

## **Incidental News Consumption On Social Media Among Gen Z: A Case Study Of The 'Immortal Basketball Club' Community In South Tangerang, Banten**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative study investigates the process of Incidental News Exposure on social media among Generation Z. Utilizing Sanda Erdelez's five-stage Information Encountering model, the research confirms that INE is a dominant mode of news consumption, largely superseding deliberate news seeking due to social media architecture. Key findings reveal that the process is highly systematic: The Noticing and Stopping stages are driven by sophisticated algorithmic curation, repetition, and affective factors like curiosity and boredom, often transforming passively encountered content into active engagement. Crucially, the Examining stage demonstrated that news utility is primarily defined by social currency, the ability to facilitate peer conversations before any pragmatic or civic value. While the exposure

is incidental, it acts as a Catalyst for Deliberate Action, prompting users to verify and seek deeper, intentional information. However, highly engaging incidental content frequently displaces the user's original intent, confirming INE's significant structural power in dictating information flow. The study concludes that news providers must adapt to Gen Z's reliance on selective incidental exposure by prioritizing casual presentation and social relevance to remain effective.

**Keywords:** *Incidental News Exposure, Generation Z, Social Media, Information Encountering, Social Currency.*

## 1. Introduction

The 21st century's technological shift has fundamentally transformed the global media landscape, moving from traditional linear models to a dynamic digital ecosystem (Newman, 2017). Social media, in particular, has evolved beyond social connection to become a dominant information portal, leveraging instantaneous sharing for news circulation and interpretation (Gottfried & Shearer, 2016). This shift has altered how users consume, share, and discover digital news, favoring speed, visual appeal, and immediacy (Goyanes & Demeter, 2022).

Within this algorithmically-driven environment, Incidental News Exposure has emerged as a defining characteristic. INE describes news encountered inadvertently during unrelated online activities, reversing the traditional dynamic where news "finds" the user (Ahmadi & Wohn, 2018). INE is structurally embedded in social media's core architecture, driven by personalization algorithms (Lee, 2018) that curates feeds based on behavioral data (Ricci, Rokach, & Shapira, 2015) And social network effects, where sharing from personal contacts turns private circles into news channels (Boyd, 2010). This has shifted consumption patterns, emphasizing both deliberate and incidental exposure (Sari, Haryati, Kurniati, & Wibowo, 2024)

In Indonesia, this digital transformation is exceptionally pronounced, with high internet penetration in 2021. Indonesian Generation Z, comprising 27.94% of the population (Evita, Prestianta, & Asmarantika, 2023), relies heavily on social media for information, often for entertainment but also for educational and work-related content (Aksara & Asnih, 2023); (Evita, Prestianta, & Asmarantika, 2023); (Frei, Wyss, & Gnach, 2022) This context

highlights social media's critical role in shaping Gen Z's news encounters.

INE profoundly impacts Generation Z and the early 2010s (Boczkowski, Mitchelstein, & Matassi, 2018). Living in an "always-on" media environment, Gen Z constantly encounters accidental news, blurring the lines between information, entertainment, and social communication. (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2016). Their behavior reflects a fundamental shift in news consumption, underscoring the urgency of understanding INE mechanisms, given the challenges of digital literacy and misinformation (Rakhman, Aeni, & Huda, 2023).

To understand this unintentional discovery, Sanda Erdelez's Information Encountering framework is essential. IE describes serendipitous information acquisition during unrelated activities, moving beyond traditional information-seeking. Its five-stage framework, Noticing, Stopping, Examining, Capturing, and Returning, is well-suited for analyzing how Gen Z transitions from passive exposure to active engagement on social media (Ahmadi & Wohin, 2018).

Despite INE's growing recognition, most research is Western-focused and macro-level (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017); (Goyanes & Demeter, 2022). In Indonesia, studies address incidental news consumption but often target adults (Realita & Setiadi, 2022), specific crises (Kamilia, 2020), or general youth patterns (Aksara & Asnih, 2023). Digital literacy and misinformation challenges among Indonesian Gen Z are also noted (Rakhman, Aeni, & Huda, 2023). This gap necessitates understanding localized INE manifestations given Indonesia's distinct digital landscape and Gen Z's dominant role.

The digital media landscape has shifted from deliberate news seeking to incidental encounters, where algorithms curate feeds blending news with entertainment. (Sormanen, Rantala, Lonkila, & Wilska, 2022). INE news discovered during unrelated activities dominates Gen Z consumption on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, comprising 27.94% of Indonesia's population, with high social media reliance (Evita, Prestianta, & Asmarantika, 2023).

The core problem is the lack of localized understanding of INE processes among Indonesian Gen Z, where Western studies overlook cultural nuances like strong community ties and algorithmic-social interplay in non-Western contexts. (Asih, Tantri,

& Prima, 2024). Indonesian Gen Z faces amplified misinformation risks amid ubiquitous exposure, yet studies focus on adults or crises, ignoring community-specific dynamics (Evita, Prestianta, & Asmarantika, 2023). This gap hinders tailored strategies against digital literacy deficits.

This study addresses this gap by focusing on the 'Immortal Basketball Club' community in South Tangerang, Banten. This specific community, characterized by active social media users with strong social ties, provides a data-rich environment for observing social sharing dynamics and pervasive INE. Shared interests also facilitate exploring the social utility of news among Gen Z (Ida, Mashud, & Saud, 2025). This study is vital as Indonesia's Gen Z drives information ecosystems, with INE fulfilling needs via social media (e.g., TikTok FYP). Understanding mechanisms informs news adaptation, enhances literacy, and counters echo chambers from personalization. Focusing on 'Immortal Basketball Club' active Gen Z users with tight ties provides rich data on social utility in INE (Hassoun, et al., 2023).

This qualitative research aims to explore how Indonesian Gen Z individuals within this community interact with news encountered incidentally on social media, emphasizing the interplay between algorithmic curation and individual agency. Specifically, this study addresses:

1. How do AI-driven recommendation systems on social media platforms influence incidental news exposure and subsequent engagement among Indonesian Gen Z users within the 'Immortal Basketball Club' community?
2. What mechanisms shape news encounters through algorithmic curation, transforming passive exposure into meaningful engagement within Indonesia's media ecosystem, as experienced by Gen Z in this community?
3. How do Indonesian Gen Z individuals within the 'Immortal Basketball Club' community interact with news encountered incidentally on social media, considering algorithmic curation and individual agency in information processing?

## 2. Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach to deeply understand the phenomenon, focusing on "how" a social process occurs within a naturalistic setting, interpreting phenomena based on

participants' ascribed meanings (Barlian, Denzin, & Lincoln, 2018). The research paradigm is interpretivist, seeking subjective understanding of human experience.

A single case study design was used, deemed appropriate for focusing on a specific, bounded system: INE within the "Generation Z in the Immortal Basketball Club community." This approach facilitated "thick description" of complex processes and influences within a particular context (Poulis, Poulis, & Plakoyiannaki, 2012).

The 'Immortal Basketball Club' was purposively selected as an information-rich case. Qualitative case study research requires selecting cases for an in-depth understanding of critical issues (Wan, 2019). This community's highly active social media users and strong social ties are crucial for observing social sharing dynamics and pervasive INE. Shared interests also facilitate exploring the social utility of news among Gen Z (Poulis, Poulis, & Plakoyiannaki, 2012). This deliberate choice ensures unique and valuable insights. The unit of analysis is the INE process as experienced and narrated by participants within this community.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). To identify individuals knowledgeable about the phenomenon. Gen Z was defined as individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2000s (18-24 years old), ensuring consistency with cognitive and social behaviors. Recruited from the Immortal Basketball Club, the inclusion criteria were: community membership, age 18-24 years, and active social media use.

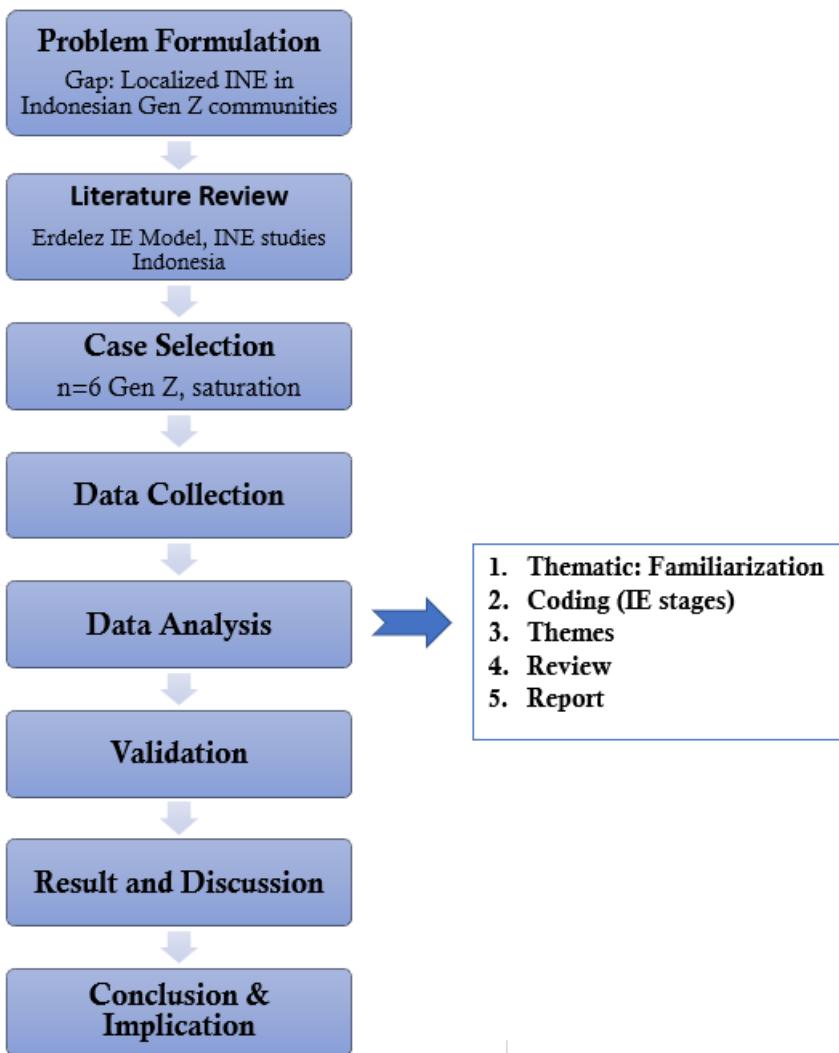
A sample of six informants meeting the criteria was selected. In qualitative research, especially case studies aiming for "thick description," smaller sample sizes allow in-depth exploration (Ahmed, 2024). Data collection ceased at  $n=6$  due to data saturation, where no new themes or patterns emerged (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021); (Wutich, Beresford, & Bernard, 2024). This indicates sufficient information power for the research questions within this relatively homogeneous population.

Data were collected via in-depth, semi-structured interviews in Bahasa Indonesia (60-90 minutes, face-to-face or online). An interview guide ensured consistent coverage of INE and the IE model, allowing flexibility for emergent topics. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim.

A Framework-Driven Thematic Analysis was used, drawing on Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach ( (Roberts, Dowell, & Nie, 2019); (Saunders, Sierpe, & von Plessen, 2023):

1. Familiarization: Transcripts were read for immersion.
2. Initial Coding: Deductive coding applied to the IE model stages, followed by inductive coding for emergent themes/sub-themes. Coding was manual.
3. Generating Themes: Codes grouped into broader themes and sub-themes.
4. Reviewing Themes: Themes refined for accuracy and research objectives.
5. Defining and Naming Themes: Clear definitions, names, and data excerpts provided.
6. Producing the Report: Final analysis presented with illustrative quotes.

Data source triangulation cross-referenced narratives across informants to enhance trustworthiness (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, & DiCenso, 2014) Consistency in reported INE processes across individual experiences within the community provided a robust understanding. Researcher reflexivity was maintained.



**Figure 1.** Research Flow

### 3. Results and Discussion

This study reveals Incidental News Exposure as a prevailing and often dominant mode of news consumption among Gen Z in the 'Immortal Basketball Club' community. This phenomenon is a direct consequence of social media architecture and inherent social dynamics, where news is largely encountered rather than actively sought for general awareness (Goyanes & Demeter, 2022). While some informants engaged in active news-seeking, it was consistently driven by highly selective personal interests, often leading back to

incidental encounters via algorithmic recommendations (Lee, 2018) or social sharing (Boyd, 2010).

This suggests INE increasingly fulfills informational needs previously addressed by intentional searches, particularly relevant in Indonesia's high internet penetration and social media reliance (Aksara & Asnih, 2023). The qualitative evidence points to INE effectively "superseding" deliberate news seeking for general awareness, though this interpretation is carefully considered, given the qualitative methodology and sample size. It highlights that INE has become an embedded mechanism often fulfilling informational needs that might otherwise require intentional search.

The process of INE among Gen Z is systematic and robustly analyzed through Sanda Erdelez's five-stage Information Encountering model, revealing intricate interplay between algorithmic curation, social dynamics, and individual agency.

### **3. 1. Noticing: The Initial Accidental Encounter**

The Noticing stage, the initial awareness of accidentally surfaced information, was universally experienced by all informants, highlighting its routine nature in social media usage. Informants attributed this prevalence to algorithmic systems that personalize content based on usage history and preferences.

Informant 1 clearly articulated this, stating,

*"...it seems like on social media it's already the system. The more often we open it, it automatically has a system that knows what we like... it knows itself what we like to look for or want to look for, even without us saying it, it already knows what we want."*

Informant 4 further described INE as a natural part of passing time:

*"Often, because I also open social media to spend time, I often get unintended news. For example, like celebrity gossip that is being talked about and comes up on Instagram Explore, it also often appears on Instagram Stories and Feeds, TikTok FYP, and is also sent by friends."*

Prior to noticing news, informants engaged in diverse activities, ranging from purposeful searches (e.g., *"I was looking for sports news..."*) to passive browsing (*"Just browsing, usually by scrolling TikTok or Instagram feeds..."*). News that captured attention typically

involved trending public interest topics or strong personal interests. For instance,

Informant 1 shared an impactful event:

*"The process was just a daily activity. I was looking for sports information, then suddenly there was news about Pak Ridwan Kamil's son drowning.*

That, in my opinion, was distracting." Informant 3 highlighted the social dimension:

*"I not only socialize with people my age but also with older people, like university students, so I wanted to know their perspective on the incident that was being widely discussed."*

These findings confirm INE's platform- and intent-agnostic nature, with high-salience/viral news and personal interest-related content being most frequently noticed, often through social sharing. These findings reinforce the pervasive influence of both algorithmic curation and social network effects in the INE process (Boyd, 2010); (Lee, 2018).

### ***3. 2. Stopping: Halting Activity for Engagement***

The Stopping stage involves temporarily pausing the primary activity to engage with the encountered news. All informants confirmed halting their original tasks, demonstrating the compelling nature of incidental content. This immediate cessation often led to deeper engagement, such as reading narratives or clicking hashtags.

Informant 1 explained the automatic response:

*"Automatically, yes, immediately. Underneath, there must be a narrative reading, so I automatically read and see what the content is, the process, so I explore the information further." Another informant noted, "Yes, stopped, then there was a hashtag, and I clicked it to see similar news and information."*

A critical mechanism identified in this stage was algorithmic repetition. Informant 5 revealed,

*"For the news about the late Eril, I initially only saw one story, two stories, and didn't react much... Then, as it appeared more and more in stories, I clicked it, read it, and apparently, it was also trending on other social media, so I started looking for more information."*

This indicates that the persistent reappearance of a news item across platforms can transform initial dismissal into intentional investigation. Factors driving the decision to stop included affective states like curiosity, stimulated by content design (*"Because I was curious, and the picture; if a news story has a picture template, it's interesting to read, then I definitely read the title which is sometimes clickbait, 'wow, what is this,' so I immediately open it to read further because I'm curious too"*), or simply boredom (*"Because I was bored"*). This suggests algorithms not only expose users but can also coerce engagement through sheer persistence (Ricci, Rokach, & Shapira, 2015).

### **3. 3. Examining: Evaluating Utility and Relevance**

In the Examining stage, informants evaluated the usefulness of the information. For many Gen Z individuals, utility was strongly linked to social currency. As one informant explained, "If the news is widely talked about or relates to my social circle or me... Besides that, so that when we hang out, we aren't stiff, we know the direction of the conversation, we don't just stay silent, that's all." Pragmatic utility also played a role; another informant noted,

*"So sometimes the information is also useful if I want to go somewhere and there is an accident around there, so I avoid that area so I don't get stuck in traffic."*

Informant 5 detailed an assessment process:

*"Then, after finishing understanding the content, I determine whether this is useful or not. Usually, the useful ones I use for reference, like job interview tips or CV making references, because I'm about to graduate."*

Conversely, some news (e.g., celebrity gossip) was deemed "useful" simply for entertainment or to satisfy immediate curiosity, as Informant 4 admitted,

*"No, because I was just bored, and it's just ordinary gossip, but it's exciting."*

These findings suggest that for Gen Z, news utility extends beyond traditional civic or informational value, aligning with research indicating that youth information consumption is intertwined with social interaction and emotional gratification (Boczkowski, Mitchelstein, & Matassi, 2018). The concept of "social currency" emerges as a crucial lens through which Gen Z evaluates

news, emphasizing its role in maintaining social connections and participation. The initial assessment of usefulness was often based on interest and content appeal, with a definitive judgment on personal needs occurring after thorough consumption and processing. This sequence suggests that interest acts as the gateway to consumption, while pragmatic need determines long-term utility.

### ***3. 4. Capturing: Storing and Sharing the Accidental Discovery***

The Capturing stage involves processing and potentially storing or sharing the accidentally found information. Informants exhibited diverse responses, including thorough exploration and verification. Informant 1 described extensive follow-up:

*"I immediately looked for information about who he was, why, so I went everywhere, like what the Aare river is, where it is, so I went everywhere... Sometimes if I find other news that really makes me curious, I usually save it for later..."*

Verification was key for Informant 3, who stated, *"First, because I was curious, so I looked deeper to find out if it's true or not, and certainly, when opening it for the first time, I wouldn't immediately share because I'm afraid of hoaxes."*

Sharing was typically reserved for like-minded friends, with one informant noting,

*"Sometimes it's on Instagram Explore, then I save it, sometimes I also make it a story. If my friends also like the content, only then do I share it."*

These responses demonstrate that INE frequently serves as a trigger for subsequent deliberate information seeking, including verifying sources due to awareness of misinformation risks (Rakhman, Aeni, & Huda, 2023). The decision to capture or share was highly dependent on the news's curiosity factor and its social potential. This highlights that Gen Z actively processes and engages with incidentally encountered information, often transitioning from passive exposure to active information management.

### ***3. 5. Returning: The Completion of the Encounter***

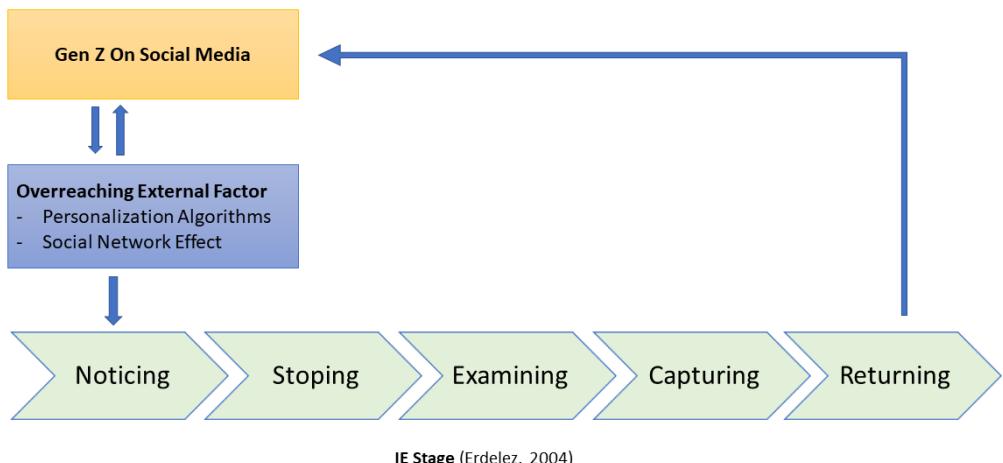
The final stage, Returning, assesses whether the user reverts to their initial activity. The results were mixed, demonstrating INE's potential to displace original intent. Informant 5 indicated a clear return to the original goal:

*"Go back to look for the previous information, go back to the original goal."*

However, Informant 4 simply moved on:  
*"Just continue looking for other information."*

This divergence confirms that highly engaging incidental discovery can effectively replace the original information need, demonstrating INE's power to dictate consumption in the digital age.

Gen Z informants were more likely to return to their original task if they had sufficient free time or if the original information was deemed important, compelling, or aligned with their needs. Crucially, a significant finding was that some informants did not return to their original task at all, instead continuing general social media browsing or moving to another incidental discovery. This non-return behavior confirms that in many cases, the Incidental News Exposure successfully replaced or displaced the user's initial objective, proving its profound power to divert attention and reshape media consumption focus (Boczkowski, Mitchelstein, & Matassi, 2018).



**Figure 2.** The Process Of Incidental News Exposure On Social Media

**Table 1.** Research Result

| IE Stage<br>(Erdelez,<br>2004) | Mechanism in Gen Z                                                                                                                                                                                         | Key<br>Behavioral<br>Finding                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Noticing                    | <b>Algorithmic Curation &amp; Dual Contexts.</b> Information is surfaced based on predicted preference (algorithm) or peer sharing (social network). Occurs during leisure scrolling or purposeful search. | INE is frequent and is a continuous condition of their digital life; Gen Z is aware of the predictive filtering of news content.                   |
| 2. Stopping                    | <b>Affective and Repetitive Triggers.</b> Interruption of the primary task is immediate, driven by curiosity, boredom, or the compelling visuals/format of the news item.                                  | Algorithmic repetition across different platforms (e.g., Instagram to TikTok) can force engagement, transforming initial dismissal into attention. |
| 3.<br>Examining                | <b>Social Utility Dominance.</b> Usefulness is assessed based on social currency (facilitating peer conversation) or satisfying                                                                            | Utility is often judged <i>after</i> consumption, indicating that interest                                                                         |

| IE Stage<br>(Erdelez,<br>2004) | Mechanism in Gen Z                                                                                                                                                            | Key<br>Behavioral<br>Finding                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | immediate personal interest/curiosity.                                                                                                                                        | is the gateway, but social relevance determines long-term value.                                                                                  |
| 4.<br><b>Capturing</b>         | <p><b>Catalyst for Deliberate Action.</b> The accidental encounter often triggers a follow-up, intentional information search, including verifying the source.</p>            | Verification and deeper exploration are common responses; sharing is highly selective and reserved only for close networks with shared interests. |
| 5.<br><b>Returning</b>         | <p><b>Displacement of Original Intent.</b> The outcome determines whether the user returns to their initial goal (e.g., assignment search) or continues general browsing.</p> | Highly engaging incidental news frequently displaces the initial objective, confirming INE's power to dictate the immediate flow of               |

| IE Stage<br>(Erdelez,<br>2004) | Mechanism in Gen Z | Key<br>Behavioral<br>Finding |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
|                                |                    | information<br>consumption.  |

The overall process can be visualized as a cyclical flow, starting from Gen Z on Social Media as the central environment, where External Factors such as "Personalization Algorithms" and the "Social Network Effect" continuously influence the Noticing stage. This then sequentially progresses through Stopping, Examining, Capturing, and finally Returning. The Returning stage can loop back to the central environment or directly to Noticing, underscoring the continuous and often self-perpetuating nature of INE in their digital lives. This visual representation encapsulates the dynamic and interconnected stages of INE as experienced by Gen Z.

This study confirms Sanda Erdelez's Information Encountering model's applicability to INE within a social media context, even in a non-Western cultural setting. Our findings extend the model by:

- a) Emphasizing Algorithmic Repetition: Highlighting how persistent algorithmic exposure, beyond initial single encounters, can drive a user from "Noticing" to "Stopping."
- b) Expanding "Utility": Introducing "Social Utility" and "Affective Utility" as primary drivers in the "Examining" stage for Gen Z, alongside pragmatic and civic utility.
- c) Detailing "Catalyst for Deliberate Action": Elaborating on how the "Capturing" stage often leads to subsequent intentional information seeking and verification, demonstrating agency amidst incidental discovery.
- d) Quantifying "Displacement of Original Intent": Providing robust qualitative evidence for how often and under what conditions INE can entirely "Displace Original Intent" in the "Returning" stage, solidifying its profound impact on information flow.

This demonstrates that while core stages remain relevant, their manifestations and driving mechanisms are profoundly shaped

by the unique affordances of social media platforms and the characteristics of the Gen Z demographic.

This study contributes to INE literature by offering insights from an Indonesian context, which is less explored than its Western counterparts (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017); (Goyanes & Demeter, 2022). While previous work mapped general patterns among Indonesian youth (Aksara & Asnih, 2023), our focus on a specific community allows for deeper, contextualized understanding. Our findings resonate with studies highlighting social media's dual nature as an information source and social interaction site (Gottfried & Shearer, 2016), emphasizing how these roles converge in Gen Z's INE experiences. The preference for casual news presentation aligns with trends in youth media habits (Frei, Wyss, & Gnach, 2022). By exploring nuances within the 'Immortal Basketball Club', we provide empirical data that enriches the global discourse on digital news consumption.

This study confirms that incidental news exposure dominates news consumption among Indonesian Gen Z in the 'Immortal Basketball Club' community, primarily through social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok, aligning with Evita et al.'s findings that social media and instant messaging serve as the main gateways for Generation Z information access across Indonesia, where entertainment is primary but serious content like education and work-related news is also sought (Evita, Prestianta, & Asmarantika, 2023). However, while Evita et al. used a large-scale survey ( $n=1177$ ) of nationwide respondents aged 15-25 to describe general media patterns without detailing INE processes, our qualitative case study ( $n=6$ , thematic analysis via IE model) reveals a systematic progression of stages, emphasizing algorithmic and social drivers in a tight-knit community context, differing due to methodological depth (interviews capturing affective mechanisms vs. broad descriptives) and focus (basketball group vs. general population). (Hassoun, et al., 2023).

In the Noticing and Stopping stages, algorithmic curation and repetition (e.g., FYP persistence) coerce engagement via curiosity and boredom, extending global patterns but amplified in Indonesia by peer shares in collectivist settings, unlike more individualized Western encounters (Asih, Tantri, & Prima, 2024).

The Examining stage prioritizes social currency (peer conversation utility) over pragmatic value, resonating with Hassoun

et al.'s U.S. Gen Z study, where information processing is socially motivated and "information sensibility" emerges from group interpretations rather than solo truth-seeking. (Hassoun, et al., 2023). Yet, our findings differ from Finnish adolescents' deliberate traditional media use due to our respondents' socially heavy digital habits and community ties (Sormanen, Rantala, Lonkila, & Wilska, 2022).

Capturing involves selective verification and sharing due to hoax awareness, higher than Western sporadic clicks, attributable to Indonesia's misinformation prevalence and cultural norms, while Returning shows frequent intent displacement via boredom loops, more pronounced than task-oriented Western returns owing to free-time social media immersion (Asih, Tantri, & Prima, 2024).

Overall, these results extend Erdelez's model with localized algorithmic-social interplay, resonating with Indonesian Gen Z entertainment-social mixes (Evita, Prestianta, & Asmarantika, 2023) but diverging from Western civic foci via collectivism and methods (case study vs. surveys) (Hassoun, et al., 2023); (Sormanen, Rantala, Lonkila, & Wilska, 2022).

#### 4. Conclusion

This research confirms that Incidental News Exposure is a prevailing and often dominant mode of news consumption among Generation Z members in the 'Immortal Basketball Club' community. This is a direct consequence of social media architecture and inherent social dynamics, suggesting news is largely encountered rather than actively sought for general awareness.

The INE process among Gen Z is systematic and analyzed through Sanda Erdelez's Information Encountering model. Key findings contribute to understanding INE within this specific Indonesian community:

1. INE is Ubiquitous and Context-Dependent: All informants consistently experienced INE, regardless of active search or passive browsing, establishing it as a continuous condition of their digital life, influenced by frequent social media engagement within a highly connected peer group.
2. Algorithmic and Social Curation Drive Engagement: Initial stages of Noticing and Stopping are profoundly shaped by platform algorithms (personalizing content) and strong community social ties (facilitating news sharing). High-

salience or high-interest news effectively captures attention, often triggered by compelling content or pervasive algorithmic repetition.

3. Utility is Primarily Social and Affective: For Gen Z, the Examining stage reveals that primary news utility extends beyond civic or pragmatic value. News is predominantly "useful" if it possesses social currency, facilitating peer-group conversations and fostering social relevance, or if it satisfies immediate curiosity and alleviates boredom. This highlights a redefinition of news value in highly social digital environments.
4. INE as a Catalyst for Subsequent Deliberate Action: Although accidental, INE frequently acts as a trigger for subsequent deliberate actions in the Capturing stage, including searching for deeper context, verifying information to mitigate misinformation risks, and selectively sharing content. This demonstrates Gen Z's active agency in processing incidentally discovered information.
5. Displacement of Original Intent is Significant: The power of INE is evident in the Returning stage. Highly engaging incidental news often fully displaces the user's original search or activity goal, confirming that accidental discovery can effectively dictate the immediate flow of information consumption and reshape user focus.

These findings suggest that news providers engaging Gen Z should adapt strategies to align with these observed behaviors. A focus on casual, visually engaging presentation (e.g., Folkative) is crucial, as is leveraging news's social relevance to spark conversations and facilitate social connection.

Insights are specific to the 'Immortal Basketball Club' and, due to their qualitative nature and small sample size, cannot be generalized to the entire Indonesian Gen Z or other cultural contexts. The community's unique characteristics (dense social ties) likely amplified social aspects of INE.

Future research should consider mixed-methods approaches for quantitative assessment across broader Gen Z populations. Longitudinal studies could explore INE's influence on critical thinking and media literacy. Comparative case studies across different community types could further elucidate how specific social contexts mediate INE processes. Investigating media literacy

interventions tailored to INE characteristics among Gen Z would also be valuable.

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