are becoming increasingly popular as sources of information and news.

6. DO YOU THINK MEDIA COVERAGE INFLUENCES YOUR OPINION ON DIFFERENT SOCIAL USES



- Disagree: 9.5%
- Neutral: 66.7%
- Agree: 21.9%
- Most respondents (66.7%) kept a neutral behaviour towards whether media coverage made them believe in social issues. Fewer (21.9%) of them said that media coverage does make them believe that all the news and updates shown by the media is real, while 9.5% of them disagreed for the above question.

7. HAVE YOU EVER CHANGED YOUR VIEW POINT ON TOPIC AFTER READING OR WATCHING MEDIA COVERAGE?



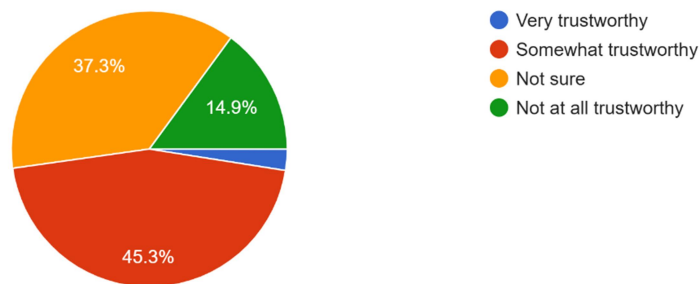
- Yes: 27.9% of the respondents (56 people) said that they had changed their opinion.



- No: 21.9% of those surveyed (44 people) replied that they had not altered their perspective.
- Sometimes: 50.2% of those surveyed (101 people) replied that they sometimes alter their perspective.

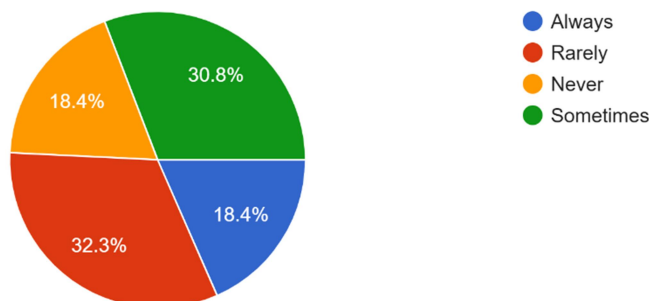
The findings of this survey imply that media coverage has a significant effect on the views of people, it affects the mindset of common people and their way of thinking, as a high percentage of respondents indicated that they adjust or at times switch their opinions after reading media.

8. HOW TRUSTWORTHY DO YOU FIND THE INFORMATION PRESENT IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA?



- Most respondents (45.3%) consider mainstream media "somewhat trustworthy."
- A large percentage (37.3%) are "not sure" whether mainstream media are trustworthy or not.
- A moderate percentage (14.9%) view mainstream media as "not at all trustworthy."
- An extremely low percentage (2.5%) of respondents rate mainstream media as "very trustworthy."

9. DO YOU FACT CHECK INFORMATION PRESENT IN MEDIA?



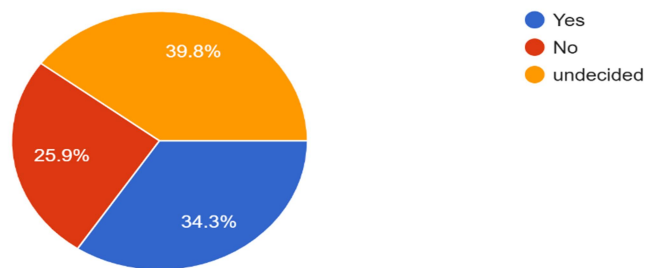
- Always: 18.4% of the participants (33 people) answered that they always fact-check information available in the media.
- Rarely: 32.3% of the participants (65 people) said that they rarely fact-check information.



- Never: 18.4% (33 people) of the respondents admitted to never fact-checking.
- Sometimes: 30.8% (70 people) of the respondents said that they sometimes fact-check.

The findings of this survey indicate that while some are consistent in fact-checking, others are not as keen on fact-checking. The findings point to the need for raising media literacy and critical thinking ability to guarantee that consumers are able to assess the information.

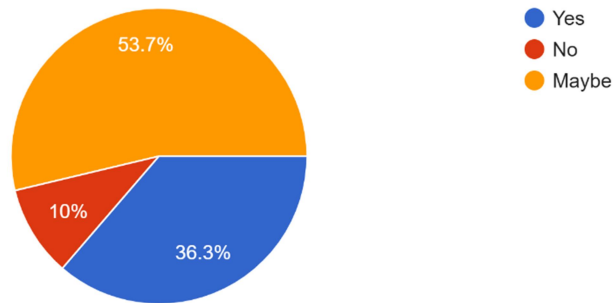
10.DO YOU THINK MEDIA REPRESENTATION AFFECTS YOUR PERCEPTION OF CERTAIN GROUPS OR COMMUNITIES?



- Yes: 34.3% (69 respondents)
- No: 25.9% (52 respondents)
- Undecided: 39.8% (80 respondents)
- Total Responses: 201

The findings of the survey reveal that a majority of respondents (39.8%) are uncertain whether the representation of the media has any effect on their perception of some groups or communities. The rest of the respondents are nearly evenly distributed between those who think that media representation matters to their perception (34.3%) and those who do not (25.9%). This information indicates that although a large percentage of respondents are not sure whether media depiction affects them, a large number do recognize its effect on them.

11.HAVE YOU EVER FELT MISLEAD OF MISINFORMED BY MEDIA COVERAGE OF OVERALL SOCIAL ISSUE?



- Above chart shows different category of which respondent thinks that doe's media coverage of any social issues misleads them or misguide them with regards to any news or updates the see through any social media platforms.
- Most of the respondents have chosen for “maybe” (53.7%)
- Large number of respondents had chosen for “yes” (36.3%)
- Least number of respondents had chosen for “(10%)

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Social media significantly influences public perception and opinion about social issues among the 18–25 age group in Nashik city.

Null Hypothesis (H0): Social media does not significantly influence public perception and opinion about social issues among the 18–25 age group in Nashik.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Media coverage (news and social media) contributes to changes in public opinion, but trust and fact-checking behaviour among Nashik residents remain limited.

Null Hypothesis (H0): Media coverage does not contribute significantly to changes in public opinion, and it has no effect on trust or fact-checking behaviour.

Chi-Square Test:-

The **Chi-Square test** was used because the data was categorical, the hypotheses involved differences in opinion categories, and the test helped validate whether media's influence, trust, and fact-checking behaviour in Nashik were statistically significant.

Chi-Square Test Calculations:



Hypothesis 1

H1: Social media significantly influences public perception and opinion about social issues among the 18–25 age group in Nashik city.

H0: Social media does not significantly influence public perception and opinion about social issues among the 18–25 age group in Nashik.

Table 1.1: Observed vs. Expected Frequencies (Hypothesis 1)

Response	Observed (O)	Expected (E)
Yes	56	67
No	44	67
Sometimes	101	67
Total	201	201

Step-by-step Calculation

$$\chi^2 = \sum (O - E)^2 / E$$

$$= (56 - 67)^2 / 67 + (44 - 67)^2 / 67 + (101 - 67)^2 / 67$$

$$= 121 / 67 + 529 / 67 + 1156 / 67$$

$$= 1.81 + 7.90 + 17.25$$

$$= \mathbf{26.96}$$

- **df = 2**
- **p-value < 0.001**

Interpretation: The test is significant. Social media plays a powerful role in shaping opinions, especially in the **18–25 age group** of Nashik.

Hypothesis 2

H1: Media coverage (news and social media) contributes to changes in public opinion, but trust and fact-checking behaviour among Nashik residents remain limited.



H0: Media coverage does not contribute significantly to changes in public opinion, and it has no effect on trust or fact-checking behaviour.

Part A: Trust in Media

Table 2.1: Observed vs. Expected Frequencies (Trust in Media)

Response	Observed (O)	Expected (E)
Very Trustworthy	5	50.25
Somewhat Trustworthy	91	50.25
Not Sure	75	50.25
Not at All	30	50.25
Total	201	201

Step-by-step Calculation

$$\chi^2 = (5 - 50.25)^2 / 50.25 + (91 - 50.25)^2 / 50.25 + (75 - 50.25)^2 / 50.25 + (30 - 50.25)^2 / 50.25$$

$$= 2047.56 / 50.25 + 1660.56 / 50.25 + 612.56 / 50.25 + 410.06 / 50.25$$

$$= 40.74 + 33.06 + 12.19 + 8.16$$

$$= 94.15$$

- **df = 3**
- **p < 0.001**

Interpretation: Trust in media is unevenly distributed, with most respondents saying “Somewhat Trustworthy” or “Not Sure.”

Part B: Fact-Checking Behaviour

Table 2.2: Observed vs. Expected Frequencies (Fact-Checking Behaviour)

Response	Observed (O)	Expected (E)
Always	33	50.25
Rarely	65	50.25

Response	Observed (O)	Expected (E)
Never	33	50.25
Sometimes	70	50.25
Total	201	201

Step-by-step Calculation

$$\chi^2 = (33 - 50.25)^2 / 50.25 + (65 - 50.25)^2 / 50.25 + (33 - 50.25)^2 / 50.25 + (70 - 50.25)^2 / 50.25$$

$$= 297.56 / 50.25 + 217.56 / 50.25 + 297.56 / 50.25 + 390.06 / 50.25$$

$$= 5.92 + 4.33 + 5.92 + 7.76$$

$$= 23.93$$

- **df = 3**
- **p < 0.001**

Interpretation: Fact-checking behaviour is not balanced. Most respondents verify information “Rarely” or “Sometimes,” indicating weak media literacy.

Summary of Hypotheses Testing**Table 3.1: Summary of Chi-Square Hypotheses Testing**

Hypothesis	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Decision
H1: Social media influence	26.96	2	<0.001	Significant
H2a: Trust in Media	94.15	3	<0.001	Significant
H2b: Fact-checking behaviour	23.93	3	<0.001	Significant

Overall Interpretation:

- **H1 accepted** → Social media significantly influences public perception in the 18–25 age group.
- **H2 accepted** → Media coverage shapes opinion, but trust in media is **low** and fact-checking behaviour is **limited**.

FINDINGS

The survey highlights a significant level of uncertainty and distrust towards media coverage of social issues among respondents. A substantial portion of respondents have felt misled or misinformed, indicating a need for more accurate and unbiased reporting. The findings suggest that the public does not fully trust the media's portrayal of social issues, with a significant majority expressing uncertainty or scepticism.

The survey results provide valuable insights into the public's perception of media coverage on social issues. Here are the key findings in detail:

- 1) **Uncertainty and Distrust**: A significant majority, 51.7%, of respondents are unsure about feeling misled or misinformed by media coverage. This indicates a high level of doubt about the information presented.
- 2) **Feeling Misled**: A notable proportion, 38.3%, have felt misled or misinformed by media coverage. This highlights a significant level of distrust towards the media's portrayal of social issues.
- 3) **Trust in Media**: A small percentage, 10%, of respondents have not felt misled or misinformed. This suggests that most people have some degree of scepticism toward the media's coverage.
- 4) **Implications**: The findings indicate that the media's portrayal of social issues is not entirely trusted by the public. A significant majority express uncertainty or scepticism.
- 5) **Need for Accurate Reporting**: The high percentage of respondents who feel misled or misinformed emphasizes the need for more accurate and unbiased reporting on social issues.
- 6) **Media Credibility**: The survey results raise concerns about the media's credibility in portraying social issues. A significant number of respondents question the accuracy of the information provided.
- 7) **Public Perception**: The findings show that the public is not fully convinced by the media's coverage of social issues, with many expressing uncertainty or distrusts.
- 8) **Media Literacy**: The survey results underline the importance of media literacy and critical thinking skills for evaluating the information presented by the media.
- 9) **Diverse Perspectives**: The findings suggest that the media could benefit from presenting diverse viewpoints on social issues to boost credibility and trust.
- 10) **Fact-Checking**: The survey results stress the importance of fact-checking and verifying the information presented by the media to ensure accuracy and credibility.
- 11) **Media Responsibility**: The findings indicate that the media should provide reliable and unbiased information to the public. Failure to do so can lead to distrust and scepticism.



12)Public Engagement: The survey results highlight the need for more public engagement and participation in media discussions. Many respondents express a desire for more accurate and informative reporting.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey explores how people engage with media, looking at consumption habits, the influence of media coverage, perceptions of media credibility, and fact-checking behaviours. Instagram appears to be a leading platform for respondents to get current updates and news. Media coverage has an impact on people's opinions, with 27.9% of respondents saying they've changed their viewpoint after consuming media coverage. Views on media credibility vary, with most considering mainstream media "somewhat trustworthy." When it comes to fact-checking, 34.6% of participants always verify information, while others check rarely or sometimes. Overall, media significantly shapes public opinion and behaviour, and how people view media credibility affects their engagement with news. The differences in fact-checking habits highlight the importance of media literacy for navigating today's media landscape effectively.

Media Consumption and Influence: The survey dives into how people consume media and how it influences their opinions. It seems Instagram is a go-to for many respondents looking for current updates and news. Media coverage plays a role in shaping people's viewpoints - about 27.9% of respondents have changed their opinion after reading or watching media coverage. This shows media has a tangible impact on how people think about various issues.

Credibility Matters: When it comes to trusting media, respondents aren't all on the same page. Most consider mainstream media "somewhat trustworthy," but a big chunk aren't sure about its credibility. This mix of opinions suggests people are cautious about what they read and watch in the media. How credible people find media can affect how they engage with news and updates.

Fact-Checking Habits Vary: People have different habits when it comes to fact-checking information in the media. 34.6% of participants say they always fact-check, while others do so rarely or sometimes. This difference in behaviour points to a need for people to be more media-savvy in today's world where news and updates come at them fast and from many directions. Being able to navigate and verify what's being reported is key to making informed decisions.

Overall Impact of Media: In the end, media plays a big role in shaping what people think and how they behave. How people perceive media credibility and how often they fact-check can impact their engagement with news. The survey findings highlight the complexities of media consumption in today's



digital age. People need to be aware of how media influences them and take steps to verify information to stay informed.

Implications for Media Literacy: The varying levels of fact-checking and perceptions of media credibility underscore the importance of media literacy. In a world where information is abundant and often conflicting, being able to critically evaluate what's being reported is crucial. Media literacy isn't just about consuming news; it's about understanding the potential biases, verifying facts, and making informed decisions based on credible information. Encouraging media literacy can help people navigate the complex media landscape more effectively.

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