

**Social Media Use, Media Credibility and Online Engagement among
Young Adults in China**

Qiong Gong

This research was funded through a PhD scholarship of the China Scholarship Council (CSC).

ISBN/EAN: 978-90-76665-39-9

Publisher: Erasmus Research Center for Media, Communication and Culture (ERMeCC)

Dissertation series no. 20

Cover design: Qiong Gong

Printing: ProefschriftMaken || www.proefschriftmaken.nl

© 2019 Qiong Gong

All rights reserved. No part of this thesis may be reproduced, distributed, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any mean without prior permission by the author

**Social Media Use, Media Credibility and Online
Engagement among Young Adults in China**

Gebruik van sociale media, geloofwaardigheid van media, en
online participatie onder jonge volwassenen in China

Thesis

to obtain the degree of Doctor from the
Erasmus University Rotterdam
by command of the
rector magnificus

Prof. dr. R.C.M.E. Engels

and in accordance with the decision of the Doctorate Board.
The public defence shall be held on

Thursday 9 January 2020 at 13.30 hrs

by

Qiong Gong
born in Hubei, China

Erasmus University Rotterdam



Doctoral Committee:

Promotor: Prof. dr. M.S.S.E. Janssen

Other members: Prof. dr. J.J. Jansz
Prof. dr. J. Groshek
Dr. M. Skoric

Copromotor: Dr. M.N.M. Verboord

Contents

Acknowledgements	<i>i</i>
List of Acronyms	<i>ii</i>
List of Tables	<i>iii</i>
List of Figures	<i>iv</i>
Chapter 1 General introduction	1
1.1 Social media, credibility and trust in the digital age	1
1.2 Theoretical background	4
1.2.1 Understanding the Chinese media landscape	4
1.2.2 Different media uses and media repertoires	6
1.2.3 Credibility and trust related to media	9
1.2.4 How do media usage and credibility relate to online engagement?	14
1.3 Research Questions	17
1.4 Method and Data	17
1.5 Outline of this thesis	19
1.5.1 Politics	20
1.5.2 Culture	21
1.5.3 Health	21
Chapter 2 Media usage and political trust among young adults in China: The mediating role of media credibility and the moderating roles of trust in sources and political membership	25
Abstract	26
2.1 Introduction	27
2.2 Conceptual framework and hypotheses	29
2.2.1 Media usage and political trust	29
2.2.2 The mediating role of media credibility	30
2.2.3 The moderating role of trust in sources: Media and non-media sources	32
2.2.4 The moderating role of CCP membership	33
2.3 The research method	36
2.3.1 Data collection	36
2.3.2 Measures	36
2.3.3 Analysis	38
2.4 Results	38
2.4.1 Descriptive results	38
2.4.2 Hypothesis testing	39
2.5 Conclusions and discussion	43

Chapter 3 Cross-media usage repertoires and their political impacts among young Chinese Adults	49
Abstract	50
3.1 Introduction	51
3.2 Social media usage and political involvement	52
3.3 Media repertoires and their impacts	53
3.4 The research method	55
3.4.1 The data	55
3.4.2 Measures	55
3.4.3 Analytical strategy	57
3.5 The results	57
3.5.1 Descriptive results	57
3.5.2 Media repertoires	58
3.5.3 What predicts cross-media repertoires?	62
3.5.4 Political implications of cross-media repertoires	65
3.6 Conclusion and discussion	67
 Chapter 4 Cultural taste repertoires and online engagement with arts and culture in the digital age	 71
Abstract	72
4.1 Introduction	73
4.2 Literature review	74
4.2.1 Explaining cultural consumption repertoires in the Chinese context	74
4.2.2 Media impact on cultural consumption repertoires	75
4.2.3 Online engagement with culture and the arts	77
4.3 Data and measurements	78
4.3.1 Data collection	78
4.3.2 Design	78
4.3.3 Measures	78
4.4 Results	80
4.4.1 Mapping cultural consumption repertoires	80
4.4.2 What predicts cultural consumption repertoires?	82
4.4.3 What predicts online engagement with art and culture?	86
4.5 Conclusions	88

Chapter 5 Social media use and health information seeking and sharing among young Chinese adults	93
Abstract	94
5.1 Introduction	95
5.2 Theoretical framework	97
5.2.1 Explaining the credibility of health- and fitness-related information in the media in China	97
5.2.2 Explaining online engagement with health and fitness	99
5.3 Methods	101
5.3.1 The data	101
5.3.2 Measurements	101
5.3.3 Analytical design	102
5.4 Results	102
5.4.1 Descriptive results	102
5.4.2 Who tends to trust health and fitness-related information?	103
5.4.3 Online engagement with health and fitness	105
5.5 Discussion and conclusions	107
Chapter 6 General conclusion and discussion	113
6.1 Summary of main findings: answers to the research questions	116
6.1.1 Politics	116
6.1.2 Culture	117
6.1.3 Health	118
6.1.4 Online political engagement	120
6.1.5 Online engagement with arts and culture	120
6.1.6 Online engagement with health and fitness	121
6.2 Implications	121
6.3 Limitations and directions for future research	124
References	127
Summary	160
Samenvatting	166
Curriculum vitae	170
Portfolio	171

Acknowledgements

Writing this section reminds me of the time when I completed my studies for the master's degree five years ago. It was springtime in Shanghai, and all the flowers started to bloom after a long and cold winter. I was looking forward to the upcoming summer, as well as to my forthcoming journey in the Netherlands, as a new PhD student. Little did I know then that life as a PhD candidate is full of frustrations and hardships in a foreign country where the culture is so different from the one I am from. I experienced many culture shocks when I came to Rotterdam. I was not used to a cold lunch and I did not even know that I should make an appointment with my supervisors before our meetings. I did not expect PhD studentship to be such a long and difficult journey, but I am glad that I met here so many wonderful people who helped me make my own dreams come true.

First of all, I would like to thank my promotor, Susanne Janssen, the first Dutch person I met. I still remember the first interview we had on Skype, when I was in Shanghai. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to study for a PhD in Rotterdam, and for all your support during the past years. I appreciate everything you have done for me. Also, I would like to express my great gratitude to Marc Verboord, my co-promotor. Thank you for all the new things you taught me and for the useful feedback and advice you gave me. My PhD thesis would not have been completed without your continued support and encouragement. I am also indebted to Manuela Tecusan for carefully copy-editing this dissertation.

I am very grateful to have had the good fortune to work with all my inspiring colleagues in the Department of Media & Communication and with other PhD fellows from the PhD Club. Many thanks to all of you! I am especially grateful to Evelien, Shangwei, Yijing, Yosha, Anouk, Elizabeth, Pieter, Min, Apoorva, Zouhair, Arne, Ana, Vidhi, and my lovely roommates Ruud, Simone, Qian, Rashid, Rian, Emy, Carmen, Lei, Hoan, Anne, and Roel. I won't forget all the nice chats, laughs, jokes, and tears we shared in our office. Also, I made many great friends in my time in Rotterdam. I wish to thank my dear friends Ziyu, Danyang, Simeng, Huimin, Gloria, Tina, Martina, Qiaomei, Yanwei, Hongchun, Karen, Julie, Weiting, Sasha for your company. Special thanks to Michel, Caryl, Armand, and Pascal.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to my family. I deeply thank my mum, my dad, my brother, my sister-in-law, my nephew, my baby niece, and my cousins for their endless support and love. Although I live far away from you, I feel so happy every time I have video calls with you! Thank you for always being there for me; home will always be home. I love you all.

July 2019, Rotterdam

List of Acronyms

BIC	Bayesian information criterion
CAIC	Consistent Akaike Information Criterion
CNY	Chinese Yuan
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CNNIC	China Internet Network Information Center
LCA	Latent Class Analysis
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics of China
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UGC	User-generated Content

List of Tables

- Table 1.1 The Eight Selected Chinese Social Media
- Table 2.1 Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Variable Correlations (N = 979)
- Table 2.2 OLS Regression Models Predicting Political Trust (Models 1–3) and Media Credibility (Models 4–5)
- Table 2.3 OLS Regression Models Predicting the Moderation Effects
- Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistics of Media Usage
- Table 3.2 Summary of Test Results for the Estimated Latent Class Models
- Table 3.3 Cross-Media Repertoires among Young Chinese Adults
- Table 3.4 User Characteristics of Cluster Members of Cross-Media Repertoires
- Table 3.5 Distal Outcomes for Three Aspects of Political Involvement
- Table 4.1 Summary of Cultural Participation Patterns in Each Repertoire
- Table 4.2 Profile of Individuals in Cultural Repertoires
- Table 4.3 Results of Step-3 Analysis with Distal Outcomes for the Online Engagement with Arts and Culture
- Table 5.1 OLS Regression Models predicting Credibility of Health- and Fitness-Related Information from Traditional and Social Media
- Table 5.2 OLS Regression Models Predicting Online Engagement with Health and Fitness

List of Figures

Figure 1 The Main Concepts Involved in This Study

Figure 2 Data Collection

Figure 3 The Overall Framework of This Dissertation

Figure 4 A Hypothesized Model

Figure 5 A Research Model with Results

Figure 6 Comparisons between Media uses along Three Different Dimensions in Three Domains



Chapter 1

General introduction



I General introduction

I.I Social media, credibility and trust in the digital age

Today we live in a complex media environment with an array of media options and various information sources available both online and offline that ranges from traditional media such as television and newspapers to social media such as Facebook (a social network) and YouTube (a content community). The rise of user-generated content (UGC) and the continued growth of social media have transformed the modalities of information diffusion, especially among young people. For young generations, social media in particular represent important sources for obtaining all sorts of information; on the other hand, this information is often unsolicited (e.g. messages from friends) (boyd, 2014; Hargittai & Hsieh, 2010; Westerman, Spence, & Van Der Heide, 2014). At the same time, the dissemination of fake or unreliable information has gained increasing public discussions worldwide in various domains in people's daily life (e.g. politics and health) (Kye, Shim, Kim, & Park, 2019; Westerman et al., 2014; Xingting Zhang, Wen, Liang, & Lei, 2017). This makes media credibility an important concern in the current media environment (Appelman & Sundar, 2016; Ardèvol-Abreu, Hooker, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2018; Westerman et al., 2014), particularly for the young generations, who have been found to pay more attention to the quality of information they receive from new sources than the older generation (Edgerly, 2017). The explosive growth of unreliable information online raises questions about how young people judge the usefulness and credibility of various media. Do they consider social media to be as credible as traditional media? Is their daily media usage related to the perceived credibility of traditional and social media? Further, how do these two media-related factors – use and credibility of the media – link to young people's further online activities?

The central concern of this dissertation is with the perceived credibility of information on traditional and social media. Credibility is a central element in trust (Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Tsfat, 2010). Prior studies suggest that individuals' media use is closely connected to the perceived credibility of media (Kioussis, 2001; Tsfat & Cappella, 2003), and both media usage and perceived credibility are associated with further online activities such as expressing opinions about government and politics, reviewing cultural products, and health-related information seeking (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012; Holt, Shehata, Strömbäck, & Ljungberg, 2013; Leguina, Arancibia-Carvajal, & Widdop, 2017; Lin, Zhang, Song, & Omori, 2016; Yun & Park, 2010). This dissertation will examine the relationship between media use, credibility, and online engagement in three important domains: politics, culture, and health, which are all strongly related to the perceived credibility of information in young people's daily life. In consequence, this

study aims to improve understanding of how young people assess information related to politics, culture, and health that they obtain from different traditional and social media platforms and to explore how the perceived credibility of these platforms impacts behaviors and forms of engagement vis-à-vis current topics in the contemporary media environment.

The focus is on the case of China, a country with a state-controlled media system, in which during the past decades a highly diversified ecology of social media platforms has emerged. With the rapid development of digital and mobile media technologies, the Internet and social media platforms have become increasingly widespread in the world, from the West to the East, and from democracies to countries with other forms of political systems (Boulianne, 2015). However, the existing literature has mainly focused on credibility-related research in well-established democracies (e.g. Westerman et al., 2014), whereas research that addresses non-Western countries and other political regimes is still scarce. Unlike most young people in Western democracies, today's generations of young people grow up and live in China without Google, Facebook, or Twitter but with a heavy dose of censorship. China represents a theoretically important case for examining media use, credibility, and online engagement in politics, culture, and health. First, China has the highest number of Internet users in the world (around 829 million Internet users: China Internet Network Information Center [CNNIC], 2019) and Chinese websites such as Baidu (the fourth) and QQ.com (the sixth) are dominant among the top global websites (Alexa, 2019). Second, not only is China one of the fastest growing economic and political players in the world, but its media field has its own particular characteristics and circumstances, notably a political context that differs from that of Western countries owing to China's one-party system and the high level of censorship exercised by the government. Also, the level of trust in institutions in China is remarkably high by comparison to that of most Western democracies (L. Li, 2004; Shen & Guo, 2013; Steinhardt, 2012). Findings from Western countries may not apply to China, which is a less democratic environment. Third, it has been suggested that there are cross-cultural differences in media-related engagement (Morahan-Martin, 2004; Song et al., 2016). A wealth of comparative, cross-media studies on media credibility, usually presented in English, have been carried out in Western democracies and are about Western users, but media credibility has not been studied that often for other countries (AlMansour, Brankovic, & Iliopoulos, 2014; Jiang, 2019). Finally, China has witnessed a significant shift owing to rapid economic growth after the implementation of a set of major economic reforms policies in 1978. Chinese citizens have experienced huge changes associated with unprecedented economic development in the past two decades, in the fields of culture consumption and healthcare among others. Not only is China the most populous country in the world, but its income inequality is among the largest worldwide (Xie & Zhou, 2014).

In China, social media users are slightly younger than in the Western world (CNNIC, 2019), nearly 72 percent of them being under 40 years of age. This dissertation focuses on young adults in the broadly defined age group of 18 to 40, because young adults' media preferences are hugely different from those of the older generation, which grew up in a media environment where social media did not exist or had not become dominant (Edgerly, 2017). In addition, China's young adults are exposed not only to traditional media (e.g. television, radio, and magazine) in their daily life, but also to a variety of social media outlets developed in China (e.g. Sina Weibo, WeChat, Baidu Tieba, and Zhihu). As social media offer more possibilities for people to gather news and information related to various topics, there is increasing attention being paid to information overload and to a lack of credibility assessment (Metzger, Flanagin, & Medders, 2010) in such an abundant high-choice media environment. If one takes social media into account, the media impacts now may be different from what they were two decades ago.

Taken as a whole, this dissertation examines how individuals, and young adults in particular, evaluate the credibility of information derived from the media in the domains of politics, culture, and health and how the perceived credibility of traditional and social media links to media use and online engagement in the context of China. The overall aim of this project is to deepen understanding of social media use, media credibility, and online engagement in politics, culture, and health in the digital age. In the following sections, the main concepts and theories related to this research are presented and discussed, and this will provide the context for the four empirical studies that make up the main body of the text. Each empirical study conducted for this dissertation highlights a key domain – politics, culture, and health – painting an overall picture of the relationships between different kinds of media use, the credibility of traditional and social media, and online engagement among young adults in China (see Figure 1).

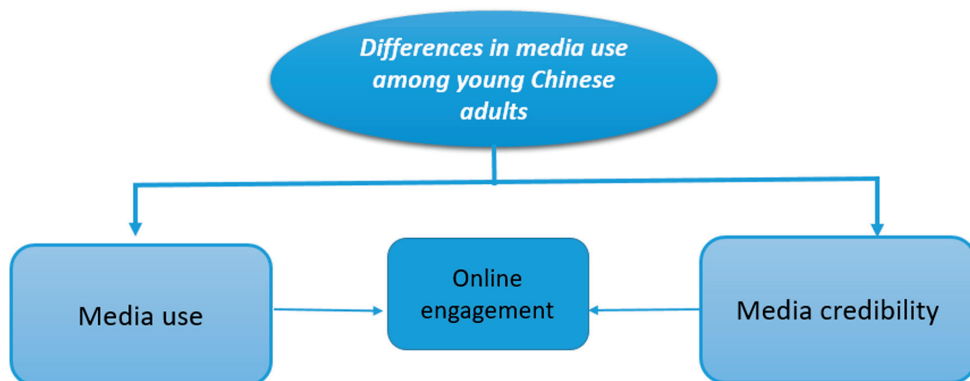


Figure 1 The Main Concepts Involved in This Study

1.2 Theoretical background

In order to understand the relationships between media usage, media credibility, and online engagement in the Chinese context, we need first of all to take a closer look at the Chinese media landscape. Then several concepts and relevant theories will be introduced. The second subsection will discuss differences in media use. The third will explain the concepts of credibility and trust, as well as several key variables linked to media, trust, and credibility in the domains of politics and health: media credibility and trust in institutions (i.e. political trust, trust in the media, and trust in the healthcare system). The final subsection will focus on how media use and credibility influence online engagement in politics, culture, and health-related domains.

1.2.1 Understanding the Chinese media landscape

The Chinese media environment is unique. Since the introduction of economic reforms in the 1970s, it has shifted from being owned and financed by the state to commercial liberalization. At present, most media organizations receive funding through advertising revenues, though some of them continue to obtain small or indirect financial support from the government (Stockmann, 2013). However, all major newspapers as well as the main television and radio stations are still registered as organizations under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or under the government and are regarded as mouthpieces of the CCP (Freedom House, 2017). Just like the mass media, the Internet is also under tight state control (Freedom House, 2017). The authorities use a combination of policy measures, cybersecurity legislation, and technical solutions to control domestic websites and to block some foreign sites (Freedom House, 2017; J. Zhao, 2008). By the end of December 2018, China had 829 million Internet users, 73.3 percent of them being in urban areas (CNNIC, 2019). Also, mobile device use has become increasingly important. China counted 817 million mobile Internet users in December 2018, and the rate of using mobile phones to access the Internet was over 98 percent, by comparison to around 48 percent and 36 percent for desktops and laptops respectively (CNNIC, 2019). This trend of mobile device use has accelerated the popularity of social media usage.

The Chinese market is dominated by homegrown services, and the affordances of the Chinese social media platforms are quite diverse. The user profiles of these platforms show both similarities and differences, which make it worthwhile to examine how platforms are combined across media outlets among young adults. In this thesis I limit myself to a number of specific Chinese media platforms, namely four types of traditional media and eight social media forms. The four traditional media are television (both on TV set and online), newspaper (in print only), magazine (in print only), and radio (both on radio set and online). The selected eight Chinese social media platforms are Sina

Weibo, WeChat, Qzone, Zhihu, Baidu Tieba, Tianya Club, Douban.com, and Guokr (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 The Eight Selected Chinese Social Media

Social Media	Launch Time	General Description	Users' Characteristics	Platforms They Are Available on
Tianya Club	1999.02	Discussion forum (one of the most popular Internet forums)	Most of the active users are from southern China and other big cities	Desktop, mobile
Baidu Tieba	2003.12	Communication platform	Young; most of the active users are teenagers	Desktop, mobile
Douban.com	2005.03	User-generated content platform (e.g. related to movies, books, music, and offline events)	Mostly married; ages mainly between 31 and 35	Desktop, mobile
Qzone	2005.06	User-generated content platform (similar to MSN Space)	Young; most of the active users are teenagers	Desktop, mobile
Sina Weibo	2009.08	Communication platform (microblogging website, a hybrid of Twitter and Facebook)	Ages mainly between 18 and 25	Desktop, mobile
Guokr.com	2010.11	Online community platform for science and technology education	Young, well-educated, and science lovers	Desktop, mobile
WeChat	2011.01	Communication platform (comparable to WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram; also offers commerce and payment services)	Male rather than female; ages mainly between 18 and 35; number of senior users is increasing	Mainly on mobile, limited functions on PC version
Zhihu.com	2011.01	Discussion forum (the most popular question-and-answer website)	Ages mainly between 19 and 24 youth; predominantly single	Desktop, mobile

At the time the survey was conducted, the most popular Chinese social media platforms were Sina Weibo, WeChat, Qzone, Baidu Tieba, Douban.com, and Zhihu.com (CNNIC, 2017). Sina Weibo, a hybrid of Twitter and Facebook, came online in 2009 and became a very popular Chinese microblogging website. In the first quarter of 2019, it had approximately 465 million monthly active users and 203 million daily active users (Weibo Corp, 2019). WeChat (in Chinese Weixin, meaning “micro message”) is a

standalone messaging app by Tencent (one of the world's largest social media companies) that was launched in 2011. It had over 1.1 billion monthly active users in the first quarter of 2019 (Statista, 2019). WeChat's distinctive characteristic is that WeChat "friends" usually know one another offline (Gan, 2017). Whereas the social circles of Sina Weibo are normally open and public, those on WeChat are more exclusive and private, open only to family and friends (DeLuca, Brunner, & Sun, 2016). Qzone and Douban.com are both more oriented toward UGC. Qzone, as a bonded service to QQ by Tencent, is a social network that is used for writing blogs, sharing photos, and listening to music and is very popular among Chinese youths between 15 and 20 years of age (Apaolaza, He, & Hartmann, 2014). Baidu Tieba is an online community launched in 2003 by the largest Chinese search engine company, Baidu. Douban.com allows users to search or create content related to music, films, books, recent events, and activities in Chinese cities. Zhihu.com and Tianya Club can be described as discussion platforms. Zhihu.com is a question-and-answer website designed to provide users with expert knowledge, insights into various topics, and space for discussion. Tianya Club – the oldest platform in my sample – is seen as an Internet forum, but started to include blog, microblog, and photo album services as well. The last platform is Guokr.com, which is an online community focusing on science and relevant topics.

1.2.2 Different media uses and media repertoires

In the early stages of Internet use studies, scholars were concerned about unequal access and the differences between users and nonusers. Inequality of access (the "digital divide") was important, and so were the systematic differences observed between who was and who was not a user of certain types of media formats. As access increased almost to the point of becoming omnipresent, the focus shifted to differences in equipment, skill, and media use patterns (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). Furthermore, researchers started to examine the outcomes of using new media, in other words to investigate who is most likely to benefit from using the Internet and the social media (van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). Recent studies show that young people do not spend much time on traditional media, and the boundary between interpersonal and mass communication is blurring (Edgerly, 2017; Sundar, 2008). However, most of these studies have focused on media usage in media environments with well-developed digital infrastructures and near-universal access. Internet access has become a standard for most Western populations (Scheerder, van Deursen, & van Dijk, 2017), but not in the non-Western world. In China, the Internet penetration rate is much lower. By the end of December 2018, the Internet penetration rate in China reached 59.6 percent overall and 74.6 percent in cities (CNNIC, 2019). In this general context, the present thesis proposes to examine the differences between traditional and social media use, the use of specific social media platforms, and media use patterns.

1.2.2.1 Traditional versus social media

There is ample evidence to suggest that social media are different from traditional media in many ways. First, these two media types often contain different information sources. Traditional media outlets normally rely for their sources on professional journalists, official authorities, organizations, and institutions (Jackob, 2010). Social media, on the other hand, contain more user-created and unsolicited information (e.g. Westerman et al., 2014). Also, in China social media have provided citizens with more diverse kinds of information than before, including critical information about political issues (Hassid, 2012). Traditional media are associated with editorial control and fact checking, and generally provide information selected by gatekeepers (e.g. editors, critics, and authorities). Social media have content from more sources (e.g. family, close friends, peers or strangers) and often lack of professional gatekeepers to check content (Song et al., 2016; Westerman et al., 2014). Second, by comparison to traditional media, social media not only offer easier and faster access to unlimited information at any time of day (Y. Li, Wang, Lin, & Hajli, 2018), but also provide more options for users who may wish to participate in activities and interact socially with others (C. Li, 2018; McKinley & Wright, 2014). For example, social media such as Facebook and Twitter offer users more opportunities to voice their opinions directly, in written political expressions and through interaction with others (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011). In China the media system is politically oriented more than market-oriented, which may imply that, owing to the rise of the Internet, differences between state-controlled traditional media and more independent social media have augmented. Given the situation of state-controlled traditional media in China, media are regarded as mouthpieces of the Party, traditional media in particular (H. Zhang, Zhou, & Shen, 2014). Although online platforms are also under the tight control of the Chinese government, there is more space for young adults to resort to opinions that are different from those of traditional media (Luo & Harrison, 2019). Understanding how traditional media are different from social media is helpful insofar as it leads to a better understanding of the credibility of traditional and social media in the eyes of young adults, as well as to a better understanding of further online engagement.

1.2.2.2 Comparison among particular media outlets

In addition to the distinctions between traditional and social media outlets, there is also an increasing diversity among online media outlets and platforms (Johnson & Kaye, 2015, 2015; A. Smith, Fischer, & Chen, 2012). Varying functions and characteristics of social media formats result in differences in users' preferences for them, according to the information they seek. For example, individuals turn to blogs for in-depth information and for perspectives that they normally cannot obtain from other platforms (Johnson & Kaye, 2009). Also, users' characteristics are different across social media outlets. The connections of Facebook users tend to be real-life friends, and Facebook posts are

normally restricted to friends, while Twitter connections are typically among strangers and posts on Twitter are public (Johnson & Kaye, 2015). Platforms also differ in the user experiences they offer: some are arguably more entertainment-oriented, others more information-oriented. Whereas some platforms have become quite “mainstream” through the corporatization that often accompanies growth (van Dijck, 2013; Webster & Ksiazek, 2012), others remain more “niche.” Since each medium outlet has its own unique architecture and culture, differences in media use could be related to the precise nature of media platforms. It is thus necessary to investigate the differences between specific media outlets. Examining such differences (e.g. characteristics and functions) is vital if we wish to understand how young adults’ perception of the credibility of traditional and social media and their online engagement are shaped by each media option.

1.2.2.3 Media repertoires

Although there are differences across social media platforms, many studies still treat social media as a single media category (M. Chan, Wu, Hao, Xi, & Jin, 2012). With the growing variety of choice options and the compartmentalization of content types this often entails, audiences are possibly more tempted to engage in selective exposure, which means sticking to media that align with existing preferences (Webster & Ksiazek, 2012). The strong diversification of social media platforms in the past decade calls for a more differentiated approach. It makes sense to consider a more fine-grained view of social media; this is also how media repertoire theory has analyzed patterns of media usage before the rise of online media (van Rees & van Eijck, 2003). To be sure, how various usages of new media in general are embedded within media repertoires has been documented (Yuan, 2011) and both user-centric¹ and audience-centric approaches have mapped the place of social media outlets in wider media networks (Webster & Ksiazek, 2012). But, as far as I know, only few studies have yet distinguished social media repertoires at the level of individual users (e.g. Boczkowski, Matassi, & Mitchelstein, 2018).

The study of media repertoires has become pivotal owing to the rapid expansion of the media landscape in the past years (Taneja, Webster, Malthouse, & Ksiazek, 2012; Webster & Ksiazek, 2012). “Media repertoires” refers to styles of media consumption, namely to the ritualistic or habitual ways in which individuals combine various sorts of media usage (print versus audiovisual, offline versus online, elite newspapers versus popular newspapers, etc.) or various media outlets (TV channels, newspaper titles, social media platforms, etc.) into a single bundle of practices (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006;

¹ User-centric studies focus on media repertoires at the level of individual consumers and are mainly designed to describe typical users or to identify users’ types over a certain period of time (Webster & Ksiazek, 2012).

Reagan, 1996; Rubin, 1993; Yuan, 2011). Recent work on media repertoires has been inspired by three traditions in media usage research. First, the “uses and gratifications” framework has emphasized how individual and psychological factors – personal needs and preferences – predict media choice (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Rubin, 1993). Related to that, sociologically tinted lifestyle research outlined how membership of certain status groups (e.g., class, education) influences taste preferences and, subsequently, media choices (van Rees & van Eijck, 2003). Thirdly, structural factors such as access to media, program schedules, and audience availability have been found to determine media choices (McDowell & Sutherland, 2000; Webster, 2009; Yuan, 2011). This approach has mainly been adopted to explain the effect of program schedule characteristics on TV viewing (Cooper, 1993; Taneja et al., 2012; Yuan & Webster, 2006). More and more, these elements have been integrated into a model of “media duality” (Webster, 2011) in which both individual and structural or contextual factors affect media choices and shape media repertoires (Cooper & Tang, 2009; S. Kim, 2014; Taneja et al., 2012; Yuan & Ksiazek, 2011). Previous studies that combined individual and structural factors in order to explain media patterns have examined either a single medium, mostly television (Cooper & Tang, 2009; Yuan & Ksiazek, 2011), or media patterns across multiple media outlets, for example news exposure across television, radio, print media, and the Internet (Edgerly, 2015), or media usage of television, newspaper and Internet for various purposes (S. Kim, 2014). These studies indicate that audience characteristics (e.g. age, gender, and education), audience availability, and place of residence influence media usage (Cooper & Tang, 2009; S. Kim, 2014; Taneja et al., 2012). The present dissertation aims to investigate the patterns of media use across four traditional media and eight specific social media outlets among young Chinese adults by taking a user-centric (focusing on individual users; Webster & Ksiazek, 2012) and a repertoire-oriented approach.

1.2.3 Credibility and trust related to media

Credibility and trust are important concepts related to media (Appelman & Sundar, 2016; Jakob, 2010; Kohring & Matthes, 2007), as they help us understand why people use certain media and not others, or why particular media usage can have impacts on users’ behaviors in the digital age. Media credibility and the related construct of trust in media have attracted scholarly attention in media and communication studies over the past decades (Appelman & Sundar, 2016; Ardèvol-Abreu et al., 2018; Kioussis, 2001; Livio & Cohen, 2018; Tsati & Ariely, 2014). Credibility and trust are similar; but they are not the same concept (Fogg & Tseng, 1999). Credibility is a central component of trust (Jakob, 2010) and offers a reason to trust. It is assumed that, when users consider a medium or channel to be credible, they are more likely to trust that medium or channel (Kohring & Matthes, 2007).

1.2.3.1 Media credibility

According to previous studies, credibility can be simply defined as believability (Fogg & Tseng, 1999) and is generally conceived of as a user-based perception (a judgment made by the users themselves) that has several dimensions: accuracy, fairness, trustworthiness, and depth (Fogg & Tseng, 1999; Johnson & Kaye, 2009; Metzger et al., 2010; Westerman et al., 2014). These dimensions are critical aspects that influence a user's assessment of the credibility of the information received, as credibility perceptions result from evaluating multiple dimensions simultaneously (Fogg & Tseng, 1999). In other words, in assessing credibility, a receiver makes a judgment of these components before arriving at an overall evaluation. The credibility judgment is also a key early stage in the persuasion process (Wathen & Burkell, 2002). This is why credibility helps us understand why users turn to certain media and how they decide what to believe.

Traditionally, credibility is conceptualized as consisting of three separate subsets: source credibility, message credibility, and medium credibility (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). Medium credibility or channel credibility research focuses mainly on the medium (or channel) through which the message is delivered (e.g. newspaper versus radio, television versus the Internet); research on source credibility is mostly about the characteristics of the source – that is, the entity that offers the news (e.g. the organization, the speaker, or the news organization) (Golan, 2010). Message credibility is more about the veracity of the content of communication (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). Thus media credibility is a complicated concept as the source, message, and medium outlets are difficult to separate in mediated communication (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). For example, it is often challenging to identify the original source of information that is retweeted or reposted through multiple sources. Although young adults receive news via mobile apps or email, the originating sources of news are, or relate mostly to, the online offerings of traditional media outlets (Antunovic, Parsons, & Cooke, 2018). Focusing on medium and message credibility, the present study concerns assessing whether young people regard the political information, arts and culture information, and health information that they receive on television, read in newspapers, or view on social media as fair, believable, accurate, or in-depth. This thesis examines the perceived credibility of information on politics, culture, and health that one gets from traditional media and from social media; then it explores how the credibility that people attribute to the information provided by these media relates to different forms of media usage and online engagement.

Prior studies on media credibility investigated for the most part the credibility of radio, newspapers, television, and the Internet and conducted cross-media comparisons (Johnson & Kaye, 2009; Kioussis, 2001; Metzger et al., 2010). People tend to rate different news technologies and outlets differently (Livio & Cohen, 2018). TV news has

been found to be judged as being more credible than newspapers (Stroud & Lee, 2013). Additionally, recommendations-based information is perceived as being more relevant and more credible (Metzger et al., 2010). More recently, also social media credibility has gained attention (Xiaojing Li & Zhang, 2018; Warren, Sulaiman, & Jaafar, 2014).

Comparisons between traditional media and new media (Internet, social media) produce inconsistent results. One set of scholars found that the Internet is judged to be more credible than its traditional counterparts (Banning & Sweetser, 2007; Johnson & Kaye, 1998), yet another group of scholars report opposite results (Kiousis, 2001; H. Zhang et al., 2014). Furthermore, some other researchers argue that the credibility of traditional media and that of their online versions are rated similarly (Antunovic et al., 2018; Stavrositu & Sundar, 2008). A main reason why respondents rated the two types similarly is that, in the current, complicated media environment, the sources of social media and those of traditional media sometimes overlap. Online sources normally include digital versions of newspapers, as well as the websites and social media accounts of traditional TV channels. For example, people receive daily news by following the official accounts of CNN or BBC on Twitter. A recent study pointed out that, although young adults receive news via mobile apps or email, the originating sources of news are mostly traditional media outlets (Antunovic et al., 2018).

Previous studies have also provided evidence that media credibility is associated with different types of media usage (Johnson & Kaye, 1998, 2015; Wanta & Hu, 1994; Westerman et al., 2014). In general, there is a positive relationship between media usage and perceived media credibility (Kiousis, 2001; Tsfat, 2010; Wanta & Hu, 1994), as well as between media usage and trust in media (Lin et al., 2016; Tokuda, Fujii, Jimba, & Inoguchi, 2009; Yamamoto, Lee, & Ran, 2016). Exposure to or reliance on a medium was found to decrease media skepticism (subjective feeling of alienation from the media) and positively predicted perceptions of media credibility (Tsfat, 2010; Wanta & Hu, 1994). Kaye and Johnson (2017) demonstrate that credibility is the strongest measure of social media use with regard to its predictive effect on motivations for the use of social networking sites and blogs. Another study indicates that the more time people spend on a medium, the more credibility they tend to attach to this platform (Mehrabi, Hassan, & Ali, 2009). Conversely, when users perceive a medium as not being credible, they may switch to another platform, which they consider to be more trustworthy (Johnson & Kaye, 2015). Furthermore, the perceived credibility of media not only leads to different media choices among the options available (e.g. traditional media versus Internet-based information sources; see Kiousis, 2001 and H. Zhang et al., 2014); it also relates to different patterns of media use. For instance, Stavrositu and Sundar (2008) posit that individuals' broader media usage repertoire matters: the credibility of the Internet is associated with both newspaper usage and Internet usage, but newspaper credibility is

influenced only by Internet usage. In addition, the different use of media and media repertoires, as well as the perceived credibility of media, may lead to different levels of online engagement. For example, the credibility of online health information is a major factor in determining further online engagement – in the form of seeking more health-related information and showing willingness to share that information – after an initial search (Hou & Shim, 2010; Lin et al., 2016; Ye, 2010; Yun & Park, 2010).

1.2.3.2 Trust in institutions: Trust in media and political trust

Definitions of trust are intrinsically multifaceted and not a single one has been accepted across the board (Corritore, Kracher, & Wiedenbeck, 2003; Williams, 2012). One of the reasons is that trust has been studied by scholars from different fields – philosophy, sociology, psychology, management, and electronic commerce (Bimber, 2001; Yuning Wu & Sun, 2009). The definitions of trust generally appeal to concepts such as expectation, vulnerability, confidence, and collaboration (e.g. Corritore et al., 2003; Rotter, 1971). For instance, Hosmer (1995) sees trust as the reliance of one person, group, or firm upon the voluntary acceptance, by another person, group, or firm, of a duty to recognize and protect the rights and interests of all those engaged in a joint endeavor or economic exchange. Trust also implies that individuals are making themselves vulnerable to other individuals, groups or institutions that may harm or betray them (Levi & Stoker, 2000). In the online world, trust is the act of a trustor, while trustworthiness is a characteristic of the object of trust (Corritore et al., 2003).

Trust also plays a vital role in relationships between the medium (or media) and the recipient, particularly when it comes to uncertain situations beyond personal experience (Jakob, 2010; Kohring & Matthes, 2007). Trust is a complex interpersonal and organizational construct (Tyler & Degoey, 1995). Although there are various types of trust, the current study is looking at trust in institutions (e.g. media organizations, government institutions). This notion of trust in institutions is taken here to relate primarily to the faith, beliefs, and expectations people have vis-à-vis institutions and to entail a certain confidence that the institutions in question observe the rules, serve the general interest, and, importantly, are reliable (Devos, Spini, & Schwartz, 2002).

Individuals' trust in media refers to people's belief that media institutions and journalists will perform their job of informing the public in a proficient and credible way (Coleman, 2012). In China, where both traditional and social media are tightly linked to the authorities, there is a great need to cast light on the differences between media credibility and trust in media. Whereas media credibility is about concrete information that people gather from media and about distinctions between various media types or outlets regarding the degree to which people are willing to accept their message as true, trust in media concerns all the media as a whole – as an institution – and normally pits

them against alternative sources of information (Jackob, 2010; Johnson & Kaye, 2009; Kiouisis, 2001). It is assumed that high levels of media credibility attached to a particular medium do not amount to trust in the media as a whole. As already noted, trust plays a key role in media–recipient relationships, and it leads to further usage – for example of alternative media information, or of non-media sources (Jackob, 2010; Kohring & Matthes, 2007; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003).

Besides trust in media institutions, numerous studies have examined trust in political organizations and other public institutions (de Haan & Bardoel, 2011; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010; Warren et al., 2014). Political trust is of vital importance in the study of political regimes and has been a major issue in political scholarship (Ariely, 2015; Cappella, 2002; Gauchat, 2012; Hooghe & Marien, 2013; Tsfati & Ariely, 2014; Yamamoto et al., 2016). Political trust is traditionally conceptualized as citizens' basic evaluative orientations (Stokes, 1962) or affective orientations (Craig, 1993) toward the government predicated on citizens' normative expectations of how their government should operate (A. H. Miller, 1974). Importantly, in this dissertation political trust is taken to have two components: the belief that the political system (or some part of it) will produce preferred outcomes even if left untended (Shi, 2001); and the fact that, to some degree, citizens are confident that their government will exercise its powers in a way that is benign to all social groups. Earlier studies on political trust show that media usage, media credibility, and trust in media are often associated with citizens' confidence in their government (Aarts, Fladmoe, & Strömbäck, 2012; Ceron, 2015; Ceron & Memoli, 2015; de Haan & Bardoel, 2011; Hyun & Kim, 2015; Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010; Shen & Guo, 2013).

In China, citizens express high levels of confidence in the government. The high level of trust leads to more resilience in the aftermath of policy mistakes and administrative blunders (L. Li, 2004) and is of great benefit to officials and political institutions. Scholars link this high level of political trust in China to many factors such as political culture (Shi, 2001) and economic development (Zhengxu Wang, 2005). Drawing on data from the World Value Survey, Shen and Guo (2013) demonstrate that news consumption in general, and TV news consumption in particular, was positively associated with political trust. Political trust is one of the most important determinants of the stability of any political system (X. Chen & Shi, 2001), and how the possible different usage of traditional and social media influences political trust among young Chinese adults still remains unexplored in the digital era.

Apart from political trust, interpersonal trust is the other main kind or species of trust (Blind, 2007). Both political and interpersonal trust are key components in a society. This study also investigates another important case of trust in institutions, namely

trust in the healthcare system and how this matters for the perceived credibility of health and fitness information derived from the media.

1.2.4 How do media usage and credibility relate to online engagement?

The third main concept in my research concerns *online engagement*. In my dissertation I will examine how media usage and credibility affect online engagement in the fields of politics, culture, and health. In China, young consumers are increasingly engaging in various types of online activities in all sorts of domains: consuming cultural products, consulting a doctor online, participating in political events. Users are switching from traditional ways (e.g. radio playing or magazine reading) to social media (e.g. music blogs and online health services) to engage in online activities. Sina Weibo offers a platform for users' political participation (M. Chan et al., 2012) and Chinese college students engage in political discussion on online forums (Mou, Atkin, Fu, Lin, & Lau, 2013). Young people search for independent artists and their music on Douban.com (D. Tang & Lyons, 2016) and for health-related topics on Zhihu.com (Zhe Wang & Zhang, 2016). Scholars from various fields have debated over the role of social media – whether they contribute to people's participatory activities. For example, scholars had many discussions about whether social media are able to increase political participation among young citizens by increasing social interaction and by offering devices that appeal to youth (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Skoric & Poor, 2013; Vissers & Stolle, 2014). A growing body of literature has examined the relationship between media usage, particularly the increasing use of the Internet and social media platforms on the one hand and, on the other, online political engagement and cultural consumption (Boulianne, 2015; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Leguina et al., 2017), as well as health information seeking and sharing (Lin et al., 2016; Ye, 2010).

Just like the concept of trust, that of engagement has various definitions in different domains. Engagement generally refers to behavior that indicates a certain commitment to a topic or brand (Bimber, 2001; Boulianne, 2009). Moreover, online engagement refers to users' Internet-related behavior and is tied to Internet use (Egea, Menéndez, & González, 2006). Online engagement is mainly measured in terms of frequency of participation in various online activities (Blank & Groselj, 2014; Eynon & Malmberg, 2011; Holmes, 2011), and this behavior often comprises frequently and proactively searching for information, comparing information, and sharing information with others (Y. Li et al., 2018; McKinley & Wright, 2014; Yun & Park, 2010). For example, information seeking is one of the strongest predictors of social media use (Guo, Shim, & Otondo, 2010). A report of CNNIC (2017) shows that sharing information was the second top behavior that users perform on WeChat. As the Internet continues to expand globally, the understanding of how media use influences online engagement becomes increasingly indispensable.

Through the Internet, users can participate in numerous types of activities in this digital age: news gathering, making social connections, online gambling, funny videos sharing, and other entertainment activities (Blank & Groselj, 2014). Going online shapes Internet users' life chances and capacity for engagement in various important domains, but not all online activities are equally important (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008). There are many people who go online for entertainment rather than seeking health-related information (Madden & Rainie, 2003). To get a better understanding of young adults' online activities in their daily life, this dissertation will examine online engagement with politics, culture, and health.

1.2.4.1 Online political engagement

How are various forms of media usage and political trust connected to political engagement? This is a relevant question because it addresses the often theorized potential of the Internet to bring about social change (M. Chan et al., 2012; Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009). In the case of China, additional relevance lies in the question of how citizens use social media in a heavily restricted political climate. There is ample evidence from Western countries to suggest that media use relates to political dispositions such as engagement and interest (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Gil de Zúñiga, Molyneux, & Zheng, 2014; Skoric, Zhu, Goh, & Pang, 2016; Xenos, Vromen, & Loader, 2014). Scholars have hypothesized that the Internet, by affording bottom-up communication, can increase political engagement among citizens and bring a new impetus both to it and to trust (e.g., Bakker & De Vreese, 2011; Vissers & Stolle, 2014). Social media such as Facebook and Twitter enable citizens to voice their opinions directly, by giving them political expression in writing, and through interaction with others (van Dijck, 2013). Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2012) argue that the use of social media for keeping abreast of news has the potential to enhance civic engagement offline and online. In the Chinese context, a survey of 499 Sina Weibo users showed that social media use increased the willingness for political participation (M. Chan et al., 2012). Mou and colleagues (2013) found that online forum use was positively associated with online political discussion among Chinese college students. In line with these findings, the present study aims to investigate how media usage, in particular the use of social media, relates to political engagement; and it will do so by taking a repertoire-oriented approach designed to explore how distinct media patterns link to young adults' political engagement online in China.

1.2.4.2 Online engagement with art and culture

Another social domain that is covered in this thesis concerns the field of art and culture. By comparison to research on political communication in the context of China and cultural studies in the Western world, very few studies have focused on how Chinese audiences participate in and engage with the arts and with culture. It is a trend, both

in the West and in China that the young generation goes online to find and share cultural information, for example by searching for cultural events on Douban.com and by sharing cultural information with family and friends via WeChat. As digitalization and more ubiquitous equipment have enlarged the options to access cultural products, cultural consumption is more and more mediatized. Media are not only regarded as an important source to obtain cultural information, they also act as legitimating agents of cultural worth. Critics act as gatekeepers who select cultural products they find important and present them to their audiences (Debenedetti, 2006; Janssen & Verboord, 2015). Compared to new media such as blogs and cultural websites, legacy media such as newspapers and opinion magazines have more clout. However, as (young) audiences are increasingly turning away from the traditional media and toward the new media, reputations are likely to change in the near future. Thus it is worthwhile to examine how specific cultural activities are associated with different types of information sources.

Earlier studies have examined the relationship between media usage, particularly the increasing use of the Internet and social media platforms, and cultural participation (e.g. online music sharing and book information searching) (D. Lee, Yejean Park, Kim, Kim, & Moon, 2011; Leguina et al., 2017; M. Smith & Telang, 2016; Verboord, 2010). However, how online activities in cultural information searching and sharing are linked to certain cultural taste patterns still remains unexplored. The present study aims to deepen our understanding of how online engagement with the arts and culture links to media usage and credibility. It will do so by investigating cultural tastes and preferences among young adults and by trying to see how cultural consumption patterns in this population relate to online engagement with culture and the arts.

1.2.4.3 Online engagement with health and fitness

The third domain for which I examine how media usage and the perceived credibility of distinct media types affect online engagement is health and fitness. Stronger reliance on Internet-based media has changed the way people engage in health-related activities. Nowadays it is increasingly common for people to seek health-related information on the Internet (Bundorf, Wagner, Singer, & Baker, 2006; Sundar, 2008). An empirical study reveals that around 33 percent of Chinese adults in Hong Kong are using the Internet monthly for health information (M. Wang, Viswanath, Lam, Wang, & Chan, 2013). Trust in social media-based information (the information provided on social media by peers) can direct users to further health-related engagement, such as looking for different options, alternative treatment, or medicinal information (Lin et al., 2016). Although social media usage is strongly linked to online engagement, it is likely that not all types of social media have similar influence (C. Li, 2018; McKinley & Wright, 2014). For instance, users who visit *online consulting groups* frequently tended to use

online health services for updates, but this behavior was not affected by the frequency of social network sites and chats usage (Mano, 2014). Also, platforms which are stronger in offering social support probably lead to more online engagement (C. Li, 2018; McKinley & Wright, 2014). It is thus necessary to examine how online engagement with health and fitness – in which a more active and critical disposition is displayed – is affected by differential media usage and by the credibility of various media outlets.

On the whole, this section intends to explore how differences in media usage (e.g. media repertoires, social support-oriented versus nonsocial support-oriented platforms) and the different types of media credibility (i.e. traditional media credibility and social media credibility) relate to online engagement in politics, culture, and health. The study makes reference to activities that may lead to more informed political engagement (e.g. seeking political information online and sharing politicians' opinions), participation in cultural activities (e.g. consuming and reviewing cultural products), and seeking and sharing health-related information in the Chinese context.

I.3 Research Questions

In investigating the relationship between media usage, media credibility, and online engagement among young Chinese adults, this dissertation aims to answer the following main research questions:

RESEARCH QUESTION 1 How strongly do different media uses and media repertoires link to young Chinese adults' perception of media credibility and to their trust in media in the fields of politics, culture, and health?

RESEARCH QUESTION 2 To what extent do different media uses and media repertoires and different forms of media credibility relate to online engagement in the fields of politics, culture, and health among young Chinese adults?

I.4 Method and Data

In order to garner insight into the relationship among differences in media use, traditional and social media credibility, online engagement in politics, culture, and health, a survey on credibility and trust among young adults between the ages of 18 and 40 in China was conducted for this project in 2016. The online survey research method makes it relatively easy to reach a large number of demographically diverse young people (from different provinces, with different education levels and incomes, etc.) who are interested

in social media. The data collection process consisted of two stages (see Figure 2). First, on May 21, 2016 a pilot survey was conducted among 120 selected respondents familiar with the Chinese media system. The questionnaire was adjusted and improved on the basis of their feedback after data analysis. Next, the revised questionnaire was distributed by the research agency wjx.cn, which has a database that covers all Chinese provinces. Only panel members in the age range of 18 to 40 were approached. Participants received compensation from the survey company. In total 1,033 valid responses (age: $M = 29.7$, $SD = 5.02$) were collected on July 7, 2016. This sample concerned respondents who completed the entire survey, with the final minimum response rate of 12.9 percent. Admittedly this response rate is relatively low, but it is common in web surveys (Shih & Fan, 2008; Yamamoto, Kushin, & Dalisay, 2015). There were slightly more female respondents (51.5 percent) participating in the survey. The sample contained a relatively large share of respondents with higher education (50.1 percent college graduates). Until December 2017, people with high school or vocational school educational levels and with junior college or higher education constituted respectively 24.5 percent and 18.6 percent of Chinese Internet users (CNNIC, 2019). Matching this overrepresentation of the highly educated, the majority of participants lived in cities (97.8 percent). Additionally, this overrepresentation seemed tied up with a disproportionately high representation of CCP members (Hyun & Kim, 2015; Hyun, Kim, & Sun, 2014). Around 33 percent of the respondents were CCP members, which was quite a bit higher than the 6 percent national percentage of CCP members (Hyun & Kim, 2015; Kennedy, Nagao, & Liu, 2018). However, Skoric, Zhu, and Pang (2016) note that the highly educated and metropolitan populations tend to be over-represented in Chinese survey samples.

As regards data analysis, the studies presented in this dissertation apply multiple quantitative methods, including ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 and latent class analysis (LCA) by LatentGold. Some analyses are conducted using Stata 15. More specific explanations for the methods are addressed in each of the following empirical studies.

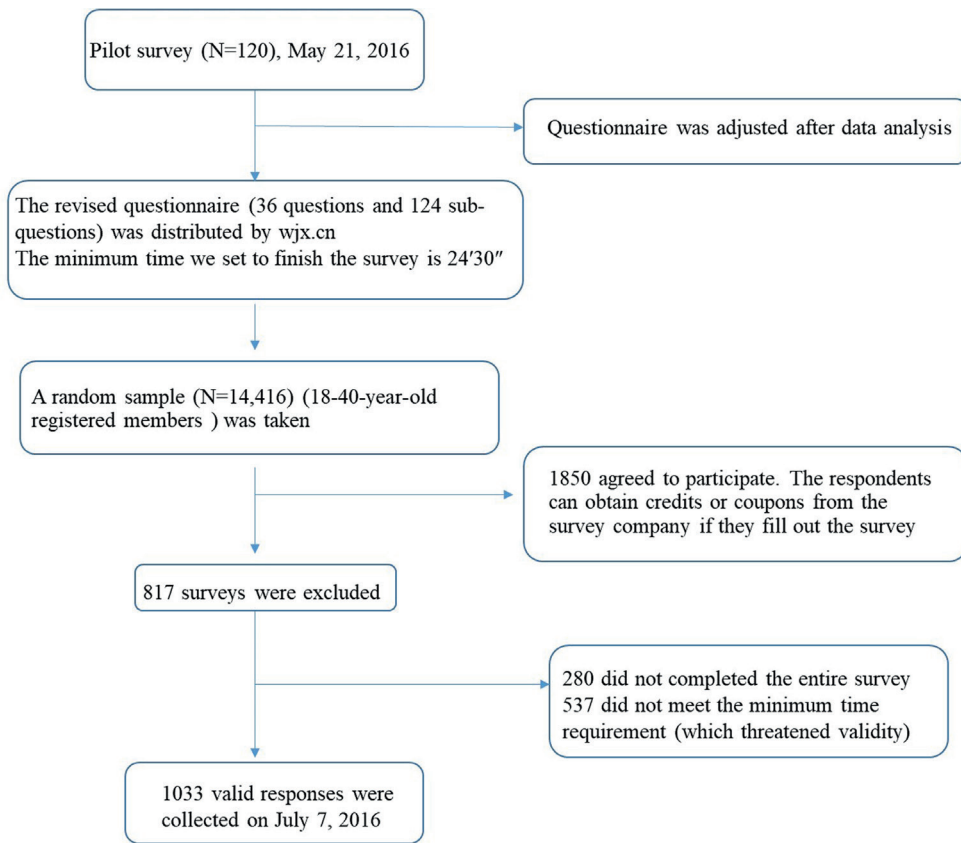


Figure 2 Data Collection

I.5 Outline of this thesis

The overall research framework is presented in Figure 3. Each chapter's content and research questions are briefly discussed below.

Four empirical studies were conducted with the aim of achieving a better understanding of media usage, credibility, and online engagement among young adults in China. Chapters 2 and 3 will focus on the relationships between media usage, media credibility, political trust, and online engagement in politics. Then Chapter 4 will examine media usage and credibility in relation to engagement with the arts and culture. Chapter 5 will investigate media usage, credibility, and online engagement in the fields of health and fitness. This project compares the uses of the media at different dimensions. Chapter 2 centers on differences between traditional media use and social media use. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on differences in media use and cultural consumption by taking a repertoire approach. Chapter 5 centers on the different uses of specific media outlets.

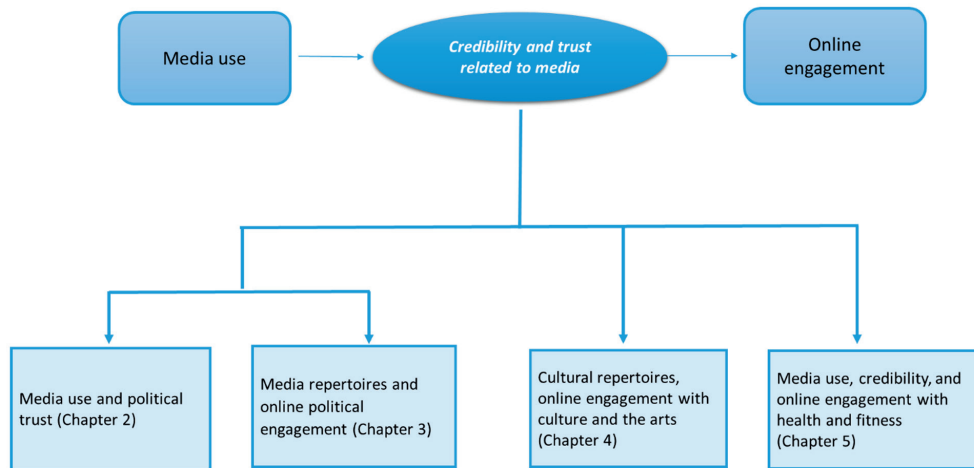


Figure 3 The Overall Framework of This Dissertation

1.5.I Politics

The first two chapters focus on the relationships between media use, the perceived credibility of political information on traditional and social media, political trust, and political engagement. Specifically, Chapter 2 examines how the association between usage of the media (traditional and social) and political trust can be explained by (1) the mediating roles of the perceived credibility of these media and (2) the moderating roles of trust in sources (both media and non-media ones) and CCP membership. To put it in broader perspective, the chapter investigates the different roles of traditional and social media within the relationship between media usage and political trust by way of seeking answers to two empirical questions in this area. (1) To what extent can we explain the said relationship through media credibility, trust in sources, and CCP membership among young Chinese adults? And (2) how do the roles of traditional and social media differ within the proposed relationship?

By taking a user-centric and repertoire-oriented approach, Chapter 3 investigates how young Chinese adults combine specific traditional media and social media platforms. Consequently this chapter examines the relationship between the media repertoires of young Chinese adults and their political preferences. The recently developed statistical application Step-3 models in LatentGold are used for analysis. Then the distal outcome option in LatentGold is used to estimate the effect of repertoires on political variables – namely political trust, political interest, and political engagement online – while controlling for other characteristics. This chapter attempts to answer three empirical questions. (1) How do young adults combine traditional media and specific social media and, in doing so, create their respective cross-media repertoires? (2) How do media

variables and the personal background predict young adults' cross-media repertoires? (3) How do distinct media patterns predict three political variables: political trust, political interest, and political engagement online?

1.5.2 Culture

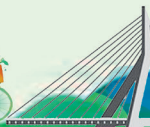
Chapter 4 examines how cultural taste patterns collected from young adults in multiple cultural domains relate to these people's media usage and sense or perception of media credibility, as well as to their online engagement with various forms of art and culture. After mapping the cultural repertoires of young Chinese adults, this chapter studies how media usage (and this covers, again, both traditional and social media) and the perceived credibility of media sources influence the patterns of media cultural consumption. I then investigate how the found repertoires impact the online cultural engagement of young people – that is, which taste patterns are tied to which uses of online media. In sum, this chapter tries to answer the following questions. (1) What kinds of clusters of cultural taste can be found in the Chinese context? (2) To what extent can the differences between Chinese cultural repertoires be explained through media variables, in particular through media credibility and media usage? (3) How much of young adults' online engagement with art and culture can we explain with the help of cultural consumption patterns and the two media variables?

1.5.3 Health

Focusing on health and fitness-related information, Chapter 5 examines how differential media usage across four traditional media outlets and eight Chinese social media platforms relate to the credibility of health and fitness information available on traditional and social media. Then, focusing on online health and fitness-related information-seeking and -sharing behaviors, the chapter goes on to predict the extent to which the use of different media platforms prompts individuals to participate in online health and fitness-related activities. It investigates young adults' perceptions about credibility of the health and fitness-related information available on traditional and social media; the use of social support-oriented versus nonsocial support-oriented social media platforms; the element of trust in the healthcare system; and the online health and fitness-related activities of the population under study. In sum, the study tries to answer the following questions. (1) How much does media usage correspond to young adults' perception of the credibility of health and fitness-related information they acquire through traditional and social media? (2) To what extent do differences in media use affect this perception? (3) To what degree can online engagement with health and fitness be explained by media usage and media credibility?

Finally, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 summarize the findings of the previous chapters and discuss important theoretical, methodological, and practical issues. Furthermore,

these chapters identify the strengths and weaknesses of the research presented in the dissertation and offer suggestions for future studies.



Chapter 2

Media usage and political trust among young adults in China:

The mediating role of media credibility and the moderating roles of trust in sources and political membership²

² This chapter is under review as Gong, Q., Verboord, M., & Wang, Y. Media usage and political trust among young adults in China: The mediating role of media credibility and the moderating roles of trust in sources and political membership. *Mass Communication and Society*

Abstract

Despite increasing acknowledgment that media usage is linked to political trust, empirical evidence regarding the precise determinants of this relation in a state-controlled media environment is limited and inconclusive. On the basis of an online survey conducted among young Chinese adults (18–40 years old), this chapter examines how the association between media usage – of both traditional and social media – and political trust can be explained by three factors: the mediating roles of the perceived credibility of traditional and social media; the moderating roles of trust in sources – media and non-media sources alike; and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) membership. Analyses support the idea that the perceived credibility of political information obtained from traditional and social media is a significant mediator and that traditional media credibility has a stronger effect than social media credibility. Trust in sources was found to moderate the influence of traditional media usage on political trust, indicating that, when young adults trust non-media sources rather than media ones, this influence was weakened. But trust in sources did not moderate the relationship between social media usage and political trust. Also, CCP membership was not a significant moderator within the proposed relationship. Limitations and suggestions for future studies are discussed.

2 Media usage and political trust among young adults in China: The mediating role of media credibility and the moderating roles of trust in sources and political membership

2.1 Introduction

In daily life in contemporary society, China's young generation is exposed not only to traditional media (e.g. television, radio) but also to a variety of homegrown social media outlets (e.g. Sina Weibo, WeChat). By comparison to the Western world, China's social media users are relatively younger, nearly 76 percent of them being under the age of 40 (CNNIC, 2019). Despite the rapid evolvement of social media in the past decade, young generations growing up with these new media are found to have lower levels of political trust and trust in government agencies (e.g. the police) than other Chinese citizens (X. Chen & Shi, 2001; Yuning Wu & Sun, 2009). Previous studies have provided evidence that citizens' political trust may link to a different kind of media usage (X. Chen & Shi, 2001; Yuning Wu, 2014), which developed under the strict control and censorship exercised by the Chinese government (L. Li, 2004; Yanfang Wu, Lau, Atkin, & Lin, 2011). However, the underlying mechanism that drives such a relationship remains unexplored. It is unclear whether distinct contextual factors in China – such as its one-party state or its state-controlled media system – influence the media usage–political trust linkage found among China's young generation.

The current study aims to improve understanding of the relationship between media usage and political trust by analyzing how the former influences the latter and what affects the strength of this relationship. In doing so, this chapter examines both the mediating and the moderating effects (Baron & Kenny, 1986) of media usage on political trust. Due to the large variety of potential news sources, it is convenient for China's young generation to access various types of political information through the media. Also, political news from non-mainstream media and non-media sources diffuse more easily through social media than through traditional media such as television or newspaper. Relying on social media usage, individuals may come across unsolicited information (e.g. messages from friends), and this may impact their political preferences. Given this wider picture, I propose the possibility that pathways to political trust differ according to the types and characteristics of media platforms – traditional media versus social media – among young adults in China.

Compared to traditional media coverage, user-created information posted on social media is less likely to be filtered by professional gatekeepers, and it typically lacks traditional indicators of authority – such as author identity or established reputation (Johnson

& Kaye, 2015; Metzger, 2007; Sundar, 2008; Westerman et al., 2014). Consequently, the task of determining credibility shifted from professional gatekeepers to public users (Johnson & Kaye, 2000; Metzger, 2007). Unlike professional gatekeepers, public users often lack the abilities to judge online information, while it is also difficult to verify information from non-media sources (Tsfati & Peri, 2006). This makes credibility an important concern in the current media environment (Sundar, 2008; Westerman et al., 2014). For example, as credibility is a central element in building trust, people tend to avoid sources that they do not trust (Johnson & Kaye, 1998). Mistrust in media can result in non-consumption and non-attention (Kiousis, 2001) and can stimulate the quest for alternative information or for information from non-media sources (Jackob, 2010; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003).

However, little is known about how the impacts of different types of media usage on political trust can be influenced by media credibility or by trust in sources in general, be they media or non-media ones. Whether the perceived credibility of the information available on media outlets plays a role in this relationship remains unexplored, as far as China's young generation is concerned. Therefore my study intends to tackle this topic and fill in the gap in the literature by revealing the underlying mechanism through which traditional and social media usage shapes political trust among China's young adults. I will start by investigating the mediating role of media credibility in the relationship between media usage and political trust. Second, as mistrust in media may prompt China's young generation to rely on non-media sources when assessing political information, it will be sensible to explore how trust in sources (media versus non-media ones) may moderate the proposed relationship. Third, given that the media institutions, political organizations and political outcomes are closely connected to the hegemony of the CCP, which is the ruling political party (Hyun & Kim, 2015; Shen & Guo, 2013), I also examine the moderating role of young adults' CCP membership in the proposed relationship.

Taken in its entirety, this study casts a much needed light on how, in the context of China, the relationship between media usage and political trust can be explained through media credibility, trust in sources, and CCP membership; and in the process it also investigates the different roles of traditional and social media within the relationship under study.

To summarize: drawing on survey data from China, I attempt to answer here two major empirical questions. (1) When we focus on young Chinese adults, to what extent can we explain the relationship between media usage and political trust through media credibility, trust in sources, and CCP membership? (2) How do the roles of traditional and social media differ within this relationship?

2.2 Conceptual framework and hypotheses

2.2.1 Media usage and political trust

Political trust is traditionally conceptualized as the basic confidence that citizens have in their government (A. H. Miller, 1974; Shen & Guo, 2013) or, more broadly, as support for a given political system (Hooghe & Kern, 2015). Shi (2001) argues that political trust is the belief that the political system or some parts of it will produce preferred outcomes even if left untended. Findings of previous communication and political science studies suggest that media play an important role in forming people's political trust (de Haan & Bardoel, 2011; Warren et al., 2014). Empirical findings are mixed, as the influence of media usage on political trust appears to be positive in some studies but negative in others (Aarts et al., 2012). Yet this impact can differ across media types (Aarts et al., 2012; Moy & Pfau, 2000).

Understanding why certain forms of media usage may have different effects on political trust requires taking more substantive explanatory factors into account. As was signaled earlier, the rise of the Internet has often been equaled to new communication opportunities that were previously unavailable; traditional forms of media simply did not have them. In particular, social media such as Facebook and Twitter enable Western citizens to formulate their opinions directly, by putting them in writing or by expressing them in interaction with others (Hassid, 2012; Sullivan, 2014). In China, by comparison, social media have provided citizens with tools for receiving and distributing a wider range of information than before, including very diverse opinions on political issues (e.g., Hyun & Kim, 2015; Xueqing Li & Chan, 2017). This kind of exposure may generate alienation and dismantle people's trust in the government, because more critical political reports could reduce citizens' political trust. However, the CCP has tightened its online censorship since president Xi Jinping came to power (Solomon, 2017). It has been shown that the CCP has rapidly adapted to the new ecology of technologies and has employed social media to its own advantage (Hassid, 2012; Hyun & Kim, 2015; Sullivan, 2014). Furthermore, information from social media somehow overlaps with information from traditional media sources, because online sources normally include digital versions of newspapers and the official accounts of traditional platforms on social media. For example, people can receive daily news by following the official accounts of the Chinese state's TV broadcaster on Sina Weibo, a micro-blogging site. It is thus plausible to expect that both traditional and social media usage are positively associated with young adults' political trust in China. Still, since traditional media in China are considered "mouthpieces" of the Communist Party (H. Zhang et al., 2014), many people tend to place great trust in state and legal authorities (M. Li & Sligo, 2012; Yuning Wu, 2014). In sum, I assume that, in China, traditional media usage exerts a

stronger influence on political trust than does social media usage. Hence I propose the following hypotheses:

H1a: Young Chinese adults' political trust is positively affected by their usage of traditional media.

H1b: Young Chinese adults' political trust is positively affected by their usage of social media.

H1c: The impact of traditional media usage on young Chinese adults' political trust is stronger than that of social media usage.

2.2.2 The mediating role of media credibility

While many studies have shown that media usage has a direct influence on political trust (X. Chen & Shi, 2001; L. Li, 2004; Yuning Wu, 2014), the theoretical explanation for this relationship is not always clear. Mediating variables can shed more light on how the association between media usage and political trust is to be interpreted. Whereas some scholars have pointed at the mediating role of nationalism (Hyun & Kim, 2015; Shen & Guo, 2013), I propose to focus on the mediating role of media credibility. In a state-controlled media environment, we expect that the credibility of the messages that have been communicated is crucial for illuminating of the underlying mechanism through which media usage shapes political trust.

In brief, credibility can be defined as believability (Fogg & Tseng, 1999), which is generally conceived of as a user-based perception (a judgment made by the users themselves) containing various dimensions: accuracy, fairness, trustworthiness, and depth (Fogg & Tseng, 1999; Johnson & Kaye, 2009; Metzger et al., 2010; Westerman et al., 2014). These dimensions represent aspects of the information that are critical to influencing a user's assessment of its credibility, as credibility perceptions result from evaluating multiple dimensions simultaneously (Fogg & Tseng, 1999). This means that a receiver makes judgments on these components in order to arrive at an overall evaluation of credibility. The credibility assessment is also a key early phase in the process of persuading (Wathen & Burkell, 2002). Being endowed with these characteristics, credibility is an important concept in relation to media (Appelman & Sundar, 2016) and helps us understand why some people use certain media and others do not, as well as how people decide what to believe.

In China, the media carry more positive than negative content relating to politics and public affairs (Xiao, 2013), which diminishes the impact of negative stories in everyday life (Shen & Guo, 2013). The existing literature suggests that political trust depends

mainly on the distribution of positive and negative information related to the system (Xueqing Li & Chan, 2017). The less information on grievances and discontent citizens receive from the media, the less they will distrust their government. However, when the credibility of media is low in individuals' perception, the positive information they receive on the Chinese government may not be considered accurate, fair, or believable; but then the impacts of media usage on political trust might be trivial or negligible, or they may disappear altogether. In other words, only if the political information that comes from traditional and social media is perceived as credible are young adults likely to adopt positive political opinions related to the government, which in turn influences their political trust. The process of persuading – which involves distinguishing credible from non-credible information – is an important step in forming credibility perceptions in young Chinese adults, and thus a mediation effect can be predicted. Some people may still use media with non-credible information because of habitual consumption patterns or lack of alternatives, or because they just enjoy listening to diverse viewpoints (Tsati & Cappella, 2005). Consequently, I argue that traditional and social media usage influences political trust indirectly, through the construct of perceived media credibility. I expect that media usage is positively associated with political trust; and this positive relationship can be explained by the credibility that people attribute to the information they find in the media of their choice.

Further, the existing literature suggests that the perceived credibility of traditional and that of social media may have different kinds of influence (Kiousis, 2001; H. Zhang et al., 2014). Whereas traditional media are associated with editorial control and fact-checking, social media offer more bottom-up expressions that could be viewed as “disinterested” or “alternative” (e.g. Metzger et al., 2010; Tsati & Peri, 2006). Empirical comparisons between traditional media and new media (e.g. the Internet, social media) produce inconsistent outcomes (Banning & Sweetser, 2007; Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Kiousis, 2001; H. Zhang et al., 2014). Also, some researchers argue that the credibility of traditional media and of their online versions is rated similarly (Antunovic et al., 2018). Particularly in a complicated media environment, the information from social media sometimes overlaps with the information from traditional media. In China, a survey in ten major cities revealed that traditional media (television and newspapers) are still considered by residents to be the most credible (H. Zhang et al., 2014). In view of this result, I would expect the credibility of social media to be lower in individuals' eyes than that of traditional media, particularly when it comes to political information.

So, as in H1c, I expect the influence of the perceived credibility of social media to be weaker than that of traditional media within the relationship under study. In line with this expectation, I formulate the following set of hypotheses:

H2a: Young Chinese adults' perceptions about the credibility of the political information they get from traditional media mediate the impact of traditional media usage on political trust.

H2b: Young Chinese adults' perceptions about the credibility of the political information they get from social media mediate the impact of social media usage on political trust.

H2c: The mediating role of young Chinese adults' perceptions about the credibility of traditional media is stronger than the role of their perceptions about the credibility of social media.

2.2.3 The moderating role of trust in sources: Media and non-media sources

By comparison to the research on media credibility, which has produced a large body of work in the past decades, research on trust in media is quite limited (Jackob, 2010; Kohring & Matthes, 2007). The concepts of credibility and trust differ from each other (Fogg & Tseng, 1999). Trust conveys a sense of stable expectations, reliance, confidence and dependence (Hosmer, 1995). Whereas media credibility is about the concrete information that people gather from the media and about distinctions between media types and outlets in terms of people's willingness to accept a given message, trust in media concerns media as an institution and is normally pitted against trust in alternative sources of information (Jackob, 2010; Johnson & Kaye, 2009; Kioussis, 2001). It is assumed that, when users consider the medium to be credible, this credibility might result in trust in the medium (Jackob, 2010; Kohring & Matthes, 2007). However, high levels of credibility accorded to a particular medium do not amount to trust in the media as a whole. Trust plays a key role in media–recipient relationships and it influences whether people turn to “alternative media” or even non-media sources (Jackob, 2010; Kohring & Matthes, 2007; Tsfatı & Cappella, 2003). In a country where both traditional and social media are political and are tightly related to the authorities, it is important to examine the differences between credibility of information (the mediator role) and trust in media institutions (the moderator role).

Whereas some people show high levels of trust in the media, others are media skeptics – in other words, have a subjective feeling of alienation from the media – or mistrust them, particularly mainstream media (Carr, Barnidge, Lee, & Tsang, 2014; Tsfatı & Peri, 2006). Compared to people who trust the media, users who trust alternative sources are expected to have less mainstream and more non-mainstream information in their media diets (Jackob, 2010; Tsfatı & Cappella, 2003). However, if we want to examine the relationship between media usage and political trust in China, relying on a dichotomy

between mainstream and alternative media is not enough. This study considers trust in two types of sources of information: mass media sources and non-media sources. The latter consist of alternative sources from outside the editorial production process of the media system (e.g. opinions from experts and scientists, telephone hotlines, official authorities) (Jackob, 2010).

When young adults have a strong trust in media sources, a strong correlation is expected between traditional media usage and political trust. As trust is closely related to dependability and reliance (Fogg & Tseng, 1999), individuals who trust media sources are likely to consume more media, expect the media to protect users' rights and interests, tolerate challenging opinions, and have confidence in media institutions. Yuning Wu (2014) demonstrates that trust in media correlates positively with trust in Chinese legal authorities. According to this argument, young Chinese adults who trust media rather than non-media sources tend to turn to media consumption more easily, traditional media in particular. Trust in media sources may therefore serve as a moderator, strengthening the relationship between traditional media usage and political trust. In contrast, trust in non-media sources would indicate a comparatively low degree of confidence in the media system and in the legitimacy of the ruling party, and ultimately would link to a low level of political trust. People who place their trust mainly in non-media sources are expected to avoid or ignore what they hear in the media, particularly in traditional media. Consequently, if people tend to trust non-media sources rather than media sources, the effect of media usage on political trust will be weak, but more so for traditional media than for social media, since the latter have a weaker association with the system. Thus the insights gained from the previous discussion of the literature and the above arguments lead to the following set of hypotheses:

H3a: The effect of traditional media usage on political trust is stronger for young Chinese adults who trust media sources than for young Chinese adults who trust non-media sources.

H3b: The effect of social media usage on political trust is weaker for young Chinese adults who trust media sources than for young Chinese adults who trust non-media sources.

H3c: The moderating role of trust in sources is stronger for traditional media usage than for social media usage.

2.2.4 The moderating role of CCP membership

Besides explanations with regard to media usage, political trust is likely also influenced by whether someone is member of the CCP. Undoubtedly CCP members are strongly

related to political institutions and the sphere of legitimacy. First, political parties are essential linkage mechanisms between citizens and their political system (Hooghe & Kern, 2015). Affiliation with the CCP was found to be linked to CCP-initiated political activities (Xinzhi Zhang & Lin, 2014). For instance, CCP members are more likely to vote than non-party members (Kennedy et al., 2018). Second, CCP members tend to be more nationalistic than non-CCP members (Sinkkonen, 2013; W. Tang & Darr, 2012). Previous research observed that, in China, nationalism promotes legitimacy for the government and for the authoritarian political system (Hyun & Kim, 2015; Sinkkonen, 2013), as well as political trust (Shen & Guo, 2013). Also, nationalism seems to be closely tied to media consumption, particularly consumption of the state-run traditional media, as the CCP manipulates this political attitude and successfully directs it toward the maintenance of regime stability and legitimacy (Hyun & Kim, 2015; Shen & Guo, 2013; S. Zhao, 2005). As official mouthpieces of the regime (H. Zhang et al., 2014), the media carry people's national and political ties (Shen & Guo, 2013). News usage of both traditional and social media indirectly were found to foster or encourage system-supportive attitudes (Hyun & Kim, 2015), and TV news watching was positively correlated with political trust (Shen & Guo, 2013). As a major group of Internet users in China, young adults, particularly college students, are positively linked to political communication online (Hyun & Kim, 2015). Meanwhile, the CCP increasingly recruits its elite members or future leaders from the ranks of young people, especially the highly educated (M. Zhou, 2018). It is important, then, to examine the role of CCP membership in media usage and in young adults' perceptions of the ruling authorities.

One expects that CCP members and non-members differ in their attitudes towards the party and the government. As mouthpieces of the party, the media may have a greater impact on political trust for CCP members than for non-members. The idea here is that CCP members are more nationalistic and more politically active than non-CCP members when they engage with what they have read, heard, or viewed in the media by way of political information. As a result, they may have more trust in the party and the government, which leads to higher levels of political trust. For this reason I explore how CCP affiliation may affect the relationship between media usage and political trust as a moderator. My conjecture is that party membership will strengthen the impact of media usage (particularly traditional media usage) on political trust. Building upon prior studies, I formulate the following set of hypotheses:

H4a: The effect of traditional media usage on political trust is stronger for young Chinese adults who are CCP members than for young Chinese adults who are not.

H4b: The effect of social media usage on political trust is stronger for young Chinese adults who are CCP members than for young Chinese adults who are not.

H4c: The moderating role of being a CCP member is stronger for traditional media usage than for social media usage.

Taken together, the literature has provided evidence for the existence of relationships between political trust, different types of media usage (related to traditional and social media), media credibility (more precisely, the perceived credibility of political information gathered from traditional and social media), trust in sources (media and non-media sources alike), and CCP membership. The current study brings these proposed pathways together into a comprehensive model (see Figure 4).

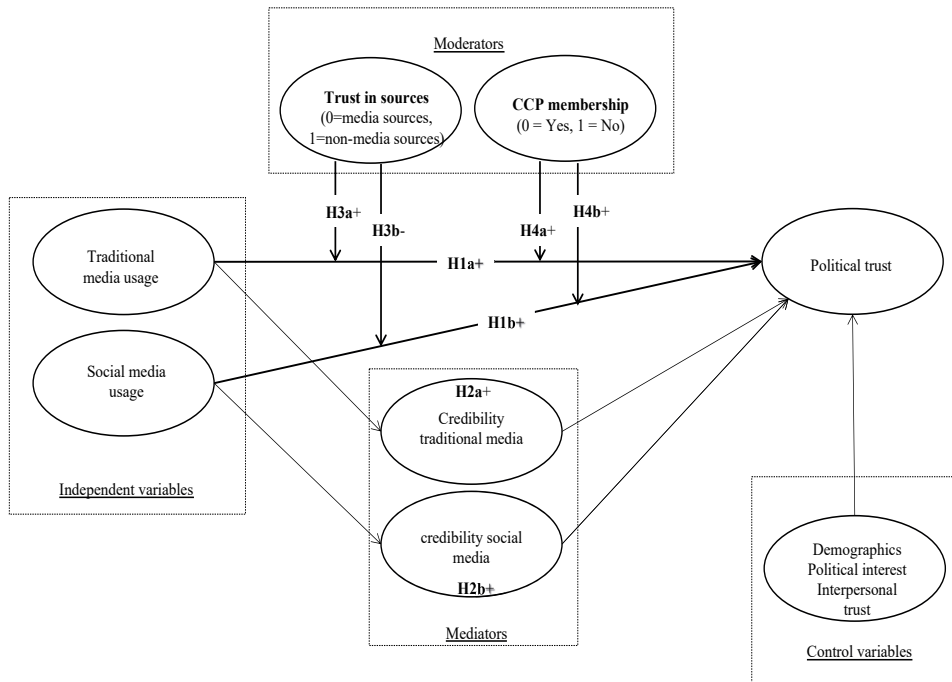


Figure 4. A Hypothesized Model

2.3 The research method

2.3.1 Data collection

The data collection process consisted of two phases. First, on May 21, 2016 a pilot survey was conducted with 120 selected respondents familiar with the Chinese media system. The survey applied snowball sampling. Accordingly, the questionnaire was adjusted on the basis of these respondents' feedback. Next, the revised questionnaire was distributed by the research agency wjx.cn, whose database covers all Chinese provinces and is representative of Internet users in China. Given my focus on young adults, only panel members within the age range of 18–40 were approached. Participants received compensation from the survey company. In total, 1,033 valid responses (age: $M = 29.7$, $SD = 5.02$) were collected in July 2016. This sample concerned respondents who completed the entire survey, with the final response rate of 12.9 percent. While this response rate is relatively low, it is similar to that of previous web survey-based studies carried out in China (Shih & Fan, 2008; Yamamoto et al., 2015). In the final sample there were slightly more female (51.5 percent) than male respondents (48.5 percent). The sample contained a relatively large share of highly educated participants (50.1 percent college graduates). Up until December 2017, people with high school or vocational school degrees and with junior college or higher education constituted respectively 25.4 percent and 20.4 percent of Chinese Internet users (CNNIC, 2019). Parents' educational level averaged 3.18 ($SD = 1.154$) on a 6-point scale, which corresponds to high school level. In line with this overrepresentation of higher-educated people, most participants lived in cities (97.8 percent). Additionally, the overrepresentation of higher education was tied in with a disproportionately high representation of CCP membership (Hyun & Kim, 2015; Hyun et al., 2014). Around 33 percent of the respondents were CCP members, which was well ahead of the national figure – 6 percent (Hyun & Kim, 2015; Kennedy et al., 2018). However, Skoric, Zhu, and Pang (2016) note that higher-educated and metropolitan populations tend to be overrepresented in Chinese survey samples.

2.3.2 Measures

Political trust. The question about political trust was formulated thus: “How much do you trust the government?” Response categories ran from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). This operationalization followed other studies (e.g. Shen & Guo, 2013), noting that political trust can be a one-dimensional attitude, as citizens do not distinguish between different dimensions of trust in government (e.g. trust related to political leaders and to different governmental institutions) (Hooghe, 2011).

Media usage. Guided by previous studies (Jung, Kim, & Zúñiga, 2011), traditional media usage was measured by an averaged index of four items: television (both TV set and online), newspaper (only in print), magazine (only in print), and radio (both on

radio set and online). Respondents were asked to indicate how often they used each medium; and they answered using a Likert-type 5-point scale where 0 was “never” and 5 was “almost daily.” Similarly, social media usage was measured by asking participants to indicate, on a 5-point scale, how often they used a selection of eight Chinese social media platforms: Sina Weibo, WeChat, Qzone, Zhihu.com, Baidu Tieba, Tianya Club, Douban.com, and Guokr.com.³

Media credibility. Guided by previous measurements, five dimensions of media credibility were combined to form a single scale measure (Appelman & Sundar, 2016; Johnson & Kaye, 1998, 2009). Participants were asked to rate the degree of believability, accuracy, fairness, depth, and trustworthiness of political information found in traditional and social media on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). Scores for the five measures of credibility were combined into indexes for the credibility of political information found in traditional media and in social media.

Trust in sources. Following past studies (Carter & Greenberg, 1965; Jakob, 2010), trust in sources was derived from the questionnaire and indicated whether the respondent trusted (mainstream, non-mainstream) media sources or non-media sources. Respondents were asked to choose from the following categories the source they tended to trust above all when they received conflicting or different views of the same events:

- official or mainstream media (e.g. television, printed newspaper)
- non-mainstream sites (e.g. blogs, forums)
- either mainstream or non-mainstream media
- neither mainstream nor non-mainstream media
- overseas media
- other (fill-in-the-blank type).

Trust in media was codified into a dummy variable (where 1 means trusting non-media sources and 0 means trusting media sources) in order to test the moderating effects within the relationship between media usage and political trust.

CCP membership. The membership was a binary variable (0 indicates CCP member and 1 indicates non-CCP member) and was measured by asking (in the form of a true/false question) whether the respondent was a CCP member.

³ I do not claim that the social media platforms selected here are the most popular or the most representative ones. Some are among the most widely used platforms (Weibo, WeChat), while others were selected because they are representative in specific domains, e.g. Douban.com in arts and culture, or Guokr.com in science. Also, my selection pays heed to what the cited academic literature signals as being popular among young Chinese, as well as to information concerning the various research reports by the CNNIC.

Control variables. Early work on media credibility suggests that audience-based variables influence media credibility. Also, the mixed findings concerning the credibility of traditional media and its online counterparts call for investigating predictors of credibility. It is clear that social background characteristics affect individuals' judgments of media credibility (Golan, 2010; Yamamoto et al., 2016). Thus my regression models include control variables such as age, gender, education, parents' educational level, and place of residence (see Appendix A to this chapter for detailed measurements).

2.3.3 Analysis

In order to investigate the mediating roles of the perceived credibility of traditional media and social media as well as the moderating roles of trust in sources and CCP membership for the relationship between media usage and political trust, I employed ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was employed (see Models 1–7). For all the regression analyses, the five demographic variables, political interest, and interpersonal trust were controlled. The analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 and Stata 15.

2.4 Results

2.4.1 Descriptive results

Table 2.1 Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Variable Correlations (N = 979)

Variables	M	SD	Cronbach's alpha	1	2	3	4	5
1. Traditional media usage	3.16	.78	.78	1				
2. Social media usage	3.07	.70	.81	.55**	1			
3. Credibility traditional media	5.38	1.14	.95	.37**	.30**	1		
4. Credibility social media	5.20	1.11	.94	.37**	.32**	.70**	1	
5. Political trust	4.80	1.51	--	.28**	.24**	.33**	.35**	1

Notes Entries are Pearson correlation coefficients. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 2.1 shows the correlations among the main variables. The results indicate that strong links exist between traditional and social media usage, the perceived credibility of political information on social and traditional media, and political trust. Reliabilities range from .78 to .95. More specifically, the frequency of traditional media usage is slightly higher than that of social media usage. Also, the perceived credibility of social

media is slightly lower than traditional media credibility. Overall political trust among young Chinese adults is high ($M = 4.8$, $SD = 1.51$): over 80 percent of respondents said that they trust the Chinese government. Regarding trust in sources, when young adults received conflicting reports of the same events from different sources, some ($N = 480$) trusted non-media sources (i.e. neither mainstream nor non-mainstream media), while others showed trust in media sources ($N = 499$).⁴

2.4.2 Hypothesis testing

Table 2.2 OLS Regression Models Predicting Political Trust (Models 1–3) and Media Credibility (Models 4–5)

	Political trust			Credibility traditional media	Credibility social media
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Gender (1 = female, 2 = male)	-.06*	-.07**	-.07**	.02	.02
Age	-.07*	-.03	-.06*	-.03	-.01
Education	.01	.05*	.03	-.04	-.07*
Parents' educational level	.03	.06*	.02	.01	.02
Size residence	-.01	-.02	-.01	-.02	.001
Political interest	.17***	.07*	.03	.31***	.24***
Interpersonal trust	.20***	.14***	.11***	.16***	.20***
Media usage					
Traditional media usage	.29***	----	.19***	.20***	.18***
Social media usage	.10**	----	.06*	.05	.10**
Media credibility (Mediators)					
Credibility traditional media	----	.38***	.35***		
Credibility social media	----	.20***	.16***		
Adjusted R ²	29.5%	42.1%	45.1%	26.6%	25.60%
F-value	46.32***	80.04***	73.69***	40.36***	38.28***

Note Values reflect standardized coefficients. Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

⁴ After the dummy coding of trust in sources, 979 out of 1,033 respondents were selected for further analysis. Answers for “overseas media” ($n = 52$) and for “others” ($n = 2$) were removed.

Table 2.2 presents the results of applying regression analysis to test whether perceived media credibility mediates the hypothesized relationship.

In the first stage of the regression (Models 1–3), the direct paths between media usage and political trust (H1a and H1b) were tested, as well as media credibility and political trust. In Model 1 I entered control variables and media usage in order to test whether they predict political trust. The regression in Model 2 ascertained whether media credibility predicts political trust. Controlling for all previous factors, I then tested the full model for predicting political trust in Model 3. The results show that traditional media usage has a strong significant effect in the hypothesized direction (Model 1: $\beta = .29$, $t = 8.10$, $p < .001$; Model 3: $\beta = .19$, $t = 5.89$, $p < .001$). *Social media usage* is also positively associated with political trust (Model 1: $\beta = .10$, $t = 2.76$, $p < .01$; Model 3: $\beta = .06$, $t = 2.04$, $p < .05$). Thus H1a and H1b are supported. Also, both the perceived credibility of traditional media (Model 2: $\beta = .38$, $t = 10.68$, $p < .001$; Model 3: $\beta = .35$, $t = 10.13$, $p < .001$) and the perceived credibility of social media (Model 2: $\beta = .20$, $t = 5.58$, $p < .001$; Model 3: $\beta = .16$, $t = 4.64$, $p < .001$) are positively related to political trust.

In the second step (Models 4–5), I tested whether media usage predicts young adults' perceptions about the credibility of political information they get from traditional and social media. Regression in Model 4 indicates that the usage of traditional media is a strong predictor: it positively predicts perceived credibility of traditional media ($\beta = .20$, $t = 5.54$, $p < .001$). I also observe that social media usage has a positive impact on the perceived credibility of social media in Model 5 ($\beta = .10$, $t = 2.84$, $p < .01$).

I tested H2a and H2b, taking them together and hypothesizing a mediating role for media credibility (namely the credibility of both traditional and social media) in the relationships between media usage (traditional versus social media) and political trust. Comparing Models 3, 4, and 5, the findings suggest that the significant relationship of traditional media usage and political trust is weakened when taking traditional media credibility into account (Model 4: $\beta = .20$, $t = 5.54$, $P < .001$ versus Model 3: $\beta = .19$, $t = 5.89$, $P < .001$). Similarly, the relationship of social media usage and political trust is also weakened via social media credibility (Model 5: $\beta = .10$, $t = 2.84$, $P < .01$ versus Model 3: $\beta = .06$, $t = 2.04$, $P < .05$). Thus, partial mediation effects are found in the relationship between media usage (and this covers both traditional and social media) and political trust. Therefore H2a and H2b are supported.

Turning to the moderating effects of trust in sources (H3a and H3b) and CCP membership (H4a and H4b) within the relationship under study, again, OLS regression equations were applied to predict political trust (see Table 2.3). Before all variables were entered in the equation in Model 8, I controlled for trust in media (Model 7) and the

party membership (Model 6), respectively. The OLS models show that trust in sources moderates the association between traditional media usage and political trust (*Model 7*: $\beta = -.38$, $t = -3.28$, $p < .01$; *Model 8*: $\beta = -.39$, $t = -3.36$, $p < .01$), but does not moderate the relationship between social media usage and political trust. Thus H3a and H3c are supported, H3b is rejected. Concerning the moderating role of CCP membership, variations in political membership do not appear to influence the political trust of young Chinese adults. Therefore H4a, H4b, and H4c are not supported.

To test H1c and H2c, I compared the regression coefficients of traditional media usage with those of social media usage, and tested whether the value of $\beta_1 - \beta_2$ is significantly different from zero where β_1 is the regression coefficient for traditional media usage and β_2 is the regression coefficient for social media usage. The dependent and independent variables are standardized to conduct the analysis. Through a regression analysis, the results show that the difference of coefficients is significantly different from zero (t-value = -2.64, $p < .01$). The results suggest that social media usage has a weaker influence on political trust than traditional media usage does, which further implies that H1c is supported. In a similar way, I tested H2c. The results show that the difference of coefficient is significantly different from zero (t-value = -2.45, $p < .01$). This suggests that H2c is supported. Taken together, all the path coefficients are shown in Figure 5.

Table 2.3 OLS Regression Models Predicting the Moderation Effects

	Political trust		
	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Gender (1 = female, 2 = male)	-.07**	-.07**	-.08**
Age	-.06*	-.06*	-.06*
Education	.02	.02	.01
Parents' educational level	.02	-.01	-.01
Size residence	-.00	-.01	-.01
Political interest	.03	.04	.04
Interpersonal trust	.12***	.11***	.12***
Media usage			
Traditional media usage	.18*	.25***	.23**
Social media usage	-.03	.02	-.07

Continue

Table 2.3 OLS Regression Models Predicting the Moderation Effects

	Political trust		
	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Media credibility (mediators)			
Credibility traditional media	.35***	.33***	.33***
Credibility social media	.16***	.16***	.15***
Moderators			
Trust in sources (0 = media sources, 1 = non-media sources)	-----	.14	.16
Traditional media usage * Trust in sources	-----	-.38**	-.39**
Social media usage * Trust in sources	-----	.14	.13
Communist party membership (0 = yes, 1 = no)	-.09	-----	-.09
Traditional media usage * Party Membership	.02	-----	.03
Social media usage * Party Membership	.16	-----	.15
Adjusted R ²	45.1%	46.6%	46.7%
F-value	58.31***	61.67***	51.26***

Note Values reflect standardized coefficients. Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

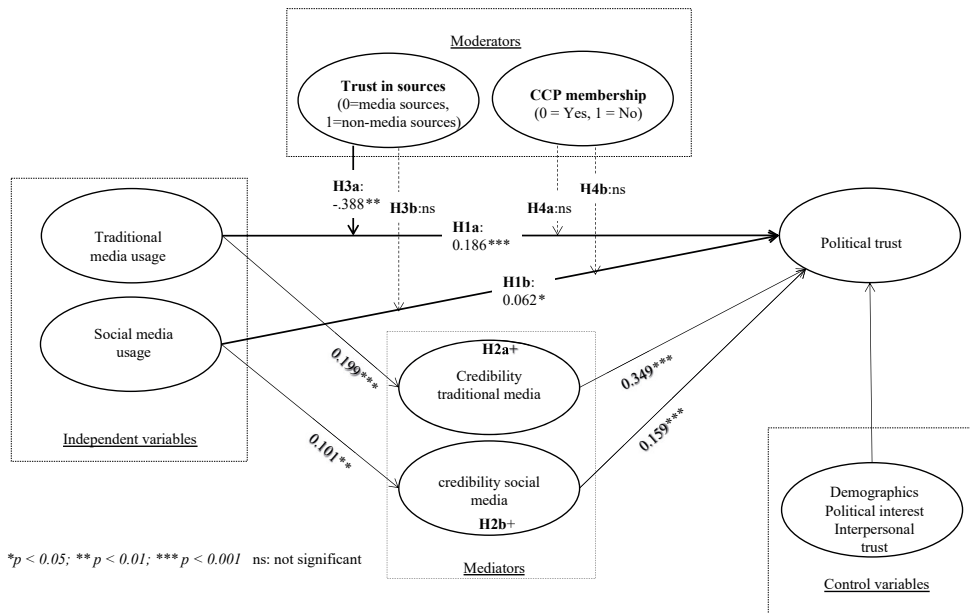


Figure 5. A Research Model with Results

2.5 Conclusions and discussion

This study focused on unfolding the mechanism of how media usage affects political trust among young Chinese adults. The mediating role of media credibility and the moderating roles of trust in sources and CCP membership were examined. First, the findings confirm that both traditional and social media usage are positively associated with political trust (supporting H1a and H1b). Along with this, the impact of traditional media is found to be stronger than that of social media. This finding confirms that consumption of different media types does have a distinct influence on young adults' political trust (Aarts et al., 2012; Moy & Pfau, 2000). This finding in the Chinese context is consistent with Lee's (2010) finding in the context of the United States.

Second, the mediating effect of media credibility is confirmed; some of the impact of media usage on political trust is achieved via the perceived credibility of the political information delivered by these media. It is worth noting that perceived media credibility explains only a part of the relationship; there still are significantly large and direct effects of media usage on political trust in China. This also implies that alternative explanations need to be considered. For example, previous studies emphasize the mediating roles of citizens' nationalism in the relationship between different types of media news usage and political trust in China (Hyun & Kim, 2015; Shen & Guo, 2013).

Next, I found that trust in media or non-media sources moderates the relationship between traditional media usage and political trust, but does not moderate the relationship between social media usage and political trust. By comparison to the traditional media, which represent the official voice of the government, social media often contain more user-generated content and offer a diversity of views on current policies and social issues (Shen & Guo, 2013). When young Chinese adults put their trust in non-media sources, this could mean that they regard various social media platforms as important sources of information.

Yet interestingly, no support was found for the moderating effect of CCP membership within the relationship between any type of media usage and political trust. H4a, H4b, and H4c could therefore not be confirmed. It should be noted that political interest also failed to reach a level significant enough to predict political trust when controlling for media usage and credibility. One possible explanation is that many young adults are eager to join the CCP mainly in order to improve their employment chances and enjoy tangible material benefits (Kennedy et al., 2018). Indeed, CCP members are often found to have more opportunities of obtaining high-paying and prestigious jobs and of enjoying higher standards of living (Dickson & Rublee, 2000) than the rest of the population. To many young adults in China, party affiliation may not mean that they feel close to the political party or support state authority. This is why no moderation role of young adults' political membership is observed in this study.

In addition, a comparison between the influence of traditional and that of social media within the relationship under study indicated that young adults rated the credibility of political information provided by traditional media higher than the credibility of political information received via social media, despite the fact that they spent more time online (including on social media) than with traditional media. Thus I found no evidence that social media have the advantage of perceived credibility in a media system where traditional media are state-controlled. In the literature, competing claims have been put forward regarding the comparison between the credibility of traditional media and that of social media (Kioussis, 2001; H. Zhang et al., 2014). While some researchers argue that traditional media were judged to be more credible than online media, others maintain opposite views or reach opposite results. The finding of this study supports the first type of conclusion, proposed in Kioussis's (2001) and H. Zhang et al.'s (2014) previous studies. More importantly, political trust had a stronger association with traditional media usage than with social media usage (supporting H1c). Also, traditional media credibility presented a stronger mediating effect than social media credibility did (supporting H2c). But when young adults showed trust in non-media sources rather than in media sources, only the impact of traditional media usage on political trust was weakened (supporting H3c). Hence this chapter argues for the view that the roles

of state-controlled traditional media and social media, which have more free-flowing information, differ within the relationship of media usage and political trust in China.

Some limitations of this study should be mentioned. First, my analysis is limited by the sample, which contains a relatively large share of highly educated Chinese youths living in cities: this implies that the results presented here apply mainly to a specific group of young adults. Still, within this group, there is considerable variety in media usage and trust levels. Second, my measurement of trust in media and non-media sources could have been more detailed. Despite these restrictions, I think that this study offers solid empirical evidence that media credibility (i.e. the perceived credibility of traditional and social media) plays an important role in the relationship between the use of traditional and social media and political trust in a less democratic society. The current study also suggests that the strength of the relationship between traditional media usage and political trust can be modified by trust in sources. Moreover, this research expands our understanding of how different types media (namely traditional versus social) influence individuals' political trust.

My findings suggest a few avenues of future research. First, other explanations for the relationship between media usage and political trust could be examined, such as the precise role of education in how trust and credibility are shaped; but this would also require better access to poorly educated young Chinese. Second, future studies might compare the effects of some specific social media platforms on political issues. For instance, Chen and Sun (2019) report that individuals who are influenced by social media such as WeChat and Sina Weibo tend to have lower trust in government. Finally, further studies should consider distinguishing between online editions of traditional media and Internet-based media, as the information offered by these two different types of media often overlaps – although making such distinctions is a challenge in the increasingly larger and more complex media ecology.

Appendix A

Measurement of Control Variables

Age was measured with reference to the exact birth year. Gender was a dummy variable, “female” being assigned the value 1 and “male” the value 2. Education was measured on a scale ranging from 1 (less than primary school) to 6 (beyond master's degree). I used respondents' IP address to identify their geographical location (city and province). Beyond demographic variables, political interest can also play a role in determining which

information platform is regarded as credible (Aarts et al., 2012; D. Kim, 2012; Tsfati & Ariely, 2014). On the basis of prior research (D. Kim, 2012; Tsfati & Ariely, 2014; Tsfati & Cappella, 2005), political interest was measured here with the help of several sub-questions (e.g. “How frequently do you follow what is going on in politics and public affairs?” “How interested would you say you are in politics?”). These items were summed up in an index ranging from 1 (“not interested at all”) to 5 (“very interested”). Another important factor is the extent to which an individual tends to trust others in general; this is because the higher the degree of interpersonal trust, the more likely it is that someone places trust in media institutions (Cappella, 2002; Tsfati & Ariely, 2014; Yamamoto et al., 2016). Interpersonal trust was measured by asking respondents whether they agreed on a 7-point scale (1 = very untrue, 7 = very true) with the following statements: “Most people can be trusted”; “Most people try to take advantage of you”; “Most of the time people are helpful” (see Tsfati & Cappella, 2003). These three statements were averaged to build a composite index.



Chapter 3

Cross-media usage repertoires and their political impacts among young Chinese Adults⁵

⁵ This chapter is under review (revise and resubmit) as Gong, Q., Verboord, M., & Janssen, S. Cross-media usage repertoires and their political impacts: The case of China. *International Journal of Communication*.



Abstract

This chapter takes a repertoire-oriented approach to examining how social and traditional media usage impact political engagement in China. Building on previous studies and giving them a new direction, I intend to examine here how various social media platforms and traditional media outlets are combined in cross-media repertoires of young Chinese adults. I will do this with the help of survey data collected in mainland China. Using the Step-3 approach of latent class analysis, I will then consider how these repertoires can be explained by various individual and contextual factors and what the impact of the repertoires themselves is on various forms of political involvement. The chapter identifies six distinctive media repertoires: digitally focused, communication oriented, minimal users, moderate omnivores, voracious omnivores, and print-interested. Repertoires are mainly shaped by age, education, and perceived media credibility. In China, young adults with the most omnivorous media repertoires display the highest levels of political trust, political interest and online political engagement. The chapter also discusses the implications of these results.

3 Cross-media usage repertoires and their political impacts among young Chinese Adults

3.I Introduction

The rise of the Internet and social media has spurred research into their “democratic potential”: the question whether new media are able to increase political participation among citizens and give new impetus to political engagement by creating a platform for the common people, by intensifying social interaction, and by offering devices that appeal to youths (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Skoric & Poor, 2013; Vissers & Stolle, 2014). There are indications that using social media is a positive and significant predictor of an individual’s political participatory behaviours, both online and offline (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012), but overall the effects seem to be modest (see Boulianne, 2015; Skoric, Zhu, Goh, & Pang, 2016). The promise of social change attached to social media acquired a new dimension in the Arab Spring, where social media were played up as crucial resources for collective action in societies where traditional media are controlled by the state or subject to censorship (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). The current research focuses on China. While meta-analyses of the relationship between social media usage and political participation have so far found more significant results in well-established democracies than in other political systems (Boulianne, 2015, p. 531), research that addresses non-Western countries and other political regimes is still relatively scarce (Skoric, 2011; Skoric, Zhu, & Pang, 2016). Furthermore, while students of political outcomes in Western countries have turned their attention to the impacts of media or news “repertoires” (e.g. Strömbäck, Falasca, & Kruikemeier, 2018), this approach is still absent in work on China. I will argue here that the strong diversification of social media platforms in China during the past decade makes it imperative to move beyond analyzing social media as a single category of media usage.

The present chapter thus aims (1) to identify current media repertoires among young Chinese adults, (2) to show how these repertoires can be explained by their social background, and (3) to examine how they relate to their political involvement. As a research context, China is a country with a state-controlled media system in which a highly diversified ecology of social media platforms has emerged during the past decades (Gleiss, 2015; A. K. Li, 2019). I focus specifically on young adults because their media preferences are generally considered to be very different from those of older generations, as they grew up with Internet-based media (e.g. Edgerly, 2017; Xenos et al., 2014). To capture all possible distinctions between age subcategories within this group, I am working with a concept of “young adults” broadly defined as individuals aged between 18 and 40.

Besides the focus on China, this study extends previous research on media repertoires and their impacts in three ways. First, I pay more attention to the specific social media platforms and their functionalities in the Chinese media context than did previous studies. I look closely at eight widely used platforms and try to analyze how they are combined with more traditional media in the media repertoires of young adults. Second, I examine three different aspects of political involvement – political trust, online political engagement, and political interest – in order to get a better sense of how, in a diverse yet restrictive media context, media repertoires can shape this kind of involvement. Finally, using data from an original online survey in China, I apply latent class analysis (LCA) to find repertoires inductively (see Strömbäck et al., 2018); and I adopt the Step-3 approach in LCA as a bias-adjusted estimation method of regression effects (Vermunt, 2010).

3.2 Social media usage and political involvement

The rise of the Internet has often been equated with the opening of new communication opportunities, which were unavailable in the world of traditional forms of media and which changed citizens' political involvement. In particular, the fast diffusion of social media has prompted many studies into the possible effects of social media usage on citizen or civic engagement (Skoric, Zhu, Goh, et al., 2016; Skoric, Zhu, & Pang, 2016), political participation (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012), and political trust (e.g. Ceron, 2015). These studies share the premise that, for the good functioning of societies, it is important that citizens express their political viewpoints, engage in political and social activities (e.g. participate in meetings where societal issues are discussed), and have a certain amount of trust that their political system functions adequately. Norris (2000, 2011) argues that civic engagement, political interest, and trust in government form a “virtuous circle” in which the separate elements reinforce one another. Nevertheless, there are also substantial differences between these concepts.

Most studies of social media effects have focused on forms of “participation” or “engagement” (often operationalized through certain activities), since social media are agency enhancing: they have enabled citizens to voice their political views directly, either by publicizing them in written form or via interactions with others (Boulianne, 2015; Skoric, Zhu, Goh, et al., 2016). Empirical studies have provided evidence that social media usage is indeed generally associated with other forms of civic and political engagement (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012, 2014; Skoric, Zhu, Goh, et al., 2016; Xenos et al., 2014). Political interest is less often studied as an outcome variable; this is because in Western countries this characteristic is considered to be rather conditional on taking action, and therefore is modeled as a control variable (Vissers & Stolle, 2014). But a

study carried out in Sweden found similar positive effects of social media usage on both political interest and (offline) political participation (Holt et al., 2013).

Political trust concerns the way citizens view the operative political institutions, such as government and parliament, and its presence indicates that such institutions are doing their jobs in an honest, responsive and accountable manner (Ceron, 2015). Higher levels of news media use are generally positively associated with political trust (Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, & Shehata, 2016), but social media use has been found to have a negative impact (Ceron, 2015).

In Western countries, many of these aspects of political involvement are connected to the functioning of democracy (Norris, 2000). Obviously, such aspects have no equivalent in non-democratic countries such as China. Nevertheless, in the Chinese context, various studies showed similar social media effects: usage of Sina Weibo was associated with increasing willingness to politically participate (M. Chan et al., 2012), online forum usage was positively associated with online political discussion among Chinese college students (Mou et al., 2013), and usage of social networking sites for information exchange was positively related to certain forms of political participation that were not organized by party officials (Xinzhi Zhang & Lin, 2014). At the same time, studies also highlighted the complexities of the political situation: expressing political opinions online is strongly related to nationalistic attitudes, which are influenced by party propaganda (Hyun & Kim, 2015). Political trust, or system support, are mainly enhanced by using traditional media such as newspapers and television, but the effects of using Internet or social media are mixed. While Shen and Guo (2013) find negative effects of Internet usage, Hyun and Kim (2015, p. 775) state that “public use of the Internet for political expression contributes to sustaining the existing Chinese system rather than undermining it.” More recently, Chen and Sun (2019) reported that individuals who are influenced by social media such as WeChat and Sina Weibo tend to have lower trust in government.

3.3 Media repertoires and their impacts

Most of the work carried out so far on the relationship between social media usage and the various manifestations of political involvement collapsed social media into one indicator or focused on one specific social media platform (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Sina Weibo). Increasingly, however, scholars are taking into account the expanding range of the media types and outlets that have emerged in the digital age, and shifted their attention to the ways in which individual media users mix and match various forms of usage (Taneja et al., 2012; Webster, 2014). This focus on “media repertoires” captures

the ritualistic or habitual ways in which individuals combine various sorts of media use into a single bundle of practices (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006; van Rees & van Eijck, 2003; Yuan, 2011). Note that there is no consensus as to which media type (print vs. audiovisual, offline vs. online, elite newspapers vs. popular newspapers, etc.) or outlet (TV channels, newspaper titles, social media platforms, etc.) should be incorporated. As a result, media repertoires can be quite varied. Recent studies of news repertoires testify to that. Bos, Kruikemeier, and Vreese (2016), with relatively few online items, find “minimalists,” “public news consumers,” “popular news consumers,” and “omnivores” for the Netherlands. Edgerly and colleagues (2018), distinguishing also by device, find “news avoiders,” “curated news only,” “traditional news only,” and “news omnivores.” And Strömbäck et al. (2018), analyzing mainly online and offline versions of traditional media, find “minimalists,” “public news consumers,” “local news consumers,” “social media news consumers,” and “popular online news consumers.”

Explanatory models of media repertoires have emphasized both socioeconomic characteristics – such as gender, age, and educational level (Strömbäck et al., 2018; van Rees & van Eijck, 2003) – and more structural factors – such as access to media, program schedules, and audience availability (Webster, 2014; Yuan, 2011). More and more, these elements have been integrated in one model of “media duality” (Webster, 2014) in which both individual and structural or contextual factors are shown to affect media choices and to shape media as well as news repertoires (Edgerly et al., 2018; S. Kim, 2014; Taneja et al., 2012; Yuan & Ksiazek, 2011).

Three important limitations stand out in this literature. First, specific social media platforms are not often distinguished in repertoires. Boczkowski et al. (2018) disclose the distinct meanings attributed to social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, but do not show how platforms are combined in actual repertoires. Second, as far as we know, inventories of media repertoires of both traditional and social media in the Chinese context have not yet been conducted. Third, despite the growing attention on how audiences perceive the credibility of different media types (Appelman & Sundar, 2016), this has not often been linked to media repertoires.

As argued previously, I do not want to stop at mapping and explaining media repertoires among young Chinese adults; I also intend to investigate how these repertoires are related to political involvement. The few existing studies suggest that social media news consumers are more likely to participate in online politics than in other news repertoires (Strömbäck et al., 2018), but that, among US teenagers, news omnivores display higher levels of online political participation than those who receive only curated news (Edgerly et al., 2018). What impacts media repertoires have in the Chinese context is yet to be seen.

3.4 The research method

3.4.1 The data

The data collection process consisted of two stages; the details have been presented in the previous chapter (see 2.3.1, p.36).

Overall, my sample resembles those of other Chinese online survey studies (e.g. Hyun & Kim, 2015). Indeed, most of my respondents (97.8 percent) live in cities, which reflects the divide between rural and urban areas in using the Internet (CNNIC, 2019). While female and male respondents are relatively balanced (51.5 percent versus 48.5 percent respectively), individuals with some form of university education constitute the majority (50.1 percent) in my sample, as I explained in the previous chapter. Because higher-educated Chinese are more likely to be CCP members (Hyun & Kim, 2015), the sample also contains a relatively higher proportion of CCP members than the population (see 2.3.1, p.37). But, as I already mentioned in the previous chapter, higher-educated and metropolitan populations predominate among Internet users (and see Skoric, Zhu and Pang, 2016). So, although my sample is not representative of the entire population of young adults in China, I do believe that, given this general predominance, my findings are relevant contributions to research on young Chinese netizens.

3.4.2 Measures

Media use. Traditional media usage was measured in a relatively basic way, as in other, previous studies (e.g. Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2012; Hyun & Kim, 2013). Respondents were asked, “How often do you use the following kinds of media?” and given a four-pronged choice between television, newspapers, magazines, and radio (see 2.3.2 for more details). Answering categories were “never,” “less than once a month,” “a couple of times a month,” “a couple of times a week,” and “(almost) daily.”

Political trust. On this, see 2.3.1 (under the same heading, p.36).

Online political engagement. Measurement for online political engagement was inspired by various previous studies (Skoric, 2011; Yamamoto et al., 2015). Respondents were asked how often they engage in five different types of political activities on social media: “reading news related to politics or public affairs”; “reading blogs or microblogging comments related to politics or public affairs”; “sharing with others on topics of politics or public affairs”; “posting comments in online discussion groups related to politics or public affairs”; and “visiting social media accounts of the government and of public

administration institutions” (1 = not at all, 5 = very frequently). These items form a reliable scale ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .80$, $\alpha = .86$).

Political interest. Guided by previous studies (Holt et al., 2013; D. Kim, 2012), the political interest item included six questions (e.g. “How frequently do you follow what is going on in politics and public affairs?” “How interested would you say you are in politics?”). As explained in the Appendix A to Chapter 2 (p. 45), answers to these questions were then ranged on a political interest scale ($M = 3.96$, $SD = .66$, $\alpha = .87$) that ran from 1 (“not interested at all”) to 5 (“very interested”).

Credibility of political information gathered from the media. On this, see 2.3.1 (under the heading “Media credibility”). The scores were combined into two credibility indexes, one for political information obtained from traditional media ($M = 5.38$, $SD = 1.14$, $\alpha = .95$) and the other for political information obtained from social media ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.12$, $\alpha = .94$).

Interpersonal trust. I am also examining individuals’ interpersonal trust, owing to its close relationship with political trust (see Mishler & Rose, 2001). Interpersonal trust was measured via answers to three questions; these answers were then averaged on a 7-point scale, so as to build a composite index ($M = 5.3$, $SD = .99$, $\alpha = .64$). More details (including the questions) can be found in the Appendix A to Chapter 2 (p. 45).

Demographics. Age is measured from the year of birth, which ranges from 1976 to 1998. Gender is coded so that female = 1. Participants’ educational level was measured on a scale running from 0 (less than primary school) to 5 (beyond master’s degree). Apart from these demographic factors, I controlled for CCP membership, because this factor can affect how individuals use media (Hyun & Kim, 2015). CPP membership is a dummy variable.

Contextual factors: size, place of residence, and Internet penetration rate. As explained in the Appendix A (p. 45), I used respondents’ IP address to find their location. The place of residence would fall into one out of six possible categories, according to population size. These categories were village/town (2.23 percent), small city (below half a million) (8.33 percent), medium city (half a million to 1 million) (13.65 percent), big city (1 to 5 million) (14.42 percent), capital city (5 million to 10 million) (28.27 percent), and super big city (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen) (33.11 percent). The Internet penetration rate is measured by region, on the basis of the national report (CNNIC, 2019).

3.4.3 Analytical strategy

To estimate the media repertoires of young Chinese, I apply the Step-3 approach of LCA using the LatentGold software (Vermunt & Magidson, 2016). This technique enables us to simultaneously find discrete groups or classes on the basis of respondents' response patterns and distribute individual respondents into these groups on the basis of conditional probabilities. In the first step, I employed the cluster option in LCA, with the media usage questions as input variables. These variables have five response categories and are treated as ordinal variables. For answering research questions 2 and 3, we rely on two relatively recently developed functionalities within LCA: Step-3 models with covariates and Step-3 models with distal outcomes (Vermunt & Magidson, 2016). Thus the second step enables researchers to examine which covariates best predict membership of classes. In line with recommendations from the literature, we apply ML (i.e. maximum likelihood) bias correction (Vermunt, 2010). The third step models memberships of classes as independent variables, which can predict selected dependent variables (here: political outcomes) while controlling for other variables. Compared to saving classes and applying regular regression models, these Step-3 models avoid the problem that parameter estimates of this last step are underestimated (Vermunt & Magidson, 2016). Here I apply the modified BCH method (Bakk & Vermunt, 2016).

3.5 The results

3.5.I Descriptive results

Table 3.I Descriptive Statistics of Media Usage

	M	SD
Total traditional media usage ¹	3.14	0.77
Television ¹	3.79	0.92
Radio ¹	2.90	1.04
Magazine ¹	2.93	0.97
Newspaper ¹	2.93	1.05
Total social media usage ²	3.05	0.71
WeChar ²	4.68	0.60
Qzone ²	3.69	1.10
Sina Weibo ²	3.47	1.15

Continue

Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistics of Media Usage

	M	SD
Baidu Tieba ²	3.07	1.10
Zhihu.com ²	2.52	1.25
Tianya Club ²	2.52	1.14
Douban.com ²	2.43	1.10
Guokr.com ²	1.98	0.98

¹n = 1033; ²n = 1030

Table 3.1 presents the descriptive statistics of media usage variables. Among twelve types of media platforms, the frequency of WeChat usage is the highest and Guokr.com scores the lowest. The respondents are less likely to use traditional media such as radio, magazines, and newspapers. Four of the social media platforms – WeChat, Qzone, Sina Weibo, and Baidu Tieba – are used significantly more than traditional media – except for television, which scores highest among traditional media outlets. Zhihu.com, Tianya Club, Douban.com, and Guokr.com score slightly lower than print media and radio usage. Clearly social media such as WeChat, Qzone, Sina Weibo, and Baidu Tieba play a significant role in young adults' daily life.

3.5.2 Media repertoires

To answer my first research question, I used the cluster option in LatentGold for estimating and comparing various models. Table 3.2 presents the summary of the model classifications. The data are sparse, since I used variables with five response categories. Inspection of the BIC (Bayesian information criterion) and CAIC (Consistent Akaike information criterion) values showed that six, seven, or eight clusters yielded the most optimal models. However, the seven and eight cluster models are less parsimonious and more difficult to interpret. I therefore selected the model that contains six classes.

Table 3.2 Summary of Test Results for the Estimated Latent Class Models

	L²	BIC (L²)	BIC (LL)	CAIC (LL)	Df	parameters	p-value
Cluster 1	19382.04	12569.60	33967.09	33730.09	982	48	2.8 ^{e-3363}
Cluster 2	16708.52	9986.26	31383.75	31444.75	969	61	2.5 ^{e-2822}
Cluster 3	15767.57	9135.49	30532.98	30606.98	956	74	4.5 ^{e-2638}
Cluster 4	15443.61	8901.72	30299.21	30386.21	943	87	6.6 ^{e-2580}
Cluster 5	15178.01	8726.31	30123.79	30223.79	930	100	1.2 ^{e-2533}

Continue

Table 3.2 Summary of Test Results for the Estimated Latent Class Models

	L²	BIC (L²)	BIC (LL)	CAIC (LL)	Df	parameters	p-value
Cluster 6	14934.50	8572.98	29970.46	30083.46	917	113	7.0 ^{e-2492}
Cluster 7	14833.93	8562.60	29960.08	30086.08	904	126	2.9 ^{e-2479}
Cluster 8	14743.14	8561.14	29959.48	30098.48	891	139	1.2 ^{e-2468}

Table 3.3 presents the conditional probabilities of the variables for belonging to the distinguished clusters (profile output). On the basis of these coefficients, we can find meaningful labels for the clusters. The first cluster, which represents about 28 percent of the research sample, is labeled *moderate omnivores*. Young adults in this group are very likely to use almost all the media platforms included in this study; but, with the exception of television, Sina Weibo and WeChat, they use these media only a couple times per month. The second largest cluster consists of the *digitally focused*, who comprise about 18 percent of the research sample. This group is least likely to use traditional media, but does use quite a lot of social media platforms. Its members seem to avoid the older platforms (Tianya Club, Douban.com) and the science-oriented platform Guokr.com. Cluster 3 is almost of the same size (17.8 percent) but combines a moderate use of traditional media with a preference for communication- and sharing-oriented social media platforms (Sina Weibo, WeChat, Qzone, Baidu Tieba). I thus label this cluster *communication-oriented*. The fourth cluster represents about 16 percent of the respondents, whom I label *minimal users*. Individuals in this group do not use many different media but spend most of their time on only two popular social media platforms – WeChat and Qzone – and television. The last two clusters are the ones most interested in traditional media. Cluster 5 (10.2 percent) is likely to use every media platform on a weekly or daily basis, and its members are therefore labeled *voracious omnivores*. The last and smallest cluster (9.7 percent) is also quite omnivorous, but less so than cluster 1 and 5. On the other hand, individuals in this cluster present a very high probability of using newspapers and magazines (and actually they also rank quite high when it comes to listening to the radio). Therefore I label them *print-interested*. In sum, while Chinese cross-media repertoires show clear similarities to repertoires found elsewhere (e.g. minimal users, omnivores), the emphasis on social media platforms also brings more specific types to light (e.g. communication oriented).

Table 3.3 Cross-Media Repertoires among Young Chinese Adults

		Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Cluster 6
		<i>Moderate omnivores</i>	<i>Digitally focused</i>	<i>Communication oriented</i>	<i>Minimal users</i>	<i>Voracious omnivores</i>	<i>Print interested</i>
Cluster Size		28.3%	18.0%	17.8%	16.0%	10.2%	9.7%
Television	never	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00
	< 1x month	0.07	0.23	0.01	0.12	0.00	0.01
	couple x/month	0.30	0.43	0.13	0.37	0.04	0.10
	couple x/week	0.47	0.28	0.48	0.41	0.35	0.45
	(almost) daily	0.16	0.04	0.38	0.10	0.61	0.44
Newspapers	never	0.02	0.20	0.01	0.08	0.00	0.00
	< 1x month	0.29	0.61	0.21	0.54	0.03	0.00
	couple x/month	0.53	0.18	0.54	0.34	0.29	0.02
	couple x/week	0.15	0.01	0.22	0.03	0.46	0.25
	(almost) daily	0.01	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.21	0.73
Magazines	never	0.01	0.15	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.00
	< 1x month	0.20	0.63	0.18	0.59	0.01	0.00
	couple x/month	0.67	0.22	0.67	0.31	0.28	0.05
	couple x/week	0.12	0.00	0.14	0.01	0.48	0.35
	(almost) daily	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.23	0.60
Radio	never	0.05	0.17	0.04	0.16	0.00	0.00
	< 1x month	0.30	0.46	0.25	0.44	0.06	0.02
	couple x/month	0.46	0.32	0.47	0.33	0.31	0.20
	couple x/week	0.17	0.05	0.21	0.06	0.40	0.40
	(almost) daily	0.03	0.00	0.04	0.01	0.24	0.38
Sina Weibo	never	0.02	0.10	0.07	0.25	0.00	0.00
	< 1x month	0.06	0.16	0.13	0.24	0.01	0.01
	couple x/month	0.27	0.36	0.35	0.32	0.09	0.12
	couple x/week	0.43	0.30	0.34	0.16	0.38	0.41
	(almost) daily	0.23	0.08	0.11	0.03	0.52	0.45
WeChat	never	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Continue

Table 3.3 Cross-Media Repertoires among Young Chinese Adults

		Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Cluster 6
		<i>Moderate omnivores</i>	<i>Digitally focused</i>	<i>Communication oriented</i>	<i>Minimal users</i>	<i>Voracious omnivores</i>	<i>Print interested</i>
	Cluster Size	28.3%	18.0%	17.8%	16.0%	10.2%	9.7%
Qzone	< 1x month	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01
	couple x/month	0.03	0.06	0.02	0.06	0.02	0.05
	couple x/week	0.19	0.27	0.15	0.26	0.18	0.25
	(almost) daily	0.78	0.65	0.83	0.67	0.79	0.68
	never	0.02	0.08	0.01	0.07	0.00	0.00
Zhihu	< 1x month	0.10	0.20	0.06	0.19	0.01	0.03
	couple x/month	0.29	0.36	0.24	0.36	0.10	0.15
	couple x/week	0.33	0.24	0.34	0.26	0.29	0.32
	(almost) daily	0.26	0.12	0.35	0.13	0.59	0.50
	never	0.06	0.24	0.41	0.95	0.00	0.00
Baidu Tieba	< 1x month	0.22	0.37	0.37	0.05	0.04	0.03
	couple x/month	0.48	0.33	0.20	0.00	0.28	0.26
	couple x/week	0.20	0.06	0.02	0.00	0.39	0.39
	(almost) daily	0.05	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.30	0.32
	never	0.02	0.10	0.06	0.44	0.00	0.00
Tianya Club	< 1x month	0.11	0.23	0.18	0.32	0.01	0.03
	couple x/month	0.47	0.49	0.51	0.22	0.19	0.30
	couple x/week	0.31	0.16	0.21	0.02	0.41	0.41
	(almost) daily	0.09	0.02	0.04	0.00	0.39	0.25
	never	0.03	0.22	0.19	0.96	0.00	0.01
Douban.com	< 1x month	0.23	0.47	0.46	0.04	0.03	0.13
	couple x/month	0.50	0.28	0.31	0.00	0.27	0.46
	couple x/week	0.21	0.03	0.04	0.00	0.41	0.30
	(almost) daily	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.28	0.09
	never	0.00	0.21	0.26	0.94	0.00	0.11
	< 1x month	0.11	0.52	0.52	0.06	0.00	0.47

Continue

Table 3.3 Cross-Media Repertoires among Young Chinese Adults

		Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Cluster 6
		<i>Moderate omnivores</i>	<i>Digitally focused</i>	<i>Communication oriented</i>	<i>Minimal users</i>	<i>Voracious omnivores</i>	<i>Print interested</i>
	Cluster Size	28.3%	18.0%	17.8%	16.0%	10.2%	9.7%
Guokr.com	couple x/month	0.63	0.26	0.22	0.00	0.16	0.40
	couple x/week	0.24	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.54	0.02
	(almost) daily	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.30	0.00
	never	0.05	0.58	0.64	1.00	0.00	0.13
	< 1x month	0.38	0.38	0.34	0.00	0.09	0.52
	couple x/month	0.49	0.04	0.03	0.00	0.50	0.33
	couple x/week	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.31	0.02
	(almost) daily	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.00

Note N = 1,030, since three respondents did not answer social media usage questions.

3.5.3 What predicts cross-media repertoires?

Table 3.4 presents the outcomes of the Step-3 approach with covariates. More particularly, I report the class-specific probabilities of the independent variables. Overall, looking at the Wald values, I conclude that class membership is most clearly explained by age, education, the size of the current place of residence, and the perceived credibility of political information received from both social and traditional media. Gender, Communist Party membership, and interpersonal trust have limited explanatory power.

Table 3.4 User Characteristics of Cluster Members of Cross-Media Repertoires

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Cluster 6	Wald
	<i>Moderate omnivores</i>	<i>Digitally focused</i>	<i>Communication oriented</i>	<i>Minimal users</i>	<i>Voracious omnivores</i>	<i>Print interested</i>	
Age							43.3***
18–25	0.24	0.33	0.15	0.22	0.14	0.05	
26–28	0.21	0.20	0.18	0.18	0.17	0.08	
29–31	0.24	0.23	0.23	0.22	0.27	0.25	

Continue

Table 3.4 User Characteristics of Cluster Members of Cross-Media Repertoires

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Cluster 6	Wald
	<i>Moderate omnivores</i>	<i>Digitally focused</i>	<i>Communi- cation oriented</i>	<i>Minimal users</i>	<i>Voracious omnivores</i>	<i>Print interested</i>	
32–34	0.18	0.13	0.20	0.15	0.29	0.38	
35–40	0.13	0.11	0.24	0.23	0.14	0.24	
Gender							13.1*
Male	0.43	0.52	0.40	0.48	0.51	0.72	
Female	0.57	0.48	0.60	0.52	0.49	0.28	
Educational level							51.2***
Max. middle school	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.00	
High school	0.04	0.04	0.10	0.16	0.02	0.01	
Some college	0.21	0.25	0.28	0.36	0.12	0.07	
University	0.56	0.56	0.50	0.40	0.50	0.39	
MA degree and up	0.20	0.15	0.11	0.05	0.36	0.53	
Membership CCP							13.3*
Not a member	0.62	0.77	0.70	0.79	0.45	0.58	
Member	0.38	0.23	0.30	0.21	0.55	0.42	
Place of residence size							42.2***
Village/ town/small city	0.18	0.29	0.36	0.38	0.07	0.08	
Medium-sized city	0.14	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.12	
Big city	0.31	0.26	0.25	0.23	0.33	0.34	
Super big city	0.38	0.29	0.23	0.24	0.49	0.46	
Interpersonal trust							13.0*
Very low	0.18	0.29	0.15	0.28	0.09	0.06	
Slightly low	0.20	0.22	0.18	0.22	0.16	0.11	

Continue

Table 3.4 User Characteristics of Cluster Members of Cross-Media Repertoires

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Cluster 6	Wald
	<i>Moderate omnivores</i>	<i>Digitally focused</i>	<i>Communi- cation oriented</i>	<i>Minimal users</i>	<i>Voracious omnivores</i>	<i>Print interested</i>	
Neither low/ high	0.31	0.27	0.31	0.27	0.27	0.23	
Slightly high	0.15	0.11	0.17	0.12	0.21	0.28	
Very high	0.16	0.11	0.20	0.11	0.27	0.32	
Credibility rating of political info from social media							16.3**
1–14	0.23	0.40	0.16	0.33	0.03	0.02	
15–18	0.20	0.23	0.17	0.21	0.08	0.06	
19–21	0.24	0.19	0.23	0.20	0.22	0.21	
22–23	0.15	0.09	0.17	0.11	0.25	0.27	
24–29	0.17	0.09	0.27	0.15	0.42	0.45	
Credibility rating of political info from traditional media							24.1***
1–17	0.19	0.39	0.14	0.30	0.04	0.01	
18–21	0.23	0.25	0.19	0.22	0.11	0.04	
22–24	0.23	0.17	0.23	0.20	0.23	0.14	
25–26	0.15	0.10	0.20	0.15	0.21	0.20	
27–30	0.19	0.09	0.24	0.14	0.42	0.61	

Note Profile information. The models are estimated using the Step 3 procedure in LatentGold with co-variables (proportional classification; ML bias correction). N = 1030. Covariates are treated as numeric variables, except for gender and member CP (nominal). $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

Inspection of the probabilities suggests that the six clusters fall apart, dividing into two groups of three clusters. On the one side we find the *moderate omnivores*, the *digitally focused*, and the *minimal users*. These clusters share relative low levels of interpersonal trust and a low ranking of the credibility of political information contained in the media (particularly social). Their members are, on average, younger than those in the other clusters (although the group of minimal users contains a few 35+-year-olds) and are not likely to be members of the Communist Party. There are some small differences between these clusters: moderate omnivores (cluster 1) are a bit more likely to be female, do more often come from bigger cities, and accord greater credibility to traditional media. The digitally focused (cluster 2) are clearly the youngest group. The minimal users have slightly lower educational levels.

The other three clusters – the *communication-oriented*, the *voracious omnivores*, and the *print-interested* – also have elements in common. They are on average older than clusters 1, 2 and 4, show higher degrees of interpersonal trust, and perceive the political information on both social and traditional media as being reasonably credible. Again, we also find differences between these clusters. While voracious omnivores and the print-interested have the highest educational levels in my research sample, the communication-oriented resemble cluster 1 and 2 in this respect. Clusters 5 and 6 are also more frequently found in big cities and present stronger chances of being members of the communist party. Print-interested individuals are much more likely to be male than female.

In sum, more highly educated and relatively older individuals tend to be omnivorous and more interested in traditional media. These repertoires are aligned with perceptions of higher credibility of mediatized political information and with greater interpersonal trust. Still, also among the younger respondents we find broadly oriented media users – moderate omnivores – who perhaps will increase their levels of media consumption in the future.

3.5.4 Political implications of cross-media repertoires

My final research question addresses the issue of whether media repertoires are associated with forms of political involvement such as political trust, political interest, and online political engagement. Table 3.5 presents the outcomes from three Step-3 analyses with distal outcomes. The coefficients can be interpreted as regression coefficients, but note that I used effect coding for the cluster variables. Effect coding contrasting group means with the grand mean rather than with a specified group, as with dummy coding. The Wald statistics for cluster variables implies that the clusters differ significantly for all three political outcomes. Thus, controlled for the confounding variables reported in the table, clusters appear to be associated with different levels of political trust, online political engagement, and political interest. In other words, regardless of how credible someone finds, for example, the information acquired from social media or traditional media, having a specific media repertoire appears to shape political orientation.

The most extreme outcomes are found for political trust. Voracious omnivores and particularly print-interested individuals have the highest levels of political trust, while minimal users and the digitally focused display the lowest levels of trust. In addition to these effects, there are still positive effects of both the perceived credibility of political information and interpersonal trust. Women are more likely to show political trust than men, but other demographics are evenly distributed across trust levels.

Table 3.5 Distal Outcomes for Three Aspects of Political Involvement

	Political trust (ordinal)		Online political engagement (continuous)		Political interest (continuous)	
	coefficient (s.e.)	Wald	coefficient (s.e.)	Wald	coefficient (s.e.)	Wald
Clusters						
Moderate omnivores	-0.26 (.06)	58.5***	0.03 (.04)	236.2***	0.04 (.04)	44.5***
Digitally focused	-0.32 (.08)		-0.39 (.06)		-0.16 (.06)	
Communication-oriented	-0.27 (.09)		-0.08 (.05)		-0.03 (.05)	
Minimal users	-0.44 (.08)		-0.58 (.06)		-0.23 (.05)	
Voracious omnivores	0.36 (.11)		0.53 (.05)		0.23 (.05)	
Print-interested	0.92 (.15)		0.50 (.05)		0.15 (.04)	
Individual factors						
Age	-0.01 (.01)	2.2	0.01 (.00)	4.3*	0.01 (.00)	5.8*
Female	0.09 (.03)	8.8 **	-0.09 (.02)	21.5***	-0.06 (.02)	12.7***
Educational level	0.01 (.04)	0.1	0.13 (.03)	23.0***	0.09 (.02)	14.2***
Membership CCP	0.06 (.03)	3.1	0.02 (.02)	1.1	-0.02 (.02)	0.9
Interpersonal trust	0.14 (.04)	15.2***	0.05 (.02)	4.8*	0.09 (.02)	15.0***
Credibility of political information from social media	0.18 (.04)	17.8***	0.12 (.03)	18.3***	0.05 (.03)	2.6
Credibility of political information from traditional media	0.30 (.04)	48.2***	0.03 (.03)	1.3	0.13 (.03)	23.6***
Contextual factors						
Place of residence – size	-0.01 (.02)	0.0	0.01 (.02)	0.3	-0.01 (.01)	0.7
Internet penetration rate	0.00 (.00)	0.5	-0.00 (.00)	0.5	-0.00 (.00)	1.1
N	1017		1017		1017	
Log-likelihood (LL)	-3240.25		-2646.35		-2586.65	
BIC (LL)	6618.99		5403.50		5284.09	

Note Results of Step-3 analysis with distal outcomes, applying BCH adjustment. Independent variables are treated as continuous, except for the following: female; membership (nominal); education; place of residence (ordinal). The parameters are effect coding. *p < .05. **p < .01 ***p < .001.

For online political engagement we find similar patterns for the cluster variables, but here voracious omnivores have slightly higher levels of engagement than the print-interested. Minimal users and the digitally focused score even lower for political engagement than for political trust, while the moderate omnivores and the communication-oriented take the middle ground – again. We find different patterns for the individual factors. How credible the various individuals find the political information in traditional media does not matter, whereas a negative effect might have been expected. Males and the higher-educated are more likely to get involved in online participation in political matters.

By comparison, political interest has the weakest connection to cross-media repertoires. Voracious omnivores are most likely to show political interest, but on this dimension print-interested young adults distinguish themselves from the remaining four clusters less than they do on the dimensions of trust and online engagement. Minimal users continue to be the least politically oriented, but the difference from the highest scoring cluster is smaller than it is in the case of the other two indicators of political orientation. Political interest is not associated with the perceived credibility of political information found on social media sites, but it is with that of political information found in traditional media. Higher levels of education, being male, and higher levels of interpersonal trust increase political interest.

3.6 Conclusion and discussion

This chapter attempts to advance our understanding of how, in the repressive media ecology of China, traditional and social media get combined by young adults into distinct cross-media repertoires, and how these repertoires relate to youngsters' political orientations. We find six different repertoires, which run progressively from quite limited ones (minimal users) to repertoires with a specific media orientation (digitally focused users, communication-oriented users), then to relatively diverse repertoires (moderate omnivores), and finally to repertoires that mix many traditional media types and social media platforms (voracious omnivores, print-interested users). In general, the younger and poorly educated respondents tended to be less inclined to include traditional media in their repertoire. Yet they also showed lower levels of interpersonal trust and did not find political information in the media very credible. This raises at least two questions. Using traditional media (television, newspapers, magazines, radio) is associated with age and education. Should we interpret these findings as a life course effect, or does it indicate cohort differences? In other words, what will happen when the current teenagers and twenty-somethings grow up and finish their education? Second, why do we find so few differences between the perceived credibility of the political information available

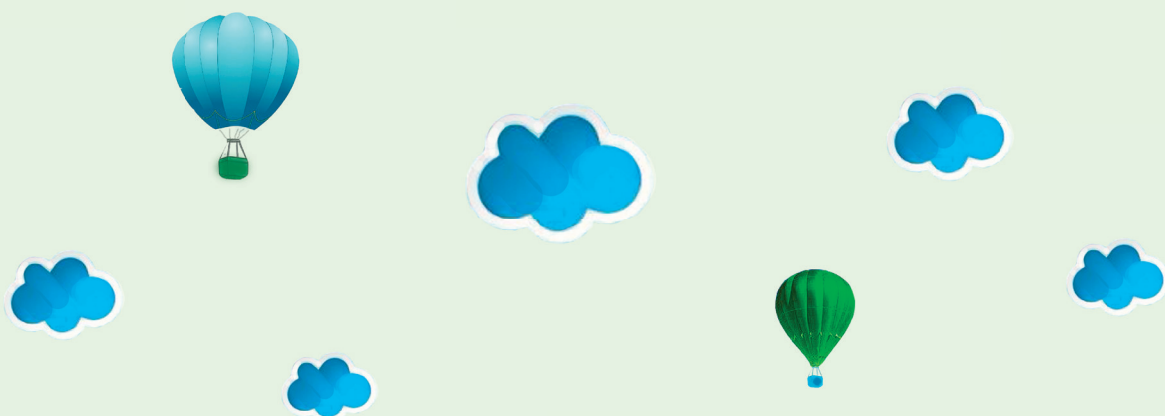
in social media and in traditional media respectively? That voracious omnivores and the print-interested also perceive as credible the information they get from social media can be explained by their omnivorous orientation (they use all kinds of media); but repertoires that focus on social media also judge traditional and social media to be alike in point of credibility (so the digitally-focused and the communication-oriented). This suggests (1) that, in the Chinese media environment, young adults see little difference between the quality of media types, and (2) that the way in which they judge this quality has more to do social background with than with how they experience media usage. But this needs further investigation.

I also examined how cross-media repertoires relate to political involvement. Although I studied three quite distinct types of involvement, the findings show clear similarities. Voracious omnivores and the print-interested show the greatest political trust, the highest online political engagement, and the most political interest. Moderate omnivores follow, at some distance, which implies that more omnivorous media repertoires are positively related to all types of political involvement, while heavier reliance on social media platforms has negative associations. That preference for print is most strongly linked with political trust suggests that print media are most strongly associated with the Chinese government.

Some limitations of this study should be mentioned. As in other studies of media usage and political participation in China (e.g. Shen & Guo, 2013; Zhang & Lin, 2014), I cannot make strong causal claims for my effects, since I rely on cross-sectional data. This implies that political involvement can also drive media usage. What is more, my sample is not representative of all Chinese young adults; it contains a large proportion of urban youths with a higher education. Future research could examine the motivations of young adults in using specific media platforms, as well as the degree of political content they come across (Choi, 2016). In the Chinese context, the role of censorship and the influence of the CCP on how young adults use (social) media remain two important elements to address (Hyun & Kim, 2015).

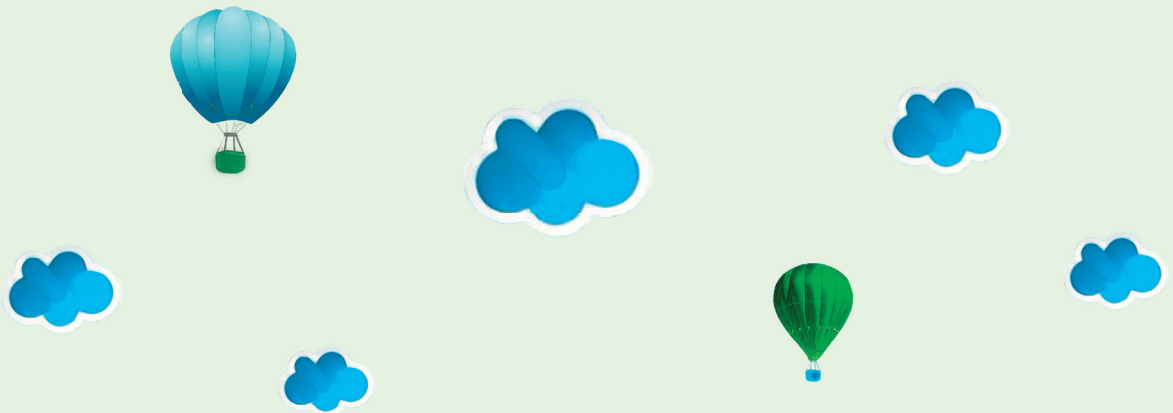
Overall, there is evidence that in China, too, more diverse media repertoires go hand in hand with stronger forms of political engagement (see Edgerly et al., 2018). While social media platforms are an essential part of such a diversified repertoire, traditional media remain important: repertoires that contain traditional media show higher political engagement. A disadvantage of the media repertoire approach is that outcomes very much hinge on the items used. Since my measurement of traditional media is, for example, less extensive than that of Strömback et al. (2018), I find different types of repertoires. Yet the increasing importance of social media platforms and their multiplicity

make it pertinent to incorporate these platforms into future repertoire research (Boczkowski et al., 2018). The findings of the present research evince the relevance of making more fine-grained distinctions between varieties of social media usage.



Chapter 4

Cultural taste repertoires and online engagement with arts and culture in the digital age⁶



⁶ This chapter is under review as Gong, Q., Verboord, M., & Janssen, S. Cultural consumption repertoires and online engagement with arts and culture in the digital age: The case of China. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*.

Abstract

In this chapter I investigate culture consumption patterns and online engagement with arts and culture among young adults in China by taking a repertoire-oriented approach. Drawing on online survey data (N = 1,033) collected in mainland China, I examine how the use of media as sources of information, in conjunction with the perceived credibility of media sources, affects cultural consumption repertoires. Using the Step-3 approach of latent class analysis (LCA), I then look into how these repertoires can be explained by various individual and media factors; and I try to analyze the impact of the repertoires on online engagement with art and culture. I identify five distinctive cultural consumption repertoires (to be distinguished from the six general types of repertoires presented in chapter 3), and I describe their practitioners as media-focused cultural omnivores, media-oriented cultural consumers, all-round cultural omnivores, minimal cultural consumers, and book-focused minimal cultural consumers. My results elicit the following observations: (1) cultural repertoires are mainly shaped by parents' education, income, credibility attributed to the media, and media usage; (2) having a specific cultural repertoire seems to shape one's online engagement with art and culture; (3) in comparison to traditional media, social media exert a stronger influence on predicting both cultural repertoires and online engagement with art and culture. The chapter will discuss the implications of these results.

4 Cultural taste repertoires and online engagement with arts and culture in the digital age

4.I Introduction

There has been an abundance of studies on patterns of cultural consumption in the past decades, in the aftermath of observations to the effect that distinctions between “classical” and “popular” culture are blurring and that cultural consumption is increasingly mediatized (Leguina et al., 2017; Purhonen, Gronow, & Rahkonen, 2010). The concept of “omnivorousness” (Peterson, 1992) was introduced to explain how the mixing of various forms of culture and entertainment was increasingly taking shape, both within individual cultural domains taken in isolation (T. W. Chan & Turner, 2017), and across cultural realms taken together (Katz-Gerro & Jæger, 2013; Purhonen et al., 2010). Despite the large literature this work has produced, little research has been done on cultural consumption repertoires and on cultural omnivorousness outside the Western world (Buigut & Amaize, 2016; Hazır & Warde, 2015; Snowball, Jamal, & Willis, 2010).

This research gap is particularly pressing, since cultural consumption is strongly linked to socioeconomic position (DiMaggio, 1987; Reeves & de Vries, 2016). Higher degrees of cultural omnivorousness are often associated with conditions of more widespread social equality and are found more often in countries with a greater number of equally distributed educational opportunities and economic resources (Purhonen et al., 2010). This begs the question of what consumption patterns look like and how can they be explained in more hierarchical countries, with lower levels of democracy. In this chapter I move the discussion of cultural omnivorousness to a less democratic environment: China, which has witnessed a significant shift in cultural consumption owing to rapid economic growth after the implementation of a set of major economic reforms policies in 1978. Not only is China the most populous country in the world, with a large number of different linguistic areas and distinctive lifestyles, but its income inequality is also among the highest worldwide (Xie & Zhou, 2014).

Besides extending the geographical range of cultural consumption research, I also aim to make progress on the mediatized perspective of culture. Prior research mainly focused on the effects of demographic parameters – especially social status, social class, and education – on cultural repertoires (Katz-Gerro & Jæger, 2013; Notten, Lancee, van de Werfhorst, & Ganzeboom, 2015). In times when more and more people access culture in a mediatized format – by downloading or streaming music and films, by watching television via the Internet, by playing online games, by reading e-books, or even by

buying culture online – it becomes increasingly important to examine how we engage with culture in online contexts. For this reason, I will focus here on young adults and will pay specific attention to mediatized culture. After mapping the cultural repertoires of young Chinese adults, I study how the use of media as information sources and the perceived credibility of these sources influence those repertoires. Next, I investigate how the repertoires I found impact the online cultural engagement of young people – that is, which consumption patterns are associated with usages of online media.

In a nutshell, this chapter tries to answer the following questions. (1) What kinds of cultural consumption clusters can be found in the Chinese context? (2) To what extent can differences in Chinese cultural consumption repertoires be explained by media variables, and in particular by media credibility and media usage? (3) How far can cultural consumption patterns among young adults and the two media variables just mentioned explain online engagement with art and culture in the population under study? To answer these questions, I used survey data that I collected in 2016 (see section 1.4) I conducted LCA to identify cultural repertoires; and I employed the Step-3 submodule in LatentGold for explanatory analyses. This submodule corrects for classification error and prevents bias in the estimation of parameters (Vermunt & Magidson, 2016). A comprehensive presentation of how this work was conducted can be found in the methodological section of Chapter 2; here, in section 4.3, I will detail only those aspects that are relevant to the subject at hand.

4.2 Literature review

4.2.1 Explaining cultural consumption repertoires in the Chinese context

Cultural consumption repertoires are traditionally shaped by a variety of factors. The large body of empirical research that has been produced in the past decades has shown the impacts of demographic characteristics such as age, gender, level of education (Katz-Gerro & Jæger, 2013; Purhonen et al., 2010), parental background (van Hek & Kraaykamp, 2015; Willekens, Daenekindt, & Lievens, 2014), and income (D. Zhu, 2017). For instance, in the domain of literature and music, the more education one has, the greater the diversity of the genres one tends to like (Purhonen et al., 2010). Concerning their theoretical base, these studies often draw upon Western perspectives of how social structures are related to the space of lifestyles. Building on Bourdieu (1984) and DiMaggio (1987), calibrations of social status variety in relation to cultural consumption are linked to configurations of social inequality, as observed in typical Western societies. However, the existing research on cultural taste patterns in the context of China is limited. What kinds of cultural consumption and taste patterns could we

expect in China that might be different from their counterparts in the West? How do we explain these patterns?

With the remarkable development of China's economy over the past several decades, the life of citizens in this country has changed deeply, including with regard to their economic status, lifestyle and cultural consumption. The increasing growth of China's economy not only produced a burgeoning middle class, but also widened the wealth gap (i.e. the gap between rich and poor) and the rural–urban gap. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBS), in the first half year of 2018 the disposable income per capita among urban residents was 19,770 Chinese yuan (CNY), whereas among rural residents it was 7,142 CNY (NBS, 2018). Even within urban areas, there is a cultural divide between elite classes and working classes, as exemplified in a study of reading practices in four big cities (Shaoguang Wang, Davis, & Bian, 2006). Chinese society is differentiated along both economic and cultural lines (Shaoguang Wang et al., 2006). In this sense, China is an interesting case for studying issues of cultural omnivorousness and social differentiation of cultural practices and tastes.

The few existing studies on cultural consumption in China have focused on the effects of individuals' age, income, education, and family size (N. Li, 2014; Tan & Wu, 2010; L. Zhou, Gu, & Lu, 2013; D. Zhu, 2017) in one or two cultural domains at a time. Some studies show similarities with Western research. For example, regarding music consumption, Li (2014) demonstrates that individuals with a low educational level are less likely to show an interest in (any kind of) music than do individuals with a high level of education. A recent empirical study shows that income, education, and occupation are significantly related to cultural taste combinations between highbrow and popular culture, at least in the fields of music and book reading (D. Zhu, 2017). What is mostly missing in Chinese research is work that examines how cultural consumption is organized in patterns that combine various sorts of cultural tastes. In other words, as far as I am aware, studies into cultural omnivorousness have not been conducted for China.

4.2.2 Media impact on cultural consumption repertoires

When reviewing the literature of cultural consumption studies, it is striking to see how often the emphasis has been placed on outdoors activities, for example visiting museums, exhibitions, music concerts, theatre performances, operas, ballets, and the like (Roose & Daenekindt, 2015). Increasingly, this perspective appears to be at odds with the existing practices of modern citizens, particularly the young. Cultural consumption is more and more mediatized, as digitalization and ubiquitous equipment have expanded people's options to access music, film, television, books, and so on. The rise of user-generated content (UGC) and of social media platforms has also transformed the way information on culture is disseminated. Potentially, this has democratized cultural

consumption patterns, in the sense that (a) popular forms of culture will become more prominent in cultural repertoires, (b) recommendations will increasingly come from non-institutionalized media (e.g. social media), and (c) consumers will be able to engage with culture via peer-to-peer communication, which excludes more “elitist” notions of culture.

At a basic level, media can be regarded as an important source of cultural information. As already mentioned, critics in the media world act as gatekeepers through the process of selecting and ranking products and presenting their selections and evaluations to the public (see Chapter 1, p.7, with reference there). There is indeed a strong link between media and their readership, which sometimes suggests influence or agenda-setting effects. For example, a study on the Greek cultural market found that museums with higher visibility in newspaper content have more visitors than museums with lower media visibility (Bantimaroudis, Zyglidopoulos, & Symeou, 2010).

At a more abstract level, the media act as legitimating agents of cultural worth. Drawing on institutional recognition, socially validated aesthetics discourses, and careful tuning in with other influential cultural agents, mediators can contribute to elevating certain products and genres in the cultural hierarchy. Arguably, legacy media (e.g. newspapers, opinion magazines) have more clout than blogs, cultural websites, and other kinds of new media; but, as I already explained (p.16), this situation is likely to change. For now, it is sufficient to examine how specific cultural activities are related to various types of information sources. Precisely because the status of cultural activities or taste expressions (“highbrow,” “popular”) is socially constructed, it is relevant to establish how these activities are connected to the very sources that impact status. Previous studies have analyzed the role of legacy media (Shrum, 1991; van Eijck & van Rees, 2000; Verboord, 2010), but how these compare to social media has not been looked into before.

In addition to media usage as information, the perceived credibility of media sources is of substantial importance to the formation of cultural repertoires. Media credibility is a user-based perception that comprises accuracy, believability, and fairness (Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus, & McCann, 2003). There is ample evidence for the claim that media credibility relates to media consumption patterns (Kioussis, 2001; Wanta & Hu, 1994). If individuals perceive a specific medium (say, the newspaper) to be highly credible, they tend to spend more time with this medium in their search for information, and their exposure to it goes up (D. Kim & Johnson, 2009; Wanta & Hu, 1994). The current media environment is packed with various sorts of platforms. Consumers are more likely to use media platforms that, in their eyes, contain cultural information that is believable, accurate, fair, in-depth or trustworthy. Given the mediatized perspective on culture that prevails in our days, it is important to investigate the effects of media

credibility on cultural consumption patterns. By examining how consumers assess the cultural information they find in the media, we can get a more accurate picture of media impacts on the repertoires of cultural consumption, and of media-based cultural practice in particular.

Also, it should be noted that existing studies produced by Chinese scholars have focused either on relatively broad cultural domains – such as education and entertainment (Xu & Zhang, 2014), tourism and social events (W. Zhu, 2012) – or on a particular subset of the entire population – such as urban consumers (Tan & Wu, 2010; D. Zhu, 2017) and college students (W. Zhu, 2012). There has been a lack of research on cultural consumption in numerous specific areas and in different population groups. This is why my exploratory study aims to examine cultural taste patterns in multiple cultural domains among young adults from different backgrounds.

4.2.3 Online engagement with culture and the arts

The advent of new technology prompts young consumers to search and share information online in all sorts of domains; and some of these are the cultural realm. Users are switching from traditional ways of sharing information about music, films, TV programs, or books – for example the radio, or exchanges among friends – to social media – for example music blogs and online music services (Dewan & Ramaprasad, 2014; M. Smith & Telang, 2016). It is a trend that the young generation goes online to search for and share cultural information – both in the West and in China. In China, for example, Douban.com, the website of Douban Music, is one of the most popular social network services and young Chinese consumers like to go there to search for music and subsequently share it with others. As the Internet continues to expand globally, understanding the connections between art and culture on the one hand and the Internet on the other is indispensable.

There is now a growing body of literature dedicated to the relationship between the use of the Internet and of social media platforms and wide-ranging cultural participation, for example in the form of sharing music online or searching for information on books (D. Lee et al., 2011; Leguina et al., 2017; M. Smith & Telang, 2016; Verboord, 2010). However, as I mentioned in Chapter 1 (p.16), the exact connections between activities such as these – activities around the online search and sharing of cultural information – and the formation of certain cultural taste patterns remains unknown. For instance, do book readers tend to search and share reviews about a book on Amazon.com frequently? Or do consumers who visit art exhibitions frequently tend to read blogs or share information on art products online? It is important to get a clearer understanding of who engages with culture online and how this type of activity connects to the existence of taste patterns, as scrutinized in omnivorousness studies.

Very few studies have focused on online activities and taste patterns in the field of culture. The present chapter aim to fill in this important gap by investigating various cultural activities deployed on Chinese social media – activities such as searches for cultural products, or the sharing of cultural information with one’s family and friends online – and trying to see how the online engagement with art and culture relates to cultural taste patterns.

4.3 Data and measurements

4.3.1 Data collection

The process by which I came to collect the research data presented and discussed in this dissertation is described in some detail in sections 2.3.1 (p.36) and at 3.4.1 (p.55); the latter is especially relevant for this chapter.

4.3.2 Design

The empirical strategy has a threefold design (see see 3.4.3 p.57 which I summarize here very briefly). First, I estimated young adults’ cultural taste repertoires by applying the Step-3 approach of LCA with LatentGold software (Vermunt & Magidson, 2016). Then I used Step-3 models with covariates, to examine which covariates best predict membership of classes. Finally, I treated memberships of classes as independent variables by applying Step-3 models with distal outcomes: these can predict selected dependent variables (here, online engagement with arts and culture) while controlling for other variables (here, demographics, media credibility, and media usage). These Step-3 models avoid the problem of regular regression models that parameter estimates of the last step are underestimated (Vermunt & Magidson, 2016:44-48).

4.3.3 Measures

4.3.3.1 Dependent variables

Cultural consumption. Previous research focused either on single cultural domains or on outdoor cultural activities. There is a lack of empirical studies on cultural consumption in a broad range of cultural domains. This chapter examines how often respondents participated in the following indoor and outdoor cultural activities: playing video games, visiting pop concerts, visiting classical concerts or opera, visiting art exhibitions, watching movies and TV series, reading a book (not for school). Results were reported on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very frequently) ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .77$, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .75$). I recoded these variables and distributed each into one out of three categories: never/rarely; sometimes; often/very frequently. On the one hand, this prevented the sparseness of the data from generating unreliable models; on the other hand, cultural participants are often found to fall into groups along such lines – hardly engaged, very

engaged, and in-between or middling (see Roose & Vander Stichele, 2010 on challenges related to the use of LCA for cultural participation).

4.3.3.2 Independent variables

Media usage. Traditional media usage ($M = 3.14$, $SD = .77$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$) is measured in a relatively basic way, as in other studies; for details and for references to the literature, see “Media usage” at 2.3.1 (p.36) and “Media use” at 3.4.2 (p.55).

Credibility of cultural information gathered from the media. On this, see “Media credibility” at 2.3.2. Here the scores were combined into two scales, respectively for the credibility of cultural information on traditional media ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.05$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$) and social media ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 1.08$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$).

Online engagement with art and culture. Measurement for this dimension goes hand in hand with the measurement of political engagement, discussed in the previous chapter (cf. “Online political engagement” see 3.4.2 p.55) with references to literature in the field; the research report on social network usage in China (CNNIC, 2017) was also of help). Respondents are asked how often they had “read blogs or microblogging related to arts and culture,” “shared with others topics related to arts and culture,” “posted comments in online discussion groups or social networking sites related to arts and culture,” “followed social media accounts of the experts and enterprises of arts and culture,” or “recommend new films, books or music products.” Answers are aligned on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very frequently) ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .77$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$).

4.3.3.3 Control variables

Socio-demographic variables. In line with previous studies, I examine the following socio-demographic factors: age, gender, education, parental education, and income. All participants' age is measured from the year of birth, which in this study extended from 1976 to 1998 (see 3.3.2, “Demographics”). Parents' educational level averaged 3.16 ($SD = 1.169$) on a 6-point scale, corresponding to high school. The respondents' income, measured on a scale from 1 (no income) to 12 (over 50,000 CNY), averaged 7.31 ($SD = 1.396$), corresponding to a range from 3,001 CNY to 5,000 CNY – the highest income among national netizens (CNNIC, 2019).

4.4 Results

4.4.I Mapping cultural consumption repertoires

To answer my first research question, I used the cluster option in LatentGold; this option helps estimate and compare various models. Owing to the sparseness of my data, the chi-squared likelihood-ratio statistic (L^2) does not have an asymptotic chi-squared distribution and is not used for model selection (Dayton & Fox, 1998, p. 16). On the basis of the criterion of the lowest BIC value, I selected the model containing five clusters (BIC = 11582.4855; L^2 = 800.0784; DF = 987; p = 1.00, see Appendix B for details). These five distinctive cultural repertoires can be labeled as follows: (1) media-focused cultural omnivores; (2) media-oriented cultural consumers; (3) all-round cultural omnivores; (4) minimal cultural consumers; and (5) book-focused minimal cultural consumers (see Table 4.1).

The cluster of *media-focused cultural omnivores* constitutes the largest group; it represents about 31 percent of the research population. Respondents belonging to this cluster participate in many ways in artistic and cultural events; they state that they sometimes go to concerts and visit exhibitions, for example. They are likely to join quite frequently in media-based activities such as movie and TV spectatorship. The second largest cluster consists of *media-oriented cultural consumers*, who comprise about 27 percent of the research population.

As in cluster 1, in this group too young adults are very likely to participate in media-based cultural activities. But they tend never to visit concert halls or art exhibitions – or to do so only rarely. Members of the third largest group (around 18 percent) can be considered “*all-round cultural omnivores*.” Young adults in this cluster show most signs of omnivorousness. All-round cultural omnivores distinguish themselves by participating very often in all cultural activities

Table 4.1 Summary of cultural participation patterns in each repertoire

	Cluster1	Cluster2	Cluster3	Cluster4	Cluster5
	Media-focused cultural omnivores	Media-oriented cultural consumers	All-round cultural omnivores	Minimal cultural consumers	Book-focused minimal cultural consumers
Cluster Size	30.72%	26.78%	18.33%	13.93%	10.24%
Indicators					
Video game playing					
Never/rarely	0.21	0.34	0.04	0.49	0.40
Sometimes	0.38	0.39	0.22	0.36	0.38
Often/very frequently	0.41	0.27	0.74	0.15	0.22
mean	2.19	1.93	2.70	1.66	1.82
Pop concert visiting					
Never/rarely	0.06	0.69	0.00	0.86	0.13
Sometimes	0.65	0.31	0.18	0.14	0.72
Often/very frequently	0.30	0.01	0.82	0.00	0.16
mean	2.24	1.32	2.82	1.14	2.03
Classical concert visiting					
Never/rarely	0.22	0.98	0.00	0.97	0.26
Sometimes	0.69	0.02	0.13	0.03	0.67
Often/very frequently	0.08	0.00	0.87	0.00	0.07
mean	1.86	1.02	2.86	1.03	1.81
Art exhibition visiting					
Never/rarely	0.05	0.55	0.00	0.79	0.15
Sometimes	0.64	0.44	0.19	0.20	0.72
Often/very frequently	0.31	0.01	0.81	0.00	0.13
mean	2.26	1.46	2.81	1.21	1.97
Movie watching					
Never/rarely	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.06
Sometimes	0.00	0.05	0.10	0.57	0.53
Often/very frequently	1.00	0.95	0.90	0.35	0.41
mean	3.00	2.95	2.90	2.27	2.35

Continue

Table 4.1 Summary of cultural participation patterns in each repertoire

	Cluster1	Cluster2	Cluster3	Cluster4	Cluster5
	Media-focused cultural omnivores	Media-oriented cultural consumers	All-round cultural omnivores	Minimal cultural consumers	Book-focused minimal cultural consumers
Cluster Size	30.72%	26.78%	18.33%	13.93%	10.24%
TV series watching					
Never/rarely	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.13	0.22
Sometimes	0.03	0.09	0.17	0.52	0.55
Often/very frequently	0.97	0.91	0.82	0.34	0.23
mean	2.97	2.91	2.82	2.21	2.02
Book reading					
Never/rarely	0.01	0.05	0.00	0.18	0.05
Sometimes	0.24	0.41	0.09	0.56	0.42
Often/very frequently	0.75	0.54	0.91	0.27	0.53
mean	2.74	2.50	2.90	2.09	2.48

Notes Bold parameters indicate the cluster with high frequency in the use of a certain media platform; values are expressed as percentages.

available and open to participation. Cluster 4 is made up of *minimal cultural consumers*, who constitute around 14 percent. People in this cluster are inclined to participate in almost all the listed cultural activities, but the frequency of their attendance is very low, except for media-based activities. Thus, compared to media-focused cultural omnivores, they appear less inclined to participate in the full range of cultural activities available; compared to media-oriented cultural consumers, they refrain from joining media-related cultural activities. The smallest cluster (around 10 percent) is the group of *book-focused minimal cultural consumers*. Young adults in this cluster distinguish themselves by participating in almost all the cultural activities, but infrequently; the only activity in which engage oftentimes is book reading.

4.4.2 What predicts cultural consumption repertoires?

What are the major characteristics that define a cultural repertoire? My second research theme addresses this question by exploring the links between cultural repertoires, demographics, and media variables. As is shown in Table 4.1, class membership is most clearly explained by parents' education, income, the amount of credibility invested in cultural information that comes from both traditional and social media, and traditional

and social media usage (on the basis of Wald values). Other demographic variables such as gender, age, and education also appear to predict membership, but just fail to reach significance. The differences between classes can be described as follows.

All-round cultural omnivores are most likely to be male, older, highly educated and coming from families with the highest level of parental educational background, and to earn more than members of the other groups. Also, young adults who give both social media and traditional media the highest scores on credibility are more likely to belong to this cluster. In contrast, minimal cultural consumers are more likely to be younger and to come up with the lowest scores on all the listed items. Respondents who are relatively young and have a lower level of personal and parental education, a lower income, and a lower perception of the credibility of the cultural information that comes from both traditional media and social media tend to be media-oriented cultural consumers – just like minimal cultural consumers; but media-oriented cultural consumers get higher scores on all items than do minimal cultural consumers.

Compared to all other consumers except the all-round cultural omnivores, media-focused cultural omnivores tend to be slightly older and have relatively higher incomes and higher perceptions about the credibility of the cultural information that comes from both traditional and social media. Media-focused cultural omnivores have the highest proportion of female participants.

Table 4.2 Profile of individuals in cultural repertoires

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Wald (p-value)
Age						
18-25	0.19	0.26	0.07	0.29	0.27	5.34
26-31	0.45	0.38	0.44	0.37	0.43	
32-40	0.36	0.36	0.49	0.34	0.30	
Gender						
Male=0	0.41	0.45	0.57	0.52	0.59	7.45
Female=1	0.59	0.55	0.43	0.48	0.41	
Education						
Middle school or lower	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.03	0.01	3.30

Continue

Table 4.2 Profile of individuals in cultural repertoires

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Wald (p-value)
High School	0.04	0.10	0.03	0.11	0.03	
Some college	0.20	0.30	0.11	0.32	0.22	
University	0.57	0.48	0.43	0.45	0.56	
Master's degree and beyond	0.18	0.11	0.44	0.10	0.18	
Parents' education						
High School or lower	0.27	0.40	0.01	0.45	0.25	13.26 *
Some college	0.38	0.40	0.24	0.39	0.38	
University	0.20	0.12	0.31	0.10	0.19	
Master's degree and beyond	0.16	0.08	0.36	0.06	0.18	
Income						
Very low	0.17	0.34	0.03	0.34	0.23	18.43 **
Slightly low	0.25	0.31	0.09	0.33	0.29	
Neither low nor high	0.31	0.23	0.21	0.19	0.26	
Slightly high	0.14	0.06	0.31	0.06	0.10	
Very high	0.13	0.06	0.37	0.08	0.12	
Credibility culture info social media						
1-14	0.13	0.30	0.01	0.57	0.39	45.56 ***
15-18	0.31	0.37	0.07	0.33	0.38	
19-21	0.32	0.20	0.40	0.08	0.16	
22-23	0.24	0.13	0.53	0.03	0.08	
Credibility culture info traditional media						
1-14	0.18	0.34	0.02	0.55	0.47	12.92 *
15-18	0.29	0.29	0.09	0.26	0.30	
19-21	0.28	0.23	0.32	0.14	0.16	
22-23	0.25	0.14	0.58	0.06	0.07	

Continue

Table 4.2 Profile of individuals in cultural repertoires

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Wald (p-value)
Social media usage						
Low	0.12	0.44	0.01	0.66	0.34	75.40 ***
	0.24	0.31	0.08	0.24	0.31	
	0.32	0.19	0.22	0.09	0.23	
	0.33	0.06	0.70	0.02	0.11	
high	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	
Traditional media usage						
low	0.15	0.39	0.01	0.57	0.36	42.23 ***
	0.28	0.33	0.06	0.30	0.34	
	0.33	0.22	0.15	0.11	0.23	
high	0.25	0.06	0.77	0.02	0.07	

Notes Coefficients are probabilities that trait contributes to cluster. Significance: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

Book-focused minimal cultural consumers resemble the media-focused cultural omnivores in many ways. They are, on average, older than individuals in clusters 2 and 4 and more likely to have obtained a master's even some higher degree. Yet they are less likely to perceive the cultural information on both types of media as reasonably credible. In the meantime, book-focused minimal cultural consumers are more likely to be male, while media-focused cultural omnivores are more likely to be female. Females are more likely to belong to clusters with lower levels of participation in artistic and cultural activities than males.

In conclusion, the analysis presented above shows that young adults who have distinct cultural repertoires also have distinct media consumption preferences and characteristics. Consumers who perceive the media of all stripes to be highly credible tend to be omnivorous. Demographic variables also shape cultural taste patterns. Respondents with a higher educational background and higher income levels, such as all-round cultural omnivores, are more likely to participate in multiple cultural activities (both highbrow and popular). In contrast, respondents with a lower educational background and lower income level, such as media-oriented cultural consumers and minimal cultural consumers, are inclined to be inactive when it comes to participation in cultural activities.

4.4.3 What predicts online engagement with art and culture?

My final research question examines whether cultural repertoires are useful as predictors of online engagement with art and culture. Table 4.2 provides an overview of the data regarding cultural repertoires' capacity to predict online engagement with art and culture. The statistics lead one to the conclusion that, regardless of how often a consumer uses the media or how much he or she trusts the cultural information that comes from them, having a specific cultural taste pattern seems to shape that person's online engagement with art and culture. More specifically, one can expect that young adults who are all-round cultural omnivores participate more frequently in cultural events and activities on social media than do consumers with other repertoires. The cluster of media-focused cultural omnivores comes second in this respect, being followed by book-focused minimal cultural consumers and by media-oriented cultural consumers. Additionally, minimal cultural consumers exhibit significantly lower levels of online cultural participation than consumers with any other repertoire, while all-round cultural omnivores engage in online participation at the highest rate.

Table 4.3 Results step-3 analysis with distal outcomes for online engagement with arts and culture

	Online engagement with arts and culture	
	coef	s.e
Clusters		
Media-focused cultural omnivores	.34	.04***
Media-oriented cultural consumers	-.17	.05***
All-round cultural omnivores	.47	.05***
Minimal cultural consumers	-.70	.07***
Book-focused minimal cultural consumers	-.05	.06***
Individual factors		
Age	-.08	.03*
Female	.03	.02
Education	-.01	.02
Parents' education	.02	.02
Income	.01	.01

Continue

Table 4.3 Results step-3 analysis with distal outcomes for online engagement with arts and culture

	Online engagement with arts and culture	
	coef	s.e
Media credibility		
Credibility culture info social media	.11	.02***
Credibility culture info traditional media	.04	.02*
Media usage		
Social media usage	.09	.02***
Traditional media usage	.04	.02*

Notes Reported effects are regression parameters. Significance levels: * $P < .05$; ** $P < .01$; *** $P < .001$

Besides the cluster variables, three other variables stand out. As can be seen from Table 4.2, first, the credibility of the cultural information culled from social media exerts a positive effect on online engagement with art and culture. The more highly my participants rate the credibility of the cultural information they get from the media, social and traditional alike, the more ready they are to participate in cultural activities online. Second, just like media credibility, media usage exerts a positive influence on online engagement with art and culture; and, again, I'm talking of both traditional and social media here. Respondents who use media more often tend to participate in online cultural activities more frequently. Furthermore, both social media usage and the credibility of cultural information that originates from social media exert a stronger influence on online participation than their counterparts in traditional media. Finally, demographic variables – mainly used as control variables in the current analysis – also have a clear impact on online engagement with art and culture. Although the age range in my sample is not large (18–40), I found that age is the only demographic variable that reaches significance when it comes to predicting cultural repertoires. Younger consumers tend to participate in more cultural practices online and use more media platforms to engage in in cultural activities. This could be explained by the fact that social media consumers were predominantly (nearly 77 percent) young adults under 40 (CNNIC, 2019). The other demographic variable, gender, almost reaches a significant level ($P = 0.075$).

It is clear that media variables play a key role in predicting both cultural repertoires and online engagement with art and culture. What is more, social media variables exert a stronger influence than traditional media on predicting online cultural engagement and cultural repertoires. I also found that strong links exist among traditional and social media usage, the credibility of cultural information from social and traditional media,

and online engagement with art and culture. Demographic factors are also important variables that influence cultural preference and online engagement with culture; but different factors have different impacts on these two items. To be more specific, cultural repertoires are largely shaped by income and parents' schooling level, but these factors do not predict online engagement with arts and culture. It is instead the demographic factor age that plays a dominant role in online cultural engagement.

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter explored the composition of cultural taste patterns within various cultural areas and explained the phenomenon of online engagement with art and culture among young adults in the mediatized climate of contemporary China. Drawing on online survey data, I addressed three research questions. First, what kinds of clusters of cultural taste can be found in the Chinese context? Second, to what extent can differences between Chinese cultural repertoires be explained by media variables, in particular by media credibility and media usage? Finally, how much can cultural consumption patterns (and other media factors) among young adults account for the phenomenon of online engagement with art and culture?

Applying LCA of cultural participation to seven domains distributed among young Chinese adults within the age span of 18 to 40 years, I identified five distinct patterns of cultural consumption and five corresponding classes of users: (1) media-focused cultural omnivores; (2) media-oriented cultural consumers; (3) all-round cultural omnivores; (4) minimal cultural consumers; and (5) book-focused minimal cultural consumers. This conclusion would suggest that cultural omnivores are also popular in China (D. Zhu, 2017). Among these five clusters, omnivores tended to participate in almost all the listed cultural activities. Media-focused cultural omnivores strongly favored indoor cultural activities. Media-oriented cultural consumers paid attention only to mediatized cultural events; they showed no interests in outdoor cultural activities. It could be argued that media usage plays a key role in influencing young adults' cultural repertoires in China. Minimal cultural consumers and book-focused minimal cultural consumers were the ones least likely to participate in cultural activities. The only activity in which book-focused minimal cultural consumers engaged with average frequency was book reading.

To answer my second research question, I investigated the links between cultural repertoires and the major characteristics of the respondents. The results indicated that there were large differences in media consumption preferences and demographic background among the various types of cultural consumers. The all-round cultural omnivores and the media-focused cultural omnivores tended to use both social

media and traditional media more frequently and rated the credibility of the cultural information obtained both via social media and via traditional media more highly than other clusters (e.g. minimal cultural consumers and book-focused minimal cultural consumers). Consumers associated with various cultural repertoires also differed in their demographic characteristics. Contrary to expectations and to previous studies (Katz-Gerro & Jæger, 2013; Purhonen et al., 2010), education did not reach the significant level associated with predicting the cultural repertoires in this study. This was probably because most of the respondents in my survey were highly educated. But parental education identifiably affected the cultural taste patterns. This latter finding is in line with the outcomes of earlier Western studies (van Hek & Kraaykamp, 2015). Income level also continues to exert a positive impact on cultural consumption in present-day China, as predicted. These results confirmed earlier characterizations of the notion of “omnivorousness” (N. Li, 2014; D. Zhu, 2017).

To answer the last question, I used membership of clusters (i.e. the feature of belonging in one cluster or another) as an independent variable, for predicting online engagement with art and culture. The results showed that, as I put it earlier, having a specific pattern of cultural tastes seems to determine a person’s online engagement with art and culture no matter how often he or she uses the media or how much trust he or she places in the information they deliver. Education did not reach the level of significance needed to predict engagement with culture online; nor did parents’ schooling level or income. This somehow could confirm the idea that the Internet and particularly the social media provide opportunities for people from different backgrounds to participate in cultural practices more easily. Social media might have the potential to reduce cultural inequality (Verboord & van Noord, 2016). Another interesting finding was that young adults’ social media usage and their perceptions concerning the credibility of cultural information from social media have a stronger predictive power than their online cultural participation, by comparison to their traditional counterparts.

The overall conclusion is that, in the mediatized world we live in, media usage and media credibility exert a strong influence on young adults’ cultural taste repertoires. These media variables also greatly influence online engagement with arts and culture. Nevertheless, the present investigation is not without limitations, and its results need to be interpreted in this light. First, my study did not clearly classify the cultural activities into “highbrow” and popular culture, although some of the cultural activities referred to here, such as visits to exhibitions or attendance to concerts, can be categorized as highbrow. But a broad sweep of cultural areas and activities was examined here, and I tried to slide along different combinations across the entire range. Second, the proportion of respondents in the rural area and with low education was small in this sample, owing to the way in which I collected the data. Usually, in China, rural residents and the poorly educated are

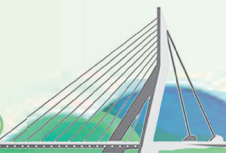
difficult to reach through online surveys. In consequence I was not able to find out the difference in cultural consumption behaviors between rural and urban respondents, or between various social strata. But, even if I could not identify the cultural gap between urban and rural, I did identify significant differences among urban citizens themselves, in terms of cultural consumption repertoires; and these discoveries echoed Wang et al.'s (2006) finds in relation to reading practices.

Despite such limitations, this study contributes to our general understanding of cultural repertoires in an increasingly mediatized cultural environment. It emphasizes the strong influence of media usage and media credibility on the formation of young adults' cultural taste repertoires. This study also contributes to the literature on cultural repertoires by showing what cultural taste patterns of young adults in a non-Western context look like and by explaining how cultural repertoires shape online engagement with art and culture. The results of this empirical study have implications that are relevant for policymaking in a less democratic country with high social inequality. These results suggest that policymakers should link different media outlets in order to boost cultural consumption among consumers with different socio-economic and demographic backgrounds and should pay attention to the quality of cultural information that is spread on media platforms, particularly on social media. Future research could certainly benefit from further elaborations on the classification of cultural domains. Also, future empirical studies should consider samples with a wider age range and reach a larger number of respondents from rural areas and with low social status.

Appendix B

Goodness of Fit Statistics for the Estimated LCMs


	L²	BIC (LL)	AIC	Df	Npar	p-value
Cluster 1	2441,2130	13001,5329	12932,3698	1019	14	3,9 ^e -118
Cluster 2	1270,5880	11886,4297	11777,7448	1011	22	4,2 ^e -8
Cluster 3	1020,4388	11691,8023	11543,5956	1003	30	0,34
Cluster 4	890,1446	11617,0299	11429,3014	995	38	0,99
Cluster 5	800,0784	11582,4855	11355,2352	987	46	1,00
Cluster 6	768,0621	11605,9909	11339,2189	979	54	1,00





Chapter 5

- Social media use and health information seeking and sharing among young Chinese adults⁷



⁷ This chapter has been published as Gong, Q., & Verboord, M. (forthcoming). Social media use and health information seeking and sharing among young Chinese adults. *The Journal of Social Media in Society*.

Abstract

This chapter sets out to determine who trusts health- and fitness-related information available in traditional and social media and what influences online engagement with health and fitness in China. The focus here is on differences in media use across four specific traditional media and eight social media outlets. Using the survey method, I classify the eight social media platforms into two types, on the basis of their characteristics; and the main criterion in my classification is whether these platforms are able to offer social support to users easily or not. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is applied to predict perceived media credibility and online engagement with health and fitness. The results show that young adults who are less well educated, watch television and use the social support-oriented platforms WeChat and Qzone very frequently, and read newspapers and use Baidu Tieba sometimes are more likely to consider online health and fitness information to be credible. Also, being male, being better educated, and regarding health information supplied by media as credible, as well as using certain media platforms frequently are features associated with frequent engagement with health and fitness. The media outlets in question include magazines and three social support-oriented websites: Sina Weibo, WeChat, and Qzone. The chapter discusses implications of my results, along with limitations of the current study and directions for future research.

5 Social media use and health information seeking and sharing among young Chinese adults

5.1 Introduction

In 2016 Wei Zexi, a 21-year-old Chinese college student, died after receiving unsuccessful experimental treatment for a rare form of cancer at a state military-run hospital. He had learned of this treatment from a promoted result publicized on the Chinese search engine Baidu. Wei's death drew widespread attention from Chinese Internet users and raised questions about the credibility of health-related information delivered online (M. Liu & Hu, 2016). Nowadays it is increasingly common for people to seek health-related information on the Internet (Bundorf et al., 2006; Sundar, 2008). Millions of people turn to the Internet as their first source of information (Hesse et al., 2005; Rutsaert et al., 2013); young people in particular have developed this habit (McKinley & Wright, 2014). However, one of the biggest limitations of the Internet, and more specifically of social media platforms for health communication, is the sometimes inaccurate character of the information they release on health (Pant et al., 2012; Rutsaert et al., 2013; Xingting Zhang et al., 2017). In China, despite the fact that the Internet is an increasingly important source of information on matters of health (Cao, Zhang, Xu, & Wang, 2016), there has been, for a long time, a lack of valid health information obtainable online (S. Tang et al., 2008; Xingting Zhang et al., 2017). Thus on the one hand seeking health- and fitness-related information online has become widespread, while on the other hand the quality and credibility of this information often seems questionable. This dilemma raises questions concerning awareness of the quality of health-related information among various demographic groups, as well as more general questions about the link between media usage and media credibility when it comes to informing oneself on health matters.

Of course, besides the Internet, traditional media such as television and newspapers also play key roles in disseminating health-related information (Peng & Tang, 2010; M. Wang et al., 2013; Zheng Wang & Gantz, 2007). Yet little is known about differences in the credibility and trustworthiness of health-related information between various media outlets. This chapter attempts to explore how different media platforms affect or influence the perceived credibility of health-related information acquired from the media – traditional and social alike. Also, by comparison to traditional media, new media, particularly social media, have great potential to support health-related information searching (L. M. S. Miller & Bell, 2012). My research seeks to understand what stimulates online engagement with health, conceptualized as active behavior that takes the form of searching, comparing, and sharing health-related information online.

Previous studies have examined various factors that influence online engagement with health, such as socio-demographic factors (Bundorf et al., 2006), source characteristics (Cao et al., 2016), and social media usage (Mano, 2014). But, to the best of my knowledge, no study has compared the different effects of media use and media credibility on the question of online engagement with health. The present chapter attempts to fill in this gap: through data analysis of young Chinese adults, it aims to build a general image of *those who tend to trust health-related information online* and of *what influences online engagement with health*.

China represents a theoretically important case for an examination of the relationship between media factors and online engagement with health. First, although it has been suggested that there are cross-cultural differences when it comes to seeking and sharing online health information (Y. Li et al., 2018; Morahan-Martin, 2004; Song et al., 2016), most of the current studies on credibility in this area concern Western users and are carried out in an Anglo-Saxon context (AlMansour et al., 2014; Jiang, 2019). A study of this problem from the Chinese perspective would expand general knowledge of health information online beyond Western cultures. Second, the media environment has its own circumstances; and this is particularly true of the online environment in China, given the strict censorship exerted by the Chinese government. Notions of media credibility might work differently in such a system. Also, in China, social media users are slightly younger than in the Western world (CNNIC, 2019): nearly 76percent of them are under 40 years of age. My research focuses on young adults in the broadly defined age group of 18 to 40, because these are, Internet-wise, the most highly connected population segment (Fox, 2004) and their media preferences are hugely different from those of the older generation (Edgerly, 2017). People in this age group also pay more attention than the older generation to the quality of the information they receive from new sources (Edgerly, 2017). Besides, on top of the regular media, old and new, these people are exposed to a variety of social media outlets developed in China (as I mentioned in an earlier chapter, p.5).

This chapter tries to answer three questions. (1) What is the effect of media usage on young adults' perceptions about the credibility of health- and fitness-related information they get from traditional and social media? (2) How much do differences in the use of media affect the users' perceptions about the credibility of online-derived health- and fitness-related information? (3) To what extent can we explain the phenomenon of online engagement with health and fitness through the notions of media usage and media credibility? To address these questions, I use survey data collected in 2016 as part of the same research project described in previous chapters and I follow the same general pattern: first I compare the differences between young adults' perceptions about the credibility of health and fitness information across media platforms; then I predict online

engagement with health and fitness with the help of media variables and demographics. I conclude with a discussion and suggestions for future research.

5.2 Theoretical framework

5.2.1 Explaining the credibility of health- and fitness-related information in the media in China

Over the past two decades, the environment in China has experienced huge changes associated with unprecedented economic development. Most notably, air pollution has become a major public health issue, given the rapid urbanization and industrialization. The problem of air pollution caused an explosion in the numbers of those seeking health information online, and recent years saw a proliferation of discussions on air pollution-related issues conducted nationwide on Chinese social media (Shiliang Wang, Paul, & Dredze, 2015). In the meantime, the general improvement in the quality of people's lives, driven as it was by income growth, has created an increasing need for more mundane types of health information (e.g. how to work out properly and effectively). This is not surprising, considering that the consumption of sports and fitness activities per capita in the Chinese population increased by 39.3 percent in the first half of 2018 (NBS, 2018).

Although the Internet is one of the major media outlets for people to gather information on health (Peng & Tang, 2010; Redmond, Baer, Clark, Lipsitz, & Hicks, 2010), most health information found on Chinese websites is unreliable and very complicated to understand (Cao et al., 2016; Jiang & Street, 2017). One survey shows that more than 60 percent of users were concerned about the quality of the health information on WeChat (Xingting Zhang et al., 2017), one of the largest Chinese social media platforms in the world. Apart from the Internet, mass media also play important roles in disseminating health-related information (Cline & Haynes, 2001; Peng & Tang, 2010; Redmond et al., 2010). An empirical study with 1,000 sampled Beijing residents shows that around 65 percent of these participants selected TV programs, 63 percent identified print media outlets (newspapers and magazines), and 44 percent chose radio programs to receive health information (S. Liu, Yao, Lin, Jia, & Zhang, 2003). Health-related reports can differ across media types. For instance, health-related news tends to be short, fleeting, and normally without follow-up information on television (Gantz & Wang, 2009). More in-depth and diverse information is provided on social media, for example professional advice and networking with peers (Van de Belt et al., 2013). Thus there are considerable differences among media outlets for people with health-related interests, questions, and concerns. Unlike traditional media, social media offer health-

related information that comes not only from health professionals, but also from peers who experience similar health concerns (Song et al., 2016; L. Zhang & Jung, 2018).

It has been widely accepted that people tend not to use a source that they do not trust (Tsfati, 2010). Kiouisis (2001) found a positive correlation between media use and media credibility. Also, some scholars suggest that traditional media are judged to be more credible than their online counterparts (Kiouisis, 2001; H. Zhang et al., 2014), although social media have become a key source of health information (Rutsaert et al., 2013). Given the differences that exist between traditional and social media, individuals evaluate the credibility of traditional media and that of Internet-based information (both with their respective sources) differently (Kiouisis, 2001; H. Zhang et al., 2014). I expect that the credibility of health- and fitness-related information from media sources will be evaluated differently in the case of traditional media and in that of social media; and I also believe that this is likely to be shaped by individuals' media usage. In consequence, I propose the following hypothesis, which is informed by the findings mentioned above and adapted to the unique media environment in China:

H1 Young adults will perceive and rate the health- and fitness-related information they get from traditional media as more credible than the corresponding information they get from social media.

Even among social media outlets, varying functions and characteristics of social media platforms result in differences in users' preferences for health-related information (L. Zhang & Jung, 2018). Some social media platforms offer easy ways for users to gain social support; one of these is Baidu Tieba, the largest online community in China. Previous studies indicate that the Quitting Smoking subgroup on Baidu Tieba provides Chinese smokers with emotional and information support, which contributes to the success of quitting smoking (C. Li, 2018); and WeChat seems to be a desirable platform for users to gain informational support (Oh, Lauckner, Boehmer, Fewins-Bliss, & Li, 2013). Social support has been shown to play a key role in maintaining individuals' mental and physical health (C.-Y. Liu & Yu, 2013). Albrecht and Adelman (1987, p. 19) define social support as "verbal and nonverbal communication between providers and recipients that helps manage uncertainty about the situation, the self, the other or the relationship and functions to enhance a perception of personal control in one's life experience." Zhao and Zhang (2017) find that social support is emphasized as one of the critical benefits to users of health-related social media settings. In this chapter, I argue that distinguishing between social media with and social media without social support orientation can help us understand the differences between young adults' perceptions about the credibility of the health- and fitness-related information available in traditional and social media – or, put otherwise, the different degrees of credibility

that young adults bestow on this kind of information. The social support-oriented social media offer platforms on which users can interact with friends and family in order to gain emotional support, for example WeChat and Q zone, or platforms on which they can find acquaintances or even strangers with similar health concerns and receive informational support from them, for example WeChat (L. Zhang & Jung, 2018) and Baidu Tieba (C. Li, 2018); and some of these platforms also offer expert knowledge and official accounts coming from health professionals. I expect that these media exert a stronger influence on the item of perceived credibility than do social media without an orientation to social support, since such platforms engage the role of others, who have the relevant experience (and these can be both peers and experts). On the basis of this argument, I formulate the following hypothesis:

H2 The use of social support-oriented media is associated with a stronger influence on the perceived credibility of health- and fitness-related information available on social media than the use of social media without a focus on social support.

5.2.2 Explaining online engagement with health and fitness

I discussed the impact of media use by focusing on two elements: the nature of this use in the specific process of seeking health information; and the role of social support. In this section I intend to focus on the interactions that occur on the Internet, particularly on social media sites, around health- and fitness-related needs – in other words I will look at online engagement with health and fitness. Online engagement generally refers to behavior that indicates a certain amount of commitment to a topic or brand. Often behavior of this kind comprises frequently and proactively searching for information, comparing information, and sharing information with others. Online engagement involves liking, commenting, and sharing health-related information (L. Zhang & Jung, 2018). Given that information seeking is one of the strongest predictors of social media use (Guo et al., 2010) and that sharing information was the second most common activity performed by users on WeChat (CNNIC, 2017), the present chapter focuses on the online seeking and sharing of health- and fitness-related information.

How is the credibility of various media outlets connected to online engagement? Answering this question is critical not only because of growing concerns about the accuracy and credibility of online information on health, but also in view of the popularity of online engagement with health and fitness. According to a national survey, 72 percent of American adults have searched for health information online (Fox, 2014). Around 33 percent of Chinese adults in Hong Kong have used the Internet monthly, for searches on health-related topics (M. Wang et al., 2013). In China, one of the great benefits to users who go online prompted by health concerns is that they need not worry less about their privacy (Cao et al., 2016). This may be true especially for people with sensitive health-

related problems, such as issues regarding sex and mental health. Compared to users in the United States and South Korea, Chinese youths in Hong Kong are significantly more likely to participate in computer-mediated communication for personal health issues (Lin et al., 2016). Previous studies found that trust in and credibility of online health information is a major determinant of further online engagement in the form of seeking more health-related information and showing willingness to share it after one successful search (Hou & Shim, 2010; Lin et al., 2016; Ye, 2010; Yun & Park, 2010). Trust in social media-based information (e.g. in the information provided on social media by peers) can direct users to further health-related engagement, such as searches for different options for treatment, alternative treatment, or medicinal information (Lin et al., 2016). Hence I expect that the credibility of the media as perceived by young adults is associated with the latter's online engagement with health and fitness.

While social media usage is strongly linked to online engagement, it is likely that not all types of social media will have similar influence: again, platforms that are stronger in offering social support will probably lead to more online engagement (C. Li, 2018; McKinley & Wright, 2014). Mano (2014) shows that individuals seeking online health information are prompted by their social media usage: the more they use social media, the more likely they are to search for health information online. He also provides evidence that different forms of social media influence online health behavior in different ways and that not all social media outlets are of equal quality in terms of users' engagement with health. More specifically, users who visit *online consulting groups* frequently are, according to Mano, more likely to use online health services for getting updates, but this behavior is not affected by the frequency of social network sites and chats usage. The results presented above indicate that not only differences in using traditional and social media impact the level of online health engagement; distinctions as to which social media platforms are used are also likely to generate differences in engagement. I expect that media usage across platforms is associated with these online behaviors to various degrees. Guided by the arguments presented here and by previous research, I formulate the following hypotheses:

H3a Young Chinese adults' online engagement with health and fitness is positively affected by their perceptions about the credibility of the health- and fitness-related information they get from social media.

H3b Young Chinese adults' online engagement with health and fitness is positively affected by their perceptions about the credibility of the health- and fitness-related information they get from traditional media.

H4 The use of social support-oriented social media is associated with more online engagement with health and fitness than the use of social media without a focus on social support.

5.3 Methods

5.3.1 The data

For a comprehensive presentation of the data collection process I followed in my research for this entire dissertation, including the present chapter, see 2.3.1, p.36.

5.3.2 Measurements

Credibility of health- and fitness-related information in the media. To compare the levels of the perceived media credibility, the respondents were asked to rate the believability, accuracy, fairness, depth, and trustworthiness of the health- and fitness-related information they found in traditional and social media on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much; see also “Media credibility” at 2.3.2 for a general presentation). This credibility measurement followed the measurements of previous studies (Johnson & Kaye, 2009). Scores for the five measures of credibility were combined into two scales, for traditional and for social media respectively.

Media use. Four types of traditional media use and eight Chinese social media platforms were measured by asking participants to specify, on a 5-point scale (0 = never, 5 = almost daily), how often they used each social platform (see “Media usage” at 2.3.2, with more details; also cf. “Media use” at 3.4.2). I classified the eight social media outlets into two types, according to whether they are (easily) able to offer their users any social support. Social support-oriented platforms tend to provide emotional support, instrumental support, and informational support (Trepte, Dienlin, & Reinecke, 2015). The group of social support-oriented social media consists of Weibo, WeChat, Qzone, and Baidu Tieba. The other group consists of Zhihu.com, Tianya Club, Douban.com, and Guokr.com.

Online engagement with health and fitness. I measured young adults’ online engagement with health and fitness by averaging five items measured on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very frequently) and then creating an index out of them (CNNIC, 2017). Respondents were asked how often they had “read blogs or microblogging of health and fitness-related information,” “shared with others of health and fitness-related information,” “posted comments of health and fitness-related information online,” “followed social media accounts related to health and fitness,” or “participated in health and fitness-related activities.” Again, these items form a reliable scale (Median = 3.40,

Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$). See, for comparison, the corresponding sections in previous chapters ("Online engagement with arts and culture" at 4.3.3.2, p. 79 and "Online political engagement" at 3.4.2, p.55)

Control variables. I take into account socio-demographic characteristics, since these have been found to influence individuals' perceptions of credibility (Y. Kim, 2016; Ye, 2010) and online engagement (Manierre, 2015; Mesch, Mano, & Tsamir, 2012; M. Wang et al., 2013). For details concerning these characteristics and their measurement, see especially the section "Socio-demographic variables" at 4.3.3.3 (p. 79), and also "Demographics" at 3.3.2 (p. 56).

Trust in the healthcare system. I also expect that the trust people put into the healthcare system will have an effect on the likelihood of their engaging in health-related activities (see also Tokuda et al., 2009). So I include a measure of trust in my analysis. The questionnaire asked respondents to answer the question "How much do you trust the healthcare system?" on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). Trust in the healthcare system (Median = 5.00) is a single-item measure.

5.3.3 Analytical design

First, this chapter examines the differences in media usage across the twelve outlets and their impacts on the perceived credibility of health and fitness-related information derived from traditional and social media. OLS regression is applied to predict the perceived credibility of health-related information on traditional and social media among young adults from their media usage, from demographic factors, and from trust in the healthcare system. Then, by applying the least squares method again, I go on to predict young adults' online engagement with health and fitness from their perceptions about media credibility, from their media usage, from demographic factors, and from trust in the healthcare system.

5.4 Results

5.4.1 Descriptive results

Out of the four traditional media outlets, television has the highest frequency of usage (Median = 4.00). The respondents are less likely to use radio (Median = 3.00), magazines (Median = 3.00), and newspapers (Median = 3.00). For the social media platforms, the frequency of WeChat usage (Median = 5.00) is the highest and Guokr.com (Median = 2.00) scores the lowest. The rate of use for all the social support-oriented social media – WeChat, Qzone (Median = 4.00), Sina Weibo (Median = 4.00), and Baidu Tieba (Median = 3.00) – is significantly higher than the rate of use for most traditional media (except television). Regarding the credibility assessment of health- and fitness-related

information in the media, descriptive results show that young adults' ratings are higher for traditional media (Median = 5.60, Cronbach's alpha = .94) than for social media (Median = 5.20, Cronbach's alpha = .94). This implies that Hypothesis 1 is supported.

5.4.2 Who tends to trust health and fitness-related information?

Table 5.1 compares young adults' assessment of the credibility of information provided by traditional versus social media in matters of health. I estimate three models for both dependent variables: one contains only the demographic variables, another contains the media variables, and yet another contains everything. When comparing the explained variances in the models for the credibility of social media and the credibility of traditional media, I find that the former are better explained by the predictors than the latter (Model 1: Adj. R^2 = 25.2 percent vs. 4: 25.6 percent; Model 2: 18.6 percent vs. Model 5: 22.1 percent; Model 3: 31.2 percent vs. Model 6: 34.5 percent). Regarding my first research question, the results show that media usage is significantly related to how young adults perceive the credibility of health- and fitness-related information in both traditional and social media. Controlling for the socio-demographic variables does not really alter the effects of media variables. The socio-demographic variables have limited impact. It seems that it is not so much the personal background that makes respondents give higher credibility to health information on media, as it is their media usage.

Table 5.1 OLS Regression Models predicting media credibility of health and fitness-related information on traditional and social media

	Traditional Media Credibility			Social Media Credibility		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Demographics						
Gender (1=Female, 2=Male)	.01	----	.02	-.03	----	-.00
Age	.04	----	.02	.04	----	.02
Education	-.00	----	-.02	-.05~	----	-.07*
Parents' education	.04	----	.00	.06*	----	.03
Income	.08*	----	.02	.08*	----	.00
Trust in HealthCare System	.47***	----	.39***	.48***	----	.38***
Traditional Media Usage						
TV	----	.15***	.13***	----	.13***	.11***
Newspaper	----	.08~	.05	----	.11**	.09*

Continue

Table 5.1 OLS Regression Models predicting media credibility of health and fitness-related information on traditional and social media

	Traditional Media Credibility			Social Media Credibility		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Magazine	-----	.15**	.11**	-----	.09*	.05
Radio	-----	-.00	-.03	-----	-.01	-.03
Social support-oriented Social Media Usage						
Sina Weibo	-----	.05	.02	-----	.07*	.04
WeChat	-----	.06~	.05*	-----	.09**	.09**
Qzone	-----	.08*	.04	-----	.14***	.10**
Baidu Tieba	-----	.07*	.06~	-----	.08*	.06*
Non-Social support-oriented Social Media Usage						
Tianya Club	-----	.02	.03	-----	.04	.06
Zhihu.com	-----	.06	.01	-----	-.00	-.02
Douban.com	-----	.02	-.00	-----	-.04	-.03
Guokr.com	-----	.01	-.02	-----	.09*	.06
Adjusted R²	25.2%	18.6%	31.2%	25.6%	22.1%	34.5%
F value	58.80	20.64	26.98	60.04	25.36	31.15

Notes Reported effects are standardized (beta) coefficients. Standardized effects. Significance levels: ~ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The second research question examines whether certain media outlets are given more weight by influencing the media credibility of health and fitness. The results indicate that the effects of the twelve media platforms on the credibility of health and fitness-related information are different, as predicted. Specifically, regarding the perceived credibility of health information on traditional media, television (Model 2: $\beta = .15$, $p < .001$; Model 3: $\beta = .13$, $p < .001$) and magazine usage (Model 2: $\beta = .15$, $p < .01$; Model 3: $\beta = .11$, $p < .01$) are positively related to it. In Model 3, the social support-oriented platforms WeChat ($\beta = .05$, $p < .05$) and Baidu Tieba ($\beta = .06$, $p < .10$) are the only two social media outlets that reach the significance level needed to predict traditional media credibility when controlling for demographics. With regard to the credibility of social media, traditional media outlets still retain their influence: television ($\beta = .11$, $p < .001$) and newspapers ($\beta = .09$, $p < .05$) are all significantly related to social media credibility in Model 6. Almost all the social support-oriented platforms are associated with social media credibility: WeChat ($\beta = .09$, $p < .01$), Qzone ($\beta = .14$, $p < .001$), and Baidu Tieba ($\beta = .08$, $p < .05$); the only exception is Sina Weibo (in Model 5 without control

variables, $\beta = .07, p < .05$). All the social media without a focus on social support fail to reach the significance level, which implies that H2 is supported. The results also show that the effect of the social support-oriented platforms is clearly larger for social media credibility in Model 6 than for traditional media credibility in Model 3. And certain traditional platforms (television and magazine) exert a stronger influence on predicting the perceived credibility of traditional media than that of social media.

So then, who tends to trust health information found online? Given the results we've looked at, young adults who are less educated, watch television and use WeChat and Qzone very frequently, and read newspapers and use Baidu Tieba sometimes are more likely to rate online health and fitness information as credible.

5.4.3 Online engagement with health and fitness

My third research question asked how media variables linked to young adults' online activities relate to health and fitness. Table 5.2 shows the results of an OLS regression analysis of the factors that influence online engagement with health and fitness. It was found that both

Table 5.2 OLS Regression Models predicting online engagement with health and fitness

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Demographics				
Gender (1=Female, 2=Male)	.12***	----	.15***	.15***
Age	.03	----	.04	.04
Education	.21***	----	.19***	.14***
Parents' education	.08**	----	.01	.01
income	.19***	----	.05	.05
Trust in HealthCare System	.25***	----	.09***	.02
Media usage				
TV	----	-.01	.03	.01
Newspaper	----	.10**	.07~	.05
Magazine	----	.13***	.15***	.13***
Radio	----	.10***	.07*	.07*

Continue

Table 5.2 OLS Regression Models predicting online engagement with health and fitness

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Social support- oriented Social Media Usage				
Sina Weibo	----	.12***	.14***	.13***
WeChat	----	.11***	.11***	.10***
Q zone	----	.04	.11***	.09***
Baidu Tieba	----	.007	.01	-.01
Non-Social support-oriented Social Media Usage				
Tianya Club	----	.10**	.08*	.08*
Zhihu.com	----	.11**	.05	.05
Douban.com	----	.01	.02	.02
Guokr.com	----	.05	.06~	.06~
Media credibility				
Social media credibility	----	.09*	----	.10**
Traditional media credibility	----	.10**	----	.08*
Adjusted R ²	25.2%	42.1%	44.8%	46.5%
F value	59.07	54.45	47.35	45.63

Notes Reported effects are standardized (beta) coefficients. Standardized effects. Significance levels:
 ~ $p < .10$ * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

traditional and social media outlets affect the likelihood that young people participate in online engagement with matters of health.

In Model 2 almost all the traditional outlets are significantly related to online engagement; this applies to reading magazines ($\beta = .13, p < .001$), listening to the radio ($\beta = .10, p < .001$), and reading newspapers ($\beta = .10, p < .01$). But the effect of radio and newspapers becomes smaller or disappears when controlling for media credibility and demographics in Models 3 and 4, and the newspaper influence even disappears when controlling for credibility in Model 4. Similarly, the effect of some social media platforms is lowered to predict health engagement online when taking demographics and media credibility into account in Model 3 and 4 by comparison to Model 2, including Tinaya Club and Zhihu.com. On the contrary, Sina Weibo ($\beta = .13, p < .001$), WeChat ($\beta = .10, p < .001$), and Qzone ($\beta = .09, p < .001$) still demonstrate strong influence on online engagement when we control for media credibility in Model 4, which implies that H4 is supported. Also, the results indicate that the perceived credibility of both traditional

and social media is significantly associated with online engagement in Models 2 and 4. Hence one can accept H3a and H3b.

Aside from media variables, some socio-demographic factors are also significantly linked to the online engagement. Gender and education are the only two demographics to influence the engagement in all models. The influences of income and parents' education disappear when controlling for demographics and media credibility in Models 3 and 4. As in the case of predicting media credibility in Table 5.1, trust in the healthcare system in Table 5.2 appears to be an essential predictor of online engagement with health in Models 1 and 3. However, the effect of trust in the healthcare system disappears in Model 4. Thus, when we take media credibility into account, trust in the healthcare system no longer affects participation in online health-related activities.

Given these results, we can conclude that there are large differences between those who engage in online health and fitness activities and those who do not. The main differences between these two groups are linked to media use, perceived media credibility, and characteristics. Male young adults who are more educated and evaluate health information from the media (and especially from social media) as credible are more likely to participate frequently in online activities related to health and fitness. Most importantly, young adults who often use certain media platforms – magazines, radio, three of the social support-oriented platforms (Sina Weibo, WeChat, and Qzone), and Tianya Club – do tend to belong in this group.

5.5 Discussion and conclusions

When individuals are increasingly turning to the Internet for health- and fitness-related information, the relatively low credibility of what one finds online – pointed out in various studies – is becoming a global problem. Despite many studies focusing on specific health cases or media platforms (or both), there is not enough knowledge and understanding of the overall patterns according to which young adults – who grew up with the Internet and social media – use and trust media outlets as part of their everyday information retrieval. This chapter is an attempt to discover those overall patterns. It sets out to show how people in this group assess the credibility of health information coming to them from all sorts of media types and outlets, and how this process is in turn related to their regular media consumption and its wider patterns in the Chinese environment. Besides comparing traditional media with social media, I distinguish between two broad types of social platforms: platforms that offer social support options and platforms that don't. I also investigate how online engagement with health and fitness – in which a more active and critical disposition is displayed – is affected by media usage and credibility.

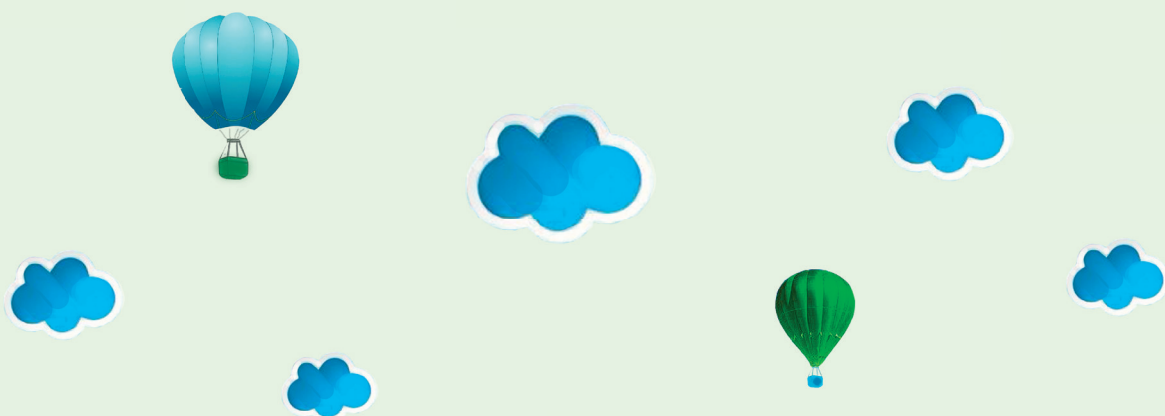
My major findings and contributions in the area delimited here are twofold. First, I find that the credibility of health information can be explained through very similar sets of factors, regardless of whether that information derives from traditional media or from social media. Both television watching and print media usage affect credibility in a positive way. The importance of television's impact on media credibility fits in with the results of an earlier study on the topic: out of six media types, television was rated as the most credible – the other five being newspapers, the radio, magazines, the Internet, and the mobile phone (J. Wu, 2016). The results for print media do raise questions: reading magazines is associated with the higher credibility of traditional media, while reading newspapers is associated with social media credibility. Perhaps this points to specific media usages: magazine reading could still primarily involve health magazines in print, whereas newspapers, may become increasingly associated with their online versions. The impact of social media usage on credibility follows rather the media classification: it is weak and very limited in the case of traditional media credibility, but stronger in the case of social media credibility. Particularly for social media credibility, two social media platforms stand out – WeChat and Qzone – probably thanks to their distinctive characteristics: on the one hand, their users are often connected to real-life friends; on the other hand, their structures are privacy enhancing by comparison to those of other outlets (e.g. access to profiles and posts requires the personal approval of existing users) (L. Zhang & Jung, 2018). Media users tend to trust recommendations from people they are familiar with, and East Asians seem to show more trust than Americans in experience-based health information sources – that is, in information that reflects someone else's experience of dealing with a medical problem (Song et al., 2016). Finally, it should be noted that socio-demographic characteristics have little impact. I only found evidence that higher-educated youngsters consider health-related information coming from social media not to be too trustworthy.

Second, this chapter also investigated how media variables (use and credibility) are linked to young adults' online engagement with health and fitness. I find evidence that social media usage prompts online engagement with health, which is in line with previous research (Mano, 2014; L. M. S. Miller & Bell, 2012). The effect is stronger for social media outlets with social support affordances, for example Sina Weibo, WeChat, and Qzone. There is also an effect of traditional media, but not as one expects it. Reading magazines and, to a lesser degree, listening to the radio increase one's online engagement with health, while watching television and reading newspapers do not. Again, we may observe the impact of health magazines here. Readers of such magazines perhaps go online in order to combine the printed information with newer, more up-to-date information or to share what they learned. The same may apply to radio listeners. Thus the positive effect of the forms of media usage suggests that young adults "mix and match" their information diets. I also found evidence that both traditional

media credibility and social media credibility predict young adults' online engagement (Lemire, Paré, Sicotte, & Harvey, 2008; Lin et al., 2016). Finally, I found effects from demographic variables. Higher-educated people show greater online engagement with health and fitness, which is consistent with the results of prior studies (Bundorf et al., 2006; Cotten & Gupta, 2004; Manierre, 2015; Mesch et al., 2012). Yet interestingly, the effect of gender contradicts previous findings: the results from my sample indicate that young Chinese men are more likely than young Chinese women to search and share health-related information online. The traditional role of housewives in dealing with matters of health has been emphasized in many cultures; women are supposed to spend more time than men on family issues, for instance caring for the sick, the children, and the elderly (e.g. Manierre, 2015). However, China has the highest proportion (over 90 percent) of dual-earner couples in the world (Lu, Lu, Du, & Brough, 2016). Disparities in findings related to the sex gap may be partly explained by the fact that the division of labor in the Chinese household is vastly changing. Yet I would recommend further investigation into the discrepancy between men and women in the matter of chasing information about health.

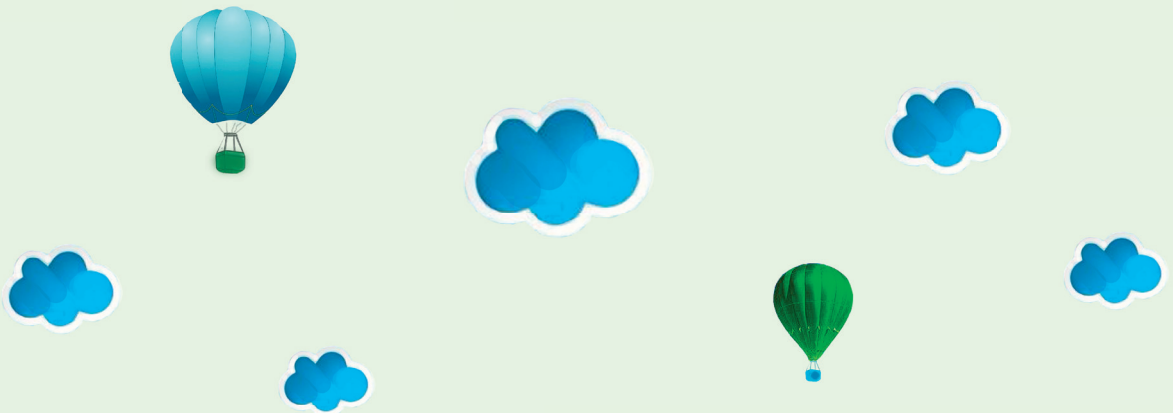
Although this chapter offers several significant contributions, some of its limitations should be borne in mind when interpreting these findings. First, as noted on earlier occasions, the higher-educated and metropolitan populations tend to be overrepresented in Chinese survey samples (Skoric, Zhu, & Pang, 2016). My results, too, relate predominantly to young adults with the same characteristics of highly educated and living in the city. Future studies should focus on more diverse and representative samples. Second, the research I carried out for this study did not ask about specific websites or types of sources. Also, more variables could be included in the analysis, for instance health literacy and stages of health conditions. Third, I did not measure young adults' motives for media use and online engagement. Motivation is relatively difficult to measure in a survey, since it can differ over time and across situations whenever individuals go online. Future studies could nevertheless focus on specific goals of online engagements. Also, as new generations of Chinese patients are increasingly gathering information on health with the help of the Internet and social media, it would be interesting to know the role of e-patients in distinguishing between expertise-based (e.g. professional/authoritative sources) and experience-based information sources in China. Finally, given that the most traditional media have online editions that offer similar content, the credibility of the health information that flows from traditional mass media can be transferred to the Internet (Ye, 2010). Further studies should consider distinguishing between online editions of traditional media and Internet-based media, although this is a challenging task in the increasingly larger and more complex media environment.

Nonetheless, this chapter provides a general framework for comparing the credibility of the health information available in the two major types of media, traditional and social, by focusing on differences in media use; and it deepens our understanding of how online engagement with health and fitness is affected by differential media usage and media credibility, particularly in the Chinese context. My research shows that the assessment of media credibility works increasingly in the same way for traditional media and social media. This makes it challenging to counter the rise of low-quality information on the Internet. Nevertheless, there are substantial differences between social media platforms, and these differences offer starting points for shaping a new policy, designed to achieve better health communication. Policymakers and authorities should be aware of the differential use of media outlets and of the targeting of young adults according to their socio-economic backgrounds.



Chapter 6

General conclusion and discussion



6 General conclusion and discussion

Young Chinese adults find themselves in a remarkable situation: there has been an enormous growth of online media outlets through which they can obtain and distribute information, but at the same time there is still censorship exercised by the government. The rise of the social media and of user-generated content has added another dimension to information diffusion, since many people, the young in particular, have incorporated both as permanent, normal features of their everyday media use (boyd, 2014; Hargittai & Hsieh, 2010). For the young, the transition from traditional media to social media involves a move from editor-based text to non-edited, bottom-up text; and this kind of shift brings up the question of how credible the information is that comes from social media. Arguably the information posted on social media is often unsolicited, and there is a lack of professional gatekeepers in the online world (Song et al., 2016; Westerman et al., 2014). Still, social media platforms have the potential to enable Chinese citizens to receive more diverse information than before, which is a good thing (e.g. Hyun & Kim, 2015; Xueqing Li & Chan, 2017). But here is the rub: online, young people might come across a story that differs from versions they find in newspapers and on national television channels. How, then, do they view the information they obtained from traditional and from social media? How credible do they perceive each of these segments of information to be?

I have studied young adults' media usage in the rapidly changing media context of China; this dissertation presents the results of my research. More specifically, I focused on how young adults perceive the credibility of the information they find in the media in three selected fields: politics, culture, and health. As the current literature has mainly focused on the study of credibility and trust in well-established democracies, research that addresses non-Western countries and other political regimes is still scarce. This research aims to improve our understanding of the credibility with which young adults in China invest media sources, along with their trust, media use, and online activities. This is a promising line of investigation because during the past decades a highly diversified ecology of social media outlets has emerged in this country, in a state-controlled media system.

Moreover, in this thesis I developed a three-pronged comparison between media uses, in order to do justice to the differences that exist between traditional and social media outlets as well as to the increasing diversity of online media outlets and platforms (see Figure 6). I started by comparing how much use young adults make of traditional media with how much use they make of social media. Then I zoomed in on specific media outlets; more specifically, I contrasted various distinctive social media platforms that are available in the current Chinese media ecology. Third, I analyzed how young adults

combine media types and outlets in repertoires. These approaches to measuring media use have been employed in different ways in my dissertation, depending on the point of focus specific to each chapter. As a whole, this study aims to discover how much young adults place trust in different media outlets and to examine how this distribution impacts behaviors and forms of engagement in the contemporary media environment in China. The four empirical studies that make up this thesis were conducted so as to lead me to answers to two main research questions:

RESEARCH QUESTION 1 How strongly do different media uses and media repertoires link to young Chinese adults' perception of media credibility and to their trust in the media in the fields of politics, culture, and health?

RESEARCH QUESTION 2 To what extent do different media uses and media repertoires and different forms of media credibility relate to online engagement in the fields of politics, culture, and health among young Chinese adults?

In order to answer these research questions, I conducted a survey among 18–40-year-olds in China. The survey was specifically built for this project. Various statistical methods were combined and employed to analyze the data collected for this dissertation. In this final chapter I will start with a summary of the key findings, then I will discuss their various implications. I will end the chapter by mapping out a few directions for future research.

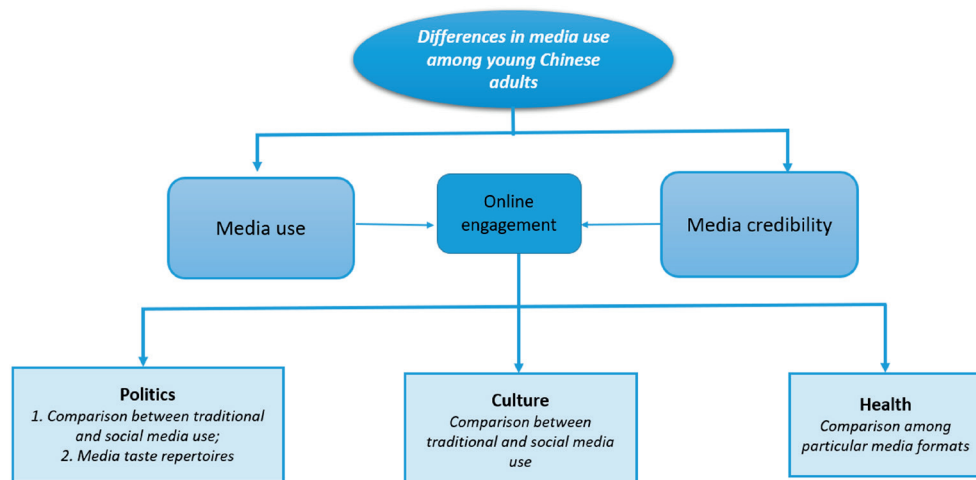


Figure 6 Comparisons between Media uses along Three Different Dimensions in Three Domains

6.I Summary of main findings: answers to the research questions

To answer my research questions, I will summarize separately the main outcomes of the analyses that I carried out in the three fields listed above. I proceed in this way because in each field I focus on different comparisons and aspects of media use and the sets of media repertoires are different – hence the results are different too. In Chapters 2–5, the question of a correspondence between differences in media use and young adults' perceptions of media credibility and trust (i.e. Research Question 1) was examined by focusing on three items: the political trust displayed by young Chinese adults; their trust in media sources; and their perception of the credibility of cultural and health information.

6.I.I Politics

In Chapter 2 I investigated how young adults' media usage influences their political trust and what affects the strength of the influence of media consumption on this trust. I did this by comparing the different roles of traditional and social media. I focused particularly on the mediating role of media credibility and the moderating effect of trust in media and non-media sources. Another component that I considered here is Chinese Communist Party (CCP) membership. Although an important structural factor in the Chinese political system, CCP membership does not seem to affect the strength of the relationship under investigation. This could be explained by the fact that many young adults are eager to join the CCP mainly for the sake of improving their employment chances and enjoying tangible material benefits (Kennedy et al., 2018).

Media credibility is important to many young adults. Whether they consider the political information offered on Chinese media to be accurate, fair, or believable has proved to impact their political trust; in other words, trust in media institutions fosters trust in the political sphere. Both traditional and social media usage are positively associated with young adults' trust in the government, but the effect of traditional media was found to be stronger than that of social media. This finding confirms that the consumption of different media types does have a distinct influence on young adults' political trust (Aarts et al., 2012; Moy & Pfau, 2000). Also, young adults' daily media consumption influences their political trust indirectly, through perceptions related to media credibility. It should be noted that the perceived credibility of the media explains only part of the relationship; there are still large and direct effects of media usage on trust in the Chinese government. In addition, by comparison to the perceived credibility of the political information gathered from social media, the credibility invested in traditional media has a stronger effect on young adults' political trust. Whether young adults trust media or non-media sources was found to strengthen the relationship between traditional media usage and political trust, but did not affect the relationship between social media usage

and political trust. Social media often contain more user-generated content than the government-controlled traditional media and offer more diverse views on current public issues (Shen & Guo, 2013). This may imply that young Chinese adults who tend to be more trustful of sources outside the media system do regard various social media platforms as important sources of information.

In addition to the comparison between traditional and social media use, I also applied, in Chapter 3, a media repertoire approach in which I studied how young adults combine various types of traditional media and social media platforms. Although many scholars have paid attention to media repertoires (Edgerly et al., 2018; S. Kim, 2014; Taneja et al., 2012; Yuan & Ksiazek, 2011), inventories of repertoires composed of both traditional and social media items, in a Chinese context, have not yet been made. By applying latent class analysis (LCA), I identify six distinct repertoires of media use among young adults. The clusters that define these repertoires can be ranged in ascending order. Those in the first category are very limited; they are the repertoires of minimal users. The next two categories display some specific media orientation; these are repertoires associated with what I call digitally focused and communication-oriented users. The fourth category shows a relatively diverse character; I labeled its users moderate omnivores. The last two categories contain repertoires that mix many traditional media types and social media platforms; they belong to what I call voracious omnivores and print-interested users.

The second step in my research consisted in examining how young adults in these different clusters perceive political information. The results indicate that moderate omnivores, digitally focused users, and minimal users share a relatively low ranking of the perceived credibility of political information in the media – social media in particular. Communication-oriented users, voracious omnivores, and print-interested users perceive the political information available in the media, both social and traditional, as moderately credible. Moreover, these six media repertoires are associated with different levels of political trust. Voracious omnivores and especially print-interested young adults tend to trust the government most, while minimal and digitally focused users display the lowest levels of political trust. Thus it seems that young adults with patterns of omnivorous media use are more likely to show high levels of trust in the Chinese government.

6.1.2 Culture

Chapter 4 focused on the case of culture. I examined media usage and the perceived credibility of information on cultural events in traditional and social media by employing a repertoire-oriented approach. Applied to cultural participation activities, LCA identified five distinct patterns of cultural consumption. The users who produced these patterns were labeled media-focused cultural omnivores, media-oriented cultural

consumers, all-round cultural omnivores, minimal cultural consumers, and book-focused minimal cultural consumers.

My findings imply, first of all, that the phenomenon of “cultural omnivorousness” is found in the context of China as well (D. Zhu, 2017). Further, Chinese consumers associated with various cultural repertoires differ in their demographic background, which is in line with the conclusion of Western studies; but the impact of parents’ education and income, for example, is more limited here than elsewhere (van Hek & Kraaykamp, 2015; D. Zhu, 2017). Second, young Chinese adults who have distinct cultural taste repertoires seem to perceive and rate differently the credibility of the cultural information they get from traditional and social media. My results indicate that some young cultural consumers (especially the all-round cultural omnivores and the media-focused cultural omnivores) tend to use both social media and traditional media more frequently than do users from the other clusters (especially the minimal cultural consumers and the book-focused minimal cultural consumers); they also tend to rate higher the credibility of cultural information they get from both.

This leads me to a twofold conclusion. On the one hand, young adults’ everyday media consumption is closely related to their cultural repertoires. On the other hand, how credible they judge the cultural information in the media to be also predicts the type of cultural repertoire they will build. It appears that young adults with omnivorous cultural tastes tend to trust most the cultural information publicized in the media, both traditional and social.

6.1.3 Health

In Chapter 5 I focused on the credibility of health-related information in the media. Although for many Chinese users the Internet constitutes an increasingly important source of information on matters of health (Cao et al., 2016), some scholars argue that for a long time there has been a lack of valid information in this field (Tang et al., 2008; X. Zhang et al., 2017). Hence I undertook to examine how young adults assess the credibility of health-related information available on twelve different media outlets.

Besides comparing traditional media with social media, I also distinguish here between two main types of social platforms, namely platforms that offer social support options and platforms that don’t. The results show that how the credibility of health information in traditional and social media is perceived can be explained by differences in media usage. Young adults who often watch television and use print media tend to trust the information on health that they find in both traditional and social media. My findings concerning the impact of TV viewing on media credibility are in agreement with the conclusion of an earlier Chinese study of media credibility, where television was

found to be rated by Chinese viewers as the most credible medium (Wu, 2016). Not surprisingly, higher levels of social media usage are associated with greater credibility of the social media in general. But, more interestingly, I found large differences between individual social media platforms. In particular, frequent users of the platforms WeChat and Qzone tend to consider online information on health most credible. This could be explained by the distinctive characteristic of WeChat and Qzone: online “friends” on these platforms are often friends or family members in real life, offline (Zhang & Jung, 2018). Moreover, results indicate that the use of social support-oriented media correlates with influence on perceptions of credibility more than does the use of social media without a focus on social support. Also, young adults who use social support-oriented platforms tend to trust the health information available in the media, but this effect is larger for the credibility of social media than for the credibility of traditional media. Thus I conclude that, overall, health information is trusted – or believed to be credible – mostly by young adults who watch television, who use WeChat and Qzone frequently, and who regularly read newspapers and use Baidu Tieba.

These results bring me to the answer to Research question 1. The findings imply that the media usage of Chinese young adults is related to their trust in institutions and to the degree to which they find the information available in the media credible. Political trust tends to be higher among young adults who use traditional media than among young adults who use social media. Also, young users with more omnivorous media repertoires are more likely to trust the Chinese government. The results regarding the perceived credibility of information in the media are slightly different in each domain. However, overall, both the use of traditional media and the use of social media have a positive impact on perceptions regarding the credibility of information – and I mean here not just the information provided by young adults’ preferred media, but all mediatized information.

My second research question addresses the issue of how media use and perceived media credibility lead to online engagement among young adults. Again, I distinguish between the perceived credibility of traditional media and that of social media, and I focus on the same fields of politics, culture, and health. Online engagement refers here to users’ Internet-related behavior (Egea et al., 2006). Following previous studies (Blank & Groselj, 2014; Eynon & Malmberg, 2011; Holmes, 2011), I measure online engagement mainly through frequency of participation in different online activities such as searching for information, comparing information, and sharing information with others (Y. Li et al., 2018; McKinley & Wright, 2014; Yun & Park, 2010).

6.I.4 Online political engagement

In Chapter 3 I examined how the patterns of media use displayed by young adults predict participation online. Previous studies suggest that media use relates to political engagement (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012, 2014; Skoric, Zhu, Goh, & Pang, 2016; Xenos et al., 2014), and scholars have hypothesized that the Internet can breathe new energy into political engagement (e.g. Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Vissers & Stolle, 2014). The findings in Chapter 3 indicate that young adults' online political activities are mainly shaped by their media use patterns.

The composition of these repertoire matters a lot. Young people who rely on multiple media platforms tend to show higher levels of political engagement. Voracious omnivores and print-interested users fall into this general category. The findings imply that more omnivorous media repertoires are positively linked to online participation in political matters, while repertoires with heavier reliance or more exclusive on social media platforms are less likely to correlate with participation in political activities online. It should be noted that, in China, more diverse media repertoires are associated with more intense political practice online. Although social media outlets are an essential part of these diversified repertoires, traditional media remain important for young adults. Media use patterns that host traditional media show higher political engagement. In China, all major newspapers are organizations registered under the CCP or the government and are regarded as voicing the CCP's viewpoints (Freedom House, 2017). Thus, young adults' preference for print is strongly connected to political involvement based on information provided by media which are most strongly associated with the Chinese government. However, by comparison to traditional media credibility, young adults' perception of the credibility of social media seems to be a more important factor in explaining who among them will partake in online political activities and why. Whereas previous studies have emphasized that the use of social media can increase individuals' civic and political participation (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012, 2014; Skoric, Zhu, Goh, et al., 2016; Xenos et al., 2014), I argue that how much people trust the political information they find on social media also matters. Young adults who perceive this kind of information as credible are more likely to participate in online political activities.

6.I.5 Online engagement with arts and culture

Moving now to culture, I examined the kinds of factors that influence young adults' online activities in this field. I found cultural repertoires to be useful predictors of online cultural engagement. Regardless how often my participants use different media outlets or how much they trust the cultural information they find in the media, it is their cultural consumption repertoires that seem to shape their online cultural activities. Online cultural engagement is also boosted when young adults rate more highly the credibility of cultural information in the media, social and traditional alike. To be sure, the impact

of credibility of information is higher when the perception of credibility relates to social media than when it relates to traditional media; and it is clear that social media exert greater influence on predicting online cultural engagement than do traditional media. I did not find any significant impact of the factors of educational background and income on online cultural engagement. This perhaps implies that the Internet – social media in particular – opens opportunities for people from different backgrounds to participate in cultural practices more easily than they could in the past.

6.1.6 Online engagement with health and fitness

In Chapter 5 I investigated the factors that influence young adults' online seeking and sharing of information on health, disease, fitness, and related themes. The results show that social media usage prompts online engagement with health matters (Mano, 2014; Miller & Bell, 2012). The effect is stronger for social media outlets with social support affordances, for example Sina Weibo, WeChat, and Qzone (in my study). There is also evidence that forms and degrees of credibility accorded to traditional and social media predict young adults' online engagement (Lemire et al., 2008; Lin et al., 2016). Young adults who evaluate the medical information they find in the media (social media in particular) as credible are more likely to participate frequently in health-related online activities. Both traditional and social media outlets affect the likelihood of online participation in and engagement with matters of health. Finally, among young adults, males and the highly educated are the ones most likely to participate in online activities of health.

Taken together, the answers to my second research question amount to the following: across all three fields in which I conducted my investigations, young adults who have greater trust in the information supplied in the media – social media in particular – tend to participate in online activities more frequently. Also, repertoires with more diverse media items are associated with stronger political engagement, and social media outlets are an important part of these repertoires. For health engagement, we see that it can also matter which specific social media platforms are used. Young adults who are in the habit of using platforms with social support orientations (Sina Weibo, WeChat, and Qzone) tend to participate more frequently in online activities related to health. Overall, in China social media exert greater influence on predicting young adults' online engagement than do traditional media.

6.2 Implications

In this digital age, young Chinese adults perceive differently the information they receive in traditional and in social media; and their online activities are related to their daily

media consumption and to how much they trust various media outlets. The results of this dissertation have implications for policymakers and for the wider discussion concerning differences in the use of social media. Previous studies have largely concentrated on the relationship between social media use and forms of online engagement (e.g. political engagement) in well-established democracies (Boulianne, 2015, p. 531). Research that addresses non-Western countries and other political regimes is still scarce (Skoric, 2011; Skoric, Zhu, Goh, et al., 2016). The present dissertation offers a view on China, a country with two important characteristics: on the one hand, strict media censorship; on the other hand, many locally based media outlets and platforms. For this reason, the implications of the four empirical studies gathered here will also be relevant, at a general level, to policymaking in less democratic countries.

Like the research of Skoric, Zhu, and Pang (2016), this dissertation shows that there is a positive relationship between social media use and political expression and participation in China, just as in Western democracies (Boulianne, 2015). The implications of my results are slightly different, though. In general, young adults rate the credibility of political information provided by traditional media more highly than its social media counterpart, despite the fact that they spent more time online than on traditional media. This finding is in line with Kioussis (2001) and H. Zhang et al. (2014), who suggest that traditional media are still more credible than “bottom-up” online media. But I argue here that the perceived credibility of the information available in traditional media and in social media works differently when it comes to young people’s trust in the government and in media institutions and to their online activities in politics, culture, and health. When compared to the traditional media, which are fully controlled by the government, social media contain, at least in principle, more user-generated content and offer a variety of points of view on current policies and social issues (Shen & Guo, 2013). Yet it should be noted that the CCP has rapidly adapted to the new technology ecology and has employed social media to its own advantage (Hassid, 2012; Hyun & Kim, 2015; Sullivan, 2014).

Whereas politics is sensitive to censorship, the fields of culture and health are less controversial. As far as culture goes, both social media usage and the credibility of cultural information culled from social media exert greater influence on young adults’ online cultural activities than do their traditional media counterparts. This suggests that policymakers should stay attuned to the influence of social media on young adults’ cultural life and should try to improve the quality of cultural material on popular social media outlets, in order to boost cultural consumption among people from different backgrounds. As for health, unlike previous studies (e.g. Wu, 2016), which emphasize the importance of television’s impact in this field, the present thesis demonstrates that magazines and, to a lesser degree, radio can also be important media tools for increasing

young Chinese adults' appetite for the online seeking and sharing of health-related information. Now, most Western studies have focused on the workings of Facebook and Twitter in health communication (e.g. C.-Y. Liu & Yu, 2013). By contrast, I investigated here the role of some specific, homegrown social media outlets with a social support orientation. Certain Chinese social media – WeChat, Sina Weibo, and Qzone – appear to exert a strong influence on young adults' health- and fitness-related activities online. It might be argued that not all types of social media have the same influence in China. Platforms that offer social support are stronger and seem to encourage young adults in their willingness or readiness to participate in online activities related to health (C. Li, 2018; McKinley & Wright, 2014). To achieve better health communication, policymakers and authorities should be aware of the groups of young people targeted by popular social media outlets and of the different affordances of the media themselves. In the Chinese context, more attention should be paid to social support-oriented media such as the ones investigated in my study.

One of the results of this research is to have demonstrated the usefulness of taking a media repertoire approach across platforms of traditional and social media outlets, combined. Whereas Boczkowski and colleagues (2018) show the distinct meanings attributed to social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, my study takes the distinctiveness of social media platforms to a superordinate level, incorporating it into an analysis of how these individual platforms combine to form actual repertoires. The finding that such cross-media repertoires affect young people's online political activities implies that future research should take differences between social media platforms more seriously. One aspect to be studied is the role of social support-oriented social media in shaping young people's trust in mediatized information related to health. Again, it should be noted that not all social media have the same influence on users' perceptions of credibility. I argue that distinguishing between social media according to what their affordances are might be helpful in making us understand differences in the trust that young adults place in information derived from social media. There are substantial differences between various social media platforms.

Lastly, this dissertation contributed to the study of online engagement (e.g. Mano, 2014; Choi, 2016) and of its relation to trust in information from the media – both traditional and social (Hou & Shim, 2010; Lin et al., 2016; Ye, 2010; Yun & Park, 2010). In the Chinese context, previous studies suggest that usage of Sina Weibo increased people's willingness to participate in political activities (Chan et al., 2012), and college students' use of their online forum was positively correlated to engagement in political discussion online (Mou et al., 2013). Although the present dissertation did not investigate how young adults' dealings with social media lead to, or determine, their online political activities, it examined how patterns of media use found among young

adults are associated with online political activities. It remains to be seen whether this study captures online political engagement in its fullest range.

The young generations in China clearly are prolific in their online activities of searching and sharing cultural information, and this reflects specific cultural preferences. What is less clear is how purchase options specific to the Internet fit into these patterns: the survey did not ask for behaviors related to buying, downloading, or streaming cultural products.

In the sphere of seeking and sharing health-related information online, my findings provide evidence that both social media usage (Mano, 2014; Miller & Bell, 2012) and the amount of trust with which young adults invest the information they find in the media (Lemire et al., 2008; Lin et al., 2016) are related to online engagement with health issues (Mano, 2014; Miller & Bell, 2012). Importantly, highly educated young adults are more likely than others to go online for medical information – which is consistent with the conclusion of prior studies (Bundorf et al., 2006; Cotten & Gupta, 2004; Manierre, 2015; Mesch et al., 2012). At the same time, the effect of gender contradicts previous findings. Young Chinese males are more likely than young Chinese females to search and share health-related information online, which is the opposite of what was found in other cultures (e.g. Manierre, 2015).

6.3 Limitations and directions for future research

If we wish to keep improving our understanding of how different types of media usage and media repertoires are related to both media credibility and online engagement, we will have to identify still more specific mechanisms and outcomes. This dissertation deals with one single country; this is its first limitation. Future research should expand to other nations – and it would certainly benefit from comparing media credibility and engagement in those cultures and in China. There are many cross-cultural differences in individuals' daily media consumption and online activities. This opens new ground for exploration; for example, the reasons behind the gender difference found in this study in the area of health-related information-seeking behavior would repay study. A range of comparative studies of this kind could advance our understanding of media consumption and online activities both in China and beyond.

Second, the sample of young adults that I gathered for this research contains an element of demographic bias in the form of an overrepresentation of highly educated and urban residents. I have explained why this imbalance suits the specific circumstances of my topic, but future research should find ways to integrate respondents from rural areas and with

lower educational levels. Additionally, this research examined the relationships between media use, credibility, and online engagement through quantitative methods. Future research may adopt qualitative methods as well, to get a more in-depth understanding of how media credibility is related to online activities. For example, Metzger and colleagues (2010) used focus groups to identify participants' social means of credibility assessment. Such approaches may contribute to unraveling still further the relationship between media use, credibility, and online engagement.

Third, this research investigates how credibility and trust are linked to differences in media use and online engagement; and it does so by focusing on trust in political and media institutions. Future studies might consider exploring how media use relates to within-person trust or to trust in commercial institutions – as reflected, say, in online shopping and dating behaviors. For instance, Bilgihan (2016) demonstrates that trust is the most important antecedent or precondition of e-loyalty for millennials as customers in online shopping; and it is also one of the key predictors of consumer attitudes toward online shopping (Akroush, Al-Debei, & Ashouri, 2015).

Finally, this dissertation has examined media variables as the main factors that influence credibility, trust, and online engagement. Future studies could take more factors into account: types of information, motivations for media use, and various goals of online engagement. For example, one could distinguish between expertise-based and experience-based information sources, as well as between information-oriented and entertainment-oriented media, in order to better understand media usage, credibility, and online engagement. Also, Rains (2007) found that mistrust of entertainment-oriented media as sources of health information decreased the odds of people's using the Web, whereas trust in information-oriented media and entertainment-oriented media predicted behavior and perceptions favorable to using the Web – the Web being an alternative to traditional media for information-seeking purposes. And my last point is a generalization of an observation I have already made in a narrower context (see section 5.5, p. 109): since most traditional media have their own online editions, the perceived credibility of traditional mass media can be transferred to the Internet. Distinguishing between online editions of traditional media and Internet-based media is another valid avenue for future research – if a challenging one, in the increasingly complex media environment we are inhabiting.



References



References

- Aarts, K., Fladmoe, F., & Strömbäck, J. (2012). Media, political trust, and political knowledge. In T. Aalberg & J. Curran (Eds.), *How media inform democracy: A comparative approach* (pp. 98–118). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Akroush, M. N., Al-Debei, M. M., & Ashouri, M. I. (2015). Consumer attitudes towards online shopping: The effects of trust, perceived benefits, and perceived web quality. *Internet Research*, 25(5), 707–733. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-05-2014-0146>
- Albrecht, T. L., & Adelman, M. B. (1987). *Communicating social support*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Alexa. (2019). The top 500 sites on the web. Retrieved March 23, 2019, from <https://www.alexa.com/topsites>
- AlMansour, A. A., Brankovic, L., & Iliopoulos, C. (2014). A model for recalibrating credibility in different contexts and languages—a twitter case study. *International Journal of Digital Information and Wireless Communications*. <https://doi.org/10.17781/P001083>
- Antunovic, D., Parsons, P., & Cooke, T. R. (2018). ‘Checking’ and googling: Stages of news consumption among young adults. *Journalism*, 19(5), 632–648. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916663625>
- Apaolaza, V., He, J., & Hartmann, P. (2014). The effect of gratifications derived from use of the social networking site Qzone on Chinese adolescents’ positive mood. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 41, 203–211. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.09.029>
- Appelman, A., & Sundar, S. S. (2016). Measuring message credibility: Construction and validation of an exclusive scale. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 93(1), 59–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699015606057>
- Ardévol-Abreu, A., Hooker, C. M., & Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2018). Online news creation, trust in the media, and political participation: Direct and moderating effects over time. *Journalism*, 19(5), 611–631. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917700447>
- Ariely, G. (2015). Does Commercialized Political Coverage Undermine Political Trust?: Evidence Across European Countries. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 59(3), 438–455. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2015.1055000>
- Bakk, Z., & Vermunt, J. K. (2016). Robustness of stepwise latent class modeling with continuous distal outcomes. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 23(1), 20–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10705511.2014.955104>
- Bakker, T. P., & de Vreese, C. H. (2011). Good news for the future? Young people, Internet use, and political participation. *Communication Research*, 38(4), 451–470. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650210381738>
- Banning, S. A., & Sweetser, K. D. (2007). How much do they think it affects them and whom do they believe. *Communication Quarterly*, 55(4), 451–466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463370701665114>
- Bantimaroudis, P., Zyglidopoulos, S., & Symeou, P. C. (2010). Greek museum media visibility and museum visitation: An exploration of cultural agenda setting. *Journal of Communication*, 60(4), 743–757. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2010.01512.x>

- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator–mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(6), 1173–1182. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.51.6.1173>
- Bilgihan, A. (2016). Gen Y customer loyalty in online shopping: An integrated model of trust, user experience and branding. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 61, 103–113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.03.014>
- Bimber, B. (2001). Information and political engagement in America: The search for effects of information technology at the individual level. *Political Research Quarterly*, 54(1), 53–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290105400103>
- Blank, G., & Groselj, D. (2014). Dimensions of Internet use: Amount, variety, and types. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(4), 417–435. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2014.889189>
- Blind, P. K. (2007). *Building trust in government in the twenty-first century: Review of literature and emerging issues*. Presented at the 7th Global Forum on Reinventing Government Building Trust in Government, Vienna, Austria. Retrieved from <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN025062.pdf>
- Boczkowski, P. J., Matassi, M., & Mitchelstein, E. (2018). How young users deal with multiple platforms: The role of meaning-making in social media repertoires. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 23(5), 245–259. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmy012>
- Bos, L., Kruikemeier, S., & de Vreese, C. (2016). Nation binding: How public service broadcasting mitigates political selective exposure. *PLoS ONE*, 11(5), e0155112. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0155112>
- Boulianne, S. (2009). Does Internet use affect engagement? A meta-analysis of research. *Political Communication*, 26(2), 193–211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600902854363>
- Boulianne, S. (2015). Social media use and participation: A meta-analysis of current research. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(5), 524–538. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1008542>
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by R. Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- boyd, danah. (2014). *It's complicated. The social lives of networked teens*. Retrieved from <http://journals.openedition.org/lectures/17628>
- Buigut, S., & Amaize, O. (2016). UAE public participation in the musical arts. *Poetics*, 58, 43–51. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2016.08.001>
- Bundorf, M. K., Wagner, T. H., Singer, S. J., & Baker, L. C. (2006). Who searches the internet for health information? *Health Services Research*, 41(3p1), 819–836. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6773.2006.00510.x>
- Cao, W., Zhang, X., Xu, K., & Wang, Y. (2016). Modeling online health information-seeking behavior in China: The roles of source characteristics, reward assessment, and internet self-efficacy. *Health Communication*, 31(9), 1105–1114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2015.1045236>
- Cappella, J. N. (2002). Cynicism and social trust in the new media environment. *Journal of Communication*, 52(1), 229–241. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2002.tb02541.x>

- Carr, D. J., Barnidge, M., Lee, B. G., & Tsang, S. J. (2014). Cynics and skeptics: Evaluating the credibility of mainstream and citizen journalism. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 91(3), 452–470. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699014538828>
- Carter, R. F., & Greenberg, B. S. (1965). Newspapers or television: Which do you believe? *Journalism Quarterly*, 42(1), 29–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769906504200104>
- Ceron, A. (2015). Internet, news, and political trust: The difference between social media and online media outlets. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 20(5), 487–503. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12129>
- Ceron, A., & Memoli, V. (2015). Trust in government and media slant: A cross-sectional analysis of media effects in twenty-seven european countries. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 20(3), 339–359. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161215572634>
- Chan, M., Wu, X., Hao, Y., Xi, R., & Jin, T. (2012). Microblogging, online expression, and political efficacy among young Chinese citizens: the moderating role of information and entertainment needs in the use of Weibo. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 15(7), 345–349. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2012.0109>
- Chan, T. W., & Turner, H. (2017). Where do cultural omnivores come from? The implications of educational mobility for cultural consumption. *European Sociological Review*, 33(4), 576–589. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcx060>
- Chen, J., & Sun, L. (2019). Media influence on citizens' government trust: A cross-sectional data analysis of China. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2019.1575854>
- Chen, X., & Shi, T. (2001). Media effects on political confidence and trust in the People's Republic of China in the post-Tiananmen period. *East Asia*, 19(3), 84–118. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-001-0011-3>
- China Internet Network Information Center. (2017). *The research report on the social network usage in China*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnnic.net.cn/hlwfzyj/hlwxbzg/sqbg/201604/P020160722551429454480.pdf>
- China Internet Network Information Center. (2019). *The 43rd statistics report on Internet development in China*. Retrieved from http://www.cac.gov.cn/wxb_pdf/0228043.pdf
- Choi, J. (2016). Why do people use news differently on SNSs? An investigation of the role of motivations, media repertoires, and technology cluster on citizens' news-related activities. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 54, 249–256. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.08.006>
- Cline, R. J. W., & Haynes, K. M. (2001). Consumer health information seeking on the Internet: the state of the art. *Health Education Research*, 16(6), 671–692. <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/16.6.671>
- Coleman, S. (2012). Believing the news: From sinking trust to atrophied efficacy. *European Journal of Communication*, 27(1), 35–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323112438806>
- Cooper, R. (1993). An expanded, integrated model for determining audience exposure to television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 37(4), 401–418. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838159309364232>
- Cooper, R., & Tang, T. (2009). Predicting audience exposure to television in today's media environment: An empirical integration of active-audience and structural theories. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 53(3), 400–418. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838150903102204>

- Corritore, C. L., Kracher, B., & Wiedenbeck, S. (2003). On-line trust: concepts, evolving themes, a model. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 58(6), 737–758. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1071-5819\(03\)00041-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1071-5819(03)00041-7)
- Cotten, S. R., & Gupta, S. S. (2004). Characteristics of online and offline health information seekers and factors that discriminate between them. *Social Science & Medicine*, 59(9), 1795–1806. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2004.02.020>
- Craig, S. (1993). *The Malevolent Leaders: Popular Discontent in America*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Dayton, C. M., & Fox, J. (1998). *Latent Class Scaling Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- de Haan, Y., & Bardoel, J. (2011). From trust to accountability: Negotiating media performance in the Netherlands, 1987—2007. *European Journal of Communication*, 26(3), 230–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323111413113>
- Debenedetti, S. (2006). The role of media critics in the cultural industries. *International Journal of Arts Management*, 30–42.
- DeLuca, K. M., Brunner, E., & Sun, Y. (2016). Weibo, WeChat, and the transformative events of environmental activism in China. *International Journal of Communication*, 10(0), 19.
- Devos, T., Spini, D., & Schwartz, S. (2002). Conflicts among human values and trust in institutions. *The British Journal of Social Psychology*, 41, 481–494. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466602321149849>
- Dewan, S., & Ramaprasad, J. (2014). Social media, traditional media, and music sales. *Mis Quarterly*, 38(1), 101–121. <https://doi.org/10.25300/MISQ/2014/38.1.05>
- Dickson, B. J., & Rublee, M. R. (2000). Membership has its privileges: the socioeconomic characteristics of Communist Party members in urban China. *Comparative Political Studies*, 33(1), 87–112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414000033001004>
- DiMaggio, P. (1987). Classification in art. *American Sociological Review*, 52(4), 440–455. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095290>
- Edgerly, S. (2015). Red media, blue media, and purple media: News repertoires in the colorful media landscape. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 59(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2014.998220>
- Edgerly, S. (2017). Seeking out and avoiding the news media: Young adults' proposed strategies for obtaining current events information. *Mass Communication and Society*, 20(3), 358–377. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2016.1262424>
- Edgerly, S., Vraga, E. K., Bode, L., Thorson, K., & Thorson, E. (2018). New media, new relationship to participation? A closer look at youth news repertoires and political participation. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 95(1), 192–212. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699017706928>
- Edosomwan, S., Prakasan, S. K., Kouame, D., Watson, J., & Seymour, T. (2011). The history of social media and its impact on business. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 16(3), 79–91.
- Egea, J. M. O., Menéndez, M. R., & González, M. V. R. (2006). Diffusion and usage patterns of Internet services in the European Union. *Information Research*, 12(2), 15.
- Eltantawy, N., & Wiest, J. B. (2011). Social media in the Egyptian revolution: Reconsidering resource mobilization theory. *International Journal of Communication*, 5(0), 18.

- Eynon, R., & Malmberg, L.-E. (2011). A typology of young people's Internet use: Implications for education. *Computers & Education*, 56(3), 585–595. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2010.09.020>
- Fogg, B. J., & Tseng, H. (1999). The elements of computer credibility. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 80–87. <https://doi.org/10.1145/302979.303001>
- Fox, S. (2004). *Older Americans and the Internet*. Retrieved from Pew Internet and American Life Project website: <https://www.pewinternet.org/2004/03/28/older-americans-and-the-internet/>
- Fox, S. (2014). The social life of health information. Retrieved January 15, 2014, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/01/15/the-social-life-of-health-information/>
- Freedom House. (2017). Freedom of the press 2017: China profile. Retrieved from <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/china>
- Gan, C. (2017). Understanding WeChat users' liking behavior: An empirical study in China. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68, 30–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.002>
- Gantz, W., & Wang, Z. (2009). Coverage of cancer in local television news. *Journal of Cancer Education*, 24(1), 65–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08858190802664727>
- Gauchat, G. (2012). Politicization of science in the public sphere: A study of public trust in the United States, 1974 to 2010. *American Sociological Review*, 77(2), 167–187. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122412438225>
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., Jung, N., & Valenzuela, S. (2012). Social media use for news and individuals' social capital, civic engagement and political participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17(3), 319–336. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01574.x>
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., Molyneux, L., & Zheng, P. (2014). Social media, political expression, and political participation: Panel analysis of lagged and concurrent relationships. *Journal of Communication*, 64(4), 612–634. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12103>
- Gleiss, M. S. (2015). Speaking up for the suffering (br)other: Weibo activism, discursive struggles, and minimal politics in China. *Media, Culture & Society*, 37(4), 513–529. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443714566897>
- Golan, G. J. (2010). New perspectives on media credibility research. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 54(1), 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764210376307>
- Guo, C., Shim, J. P., & Otondo, R. (2010). Social network services in China: An integrated model of centrality, trust, and technology acceptance. *Journal of Global Information Technology Management*, 13(2), 76–99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1097198X.2010.10856515>
- Hargittai, E., & Hinnant, A. (2008). Digital inequality: Differences in young adults' use of the internet. *Communication Research*, 35(5), 602–621. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650208321782>
- Hargittai, E., & Hsieh, Y. P. (2010). Predictors and consequences of differentiated social network site usage. *Information, Communication & Society*, 13(4), 515–536. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691181003639866>
- Hasebrink, U., & Popp, J. (2006). Media repertoires as a result of selective media use. A conceptual approach to the analysis of patterns of exposure. *Communications*, 31(3), 369–387. <https://doi.org/10.1515/COMMUN.2006.023>

- Hassid, J. (2012, July 14). *The politics of China's emerging micro-blogs: Something new or more of the same?* Presented at the American Political Science Association 2012 Annual Meeting. Retrieved from <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2106459>
- Hazır, I. K., & Warde, A. (2015). The cultural omnivore thesis: Methodological aspects of the debate. In L. Hanquinet & M. Savage (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of the Sociology of Art and Culture* (pp. 77–89). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203740248-11>
- Hesse, B. W., Nelson, D. E., Kreps, G. L., Croyle, R. T., Arora, N. K., Rimer, B. K., & Viswanath, K. (2005). Trust and sources of health information: The Impact of the Internet and its implications for health care providers: findings from the first health information national trends survey. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 165(22), 2618–2624. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archinte.165.22.2618>
- Holmes, J. (2011). Cyberkids or divided generations? Characterising young people's internet use in the UK with generic, continuum or typological models. *New Media & Society*, 13(7), 1104–1122. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810397649>
- Holt, K., Shehata, A., Strömbäck, J., & Ljungberg, E. (2013). Age and the effects of news media attention and social media use on political interest and participation: Do social media function as leveller? *European Journal of Communication*, 28(1), 19–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323112465369>
- Hooghe, M. (2011). Why there is basically only one form of political trust. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 13(2), 269–275. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2010.00447.x>
- Hooghe, M., & Kern, A. (2015). Party membership and closeness and the development of trust in political institutions: An analysis of the European Social Survey, 2002–2010. *Party Politics*, 21(6), 944–956. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068813509519>
- Hooghe, M., & Marien, S. (2013). A comparative analysis of the relation between political trust and forms of political participation in Europe. *European Societies*, 15(1), 131–152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2012.692807>
- Hosmer, L. T. (1995). Trust: The connecting link between organizational theory and philosophical ethics. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(2), 379–403. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1995.9507312923>
- Hou, J., & Shim, M. (2010). The role of provider–patient communication and trust in online sources in internet use for health-related activities. *Journal of Health Communication*, 15(sup3), 186–199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2010.522691>
- Hyun, K. D., & Kim, J. (2015). The role of new media in sustaining the status quo: Online political expression, nationalism, and system support in China. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(7), 766–781. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2014.994543>
- Hyun, K. D., Kim, J., & Sun, S. (2014). News use, nationalism, and Internet use motivations as predictors of anti-Japanese political actions in China. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 24(6), 589–604. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2014.944922>
- Jackob, N. G. E. (2010). No alternatives? The relationship between perceived media dependency, use of alternative information sources, and general trust in mass media. *International Journal of Communication*, 4, 589–606.
- Janssen, S., & Verboord, M. (2015). Cultural mediators and gatekeepers. In J. Wright & C. J. van Rees (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (Second Edition, pp. 440–446). Retrieved from <https://repub.eur.nl/pub/78003/>

- Jiang, S. (2019). Functional interactivity in social media: an examination of Chinese health care organizations' microblog profiles. *Health Promotion International*, 34(1), 38–46. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dax056>
- Jiang, S., & Street, R. L. (2017). Pathway linking Internet health information seeking to better health: a moderated mediation study. *Health Communication*, 32(8), 1024–1031. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2016.1196514>
- Johnson, T. J., & Kaye, B. K. (1998). Cruising is believing? Comparing Internet and traditional sources on media credibility measures. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75(2), 325–340. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769909807500208>
- Johnson, T. J., & Kaye, B. K. (2000). Using is believing: The influence of reliance on the credibility of online political information among politically interested internet users. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77(4), 865–879. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900007700409>
- Johnson, T. J., & Kaye, B. K. (2009). In blog we trust? Deciphering credibility of components of the internet among politically interested internet users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 25(1), 175–182. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2008.08.004>
- Johnson, T. J., & Kaye, B. K. (2015). Reasons to believe: Influence of credibility on motivations for using social networks. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 50, 544–555. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.04.002>
- Jung, N., Kim, Y., & Zúñiga, H. G. de. (2011). The mediating role of knowledge and efficacy in the effects of communication on political participation. *Mass Communication and Society*, 14(4), 407–430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2010.496135>
- Katz, E., Blumler, J., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Utilization of mass communication by individual. In J. Blumler & E. Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communication: Current perspectives on gratifications research* (pp. 19–32). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Katz-Gerro, T., & Jæger, M. M. (2013). Top of the pops, ascend of the omnivores, defeat of the couch potatoes: Cultural consumption profiles in Denmark 1975–2004. *European Sociological Review*, 29(2), 243–260. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcr058>
- Kaye, B. K., & Johnson, T. J. (2017). Strengthening the core: Examining interactivity, credibility, and reliance as measures of social media use. *Electronic News*, 11(3), 145–165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1931243116672262>
- Kennedy, J., Nagao, H., & Liu, H. (2018). Voting and values: Grassroots elections in rural and urban China. *Politics and Governance*, 6(2), 90–102. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v6i2.1331>
- Kim, D. (2012). Interacting is believing? Examining bottom-up credibility of blogs among politically interested Internet users. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17(4), 422–435. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01583.x>
- Kim, D., & Johnson, T. J. (2009). A shift in media credibility: Comparing Internet and traditional news sources in South Korea. *International Communication Gazette*, 71(4), 283–302. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048509102182>
- Kim, S. (2014). A repertoire approach to cross-platform media use behavior. *New Media & Society*, 18(3), 353–372. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814543162>

- Kim, Y. (2016). Trust in health information websites: A systematic literature review on the antecedents of trust. *Health Informatics Journal*, 22(2), 355–369. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1460458214559432>
- Kiousis, S. (2001). Public trust or mistrust? Perceptions of media credibility in the information age. *Mass Communication and Society*, 4(4), 381–403. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0404_4
- Kohring, M., & Matthes, J. (2007). Trust in news media: Development and validation of a multidimensional scale. *Communication Research*, 34(2), 231–252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650206298071>
- Kushin, M. J., & Yamamoto, M. (2010). Did social media really matter? College students' use of online media and political decision making in the 2008 election. *Mass Communication and Society*, 13(5), 608–630. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2010.516863>
- Kye, S. Y., Shim, M., Kim, Y. C., & Park, K. (2019). Sharing health information online in South Korea: motives, topics, and antecedents. *Health Promotion International*, 34(2), 182–192. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dax074>
- Lee, D., Yejean Park, J., Kim, J., Kim, J., & Moon, J. (2011). Understanding music sharing behaviour on social network services. *Online Information Review*, 35(5), 716–733. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14684521111176462>
- Lee, T.-T. (2010). Why they don't trust the media: An examination of factors predicting trust. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 54(1), 8–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764210376308>
- Leguina, A., Arancibia-Carvajal, S., & Widdop, P. (2017). Musical preferences and technologies: Contemporary material and symbolic distinctions criticized. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 17(2), 242–264. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540515586870>
- Lemire, M., Paré, G., Sicotte, C., & Harvey, C. (2008). Determinants of Internet use as a preferred source of information on personal health. *International Journal of Medical Informatics*, 77(11), 723–734. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijmedinf.2008.03.002>
- Levi, M., & Stoker, L. (2000). Political trust and trustworthiness. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 3(1), 475–507. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.3.1.475>
- Li, A. K. (2019). Papi Jiang and microcelebrity in China: A multilevel analysis. *International Journal of Communication*, 13(0), 19.
- Li, C. (2018). Smoking cessation through online health communities: A social support perspective. In *Proceedings of the seventh international conference on well-being in the information society: Fighting inequalities (WIS 2018)* (pp. 45–50). Retrieved from <https://www.utupub.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/145816/TUCSLectureNotes28.pdf?sequence=1#page=29>
- Li, L. (2004). Political trust in rural China. *Modern China*, 30(2), 228–258. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700403261824>
- Li, M., & Sligo, F. (2012). Chinese media going global: Issues of perception and credibility. *China Media Report Overseas*, 8(4), 1–12.
- Li, N. (2014). Zhongguo de she hui fen ceng yu wen hua pin wei: ji yu yin yue pian hao de yan jiu [Social stratification and cultural taste in China: Based on the analysis of music preferences]. *She Hui Xue [Sociology]*, 1, 38–46.
- Li, Xiaojing, & Zhang, G. (2018). Perceived credibility of Chinese social media: Toward an integrated approach. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 30(1), 79–101. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edw035>

- Li, Xueqing, & Chan, M. (2017). Comparing social media use, discussion, political trust and political engagement among university students in China and Hong Kong: an application of the O–S–R–O–R model. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 27(1), 65–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2016.1248454>
- Li, Y., Wang, X., Lin, X., & Hajli, M. (2018). Seeking and sharing health information on social media: A net valence model and cross-cultural comparison. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 126, 28–40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2016.07.021>
- Lin, W.-Y., Zhang, X., Song, H., & Omori, K. (2016). Health information seeking in the Web 2.0 age: Trust in social media, uncertainty reduction, and self-disclosure. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 56, 289–294. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.11.055>
- Liu, C.-Y., & Yu, C.-P. (2013). Can Facebook use induce well-being? *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 16(9), 674–678. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2012.0301>
- Liu, M., & Hu, Y. (2016). A mini review of patients' access to health information in China. *Journal of Health & Medical Informatics*, 7, 237.
- Liu, S., Yao, C., Lin, G., Jia, P., & Zhang, Y. (2003). Effectiveness evaluation of mass media in health education. *Chinese Journal of Health Education*, 19, 21–23.
- Livio, O., & Cohen, J. (2018). 'Fool me once, shame on you': Direct personal experience and media trust. *Journalism*, 19(5), 684–698. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916671331>
- Lu, C., Lu, J.-J., Du, D., & Brough, P. (2016). Crossover effects of work-family conflict among Chinese couples. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 31(1), 235–250. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-09-2012-0283>
- Luo, Y., & Harrison, T. M. (2019). How citizen journalists impact the agendas of traditional media and the government policymaking process in China. *Global Media and China*, 4(1), 72–93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059436419835771>
- Madden, M., & Rainie, L. (2003). *America's online pursuits*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewinternet.org/2003/12/22/americas-online-pursuits/>
- Manierre, M. J. (2015). Gaps in knowledge: Tracking and explaining gender differences in health information seeking. *Social Science & Medicine*, 128, 151–158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.01.028>
- Mano, R. S. (2014). Social media and online health services: A health empowerment perspective to online health information. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 39, 404–412. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.07.032>
- McDowell, W., & Sutherland, J. (2000). Choice versus chance: Using brand equity theory to explore tv audience lead-in effects, A case study. *Journal of Media Economics*, 13(4), 233–247. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327736ME1304_3
- McKinley, C. J., & Wright, P. J. (2014). Informational social support and online health information seeking: Examining the association between factors contributing to healthy eating behavior. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 37, 107–116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.04.023>
- Mehrabi, D., Hassan, M. A., & Ali, M. S. S. (2009). News media credibility of the internet and television. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(1), 136–148.

- Mesch, G., Mano, R., & Tsamir, J. (2012). Minority status and health information search: A test of the social diversification hypothesis. *Social Science & Medicine*, 75(5), 854–858. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2012.03.024>
- Metzger, M. J. (2007). Making sense of credibility on the Web: Models for evaluating online information and recommendations for future research. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 58(13), 2078–2091. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.20672>
- Metzger, M. J., Flanagin, A. J., Eyal, K., Lemus, D. R., & McCann, R. M. (2003). Credibility for the 21st Century: Integrating perspectives on source, message, and media credibility in the contemporary media environment. In P. J. Kalbfleisch (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook* (Vol. 27, pp. 293–335). Retrieved from <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/>
- Metzger, M. J., Flanagin, A. J., & Medders, R. B. (2010). Social and heuristic approaches to credibility evaluation online. *Journal of Communication*, 60(3), 413–439. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2010.01488.x>
- Miller, A. H. (1974). Political issues and trust in government: 1964–1970. *American Political Science Review*, 68(3), 951–972. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1959140>
- Miller, L. M. S., & Bell, R. A. (2012). Online health information seeking: the influence of age, information trustworthiness, and search challenges. *Journal of Aging and Health*, 24(3), 525–541. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0898264311428167>
- Mishler, W., & Rose, R. (2001). What are the origins of political trust?: Testing institutional and cultural theories in post-communist societies. *Comparative Political Studies*, 34(1), 30–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414001034001002>
- Morahan-Martin, J. M. (2004). How internet users find, evaluate, and use online health information: a cross-cultural review. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 7(5), 497–510. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2004.7.497>
- Mou, Y., Atkin, D., Fu, H., Lin, C. A., & Lau, T. Y. (2013). The influence of online forum and SNS use on online political discussion in China: Assessing “Spirals of Trust.” *Telematics and Informatics*, 30(4), 359–369. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2013.04.002>
- Moy, P., & Pfau, M. (2000). *With malice toward all? The media and public confidence in democratic institution*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- NBS. (2018). Residents' income growth was steady and consumption had fast increase in the first half of 2018. Retrieved July 17, 2018, from http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/sjjd/201807/t20180717_1610402.html
- Norris, P. (2000). *A virtuous circle: Political communications in postindustrial societies*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. (2011). *Democratic deficit: critical citizens revisited*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Notten, N., Lancee, B., van de Werfhorst, H. G., & Ganzeboom, H. B. G. (2015). Educational stratification in cultural participation: cognitive competence or status motivation? *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 39(2), 177–203. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10824-014-9218-1>
- Oh, H. J., Lauckner, C., Boehmer, J., Fewins-Bliss, R., & Li, K. (2013). Facebooking for health: An examination into the solicitation and effects of health-related social support on social networking sites. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(5), 2072–2080. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.04.017>

- Pant, S., Deshmukh, A., Murugiah, K., Kumar, G., Sachdeva, R., & Mehta, J. L. (2012). Assessing the credibility of the “YouTube approach” to health information on acute myocardial infarction. *Clinical Cardiology*, 35(5), 281–285. <https://doi.org/10.1002/clc.21981>
- Peng, W., & Tang, L. (2010). Health content in Chinese newspapers. *Journal of Health Communication*, 15(7), 695–711. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2010.514028>
- Peterson, R. A. (1992). Understanding audience segmentation: From elite and mass to omnivore and univore. *Poetics*, 21(4), 243–258. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X\(92\)90008-Q](https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X(92)90008-Q)
- Purhonen, S., Gronow, J., & Rahkonen, K. (2010). Nordic democracy of taste? Cultural omnivorousness in musical and literary taste preferences in Finland. *Poetics*, 38(3), 266–298. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2010.03.003>
- Reagan, J. (1996). The “repertoire” of information sources. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 40(1), 112–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838159609364336>
- Redmond, N., Baer, H. J., Clark, C. R., Lipsitz, S., & Hicks, L. S. (2010). Sources of health information related to preventive health behaviors in a national study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 38(6), 620–627. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2010.03.001>
- Reeves, A., & de Vries, R. (2016). The social gradient in cultural consumption and the information-processing hypothesis. *The Sociological Review*, 64(3), 550–574. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12406>
- Roose, H., & Daenekindt, S. (2015). Trends in cultural participation. In J. Wright (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (second edition, Vol. 5, pp. 447–452). Oxford, UK: Elsevier.
- Roose, H., & Vander Stichele, A. (2010). Living room vs. concert hall: Patterns of music consumption in Flanders. *Social Forces*, 89(1), 185–207. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2010.0077>
- Rotter, J. B. (1971). Generalized expectancies for interpersonal trust. *American Psychologist*, 26(5), 443–452. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0031464>
- Rubin, A. M. (1993). Audience activity and media use. *Communication Monographs*, 60(1), 98–105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759309376300>
- Rutsaert, P., Regan, Á., Pieniak, Z., McConnon, Á., Moss, A., Wall, P., & Verbeke, W. (2013). The use of social media in food risk and benefit communication. *Trends in Food Science & Technology*, 30(1), 84–91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2012.10.006>
- Scheerder, A., van Deursen, A., & van Dijk, J. (2017). Determinants of Internet skills, uses and outcomes. A systematic review of the second- and third-level digital divide. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(8), 1607–1624. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2017.07.007>
- Shen, F., & Guo, Z. S. (2013). The last refuge of media persuasion: news use, national pride and political trust in China. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 23(2), 135–151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2012.725173>
- Shi, T. (2001). Cultural values and political trust: A comparison of the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan. *Comparative Politics*, 33(4), 401–419. <https://doi.org/10.2307/422441>
- Shih, T.-H., & Fan, X. (2008). Comparing response rates from web and mail surveys: A meta-analysis. *Field Methods*, 20(3), 249–271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X08317085>

- Shrum, W. (1991). Critics and publics: Cultural mediation in highbrow and popular performing arts. *American Journal of Sociology*, 97(2), 347–375. <https://doi.org/10.1086/229782>
- Sinkkonen, E. (2013). Nationalism, patriotism and foreign policy attitudes among Chinese university students. *The China Quarterly*, 216, 1045–1063. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741013001094>
- Skoric, M. M. (2011). Introduction to the special issue: Online social capital and participation in Asia-Pacific. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 21(5), 427–429. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2011.602270>
- Skoric, M. M., & Poor, N. (2013). Youth engagement in Singapore: The interplay of social and traditional media. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 57(2), 187–204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2013.787076>
- Skoric, M. M., Zhu, Q., Goh, D., & Pang, N. (2016). Social media and citizen engagement: A meta-analytic review. *New Media & Society*, 18(9), 1817–1839. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815616221>
- Skoric, M. M., Zhu, Q., & Pang, N. (2016). Social media, political expression, and participation in Confucian Asia. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 9(4), 331–347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2016.1143378>
- Smith, A., Fischer, E., & Chen, Y. (2012). How does brand-related user-generated content differ across YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter? *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(2), 102–113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2012.01.002>
- Smith, M., & Telang, R. (2016). *Streaming, sharing, stealing: big data and the future of entertainment*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Snowball, J. D., Jamal, M., & Willis, K. G. (2010). Cultural consumption patterns in south africa: An investigation of the theory of cultural omnivores. *Social Indicators Research*, 97(3), 467–483.
- Solomon, F. (2017, May 3). China Has Tightened Its Grip on Online News With Sweeping New Controls. Retrieved from Fortune website: <https://fortune.com/2017/05/03/china-internet-news-censorship-online/>
- Song, H., Omori, K., Kim, J., Tenzek, K. E., Hawkins, J. M., Lin, W.-Y., ... Jung, J.-Y. (2016). Trusting social media as a source of health information: Online surveys comparing the United States, Korea, and Hong Kong. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 18(3). <https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.4193>
- Statista. (2019). Number of monthly active WeChat users from 1st quarter 2012 to 1st quarter 2019. Retrieved August 16, 2017, from www.statista.com website: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/255778/number-of-active-wechat-messenger-accounts/>
- Stavrositu, C., & Sundar, S. S. (2008). If Internet credibility is so iffy, why the heavy use? The relationship between medium use and credibility. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 11(1), 65–68. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2007.9933>
- Steinhardt, H. C. (2012). How is high trust in China possible? Comparing the origins of generalized trust in three Chinese societies. *Political Studies*, 60(2), 434–454. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2011.00909.x>
- Stockmann, D. (2013). *Media commercialization and authoritarian rule in China*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Stokes, D. E. (1962). Popular evaluations of government: An empirical assessment. In H. Cleveland & H. D. Lasswell (Eds.), *Ethics and bigness: Scientific, academic, religious, political, and military*. New York, NY: Harper and Brothers.
- Strömbäck, J., Djerf-Pierre, M., & Shehata, A. (2016). A question of time? A longitudinal analysis of the relationship between news media consumption and political trust. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 21(1), 88–110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161215613059>
- Strömbäck, J., Falasca, K., & Kruike-meier, S. (2018). The mix of media use matters: Investigating the effects of individual news repertoires on offline and online political participation. *Political Communication*, 35(3), 413–432. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2017.1385549>
- Stroud, N. J., & Lee, J. K. (2013). Perceptions of cable news credibility. *Mass Communication and Society*, 16(1), 67–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2011.646449>
- Sullivan, J. (2014). China's Weibo: Is faster different? *New Media & Society*, 16(1), 24–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812472966>
- Sundar, S. S. (2008). The MAIN model: A heuristic approach to understanding technology effects on credibility. In *Digital media, youth, and credibility* (pp. 73–100). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Tan, Y., & Wu, Z. (2010). Shangdong sheng cheng zhen ju min wen hua xiao fei jie gou tan xi [Analysis on the cultural consumption structure of urban residents in Shangdong province]. *Journal of Shangdong University of Technology (Social Sciences Edition)*, 2, 20–23.
- Taneja, H., Webster, J. G., Malthouse, E. C., & Ksiazek, T. B. (2012). Media consumption across platforms: Identifying user-defined repertoires. *New Media & Society*, 14(6), 951–968. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444811436146>
- Tang, D., & Lyons, R. (2016). An ecosystem lens: Putting China's digital music industry into focus. *Global Media and China*, 1(4), 350–371. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059436416685101>
- Tang, S., Meng, Q., Chen, L., Bekedam, H., Evans, T., & Whitehead, M. (2008). Tackling the challenges to health equity in China. *The Lancet*, 372(9648), 1493–1501. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(08\)61364-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(08)61364-1)
- Tang, W., & Darr, B. (2012). Chinese nationalism and its political and social origins. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 21(77), 811–826. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2012.684965>
- Tokuda, Y., Fujii, S., Jimba, M., & Inoguchi, T. (2009). The relationship between trust in mass media and the healthcare system and individual health: evidence from the AsiaBarometer Survey. *BMC Medicine*, 7(1), 4. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1741-7015-7-4>
- Trepte, S., Dienlin, T., & Reinecke, L. (2015). Influence of social support received in online and offline contexts on satisfaction with social support and satisfaction with life: A longitudinal study. *Media Psychology*, 18(1), 74–105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2013.838904>
- Tsfati, Y. (2010). Online news exposure and trust in the mainstream media: Exploring possible associations. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 54(1), 22–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764210376309>
- Tsfati, Y., & Arieli, G. (2014). Individual and contextual correlates of trust in media across 44 countries. *Communication Research*, 41(6), 760–782. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650213485972>
- Tsfati, Y., & Cappella, J. N. (2003). Do people watch what they do not trust?: Exploring the association between news media skepticism and exposure. *Communication Research*, 30(5), 504–529. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650203253371>

- Tsfati, Y., & Cappella, J. N. (2005). Why do people watch news they do not trust? The need for cognition as a moderator in the association between news media skepticism and exposure. *Media Psychology*, 7(3), 251–271. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0703_2
- Tsfati, Y., & Peri, Y. (2006). Mainstream media skepticism and exposure to sectorial and extranational news media: The case of Israel. *Mass Communication and Society*, 9(2), 165–187. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327825mcs0902_3
- Tyler, T. R., & Degoey, P. (1995). Collective restraint in social dilemmas: Procedural justice and social identification effects on support for authorities. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(3), 482–497. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.69.3.482>
- Valenzuela, S., Park, N., & Kee, K. F. (2009). Is there social capital in a social network site? Facebook use and college students' life satisfaction, trust, and participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14(4), 875–901. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2009.01474.x>
- Van de Belt, T. H., Engelen, L. J., Berben, S. A., Teerenstra, S., Samsom, M., & Schoonhoven, L. (2013). Internet and social media for health-related information and communication in health care: preferences of the Dutch general population. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 15(10). <https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.2607>
- van Deursen, A. J. A. M., & Helsper, E. J. (2015). The third-level digital divide: Who benefits most from being online? In L. Robinson, S. Cotten, J. Schulz, T. Hale, & A. Williams (Eds.), *Communication and Information Technologies Annual* (pp. 29–52). <https://doi.org/10.1108/S2050-206020150000010002>
- van Dijck, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- van Eijck, K., & van Rees, K. (2000). Media orientation and media use: Television viewing behavior of specific reader types from 1975 to 1995. *Communication Research*, 27(5), 574–616. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650000027005002>
- van Hek, M., & Kraaykamp, G. (2015). How do parents affect cultural participation of their children? *Poetics*, 52, 124–138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2015.06.001>
- van Rees, K., & van Eijck, K. (2003). Media repertoires of selective audiences: The impact of status, gender, and age on media use. *Poetics*, 31(5–6), 465–490. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2003.09.005>
- Verboord, M. (2010). The legitimacy of book critics in the age of the internet and omnivorousness: Expert critics, internet critics and peer critics in Flanders and the Netherlands. *European Sociological Review*, 26(6), 623–637. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcp039>
- Verboord, M., & van Noord, S. (2016). The online place of popular music: Exploring the impact of geography and social media on pop artists' mainstream media attention. *Popular Communication*, 14(2), 59–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2015.1019073>
- Vermunt, J. K. (2010). Latent Class modeling with covariates: Two improved three-step approaches. *Political Analysis*, 18(4), 450–469. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mpq025>
- Vermunt, J. K., & Magidson, J. (2016). *Technical Guide for Latent Gold 5.1: Basic, Advanced, and Syntax*. Retrieved from <https://www.statisticalinnovations.com/wp-content/uploads/LGtechnical.pdf>

- Visser, S., & Stolle, D. (2014). The Internet and new modes of political participation: Online versus offline participation. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(8), 937–955. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.867356>
- Wang, M., Viswanath, K., Lam, T., Wang, X., & Chan, S. S. (2013). Social determinants of health information seeking among Chinese adults in Hong Kong. *PloS One*, 8(8), e73049. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0073049>
- Wang, Shaoguang, Davis, D., & Bian, Y. (2006). The uneven distribution of cultural capital: Book reading in urban China. *Modern China*, 32(3), 315–348. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700406288178>
- Wang, Shiliang, Paul, M. J., & Dredze, M. (2015). Social media as a sensor of air quality and public response in China. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 17(3). <https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.3875>
- Wang, Zhe, & Zhang, P. (2016). Examining user roles in social Q&A: The case of health topics in Zhihu.com. *Proceedings of the 79th ASIS&T Annual Meeting: Creating Knowledge, Enhancing Lives Through Information & Technology*, 103:1–103:6. Retrieved from <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=3017447.3017550>
- Wang, Zheng, & Gantz, W. (2007). Health content in local television news. *Health Communication*, 21(3), 213–221. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410230701307527>
- Wang, Zhengxu. (2005). Before the emergence of critical citizens: Economic development and political trust in China. *International Review of Sociology*, 15(1), 155–171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03906700500038876>
- Wanta, W., & Hu, Y.-W. (1994). The effects of credibility, reliance, and exposure on media agenda-setting: A path analysis model. *Journalism Quarterly*, 71(1), 90–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769909407100109>
- Warren, A. M., Sulaiman, A., & Jaafar, N. I. (2014). Social media effects on fostering online civic engagement and building citizen trust and trust in institutions. *Government Information Quarterly*, 31(2), 291–301. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2013.11.007>
- Wathen, C. N., & Burkell, J. (2002). Believe it or not: Factors influencing credibility on the Web. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 53(2), 134–144. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.10016>
- Webster, J. G. (2009). The role of structure in media choice. In T. Hartmann (Ed.), *Media choice: A theoretical and empirical overview* (pp. 221–233). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Webster, J. G. (2011). The duality of media: A structural theory of public attention. *Communication Theory*, 21(1), 43–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2010.01375.x>
- Webster, J. G. (2014). *The marketplace of attention*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Webster, J. G., & Ksiazek, T. B. (2012). The dynamics of audience fragmentation: Public attention in an age of digital media. *Journal of Communication*, 62(1), 39–56. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01616.x>
- Weibo Corp. (2019, May 23). Weibo Reports First Quarter 2019 Unaudited Financial Results. Retrieved from weibo.com website: <http://ir.weibo.com/news-releases/news-release-details/weibo-reports-first-quarter-2019-unaudited-financial-results>

- Westerman, D., Spence, P. R., & Van Der Heide, B. (2014). Social media as information source: Recency of updates and credibility of information. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19(2), 171–183. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12041>
- Willekens, M., Daenekindt, S., & Lievens, J. (2014). Whose education matters more? Mothers' and fathers' education and the cultural participation of adolescents. *Cultural Sociology*, 8(3), 291–309. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975514533686>
- Williams, A. E. (2012). Trust or bust? : Questioning the relationship between media trust and news attention. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56(1), 116–131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2011.651186>
- Wu, J. (2016). Mei jie ke xin du de shi zheng yan jiu [Empirical study of medium credibility: based on the large survey among residents in Chengdu]. *Journal of Southwest Minzu University (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 2, 147–152.
- Wu, Yanfang, Lau, T., Atkin, D. J., & Lin, C. A. (2011). A comparative study of online privacy regulations in the U.S. and China. *Telecommunications Policy*, 35(7), 603–616. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2011.05.002>
- Wu, Yuning. (2014). The impact of media on public trust in legal authorities in China and Taiwan. *Asian Journal of Criminology*, 9(2), 85–101. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11417-013-9177-z>
- Wu, Yuning, & Sun, I. Y. (2009). Citizen trust in police: the case of China. *Police Quarterly*, 12(2), 170–191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611108330228>
- Xenos, M., Vromen, A., & Loader, B. D. (2014). The great equalizer? Patterns of social media use and youth political engagement in three advanced democracies. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(2), 151–167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.871318>
- Xiao, W. (2013). *Freedom of information reform in China: Information flow analysis*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203802991>
- Xie, Y., & Zhou, X. (2014). Income inequality in today's China. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(19), 6928–6933. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1403158111>
- Xu, X., & Zhang, Z. (2014). Wo guo cheng xiang ju min wen hua xiao fei de te zheng ji qu shi [Characteristics and trends of cultural consumption of urban and rural residents in China]. *Economic Review*, 10, 35–38.
- Yamamoto, M., Kushin, M. J., & Dalisay, F. (2015). Social media and mobiles as political mobilization forces for young adults: Examining the moderating role of online political expression in political participation. *New Media & Society*, 17(6), 880–898. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444813518390>
- Yamamoto, M., Lee, T.-T., & Ran, W. (2016). Media trust in community context: A multilevel analysis of individual- and prefecture-level sources of media trust in Japan. *Communication Research*, 43(1), 131–154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650214565894>
- Ye, Y. (2010). Correlates of consumer trust in online health information: findings from the health information national trends survey. *Journal of Health Communication*, 16(1), 34–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2010.529491>
- Yuan, E. (2011). News consumption across multiple media platforms: A repertoire approach. *Information, Communication & Society*, 14(7), 998–1016. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2010.549235>

- Yuan, E., & Ksiazek, T. B. (2011). The duality of structure in China's national television market: A network analysis of audience behavior. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 55(2), 180–197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2011.570825>
- Yuan, E., & Webster, J. G. (2006). Channel repertoires: Using peplemeter data in Beijing. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 50(3), 524–536. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem5003_10
- Yun, E. K., & Park, H.-A. (2010). Consumers' disease information-seeking behaviour on the Internet in Korea. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 19(19–20), 2860–2868. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702.2009.03187.x>
- Zhang, H., Zhou, S., & Shen, B. (2014). Public trust: A comprehensive investigation on perceived media credibility in China. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 24(2), 158–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2013.856452>
- Zhang, L., & Jung, E. H. (2018). WeChatting for health: An examination of the relationship between motivations and active engagement. *Health Communication*, 0(0), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2018.1536942>
- Zhang, Xingting, Wen, D., Liang, J., & Lei, J. (2017). How the public uses social media wechat to obtain health information in china: a survey study. *BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making*, 17(2), 66. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12911-017-0470-0>
- Zhang, Xinzhi, & Lin, W.-Y. (2014). Political participation in an unlikely place: How individuals engage in politics through social networking sites in China. *International Journal of Communication*, 8, 21–42.
- Zhao, J. (2008). A snapshot of Internet regulation in contemporary China: Censorship, profitability and responsibility. *China Media Research*, 4(3), 37–42.
- Zhao, S. (2005). China's pragmatic nationalism: Is it manageable? *The Washington Quarterly*, 29(1), 131–144. <https://doi.org/10.1162/016366005774859670>
- Zhao, Y., & Zhang, J. (2017). Consumer health information seeking in social media: a literature review. *Health Information & Libraries Journal*, 34(4), 268–283. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hir.12192>
- Zhou, L., Gu, J., & Lu, C. (2013). Ji yu ELES mo xing de wen hua xiao fei ying xiong yin su tan xi [Analysis on the influence factors of cultural consumption—based on ELES model]. *Xian Dai Ke Xue Guan Li*, 8, 12–14.
- Zhou, M. (2018). How elite Chinese students view other countries: Findings from a survey in three top Beijing universities. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 47(1), 167–188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810261804700106>
- Zhu, D. (2017). Gao ya pin wei hai shi zha shi? ---te da cheng shi ju min wen hua qu fen shi zheng yan jiu [Highbrow taste or omnivores? ---an empirical study of cultural distinction in megalopolises]. *Shandong Social Sciences*, 10, 35–43.
- Zhu, W. (2012). Da xue sheng wen hua xiao fei xian Zhuang ji ying xiang yin su fen xi [Analysis of college students' cultural consumption and its influencing factors]. *Statistics & Decision*, 17, 115–118

Appendix C

Survey of Media Use among Young Chinese Adults

Part I. About You

1. In which year were you born?

2. What is your gender?

☐ Female

☐ Male

3. What is your highest level of education completed?

If you are a student now, choose your current education

☐ Less than primary school

☐ Middle School

☐ High School

☐ Some College (2 or 3 year vocation/technology school)

☐ University (4/5 years)

☐ Beyond Master degree

4. What is your parents' highest level of education completed?

Choose the highest level attained by either the mother or the father

☐ Less than primary school

☐ Middle School

☐ High School

☐ Some College (2 or 3 year vocation/technology school)

☐ University (4/5 years)

☐ Beyond Master degree

5. Are you from the Han ethnic group?

☐ Yes

☐ No

6. Do you have a religious belief?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. What is your political affiliation?

☐ Communist Party Member

☐ Non Communist Party Member

☐ Prefer not to say

8. Not counting people at work or family at home, about how many other friends or relatives do you keep in contact with at least once a year?

☐ 0-2

☐ 3-5

☐ 6-10

☐ 11-20

☐ 21-40

☐ >40

9. Of these friends and relatives that are contacted at least once a year, about how many would you say you feel really close to, that is, close enough to discuss personal or important problems with?

- ☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐
 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ >20

10. To what extents does each of the following statements apply to you?

The extent is measured on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1= Very untrue to 7= Very true.

	1=Very untrue	2	3	4	5	6	7=very true
Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful							
Most People try to take advantage of you or try to be fair							
Most of the time people helpful or mostly looking out for themselves							

11. What is your current occupation?

- ☐ Student ☐ Official ☐ Company employee
☐ Entrepreneur or self-employed ☐ Migrant worker (service & factory worker)
☐ Agriculture worker ☐ Professional worker ☐ Unemployed
☐ Retired

12. What is your income (before taxes)?

- ☐ No income ☐ Less than 500 CNY per Month
☐ 501-1000 CNY per Month ☐ 1001-1500 CNY per Month
☐ 1501-2000 CNY per Month ☐ 2001-3000 CNY per Month
☐ 3001-5000 CNY per Month ☐ 5001-8000 CNY per Month
☐ 8001-10000 CNY per Month ☐ 10001-20000 CNY per Month
☐ 20001-50000 CNY per Month ☐ More than 50000 CNY per Month

13. Where did you grow up and where do you live now?

If you grew up in many places, choose a place where you spent most of time from the range of age 3-18 years old.

	Grew up	Live now
Village		
Town		
Small city (below Half million)		
Middle city (Half million-5 million)		
Big city (5 million- 10 million)		
Super big city (Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Tianjin)		

Part 2. About Your Media Use

14. How often do you use the following kinds of media?

	Never	Less than once a month	Couple of times per month	Couple of times per week	Almost daily
TV (both on TV set and online)					
Newspaper (only in print)					
Magazine (only in print)					
Radio (both on radio set and online)					
Internet (computer/laptop)					
Internet (mobile/tablet)					

15. How often do you get information on the following topics through media in general?

	Never	Less than once a month	Couple of times per month	Couple of times per week	Almost daily
Politics					
Economics					
Education (policies, educational issues)					
Health & Fitness					
Fashion					
Sports					
Arts & Culture (popular & classical)					
News on celebrities and entertainment					
Foreign affairs					

16. Do you use social media (such as Sina Weibo and WeChat)?

☐ Yes → please go to questions 17 ☐ No → please go to questions 20

17. What is the time you spend on social media per day (on average)?

☐ <1 hours ☐ 1-2 hours ☐ 2- 3 hours ☐ 3- 4 hours
☐ 4- 5 hours ☐ 5-6 hours ☐ >6 hours

18. How often do you use the following social media?

	Never	Less than once a month	Couple of times per month	Couple of times per week	Almost daily
Sina Weibo					
WeChat					
Qzone					
Sina Blog					
Baidu Tieba					
Tianya Club					
Douban					
Guokr					

19. What are your motivations for using social media?

(Check all that apply.)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting news | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional information seeking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifestyle/leisure information seeking | <input type="checkbox"/> Keep in touch with friends/family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expressing opinions (blogging, participate online discussion) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online Shopping | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, namely _____ |

20. If you got conflicting or different reports of the same news events, which source below would you be the most inclined to trust?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Official or mainstream media (such as TV, printed newspaper) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nonmainstream sites (such as personal websites, blogs, forums and other social media) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Either mainstream or nonmainstream media | <input type="checkbox"/> Overseas media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither mainstream nor nonmainstream media | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, namely _____ |

21. If you need to find a solution of some general knowledge questions in daily life, who or what do you usually turn to for help?

	Never	Less than once a month	Couple of times per month	Couple of times per week	Almost daily
Friends/family (online)					
Friends/family (offline)					
Books and other paper resources					
Online resources in general					

22. To what extent do you use social media as an alternative choice when you cannot find what you want via mainstream media?

The extent is measured on a 5-point scale with 1 for Not at all and 5 for a great extent.

Not at all	2	3	4	a great extent

23. How much do you trust the following items?

	No trust	2	3	4	5	6	Full trust
Health care system							
Education system							
Charity organizations							
Science							

24. How do you think our society influenced by what people say about big public issues via social media (e.g., Guo Meimei and the Red Cross Scandal and The Dengyujiao incident)?

- ☐ I think this mainly has a positive influence
- ☐ I think this has mainly has a negative influence
- ☐ I don't think this has much influence on society

Part 3. About Politics

The next questions are about your interest and trust in politics.

25. To what extents does each of the following statements apply to you?

The extent is measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1= Very untrue to 5= Very true.

	1= Very untrue	2= bit untrue	3	4= bit true	5= very true
I think it is relevant to know what is going on in politics					
I like talking about politics with friends					
I think it's very important to be informed about current political issues					
I am not interested in politics at all					
I think it is meaningless to talk about politics					

26. How often do you engage in each of the following political activities via social media?

The extent is measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=Not at all to 5=Very frequently.

	Not at all	2	3	4	Very frequently
Reading news on topics related to politics or public affairs					
Reading blogs or microblogging commenting related to politics or public affairs					
Sharing with others on topics related to politics or public affairs					
Posting comments in online discussion groups related to politics or public affairs					
Visiting social media accounts of the government and public administration institutions					
Signing online petitions					

27. People sometimes get political information via social media. How do you evaluate the political information offered by social media?

The extent is measured on a 7-point scale with 1 for Not at all and 7 for very much.

Political information on social media is...	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very much
Believable							
Fair							
Accurate							
In-depth							
Trustworthy							

28. People sometimes get political information via traditional media (e.g., newspapers and TV). How do you evaluate political information offered by traditional media?

The extent is measured on a 7-point scale with 1 for Not at all and 7 for very much.

Political information on traditional media is...	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very much
Believable							
Fair							
Accurate							
In-depth							
Trustworthy							

29. How much do you trust the government?

Trust level is measured on a 7-point scale with 1 for No trust and 7 for Full trust.

	No trust	2	3	4	5	6	Full trust
Political trust							

Part 4. About Arts & Culture

The next questions are on your interests in arts and culture. By that I mean activities such as watching movies, reading books, visiting museums etc.

30. To what extent does each of the following statements apply to you?

The extent is measured on a 5-point scale with 1 for Very untrue at all and 5 for Very true.

	1= Very untrue	2= bit untrue	3	4= bit true	5= Very true
It's important for me to be up to date with what is going on in arts and culture					
I follow closely what is going on in arts and culture					
I am always looking for tips on arts and culture					
I like talking about arts and culture with friends					
I think it's relevant to know about arts and culture					
I am not interested in arts and culture at all					

31. How often do you engage in each of the following activities via social media?

The extent is measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=Not at all to 5=Very frequently.

	Not at all	2	3	4	Very frequently
Reading blogs or microblogging related to arts and culture					
Sharing with other topics related to arts and culture					
Posting comments in online discussion groups or social networking sites related to arts and culture (e.g., about films, music)					
Following social media accounts of the experts and enterprises about arts and culture (e.g., artist, music reviewer, film company)					
Recommend new films, books or music products					

32. When you get information on new culture products (e.g., film, book) on social media, how do you evaluate the information on social media?

The extent is measured on a 7-point scale with 1 for Not at all and 7 for very much.

Arts and culture information on social media is...	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very much
Believable							
Fair							
Accurate							
In-depth							
Trustworthy							

33. People sometimes get information about new culture products (e.g., film, book) on traditional media, how do you evaluate the information on traditional media?

The extent is measured on a 7-point scale with 1 for Not at all and 7 for very much.

Arts and culture information on traditional media is...	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very much
Believable							
Fair							
Accurate							
In-depth							
Trustworthy							

34. People sometimes get information about new culture products (e.g., film, book), how often do you participate in the following art and culture activities?

	Never	Less than once a month	Couple of times per month	Couple of times per week	Almost daily
Playing computer games					
Visiting pop concerts					
Visiting classical concerts or opera					
Visiting art exhibitions					
Watching movies (at home or in cinema)					
Watching TV series					
Reading a book (not for school)					

35. Are you interested in the following arts and culture activities? If so, would you say you are mostly interested in Chinese or foreign arts and culture events

	Not interested	Mostly Chinese	Some Chinese/ Foreign	Mostly foreign
Playing computer games				
Visiting pop concerts				
Visiting classical concerts or opera				
Visiting art exhibitions				
Watching movies (at home or in cinema)				
Watching TV series				
Reading a book (not for school)				

Part 5. About Health and Fitness

The next questions are on health and fitness. By that I mean activities such as doing sports, keeping your body in shape, but also advice and tips on health issues. And experts are doctors and fitness trainers.

36. To what extent does each of the following statements apply to you?

The extent is measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1= Very untrue to 5= Very true.

	1=very untrue	2=bit untrue	3	4=bit true	5=very true
I follow closely news on health and fitness					
For me it's important to be up to date with health and fitness information					
I am always looking for tips on health and fitness					
I like to be informed about health and fitness					
I find information on health and fitness very interesting					
I am not interested in information about health and fitness at all					

37. How often do you engage in activities about health and fitness via social media?

The extent is measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=Not at all to 5=Very frequently.

	Not at all	2	3	4	Very frequently
Reading blogs or microblogging related to how to stay healthy					
Sharing with others topics related to how to stay healthy					
Posting comments in online discussion groups or social networking sites related to how to stay healthy					
Following social media accounts of the experts and enterprises about how to stay healthy (such as a famous yoga teacher, Nike+ Run Club)					
Participating some online activities of how to stay healthy (like joining online challenges of sports, sharing your own workout record through social media)					

38. When you get information on health and fitness issues on social media, how do you evaluate the information on social media?

The extent is measured on a 7-point scale with 1 for Not at all and 7 for very much.

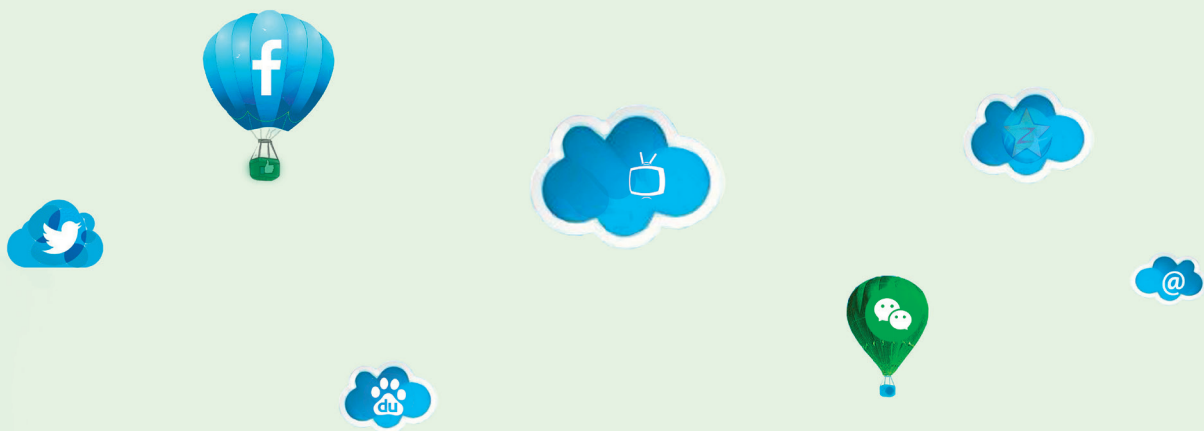
Health and fitness information given by experts on social media is...	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very much
Believable							
Fair							
Accurate							
In-depth							
Trustworthy							

39. When you get information on health and fitness issues on traditional media, how do you evaluate the information on traditional media?

The extent is measured on a 7-point scale with 1 for Not at all and 7 for very much.

Health and fitness information given by experts in traditional media is...	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very much
Believable							
Fair							
Accurate							
In-depth							
Trustworthy							

Thank you very much for participating!



Summary



Summary

Social media outlets are becoming increasingly available in China, especially to young adults –by which I mean 18–40-year-olds (the demographic studied here). On these platforms they can gather information on matters of interest to them and share their opinions with others in the media environment, under strict censorship. Two features of this situation are of great significance. On the one hand, there is a lack of professional gatekeepers online – and the information that can be found on social media is normally unsolicited. On the other hand, the rise of social media enables Chinese citizens to receive information that is much more diverse and variegated than ever before.

The explosive growth of this element of diversity or heterogeneity in the information propagated online raises questions about how young adults perceive the information they obtain from the media in general, both traditional and social. How is young adults' daily media consumption related to their trust in media and to their online activities? To get an in-depth understanding of how these people perceive the credibility of various media outlets in country's rapidly changing mediatized environment, I studied media usage by selecting a sample of participants in the 18–40 age group and by focusing on topics of politics, culture, and health. The present dissertation is the result of this attempt to understand the workings of and interconnections between credibility, trust, media use, and online activities among young adults in contemporary Chinese culture and society; and one should bear in mind that research on such matters in non-Western democracies and political regimes is scarce. Drawing on data collected online in China, this dissertation consists of four studies that deal – from different angles – with relationships between media use and repertoires, traditional and social media credibility, and online engagement in politics, culture, and health among young adults. In a nutshell, I investigated how much young adults trust the various media outlets at their disposal and how this affects behaviors and forms of engagement vis-à-vis topical issues in the fields of politics, culture and health in the country's contemporary media environment.

The first question I asked in Chapter 1 was this. How strongly do different media uses and media repertoires link with young adults' perception of media credibility and with their trust in the media in the fields of politics, culture, and health? I was interested in exploring how the use of traditional and social media, the formation and existence of different media repertoires, and the consumption of material on specific social media outlets all impact my participants' assessment of the credibility of the media. As for online activities among the population under study, I also asked to what extent different media uses and media repertoires and different forms of media credibility relate to online engagement in the same three fields of politics, culture, and health.

The second chapter centers on the relationship between media usage and an important form of trust in intuitions: political trust. It examines, first, how the effect of young adults' traditional and social media usage on their political trust can be explained through the perceived credibility of the information provided by traditional and social media; and, second, how the strength of the relationship between usage and trust is modified by young adults' trust in their sources – both media and non-media – and by their membership of the ruling party. I also investigated here, of course, the different roles of traditional and social media within the relationship under study. On the basis of the results I obtained from ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis, the conclusion can be drawn that both traditional media usage and social media usage are positively related to my participants' – and, by extension, to young adults' – trust in the government; but traditional media seem to have a stronger influence than social media. Also, when it comes to political information, the perceived credibility of traditional media has a stronger effect on young adults' political trust than the perceived credibility of social media. In my research, the strength of the relationship between traditional media and political trust was modified only by the participants' trust in media sources, not by their party membership.

The chapter emphasizes the continuing relevance of traditional media for young Chinese adults in political matters. However, it should be noted that social media outlets play an important role, too, in building young adults' political trust. This research helps us understand the underlying mechanisms through which various media affect individuals' political trust differentially and the factors that moderate the relationship between media consumption and young adults' trust in the government.

Chapter 3 explains how various types of media (four traditional and eight social media outlets) get combined into distinct cross-media repertoires, and how patterns of media use predict political involvement. Using the Step-3 approach of latent class analysis (LCA), I identified six distinctive media consumption repertoires. Young adults in each of these repertoires perceive the political information differently from the others and have their own, specific levels of trust in the government; for example, users with omnivorous media repertoires are more likely to trust the Chinese government. Furthermore, the composition of these repertoire matters a lot in young adults' online political activities. More omnivorous patterns of media use are positively correlated to online engagement in political matters. Overall, my findings in this area contribute to the literature on media repertoires by showing what the media repertoires of young adults in a non-Western context look like and what political implications such distinct patterns of media use may have. Scholars should neither treat social media *en bloc*, as an undifferentiated whole, nor limit themselves to extremely popular platforms such as Facebook and Sina Weibo. More fine-grained distinctions should be made between the

uses of different social media outlets, if we wish to investigate and explain how social media affect individuals' political involvement.

Chapter 4 analyzes culture consumption patterns and the online engagement with art and culture among young adults; and it does so by taking, again, a repertoire-oriented approach. This chapter examines how young adults' use of the media and trust in the cultural information they find in them influence their online cultural activities. I identified five distinctive cultural repertoires and showed that cultural omnivores are popular in China. My results here also indicate that the participants' cultural repertoires are mainly shaped by their parents' education, their own income, the credibility they invest the media with, and their media consumption. By comparison to traditional media, social media exert a greater influence on predicting both cultural repertoires and online cultural activities. By centering on the cultural repertoires of young adults, their trust in the cultural information offered by differed media, and their online activities, the chapter highlights the role of social media in these people's cultural life, including their online seeking and sharing of information about art and culture.

The final empirical chapter deals with social media use for purposes of finding and sharing information on health. It compares how young adults perceive the credibility of health- and fitness-related information in traditional and in social media, and tries to discover the factors that influence young adults' online searches for and exchanges of such information. The chapter does so by focusing on media use across specific media outlets and affordances. OLS regression was applied to predict the participants' trust in the health information they obtained from various media and their information seeking and sharing. The results indicate that young adults who are less educated, who watch television frequently, who use the social support-oriented platforms WeChat and Qzone, and who sometimes read newspapers and use the platform Baidu Tieba are more likely to trust the health information offered by both traditional and social media. Also, the features of being male, being well educated, considering the health information offered by social media credible, and frequently using magazines together with three social support-oriented media – Sina Weibo, WeChat, and Qzone – tend to correlate with the feature of seeking and sharing health and fitness information online. This chapter suggests that not all social media have a similar influence on young adults' online practice, and we should distinguish between social media according to their affordances. In the Chinese context, policymakers and authorities should focus on social support-oriented media such as Sina Weibo, WeChat, and Qzone.

Chapter 6 concludes this dissertation by answering the research questions raised in Chapter 1 and discussing the implications of the research presented here. I focused on young adults' media use, on the credibility of the media in these people's eyes, on the

trust they place in media, and on their online activities in politics, culture, and health. This dissertation contributes to the existent literature in various ways: it enhances our understanding of media consumption and online activities in this young demographic in a non-Western context; it separates the different roles of traditional and social media in the formation of young adults' trust in institutions and of the credibility they attribute to the information they receive from various media outlets and platforms; it contributes to a literature of comparisons between media uses in the fields of politics, culture, and health; it reveals some of the practical implications of young adults' online activities in this digital age; and it provides directions for future research. Comparative studies of media use and online engagement should be conducted between China and other cultures. Qualitative research methods, if applied in addition to quantitative ones, could lead to a better understanding of young people's daily media consumption and online life. Besides media factors, future studies should also pay heed to factors such as types of information and motivations for online engagement.

Samenvatting

Er is een steeds grotere beschikbaarheid van sociale mediakanalen in China, vooral gericht op jongvolwassenen, waarmee de leeftijdsgroep van 18-40-jarigen bedoeld wordt (de in dit proefschrift onderzochte bevolkingsgroep). Op deze platforms kunnen zij, onder strenge censuur, informatie verzamelen over onderwerpen die hen interesseren en hun meningen met anderen in de mediaomgeving delen. Twee kenmerken van deze situatie zijn van groot belang. Aan de ene kant is er een gebrek aan professionele poortwachters online, en de informatie die op sociale media aangetroffen kan worden is meestal ongevraagd. Anderzijds stelt de opkomst van sociale media Chinese burgers in staat om informatie te ontvangen die diverser en gevarieerder is dan ooit tevoren.

De explosieve groei van dit element van diversiteit of heterogeniteit in online verspreide informatie, roept vragen op over welke perceptie jongvolwassenen hebben van informatie die zij krijgen via de media in het algemeen, zowel traditionele als sociale media. Hoe is de mediaconsumptie van jongvolwassenen gerelateerd aan hun vertrouwen in die media en aan hun online activiteiten? Om goed te begrijpen hoe deze mensen de geloofwaardigheid van verschillende mediakanalen beoordelen in het snel veranderende medialandschap van China, heb ik het mediagebruik van jongvolwassenen onderzocht door een steekproef van deelnemers te selecteren uit de leeftijdsgroep van 18-40 jaar, waarbij ik me heb toegespitst op politieke, culturele en gezondheidsthema's. Deze dissertatie heeft als doel de werking en de onderlinge samenhang van geloofwaardigheid, vertrouwen, mediagebruik en online activiteiten van jongvolwassenen binnen de huidige Chinese cultuur en samenleving beter te begrijpen. Hierbij moet rekening gehouden worden met het feit dat onderzoek naar deze materie in niet-Westerse democratieën en politieke regimes schaars is. Deze dissertatie is gebaseerd op in China online verzamelde gegevens en bestaat uit vier onderzoeken die zich vanuit verschillende oogpunten richten op de relaties tussen mediagebruik en -repertoires, de geloofwaardigheid van traditionele en sociale media en de online betrokkenheid bij politiek, cultuur en gezondheid van jongvolwassenen. Ik heb, in een notendop, onderzocht in hoeverre jongvolwassenen verschillende beschikbare mediakanalen vertrouwen en welke invloed dit vertrouwen heeft op gedrag en vormen van betrokkenheid ten aanzien van onderwerpen en kwesties op het gebied van politiek, cultuur en gezondheid, in het huidige medialandschap van China.

De eerste vraag die ik in Hoofdstuk 1 stelde was: Hoe sterk is het verband tussen het mediagebruik en de media repertoires van jongvolwassenen en hun perceptie van de geloofwaardigheid van en het vertrouwen in diverse media op het gebied van politiek, cultuur en gezondheid? Ik wilde achterhalen in hoeverre het gebruik van traditionele en sociale media, de vorming en het bestaan van verschillende mediarepertoires en de

consumptie van specifieke sociale mediakanalen invloed hebben op de inschatting die mijn deelnemers maken van de geloofwaardigheid van de media. Met betrekking tot de online activiteiten van de onderzochte groep onderzocht ik ook in welke mate verschillen in mediagebruik en media repertoires en verschillende vormen van geloofwaardigheid van media gerelateerd zijn aan online betrokkenheid bij diezelfde drie thema's, politiek, cultuur en gezondheid.

Het tweede hoofdstuk richt zich op de relatie tussen mediagebruik en een belangrijke vorm van vertrouwen in instituties: vertrouwen in de politiek. Hierin onderzocht ik ten eerste hoe de invloed van het gebruik van traditionele en sociale media door jongvolwassenen op hun vertrouwen in de politiek verklaard kan worden door middel van de gepercipieerde geloofwaardigheid van informatie die wordt aangeleverd door traditionele en sociale media en, ten tweede, in hoeverre de sterkte van de relatie tussen gebruik en vertrouwen beïnvloedt wordt door het vertrouwen van jongvolwassenen in hun bronnen, zowel media als niet-media, en hun eventuele lidmaatschap van de Chinese Communistische Partij (CCP). Ik heb hier uiteraard ook de verschillende rollen van traditionele en sociale media binnen de onderzochte relatie onderzocht. Op basis van de uitkomsten van regressieanalyse volgens de kleinste kwadratenmethode, kan de conclusie getrokken worden dat zowel het gebruik van traditionele als van sociale media positief gecorreleerd is aan het vertrouwen van mijn deelnemers en, bij extensie, van jongvolwassenen in de overheid, maar dat traditionele media een sterkere invloed lijken te hebben dan sociale media. Als het gaat over politieke informatie, heeft de gepercipieerde geloofwaardigheid van traditionele media een sterker effect op het politieke vertrouwen van jongvolwassenen dan de gepercipieerde geloofwaardigheid van sociale media. In mijn onderzoek was de sterkte van de relatie tussen traditionele media en politiek vertrouwen uitsluitend afhankelijk van het vertrouwen van deelnemers in mediabronnen, niet van hun partijlidmaatschap.

Het hoofdstuk benadrukt de blijvende relevantie van traditionele media voor jonge Chinese volwassenen in politieke kwesties. Er dient echter opgemerkt te worden dat bij jongvolwassenen ook sociale mediakanalen een belangrijke rol spelen bij het opbouwen van politiek vertrouwen. Dit onderzoek helpt ons bij het begrijpen van de onderliggende mechanismen waarmee verschillende media invloed hebben op het gedifferentieerde politieke vertrouwen van individuen, en de factoren die de relatie tussen mediaconsumptie en het vertrouwen van jongvolwassenen in de regering bepalen.

Hoofdstuk 3 beschrijft hoe verschillende soorten media (vier traditionele en acht sociale mediakanalen) worden gecombineerd in onderscheiden mediaoverstijgende repertoires en hoe patronen van mediagebruik tot een voorspelling van politieke betrokkenheid kunnen leiden. Met behulp van de 3-stappenbenadering van latenteklasseanalyse heb ik

zes verschillende mediaconsumptierepertoires geïdentificeerd. Jongvolwassenen met deze onderscheiden mediarepertoires nemen politieke informatie op verschillende manieren op en hebben een eigen, specifiek niveau van vertrouwen in de regering. Gebruikers met een omnivoor mediarepertoire hebben over het algemeen meer vertrouwen in de Chinese overheid. Verder heeft de samenstelling van deze repertoires een grote invloed op de online politieke activiteiten van jongvolwassenen. Meer omnivore patronen van mediagebruik zijn positief gecorreleerd aan online betrokkenheid bij politieke zaken. Mijn bevindingen op dit gebied dragen bij aan de literatuur over mediarepertoires, door te laten zien hoe mediarepertoires van jongvolwassenen in een niet-Westerse context eruit zien en welke politieke implicaties dergelijke verschillende patronen kunnen hebben op het mediagebruik. Ook dienen onderzoekers sociale media niet als een eenheid, als een ongedifferentieerd geheel te beschouwen, of zichzelf te beperken tot bijzonder populaire platforms zoals Facebook en Sina Weibo. Er moet een fijnmaziger onderscheid gemaakt worden tussen gebruik van verschillende sociale mediakanalen, als we de invloed van sociale media op de politieke betrokkenheid van individuen willen onderzoeken en verklaren.

Hoofdstuk 4 analyseert cultuurconsumptiepatronen en de online betrokkenheid bij kunst en cultuur van jongvolwassenen. Hierbij wordt eveneens een repertoire-georiënteerde benadering gebruikt. In dit hoofdstuk wordt onderzocht hoe het mediagebruik van jongvolwassenen en het vertrouwen in de culturele informatie die zij daar aantreffen, invloed hebben op hun online culturele activiteiten. Ik heb vijf verschillende culturele repertoires geïdentificeerd en heb aangetoond dat culturele omnivoren in China veel voorkomen. Mijn resultaten hier lijken er tevens op te wijzen dat de culturele repertoires van deelnemers voornamelijk gevormd worden door het onderwijs van hun ouders, door hun eigen inkomen, de geloofwaardigheid die zij aan de media toekennen en door hun mediaconsumptie. In vergelijking met traditionele media oefenen sociale media een grotere invloed uit op de voorspellende waarde van zowel de culturele repertoires als de online culturele activiteiten. Door de aandacht te richten op de culturele repertoires van jongvolwassenen, hun vertrouwen in de culturele informatie die wordt aangeboden door de diverse media en hun online activiteiten, benadrukt het hoofdstuk de rol van sociale media in het culturele leven van deze mensen, waaronder het online zoeken en delen van informatie over kunst en cultuur.

Het laatste empirische hoofdstuk gaat over gebruik van sociale media ten behoeve van het zoeken en delen van informatie over gezondheid. Hierin wordt vergeleken in hoeverre jongvolwassenen de geloofwaardigheid van gezondheid- en conditiegerelateerde informatie in traditionele en sociale media waarnemen, en er wordt een poging gedaan om de factoren bloot te leggen die de online zoektocht van jongvolwassenen naar en het uitwisselen van dergelijke informatie bepalen. In het hoofdstuk wordt de nadruk

gelegd op het mediagebruik via specifieke mediakanalen en affordanties. Hierop is gewone regressieanalyse toegepast om een voorspelling te maken van het vertrouwen van deelnemers in de gezondheidsinformatie die via verschillende mediakanalen verkregen is en het zoeken en delen van deze informatie. De resultaten tonen aan dat laagopgeleide jongvolwassenen die vaker televisie kijken, die gebruik maken de sociale ondersteuningsgeoriënteerde platforms zoals WeChat en Qzone, die soms kranten lezen en het platform Baidu Tieba gebruiken, met meer waarschijnlijkheid vertrouwen op gezondheidsinformatie die zowel op traditionele als op sociale media wordt aangeboden. Ook hoogopgeleide mannen, het beschouwen van gezondheidsinformatie op sociale mediakanalen als geloofwaardig en het gebruik maken van tijdschriften in combinatie met drie sociale ondersteuningsgeoriënteerde media - Sina Weibo, WeChat en Qzone, is vaak gecorreleerd met het kenmerk van het zoeken en delen van online informatie over gezondheid en conditie. In dit hoofdstuk wordt beargumenteerd dat de invloed van verschillende sociale media op de online praktijk van jongvolwassenen niet gelijk is en dat we onderscheid moeten maken naargelang hun affordanties. Binnen de Chinese context moeten beleidsmakers en autoriteiten nadruk leggen op sociale ondersteuningsgeoriënteerde media zoals Sina Weibo, WeChat en Qzone.

Hoofdstuk 6 sluit deze dissertatie af met een antwoord op de onderzoeksvraag die in Hoofdstuk 1 werd opgeworpen en bespreekt de implicaties van het hier gepresenteerde onderzoek. Ik heb mij voornamelijk gericht op het mediagebruik van jongvolwassenen, op de geloofwaardigheid van media in de ogen van deze mensen, op het vertrouwen dat zij hebben in de media en op hun online activiteiten gerelateerd aan politiek, cultuur en gezondheid. Deze dissertatie draagt op verschillende manieren bij aan de bestaande literatuur. Mijn onderzoek verstrekt ons begrip van mediaconsumptie en online activiteiten van 18 tot 40-jarigen binnen een niet-Westerse context; het scheidt de verschillende rollen van traditionele en sociale media in de vorming van vertrouwen van deze jongvolwassenen in instituties en de geloofwaardigheid die zij toekennen aan de informatie die ze ontvangen via verschillende mediakanalen en platforms; het draagt bij aan een comparatieve literatuur over mediagebruik binnen politiek, cultuur en gezondheid; het onthult enkele praktische implicaties van de online activiteiten van jongvolwassenen in dit digitale tijdperk en het geeft richting aan toekomstig onderzoek. Tussen China en andere landen en culturen zou nader vergelijkend onderzoek ten aanzien van mediagebruik en online betrokkenheid uitgevoerd moeten worden. Kwalitatieve onderzoeksmethoden kunnen, indien toegepast naast kwantitatieve benaderingen, leiden tot een beter begrip van de dagelijkse mediaconsumptie en het online leven van jongvolwassenen. Naast mediafactoren moeten toekomstige onderzoeken ook aandacht schenken aan factoren zoals informatietype en motivaties voor online betrokkenheid.

Curriculum Vitae

Qiong Gong holds a research Master's in Communication (2011–2014) from the East China Normal University, Shanghai, and a Bachelor's in Management (2007–2011) from the South-Central University for Nationalities, Wuhan. During her studies she worked as a student journalist for the school newspaper in Wuhan and as a marketing intern for a public relations and marketing agency in Shanghai.

In September 2014, Qiong embarked on a PhD program at the Erasmus Research Centre for Media, Communication and Culture (ERMeCC) at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Between 2014 and 2019 she participated in various international conferences and workshops. She is also a member of the ERMeCC PhD Club and attends their bimonthly meetings.

Qiong is interested in both quantitative and qualitative research – in media and communication as well as in culture studies. In applying these methods she is led above all by a desire to understand how young people engage with the media.

Portfolio

Courses attended during the PhD Project

- *How to survive your PhD* (September to December 2014, 2.5 ECTS)
- *Research Design* (September 2014 to December 2014, 5 ECTS)
- *Advanced Quantitative Research Methods* (September 2014 to February 2015, 5 ECTS)
- *Advanced Research methods 1: Qualitative Data Analysis. How to generate conclusion from qualitative data* (October -November 2015, 2.5 ECTS)
- *Popular academic writing and using social media* (October-November 2015, 2.5 ECTS)
- *Doing the literature review* (November 2015 - March 2016, 2.5 ECTS)
- *English academic writing for PhD candidates* (November 2015 - March 2016, 2.5 ECTS)
- *How to get your article published* (November 2015 - March 2016, 2.5 ECTS)
- *Brush up your SPSS skills* (November 2017, 1 ECTS)
- *Shut up and write* (December 2017, 2.5 ECTS)
- *Self-presentation: confidence, focus, persuasion* (November 2018, 2.5 ECTS)

Presentations at conferences and academic workshops

- Conference “24 Hours of Communication Science” (Etmaal), Amsterdam, the Netherlands, February 2016.
- International Conference on Communication and Management, Athens, Greece, May 2016.
- DSA2016, “Politics in Development,” Oxford, UK, September 2016.
- Conference “Innovative Methods in Communication Research” (Etmaal), Tilburg, the Netherlands, February 2017.
- RMeS Winter School–University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, February 2018: oral presentation.
- 2018 Conference of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), Eugene, Oregon, USA, June 2018.

Manuscripts submitted for publication

- **Gong, Q.**, & Verboord, M. (forthcoming). Social media use and health information seeking and sharing among young Chinese adults. *Journal of Social Media in Society*.

- **Gong, Q.**, Verboord, M., & Janssen, S. Cross-media usage repertoires and their political impacts: The case of China. [Revised and resubmitted to the *International Journal of Communication*.]
- **Gong, Q.**, Verboord, M., & Wang, Y. Media usage and political trust among young adults in China: The mediating role of media credibility and the moderating roles of trust in sources and political membership. [Submitted to *Mass Communication & Society*.]
- **Gong, Q.**, Verboord, M., & Janssen, S. Cultural consumption repertoires and online engagement with the arts and culture in the digital age: The case of China. [Submitted to *International Journal of Consumer Studies*.]

Reviewing experience

- Peer review (three articles): The 68th Annual International Communication Association (ICA) Conference, November 2017.
- Peer review (one article): *New Media & Society*, July 2018.