

Platformed Journalistic Authority on TikTok: An Integrative Review of News Credibility, Creator Practices, and Algorithmic Gatekeeping

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Abstract

Short-form social video has moved from the margins of digital culture into the infrastructure of contemporary news circulation, yet the conditions under which journalistic authority survives platform adaptation remain unsettled. This integrative review synthesises 27 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2022 and 26 July 2026 on TikTok-centred journalism, social-media news credibility, news creators, platform affordances, algorithmic gatekeeping, and audience verification. A structured web-based scholarly search was conducted across publisher platforms and journal repositories, followed by relevance screening, source verification, data extraction, and thematic synthesis. Six recurring patterns emerged. First, news organisations increasingly adopt platform-native audiovisual, humorous, personalised, and interactive forms without necessarily abandoning core journalistic norms. Second, authority is becoming personified: visible journalists and creators can function as trust-bearing interfaces between institutions and audiences. Third, audiences judge credibility through a combination of source authority, perceived accuracy, transparency, authenticity, and self-initiated verification. Fourth, recommendation systems operate as distributional gatekeepers whose incentives may privilege entertainment and reduce routine exposure to news. Fifth, journalistic quality on TikTok is best understood as a negotiated balance between epistemic discipline and platform congruence rather than as a simple opposition between information and entertainment. Sixth, evidence remains geographically concentrated outside sub-Saharan Africa, despite Nigerian studies showing that social-media credibility and literacy are already central concerns. The review proposes a Platformed Journalistic Authority framework integrating epistemic signals, relational authenticity, platform congruence, and distributional gatekeeping. The framework clarifies why visibility alone does not produce credibility and identifies a search agenda for Nigeria and comparable Global South news environments.

Keywords: TikTok; social media journalism; news credibility; journalistic authority; news creators; algorithmic gatekeeping; media literacy

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Introduction

News production and consumption are increasingly shaped by platforms built around personalised recommendation, mobile video, creator culture, and continuous audience interaction. TikTok provides an illustrative case of this broader transformation because its news environment is organised around an algorithmically curated stream rather than a conventional homepage, subscription feed, or search-based encounter. Within this environment, journalism competes for attention alongside entertainment, lifestyle content, humour, advocacy, and user-generated content. Early platform research showed that news organisations were adapting journalistic storytelling to TikTok's short, visual, and trend-oriented formats to engage younger audiences (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2022). More recent comparative research across social media platforms suggests that such adaptations represent a broader shift toward platform-specific forms of social media journalism rather than merely the redistribution of legacy news products (Hendrickx & Vázquez-Herrero, 2024; Hendrickx, 2025a).

The credibility consequences of this transformation are not straightforward. Platform-native news can make public affairs more accessible, conversational, and personally relevant, but the same features that improve attention can blur distinctions

between reporting, commentary, promotion, entertainment, and influencer performance. News companies increasingly combine informational and entertaining elements on Instagram and TikTok, while users continue to evaluate such content against expectations of accuracy, credibility, and usefulness (Cheng et al., 2025; Wirz & Zaib, 2025). Journalists themselves also perform more personalised roles on social media, including promotional, celebrity, humorous, and community-facing roles that would have been less visible within conventional newsroom products (Mellado, 2022; Mellado & Hermida, 2024).

A second complication is that algorithmic distribution systems across social media platforms are not neutral mechanisms of content exposure. Recommendation systems influence which content users encounter, and research on platform environments has shown that algorithmic ranking can shape attention patterns, including the visibility of news content relative to entertainment-oriented material (Hagar & Diakopoulos, 2025; Huang & Yang, 2024). However, such findings should be understood as evidence about social media recommendation systems more broadly rather than being treated as exclusively TikTok-specific dynamics.

Within TikTok's short-form video environment, these dynamics are particularly relevant because journalistic content is distributed through a personalised recommendation stream where visibility depends not only on newsroom production decisions but also on platform ranking mechanisms, creator practices, content charac-

teristics, and audience responses. Therefore, journalistic authority in short-form video environments cannot be understood solely as a property of the newsroom, reporter, or message; rather, it is jointly produced through the interaction of content, persona, platform design, recommendation systems, and audience evaluation.

These questions have particular relevance for countries such as Nigeria, where social media has become deeply embedded in news consumption but concerns about credibility, misinformation, verification, and media literacy remain significant. Nigerian studies demonstrate both substantial reliance on social media for news and variation in how credibility is judged (Aondover et al., 2024; Oladokun et al., 2022). Research among Nigerian students further indicates that social media literacy can shape how users respond to questionable or false information (Usman et al., 2022). Yet the recent international scholarship on TikTok journalism, news creators, and short-form credibility is still dominated by Europe, North America, and parts of Asia. The present article therefore offers an integrative review of recent peer-reviewed scholarship published between 2022 and 2026. It asks not simply whether TikTok is beneficial or harmful for journalism, but how journalistic authority is reconstructed when news becomes short-form, creator-oriented, highly personalised, and algorithmically distributed. Existing scholarship on platformisation has examined how digital platforms reshape media institutions and journalistic practices; gatekeeping theory has explained how actors influence the selection and circulation of news; and source credibility research has focused on how audiences evaluate trustworthiness based on message and communicator characteristics. However, these approaches often examine institutional transformation, information selection, or audience judgement as separate processes.

To address this limitation, the review develops the Platformed Journalistic Authority Framework, which conceptualizes journalistic authority as an emergent outcome produced through the interaction of four interconnected dimensions: epistemic signals, relational authenticity, platform congruence, and distributional gatekeeping. Unlike traditional models that primarily locate authority within journalistic institutions, professional norms, or source characteristics, this framework explains how authority is continuously negotiated across newsroom practices, creator identities, audience relationships, and algorithmic visibility mechanisms. By integrating production, audience, and platform-level perspectives within a single analytical model, the framework provides a distinct basis for examining journalistic authority in short-form video environments, particularly within Nigeria and comparable Global South media systems.

Problem Statement and Review Contribution

Recent research on social media journalism has grown rapidly, but it remains fragmented across different analytical traditions. Production studies examine how newsrooms adapt content to platform affordances; audience studies focus on credibility, trust, and verification; identity research examines the increasingly personal and influencer-like performance of journalists; and computational studies audit recommendation systems. Each strand captures an important part of the transformation, but the separation of these literatures obscures the central problem: on short-form video platforms, the credibility of journalism is inseparable from how journalism is performed, distributed, encountered, and verified.

Existing reviews provide valuable foundations but leave this integration unfinished. Anter (2024) synthesised how news organisations coordinate, select, and edit social-media content, while Degen et al. (2024) reviewed the literature on quality journalism in social media. Sánchez-Amboage et al. (2025) examined the emerging journalist-influencer professional profile. These

reviews establish that platformisation changes journalistic practices, quality expectations, and professional identities. However, the specific connection among platform-native performance, creator-centred authority, credibility heuristics, and algorithmic exposure remains underdeveloped.

The gap is consequential because visibility and credibility are different outcomes. A news creator may be highly visible but poorly trusted; a legacy newsroom may be highly credible but algorithmically invisible; and an individual journalist may gain trust through relational authenticity while simultaneously creating ambiguity about institutional accountability. A framework that treats authority as platformed must therefore explain both epistemic legitimacy and the conditions under which that legitimacy reaches an audience.

This review contributes in three ways. First, it integrates recent research on journalistic production, audience credibility, professional identity, quality, and algorithmic distribution within a single analytical structure. While existing perspectives on platformisation, gatekeeping, and source credibility explain important aspects of digital journalism, they often examine institutional change, visibility, and audience judgement separately. Second, the review develops the Platformed Journalistic Authority Framework, which extends these perspectives by linking epistemic signals, relational authenticity, platform congruence, and distributional gatekeeping to explain how journalistic authority is negotiated among journalists, audiences, and algorithmic systems, particularly through the connection between algorithmic visibility and credibility formation. Third, it identifies a research agenda for Nigeria, where social-media credibility research exists, but TikTok journalism, creator-based authority, and algorithmic news exposure remain underexplored.

Objectives and Research Questions

The review has four objectives: to synthesise recent evidence on the adaptation of journalism to short-form social video; to identify the cues through which audiences evaluate credibility and authority; to examine how platform algorithms and affordances condition news visibility and quality; and to identify theoretical, geographic, and methodological gaps with particular attention to Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa.

RQ1: How do short-form social video affordances reshape the production and presentation of journalistic news?

RQ2: How are journalistic authority, authenticity, and credibility negotiated between news organisations, individual journalists, creators, and audiences?

RQ3: What role do recommendation systems and platform design play in shaping exposure to and evaluation of news?

RQ4: What gaps in recent scholarship are most important for future Mass Communication research in Nigeria and comparable Global South contexts?

Conceptual Framework: Platformed Journalistic Authority

The review treats journalistic authority as a relational achievement rather than a fixed institutional possession. On social video platforms, audiences may encounter a journalist's face, voice, humour, explanatory style, disclosure practices, comments, and popularity signals before they encounter the institutional brand behind the report. At the same time, the platform determines which stories are surfaced and how they are formatted. The resulting authority is therefore platformed: it emerges from an interaction among professional norms, personal performance, platform-native communication, and algorithmic distribution.

The first component is epistemic signals. These are cues that connect a news item to practices of evidence, verification,

sourcing, accuracy, editorial accountability, and professional gatekeeping. Recent audience research shows that users still value accuracy, utility, and credibility even when they consume news in entertainment-oriented environments (Cheng et al., 2025). Preference for professional journalistic gatekeeping is also associated with higher trust in news, underscoring the continued importance of editorial expertise (Scheffauer et al., 2024).

The second component is relational authenticity. Social platforms reward visible personalities, backstage access, conversational speech, direct address, and interaction. Journalists use these practices to construct digital identities that may be more personal, humorous, promotional, or community oriented (Mellado, 2022; Mellado & Hermida, 2024). Metajournalistic content on TikTok similarly relies on personalisation, educational explanation, creativity, and audience interaction (Al-Rawi, 2024). Relational authenticity can humanise journalism and reduce social distance, but it also increases the importance of clear boundaries between reporting, opinion, promotion, and commercial influence (Aalto & Frig, 2026).

The third component is platform congruence: the degree to which journalism fits the communicative vernacular of the platform. TikTok rewards vertical video, brevity, rapid openings, visual explanation, music, trends, imitation, humour, and creator-centred presentation. Newsrooms that simply transplant conventional formats risk weak engagement, while excessive adaptation may encourage sensationalism or contextual compression. The literature therefore suggests a negotiated rather than binary relationship between journalistic quality and entertainment (Degen et al., 2024; Wirz & Zaib, 2025).

The fourth component is distributional gatekeeping. Platformed authority cannot matter to audiences if news is not shown to them. Algorithm audits indicate that recommendation systems can provide limited proactive exposure to news or pull users away from news toward entertainment, even when users initially engage with public-affairs material (Hagar & Diakopoulos, 2025; Huang & Yang, 2024). Distributional gatekeeping thus shapes the opportunity for credibility judgements to occur.

The model further recognises audience conditions, particularly media literacy, prior trust, topic sensitivity, and verification habits. Young adults may be sceptical of TikTok in general while still using source authority as a heuristic for individual posts and engaging in internal or on-platform verification (Anter & Kümpel, 2026). In Nigeria, social-media literacy has also been associated with users' capacity to recognise and respond to false information (Usman et al., 2022). These audience conditions moderate how the other four dimensions translate into credibility and engagement.

Method

Review Design

An integrative literature review was used because the research problem spans heterogeneous evidence, including qualitative interviews, ethnography, surveys, content analysis, digital methods, algorithm audits, and prior systematic reviews. The

objective was analytical integration rather than statistical meta-analysis. The procedure was designed to preserve methodological transparency while avoiding claims of exhaustive database coverage that could not be supported across all rapidly changing platform research.

The review window covered publications from January 2022 through 26 July 2026, capturing the period in which TikTok became an increasingly significant space for news production, creator-centred journalism, and research on recommendation systems, social-media news quality, and audience verification. Only peer-reviewed journal articles were included, with peer-review status verified through journal indexing records, publisher information, and database metadata. Online-first articles were eligible where they had been formally accepted and published by recognised academic journals within the review period. The review was limited to English-language publications due to accessibility and consistency of analysis. Prior systematic reviews and review articles were examined only as background sources to identify key debates and research gaps; they were not combined with primary studies in the evidence synthesis to avoid double-counting findings. The final analysis therefore focused exclusively on eligible primary peer-reviewed studies.

Search Strategy and Source Verification

A structured web-based scholarly search was conducted across major publisher platforms and journal repositories that index communication and journalism research, including Taylor & Francis Online, SAGE Journals, De Gruyter Brill, the International Journal of Communication, Cogent/Taylor & Francis, DOAJ-linked journal records, and university research repositories used to verify bibliographic metadata. Searches combined terms such as TikTok, short-form video, social media journalism, news creator, journalist-influencer, news credibility, media trust, authenticity, verification, quality journalism, algorithmic gatekeeping, recommendation algorithm, and platform affordances.

Candidate records were checked against publisher or institutional records for authorship, publication year, journal title, volume/issue where available, page range or article number, and DOI. This verification step was used to reduce the risk of including miscited, duplicated, non-peer-reviewed, or unverifiable material.

Eligibility Criteria and Analytical Corpus

Articles were included when they met four conditions: publication between 2022 and 2026; peer-reviewed journal publication; direct relevance to journalism or news on social/video platforms; and substantive evidence concerning at least one of the review domains—production practices, professional identity, credibility/trust, audience verification, quality, platform affordances, or algorithmic distribution. Studies focused only on commercial influencer marketing, entertainment without a news dimension, non-journalistic health communication, conference proceedings, preprints, reports, and grey literature were excluded from the analytical corpus. A condensed Table 1 for the manuscript can be presented as follows:

Table 1 | Characteristics of Included Studies on Platformed Journalistic Authority

Author(s) & Year	Country/Region	Platform	Research Design	Sample/Corpus	Principal Construct	Contribution to Theme
Vázquez-Herrero et al. (2022)	Spain/Europe	TikTok	Content analysis	News media TikTok videos	Platform-native journalism	Demonstrated how news organisations adapt storytelling to TikTok affordances.
Mellado (2022)	Chile	Twitter & Instagram	Ethnographic study	Journalists' social media practices	Journalist identity and roles	Showed the emergence of personalised and hybrid journalist identities.

Author(s) & Year	Country/ Region	Platform	Research Design	Sample/Corpus	Principal Construct	Contribution to Theme
Oladokun et al. (2022)	Nigeria	Social media platforms	Survey research	Nigerian social media users	News credibility	Highlighted credibility challenges in political news consumption.
Usman et al. (2022)	Nigeria	Social media platforms	Survey research	Nigerian users/ students	Media literacy and misinformation	Demonstrated the role of literacy in evaluating false information.
Bolz (2023)	Not specified/ Europe context	TikTok	Qualitative analysis	TikTok journalism communities	Edutainment and legitimacy	Explained how educational-entertainment practices influence journalistic legitimacy.
Anter (2024)	International review	Social media platforms	Systematic literature review	Journalism studies literature	Platform adaptation	Synthesised newsroom practices and social media journalism transformation.
Al-Rawi (2024)	International	TikTok	Content/ discourse analysis	TikTok journalistic content	Metajournalistic discourse	Showed how journalists explain and perform journalism on TikTok.
Degen et al. (2024)	International	Social media platforms	Literature review	Journalism quality studies	Quality journalism	Identified tensions between journalism quality and platform logic.
Hendrickx & Vázquez-Herrero (2024)	Multi-country	Multiple platforms	Comparative study	News organisations across platforms	Social media journalism	Demonstrated platform-specific journalistic adaptation.
Peterson-Salahuddin (2024)	United States	TikTok	Qualitative study	Citizen journalists	Creator journalism	Examined blurred boundaries between journalism and creator culture.
Rydenfelt et al. (2024)	Finland	Social media	Qualitative study	Legacy media organisations	Personalisation ethics	Identified ethical challenges of personalised journalism.
Scheffauer et al. (2024)	International	Social media/ news platforms	Quantitative study	News audiences	Algorithmic vs professional gatekeeping	Showed effects of gatekeeping processes on news trust.
Aondover et al. (2024)	Nigeria	Social media platforms	Survey research	Nigerian users	Social media credibility	Examined news consumption and credibility perceptions.
Cheng et al. (2025)	International	TikTok	Audience study	TikTok users	Quality journalism perceptions	Showed how users evaluate TikTok news quality.
Hagar & Diakopoulos (2025)	United States	TikTok	Algorithm audit	Recommendation system observations	Algorithmic gatekeeping	Demonstrated limited proactive news recommendation on TikTok.
Hendrickx (2025a)	International	TikTok	Digital methods study	TikTok news content	Algorithmic visibility	Examined how news appears through TikTok's recommendation system.
Hendrickx (2025b)	Europe	TikTok & Instagram	Qualitative study	Young adult audiences	News encounters	Explored youth experiences with platform news.
Huang & Yang (2024)	International	YouTube	Algorithm audit	Recommendation pathways	Algorithmic diversion	Showed how recommendation systems may shift users away from news.
Mellado & Hermida (2024)	Chile/ International	Twitter & Instagram	Content analysis	Journalists' profiles	Digital journalist roles	Identified promotional, celebrity, and humorous journalist roles.
Sánchez-Amboage et al. (2025)	International	Social media platforms	Systematic review	Journalist-influencer literature	Professional identity	Explained emergence of journalist-influencer roles.
Shaw (2025)	International	TikTok	Qualitative study	Environmental news cases	Platform friction	Examined technological constraints affecting news production.
Verstappen & Opgenhaffen (2025)	Belgium/ Europe	TikTok	Interview study	TikTok editors/ news organisations	Editorial decision-making	Explained newsroom adaptation to TikTok pressures.
Wirz & Zaib (2025)	International	Instagram & TikTok	Content analysis	News stories	Infotainment	Examined information–entertainment combinations.
Wölflé & Schmuck (2025)	International	Social media platforms	Survey research	Young audiences	Trust and bias perception	Compared trust in legacy and social media news sources.
Zhao & Ye (2025)	China	Douyin/ TikTok	Content analysis	Chinese official media videos	Entertainment journalism	Showed how humour and platform culture shape official news.

Author(s) & Year	Country/Region	Platform	Research Design	Sample/Corpus	Principal Construct	Contribution to Theme
Aalto & Frig (2026)	International	Social media platforms	Qualitative study	Journalist influencers	Authenticity and boundaries	Examined controversies around journalist influencers.
Anter & Kümpel (2026)	International	TikTok	Audience study	Young adult TikTok users	Credibility and verification	Showed how users evaluate and verify TikTok inform

Data Extraction and Thematic Synthesis

For each article, the review recorded publication year, geographic context, platform, study design, sample or corpus where stated, focal construct, and principal finding relevant to journalistic authority. The studies were then compared iteratively across production, audience, identity, quality, and algorithmic dimensions. Initial descriptive codes were collapsed into broader analytical categories when they represented the same underlying process.

Six themes were retained because they recurred across multiple methodological traditions: platform-native adaptation; personification of journalistic authority; credibility heuristics and verification; algorithmic distribution as gatekeeping; the quality–authenticity–entertainment tension; and geographic/methodological asymmetry. The coding process involved systematic extraction and comparison of key concepts from all included studies. Initial coding was conducted by the author, followed by iterative review and refinement of codes to identify recurring patterns and relationships across the literature. A theme was considered recurrent when it appeared consistently across multiple studies and methodological approaches rather than being limited to a single source or context. Where interpretation differences occurred during synthesis, they were resolved through re-examination of the original studies and alignment with the review objectives. The quality and relevance of included studies were assessed through verification of peer-review status, methodological transparency, and alignment with the review scope. The conceptual framework was developed after the thematic synthesis so that it reflected recurring relationships emerging from the evidence rather than a pre-established theoretical assumption.

Ethical Considerations

The review analysed publicly identifiable scholarly publications and did not involve human participants, private records, or personally identifiable data. Institutional ethical approval was therefore not required. Care was taken to represent study findings at the level supported by the original publications and to avoid treating platform-specific evidence as universally generalisable.

Results

Theme 1: Platform-Native Journalism

News organisations increasingly produce platform-specific journalism rather than merely distributing links. TikTok content now reflects its visual, short-form and trend-driven conventions (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2022; Hendrickx & Vázquez-Herrero, 2024), with newsrooms selectively adopting visual, hashtag and other affordances according to editorial goals and audience expectations (Hendrickx, 2025a). This adaptation requires journalists to balance professional standards with platform pressures (Verstappen & Opgenhaffen, 2025; Anter, 2024), while technological constraints such as vertical video, limited hyperlinking and trend-centred design may complicate traditional journalistic practice (Shaw, 2025).

Theme 2: Personified Journalistic Authority

Social media increasingly shifts journalistic authority from institutions towards identifiable personalities. Journalists construct multidimensional online identities involving profession-

al, celebrity, humorous and promotional roles (Mellado, 2022; Mellado & Hermida, 2024). On TikTok, personalisation, explanation, creativity and entertainment enhance audience engagement (Al-Rawi, 2024; Bolz, 2023). However, citizen journalism and the emergence of journalist-influencers increasingly blur boundaries between professional journalism, creator culture and commercial influence (Peterson-Salahuddin, 2024; Sánchez-Amboage et al., 2025; Aalto & Frig, 2026).

Theme 3: Credibility and Verification

Young audiences continue to value accuracy, credibility and professional standards in short-form news, but assess them through multiple cues including source identity, expertise, presentation and corroboration (Cheng et al., 2025). TikTok users often combine source-based heuristics with selective verification through comments, prior knowledge and external sources (Anter & Kümpel, 2026). Professional gatekeeping remains associated with news trust (Scheffauer et al., 2024), although credibility varies by source and context (Wölflé & Schmuck, 2025). Nigerian studies similarly identify credibility, misinformation and media literacy as major concerns in social-media news consumption (Oladokun et al., 2022; Aondover et al., 2024; Usman et al., 2022).

Theme 4: Algorithmic Gatekeeping

Recommendation algorithms have become important gatekeepers because they determine whether audiences encounter journalistic content. Evidence suggests that TikTok does not necessarily provide substantial incidental exposure to credible news (Hagar & Diakopoulos, 2025), while recommendation systems may re-direct users towards entertainment (Huang & Yang, 2024). Algorithms also influence production as journalists and citizen creators adapt content to perceived distribution preferences (Al-Rawi, 2024; Peterson-Salahuddin, 2024). Visibility therefore facilitates authority but should not be equated with credibility.

Theme 5: Journalism, Quality and Entertainment

Platform adaptation does not necessarily reduce journalistic quality (Degen et al., 2024; Anter, 2024). Entertainment can enhance accessibility when combined with informative storytelling, as demonstrated in platform-native news practices (Wirz & Zaib, 2025), Chinese Douyin journalism (Zhao & Ye, 2025), and edutainment strategies (Bolz, 2023). Nevertheless, excessive brevity, humour, personalisation, emotionalisation and commercialisation may weaken context, independence and verification. Newsrooms must therefore balance platform appeal with journalistic accountability.

Theme 6: Research Gaps

Research remains concentrated in Europe, North America and China, with limited evidence from sub-Saharan Africa. Nigerian scholarship has examined social-media news credibility, misinformation and media literacy (Aondover et al., 2024; Oladokun et al., 2022; Usman et al., 2022), but little is known about Nigerian TikTok journalism, creator credibility, algorithmic exposure, monetisation, multilingual news practices and personality-led reporting. Methodologically, future research should integrate content analysis, platform data, audience experiments or diaries, and interviews to connect journalistic production, algorithmic distribution and audience credibility judgements.

Discussion

Taken together, the literature suggests that journalistic authority on TikTok is neither disappearing nor simply migrating intact from legacy media. It is being reconstructed. Traditional authority relied heavily on institutional reputation, editorial routines, professional identity, and stable distribution channels. Platformed authority adds new requirements: the journalist or creator must be recognisable and relatable; the content must fit platform vernaculars; the recommendation system must surface the content; and the audience must be able to connect the post to credible evidence or a trustworthy source.

This reconstruction explains apparently contradictory findings in the literature. Platform-native personality can increase attention and perceived closeness, yet social-media personalities are not

automatically more trusted than legacy media or ordinary users (Wölflé & Schmuck, 2025). Entertainment can make news more engaging without necessarily destroying quality, yet algorithmic entertainment incentives can also pull users away from news (Degen et al., 2024; Huang & Yang, 2024). Journalists can gain autonomy on TikTok while becoming more dependent on opaque platform logics (Verstappen & Opgenhaffen, 2025). These are not anomalies. They reflect a hybrid media environment in which professional authority and platform power are interdependent. Table 1: Platformed Journalistic Authority Framework: Constructs, Relationships and Indicators outlines how epistemic signals, relational authenticity, platform congruence, and distributional gatekeeping shape journalistic authority, with audience conditions moderating these relationships and guiding empirical assessment of credibility formation.

Table 2 | Platformed Journalistic Authority Framework: Constructs, Relationships and Indicators

Construct	Conceptual Definition	Theoretical Role / Relationship	Observable Indicators
Epistemic Signals	Credibility cues showing accuracy, expertise, evidence, and reliability of journalistic claims.	Establishes why information should be believed and positively shapes journalistic authority.	Evidence use, source transparency, verification, fact-checking, expertise.
Relational Authenticity	Perceived honesty, transparency, sincerity, and connection between journalists and audiences.	Explains why audiences trust and engage with communicators, strengthening credibility.	Honesty, openness, responsiveness, consistency, audience connection.
Platform Congruence	Alignment between journalistic content and platform norms, formats, and interaction practices.	Explains how platform suitability enhances message relevance, attention, and legitimacy.	Format fit, platform adaptation, interaction style, accessibility, engagement.
Distributional Gatekeeping	Processes through which platforms, algorithms, and networks influence content visibility and exposure.	Determines how audiences encounter journalistic messages and shapes opportunities for authority formation.	Algorithmic ranking, recommendations, network diffusion, amplification.
Audience Conditions (Moderator)	Audience characteristics that influence interpretation of credibility signals.	Strengthens or weakens the effects of authority dimensions on perceived credibility.	Media literacy, prior beliefs, political identity, trust disposition, information needs.
Platformed Journalistic Authority (Outcome)	Perceived credibility, legitimacy, and influence of journalism in digital environments.	Represents the combined outcome of epistemic, relational, platform, and distributional mechanisms.	Trust, acceptance, engagement, sharing, reliance on journalistic content.

The framework also clarifies a crucial distinction between credibility and popularity. Social metrics can function as heuristics, but reach, virality, or follower count cannot substitute for verification. The central normative challenge for journalism is therefore to build platform-native forms that preserve traceable evidence. A creator-style presenter can remain journalistic when sourcing, correction, context, independence, and accountability remain visible. Conversely, a polished institutional account can undermine trust if its content is decontextualised, opaque, or perceived as excessively promotional.

From an audience perspective, the evidence supports designing credibility for verification rather than assuming trust. Anter and Kümpel's (2026) findings suggest that young users often verify selectively, particularly when content is consequential or suspicious. Newsrooms can reduce verification costs by making source attribution, evidence links, reporter identity, update status, and correction information easy to locate. TikTok's technical frictions complicate some of these practices (Shaw, 2025), which strengthens the case for standardised visual attribution and cross-platform provenance rather than reliance on hyperlinks alone.

Theoretical Implications

The review has three theoretical implications for Mass Communication research. First, credibility research should move beyond a source-message-medium separation when studying algorithmic social video. On TikTok, source, message, medium, and distribution are experienced simultaneously. The reporter's persona is

part of the message; the platform's interface shapes source recognition; and algorithmic ranking shapes the sequence and context in which credibility cues appear.

Second, gatekeeping should be analysed as a layered process. Professional gatekeeping remains relevant to trust (Scheffauer et al., 2024), but it now coexists with creator gatekeeping, audience recirculation, and algorithmic ranking. This layered structure means that institutional editorial control no longer guarantees either visibility or interpretive dominance.

Third, authenticity should not be treated as the opposite of professionalism. The emerging evidence instead suggests that authenticity is a relational resource whose journalistic value depends on epistemic anchoring. Personal voice, humour, backstage access, and responsiveness can strengthen connection, but their credibility effect is conditional on evidence, transparency, and role clarity. The proposed framework therefore treats authenticity as complementary to professional authority when it remains accountable, and as a credibility risk when commercial or performative incentives obscure evidentiary standards.

Implications for Newsrooms and Journalism Education

For news organisations, the strongest implication is that short-form video should not be managed as a promotional afterthought. Platform-native news requires dedicated editorial judgment, format expertise, verification routines, and clear accountability. Newsrooms should identify which conventions can be adopted

without compromising evidence: direct-to-camera explanation, concise visual storytelling, conversational language, on-screen sourcing, and audience interaction can coexist with rigorous journalism.

Newsrooms should also make journalistic process visible. Meta-journalistic explanation—showing how a story was verified, why a source was used, what remains uncertain, or how a correction was made—can convert the personal visibility of the journalist into evidence of accountability (Al-Rawi, 2024; Bolz, 2023). This is especially useful in environments where users encounter news incidentally and may not recognise the institutional brand.

Journalism education should expand credibility training beyond writing accuracy. Students need competence in vertical-video storytelling, visual verification, transparent sourcing, platform analytics, creator ethics, conflict-of-interest disclosure, and algorithmic literacy. They should learn that virality is an editorial condition but not an editorial value. The professional goal is not to reject platform vernaculars but to use them without surrendering verification, context, fairness, and independence.

Media literacy interventions should likewise reflect actual audience behaviour. Rather than expecting users to perform lengthy external fact-checking for every post, literacy education can teach scalable routines: identify the original source; distinguish reporting from commentary; inspect evidence; look for corroboration; check whether a clip is current and contextualised; and recognise when popularity metrics are being mistaken for reliability. Nigerian evidence already shows the practical relevance of literacy to misinformation response (Usman et al., 2022).

A Research Agenda for Nigeria and the Global South

The Nigerian context offers a particularly important site for extending the literature. Existing studies establish that social media is a significant news environment and that credibility and literacy vary across users (Aondover et al., 2024; Oladokun et al., 2022). What is missing is a platform-specific account of how authority is negotiated in short-form video journalism.

A first priority is comparative credibility research that experimentally varies communicator identity: legacy newsroom, named professional journalist, independent news creator, citizen journalist, and anonymous account. Such studies should measure not only credibility but also verification intention, willingness to share, perceived bias, and recognition of sponsorship or opinion. A second priority is observational research on Nigerian journalists and news creators using TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts, with attention to English, Nigerian Pidgin, Hausa, Tiv, Yoruba, Igbo, and other linguistic practices. Language may influence both authenticity and perceived authority in ways that are poorly captured by Western samples.

A third priority is algorithmic and exposure research. Scholars should investigate what types of Nigerian public-affairs content are recommended to new or low-information users, whether entertainment pathways reduce news exposure, and how political or crisis content is ranked. A fourth priority is newsroom ethnography examining how Nigerian editors negotiate speed, verification, platform trends, monetisation, limited resources, and pressure to grow audiences.

Finally, future work should use mixed designs capable of connecting content, exposure, and interpretation. A robust programme could combine API or screen-capture data, content coding, diary methods, controlled experiments, and interviews. Such designs would allow scholars to distinguish what journalists publish, what algorithms show, what audiences notice, what they believe and what they verify. This sequence is essential for

explaining platformed authority rather than measuring only one stage of the process.

Limitations

This review has limitations. It is an integrative rather than exhaustive systematic review and did not rely on a single exportable bibliographic database. Although included references were checked against available publisher, journal, indexing, and institutional records, a verification log was maintained to document the source used for confirming bibliographic details. References with incomplete DOI information or advance online publication status require further confirmation during the proof stage to ensure that final volume, issue, and pagination details are accurately reported. Despite these procedures, relevant studies indexed in less visible regional databases may have been missed. Furthermore, the restriction to English-language peer-reviewed journal articles may underrepresent scholarship published in other languages and contexts.

Second, the corpus is strongly TikTok-centred. This focus is analytically useful but limits generalisation to Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, Snapchat, or future short-form platforms with different affordances and recommendation systems. Third, the studies are methodologically heterogeneous, which makes statistical meta-analysis inappropriate. Fourth, publication lags mean that studies appearing in 2025 may analyse platform data collected several years earlier; platform features and algorithms can change faster than academic publishing cycles.

These limitations strengthen rather than weaken the central conclusion that platform effects should be treated as contingent. Future reviews can build on this synthesis using database-specific systematic protocols, multilingual searches, formal quality appraisal tools, and separate meta-analyses where comparable outcome measures become available.

Conclusion

Short-form social video is not merely another channel through which journalism travels. It reorganises the conditions under which journalism becomes visible, recognisable, credible, and useful. The recent literature shows that newsrooms and journalists are learning to work within platform-native forms, audiences continue to value accuracy and authority, and creators can build relational trust through personal and interactive communication. At the same time, platform algorithms shape exposure, entertainment incentives compete with civic information, and the boundaries among journalist, influencer, commentator, and citizen reporter are increasingly porous.

The review's central argument is that contemporary journalistic authority is platformed. Credibility depends on the interaction of epistemic signals, relational authenticity, platform congruence, distributional gatekeeping, and audience conditions. None of these dimensions is sufficient alone. Accuracy without visibility may have little public effect; visibility without verification can magnify misinformation; authenticity without accountability can become persuasion; and institutional reputation without platform adaptation can fail to reach younger audiences.

For Mass Communication scholarship, the next stage is to move from asking whether social video is replacing journalism to examining what kinds of journalism become authoritative within social-video environments and for whom. Nigeria provides an important setting for that work. Locally grounded research can test whether the credibility dynamics identified internationally hold in a multilingual, mobile-first, politically vibrant media environment and can contribute theory from the Global South rather than merely applying models developed elsewhere.

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