Original Research Article

Breaking the News: The Role of AI in Shaping Young Audiences' Perception of Bias and News Consumption in Japan

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ABSTRACT

As artificial intelligence (AI) advances rapidly, the media industry is undergoing major transformation, particularly in technologically advanced countries such as Japan. Yet the extent to which AI shapes public perceptions of bias and trust in news remains underexplored. This study investigates the use of AI in Japanese news media and its influence on news consumption and credibility among young audiences. A mixed-methods design was employed, combining surveys of 216 respondents with content analysis of AI-generated and traditional media. Most respondents were under 18 (58.8%) and primarily consumed news via online websites (36.5%) and social media (34.7%). Far fewer relied on television (21.7%), print newspapers (0.9%), or AI-generated platforms (0.5%). Trust was highest for traditional media (mean 3.79/5), lower for digital platforms (2.99), and lowest for AI-generated news (1.90). Respondents identified political influence (88.3%) and corporate interests (55%) as the main drivers of media bias. Concerns about AI-driven news focused on accuracy (26.8%) and algorithmic bias (23.2%), while benefits included faster delivery (50%) and lower production costs (47.7%). Although direct engagement with AI-generated news remains limited, AI's expanding role in content curation and production makes understanding its implications for audience trust increasingly urgent. This paper contributes Japan-specific empirical evidence to ongoing debates about the perceptual, ethical, and societal challenges of AI-driven journalism.

Keywords: AI-driven journalism; Algorithmic bias; Media trust; News consumption; Personalized news; Ethical implications of AI

INTRODUCTION

AI is reshaping numerous sectors, and its growing presence in journalism presents both opportunities and challenges. Within news media, AI has generated sustained debate concerning its impact on information production, data interpretation, and public trust in a society where algorithms increasingly mediate news consumption.

The expansion of AI-generated reporting has intensified scrutiny of journalism's accuracy, objectivity, and transparency. Although AI-assisted writing is not new, adoption is accelerating, especially in technologically advanced societies (1, 2). Japan offers a particularly valuable case for examining AI in journalism due to strong

government backing for digital innovation, widespread exposure to automation and generative AI, and a media environment that includes long-established legacy outlets alongside rapidly growing digital platforms (3). These dynamics make Japan a relevant context in which to assess how cultural attitudes toward automation and trust shape audience perceptions of AI-generated news.

Traditional public discourse, historically defined by newspapers, radio, and television, has already been transformed by digital platforms. Younger audiences now rely heavily on online news websites and social media (4, 5). Although only a small minority directly consume AI-generated platforms, AI is already embedded in automated summarization and recommendation systems, indirectly shaping what audiences read and trust (6).

AI-related practices in Japanese newsrooms include forms of newsroom automation and algorithmic systems that support content production and distribution (7). While these tools increase personalization and speed, they also raise ethical concerns, including algorithmic bias, misinformation, and diminished journalistic accountability (1, 8). Concerns have been raised about limited transparency surrounding AI-assisted content in Japanese journalism (7), potentially undermining trust among younger audiences once authorship is revealed (6, 8). Moreover, AI's limited ability to interpret context heightens risks related to misinformation, including manipulated or misleading content (1, 6).

This study addresses the following research question: How does the integration of AI in Japan's news media affect perceptions of bias and patterns of news consumption among young audiences, compared with traditional and digital sources? To answer this, a mixed-methods approach—surveys, interviews, and content analysis—was used to compare perceptions of AI-generated journalism with legacy and digital media while considering cultural attitudes toward technology and historical trust in institutions. Although international studies provide valuable insights, their applicability to Japan is constrained due to differences in media culture, institutional trust, and attitudes toward automation (9, 10). The need for Japan-specific investigation is therefore clear. Young audiences are central to this research because they are at the forefront of digital news consumption. Despite extensive scholarship on AI in Western journalism, studies in Asian markets, including Japan, remain relatively limited (7, 9, 10). Addressing this gap offers a more nuanced understanding of how AI shapes credibility in non-Western contexts (Figure 1).
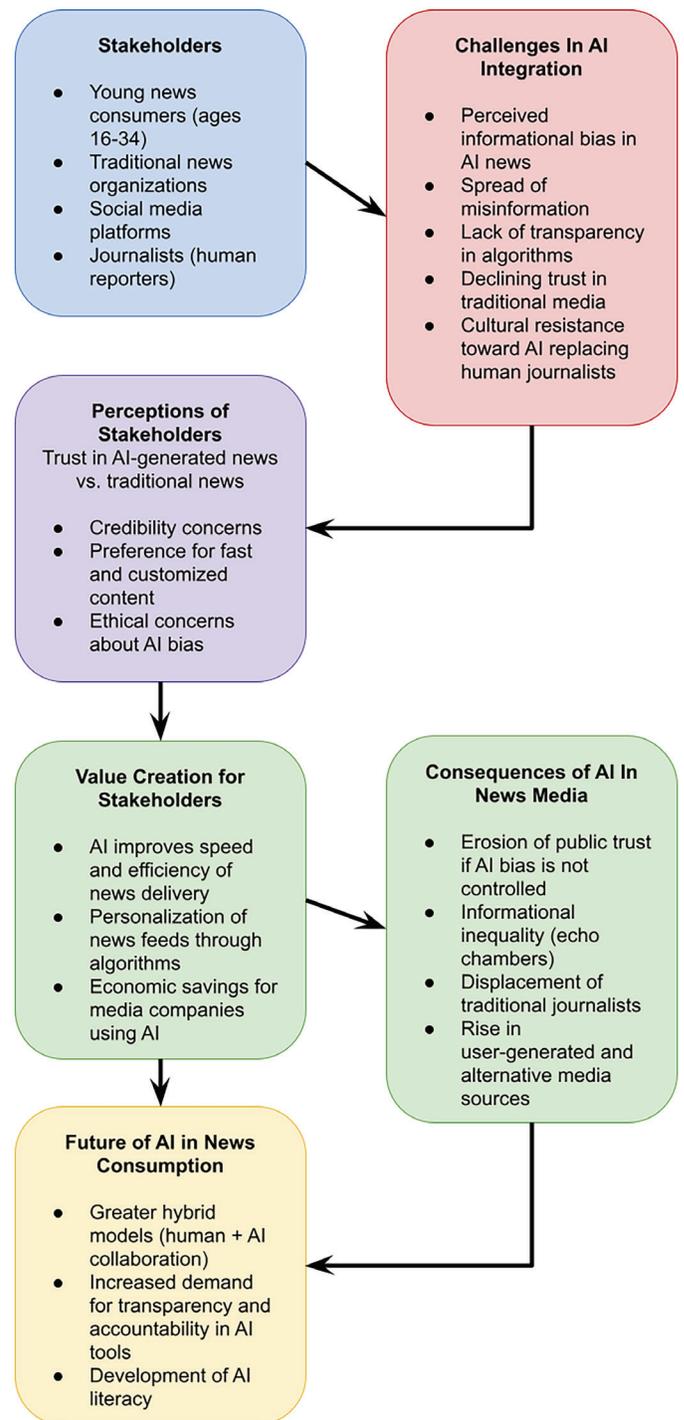
Figure 1. Conceptual framework of AI integration in news media. The figure illustrates key stakeholders, perceived challenges in AI adoption, perceptions of credibility, value creation for stakeholders, consequences for news media, and anticipated future trends in AI-driven journalism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarly work on AI in journalism increasingly examines its implications for credibility, information access, and newsroom practices. However, fewer studies directly address how audiences form trust in AI-generated news. This review synthesizes research across three key themes: credibility formation in news media, adoption of new media technologies, and audience perceptions of AI in journalism.

Credibility theory emphasizes that audiences judge news by perceived accuracy, fairness, and transparency. Trust in journalism is closely linked to source reputation and accountability (1, 4). In Japan, institutional stability has enabled outlets such as NHK and Asahi Shimbun to maintain high levels of public confidence, whereas digital-only and AI-assisted sources face greater skepticism (3, 7). Research further indicates that when AI-generated articles are unlabeled, audiences feel misled even if the content is accurate (8), underscoring transparency as a crucial determinant of trust.

While international scholarship identifies major themes—algorithmic bias, declining trust in digital information, and disruption of professional norms—its transferability to Japan is limited. Only one study in Table 1 directly examines Japan (7). Media systems in the United States, United Kingdom, China, and South Korea differ significantly from Japan's, particularly regarding institutional trust and cultural attitudes toward automation (9, 10). Japan therefore requires localized investigation rather than extrapolation from foreign contexts.

Table 1. Summary of prior studies on trust, bias, and AI in news media.

Reference	Methods	Country/ Market	Factors/ Dimensions/ Variables	Findings
1	Quantitative	News Media	1. Level of trust in news media 2. Preference for mainstream vs. non-mainstream news sources 3. Online news participation behaviors (e.g., sharing, commenting)	1. Individuals with low trust in news media prefer non-mainstream sources like social media, blogs, and digital-only outlets. 2. Those with low trust are likelier to engage in online news participation, such as sharing and commenting. 3. Trust levels influence the choice of news sources and the degree of active engagement with news content.
2	Qualitative	News Media (China)	1. Speed and reach of news dissemination 2. User engagement patterns 3. Credibility and verification processes 4. Cultural and user-base differences	1. Weibo and Twitter are pivotal in democratizing access to news, managing crises, and fostering globalized information sharing. 2. Weibo is deeply embedded in Chinese-speaking users' lives, offering diverse engagement features, while Twitter supports rapid, concise news dissemination globally. 3. Challenges include misinformation, credibility issues, and cultural constraints on user engagement. 4. Recommendations include fostering user media literacy and emphasizing verification processes for journalists.

Continued Table 1. Summary of prior studies on trust, bias, and AI in news media.

Reference	Methods	Country/ Market	Factors/ Dimensions/ Variables	Findings
3	Qualitative	News Media (Korea)	1. Media transformation 2. Influence of AI on journalism and news consumption	1. AI has significantly influenced South Korea's media industry, particularly in automating news production and customizing user experiences. 2. There is an increasing dependency on AI-driven algorithms, which raises concerns about biases and the ethics of AI-generated news. 3. Traditional media outlets face challenges competing with AI-augmented platforms, as they struggle to adapt to the rapidly changing digital environment. 4. AI offers efficiency and audience engagement opportunities, but risk deepening informational inequality and spreading biased narratives if not regulated.
4	Qualitative & Quantitative	News Media (United States)	1. Impact of digital platforms on traditional media 2. News consumption patterns 3. Economic implications of digital transformation	1. Digital platforms disrupted traditional news media, shifting advertising revenues and reducing print media viability. 2. Algorithms on platforms heavily influence content visibility and user engagement. 3. There is a significant decline in traditional journalism's financial sustainability.
5	Qualitative	News Media (China, Japan, Switzerland, UK)	1. Cultural perceptions of AI in journalism 2. Ethical considerations 3. Impacts on journalistic practices 4. Technology design and adoption	1. Journalists' perceptions of AI vary by cultural and societal contexts, affecting trust and adoption across regions. 2. Ethical concerns include algorithmic bias, transparency issues, and journalist displacement. 3. Global perspectives differ: some value efficiency, others focus on ethics and human-centered journalism. 4. AI is both an innovative tool (e.g., automating tasks) and a disruptor (e.g., spreading misinformation). 5. The study emphasizes designing culturally sensitive, ethical AI and fostering collaboration to uphold journalistic values like fairness and accountability.

Continued Table 1. Summary of prior studies on trust, bias, and AI in news media.

Reference	Methods	Country/ Market	Factors/ Dimensions/ Variables	Findings
6	Quantitative	News Media (United States, South Korea)	1. Type of news author (algorithm vs. human journalist) 2. Type of media (traditional vs. online) 3. Cultural background (US vs. South Korea)	1. Participants perceived algorithm-generated news as higher in quality than human-written news. 2. Online media led to higher ratings for algorithm-generated news than traditional media. 3. US readers rated algorithm-generated news highly across all media, while Korean readers preferred human-written news in traditional media. 4. Cultural thinking styles (holistic vs. analytic) shaped news quality perception.
7	Qualitative & Quantitative	News Media (Global)	1. Sentiment analysis of news coverage from 1956 to 2018 2. Risk perception and media representations 3. Public engagement with AI and digital health technologies	1. Contrary to popular belief, evidence does not support claims of negative sentiment in media coverage of AI. 2. The "Terminator Syndrome" (fear-driven perception of AI risk) lacks a basis in media sentiment data. 3. Responsible AI innovation in digital health and life sciences requires better public engagement and informed media representations.
8	Qualitative & Quantitative	News Media (United States)	1. Evolution of AI in media coverage over 30 years 2. Scientific subjects and technological advancements 3. Commercialization and institutional integration 4. Role of key individuals in AI discourse 5. Sentiment polarity (positive, neutral, negative) 6. Ethical concerns surrounding AI 7. Influence of media narratives on public perceptions	1. Fragmentation of AI conceptualization as different subjects compete to define it. 2. AI is portrayed as a commercial product, a field of research, and an imaginative concept. 3. Integration of science and business in AI reporting. 4. Negative reports primarily focus on AI ethics issues. 5. Findings can promote better engagement and discussions among scientists, businesses, governments, and the public.

Continued Table 1. Summary of prior studies on trust, bias, and AI in news media.

Reference	Methods	Country/ Market	Factors/ Dimensions/ Variables	Findings
9	Qualitative	News Media (China)	1. Perceived impact of AI on media employment 2. Journalists' adaptability and resilience 3. Organizational discourse and AI adoption 4. Rivalry for influence in the media market	1. AI platforms like Media Brain and AI news anchors have drawn attention for their role in transforming media operations. 2. Media practitioners expressed concerns about marginalization and job replacement by AI. 3. Human journalists highlighted adaptability and resilience as essential for survival in the AI-driven media landscape. 4. Media institutions create organizational discourse around AI adoption to foster acceptance and competitiveness.

Research on technology adoption suggests that perceived usefulness, social norms, and cultural expectations shape public acceptance of new media technologies (8). Despite Japan's reputation for technological leadership, integration of AI in journalism has progressed cautiously. Cultural emphasis on professionalism, risk aversion, and human authorship in creative work has slowed adoption (7, 10). The finding that only 0.5% of respondents in this study rely primarily on AI-generated platforms reflects this cautious approach.

Ethical concerns surrounding AI in journalism vary by region. Internationally, misinformation, algorithmic bias, and job displacement are central issues (1, 2, 6). In contrast, the respondents in this study prioritized political influence and factual accuracy—suggesting that trust in Japan continues to hinge on institutional dynamics rather than technological ones. Although Japanese youth are digitally fluent, research indicates ongoing challenges related to media literacy and the evaluation of algorithmically mediated information (3, 5), emphasizing the importance of education.

Overall, existing literature highlights a complex interaction between technology, culture, and credibility. AI may increase efficiency and personalization, but its adoption challenges long-standing ethical expectations. In Japan, where institutional trust remains high, successful AI integration will depend more on preserving accountability and transparency than on technological capability.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study used a mixed-methods approach combining surveys, interviews, and content analysis to examine how artificial intelligence is influencing perceptions of news credibility and bias in Japan. The primary method was an online survey conducted through Google Forms beginning on February 10, 2025. The survey instrument is available upon request. Although the target demographic was young adults between the ages of 18 and 34, the sample ultimately included a wider range of respondents, with a majority under 18. Recruitment was carried out primarily through social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram, as well as through the American School in Japan community and a local community bulletin board. A total of 216 valid responses were collected, representing the study's response rate.

The survey was designed to capture both demographic and attitudinal data and included questions about news consumption habits, exposure to AI-generated news, levels of trust in different types of media, and perceptions of bias. To ensure clarity and consistency, participants were provided with examples of AI-generated news, such as chatbot summaries and AI-written articles, as shown in Table 2. Responses were collected through a combination of closed questions and Likert-scale ratings. Ethical considerations were addressed by ensuring that participation was voluntary, responses were anonymous, and the survey questions were phrased in neutral language to avoid leading participants toward specific

Table 2. Survey responses on news sources, ethical concerns, and perceived benefits of AI.

Survey Questions	Options	Responses
Q1: How old are you?	• Under 18 • 18-24 • 25-34 • 35+	Under 18: 127 (58.79%) 18-24: 23 (10.65%) 25-34: 5 (2.31%) 35+: 61 (28.24%)
Q2: What is your primary source of news? (Select all that apply)	• Television • Print newspaper/magazines • Online news websites (e.g., NHK, Asahi, Yomiuri) • Social media (e.g., Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok) • AI-generated news platforms (e.g., Chatbots, AI-curated news apps) • Other: _____	Social Media (e.g., Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok): 75 (34.72%) Online News Websites (e.g., NHK, Asahi, Yomiuri): 79 (36.52%) Television: 47 (21.70%) Family/Friends (e.g., parents, people they know): 5 (2.31%) Print Newspapers/Magazines: 2 (0.92%) Podcasts: 1 (0.46%) AI-Generated News Platforms: 1 (0.46%) No interest in news ("I don't pay attention"): 1 (0.46%)
Q3.1: How much do you trust the news you consume from the following sources?: Traditional media (e.g., TV, print newspapers)	• 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5	Average score: 3.63
Q3.2: How much do you trust the news you consume from the following sources?: Digital platforms (e.g., online news websites, social media)	• 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5	Average score: 2.90
Q3.3: How much do you trust the news you consume from the following sources?: AI-generated news platforms (e.g., chatbots, AI-curated news apps)	• 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5	Average score: 1.92

Continued Table 2. Survey responses on news sources, ethical concerns, and perceived benefits of AI.

Survey Questions	Options	Responses
Q4: What factors do you think influence bias in news reporting the most? (Select up to two)	• Political influence • Corporate influence • Journalist/editorial bias • AI algorithm design	Political influence: 106 (88.33%) Corporate influence: 66 (55%) Journalist/editorial bias: 43 (35.83%) AI algorithm design: 15 (12.5%)
Q5: How often do you encounter AI-generated news in your media consumption?	• Very frequently • Occasionally • Rarely • Never	Very frequently: 16 (4.60%) Occasionally: 60 (17.24%) Rarely: 123 (35.34%) Never: 26 (7.47%)
Q6: What role do you think AI should play in the creation and dissemination of news? (Select all that apply)	• AI should assist human journalists in news creation (e.g., generating content or curating news) • AI should fully replace human journalists in news creation • AI should only be used to curate or recommend news based on preferences • AI should not be used in news creation at all • Not sure • Other: ___	AI should assist human journalists in news creation (e.g., generating content or curating news): 42 (12.07%) AI should only be used to curate or recommend news based on preferences: 54 (15.52%) Not sure: 35 (10.07%) AI should not be used in news creation at all: 39 (11.21%) Others: 9 (2.59%)
Q7: What concerns, if any, do you have about AI-generated news? (Select all that apply)	• Accuracy of information • Lack of human oversight • Ethical concerns (e.g., misinformation, propaganda) • Potential for bias in AI algorithms • I have no concerns • Other: ___	Accuracy of information: 52 (26.8%) Lack of human oversight: 37 (19.07%) Ethical concerns (e.g., misinformation, propaganda): 41 (21.13%) Potential for bias in AI algorithms: 45 (23.2%) I have no concerns: 19 (9.79%) Other: 8 (4.12%)
Q8: In your opinion, what are the benefits of AI-generated news? (Select all that apply)	• Speed of news delivery • Personalization based on interests • Reduced the cost of news production • Greater accessibility to information • Other: _____	Speed of news delivery: 44 (50%) Personalization based on interests: 36 (40.91%) Reduced cost of news production: 42 (47.73%) Greater accessibility to information: 38 (43.18%) Others (including "None"): 7 (7.95%)

answers. This study was reviewed and approved by the Regeneron STS Institutional Review Board on September 26, 2025.

Two main hypotheses guided the study. The first proposed that AI-generated news would be perceived as significantly less trustworthy than traditional media. The second proposed that younger respondents, particularly those under 18, demonstrate higher trust in AI-generated news compared with older respondents. To test these hypotheses, trust ratings across traditional, digital, and AI-generated sources were analyzed using one-way ANOVA. Independent samples t-tests were used to assess whether age affected levels of trust in AI-generated content.

RESULTS

The demographic profile of respondents showed that 58.8% were under the age of 18, 10.7% were between 18 and 24, 2.3% were between 25 and 34, and 28.2% were 35 or older. Although the survey was designed to focus on 18 to 34-year-olds, the skew toward younger participants provided additional insight into how teenagers perceive news credibility.

Patterns of news consumption revealed that online news websites and social media were the dominant sources of information, selected by 36.5% and 34.7% of respondents, respectively. Traditional television was cited by 21.7%, while print newspapers and AI-generated news platforms were rarely used. Only 0.5% of respondents identified AI-generated platforms as their primary source of news, which highlights their limited visibility in the current media environment.

When asked about trust, respondents expressed the highest confidence in traditional media, which received an average trust score of 3.79 on a five-point scale. Digital platforms, including online news websites and social media, received an average score of 2.99, while AI-generated platforms were rated lowest at 1.90. Statistical analysis confirmed that these differences were significant, with trust in traditional media notably higher than trust in both digital and AI-generated news.

Perceptions of bias in news reporting were also revealing. A very large majority of participants, 88.3%, identified political influence as the most significant driver of bias, while 55% pointed to corporate interests and 35.8% mentioned journalist or editorial bias. Only 12.5% highlighted AI algorithm design, suggesting that concerns about news bias remain focused more on human and institutional factors than on technological ones.

Respondents reported relatively low levels of exposure to AI-generated news. Only 4.6% said they encountered it very frequently, 17.2% occasionally, and 35.3% rarely, while 7.5% said they never encountered it. When asked what role AI should play in journalism, responses were mixed. Around 12.1% supported the idea that AI should assist journalists by generating or curating content, 15.5% supported its use only for curating or recommending news, and 11.2% argued that AI should not be used in news production at all. A considerable portion of respondents expressed uncertainty about the role of AI, reflecting ambivalence toward technology.

Concerns about AI-generated news focused most heavily on the accuracy of information, which was cited by 26.8% of respondents. Other commonly reported concerns included potential bias in algorithms at 23.2%, ethical issues such as misinformation and propaganda at 21.1%, and lack of human oversight at 19.1%. Despite this skepticism, participants also acknowledged benefits: 50% saw speed of delivery as an advantage, 47.7% mentioned reduced production costs, and 43.2% pointed to greater accessibility of information.

Finally, analysis of the two hypotheses showed that the first was supported, since AI-generated news was clearly trusted less than traditional and digital news. The second hypothesis was not supported, as the independent samples t-test revealed no significant difference between younger and older participants in their levels of trust toward AI-generated platforms (Table 3). Skepticism was broadly consistent across age groups, suggesting that distrust in AI is a general rather than age-specific attitude.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates a pronounced preference for traditional media among respondents, reinforcing existing literature on the role of institutional trust in shaping perceptions of news credibility. Despite growing industry interest in AI-driven journalism, audiences—especially young ones—continue to associate reliability with established news organizations. The negligible proportion of respondents who rely primarily on AI platforms (0.5%) confirms that AI-generated journalism has yet to achieve mainstream acceptance.

The influence of bias remains conceptualized in traditional rather than technological terms. The fact that respondents overwhelmingly cited political and corporate influence as the primary sources of bias contrasts with international literature that emphasizes algorithmic manipulation. This suggests that Japanese audiences

Table 3. Statistical results comparing trust across traditional, digital, and AI-generated news.

Variable / Statistic	Model 1: ANOVA – Trust by News Type	Model 2: T-test – AI Trust by Age Group
Test Type	One-Way ANOVA	Independent Samples T-Test
Comparison Groups	Traditional, Digital, AI News	Under 18 vs. 18–34
Mean – Group 1	Traditional: 3.79	Under 18: 1.89
Mean – Group 2	Digital: 2.99	18–34: 1.92
Mean – Group 3	AI: 1.90	—
Test Statistic	F = 159.26	t = -0.14
p-value	< 0.001	0.893
Significance	***	n.s. (not significant)

conceptualize media bias primarily as an institutional problem, not a technological one.

Findings relating to age are particularly noteworthy. While existing scholarships often frame younger audiences as more receptive to digital news and algorithmic mediation, this study finds no age-based difference in trust toward AI-generated news. Skepticism is widespread, indicating that accuracy, bias and oversight cut across generational divides.

These insights carry practical implications. For news organizations, successful AI integration will require clear transparency about the role of AI in content production and continued emphasis on editorial accountability. Without visible human oversight, audiences remain unlikely to accept AI-generated news as credible. For policymakers, the results highlight the need for ethical frameworks governing AI use in journalism that address both algorithmic risks and long-standing institutional influences on media bias.

Theoretically, the findings underscore the importance of contextualizing global scholarships to local media systems. Japan's high institutional trust and culturally embedded expectations of professionalism differentiate it from Western contexts, reinforcing the need for region-specific research rather than generalization from international trends.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how young audiences in Japan consume news and evaluate the credibility of traditional, digital, and AI-generated platforms. Although respondents acknowledged advantages of AI—such as faster delivery, cost efficiency, and accessibility—concerns about accuracy, bias, misinformation, and insufficient human oversight persist. As a result, AI-generated news remains the least trusted media category and is rarely used as a primary information source.

These findings highlight the complex role of AI in journalism. While AI can support efficiency and personalization, it cannot yet replace the credibility associated with professional journalistic oversight. The results further emphasize the importance of media literacy education, particularly for younger audiences who mainly rely on digital platforms but may lack training to critically assess AI-generated content.

Limitations of this research include the younger-skewed sample, reliance on self-reported data, and potential regional and platform-based variation in AI-news exposure. Future research should explore longitudinal shifts in trust toward AI-driven journalism, methods to reduce algorithmic bias in news systems, and how cultural factors shape AI acceptance across different societies. International research on AI in journalism remains dominated by Western and East Asian studies outside Japan, limiting generalizability. Continued Japan-focused inquiry is therefore necessary to capture the unique cultural and institutional dimensions that shape attitudes toward AI in journalism.

Overall, this study contributes to scholarship on responsible AI integration in news media. Ensuring transparency, maintaining human oversight, and supporting media literacy represent crucial steps toward fostering ethical and trustworthy AI use in journalism while preserving public confidence.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to this work.

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