

Effects of Media Integration on Users' Parasocial Relationship and Political Participation in China

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Abstract: *This study explored the effects of the parasocial relationship formed by CCTV (China Central Television) TV news and non-traditional news on users' perceived media credibility and their online and offline political participation. This study conducted a survey with the Chinese CCTV users between April 19 and April 30, 2021, and finally, 701 respondents' data were analyzed using structural equation modeling. The study results showed that both TV news and non-traditional news had positive effects on parasocial relationships and the parasocial relationship positively influenced media credibility, which subsequently facilitated political participation. However, there was no direct effect between media usage and media credibility. This implies the important mediating role of parasocial interactions, which enables CCTV news to gain media credibility and subsequently influence political participation. This study suggests that CCTV needs to improve the parasocial interactions between their audience and media figures by utilizing the interactive mechanism of non-traditional media.*

Keywords: China Central Television (CCTV) News Usage; Media Integration; Parasocial Relationship Media Credibility; Political Participation

1. Introduction

In China, traditional media such as newspapers, television, and radio are losing their position as an exclusive news source by various social media. However, the state-owned CCTV News still exerts overwhelming influence as the nation's number one news channel and national representative media. Such a CCTV News is also operating social media channels on platforms such as Sina microblog, WeChat, Tik Tok, and Bilibili in the new age of media integration.

China's mainstream communication systems reflect communist theory, the main idea being that propaganda is more important job to the media than communication. The media must be responsible for carrying out the work for the Communist party and the country. The media and reporters are required to follow the laws and directives of the Party and to act as the "mouthpiece" of the country. Meanwhile, the rise of social media news has given the general public a louder voice and higher involvement in the media. This change also had a dramatic impact on users' perceptions of mainstream media. Many case studies have been conducted in the past to explain and elaborate on these changes, but it is still unknown how such a media integration process affected users' political participation. Therefore, this study takes CCTV News as a target of analyses and reveals how mainstream state-owned media affect users' perception and participation after media integration.

To this end, this study models the process of media usage affecting political participation mediated by parasocial interactions and media credibility, and then tries to figure out the causal relationships among the factors through a survey of CCTV news users. In particular, this study compares the direct and indirect effects between factors by dividing CCTV news users into TV viewers and non-traditional media users. The results would help us to gain a better understanding of the influence of media integration on users' perception of media and political participation in a Communist country.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Media Integration and CCTV News' Dissemination Effects in China

Terms such as media convergence or media integration are used to explain the complex use of multiple media. Media convergence is specifically observed in five areas: convergence of ownership, convergence of strategy, convergence of production structures, convergence of interviewing skills, and convergence of narrative forms [1]. Therefore, media convergence is not a simple addition of various media, but it covers all aspects of diversity that comes from multi-media use.

Meanwhile, media integration refers to the combination of different media forms, where the "quantitative change" creates a "qualitative change" that results in new media forms, such as mobile newspapers, Internet broadcasting, etc. [2]. Furthermore, media integration refers to the establishment of new communication platforms driven by technological advances, which enables different media to integrate and interact with each other, drawing on communication methods and contents, thus creating momentum for development [3].

However, there is a difference between two terms. Convergence refers to only formal collaboration between traditional and digital media. Integration refers to not only the convergence of traditional and digital media, but also the merger of content, communication channels, skills, and organization between media. A completely integrated media may be a new media completely distinct from the media of the past [4].

Media integration is divided into four areas: information integration, broadcasting method integration, operational network integration, and marketing integration [5]. In the process of media integration, the perception of communication participants should be changed from passive receivers to active senders who use and generate information, thus changing the previous linear communication structure system with unidirectionally networked system. The content of communication also should be changed. Present online media and social media, a subsidiary of traditional media, deal with massive volume of unstructured content. Producers in those media should have ability to process and package existing content to be suitable for different audience in different media.

This media integration is observed in Chinese media environment including WeChat, Sina micro-blog, mobile apps, and short video platforms [4]. According to vice president of Jiangxi Workers' Daily, this transition has an effective agenda-setting function. Short video networks show unprecedented ability to build agenda in many areas, engage viewers to share and monitor news. CCTV (China Central Television), a state-owned major broadcaster, also use various media platform and CCTV News diffuses various news through those media in such different ways. Traditionally CCTV News propagates the mainstream ideology of China and conveys the most authoritative voice of the Communist Party and the state. For most Chinese TV viewers, CCTV news is a bridge between the government and the public, meeting to the greatest extent the Chinese people's demand for information on national politics, economy and society. In effect, CCTV News influences and constructs the way Chinese viewers understand themselves and the nation with predefined set of symbols of television sound, language, text, and image. Such a symbolic viewing leads each viewer to symbolically participate in the affairs and agenda of China [6]. In other words, watching the news on CCTV channels is a form of daily political participation of the Chinese people.

According to data from 2018, CCTV's official microblog surpassed People's Daily in terms of total interactions including retweets, comments and likes. CCTV also launched over 12,000 mobile live broadcasts throughout the year with a total of 3.9 billion viewers. Furthermore, 233 videos were released on new platforms such as Tik Tok and Bilibili with a total of 95 million views. This shows that CCTV News got a huge number of users in SNS and short video platforms under the environment of media integration.

2.2 Parasocial Relationship

The term of parasocial interaction was coined to describe how media consumers react to media characters in such a way that they regard characters as close conversational partners [7]. It refers to an interpersonal relationship that people have with a media person when they view the media. Early research on parasocial interaction presented two perspectives: the deficiency paradigm and the generic paradigm. The former views parasocial relationships as complementary to inadequate interpersonal interactions, especially in studies of celebrity worship [8], which were seen as pathological symptoms such as obsession [9]. The latter considers parasocial relationships as reflection of general motivation to seek a sense of intimacy through information exchange activities.

Previous studies on parasocial interactions have focused on relationships formed with television characters: Television hosts [10], talk-show performers [11], sitcom personalities [12], and advertising model celebrities

[13]. Some studies have identified prerequisites for parasocial relationships, such as time spent with media figures [14], characteristics of the individual [15], and characteristics of the media figure [16]. For example, perceived attractiveness is found to have a positive effect on the quality and strength of parasocial relationships [17]. Perceived similarity also leads to more positive interpersonal liking [18].

Currently, the research has evolved with the rise of social media and short video platforms. The like and comment capabilities in social media allow users to participate more directly and realistically in the imagined realm of discussion with media performers, accelerating the formation of parasocial relationships. For example, video clip news is increasing its occupancy in the information and news industry owing to its graphic depiction and rapid reaction time [19]. Vloggers (video bloggers) document their daily lives with many videos and share them with Internet users. Handheld shots and on-camera monologues enable viewers to witness natural emotions and thus form personal intimacy and mutual trust [20]. Specifically, study [21] on beauty vloggers found that the perceived similarity and credibility with vloggers had a significant impact on parasocial interactions, which affected consumers' attitudes towards the products displayed in these vlogs. Reference [22] found that the swift immediacy of feedback, rich symbol set, and authenticity of content encouraged female viewers to develop intimacy. Reference [13] found a well-known Youtuber used vlogs to supplement her product-focused videos and successfully provided behind-the-scenes intimacy into her own lifestyle. The videos here fostered a close bond between the viewers and the Youtuber's image, as well as between the viewers and her products.

In CCTV News, as of 2021, there are more than 2,000 videos submitted with over 800 million plays. Especially, CCTV News uses various short videos of news anchors talking on the SNS platform and many interactive videos of conversations with viewers. They are not only retransmissions of news, but also presentations of popular news anchors to the audience. The anchors still deliver values propagated by the state-owned media, but their presentations create a strong sense of intimacy among viewers.

2.3 Media Credibility

In the United States, most news media are operating independently of the government in a competitive information market and the public expects the media to act as watchdogs for government and power. Public trust in news media is largely shaped by the degree of journalism activity of the media. However, in China, the public tends to rely on state-owned media to understand and judge the government's policies, hoping that the media such as CCTV can convey the public's voice to solve social problems. Traditional media not only plays an important role in transmitting information but also plays an important role as a political channel.

Research on media credibility in China is not long. Reference [23] conducted the first nationwide survey to assess media credibility in China. They argued that understanding of media credibility needs to be approached from different perspectives between privately-owned media in Western countries and state-owned media in China [23]. Based on the relationship between the media and the government, there are two approaches to measure media credibility in China: the professional approach and the authority approach [24]. From the professional approach, the traditional Western research suggested various indicators of media credibility. According to [25], media credibility consists of expertness and trustworthiness. Expertness refers to information source's ability to perform the relevant work, while trustworthiness refers to source's tendency to disseminate false information by inducing certain attitudes in a particular direction. However, the credibility of Chinese media should be understood from the authority approach. In China, people have authority-related orientation to evaluate or trust a particular institution. Their trust in the media may depend on how high the media's position is in the political authority system. Thus, indicators of media credibility include the media's political position and usefulness [26,27]. The credibility of CCTV news, therefore, can be measured by perceived CCTV's position and usefulness.

According to previous research, in China, the credibility of news is typically determined by the news media's position or reputation. However, some studies indicated that individuals exposed to low-quality videos had bad evaluation of the news media. Then, how do people who use short online videos evaluate the credibility of CCTV? Do people who watch TV news and those who use online videos evaluate the credibility of CCTV differently?

Previous research showed that the credibility of TV and newspaper news is higher than that of online news [28]. On the other hand, reference [29] found that college students trusted the Internet more than television and newspapers. Another study showed that news on social media platforms is more likely to be trusted than those

on traditional media [30]. On social media, people are often exposed to news based on recommendations from acquaintances and they tend to trust news with similar views.

As the official media of the Chinese Communist Party, CCTV News has a high credibility among the Chinese public in terms of both professionalism and power. The huge amount of CCTV usage may further increase the public's trust in it. However, it is questionable whether the credibility of CCTV is maintained in other forms of media such as Video and SNS.

2.4 Political Participation

Early studies on political participation focused on voting and election-related behaviors. Subsequent studies have gradually expanded the scope of political participation. Reference [31] classified political participation into four types: covering turnout, campaigning, communal, particularized contracting activities. Later, some scholars included moderate protests or product boycotts in the political participation [32]. Currently political discussion or political talk also was considered as a type of political participation [33].

Political participation in China is a complex and integrated process, which includes contacting government officials, party representatives, deputies to National People's Congress, members of the CPPCC (Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) National Committee, voting in grassroots elections, voting for people's deputies, reporting, hearing and questioning, administrative litigation, and other non-institutionalized participations [34]. Non-institutionalized participation can be divided into labor (including migrant workers), environment, citizens' rights and interests in production and business (including rural land issues), and other emergencies [34].

In the era of mobile Internet, a number of Internet users are accustomed to reading news with fragmented time. With news communication applications such as micro-blog and WeChat, more and more Internet users easily access to various news channels. Thus, the rapid spread of major news events is made possible through micro-blogs, short videos, and other SNS channels based on the Internet. This dramatic changes in media use have brought new political space for Chinese people. According to statistics from the China Social Opinion and Crisis Management Report, the Internet-driven political participation in China had increased significantly. For example, the discussion about abolishing the re-education through labor system, initiated by the Internet in recent years, promoted legal protection of prisoners' human rights. All these events triggered by some Internet users have promoted political participation of the public in Chinese society and caused extensive public discussions on political participation, which in turn made differences in the reality.

As mentioned so far, it is better to approach political participation by dividing it into offline and online types. Offline political participation may include voting, political speech, political association, and so on while online political participation can include online information use, online political discussion, online fundraising, and so on. Reference [35] suggested four relationships between offline political participation and online political participation. First of all, in the relationship of independence, there is no relation between offline and online political participation. In the spillover relationship, political participation taking place offline is considered to be reproduced in the online space. Next, in the gateway relationship, online political participation triggers, strengthens, or weakens offline political participation. Finally, in the reciprocity relationship, it is assumed that offline political participation and online political participation are closely related to each other and influence each other. As such, it is necessary to analyze the impact of political participation by dividing it into offline and online forms.

2.5. Research Hypotheses and Research Model

There have been many studies on the parasocial relationships formed by different media platforms such as studies on TV news anchors [36], radio talk show hosts [37], and social platforms celebrity groups [38]. However, few attempts have been made to compare differences in the parasocial relationships between media platforms. In this sense, this study explored how CCTV news viewers' formation of parasocial relationships differ according to the use of traditional media (TV) and non-traditional media (SNS and short video platforms).

In social media, Likes and comments allow users to participate more quickly and visibly in the imagined realm of discussion with vloggers, hastening the construction and solidification of parasocial interactions. In China, Weibo, WeChat, and short video platforms are more likely to evoke users' perceptual cognition with the mobility of new screens brought about by digital technology [39]. Video platforms also allow for broader plasticity of the media scenarios, employing a variety of technical methods such as filters, special effects, sound

effects, and subtitles. This kind of three-dimensional and lively short video format is more likely to attract users' attention and generate interactions.

Parasocial interactions in traditional media such as televisions and movies were regarded as one-sided witnessing. In contrast, social media and short video platforms provide audiences with opportunities to interact with media figures, and this interactivity and intimacy generated by media features will further enhance users' parasocial relationships. Simultaneously, algorithmic technologies increase the social intimacy of short-form video users with media personalities.

As described by reference [8], parasocial relationships are sustaining, long-term, and normally supportive one-sided affection that audience establish with media performers at distance as a result of repeated interactions. According to [40], the repeated appearance of media characters contributes to enhance parasocial relationships because the audience can more easily sense the media characters' feelings, perceptions, and behaviors. This will be more evident in non-traditional media that facilitates interaction with the audience. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are put forth:

H1: TV news usage will have a positive effect on the perceptions of parasocial relationship.

H2: Non-traditional news usage will have a positive effect on the perceptions of parasocial relationship.

As discussed, exposure to news media evokes feelings of intimacy with media figures. As this relationship develops, the audience tend to consider the figures as credible sources of knowledge and easily follow their guidance [10]. In general, it is known that parasocial relationships with information sources have a significant effect on the credibility of the sources [41]. When people see those close to them, they are more likely to imitate their behaviors [42]. When people believe that they have a lot in common with a celebrity, the celebrity's decisions have a significant impact on people's decisions [41]. Based on previous studies, it can be assumed that there is a significant relationship between parasocial relationships with media figures and the media credibility. Furthermore, Reference [20] found that the parasocial relationship serve as a mediator between audience's vlog use and their perceived credibility of vloggers. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H3: The users' perceptions of parasocial relationships will have a positive effect on their perceived media credibility.

According to [43], the Internet and social media act as alternative information providers, but people's confidence in traditional media such as CCTV news remains high. People's use of reliable traditional media, such as CCTV News, enhances credibility through repeated daily exposures. The study [30] also found that the degree of use of news on websites was positively correlated with the perceived reliability of news media.

Social media is certainly a platform that can expose China's corruption and government fraud, which may lead people to trust social media. On the other hand, the spread of rumors and false information on microblogging makes people skeptical about reading them and loses trust in the media [43]. Above all, It is a clear trend to trust news delivered by acquaintances on social media. In sum, whether it's television or non-traditional media, the use of higher levels of news may increase the perceived credibility of media users. Therefore, the following hypothesis is made.

H4: TV news usage will have a positive effect on media credibility.

H5: Non-traditional news usage will have a positive effect on media credibility.

Reference [44] found that media credibility had a differential impact on online and offline political participation. According to [45], there was a positive relationship between online media credibility and political participation. The credibility of media may lead users to trust the information and opinions of the media source and facilitate them to form their opinion and to participate in political activities. Therefore, this study suggests the following hypotheses.

H6: Media credibility will have a positive effect on the users' online political participation.

H7: Media credibility will have a positive effect on the users’ offline political participation.

Based on hypotheses above, we can speculate that media usage causes parasocial relationships, parasocial relationships causes media credibility, and media credibility causes online and offline political participation. This study proposes a research model reflecting comprehensive causal relationships among media usage, parasocial relationships, media credibility, and political participation by integrating all of the above hypotheses in Figure 1.

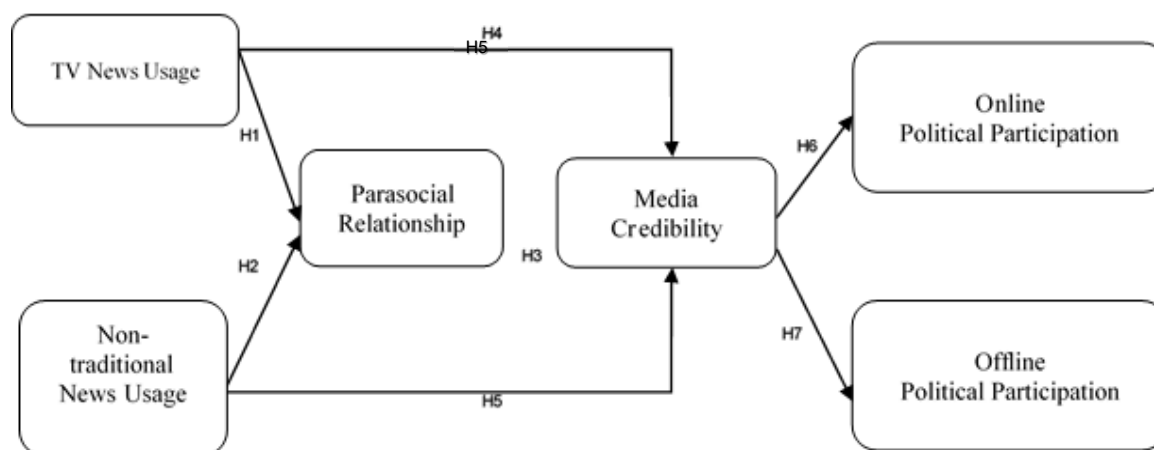


Figure 1. Research Model and Research Hypotheses

3. Methodology

This study conducted a survey for Chinese CCTV news users between April 19 and April 30, 2021. A nationwide online questionnaire was distributed with the help of the "Credamol" platform researched by Beijing e-Math Modeling Technology Co. Respondents came from 30 provinces and regions of China. A total of 701 responses were used for the analysis of this study.

This survey included questions about the variables of the above hypotheses. The measurement items for each variable were reconstructed appropriately for the CCTV users by considering the cases of previous studies [45-48]. The measurement for each variable is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Composition of Factors for Measurement Variables

Concept	Variables	Questions
TV News Usage	MU1	How many times a week do you usually watch CCTV news by using TV?
	MU2	How many times a week do you usually watch CCTV news by using Sina microblog?
Non-traditional News Usage	MU3	How many times a week do you usually watch CCTV news by using Tik Tok?
	MU4	How many times a week do you usually watch CCTV news by using Bilibili?
	MU5	How long do you usually watch CCTV news a day by using TV?
	MU6	How long do you usually watch CCTV news a day by using Sina microblog??
	MU7	How long do you usually watch CCTV news a day by using Tik Tok?
	MU8	How long do you usually watch CCTV news a day by using Bilibili?
	PSR1	I feel that the anchors of CCTV news are like good friends.

Parasocial Relationship	PSR2	I feel familiar with the anchors of CCTV news.		
	PSR3	I would pay attention to CCTV news anchors if they appeared in other situations.		
	PSR4	I think it is worth the time to watch and get to know the CCTV news anchors.		
	PSR5	CCTV news anchors can help me understand government information and political trends.		
	PSR6	I will be interested in the views on government expressed by the CCTV news anchors and reformed my own views.		
	PSR7	I agree with most of the views expressed by the CCTV news anchors.		
	PSR8	I will pay attention to the comments of others about the CCTV news anchors.		
	PSR9	I feel that the CCTV news anchors seems to be understandable.		
	Media Credibility	Expertness	MC1	Most news of CCTV News is accurate.
MC2			Most news of CCTV News is unbiased.	
MC3			Most news of CCTV News is detailed and in-depth.	
MC4			Most news of CCTV News is informative.	
MC5			Most news of CCTV News has originality.	
MC6			Most news of CCTV news is belonged to the reader and to the regional community.	
Trustworthiness		MC7	Most news of CCTV news serves public interest.	
		MC8	Most news of CCTV news is trustworthy.	
		MC9	Most news of CCTV news is honest.	
		MC10	Most news of CCTV news is convincing.	
		Authority	MC11	I trust CCTV News because it represents the views of the Chinese government.
			MC12	I trust CCTV News because it is the highest-rated TV station in China.
			MC13	I trust CCTV News because it is the media that all the Chinese people can follow.
Political Participation	Online	PP-on1	I will look for information related to politics that I am curious about on purpose through the Internet.	
		PP-on2	I will consume news related to politics and the leave my comments.	
		PP-on3	I will post some of my own opinions and comments about politics online.	
		PP-on4	I will participate in online discussions about some of the political issues.	
	Offline	PP-off1	I will participate in political voting.	
		PP-off2	I will participate in political election.	
		PP-off3	I will participate in political association (such as trade unions, the communist youth league, women's federations, neighborhood committees, and communist activities in university, etc)	
		PP-off4	I will participate in political speech. (I am willing to express and promote my political ideas through spoken word, written materials or electronic materials, etc.)	

Out of the total 701 respondents, males and females consisted of 355 (50.6%) and 346 (49.4%), respectively. In terms of age, the number of respondents in the age group of 26-35 years was 367 (52.4%), which was the largest share. As for final education level, university students and graduates accounted for 358 (51.1%) of the respondents, accounting for the vast majority. In addition, there were 90 (12.8%) master's degree students and master's degree graduates and 81 (11.6%) high school students and graduates. The number of people with a monthly income of ¥6000-8000 or more was 162(23.1%), accounting for the highest percentage.

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for variables such as media usage, parasocial relationships, media credibility, and political participation intentions (online and offline). Individual items constituting each variable

showed a reliability of .7 or higher of Cronbach's alpha. All items were measured on a Likert 7-point scale, and the means mostly exceeded the central value of 4.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Measurement Variables

Concept	Variables	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α	
TV News Usage	MU1	3.52	1.943	0.796	
	MU2	4.50	1.885		
Non-traditional News usage	MU3	4.39	2.016	0.835	
	MU4	3.88	1.946		
	MU5	3.32	1.570		
	MU6	3.58	1.468		
	MU7	3.52	1.594		
	MU8	3.28	1.509		
Parasocial Relationship	PSR1	5.56	1.326	0.921	
	PSR2	5.87	1.064		
	PSR3	5.78	1.149		
	PSR4	5.73	1.191		
	PSR5	5.64	1.212		
	PSR6	5.77	1.137		
	PSR7	5.71	1.137		
	PSR8	5.72	1.087		
	PSR9	5.51	1.272		
Media Credibility	Expertness	MC1	5.74	1.185	0.861
		MC2	5.79	1.078	
		MC3	5.86	1.013	
		MC4	6.00	0.975	
		MC5	5.77	1.075	
	Trustworthiness	MC6	5.89	1.008	0.787
		MC7	5.93	1.008	
		MC8	6.01	0.959	
		MC9	5.94	1.017	
		MC10	6.00	0.942	
	Authority	MC11	5.96	1.070	0.810
		MC12	5.96	1.084	
		MC13	5.80	1.155	
Political Participation	Online	PP-on1	5.45	1.424	0.875
		PP-on2	5.21	1.605	
		PP-on3	5.30	1.577	
		PP-on4	5.67	1.237	
	Offline	PP-off1	5.64	1.284	0.854
		PP-off2	5.47	1.401	
		PP-off3	5.69	1.247	
		PP-off4	5.71	1.136	

4. Results

This study analyzed the research model presented above through a structural equation modeling with AMOS 24 program. After excluding the insignificant paths (MU3, MU4 and MU5), the fit indices of the structural equation model had a satisfactory fit with $\chi^2/df=2.367$; the goodness of fit index (GFI)=.901, adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)=.872, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=.044, the incremental fit index (IFI)=.951, the comparative fit index (CFI) = .950 and the standardized RMR = .057[49]. All factor loadings on each variable were above 0.6 as shown in Table 3, indicating a stable structure.

Next, Figure 2 shows the result of this structural equation modeling. The values indicated above the arrows in the figure are standardized coefficients representing the direct effect between variables. According to the analysis results, the amount of TV news usage positively influenced the parasocial relationship ($\beta = 0.278$, $p <$

0.001) and the non-traditional news usage also had a positive effect on users' parasocial relationship ($\beta = 0.208$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, H1 and H2 were supported. Next, parasocial relationship was found to show a significantly positive effect on media credibility ($\beta = 0.851$, $p < 0.001$), which supported H3. By the way, H4 and H5 were not supported. TV news usage and Non-traditional News Usage of CCTV news did not show any significant effects on media credibility ($\beta = -0.063$, $p > 0.05$ and $\beta = -0.044$, $p > 0.05$). Finally, media credibility turned out a significantly positive predictor of online and offline political participation ($\beta = 0.590$, $p < 0.001$ and $\beta = 0.726$, $p < 0.001$). H6 and H7 were supported.

Furthermore, this study examined whether the indirect effects between variables were significant. This can tell us whether the media usage has a significant effect on political participation through parasocial relationships and media credibility. Amos's bootstrapping method for mediating effect of each path was employed with a sample size of 2000 and a confidence interval of 95%. Table 4 showed that TV news usage had a positive indirect effect on online political participation through parasocial relationships and media credibility. The 95% confidence interval ranged from 0.061 to 0.230, which did not include 0. In this way, other three paths turned out statistically significant.

Table 3. Factor Loadings of Measurement Variables

Concept		Variables	Factor Loadings
TV News Usage		MU1	0.816
		MU2	0.826
		MU3	Deleted
Non-traditional News Usage		MU4	Deleted
		MU5	Deleted
		MU6	0.843
		MU7	0.749
		MU8	0.714
Parasocial Relationship		PSR1	0.764
		PSR2	0.719
		PSR3	0.754
		PSR4	0.722
		PSR5	0.824
		PSR6	0.761
		PSR7	0.742
		PSR8	0.753
		PSR9	0.718
Media Credibility	Expertness	MC1	0.661
		MC2	0.771
		MC3	0.739
		MC4	0.794
		MC5	0.665
	Trustworthiness	MC6	0.691
		MC7	0.711
		MC8	0.753
		MC9	0.773
		MC10	0.803
		MC11	0.710
	Authority	MC12	0.674
		MC13	0.667
Political Participation	Online	PP-on1	0.861
		PP-on2	0.784
		PP-on3	0.789
		PP-on4	0.807
	Offline	PP-off1	0.751
		PP-off2	0.723
		PP-off3	0.799
		PP-off4	0.693

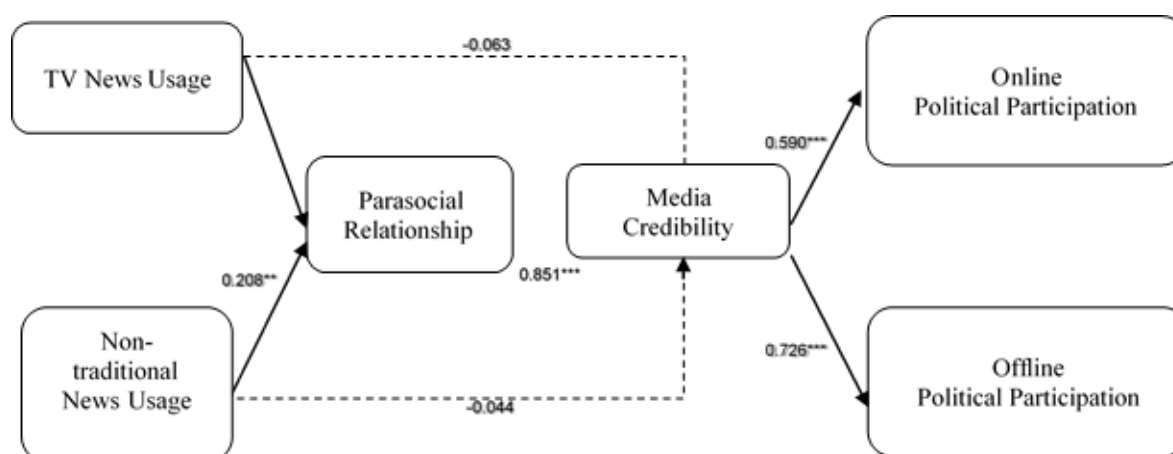


Figure 2. The Result of Structural Equation Modeling (N=701; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$)

Table 4. The Result of Indirect Effect Tests for Four Paths

Path	Standardized Estimates	SE	Bias-corrected 95%CI		<i>p</i>
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
TV News Usage → Parasocial Relationship → Media Credibility → Online Political Participation	0.140	0.140	0.061	0.230	<.001
TV News Usage → Parasocial Relationship → Media Credibility → Offline Political Participation	0.172	0.172	0.075	0.280	<.001
Non-TV News Usage → Parasocial Relationship → Media Credibility → Online Political Participation	0.105	0.105	0.027	0.201	0.016
Non-TV News Usage → Parasocial Relationship → Media Credibility → Offline Political Participation	0.129	0.129	0.034	0.250	

5. Discussion

The results can be summarized as follows. First of all, both TV news usage and non-traditional news usage had positive effects on parasocial relationship, which is consistent with previous studies [20]. In addition, this study showed that parasocial relationship was an essential factor in the formation of media credibility. This result confirmed previous studies [20],[41],[50].

However, there is no direct effect between media usage and media credibility, which is not consistent with previous studies [30],[47]. This implies that people's use of CCTV news does not enhance the credibility of CCTV news in China. This may be due to China's special media system and characteristics. Unlike the media credibility in Western countries, authoritative perspective was added to the measure of CCTV news credibility. It seems that the Chinese view of media credibility based on authority has led to different results.

Another notable result was that parasocial relationships had a significant effect on media credibility in both TV and non-traditional new users. The parasocial relationships toward TV news anchors is primarily one-sided. However, SNS and video platforms users can increase their level of parasocial relationships with the help of various interactive communication devices and this may lead them to increase their trust in the media. Although media usage does not directly influence media credibility, it can have significant impact on media credibility through parasocial relationships.

Finally, media credibility had a significantly positive effect on users' intentions to political participation. This is consistent with previous findings [44]. This suggests that, despite different political systems, media credibility significantly influence political participation both in Western countries and China. In addition, the result indicates that media credibility has a significant impact on both offline political participation and online political participation. Traditional media platforms such as newspapers and TV have been relied on for political propaganda. Currently the CCTV news remains to be a strong influencer on people's political participation. At the same time, for non-traditional media users. CCTV news usage was found to increase political participation. It seems that high interaction through SNS and short videos promotes active political participation.

In the analysis of indirect effects, parasocial relationships and media credibility play significant mediating roles between news usage and political participation. Especially, the successful mediation of parasocial relationships, found in the previous study on vloggers [20], was also true of Chinese CCTV news platforms including TV and non-traditional media. On the other hand, media usage had no direct effect on media credibility. This emphasizes the important mediating role of parasocial interactions, which enables CCTV news usage to form the media credibility and to finally lead to political participation. It implies that the formation of a virtual relationship with news anchors through interaction is very important even in the transmission of news and information. This point must be taken into serious consideration for CCTV news to maintain a high level of media credibility and to lead users' political participation in the future. In addition, in order to increase parasocial interactions, the interactive mechanism of non-traditional media should be fully utilized. As the CCTV news communicator accepts the opinions of CCTV news users through SNS and short videos and approaches them more closely, the higher level of parasocial interactions will be formed. Then this increased parasocial interactions through non-traditional media can improve the credibility of CCTV news and ultimately facilitate users' political participation.

This study showed that the active use of non-traditional media is necessary for CCTV to maintain its high level of credibility and to induce users to a high level of political participation. We look forward to CCTV's active response and change in the age of media integration. On the other hand, this study has the following limitations. First, residents of 30 or more provinces across China participated in this survey. Media credibility and political participation may vary depending on whether they live in urban or rural areas. Further analyses are needed in the future by inputting the region as a variable in the model. Second, in this study, online political participation and offline political participation were analyzed independently. However, a high correlation between the two variables possibly exists. People who use a lot of political news on the Internet are more likely to participate in voting. An in-depth analysis of the relationship between the two types of political participation is needed in subsequent studies. Third, In this study, both TV news usage and non-traditional news usage were found to have positive effects on political participations. This means that even if people use social media or short videos other than TV, it can bring about a significant change in political participation. According to [51], media use and its effects can be discussed from the two perspectives such as technological determinism and social determinism. The result that non-traditional news usage through social media affects political participation makes technological determinism valid. On the one hand, it should be pinpointed that the strong influence of social media is formed by the desires and interests of Chinese users, which is consistent with the viewpoint of social determinism. This study is based on the view of technological determinism, taking media use as the starting point of the prediction model. However, another attempt is needed to analyze the social interests and relationships that may induce the non-traditional media use in the age of media integration.

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