

The Structure of Trust in the Mass Media: A Survey and Analysis of Japanese Views of the Media

YOKOYAMA Shigeru and YONEKURA RITSU

Popular trust in the mass media has been an issue of debate in all sorts of fields. Some researchers emphasize the accuracy of information transmitted by the media, diversity of views, and the importance of supplying the context and background in which an event is situated. Others point out problems of “sugar-coated” journalism or “tabloidization.” The advent and diffusion of the Internet relativized the reliability of the established mass media, including the newspapers, television, and magazines. In the last few years, with the enactment in May 2000 of the five laws relating to the protection of personal information and the passage of legislation for handling of military emergencies, as well as recent consideration of the introduction of the jury system in Japan, the sociopolitical environment surrounding the mass media is increasingly demanding. Behind recent arguments gaining support for greater regulation of the media lies widespread popular distrust of the media.¹ The question of popular trust and distrust in the mass media is a serious issue today that relates to freedom of speech and expression, and the autonomy of the media.

Until now, however, there have been almost no surveys directly addressing popular trust in the mass media. There are, of course, critiques, letters to the editor, and exemplar views of experts and the general public available in this field, but as for nationwide surveys conducted by the probability (random) sampling method, few can be found. One example is that carried out by the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association and its constituent newspaper companies.² And even those are limited to narrowly focused

¹ Hara Toshio, Tajima Yasuhiko, et al., *Media kisei to tero, senso hodo* [Media Control and News Reporting on Terrorism and War], Akashi Shoten, 2002; Shimizu Hideo, *Genron no jiyu wa garasu no shiro ka* [Is Freedom of Speech a Glass House?], Sanseido, 1999; Katsura Keiichi, “Media ni yoru jinken shingai” [Human Rights Violations by the Media], published in *Jurist* (no. 1196); etc.

² Yomiuri newspaper's public opinion survey (2002); “Nisen'ichi-nen zenkoku media sesshoku hyoka chosa” [2001 Nationwide Survey of Media Contact and Evaluation], Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association (October 2001); etc.

themes such as the question which is more trusted, newspapers or television.

To better identify what kinds of attitudes and views people have toward the mass media, our project team at the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute conducted an exploratory survey. Reported here are the results and some analysis of our survey data regarding what factors trust in the mass media hinges on and how.

SURVEY OUTLINE AND RESULTS

What follows is an outline of the public opinion survey analyzed in this paper.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Date of survey | November 8 (Fri.) to November 10, 2002 (Sun.) |
| 2. Survey method | Face-to-face interview |
| 3. Survey target | Citizens 20 years of age and older |
| 4. Survey sample | Stratified two-stage probability (random) sampling
1,800 (12 × 150 locations) |
| 5. No. of respondents
(response rate) | 1,169 (64.9 percent) |

From among survey findings we focus on the responses to questions about “degree of trust in the mass media” and “most trusted mass medium,” the responses to questions about factors presumed to be related with degree of trust, and some basic attributes of respondents. A comparative study is made here using mainly the results of cross tabulations of these.

Trust in Relation to Respondents’ Attributes

First, we will give a general overview of the conditions and features of the level of people’s trust in the mass media in general, which includes newspapers, television, magazines, etc.

Twelve percent of respondents reported that they “trust” the mass media in general and 70 percent said they “tend to trust” it, for a combined total of 82 percent who trust the mass media (fig. 1). There is a great difference, however, in the attributes of “trust” and “tend to trust” respondents. Figure 2 is a combined cross-tabulation broken down by age group, region, and education.

More people of older age groups than of younger, more in rural regions than in urban, and more with less education than higher said they “trust” the mass media in general. By contrast, many “tend to trust” respondents were those in their thirties and forties, lived in urban areas, and had a high level of education. Thus, the differences between “trust” and “tend to trust” respondents were readily apparent in characteristics of age, region, and education. Moreover, in views and behavior also, their differences were clear, as we will

Figure 1. Degree of Trust in the Mass Media in General

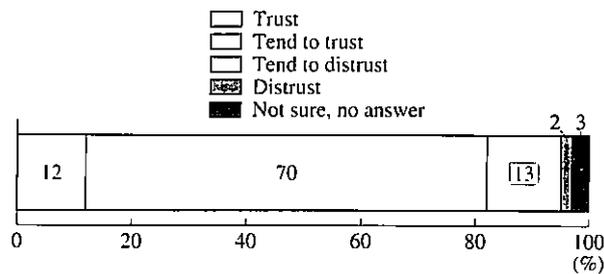


Figure 2. Attributes of "Trust" and "Tend to Trust" Respondents

	Age group							Region (by population)							Education						
	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70 and over	Tokyo area	Osaka area	300,000 and over;	100,000-300,000	under 100,000	towns and villages	junior high	high school	vocational/technical school	university/graduate school	student	not sure/no answer	All respondents		
Trust	3	5	9	13	15	23	7	9	13	11	15	16	19	11	9	9	6	11	12		
Tend to trust	76	78	77	70	64	58	75	69	69	71	68	68	61	72	76	75	53	44	70		

see below. Although these two groups can be termed "the section of respondents that trusts the mass media," digging somewhat deeper reveals gaps between the two that suggest they cannot be treated on the same lines.

Differences in "most trusted mass medium" by attribute

Next, let us look at the results for "most trusted mass medium." The medium selected by respondents as the single most trusted for finding out about happenings in the world was, in order of highest response: NHK (45 percent), newspapers (36 percent), and commercial broadcasters (11 percent) (fig. 3). Here, too, we see a great difference in which medium is most trusted vis-à-vis respondents' attributes (fig. 4).

As with those who said they "trust" the mass media in general, many respondents who listed NHK as the most trusted medium were in the upper age brackets, lived in rural areas, and had a low level of education. On the

Figure 3. Most Trusted Medium

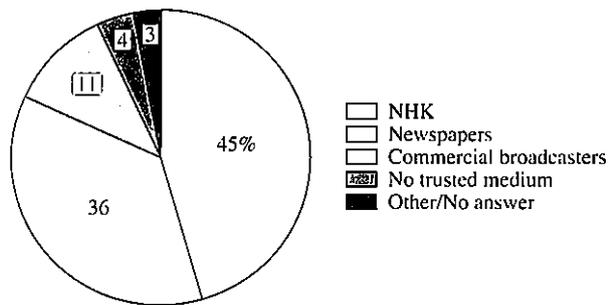


Figure 4. Base Attributes of Respondents by Most Trusted Medium

	Age group							Region (by population)							Education					All respondents
	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70 and over	Tokyo area	Osaka area	300,000 and over;	100,000-300,000	under 100,000	towns and villages	junior high	high school	vocational/technical school	university/graduate school	student	not sure/no answer		
Newspapers	32	42	43	36	39	25	39	51	39	41	28	26	29	37	36	43	59	22	36	
Commercial broadcasters	23	17	13	8	5	5	10	6	13	8	14	10	13	13	10	3	6	—	11	
NHK	30	29	38	49	53	64	41	35	41	47	48	56	51	44	45	43	24	22	45	

other hand, as with “tend to trust” respondents, people who said they “trust” newspapers the most (36 percent of all respondents) were mainly those in their thirties and forties, lived in urban areas, and had a high level of education. Those who “trust” commercial broadcasters the most (11 percent of all respondents) showed characteristics midway between the NHK faction and newspaper faction, with many respondents in younger age groups but with no prominent characteristics by region, and with many high school graduates but few university graduates.

In this way, people’s degree of trust in the mass media and their most trusted mass medium both differed according to respondents’ attributes. In addition to attributes, however, there are several factors relating to the structure of

people's trust in the mass media. We will consider each of these factors in the discussion that follows.

Components of Trust

It is natural to imagine that people's evaluation of the mass media's informational content and broadcasting policy will likely influence their degree of trust in the mass media. Indeed, the survey results clearly corroborate this.

Evaluation of informational content

First, we will examine the relationship between the respondents' evaluation of informational content transmitted by the mass media and their degree of trust in the media in general.

This survey asked participants to evaluate informational content from four angles:

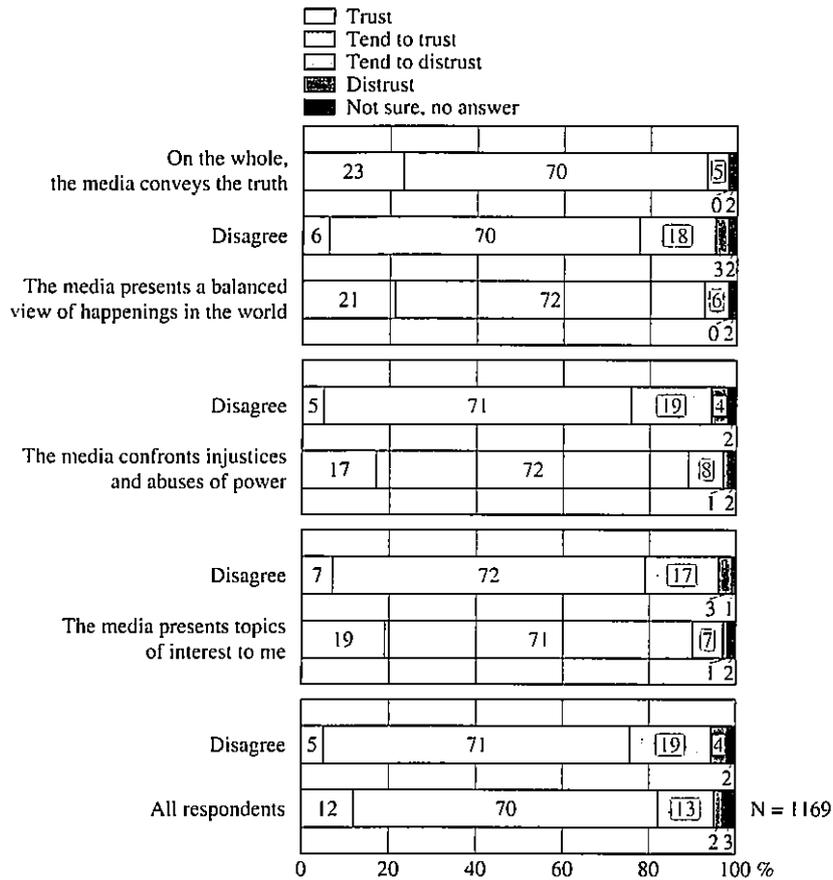
1. Does the media, on the whole, convey the truth?
2. Does the media, on the whole, present a balanced view of happenings in the world?
3. Does the media confront injustices and abuses of power?
4. Does the media present topics of interest to you?

As shown in figure 5, a large proportion of those respondents who gave a high evaluation of each facet of the informational content transmitted by the mass media were invariably those who said they "trust" the mass media. A high percentage (23 percent) of those who thought that, on the whole, the media conveys the truth were respondents who "trust" the mass media, whereas a high percentage (18 percent) of those who disagreed were "tend to distrust" respondents. For each of the remaining three items, as well, a large portion of those who agreed were "trust" respondents and those who disagreed were "tend to distrust" respondents. These results show that popular trust in the mass media has some correlation with their evaluation of its informational content.

Evaluation of newsgathering behavior and broadcasting policy

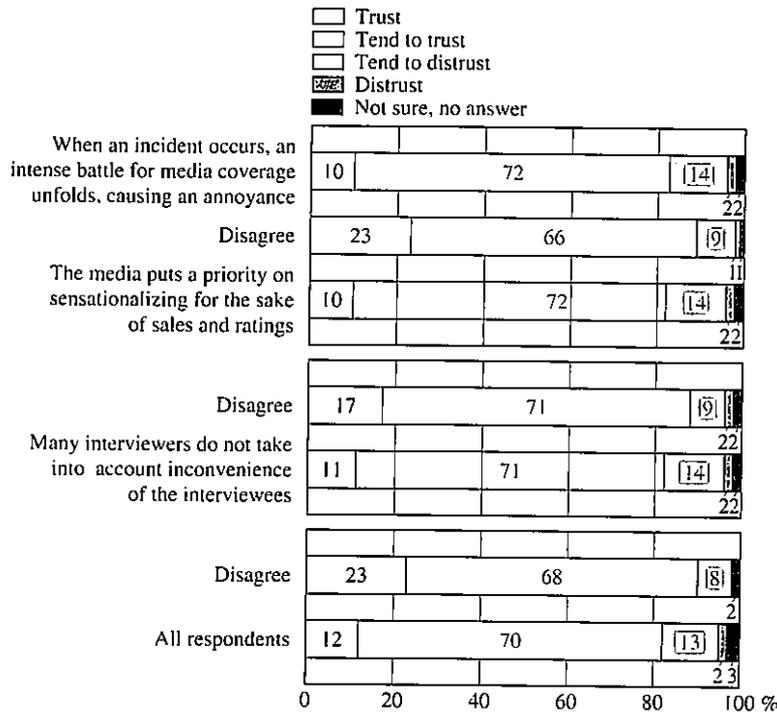
In recent years, the newsgathering behavior and the broadcasting policy of the mass media have been called into question on several occasions. Practices such as media scrums, in which reporters with the mass media stampede the site of a newsworthy incident or crowd around the homes of those involved, have been criticized as violations of human rights and invasions of privacy. Our survey results show a large correlation between people's degree of trust and their evaluation of the newsgathering behavior and broadcasting policy of the mass media.

Figure 5. Evaluation of the Mass Media's Informational Content in Relation to Degree of Trust in the Mass Media



Respondents who gave a positive evaluation of the newsgathering behavior and broadcasting policy of the mass media tended to show a higher degree of trust in the mass media, while those who gave a negative evaluation tended toward a lower degree of trust. Figure 6 presents the results of three questions, selected from a total of thirteen, which asked respondents to evaluate the broadcasting policy of the mass media. Many "tend to distrust" respondents agreed that when an incident occurs an intense battle for media coverage unfolds, causing an annoyance, that the media puts a priority on sensationalizing for the sake of sales and ratings, and that many interviewers do not take into account inconvenience to the interviewees. Respondents who "trust" the

Figure 6. Evaluation of Newsgathering Behavior and Broadcasting Policy in Relation to Degree of Trust in the Mass Media



media accounted for a large proportion of those who disagree with these propositions.

Degree of satisfaction with the mass media in general

Degree of trust is also closely related to degree of satisfaction with the mass media in general. The results show a positive correspondence, in which the higher the degree of respondents' satisfaction, the higher the degree of their trust in the media.

As shown in figure 7, a high percentage (43 percent) of "sufficiently satisfied" people trust the mass media in general. Likewise, a high percentage (41 percent) of respondents who "tend to be unsatisfied" also "tend to distrust" the mass media.³

There is a similar relationship, moreover, between degree of satisfaction

³ "Completely unsatisfied" respondents have been omitted due to their low population parameter (15 people).

Figure 7. Degree of Satisfaction with the Mass Media in Relation to Degree of Trust in the Mass Media

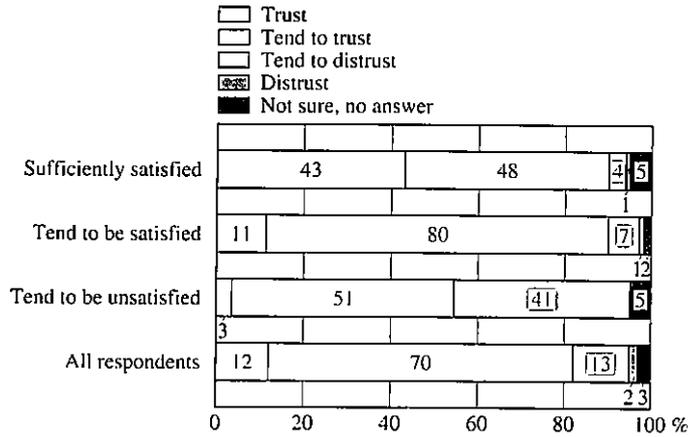
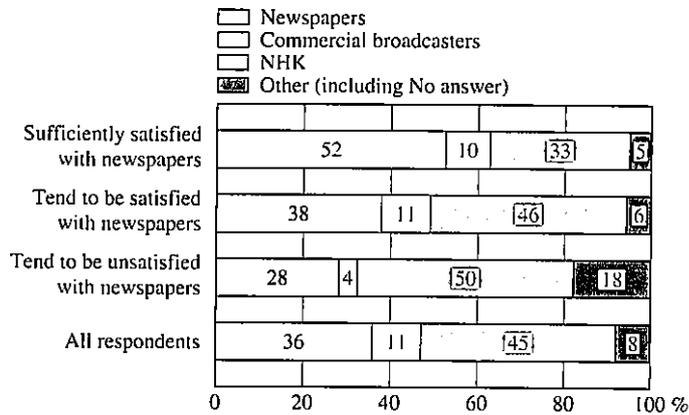


Figure 8.1. Degree of Satisfaction with Newspapers in Relation to Most Trusted Mass Medium



with individual media and the most trusted mass medium. In general, the results tend to show that the higher the degree of satisfaction with a particular medium, the higher the percentage of respondents who listed that medium as their most trusted.

A high percentage (52 percent) of people who were “sufficiently satisfied” with newspapers, and a low percentage (28 percent) who “tend to be unsatisfied,” listed newspapers as their most trusted mass medium (fig. 8.1). The same trend can be seen in the results for NHK (fig. 8.2). For commercial

Figure 8.2. Degree of Satisfaction with NHK in Relation to Most Trusted Medium

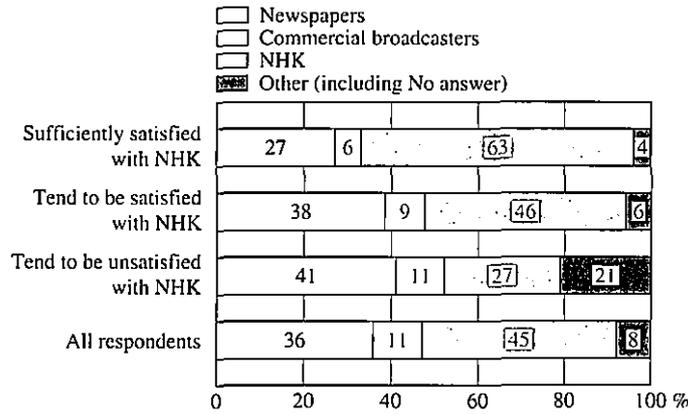
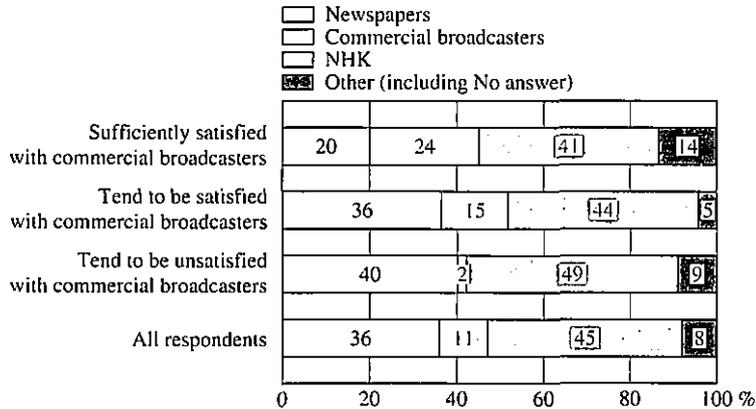


Figure 8.3. Degree of Satisfaction with Commercial Broadcasters in Relation to Most Trusted Medium



broadcasters, however, the percentage of “sufficiently satisfied” respondents who listed commercial broadcasters as their most trusted medium (24 percent), while slightly higher than that for all respondents (11 percent; fig. 8.3), was less than in the case of newspapers or NHK. In other words, with newspapers and NHK, degree of satisfaction is linked to a high degree of trust, but in the case of commercial broadcasters, degree of satisfaction is not so strongly tied to degree of trust. Quite a few people, it seems, are satisfied with commercial broadcasters but do not necessarily consider them most trustworthy.

Usefulness

People's evaluation of a particular mass medium's usefulness should logically show a correspondence with their degree of trust in that medium. On this point, the survey data indicate that one of the fundamental factors in determining people's most trusted medium is whether they also find that medium most useful.

Figure 9 shows cross tabulations between "most useful medium" and "most trusted medium" by area of sought-after information. Respondents were queried on a total of ten information genres, such as "weather information," "hobbies and entertainment," etc., but we will only introduce the results for two of these here: "political and social affairs" and "sports."

A high percentage (60 percent) of people who listed newspapers as the most useful mass medium for finding out about political and social affairs also gave newspapers as their most trusted mass medium (fig. 9.1). For the same area of information, a high percentage (64 percent) of people who listed NHK as the most useful medium also responded that NHK was their most trusted medium. The same tendency was observed for finding out about sports (fig. 9.2).

This pattern did not hold, however, in the case of commercial broadcasters. Of those who listed commercial broadcasters as their most useful medium for finding out about political and social affairs, 29 percent gave commercial broadcasters as the most trusted mass medium, while 30 percent gave either NHK or newspapers, respectively.

As with degree of satisfaction, even though there was a strong correlation between usefulness and degree of trust for newspapers and NHK, when it came to commercial broadcasters, that correlation existed but was not as strong. As in the case of satisfaction, it can be said here again that quite a few people watch commercial broadcasters despite these not being their most trusted mass medium. This would suggest that there are subtle shades to people's degree of trust depending on the distinctive traits of each medium, a point we will consider later.

Information behavior

Are people more likely to have a high degree of trust in mass media they use on a daily basis than in those they do not use often? Or, are people more likely to place their trust in media they rarely use?

When we examined respondents' frequency of media use in daily life in relation to their degree of trust in the mass media in general, we found that people who use a wide variety of media, such as magazines and the Internet, tend to have a lower degree of trust.

Figure 9.1. Most Useful Media for Finding out about Political and Social Affairs in Relation to Most Trusted Medium

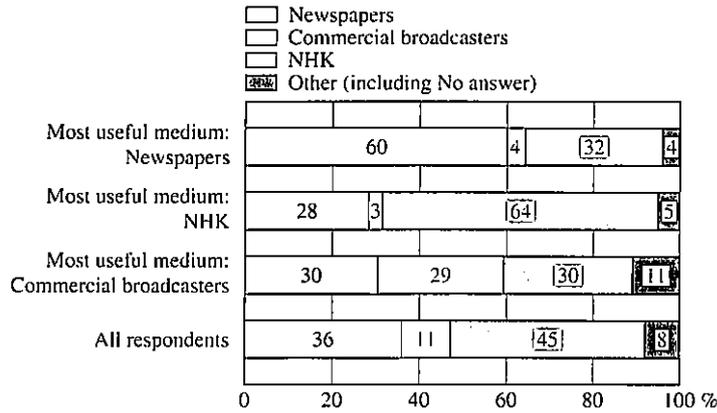


Figure 9.2. Most Useful Medium for Finding out about Sports in Relation to Most Trusted Medium

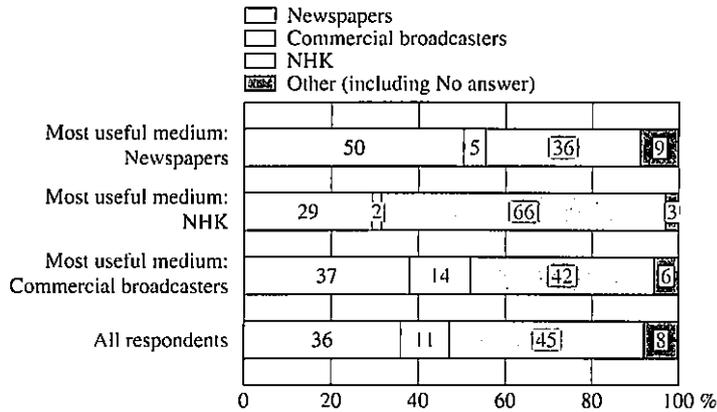


Figure 10.1 is the cross tabulation between “frequency of magazine reading” and “degree of trust.” Among people who read magazines almost daily, the percentage who “trust” the mass media in general was low (9 percent) and who “tend to distrust” the mass media was high (27 percent). Among people who read magazines once or twice per month, the percentage who “tend to distrust” the media was lower and roughly the same as the percentage who “trust” the media (13 percent).

Figure 10.1. Frequency of Magazine Use in Relation to Degree of Trust in the Mass Media in General

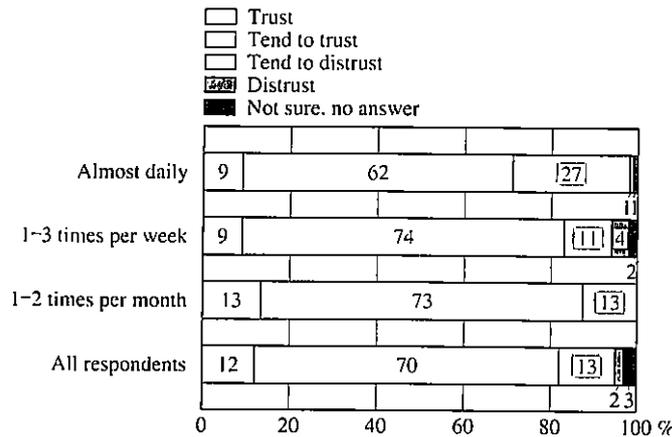
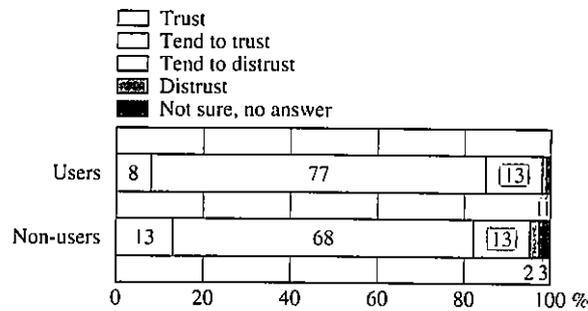


Figure 10.2. Degree of Trust in the Mass Media in General for Users and Non-users of the Internet



Comparing Internet users and non-users,⁴ moreover, we see that a slightly higher percentage of non-users than users trust the mass media (fig. 10.2).

On the other hand, a high percentage of people who trust the mass media in general tend to make use of NHK. Figure 11 ranks media use by information genre for both “trust” and “tend to trust” respondents. We can see that those

⁴ An “Internet user” is defined here as a person who uses the Internet once or more times per month, regardless of whether the place of use is home or work, not including the sending and receiving of e-mail. A “Non-user” is a person who uses the Internet a few times per year or not at all.

Figure 11. Media Use by Genre

1. Respondents who trust the mass media in general

(%)

	Weather information		Political and social affairs		Sports		Hobbies and entertainment	
First	NHK	16	NHK	15	NHK	19	NHK	17
Second	Commercial broadcasters	8	Commercial broadcasters	9	Newspapers	10	Commercial broadcasters	12
Third	Newspapers	7	Newspapers	8	Commercial broadcasters	9	Newspapers	16

2. Respondents who tend to trust the mass media on the whole

(%)

	Weather information		Political and social affairs		Sports		Hobbies and entertainment	
First	Commercial broadcasters	76	Newspapers	76	Newspapers	75	Newspapers	78
Second	Newspapers	76	Commercial broadcasters	72	Commercial broadcasters	74	Magazines	77
Third	NHK	66	NHK	69	NHK	66	Internet	76

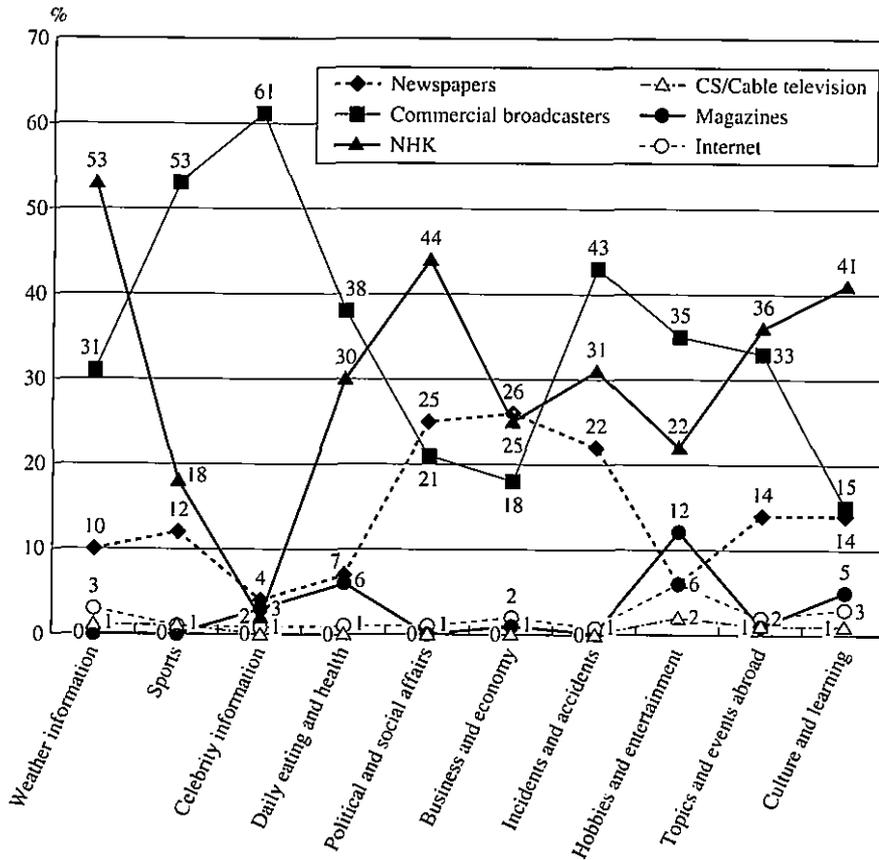
who “trust” the mass media use NHK most for finding out about political and social affairs, weather information, and all of the other information genres. On the other hand, a large proportion of the people who “tend to trust” the mass media in general use newspapers and commercial broadcasters most. A high percentage of these respondents, moreover, use magazines and the Internet to find out about hobbies and entertainment.

In this way, a tendency appears for many of the people whose information behavior is comparatively limited and who focus their media use on NHK to say they “trust” the mass media in general. On the other hand, many of the people with more eclectic information behavior, who use newspapers, commercial broadcasters, magazines and even the Internet, say they only “tend to trust” the mass media.

Media Traits and User Attributes in Relation to Degree of Trust

As we have seen so far, several factors aside from respondents’ attributes have a certain significance for the level of their trust in the mass media, including “evaluation of informational content and broadcasting policy,” “degree of satisfaction,” “usefulness,” and “information behavior.” At the same time, however, the results indicate that the relationships between sense of satisfaction and usefulness and degree of trust are not simple correspondences, such that when one value is high the other is high also. They require a more detailed

Figure 12. Most Useful Medium by Information Area



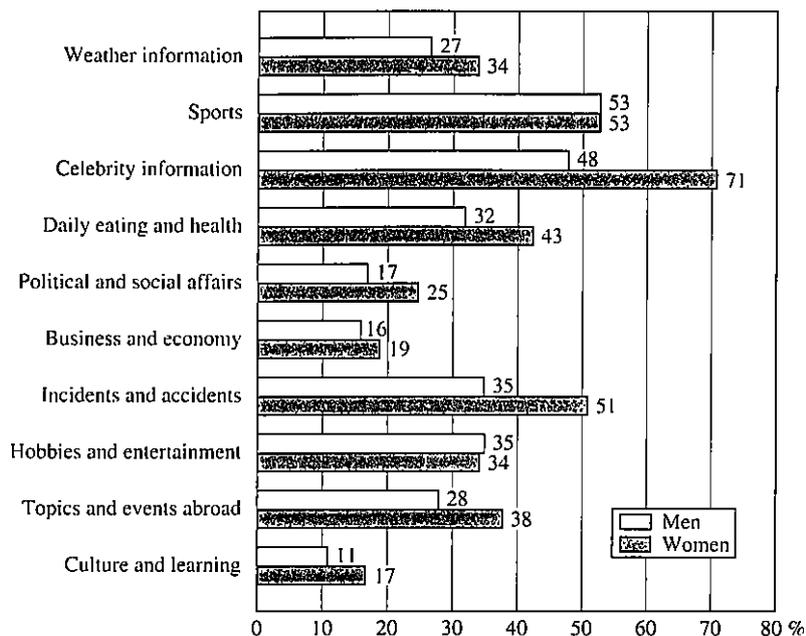
examination which takes into account the traits of each medium. To address this issue, we would like to carry our analysis a little further, using the criterion of “usefulness” as an example.

Differences in “most useful medium” by area of information sought

First, it should be noted that respondents’ most useful medium differs greatly by genre of information sought as shown in figure 12.

Because this question only allows respondents to give one most trusted mass medium for each area of information, what appears here is no more than a comparative ranking. Out of the ten areas of information treated here commercial broadcasters are listed most often as the most useful mass medium.

Figure 13. “Commercial Broadcasters Are Most Useful” Respondents by Gender and Information Area

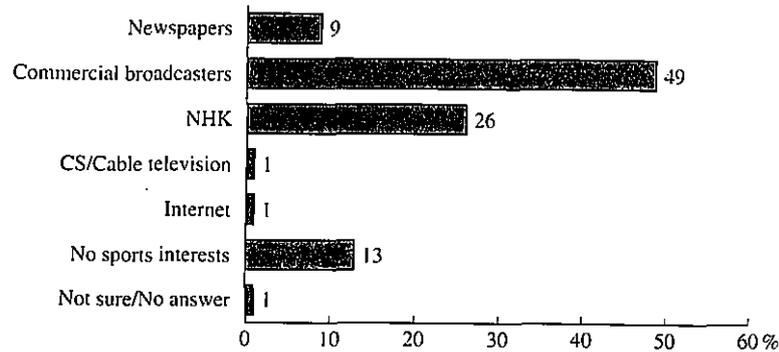


Tallying the percentages from all ten categories for each medium to get a cumulative “most useful mass medium” percentage puts commercial broadcasters in first with 347 percent, NHK in second with 300 percent, and newspapers in third with 137 percent. These three can be considered the basic mass media in Japan. The cumulative “most useful mass medium” percentages for magazines (28 percent), the Internet (21 percent), and CS/Cable television (7 percent) are far lower than for the three above. These mass media can be called the subsidiary mass media.

Differences in “most useful mass medium” by user attribute

It is necessary to call attention to the fact that respondents’ choice of “most useful mass medium” and their “media use” differed for each of the ten areas of information according to users’ gender, age, occupation, and some other attributes. To give an example, more women than men use commercial broadcasters and a higher percentage of women than men regard commercial broadcasters as their most useful medium for most areas of information. Figure 13

**Figure 14. Most Useful Medium for Finding out about Sports
(Respondents Who Listed NHK as Most Trusted)**



shows the number of people by gender who said that commercial broadcasters are the most useful medium in each of the areas of information. Of the ten areas all but “sports,” “hobbies and entertainment,” and “business and economy” registered a significantly higher proportion of women than men who regarded commercial broadcasters as their most useful medium.

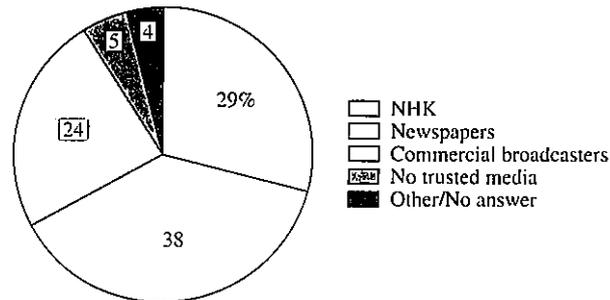
Complex relationship between “usefulness” and “degree of trust”

Reflecting these circumstances, the relationship between usefulness and degree of trust is rather complicated. When we look at respondents’ most useful mass medium in the area of sports in relation to their most trusted mass medium (fig. 14), for example, among the 528 respondents who gave NHK as their most trusted mass medium 49 percent (258 people) responded that commercial broadcasters were the most useful mass medium in that field, while 26 percent named NHK as such. In other words, 22 percent of survey respondents who “trust” NHK the most responded that, as for sports, commercial broadcasters are the most useful mass medium. Similarly, a high proportion of those who listed newspapers as their most trusted mass medium responded that commercial broadcasters were the most useful for finding out about sports.

Returning to figure 3, the overall rate for “most trusted mass medium” puts NHK first (45 percent), newspapers second (36 percent), and commercial broadcasters third (11 percent). But when those respondents who said that commercial broadcasting is the most useful mass medium for finding out weather information are focused, the first and second ranking for these respondents’ most trusted mass medium switch places, with newspapers in

Figure 15. Most Trusted Medium

(responses of those who regard commercial television as the most useful medium for finding out weather information)



first (38 percent), NHK in second (29 percent), and commercial broadcasters in third (24 percent) (fig. 15).

We take these results to mean that there are levels to the issue of media trustworthiness that cannot be thought of simply in terms of the media in general or individual media. In accordance with its distinctive technical, economic, and social character, each medium has its own specialized areas of information. Likewise there are particular strata that can more easily gain access to certain media thanks to their technical, economic, and social advantage. Trust in the media is deeply tied to these things, and with the advance of the so-called information society, it is gradually becoming difficult to think of people's sense of trust simply in terms of individual media.

DISCUSSION AND SOME TOPICS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the results above, in this section we will present some observations and discuss topics for future research regarding the issue of trust in the media.

“Critical Trust” and Media Literacy

Several surveys carried out previously have indicated that the younger generations, those with higher education, inhabitants of urban areas and white- or gray-collar workers are more active in their information behavior than the other strata and use the Internet and magazines more frequently. What the current survey has clarified is that a large proportion of these active people “tend to trust” the mass media. That suggests that their sense of trust toward the

mass media is not wholesale but a form of “critical trust,” as it were, and that they hold a high “level of expectation” for the mass media.⁵ What do they expect of the mass media and what makes them “tend to trust” the media? Explicating more specifically the information behavior and attitudes of this segment of people requires further research.

At the same time, we would like to point out that this sort of user attitude is related to the media literacy—or media education—movement and to media accountability.⁶ The media literacy movement, for example, aims to foster a critical understanding of the mass media. In this usage, however, “critical” does not mean a wholesale rejection of the media but is intended to signify an accurate understanding of the media in order to effectively make use of them while recognizing the limitations of the information they provide. The issue of media literacy will have to be taken into consideration when thinking about popular trust in the mass media.

Focus on Daily Contact with the Media

The results of our analysis, moreover, show a wide divergence in the factors that constitute “trust” in the mass media. They suggest that trust has a complex structure, which cannot be fully grasped from such aspects as the reliability of informational content transmitted by the media and evaluation of broadcasting policy. On this point, several things should be noted:

First, although there are some exceptional cases, it can be said that in general people gradually develop a sense that certain media are “useful” and “satisfactory” by watching and reading these media on a daily basis and that this is linked to their degree of trust in the mass media. In future studies there will be a need to grasp in greater detail this deep link between people’s daily media exposure and their trust in the mass media.

Second, it is not sufficient to consider only the relationship between the

⁵ The survey reveals that even people with a high frequency of Internet use, while having a strong tendency to be critical of the media, hold high expectations of the mass media and a strong urge for access (the desire to reflect their views and wishes). For more details, refer to Yokoyama Shigeru and Yonekura Ritsu, “Dokyo suru shinrai to hihan” [Coexisting Trust and Criticism of the Mass Media], March 2003 issue of *Hoso kenkyu to chosa*.

⁶ Many observers maintain that it is important, from the standpoint of social responsibility in the media, to strengthen this sort of bond with the citizenry in order to protect the media’s freedom of expression. C. J. Bertrand, for instance, who advocates the concept of a “media accountability system” (MAS), points out that citizen access to the media, including such diverse efforts as media literacy, public access, press ombudsmen, and press councils, constitutes the sole democratic and safe method of protecting the freedom of the press from the threat of industry and the central government. (*An Arsenal for Democracy: Media Accountability Systems*, edited by C. J. Bertrand, Hampton Press, 2003.)

media and its users. As researchers in cultural studies have emphasized, although television determines people's social awareness and the very framework for that awareness, television itself lies within a larger political and economical context that encapsulates both sender and receiver.⁷ Neither the media nor the users can free themselves from the effects of various political and economic factors.

Third, as for the flow of information from the media to the receiver, there are two kinds: the direct flow from the mass media to the receiver and the indirect flow that delivers information to the receiver via some other media or some opinion leaders. As noted by John Fiske, for example, in the media's current state, the effects of television not only reach its audience directly but extend to almost all aspects of their cultural life, including newspapers, magazines, advertisements, conversations, radio, fashion, makeup, dance steps, and so on.⁸

Fourth, to touch on yet another fundamental issue, the people who are receivers of the media's information do not remain unchanged across time. Humanity itself is formed by the effects of the predominant media and shifts with the times. As Marshall McLuhan stated, "They that make them shall be like unto them."⁹ While the printing technology invented by Johannes Gutenberg created a new—hitherto nonexistent—generation accustomed to printed media, television, through its moving image and sound, provides its audience with large amounts of indirect (vicarious) experience and is fashioning generations of people more and more accustomed to such indirect experience rather than to direct or real experience.

The various issues surrounding trust in the mass media today, therefore, have to be considered in the context of the media environment as a whole, as well as the larger political and economical context that envelops it, including changes not only in the classic sender/receiver scheme but also in the receivers themselves.

⁷ Representative works include: Ang, Ien, *Living Room Wars*, Routledge, 1996; and Silverstone, Roger, *Why Study the Media?*, Sage, 1999.

⁸ Fiske, John, *Television Culture: Popular Pleasures and Politics*, Methuen, 1987.

In this work, Fiske discusses how television creates a sense of reality in people. According to him, realism is prescribed not just by its content but also by its form. Realism does not reproduce reality, but it creates a sense of reality. The essence of realism lies in creating reality in a form that is easily understood.

⁹ McLuhan, Marshall, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, McGraw-Hill, 1964, p. 45.

Multi-level Measuring of Trust

As we noted at the beginning of this essay, there is little empirical data dealing with degree of trust in the mass media, and even the small amount that has been accumulated, such as whether people consider newspapers or television more trustworthy, stops at a relative comparison between specific media. The analysis of our recent survey, however, seems to suggest the difficulty that hardly any specific media can garner complete trust across all areas of information. With the advent of the multimedia and multichannel era, most people are no longer relying completely on one or few media. It appears that people place their trust less in individual media, but increasingly use plural media to find out about different areas of information, so their assessment of a certain medium's trustworthiness shifts from one information area to another.

It will be necessary to contrive new survey methods in order to analyze this situation in greater detail. Regarding media usefulness, for example, this survey employed a questionnaire format that allowed respondents to select only one "most used medium" for each genre of information, but the true state of media use could probably be grasped more accurately if this was changed to a multiple response format.

Newspapers and television are still "the basic media" in today's society, but information acquired from "the subsidiary media," such as magazines and the Internet, can have a significant effect on their users' judgment. It will be necessary to examine the issue of degree of trust in the mass media from more specific sublevels, and developing a methodology to accomplish that is essential. Furthermore, one of the pressing topics for future research, we believe, will be to clarify the conceptual definition of what constitutes "trust" in the mass media in the first place.

(Translated by Luke Morehouse)