Designing a Media Trust Model in Sports

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to design a model for building media trust in sports. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. In the qualitative section, systematic library studies and exploratory interviews were used to extract components and frame them. In the quantitative section, the study is descriptive-correlational and applied in nature, conducted via surveys. The statistical population includes prominent professors in sports management who specialize in sports and Islam, as well as experts in Islamic civilization. These individuals were selected purposefully (36 interviews with 36 participants continued until theoretical saturation was achieved). In the qualitative phase, two tools were used: systematic library studies and exploratory interviews. In the quantitative phase, a researcher-developed questionnaire, derived from the qualitative phase, was used. The content or face validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by 10 sports management professors. The reliability or internal consistency was calculated using Cronbach's alpha in SPSS24 software ($\alpha = 0.89$) and confirmed. In the qualitative section, three stages of coding were used to categorize the identified components. In the quantitative section, confirmatory factor analysis was used to confirm the research construct. Finally, structural modeling and multiple variable relationships were assessed using SmartPLS software. The qualitative section identified 43 conceptual codes, 12 main categories, and 9 core codes. The core codes include media, human resources, audience, media economy, media supervision and evaluation, international communications and learning, news quality and reporting, accuracy, and speed. In the quantitative section, results showed that human resources (0.511), audience (0.431), accuracy (0.532), news quality and reporting (0.515), media speed (0.502), media economy (0.536), international communication and learning (0.485), supervision and evaluation (0.465), and media ownership (0.523) significantly contribute to media trust-building. Path analysis revealed that media trust-building is significantly influenced by audience, media economy, supervision and evaluation, international communications and learning, news quality and reporting, accuracy, and speed. Based on this model, it is possible to assess the factors affecting media trust-building and, by prioritizing and addressing each factor, take appropriate actions to gain audience trust.
Keywords: Model, Trust, Media, Sports

1.   Introduction

Media trust is a critical component in the consumption and dissemination of information, particularly in the realm of sports, where public perception and engagement play significant roles (Lim et al., 2015). The credibility of media sources influences how audiences perceive sports events, athletes, and associated narratives, thereby impacting overall engagement and support (Jiang et al., 2024). The development of a reliable model for media trust-building in sports is essential for ensuring that information is conveyed accurately and effectively, fostering a trustworthy relationship between media outlets and their audience (Ngai et al., 2023). The concept of trust in media encompasses several dimensions, including the accuracy of information, the quality of reporting, the speed of news delivery, and the transparency of sources (Ceron, 2015). Trust is also shaped by the perceived reliability and integrity of media personnel, the economic interests of media organizations, and the extent of regulatory oversight (Müller, 2013). In the context of sports media, these factors are further complicated by the competitive nature of sports journalism, the commercial interests tied to sports events, and the diverse audience demographics that consume sports content.

Trust in sports media is vital for several reasons. Firstly, it ensures that the information disseminated is accurate, which is crucial for maintaining the integrity of sports reporting (Ramon Vegas, 2016). Misreporting or biased reporting can lead to misinformation, which not only affects public perception but can also have serious implications for athletes, teams, and sports organizations. For instance, false allegations or exaggerated claims can damage reputations and lead to unwarranted scrutiny (Moro-Visconti, 2024). Secondly, trust in sports media enhances audience engagement. When audiences believe that the information they receive is reliable, they are more likely to engage with the content, participate in discussions, and support their favorite teams and athletes (Abeza et al., 2013). This engagement is beneficial not only for media organizations but also for the sports industry as a whole, driving ticket sales, merchandise purchases, and viewership ratings. Several factors influence media trust, including human resources, audience perception, media economy, regulatory oversight, international communications, and the quality and speed of news reporting. The credibility of journalists and media personnel plays a significant role in shaping trust. Well-trained, ethical, and experienced journalists are more likely to produce high-quality, trustworthy content (Olayinka & Odunayo, 2024). Continuous professional development and adherence to journalistic standards are essential for maintaining credibility. Audience trust is also influenced by their perception of media bias and transparency. Audiences are more likely to trust media outlets that they perceive as unbiased and transparent in their reporting (Bhuiyan et al., 2021). Engaging with audiences through interactive platforms and addressing their concerns can enhance trust. The economic interests of media organizations can impact trust. Media outlets that are perceived to prioritize commercial interests over journalistic integrity may face trust issues (Brants & De Haan, 2010). Transparent disclosure of sponsorships and commercial affiliations can mitigate these concerns. Effective regulatory frameworks ensure that media organizations adhere to ethical standards and practices. Regulatory bodies play a crucial role in monitoring media content and holding organizations accountable for misinformation or unethical practices (Cavaliere, 2020). In an increasingly globalized world, international collaborations and communications are vital for comprehensive sports reporting. Trust in media is enhanced when international news is reported accurately and without bias, reflecting a balanced perspective (Ward, 2014). The accuracy and quality of news reporting are fundamental to building trust. High-quality, well-researched, and promptly delivered news is more likely to be trusted by audiences (Uth, 2024). Speed, however, should not compromise the accuracy and quality of the content. The role of media in sports extends beyond mere reporting. Media organizations play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, promoting sports events, and enhancing the visibility of sports and athletes (Boyle, 2009). They serve as a bridge between sports entities and the public, facilitating the flow of information and fostering a sense of community among sports enthusiasts. In the context of sports, media trust is not only about the accuracy of game results or player statistics but also about the narratives constructed around sports events and personalities. These narratives can influence public perception and attitudes towards sports and athletes, highlighting the need for ethical and responsible reporting.

Building and maintaining media trust is challenging, particularly in the digital age, where misinformation can spread rapidly through social media and other online platforms (Abeza et al., 2013). The proliferation of fake news and the increasing competition among media outlets

for attention and clicks further complicate this issue. Media organizations must navigate these challenges by prioritizing ethical journalism, engaging with their audiences, and leveraging technology to enhance the credibility and reliability of their reporting (Moro-Visconti, 2024).

2.   Methods and Materials

2.1.   Study Design

The present study employs a comprehensive mixed-methods approach to design a model for building media trust in sports. This approach integrates both qualitative and quantitative research methods to ensure a robust and well-rounded understanding of the factors influencing media trust. The methodology is divided into two main phases: qualitative and quantitative.

2.2.   Qualitative Phase

The qualitative phase aims to extract and frame the relevant components necessary for building media trust. This phase involves two primary methods: systematic library studies and exploratory interviews. Systematic library studies were conducted to review existing literature on media trust, sports journalism, and related fields. The purpose of this review was to identify key concepts, theories, and frameworks that have been previously studied and to build a foundation for further research. Databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, WOS and Scopus were used to gather relevant articles, books, and reports. Keywords included "media trust," "sports journalism," "audience perception," and "media ethics." This extensive review helped to pinpoint gaps in the existing literature and to highlight areas requiring deeper exploration.

2.2.1.   Exploratory Interviews

To complement the literature review, exploratory interviews were conducted with experts in sports management and media. These interviews aimed to gain insights into practical aspects of media trust that may not be fully covered in academic literature. The interviewees included 36 prominent professors and practitioners who specialize in sports management, Islamic studies, and media. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for open-ended responses that provided rich qualitative data. The discussions focused on identifying factors that influence media trust, including organizational practices, ethical standards, and audience interactions. The qualitative

data collected from these methods were analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involved coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns. A three-stage coding process was employed:

- Open Coding: Initial coding to break down the data into distinct parts and identify key concepts.
- Axial Coding: Linking categories and subcategories to form a coherent framework.
- Selective Coding: Integrating and refining the categories to develop core codes that encapsulate the main findings.

Through this rigorous analysis, 43 conceptual codes were identified, which were then categorized into 12 main categories and further distilled into 9 core codes. The core codes identified include media, human resources, audience, media economy, media supervision and evaluation, international communications and learning, news quality and reporting, accuracy, and speed.

2.3.   Quantitative Phase

The quantitative phase of the study builds on the qualitative findings to test and validate the proposed model for media trust-building. This phase involves a descriptive-correlational survey designed to quantify the relationships between the identified factors and media trust.

2.3.1.   Survey Design

A researcher-developed questionnaire was created based on the insights gained from the qualitative phase. The questionnaire included items related to each of the identified core codes and their respective categories. The items were designed to measure perceptions of media trust, the influence of human resources, audience engagement, economic factors, and the quality and speed of news reporting.

2.3.2.   Validation and Reliability Testing:

The content validity of the questionnaire was ensured by consulting with 10 experts in sports management and media. These experts reviewed the questionnaire items to ensure they accurately reflected the constructs identified in the qualitative phase. Based on their feedback, minor adjustments were made to improve clarity and relevance. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. A pilot study was conducted with a small sample of respondents to test the internal consistency of the

questionnaire items. The resulting Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.89, indicating high reliability and suggesting that the items consistently measure the intended constructs.

2.3.3. Data Collection

The finalized questionnaire was distributed to a larger sample of respondents, including sports management professionals, media personnel, and academics specializing in sports and Islamic studies. The survey was administered both online and in-person to ensure broad participation. Participants were selected purposefully to represent a diverse range of perspectives on media trust in sports.

2.3.4. Data Analysis

The collected survey data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their overall perceptions of media trust. Inferential statistics, including correlation analysis and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), were employed to test the relationships between the identified factors and media trust. Confirmatory factor

analysis was used to validate the proposed model by assessing the fit between the observed data and the hypothesized factor structure. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was then conducted using SmartPLS software to evaluate the multiple relationships between the variables and to identify the most significant predictors of media trust.

3. Results

The results of the quantitative analysis indicated that factors such as human resources (0.511), audience (0.431), accuracy (0.532), news quality and reporting (0.515), media speed (0.502), media economy (0.536), international communication and learning (0.485), supervision and evaluation (0.465), and media ownership (0.523) significantly contribute to media trust-building. Table 1 shows the eigenvalues of the factors before and after rotation, along with the cumulative percentage of variance explained. The direct effect column indicates the strength of each factor's contribution to media trust-building. Media economy has the highest direct effect (0.536), while audience has the lowest direct effect (0.431).

Table 1

Results of Factor Analysis and Path Analysis

Factor	Eigenvalue (Rotated)	Eigenvalue (Unrotated)	Cumulative Percentage (Rotated)	Cumulative Percentage (Unrotated)	Direct Effect
Human Resources	4.253	3.134	45.100	25.301	0.511
Audience	4.197	4.253	62.979	45.100	0.431
Accuracy	5.052	4.197	71.423	62.979	0.532
News Quality and Reporting	5.048	5.052	79.638	71.423	0.515
Media Speed	5.048	5.048	90.638	79.638	0.502
Media Economy	4.800	5.048	98.137	90.638	0.536
International Communication and Learning	3.792	4.800	99.420	98.137	0.485
Supervision and Evaluation	3.340	3.792	100.000	99.420	0.465
Media Ownership	3.340	3.340	100.000	100.000	0.523

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the research variables, including mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. The standard deviations indicate low variability among responses, suggesting consistent answers from participants. Skewness and kurtosis values indicate that the data distribution is close to normal.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Human Resources	3.6490	0.89591	-0.035	-0.794
Audience	3.4305	0.92022	0.546	-0.659
Accuracy	3.8808	0.99282	-0.379	-0.981
News Quality and Reporting	3.7947	1.02838	-0.137	-1.283
Media Speed	3.7086	0.89881	0.220	-1.118
Media Economy	3.5695	1.07400	-0.379	-0.163
International Communication and Learning	3.5430	0.95732	-0.263	0.506
Supervision and Evaluation	3.4967	0.96522	0.167	-0.945
Media Ownership	3.8543	0.89738	-0.493	-0.431

4.   Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to design a model for building media trust in sports by identifying and analyzing the critical factors that contribute to this trust. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative insights with quantitative validation to provide a comprehensive understanding of the elements influencing media trust. The findings highlight several key factors, including human resources, audience engagement, media accuracy, news quality and reporting, media speed, media economy, international communication and learning, supervision and evaluation, and media ownership. Each of these factors was shown to have a significant impact on media trust, with media economy emerging as the most influential factor. The quantitative analysis revealed that media economy (0.536), human resources (0.511), and accuracy (0.532) have the highest direct effects on media trust-building. These results underscore the importance of financial stability, ethical journalism practices, and accurate reporting in fostering trust among sports media audiences. Other significant factors included news quality and reporting (0.515), media speed (0.502), international communication and learning (0.485), supervision and evaluation (0.465), and media ownership (0.523). The results of this study align with previous research on media trust. For instance, Kagolo (2024) emphasized the critical role of accuracy and quality in news reporting in building media credibility(Kagolo, 2024). Similarly, Wolde (2024) highlighted the influence of journalistic integrity and transparency on audience trust. Our study extends these findings to the specific context of sports media, demonstrating that the same principles apply (Wolde & Woldearegay, 2024) .

The significant role of media economy found in this study is consistent with Bruce, et.al (2024) assertion that economic pressures can influence media practices and, consequently, audience trust. Transparent disclosure of commercial interests and maintaining financial independence are crucial for preserving media integrity and trust.

The prominence of media economy in influencing trust can be attributed to the direct relationship between financial stability and journalistic quality. Media organizations with robust economic foundations are better positioned to invest in high-quality reporting, ethical practices, and advanced technologies that enhance accuracy and speed. This, in turn, fosters trust among audiences who rely on media for reliable information. The significant impact of accuracy and news quality on media trust highlights the audience's demand for reliable and well-researched information. In an era where misinformation can spread rapidly, particularly through social media, the credibility of traditional media hinges on its ability to provide accurate and comprehensive reporting. The speed of media, while important, must not compromise the quality and accuracy of the news, as reflected in the study's findings.

Human resources are fundamental to media trust because journalists are the primary conveyors of information (Setiawan, 2024). Their skills, ethics, and credibility directly affect the trustworthiness of the media content. This underscores the need for media organizations to invest in the continuous training and development of their personnel to uphold high standards of journalism. Despite its comprehensive approach, this study has several limitations. Firstly, the sample size, although sufficient for the statistical analyses conducted, may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives within the broader population. Future research should consider larger and more diverse samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the study focuses primarily on the factors influencing trust within the context of sports media, which

may limit the applicability of the findings to other types of media. Comparative studies across different media sectors could provide a more holistic understanding of media trust. Additionally, the study employs self-reported data, which can be subject to biases such as social desirability and recall bias. Employing objective measures, where possible, could mitigate these biases in future research. Future research should explore the long-term impact of these identified factors on media trust. Longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into how media trust evolves over time and how media organizations can adapt to maintain trust in a rapidly changing information landscape. Investigating the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and blockchain, in enhancing media trust could also be a fruitful area of research. These technologies have the potential to improve transparency, accuracy, and accountability in media practices. Moreover, cross-cultural studies could examine how different cultural contexts influence the factors that contribute to media trust. Understanding these cultural variations could help media organizations tailor their strategies to build trust in diverse audiences. Finally, future studies should consider the impact of external events, such as pandemics or political changes, on media trust. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, has significantly altered media consumption patterns and trust levels, providing a unique context for examining the dynamics of media trust.

This study provides a comprehensive model for understanding and building media trust in sports. The findings underscore the importance of financial stability, journalistic integrity, accuracy, and audience engagement in fostering trust. By addressing the identified factors and considering the recommendations for future research, media organizations can enhance their credibility and build stronger relationships with their audiences.

Authors' Contributions

A.M. conceptualized the study, designed the research methodology, and supervised the overall implementation of the study. She also conducted the systematic library studies and exploratory interviews in the qualitative phase. L.S., the corresponding author, led the data analysis, interpreted the results, and took the lead in drafting and revising the manuscript. She also facilitated the content and face validity assessment of the questionnaire with sports management professors. M.N. assisted in the development of the research tools, supported participant recruitment, and

contributed to the quantitative data collection and analysis using SPSS and SmartPLS software. All authors participated in discussing the findings, critically reviewed the manuscript for important intellectual content, and approved the final version for publication.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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