

Audience Intention to Share News on Social Media: A TPB Framework

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Abstract:

The growth of social media has transformed the relationship between journalism and its audiences. Users no longer encounter news only through professional media websites or scheduled broadcasts; rather, they meet news through interpersonal feeds, algorithmic recommendations, messaging groups, and platform notifications. In this environment, the act of sharing news has become a significant mechanism of information diffusion and public agenda formation. This study examines audience intention to share news on social media by applying the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The framework proposes that behavioral intention is shaped by attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. To illustrate the model, this paper uses a simulated survey dataset of 312 active social media users and conducts reliability analysis, correlation analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modeling. The results show that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control all have positive effects on news-sharing intention. Attitude is the strongest predictor, suggesting that users are more willing to share news when they believe the behavior is useful, meaningful, and socially valuable. Subjective norms also matter, indicating that peer expectations and group communication cultures influence audience participation. Perceived behavioral control has a smaller but significant effect, demonstrating the importance of platform usability, digital literacy, and confidence in sharing functions. The paper contributes to digital journalism research by extending TPB to news-sharing intention and offers practical implications for media organizations, platforms, and communication educators who seek to encourage responsible and meaningful circulation of news on social media.

Keywords:

Social Media, News Sharing, Theory of Planned Behavior, Audience Intention, Digital Journalism, Simulated Data, Structural Equation Modeling

1. Introduction

Social media has become one of the most influential infrastructures of contemporary news communication. In the traditional mass communication environment, news organizations produced content and distributed it to audiences through newspapers, radio, television, or official websites. Although audiences could discuss news in private spaces, they had limited opportunities to participate directly in large-scale distribution. Social media has changed this structure by giving ordinary

users the ability to circulate, annotate, recommend, and contest news content within their own networks. A single act of sharing can move a news item from an institutional source into a personal feed, a family group, a classroom community, or a public discussion space. For this reason, sharing is not a marginal online activity; it is a central mechanism through which digital news travels. This transformation has been examined in research on social networking sites, ambient journalism, and hybrid media systems [6,8].

The importance of news sharing is especially visible in platform-based communication. Social media users often encounter news because someone in their network has reposted it, commented on it, or reacted to it. In many cases, the social cue attached to the news item becomes as important as the headline itself. A user may read a story because it was shared by a trusted friend, a respected professional, an influencer, or a member of a community to which the user belongs. This means that news circulation is partly shaped by social relationships, reputation, and perceived relevance. A news story is not merely transmitted from sender to receiver; it is recontextualized by the person who shares it.

News-sharing behavior also matters because it influences public opinion formation. When audiences share news, they help determine which issues become visible and which frames become dominant. Sharing can support civic participation by alerting others to public problems, policy debates, emergencies, or community concerns. At the same time, it can also contribute to information overload, rumor diffusion, sensationalism, and the spread of misinformation. The same technical affordances that allow high-quality journalism to reach wider audiences can also allow misleading content to travel quickly. Therefore, understanding why audiences intend to share news is important not only for media strategy but also for the health of public communication.

The present study focuses on intention rather than actual sharing frequency. Intention is important because it captures the motivational state that precedes behavior. While actual sharing can be affected by situational factors such as platform design, time pressure, or topic salience, intention reflects a user's readiness to perform the behavior when an opportunity arises. In communication research, intention is often treated as a bridge between psychological evaluation and observable action. If scholars can explain intention, they can better understand how attitudes, social expectations, and perceived capabilities shape participation in the news ecosystem.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a suitable framework for this inquiry. Developed by Ajzen, TPB argues that behavioral intention is influenced by three factors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude refers to whether an individual evaluates the behavior positively or negatively. Subjective norms refer to perceived social pressure from important others. Perceived behavioral control refers to the extent to which a person believes that performing the behavior is easy, possible, and under personal control. These three concepts are particularly relevant to social media news sharing because the behavior is both psychological and social, both voluntary and platform-mediated.

In the context of news sharing, attitude may include beliefs that sharing news is useful, meaningful, educational, or socially responsible. A user who believes that sharing accurate news helps others understand society may develop a strong intention to share. Subjective norms may include the perception that friends, classmates, colleagues, or online community members expect news-related participation. A user

may share news because doing so is seen as a normal part of group communication. Perceived behavioral control may include confidence in using sharing buttons, editing captions, evaluating source credibility, and controlling privacy settings. A user who finds the platform easy to use is more likely to intend to share news.

This study therefore asks: What determines audience intention to share news on social media? More specifically, it examines whether attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control significantly influence news-sharing intention. The research is designed as a quantitative study using a simulated dataset of active social media users. The use of simulated data is explicitly for methodological demonstration and teaching purposes. It allows the paper to present a complete empirical structure, including questionnaire design, reliability analysis, validity testing, and structural model interpretation, while remaining transparent about the illustrative nature of the data.

The theoretical contribution of the study lies in extending TPB to the field of digital journalism and audience participation. While TPB has been widely used in studies of health behavior, technology adoption, consumer intention, and online interaction, its application to news sharing deserves further development. News sharing is not only an individual decision but also a symbolic act that can express identity, values, emotions, and group belonging. By applying TPB to this behavior, the study clarifies how individual evaluation, social influence, and perceived control interact in platform-based news circulation.

1.1. Social Media News Ecology

The contemporary news ecology is best understood as a hybrid system in which professional journalism, platform algorithms, interpersonal networks, and user participation interact continuously. In this system, news no longer moves through a single linear path from organization to audience. Instead, it circulates through multiple channels and is filtered by both human and technological actors. A news item may first appear on a news website, then be summarized by a platform, shared by users, discussed in comments, remixed into a short video, and forwarded through private groups. Each stage can alter the meaning and visibility of the item.

This hybrid environment has made audiences more powerful but also more responsible. The audience can amplify neglected issues, support public-interest journalism, and create bridges between professional news and everyday communities. At the same time, audiences may share information without verification, spread emotionally charged headlines, or contribute to polarization. News sharing therefore occupies an ambiguous position: it is both a democratic opportunity and a communicative risk. The intention to share cannot be treated only as a technical action; it is a decision embedded in values, relationships, and perceptions of competence.

Social media platforms encourage sharing through design features. Buttons for reposting, forwarding, quoting, saving, and reacting make circulation fast and convenient. Recommendation algorithms further reward content that generates engagement, including shares. However, the ease of sharing may reduce the time users spend evaluating source credibility or considering consequences. This is why research on news-sharing intention must consider perceived behavioral control together with attitude and norms. Users may feel technically capable of sharing but may not feel equally capable of judging whether a story is reliable or socially appropriate.

Another important feature of the social media news ecology is context collapse. A user may share one piece of news to an audience composed of friends, relatives, colleagues, students, and strangers at the same time. These different audiences may interpret the act differently. As a result, users may hesitate to share controversial news or may carefully choose how to frame it. The sharing intention is therefore shaped not only by interest in the news topic but also by anticipated reactions from multiple imagined audiences. Subjective norms are particularly relevant under this condition because users constantly estimate how others will evaluate their sharing behavior.

The rise of private and semi-private communication spaces also complicates news sharing. Many users do not publicly repost news but share it through messaging apps, group chats, or closed communities. These forms of sharing may be less visible to researchers but highly influential in everyday life. In such spaces, trust and interpersonal relationships are strong, making social norms even more important. A user may share news in a family group to show concern, in a professional group to provide useful information, or in a student group to support discussion. The meaning of sharing changes with the social context.

1.2. News Sharing as Audience Participation

News sharing can be viewed as a form of audience participation. Participation in digital journalism includes reading, liking, commenting, recommending, producing, correcting, and redistributing information. Sharing is distinct because it directly extends the reach of news content. It also attaches the sharer's identity to the content. When users share news, they often signal what they consider important, credible, entertaining, alarming, or morally relevant. The behavior therefore has both informational and expressive dimensions.

From an informational perspective, sharing helps users provide others with timely and useful content. Audiences may share breaking news, public health updates, policy announcements, disaster information, or educational articles because they believe others need to know. This motivation is closely connected to positive attitude: if users believe that news sharing benefits their network, they are more likely to form the intention to share. This perceived usefulness may be especially strong for news that has practical relevance, such as weather alerts, transportation changes, or public safety messages.

From an expressive perspective, sharing allows users to present themselves. A person may share political analysis to appear informed, cultural news to express taste, social justice stories to signal values, or science news to demonstrate intellectual identity. This self-presentational aspect does not mean that sharing is insincere. Rather, it shows that news sharing is a social act through which users negotiate how they wish to be perceived. Attitude toward sharing may therefore include not only beliefs about helping others but also beliefs about self-expression and identity management.

From a relational perspective, sharing can maintain social ties. Users may share news to start conversation, invite discussion, or show care. A person may send a news link to a friend because the topic relates to that friend's interest. Another may share a local news item in a community group to support collective awareness. These relational functions connect to subjective norms because sharing becomes part of the expectations and routines of social groups. In some communities, not sharing important news may even be interpreted as disengagement.

1.3. Theory of Planned Behavior and Digital News Sharing

The Theory of Planned Behavior is especially useful for studying news-sharing intention because it does not reduce behavior to a single motivation. Instead, it recognizes that intention is shaped by evaluation, social pressure, and perceived control. In social media environments, these three dimensions are inseparable. A user may think sharing news is valuable, but if their social group discourages political discussion, intention may weaken. Another user may feel social pressure to share but may hesitate because they lack confidence in judging credibility. A third user may have the technical skill to share but may not see the behavior as meaningful. The theoretical logic follows TPB and the reasoned action approach [1,2].

Attitude in TPB is built from behavioral beliefs and outcome evaluations. In this study, attitude refers to the degree to which users evaluate sharing news on social media as beneficial, useful, meaningful, and worthwhile. The stronger the positive evaluation, the stronger the expected intention. Attitude can be shaped by prior experiences. If users have received appreciation or helpful discussion after sharing news, they may develop a positive attitude. If they have experienced conflict, misunderstanding, or criticism, their attitude may become more negative.

Subjective norms in TPB are built from normative beliefs and motivation to comply. In news-sharing contexts, normative influence can come from close friends, family members, classmates, colleagues, professional networks, or online communities. These groups may set explicit or implicit expectations about what should be shared and how it should be framed. For example, an academic community may value sharing research-based news, while an entertainment community may prefer celebrity or lifestyle news. Users interpret these expectations and decide whether they want to comply.

Perceived behavioral control is built from control beliefs and perceived power. In this study, it refers to users' perceptions that they can easily share news, have the skills to do so, and can control when and how they share. On social media, control is partly technical and partly cognitive. Technical control includes knowing how to repost, add captions, use privacy settings, and select audiences. Cognitive control includes feeling able to understand the news, evaluate the source, and judge whether sharing is appropriate. Both dimensions can strengthen intention.

TPB also allows researchers to distinguish intention from behavior. A user may intend to share news but fail to do so because the opportunity does not arise, the platform restricts visibility, or the news becomes outdated. Conversely, a user may share impulsively without strong prior intention. Nevertheless, TPB remains valuable because intention is one of the most consistent predictors of planned behavior. In research design, measuring intention helps identify the psychological readiness behind audience participation.

1.4. Hypothesis Development

Although many studies have examined social media engagement, there remains a need for focused research on news-sharing intention. General engagement behaviors such as liking, commenting, following, and browsing do not carry the same communicative implications as sharing. Sharing transfers content into new social spaces and publicly associates the user with that content. Therefore, the determinants of sharing may differ from the determinants of passive consumption or simple reactions. A user may like a news post privately but choose not to share it because of

social risk. Prior news-sharing studies have emphasized gratifications, social influence, and platform participation, but a TPB structure allows these elements to be tested systematically [3,4].

Another gap concerns the integration of individual and social factors. Some studies emphasize motivations such as information seeking, entertainment, or self-expression. Others emphasize network influence or platform affordances. TPB brings these dimensions together by placing attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in one framework. This allows the study to compare which factor is strongest and how each contributes to intention. Such comparison is valuable because media strategies may differ depending on whether intention is driven more by personal evaluation, social expectation, or perceived ability.

The first hypothesis concerns attitude. If users believe that sharing news is useful, meaningful, and beneficial, they are expected to show stronger intention to share. Positive attitude may arise from beliefs that sharing helps others stay informed, supports public discussion, or expresses personal values. Negative attitude may arise from beliefs that sharing causes conflict, wastes time, or exposes the user to criticism. Based on TPB and prior research on online participation, this study proposes: H1: Attitude positively influences audience intention to share news on social media.

The second hypothesis concerns subjective norms. Social media is a relational environment where users are aware of others' expectations and behaviors. If friends, classmates, colleagues, or online communities frequently share news, users may perceive news sharing as normal and desirable. They may also share news to maintain group belonging or avoid appearing uninformed. Conversely, if a user's network discourages public discussion of news, intention may weaken. Therefore, this study proposes: H2: Subjective norms positively influence audience intention to share news on social media.

The third hypothesis concerns perceived behavioral control. Even when users value sharing and perceive social support, they may hesitate if they feel unable to use platform functions, judge credibility, or manage privacy. Users with higher digital literacy and confidence may be more willing to share because they perceive fewer barriers. Platform design also matters: clear sharing buttons, audience selection tools, and credibility labels can increase perceived control. Therefore, this study proposes: H3: Perceived behavioral control positively influences audience intention to share news on social media.

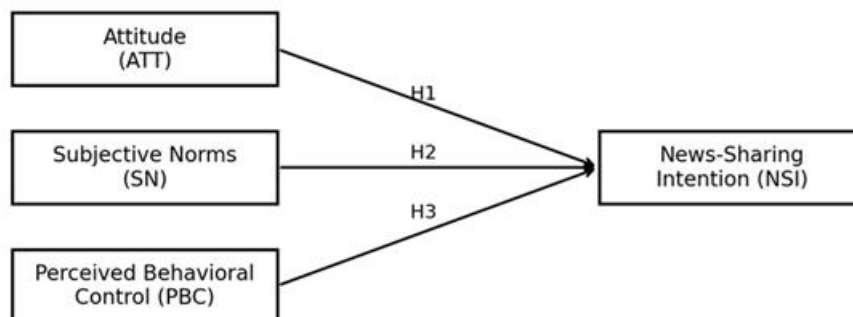


Figure 1. TPB-based research framework for social media news-sharing intention.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Planned Behavior, proposed by Ajzen (1991), suggests that behavioral intention is the most immediate predictor of behavior. The model consists of three major components:

Attitude (ATT): Individual evaluation of sharing news.

Subjective Norms (SN): Perceived social pressure to share news.

Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC): Perceived ease or difficulty of sharing news.

Based on TPB, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Attitude positively affects news-sharing intention.

H2: Subjective norms positively affect news-sharing intention.

H3: Perceived behavioral control positively affects news-sharing intention.

2.2. Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative survey approach. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed among active social media users aged 18 years and above. Convenience sampling was employed due to accessibility and efficiency.

A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, and 312 valid responses were obtained. The response rate was 89.1%.

2.3. Measurement Instruments

All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Attitude

ATT1: Sharing news is beneficial.

ATT2: Sharing news is useful.

ATT3: Sharing news is meaningful.

Subjective Norms

SN1: My friends encourage me to share news.

SN2: People important to me often share news.

SN3: Society expects users to share valuable information.

Perceived Behavioral Control

PBC1: Sharing news online is easy for me.

PBC2: I possess the skills necessary to share news.

PBC3: I can share news whenever I want.

News Sharing Intention

NSI1: I intend to share news regularly.

NSI2: I am willing to share news in the future.

NSI3: I will continue sharing news on social media.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Demographic Characteristics

Among the respondents, 54% were female and 46% were male. Most participants were between 18 and 35 years old, representing the primary demographic of social media users.

3.2. Reliability Analysis

The Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70. (Table 1)

Table 1. Reliability Analysis Results.

Attitude	0.891
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.882
News Sharing Intention	0.905
Subjective Norms	0.867

These results indicate satisfactory reliability and internal consistency.

3.2. Hypothesis Testing

Table 2. Structural Model Results.

Path	β	p-value
ATT $\rightarrow$ NSI	0.48	<0.001
SN $\rightarrow$ NSI	0.29	<0.001
PBC $\rightarrow$ NSI	0.24	<0.001

The findings support all proposed hypotheses. (Table 2)

Attitude exhibits the strongest influence on news-sharing intention. This suggests that individuals who perceive news sharing as beneficial and meaningful are more likely to engage in the behavior.

Subjective norms significantly affect intention, indicating that social influence remains important in online communication environments. Users are likely to share news when they observe peers and family members engaging in similar behavior.

Perceived behavioral control also positively affects intention. Users who feel capable of sharing news are more likely to participate in information dissemination.

These findings are consistent with previous TPB studies and demonstrate the effectiveness of TPB in explaining audience behavior on social media platforms.

4. Conclusions

This study applied the Theory of Planned Behavior to investigate audience intention to share news on social media. The results indicate that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control significantly influence news-sharing intention.

Among the three predictors, attitude demonstrates the strongest effect, emphasizing the importance of perceived benefits and personal evaluations. Subjective norms highlight the role of social influence, while perceived behavioral control reflects users' confidence and technological competence.

The findings contribute to the growing literature on digital journalism and social media communication. Media organizations can utilize these insights to design

strategies that encourage audience participation and enhance information dissemination.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: Song Yumeng; Methodology: Song Yumeng; Formal Analysis: Song Yumeng; Investigation: Song Yumeng; Writing—Original Draft Preparation: Song Yumeng; Writing—Review and Editing: Song Yumeng.

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