

Trust in Algorithmically Curated News among Facebook Users in Bangladesh

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100600743>

Received: 20 June 2026; Accepted: 26 June 2026; Published: 04 July 2026

ABSTRACT

Algorithmically curated news has become an important part of social media news consumption, particularly on Facebook. Although algorithmic systems increasingly shape users' exposure to online news, limited research has examined users' trust in algorithmically curated news within developing countries such as Bangladesh. This study examined the technological and behavioural factors associated with Trust in Algorithmically Curated News among Facebook users in Bangladesh. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 230 Facebook users. The study integrated selected constructs from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. The findings revealed that all seven examined factors had significant positive relationships with Trust in Algorithmically Curated News ($p < .001$). Attitude Toward Behaviour showed the strongest relationship ($r = .699$), followed by Social Influence ($r = .609$) and Effort Expectancy ($r = .608$). The findings suggest that trust in algorithmically curated news is associated with technological perceptions, social influence, and behavioural evaluations. This study contributes to the literature on algorithmic trust, social media news consumption, and digital communication in emerging media environments.

Keywords: Algorithmic Trust, Social Media, Facebook, News Consumption, UTAUT, TPB

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have significantly transformed the way individuals' access, consume, and share news. Traditional news consumption patterns have gradually shifted towards digitally mediated environments where information is increasingly delivered through algorithmic recommendation systems. Among various social media platforms, Facebook remains one of the most influential sources of news and information globally, particularly in developing countries where social media serves as a primary gateway to information access (Datareportal, 2023; Newman et al., 2022).

In Bangladesh, Facebook has become an important platform for news consumption due to its accessibility, widespread adoption, and ability to provide real-time information updates. Rather than presenting content chronologically, Facebook relies on algorithmic curation systems that personalise news feeds based on users' interests, engagement patterns, and previous online behaviours. These systems determine which content users are more likely to encounter, thereby influencing information visibility and exposure (Eslami et al., 2015; Rader et al., 2018).

As algorithmic systems increasingly mediate news consumption, understanding users' trust in algorithmically curated news has become an important area of inquiry. Trust plays a critical role in shaping users' willingness to

engage with, rely upon, and accept information recommended by digital platforms. Users who trust algorithmic systems may perceive recommended content as useful, credible, and relevant. Conversely, low levels of trust may encourage scepticism towards platform-generated content (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013).

Existing studies have examined technology acceptance, social media usage, and online information behaviour across different contexts. However, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the technological and behavioural factors associated with trust in algorithmically curated news among Facebook users in developing countries, particularly Bangladesh. In addition, previous research has often examined technological acceptance and behavioural determinants separately. Therefore, this study integrates the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to examine the factors associated with Trust in Algorithmically Curated News among Facebook users in Bangladesh (Ajzen, 1991; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Trust in Algorithmically Curated News

Algorithmically curated news refers to news content that is selected, ranked, and presented to users through automated systems based on behavioural data, preferences, and interaction histories. Social media platforms such as Facebook increasingly rely on algorithms to personalise news feeds and optimise user engagement. While algorithmic curation offers convenience and relevance, it also shifts part of the gatekeeping function from human editors to automated systems (Diakopoulos, 2020).

Trust in algorithmically curated news refers to users' confidence that algorithmically selected news content is relevant, reliable, useful, and suitable for their information needs. Trust is considered important because users often interact with algorithmically selected content without fully understanding how the system determines what appears in their news feeds. Therefore, trust becomes a key factor in how users evaluate and engage with algorithmically curated content (Rader et al., 2018).

UTAUT and Trust in Algorithmically Curated News

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology explain technology acceptance through four main constructs: Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Facilitating Conditions (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Performance Expectancy refers to the extent to which individuals believe that using a system helps them achieve desired outcomes. In the context of algorithmically curated news, users may develop trust when they perceive that the system provides useful, relevant, and timely news.

Effort Expectancy refers to the perceived ease of using a system. Algorithmic news systems that are perceived as easy to understand and navigate may strengthen users' confidence in using the platform. Social Influence refers to the extent to which important others shape users' perceptions of a system. In social media environments, recommendations, sharing behaviour, comments, and peer interactions may influence users' trust in algorithmically curated news. Facilitating Conditions refer to the availability of resources, knowledge, and support required to engage with technological systems. Users with adequate digital skills and resources may be more confident in engaging with algorithmically curated content.

Theory of Planned Behaviour and Trust in Algorithmically Curated News

The Theory of Planned Behaviour explains behavioural intention through Attitude Toward Behaviour, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioural Control (Ajzen, 1991). Attitude Toward Behaviour refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of a behaviour. Within algorithmically curated news environments, users who hold favourable attitudes towards algorithmic recommendations may demonstrate higher trust in the content presented.

Subjective Norms refer to perceived social pressure from important others. Users may form trust based on the views, expectations, and behaviours of people within their social networks. Perceived Behavioural Control refers to users' perceived ability to perform a behaviour successfully. Users who believe they have the knowledge and

skills to evaluate online information may feel more confident when engaging with algorithmically curated news.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

This study integrates selected UTAUT and TPB constructs to examine their relationships with Trust in Algorithmically Curated News. The independent variables are Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, Facilitating Conditions, Attitude Toward Behaviour, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioural Control. Trust in Algorithmically Curated News serves as the dependent variable.

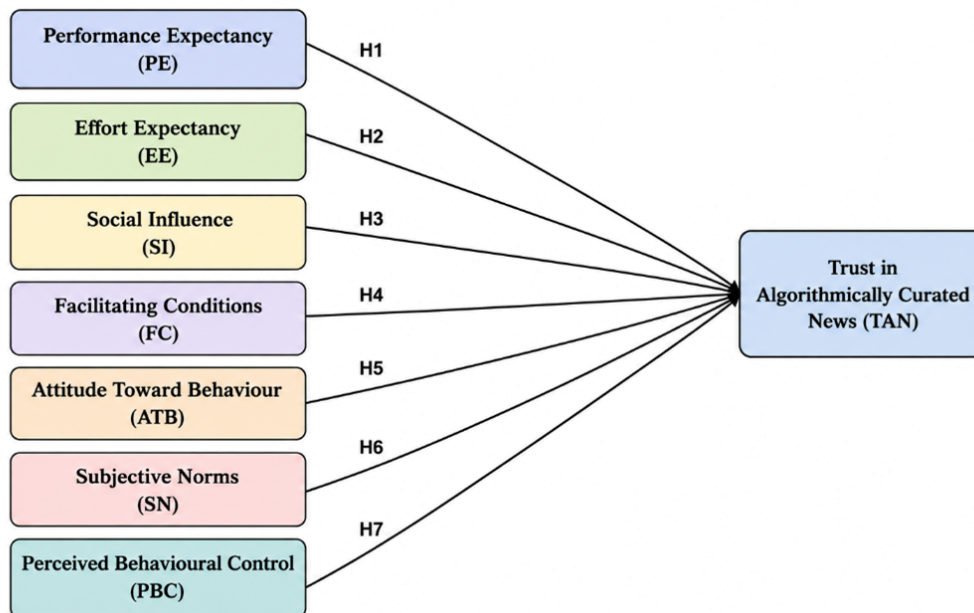


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on the conceptual framework, the study proposes that technological perceptions and behavioural evaluations are positively associated with Trust in Algorithmically Curated News. The UTAUT constructs represent users' perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, social influence, and available support, while the TPB constructs represent users' attitudes, perceived social expectations, and perceived control. Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between Performance Expectancy and Trust in Algorithmically Curated News.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between Effort Expectancy and Trust in Algorithmically Curated News.

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between Social Influence and Trust in Algorithmically Curated News.

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between Facilitating Conditions and Trust in Algorithmically Curated News.

H5: There is a significant positive relationship between Attitude Toward Behaviour and Trust in Algorithmically Curated News.

H6: There is a significant positive relationship between Subjective Norms and Trust in Algorithmically Curated News.

H7: There is a significant positive relationship between Perceived Behavioural Control and Trust in Algorithmically Curated News.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design. The design was appropriate because the study aimed to examine the relationships between selected technological and behavioural factors and Trust in Algorithmically Curated News among Facebook users in Bangladesh.

The target population consisted of Facebook users residing in Bangladesh. Data were collected from 230 respondents using an online questionnaire. The questionnaire measured demographic characteristics and the main study constructs, namely Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, Facilitating Conditions, Attitude Toward Behaviour, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioural Control, and Trust in Algorithmically Curated News.

All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The collected data were analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the demographic profile and the overall level of each variable. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between the independent variables and Trust in Algorithmically Curated News. The significance level was set at $p < .05$.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

A total of 230 valid responses were included in the final analysis. The sample consisted of 116 male respondents (50.4%) and 114 female respondents (49.6%). Most respondents were aged between 16 and 32 years (72.6%), followed by those aged between 50 and 65 years (14.8%) and 33 to 49 years (12.6%). In terms of education, 46.1% held undergraduate degrees and another 46.1% held postgraduate qualifications. Most respondents identified news agencies as their preferred source of news on Facebook (60.4%).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 230)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	116	50.4
	Female	114	49.6
Age	16–32	167	72.6
	33–49	29	12.6
	50–65	34	14.8
Education	Undergraduate Degree	106	46.1
	Postgraduate Degree	106	46.1
	Diploma/Certificate	13	5.7
	Secondary School	5	2.2
Preferred News Source	News Agencies	139	60.4
	Family/Friends	40	17.4
	Influencers/Public Figures	29	12.6
	Facebook Groups/Pages	12	5.2
	Sponsored News	10	4.3

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive findings showed moderate-to-high mean scores across the study variables. Facilitating Conditions recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.81$), followed by Performance Expectancy and Subjective Norms ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.81$). Trust in Algorithmically Curated News recorded a moderate mean score ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.96$), suggesting that respondents were moderately cautious in trusting algorithmically curated news on Facebook.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD
Performance Expectancy (PE)	3.97	0.81
Effort Expectancy (EE)	3.88	0.83
Social Influence (SI)	3.73	1.03
Facilitating Conditions (FC)	4.33	0.81
Attitude Toward Behaviour (ATB)	3.59	0.89
Subjective Norms (SN)	3.97	0.81
Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)	3.91	0.89
Trust in Algorithmically Curated News (TAN)	3.36	0.96

Note: All constructs were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

The descriptive statistics indicate that respondents generally reported moderate to high levels across the study variables. Facilitating Conditions recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.81$), suggesting that respondents perceived adequate resources, support, and capabilities for engaging with algorithmically curated news on Facebook. Trust in Algorithmically Curated News recorded a moderate mean score ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.96$), indicating that respondents demonstrated a moderate level of trust towards algorithmically curated news content. The standard deviation values ranging from 0.81 to 1.03 suggest an acceptable level of response variation among participants.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the seven independent variables and Trust in Algorithmically Curated News. The findings showed that all seven proposed relationships were positive and statistically significant at $p < .001$.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	r	p-value	Interpretation
H1	PE ↔ TAN	.513	< .001	Significant positive relationship
H2	EE ↔ TAN	.608	< .001	Significant positive relationship
H3	SI ↔ TAN	.609	< .001	Significant positive relationship
H4	FC ↔ TAN	.438	< .001	Significant positive relationship
H5	ATB ↔ TAN	.699	< .001	Significant positive relationship
H6	SN ↔ TAN	.436	< .001	Significant positive relationship
H7	PBC ↔ TAN	.572	< .001	Significant positive relationship

Notes: PE = Performance Expectancy; EE = Effort Expectancy; SI = Social Influence; FC = Facilitating Conditions; ATB = Attitude Toward Behaviour; SN = Subjective Norms; PBC = Perceived Behavioural Control; TAN = Trust in Algorithmically Curated News.

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis revealed that all seven independent variables were positively and significantly associated with Trust in Algorithmically Curated News ($p < .001$). Among the examined variables, Attitude Toward Behaviour demonstrated the strongest relationship with Trust in Algorithmically Curated News ($r = .699$), followed by Social Influence ($r = .609$) and Effort Expectancy ($r = .608$). Performance Expectancy ($r = .513$), Perceived Behavioural Control ($r = .572$), Facilitating Conditions ($r = .438$), and Subjective Norms ($r = .436$) also showed significant positive relationships with Trust in Algorithmically Curated News. These findings indicate that technological perceptions, behavioural evaluations, and social influences are significantly associated with users' trust in algorithmically curated news among Facebook users in Bangladesh.

Attitude Toward Behaviour demonstrated the strongest positive relationship with Trust in Algorithmically Curated News ($r = .699$, $p < .001$), followed by Social Influence ($r = .609$, $p < .001$) and Effort Expectancy ($r =$

.608, $p < .001$). Perceived Behavioural Control ($r = .572$, $p < .001$) and Performance Expectancy ($r = .513$, $p < .001$) also showed positive relationships with trust. Facilitating Conditions ($r = .438$, $p < .001$) and Subjective Norms ($r = .436$, $p < .001$) recorded lower but still significant positive relationships.

These findings suggest that trust in algorithmically curated news is associated with users' attitudes, social environments, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, perceived control, and available support. The strongest relationship was found between Attitude Toward Behaviour and trust, indicating that users' evaluations of algorithmically curated news are closely related to their trust in such content. This aligns with TPB, which emphasises the role of attitude in shaping behavioural evaluation (Ajzen, 1991).

The significant relationship between Social Influence and trust suggests that users' social environments may be connected to how they evaluate algorithmically curated news. On Facebook, users are frequently exposed to content that is liked, shared, recommended, or discussed by others. These social signals may contribute to trust formation in digital news environments.

The positive relationships between Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy and trust support the relevance of UTAUT in explaining algorithmic trust. Users who perceive algorithmically curated news as useful and easy to engage with are more likely to report higher trust. Similarly, the positive relationships involving Facilitating Conditions and Perceived Behavioural Control suggest that users' resources, digital confidence, and perceived ability to manage online information are related to trust in algorithmically curated news.

Overall, the findings indicate that trust in algorithmically curated news is not associated with one factor alone. Instead, it is linked to a combination of technological perceptions, behavioural evaluations, social influence, and perceived control.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has several limitations. First, the study used a cross-sectional design, which captured respondents' perceptions at one point in time. Therefore, the findings cannot explain changes in trust over time.

Second, the study focused only on Facebook users in Bangladesh. Since users may consume news across multiple platforms, the findings may not fully represent trust in algorithmically curated news across other social media environments.

Third, the study relied on self-reported survey data. Respondents' answers may be influenced by personal interpretation, memory, or social desirability.

Fourth, the sample was predominantly young (72.6% aged 16–32), with relatively limited representation from the 33–49 age group (12.6%). Future research should seek more balanced age representation to improve generalisability.

Fifth, the use of an online survey may have excluded individuals with limited internet access or digital literacy, potentially introducing selection bias.

Future studies may use longitudinal or mixed method approaches to gain deeper insights into how users develop, maintain, or reduce trust in algorithmically curated news. Future research may also examine additional factors such as algorithmic transparency, digital literacy, perceived credibility, and misinformation awareness.

CONCLUSION

This study examined Trust in Algorithmically Curated News among Facebook users in Bangladesh. By integrating selected constructs from UTAUT and TPB, the study found that all seven examined factors had significant positive relationships with trust.

Attitude Toward Behaviour showed the strongest relationship with trust, followed by Social Influence and Effort Expectancy. These findings suggest that users' personal evaluations, social surroundings, and perceived ease of

use are important in understanding trust in algorithmically curated news. Other factors, including Performance Expectancy, Facilitating Conditions, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioural Control, also demonstrated significant positive relationships with trust.

Overall, the study highlights that trust in algorithmically curated news is associated with both technological and behavioural factors. The findings contribute to understanding algorithmic trust in social media news consumption, particularly within the Bangladeshi Facebook context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed.

First, social media platforms should improve users' understanding of how algorithmically curated news is selected and presented. Clearer explanations of recommendation systems may help users make more informed decisions when engaging with news content on Facebook.

Second, digital literacy initiatives should include algorithmic awareness as part of media education. Users should be encouraged to understand how algorithms influence news visibility, content exposure, and information engagement.

Third, educators, policymakers, and communication practitioners should consider the role of social influence in shaping trust. Since users' trust may be related to peers, online communities, and social networks, awareness campaigns should promote responsible sharing and critical evaluation of online news.

Finally, future research may examine trust in algorithmically curated news across different social media platforms and demographic groups.

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