

ROLE OF MEDIA TRUST IN TODAY'S DYNAMIC SOCIAL MEDIA ENVIRONMENT: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

News organizations are having more trouble holding onto their viewers in a media landscape that is becoming more complicated. However, social media presents fresh avenues for news dissemination; among these avenues is Facebook, which is also among the fastest-growing news-gathering platforms. Considering that Facebook news sharing is starting to approach a critical mass, a deeper examination of this peer-to-peer digital news exposure mechanism is necessary. What effects does the news sharing process have on news trust when more individuals get their news from peers on social media? More precisely, does trust in a news source increase when news is obtained via a friend on social media? Do friends' news posts on social media influence how people search out information? And does it matter which friends—that is, who shares the news story—in each of these relationships? These questions are answered in this paper through a review of relevant literature.

Keywords: Media trust; Social Media; Facebook; Literature review.

Introduction

The postbroadcast environment has led to heightened rivalry among news providers, which has resulted in a rise in interpretive reporting methods, politicised news sources, and negative news coverage. The public's confidence in news media is being undermined as a result of growing media rivalry. Over the past few decades, researchers have noted overall drops in public trust in the news, turning the once-respected news industry into a source of contempt and unhappiness. This tendency merits scientific investigation since public opinion on significant policy issues is influenced by media trust and the perceived credibility of the news.

Select literature on media trust is reviewed in this paper to find out role of media trust in today's dynamic social media environment.

Literature review

Stromback et al. (2020) claim that in today's highly selective media environment, the issue of trust in the media and its impact on people's media use has taken on new importance. At the same time, it is not clear to what extent people trust the news media and how much this depends on their use of different types of media. To lay the groundwork for future research, in this article authors offer a focused review of (a) how trust in the news media has been conceptualized and operationalized in previous research and (b) an investigation of the extent to which trust in the news media influences media use, and c) offer a theoretically derived framework for future research on trust in the news media and its influence on media use.

Schranz (2018) use data from the 2016 Media Use and Trust in Media Survey in 13 selected countries to apply regression analysis to examine how strongly media use influences media trust. In the second step, authors analyzed the effects of trust/distrust on important parameters of the media industry (e.g. willingness to pay, acceptance of advertising). News consumption generally appears to promote trust in media systems. Furthermore, it has become clear that the consumption of public broadcasting as well as conventional quality services such as subscription printing significantly strengthens trust in the media system. Therefore, it must be a key concern of the industry to strengthen trust in the media, as intact media trust supports not only the willingness to pay for news, but also the acceptance of advertising.

Turcotte et al. (2015) state that surveys show a sharp decline in public trust in traditional news outlets; however, social media offers new avenues for receiving news content. This experiment used the Facebook API to manipulate whether a news story appeared to have been posted on Facebook by one of the respondent's actual Facebook friends. The results show that social media recommendations improve the level of trust in the media and also make people want to watch more news from a particular media outlet in the future. Additionally, these effects are amplified when the real-life friend sharing the story on social media is perceived as an opinion leader. Implications for democracy and reporting are discussed.

Kalogeropoulos et al. (2019) observe that changes in the way people consume news and the emergence of digital and distributed news sources require a rethinking of the relationship between

news use and news trust. Previous research has suggested that the use of alternative news is correlated with lower levels of news trust, while the use of mainstream news is correlated with higher levels of news trust. The research, based on a survey of news users in 35 countries, shows that using mainstream or alternative news sources is associated with higher levels of trust in the news. However, authors found that using social media as a primary source of news correlated with lower levels of trust in the news. When authors look at country-by-country effects, authors find that systemic factors such as the degree of press freedom or the share of public broadcasting viewers in a given country are not significantly correlated with trust in the news.

Knudsen et al. (2021) posit that despite the central role that ordinary citizens play as “trusters” (i.e., the actor who invests trust) in the news media trust literature, previous quantitative studies have paid little attention to how ordinary citizens understand and define trust in the news media. Trust here tends to be studied from the perspective of the researcher – rather than from the perspective of the audience. To address this gap, authors examine how the public describes trust in the news media in their own words by asking them directly. Authors analyze 1,500 written responses collected through a Norwegian probability-based online survey, here using a semi-supervised quantitative text analysis technique called Structural Topic Modeling (STM). Authors found that citizens' own understanding of trust in the news media can be categorized into four distinct themes, which in some cases are comparable to academic and professional discourse. Authors show that citizens' written descriptions of trust in the news media vary along many of the same variables that previous research has found to be important predictors of trust levels. Respondents' written descriptions of trust in the news media vary by education and satisfaction with democracy, but not by other known predictors of trust, such as ideological self-alignment and political preference. Williams (2012) establishes the theoretical significance of media trust and examines the relationships between individuals' levels of media trust and news attention. Three distinct types of media trust are introduced: 1) trust in the news, 2) trust in those delivering the news, and 3) trust in media corporations. The findings suggest that these different types of media trust relate to news attention in different ways, specifically when examined across media. The theoretical significance of the findings is discussed and contextualized in light of the evolving media environment.

Hopmann et al. (2015) examine the extent to which trust in the media is influenced by personal media use and the framing of politics as a strategic game. The study is based on a four-wave panel survey matched with media content data, which allows us to examine not only correlations but also influences on media trust at the individual level. Consistent with previous research, our analysis shows that using specific types of media leads to greater trust in those specific media. The results also show that the media's framing of politics as a strategic game has a negative effect on trust in the media. The more citizens are exposed to in-game news, the less they tend to trust the media, with the exception of tabloids. Overall, these results support the assumption of contagion effects of in-game messages. In the final section, authors summarize our results and discuss the implications of our findings.

Ognyanova (2019) state that concerns about low public trust in America's media institutions have deepened recently in the context of increasing partisan polarization, large-scale digital disinformation campaigns, and frequent attacks on the press by political elites. This study investigated the social factors that shape our trust in mainstream news sources. An examination of longitudinal network data from 13 residential student communities highlighted the importance of interpersonal influence on media attitudes. Results show that participants' media trust was predicted by the trust scores of their online and offline social contacts. The most robust and consistent effect comes from face-to-face interactions with politically like-minded conversation partners. Among online social ties, the analysis found effects from contact with others who do not trust the media, but not from communicating with people who reported high levels of trust in the media.

Tsfati & Ariely (2013) state that media research shows that audience trust in the news media is a highly consequential factor that shapes audience choice and response to the media and potentially influences citizens' perceptions of the political system as a whole. Yet our knowledge of the correlates of media trust is limited. Only a few studies have used a correlational design to examine the associations between media trust and other factors, and almost all of these studies are from the US context. The current investigation uses data from 44 different countries ($n = 57,847$), collected as part of the World Values Survey, to expand our understanding of trust in the media. The goal is twofold—to learn about individual-level correlates across contexts and to show that macro-level factors play a role in shaping such trust. The findings suggest that levels of political interest,

interpersonal trust, and exposure to television news and newspapers are positively correlated with media trust, while education and Internet news exposure are negatively associated. At the macro level, postmaterialism emerged as a consistent predictor of trust in the media. State ownership of the media industry did not have a main effect on trust in the media after controlling for other factors. However, an interaction was found between state ownership and the level of democracy: state ownership of television is positively associated with trust in the media in democratic societies and negatively with trust in the media in non-democratic societies.

Ariely (2015) observe that although the media serves as a vital source of information about politics, the relationship between trust in the media and political trust has been largely overlooked, especially outside the US. Using a comparative approach, this study examines the ways in which trust in the press and political trust are related in different media environments. Analyzing survey data from 32 European countries, authors find that while trust in the press and political trust are positively related, the magnitude of this relationship varies across countries. This variation is explained by three structural components in the media environment: media autonomy, journalistic professionalism, and party-press parallelism. Multilevel models show that countries with greater media autonomy and journalistic professionalism show a weaker relationship between media trust and political trust. A stronger relationship is obtained in a media environment characterized by page/press parallelism. These findings illustrate how the media environment influences citizens' perceptions of the political sphere: the less restricted and more professional the media environment, the more the public has the opportunity to be influenced by what is presented.

Conclusion

Our research refutes the one-step flow theory of communication. This work predates most social media, but it argues that in a communication environment with many of options, more people choose niche media to obtain information in a one-step flow. It has been observed that an increasing number of news organizations are providing social media sharing tools on their digital news sites. These opportunities have led to the development of a "two-step gatekeeping process" whereby news consumers re-disseminate content to audiences that are considered "secondary." Put differently, people are not just sharing content but are also urged to do so in ways that highlight the usefulness of two-step flow. Scholarly research ought to re-examine

current theoretical frameworks in order to comprehend the changing directions of computer-mediated information. In general, this study highlights how crucial it is to review basic mass communication concepts in order to comprehend how various processes, such as two-step flow, manifest themselves in new media. Social media users rely on social recommendation cues and views of opinion leadership in an era of abundant information and digital news sharing to evaluate the reliability of information; nonetheless, it should be noted that this study presents a simplified conceptualization of opinion leadership.

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