

AI-Generated News and Audience Trust: A Study of Young Adults' Perception of credibility, Accuracy and Authenticity

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Abstract—The growing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into news production has brought renewed attention to a fundamental question in journalism: how do audiences assess the credibility, accuracy, and authenticity of news when they know that AI has contributed to its creation? This question is particularly significant for young adults, who encounter AI-mediated content across an increasingly diverse digital media environment. The present study examines these perceptions through a structured survey of 122 respondents drawn primarily from Rewa and Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The questionnaire explored respondents' news-consumption habits, the cues they use to assess trustworthiness, their prior exposure to AI-generated content, their comfort with AI-assisted news production, and their comparative trust in AI-generated and human-produced journalism. Descriptive findings indicate that exposure to AI-generated content is relatively common, but familiarity has not translated into strong confidence in fully AI-authored news. The study therefore considers not only whether young adults trust AI-generated journalism, but also the conditions under which such trust may be established.

Index Terms—AI-generated news, audience trust, credibility, accuracy, authenticity, young adults, automated journalism, media trust

I. INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has moved beyond its earlier role as a largely invisible newsroom support technology and has become an increasingly visible component of contemporary news production and distribution. News organisations can now use AI-based systems to assist with transcription, summarisation, translation, headline generation, data

processing, and the drafting of routine news content. Generative AI has expanded these possibilities further by enabling systems to produce increasingly sophisticated forms of text and other media. As these practices become more common, a central question for journalism and communication research is how audiences respond when the role of AI in producing news becomes visible to them.

This question emerges within a broader environment in which audiences are already negotiating misinformation, algorithmic recommendation, declining confidence in news institutions, and the fragmentation of news consumption across digital platforms. Research on evolving media consumption has documented a longer transition from traditional media toward internet-, mobile-, streaming-, and social-media-centred environments, with emerging technologies such as AI becoming part of this transformation (Dwivedi & Kishore, 2025b). The introduction of a non-human agent into the production process can therefore create an additional layer of uncertainty: audiences may evaluate not only what a news story says, but also who or what they believe is responsible for producing it. Young adults are especially relevant to this discussion because they are deeply embedded in platform-based news environments and are increasingly familiar with AI tools in everyday digital life.

Against this background, the present study examines young adults' perceptions of the credibility, accuracy, and authenticity of AI-generated news and compares these perceptions with their trust in human-produced journalism. Using a structured survey of 122 respondents, the study considers news-consumption

patterns, the factors that shape trust, prior exposure to AI-generated content, comfort with AI in news production, perceived accuracy and authenticity, and preferences regarding AI and human journalists. The study contributes descriptive evidence from an Indian context, with particular attention to respondents from Rewa and Indore in Madhya Pradesh.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Attitudes Toward AI in Journalism

Large-scale audience research suggests that public acceptance of AI in journalism is conditional rather than uniform. The Reuters Institute's Digital News Report 2024, drawing on a YouGov survey of more than 95,000 people across 47 markets, reported greater audience comfort with applications in which AI assists journalists for example, by transcribing interviews or summarizing background information than with news content produced primarily by AI. Fletcher and Nielsen (2024), in a six-country study, similarly identified a distinction between AI-assisted and AI-authored journalism. Their findings also indicated that younger respondents were somewhat more receptive to AI involvement than older respondents, although skepticism remained widespread across age groups.

Media Convergence, Platform Use, and Audience Behaviour

Research on broader media transformation helps situate AI-generated news within a longer shift in how audiences encounter content. Dwivedi and Kishore (2025b) describe the movement from traditional media toward internet-, mobile-, streaming and social-media centred consumption and identify AI among the emerging technologies shaping the future media ecosystem. This work is used here as contextual evidence rather than as direct evidence about AI trust. Related research on Gen Z podcasting examines young audiences' participation in multi-platform media use, reinforcing the relevance of platform-based audience behaviour when considering how younger users encounter newer forms of journalism (Dwivedi & Kishore, 2025a).

Evidence from outside Europe and North America points to a similarly conditional pattern. Gondwe (2025), in a study of 1,960 participants across ten African countries, found that perceptions of AI-

generated news were generally neutral, with meaningful differences associated with age. Younger participants appeared more receptive, particularly when the origin of the content was transparent and the material was easy to understand. Taken together, these findings suggest that audience responses to AI-generated journalism are unlikely to be explained by a simple acceptance–rejection divide. Instead, trust appears to depend on how AI is used, how its role is communicated, and what audiences perceive about the quality and accountability of the resulting journalism.

Source, Authorship, and Credibility

A related body of research examines whether the perceived identity of the news producer influences credibility judgements independently of the content itself. Wölker and Powell (2021) compared readers' evaluations of human, automated, and hybrid forms of journalism and found broadly comparable credibility assessments across production modes, although automated journalism received stronger credibility evaluations in the context of sports reporting. Graefe et al. (2018) similarly reported that computer-generated news could be perceived as less readable without necessarily being regarded as less credible. These findings suggest that the relationship between automation and credibility is not consistent across all journalistic contexts.

More recent research indicates that credibility can decline when audiences perceive AI as having a more substantial or autonomous role in authorship. Jia et al. (2024), in an experiment involving 269 participants, found that greater perceived AI involvement was associated with lower evaluations of both message credibility and source credibility, with perceived humanness of the byline serving as an important mechanism. Waddell (2019) likewise demonstrated that explicit machine attribution can influence perceptions of anthropomorphism, bias, and credibility even when the underlying news text remains unchanged. Collectively, these studies indicate that authorship cues and perceptions of agency can influence credibility judgements alongside conventional assessments of accuracy and evidence.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MEDIA TRUST

Research on source credibility provides an important foundation for understanding these responses. Hovland and Weiss (1951) established that perceptions of source expertise and trustworthiness influence the reception of a message, a principle that continues to inform contemporary research on automated and AI-mediated journalism. Kohring and Matthes (2007) subsequently conceptualised media trust as a multidimensional construct involving audiences' assessments of journalistic accuracy, reliability, and related dimensions of news selection and evaluation. This perspective is particularly useful for understanding why audiences may approach a relatively unfamiliar or non-human source differently from an established journalistic source. Sundar's (2008) MAIN model extends credibility research into digital media by proposing that technological features can function as heuristic cues that shape users' judgements of credibility.

Research Gap

Existing scholarship provides substantial evidence on public attitudes towards AI in journalism, yet important geographical and methodological gaps remain. Cross-national audience surveys, including the Reuters Institute's work, provide valuable evidence on general levels of comfort but do not always examine young adults as a distinct group using detailed measures of trust, accuracy, and authenticity. Experimental studies provide stronger insight into the effects of authorship and disclosure cues, but many have relied on Western student or crowdsourced samples and controlled exposure conditions that do not necessarily reflect habitual news consumption. Research from regions outside Europe and North America is beginning to broaden this evidence base, but comparable survey evidence concerning young adults in India remains limited. The present study therefore addresses a specific gap by examining how young adults in two districts of Madhya Pradesh perceive AI-generated news and how these perceptions relate to their existing news habits and criteria for judging trustworthiness.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine young adults' general news-consumption habits and the sources on which they most frequently rely.
2. To identify the factors that most strongly influence young adults' trust in a news story.
3. To assess young adults' awareness of and prior exposure to AI-generated content.
4. To examine young adults' comfort with, and perceptions of the accuracy and authenticity of, AI-generated news.
5. To compare young adults' trust in AI-generated and human-generated news and identify their principal concerns about AI-assisted journalism.

Research Questions

- RQ1. What are young adults' primary sources of news, and which factors most strongly influence their trust in a news story?
- RQ2. To what extent have young adults knowingly encountered AI-generated content?
- RQ3. How comfortable are young adults with the use of AI in news production, and how do they perceive the accuracy and authenticity of AI-generated news?
- RQ4. How much do young adults trust a news story once they know it was written entirely by AI, compared with a human-written story?
- RQ5. What concerns do young adults associate with AI-generated news, and whom do they trust more to produce important news: AI systems, human journalists, or a combination of both?

THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The first framework is Sundar's (2008) MAIN model—Modality, Agency, Interactivity, and Navigability—which explains how technological affordances can operate as heuristic cues in users' credibility judgements. The model is particularly relevant to AI-generated news because the perceived agency of the technology may itself become a meaningful cue. Once audiences learn that a non-human system has produced a news story, they may draw conclusions about its objectivity, judgement, bias, or reliability before independently assessing the full evidentiary basis of the story. In this study, the MAIN model therefore helps explain why knowledge

of AI authorship may influence trust even when the content itself is not independently evaluated.

The second framework is Kohring and Matthes' (2007) Media Trust Model, which conceptualises trust in news through multiple dimensions related to the selection of topics and facts, the accuracy of representation, and journalistic assessment. This framework is useful for interpreting the present findings because respondents placed particular emphasis on supporting evidence and reliable sources when evaluating news. Considered together, the two frameworks provide a complementary lens: the MAIN model draws attention to heuristic responses triggered by technological and source cues, while the Media Trust Model emphasises the more substantive dimensions through which audiences evaluate journalistic reliability. The combination is therefore appropriate for examining both the immediate perception of AI authorship and the evidence-based criteria respondents use when deciding whether news deserves their trust.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

The study employed a quantitative, descriptive survey design to examine young adults' self-reported perceptions of AI-generated news at a single point in time. The cross-sectional design was selected because the primary purpose was to document current patterns of awareness, exposure, trust, and perceived credibility rather than to establish causal relationships.

Research Area and Target Population

The study was conducted among young adult respondents located primarily in Rewa and Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India. The target population consisted of young adults who consume news through digital and traditional media channels. The geographical focus provides a context-specific view of audience perceptions within two districts while also allowing comparison with broader scholarship on AI and journalism.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A total of 122 valid responses were included in the analysis. Participants were recruited through non-probability convenience and snowball sampling.

Given the exploratory and descriptive nature of the study, this approach enabled the researcher to reach respondents within the defined population and obtain sufficient responses for the intended analysis. The sampling design should, however, be considered when interpreting the generalisability of the findings.

Data Source and Collection Method

Primary data were collected through a structured, self-administered online questionnaire. The instrument contained 20 substantive questions covering demographic characteristics, news-consumption habits, criteria used to evaluate trust, and perceptions of AI-generated news. The AI-related items addressed awareness and exposure, comfort with AI in news production, perceived factual accuracy, perceived authenticity, trust in fully AI-written news, concerns about AI-generated journalism, and comparative trust in AI and human journalists.

Variables

The analysis considered education level, frequency of news consumption, primary news source and platform, the cues that initially attract attention to a story, types of news receiving the most attention, factors that build trust, perceived importance of source and accuracy, verification behaviour, prior exposure to false or misleading news, prior exposure to AI-generated content, comfort with AI-produced news, perceived factual accuracy, trust in fully AI-written stories, perceived authenticity relative to human journalism, concerns about AI-generated news, and comparative trust in AI versus human journalists.

Data Analysis Procedure

Responses were screened for completeness and duplication and were subsequently cleaned and organised for analysis. Descriptive statistics—including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations—were used to summarise the data. For ordinal five-point items, means and standard deviations were calculated to provide a concise description of response patterns. Cross-tabulations were also used to examine descriptive differences between prior exposure to AI-generated content and trust in fully AI-written news. No inferential tests, such as chi-square tests, correlations,

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	65	53.3
	Male	56	45.9
	Others	1	0.8
Age group	16–22	66	54.1
	23–27	33	27.0
	28–31	10	8.2
	32–35	5	4.1
	36+	8	6.6
Education	Undergraduate	59	48.4
	Postgraduate	37	30.3
	Higher Secondary	21	17.2

or regression models, were conducted. Accordingly, the relationships reported in this paper should be interpreted as descriptive patterns rather than statistically tested associations or causal effects.

Ethical Considerations and Data Privacy/Confidentiality

Participation in the survey was voluntary, and respondents were informed that the information collected would be used for research purposes. The original dataset contained personally identifiable information, including names, mobile numbers, and email addresses. These fields were excluded from the analytical dataset and are not reproduced in the paper. Results are presented only in aggregated or de-identified form to protect respondent privacy and confidentiality.

Data Screening and Sample Validity

The dataset contained 122 records. Personally identifiable fields—name, phone number, and email address—were excluded from analysis. Precise geographic information was retained only at the district level (Rewa or Indore) for analytical purposes. The dataset was reported as complete across the research-relevant survey items, with no

duplicate response patterns identified. The final analytical sample was therefore $N = 122$, comprising the substantive survey variables and the broad demographic variables retained for reporting.

V. RESULTS / FINDINGS

Sample Profile

The sample comprised 65 female respondents (53.3%), 56 male respondents (45.9%), and one respondent identifying as “Other” (0.8%). In terms of residence, 63 respondents (51.6%) were from Rewa and 59 (48.4%) were from Indore. The largest age group was 16–22 years ($n = 66$, 54.1%), followed by 23–27 years ($n = 33$, 27.0%). The remaining respondents were aged 28–31 ($n = 10$, 8.2%), 32–35 ($n = 5$, 4.1%), or 36 years and above ($n = 8$, 6.6%). Educationally, 59 respondents (48.4%) were undergraduates, 37 (30.3%) were postgraduates, and 21 (17.2%) had completed higher secondary education. Overall, the sample was concentrated within the intended young-adult, student, and early-career population. The age variable was originally collected using a combination of predefined categories and a small number of open-ended numerical responses; these were subsequently recoded into consistent reporting categories.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents ($N = 122$)

Note. Five respondents reported education levels outside these three categories and are omitted from this table; percentages are of total N .

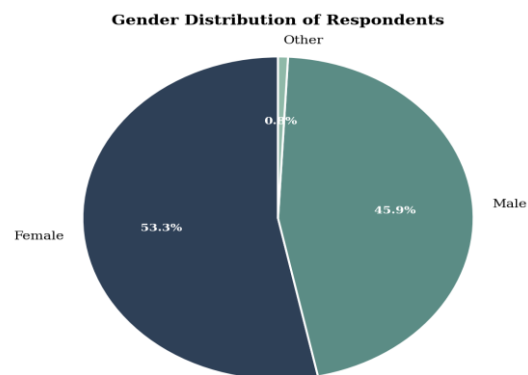


Figure1 Gender distribution of respondents ($N = 122$).

Gender distribution of respondents ($N = 122$).

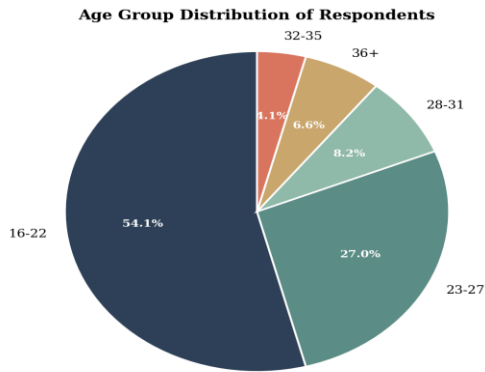


Figure 2 Age-group distribution of respondents (N = 122). Age-group distribution of respondents (N = 122).

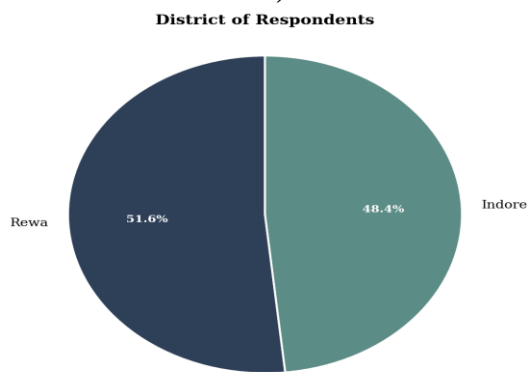


Figure 3 District of residence of respondents (N = 122). District of residence of respondents (N = 122).

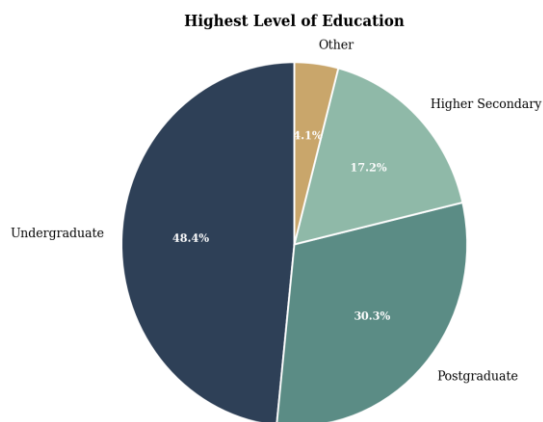


Figure 4 Highest level of education of respondents (N = 122). Categories below 2% of the sample are grouped as "Other. Highest level of education of respondents (N = 122). Categories below 2% of the sample are grouped as "Other.

News Consumption Habits and Trust Criteria (RQ1)

News consumption was frequent among the respondents. Fifty-five participants (45.1%) reported consuming news several times a day, while 37 (30.3%) reported doing so once a day; only 7 respondents (5.7%) indicated that they consumed news rarely. Social media was the dominant primary news source, identified by 81 respondents (66.4%), followed by news websites or applications (n = 13, 10.7%), newspapers (n = 12, 9.8%), television (n = 8, 6.6%), and YouTube (n = 6, 4.9%). Instagram, Facebook, and X were collectively identified as the usual platforms for obtaining news by 62 respondents (50.8%). These findings indicate that the respondents' news environment was strongly shaped by platform-based and social-media distribution. When asked what initially attracted their attention to a news story, respondents most frequently selected the headline (n = 54, 44.3%), followed by photographs or video (n = 24, 19.7%), the source of the news (n = 21, 17.2%), and the topic itself (n = 20, 16.4%). Politics (29.5%) and local news (27.0%) were the categories receiving the greatest attention. When respondents were asked what builds trust in a news story, supporting facts or evidence was the most frequently identified factor (n = 52, 42.6%), followed by a reliable source (n = 34, 27.9%) and photographs or videos (n = 17, 13.9%). Professional language and the author or journalist's name were selected less frequently. The findings therefore suggest that respondents place greater emphasis on evidentiary and source-related cues than on authorship alone.

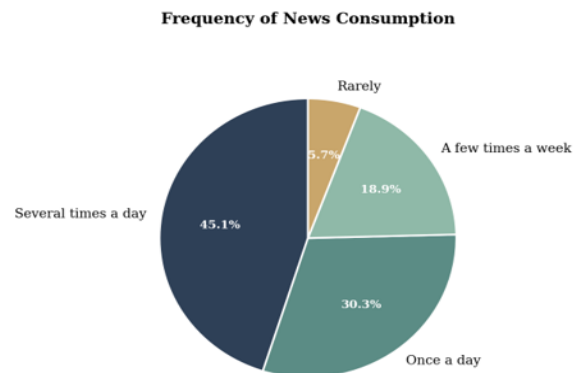


Figure 5 Frequency of news consumption (N = 122).

Frequency of news consumption (N = 122).

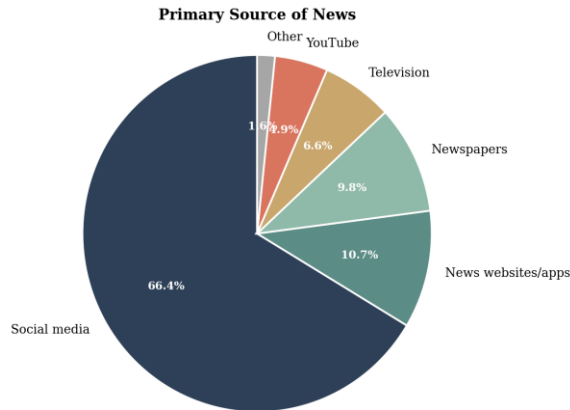


Figure 6 Primary source of news (N = 122). Categories below 2% of the sample are grouped as "Other." Primary source of news (N = 122). Categories below 2% of the sample are grouped as "Other."

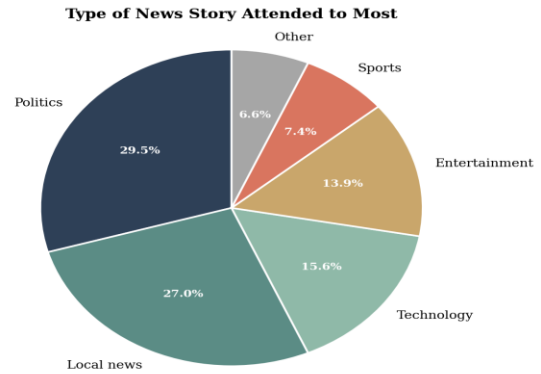


Figure 9 Type of news story respondents pay the most attention to (N = 122). Categories below 2% of the sample are grouped as "Other." Type of news story respondents pay the most attention to (N = 122). Categories below 2% of the sample are grouped as "Other."

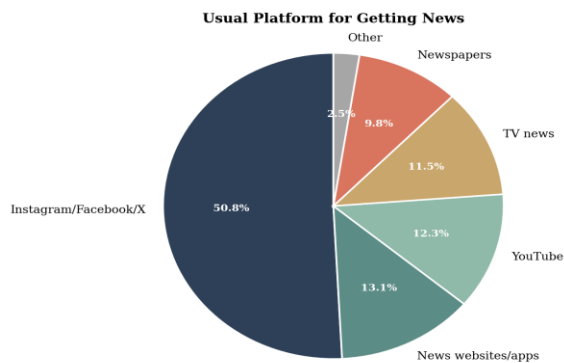


Figure 7 Usual platform for obtaining news (N = 122). Categories below 2% of the sample are grouped as "Other." Usual platform for obtaining news (N = 122). Categories below 2% of the sample are grouped as "Other."

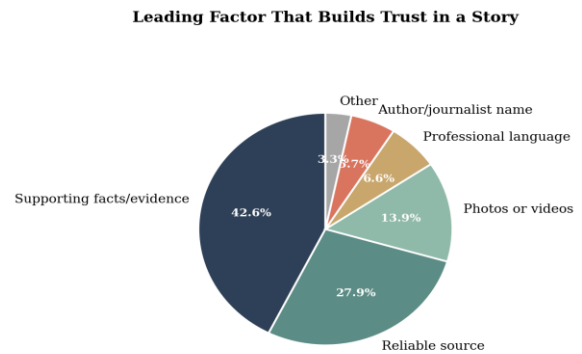


Figure 10 Leading factor that builds trust in a news story (N = 122). Categories below 2% of the sample are grouped as "Other." Leading factor that builds trust in a news story (N = 122). Categories below 2% of the sample are grouped as "Other."

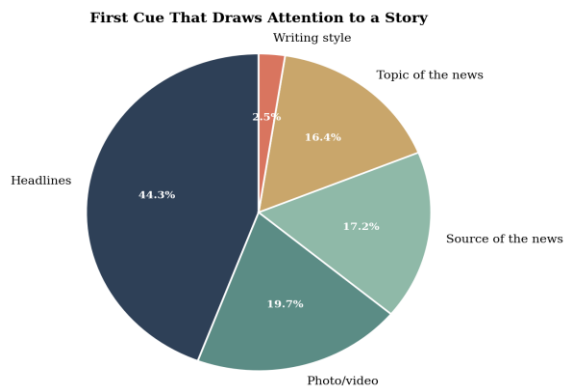


Figure 8 First cue that draws attention to a news story (N = 122). First cue that draws attention to a news story (N = 122).

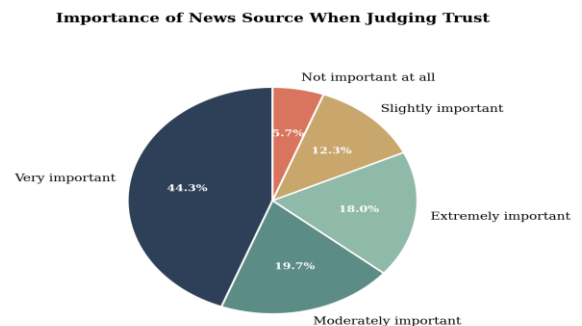


Figure 11 Importance of the news source when judging trust in a story (N = 122). Importance of the news source when judging trust in a story (N = 122).

Frequency of Verifying News Before Believing It

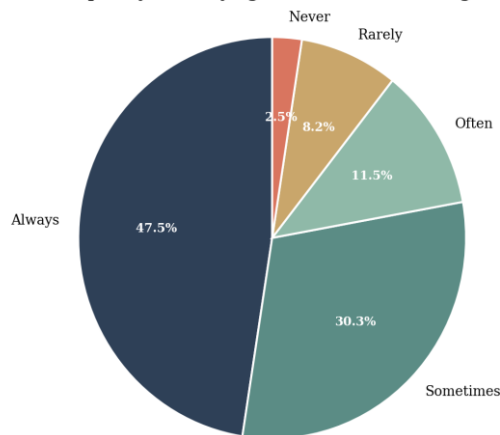


Figure 12 Frequency of verifying a news story before believing it (N = 122). Frequency of verifying a news story before believing it (N = 122).

Response to a Doubtful News Story

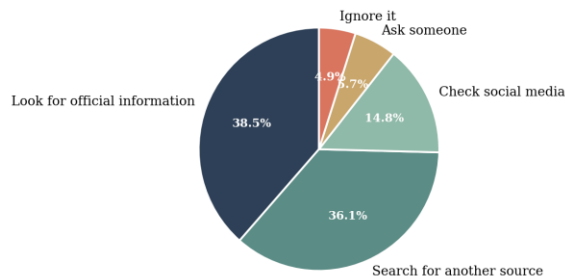


Figure 13 Typical response when a news story seems doubtful (N = 122). Typical response when a news story seems doubtful (N = 122).

Perceived Newsworthiness of Social Media News

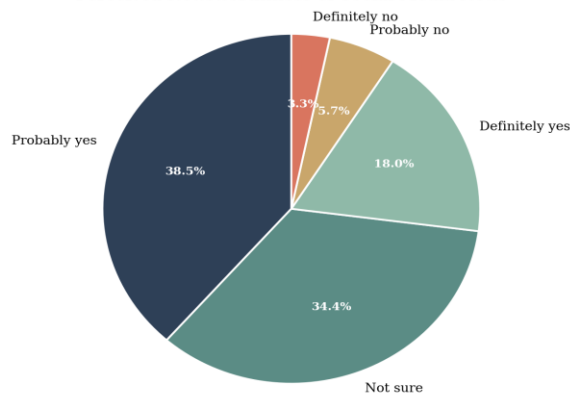


Figure 14 Perceived newsworthiness of social media news (N = 122). Perceived newsworthiness of social media news (N = 122).

Prior Exposure to False or Misleading News

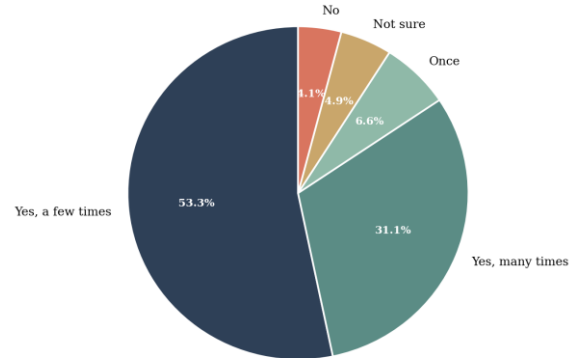


Figure 15 Prior exposure to false or misleading news (N = 122). Prior exposure to false or misleading news (N = 122).

Importance of Accuracy in Trust Judgements

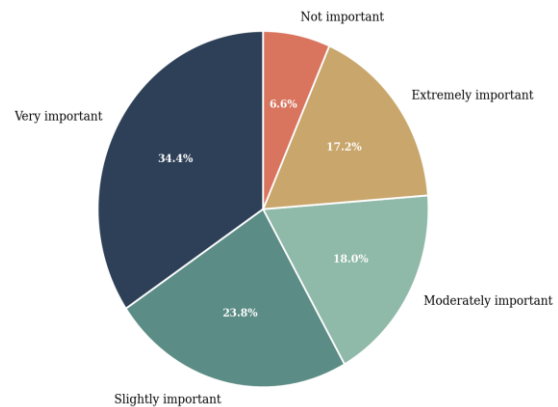


Figure 16 Importance of accuracy when deciding whether to trust news (N = 122). Importance of accuracy when deciding whether to trust news (N = 122).

Awareness and Exposure to AI-Generated Content (RQ2)

A majority of respondents—80 out of 122 (65.6%)—reported that they had knowingly read or watched AI-generated content. A further 24 respondents (19.7%) selected “maybe,” while 13 (10.7%) reported “no” and 4 (3.3%) were unsure. The pattern indicates substantial awareness and reported exposure to AI-generated content within the sample. Importantly, however, exposure did not correspond to a comparable level of comfort or trust in fully AI-authored news, as the subsequent findings demonstrate.

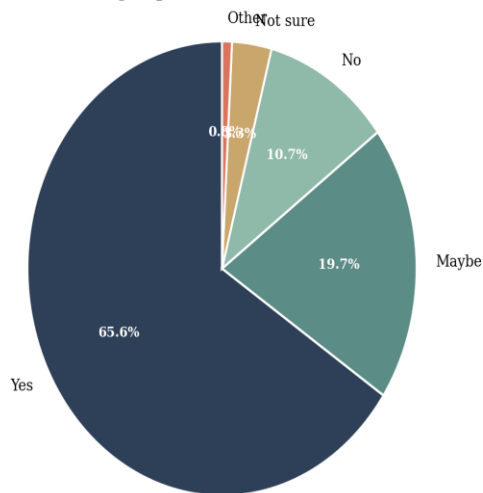
Prior Knowing Exposure to AI-Generated Content

Figure 17 Prior knowing exposure to AI-generated content (N = 122). Categories below 2% of the sample are grouped as “Other.” Prior, knowing exposure to AI-generated content (N = 122). Categories below 2% of the sample are grouped as “Other.”

Comfort, Perceived Accuracy, and Authenticity of AI-Generated News (RQ3)

Responses to the use of AI in news production were concentrated around the neutral position. Sixty respondents (49.2%) selected “neutral,” while 24 (19.7%) reported being comfortable, 21 (17.2%) uncomfortable, and 15 (12.3%) very uncomfortable (M = 2.79, SD = 0.93). Perceptions of AI’s capacity to produce factually accurate news were similarly cautious: 47 respondents (38.5%) were not sure, 43 (35.2%) selected “probably yes,” and 14 (11.5%) selected “definitely yes” (M = 3.43, SD = 0.91). Perceived authenticity showed a comparable distribution, with 33 respondents (27.0%) indicating that AI-generated news could probably feel as authentic as human journalism, 31 (25.4%) remaining unsure, and 29 (23.8%) responding “probably no” (M = 3.05, SD = 1.21). Taken together, these measures point to a cautious and unresolved orientation towards AI-generated journalism rather than either unequivocal acceptance or outright rejection.

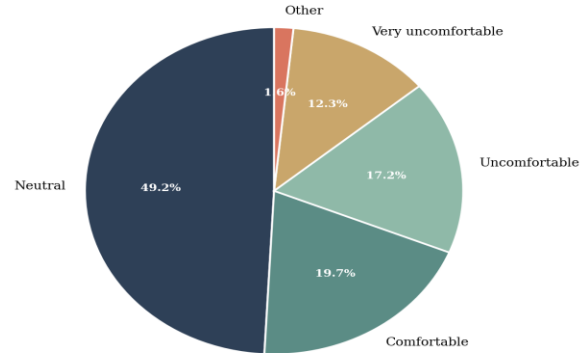
Comfort With AI Being Used to Create News

Figure 18 Comfort with the idea of AI being used to create news (N = 122). Comfort with the idea of AI being used to create news (N = 122).

Item (1–5 scale)	M	SD	n
Importance of news source when trusting a story	3.57	1.10	122
Importance of accuracy when trusting a story	3.32	1.20	122
Comfort with AI being used to create news	2.79	0.93	121
Belief that AI can produce factually accurate news	3.43	0.91	121
Trust in a news story known to be written entirely by AI	2.22	0.92	122
Belief that AI news can feel as authentic as human journalism	3.05	1.21	122

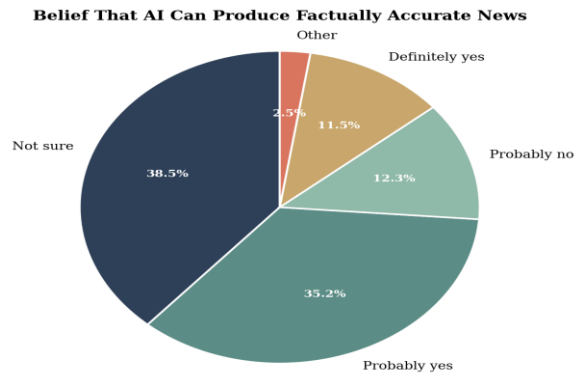


Figure 19 Belief that AI can produce factually accurate news (N = 122). Categories below 2% of the sample are grouped as “Other.” Belief that AI can produce factually accurate news (N = 122).

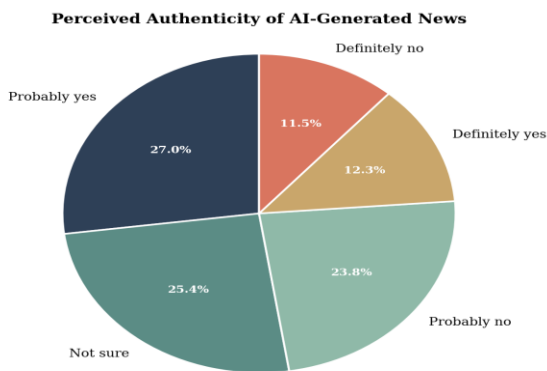


Figure 20 Perceived authenticity of AI-generated news relative to human journalism (N = 122). Perceived authenticity of AI-generated news relative to human journalism (N = 122).

Trust in AI-Generated News Versus Human Journalism (RQ4 and RQ5)

When respondents were asked how much they would trust a news story known to have been written entirely by AI, the overall response pattern indicated limited trust. Twenty-six respondents (21.3%) selected “not at all,” while 55 (45.1%) selected “a little,” meaning that 66.4% expressed little or no trust in a fully AI-written story. Thirty-two respondents (26.2%) expressed moderate trust, whereas only 6 (4.9%) selected “a lot” and 3 (2.5%) selected “completely.” The mean trust score was 2.22 (SD = 0.92), the lowest among the scaled items reported in the study. Descriptively, trust scores were also broadly similar across groups defined by prior exposure to AI-generated content, indicating that

exposure alone did not correspond to a substantial increase in trust in fully AI-authored news.

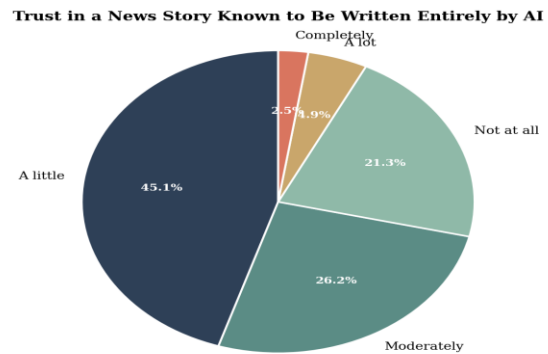


Figure 21 Trust in a news story known to be written entirely by AI (N = 122).

Trust in a news story known to be written entirely by AI (N = 122).

The cautious orientation towards fully AI-authored news was also reflected in respondents’ comparative preferences. Sixty-six respondents (54.1%) indicated that they would trust a human journalist more to produce important news, compared with 5 (4.1%) who selected an AI system. At the same time, 25 respondents (20.5%) preferred a combined human-AI system, while 24 (19.7%) indicated that their choice would depend on the situation. Thus, 40.2% of respondents expressed some degree of openness to a context-dependent or hybrid approach. The finding is important because it suggests that respondents’ views are not reducible to a simple human-versus-AI opposition; a substantial minority recognise circumstances in which AI and human journalistic work may coexist.

Who Would You Trust More to Produce Important News?

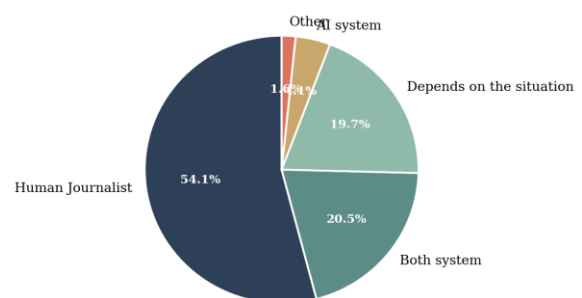


Figure 22 Who respondents would trust more to produce important news (N = 122).

Who respondents would trust more to produce important news (N = 122).

Table 3 Who Would You Trust More to Produce Important News? (N = 122)

Response	n	%
Human Journalist	66	54.1
Both system (human and AI)	25	20.5
Depends on the situation	24	19.7
AI system	5	4.1
Not sure	2	1.6

Concerns About AI-Generated News (RQ5)

The most frequently identified concern about AI-generated news was the perceived lack of human judgement (n = 34, 27.9%). This was followed by the possibility of fake or misleading content (n = 30, 24.6%), loss of journalistic responsibility or accountability (n = 25, 20.5%), hidden bias (n = 18, 14.8%), and incorrect information (n = 14, 11.5%). These concerns are closely connected to the dimensions of accuracy, selectivity, judgement, and accountability emphasized in the Media Trust Model. Rather than expressing a general discomfort with technology alone, respondents identified specific risks associated with editorial responsibility and the reliability of AI-generated information.

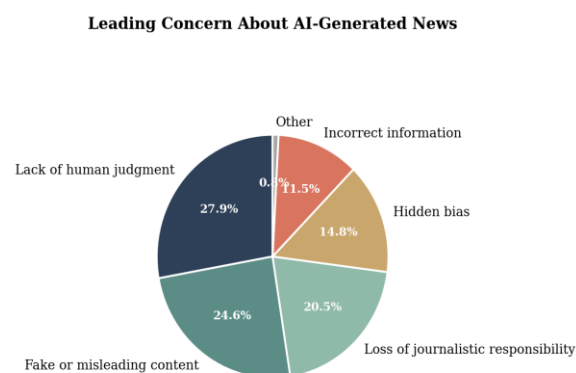


Figure 23 Leading concern about AI-generated news (N = 122). Leading concern about AI-generated news (N = 122).

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate a pattern of cautious and conditional engagement with AI-generated news rather than a clear-cut rejection or acceptance of the technology. Although 65.6% of respondents reported knowingly encountering AI-generated content, familiarity did not translate into strong trust in fully AI-authored news. The mean trust score for a story known to be written entirely by AI was 2.22, the lowest of the scaled measures examined, and a majority of respondents indicated greater trust in human journalists when important news is concerned. This pattern is broadly consistent with the distinction reported in earlier audience research between AI-assisted and AI-authored journalism (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2024; Newman et al., 2024). It also corresponds with experimental evidence suggesting that greater perceived AI involvement can reduce credibility judgements (Jia et al., 2024).

At the same time, the results do not indicate a uniformly negative attitude towards AI in journalism. Comfort responses were concentrated around the neutral category, and 40.2% of respondents selected either a combined human-AI approach or a situation-dependent option when asked whom they would trust to produce important news. This suggests that respondents may distinguish between the use of AI as a newsroom tool and the transfer of primary editorial responsibility to an AI system. Such a distinction is compatible with findings that automated and human journalism can receive comparable credibility assessments in particular contexts, especially where reporting is routine and data-driven (Wölker & Powell, 2021). In the present study, scepticism appears to be associated less with the existence of AI itself than with concerns about judgement, accountability, accuracy, and misleading content.

The prominence of supporting evidence and reliable sources among the factors used to establish trust is also theoretically significant. These criteria were selected far more frequently than the author or journalist's name, suggesting that respondents rely substantially on evidence and source cues when evaluating news. From the perspective of Sundar's (2008) MAIN model, however, awareness that AI produced a story may introduce an additional heuristic cue that affects trust before the audience has fully evaluated the content. The findings are also

compatible with the Media Trust Model, particularly its emphasis on accuracy and the processes through which audiences assess the reliability of journalism. Related research on radio credibility in a fragmented digital audio environment has likewise highlighted human connection, local relevance, and reliability as important components of perceived credibility, providing a useful comparative point for the present study's emphasis on identifiable human judgement and editorial responsibility (Dwivedi & Kishore, 2025c). The descriptive similarity in trust scores across prior-exposure groups further suggests that exposure by itself may be insufficient to establish confidence in fully AI-authored news; transparency, demonstrable accuracy, and identifiable editorial responsibility may be more consequential.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study examined young adults' perceptions of the credibility, accuracy, and authenticity of AI-generated news using survey data from 122 respondents. The findings show that reported exposure to AI-generated content is relatively widespread, while trust in fully AI-authored news remains limited. A majority of respondents indicated greater trust in human journalists for important news, although a substantial minority expressed openness to hybrid or situation-dependent forms of human-AI news production. The concerns identified by respondents were specific, with human judgement, accountability, accuracy, and the possibility of misleading content emerging as prominent issues. Overall, the findings suggest that trust in AI-generated journalism is conditional and shaped by both source-related cues and substantive expectations concerning evidence and editorial responsibility. For these respondents, confidence in AI-generated news appears more closely associated with demonstrated reliability and accountable journalistic practice than with exposure to the technology alone.

Implications

For news organisations, the findings indicate the importance of treating AI disclosure as part of a broader transparency and accountability framework rather than as a stand-alone trust-building measure. If audiences are informed that AI has contributed to a story, that disclosure may need to be accompanied by

accessible information about sourcing, verification, human editorial oversight, and responsibility for the published content. The respondents' openness to hybrid production also suggests that newsrooms may need to distinguish clearly between routine AI-assisted tasks and decisions that require journalistic judgement. For AI developers, the findings highlight the importance of factual reliability, traceability, and transparency in systems used for journalism. For media literacy educators, the results provide a useful foundation for strengthening existing verification practices so that young audiences can evaluate AI-generated content through evidence and source assessment rather than relying solely on assumptions about the technology.

VIII. LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample of 122 respondents was obtained through non-probability convenience and snowball sampling and was concentrated in two districts of Madhya Pradesh. The findings therefore cannot be assumed to represent young adults across India. Second, the reported age categories include respondents in the 16–22 range; because this range can include respondents below 18, the study's consent/ethics documentation should be retained and reported in accordance with the requirements of the target publisher. Third, the age variable was collected using a mixed format that combined predefined categories with a small number of open-ended numerical responses; these responses required recoding for consistent presentation. Fourth, the cross-sectional and descriptive design captures perceptions at one point in time and does not establish causal relationships between exposure to AI-generated content and trust. The differences observed across exposure groups should consequently be treated as descriptive patterns rather than statistically tested effects. Finally, respondents were asked to report whether they had encountered AI-generated content, meaning that the measure reflects perceived or recalled exposure and may not always correspond to the actual production process of the content they encountered.

IX. FUTURE SCOPE

Future research could extend the present study by using probability-based sampling across a wider and more diverse geographical area, thereby improving the representativeness of the evidence. Longitudinal studies could examine whether trust changes as audiences become more familiar with AI-generated journalism and as disclosure and accountability practices develop. Experimental research could separately manipulate AI disclosure, human editorial involvement, and the factual accuracy of news content to distinguish technology-related heuristics from judgements based on content quality. Future studies could also compare responses across news genres such as sports, politics, health, and local news, since perceptions of automated journalism may vary by topic. With larger and more representative samples, inferential methods such as correlation, regression, or multivariate modelling could further examine the relationships among AI exposure, verification behaviour, perceived accuracy, authenticity, and trust.

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