

# Informational Reading and Source Criticism in A Digital Culture Among University Students: The Role of The Library

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**Abstract** - Technology and digital platforms have improved learning in several ways; however, in-depth reading, which is a vital aspect of human development, is decreasing drastically. The poor reading culture, caused by the increased use of these digital platforms by students, diminishes the impact of technology on learning. Although people read for several purposes, the core purpose is self-growth and development. This study aims to investigate the role of the library in promoting informational reading and source criticism among university students. A self-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 50 students and 15 academic librarians. The findings revealed that social media platforms are the most frequently visited among the listed digital platforms, and that multitasking online increases distraction and becomes detrimental to students' reading abilities. The study further revealed that libraries play significant roles in ensuring that what students read online is credible and trustworthy. Libraries create digital resource aggregators for collecting credible sources on various topics for easy access, provide constant Online Reference Services (ORS), and create and curate reading lists that contain credible sources in various fields, among other strategies.

**Keywords:** Digital Culture, Digital Era, Informational Reading, Source Criticism, Library

## I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of the internet and digital media has brought about an unprecedented amount of information accessible to people from all walks of life. Because these digital tools have empowered individuals with little or no skill to act as information brokers, they now have the opportunity to share ideas and knowledge that are not filtered, organized, properly reviewed, or critiqued. Vicario et al. (2015) described this situation as the rapid spread of unverified information resulting from faster internet connection, durability, and affordability. This has resulted in many individuals struggling to determine the credibility of online sources because the sheer volume and variety of information accessible on the internet can make it difficult for users to distinguish between credible and unreliable sources, leading to misinformation.

Selecting the right information in this digital age is like searching for a needle in a haystack, as the widespread availability of information will continue to increase with technological innovation. Interestingly, many people heavily rely on digital media and online sources as their primary source of information while struggling to access

reliable and unbiased information from credible sources. The increasing use of new media platforms for communication, entertainment, knowledge acquisition, and news consumption are a matter of concern. Therefore, the ability to sift relevant and credible information from the avalanche of information online is a required skill in this era of digital culture.

The ability of members of society to determine the trustworthiness of information and information sources through critical evaluation is currently listed as vital for maintaining a stable democratic society and for people's health and safety (Haider & Sundin, 2020). Moreover, digital culture, which refers to the way in which digital technologies and the internet influence various aspects of contemporary society, now involves more than merely sitting at a computer terminal and has become an integrated pattern where the internet is a major part of our daily work, leisure, social, and political life (Lui, 2021). This integration is enhanced by the extensive growth of mobile technologies, especially the latest generation of mobile phones, which allow almost infinite access to the internet, a variety of information, and easy contact with friends, family, and society at large.

The massive growth of this integration has encouraged the widespread use of social media, whose content format-such as short-form posts, videos, and memes-may discourage in-depth reading and critical analysis, leading to a superficial understanding of complex issues. According to Iyanuoluwa (2024), this has become one of the major contributors to the decline of in-depth reading among the younger generation. The researcher opined that the rapid, short, and speedy flow of information on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter enables quick, bite-sized content consumption at the cost of more profound engagement with longer-form texts. It has drastically changed the traditional reading culture, and the common effect of this transition is that people prefer browsing through feeds rather than delving into books or articles.

Obviously, technology and digital platforms have improved learning in several ways; however, in-depth reading, which is a vital aspect of human development, is decreasing drastically. The poor reading culture, caused by the increased use of digital platforms by students, diminishes

the impact of technology on learning. Although people read for several purposes, the core purpose is self-growth and development. Anyira and Udem (2020) opined that reading can be for therapeutic, aesthetic, self-developmental, or update purposes. Whatever the purpose, reading fundamentally forms the bedrock of mental growth and self-development in everyone, regardless of age, gender, or status. This is consistent with Chiweta-Oduah's (2020) work, which states that the fundamental idea and habit of reading is not hinged merely on excelling in examinations; rather, it possesses transformational abilities socially, politically, and otherwise.

Furthermore, Moniruzzaman (2023) opined that informational reading is an essential cognitive activity that enhances critical thinking, knowledge acquisition, and personal growth. It is a fundamental skill required for building the right understanding of life (Oge, 2019). Therefore, promoting informational reading in this digital era is essential and calls for immediate attention. For the purpose of this research, informational reading is defined as a careful and selective process of choosing and critically evaluating printed or digital content with the aim of absorbing the right information or knowledge to meet one's information needs. Through careful evaluation of content credibility and accuracy, one can decipher the right and relevant information to consult.

Beyond an individual's ability to recognize letters and symbols and derive meaning from them-as Ogunbodede and Sawyerr-George (2023) described reading-informational reading requires skillful scrutiny of the source, author, and content of the information. As we increasingly rely on digital communication and social media for information, it becomes more important than ever to develop the skills needed to navigate the vast amount of information available on the internet; hence, the need for the library. The role of the library as a cultural institution in promoting informational reading cannot be overemphasized in this digital era. Libraries harness their tools and resources to ensure adequate access to credible information in a digital culture because the modern library has evolved in many ways.

According to Magoi and Gani (2014), today's libraries are experiencing technological transformation. This transformation opens new prospects for libraries to adopt innovative tools to enhance their service provision. The innovation enables libraries to hasten the systematic approach to acquiring, organizing, and making accessible credible information in all formats to strengthen informational reading and contribute to lifelong learning opportunities for all members of society (Li & Furht, 2014). Therefore, beyond being places strictly designed for books, libraries are functioning as knowledge and support centers for learning, teaching, and research, as well as hubs for community activities (Omeluzor, Ugochi, & Izuakolam, 2020). Besides, the core objective of every library is to ensure the adequate use of knowledge by providing

members of society with information resources that contribute to their intellectual development (Swamy & Kishore, 2019).

Equipping individuals with the skills to critically evaluate sources and the content of online information is a major challenge currently facing information seekers and society at large. There is a growing concern about the quality and reliability of the information available to readers in this era of digital culture. Failure to address this issue has the potential to perpetuate the digital divide and limit individuals' ability to fully participate in society and make informed decisions. Libraries, as cultural institutions, are saddled with the responsibility of providing credible sources, resources, and tools for informational reading and source criticism. They are also responsible for inculcating the right skills needed to evaluate online information and sources.

Therefore, the need to investigate their role in promoting informational reading and source criticism in this era of digital culture has never been more pressing. Specifically, this research will focus on determining the extent to which students use digital media platforms for their intended purposes, how they assess the credibility and trustworthiness of digital content, their experiences while carrying out informational reading and source criticism in a digital culture, and the strategies adopted by libraries in promoting informational reading and source criticism in a digital culture.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior to the rapid growth of technology, media relied on print and analogue models such as newspapers, radio, cinema, and television. Currently, stages of revolution have occurred that brought about the convergence of media and technology. Moyo (2011) describes this convergence as the fusion of media of diverse textual backgrounds-such as newspapers, radio, and television-into one robust, versatile medium. This integration necessitated a shift from traditional media to online media. Beyond online media, artificial intelligence has radically altered the status quo. According to Coleman (2024), the exponential growth of technological advances such as generative AI, natural language processing (NLP), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) affects all aspects of our daily lives. Information can be entirely generated and interpreted by this improved technology, and at the heart of this cultural shift sits the internet, the ultimate network of networks (Creeber & Martins, 2011).

Digital culture encompasses the interplay of digital technology, new media, and artificial intelligence in our daily lives, influencing how we communicate, work, and interact with technology. According to Bray (2022), digital culture is the result of consistent persuasive technology within us and the product of disruptive technological innovation. Digital culture can be applied to several topics,

but it is essential to investigate one very important aspect-how it affects the behaviour of people, especially regarding source criticism in their search for information. In other words, digital culture goes beyond the integration of technology into our daily activities; rather, it encompasses the new behaviours, values, and practices we inculcate as we apply these technologies in our daily life endeavours (Lardi, 2023).

Psychologically, a person's behaviour is formed over time by their habits. The constant use of digital technologies in the search for information affects reading habits because the digital revolution has reshaped how students read, write, and access information. Ashfaq and Ansari (2020) carried out a study to investigate the online reading experiences of professionals and students. The study revealed that 74% of respondents prefer reading online, while 48% spend more than 2 hours reading online per visit.

Furthermore, one tends to multitask while reading on-screen; the study carried out by Baron (2017) revealed that 85% of respondents from the U.S. multitasked when reading digitally, compared with the 26% who prefer reading print materials. The study revealed that individuals who multitask while reading are less likely to pay close attention to the text compared to those who do not, as 92% of respondents agreed that it was easiest to concentrate when reading print materials. This implies that while readers may prefer printed information, they are still more drawn to online resources due to convenience and accessibility.

Moreover, the continuous influx of notifications on social media fosters a pattern of regular distraction, making it difficult to maintain prolonged and in-depth reading. Iyanuoluwa (2024) believes that the constant use of smartphones encourages frequent checking of notifications and feeds, which often interrupts reading, leading to shifts in attention spans and consumption habits. In line with Iyanuoluwa's assertion, Kojo, Agyekum, and Arthur (2018) conducted a study to explore the effects of social media on the reading culture of students. The respondents-478 students-were queried on how frequent use of social media affects their reading habits; 301 (63%) agreed that they get distracted by their tendency to access social media while reading. Furthermore, 108 (22.6%) of respondents affirmed that it has also affected their reading habits. The findings reveal how negatively social media has affected students' in-depth reading.

Consequently, Abdullahi (2023) opined that the hyper-connected world caused by the advancement of technology mounts pressure on individuals to constantly stay updated. The author posited that this quest to stay updated has become ingrained in our culture, leading to shorter attention spans and the inability to focus for prolonged periods. Reading, which helps develop critical thinking, is highly affected as technology provides alternatives that offer quick responses to our information searches. Currently, digital reading is evolving rapidly-from traditional paper to various

kinds of e-books and online content. The habit of reading printed materials has gradually shifted to digital reading. According to Liu (2021), new media technology has propagated a new reading culture because the reading culture of online reading communities in the digital media era is constantly changing with the times-a digital culture that is gradually transforming into digital reading.

A communication scientist in the United States, as cited by Liu (2021), conducted a study on information acceptance; the results showed that people's acceptance of text, sound, and images is 20%, 30%, and 40%, respectively. This reveals that acceptance of text is the lowest compared to sound and images. This means that traditional reading of text is becoming less attractive and influential, whereas the digital presentation of images, text, sounds/videos, and visual representations of content can increase reader interest. The format of the content is not the concern in this study; rather, it is the ability of information seekers to decipher the credibility of the information source. The sheer volume and variety of information available on digital media can make it difficult for users to distinguish between credible and unreliable sources.

The ability to have an in-depth understanding of critical approaches to both media and source materials is essential in informational reading. Informational reading in this digital era cannot be achieved without proper source criticism because technology has empowered individuals with little or no skill to act as information brokers who share ideas and knowledge that are not filtered, organised, properly reviewed, or critiqued. Therefore, beyond dealing with fatigue, distractions, and multitasking when reading on-screen or online resources, the ability to sieve the right resources is key-hence the need for source criticism. Fundamentally, building the skills required to arrive at an independent inference and make scholarly evaluations of source material marks the crescendo of source criticism (Teaching codex, 2015).

Source criticism is a historical approach to ascertaining the worthiness of a resource. Koch and Kinder-Kurlanda (2020) defined it as an epistemological practice in social and cultural studies that is essential for defining the extent and scope of information-or, in other words, its validity and reliability. The goal of source criticism, as posited by Vasquez (2023), is to determine the trustworthiness of the information provided in a source; this also helps identify possible biases or sequences of opinion in formulating ideas. Therefore, source criticism is the effort applied in analyzing information to review how reliable, trustworthy, and credible the primary sources are.

Essentially, source criticism involves evaluating the origins, authorship, date, and factors that led to the creation of the information. The critical evaluation of sources enables one to understand their credibility, origin, and purpose. Understanding and inculcating the ability to critically evaluate and interpret sources is a major area of information

literacy programs, and to effectively carry out these activities using digital tools, one must be digitally and media literate. Literacy programs are a core responsibility of the library to society. Libraries assist users in identifying and locating timely, credible, and trustworthy information; however, the tools of the trade have changed due to the shifting information behaviour of library users. Nevertheless, libraries have been at the forefront of all kinds of literacy, including information, digital, and media literacy.

Huysmans (2016) opined that libraries are committed to becoming multimedia and information-rich learning environments, not merely places where people come to read and borrow books. It is the duty of the library to provide access to a wide range of credible and reliable sources and to offer guidance on how to evaluate these sources and determine their credibility. By doing so, libraries are well positioned to play a crucial role in promoting source criticism. Libraries curate and provide access to a range of credible sources, including scholarly journals, books, and databases that can help users find reliable information. Accordingly, Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) opined that the traditional idea of a library as a physical space for accessing information is evolving into a social cyberspace where users create, engage, share, and contribute to existing knowledge.

Librarians have to identify the information needs of their clients, determine whether a primary or secondary source will meet those needs, and critically review the sources by checking the credibility, objectivity, accuracy, and relevance of the information content and its sources.

In terms of credibility, the librarian checks the author and the type of source-primary or secondary-and where the information is published. For objectivity, the librarian seeks to determine the purpose of the information. For accuracy, the librarian checks whether the information is updated, comprehensive, detailed, and precise. All these checks determine the relevance of the information in meeting the needs of the user.

### III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### *A. Research Design*

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design helps to describe conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held, a process that is ongoing, an evident effect, or trends that are developing. It is most appropriate for this study since there is no hypothesis to

test; rather, the research focuses on describing a pattern as it is. The researcher employed a self-structured questionnaire to gather data from the respondents. The questionnaire contains seven questions that align with the objectives of the study.

They are as follows:

1. How frequently do you visit any of the listed digital media platforms?
2. To what extent are these digital media platforms used for their intended purpose?
3. How many hours do you spend on these platforms per visit?
4. What format do you prefer for carrying out informational reading?
5. To what extent do you assess the credibility and trustworthiness of online resources?
6. What are your experiences with carrying out informational reading online?
7. What strategies and resources do libraries provide to support informational reading and source criticism?

The questionnaire was converted to an online format using Google Forms, and a 4-point Likert scale was applied to questions 1, 2, 5, and 7.

#### *B. Research Methodology*

The population under investigation consists of undergraduate and postgraduate students who visited the Faculty of Management and Social Science (FMSS) Library, Baze University, Abuja, in the month of June 2024, as well as librarians at the Baze University Library. From the FMSS library users' attendance record, about 416 patrons visited the library in June 2024. Baze University Library has 18 staff members. The questionnaire was randomly administered to library patrons who visited the library in June through their email. The same medium was used to administer the questionnaire to the library staff. A total of 50 students and 15 librarians responded and submitted the online survey. Students responded to the first six research questions, while the librarians attended to the seventh research question.

The data were analyzed using simple percentages, mean, and standard deviation, and presented using a table and a chart. The frequencies were converted to percentages for clarity. Any item with a mean less than 2.5 was considered disagreed, while any item with a mean of 2.5 and above was considered agreed.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

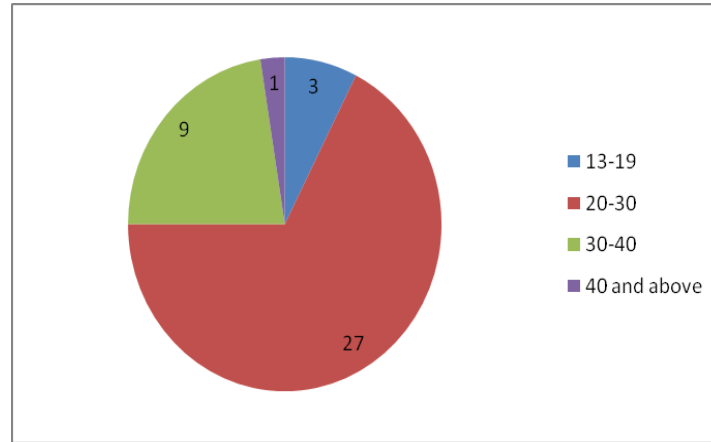


Fig.1 Age Bracket of Respondents

Figure 1 provides the age brackets of the students who responded to the survey. The purpose is to ascertain the age distribution of the respondents because age is often used as a control variable in studies on digital culture and media usage. Hazzam (2021) opined that age is a strong determinant of social media use and engagement. Furthermore, most digital content is designed to meet the needs of specific age groups. The chart above reveals that the majority (74%) of the respondents are between the ages of 20–30 years, while 18% are between 31–40 years, and 6% are between 13–19 years.

TABLE I ACADEMIC LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS

S. No.	Item Statement	Frequency	Percentage
1	Undergraduate	29	58%
2	Postgraduate	21	42%

The Table I above shows the percentage frequency of the academic levels of the respondents. Twenty-nine respondents were undergraduates, representing 58%, whereas 21 participants were postgraduates, representing 42%.

TABLE II MEAN RESPONSE ON HOW FREQUENT STUDENTS VISIT LISTED DIGITAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

S. No.	Item Statement	VF	LF	VR	NAL	Mean	SD
1	Social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, Snapchat, etc)	44	6	-	-	3.88	0.32
2	News Website and App (Channels, Vanguard, Guardian, etc.)	6	30	10	3	2.39	0.90
3	Video Streaming Platforms (YouTube, Netflix, Amazon prime video App, Hulu, etc)	20	18	8	3	3.10	0.99
4	Gaming Platforms and Apps (play stations,)	4	13	17	15	1.90	0.85
5	Online Market Platform (Konga, Jumia, etc.)	3	10	22	11	1.88	0.75
6	Educational Platform (Researchgate, Academia.edu, science direct, EBSCOhost, etc.)	18	26	6	-	3.24	0.61
7	Blogs and blogging platforms (WordPress, Blogger, etc.)	4	20	12	13	2.04	0.89
8	Digital magazine platforms	5	12	22	10	2.08	0.85
9	Online learning platform (coursera, udemy, etc.)	13	18	14	4	2.68	0.99
10	Online forums (Reddit, Quora, Stack, etc.)	5	19	15	10	2.26	0.97

Key: Very Frequent (VF), Less Frequent (LF), Very Rare (VR), Not at All (NA)

The Table II shows the mean and standard deviation (SD) of how frequently the respondents visit the listed digital media platforms. From the table, social media platforms ranked as the most frequented, with a mean score of 3.88 (SD = 0.32), followed by educational platforms with a mean score of

3.24 (SD = 0.61). This indicates that in this era of digital culture, students frequent social media platforms more than other digital media platforms, including online academic platforms such as ResearchGate, Coursera, and Academia.edu.

**TABLE III** MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION ON THE EXTENT THESE DIGITAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ARE USED FOR THEIR INTENDED PURPOSE

S. No.	Item Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	SD
1	For entertainment purposes	25	14	6	2	3.30	0.85
2	To get news update	27	18	2	1	3.57	0.68
3	To keep abreast with recent happening	32	16	1	1	3.69	0.58
4	For research purposes	28	19	3	-	3.57	0.57
5	For personal and self development purposes	32	15	2	-	3.68	0.56
6	To while away time	14	15	13	5	2.45	1.05
7	To communicate with friends and family	27	17	5	-	3.54	0.60
8	To discover new ideas	31	16	2	-	3.66	0.58
9	For business transactions	25	15	9	1	3.30	0.86
10	For Learning of new things	26	21	2	1	3.50	0.70
11	Meeting with new people	19	16	10	3	3.08	0.86
12	Expressing yourself through sharing of contents online	24	13	11	2	3.18	0.89
13	To read articles and books	23	21	3	2	3.34	0.78
14	To attend classes and other professional development	22	18	7	3	3.18	0.87
15	To engage in novel and intriguing discussions	16	19	9	5	2.98	0.92
16	For professional networking	16	22	8	4	3.0	0.86
17	For academic purposes	29	19	2	-	3.61	0.57

Key: Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), Very Low Extent (VLE)

From the results in the table above, it can be concluded that all the respondents agreed that media platforms are used for their intended purposes, except for whiling away time, which has a mean score of 2.45 (SD = 1.05). The findings also show that keeping abreast of recent happenings has the highest mean score of 3.69 (SD = 0.58), followed by

personal and self-development purposes with a mean score of 3.68 (SD = 0.56). Discovering new ideas, academic purposes, getting updates, and research purposes-with mean scores of 3.66, 3.61, 3.57, and 3.57, respectively-are the other top reasons for using digital platforms. All these purposes require information-reading skills to achieve.

How many hours do you spend on these platforms per visit?

50 responses

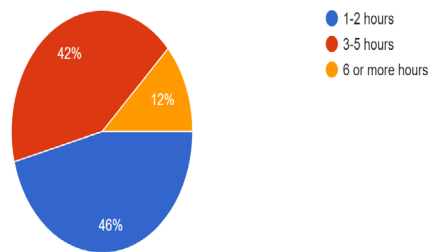


Fig.2 Time Spent on Digital Media Platforms

As indicated in the chart above, 46% of the respondents spend one to two hours on these digital platforms per visit, followed by 42% who spend three to five hours per visit, and about 12% who spend six hours or more per visit. This

result shows that the respondents spend considerable time each time they log in to any of these platforms in search of content and information.



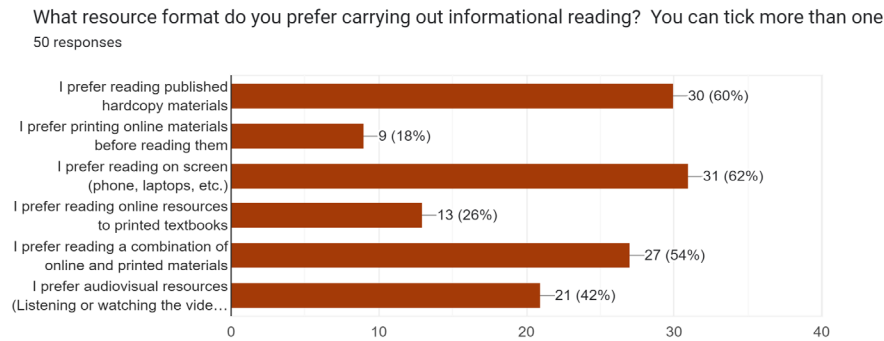


Fig.3 Preferred Resource Format

The chart above indicates that 62% of the respondents prefer reading on screen for informational reading, while 60% prefer printed hard-copy materials. Additionally, 54% prefer a combination of online and printed materials. Although a greater percentage prefer reading on screen, the majority of respondents still prefer reading printed

textbooks over online resources. In other words, converting a printed textbook to a digital format or providing a soft copy is essential for enabling students to carry out informational reading. This is where the role of a librarian becomes crucial.

TABLE IV A MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION ON HOW EXTENT STUDENTS ASSESS THE CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF ONLINE RESOURCES

S. No.	Items Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	SD
1	If the information has exactly what I am looking for	26	19	2	2	3.52	0.75
2	I check users feedback, review or rating to see if others have found the information reliable	22	20	3	1	3.43	0.67
3	I verify the authority of the author	15	24	8	-	3.20	0.67
4	If the information source is recommended by an expert	23	19	3	2	3.43	0.75
5	I check the currency of the information	15	18	11	3	2.93	0.89
6	If the information is relevant to what I need	24	19	3	1	3.50	0.65
7	If it is published in a reputable search engines or platform	19	19	7	3	3.14	0.84
8	If the information has multiple positive comment under it	17	20	7	3	3.07	0.83
9	If it is published in a platform related to what I am looking for (e.g. news update on news website, Textbook on academic platform, etc.)	15	22	8	2	3.09	0.81
10	I fact check every online information before accepting it	23	18	6	1	3.36	0.72
11	I seek for opinions of experts on certain online information	17	18	9	3	3.07	0.84
12	I look for supporting evidence like citations, references, or data to validate the claims made in the information	21	17	9	1	3.29	0.79
13	I cross-verify the information from multiple reputable sources	15	19	10	3	2.97	0.88
14	I check if the information comes from a reliable organizations or institutions or publishing firms	20	15	11	-	3.20	0.76
15	I apply critical thinking skills in analyzing the content.	20	15	8	3	3.10	0.82
16	I check the authenticity of the domain/URL	17	15	13	2	3.00	0.85

Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), Very Low Extent (VLE)

The table above reveals the extent to which respondents assess the credibility and trustworthiness of online resources while engaging in informational reading. The findings indicate that if the information matches exactly what they are looking for, it is often accepted as credible. The item "if the information has exactly what I am looking for" has the highest mean score of 3.52 (SD = 0.75), followed by "if the information is relevant to what I need," with a mean score of 3.50 (SD = 0.65). Basic skills such as fact-checking, cross-verification, critical thinking, and expert

recommendations have lower mean scores. This suggests that students prioritize relevance over verifying credibility, trustworthiness, and authenticity, contributing to a decline in informational reading and an increase in misinformation. Additionally, the table shows that checking users' feedback, reviews, or ratings to see if others have found the information reliable, and whether the information source is recommended by an expert, both have a mean score of 3.43. Nonetheless, all items listed in the table have an acceptable mean score of more than 2.5.

TABLE V FREQUENCY DESCRIPTION ON STUDENT'S EXPERIENCES WHILE CARRYING OUT INFORMATIONAL READING ONLINE

S/N	Items Statement	Agreed	Percentage	Disagree	Percentage
1	I easily get distracted with pop-ups, advertisements, friend's chats, etc.	28	58%	20	42%
2	I am not easily distracted while reading online	26	57%	20	43%
3	I usually multitask while reading on online platform (doing many things online at the same time)	36	73%	13	27%
4	I can focus on reading alone at a time on online platform	24	49%	25	51%
5	I concentrate more while reading online	21	45%	26	55%
6	The amount of information online can be overwhelming making it difficult to prioritize on relevant content	36	73%	13	27%
7	I can easily search for the exact information that I need	42	86%	7	14%
8	Prolonged screen time causes eyes strain and fatigue	36	75%	12	25%
9	I find it difficulty in discerning credible sources from unreliable sources	19	40%	29	60%
10	It is easy to discern credible and reliable sources online	31	69%	14	31%
11	I have short attention span why reading on screen	26	53%	23	47%
12	I spent more time reading relevant materials online than a physical copy	27	55%	22	45%
13	I experience technical glitches while reading online thereby interrupting my reading experience	35	71%	14	29%
14	Reading online increases screen time leading to poor time management for other activities	36	78%	10	22%
15	I can manage my time properly while reading online	26	55%	21	45%
16	I experience limited access to paid content	34	74%	12	26%
17	Difficulty in reading long-form content online on a small screen like phone.	33	69%	15	31%
18	I tend to scroll through feeds while reading online thereby having a superficial understanding of the content	37	78%	10	21%

The question aims to understand students' experiences while engaging in informational reading online. The questions were asked in contrasting statements to help identify the variability and consistency of respondents' experiences. The findings show very close responses to each of the contrasting statements. For instance, 58% agreed with the statement "I easily get distracted with pop-ups, advertisements, friends' chats, etc." while 42% disagreed. Conversely, 57% agreed with the statement "I am not easily distracted while reading online," and 43% disagreed. These close percentages suggest that respondents have mixed feelings or experiences regarding the issue, or their behavior might be highly context-dependent. Factors such as the type of content being read, the environment, or the specific platform could influence their responses.

Furthermore, 73% of respondents agreed that the amount of information online can be overwhelming, making it difficult to prioritize relevant content. Meanwhile, 86% agreed that they can easily search for the exact information they need amidst the overwhelming amount of information available online. Additionally, 75% of respondents agreed that prolonged screen time causes eye strain and fatigue, while 55% disagreed that they can concentrate more while reading online. Moreover, 78% of respondents agreed that reading online increases screen time, leading to poor time management for other activities, and 78% also agreed that they tend to scroll through feeds while reading online, resulting in a superficial understanding of the content.

While 60% of respondents disagreed with the statement that it is difficult to discern credible sources from unreliable ones, 69% agreed that it is easy to identify credible and reliable sources online. Lastly, 74% of respondents agreed that they experience limited access to paid content, and 71% agreed that they encounter technical glitches while reading online, which interrupts their reading experience.

This table attempts to determine the extent to which libraries employ different strategies in promoting informational reading. From the table, providing access to primary sources of information has the highest mean score of 3.29 (SD = 0.86). The provision of access to databases for online books and academic journals and providing constant Online Reference Services (ORS) both have mean scores of 3.21 (SD = 0.83). Promoting the use of collaborative learning platforms, creating digital libraries and repositories, creating a digital resource aggregator for collecting credible sources on various topics for easy access, and providing citation and research management tools have mean scores of 3.14, 3.14, 3.07, and 3.00, respectively. Other items, such as creating annotated bibliographies on key topics that include a brief evaluation of each source's credibility and relevance, integrating online learning platforms, developing and providing subject-specific LibGuides that offer tailored resources in several fields, and creating and curating reading lists that contain credible sources in various fields, have acceptable mean scores above 2.5.



TABLE VI MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION ON THE EXTENT LIBRARIES EMPLOY LISTED STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT INFORMATIONAL READING AND SOURCE CRITICISM

S. No.	Item Statements	VHE	HE	VLE	NE	Mean	SD
1.	Organizing Media literacy campaign on how to critically analyze media content	4	5	5	-	2.93	0.80
2	Creating digital resource aggregator for collecting credible sources on various topics for easy access	5	5	4	-	3.07	0.83
3	Organizing peer mentoring program, where experienced staff, library user or students can teach others how to develop their informational reading and source criticism skills	4	3	6	1	2.71	0.91
4	Create and curate reading list that has credible sources in various field	3	8	2	1	2.93	0.83
5	By providing online access to primary sources of information like conference papers, inaugural lecture papers, peer reviewed articles, etc.	7	4	3	-	3.29	0.86
6	Providing constant Online Reference Services (ORS)	7	2	4	-	3.21	0.83
7	Developing and providing subject-specific LibGuides that provides tailored resources in several fields.	3	6	5	-	2.86	0.80
8	Provision of citation and research management tools like Zotero, Endnotes, Mendeley, etc.	4	6	4	-	3.00	0.82
9	By creation of digital libraries and repositories	7	2	3	1	3.14	0.97
10	Provision of access to databases for online books and academic journals like JSTOR, IEEE Xplore, EBSCOhost, etc.	7	3	4	-	3.21	0.88
11	Creating annotated bibliographies on key topics that includes brief evaluation of each source's credibility and relevance	3	7	3	1	2.86	0.86
12	Promote the use of collaborative learning platforms like ResearchGate, Academia.edu, Google Scholar, etc.	5	6	3	-	3.14	0.77
13	Integrate online learning platforms like Udemy, Coursera, edX etc.	1	8	4	1	2.64	0.92

Keys: Very Highly Employed (VHE), Highly Employed (HE), Very Low Employed (VLE), Not Employed

## V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The results of this study show that in this era of digital culture, social media platforms are the most frequently visited among the listed digital platforms. This aligns with several other studies indicating that students spend hours on their preferred social media platforms (Kolhar *et al.*, 2021; Akinwalere & Adeosun, 2022; Anyira & Udem, 2020). Research has also demonstrated that the effect of social media on students' informational reading is both positive and negative, with the negative impacts seeming to outweigh the positive. Informational reading is becoming less appealing with the influx of social media and its content. The findings revealed that 58% of respondents agree that they easily get distracted by pop-ups, advertisements, friends' chats, and other interruptions while carrying out informational reading digitally. This aligns with the findings of Wang *et al.* (2011), which revealed that about two-thirds of college students use social media while in class or reading. This multitasking increases distraction and becomes detrimental to students' reading abilities, with 53% of respondents experiencing a short attention span while reading on screen. Moreover, the frequent use of social media while engaging in informational reading leads to an inability to concentrate. The findings of this study show that 55% of respondents disagree that they concentrate more while reading online, and 51% disagree that they stay focused on reading alone at a time on online platforms. Several factors might contribute to this, including scrolling through feeds while reading online, which 78% of respondents agreed they experience. Furthermore, Omojuwe

(2021) notes that digital media platforms support various implicit applications and activities such as games, advertisements, live television, comedies, and shows, which grab users' attention. The easy access to these diversions can disrupt users' ability to concentrate on reading online. The findings further reveal that reading online increases screen time, leading to poor time management for other activities. According to a study by Anyira & Udem (2020), cited in Adekunjo and Unuabor (2024), students' frequent use of social media consumes more of their time, which affects the time available for reading. Regarding their ability to carry out source criticism while reading on digital platforms, the findings show that students exercise due diligence in evaluating the credibility of online information. Nevertheless, libraries still have significant roles to play in ensuring that what students read online is credible and trustworthy. The findings indicate that libraries provide online access to primary sources of information such as conference papers, inaugural lecture papers, and peer-reviewed articles. They also create digital resource aggregators for collecting credible sources on various topics for easy access, provide constant Online Reference Services (ORS), and create and curate reading lists containing credible sources across various fields, among many other strategies.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Informational reading is a deliberate action taken to understand and learn something. Additionally, it is a strategic and intentional task aimed at precise knowledge

acquisition targeted at a specific criterion. However, with the overwhelming amount of information enabled by the growth of digital media platforms that allow the general public to create and disseminate information, accessing the right information has become a daunting task. Through source criticism, one can evaluate both the source and content of information to ensure its credibility, trustworthiness, and relevance. The 21st-century library is equipped to provide information that is credible and free of bias in this digital era.

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