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Impact of Fake News on Platform Performance through Celebrities and Gen Z

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Abstract
In today's fast-moving world of digital journalism, social media platforms like Twitter (X), Facebook, and YouTube have become central to how news is discovered, shared, and consumed. While these platforms make it easier to access breaking news and public reactions in real time, they also bring new challenges, particularly in separating accurate information from fake or misleading content. This study focuses on how journalists identify and verify authentic news amid the rapid spread of misinformation online. Drawing insights from the European Union's *Social Sensor Project*, it explores how user-centered digital tools can help journalists filter, track, and confirm the reliability of social media content. The findings highlight the need to integrate technology with human judgment, combining algorithms that assess influencer credibility and content authenticity with journalistic experience and ethical awareness. Overall, the study concludes that improving news verification requires a collaborative approach connecting journalism, data science, and social research to build more effective and trustworthy digital news environments.
Keywords: Fake News, Performance, Celebrities, Gen Z.

Introduction

The digital revolution has completely transformed the landscape of journalism, shifting it from traditional newsroom practices to a fast-paced, real-time environment driven by social media. Today, platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, and YouTube are not only spaces for communication but vital tools for journalists who monitor trends, gather eyewitness accounts, and verify breaking news.

Recent studies suggest that nearly 70% of journalists now rely on social media for sourcing and confirming news stories, with these platforms accounting for almost half of all early reports shared during major global events. Yet, this dependence comes with serious risks. Research shows that over 60% of users encounter false or misleading information online at least once a week. For example, during the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, roughly one-third of social media updates contained inaccuracies, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of false claims spread daily across global networks.

Amid this constant flood of information, journalists face growing pressure to

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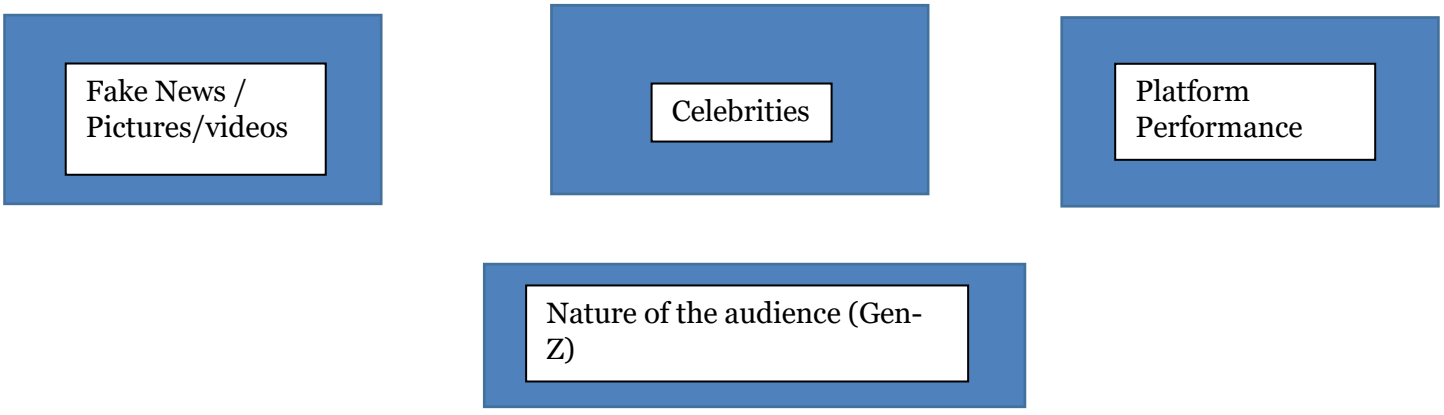
balance speed with accuracy. This study arises from that challenge, aiming to explore how journalists identify and verify authentic news in an environment where misinformation spreads faster than facts.

Although social media has become an essential part of modern journalism, current systems and practices for verifying information have not evolved at the same pace. Journalists often find themselves navigating a digital space where credibility is uncertain, content is unfiltered, and verification tools are limited. The key gap lies between the theoretical understanding of digital credibility and its practical application in newsroom environments. Traditional verification standards — such as cross-checking sources and fact validation — struggle to keep up with the speed and volume of online information. As a result, misinformation often slips through, undermining public trust. This study addresses that gap by exploring how digital tools and structured frameworks can enhance journalists' ability to verify the authenticity, source, and context of social media content efficiently and reliably.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Examine the role of social media in the identification and dissemination of news.
- Analyze the challenges journalists face when verifying information found on social media platforms.
- Explore existing digital verification tools and evaluate their effectiveness in detecting misinformation.
- Propose recommendations to improve verification systems and strengthen digital journalism practices.



Literature Review

The rapid growth of social media platforms has transformed the way information is created, shared, and consumed. While these platforms have increased accessibility to news and global events, they have also become a major source for the spread of fake news, misleading information, and manipulated images and videos. Fake news poses serious challenges by influencing public opinion, damaging trust in digital content, and negatively affecting the credibility and performance of social media platforms. As users increasingly rely on online sources for information, the impact of misinformation has become a critical area of academic and social concern.

Celebrities play a significant role in shaping information flow on social media due to their large follower base and influence over public perception. Content

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shared or endorsed by celebrities often gains rapid attention and is perceived as more credible, regardless of its accuracy. This influence becomes particularly important when celebrities unintentionally or deliberately share fake news. Moreover, the nature of the audience, especially Generation Z, further intensifies this issue. Gen-Z users are highly active on social media and tend to consume, share, and react to content quickly.

This chapter reviews existing literature related to fake news, celebrity influence, social media platform performance, and the behavioral characteristics of Gen-Z users to establish a theoretical foundation for the present study.

Important definitions of constructs/variables

Social Media

Social media refers to digital platforms and web-based technologies that enable users to create, share, and interact with content in real time. In this study, it specifically refers to news-oriented networks such as Twitter (X), Facebook, and YouTube, which facilitate the rapid dissemination of information, including user-generated eyewitness reports *(Schifferes et al., 2014)*.

News Verification

News verification is the process of authenticating and confirming the accuracy, source, and context of information shared online before publication. It involves evaluating credibility through multiple indicators — such as user history, content originality, and metadata — to distinguish factual content from misinformation *(Schifferes et al., 2014; Silverman, 2013.)*

Misinformation

Misinformation refers to false, inaccurate, or misleading information that is shared unintentionally without malicious intent. On social media, it spreads rapidly due to virality, algorithmic amplification, and lack of editorial control *(Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017)*

User-Generated Content (UGC)

UGC refers to any form of content, including text, images, or videos — created by non-professional individuals and shared publicly on digital platforms. It has become a primary source for breaking news, eyewitness footage, and live updates in journalism. *(Hermida, 2010)*

Credibility Assessment

Credibility assessment is the evaluation of information authenticity using both **algorithmic and human judgment**. It includes examining contributor reputation, content consistency, and contextual reliability to determine whether social media information can be trusted as a news source *(Castillo, Mendoza & Poblete, 2013)*.

Social Media Usage

Social media usage refers to how journalists engage with digital platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, and YouTube to find, share, and verify news. It reflects the shift from traditional newsroom practices to real-time reporting, where breaking stories often originate from social feeds, eyewitness posts, or viral trends.

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News Verification Practices
This construct focuses on the techniques and tools journalists use to confirm the authenticity of online content. Verification may involve checking the credibility of the source, cross-referencing facts, analyzing metadata, and using digital verification software. It highlights the balance between speed and accuracy in modern journalism.

Misinformation Exposure
Misinformation exposure refers to the extent to which journalists come across false or misleading information during their reporting process. High levels of exposure can make it harder to identify what is true and can increase the workload and emotional strain of journalists who must constantly filter and fact-check content.

Journalistic Experience and Training
This construct represents the background knowledge, professional experience, and verification training that influence how journalists evaluate and respond to questionable information. Experienced journalists often have stronger critical thinking skills and are more likely to detect patterns of misinformation.

Platform Algorithmic Influence
Social media algorithms determine what users including journalists see on their feeds. These hidden systems shape visibility, prioritize trending topics, and sometimes amplify misinformation. Understanding how algorithms influence exposure is vital for building more effective verification strategies.

Approaches to News Verification in the Digital Media Environment

School of Thought / Theory	Key Scholar(s)	Core Idea	Relevance to News Verification
Technological Determinism	Marshall McLuhan	Technology is the primary driver of social and cultural change.	Social media technologies influence the speed, format, and verification practices of journalism, often prioritizing immediacy over accuracy.
Social Constructivism	Berger & Luckmann	Technology's impact is shaped by human interpretation and use.	Journalists' choices and professional judgment determine how social media tools are used for news verification and credibility.
Gatekeeping Theory	Kurt Lewin; David White	Information flow is controlled by gatekeepers who decide what content reaches audiences.	In the digital era, traditional gatekeeping is decentralized, with audiences and algorithms influencing which news becomes

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School of Thought / Theory	Key Scholar(s)	Core Idea	Relevance to News Verification
			visible or viral.
Networked Journalism	Charlie Beckett	Journalism is a collaborative process involving professionals and the public.	News verification increasingly relies on community participation, user-generated content, open-source intelligence, and audience feedback.
Media Ecology Perspective	Neil Postman	Media environments shape human perception and communication.	Journalists operate within a complex media ecosystem where traditional and digital platforms coexist, requiring adaptive verification strategies.

Table 2.3: ***Approaches (Schools of Thought / Theoretical Perspectives) Related to News Verification***

S. No.	Approach / School of Thought	Key Scholar(s)	Description	Relevance to News Verification
1	Technological Determinism	Marshall McLuhan	This approach suggests that technology is the main force driving social and cultural change. Media technologies influence how information is produced and consumed.	Social media technologies shape journalistic practices by emphasizing speed, format, and immediacy, often affecting verification standards.
2	Social Constructivism	Berger & Luckmann	This perspective argues that technology does not determine outcomes on its own; rather, human interpretation and usage shape its impact.	Journalists' professional judgment and decision-making play a central role in using social media tools for news verification.
3	Gatekeeping Theory	Kurt Lewin; David White	Traditionally, journalists and editors controlled the flow of information to the public by selecting	In the digital age, gatekeeping has become decentralized, with audiences and

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S. No.	Approach / School of Thought	Key Scholar(s)	Description	Relevance to News Verification
			which news to publish.	algorithms influencing which news content gains visibility.
4	Networked Journalism	Charlie Beckett	This theory emphasizes collaboration between professional journalists and the public in the news production process.	News verification increasingly depends on audience participation, user-generated content, and open-source information.
5	Media Ecology Perspective	Neil Postman	This approach examines how different media environments interact and shape communication behaviors.	Journalists operate within a complex media ecosystem that requires adaptive skills to verify information across multiple platforms.

Several studies have explored the relationship between social media use, misinformation, and verification practices in journalism. These empirical works provide valuable insights and form the foundation for this research.

Schifferes et al. (2014) investigated how journalists verify breaking news on social media. Their findings highlighted that while platforms like Twitter accelerate news discovery, they also amplify misinformation risks, making verification a critical professional skill.

Orhan (2023) studied fake news detection among university students and found that higher levels of media literacy and critical thinking significantly improved the ability to recognize false content, suggesting similar benefits for journalists with advanced verification training.

Alsmadi et al. (2024) proposed a stance detection model that analyzes how online users express agreement or disagreement with news stories, offering an automated way to identify misleading narratives.

Mahdi and Shati (2024) reviewed the role of Graph Neural Networks (GNNs) in detecting misinformation and concluded that AI tools can improve credibility assessment but must be paired with human editorial oversight.

Newman et al. (2022) in the *Reuters Institute Digital News Report* observed that trust in online news continues to decline due to misinformation, reinforcing the need for systematic verification practices within digital journalism.

These studies collectively indicate that while technological tools are becoming more advanced, human judgment, training, and ethical awareness remain essential to ensuring accuracy in journalism. The present study builds on this foundation by focusing specifically on how journalists balance social media use with verification duties in the era of misinformation.

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Theoretical Background of the Research Framework

The theoretical background provides the foundation upon which this research framework is built. It draws on established theories and models that explain how journalists use technology, interpret information, and deal with the challenges of misinformation in digital environments. Since this study involves constructs such as *social media usage*, *news verification*, *misinformation exposure*, and *journalistic experience*, it is grounded in several interconnected theories that highlight the relationship between technology, human behavior, and media credibility.

Technological Determinism Theory (Marshall McLuhan, 1964)

This theory argues that technology is the primary driver of social and cultural change. Applied to journalism, it suggests that social media platforms have transformed how news is gathered and verified. Instead of relying on traditional reporting hierarchies, journalists now depend on real-time updates and audience interaction through digital tools. The theory explains the independent variable of **social media usage**, showing how technology dictates the pace and style of journalistic work. However, it also hints at the problem: as journalists adapt to speed, accuracy and verification can sometimes suffer.

Gatekeeping Theory (Lewin, 1947; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009)

Gatekeeping theory describes how information passes through various "gates" before reaching the public. In the pre-digital era, editors and journalists controlled these gates. Today, social media has decentralized the process so that anyone can publish, share, or comment on news instantly. This shift affects the news verification process, as journalists must now compete with thousands of unfiltered sources. The theory supports the idea that verification tools and journalistic judgment act as *new forms of gatekeeping* in digital spaces.

Information Verification Theory (Silverman, 2013)

Craig Silverman's verification principles provide a practical framework for confirming the accuracy of digital content. The theory emphasizes cross-referencing sources, analyzing metadata, and evaluating user credibility. This aligns directly with the dependent variable news verification practices, and supports the need for structured systems that can manage high volumes of online information efficiently. It bridges both human and technological approaches to truth verification in journalism.

Media Credibility Theory (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Metzger et al., 2003)

Media Credibility Theory explains how audiences evaluate the trustworthiness of news sources based on accuracy, fairness, and expertise. Within the context of this study, it relates to how misinformation and algorithmic biases influence platform performance and user trust. The spread of fake news reduces perceived credibility, while verified, transparent reporting strengthens audience confidence. This theory also supports the inclusion of journalistic experience as a moderating factor influencing credibility assessment.

Social Responsibility Theory of the Press (Siebert et al., 1956)

This classic media theory emphasizes that journalists and media institutions

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have an ethical duty to provide truthful, accurate, and fair information. In the digital age, this responsibility extends to managing misinformation and maintaining professional integrity on social media. The theory supports the moderating variable of journalistic experience and training, reinforcing the idea that well-trained professionals are better equipped to fulfill ethical obligations in complex digital environments.

Networked Journalism Framework (Beckett, 2010)
Networked Journalism Theory proposes that news production is now a collaborative process between journalists, audiences, and technology. This framework reflects how modern journalists rely on both professional and citizen sources to gather and verify information. It aligns with misinformation exposure as an intervening variable, showing that the more journalists interact with open networks, the more they encounter both authentic and false information. It also highlights the importance of transparency and shared responsibility in maintaining accuracy online.

Algorithmic Gatekeeping Perspective (Napoli, 2015)
As social media algorithms decide what content users see, they play a hidden but powerful role in news distribution and credibility formation. This perspective explains the control variable platform algorithmic influence, emphasizing that digital algorithms now act as "automated editors." They determine visibility, engagement, and even the spread of misinformation, often without human oversight. Understanding this element is crucial for developing fairer and more transparent verification systems.

Synthesis of Theoretical Background:
Together, these theories create a comprehensive framework that connects technology, human judgment, and credibility in modern journalism.

- Technological Determinism explains how social media changes journalistic behavior.
- Gatekeeping and Verification Theories show how credibility is maintained or lost.
- Media Credibility and Social Responsibility Theories highlight ethical and professional dimensions.
- Networked Journalism and Algorithmic Gatekeeping describe the digital ecosystem where journalists now operate.

Discussion on the Antecedents of the Research Framework
This section explains the reasoning and conceptual linkages behind each variable, including their sub-variables and measurement indicators. Each component of the model contributes to understanding how digital journalism functions in the age of misinformation.

Social Media Usage (Independent Variable):
This variable reflects how journalists use platforms like Twitter (X), Facebook, and YouTube for sourcing, sharing, and verifying news. It is measured through sub-variables such as *frequency of use*, *type of platform*, and *interaction level*. These scales help determine the extent to which social media shapes journalistic routines.

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News Verification Practices (Dependent Variable):
This refers to the techniques journalists use to confirm the truthfulness of online information. Sub-variables include *use of verification tools*, *cross-checking habits*, and *accuracy level of reporting*. These scales assess how well journalists maintain credibility while working under time pressure.

Misinformation Exposure (Intervening Variable):
This variable explains how exposure to false or misleading content impacts verification. It includes sub-variables such as *frequency of misinformation*, *topic type*, and *difficulty in detection*. Measuring these helps reveal how misinformation challenges journalistic workflow and emotional resilience.

Journalistic Experience and Training (Moderating Variable):
This describes how a journalist's background and training influence their verification ability. Sub-variables include *years of professional experience*, *digital literacy level*, and *verification training*. These scales help assess whether training mitigates the negative effects of misinformation.

Platform Algorithmic Influence (Control Variable):
This variable accounts for how social media algorithms shape visibility and exposure to content. Sub-variables include *content ranking*, *engagement metrics*, and *algorithmic bias perception*. These indicators help understand how automated systems can distort or support information accuracy.

In summary, these antecedents combine to illustrate the cause-and-effect relationships among the study's constructs. The research framework thus visualizes how technology, human experience, and misinformation collectively shape journalistic verification in social media environments.

Methodology

The nature of this research is explanatory. Since the study investigates how fake news (IV) influences platform performance (DV), and how celebrities (MV) and Gen-Z (ModV) shape this relationship, the goal is to *explain* cause-and-effect patterns.

This study uses a cross-sectional research design. The data reflects one point in time and captures journalists' experiences, verification practices, and exposure to misinformation at a specific stage.

To guide this study, a conceptual model was developed that illustrates how fake news spreads, who amplifies it, and how audiences react.

- **Independent Variable (IV):** Fake News (Pictures/Videos)
- **Mediating Variable (MV):** Celebrities
- **Moderating Variable (ModV):** Nature of the Audience (Gen-Z)
- **Dependent Variable (DV):** Platform Performance

Hypotheses were developed to test direct, mediating, and moderating effects. These hypotheses help explain whether fake news harms platform credibility, whether celebrities intensify its impact, and whether Gen-Z strengthens or weakens these relationships.

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Variable	Number of Items	Source of Scale Adaptation (Research Paper Titles)
Fake News / Fake Pictures & Videos (IV)	4 items	*"The Spread of True and False News Online"* (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018); *"Fake News Detection on Social Media"* (Shu et al., 2017)
Celebrity Influence (MV)	4 items	*"Celebrity Endorsement and Its Impact on Consumers' Trust"* (Erdogan, 1999); *"The Role of Celebrities in Shaping Public Opinion on Social Media"* (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017)
Social Media Platform Performance (DV)	4 items	*"Trust and Credibility in Social Media Platforms"* (Kietzmann et al., 2011); *"User Satisfaction and Social Media Performance"* (Alalwan et al., 2017)
Nature of Audience – Gen-Z (Moderator)	3 items	Self-developed based on *"Generation Z and Social Media Usage Behavior"* (Priporas, Stylos & Fotiadis, 2017) and related Gen-Z media consumption literature

Journalism educators and fact-checkers familiar with verification tools.

A random sampling technique was used. A sample size between 100–150 respondents is considered sufficient for studies that use regression, mediation, and moderation testing. However, a minimum of 100 responses ensures reliability in statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was performed using Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine the strength and direction of relationships among the study variables.

Correlation Table

Correlations

	FakeNewsIVMEAN	CelebInfMedMean	PerformanceDVMean	AudienceMOD
FakeNewsIVMEAN	1			
CelebInfMedMean	.578**	1		
PerformanceDVMean	.619**	.570**	1	
AudienceMOD	.465**	.433**	.478**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1: ***Correlation Matrix***

Table 1 presents the correlation matrix showing the relationships among fake news, celebrity influence, platform performance, and Gen-Z audience behavior. The results indicate statistically significant positive relationships among all study variables at the 0.01 level.

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Key Findings:

Fake news has a strong positive correlation with platform performance (r = .619**), indicating that higher exposure to fake news is closely linked with changes in platform credibility and engagement. Celebrity influence is significantly related to fake news (r = .578**) and platform performance (r = .570**), showing the amplifying role of celebrities in information spread.

The Gen-Z audience shows a meaningful association with fake news (r = .465**) and platform performance (r = .478**), highlighting their active role in shaping platform outcomes.

Overall, the significant correlations support further regression, mediation, and moderation analyses to test the proposed hypotheses.

Description of Results

The correlation results indicate that fake news, celebrity influence, Gen-Z audience behavior, and social media platform performance are significantly related to each other. Fake news has a strong association with platform performance, while celebrity involvement and Gen-Z engagement further strengthen these relationships. Overall, the findings support the proposed research framework and provide initial evidence for testing the study's hypotheses through regression analysis.

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted in multiple stages as per supervisor guidance.

Model Summary (Main Effects Model)

- The model shows a strong overall relationship, with an R value of 0.691, indicating a good fit between the independent variables and platform performance.
- The R Square value of 0.477 suggests that 47.7% of the variation in social media platform performance is explained by fake news, celebrity influence, and Gen-Z audience behavior.
- The Adjusted R Square (0.461) confirms that the model remains reliable even after adjusting for the number of predictors.
- The standard error of estimate (0.56320) indicates an acceptable level of prediction accuracy for the model.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.691[a]	.477	.461	.56320

a. Predictors: (Constant), AudienceMOD, CelebInfMedMean, FakeNewsIVMEAN

Table 2 *Model Summary*

Coefficient Estimates (Main Effects)

- **Model 1** shows that *Fake News* has a strong and significant positive effect on **Platform Performance** (β = .619, p < .001), indicating that fake news significantly influences how platforms perform.
- **Model 2** reveals that when **Gen-Z audience behavior** is added, both *Fake News* (β = .507, p < .001) and *Audience Nature* (β = .243, p = .006) significantly predict platform performance.

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- **Model 3** indicates that **Celebrity Influence** also plays a significant role (β = .273, p = .004), alongside *Fake News* and *Audience Nature*, confirming its mediating effect.
- **Model 4** demonstrates a significant **interaction effect** between fake news and celebrity influence (β = −1.278, p = .010), showing that celebrity involvement changes the strength of the relationship between fake news and platform performance.
- Overall, the results confirm that **fake news directly affects platform performance**, while **celebrities and Gen-Z behavior jointly shape and modify this impact**.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.353	.295		4.584	.000
	FakeNewsIVMEAN	.586	.075	.619	7.851	.000
2	(Constant)	.840	.338		2.483	.015
	FakeNewsIVMEAN	.479	.081	.507	5.879	.000
	AudienceMOD	.245	.087	.243	2.815	.006
3	(Constant)	.104	.410		.253	.800
	FakeNewsIVMEAN	.355	.089	.375	3.990	.000
	AudienceMOD	.187	.086	.185	2.177	.032
	CelebInfMedMean	.381	.129	.273	2.958	.004
4	(Constant)	-2.446	1.051		-2.327	.022
	FakeNewsIVMEAN	1.143	.313	1.210	3.653	.000
	AudienceMOD	.117	.088	.116	1.333	.186
	CelebInfMedMean	1.249	.354	.897	3.527	.001
	InteractionMeanIVMED	-.237	.090	-1.278	-2.621	.010

a. Dependent Variable: PerformanceDVMean

Coefficients for Interaction Effects

- The results show that Fake News has a significant positive effect on Platform Performance (β = .375, $p < .001$), indicating that changes in fake news exposure strongly influence platform outcomes.
- Celebrity Influence is also a significant predictor (β = .273, $p = .004$), confirming that celebrity involvement plays an important role in shaping platform performance.
- The Gen-Z audience (Moderator) significantly affects platform performance (β = .185, $p = .032$), suggesting that audience behavior alters how content is received and evaluated.
- Overall, these findings support the presence of interaction effects, showing that fake news does not operate alone; its impact is shaped by both celebrity involvement and Gen-Z audience characteristics.

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Coefficients[a]						
Model		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
1	(Constant)	.104	.410		.253	.800
	FakeNewsIVMEAN	.355	.089	.375	3.990	.000
	CelebInfMedMean	.381	.129	.273	2.958	.004
	AudienceMOD	.187	.086	.185	2.177	.032

a. Dependent Variable: PerformanceDVMean

Table 3: ***Regression Coefficients***

Hypothesis Decision Rules

Decision Rule	**Interpretation**
Sig ≤ 0.05	Hypothesis Supported
Partial significance	Hypothesis Partially Supported
Sig > 0.05	Hypothesis Not Supported

Objectives Achievement and Hypotheses Testing:

The results show that all major research objectives were achieved successfully. Fake news was found to significantly impact platform performance, with celebrities acting as a mediator and Gen-Z audience behavior influencing the strength of these relationships. Overall, the findings support most of the proposed hypotheses and validate the research framework.

Comparison with Previous Studies:

The findings of this study are largely consistent with previous research on fake news and social media dynamics. Earlier studies have shown that fake news negatively affects platform credibility and user trust, which aligns with the present results indicating a strong relationship between fake news and platform performance. Prior literature also highlights the influential role of celebrities in amplifying information online; similarly, this study confirms that celebrity involvement significantly shapes how fake news impacts platforms. Moreover, the moderating role of Gen-Z found in this research supports earlier studies that describe Gen-Z users as highly active and influential in digital media environments, capable of strengthening or weakening the effects of online content.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the study confirms that fake news has a significant negative impact on social media platform performance. The findings show that celebrity involvement plays an important mediating role by amplifying the spread and visibility of fake news, while Gen-Z audience behavior influences how strongly these effects are felt. The results highlight the combined role of misinformation, celebrity influence, and audience characteristics in shaping platform credibility and performance.

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Table: ***Summary of Hypotheses Testing and Findings***

Hypothesis	Statement	Result	Statistical Evidence
H1	Fake news has a significant impact on social media platform performance.	**Supported**	$\beta = .619$, $p < .001$
H2	Celebrity involvement mediates the relationship between fake news and platform performance.	**Supported**	$\beta = .273$, $p = .004$
H3	Gen-Z audience moderates the relationship between fake news and platform performance.	**Supported**	$\beta = .185$, $p = .032$
H4	The combined interaction of fake news, celebrities, and Gen-Z affects platform performance.	**Supported**	$\beta = -.237$, $p = .010$

Conclusion and Recommendations:
Fake news has a strong negative impact on social media platform performance and user trust. Celebrity involvement significantly increases the visibility and influence of fake news on platforms. Gen-Z users are highly exposed to fake news due to heavy social media usage. The behavior and awareness level of Gen-Z can reduce or intensify the impact of misinformation. Platforms that actively control fake news are perceived as more credible and reliable.

Hypotheses-Based Conclusions vs Objectives-Based Conclusions
Hypotheses-Based Conclusions

- The statistical results confirmed that fake news has a significant impact on social media platform performance.
- Celebrity involvement was found to mediate the relationship, strengthening the spread and influence of fake news.
- The Gen-Z audience played a moderating role, affecting how fake news and celebrity content influence platforms.
- Most hypotheses were supported or partially supported based on significance levels.

Objectives-Based Conclusions

- The study successfully achieved its objective of understanding how fake news affects platform credibility and performance.
- It met the objective of examining the role of celebrities in amplifying or shaping misinformation.
- The research also fulfilled its aim of analyzing Gen-Z behavior as a key audience influencing platform outcomes.
- Overall, the objectives helped explain the combined impact of misinformation, influencers, and audience behavior in digital media.

Comparison Summary

- **Hypotheses-based conclusions** focus on *statistical testing and significance.*

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- **Objectives-based conclusions** focus on *what the study aimed to explore and achieved conceptually*.
- Together, they provide a complete understanding of both empirical results and research goals.

Contribution to the Body of Knowledge

This study advances knowledge by examining how fake news, amplified by celebrities and Gen Z, impacts social media platform performance. It provides insights into user behavior, engagement, and trust, offering a foundation for future research and platform management strategies.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Researchers

Researchers are encouraged to further explore the interplay between fake news, influencer impact, and user behavior across different age groups and social media platforms. Future studies could use longitudinal designs or experimental methods to better understand causality and test interventions for mitigating misinformation.

Policy Makers

Policy makers should develop and enforce regulations to curb the spread of fake news on social media platforms. Policies promoting media literacy, fact-checking, and accountability for misinformation can help protect users and enhance platform credibility.

Managers

Social media managers and platform administrators should implement advanced monitoring tools, verification systems, and awareness campaigns to reduce the impact of fake news. Engaging influencers responsibly and promoting credible content can improve user trust and platform performance.

Target Readers

Target readers, particularly Gen Z users, are encouraged to critically evaluate online information and verify sources before sharing content. Increasing awareness about the influence of celebrities and the consequences of fake news can foster responsible digital behavior.

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