International Journal of Marketing, Communication and New Media
ISSN: 2182-9306. VOL 13, Nº 24, June 2025

IJMCNM

DOI: https://doi.org/10.54663/2182-9306.2025.v.13.n.24.189-216

Research paper

Blind Faith: A Study on the Interrelations among Credibility, Trust, and Non-Exposure to the Media.

Isabel Neira *
Marta Portela **
Martín Vaz Álvarez ***
José Miguel Túñez López ****

ABSTRACT

Media research has dedicated important efforts to the concepts of trust, credibility or trustworthiness in traditional media. These efforts have focused on the idea of their conceptualization and their relations to different factors (e.g., exposure), all concentrating on the connection between citizens (trustors) and the media (trustees). This study aims to examine how trust in the media is shaped by the perceived credibility of the newsmaking process and by media exposure, distinguishing between traditional channels (print, radio, TV) and online platforms, using a sample comprising 27,424 observations on individuals from the 28 European countries included in Eurobarometer 90.3. Through this analysis, we estimate the determinants of trust in print media, radio, TV, and the internet, obtaining a strong correlation between credibility and trust. Exposure to traditional media (print media, radio, and TV) reinforces trust in them, with no negative effects on trust between each other. The correlation between trust and non-exposure to the media is also notable, opening an interesting discussion on how consumption or non-consumption can affect how the public perceives news through different media types.

Keywords: Trust, exposure, credibility, newsmaking, news media trust, media type, non-exposure

* VALFINAP-ECOBAS (Economics and Business Administration for Society), University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain. E-mail: isabel.neira@usc.es
** VALFINAP-ECOBAS (Economics and Business Administration for Society), University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain. E-mail: marta.portela@usc.es
*** Novos Medios Research Group, Department of Communication Sciences, University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain. E-mail: martin.vaz.alvarez@usc.es
**** Novos Medios Research Group, Department of Communication Sciences, University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain. E-mail: miguel.tunez@usc.es

Received on: 2024.10.05
Approved on: 2025.06.28
Evaluated by a double-blind review system

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance given to trust in the field of communication has shown increasing relevance in studies of different agencies, including the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the Annual Reports of the Reuters Institute, the University of Oxford, and the Edelman Trust Barometer (2019). All of them address the media's concern about the impacts of trust on image, reputation, and audience levels as a marker of social acceptance and influence. Trust and audience (or exposure to the media) could be highly correlated in a perfect and correctly informed society; citizens would then only consume the news that they trust. However, as Jones (2004) and Strömbäck et al. (2020) point out, trust and credibility have fallen significantly in both the USA (from 68% in 1968 to 32% in 2016) and the European Union (from 50% in 2006 to 42% in 2018) (Eurobarometer 2018). Moreover, the arrival of new communication channels and the disinformation or misinformation caused by fake news through new vehicles of information poses a major challenge in which trust acquires new relevance (Tsfati et al., 2020).

When it comes to conceptualizing media trust, one important aspect is related to the concept of media and what exactly is the measure of the connection between citizens (trustors) and the media (trustees). Media trust could refer to an unspecified media type, media news in general, media as institutions, individual media outlets, journalists, or the topic of media coverage (Strömbäck et al., 2020). If what researchers mean is not clear when discussing the recipients of this trust – the trustees – there is no consensus on the definition of trust itself. "Media credibility", "media trust," and "media trustworthiness" are often used as synonymous or interchangeable terms (Henke et al., 2020; Kiousis, 2001; Kohring & Matthes, 2007; Fawzi, Nayla, et al, 2021).

The analysis of the factors that determine media trust at an individual level is related to political interest, interpersonal trust, and exposure (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003). The mainstream academic literature has studied exposure to the media as a whole, noting no difference regarding the media type, especially the new media platforms. The results have only shown modest associations between media trust and exposure (Tsfati and Cappella,

2003), leaving the question of why people watch news they do not trust with important unknowns to be solved.

In this research, we approach trust from the field of communication, classifying the media type into the classic diffusion channels (print media, radio, and TV) and, in particular, considering the effects of the eruption of new media through the internet. We focus on the analysis of two determining factors: the newsmaking process (analysing credibility, plurality of voices and opinion or independence) and media exposure.

We make a novel and timely contribution since we delve into the interaction between media types at a time when users are engaged in a transmedia consumption that links multiple platforms and dilutes the importance of the main user (Molyneux, 2019). In addition, parting from the perception of each media type, we analyze the effects of channel choice itself, the perception of the newsmaking process, and the variations regarding whether news is consumed in traditional media or online. For this purpose, 28 countries' microdata extracted from Eurobarometer 2018 are used to contextualize this new reality in the media consumption habits in Europe.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of trust in the media is one of the oldest lines of research, initiated by Westley and Severin (1964), with their work on a local sample in Wisconsin to examine the influence of demographic variables (sex, age, and education) on trust in the press and on radio and TV. Most of the reference works in the field of trust focus on the final results of newsmaking (Kohring & Matthes, 2007) in selectivity of topics, selectivity of facts, accuracy of depictions, and journalist assessments. Linked and often interchanged with the concept of trust is the source of credibility, which investigates how the same message can have greater or lesser credibility, depending on the source (Hovland et al., 1953; Hovland & Weiss, 1951). For Henke et al. (2020), media credibility and trustworthiness are not inherent or objective characteristics of the media but products of a triangular perception of news users, influenced not only by the final story (the content) but by the whole process and the whole context of newsmaking and distribution of the news. In contemporary newsmaking processes, the fact that news content can now be fully computer-generated (Graefe, 2016) suggests adding a new layer to the perception of the users, which should be taken into account moving forward into future studies on trust. Also, more recent experimental work

confirms that when users are aware that a story or image is AI-generated or carries metadata about its provenance, their trust in its credibility declines, even if the content itself is accurate (Feng et al., 2023).

This triangular perception associated with the journalist's role in newsmaking cannot be considered an unquestionable indicator, but one of the proposals handled in the polyhedral vision of trust analysis and of the levels that could be differentiated if we refer to trust in the media as support or trust in the content (the news). Henke et al. (2020) emphasise that trust in the media means trust in journalistic practices because trust is a delegation in the dynamics of content production with the expectation of obtaining a quality product. In line with the methods used in several studies, Appelman and Sundar (2016); Borah, (2014); Golan (2010); Henke et al., (2020); sequence credibility in different aspects of newsmaking: the evaluation of the channel through which it is disseminated, the source of the message (i.e., the organisation that promotes or disseminates the news) and the interactions with the source through the explicit references embedded in the news narrative.

Media trust and media credibility are two different subdimensions. They are highly correlated (Prochazka & Schweiger, 2019; Strömbäck et al., 2020) but still shallowly explored from the empirical perspective.

The explicit references to the sources referred to by Henke et al. (2020) end up determining the polyphony or the monophony of the informative contents. Due to their amplitude and variability, they can be considered indicators of the plurality of information, individually, and of the subject matter or the medium, collectively. Polyphony links plurality and independence according to the prominence given to the voices of shareholders, governing political actors, or economic groups as dominant actors or single voices in monophonic contents, that is, stories that lack enough contrast to guarantee plurality.

2.1 Exposure

In a perfectly informed society, citizens would only consume the news they trust. Therefore, a high correlation would be expected between audience trust and exposure.

However, the audience can also be interpreted as a reinforcement of the conduct and an identification of the habits that respond to a behavioural model through which more confidence is expressed in the medium or the support that is received. This phenomenon is the bilateral interrelation between trust and exposure. There is thus a two-way relation, which is out of the focus of this work, but would be interesting to analyse through a specific

temporal analysis (Fisher, 2018; Jackob, 2010, 2012; Kiousis, 2001; Rimmer & Weaver, 1987; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003). Audience or media exposure could be a good predictor, but it is not the equivalent of trust. People become media consumers for a variety of reasons besides the desire to be informed, fun, entertainment, companionship, and political orientation. Tsfati and Cappella (2003) suggest a linkage between news media trust and selective (non-) exposure to news media. This provides evidence that social sectors that are not audiences are non-trusted segments of the public that moderate the persuasive effects of the media (Hovland et al., 1953; Hovland & Weiss, 1951). The comparison is not always accurate because non-exposure is not always equivalent to non-trust, as evidenced by the positive reputation of trust in the contents of the media worldwide, considered referential even for those who do not usually consume those media (e.g., BBC, The New York Times, *The Guardian*). There is trust even in non-exposure (Tsfati et al., 2025) suggests a reciprocal relationship between trust and exposure: The reinforcing spirals model, the study confirms a link between media use and trust in mainstream media, primarily driven by selective exposure, people use media they already trust. While there's some evidence that media use can also increase trust over time, especially through repeated exposure and socialization, this effect is weaker and varies by group, with populist or right-leaning individuals remaining more skeptical.

In these cases, it is worth resorting to the impact of the confirmatory bias (Mahoney, 1977) on the audience, which in part represents the result of the tendency to seek, pay attention to, and even embellish experiences that support a person's own beliefs. In the case of journalism, the bias is in line with the theories that, since Cohen (1963), have supported the idea that the media do not say what to think about something, but rather what to think about. The theories guide the interpretation of trust as a process of confidence building through the search for the reinforcement of a person's own beliefs and, by extension, of exposure to more media. Exposure through this process acts as an inadvertent and unconscious bias that sees the media as credible because it reinforces previous beliefs (MacCoun, 1998).

2.2 New online platforms

Linking trust with the media types and their distribution platforms, the main point of this research, becomes specially relevant with the rise of online news dissemination (Appelman & Sundar, 2016) and the attitude of the media as actors in social networks, making content visible or transferring traffic to their main websites, that is, to attract the audience (Lasorsa

et al., 2012), but at the cost of taking the news out of its original informative context and turning it into social network content. The media outlets diversify their platforms, but when they distribute content both offline and online, they do not ostensibly differentiate it but derive their strategy from formulas that allow them to monetise this online dissemination, encouraged by the participation and consumption rates on the internet (Flanagin et al., 2020). This increase in online media activity can be considered significant. Although one of the intangibles associated with their products is credibility, they generate content in a medium that suffers from a high level of public

distrust, which could explain their concern for their credibility as a medium of communication and globally, as a sector (press, radio, and TV),

Recent findings confirm that exposure to high volumes of false or misleading news more prevalent in online environments, contributes to a general erosion of trust in media (Altay et al., 2025), and people are less trustful of news they consume through social media (Karlsen & Aalberg, 2021). People who use social media for news—especially those exposed incidentally—tend to show lower trust in the news they encounter there (Park & Lee, 2023).

The analysis of trust in the media admits multiple approaches that review all the variables influencing the generation of trust in the media, as well as the interaction of the actors and the media involved in the content dissemination and consumption. These range from the influence of personal relationships (Hermida et al., 2012), increased by the universalisation of social networks, to the influence of algorithmic selection through content recommendations (Shardanand & Maes, 1995; Thurman & Schifferes, 2012). Such an algorithm is currently based on a data mining analysis for the micro-segmentation of audiences that can identify expectations on the offered product and select the best way to guide the personalised exposition of that recommendation in order to satisfy them.

3. METHOD

The data used were sourced from Eurobarometer 90.3: Media monitoring, media analysis, and Eurobarometer (2018).

Our analysis covers 28 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus (Republic), Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, the United Kingdom, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Latvia, Malta, The

Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia and Slovakia (EU-28 group). The dependent variables for trust in institutions are print media, radio, TV, and the internet. These are dichotomic variables with two possible answers: tend to trust and tend not to trust. Table 1 shows the frequencies of these variables.

Table 1. Trust in the media.

Variables	**Values** 1 – **Tend not to trust** 2 – **Tend to trust**	**Frequencies (%)**
Trust print media	1	46.88
	2	53.12
Trust radio	1	34.58
	2	65.42
Trust TV	1	41.49
	2	58.51
Trust the internet	1	58.14
	2	41.86

Independent variables are related to the perceived state of the national media, trust in certain media-related institutions, media exposure, sources of information on national policy issues, and other control variables. Information on these variables can be found in Table 2 and in the Appendix.

Given the dichotomic nature of dependent variables, logit models are estimated. The empirical analysis is based on the following equation:

$$Trust_i = \alpha + \sum \beta_n X_{\{n,i\}} + \varepsilon_i$$

Where *i* refers to the individual respondent

$Trust_i$ The binary dependent variable indicates whether the individual expresses trust in each type of media.

$X_{\{n,i\}}$ represents the set of independent variables for individual *i*

β_n are the estimated coefficients that measure the effect of each predictor on the probability of trusting the media.

ε_i is the error term.

The logit model transforms the linear combination of predictors into a probability using the logistic function, which ensures that the predicted values fall within the interval [0, 1]. This is particularly useful when modeling binary outcomes, as it allows for the interpretation of results in terms of likelihood or odds of trusting a specific medium.

The estimations were carried out using the glm() function in R, specifying the binomial family to indicate that the dependent variable is binary. This function fits generalized linear models and is widely used in social science research for its flexibility and robustness. In this case, the dependent variable is a binary indicator of whether an individual expresses trust in a specific type of media (e.g., print, radio, TV, or internet). The model estimates the log-odds of trusting the media as a linear function of a set of predictors, including perceptions of media credibility, institutional trust, media exposure, and sociodemographic characteristics.

The logit model is expressed as:

$$log\left(\frac{Trust_i}{1-Trust_i}\right) = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{\{1,i\}} + \beta_2 X_{\{2,i\}} + \cdots + \beta_n X_{\{n,i\}}$$

With this model specification in place, Table 2 presents the empirical results of the logistic regressions. These results provide insight into which factors are most strongly associated with trust in different types of media (print, radio, TV, and internet). Table 2 presents the results of the regression analysis.

Table 2. Results of the regression analysis

	Print media	**Radio**	**TV**	**Internet**
(Intercept)	**-2.474***** (0.439)	**-2.295***** (0.437)	**-3.874***** (0.460)	**-3.333***** (0.504)
National media (reference category: Yes)				
National media: Trustworthy	**1.048***** (0.052)	**0.871***** (0.053)	**0.923***** (0.052)	**0.274***** (0.059)
National media: Diverse views	**0.302***** (0.054)	**0.40734***** (0.053)	**0.378***** (0.053)	**0.09686** (0.059)
National media: Free from political/commercial pressure	**0.252***** (0.053)	**0.105** (0.056)	**0.343***** (0.053)	**-0.073** (0.057)
National public service media: Free from political pressure	**0.062** (0.051)	**0.040** (0.054)	**0.234***** (0.051)	**-0.065** (0.055)
Trust in institutions (reference category: Tend not to trust)				
Internet	**0.803***** (0.053)	**0.815***** (0.057)	**1.015***** (0.054)	
Online social networks	**0.551***** (0.060)	**0.377***** (0.065)	**0.408***** (0.062)	**3.228***** (0.061)
Public administration	**0.594***** (0.053)	**0.651***** (0.055)	**0.602***** (0.053)	**0.327***** (0.060)

Regional/local public authorities	**0.549***** (0.052)	**0.596***** (0.053)	**0.525***** (0.052)	**0.260***** (0.058)
Media use (reference category: Medium exposure)				
TV via TV set: No exposure	**-0.063** (0.141)	**0.177** (0.143)	**-0.136** (0.145)	**0.072** (0.144)
TV via TV set: Intense exposure	**0.229**** (0.089)	**0.127** (0.089)	**0.205*** (0.088)	**0.110** (0.092)
TV via internet: No exposure	**-0.017** (0.055)	**-0.066** (0.058)	**-0.101** (0.056)	**0.045** (0.058)
TV via internet: Intense exposure	**0.001** (0.058)	**-0.185**** (0.061)	**-0.029** (0.059)	**-0.084** (0.061)
Radio: No exposure	**-0.093** (0.090)	**-0.227*** (0.092)	**-0.062** (0.090)	**-0.231*** (0.098)
Radio: Intense exposure	**0.011** (0.059)	**0.235***** (0.059)	**0.040** (0.059)	**-0.004** (0.062)
Print media: No exposure	**-0.193**** (0.069)	**-0.187**** (0.068)	**0.046** (0.068)	**-0.079** (0.074)
Print media: Intense exposure	**0.264***** (0.052)	**0.094** (0.055)	**0.147**** (0.053)	**-0.035** (0.057)
Internet: No exposure	**0.187** (0.117)	**-0.045** (0.120)	**0.129** (0.119)	**-0.375**** (0.139)
Internet: Intense exposure	**-0.030** (0.095)	**0.297**** (0.098)	**-0.048** (0.097)	**0.338**** (0.107)

Online social networks: No exposure	**-0.046** (0.081)	**0.114** (0.086)	**0.024** (0.082)	**-0.134** (0.084)
Online social networks: Intense exposure	**-0.192**** (0.071)	**-0.009** (0.075)	**-0.039** (0.071)	**-0.103** (0.072)
National political matters news – First news source (1st) (reference category: Other [spontaneous]) – Second news source (2nd)				
1st: TV	**-0.364** (0.335)	**-0.137** (0.326)	**0.862*** (0.359)	**0.773** (0.398)
1st: Print media	**0.516** (0.339)	**-0.009** (0.332)	**0.482** (0.363)	**0.517** (0.402)
1st: Radio	**-0.161** (0.339)	**0.276** (0.332)	**0.493** (0.363)	**0.455** (0.402)
1st : Websites	**-0.537** (0.334)	**-0.663*** (0.326)	**-0.131** (0.358)	**1.375***** (0.400)
1st: Online social networks	**-0.818*** (0.345)	**-0.641** (0.336)	**-0.016** (0.368)	**0.554** (0.408)
2nd: TV	**-0.055** (0.071)	**0.140** (0.073)	**0.427***** (0.070)	**-0.015** (0.074)
2nd: Print media	**0.371***** (0.052)	**0.104** (0.055)	**0.155**** (0.053)	**0.012** (0.056)
2nd: Radio	**0.009** (0.049)	**0.332***** (0.052)	**0.154**** (0.050)	**-0.062** (0.052)
2nd: Websites	**-0.074** (0.053)	**-0.135*** (0.056)	**-0.120*** (0.054)	**0.365***** (0.056)
2nd: Online social networks	**-0.253***** (0.061)	**-0.086** (0.063)	**-0.056** (0.062)	**-0.062** (0.065)

2nd: Other (spontaneous)	**0.081** (0.119)	**-0.034** (0.119)	**-0.005** (0.120)	**0.317*** (0.128)
Concept image: Public Service –positive	**0.159**** (0.051)	**0.151**** (0.051)	**0.177***** (0.051)	**0.089** (0.057)
Left–right placement (reference category: Centre)				
(1– 4) Left	**0.155**** (0.049)	**0.182***** (0.052)	**0.166***** (0.050)	**0.012** (0.053)
(7–10) Right	**-0.003** (0.052)	**-0.060** (0.053)	**0.152**** (0.052)	**0.166**** (0.055)
Age				
Age: Exact	**0.008** (0.009)	**-0.016** (0.009)	**-0.002** (0.009)	**-0.003** (0.010)
Age: Squared	**-0.000** (0.000)	**0.000*** (0.000)	**0.000** (0.000)	**-0.000** (0.000)
Marital status (reference category: (Re-)Married				
Single, living with partner	**0.010** (0.068)	**0.069** (0.071)	**0.024** (0.068)	**0.016** (0.070)
Single	**0.082** (0.066)	**0.08253** (0.069)	**0.001** (0.067)	**-0.06456** (0.070)
Divorced or separated	**-0.057** (0.081)	**-0.185*** (0.083)	**-0.004** (0.081)	**-0.024** (0.088)
Widow	**0.048** (0.096)	**-0.086** (0.101)	**-0.042** (0.098)	**0.118** (0.106)
Gender				
Gender: Female	**0.198***** (0.043)	**0.248***** (0.045)	**0.241***** (0.044)	**-0.041** (0.046)

Respondent Occupation Scale (C14) (reference category: self-employment)				
Managers	**-0.070** (0.092)	**0.027** (0.095)	**0.159** (0.092)	**-0.097** (0.094)
Other white-collar employees	**-0.018** (0.090)	**0.076**(0.093)	**0.106** (0.091)	**-0.095** (0.094)
Manual workers	**-0.322***** (0.085)	**0.032** (0.087)	**0.143** (0.085)	**-0.204*** (0.088)
House persons	**-0.354**** (0.130)	**-0.316*** (0.132)	**0.048** (0.130)	**-0.145** (0.139)
Unemployed	**-0.279*** (0.117)	**0.265*** (0.119)	**0.247*** (0.117)	**-0.046** (0.122)
Retired	**-0.132** (0.095)	**0.007** (0.099)	**0.093** (0.096)	**-0.186** (0.101)
Students	**0.249** (0.135)	**0.128** (0.138)	**0.259** (0.135)	**-0.246** (0.140)
Type of community (reference category: rural area or village)				
Small-/medium-sized town	**0.060** (0.051)	**-0.023** (0.053)	**-0.011** (0.051)	**-0.082** (0.054)
Large town	**-0.066** (0.054)	**-0.170**** (0.056)	**-0.136*** (0.054)	**0.104** (0.057)
Financial situation of household (reference category: very poor)				
Rather poor	**0.0180** (0.119)	**0.142** (0.113)	**0.193** (0.117)	**0.120** (0.132)
Rather good	**0.173** (0.115)	**0.427***** (0.110)	**0.412***** (0.113)	**0.202** (0.128)
Very good	**0.359**** (0.126)	**0.635***** (0.124)	**0.589***** (0.125)	**0.044** (0.138)
Akaike’s Information Criteria	14135.265	13179.819	13946.396	12944.504

Bayesian Information Criteria	14539.921	13584.284	14351.586	13342.859
Log likelihood	-7013.632	-6535.909	-6919.198	-6419.252
Deviance	14027.265	13071.819	13838.396	12838.504
Number of Observations	13275	13228	13407	13577
Notes: $^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$				

(Brackets represent standard deviations)

Table 2 shows the results of the four estimated models that are summarised in the following sections.

Section I: Newsmaking

The results point out that credibility, measured through the "media provide trustworthy information", has the greatest and most positive effect of all factors analysed in any media type (print media, radio, TV, and the internet). The largest effect is that of print media (1.048), where journalistic information is predominant. The effects of TV (0.923) and radio (0.871) are also high, and even on the internet (0.274), a significant and positive effect is observed. This supports the idea of systemic trust (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003), where trust in the media system spills over into individual media outlets.

Other important elements in the newsmaking process have been studied in this paper, such as the "plurality of voices and opinion", measured through the "media provide a diversity of views and opinions", with positive and significant effects. Nevertheless, with slightly lower coefficients in this case, the confidence in the dissemination of content on the internet is not affected by this factor of plurality.

Related to the variable "independence", we differentiate between the "media" and the "public media". In the first option, the "media provide a diversity of views and opinions" is only positive and significant for print media and TV (0.252 and 0.343, respectively). However, trust in radio and the internet is not affected by the idea of "media independence". The "public service media are free from political pressure" is only significant for TV (0.234).

Section II: Generalised trust

All variables indicate that trust is reinforced following this pattern: people who trust institutions (e.g., administration and its office holders, authorities, etc.) also trust the media. The most striking result is the effect of trust in social networks on trust in the internet. This suggests a strong horizontal trust transfer between digital platforms, where users who trust social networks are also more likely to trust internet-based news sources. This aligns with the work of Gil de Zúñiga and Chen (2019), who argue that digital media use fosters civic engagement and trust in digital information environments. It also reflects the idea that users embedded in digital ecosystems develop a positive predisposition toward digital news, reinforcing their credibility.

Similarly, trust in the internet as an institution has a strong and significant effect on trust in traditional media. This may indicate a form of generalized digital trust, where individuals

who perceive digital technologies as reliable extend that trust to media that integrate digital formats.

Trust in public administration and regional/local authorities also shows consistent and significant positive effects across all media types. These results support Newton's (2001) theory of generalized institutional trust, which posits that confidence in democratic institutions correlates with trust in the media. In this sense, media trust is not only a function of media performance but also of the broader institutional ecosystem in which media operate.

In summary, institutional trust, especially in digital platforms and public authorities, plays a crucial role in shaping media trust. The findings suggest that efforts to strengthen institutional legitimacy and transparency may have positive spillover effects on media credibility.

Section III: Exposure

The results of the variable "exposure to the media" explain that on one hand, those who watch TV on a TV set at least two or more times a week (90% of the interviewees) also report a higher trust in print media and TV than others. On the other hand, those who browse TV content through the internet (21% of the sample population) show a negative effect on trust in radio and no significant impact elsewhere.

Regular radio consumers (68% of the European average) are more confident in the radio itself, reinforcing its role as a stable and credible medium, especially in local contexts.

Regarding print media content (45% do so at least twice a week), those who read it are more confident in the information obtained from print media and TV.

No exposure to the internet significantly reduces trust in the internet, while exposure increases trust in the internet and radio. This duality reflects the complexity of digital trust.

Regarding non-traditional media, those who choose to obtain political information through websites or online social networks show less trust in print media, while having no significant effect on other media.

Section IV: Political Information Sources and Trust

This section examines how the primary and secondary sources individuals use to obtain information about national political matters influence their trust in different types of media. The results reveal that the origin of political information—whether traditional or digital—has a significant impact on media trust, often reinforcing or undermining perceptions of credibility.

First Source of Political News

Websites as the first source of political news have a strong positive effect on trust in the internet, but a negative effect on trust in radio.

Social networks, as the first source, reduce trust in print, reinforcing the idea that social media consumption may displace trust in legacy journalism.

TV as the first source increases trust in TV, but has no significant effect on other media. This reflects a medium-reinforcing effect, where users who rely on a medium for political information tend to trust it more.

Print and radio as first sources do not show significant effects, suggesting that their influence may be more diffuse or mediated by other factors such as education or political interest.

Second Source of Political News

Print media as a second source increases trust in print and TV, confirming its role as a reliable secondary reference.

Radio as a second source increases trust in radio and TV, reinforcing its role as a complementary medium that supports trust in other platforms.

Websites as a second source increase trust in the internet but reduce trust in traditional media. Finally, social networks as a second source reduce trust in print.

Section IV: Others

We have included other variables that are traditionally used in the trust literature, such as political opinion, and have found that people with more left-leaning tendencies have greater trust in all media than those in the centre (0.155** [print media]; 0.182*** [radio]; 0.166*** [TV]). In contrast, those with more right-wing political orientations have more trust in TV (0.152**) and the internet (0.166**).

Other control variables, such as age or marital status, do not show statistically significant behavior. In relation to gender, women show more trust in all media, except the internet.

The analysis of occupations shows that manual workers have less confidence in the press (-0.322***) and the internet (-0.204*), while the unemployed have more confidence in radio (0.265*) and TV (0.247*)

People who live in cities have less trust in radio (-0.170**) and TV (-0.136*) than those who live in villages or rural areas. Those who have a solvent financial situation generally have more trust in all media, except internet information.

Table 3. Summary of results

It can be affirmed that		**Influences trust in**			
		Media/platform			
		Print media	**Radio**	**TV**	**Internet**
Newsmaking (content production)	Trustworthiness	***	***	***	***
	Plurality of voices and opinions	***	***	***	
	Independence	**		***	
	Independence of public media			***	
High exposure (more than two times a week)	Print media	***	**		
	Radio		***		*
	TV via a TV set	*		**	
	TV via Internet		(-)*		(-)*
	Internet	(-)*	***	(-)*	***
	Online social networks	(-)*			
Exposure top olitical information	Print media	***		***	
	Radio				
	Websites		(-) *		***
	Online social networks	(-) *			

4. DISCUSSION

The communication literature has paid increasing attention to the concept of trust, using it interchangeably with concepts such as media credibility, media trust, and media trustworthiness. In this paper, we show that trust is analysed in a similar way as it is in other institutions through the Eurobarometer. The question studied is carried out jointly on trust in a set of media and institutions. The determinants of this trust have been analysed, considering the process of news generation or newsmaking, measured by the question the "media provide trustworthy information", obtaining a high correlation between trust and the newsmaking process, but being higher in the case of print media and TV, slightly lower for radio and with a low coefficient in the case of the internet, results in line with Guo, Y., and Lei, Y. (2025), they found clear evidence for the political trust transfer hypothesis: individuals with higher trust in political institutions tended to have much greater trust in traditional media (newspapers) relative to online news. Trust in institutions and trust in the media tend to reinforce each other—those who trust authorities are also more likely to trust the media supporting, (Fawzi et al., 2021) highlights that trust dynamics are often circular processes: what people identify as causes or determinants of trust can also be consequences of trust, making it a long-term, self-reinforcing cycle. Chang, A. C. H., and Tang, Y. C. (2023) notice that people who expressed greater confidence in their government were significantly more likely to trust the news media in their country, regardless of regime, suggesting citizens intuitively link the credibility of mass media to the integrity of political authorities.

Delving deeper into the newsmaking process in the generation of content, about credibility, plurality of voices and opinions, and independence, we have found that those people who consider the media (or media content) plural have greater trust in all the media analysed. Our results are in line with (Parku et al., 2022), which suggests safeguarding diversity of voices, opinions, and ownership structures in the online media landscape is essential to fostering public trust and journalistic credibility.

Another central aspect of the study is the analysis of media exposure, where we have found that exposure to traditional media (print media, radio and TV) reinforces trust in them, with no negative effects on trust between each media types, similar results could find in Tsfati et al. (2025), who suggest that here's some evidence that media use can also increase trust over time, especially through repeated exposure and socialization.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that perceived credibility of the newsmaking process exerts a strong positive influence on media trust across both traditional and online platforms, with particularly pronounced effects for trust in traditional ones. It also finds that exposure to traditional media (print, radio, and television) tends to reinforce trust in those channels, whereas individuals who rely primarily on digital news sources or social media for information express significantly lower trust in traditional news.

The analysis reveals clear differences between the factors that influence trust in traditional media (print, radio, and TV) and those affecting trust in internet-based platforms. Trust in traditional media is strongly associated with perceptions of journalistic quality, particularly trustworthiness, plurality of voices, and independence in the newsmaking process. In contrast, trust in internet media, though positively influenced by perceived trustworthiness, is not significantly affected by plurality or independence, indicating that users assess online content through different, perhaps less institutionalized, criteria. Moreover, frequent exposure to traditional media reinforces trust in those same platforms, while exposure to digital media, such as online news and social networks, produces more ambivalent effects: although it may increase trust in the internet itself, it often correlates with lower trust in traditional media. Notably, reliance on websites or social networks for political information is linked to a decrease in trust toward print and radio outlets. These findings highlight a structural asymmetry, whereby traditional media gain trust through perceived content quality, while internet-based media accumulate trust more through usage patterns, despite a generally higher degree of public skepticism.

As Strömbäck et al. (2020) refer to in their study, "News media trust and its impact on media use: Toward a framework for future research", there is a latent need for further research on trust and the elements that influence it. One of the purposes of this paper is to extend our knowledge of how exposure or non-exposure can affect trust in the media. However, much more has to be taken into account than just a media-type perspective, such as a deeper exploration of the interrelation of exposure and trust regarding specific types of content through the different platforms, and pondering the effects of this content from a news media source or other types of media.

It is important to highlight how new media, through the internet, have eroded the trust placed in traditional media on key issues such as politics, so that all those people who are informed

predominantly through the internet or online social networks have become less trusting in the information offered by traditional media. With all, the limits of our study are those of the survey used to analyse the data, which, although longitudinal, might need more specific questions to ascertain more significant conclusions.

To build on these findings, future research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs to untangle the causal relationships between media exposure and trust, incorporate more granular analyses of exposure focusing on specific content types or platforms, and further investigate how digital-era factors—such as algorithmic news curation, confirmation bias, and incidental exposure through social networks—shape trust in traditional and online media environments.

Support: Grupo de Investigación GI-1866-USC "**Valoración Financeira Aplicada - VALFINAP**", Grupo de Referencia Competitiva do Sistema Universitario de Galicia – Xunta de Galicia, ED431C 2024/08.

REFERENCES

Altay, S., Lyons, B. A., & Modirrousta-Galian, A. (2024). Exposure to Higher Rates of False News Erodes Media Trust and Fuels Overconfidence. *Mass Communication and Society*, 28(2), 301–325. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2024.2382776

Appelman A and Sundar SS (2016) Measuring message credibility: Construction and validation of an exclusive scale. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 93(1): 59–79. DOI: 10.1177/1077699015606057.

Borah P (2014) The hyperlinked world: A look at how the interactions of news frames and hyperlinks influence news credibility and willingness to seek information. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 19(3): 576– 590. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12060.

Chang, A. C. H., and Tang, Y. C. (2023). The political foundation of mainstream media trust in East and Southeast Asia: A cross-national analysis. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 15(4), 585-604.

Cohen B (1963) Press and foreign policy. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt183q0fp (accessed 11 May 2021).

Edelman (2019), Trust Barometer Global Report.

European Commission. (2018). *Standard Eurobarometer 90.*

Fawzi, N., Steindl, N., Obermaier, M., Prochazka, F., Arlt, D., Blöbaum, B., ... & Ziegele, M. (2021). Concepts, causes, and consequences of trust in news media–a literature review and framework. Annals of the International Communication Association, 45(2), 154-174.

Feng, K. J. K., Ritchie, N., Blumenthal, P., Parsons, A., & Zhang, A. X. (2023). Examining the impact of provenance-enabled media on trust and accuracy perceptions. Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction, 7(CSCW2), Article 270, 1–42. https://doi.org/10.1145/3610061

Fisher C (2018) What is meant by 'trust' in news media? In: Otto K and Köhler A (eds) *Trust in Media and Journalism.* Wiesbaden: Springer VS, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-20765-6_2.

Flanagin A, Winter S, and Metzger M (2020). Making sense of credibility in complex information environments: The role of message sidedness, information source, and thinking styles in credibility evaluation online. *Information, Communication & Society* 23(7): 1038–1056. DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2018.1547411.Golan GJ (2010) New perspectives on media credibility research. *American Behavioral Scientist* 54(1): 3–7. DOI: 10.1177/0002764210376307.

Graefe A, Haim M, Haarmann B, and Brosius H-B (2016). Readers' perception of computer-generated news: Credibility, expertise, and readability. *Journalism* 19(5): 595–610. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916641269.

Guo, Y., and Lei, Y. (2025). The Media Trust Gap and Its Political Explanations: How Individual and Sociopolitical Factors Differentiate News Trust Preferences in Asian Societies. *The International Journal of Press/Polit*ics, 19401612251315597.

Henke J, Leissner L, and Möhring W (2020). How can journalists promote news credibility? Effects of evidence on trust and credibility. *Journalism Practice* 14(3): 299–318. DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2019.1605839.

Hermida A, Fletcher F, Korell D, and Logan D (2012) Share, like, recommend. *Journalism Studies* 13(5–6): 815–824. DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2012.664430.

Hovland CI, Janis IL, and Kelley HH (1953) *Communication and Persuasion; Psychological Studies of Opinion Change.* Yale University Press.

Hovland CI and Weiss W (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 15: 635–650. https://doi.org/10.1086/266350.

IPSOS (2019) *Trust in the Media*. IPSOS Global Advisor.

Jackob N (2010) No alternatives? The relationship between perceived media dependency, use of alternative information sources, and general trust in mass media. *International Journal of Communication* (4): 589-606.

Jackob N (2012) The tendency to trust as individual predisposition – exploring the associations between interpersonal trust, trust in the media and trust in institutions. *Communications* 37(1): 99–120. https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2012-0005.

Jones D (2004). Why Americans don't trust the media: A preliminary analysis. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 9(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X04263461.

Karlsen, R., and Aalberg, T. (2021). Social Media and Trust in News: An Experimental Study of the Effect of Facebook on News Story Credibility. *Digital Journalism*, 11(1), 144–160. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1945938

Kiousis S (2001) Public trust or mistrust? Perceptions of media credibility in the information age. *Mass Communication and Society* 4(4): 381–403. DOI: 10.1207/S15327825MCS0404_4.

Kohring M and Matthes J (2007) Trust in news media: Development and validation of a multidimensional scale. *Communication Research* 34(2): 231–252. DOI: 10.1177/0093650206298071.

Lasorsa D, Lewis S, and Holton A (2012) Normalizing Twitter. *Journalism Studies* 13(1): 19–36. DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2011.571825.

Lecompte C (2015) Automation in the newsroom. *Nieman Reports* 69(3): 32–45.

Lewicka M (1998) Confirmation bias. In: Kofta M, Weary G and Sedek G (eds) *Personal Control in Action*. The Springer Series in Social Clinical Psychology. Boston, MA: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4757-2901-6_9

MacCoun RJ (1998) Biases in the interpretation and use of research results. *Annual Review of Psychology* 49: 259–287. DOI: 10.1146/annurev.psych.49.1.259. PMID: 15012470.

Mahoney MJ (1977) Publication prejudices: An experimental study of confirmatory bias in the peer review system. *Cognitive Therapy and Research* 1: 161–175. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01173636.

Molyneux L (2019). Multiplatform news consumption and its connection to civic engagement. Journalism 20(6): 788-806. DOI: 10.1177/1464884917730216

Park, S., and Lee, J. Y. (2023). Incidental News Exposure on Facebook and Its Relation to Trust in News. *Social Media Society*, 9(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051231158823

Parcu, P. L., Brogi, E., Verza, S., Da Costa Leite Borges, D., Carlini, R., Trevisan, M., & Domazetovikj, N. (2022). Study on media plurality and diversity online. Publications Office of the European Union.

Prochazka F and Schweiger W (2019) How to measure generalized trust in news media? An adaptation and test of scales. *Communication Methods and Measures* 13(1): 26–42. DOI: 10.1080/19312458.2018.1506021.

Rimmer T and Weaver D (1987) Different questions, different answers? Media use and media credibility. *Journalism Quarterly* 64(1): 28–44. DOI: 10.1177/107769908706400104.

Shardanand U and Maes P (1995) Social information filtering: Algorithms for automating "word of mouth". In: *Proceedings of the ACM CHI '95 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, pp. 210–217. New York: ACM. http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/223904.223931.

Strömbäck J, Tsfati Y, Boomgaarden H, Damstra A, Lindgren E, Vliegenthart R, and Lindholm T (2020) News media trust and its impact on media use: Toward a framework for future research. *Annals of the International Communication Association*. DOI: 10.1080/23808985.2020.1755338.

Tsfati, Y., Strömbäck, J., Lindgren, E., Damstra, A., Boomgaarden, H. G., & Vliegenthart, R. (2022). Going beyond general media trust: An analysis of topical media trust, its antecedents and effects on issue (mis) perceptions. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 34(2), edac010.

Tsfati, Y., Vliegenthart, R., Strömbäck, J., & Lindgren, E. (2025). An asymmetrical reinforcing spiral? Disentangling the longitudinal dynamics of media use and mainstream media trust. *Journal of Communication*, 75(1), 16–26. https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqae039

Thurman N and Schifferes S (2012) The future of personalisation at news websites: Lessons from a longitudinal study. *Journalism Studies* 13(5–6): 775-790 DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2012.664341.

Tsfati Y, Boomgaarden HG, Strömbäck J, Vliegenthart R, Damstra A and Lindgren E (2020). Causes and consequences of mainstream media dissemination of fake news: Literature review and synthesis. *Annals of the International Communication Association* 44(2): 157–173. DOI: 10.1080/23808985.2020.1759443.

Tsfati Y and Cappella JN (2003) Do people watch what they do not trust?: Exploring the association between news media skepticism and exposure. *Communication Research* 30(5): 504–529. DOI: 10.1177/0093650203253371.

Westley B and Severin J (1964) Some correlates of media credibility. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 41(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/107769906404100301.

Appendix

	Variables	Values	Frequencies (%)
Section I: Credibility, plurality and independence in the newsmaking process	National media: Trustworthy (1)	1 – No	34.44
		2 – Yes	65.56
	National media: Diverse views (1)	1	24.49
		2	75.51
	National media: Free from political/com pressure (1)	1	53.31
		2	46.69
	National public service media: Free from political pressure (1)	1	55.78
		2	44.22
Section II: Generalised trust	Trust: Online social networks	1 – Tend not to trust	73.27
		2 – Tend to trust	26.73
	Trust in institutions: Public administration	1	45.57
		2	54.43
	Trust in institutions: Regional/local public authorities	1	42.99
		2	57.01
Section III: Exposure	Media use: TV via TV set (2)	1 – No exposure	3.50
		2 – Medium exposure	6.32
		3 – Intense exposure	90.18
	Media use: TV via internet (2)	1	57.00

		2	21.61
		3	21.39
	Media use: Radio (2)	1	12.20
		2	19.30
		3-	68.50
	Media use: Print media (2)	1	20.30
		2	35.08
		3	44.62
	Media use: Internet (2)	1	21.28
		2	6.05
		3	72.67
	Media use: Online social networks (2)	1	35.93
		2	10.85
		3	53.22
Section IV: Political information	National political matters news – First news source	1 – Other (Spontaneous)	0.64
		2 – TV	57.09
		3 – Print media	8.74
		4 – Radio	7.99
		5 – Websites	15.85
		6 – Online social networks	4.02
		7 – You do not look for news	5.67

	National political matters news – Second: TV	1 – Not mentioned	76.00
		2 – TV	24.00
	National political matters news – Second: Print media	1 – Not mentioned	68.51
		2 – Print media	31.49
	National political matters news – Second: Radio	1 – Not mentioned	61.58
		2 – Radio	38.42
	National political matters news – Second: Websites	1 – Not mentioned	75.80
		2 – Websites	24.20
	National political matters news – Second: Online social networks	1 – Not mentioned	85.84
		2 – Online social networks	14.16
	National political matters news – Second: Other (Spontaneous)	1 – Not mentioned	94.34
		2 – Other	5.66
	Concept image: Public service (3)	1 – Negative	27.57
		2 – Positive	72.43
Control variables	Left–right placement	1 – (5–6) Centre	42.95
		2 – (1–4) Left	30.59
		3 – (7–10) Right	26.46
	Marital status	1 – (Re-)Married	53.65
		2 – Single, living with partner	11.67
		3 – Single	16.50
		4 – Divorced or	7.48

		separated	
		5 – Widow	10.69
	Gender	1 – Male	45.21
		2 – Female	54.79
	Respondent Occupation Scale	1 – Self-employed	7.28
		2 – Managers	10.27
		3 – Other white-collar workers	11.99
		4 – Manual workers	20.79
		5 – House persons	4.75
		6 – Unemployed	6.05
		7 – Retired	33.07
		8 – Students	5.80
	Type of community	1 – Rural area or village	33.74
		2 – Small-/medium-sized town	38.13
		3 – Large town	28.13
	Financial situation	1 – Very poor	5.29
		2 – Rather poor	22.35
		3 – Rather good	59.06
		4 – Very good	13.31
	Age, exact	Mean (SD): 51.76 (18.16)	
	Age, square	Mean (SD): 3008.71 (1870.36)	

	(1) These variables have been recoded. The original categories (Yes, definitely; Yes, to some extent; No, not really; and No, not at all) have been reduced to two categories: No (No, not really + No, not at all) and Yes (Yes, definitely + Yes, to some extent).
	(2) These variables have been recoded. The original categories (Every day/almost every day; Two or three times a week; About once a week; Two or three times a month; Less often; Never; No access to this medium; [Spontaneous]) have been reduced to three categories: No exposure (Never + No access to this medium); Medium exposure (About once a week + Two or three times a month + Less often); and Intense exposure (Every day/almost every day + Two or three times a week).
	(3) This variable has been recoded. The original categories (Very positive, Fairly positive, Fairly negative and Very negative) have been recoded to Negative (Fairly negative + Very negative) and Positive (Very positive + Fairly positive).

How to cite this article:

Neira, I.; Portela, M.; Álvarez, M. V. & López, J. M. T. (2025). Blind Faith: A Study on the Interrelations among Credibility, Trust, and Non-Exposure to the Media. *International Journal of Marketing, Communication and New Media*, *Vol 13, Nº 24*, June 2025, pp. 189-216.