

A study on the current situation of college students' media literacy in the new media era

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ABSTRACT

In the era of new media, media literacy as well as become an important indicator to measure the quality of citizens. This study chooses Chinese college students as the research object, and adopts the methods of literature analysis and questionnaire survey to investigate Chinese college students' media literacy in terms of their media use ability, media literacy cognitive level, media information screening and judgement ability. It is found that Chinese college students have problems such as media dependence, insufficient knowledge of the concept of media literacy, weak media information screening ability, and the ability to judge media information needs to be improved, etc. On the basis of analyzing the current situation, this study provides some ideas for the society, colleges and universities as well as the college students themselves on how to improve their media literacy.

KEYWORDS: new media age; media literacy; university students.

1. INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the study

In the twenty-first century, human society has entered the era of high-speed development of digital information, and media literacy has become an important indicator of a country's national quality. With the continuous optimization of information technology, new media represented by mobile phones and the Internet are invading people's daily life at an unimaginable speed and gradually becoming an important tool for daily communication. According to the 52nd Statistical Report on Internet Development in China released by CNNIC, as of June 2023, the number of Internet users in China reached 1.079 billion, the number of instant messaging users reached 1.047 billion, and the Internet penetration rate reached 76.4%. The development of new media technology not only subverts the linear dissemination of media information, but also subtly influences the whole process of people's acquisition, identification, interpretation and creation of information.

College students, as a group growing up with the development of new media, are full of individuality, willing to contact new things, and curious. In addition, college age is also an important stage for them to form their self-values, outlook on life, and world outlook, and the new media can help college students to acquire information and explore knowledge. At the same time, due to the lack of practical experience and social experience, college students are not capable of knowing and judging the media and their messages, they usually cannot analyze and criticize media information rationally, and they are prone to receive false information from the new media, which may cause negative impacts. In order to better satisfy the information needs of college students and make the media serve their study and life better, improving college students' media literacy has become a problem that needs to be researched and solved urgently.

2. Significance of the study

The popularity of the Internet, mobile phones and other new media has provided great convenience to college students' life, study, work and entertainment. They learn about domestic and international events, pay attention to hot news, acquire knowledge, socialize and entertain themselves through the Internet. However, there are some problems, such as the popularity of new media makes the information quantitative, whether college students can rationally use the media to better serve their lives, rather than overly relying on the media and being dominated by the media; whether college students can keep a clear head in front of many public opinions, and whether they can understand all kinds of information in the media critically, and so on.

This paper selects Chinese college students as the research object, hoping to understand the current situation of college students' media literacy through the data analysis of the questionnaire, and through the analysis of the existing problems, to give some ideas to the society, colleges and universities as well as the college students themselves on how to improve the media literacy, in order to enrich and develop the empirical research on media literacy in China.

3. Research questions

Based on the above analysis, the research questions of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. What is the current situation of media use among Chinese college students? What are the purpose, duration and type of media use? Is there any correlation with the length of time spent on the Internet?
2. What is the media literacy level of Chinese college students? Is it related to the difference in majors?
3. What is the media information screening ability of Chinese college students? Is it related to gender?
4. What is the media information evaluation ability of Chinese college students?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Media literacy appeared 90 years ago. In China, Bu Wei, a scholar, summarized the concept of "media literacy" in his article "On the Meaning, Contents and Methods of Media Education" in 1997, which was also the first research article on this field in China. It pointed out the history of the development of the term "media literacy" overseas, and the subject has received keen attention from scholars, with a number of research papers on media literacy published one after another.

1. Conceptual Studies on Media Literacy

In 1992, the Media Literacy Research Centre of the United States gave the following definition of media literacy: media literacy refers to people's ability to select, comprehend, question, evaluate, create and produce, and reflect discursively in the face of a variety of information in the media. Bu Wei (1997) suggests that each country has different definitions of media literacy, different research methods and different research contents, and that China should study the development goals and improvement measures of media literacy education in China from the perspective of China's national conditions, the state's regulation of the Internet, the characteristics of China's college students, and the different demands for media literacy education.

2. Study on the problems of media literacy among university students

Some scholars put forward a variety of views on the problems existing in the current domestic media literacy research. Among them, Zhang Yan (2017) believes that college students are prone to problems such as technological dependence, alienation of interpersonal relationships, inhibition of innovation and value distortion. Xie Xiaohui (2021) believes that when college students receive new media information, there are problems such as weak ability to distinguish information, passive reception of "filter bubbles" precision push, and reduced cultural identity of China. Sun Jing and Jin Guohua (2017) believe that some college students lack restraint in media consumption, and even some college students disregard the law and use the Internet to commit crimes.

3. Research on countermeasures to enhance college students' media literacy education

Fengsha and Xiao Yixiao (2023) proposed that the importance of young students to media literacy needs to be improved, and the pertinence of media literacy education needs to be improved, and believed that the effective path to enhance the media literacy of young students in the network era is to strengthen the organizational leadership as a support, so as to achieve the guidance of policy and planning; to improve the school nurturing system as a hand, to enhance the initiative of education; to lead with the correct values as a fundamental, to enhance the value of judgement ability. Li Peiyu and Tian Hao (2021) suggest that the concept of media literacy should be cultivated as an action to build a cultural atmosphere within the community of interest, and that the initiative of individual college students should be explored in their daily media practice, so as to encourage them to gain positive media participation willingness and good media participation ability.

To sum up, based on foreign media literacy research, researchers in China have explored the Chinese model and method from the national conditions of China and the current situation of online media, but the media literacy research on college students is still insufficient, the importance of media literacy education needs to be strengthened, and the concrete implementation of media literacy education is not high. This study adopts the methods of literature analysis and questionnaire survey to analyze the current situation of college students' media literacy in the new media era, and puts forward specific and targeted media literacy enhancement strategies, with a view to contributing to the weakness of the study.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

1. Research Methods

(1) Literature Analysis Method

Collate relevant literature on media literacy researchers at home and abroad, sort out the status quo of media literacy researchers, key difficulties and innovations, and systematically analyze the current situation of media literacy research for college students in China. To sort out the literature on the cultivation program of college students in the new media era, to analyze the problems of media literacy education of college students, and to put forward specific strategies to improve media literacy.

(2) Questionnaire Survey Method

This research topic uses questionnaire survey as the key research method, by distributing questionnaires to Chinese college students, using SPSS software, mainly using credibility analysis, multiple comparisons, factor (correlation) analysis and other methods to analyze the recovered data, so as to understand the current situation of college students' media literacy in the era of new media, the existing problems and the development countermeasures, with the aim of improving the college students' media literacy, and cultivating high-quality talents.

2. Research Design

(1) Survey Objects

This questionnaire survey research is mainly for full-time specialized, undergraduate and master's degree students in China, and the questionnaires are randomly distributed in the form of electronic questionnaires. A total of 123 college students from different majors, different grades and different regions were selected through stratified sampling to conduct the questionnaire study, which systematically analyzed the current situation of college students' media literacy, aiming to improve their media literacy.

From July to October 2023, 123 questionnaires were distributed online through China's professional online data collection platform "Questionnaire Star", and eventually 123 questionnaires were returned, with 112 valid questionnaires and a validity rate of 91%. The survey data were analyzed using SPSS26 statistical software.

(2) Composition of the survey

The questionnaire used for this study consisted of 21 questions. There are four main contents. First, the basic personal information of college students, including their gender, education and majors; second, the media use of college students, analyzing the time, type, motivation and knowledge of college students; third, the media judgment ability of college students, understanding college students' concern and participation in news events, as well as the protection of personal information; and fourth, the education of college students' media literacy, focusing on their understanding of media literacy and exploring their favorite ways of media literacy education. Fourthly, media literacy education for college students, which focuses on college students' understanding of media literacy, and explores college students' favorite ways of media literacy education.

(3) Validation of the reliability of the questionnaire

Regarding the reliability and validity of the data, according to the SPSS data analysis, the α -value of each variable of the scale in the Questionnaire on the Current Situation of Media Literacy among College Students in the New Media Era is above 0.85, with an overall reliability of 0.894. According to the standard that the acceptable reliability coefficient of the data proposed by the scholars should be more than 0.7, the data in this paper has a high reliability.

<Table 1> Reliability statistics of questionnaire scales

variant	Cronbach Alpha	item count (of a consignment etc.)
Media Information Acquisition and Creative Skills	0.866	6
Ability to judge and filter media messages	0.817	9
population (statistics)	0.894	15

In order to test the validity of the Likert scale, KMO and Bartlett's test were carried out and as can be seen from the table above, the KMO value is 0.895, the KMO value is greater than 0.8, the p-value is 0.000, and the data of the study is well suited for extracting information.

<Table 2> Results of KMO and Bartlett's test data

KMO Number of Sample Suitability Measures.	0.895	
Bartlett's test of sphericity	approximate chi-square (math.)	837.028
	(number of) degrees of freedom (physics)	105
	p	0.000 *

*p<0.05

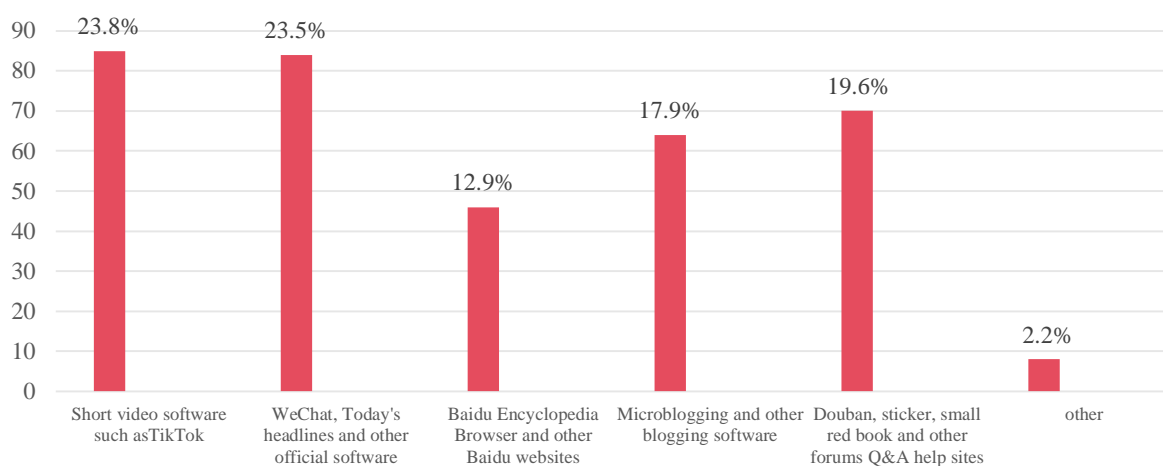
4. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

1. Analysis of the Current Situation of Media Use among Chinese College Students

(1) Types of media use

In the era of new media, the diversity of media forms develops, and due to the differences in personality, college students have different preferences in the type of media contact, and the main ways of obtaining information have diversified characteristics. From the results of the questionnaire survey, the distribution of college students' media usage preferences is shown in Figure 1 below.

What is the medium of your main source of information in your life?



<Figure 1> Statistical chart of the main ways for Chinese university students to obtain information

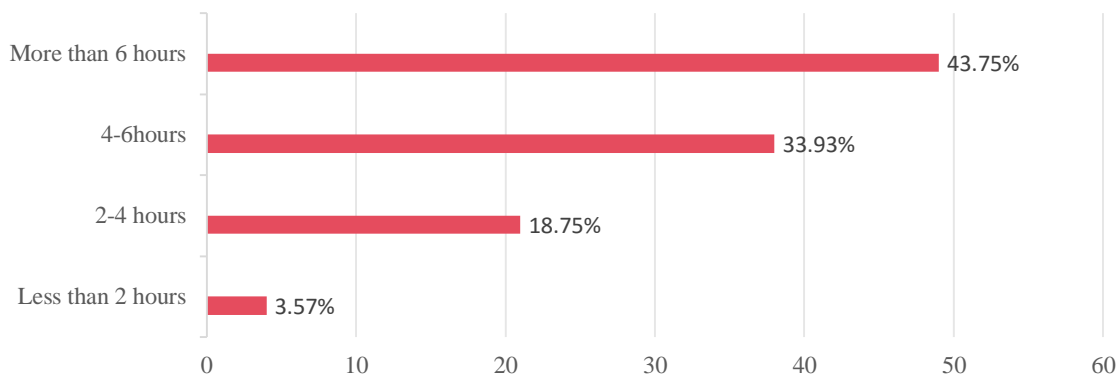
It can be seen through the above figure that the proportion of those who take short video software such as Jittery, fast hand and other short video software to obtain information as the main way to obtain information is the highest, 23.8%, the proportion of those who take official software such as WeChat public number and today's headlines as the main way to obtain information is 23.5%, and the proportion of those who take forum Q&A help sites such as Douban, posting bar, Xiaohongshu, Zhihu and other forums as the main way to obtain information is 19.6%. It can be seen that with the development of new media, new media forms such as Jittery, Shutterbug, WeChat, Today's Headlines and so on have gradually become the main way to get information in university life because of their timeliness, mass, and ease of operation.

(2) Duration of media use

With the continuous development of network technology, the network has penetrated into all aspects of life such as clothing, food, housing and transport, etc. Through the questionnaire survey of Chinese college students, the statistics of cumulative time spent on the Internet are shown in Figure 2 below.

From the above results, 18.75% of Chinese college students spend 2-4 hours or less on the Internet every day, 33.93% spend 4-6 hours or less on the Internet every day, 43.75% spend more than 6 hours on the Internet every day, and only 3.57% spend less than 2 hours on the Internet every day. It can be seen that college students' media usage is excessive, and the phenomenon of media dependence is more serious.

Approximately how much time do you spend online each day?



<Figure 2> Statistical chart of Chinese college students' cumulative Internet access hours

In order to analyze whether there is a difference between Chinese college students' Internet access hours on media use ability, correlation test analysis was conducted and the results of the examination are as follows:

<Table 3> correlation test analysis results

The current situation of Chinese university students' media competence

	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (bibtail)	Number of cases
Hours spent on the Internet	-0.326	0.000*	112

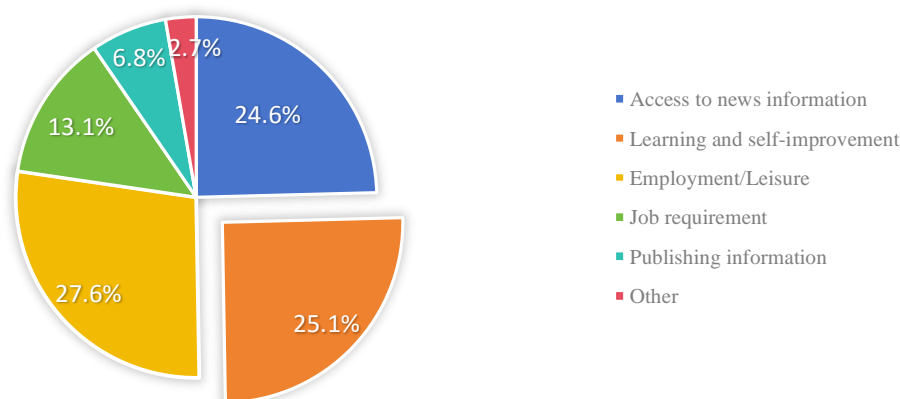
*p<0.05

As shown in Table 3, the correlation between Chinese college students' media use ability and the length of time spent on the Internet is as follows: the correlation coefficient is -0.326, with a p-value of 0.000, which means that Chinese college students' media use ability is positively correlated with the length of time spent on the Internet.

(3) Purpose of media use

Chinese college students have different purposes for accessing the media, such as obtaining news and information, learning and self-improvement, leisure and entertainment, work needs, and publishing information. According to the questionnaire, the purposes of Chinese college students' Internet access are shown in Figure 3 below.

What is your motivation for engaging with the media?



<Figure 3> Statistics on the Purpose of Chinese College Students' Media Use

As can be seen from the above figure, the motives of most Chinese college students for surfing the Internet are diverse. Employment/leisure is the main motive for 27.6% of college students to use the media, 25.1% of college students use the media for learning and self-improvement, 24.6% of college students use the media for obtaining news and information, and only 6.8% of college students use the media online for the motive of publishing information.

Questionnaire research on Chinese college students, the frequency of the content that college students usually pay attention to is shown in Table 4 below.

<Table 4 > Frequency analysis statistics of university students' concern content

Options	Combined Score	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
A .Online shopping and socializing information	3.25	60(53.57%)	27(24.11%)	18(16.07%)	7(6.25%)
C. Hot Event Information	2.79	29(25.89%)	37(33.04%)	39(34.82%)	7(6.25%)
B. Games, video information	2.23	19(16.96%)	32(28.57%)	17(15.18%)	44(39.29%)
D. Current News Information	1.73	4(3.57%)	16(14.29%)	38(33.93%)	54(48.21%)

As we know from Table 4 , the frequency ranking of the content that college students pay attention to is the most important option "online shopping, social information", followed by the option "hot events information", the third is the option "games, video information", and the last is the option "current affairs news information". The third option is "game and video information", and the last option is "current affairs news information". To sum up, college students tend to use media for recreation, social communication, news information and shopping, and entertaining media information is more popular among college students.

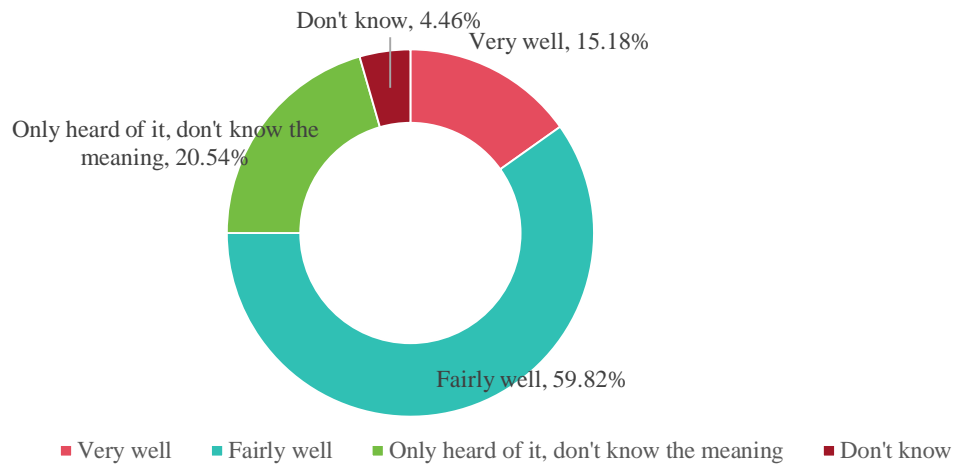
2. Analysis of Chinese college students' media literacy awareness level

The media literacy awareness level of Chinese college students is a complex and multi-level issue. The following section will analyze the current media literacy awareness level of Chinese college students from the perspective of college students' awareness of the concept of media literacy, their awareness of the functions of media literacy, and their awareness of the media literacy level of contemporary college students.

(1) Cognition of the concept of media literacy

In order to investigate college students' understanding of the concept of media literacy, the questionnaire was designed to answer the question "Do you understand the concept of media literacy?". The distribution of the answers to the questionnaire reveals that the top three items with the highest proportion are "quite understand", "only heard of it, don't know what it means", and "understand it very well", which account for 59.82%, 20.54% and 20.34% of the total number of answers respectively. 59.82%, 20.54% and 15.18% respectively, indicating that college students have a preliminary understanding of the concept of media literacy, but some college students still stay at the superficial level, and even a small number of college students have never understood media literacy.

Do you understand the concept of media literacy?



<Figure 4>Statistical chart of Chinese college students' knowledge of the concept of media literacy

A chi-square analysis was conducted to analyze whether Chinese university students' perceptions of the concept of media literacy varied according to the majors they studied. The results of the chi-square analysis are as follows:

<Table 4> chi-square test based on specialization

depth of knowledge (%)						
title	name	very well	relatively know	only heard of it	don't know	x ² P
your specialty are you a major in media	Yes	14(12.5)	32(28.6)	4(3.6)	0(0.0)	20.990 0.000*
	No	3(2.7)	35(31.3)	19(17.0)	5(4.5)	
	total	17	67	23	25	

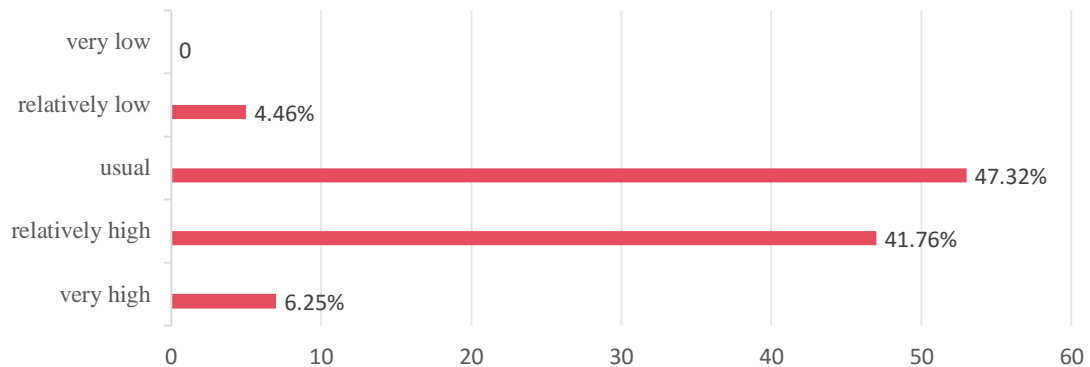
*p<0.05

As shown in Table 4, the P-value in the chi-square analysis test result is greater than the selected level of significance (0.05), which shows that college students majoring in media are more knowledgeable about the concept of media literacy than those who are not majoring in media. Therefore, the difference in major categories is one of the factors affecting college students' understanding of the concept of media literacy.

(2) Perceptions of Chinese college students' media literacy level

College students have different perceptions of the level of media literacy possessed by current college students, and the results of the survey are shown in Figure 5. Among them, the largest number of college students believe that the media literacy level of contemporary college students is "average", accounting for 47.32%, while some college students believe that the media literacy level of contemporary college students is "relatively high" and "very high", accounting for 41% and 41% respectively. Some college students think that the media literacy level of contemporary college students is "relatively high" and "very high", accounting for 41.75 per cent and 6.25 per cent respectively. This shows that nearly half of the university students have an optimistic attitude towards Chinese university students, and a smaller proportion of them think that the media literacy level of contemporary university students needs to be improved.

What do you think is the level of media literacy among



<Figure 5> Statistical chart of Chinese college students' perception of media literacy level

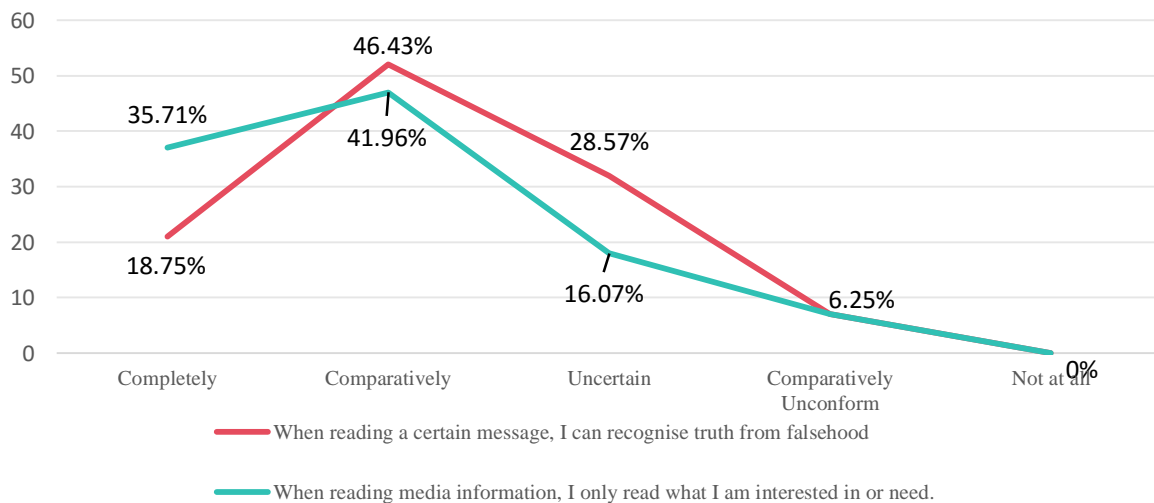
3. Analysis of Chinese university students' media information screening ability

Due to the characteristics of the quantification and complexity of media information and the diversification of communication channels, there has been a sudden increase in the phenomena of all kinds of false news, reversal news and network information fraud, which requires us to filter and screen media information on the basis of its acceptance.

(1) Selective exposure to media information

Through the media literacy questionnaire survey of Chinese college students, the selective exposure of college students to media information is shown in the figure below.

Selective exposure of university students to the media



<Figure 6> Statistical chart of Chinese university students' ability to filter media information

Figure 6 shows that when asked about the degree of compliance with the question "When reading media information, I only read what I am interested in or need", the frequency of choices is concentrated in the options of "Comparatively Compliant" and "Very Compliant", accounting for 41.96% and 35.71% respectively, while the proportion of choosing the option of "Comparatively Not Compliant" is only 6.25%. The frequency of choices is concentrated in the two options of "more conformity" and "very conformity", accounting for 41.96% and 35.71% respectively, while the proportion of those who choose the option of "less conformity" only accounts for 6.25%. This shows that Chinese college students are very selective in their media exposure, preferring to expose themselves to what they are interested in or need, and paying less attention to what is less relevant to them or what they are not interested in.

(2) Judgement on the truthfulness of media information

In the survey on the degree of conformity of Chinese college students to the statement "When reading a certain message, I can identify whether it is true or false", the option "Comparatively conforms" was chosen most frequently, accounting for 46.43%, while 18.75% of college students chose "Completely conforms". "Completely conform", while "Not sure" and "Comparatively do not conform" were chosen by 28.57 per cent and 6.25 per cent respectively. This shows that although most college students are able to make judgement on the authenticity of media information, nearly 40% of them still have problems in judging the authenticity of information.

In order to compare whether there is a difference between male and female college students' ability to judge the type of media information, an independent sample t-test was conducted, and the test results are as follows:

<Table 5 > t-test analysis results based on gender

Gender (mean \pm standard deviation)

	females(n=93)	males(n=19)	t	p
The ability to recognize the type of message through the media source to distinguish the type of information	1.47 \pm 0.612	1.99 \pm 0.915	-2.347	0.021*

*p<0.05

From the above table, it can be seen that all the different genders show significance ($p<0.05$) for the ability to distinguish the type of information through media sources, which means that there is a difference between different genders on the ability to distinguish the type of information through media sources. Specific analyses show that gender is significant at the 0.05 level ($t=-2.374$, $p=0.021$) for the type of information that can be discerned through media sources, as well as specific comparisons of the differences show that the mean value of men (1.99) is higher than the mean value of women (1.47). In conclusion, it can be seen that different gender samples show significant differences in terms of whether they can distinguish the type of information through media sources.

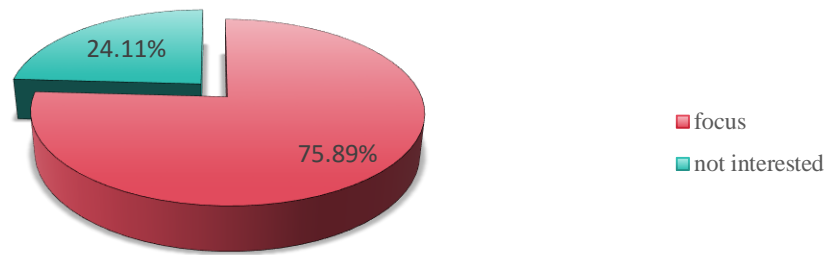
4. Analysis of Chinese college students' ability to judge media information

The production and dissemination of information in the media are inevitably affected by various factors. Due to the nature of the media in China, which is "business nature and enterprise management", the process of media dissemination, even after strict control, still carries tendency and guidance. Therefore, judging media information is an important part of media literacy. The following section analyses Chinese university students' ability to judge media information in terms of their attention to information sources and their participation in news events.

(1) Attention to the sources of news information

Information sources are the prerequisite for judging whether media information is true and reliable, and the most direct way to analyze college students' ability to judge media information is to analyze their attention to media information sources. Figure 7 shows the statistics of Chinese college students' attention to media sources. The survey shows that 75.89% of college students will pay attention to the source of news they are interested in when they see it on the Internet, but 24.11% of college students still do not pay attention to the source of information. Therefore, college students should pay more attention to news sources and correctly identify the authenticity of information sources.

When you seen a news story online that interests you,do you pay attention to its source?

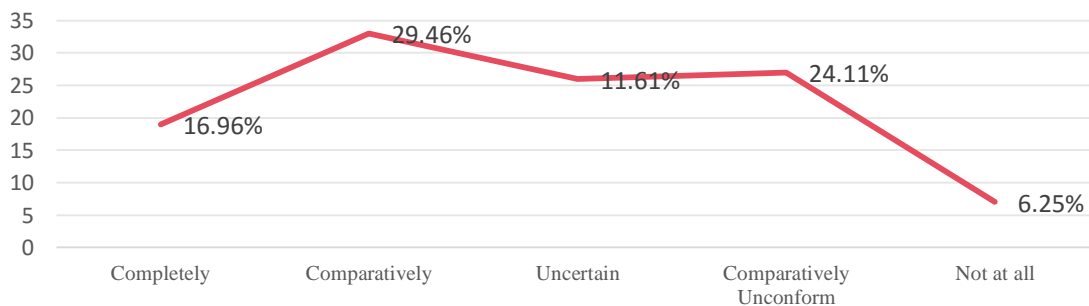


<Figure 7> Statistics of Chinese college students' concern about media information sources

(2) Participation in news events

Figure 8 shows the statistics of Chinese university students' participation in news events. When asked, "When reading a media message, I will express my own opinion when the media message is different from my own", 19 of them chose to be completely in line with it, 33 chose to be relatively in line with it, 26 chose to be unsure, 27 chose to be relatively in line with it, and 7 chose to be not in line with it at all. So overall, it seems that college students' participation in commenting on media messages, etc. is not high.

When reading a media message, I express my opinion when it differs from my own.



<Figure 8> Statistical chart of Chinese university students' participation in news events

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conclusion

In the new media era, the media has been with college students, the media literacy of college students in general shows a positive and good trend, but it is undeniable that college students in the use of media, media cognition, media judgement and media filtering, and other aspects of the media are more or less negative factors, for the media knowledge, skills training is still in the spontaneous mode. According to the analysis of the survey, there are the following problems:

Firstly, Chinese university students generally use the media excessively, and some of them have formed a serious dependence on the media and even become addicted to the media. It can be seen that most college students cannot make the best use of the media, which was created to meet the needs of society, but only for communication and entertainment and killing time. If college students are unable to use the media in depth, they will not be able to make use of the media to achieve self-development. Therefore, it is necessary for college students themselves, their parents, schools and society to pay great attention to this issue.

Secondly, Chinese university students are optimistic about their media literacy level. Although they have a certain degree of media knowledge and are able to master the media technology needed for daily use, most of them only have a superficial understanding of the concept of media literacy. In this regard, we need to consider how to strengthen the theoretical knowledge of college students' media literacy and form a clear understanding of their own media literacy.

Thirdly, Chinese college students' media information screening ability is relatively weak. In the era of information explosion, people's information screening ability is required to increase, because human energy is limited, in the limited time, people must quickly screen out the real and effective information to meet their own requirements. College students, as media users and the main force in the future construction of the country, must have efficient and accurate information screening ability.

Fourthly, Chinese college students' ability to judge media information needs to be improved, and their motivation to participate in media information needs to be strengthened. Although college students are aware of the credibility of online media information, they are not yet able to completely avoid the negative impacts of media information. In addition, college students' outlook on life and values are not yet fully formed, and they lack social experience and maturity in their thinking and behavior, which means that they do not have a high capacity to judge media information.

2. Recommendations

In view of the above problems of college students' media literacy, in order to help college students, make more correct use of the media, learn knowledge with the help of the media, expand their horizons, enrich themselves, better realize their social value, and avoid being misled and controlled by the media, it is imperative to provide specific and implementable strategies to improve college students' media literacy. It is imperative to provide specific and implementable strategies to improve.

Firstly, students need to cultivate good habits of Internet exposure. In the correlation analysis of Chinese college students' Internet time and media use ability, the correlation between the two is positive. In this regard, college students should set clear goals for study and entertainment, and make a reasonable schedule to balance study, work and entertainment. Through reasonable time management, they can make effective use of network resources and avoid wasting time.

Secondly, the chi-square analysis shows that college students majoring in media have a deeper understanding of the concept of media literacy. Therefore, colleges and universities can pay more attention to media literacy courses and provide specialized courses for non-media major college students to enhance their knowledge base of media literacy. For example, with the help of new media platforms, students are encouraged to participate in catechism classes and study a series of courses on communication, media literacy and media application on the Internet.

Thirdly, in order to address the problem of college students' weak media judgement and screening ability, it is also necessary for society to make joint efforts. For example, the government can formulate relevant policies to regulate the media participation behavior of college students and improve the relevant provisions on information dissemination in the network security law. The government can also join hands with media organizations to open public numbers on media literacy education through new media platforms, and release related texts or videos, so that media literacy education can penetrate into the daily lives of university students

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