

# Mobile News Engagement in a South Asian Context: Roles of Demographics, Motivations, and News Type Preferences in News Exposure and Participation in Bangladesh

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**Abstract:** *This study examines mobile news engagement—conceptualized as news exposure and participation—in the context of South Asia which has experienced tremendous growth in mobile-Internet users without receiving much attention from communication scholars. Along with demographic characteristics, this research incorporates motivational factors (grounded on uses and gratifications—U&G—approach) and news type preferences to explore their roles in mobile news engagement among urban citizens in Bangladesh. Results of a self-administered survey (N = 504) revealed that participants’ mobile news engagement partially varied depending on their demographic differences, particularly gender, age, and education. Our study also unveiled that individuals’ motivation for sharing information seemed to be a strong predictor of mobile news exposure and participation. In addition, Bangladeshi respondents were more likely to be interested in the hard news in terms of expressing views on news comments and sharing news via mobile platform. Conversely, preference for soft type news had a significant influence on news exposure through mobile browsing. This study provides insights into the understanding of global phenomena of mobile news engagement by unpacking the case of Bangladesh where mobile news usage seems to be an evolving state.*

**Keywords:** Mobile News Engagement, Uses and Gratifications, Motivations, News Type Preference, Bangladesh

## 1. Introduction

Mobile device (e.g., smartphone, tablet, e-reader, and etc.) plays a facilitating role in users’ engagement in news contents [1,2]. It offers technology-related utilities of device portability, immediate accessibility, content multiplicity, and better interactivity, among many others [3]. Mobile device has also spurred users’ access to up-to-date news and information [4-6]. It allows recurrent access to diversified content. Unlike traditional media consumers, mobile news users (who access news via mobile device) could share news articles with other online members, partake in news discussions in online forums, and give views to news media’s websites or social media pages. Taken together, mobile device creates new scopes for users’ engagement in digital news contents which is under studied in many parts of the world.

Given the potential usage of mobile interface, mobile-Internet connectivity has shown considerable growth across the globe with 56% to East Asian and Pacific, and 33% to South Asia compared to 68% and 53% to Europe and Latin America respectively [7]. With the emerging global trend of mobile news, many studies focused on exploring the news usage via mobile interface [3, 4, 6, 8], which mostly reflected the context of developed countries. However, studies are limited to understand people’s news engagement on mobile platform in the context of the global South specifically in developing countries. One indispensable question of how socio-economic differences in a developing country would explain participants’ news engagement. Relied on a

Western data, researchers claimed that digital media somewhat helps to lessen the gender gap in news participation as women are more likely to be active in news commenting and news sharing via social media [9]. Do that findings generalize the context of a global South, particularly in a developing country? Given that, scholars have urged for more empirical evidence on mobile news use among diverse groups, communities, people, and places [10]. In this vein, Bangladesh remains a unique case to be explored the state of mobile news engagement in the South Asian context.

Meanwhile, when studying news use behavior (e.g., commenting, sharing), researchers typically address it from a bottom-up approach. This process is explained as audience engagement which is likely driven by a diverse range of motivations [9, 12]. Media scholars have observed that individuals' motivations are likely to be prominent driving forces for news use on digital platforms [13-15]. Accordingly, some studies employed U&G approach to examine the motivations for mobile news use, but mostly focused on consumption behavior [2, 6, 8, 16]. Studies are limited to understand users' motivations for mobile news engagement particularly for both news exposure and participation. Besides, as news use on mobile device is still evolving in Bangladesh, it seems imperative to understand how individuals' motivations might account for mobile news engagement. Studying uses and gratifications (U&G) for mobile news engagement among Bangladeshi citizens will help to overcome the Western bias by expanding the generalization of the U&G on a global context.

Beyond the motivational aspect, researchers observed that people's news engagement might also be affected by external media factors. At this, users' news interest would be an important consideration in digital media news platform [3, 9]. In mobile media environment, people find opportunities to get a wide variety of news stories including politics, business, fashion, feature, etc. through regular mobile news usage. But people's interest in different news topics is unlikely the same [17, 18]. It might be varied from political hard news to entertainment issues. Consequently, users' participation in news is also varied by their preferences to a particular news type. Previous studies demonstrate that users mostly post comments on news topics related to politics or domestic policies, and controversial elements [18, 19]. Some researchers [3] found evidence of the significant influence of individuals' preferences to some news issues (e.g., sports, technology) on mobile news usage. Another study demonstrated that mobile platform more likely to deliver "sensational, breaking, and entertainment-oriented news" (p.1106) instead of public affairs issues (e.g., politics, social issues, health, education, economy, business etc.) in the U.S. context [20]. However, the question of how users' preferences to different news types would predict mobile news engagement is yet to be explored.

Against the backdrop, this study draws attention to explores how mobile news engagement is differed depending on respondents' socio-economic differences in the context of Bangladesh. Using mobile devices for news engagement seems to be a global phenomenon. News users across the globe come across a variety of issues and involve in news content through interactive features of online social media and news websites afforded by mobile technologies. Specifically, it looks at what motivations lie behind mobile news exposure and participation among urban citizen in a developing country. Further, this research also examines how mobile news users' preferences to news types likely exert influence on mobile news engagement.

The empirical evidence of participants' motivations for news exposure and participation on mobile interface in the context of global south will contribute theoretical insights into the U&G approach by two ways. First, U&G approach could be generalized beyond Western data. Second, the literature of U&G will largely be extended by underlying the application of motivational factors into the news engagement on mobile interface. Practically, the findings contribute to developing our understanding of audience members' relations with the mobile news. It will add value to the Bangladeshi media environment by showing potentialities of how mobile news users are staying well-informed about the internal and external affairs of the state and propagating views through news engagement. This process would lead people to be aware of public issues, become responsible citizens, and safeguard their citizen rights. Thereby, the current research contributes to filling the gap of literature in communication scholarship by putting mobile news engagement into a South Asian context.

## **2. Literature Review and Research Questions**

### **2.1 Mobile news engagement**

The engagement has been explained as a multifaceted concept [21]. It includes behavioral (action), emotional (feelings), and cognitive (thoughts) aspects in relation to audience engagement with news content [22]. Shao [23] identified three ways of individuals' involvement in news contents; "consumption" (e.g.,

watching, viewing, listening), “participation” (e.g., commenting, sharing, liking), and “production” (e.g., uploading video/audio/image). In terms of examining audience engagement with social media (e.g., YouTube), one study [15] unpacks two dimensions; “passive consumption” (viewing, reading comments) and “active participation” (commenting, sharing, etc.). Similarly, from online news use perspective, the nature of engagement might be varied by “silent” (e.g., news browsing, checking, monitoring) or “loud” (e.g., contributing, distributing) [24].

News use phenomenon is continually changing in the digital media platform. People nowadays are not just passively exposing news and information, but also becoming active in the dynamic use of news contents [25]. At this, scholars argue that individuals’ news experience has been extensively broadened and strengthened due to the Internet-equipped portable mobile devices. “Parallel to social media, mobile media...also enable users to be engaged with news they consume” (p.7) [2]. Under the banner of “mobile news engagement”, Wei and Lo [2] specified “supportive engagement” indicating how people utilized mobile device for following news media, news blogs, news blogger, and etc. Moreover, it is likely to be easier for mobile news users to be active in news content. Using the mobile interface, people can generate their content, and participate in news sharing and exchanging [1]. However, not enough studies paid attention to explicate how news users engage in news content on mobile platform.

Based on the above discussion, this study borrowed the idea of engagement from Khan’s study [15] and applied it to the current context of mobile news engagement. Accordingly, it suggests two forms of engagement: mobile news exposure (consumption through various channels that was defined as “passive consumption”), and mobile news participation (engagement with news content via commenting and sharing which was described as “active participation”) to gauge mobile news use behaviors.

### 2.1.1 Mobile news exposure

In the contemporary media landscape, mobile news has tremendously shaken the way of exposing journalistic content [6]. It provides a wide range of access to news through mobile applications (e.g., mobile news apps, mobile SNS apps). Through news apps, users can expose to the latest news, multimedia contents including video stories, photo galleries, and so forth without any monetary cost. Similarly, the widespread expansion of the mobile SNS potentially plays a vital role in creating omnipresent scopes for mobile news users. The SNSs are described as third-party platforms where news is distributed from the original (news media) sources (intentional exposure) or shared by other users (incidental exposure). Besides, people could access news via visiting news portals or searching news aggregators (e.g., Yahoo news, Google news), among other online sources on their mobile devices. According to a study report, around 57% of users access news via mobile device in the US whereas the figure stands at 70% and 76% in South Korea and South Africa respectively [26].

### 2.1.2 Mobile news participation

This study underlines user-to-content interactions intending to explore audience members’ participatory news use behaviors. Although the dimensions of participatory news use are wide-ranging, this research focuses on commenting and sharing behaviors which have been distinguished as the most participatory potential for online users’ news engagement in digital media platform [9].

**News Commenting:** Commenting has been observed as the most active form of individuals’ online engagement [15]. It contributes to discursive participation in the digital space [27]. A study shows that above 53 percent of participants are somehow engaged in posting and reading online comments [19]. By posting

comments and replying to others, news users can communicate their opinion, express reactions, know fellow members' views, and overall interact with other participants. Users' engagement in posting comments on online news stories symbolizes the emerging form of the public sphere as coined by Habermas [28]. Accordingly, mobile news users could utilize the digital space of news media by taking part in political talks, sharing information related to public affairs, and exchanging opinions on various socio-political issues. This kind of discursive place offers a greater level of user anonymity and maintains a minimum level of editorial gate-keeping. Individuals entertain a higher level of freedom to generate content which affords equality for expressing views [29]. Subsequently, news users' participation in news comments or discussion is considered as one of the key indicators of news media viability [30]. From the audience side, they "have gained a voice in discussing and commenting on the news" (p.62) [30]. Further, researchers elaborated on the news commenting as "readers' reflection and feedback on the news events and news reports" (p.77) [28].

**News Sharing:** News sharing is defined as "the act of distributing a specific kind of content" (p.2) [31]. Using a mobile interface, people could easily forward journalistic content to others by recommending or posting the news links from a variety of sources. Online users can share news stories privately (e.g., e-mail, message) or publicly (e.g., Facebook feeds). According to a report, about 46% of US adults get news from social media sources whereas 37% of online users share news through email, messaging, or social media [26]. Researchers have addressed the process of sharing activities as a "bottom-up" approach which deals with the ways of users' engagement [32]. Scholars also argue that the act of content sharing online is not only a matter of exchanging information with others, rather it seems to be the audience's "self-publication" too. Through the process of sharing, people in fact convey something (e.g., idea, opinion, concern) about themselves (p.922) [32].

## 2.2 Mobile News engagement: The Context of Bangladesh

A large percentage of the population in Bangladesh is still outside of the Internet connectivity. However, an extensive number of above 94 million people use mobile-Internet [33] which is near to double the total population size (50 million) of the world's most digitized country—South Korea. Approximately 92 percent of online users get Internet access through mobile phones. Bangladesh has introduced fourth-generation (4G) data service while people are enjoying a cheaper rate (1 gigabyte = US \$0.99 compared to \$8.53 in the US) of mobile data as shown in worldwide mobile data pricing 2018.

One turning point is that people have overwhelmingly moved to use mobile data services [34]. Given the spiraling of mobile data over the voice service, mobile-Internet might lead to bringing changes in people's traditional media usage patterns including reading newspapers, searching for information, and watching television. Taken together, the country has experienced rapid growth in mobile-Internet which seems to be a catalyst towards growing access to digital content. According to a study report, mobile device is shown as the prime gateway for news exposure among Bangladeshi youths [35]. Another research also traced the usage of mobile devices stating that 44.5 percent of respondents use mobile interface for getting update news, while 26.8 percent for reading newspapers [36]. While mobile-Internet gained much popularity as many people are thriving toward adopting digital technologies like mobile devices for accessing journalistic content, research on the exploration of mobile users' news use behaviors and their predictive factors is much warranted.

### 2.2.1 Demographic Differences

Socioeconomic indicators (e.g., gender, age, education, income) are likely vital considerations for explaining variances in mobile news use [3, 8]. Westlund [37] reports gender-based inequalities by mentioning

that men are early adopters of mobile news. Subsequently, past studies pointed out the role of gender in users' online news participation. But the findings seem to be contradictory. Some researchers find gender and age as less significant factor for explaining news engagement like news sharing [32]. On the contrary, someone indicates the important role of women against the long-standing gender inequalities in news participation like commenting and sharing via social media [9]. Age seems to be the most consistent demographic predictor for news use via digital media platform. One study reveals that people aged between 15 and 49 frequently use news through online media [37]. Chan also reports that people aged from 18 to 34, and 35 to 54 mostly use multiplatform news media on mobile news environment [8]. Besides, higher level of education seems to lead the uses of mobile device [37]. Simultaneously, the consumption of hard news on mobile device is found to be significantly predicted by participants' education [8]. Moreover, the level of income also strongly predicted the adoption of digital technology such as personal computer [38]. Even though the above evidences help us to understand demographic relations with the news use behaviors on digital media, the literature is mostly based on Western context or developed countries. Not enough focus has drawn to the global south to realize how people's socioeconomic varieties in a developing country account for their news engagement. To that end, this research deals with the participants of Bangladesh which is belonged to one of the world's most populous countries with a growing economy [11].

There is a wide gender gap in terms of using mobile-Internet in the country. One recent study unveils that around 13 percent of women use mobile-Internet compared to their male counterparts at 30 percent [39]. The rate of mobile-Internet using among adult men is two times higher than that of women. The report published by GSMA (Global System for Mobile Communications) mentioned that some 58% of females possess mobile ownership while it goes to 86% for male counterparts prevailing a huge gender gap. Bangladesh have a fairly large percentage of the young population. According to a statistic, more than 54% of the country's population is between 15 and 49 years while around 30% of the total population is under 15 years old [40]. In addition, the case of adult literacy rate (72.9%) is still very low in the country [40]. Nonetheless, the scenario of tertiary education (University level) system shows a huge turnout. The 2016 annual report of the University Grants Commission (UGC) reveals that more than three million students are pursuing higher education in the country [41]. Furthermore, Bangladesh have turned from a low-income country (LIC) to a lower-middle-income country (LMIC) in 2015. Per capita income of GDP is US\$1602 [11]. Taking the ground realities into consideration, it looks necessary to investigate the extent of how demographic factors explain the variance in the current setting of mobile news engagement. We, therefore, propose the following research question:

**RQ1:** Are there any differences among demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age categories, level of education, and household income) in explaining individuals' news exposure and news participation on mobile interface?

### 2.3 Gratification Seeking Motivations

Media scholars typically observe users' motivations under the U&G approach considering its ability to investigate user's cognitive needs for media usage [42]. U&G postulates the goal-directed and purposive behaviors of media consumers. It suggests that audience members actively use media to gratify their particular needs. To identify why and how individuals actively select a certain type of media and gratify their needs, Katz and his colleagues proposed some social and psychological motivations [43].

Researchers have extended U&G approach to the digital media and examined users' discrete motivations for multidimensional news use via various online platforms [13, 14, 28, 44]. Researchers show that online *news*

*seeking* motive has a significant relationship (both direct and indirect) with news posting via SNS [45], and mobile news use [6]. Similarly, people's *social connection* motivation is found as the most powerful predictor for posting comments on the news, which is shared on the social media platform [28]. *Social interaction* or *socializing* is also strongly associated with commenting and uploading a video on YouTube [15], and news sharing intention through social media [14]. *Passing time* is pointed to the best-fit motivation for the usage of online (social) media. Researchers have also applied *passing time* motivation to understand its relation with news sharing intention [44], and posting comments on the news [28]. One study reveals a strong and significant connection of *passing time* with mobile (both hard and soft) news consumption [8].

Meanwhile, researchers claimed that individuals' motivations for news use in the digital platform tend to be more diverse than at any time before [15, 44]. Online media offers interactive features allowing its users to produce their own content and share those with others. People could gratify their information-sharing motivation through sharing or posting a news link and posting comments. Accordingly, researchers incorporated *informing* or *information sharing* motive among others to the U&G approach in explicating users' motivations for news engagement in the new media environment [28, 44].

Taking previous literature into consideration, this study considers *seeking information*, *socializing*, *passing time*, and *sharing information* as the most consistent factors for explaining individuals' motivations behind news use behaviors in digital media environment. However, not enough studies paid attention to look at how people's motivations explain for news engagement in the mobile media environment. Subsequently, news engagement via mobile interface is a new experience for online users particularly in a developing country like Bangladesh. While U&G is thought to be a dominant approach to address individuals' motivations behind the usage of a particular media or their contents [28, 44, 46], this study focuses on examining mobile news engagement which is a new phenomenon with an evolving media platform, but not known much about, in the context of Bangladesh. We, therefore, propose the following research question:

**RQ2.** How are four different types of motivations—*passing time*, *seeking information*, *sharing information*, and *socializing*—related to news exposure and news participation on mobile interface?

#### 2.4 News Type Preferences

While the news is found to be a key stimulation to discursive participation, but the news exposure in the age of mobile media has become more diverse; from intentional to incidental exposure. Without pre-intention, people encounter a wide range of journalistic content incidentally by their regular social media browsing on a mobile platform [47]. Despite the fact, individuals' news choices are unlikely the same to all news topics that vary from public affairs to non-public issues. Researchers illustrate that some news stories are most viewed or read, some are most recommended, and some are most emailed [48]. Previous studies unveiled that individuals maintain a greater level of interest in certain topics. On the contrary, some news stories are likely less interested [17, 18]. Consequently, different news items might have dissimilar stimulation on shaping users' cognitive effort toward news engagement.

Generally, researchers showed various types of the news and underlined "hard news" and "soft news" as two broad types of news [49]. Hard news is subject to immediate dissemination, explanation, and substantive importance. Shoemaker and Cohen [50 (cited in 51)] explained hard news as an urgent occurrence that should be reported right after the incident happens. These events are fresh. Hard news would include burning topics such as politics, economics, judicial, social, and so forth. On the other hand, soft news is defined as "nonscheduled events". This type of news has no schedule for journalists to publish or telecast. Soft news items

typically do not run on timeliness. It includes entertainment items, including arts and literature, documentaries, feature magazines, lifestyles, and etc. Curran and his co-authors [52] identified some news items related to politics, economy, science, government, technology as hard news. Conversely, news items related to human interest, sports, entertainment, celebrities were included under the soft news umbrella.

Meanwhile, the literature on news type preferences indicates two contradictory trends [53]. On one hand, researchers observed that news users ranked public affairs (hard news) issues higher than non-public (entertainment) news stories [54]. In contrast, some studies also suggested that news users' interest in soft genres (non-public contents) was greater than public stories. For instance, news users showed a higher interest in disaster items ("reports about catastrophes, man-made, or natural") compared to political or conflict stories [17]. Given that the individuals' news type preferences are likely dissimilar and studies are limited to understand how different types of news preferences likely predict diversified types of mobile news engagement, we propose the third research question:

**RQ3.** How do individuals' news type preferences to soft news and hard news respectively predict news exposure and news participation on mobile interface?

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Participants

This study interviewed a total of 504 participants who use the Internet on mobile device. We used a self-administered survey questionnaire to collect data over the period from March to April 2019. It targeted Bangladeshi citizens living in the capital city of Dhaka and its surrounding areas (e.g., Tungi, Savar, Keraniganj, Gabtoli, Ashulia). Around 36 percent of the country's urban population resides in greater Dhaka [55]. Here, people from all corners of the country can be reached.

The study relies on convenience sampling considering its benefits to explore a new setting [56]. Even though Bangladesh has experienced a digital transformation with an increasing rise of the Internet and social media users, but the practices of conducting online surveys are yet to be flourished. Therefore, it was realistic to get our subjects for an interview directly. A team of six members was formed for data collection. The team was comprised of both male and female members for convenient access to participants. Team members were selected based on their prior experience in research work. Each of the data collectors interviewed eight to 10 respondents per day. To ensure demographic diversity in the sampling, data collectors met participants in different public places of the city including university dormitories, government/non-government offices, religious spaces (e.g., Mosque), public gathering areas (parks, busy streets, playgrounds, shopping malls), police stations, hospitals, courts, grocery shops, among many others. Data collectors visited different parts of Dhaka city and requested potential participants to take part in the survey. Simultaneously, this study attempted to include respondents from different socio-economic, educational, religious, ethnic, and professional backgrounds in the sample.

The demographic variables are comprised of gender (female, 39.5%; male, 60.5%), age ( $M = 30.25$  years), education ( $M = 2.25$  whereas 1 with a range of "higher secondary/equivalent or below"; 2, "bachelor/equivalent or below"; 3, "masters/equivalent or above"), and monthly household income ( $M = 3.14$ , whereas 1 with a range of "US\$0—\$250"; 2, "US\$250—\$500"; 3, "US\$500—\$750"; 4, "US\$750—\$1,000"; and 5, over US\$1,000). The highest and the lowest age of the participants were 62 and 18 respectively. There is a variety of education system in Bangladesh. The mainstream education system encompasses four stages, including primary school, secondary school, higher secondary/college, and University level. Along with this, the country has also

Madrasah education (two main divisions such as Alia Madrasah and Kawmi Madrasah), English medium education, Technical and vocational education, and a non-formal education system. Given that, this study categorized the level of education into three broad groups, such as higher secondary or below, bachelor, and masters or above. Participants whose educational qualifications recognized as similar to the mainstream ones were re-coded into the same group by terming “equivalent.”

### 3.2 Measurement

**Mobile news engagement:** This study measured news engagement by identifying mobile users’ news exposure and their participation in news content on mobile interface. For news exposure, the respondents were asked to confirm the frequency of accessing news from different media channels through mobile devices. To identify participatory mobile news engagement, participants were asked to mention the extent they involve in the news content on their mobile device in a typical week. A seven-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = never to 7 = always) was used to gauge participants’ responses. Five items for news exposure and eight items for news participation were employed, respectively. The items were adapted from previous studies [9, 28, 57] and modified to the context of the current research.

This study applied exploratory factor analysis via SPSS statistical software program. The results of the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with a varimax rotation produced four clusters with eigenvalues above 1.00 which explained 41.84% of the variance. All items had a loading of greater than .60. One item (mobile news use via mobile application) was dropped due to the low loading in PCA analysis. The extracted components are SNS news exposure ( $M = 5.36$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .83$ ), mobile news browsing ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 1.87$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .74$ ), news commenting ( $M = 2.35$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .86$ ), and news sharing ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .86$ ). While former two factors belong to news exposure and the latter two components fit to news participation.

**Individuals’ motivations:** This study employed 15 survey items related to gratification seeking motivations. The survey items were adapted from previous research [13-15] [44] and modified to the context of this study. A seven point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree, was used to identify participants’ motives for news engagement on mobile interface. Based on exploratory factor analysis (conducted via PCA analysis), we found four clusters (with the eigenvalues above 1.00, which explained 35.56% of the variance), such as *time passing* ( $M = 4.87$ ,  $SD = 1.93$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .93$ ), *seeking information* ( $M = 6.29$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .80$ ), *sharing information* ( $M = 6.03$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .84$ ), and *socializing* ( $M = 5.92$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .83$ ).

**News type preferences:** This variable is typified as *soft news* and *hard news* following the formula of previous studies [8, 9]. Respondents were asked to assess the degree (on a seven point Likert-type scale ranging 1 = extremely unlikely to 7 = extremely likely) of preference to the news topics. Through exploratory factor analysis, two factors were yielded with the eigenvalues above 1.00, which explained 40.04% of the variance. While *soft news* ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 1.80$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .74$ ) includes news stories, such as features/magazine ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 2.02$ ), and documentary ( $M = 3.83$ ,  $SD = 2.03$ ); *hard news* ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .49$ ) comprises of business/economic ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 1.96$ ), and politics ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 2.15$ ).

### 3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

This study employed SPSS-23 statistical program to explore the research questions. First, it explained some descriptive statistics by analyzing the average values of mobile news exposure and participation. Second,



the significance of demographics in relation to the dependent variables were examined by conducting independent-sample *t*-test for gender and one-way ANOVA for age categories, levels of education, and household incomes. Finally, the current study examines the influences of individuals' motivations and news type preferences on mobile news engagement through conducting a series of hierarchical regression analyses. Predicting variables were placed into block 2 and block 3 correspondingly after controlling the demographic characteristics shown in block 1.

#### 4. Results

The results reveal that mobile news users' participation in news content is very low compared to mobile news exposure. Among all types of mobile news use behaviors, news commenting ( $M = 2.35, SD = 1.27$ ) shows the lowest mean value whereas news exposure via mobile SNS ( $M = 5.36, SD = 1.45$ ) goes to top.

**RQ1** looks at the differences among demographic characteristics in terms of explaining mobile news engagement. Based on *t*-test results, gender (0 = Female, 1 = Male) is seen as a statistically significant for mobile SNS news ( $t = -2.62, df = 396.82, p < .01$ ) and mobile news browsing ( $t = -3.64, df = 428.14, p < .001$ ). According to ANOVA outputs, participants' mobile SNS news exposure ( $F = 2.57, df = 5, p < .05$ ), and mobile news sharing ( $F = 2.47, df = 5, p < .05$ ) are likely varied depending on their age differences. Similarly, different levels of education also display significant relation with mobile news browsing ( $F = 14.45, df = 2, p < .001$ ), and mobile news sharing ( $F = 10.53, df = 2, p < .001$ ) respectively. Similarly, participants' household income shows a significant association only with mobile SNS news ( $F = 2.45, df = 4, p < .05$ ) exposure (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics and the outputs of *t* test and ANOVA in examining the relations of demographics with mobile news exposure and mobile news participation ( $N = 504$ ).

Demographic characteristics		Mobile news exposure						Mobile news participation					
		Mobile SNS news			Mobile news browsing			Mobile news commenting			Mobile news sharing		
		M	SD	t / F	M	SD	t / F	M	SD	t / F	M	SD	t / F
Gender	Female (0 = female, 1 = male)	5.15	1.52	t = -	3.75	1.82	t = -	<b>2.29</b>	<b>1.27</b>	t = -.81	<b>3.05</b>	<b>1.47</b>	t = -1.39
	Male	5.50	1.39	<b>2.62**</b>	4.36	1.85	<b>3.64***</b>	2.39	1.27		3.24	1.59	
Age	20 years or below	5.19	1.79	F =	3.97	1.57	F = 1.95	2.23	1.27	F = .53	2.63	1.34	<b>F = 2.47*</b>
	21 to 25 years	5.35	1.40	<b>2.57*</b>	4.01	1.73		2.26	1.10		2.99	1.52	
	26 to 30 years	5.49	1.33		4.51	1.96		2.35	1.27		3.27	1.58	
	31 to 35 years	5.64	1.34		4.05	1.98		2.49	1.40		3.34	1.61	
	36 to 40 years	5.30	1.32		4.14	1.82		2.31	1.28		3.23	1.46	
	40 years above	4.85	1.60		3.69	1.93		2.46	1.33		3.43	1.57	
Levels of education	Higher secondary/equivalent or below	5.37	1.48	F = .01	3.33	1.75	<b>F = 14.45***</b>	<b>2.35</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>F = .39</b>	<b>2.72</b>	<b>1.47</b>	<b>F = 10.53***</b>

	Bachelor/equivalent or below	5.36	1.48		4.11	1.79		2.29	1.14		2.99	1.48	
	Masters/equivalent or above	5.35	1.42		4.49	1.86		2.40	1.30		3.48	1.56	
Monthly household income	BDT 0 - 20,000 (US \$0 - \$250)	5.72	1.47	F = 2.45*	4.27	2.00	F = .54	2.52	1.55	F = 1.36	2.74	1.76	F = 1.02
	BDT 21,000 - 40,000 (US \$251 - \$500)	5.51	1.34		4.21	1.78		2.49	1.32		3.18	1.47	
	BDT 41,000 - 60,000 (US \$501 - \$750)	5.17	1.52		4.13	1.89		2.28	1.16		3.23	1.46	
	BDT 61,000 - 80,000 (US \$751 - \$1,000)	5.46	1.29		3.89	1.84		2.36	1.26		3.15	1.57	
	Above BDT 80,000 (US \$1,000 above)	5.12	1.60		4.15	1.93		2.16	1.17		3.26	1.61	

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; and \*\*\* $p < .001$

**RQ2** investigates how individuals’ motivations are related to participants’ news exposure and participation on mobile device. The results of the hierarchical regression disclose that motivation for *sharing information* is significantly related to mobile SNS news ( $\beta = .16, p < .01$ ), and mobile news browsing ( $\beta = .18, p < .01$ ). The motivation for *seeking information* is connected with mobile SNS news ( $\beta = .14, p < .01$ ), while *socializing* is strongly associated with mobile news browsing ( $\beta = .15, p < .01$ ). In the case of mobile news participation, motivations for *passing time* ( $\beta = .23, p < .001$ ), and *sharing information* ( $\beta = .20, p < .001$ ) are positively and significantly related to news commenting behavior. Likewise, mobile news sharing is significantly associated with users’ motivations for *passing time* ( $\beta = .23, p < .001$ ), and *sharing information* ( $\beta = .18, p < .01$ ). However, motivation for *seeking information* shows a negative association to mobile news commenting ( $\beta = -.20, p < .001$ ). From the outputs of composite indices, it demonstrates that the motivation for sharing information is a dominant factor in terms of predicting both dimensions of mobile news engagement; news exposure ( $\beta = .21, p < .001$ ), and news participation ( $\beta = .22, p < .001$ ).

**Table 2.** Hierarchical regression analysis of predicting the role of individuals’ motivations and news preferences in news exposure and news participation on mobile interface (N = 504).

Predictors	Mobile news exposure					
	Mobile SNS news		Mobile news browsing		Composite index	
	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	T
Block-1: Control variables						
Gender	.13**	2.80	.16***	3.60	.18***	4.02
Age	-.05	-1.14	-.07	-1.67	-.08	-1.77
Education	.02	.38	.25***	5.64	.18***	4.08
Household income	-.10*	-2.11	-.09*	-2.07	-.12*	-2.58
R <sup>2</sup>	.03**		.09***		.07***	
Block-2: Motivation						

Passing time	-.06	-1.21	.01	.26	-.02	-.50
Seeking information	.14**	2.62	.03	.53	.10	1.85
Sharing information	.16**	2.86	.18**	3.35	.21***	3.97
Socializing	.07	1.48	.15**	3.32	.14**	3.16
$R^2$	.11***		.17***		.19***	
Block-3: News type preference						
Soft news	-.04	-.89	.21***	4.74	.12**	2.77
Hard news	.04	.81	.04	.91	.05	1.09
$R^2$	.11		.21***		.20*	
Mobile news participation						
Predictors	Mobile news commenting		Mobile news sharing		Composite index	
	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	T
Block-1: Control variables						
Gender (0 = female, 1= male)	.02	.50	.03	.70	.03	.69
Age	.06	1.32	.11*	2.39	.10*	2.17
Education	.04	.96	.19***	4.14	.14**	3.07
Household income	-.11*	-2.42	-.01	-.21	-.064	-1.38
$R^2$	.02		.05***		.03**	
Block-2: Motivation						
Passing time	.23***	5.05	.23***	5.30	.26***	5.97
Seeking information	-.20***	-3.63	.01	.82	-.09	-1.77
Sharing information	.20***	3.63	.18**	3.39	.22***	4.03
Socializing	.10*	2.16	-.01	-.18	.05	1.03
$R^2$	.11***		.16***		.15***	
Block-3: News type preference						
Soft news	-.03	-.74	.17***	3.87	.09	2.00
Hard news	.18***	3.84	.21***	4.73	.22***	4.98
$R^2$	.14**		.22***		.20***	

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; and \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**RQ3** explores how participants' news type preferences predict news exposure and participation on mobile device. According to the outputs of hierarchical regression analyses, mobile news browsing is positively and significantly determined by respondents' news type preference to *soft news* ( $\beta = .21, p < .001$ ). However, there is no significant relationship between news type preference to hard news and mobile news exposure through either mobile SNS or mobile browsing. On the other hand, it is evident that preference to *hard news* significantly predicts news commenting ( $\beta = .18, p < .001$ ), and news sharing ( $\beta = .21, p < .001$ ) behaviors. Subsequently, *soft news* also reveals a positive association with mobile news sharing ( $\beta = .17, p < .001$ ). Importantly, the strength of coefficient of *hard news* preference ( $\beta = .21, p < .001$ ) is higher than that of *soft news* ( $\beta = .17, p < .001$ ) preference in predicting mobile news sharing. The results of composite indices unveil that participants'

news type preference to *hard news* is strongly related to mobile news participation ( $\beta = .22, p < .001$ ) while *soft news* is linked to mobile news exposure ( $\beta = .12, p < .01$ ) (Table 2).

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study is designed to explore the influence of demographic differences, individuals' motivations, and news type preferences on various dimensions of mobile news engagement in the context of a developing country—Bangladesh—placed in the global South. It finds evidence that participants' mobile news engagement is somewhat differed depending on their demographic differences, such as gender, age, and level of education. In specific, there is a significant difference between women and men in terms of news exposure through mobile SNS and mobile browsing. Females compared to their male counterparts are less likely to use news on mobile interface. This finding reiterates the long-standing gender gap in the percentage of mobile internet users in Bangladesh [39]. While Kalogeropoulos et al.'s [9] study shows a striking finding of women's potential participation in news commenting and news sharing through social media in the European context, our study reveals reverse evidence.

Bangladeshi participants belonged to the groups aged 26 to 30, and 31 to 35 are more likely to be engaged in mobile news. The trend of young people's engagement (e.g., news consumption, participation) in online platform is strongly supported by existing literature [58]. While a dominant portion of the country's population is youth [40], it is indicative that youth adults would be proactive toward vibrant uses of mobile devices, so does mobile news. Besides, people with a higher level of education are likely to be active in mobile news sharing and news browsing. It may be explained in two ways. On one hand, handling digital devices (e.g., mobile news) requires some technical skills and the ability to take full advantage of the digital technology that it provides [59]. On the other hand, as our study shows, the higher level of education tends to drive people's motivation for accessing news and to share it with others. Therefore, it is possible to postulate that news engagement on mobile device is still largely reliant on the educated class which would limit the potential scopes of the mobile platform especially in a developing country.

From gratification seeking perspective, the results point out that individuals' motivation for sharing information is strongly connected to mobile news exposure (through mobile SNS and mobile browsing) and mobile news participation (both for news commenting and news sharing), respectively. It suggests that motivation for seeking information and mobile SNS news exposure shows a significant association. The findings of the earlier studies sought surveillance motivation for news use through SNS [13], and mobile media [6, 8] also consistently reflect this point. For example, people could seek and obtain information related to market prices of essential goods, environmental risks, health services, and the like. They could get exposure to the internal and external affairs of the state, political activities, policy matters, governance issues, and so forth. The bottom line is that the ubiquitous accessibility to news and information through mobile device is beneficial for the people to be well-informed about their community and the nation. This process may also lead citizens to be aware of public affairs, make better decisions, and give responses to socio-political activities.

Meanwhile, mobile platform helps to gratify peoples' demand for informing others by participating in news commenting and news sharing. People might process the necessary information on socio-political issues that they intend to share with others. Through news participation, people can exchange viewpoints and come across counter-opinions which reflect the interactivity on the comment section of news media platforms [28]. Our finding is consistent with the existing literature that indicates the positive influence of informing motivation on commenting and sharing in the context of social media and online news [15, 28]. Interestingly, this study demonstrates a strong positive association between the motivation for time passing and mobile news

participation. Previous studies also identified pass time gratification as a strong predictor for news endorsing via SNS [13], sharing content on YouTube [15], and mobile hard news and mobile soft news consumption [8]. With regards to mobile news, it implies that individuals are more likely to engage in news commenting and news sharing when they have nothing better to pass the time. People might spend their leisure time by engaging in posting comments on news and sharing news links. One influential matter that acts behind the finding would be user-generated content (UGC). Getting access to seeing and reading the instant reaction and feedback from various sections of the audience followed by a news upload might be much entertaining among mobile news users. Further, as mobile technology affords user-generated content, people could actively engage in news stories by contributing their own contents.

Interestingly, the relation of users' motivation for seeking information is negatively related to mobile news commenting. This is contradictory to some earlier studies that demonstrate the significant relation of information seeking with participation in social media [15] and news posting on SNS [13]. While some scholars [6] reported the influential role of the information-seeking motivation for predicting almost all types of news use activities, irrespective of the media platforms, our study found an inconsistent result. Against this counter-intuitive finding, it reflects the distinct nature of each of the news engagement behaviors which might even differ from medium to medium. Another interpretation behind the negative relationship may be the low trend of news participation as the majority of the online users is silent and unlikely to be public (by commenting) on online news [24]. Therefore, people's motivation for seeking information is unlikely fit to the commenting behavior. In addition, our study reveals a significant role of socializing motivation in news exposure via mobile browsing. In this sense, users would come across various issues going on with other members of society through mobile news browsing. This, in turn, would prompt mobile news users to fulfill their motivation for social connection. It would help people to feel close to others and strengthen their relational ties with virtual friends [28].

Another significant finding of the current study lies in realizing the role of news type preferences in explicating their relations with mobile news engagement. According to our findings, preference to soft news significantly predicts mobile news exposure through browsing. This finding is indicative of wide-spread accessibility to a variety of soft news items. Mobile users could browse entertainment or celebrity news, human interest news items, lifestyles, feature news, and so forth. As Santana and Dozier's [20] study claims that the mobile news platform mostly provides entertainment-oriented news, our study supports the importance of soft news in explaining mobile news browsing.

In contrast, news type preference to hard news is found to be a strong determinant of both news commenting and news sharing in the mobile context. Even though news preferences to soft news also predicts significantly mobile news sharing, the relational strength of hard news with mobile news sharing is stronger than that of soft news. The results make sense as hard news in many cases provides important information about socio-political and economic affairs including government policies, development projects, migration, foreign remittance, allegation of a financial scam, among many others. People with a higher interest in those public issues would be encouraged for news commenting, and news sharing. Moreover, news content related to politics and conflicts are inherently allied to key arguments and disputes among social groups and mass people [18]. Research also shows evidence that news interest in hard news (such as politics or government-related topics) has a strong influence on news users' commenting and sharing behaviors than that of soft news [9]. Therefore, as far as the preference to hard news fits into news users' everyday lives, the implication of hard news preference would be increasingly significant in news commenting and news sharing.

This exploratory research is limited by some issues. It examined the proposed research questions relied on the data with convenient sampling in the capital Dhaka, even though the researchers attempted to get respondents from diversified demographics. Although the representative sample data through an online survey would provide more actual behaviors of mobile news engagement, this was difficult to implement because of the concern for low turnout in participation. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to a wider population. We also acknowledge the possible validity concerns due to the translated (into the local language from originally prepared in English) version of the survey questionnaire which might negatively affect measurement validity. Meanwhile, the present study unveiled two distinct types of news preferences whereas the factor of hard news preference displays a very low level of internal consistency. Later work would apply an improved version of the questionnaire to measure the factors of news type preferences. Likewise, many more socio-cultural and development-oriented issues should be incorporated to validate the concept of news type preference in such a developing country as Bangladesh. Moreover, the result of this study should be interpreted with due caution as the mean value of news commenting shows very low. Thus, future study should dig deep into the ground realities of socio-political contexts behind individuals' lower level of participation in mobile news.

Despite some limitations, the empirical evidence with a South Asian context contributes to broadening the perspectives of mobile news engagement. From a theoretical viewpoint, understanding motivations for mobile news engagement among citizens in a developing country would help to generalize U&G approach and its applications on a global scale. Likewise, unveiling the relation of news participation with participants' motivations will contribute to enriching the literature of U&G scholarship in the mobile media environment. Practically, this study provides a new perspective on users' relations with mobile news. Even a decade ago, people in Bangladesh mostly depended on traditional media (e.g., printed newspapers, radio, and TV) for news and information. But the considerable growth of mobile-Internet over the recent past opens up a myriad of potentialities; people now have ubiquitous access to digital content on their mobile devices. Nevertheless, this study reveals a gender gap in mobile news exposure, which could limit the potential uses of mobile news. The findings also deliver the significance of Internet-enabled mobile devices for news participation. People can express their views via news commenting that is simultaneously reached to numerous users. Indeed, this is an extensive kind of freedom for common people to express opinions in the digital space [60]. Assuming that the growth of mobile-Internet continues to rise in Bangladesh, the news media organizations of the country should consider the implication of mobile users' news engagement which is seen as a key index of the media viability [30]. Therefore, how to reach mobile news users' productive engagement in news content (e.g., contributing constructive views in news comments) is an essential research agenda in achieving the goal of effective utilization of the emerging mobile platform.

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