



Media Exposure, News Credibility, and Trust in Pro-Beijing New Media: Evidence from the 2019 Hong Kong Protests

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of media exposure and news credibility on trust in pro-Beijing media outlets during the 2019 Hong Kong protests. It analyzed media exposure and evaluated news credibility and trust in media based on past studies. Using regression analysis, this study identified the following key findings: 1) Media exposure to Wen Wei Po was a significant negative predictor of Hong Kong respondents' trust, mediated by perceived news credibility; however, news credibility itself was not a significant predictor. 2) Media exposure to Orange News was a significant negative predictor of Hong Kong respondents' trust, while news credibility had no significant effect. 3) Media exposure to HKG Pao was a significant negative predictor of Hong Kong respondents' trust, but news credibility did not have a statistically significant impact. These findings suggested that media exposure to pro-Beijing outlets may reduce trust regardless of perceived credibility, indicating that external factors might have played a more dominant role.

Keywords: Hong Kong Protest, Pro-Beijing Media, Media Exposure, News Credibility, Trust in Media

Introduction

This study examined the impact of media exposure and news credibility on trust in pro-Beijing media during the 2019 Hong Kong protests. Utilizing purposive and convenience sampling, a survey of 200 Hong Kong residents assessed the relationship between exposure to pro-Beijing media, perceptions of news credibility, and trust in media.

According to BBC News (2019) and Human Rights Watch (2019), Hong Kong had operated under the “One Country, Two Systems” framework since its handover to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, maintaining its distinct legal and social systems. However, the 2019 extradition bill amendment sparked widespread protests, exposing deep societal divisions in Hong Kong and attracting substantial international attention.



According to Dore (2023), the widespread availability of alternative narratives through social media and independent news outlets provided a counterbalance, allowing a more diverse range of perspectives to reach the public. The 2019 Hong Kong protests underscored the crucial role of media in democratic societies. In addition to informing the public, media also played a significant role in shaping the political agenda and influencing the trajectory of social movements (Khoo & Datta, 2023).

Existing studies have explored how media influenced trust, which shaped political and social behavior. Slater (2007) highlighted the reinforcing spirals perspective, focusing on the mutual influence of media selectivity and individual behavior. However, few studies had examined the role of pro-Beijing media in shaping public trust during the 2019 Hong Kong protests. Given Hong Kong's polarized media landscape, it remained unclear how exposure to pro-Beijing outlets affected trust, particularly in the context of contested narratives and credibility concerns.

This study examined how media exposure and credibility perceptions influence public trust in pro-Beijing media, offering insights into the interplay between media exposure, credibility, and trust in politically sensitive contexts.

Objectives

1. To examine the influence of exposure to pro-Beijing media outlets (Wen Wei Po, Orange News, and HKG Pao) on Hong Kong residents' trust in these media.
2. To investigate the impact of news credibility of pro-Beijing media outlets (Wen Wei Po, Orange News, and HKG Pao) on Hong Kong residents' trust in these media.

Concept theory framework

Literature Review

Media Exposure

According to Garramone and Atkin (1986), repeated exposure to media content can shape audience perceptions and behaviors. Donsbach (1991) discussed the impact of cognitive dissonance on readers' selectivity when exposed to political content in newspapers, contributing to the paradigm of weak media effects. Therefore, in Hong Kong repeated exposure to pro-Beijing media may reinforce selective perceptions, influencing how audiences process political events such as the 2019 protests. Furthermore, exposure to misinformation and fake news has been found to correlate with lower trust in media and public opinion, as reported by Ognyanova, Lazer, Robertson, and Wilson (2020).



Trust in Media

According to Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley, and Matsa (2014), political ideologies play a significant role in shaping trust in the media, as demonstrated by their study on political polarization and media habits. Austin and Dong (1994) conducted an experiment to assess the effects of message type and source reputation on judgments of news believability. Their findings indicated that judgments of source truthfulness, expertise, bias, and personal perspective all contribute to perceptions of credibility. This is particularly relevant in Hong Kong's polarized media landscape, where trust in the media is influenced by perceived political alignment. Pro-Beijing media may face skepticism from audiences opposed to Chinese government influence, reinforcing trust disparities across media sources. Lee (2010) also emphasized the importance of credibility in explaining trust in media, highlighting the ongoing scholarly interest in this area.

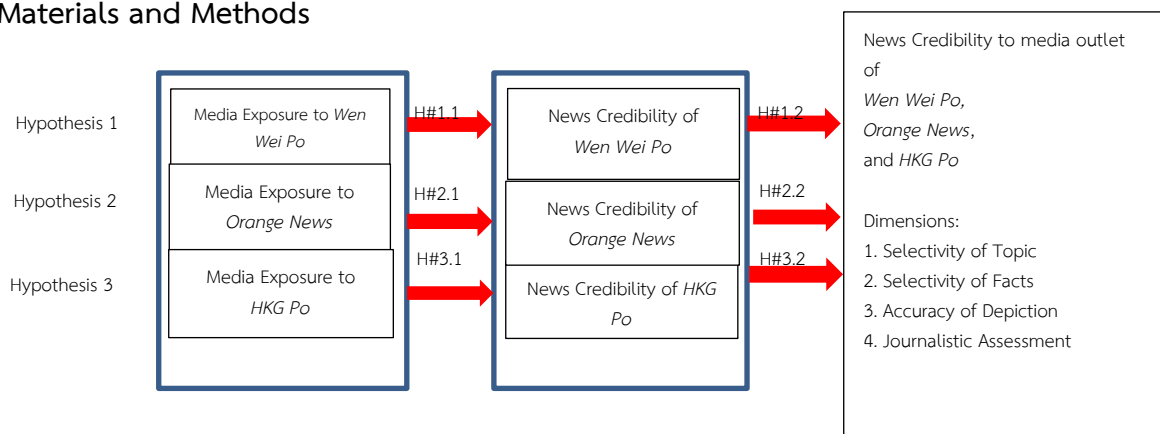
Theory of News Credibility

According to Gaziano and McGrath (1986), news credibility is viewed as a multidimensional concept, encompassing factors such as accuracy, fairness, objectivity, and trustworthiness. They developed the News Credibility Scale, a 12-item survey that evaluates two key dimensions: credibility (measuring fairness, bias, and accuracy) and social concerns (assessing whether the media promotes public interest). This scale is particularly relevant for studying politically polarized environments like Hong Kong, as it captures key dimensions of credibility—fairness, bias, and accuracy—that influence public trust in media, where perceptions of bias and agenda-setting shape trust in media, making a multidimensional approach essential for understanding audience attitudes.

Pro-Beijing Media in 2019 Hong Kong Protest

According to Cook et al. (2022), Chinese-language media outlets based abroad, including those in Hong Kong, have faced increasing challenges due to escalating political repression in the region since 2019. Pro-Beijing media outlets have been criticized for their coverage of the protests and Hong Kong's political situation (U.S. Department of State, 2024). State control mechanisms and editorial policies in pro-Beijing media, particularly through selective framing of protest events and censorship of dissenting voices, may shape audience perceptions of credibility, reinforcing trust among pro-government individuals while diminishing it among opposition groups due to perceived bias. Additionally, Chinese state media and pro-Beijing private outlets play a crucial role in shaping political coverage in China, particularly on platforms like WeChat (Cook et al., 2022).

Materials and Methods



Research Hypotheses

Previous research suggested that both media exposure and news credibility contributed to trust in media, but their relative impact remained uncertain, particularly in polarized media environments. While exposure could increase familiarity and perceived reliability, credibility played a crucial role in shaping trust. This study does not formally assess mediation effects but acknowledges the potential role of these factors in shaping trust.

HP#1: Media exposure (IV) and news credibility (MV) of *Wen Wei Po* significantly influence trust in the news media (DV) of *Wen Wei Po*

HP#1.1: Media exposure (IV) of *Wen Wei Po* significantly influences trust in the news media (DV) of *Wen Wei Po*.

HP#1.2: News credibility (MV) of *Wen Wei Po* significantly influences trust in the news media (DV) of *Wen Wei Po*.

HP#2: Media exposure (IV) and news credibility (MV) of *Orange News* significantly influence trust in the news media (DV) of *Orange News*.

HP#2.1: Media exposure (IV) of *Orange News* significantly influences trust in the news media (DV) of *Orange News*.

HP#2.2: News credibility (MV) of *Orange News* significantly influences trust in the news media (DV) of *Orange News*.

HP#3: Media exposure (IV) and news credibility (MV) of *HKG Pao* significantly influence trust in the news media (DV) of *HKG Pao*.

HP#3.1: Media exposure (IV) of *HKG Pao* significantly influences trust in the news media (DV) of *HKG Pao*.

HP#3.2: News credibility (MV) of *HKG Pao* significantly influences trust in the news media (DV) of *HKG Pao*.



Research Methodology

Research Design

Given the purpose of this study, the questionnaire includes the News Credibility Scale developed by Gaziano and McGrath (1986) to measure key factors such as fairness, accuracy, bias, and trustworthiness in news media. Additionally, the Trust in News Media scale developed by Kohring and Matthes (2007) was included to measure trust levels in news media, evaluating dimensions such as Selectivity of Topics, Selectivity of Facts, Accuracy of Depictions, and Journalistic Assessment. For this study, the questionnaire was translated into Traditional Chinese to ensure accessibility for Hong Kong residents.

Population and Sampling Method

Given the scope of this study, the respondents were Hong Kong residents who experienced the 2019 protest and had regular exposure to pro-Beijing media. Both purposive sampling and convenience sampling are employed to select participants meeting the study's criteria while ensuring efficient recruitment. Purposive sampling targets individuals with relevant exposure, while convenience sampling leverages online platforms for broader reach. However, these methods may introduce self-selection bias, as individuals with strong opinions on pro-Beijing media may be more inclined to participate.

Research Instrument

Given the purpose of this study, the questionnaire consists of four sections: demographic information, frequency of media exposure to pro-Beijing outlets (15 interval scale questions), news credibility of pro-Beijing media (36 interval scale questions), and trust in pro-Beijing media (48 interval scale questions). News credibility was measured using Gaziano and McGrath's (1986) 12 dimensions, including fairness, accuracy, bias, and trustworthiness, on a 5-point Likert scale. Trust in news media was assessed based on Kohring and Matthes (2007), examining 4 dimensions: topic selectivity, fact selectivity, accuracy of depictions, and journalistic assessment, also using a 5-point Likert scale.

The instrument's reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha above 0.70. Media exposure had an alpha of 0.886, news credibility 0.813, and trust in media 0.807. Individual media outlets showed high internal consistency, with alpha values between

Data Collection

This study collected a total of 221 responses via online platforms, but only 200 were valid after applying the filter questions. A total of 21 responses were excluded as the respondents either did not live in Hong Kong during the 2019 protest or did not regularly consume news from pro-Beijing media outlets. The questionnaire was translated into Cantonese and then back translated into English.



Data analysis

The independent variable is media exposure to Wen Wei Po, Orange News, and HKG Pao, while the mediating variable is the perceived news credibility of these media outlets, and the dependent variable is trust in each respective media outlet. All variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Regression analysis was applied to assess the influence of media exposure and news credibility on trust in Wen Wei Po, Orange News, and HKG Pao. Additionally, potential confounding factors, such as political attitudes and media literacy, are considered when interpreting the findings.

Results

Descriptive findings

The descriptive analysis showed that most respondents were male (29.00%, $n = 58$), followed by female (25.00%, $n = 50$), LGBTQ (23.50%, $n = 47$), and those keeping their gender confidential (22.50%, $n = 45$). The age distribution was 18 years old (28.00%, $n = 56$), 28–37 (25.00%, $n = 50$), 38–47 (25.00%, $n = 50$), and 18–27 (22.00%, $n = 44$), with no respondents aged 48 or above. Most had completed high school or vocational school (40.50%, $n = 81$), followed by graduate degree or above (19.50%, $n = 39$), college/university degree (14.50%, $n = 29$), middle school (14.00%, $n = 28$), and primary school or below (11.50%, $n = 23$).

Survey results highlighted respondents' access channels to Pro-Beijing media. For Wen Wei Po, most accessed via newspapers/magazines (51.00%, $n = 102$), followed by the internet (44.50%, $n = 89$) and television (4.50%, $n = 9$). Orange News was accessed online (48.50%, $n = 97$), then through newspapers/magazines (43.50%, $n = 87$) and television (8.00%, $n = 16$). Similarly, HKG Pao was primarily accessed via newspapers/magazines (47.50%, $n = 95$), closely followed by the internet (46.00%, $n = 92$) and television (6.50%, $n = 13$). Regarding credibility, most respondents were sometimes exposed to Wen Wei Po ($\bar{x} = 3.43$, $SD = 1.05$).

In terms of specific platforms, most respondents were sometimes exposed to Wen Wei Po (Mean = 3.43, $SD = 1.05$), with the highest exposure on Weibo ($\bar{x} = 3.48$, $S.D. = 1.34$), followed by Facebook ($\bar{x} = 3.43$, $S.D. = 1.25$), the official website ($\bar{x} = 3.42$, $S.D. = 1.37$), Instagram ($\bar{x} = 3.42$, $S.D. = 1.27$), and YouTube ($\bar{x} = 3.38$, $S.D. = 1.28$). For Orange News, most respondents were sometimes exposed (Mean = 3.41, $SD = 1.05$), with exposure highest on Facebook ($\bar{x} = 3.43$, $S.D. = 1.32$), followed by YouTube ($\bar{x} = 3.42$, $S.D. = 1.27$), Weibo ($\bar{x} = 3.41$, $S.D. = 1.35$), the official website ($\bar{x} = 3.40$, $S.D. = 1.35$), and Instagram ($\bar{x} = 3.39$, $S.D. = 1.32$). For HKG Pao, most respondents were sometimes exposed (Mean = 3.35, $SD = 1.05$). In terms of specific platforms, exposure was highest on Weibo ($\bar{x} = 3.41$, $S.D. = 1.35$) and YouTube ($\bar{x} = 3.41$, $S.D. = 1.36$), followed by the official website ($\bar{x} = 3.35$, $S.D. = 1.26$), Facebook ($\bar{x} = 3.29$, $S.D. = 1.31$), and Instagram (\bar{x}



= 3.29, S.D. = 1.26).

The findings show that respondents perceived high credibility for Wen Wei Po in the following order: respecting/invasive privacy (\bar{x} = 3.48, S.D. = 1.34), watching/ignoring readers' interests (\bar{x} = 3.57, S.D. = 1.16), unbiased/bias (\bar{x} = 3.56, S.D. = 1.23), and accurate/inaccurate reporting (\bar{x} = 3.56, S.D. = 1.18). For Orange News, the highest credibility was perceived for concern about public interest over profit (\bar{x} = 3.67, S.D. = 1.23), followed by being factual over opinionated (\bar{x} = 3.66, S.D. = 1.23), and trusted over untrusted (\bar{x} = 3.63, S.D. = 1.22). For HKG Pao, the highest credibility was perceived for watching readers' interests (\bar{x} = 3.68, S.D. = 1.23), followed by accurate reporting (\bar{x} = 3.63, S.D. = 1.29), and concern for community well-being (\bar{x} = 3.62, S.D. = 1.19).

Respondents had the highest trust in Wen Wei Po for selectivity of fact (\bar{x} = 3.64, S.D. = 1.02), followed by selectivity of topic (\bar{x} = 3.60, S.D. = 1.00), accuracy of depiction (\bar{x} = 3.58, S.D. = 0.97), and journalistic assessment (\bar{x} = 3.57, S.D. = 1.02). For Orange News, trust was highest in selectivity of fact (\bar{x} = 3.65, S.D. = 1.04), followed by journalistic assessment (\bar{x} = 3.63, S.D. = 0.98), accuracy of depiction (\bar{x} = 3.62, S.D. = 0.99), and selectivity of topic (\bar{x} = 3.61, S.D. = 0.99). For HKG Pao, trust was highest in journalistic assessment (\bar{x} = 3.58, S.D. = 0.99), followed by accuracy of depiction (\bar{x} = 3.56, S.D. = 0.99), selectivity of fact (\bar{x} = 3.48, S.D. = 1.00), and selectivity of topic (\bar{x} = 3.46, S.D. = 1.08).

Hypotheses Finding and Testing

Hypothesis 1: Media exposure and news credibility of Wen Wei Po significantly influence trust in the news media of Wen Wei Po

Hypothesis 1.1: Media exposure of Wen Wei Po significantly influences trust in the news media of Wen Wei Po

Hypothesis 1.2: News credibility of Wen Wei Po significantly influences trust in the news media of Wen Wei Po

As shown in Table 1, Model 1 Regression analysis revealed that media exposure did not significantly predict trust in Wen Wei Po (B = 0.052, $Beta$ = 0.067, p > 0.05) when media exposure to Wen Wei Po was examined alone. The R^2 for Model 1 was 0.004, indicating that media exposure explains only 0.4% of the variance in trust in Wen Wei Po, suggesting that media exposure alone has no significant effect on trust in Wen Wei Po.

However, when both media exposure and news credibility were considered, the analysis revealed that media exposure was a significant negative predictor of trust in Wen Wei Po (B = -0.113, $Beta$ = -0.178*, p < 0.01). On the other hand, news credibility had a positive influence on trust in Wen Wei Po, but it was not statistically significant at the conventional level (B = 0.107, $Beta$ = 0.137, p > 0.05). The R^2 for Model 2 was 0.031, indicating that the inclusion of news credibility slightly improved the model's



explanatory power, explaining 3.1% of the variance in trust in Wen Wei Po.

The findings suggested that media exposure to Wen Wei Po was a significant negative predictor of trust, mediated by news credibility as perceived by Hong Kong respondents. However, news credibility itself did not significantly affect trust in Wen Wei Po, which suggests that trust might be shaped more by emotional responses or political alignment rather than traditional credibility metrics. Overall, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported: Hypothesis 1.1 was supported, but Hypothesis 1.2 was not.

Table 1: Summary of Regression Analysis on the Impact of Media Exposure and News Credibility on Respondents' Trust of News Media of Wen Wei Po

| Model | Predictors | B | S.E. | Beta | Sig.t |
|-------|--|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Media exposure to Wen Wei Po | 0.052 | 0.055 | 0.067 | 0.348 |
| | Trust of Wen Wei Po (Dependent Variable), $R^2 = 0.004$, $df = 1$ ($p < 0.01$), $df1=1$ | | | | |
| 2 | Media exposure to Wen Wei Po | -0.113 | 0.049 | -0.178 | 0.021 |
| | News Credibility of Wen Wei Po | 0.107 | 0.059 | 0.137 | 0.074 |
| | Trust of Wen Wei Po (Dependent Variable), $R^2 = 0.031$, $df = 2$ ($p < 0.01$), $df1=1$ | | | | |

Hypothesis 2: Media exposure and news credibility of Orange News significantly influence trust in the news media of Orange News.

Hypothesis 2.1: Media exposure of Orange News significantly influences trust in the news media of Orange News.

Hypothesis 2.2: News credibility of Orange News significantly influences trust in the news media of Orange News.

As shown in Table 2, Model 1 Regression analysis revealed that media exposure to Orange News significantly predicted trust in Orange News ($B = -0.142$, $Beta = -0.223^*$, $p < 0.05$). The R^2 for Model 1 is 0.045, meaning that media exposure explains 4.5% of the variance in trust in Orange News. This indicated that media exposure had a significant negative effect on trust in Orange News.

However, in Model 2, when examined media exposure and news credibility, the analysis revealed that media exposure continues to be a significant negative predictor of trust in Orange News ($B = -0.142$, $Beta = -0.224^*$, $p < 0.01$). However, news credibility has no significant impact on trust in Orange News ($B = -0.008$, $Beta = -0.01$, $p > 0.05$). The R^2 for Model 2 is 0.040, indicating that the inclusion of news credibility marginally reduces the explanatory power of the model, explaining 4.0% of the variance in trust in Orange News.



The findings suggested that media exposure to Orange News was a significant negative predictor of trust, while news credibility did not have a significant effect on respondents' trust in Orange News. Therefore, Hypothesis 2.1 was supported, but Hypothesis 2.2 was not supported.

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis on the Impact of Media Exposure and News Credibility on Respondents' Trust of News Media of Orange News

| Model | Predictors | B | S.E. | Beta | Sig.t |
|-------|---|--------|-------|--------|----------|
| 1 | Media exposure to Orange News | -0.142 | 0.044 | -0.223 | 0.001*** |
| | Trust of Orange News (Dependent Variable), $R^2 = 0.045$, $df = 1$ ($p < 0.01$), $df1 = 1$ | | | | |
| 2 | Media exposure to Orange News | -0.142 | 0.044 | -0.224 | 0.002** |
| | News Credibility of Orange News | -0.008 | 0.052 | -0.01 | 0.884 |
| | Trust of Orange News (Dependent Variable), $R^2 = 0.040$, $df = 2$ ($p < 0.06$), $df1 = 1$ | | | | |

Hypothesis 3: Media exposure and news credibility of HKG Pao significantly influence trust in the news media of HKG Pao.

Hypothesis 3.1: Media exposure of HKG Pao significantly influences trust in the news media of HKG Pao.

Hypothesis 3.2: News credibility of HKG Pao significantly influences trust in the news media of HKG Pao.

As shown in Table 3, Model 1 Regression analysis revealed that media exposure to HKG Pao significantly predicts trust in HKG Pao ($B = -0.134$, $Beta = -0.225$, $p < 0.05$). The R^2 for Model 1 is 0.050, meaning that media exposure explains 5.0% of the variance in trust in HKG Pao. This indicates that media exposure has a significant negative effect on trust in HKG Pao.

However, in Model 2, when examined media exposure and news credibility, the analysis revealed that media exposure remains a significant negative predictor of trust in HKG Pao ($B = -0.147$, $Beta = -0.247^*$, $p < 0.01$). However, news credibility has a negative effect on trust in HKG Pao but is not statistically significant at the conventional level ($B = -0.085$, $Beta = -0.121$, $p > 0.05$). The R^2 for Model 2 is 0.065, indicating that the inclusion of news credibility slightly improves the explanatory power of the model, explaining 6.5% of the variance in trust in HKG Pao.

The findings suggested that media exposure to HKG Pao was a significant negative predictor of trust, but news credibility does not have a statistically significant impact on respondents' trust in HKG Pao. Therefore, Hypothesis 3.1 was supported, but Hypothesis 3.2 was not supported.



Table 3: Summary of Regression Analysis on the Impact of Media Exposure and News Credibility on Respondents' Trust of News Media of HKG Pao

| Model | Predictors | B | S.E. | Beta | Sig.t |
|-------|---|--------|-------|--------|----------|
| 1 | Media exposure to HKG Pao | -0.134 | 0.041 | -0.225 | 0.001*** |
| | Trust of HKG Pao (Dependent Variable), $R^2 = 0.050$, $df = 1$ ($p < 0.01$), $df1=1$ | | | | |
| 2 | Media exposure to HKG Pao | -0.147 | 0.042 | -0.247 | 0.001*** |
| | News Credibility of HKG Pao | -0.085 | 0.049 | -0.121 | 0.085 |
| | Trust of HKG Pao (Dependent Variable), $R^2 = 0.065$, $df = 2$ ($p < 0.01$), $df1=1$ | | | | |

Conclusions and Discussion

This study aimed to explore the impact of media exposure and news credibility on the trust in pro-Beijing media outlets among Hong Kong residents, specifically focusing on the 2019 Hong Kong protests.

The findings indicated that exposure to Wen Wei Po, Orange News, and HKG Pao significantly and negatively influence trust in these outlets. Respondents with more frequent exposure consistently reported lower trust levels. However, news credibility did not significantly affect trust.

This unexpected result may be due to emotional and psychological factors, such as hope, anger, or fear (Gause, Moore & Ostfeld, 2023). In politically polarized contexts, such emotions may lead to resistance against trusting media that contradict personal beliefs, with heightened emotional engagement amplifying skepticism and diminishing the influence of news credibility on trust (Arguedas, Robertson, Fletcher & Nielsen, 2022).

Furthermore, political polarization exacerbates the issue by lowering the perceived credibility of all three pro-Beijing media outlets. This polarization may lead to reduced trust even among those frequently exposed to their content, highlighting the complex interplay between media exposure, credibility, and trust.

The Theory of Media Exposure emphasizes how repeated exposure to media content can shape audience perceptions and behaviors (Garramone & Atkin, 1986). In this case, the major influence of media exposure suggests that frequent encounters with pro-Beijing media reinforced existing perceptions, whether positive or negative. However, audience responses were shaped by preexisting attitudes, resulting in selective acceptance or rejection of media messages. Cognitive dissonance may lead individuals to distrust media that contradicts their beliefs (Donsbach, 1991), contributing to reducing trust. This aligns with reinforcing spirals theory, wherein individuals seek information that confirms their prior attitudes, exacerbating polarization.



The News Credibility Theory highlights the importance of accuracy, fairness, and objectivity in building audience trust (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986). However, the findings show that credibility alone did not significantly influence trust in pro-Beijing outlets during the 2019 Hong Kong protests. This suggested that, in politically charged environments, traditional measures of credibility may be overshadowed by audience's perceptions of political alignment. The results echoed findings from other studies in polarized contexts, where perceived ideological congruence often took precedence over objective credibility indicators (Arguedas, Robertson, Fletcher & Nielsen, 2022).

The Trust on the media underscores that audience's trust is influenced by broader contextual factors such as political alignment and ideological congruence (Tsfati & Ariely, 2013). During politically sensitive events, like the Hong Kong protests, audiences may prioritize perceived alignment over traditional notions of credibility. This finding raised questions about whether trust in media is becoming increasingly identity-driven rather than fact-based. Future studies should explore whether exposure to diverse perspectives could mitigate these effects.

In conclusion, the value of this research lies in showing that media exposure can significantly shape public trust, especially in politically sensitive contexts. The necessity for media outlets to consider audience perceptions beyond traditional credibility measures and for policymakers to advance media literacy initiatives fostering critical engagement with news sources was emphasized. These findings highlight the challenges of sustaining trust in the media amid growing polarization.

Recommendations for Future Application

Given the findings of this study, there are several practical recommendations for media practitioners and policymakers, and pro-government media. Media exposure and perceived credibility are key factors in shaping public trust, but they are not the sole determinants. For pro-government outlets, improving credibility or increasing exposure alone may not foster long-term trust. A broader approach is needed, focusing on democratic principles, respecting public opinion, and ensuring accountability. Addressing concerns about transparency and responsiveness will more effectively enhance trust. For instance, media outlets can adopt independent oversight bodies, collaborate with neutral third-party fact-checkers, and establish public feedback mechanisms to enhance transparency. Policymakers should recognize that trust is linked to the political environment, promote media literacy, and maintain a framework that upholds democratic values, ensuring open communication and responsiveness to citizens' needs. One practical step is integrating media literacy programs into Hong Kong's education system, equipping younger generations with critical thinking skills to assess media credibility.



Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should explore emotional responses and political polarization, which influence trust in media outlets and shape perceptions of credibility. Expanding the study to include media from both political sides would offer a broader understanding of how media exposure and emotional reactions impact trust in Hong Kong's polarized media during protests.

Longitudinal studies could track shifts in public perceptions over time. Additionally, qualitative methods, like interviews or content analysis, could uncover factors shaping trust, focusing on media content, framing, and emotional undertones. To enhance practical applicability, future studies could also examine how specific journalistic practices, such as fact-checking initiatives, audience engagement strategies, and interactive reporting, influence trust in the media. Research should also examine the influence of social media and user-generated content on trust in traditional media. A comparative study between traditional media and emerging digital platforms would provide insights into how different formats and communication styles affect public trust dynamics.

Limitations of the Study

This study offers several limitations. The sample size of 200 Hong Kong residents may not reflect the broader population's diversity due to time and resource constraints. The online survey may exclude those without internet access, affecting representativeness. Selection bias could arise, as respondents with strong opinions about pro-Beijing media might be more likely to participate. Political sensitivity may lead to biasing social desirability, with respondents withholding honest opinions. Additionally, media exposure and news credibility alone may not fully explain trust in the media. Future research should explore factors like political polarization, emotional responses, and social identity. Lastly, the focus on three pro-Beijing outlets limits the scope, as other media sources could also influence public trust and perceptions of credibility.

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