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The Construction of Public Trust in AI-Based Information in Digital Media: An Analysis of Audience Perception and Communication Literacy

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Abstract

This study examines the construction of public trust in artificial intelligence (AI)-based information in digital media through a qualitative approach in the form of a literature review. The study focuses on three main aspects: the mechanism of public trust formation in AI content, the role of audience communication literacy in interpreting and assessing message credibility, and the impact of trust-literacy interactions on the dynamics of contemporary digital communication. Literature findings indicate that audience perceptions of the credibility of AI information are influenced by technological factors, previous media experience, and communication literacy levels, which collectively form a dynamic and heterogeneous trust structure. Communication literacy has been shown to be an important mediator in strengthening audiences' ability to evaluate and verify information, thereby reducing vulnerability to misinformation. The implications of this study emphasize that strengthening communication literacy and transparency in the use of AI by the media are prerequisites for the formation of rational and sustainable trust. The study's conclusions provide conceptual contributions to the development of ethical digital communication strategies and audience capacity building in the AI era.

Keywords:*public trust; artificial intelligence; communication literacy*

Introduction

The development of artificial intelligence has transformed the digital media ecosystem structurally and functionally. AI technology plays a role not only as a tool but also as an active actor in the production, selection, and distribution of information. Algorithms are capable of producing text, images, and videos that resemble human communication products. This accelerates the flow of information while increasing the volume of messages

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received by audiences. High levels of exposure make audiences increasingly dependent on automated systems for information acquisition. This dependency shifts the relationship between audiences and information sources. This shift marks the starting point for changes in the pattern of public trust formation in the digital space.

As AI becomes more prominent, the boundaries between human- and machine-generated information become increasingly difficult to discern. AI-based information representations often appear convincing through coherent language structures and realistic visuals. These capabilities create assumptions of credibility that are not always supported by factual accuracy. Audiences tend to judge the veracity of a message based on its appearance and narrative fluency. This assessment has the potential to undermine critical verification processes. As a result, trust in information is no longer solely based on the authority of the source. This situation demonstrates a transformation in information evaluation mechanisms in digital media (Tandoc et al., 2020).

This transformation has serious implications for the concept of public trust. Trust is no longer built solely through the reputation of media institutions, but also through perceptions of the technology used. Some audiences view AI as an objective, efficient, and self-interested system. This perception encourages the rapid acceptance of information without adequate critical consideration. On the other hand, skepticism has also emerged, viewing AI as a source of information manipulation. This diversity of attitudes demonstrates that trust is dynamic and multi-layered. These differences indicate the presence of mediating factors in the formation of public trust.

A prominent mediating factor in this process is audience communication literacy. Communication literacy encompasses the ability to understand messages, recognize sources, and assess communication objectives. Audiences with good communication literacy are able to identify the characteristics of AI-based information. This ability enables them to question the validity, bias, and interests behind messages. Conversely, limited literacy encourages passive reception of information. This passive reception pattern increases the risk of misperceptions and misinformation (Sudirjo et al., 2024; Siregar et al., 2025). Therefore, communication literacy serves as a determinant of the quality of audience interaction with AI information.

Differences in communication literacy levels result in varying perceptions of information credibility. Highly literate audiences tend to rely on content analysis and the

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https://ojsap.com/index.php/archipel/index
DOI

logical consistency of messages. They are less reliant on popularity or algorithmic recommendations. Meanwhile, low-literacy audiences are more easily influenced by the frequency of messages and the style of presentation. This pattern suggests that trust is often built through heuristic mechanisms. Heuristics facilitate decision-making but reduce the rigor of evaluation. The accumulation of these processes creates a belief structure that is vulnerable to information distortion.

Vulnerable trust structures have broader implications for the quality of public communication. AI-based information has the potential to reinforce existing biases in audiences. Algorithms that operate based on user preferences can create information echo chambers. Echo chambers narrow the diversity of perspectives received by audiences. This situation hinders critical dialogue and the healthy exchange of ideas. The resulting beliefs become exclusive and selective. This phenomenon confirms that technology and communication mutually influence each other in shaping social reality.

The social reality shaped by digital media demands a more comprehensive approach to communication analysis. Public trust in AI-based information cannot be understood solely through technological aspects. Audience perceptions, media experience, and communication literacy capacity need to be analyzed simultaneously. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the process of meaning construction. Communication analysis can reveal how messages are received, interpreted, and believed. The results of this analysis are relevant for developing digital communication policies and practices. Therefore, this study has strategic value for strengthening the quality of public information.

Based on this overall description, research on the construction of public trust in AI-based information is becoming increasingly important. Focusing on audience perceptions and communication literacy provides theoretical and practical contributions to communication science. This study helps explain the dynamics of the relationship between audiences, digital media, and AI technology. This understanding can be used to design more responsible communication strategies. Furthermore, this research has the potential to increase public critical awareness of digital information. Such efforts support the creation of a healthier media ecosystem. Therefore, this analysis is relevant to addressing communication challenges in the era of artificial intelligence.

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DOI

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review design to analyze the construction of public trust in artificial intelligence-based information in digital media. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of concepts, thought patterns, and audience perception dynamics as represented in previous scientific studies. The literature review is used as the primary strategy to integrate various conceptual and empirical findings relevant to the issues of trust, communication literacy, and AI technology in the context of digital media.

The research data sources included scientific journal articles, academic books, conference proceedings, and research reports relevant to the study topic. Literature was collected through reputable scientific databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and accredited national journal portals. Inclusion criteria included publications discussing AI-based information, public trust, communication literacy, and audience perceptions in digital media. The literature used was limited to publications within the last ten years to ensure relevance to current technological developments. Sources containing popular opinion or sources not subject to peer review were excluded from the analysis.

The data collection process was carried out in stages through searches for predetermined keywords, such as artificial intelligence and information, public trust in digital media, communication literacy, and audience perception. Each obtained literature was selected based on its topic suitability, depth of analysis, and contribution to the research's conceptual framework. Literature that met the criteria was then classified based on the study's focus, such as technological dimensions, communication aspects, and audience factors. This classification aims to facilitate mapping patterns and relationships between concepts. The selection process was carried out iteratively to maintain data consistency and quality.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques. Each literature was critically reviewed to identify key themes related to the construction of trust in AI-based information. These themes included the mechanisms of trust formation, the role of communication literacy, and the influence of digital media characteristics on audience perceptions. Next, the themes were analyzed comparatively to identify similarities, differences, and research gaps. This process enabled an integrative conceptual synthesis.

Archipel Journal
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Data validity was maintained through a source triangulation strategy, comparing findings from various literatures with different disciplinary backgrounds and methodological approaches. Furthermore, the researchers implemented an audit trail by systematically documenting the literature search, selection, and analysis process. This step aimed to increase the transparency and replicability of the research. Consistency of interpretation was maintained by linking each finding to a relevant theoretical framework in communication science. Thus, the study's results have a strong academic foundation.

The results of this literature review are presented in an analytical narrative that connects theory, empirical findings, and recent developments related to AI-based information. The presentation is thematic to emphasize the relationship between audience perception, communication literacy, and public trust. The resulting synthesis is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of trust in AI information in digital media. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to serve as a conceptual reference for further research and the formulation of more ethical and responsible digital communication strategies.

Results and Discussion

1. Dynamics of Public Trust Construction in AI-Based Information in Digital Media

Public trust in artificial intelligence-based information is formed through a complex interaction between technology, media, and audiences. AI-generated information is often perceived as having a high degree of objectivity due to its data- and algorithm-based nature. This perception is reinforced by messages that are systematic, consistent, and minimally linguistically incorrect. Audiences tend to associate the technical quality of a message with the accuracy of the information. This association encourages the acceptance of information without in-depth evaluation of its source and production process. Trust then shifts from human authority to technological legitimacy. This shift marks a paradigm shift in the digital communications ecosystem (Maulana et al., 2025).

This paradigm shift is not occurring uniformly across audience groups. The literature shows variations in perception based on media experience and technological knowledge. Some audiences view AI as an innovation that improves information quality. Others express ambivalence due to concerns about algorithmic manipulation and bias. This variation reflects

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DOI

the situational and contextual nature of trust. Social and cultural factors also influence how audiences interpret the role of AI. Previous experiences with misinformation reinforce skepticism toward automated content. Thus, public trust is formed through accumulated communication experiences.

Trust is also influenced by how digital media frames the use of AI. Transparency regarding AI use in content production is an important indicator for critical audiences. When media outlets fail to explain the involvement of AI, audiences tend to fill in the gaps with their own assumptions. These assumptions do not always lead to accurate judgments. The lack of source tagging weakens message evaluation mechanisms. This situation increases the potential for misinterpretation. The trust formed becomes fragile and easily changed (Lee & Tandoc, 2024).

In addition to media framing, algorithmic design also influences the construction of trust. Recommendation systems present information based on user preferences and history. This pattern creates a high perception of relevance to the content displayed. Relevance is often equated with truth by some audiences. This assumption reinforces the acceptance of messages without cross-verification. Repeated exposure to similar information increases the subjective validation effect. This process subconsciously consolidates trust.

The accumulation of technological, media, and audience factors forms a dynamic trust structure. Trust does not exist as a fixed state, but is continually negotiated through communication experiences. The literature confirms that this structure is vulnerable to disruption by AI-based misinformation. When errors are identified, trust can collapse rapidly. The impact of this collapse extends beyond a single message and impacts perceptions of the system as a whole. Therefore, trust construction needs to be understood as an ongoing process. This understanding forms the basis for analyzing the role of communication literacy.

2. The Role of Communication Literacy in Shaping Audience Perceptions of AI Information

Communication literacy serves as a cognitive framework for interpreting artificial intelligence-based information. This capability encompasses understanding message structure, identifying sources, and evaluating communication objectives. Audiences with adequate communication literacy are able to recognize the language patterns typical of AI-generated content. Awareness of these patterns encourages a reflective attitude in receiving

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https://ojsap.com/index.php/archipel/index
DOI

information. The process of reflection reduces the tendency to automatically accept messages. Literacy acts as an initial filter in the formation of perceptions. Thus, the quality of perception is highly dependent on the audience's literacy capacity (Jayanti & Meilinda, 2024).

Literature shows that communication literacy is not only technical but also critical. The critical dimension allows audiences to question the power relations behind information technology. AI is understood not as a neutral entity, but rather as a product of particular interests. This understanding changes how audiences assess the credibility of messages. Evaluation goes beyond content to encompass the production process. Structural awareness enriches audiences' analysis of digital messages. The resulting perceptions become more contextual and deliberate.

Differences in literacy levels create gaps in how audiences respond to AI information. Audiences with low literacy rely more on surface cues such as popularity and visuals. These cues provide a false sense of security regarding the information's veracity. Reliance on surface cues increases the risk of misinterpretation. Meanwhile, audiences with high literacy exhibit a tendency to verify information across sources. This verification process slows information consumption but increases the accuracy of understanding. This gap highlights the social dimension of communication literacy (Poladia et al., 2025).

The literacy gap impacts the distribution of trust within society. Highly literate groups function as agents of information correction. Low-literate groups are more vulnerable to manipulative information flows. The interaction between the two groups shapes the dynamics of public communication. Digital discourse often exhibits conflicting interpretations of the same information. This conflict reflects differences in cognitive frameworks for evaluating messages. The literature emphasizes the importance of literacy as a tool for equalizing information quality.

Strengthening communication literacy is seen as a long-term strategy in addressing the dominance of AI in digital media. Literacy not only increases individual capacity but also collective resilience against disinformation. A literate audience contributes to a healthier communication ecosystem. Critical participation encourages accountability among media and technology developers. The resulting trust becomes more rational and measurable, and the structure of public communication becomes more stable. Therefore, communication literacy holds a strategic position in discussions of public trust.

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DOI

3. Implications of Trust Construction and Communication Literacy for the Digital Media Ecosystem

The construction of public trust in AI-based information has broad implications for the digital media ecosystem. Trust influences patterns of information consumption, distribution, and reproduction. Audiences tend to share information deemed credible without further verification. This pattern accelerates the circulation of messages in the digital space. When trust is formed on the basis of false perceptions, the risk of spreading misinformation increases. This dynamic positions audiences as active actors in the production of meaning. The media ecosystem becomes increasingly participatory and vulnerable.

This vulnerability is exacerbated by the integration of AI into media systems. Algorithms operate based on the logic of efficiency and user engagement. This logic does not always align with the principle of information accuracy. Content that triggers an emotional response is prioritized in distribution. Audiences then receive selectively filtered information. This selectivity creates a fragmented information reality. Trust thrives within a limited information space. Fragmentation weakens public consensus on the truth.

Communication literacy acts as a corrective mechanism in such situations. Literate audiences are able to navigate beyond algorithmic fragmentation. The ability to navigate across sources broadens the spectrum of information received. This broad spectrum enriches understanding and reduces perceptual bias. Critical interaction with the media encourages more substantial dialogue. This dialogue is crucial for the formation of healthy public opinion. The media ecosystem receives constructive feedback from the audience (Prasojo, 2025).

Another implication concerns the responsibilities of media institutions and technology developers. Public trust demands transparency and accountability in the use of AI. The literature highlights the importance of digital communication ethics in maintaining media legitimacy. Explanations about the role of AI raise audience awareness. This awareness strengthens the relationship between media and the public. Trust is no longer taken for granted but openly negotiated. This process strengthens the foundation of public communication.

Overall, the construction of trust and communication literacy are interconnected in shaping the quality of the digital media ecosystem. Trust without literacy creates information

vulnerability. Literacy without trust hinders public participation. A balance between the two is a prerequisite for sustainable digital communication. Literature studies show that this balance can be achieved through a reflective communication approach. This approach positions the audience as an active and critical subject. Thus, this discussion emphasizes the importance of integrating a communication perspective in the study of AI and digital media.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, public trust in artificial intelligence-based information in digital media is formed through a complex interaction between technology, media, and audiences. Trust does not emerge automatically but is built through perceptions of message credibility, algorithmic design, and prior communication experiences. AI-based information is often associated with objectivity and efficiency, thus encouraging message acceptance without in-depth evaluation. This situation demonstrates a shift in information authority from human actors to technological legitimacy. However, variations in audience attitudes indicate that trust is dynamic and not homogeneous. Communication literacy plays a key role in mediating how audiences interpret and evaluate digital information. Adequate literacy levels enable audiences to be reflective and critical of AI-based messages. Conversely, limited literacy increases vulnerability to misinformation and algorithmic bias. The findings of the literature study confirm that trust without literacy results in fragile communication structures. The integration of communication literacy contributes to strengthening the resilience of public information. The implications of this discussion place media institutions and technology developers in a strategic position to build transparency and accountability. Thus, the balance between public trust and communication literacy is a key prerequisite for the sustainability of the digital media ecosystem in the era of artificial intelligence.

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