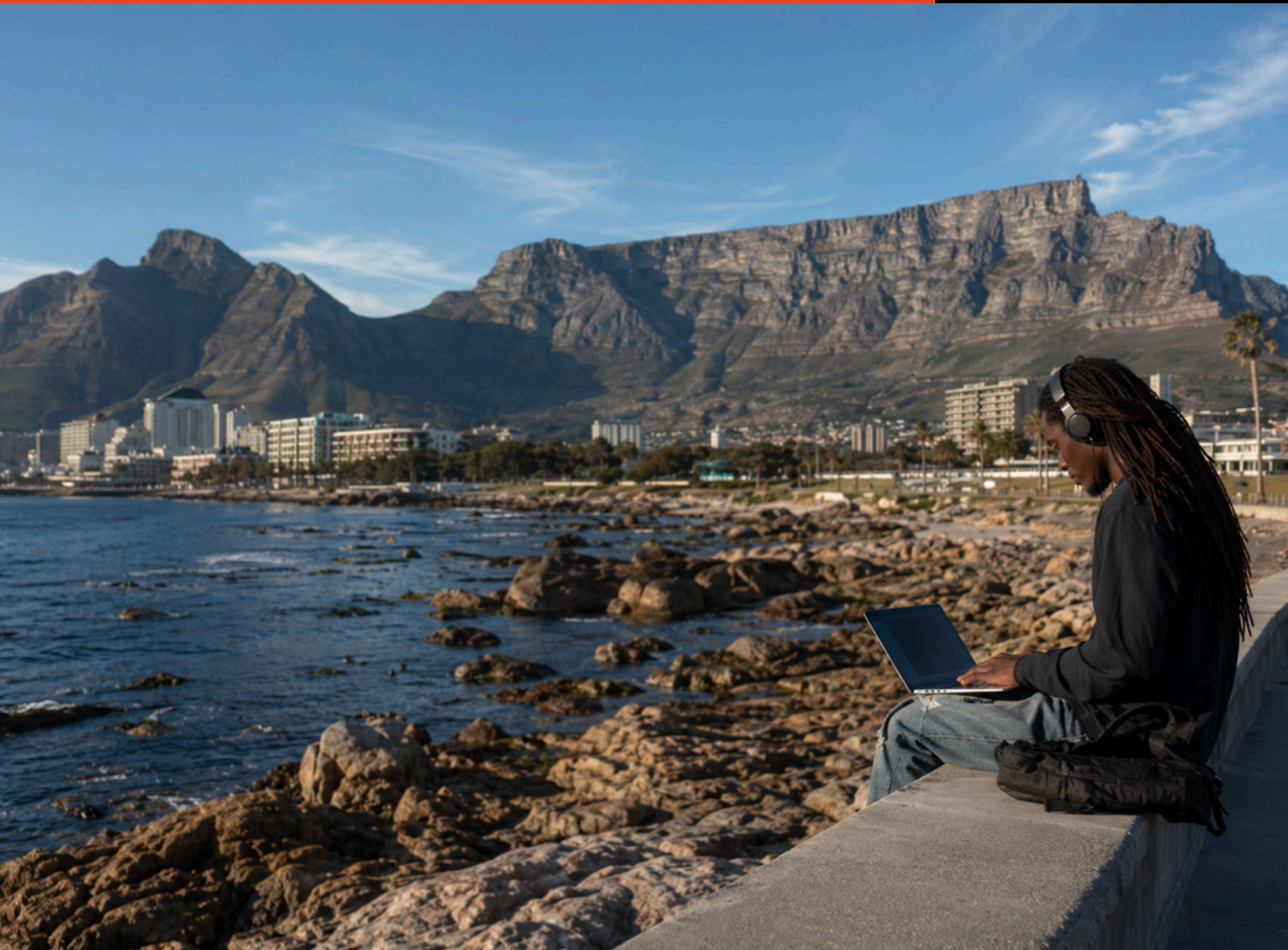


# PRACTICING TRUST MEDIA, MACHINES AND METHODS

## Preconference

# ICA 2026

# Cape Town



JUNE 4 2026 • 8:30 AM - 4.30 PM  
CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE

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Professor Terry Flew  
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*University of Sydney*

Dr. Harry Dugmore  
*University of Sunshine Coast*

Dr. Michael Davis  
*University of Technology Sydney*

Professor Sora Park  
*University of Canberra*

## Venue Information

Event will be held in

**Room CTICC1, Lev 1**

**Cape Town International  
Convention Centre**



Please see our [event FAQs](#) for further information

# Pre-conference Schedule

**8:00 - 8:30**

Greetings & coffee

**8:30 - 9:10**

Chair: Terry Flew

## **Practicing Trust opening and Keynote**

Keynote speaker Professor Admire Mare (University of Johannesburg) opens the preconference by helping us reconsider mediated trust in the platform and AI era from a Global South perspective. Highlighting African sociological and anthropological research, he shows how trust emerges through relationships, history, and everyday media use, challenging dominant Northern frameworks in journalism and digital communication. (p.12)

**9:10 - 10:15**

Chair: Timothy Koskie

## **Session 1: Renegotiating trust under platforms and AI**

This session examines how trust is conceptualised and contested in platform and AI environments. The presenters examine how trust is defined, where it is located, and how these assumptions are challenged as these innovations reshape our communication.

**Terry Flew**

Trust, Communications and Technology: Towards a Theory of Mediated Trust (p.9)

**Marina Lindmeyr**

Transparency as Trust Repair: Civil Society Discourses on Mis/Disinformation and AI (p.11)

**Sharon Strover**

The Challenges of Public Surveillance (p.15)

**Bruce Isaacs**

Kids Don't Believe in Images Anymore': On the Emergence of AI Cinema (p.9)

**Leeam Azoulay**

From Platform Trust and Safety to AI Safety: Did Trust Fall by the Wayside? (p.5)

**10:15 - 10:30**

Morning Tea

**10:30-12:30**

Chair: Wenjia Tang

## **Session 2: Trust and the new conditions of journalism**

This session explores how trust in news is changing as journalism adapts to new pressures and technologies. It highlights how news trust is enacted and impacted in current conditions and how emerging uses of AI complicate long-standing assumptions about credibility and integrity.

**Michael Davis**

News Integrity and Public Trust in the AI Era (p.7)

**Timothy Koskie**

Practising trust in contemporary news work: Perspectives from Australia (p.10)

**Sena Ozkurt Azimli**

AI and Journalistic Agency in Data-Scarce Contexts: Insights from Turkish Newsrooms, 2021-2025 (p.5)

**Katharina Esau**

Audience Trust and News Media Polarisation: Connecting News Content and Audience Responses in Australia (p.8)

**Camila Mont'Alverne**

Habit, Selective Choice, or Emotion? Investigating Drivers of Trust in News (p.13)

**Harry Dugmore**

Trust, identity, and reader-funded journalism: a comparative analysis of the Guardian Australia and South Africa's Daily Maverick's reader revenue models (p.8)

**Wendi Li**

Trusting the machine? Auditing politicised climate discourses in Chinese and Russian LLM-based chatbots (p.11)

**Kimon Kieslich**

Feeling iffy about generative AI: When journalists disclose AI use, trust in news is lower (p.10)

**Yin Wu**

The Influence of Press, Valence, Nationalism, and Emotion on Trust in Foreign Media Coverage of the U.S. on Facebook (p.16)

<b>12:30 - 13:00</b>	Lunch
<b>13:00 - 13:45</b> Chair: Harry Dugmore	<b>Second Keynote</b> Professor Herman Wasserman (Stellenbosch University) examines how trust in media is shaped by South Africa's social and historical context. He explores rising cynicism, the role of disinformation, and the conditions under which trust can be rebuilt through dialogue and collaboration between journalists and communities. (p.16)
<b>13:45 - 15:00</b> Chair: Timothy Koskie	<b>Session 3: AI and the transformation of trust</b> This session illustrates how AI is interacting with trust in key communication contexts. The presenters explore how AI is impacting on policy, politics, and professional media conditions, with impacts on whether and how we invest our trust.
<b>Wenjia Tang</b>	Performing Trust: Symbolic policies in regulating generative AI in the U.S. (p.15)
<b>Svetlana Bodrunova</b>	Multi-level transformation of media trust: The AI challenge (p.6)
<b>Lydia Cheng</b>	Trust in Lifestyle Media: The Adoption of AI in Malaysian, Filipino, and Australian Lifestyle Journalism (p.6)
<b>Kieran McGuinness</b>	Friends in untrustworthy places? Political influencers as alternative sources of election news and information on social media (p.12)
<b>Jasmine McNealy</b>	AI Refusal: Tactical Distrust as a Radical Communicative Practice (p.13)
<b>15:00 - 15:15</b>	Afternoon Tea
<b>15:15-16:30</b> Chair: Wenjia Tang	<b>Session 4: The conditions of trust in communication</b> This session identifies how changes to the ways we communicate have impacted on trust in diverse communication environments. These presenters put a lens to distinct contexts and groups to show how these shifts affect relationships, practices, and ultimately the systems and situations supporting trust.
<b>Hamideh Mohammadi</b>	Algorithmic Mediation and Trust in Health Journalism: An Analytical Review (p.14)
<b>Shengnan Pinker Yao</b>	Multicultural Australian Audiences: Which News to Trust, and Where to Belong? (p.17)
<b>Sherine Conyers</b>	Trust in Turbulence: Vortex Journalism and Platform Reconfiguration of News Authority (p.7)
<b>Anne Reinhardt</b>	Defining Trust in AI-Generated Health Information: A Systematic Literature Search and Conceptual Synthesis (p.14)
<b>Ziyi Yu</b>	Trust Under Fire: Audience Expectations and the Legitimacy of Alternative Media in Post-NSL Hong Kong (p.17)
<b>16:30</b>	Close of pre-conference

# Full Abstracts

## **AI and Journalistic Agency in Data-Scarce Contexts: Insights from Turkish Newsrooms, 2021-2025**

*Sena Ozkurt Azimli*  
*University of Virginia*

The rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence (AI) into journalism has intensified debates over professional autonomy, ethics, and public trust. Yet most research assumes data-rich and politically open media environments. This study examines how journalists in Türkiye negotiate trust in AI systems under conditions of political control, censorship, and infrastructural scarcity.

The article asks: (1) how journalists' perceptions of AI have changed since 2021; (2) how political pressure, censorship, and infrastructural dependency shape their willingness to rely on algorithmic tools; (3) how ethical boundaries are negotiated in everyday practice; and (4) how data scarcity reconfigures professional agency and confidence in AI-mediated newswork. Theoretically, the study situates trust at the intersection of platform power, data colonialism, and democratic backsliding, treating AI not as a neutral instrument but as a socio-technical infrastructure embedded in relations of control and dependency.

Methodologically, the research adopts a longitudinal qualitative design. It revisits 21 journalists interviewed in 2021-2022 and re-interviews them in the upcoming 2026 using semi-structured protocols. The analysis traces shifts in newsroom practices, ethical judgments, and professional self-understandings as AI tools become increasingly integrated into news production.

Findings show that journalists' trust in AI is highly conditional. Chronic data scarcity, politically filtered databases, and reliance on proprietary or state-aligned platforms restrict meaningful experimentation and foster skepticism toward algorithmic outputs. Rather than enhancing autonomy, AI often deepens infrastructural dependency, narrowing editorial discretion and reshaping ethical decision-making. While some practitioners develop adaptive practices, algorithmic mediation increasingly structures what can be verified or investigated.

By foregrounding journalist-AI trust in a constrained media system, this paper contributes to debates on human-machine communication, transparency, and data justice, showing how uneven AI diffusion may entrench existing hierarchies rather than strengthen journalism's democratic function.

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## **From Platform Trust and Safety to AI Safety: Did Trust Fall by the Wayside?**

*Leeam Azoulay*  
*Rutgers School of Communication & Information*

Social media platforms have defined the emerging professional practice within their companies aimed at protecting users from harm as "trust and safety." Within artificial intelligence (AI) companies, the term "trustworthy AI" is sometimes used, but the field as a whole is increasingly coalescing around "AI safety" to describe the set of practices meant to identify risks to users and prevent harm. In this discursive transition from "trust and safety" to "AI safety," where has trust gone?

This project traces and compares how social media platforms and AI companies conceive of the concepts of trust and safety through a content analysis and critical discourse analysis of 180 job descriptions for trust and safety and AI safety roles across six companies: OpenAI, Anthropic, and Google on the AI side, and Meta, TikTok, and YouTube on the social media side. A research working group led by sociologist Gil Eyal distinguishes between "trustworthy AI" and "trust in AI" (The Trust Collaboratory, n.d.), a distinction that provides an important lens for interrogating how these companies understand the concept of trust. Is promoting trust framed primarily as a technical practice, i.e., ensuring reliable algorithmic outputs, or as one concerned with cultivating the trust of human users?

Practitioners and analysts have argued that AI companies should learn from the mistakes of social media platforms; at the same time, there is concern that flawed practices and assumptions developed within social media platforms will shape the trajectory of AI safety (Nossel, 2025; Weedon, 2025). This project builds on recent work by Gillespie et al. (2025) on red-teaming, the practice of testing AI models to uncover vulnerabilities. It also draws on and extends key contributions in platform governance, including Gillett, Stardust, and Burgess's (2022) analysis of how platforms conceive and frame safety, as well as critical scholarship on platform values led by Shifman (e.g., Scharlach, Hallinan, and Shifman, 2024).

# Multi-level transformation of media trust: The AI challenge

*Svetlana Bodrunova, Kamilla Nigmatullina*  
*St. Petersburg State University*

Journalism has for centuries relied on public trust for survival. Media trust (Tsfati&Ariely, 2014) has developed as a multi-level system of socio-industrial relations. Journalistic epistemologies (Hanitzsch, 2007), norms (Schudson, 2020), and public roles (Mellado, 2020) became paradigmatically mirrored in specific features of media texts (Poettker, 2003) and in editorial procedures (Tuchman, 1972) which signaled to audiences that media were trustworthy (Hallin&Mancini, 2004: 15-16). This has become a major force supporting professional sustainability of journalism, making both legacy and newer media bear multi-level credibility formation routines. However, with AI becoming a whole new dimension of newsmaking, credibility formation is critically affected by it (Gondwe, 2025), its impact being both positive and negative (Toff&Simon, 2024). Nonetheless, the scholarly evidence on how media trust transforms under the impact of AI has not yet undergone systemic conceptualization.

We provide a systematic review of 40+ papers on the interplay between AI and media trust. It allows for conceptualizing multi-level transformation of AI-affected media trust by detecting controversies between the rise of media trust on certain levels of editorial practice and its fall on the others. Thus, we define six domains of media trust affected by AI and detect meaningful lacunas in how they are researched today.

First, AI affects media trust on the level of authorship (Tandoc-Jr., Yao, Wu, 2020). Globally, hybrid models of authorship (Opdahl et al., 2023) are gaining bigger credit than single AI/human authorship, hybrid authorship seen as a turning point in AI adoption. Second, it is norms, including representation of sides, verification, the fact/interpretation division, and AI journalism ethics (Olanipekun, 2025). While there is research on whether AI follows journalism norms (Zagorulko, 2023), studies on how AI's (non-)adherence to journalistic norms affects media trust are regrettably scarce, non-dewesternized, and rarely questioning quality (Calvo-Rubio&Rojas-Torrijos, 2024). Similarly, public roles of AI-assisted journalism and the AI-related editorial procedures are rarely discussed, despite the mediating role of trust to AI has been underlined (Nah et al., 2024). The fifth and sixth domains are the writing styles (Yang et al., 2025) and, wider, the writing language. Here, the issue of machine biases re-appears on a new level. Thus, traditional paradigmatic indicators of professionalism that used to form media trust are largely under-researched, instead giving floor to AI/journalist personalized trust and language use in more general terms. We call for more scholarly attention to the shifts in AI's impact on media trust domains.

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## Trust in Lifestyle Media: The Adoption of AI in Malaysian, Filipino, and Australian Lifestyle Journalism

*Lydia Cheng*  
*Nanyang Technological University*

Scholars have found that if used correctly, GenAI can bring about several benefits for news audiences, such as making journalism more accessible, digestible, and personalised (Dodds et al., 2025). However, there are also several concerns, like the need for transparency, as public trust in news media is largely dependent on whether audiences understand how AI is used to create content (Verma, 2024). Without proper disclosure, audiences might face what Dodds et al. (2025) term an 'authenticity crisis', where they are unable to separate human-created and AI-generated content. While journalists have already incorporated AI tools to perform tasks like summarising information, brainstorming for story ideas, and text editing (Dijkstra et al., 2024; Nishal & Diakopoulos, 2023; Reilley, 2024), their reconciliation of AI usage and trust in their work has been less readily studied. This is especially true for lifestyle journalism; that is, much of the existing discussions surrounding audiences' perceptions of AI and journalism are based on the usage of AI in hard news (Lin & Lewis, 2022). Yet, the Digital News Report: Australia 2024 found that news consumers were more likely to accept AI use in lifestyle-skewed content, rather than hard, political journalism. This raises the question of whether lifestyle journalists have differing views regarding AI use and disclosure in their work. Drawing from three empirical studies - 12 interviews with Malaysian lifestyle journalists (completed in January 2026) and 10-15 interviews with Australian and Filipino lifestyle journalists (scheduled for March and May 2026 respectively) - this research will perform a cross-country comparison of how AI is adopted across these three countries with unique media systems.

Some preliminary results from the Malaysian interviews can be presented. First, interviewees noted the lack of broader newsroom or national directives regarding AI use in media, and so AI usage is usually dependent on the individual journalist's agency (Wu, 2024). This has resulted in interviewees who believe in a total ban of AI in their work to interviewees who routinely utilise AI to create story drafts. When questioned on the inclusion of an AI label in their stories, interviewees similarly gave a range of responses, with some noting that such disclosures can help increase audience trust, while others believe it will drive away readers. Interestingly, most interviewees agreed that the use of AI is more acceptable in hard news than lifestyle media, as they categorised their content as creative work that cannot be replicated by AI.

# Trust in Turbulence: Vortex Journalism and Platform Reconfiguration of News Authority

*Dr Sherine Conyers*

*The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology*

This presentation argues that contemporary journalism is undergoing an epistemic rupture, in which traditional knowledge-production practices are systematically displaced by the commercial and technical logics of digital platforms (Reese 2021; Anderson 2021; Nielsen & Ganter 2022; Petre 2015). News organisations have accelerated this shift through managerial decisions that prioritise metrics, platform compatibility, and algorithmic optimisation over editorial judgment. This transformation has profound implications for public trust, as journalistic authority becomes subordinated to computational systems and traffic-driven incentives.

Legacy newsrooms, seeking revenue, have adopted predictive analytics, traffic-harvesting software, and large language models that replicate platform data practices in isomorphic ways (Meese & Seipp 2025), often at the expense of balanced and fair reporting. These technologies foster habitual algorithmic-preferencing, further undermining the ethical foundations of journalism. Platform mechanisms thus accelerate public scepticism toward the reliability and intentions of news. Using Actor-Network Theory (Latour 2005), journalism is conceptualised as a dynamic assemblage of human and non-human actors—including journalists, platforms, metrics, interfaces, audiences, and organisational routines—whose interactions actively configure professional roles. The Nicola Bulley disappearance illustrates this: the event became an “attention opportunity,” generating up to 6,500 stories per day, not due to evolving public relevance but because analytics and platform signals demanded continuous production.

This phenomenon is framed as “Vortex Journalism”: a self-reinforcing cycle in which news content serves algorithmic attention economies rather than community need. Journalists become casual employees of the algorithm, producing disposable content that prioritises visibility over verification and amplifies sensation over substance. Such practices can constitute a journalism of harm (Anderson 2021), damaging communities, obstructing investigations, and deepening the crisis of trust in news.

The presentation concludes by calling for renewed attention to journalism’s normative foundations (Christians et al. 2009; Strömbäck 2005; Witschge et al. 2019) arguing that restoring public good as the driver of news production is essential to rebuilding public trust.

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## News Integrity and Public Trust in the AI Era

*Michael Davis*

*University of Technology Sydney*

The advent of generative AI has raised significant concerns amongst journalists and the broader public about the technology’s potential impact on news integrity and public trust (Ananny & Karr, 2025; Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024; Davis & Attard, 2025). This is most prominently cast as a problem of journalistic process, placing the bulk of the burden on news organisations to ensure that their use of generative AI technologies does not undermine editorial standards, particularly the obligation for “informative truthfulness” (Herrero-Beaumont, 2022). Yet, as Davis & Attard (2025) argue, news integrity — certainly as conceived by journalists themselves — is not only a question of process. Rather, the integrity of the news can be undermined by technological forces even where journalistic process is robust. News is scraped from the open internet and used to train AI models or in retrieval-augmented generation, at which point news organisations relinquish all editorial control. The synthesis of multiple sources of information by generative models means that the informative truthfulness of AI output cannot be guaranteed. As the public increasingly turns to AI chatbots and integrated search for their news and information, this clearly has the potential to undermine public trust in the news, which are tied to perceptions of proper process and to human involvement in news production (Jones et al., 2023). Paradoxically, greater transparency of news sources used in synthetic output may further undermine perceptions of trust where the output fails to meet the editorial standards of the original sources.

Building on insights from ongoing empirical studies (Cf. Davis & Attard, 2025), this paper seeks to articulate a broader understanding of news integrity that goes beyond editorial process and standards to encompass external dependencies. These include technological intermediation, such as through AI systems, but also the broader information environment and institutional and sociopolitical context. It then draws on concepts from social epistemology to articulate a thicker conception of audience reception that recognises the active role that news consumers play in constructing public trust.

Finally, the paper points towards the policy arena, recognising that these expanded conceptions of news integrity and public trust demand a media policy that distributes responsibility for “informative truthfulness” and public trust beyond news organisations to AI companies, governments and even the public. Industry-led initiatives, such as the EBU’s News Integrity in the Age of AI, suggest a way forward. But without the backing of regulation or public policy such efforts may be futile.

# Trust, identity, and reader-funded journalism: a comparative analysis of the Guardian Australia and South Africa's Daily Maverick's reader revenue models

Harry Dugmore

University of the Sunshine Coast

In 2016 and 2018, respectively, Guardian Australia and South Africa's Daily Maverick implemented revenue-generating mechanisms that create a seemingly paradoxical business model: keeping all news content freely available while convincing some readers to make voluntary, subscription-like payments. By 2025, both organisations earned substantial proportions of their revenue from these regular voluntary payments - approximately 60% for Guardian Australia (Buckley, 2025) and 40% for Daily Maverick (Veseling, 2024), despite their journalism remaining freely accessible to all. This paper explores how the unexpected success of these models can be understood through Buchanan's concept of club goods (Buchanan, 1965) and Veblen's earlier notions of prestige goods (Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996), if and only if trust operates as the essential precondition enabling these economic models to function. Club goods are characterised by excludability and non-rivalry: one person's paid membership does not diminish another's enjoyment of freely available journalism, up to a particular congestion point. Prestige goods derive value from their capacity to signal status and identity alignment to others. Both news organisations offer paid members curated content and ad-free experiences, but overlay these with prospects of conviviality and connection and the provision of social signalling opportunities. This, in turn, affords users multiple affective value as well as more tangible use value, at a relatively low cost. This framework helps partially explain what traditional commodity models don't: why audiences willingly pay for content they can otherwise access for free. But, as the paper explores, members must trust that their membership fees enable editorial independence and high-quality journalism. Trust is thus not, the paper argues, incidental to these business models but rather a prerequisite that activates them. Guardian Australia's appeal to progressive identity ("support quality journalism in a multicultural democracy") and Daily Maverick's more explicitly patriotic framing ("help fund accountability journalism to save South Africa from predatory elites") resonate only because audiences have come to trust these organisations' multilayered credibility claims. This qualitative comparative study combines textual analysis of fundraising and membership communications (2016-2025) using Reflexive Thematic Analysis, alongside interviews with organisational leadership in South Africa (2025) and Australia (2026). The findings demonstrate that voluntary payment models succeed through the intersection of economic frameworks (club/prestige goods), identity performance, and actively constructed trust. This potentially has significant implications for how news organisations maintain institutional legitimacy amid the platform capitalism's disruption of journalism's revenue models, and the broader information fragmentation in the media ecosystem.

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## Audience Trust and News Media Polarisation: Connecting News Content and Audience Responses in Australia

Katharina Esau<sup>1</sup>, Sora Park<sup>2</sup>, Michelle Riedlinger<sup>1</sup>, Kieran McGuinness<sup>2</sup>, Samantha Vilkins<sup>1</sup>, Jee Young Lee<sup>2</sup>, Laura Vodden<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Queensland University of Technology (DMRC), <sup>2</sup> University of Canberra (News Media Research Centre)

Trust in specific media brands, as well as in journalism as an institution, is closely intertwined with growing political and social polarisation in contemporary democracies. One explanation for declining trust is that as news outlets increasingly diverge in how they frame public issues, audiences place greater trust in sources aligned with their own beliefs while rejecting outlets associated with opposing camps. Empirically examining this relationship, however, requires connecting systematic analyses of news content with equally systematic evidence of audience responses—an approach that remains rare. Against the backdrop of intensifying polarisation, eroding trust, and changing news production and consumption practices, this paper brings together two largely disconnected research domains: audience polarisation and the polarisation of media outlets as reflected in their aggregated news content. Focusing on climate change coverage among major news outlets in Australia, the study examines how patterns of audience polarisation align or diverge from differences between media outlets across key content dimensions. Drawing on survey data from the Digital News Report: Australia (2016–2025) and a standardised manual content analysis of 22 major Australian news outlets (2023–2024), we compare audience responses—including access to and trust in news outlets—with variations in positions, claims, justification types, emotional framing, and social values embedded in news coverage. For the first time, this approach directly links audience polarisation with content-based mapping of media outlets, enabling an integrated analysis of how audience responses relate to the substantive characteristics of news content. Across the 22 news brands, we track the changes in weekly access, trust in the brands, and the political orientation of brand audiences across the 10 years. We then analyse the content of the news coverage on climate change of these brands to map the viewpoints and perspectives of the stories to audiences' responses. We used a constructed week sampling method to capture climate change-related news coverage over two distinct but politically and climatologically relevant periods: the 2023 COP28 United Nations Climate Change Conference and the 2024 announcement of the opposition energy policy document Australia's Energy Future by the Liberal National Party. In total, 404 articles were manually coded to operationalise four dimensions of news polarisation—actor, positional, affective, and value polarisation—and to compare how alternative and traditional outlets frame climate change. Preliminary findings show that issue polarisation was limited in climate change reporting across the Australian news brands, but patterns of affective polarisation emerged through “othering” claims targeting opponents' motives, credibility, or capacity to act, contributing to fragmented climate discourse even in the absence of strong ideological polarisation. By linking audience perceptions with actual news content, this study deepens our understanding of how audiences navigate the polarised news media environment.

# Trust, Communications and Technology: Towards a Theory of Mediated Trust

*Terry Flew*

*The University of Sydney*

The field of trust studies has long had a dichotomous existence. There have been extensive analyses of the foundations of interpersonal trust and how such trust scales into organisations (Mayer et al., 1995; Robbins, 2016; Rousseau et al., 1998). There have also been various accounts of social trust, related to confidence in institutions, perceptions of risk, social capital and, most recently, misinformation (Giddens, 1990; Luhmann, 1988; Misztal, 2020; Mollering, 2006). A question that has long existed has been how to understand trust as a multiscale phenomenon, where a relationship can be identified between the micro level of personal trust, the meso level of institutional trust, and the macro level of social trust.

In this paper I will point to the critical role played by communication in linking the various scales of trust. Like trust, communication has long been understood to have micro, meso, and macro dimensions. It has also long been a mediated practice, shaped through technologies and institutions. I will argue that the concept of mediated trust is best understood at arising at the intersection of communications, technologies and institutions, which are understood not as three separate entities but as three enmeshed fields.

I will consider what this means for debates about digital platforms, social media and trust. In particular, I will point to the limitations of a "supply side" understanding of misinformation as the result of the activities of 'bad actors' and also critique notions of post-truth as they pertain to digital technologies and artificial intelligence.

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## Kids Don't Believe in Images Anymore': On the Emergence of AI Cinema

*Bruce Isaacs*

*The University of Sydney*

In 2025, I collaborated with several art historians, AI producers and creative artists, traditional filmmakers, and technology pioneers working within entertainment industries to contribute to a globally-reaching AI International Film Festival: the OMNI International AI Film Festival. <https://www.omnifilmfestival.com/>. In its first iteration, OMNI drew more than 1000 discrete entries from countries spanning all regions of the world, with a heavy weighting from East Asia, the US, Western Europe, and Australia. The only technological stipulation OMNI presented as a challenge to creative artists was that a 'film' entry had to be produced entirely using AI technologies, platforms, and materials. That is, what we saw on the screen was the output of an AI tool (or more commonly several tools working in concert) and its 'authoring' creative agent: the filmmaker. Of course, even at this basic level of description, film and media production terminology seem not only problematic but at a crisis point: what is a film? What is an 'image'? What is the relationship of an image to its profilmic source if that profilmic source lives only within an AI production itinerary? What is the filmmaker's ethical relationship to an artificially intelligent production itinerary?

As a scholar of cinema (with a particular focus on the transformation of analogue to digital cinema production), and in recent years, of cinema's capacity to engage what André Bazin called 'the real', I can only state that my work with OMNI was inspiring and personally transformative. I saw AI cinema at a stage of emergence that was at once thrilling and full of potential for new creative avenues, new democratic spaces of production in increasingly collaborative virtual environments, and wholly new forms of representation. And yet, the 'films' I saw radically destabilised my own perception of a century of cinema that sought to show us the 'real', or the 'world' as it is and potentially could be.

This paper reflects on the achievement (and controversy in the Australian media) of OMNI in its first two iterations, projecting an hypothesis of the way in which AI cinema will evolve as a mode of expression, creative practice, and image-based epistemology.

## Feeling iffy about generative AI: When journalists disclose AI use, trust in news is lower

*Kimon Kieslich, Nicolas Mattis, Claes de Vreese*  
*University of Hohenheim | University of Amsterdam*

As using generative AI (GenAI) in journalism is becoming more common, calls for transparent AI disclosures are growing louder. However, transparency on GenAI in journalistic newsrooms is a sensitive and challenging issue, as news media seek to innovate while upholding journalistic standards and maintaining audience's trust.

Prior studies predominantly tested relatively generic AI disclosures that are implicitly interpreted as fully automated news production and tend to decrease readers' trust in the labelled information. However, these results might mask important differences depending on how exactly AI is applied throughout the journalistic value chain. Thus, to explore the effects of more nuanced AI disclosures that align more closely with how news organisations actually (aim to) use GenAI, we conducted a preregistered (<https://osf.io/yrg7x>) conjoint experiment with 742 Dutch respondents in January 2025.

We tested AI disclosure, i.e. if a task was performed by AI or human, for seven different journalistic tasks (idea generation; image generation; background research; article writing; proofreading; fact-checking; human in the loop) across three different topics (housing; logistics; vaccinations). This enabled us to provide nuanced insights into the relative importance of how disclosing AI usage for various tasks in the journalistic value chain affects perceived trustworthiness, as well as how these effects vary between individuals and across topics - insights that should prove helpful for designing effective AI disclosures in journalism.

Overall, our results suggest that any AI involvement decreases perceived trustworthiness, with no variation across different news topics, but some variation between different disclosure attributes (e.g. human fact-checking being more important than human idea generation). However, moderation and cluster analysis suggest that these effects are not universal, but depend on individual-level characteristics that co-determine AI disclosure effects. (1) We highlight important individual-level moderators such as respondents' political position and their knowledge of journalistic AI. (2) We describe five distinctive preference profiles for AI disclosures: (i) Cautious Optimists, (ii) Indifferents, (iii) Fact-Checkers, (iv) Human Creatives, and (v) Human in the Loops. Subsequent MANOVA analysis shows substantial differences in terms of group assignment for various predictors such as attitudes to AI, experience with AI, political position, and journalistic knowledge. Our results raises important questions about the effects of AI disclosures on journalistic trustworthiness and help practitioners cater AI disclosures to particular groups of readers.

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## Practising trust in contemporary news work: Perspectives from Australia

*Timothy Koskie, Agata Stepnik*  
*The University of Sydney*

While Australian journalists, media organisations, and the public increasingly identify trust in the news as a crucial concern, levels of confidence remain low. The Edelman Trust Institute (2025) finds only 37% of Australians view the news media as trustworthy, placing Australia well behind the majority of other surveyed nations including China and the US. Compounding this challenge, prior research has identified a "trust nexus" in which trust in news media is closely associated with trust in government and public institutions (Hanitzsch et al., 2018). Understanding how news organisations themselves conceptualise and practise trust is therefore vital, both for journalism's own legitimacy and for its broader democratic role.

This presentation draws on a qualitative investigation into these trust practices that cross newsrooms and platforms, examining how journalistic professionals and other media producers delivering news to Australian audiences understand trust as part of their work. We are conducting in-depth interviews with ten informants performing diverse forms of news labour, from frontline newspaper reporting to social media-based news influencing, working within a range of news organisational contexts. These interviews explore how participants value trust, the practices they identify as building or undermining it, their perceived role in shaping trust in public institutions, and how systemic changes such as social media and generative AI are impacting on these dynamics.

Our findings show that trust is consistently and strongly framed as central to journalistic work, but its meaning and practical implications are contested across roles, platforms, and organisational settings. Participants positioned the relationship between trust in news and trust in institutions not as incidental, but as a core professional responsibility tied to accountability, explanation, and public education. At the same time, emerging technologies - particularly social media and generative AI tools - were seen as both sources of risk due to concerns around deepfakes and information disorder, as well as indispensable tools for contemporary news practice.

The presentation offers an empirically grounded account of how trust is actively practised, negotiated, and defended within Australian journalism, with participants revealing tensions between professional ideals, platform logics, and technological disruption. The results characterise trust not as an abstract value, but as a product of practices that are impacted by the shifting context behind news and media consumption, with implications for journalists, institutions, and the public.

# Trusting the machine? Auditing politicised climate discourses in Chinese and Russian LLM-based chatbots

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As generative AI tools become go-to information sources for global publics, questions of trust have become increasingly urgent. Large Language Model (LLM)-based chatbots now shape how publics encounter and evaluate information on contested issues like climate change, yet the credibility of this AI-generated information remains underexamined, especially in non-Western contexts. This study probes how trust is mediated at the intersection of AI technologies, government-controlled information environments, and climate communication in China and Russia, where both institutional trust and public discourse are heavily shaped by the state. Specifically, we employ AI auditing methods to examine how six domestic LLM chatbots communicate about climate change: DeepSeek, Ernie, and Doubao (China); and Alisa AI, GigaChat, and ruGPT (Russia). Through systematic prompting and critical discourse analysis, we investigate the embedded biases, rhetorical devices, and underlying ideologies reflected in the language that these AI chatbots produce and examine whether they are related to misinformation. Ultimately, we ask to what extent these AI chatbots can be trusted to provide balanced climate information. Our preliminary findings reveal how domestic LLMs in China and Russia construct climate related information in ways that both reflect and complicate their political information environments. In China, early tests with DeepSeek show tight alignment with mainstream media and policy discourses. When asked, “What role does China play in climate action?”, DeepSeek describes China as “an active participant in global climate governance... and a key leader in global collaboration addressing climate change,” reproducing pro state framings without critically engaging with the policy documents and media sources it cites. In contrast, the Russian chatbot Alisa AI exhibits a more mixed informational pattern: although operating within a similarly state controlled environment, it sometimes references sources officially designated as “undesirable,” generating outputs that diverge from state-endorsed messages. These patterns suggest that AI generated climate information in authoritarian contexts cannot be assumed to uniformly mirror official discourse; instead, such systems may simultaneously reinforce dominant ideologies while introducing inconsistencies that challenge assumptions about LLMs as predictable amplifiers of state messaging. The next stage of our study will involve a more systematic comparative analysis to assess the reliability and potential risks of the climate information these chatbots produce. Overall, this study contributes to understanding trust in the age of AI by examining how LLM chatbots function as sites where technological, institutional, and epistemic trust intersect. By comparing two understudied national contexts, we advance methodological approaches for auditing AI trustworthiness across different information environments and offer insights for communication policy addressing AI-mediated climate information integrity.

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## Transparency as Trust Repair: Civil Society Discourses on Mis/Disinformation and AI

Marina Lindmeyr, Christina Krakovsky, Marie Rathmann, Krisztina Rozgonyi, Sandra Förster, Tobias Eberwein

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Trust is increasingly practised under conditions of informational overload, algorithmic amplification and AI-related opacity. Mis- and disinformation – further intensified and reshaped by AI technologies – are now tightly woven into democratic public communication, making it harder to tell error from intention and accuracy from manipulation (Farid, 2022; Zimmermann & Kohring, 2018). Attention-driven platforms reward polarising, emotionally charged content, distorting debate and deepening mistrust and cynicism (Papacharissi, 2021; Persily & Tucker, 2020; Phillips, 2018; Rogers, 2024). These global pressures manifest acutely in Austria’s hybrid media landscape, where political influence, economic dependencies and structural transformation strain journalistic autonomy and deliberative quality (Vinatzer et al., 2024). In this context, transparency becomes both an accountability mechanism and a condition for sustainable, justified trust, particularly regarding (genAI-influenced) mis- and disinformation and its production and dissemination (Abbas, Chesterman & Taeiagh, 2025). Simultaneously, rising trust in civil society – especially NGOs (Parr, 2025) – positions it as a key arena where trust is practised, negotiated and stabilised under informational and technological uncertainty. Guided by media accountability (Fengler et al., 2014) and dialogic communication ethics (DCE), this study conceptualises trust as relational and moral work – practical judgement negotiated through dialogue, reciprocity and mutual recognition (Anderson et al., 1994; Johannesen et al., 2008; Arnett, Fritz & Bell, 2009). It asks: (1) How does Austrian civil society perceive mis- and disinformation, AI and trust in public communication? (2) What communicative practices do civil society actors employ when navigating mis- and disinformation, AI and trust across contested public debates? Empirically, the study draws on eleven focus group discussions (N = 70) conducted in Austria within a comparative Horizon Europe project. Participants discussed contested topics – including communication on climate activism, gender, AI, science scepticism and conspiracy narratives – and represented diverse civic voices, from media professionals and NGO actors to individuals in precarious living situations. Data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in MAXQDA. The findings show distrust as a structural problem, intertwined with mis- and disinformation driven by financial incentives, political instrumentalisation and algorithmic amplification. Trust, instead, is a situated, relational practice shaped by credibility cues, institutional accountability and platform opacity. Fact-checking proved insufficient for publics immersed in conspiratorial worldviews amid societal insecurity. Actors relied on selective verification, interpersonal sense-making and balancing accuracy with accessibility. Participants favoured multi-layered responses framing transparency as a trust-repair mechanism, combining AI-content disclosure, stronger media-accountability instruments and – consistent with DCE – greater reciprocity, responsiveness and moral responsibility.

## **Reimagining Mediated Trust in the Platform and AI Era: Perspectives from the Global South**

*Admire Mare*

*University of Johannesburg*

Trust is often described as the social glue that enables cooperation, bridging individual psychology and social structure. In contemporary communication environments, however, trust is increasingly mediated—shaped and negotiated through news institutions, digital platforms, and emerging AI systems. Understanding how trust operates today, therefore, requires closer attention to the media infrastructures and intermediaries through which information and authority circulate. While concepts such as mediated, networked, and institutional trust have gained prominence in journalism and communication studies, much of the dominant scholarship on trust has emerged from the Global North. This keynote recenters Global South perspectives to rethink mediated trust in the age of platforms and artificial intelligence. Drawing on African anthropological and sociological insights, it explores how trust is produced through relational networks, historical experience, and everyday communicative practices. By foregrounding horizontal and vertical forms of trust, the talk highlights the contextual and fluid nature of trust. It ultimately advances alternative frameworks for understanding mediated trust in contemporary journalism, media industries, and platformized communication environments.

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## **Friends in untrustworthy places? Political influencers as alternative sources of election news and information on social media**

*Kieran McGuinness*

*University of Canberra*

There is growing concern that political leaders around the world are misleading the public<sup>1</sup>. Trust in public institutions and democracy are in decline. A lack of trust in news is known to be related to news avoidance<sup>2</sup>, which could further accelerate political disengagement. However, the relationship between trust in news and political information seeking is complex. Research suggests that audiences may continue to use news or information sources they distrust<sup>3</sup>, or seek out alternatives in low-trust media environments. Most Australians distrust news they see on social media<sup>4</sup>, yet it is a growing source for many<sup>5</sup>. Influencers have become a key source of political information for younger audiences<sup>6</sup>. This suggests audiences are making complex credibility assessments rather than responding with blanket distrust. To explore this further, this paper draws on data from an online survey of adults (n = 2,003) conducted in Australia following the 2025 Federal Election. The paper seeks to identify factors related to the use of influencers as sources of news and information about the 2025 election: including demographic factors, preferred platform, trust in the political system, exposure to election misinformation, and attitudes towards influencer political content. Overall, the aim is to propose hypotheses and explore alternative explanations that position trust as a moment-to-moment and context dependent factor in information seeking, rather than a constant.

## AI Refusal: Tactical Distrust as a Radical Communicative Practice

Jasmine McNealy  
University of Florida

In the prevailing discourse of Artificial Intelligence, “trust” is frequently framed as a hurdle to be overcome—a technical metric to be optimized through transparency reports or “human-in-the-loop” design. However, this critique argues that trust in ubiquitous AI systems is often a mechanism of submission rather than a reflection of system reliability. Building on the concept of tactical distrust, this paper explores AI Refusal not as a deficit of digital literacy, but as a sophisticated, generative communicative practice.

Shifting the focus from individual “non-use” to community-led resistance, this research explores how refusal serves as a mechanism for group sovereignty. This research conceptualizes community advocacy for municipal bans on facial recognition (e.g., San Francisco and Oakland) and large-scale legal actions (e.g., BIPA privacy settlements and the Anthropic settlement) as community-driven assertions of power. These are not merely technical opt-outs; they are social performances of distrust that seek to protect marginalized community members from the vulnerabilities inherent in automated surveillance and data extraction.

By applying the frameworks of strategic illiteracy and the politics of refusal, this study demonstrates that communities practice distrust to reclaim agency over their communicative environments.

This work contributes to the “Practicing Trust” pre-conference by asserting that the health of a digital society depends not just on how we build trust, but on how we ethically and collectively practice the right to say “no.”

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## Habit, Selective Choice, or Emotion? Investigating Drivers of Trust in News

Camila Mont'Alverne<sup>1</sup>, Tali Aharoni<sup>2</sup>, Amy Ross Arguedas<sup>2</sup>, Sayan Banerjee<sup>3</sup>, Benjamin Toff<sup>4</sup>, Richard Fletcher<sup>2</sup>, Rasmus Kleis Nielsen<sup>5</sup>

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Do people trust news brands they use, or do they use news brands they trust? Do people’s feelings about news brands drive their trust levels, or do their trust levels determine their feelings about news brands? The study examines how habit, selective choice, and emotion explain trust in news over time. Existing research offers competing explanations for whether people trust the news they use or use the news they trust, pointing to factors such as habit, reputation, and selective exposure. While prior work consistently identifies news use as a predictor of trust, qualitative studies highlight the ritualistic and affective dimensions of audiences’ relationships with news. Recent evidence suggests that these dynamics vary across media systems and outlet types: traditional television use may generate trust, while trust in partisan outlets may be driven from selective exposure. Yet most studies rely on self reported survey data, limiting the precision with which media use can be measured. Moreover, although emotions are increasingly recognized as central to how people evaluate news, no research has examined how brand specific feelings and trust interact over time. Addressing these gaps, this study combines large scale behavioral data with panel survey measures to analyse how habit, selective choice, and emotion shape trust in news brands. We draw on mobile and desktop web tracking data capturing 42 million clicks, paired with a four wave panel survey of 2,200 participants conducted during the 2022 Brazilian election. This design enables us to examine trust dynamics at the brand level across legacy, digital born, and partisan outlets in a Global South media environment. We propose two hypotheses: (H1) using specific news brands predicts increased trust in those brands over time (media effect); and (H2) trusting specific brands predicts greater subsequent use (selection effect). Given limited evidence on the role of emotions, we also pose an open research question: (RQ1) how do people’s positive and negative feelings toward news brands relate to their trust in those brands over time? To test these relationships, we employ Random Intercept Cross Lagged Panel Models, allowing us to isolate within person autoregressive and cross lagged effects and assess potential reinforcing spirals. We measured trust and emotional perceptions for 22 news organisations during all survey waves, while web tracking data provide behavioral indicators of brand use. By integrating behavioral measures with longitudinal attitudinal data, this study advances understanding of trust in news and contributes to de westernizing journalism research.

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*The University of Sydney*

Public trust in health journalism has become increasingly fragile in digitally mediated information environments shaped by platformisation, algorithmic governance, and the growing integration of AI technologies in news production. During health crises, journalism plays a critical role in translating scientific knowledge, mediating institutional authority, and supporting public decision-making. Yet existing research offers fragmented and sometimes contradictory accounts of how trust in health journalism is produced, sustained, or eroded under contemporary media conditions. This paper addresses this gap through a meta-analytical examination of scholarship at the intersection of journalism studies, health communication, and mediated trust. The study adopts a qualitative meta-analysis and in-depth analytical review of peer-reviewed literature published over the past two decades. Rather than aggregating statistical results, the analysis synthesises conceptual frameworks, methodological approaches, and key empirical findings to identify dominant patterns and unresolved tensions in how trust is theorised and operationalised in health journalism research. The review focuses on three interrelated domains: (1) journalistic norms and professional practices shaping credibility and authority in health reporting; (2) the role of digital platforms, algorithms, and data infrastructures in mediating visibility, verification, and audience engagement; and (3) debates around AI-assisted journalism, including automation, generative tools, and their implications for transparency and accountability. The analysis reveals that trust is most often framed as an outcome of effective communication or audience perception, while comparatively less attention is paid to trust as a relational, process-based phenomenon embedded within socio-technical systems. Studies addressing misinformation and AI frequently isolate technological risks without sufficiently situating them within institutional and professional contexts. This fragmentation limits the field's capacity to explain how trust is negotiated across journalists, platforms, institutions, and publics. By reconceptualising trust in health journalism as a dynamic and context-dependent process, this paper contributes to debates on mediated trust, human-machine communication, and the future of journalistic authority, while demonstrating the value of meta-analytical synthesis for advancing trust research beyond case-specific studies.

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## Defining Trust in AI-Generated Health Information: A Systematic Literature Search and Conceptual Synthesis

*Anne Reinhardt, Anabel Wächter*  
*LMU Munich*

Generative AI systems are becoming routine information sources, including in health contexts. In this domain, trust is pivotal because it governs whether users rely on and act upon health information (Lu et al., 2018). However, calibrating trust is challenging for AI-generated health information (AI-HI): generative systems may produce convincing but incorrect or biased content, undermining informational reliability (Kordzadeh & Ghasemaghahi, 2022). Despite these risks, emerging evidence suggests that public trust in AI-HI is already moderate (\*\*blinded). While research is beginning to empirically tackle trust in AI-HI, its conceptualization remains unclear. Relevant insights are dispersed across two adjacent but largely separate research strands: (a) trust in online health information (OHI) and (b) trust in generative AI. These strands often approach trust with different emphases. OHI research foregrounds credibility and usefulness perceptions (Johnson et al., 2015), whereas AI trust research focuses on system properties such as opacity, explainability, and predictability (Rheu et al., 2021). Without systematically integrating these perspectives, health communication research risks relying on incompatible definitions and measures of trust in AI-HI. To address this gap, we conduct a systematic two-strand literature search paired with a conceptual synthesis. On November 2nd 2025, we searched Communication & Mass Media Complete, PubMed, and the ACM Digital Library for peer-reviewed articles published since 2010, using two predefined strategies: (1) an OHI-focused search (title: trust\* OR trustworth\* OR credib\*; abstract: "online health information" OR "digital health information" OR "internet health information" OR "eHealth"); and (2) a generative-AI-focused search (title: trust\* OR trustworth\* OR credib\*; abstract: "artificial intelligence" OR "AI systems" OR chatbot\* OR "conversational agent\*" OR "large language model\*" OR "generative AI"). The combined search yielded 181 records; after deduplication and other reasons (paper was not published yet), 179 remained (NOHI = 30; NAI = 149). During title/abstract screening, two coders assessed whether trust and/or trustworthiness constituted a central focus, resulting in 90 papers for full-text eligibility assessment (NOHI = 22; NAI = 68). We are currently in the full-text screening phase, which will be followed by structured data extraction and a conceptual synthesis. The synthesis will deliver (1) a domain-sensitive working definition of trust in AI-HI, (2) an integrative framework separating trust from trustworthiness, and (3) a set of core dimensions to inform scale development and future health communication research on trust in the AI era. The review process will be completed in April 2026, enabling presentation of finalized results at the pre-conference.

## The Challenges of Public Surveillance

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Notions of privacy and trust are increasingly challenged as technology systems driven by AI capabilities expand. Unobtrusive data-gathering technologies can influence peoples' trust in the institutions using them, with the public sector entities such as city governments being especially vulnerable to waning trust as they enlarge their monitoring of all things, human and built, in the name of goals such as being a "smart city" or tech-friendly.

To examine how people respond to two widely-used camera-based systems in the U.S. that gather visual information in public places, we gathered data from a sample of 1006 people and used contextual integrity theory to explore evolving privacy norms and ideas about accountabilities. Our literature review first provides background on these two popular and widely used surveillance systems and the smart city setting that has normalized them, and highlights where and why their performance has raised questions. Second, we examine theories of privacy, trust and safety that intersect the public sector use of these cameras, necessarily raising matters of public awareness and approval of their use. Our survey measures people's willingness to have their local authorities use cameras for certain purposes, with contextual integrity theory's core contribution being to separate specific "actors" such as administrative units like Policy or Fire, from the purposes of the monitoring. Our primary research questions address emerging public norms associated with these surveillance systems, a term important in the contextual theory of privacy (Nissenbaum, 2007). Our results show the relevance of contextual functions in how the public evaluates the use of public cameras and offer a different way to frame the dynamics of trust in an environment populated by nonobvious or invisible technologies. One policy implication growing out of the results is that cities or other regulatory bodies address the specifics of when and how surveillance systems can be used locally. Another implication addresses the data issues associated with using third party vendors to collect and process what ostensibly is "public" data.

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## Performing Trust: symbolic policies in regulating generative AI in the U.S.

*Wenjia Tang, Timothy Koskie*  
*The University of Sydney*

With trust in governments, technologies and other institutions reportedly in broad decline in several international contexts (Edelman Trust Institute, 2025), it is not surprising that the providers of potentially disruptive generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) services are finding a lack of trust posing a barrier to broader uptake of their innovations (Choung et al., 2023). People propose that effective regulations can help invigorate the public's trust, but a limited consensus on whether and how to trust GenAI among different stakeholders makes it difficult to balance its rapid development with impactful guardrails - like the recent and often ineffectual history of technology regulations for social media platforms (Napoli, 2021). Nevertheless, both the GenAI service providers and governments have put forward a selection of highly visible policies that elicit, often explicitly, public trust in both the technology and its providers.

To better understand where the disagreements in aims and actions of these policies and their impacts, we examine documents seeking to instil confidence in GenAI from both government regulators and major technology companies (e.g., OpenAI, Google, Meta, Microsoft) in the U.S. We conducted content analysis on 18 published documents-12 from the most influential tech companies and 6 from the United States Government (published from 2020 to 2025). By investigating their language, agendas, steps to act and then comparing them with their final behaviours, we identify whether these documents provide a practical basis for trust (Luhmann, 2018; Warren, 1999) or instead constitute "symbolic actions" as described by Edelman (1964), whereby organisations are attempting to instil trust in GenAI oversight through their performances. Most importantly, we associate divergences and conflicts of aims and actions, to further explore what the U.S. government and companies really prioritise.

Our preliminary findings observed "symbolic regulations" (Stern, 2009) in these documents, which placed an emphasis on innovative competitiveness and "trustworthy framework", but the actual approaches involved very little for general users. Moreover, couched in public-benefit language, the government and enterprises fundamentally want to translate abstract policy goals of "trust" and "security" from technical practices and protocols to tangible commercial operations, diplomatic responsibilities, and product leadership. It reveals disparities between the documents' contents, framing, and what the public can trust and expect from these organisations as they continue their rapid expansion. The results have implications for both scholars seeking to understand and contextualise these organisations as well as the policymakers currently struggling to guide their behaviours and guard against their impacts.

## **Trust in context: South African perspectives**

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*Centre for Information Integrity in Africa, Stellenbosch University*

Although declining trust in democratic institutions, including the media, has been widely documented across the globe, this trend is neither uniform nor experienced in the same way across different societies. If trust is understood as a relational value, shaped by particular social contexts, communities, and historical experiences, then efforts to address its erosion must first attend to these contextual dynamics before broader comparisons or generalizations can be made.

Drawing on examples from South Africa, this keynote explores how trust in media is shaped by the country's specific social, economic, and historical conditions. It examines the factors that influence public confidence in different forms of media, including the rise of cynicism among younger audiences and the ways in which distrust is strategically mobilized and amplified through disinformation campaigns. At the same time, the presentation considers possible pathways toward rebuilding trust. It argues that restoring confidence in media institutions requires approaches grounded in dialogue, listening, and coalition-building among journalists, civil society, and communities. Such strategies may provide more sustainable foundations for renewing trust in democratic communication systems.

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## **The Influence of Press, Valence, Nationalism, and Emotion on Trust in Foreign Media Coverage of the U.S. on Facebook**

*Yin Wu*

*Fuzhou University of International Studies and Trade*

The key aim of the article is to demonstrate the importance of emotional trust in social media content in today's digital media environment and global social networks. As the mass distribution of fake news and misinformation on social media has been decreasing the global trust in news media, it is essential to put digital media consumption behaviors and digital media trust onto the main agenda of mass communications research. It also requires updating the theoretical model of digital media trust in international context. More specifically, this study predicts positive associations between news organizations, valence, nationalism, and emotion with news trust. A 4 by 4 by 2 online survey experiment with four repeated measures was conducted to compare American media consumers' trust in domestic or foreign news organizations and negative or positive news with respect to the U.S. The results show that American audiences will trust ideologically aligned news organizations more than non-aligned news organizations, positive news more than negative news, and extremely high nationalists trust much more than others. Additionally, users' confidence in detecting online misinformation was found to significantly interact with the effects of news organizations, valence, and nationalism. Finally, an SEM analysis was conducted and suggested mediating effects of pride and anger between nationalism, valence, and trust, and the moderating effect of news organizations on the mediating effect between nationalism and pride. These results provide us with a vision of informed citizens with abundant foreign affair knowledge and a peaceful political discussion on international platforms.

## Multicultural Australian Audiences: Which News to Trust, and Where to Belong?

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Trust has long been treated as a foundational yet diffuse concept in communication research, examined variously as an audience attitude toward media institutions, a precondition for civic engagement, or a key element of social cohesion in multicultural societies (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003; Kohring & Matthes, 2007). In highly diverse contexts such as Australia—one of the world’s most multicultural democracies—trust in news is not formed within a single media system but negotiated across multiple, overlapping news domains. For multicultural Australian audiences, everyday news engagement typically spans three distinct news systems: English-language Australian news, news from one’s cultural and language community in Australia, and news from one’s country of origin. This paper argues that trust is best understood as a practiced, domain-specific relationship that actively shapes where and how individuals experience belonging, a concept central to democratic inclusion and social cohesion in plural societies. Drawing on Communication Infrastructure Theory, the study conceptualises news engagement as embedded within multilayered storytelling networks that connect individuals to national, community, and transnational communicative contexts (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006). Belonging is theorised as a multidimensional construct encompassing perceived acceptance, social connection, and empowerment—understood as confidence in one’s ability to make a difference—across geographical and psychological domains (Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Trust is treated not as a generalised disposition toward “the media,” but as a relational resource emerging through everyday media practices within specific news systems. Using survey data from multicultural community members in Australia (N = 231), the analysis adopts a comparative, domain-based approach to examine how news consumption and trust across the three news systems relate to belonging to Australian society, to one’s cultural community in Australia, and to one’s home country. Findings show that trust operates with different significance across domains. In the English-language Australian news system, belonging is primarily associated with news consumption, indicating that access to mainstream news supports connection to national discourse and institutions. By contrast, trust in home-country news functions as a critical turning point for belonging, sustaining identity continuity and affective connection in transnational contexts. Cultural and language community news occupies an intermediary position, where both news use and trust support localised belonging. Together, these findings demonstrate that trust is practiced relationally across news systems, producing parallel and complementary pathways of belonging. The paper offers implications for policymakers, public-service broadcasters, and multicultural media organisations, highlighting the need for differentiated trust-building strategies to foster communicative inclusion in multilingual societies.

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## Trust Under Fire: Audience Expectations and the Legitimacy of Alternative Media in Post-NSL Hong Kong

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Trust is a relationship cultivated before the trustee (the media) fulfills the truster’s (the audience) expectations. While journalism studies have experienced a general “audience turn,” previous research has primarily focused on the top-down strategies media organizations used to establish trustworthiness. Less attention has been paid to “why” audiences, as agentic trusters, choose to extend or withhold trust, or “how” these bottom-up expectations shape media legitimacy and journalistic sustainability. Furthermore, many studies examine creators, audiences, and media texts in isolation, overlooking how their interaction dynamically affects trust. This question is particularly urgent in the case of alternative media, whose survival often depends on reciprocal relationships with their publics. This study investigates how audiences construct trust in alternative journalism in Hong Kong after the National Security Law was implemented in 2020, where political constraints have reshaped the relationship between news producers and audiences. While alternative media often claim closer proximity to public sentiment, we ask how such trust is discursively performed and negotiated under conditions of political and informational ambiguity. Taking the 2025 Wang Fuk Court Fire, the city’s most severe disaster since WWII, as a case study, we explore how audience trust is shaped when narratives about public safety diverge across different journalistic sources. Methodologically, the study combines focus group interviews with digital discourse analysis of comment sections on alternative media platforms. Drawing on Stance Theory, we analyse how audiences evaluate and align with journalistic voices through linguistic strategies of trust or mistrust. Building on the stance-based coding, we further draw on the framework of reciprocal journalism to analyse how audience comments reflect expectations of mutual recognition, emotional proximity, and responsiveness in alternative media content. Rather than assuming alternative media are inherently more credible, we examine how audiences define credibility, and what content practices foster that perception. Ultimately, this study broadens research on Hong Kong’s alternative media landscape by demonstrating that political positionality is not the sole determinant of media trust. Instead, trust is actively performed through discursive stances and shaped by reciprocal expectations between media and audiences.