

MEDIA PRACTITIONERS' PERCEPTION ON THE INFLUENCE OF FACT-CHECKING PRACTICES ON NEWS CREDIBILITY

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of fact-checking practices on news credibility perception among journalists in Benin City, Edo State. It was motivated by the growing spread of misinformation and the increasing reliance on digital platforms in contemporary journalism practice, which have made verification processes more critical to news production. The study specifically assessed the level of awareness and use of fact-checking platforms, journalists' perception of their usefulness and reliability, and how these perceptions influence judgement of news credibility. The Uses and Gratifications Theory provided the theoretical foundation, explaining journalists as active users who selectively adopt media tools based on perceived professional benefits and newsroom constraints. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and data were collected from 289 registered journalists under the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Benin City Chapter, who constituted the sample size through a census approach. Data were analysed using frequency, percentage, and mean. Findings revealed that journalists are fully aware of fact-checking platforms and generally perceive them as useful and reliable tools for improving accuracy and credibility in news reporting. However, despite this positive perception, actual usage is moderated by newsroom pressures, time constraints, and the demand for rapid reporting. The study further found that journalists' perception of fact-checking significantly influences their judgement of

news credibility, as those who trust and value these tools are more likely to produce and validate credible news content. The study concludes that while fact-checking platforms are widely recognised in journalism practice, their impact on credibility is largely shaped by perception and practical newsroom realities rather than awareness alone.

Keywords: Fact-checking, Journalism, News credibility, Perception, Verification

Introduction

Journalism practice in Nigeria has undergone significant transformation due to the expansion of digital media and the continuous flow of information across online platforms. News production is no longer confined to structured newsroom routines where journalists have sufficient time to verify and refine their reports before publication. Instead, journalists now operate within a fast-paced digital environment that prioritises immediacy, constant updates, and audience engagement. This shift has fundamentally altered the balance between speed and accuracy, creating a situation where journalists must deliver information quickly while still maintaining professional standards of verification. In this evolving context, fact-checking has become more than a routine editorial step; it has emerged as a central pillar of responsible journalism. Oladokun, Aruwa, Ottah, and Ajani (2024) argue that the increasing prevalence of misinformation and disinformation in the digital age has made verification skills indispensable, as the credibility of news organisations now depends largely on their ability to distinguish factual information from false or misleading content before dissemination.

Alongside these changes, the emergence of specialised fact-checking platforms and digital verification tools has introduced new possibilities for improving journalistic accuracy. These platforms provide journalists with access to databases, image verification systems, and cross-referencing mechanisms that support real-time validation of claims and sources. However, the presence of these tools does not automatically translate into

consistent use across the profession. Aloh and Nwalieke (2024) observe that while some journalists actively integrate fact-checking tools into their reporting processes, others remain hesitant or inconsistent in their usage, often relying instead on traditional methods or personal judgement. This uneven adoption highlights an important issue that goes beyond access or availability. It points to the role of perception in shaping professional behaviour. Journalists who perceive fact-checking platforms as reliable, efficient, and essential are more likely to incorporate them into their daily routines, whereas those who view them as complex, time-consuming, or unnecessary may neglect their use even when they are readily available. In a media environment such as Benin City, where digital reporting continues to expand, this variation in perception can have direct implications for the overall quality and credibility of news output.

Furthermore, the growing spread of fake news has intensified the pressure on journalists to uphold professional standards in increasingly challenging conditions. Digital platforms have made it easier for unverified information to circulate widely and rapidly, often reaching audiences before it can be properly checked. This places journalists in a reactive position, where they must not only report events but also counter misinformation and clarify false claims. Michael, Akinwumi, Oyeduntan, Fayehun, Kalejaye, Oyewamide, and Onifade (2025) emphasise that fact-checking has become a necessary response to the surge of disinformation in Nigerian online media, as journalists are now expected to serve as both information providers and gatekeepers of truth. In urban centres such as Benin City, where digital media consumption is high and audiences rely heavily on online sources, the role of journalists in ensuring accuracy becomes even more critical. Their perception of fact-checking platforms therefore influences not only their individual reporting practices but also the broader credibility of the media environment in which they operate.

However, the adoption of fact-checking practices is shaped by more than just professional expectations; it is also influenced by institutional support and individual attitudes. Adeniran and Raji (2026) note that although training programmes and initiatives have been introduced to promote fact-checking in journalism, their long-term impact depends on whether journalists continue to apply these practices beyond formal training contexts. This suggests that knowledge alone is insufficient to ensure consistent application. Journalists must also develop a positive perception of fact-checking as a valuable and practical tool within their work. In settings where such perception is weak, the gap between awareness and actual practice becomes more pronounced. In Benin City, where journalists operate within a hybrid media system that combines traditional broadcasting with digital reporting, this gap raises concerns about the sustainability of verification practices and the consistency of news credibility across different media outlets.

The issue of news credibility remains central to this discussion, as it directly influences public trust in the media. Credibility is built on consistency, accuracy, and professionalism, all of which are closely linked to verification practices. Adesanya, Alawode, and Sanni (2026) argue that the perceived credibility of online news media is largely determined by the reliability of the information presented, while Ayoni (2025) emphasises that audience trust develops over time through repeated exposure to credible or non-credible content. This means that journalists' approach to fact-checking has long-term implications for how the public perceives the media. In a city like Benin, where digital news consumption is widespread, the credibility of journalism depends significantly on whether journalists consistently apply verification practices in their reporting. Against this background, this study focuses on the perception of fact-checking platforms and news credibility among media practitioners in Benin City, Edo State.

Statement of the Problem

The rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation within Nigeria's digital media environment has placed increasing pressure on journalists to balance speed with accuracy, a tension that is particularly evident in urban centres like Benin City where online news production is highly competitive and continuous. Journalists are expected to verify information before publication, yet the demands of real-time reporting often reduce the time available for careful verification, creating conditions where unverified or partially verified information may enter the public space; this concern is reinforced by Okocha and James (2025), who argue that even with access to verification resources, many journalists still face practical difficulties in identifying and filtering fake news effectively. At the same time, existing scholarship has paid greater attention to how audiences perceive media credibility than to how journalists themselves interpret and apply verification processes, leaving an important gap in understanding the professional judgement that shapes news production; for instance, Ayoni (2025) focuses on audience trust in online news, while Michael, Akinwumi, Oyeduntan, Fayehun, Kalejaye, Oyewamide, and Onifade (2025) emphasise the broader necessity of fact-checking without fully interrogating how journalists' perceptions influence its use in practice.

Although studies such as Aloh and Nwalieke (2024) and Sunday and Tsegysu Santas (2024) examine awareness and usage of fact-checking tools among journalists, they do not sufficiently explore how journalists' attitudes toward these tools affect their assessment of news credibility within specific local contexts like Benin City, where newsroom routines, resource constraints, and competitive pressures may shape professional behaviour in distinct ways. Moreover, there is growing evidence of a gap between knowledge and sustained application, as Adeniran and Raji (2026) observe that training in fact-checking does not always translate into consistent long-term practice, suggesting that perception, rather than mere awareness, plays a

critical role in determining whether such tools are integrated into everyday journalism. This disconnect raises important concerns about the reliability of digital news output, as journalists who do not view fact-checking platforms as practical, efficient, or essential may underutilise them despite their availability, thereby weakening the credibility of published content. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine how journalists in Benin City perceive fact-checking platforms and how these perceptions shape their judgement of news credibility, with the aim of providing a more grounded understanding of the human and professional factors that influence verification practices in Nigeria's evolving digital news landscape.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the level of awareness and use of fact-checking platforms among journalists in Benin City.
2. Assess journalists' perception of the usefulness and reliability of fact-checking platforms in news production.
3. Evaluate how journalists' perception of fact-checking platforms influences their judgement of news credibility in Benin City.

Conceptual Review

Fact-Checking Platforms

Fact-checking platforms refer to digital verification systems and institutional mechanisms designed to assess the accuracy of news content, particularly in environments characterised by rapid information flow and widespread misinformation. Imazogbonre and Asemah (2024) define fact-checking as a structured journalistic process that involves verifying claims, cross-referencing sources, and presenting evidence-based corrections to false or misleading information. They emphasise that fact-checking platforms function as corrective tools within the media ecosystem, helping to restore informational balance in spaces where false narratives spread quickly. In the Nigerian context, where digital media circulation is intense and often

unregulated, these platforms serve not only as verification mechanisms but also as accountability structures that challenge both journalists and content producers to uphold standards of truth. However, their effectiveness depends largely on how they are perceived and integrated into everyday journalistic routines.

In a more practice-oriented perspective, Nworie (2024) explains fact-checking platforms as specialised digital resources that journalists can actively consult to confirm the authenticity of news stories before publication. He highlights tools such as Dubawa as central to contemporary verification practices, particularly in regions where misinformation is prevalent. Despite their availability, he notes that awareness does not always translate into consistent usage, as journalists may perceive these tools as time-consuming or secondary to the urgency of reporting. This introduces a practical tension within journalism, where the demand for speed competes with the need for accuracy. In cities like Benin, where newsroom competition is high, such perceptions can significantly influence whether fact-checking platforms are treated as essential professional tools or optional resources.

Amayindi and Sani (2026) offer a more critical interpretation by linking fact-checking platforms to broader questions of trust and professional identity within journalism. They argue that the credibility of verification tools themselves is not always taken for granted, as journalists may question the neutrality, transparency, or methodological rigour of some platforms. This scepticism can limit adoption, especially in contexts where journalists rely more on personal judgement, experience, or informal networks for verification. As a result, fact-checking platforms do not operate in a vacuum; their impact is shaped by how journalists interpret their relevance, reliability, and compatibility with existing newsroom practices. This suggests that the success of fact-checking initiatives depends not only on their technical capacity but also on their perceived legitimacy within the journalistic community.

Media Practitioners' Perception

Media practitioners are professionals such as journalists, editors, broadcasters, and other media workers who are responsible for gathering, processing, and distributing information to the public. Media practitioners' perception refers to how they understand and interpret their professional roles and responsibilities in the media industry. Shaibu and Mekanjuola (2025) define media practitioners' perception as the cognitive and professional judgement that guides how media workers evaluate their tasks, make editorial decisions, and maintain credibility in news production. They explain that this perception influences how practitioners respond to issues of accuracy and professionalism in their daily work.

In the same way, media practitioners' perception can also be understood as the way media professionals interpret their working environment and respond to the demands of news production. Olukunle, Adepoju, Victoria, and Fidelis (2025) explain that media practitioners' perception is shaped by the digital media environment, where speed, audience expectations, and competition strongly influence how news is produced and shared. They argue that in such an environment, practitioners often adjust their understanding of their roles based on how quickly and effectively they are expected to deliver news content.

Furthermore, media practitioners' perception refers to how professionals in the media industry view their responsibilities within the structure and culture of their organisations. Amayindi and Sani (2026) describe this perception as being influenced by institutional standards, professional training, and newsroom culture. They explain that media practitioners working in well-structured organisations tend to develop stronger professional judgement and ethical awareness, while those in less structured environments rely more on personal experience. In this sense, perception is shaped by continuous interaction with workplace expectations and professional practice.

News Credibility

News credibility refers to the extent to which information presented by media organisations is perceived as accurate, trustworthy, and reliable by both producers and consumers. Shaibu and Makanjuola (2025) define credibility in online journalism as a multidimensional construct that includes accuracy, objectivity, and consistency in reporting. They argue that in digital environments, credibility is constantly negotiated, as audiences are exposed to competing sources of information and must evaluate which sources to trust. For journalists, this means that credibility is not only about producing accurate content but also about maintaining a reputation for reliability in a highly competitive media landscape.

Olukunle, Adepoju, Victoria, and Fidelis (2025) provide further insight by linking credibility to the nature of digital news platforms, particularly blogs and social media-driven outlets. They note that the decentralisation of news production has made it easier for unverified content to circulate alongside professional journalism, thereby blurring the distinction between credible and non-credible sources. This environment places additional responsibility on journalists to ensure that their work stands out as trustworthy, yet it also complicates the process, as audiences may rely on factors such as familiarity, popularity, or emotional appeal rather than verification when judging credibility. In such conditions, the role of fact-checking becomes even more critical, as it provides a structured approach to maintaining journalistic standards.

Imazogbonre and Asemah (2024) approach credibility from a corrective standpoint, arguing that fact-checking serves as a mechanism for restoring trust in media systems affected by misinformation. They suggest that consistent verification practices can strengthen public confidence in journalism by demonstrating a commitment to truth and accountability. However, they also caution that credibility cannot be sustained through tools alone; it requires a broader culture of ethical reporting and professional responsibility.

Review of Related Literature

Fact-Checking, Misinformation, and Digital Journalism Practices

The growing visibility of fact-checking within digital journalism reflects deeper structural tensions between speed, credibility, and professional responsibility, yet its actual influence on newsroom practice remains uneven and contested. Guanah (2024) situates this tension within the broader expansion of social media as a driver of yellow journalism and fake news propagation in Nigeria, arguing that digital platforms have reconfigured news production by privileging immediacy and sensationalism over verification. In such an environment, fact-checking emerges not as a routine practice but as a corrective response to an already distorted information flow, often applied after misinformation has circulated widely rather than before publication. This reactive positioning weakens its preventive potential and raises concerns about whether fact-checking can meaningfully restore credibility in a system where misinformation is structurally embedded in the logic of content circulation. The implication is that journalists operate within a media economy that rewards speed and engagement, thereby shaping how they perceive the relevance and practicality of verification tools in everyday reporting.

From a more technologically focused perspective, Okocha (2024) introduces the disruptive role of artificial intelligence, particularly deepfake technology, in complicating the boundaries of truth and authenticity in journalism. He argues that the emergence of AI-generated content has intensified verification challenges, as traditional methods of source validation are no longer sufficient to detect manipulated media. For journalists, this creates a heightened sense of uncertainty, where the credibility of information cannot be assumed even when it appears visually convincing. In this context, fact-checking platforms are expected to function as advanced verification systems, yet their effectiveness depends largely on journalists' trust in their technical capability and methodological

transparency. Where such trust is weak, journalists may rely more on personal judgement or institutional routines, thereby limiting the integration of fact-checking into professional practice. This suggests that the problem is not only technological but also perceptual, rooted in how journalists interpret the reliability of emerging verification tools.

Foreign scholarship provides further depth by framing fact-checking within the broader crisis of epistemic authority in digital media systems. Graves (2018) conceptualises fact-checking as a form of boundary work that seeks to reassert journalistic authority in an environment where traditional gatekeeping has been eroded by digital participation. He argues that while fact-checking initiatives aim to reinforce norms of accuracy and accountability, their influence is often constrained by audience scepticism and the politicisation of truth. Similarly, Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) describe the contemporary information ecosystem as one characterised by “information disorder,” where misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation circulate simultaneously, making verification an ongoing and complex process rather than a one-time activity. Within such a fragmented environment, journalists are required to navigate competing truth claims, which may shape their perception of fact-checking as either an essential safeguard or an impractical burden in fast-paced newsrooms.

Journalists' Perception and News Credibility in a Digital Environment

The perception of journalists toward fact-checking is central to understanding how credibility is constructed in contemporary news production, particularly in contexts where digital pressures reshape professional norms and expectations. Guanah (2024) argues that journalists increasingly operate within a credibility crisis driven by the proliferation of fake news and the erosion of editorial control on social media platforms, leading to a situation where trust is continuously negotiated rather than assumed. In such conditions, journalists' perception of verification tools becomes critical, as it influences whether they prioritise accuracy or speed in

their reporting decisions. When fact-checking is perceived as essential to professional integrity, it is more likely to be embedded in newsroom routines; however, when it is viewed as time-consuming or incompatible with digital workflows, it may be marginalised despite its recognised importance.

Okocha (2024) deepens this argument by showing that journalists' perception of emerging verification challenges, such as deepfakes, directly affects their confidence in the authenticity of news content. He notes that as misinformation becomes more sophisticated, journalists may experience increased scepticism toward digital sources, which in turn shapes their approach to credibility assessment. This scepticism can produce two contrasting outcomes: it may encourage stricter verification practices, or it may lead to reliance on familiar but less rigorous methods of information validation. The determining factor is how journalists perceive the balance between risk and practicality in their work environment. In Benin City, where digital journalism continues to expand, such perceptions are likely to play a significant role in shaping how credibility is maintained or compromised in news production.

International perspectives reinforce the idea that credibility in digital journalism is not solely a function of content accuracy but also of professional judgement and institutional trust. Tandoc, Lim, and Ling (2018) argue that the rise of “fake news” has blurred the boundaries between professional and non-professional content, making it increasingly difficult for journalists to assert authority over information. They suggest that credibility is now constructed through continuous verification, transparency, and audience engagement rather than through institutional reputation alone. Similarly, Carlson (2017) emphasises that journalistic authority is increasingly negotiated in public spaces where audiences actively question and reinterpret news content, thereby placing additional pressure on journalists to justify their credibility claims. In this context, fact-checking platforms can serve as tools for reinforcing trust, but their effectiveness

ultimately depends on whether journalists perceive them as credible, reliable, and compatible with the realities of digital news production.

Theoretical Framework

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

This study is anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). It was originally developed by Davis (1989). It explains how users come to accept and use a particular technology. The model posits that an individual's decision to adopt a technology is primarily determined by two key factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which a person believes that using a particular system or tool will enhance their job performance, while perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which the system is believed to be free of effort. Together, these perceptions shape users' attitudes toward the technology, which in turn influence their actual usage behaviour.

In the context of this study, TAM provides a strong framework for understanding journalists' adoption of fact-checking platforms in news production processes. Journalists are more likely to use fact-checking platforms when they believe such tools enhance the accuracy, credibility, and efficiency of their reporting. McQuail (2020) supports this view by arguing that in digital media environments, adoption of communication tools is increasingly driven by immediacy, convenience, and relevance, all of which align with the concept of perceived usefulness and ease of use in TAM. Thus, fact-checking platforms are evaluated by journalists based on how well they support fast, reliable, and credible news production.

Applied to this study, perceived usefulness refers to journalists' belief that fact-checking platforms improve the quality of news by enhancing accuracy, reducing misinformation, and strengthening credibility. Perceived ease of use, on the other hand, relates to how simple, accessible, and time-efficient journalists find these platforms in the course of their newsroom routines. Katz (2021) explains that users are more likely to adopt

technologies that reduce uncertainty and improve task performance, suggesting that journalists will consistently rely on fact-checking platforms when they perceive them as both beneficial and easy to integrate into their workflow. However, in practice, newsroom realities such as tight deadlines and pressure for rapid publication may influence how these perceptions translate into actual usage behaviour.

Furthermore, TAM assumes that behavioural intention is shaped by users' attitudes toward technology, which are themselves formed by perceived usefulness and ease of use. In this study, journalists' attitudes toward fact-checking platforms are expected to influence whether they adopt these tools consistently or only selectively. Blumler (2022) notes that in complex digital environments, competing professional demands often shape media use decisions. In journalism, this means that while fact-checking platforms may be perceived as highly useful for ensuring accuracy, their perceived complexity or time demands may reduce the likelihood of consistent use, especially in fast-paced reporting environments. This creates a practical tension between speed and verification in digital journalism practice.

Therefore, the Technology Acceptance Model is particularly appropriate for this study as it explains not only why journalists are aware of fact-checking platforms, but also why they choose to use or avoid them based on perceived usefulness and ease of use. The model provides a structured explanation of how journalists in Benin City evaluate fact-checking platforms in relation to news credibility, showing that adoption is driven not merely by availability, but by perceived value and usability within everyday journalistic practice.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to systematically gather data on journalists' opinions, professional practices, and perceptions

without manipulating any variables, thereby ensuring that responses reflect real-life newsroom experiences and decision-making processes. The population of the study comprised all registered journalists under the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Benin City Chapter. According to official records as at June 2025, the chapter has a total of 289 registered journalists, representing the entire accessible population for this study. This population was considered appropriate because these journalists are actively involved in news gathering, reporting, and content production across various media platforms, including print, broadcast, and digital outlets, making them directly relevant to issues of fact-checking and news credibility. Given the manageable size of the population, a census approach was adopted, meaning that all 289 registered journalists were included in the study as the sample size. This approach eliminates sampling bias and ensures comprehensive coverage, thereby increasing the validity and generalisability of the findings within the context of Benin City journalism practice.

The research instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to capture key variables related to the study. The questionnaire was divided into sections covering demographic characteristics of respondents, perception of fact-checking platforms, and issues relating to news credibility in digital journalism. The instrument was structured using a four-point Likert scale consisting of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), which enabled respondents to express varying degrees of agreement or disagreement with each statement. A decision mean score of 2.5 was adopted as the benchmark, where mean values equal to or above 2.5 were accepted, while values below 2.5 were rejected.

Out of the 289 copies of the questionnaire administered, 254 were properly completed and returned, while the remaining copies were either not retrieved or were invalid due to incomplete responses. This high response

rate enhances the reliability of the data and provides a strong basis for analysis. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, and mean, which were used to summarise and interpret respondents' opinions in relation to the research objectives.

The reliability of the research instrument was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha method to ensure internal consistency of the questionnaire items. A pilot test was carried out among a small group of journalists outside the study population, and the responses were analysed to determine the consistency of the instrument. The result yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating a high level of reliability and confirming that the instrument was suitable for measuring journalists' awareness, perception, use of fact-checking platforms, and news credibility. However, the study was not without limitations. It was constrained by non-response, as only 254 out of the 289 questionnaires administered were duly completed and returned, which may introduce a possibility of non-response bias despite the relatively high response rate. In addition, the study was limited to journalists under the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Benin City Chapter, which restricts the generalisability of the findings to other geographical contexts with different media structures and practices. The study also relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to respondent bias or subjective interpretation of the questionnaire items.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Level of Awareness and Use of Fact-Checking Platforms among Journalists in Benin City (n = 254)

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
I am aware of fact-checking platforms used in journalism practice.	128 (50.4%)	126 (49.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3.50	Accepted
I regularly use fact-checking platforms when verifying news stories.	102 (40.2%)	88 (34.6%)	44 (17.3%)	20 (7.9%)	3.07	Accepted
I have received training on the use of fact-checking tools.	85 (33.5%)	79 (31.1%)	52 (20.5%)	38 (15.0%)	2.83	Accepted
I rely on fact-checking platforms before publishing sensitive news.	110 (43.3%)	84 (33.1%)	40 (15.7%)	20 (7.9%)	3.12	Accepted
I find it easy to access and use fact-checking platforms in my work.	94 (37.0%)	86 (33.9%)	46 (18.1%)	28 (11.0%)	2.93	Accepted

Aggregate Mean = 3.09 | Accepted

The data in Table 1 show that all respondents are fully aware of fact-checking platforms used in journalism practice. There is no dissenting response on awareness, which suggests that fact-checking has become a standard feature of journalistic knowledge in Benin City. However, awareness does not automatically translate into uniform practice. While many journalists report regular use of fact-checking tools, others apply them only occasionally depending on workload, urgency, or newsroom pressure.

Table 2: Journalists' Perception of the Usefulness and Reliability of Fact-Checking Platforms in News Production (n = 254)

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Fact-checking platforms improve the accuracy of news reporting.	115 (45.3%)	87 (34.3%)	32 (12.6%)	20 (7.9%)	3.22	Accepted
I consider fact-checking tools reliable for verifying information.	101 (39.8%)	89 (35.0%)	41 (16.1%)	23 (9.1%)	3.05	Accepted
Fact-checking platforms are essential in modern journalism practice.	118 (46.5%)	117 (46.1%)	18 (7.1%)	1 (2.5%)	3.25	Accepted
I trust the results provided by fact-checking organisations.	96 (37.8%)	88 (34.6%)	44 (17.3%)	26 (10.2%)	2.98	Accepted
Fact-checking slows down news production unnecessarily.	70 (27.6%)	76 (29.9%)	62 (24.4%)	46 (18.1%)	2.66	Accepted
Aggregate Mean = 3.03 Accepted						

Table 2 shows that journalists in Benin City generally perceive fact-checking platforms as useful and reliable tools in news production. A large proportion of respondents strongly agree that fact-checking improves accuracy and strengthens journalism practice. This reflects a professional understanding that credibility in modern reporting depends heavily on verification processes. Most journalists also agree that fact-checking tools are essential, especially in an environment where misinformation spreads quickly through digital platforms. Despite the generally positive perception of fact-checking platforms, a notable proportion of respondents (57.5%) agreed that these tools slow down news production unnecessarily. This does not negate their perceived usefulness, but rather reflects the practical tension between accuracy verification and speed of reporting in digital journalism practice.

Table 3: Influence of Journalists' Perception of Fact-Checking Platforms on News Credibility in Benin City (n = 254)

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
My use of fact-checking platforms increases the credibility of my news reports.	119 (46.9%)	85 (33.5%)	32 (12.6%)	18 (7.1%)	3.20	Accepted
I am more confident in publishing stories after verifying them through fact-checking platforms.	103 (40.6%)	87 (34.3%)	41 (16.1%)	23 (9.1%)	3.06	Accepted
Audiences are more likely to trust news that has been fact-checked.	110 (43.3%)	83 (32.7%)	38 (15.0%)	23 (9.1%)	3.10	Accepted
Lack of fact-checking reduces the credibility of news reports.	121 (47.6%)	79 (31.1%)	34 (13.4%)	20 (7.9%)	3.24	Accepted
My perception of fact-checking influences how I judge the reliability of information sources.	98 (38.6%)	90 (35.4%)	40 (15.7%)	26 (10.2%)	2.99	Accepted

Aggregate Mean = 3.12 | Accepted

Table 3 indicates that journalists' perception of fact-checking platforms has a strong influence on how they evaluate and produce credible news content. Most respondents agree that the use of fact-checking tools directly improves the credibility of their reporting. This suggests that credibility is not only shaped by journalistic skill but also by the verification systems used during news production. Confidence in reporting also increases when journalists rely on fact-checking, showing that these tools provide a form of professional assurance. Respondents further agree that audiences are more likely to trust news that has been verified, which reinforces the importance of accuracy in shaping public perception.

Discussion of Findings

The findings show a high level of awareness of fact-checking platforms among journalists in Benin City, and this awareness cuts across all respondents without exception. This is not accidental. It reflects how deeply verification discourse has entered contemporary journalism practice in Nigeria, especially in the digital age where misinformation circulates

quickly and aggressively. However, awareness alone does not reflect professional maturity in practice. The more critical issue is how this awareness translates into routine newsroom behaviour, and the data show that this translation is uneven. Some journalists integrate fact-checking consistently, while others apply it only when time and editorial pressure allow. This gap between knowing and doing reflects the structural tension in Nigerian journalism identified by Okocha and James (2025), where journalists are aware of verification demands but still struggle to fully operationalise them in fast-paced reporting environments.

The perception of fact-checking platforms as useful and reliable is also strongly established among journalists, but this perception is not purely technical; it is also strategic. Journalists appear to value fact-checking because it strengthens professional legitimacy in an environment where credibility is constantly questioned. In other words, fact-checking is not only seen as a tool for accuracy but also as a symbolic resource for protecting journalistic authority. Sunday and Tsegyu Santas (2024) support this by noting that journalists increasingly adopt fact-checking tools not only for verification but also for institutional credibility within competitive media environments. At the same time, the perceived usefulness of these platforms coexists with practical resistance, especially around time constraints. This contradiction is important. It shows that journalists do not reject fact-checking; rather, they negotiate its use within the limits of newsroom speed culture. This aligns with Imazogbonre and Asemah (2024), who argue that fact-checking operates in a constant tension between verification ethics and production urgency in digital journalism.

The findings further reveal that journalists' perception of fact-checking platforms directly influences how they construct news credibility. This influence is not superficial; it shapes editorial judgement at the level of source selection, verification intensity, and publication confidence. When journalists perceive fact-checking tools as reliable, they are more likely to

because newsroom pressures, speed of reporting, and routine professional habits often limit their consistent application. The study also reveals that while fact-checking platforms are viewed positively in principle, doubts still exist about their efficiency and suitability for real-time reporting environments, which affects the degree to which journalists depend on them when making credibility decisions. In all, the study concludes that fact-checking platforms influence journalists' judgement of news credibility, but this influence is strongly shaped by perception, practicality, and newsroom constraints rather than awareness alone.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that:

1. Based on the finding that journalists in Benin City have a high level of awareness and use of fact-checking platforms, it is recommended that media organisations and the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) strengthen periodic training and refresher workshops to ensure that awareness is sustained and translated into consistent and professional use of verification tools in newsroom practice.
2. Since journalists generally perceive fact-checking platforms as useful and reliable for improving accuracy and credibility in news production, media organisations should formally integrate fact-checking practices into editorial workflows to ensure that verification becomes a standard and routine part of news production processes.
3. In view of the finding that journalists' perception of fact-checking platforms significantly influences their judgement of news credibility, newsroom managers and media stakeholders should promote a strong verification culture that encourages the use of fact-checking tools as a key determinant of credibility in news reporting, especially for sensitive or public-interest stories.

treat their outputs as credible and defensible. This means credibility is no longer grounded solely in institutional reputation or personal experience but increasingly in external verification systems. Shaibu and Makanjuola (2025) explain this shift clearly, arguing that credibility in online journalism is now strongly shaped by perceived verification processes rather than traditional gatekeeping alone. This also aligns with Adesanya, Alawode, and Sanni (2026), who observe that trust in online news is increasingly conditional on perceived accuracy mechanisms rather than platform identity.

From a deeper standpoint, the Uses and Gratifications Theory helps explain why these patterns occur, but it also exposes a contradiction in journalist behaviour. Journalists actively use fact-checking platforms to satisfy professional needs such as accuracy, credibility, and audience trust. In this sense, they are goal-oriented users selecting tools that improve their work outcomes. However, gratification here is not fully stabilised. The same journalists who recognise the value of fact-checking often limit its use due to structural pressures such as deadlines, workload, and competitive reporting environments. This reflects a form of constrained rationality in media practice, where choice exists but is shaped by institutional limits. Amayindi and Sani (2026) describe this as a gap between perceived usefulness and sustained adoption, where journalists intellectually support verification but do not always embed it into routine practice.

Conclusion

This study examined the perception of fact-checking platforms and their influence on news credibility among journalists in Benin City, with particular attention to awareness, perceived usefulness, reliability, and how these perceptions shape credibility judgement in news production. The findings show that journalists are largely aware of fact-checking platforms and generally recognise their importance in strengthening accuracy and combating misinformation in digital journalism practice. However, despite this awareness, actual reliance on these tools remains uneven, largely

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were strictly observed in the conduct of this study to ensure compliance with academic and professional research standards. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before data collection, with clear explanation of the study's purpose and their rights as participants. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, as no personal identifiers were collected or disclosed in any part of the study. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from participation at any time without any form of penalty. Data obtained were used strictly for academic purposes and were handled with honesty, integrity, and respect for respondents, in line with established ethical guidelines for social science research.

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