



# Factors Influencing Youth Trust In Online Media and Its Implications for Emigration Decision-Making

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## Abstract

The widespread presence of online media platforms has become an integral part of daily life, exerting a significant influence on the decision-making processes of young individuals, particularly concerning emigration decisions. Online media play a pivotal role in informing and shaping patterns of youth emigration, notably in Albania. This study aims to elucidate the factors that influence trust in online information within online media and subsequently impact emigration decisions among young Albanian individuals. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this research seeks to uncover the underlying factors that shape the reception and consideration of online emigration information. Through a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative analysis, insights will be gathered from a diverse sample of young individuals in Albania. Preliminary analysis suggests that various factors, including socioeconomic background, educational attainment, exposure to diverse perspectives, cultural influences, and personal aspirations, may significantly impact young people's perceptions and attitudes toward emigration information encountered online. By exploring these factors, this study endeavors to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved when young individuals navigate online media platforms in the context of emigration decision-making. Ultimately, the findings of this research aim to offer valuable insights into the field, facilitating informed decision-making processes among young individuals considering emigration opportunities.

**Keywords:** *online media, emigration, young Albanians, youth emigration, decision-making processes*

## 1. Introduction

The digital landscape, particularly online media, has emerged as a significant catalyst in the facilitation and promotion of youth emigration. This global phenomenon encompasses the movement of young individuals across borders for multifaceted reasons, including educational pursuits, employment opportunities, and cultural enrichment. The internet, through its various channels, serves as a conduit for disseminating information pertinent to emigration avenues, such as study abroad programs and international internships (Kasperek, 2019). Czaika and Haas (2014) assert the pivotal role of media in raising awareness among young individuals regarding emigration opportunities and subsequently influencing their migration decisions. Through online platforms, youths not only communicate and establish new social networks but also become more inclined towards emigration, bolstered by informed decision-making capabilities. Moreover, online media presents a gateway to diverse employment prospects. By harnessing various internet platforms, young individuals can cultivate essential skills and knowledge pertinent to their future vocations. This newfound proficiency enables connectivity with a global audience, fosters cultural exchange, and enhances adaptability in a globalized workforce environment. In addition, online media platforms furnish youths with resources to navigate challenges inherent in immigration processes, including linguistic barriers and cultural disparities (Gans & Bloch, 2013).

A study conducted by the German Foundation Friedrich Ebert titled “Albanian Youth in 2015” underscores the pervasive desire among young Albanians to emigrate, irrespective of age group or socio-economic status. As reported by Balkan Web (October 25, 2015), a staggering 60% of Albanian youths express a willingness to pursue opportunities abroad, indicative of systemic deficiencies hindering educational, economic, and professional advancement domestically. This aspiration for emigration is further compounded by the pervasive influence of information technology and online media platforms.

Furthermore, online media engenders a sense of global citizenship among young individuals, catalyzing their quest for international experiences, including emigration. Exposure to diverse cultural perspectives and global issues instills in youth a heightened sense of interconnectedness and fosters a predisposition toward seeking opportunities beyond national boundaries. As a result, the pervasive influence of online media in shaping youth migration underscores the need for nuanced exploration and comprehension of its multifaceted impact on decision-making processes. Such insights are paramount in elucidating the intricate interplay between digital environments and migration dynamics, thereby informing policy interventions and fostering informed decision-making among young migrants.

### 1.2 Literature review

Studying factors influencing emigration decision-making among young people exposed to online media involves a multidisciplinary approach, drawing from various fields such as sociology, psychology, communication studies, and migration studies. Central to our inquiry is Social Network Theory, which illuminates the intricate web of social connections that shape individuals' decisions, including their propensity to emigrate. Within the realm of online media, these platforms function as virtual social networks, facilitating the exchange of information, opinions, and experiences among young individuals (Granovetter, 1973). Through the lens of social network theory, it can be probed how these online connections influence perceptions of emigration opportunities and subsequently mold decision-making processes.

Complementary to Social Network Theory is Agenda Setting Theory, which underscores the pervasive influence wielded by media, including online platforms, in shaping public perceptions and agendas. Within the context of emigration, online media coverage plays a pivotal role in shaping attitudes and intentions among young individuals. Studies have scrutinized the impact of online media narratives surrounding emigration-related topics, such as economic opportunities abroad and immigration policies, on the decision-making calculus of young emigrants (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Furthermore, information processing theory offers valuable insights into how individuals navigate and interpret the myriad of information encountered through online media channels. Cognitive factors such as attention, perception, and memory shape the processing of emigration-related information. Research in this domain has explored how young people decipher the accuracy and credibility of online content about emigration, as well as the emotional responses elicited by such information (Johnson-Laird, 1983).

The Theory of Planned Behavior emerges as another pertinent framework, highlighting the pivotal role played by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping individuals' intentions and behaviors. Applied to the context of emigration, this theory provides a lens through which researchers examine the myriad factors driving young people's intentions to emigrate. Central to this inquiry are attitudes towards emigration, social norms within online networks, and perceived barriers and facilitators influencing emigration decisions (Ajzen, 1991).

Cultural identity theory further enriches our understanding by delving into how individuals navigate cultural identities and adapt to new cultural environments. Within the realm of online media, these theories elucidate how young people engage in discussions surrounding cultural identity, diaspora communities, and the experiences of emigrants in destination countries. Such engagements shape perceptions of emigration and acculturation processes among young emigrants (Berry, 2006). Moreover, economic theories such as Human Capital Theory and the New Economics of Labor Migration furnish frameworks for comprehending the economic motivations underlying emigration decisions. Studies in this domain have scrutinized how online media platforms inform young people about economic opportunities abroad, including job prospects, wages, and living standards. These economic considerations significantly influence emigration aspirations and intentions among young individuals (Borjas, 1987).

Risk Perception Theory also offers invaluable insights into how individuals assess and mitigate perceived risks and uncertainties associated with emigration decisions. Within the online media landscape, young people navigate concerns ranging from legal and economic challenges to social and personal adjustments in destination countries. By scrutinizing these risk perceptions,

researchers gain a nuanced understanding of the decision-making calculus of young emigrants (Slovic, 1987).

Online media has emerged as a significant determinant in shaping the migration decisions of youth cohorts. As elucidated by Czaika and Haas (2014), exposure to online media outlets has been associated with heightened propensities for emigration among young demographics, particularly in contexts characterized by stringent immigration policies and constrained legal migration avenues. The authors posit that technological platforms afford young individuals access to information and guidance previously inaccessible, thereby fostering the establishment of social networks and support infrastructure conducive to the migration trajectory.

Further scholarly inquiries, exemplified by Castells and Portes (2014), underscore the instrumental role of social media platforms in fostering a sense of belonging and transnational connectivity among youth populations. Such platforms serve as conduits for accessing pertinent information and resources relevant to the migration process. Correspondingly, Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011) highlight the mobilizing potential inherent in social media, particularly in garnering support for immigration-centric causes and amplifying narratives surrounding immigrant experiences. However, the efficacy of online media in galvanizing youth emigration endeavors is contingent upon multifaceted considerations. Siegel and Hagen-Zanker (2011) note the salience of credibility attributions accorded to online media sources, with discernible disparities in reliance observed between official sources and informal platforms such as social media. Likewise, Gans and Bloch (2013) underscore the pivotal roles played by accessibility and relevance in shaping the effectiveness of online media outlets in furnishing pragmatic guidance on immigration procedures.

## 2. Methodology

The primary methodology employed in this study entailed the quantitative collection of data through the administration of a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 200 young individuals, aged 19–23 years old, affiliated with the University "Aleksander Moisiu" in Durrës, Albania, who had expressed intentions to emigrate in the near future. Out of these participants, 186 provided complete responses, ensuring a robust dataset for analysis. The data collection period spanned from October to December 2023, during which informed consent was obtained from all participants and measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality of their responses (Creswell & Clark 2017).

The main research question of the study is: What are the factors influencing trust in online information within online media that subsequently influence emigration decisions among young Albanian people as they engage with information from online media sources?

Aligned with the framework outlined by Siegel and Hagen-Zanker (2011), the questionnaire was structured around four key domains, each aimed at elucidating a specific aspect of the study:

1. **Reliability and Accuracy of Information:** Participants were queried on their perceptions regarding the reliability and accuracy of information disseminated by online media sources relevant to emigration.
2. **Accessibility and Convenience:** This section aimed to assess participants' perspectives on the accessibility and convenience afforded by online media platforms in accessing emigration-related content.

3. **Relevance to Needs and Interests:** Participants were prompted to reflect on the extent to which online media content aligns with their needs and interests concerning emigration decision-making.
4. **Role of Social Influence and Networks:** This domain sought to elucidate the perceived influence of social networks and peer interactions facilitated by online platforms on participants' inclinations towards emigration.

The resultant dataset, augmented by pertinent literature references, formed the basis for the formulation of the study's conclusions. The findings suggest a nuanced understanding of the interplay between technology and youth emigration decisions. Specifically, the study posits that online media platforms play a transformative role by providing young individuals with comprehensive information regarding immigration policies, opportunities, and destination countries. Furthermore, these platforms serve as conduits for soliciting support and guidance from peers and experts alike. Consistent with the assertions of Siegel and Hagen-Zanker (2011), the reliability and accuracy of information disseminated by online media emerged as pivotal determinants shaping participants' proclivity towards emigration. Similarly, considerations surrounding the accessibility, relevance, and social dynamics of online media content were found to exert a significant influence on the efficacy of social networks in fostering youth emigration.

### 3. Discussions and Results

The data gleaned from the questionnaire revealed notable insights into the preferences and priorities of young Albanian individuals regarding online media platforms and their impact on emigration decisions. The data showed that 36% of young people define the accessibility and convenience of online media platforms as the main criteria. The accessibility and convenience of online media platforms can also determine their influence on immigration decisions. Broussard and Sundar (2020) conducted research that highlighted the significance of accessibility on online media platforms. They found that platforms that are easily accessible, user-friendly, and provide personalized information tend to attract more user engagement. The convenience offered by online media platforms plays a crucial role in the dissemination of information. Studies by Johnson and Kwak (2019) have shown that platforms providing easy access to relevant and reliable information, such as news articles, educational resources, or research documents, attract a wider audience. Easy access and information sharing on online media platforms increase users' ability to stay informed and contribute to the overall convenience and efficiency of the information ecosystem. Online media platforms also serve as spaces for interaction and social connection.

27% of young people believe that the reliability and accuracy of information provided by online media is an important criterion. The information provided by online media on migration opportunities, policies, and destination countries can significantly influence young people's migration decisions. Numerous studies have highlighted the widespread influence of disinformation and fake news on online media. Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral (2018) analyzed the spread of fake news on Twitter and found that fake news spreads faster and reaches more people than real stories, posing a major challenge to the credibility of online media sources. Research has shown that online multimedia platforms, guided by algorithms, contribute to the formation of filter bubbles and echo chambers. Pariser (2011) introduced the concept of a filter bubble,

in which users are exposed only to content that matches their pre-existing beliefs, potentially strengthening disinformation.

23% of young people defined as a criterion the relevance of online media content to the needs and interests of young people: Studies have shown that when platforms are easily accessible and offer a user-friendly interface, they have a greater influence on the decisions of young people about emigration. Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) highlighted the importance of user-friendly designs and personalized information in capturing and retaining the attention of young individuals. The ease of access to relevant content through these platforms may contribute to shaping their perceptions of migration opportunities. Adapting online media content to meet young people's needs and interests has been identified as a crucial factor in influencing their migration decisions. Livingstone, Van Couvering, and Thumim (2008) argued that content meeting the specific needs and interests of young people is more attractive and effective in shaping their perception of migration opportunities. Guess, Nagler, and Tucker (2020) found that recommendations or endorsements from peers or trusted sources can significantly influence young people's considerations of emigration. Social connections and networks play a crucial role in shaping their perceptions and decisions, highlighting the importance of the social influence of online media. 14% of young people defined the role of social influence and networks as another criterion. The role of social influence and networks can also determine the extent of the influence of online media on immigration decisions. If young generations receive recommendations or endorsements from their peers or trusted sources, they may be more likely to consider emigration as an option. The role of social influence and networks has attracted considerable attention in understanding the behavior and decision-making processes of individuals, especially in the context of online media platforms. Research by Cialdini and Goldstein (2004) has highlighted the persuasive influence of social influence, where individuals are more likely to conform to the opinions and behaviors of others, especially those they perceive as trustworthy or similar to themselves. On online media platforms, social influence is manifested through recommendations, approvals, and interactions with colleagues, which can significantly influence decision-making processes and user engagement. Online media platforms provide users with opportunities to connect with and network with others. Research by Watts and Dodds (2007) has demonstrated the power of network effects in promoting information dissemination. Social influencers, individuals with significant online followings and influence, have become prominent figures on online media platforms. A study by Chen and Lin (2019) found that social influencers act as opinion leaders, leveraging their credibility and social capital to shape attitudes, behaviors, and user engagement with online media content. Social influence plays a key role in consumer decision-making. Studies by Lee and Youn (2009) have shown that users are more likely to engage in online shopping and make buying decisions when they perceive positive social influence, such as user reviews, testimonials, and social approvals.

### 4. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the determinants of trust in online information within online media platforms, which in turn impact emigration decisions among young Albanian individuals as they interact with online media sources. The findings reveal that the reliability and accuracy of information, the accessibility and convenience of online platforms, the relevance of content to young

people's needs and interests, and the role of social influence and networks all play pivotal roles in shaping migration aspirations.

Moving forward, it is imperative to recognize the importance of enhancing the reliability and accuracy of information disseminated through online media channels. This could involve initiatives to combat misinformation and promote fact-checking mechanisms to ensure young individuals have access to credible and trustworthy information. Moreover, efforts should be directed toward improving the accessibility and usability of online media platforms, making migration-related resources more readily available and user-friendly. Tailoring content to align with the specific needs and interests of young people can also enhance engagement and effectiveness. Also, fostering positive social networks and influencer communities within online platforms can amplify the dissemination of accurate information and provide valuable support and guidance to young individuals considering emigration.

Overall, by addressing these factors and leveraging the potential of online media in constructive ways, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders can empower young people to make well-informed emigration decisions that align with their aspirations and goals.

## Data Availability

The data used in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author, subject to any necessary ethical and legal considerations.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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