

Use of social media for news doesn't seem to increase false political beliefs among Mexicans, one study finds | Nieman Journalism Lab

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In Mexico, social media isn't the major driver of political misinformation as it's popularly believed to be, according to a new study in the International Journal of Press/Politics.

Researchers Sebastián Valenzuela, Carlos Muñiz, and Marcelo Santos found “no significant correlation between using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram or WhatsApp as news sources and belief in political misinformation.”

Valenzuela, Muñiz, and Santos conducted the study in two phases during Mexico's midterm elections in 2021. The first phase had 1,750 respondents, 596 of whom were re-interviewed for the second phase.

In the first phase, researchers presented respondents with four false claims that had circulated during the election season, and then another three in the second wave. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of endorsement of each statement on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely).

To understand how people use social media platforms for news, the researchers measured how often during one week respondents used Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp to get national news. They also looked at three control variables: “traditional news media use and political discussion; political interest, efficacy, presidential approval, and ideology; and political knowledge, news elaboration, information literacy, and digital skills.”

[...]

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