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# ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER BENCHMARKING IN MACAU.

AVALIAÇÃO COMPARATIVA  
DOS JORNAIS DE LÍNGUA INGLESA EM MACAU

Simões, J.M., & Pangan, C.A. (2024). English-language newspaper benchmarking in Macau. In F.B. Gil, & P.F. Alves (Eds.), *Comunicação, Artes e Culturas* (pp. 81–106). CDIG, Cultura Digital. eBooks.NMd.

 [10.23882/cdig.2409101](https://doi.org/10.23882/cdig.2409101)

## English-language newspaper benchmarking in Macau.

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JOSÉ MANUEL SIMÕES

*University of Saint Joseph, Macao, China*

*jmsimoes@usj.edu.mo*

CHEILA ALEXIS PAGAN

*University of Saint Joseph, Macao, China*

*pcheii296@gmail.com*

### **Abstract:**

This paper explores the development of English media in Macau, a region known for its Chinese and Portuguese language dominance. While the English media market is smaller than other languages, it caters to the English-speaking communities in Macau, including foreign migrants and immigrants. However, more research is needed on how English media influences the culturally diverse Macau under its current regime. As Macau soon celebrates its 25th anniversary since its return to China in 1999, it is fitting to examine the region's media development. This paper aims to understand the connection between the media's contribution to Macau's development and the freedom of the press. By analysing the role of English media in Macau, we can gain insights into the dynamics of a multilingual media environment and its implications for the region's cultural and social fabric. The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on media and provide a deeper understanding of the role of English media in Macau's societal and economic progress.

**Keywords:** English-language newspapers, benchmarking results, Media freedom, Biased news

The current quantitative study provides valuable insights into the messages conveyed by newspapers based on performance measures and benchmarking results. A qualitative approach was employed to collect data from the sampled news articles. The study evaluated news article reporting against performance measures and conducted a comparative analysis between two newspapers.

To ensure comprehensive analysis, the study further sampled, tabulated, and labelled information segments according to the performance indicators. The tabulated results are descriptive, providing daily records for each measurement criterion. Each column of benchmarking criteria corresponds to the sampled information segment.

The benchmarking measures and data yielded from the study were robust enough to assess the responsibility and accountability of journalists in reporting for each newspaper. Significantly, the results were not manipulated and were provided after thorough data analysis. The study consistently revealed discrepancies in the coverage of the sampled newspapers, offering valuable insights into the differences between them.

This quantitative study effectively sheds light on the messages conveyed by newspapers, utilising performance measures and benchmarking results. The qualitative approach employed to collect data allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of news article reporting and a comparative analysis between the two newspapers. The findings, presented in descriptive tabulated results, provide a nuanced understanding of each newspaper's coverage while ensuring the integrity of the results obtained through meticulous data analysis.

### 1.1 Results

Two hundred newspapers were collected and sampled from August 2019 to December 2019 (5 months). Out of 200 newspapers, 20 yielded no data, as none of the performance measurements were identified. 386 news articles were sampled and tabulated into information segments from Macau Daily Times (MDT) and Macau Post Daily (MPD). Results show that MDT records more data than MPD on most of the performance measures (see Table 1). Different benchmarking measures recorded various levels of data. Among both newspapers, measurements on opposing arguments and reports against government, imperialism, and pluralism recorded the highest data. In contrast, measurements on neutrality and self-citizenship showed the least amount of data. Data analysis shows balance in reporting across the performance measures, albeit with varied frequency in both newspapers.

**Table 1.** Newspaper Benchmarking results.

	Positive Argument	Negative Argument	Neutrality	Support Government	Against Government	Imperialism	Pluralism	Citizenship	Self-citizenship	Total newspapers collected (n)
Macau Daily Times	56	74	23	34	39	65	57	27	12	101
Macau Post Daily	24	34	6	15	16	51	35	32	10	99
<i>Total</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>108</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>116</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>200</i>

### **1.1.1 Macau Daily Times**

Over the data collection period, 101 newspapers were gathered, and 238 news articles were sampled. Results showed that MDT yielded more data than MPD in all performance measures except in citizenship. Notably, measurements on opposing argument (31%), imperialism (27%), and pluralism (24%) presented the highest amount of data among the sampled articles published in MDT.

The sampled newspapers reported both positive and negative sides of the arguments. There were more negative arguments (31%) than positive arguments (24%). Over five months, approximately 5% of the sampled articles captured both positive and negative argument measures, indicating a balance in reporting the two standards. Neutrality is identified and accounted for 10% of the total sampled articles. The neutrality measurement is also found with positive and negative arguments in the sampled articles, with less frequency, adding up to 0.8% of the sampled articles only.

Reports favourable and unfavourable to the government comprise 14% and 16% of the sampled news articles, respectively. The measurement of information opposing the government yielded a higher percentage rate than that of information supporting the government. A balanced reporting of information opposing and supporting the government is found twice (0.8%) within the samples – which was identified in the month of August.

Measurements of imperialism (27%) and pluralism (24%) were among the highest recorded criteria in the newspaper for the past five months – a close second to the measurement of positive and negative arguments. Data revealed that, over five months, MDT published news articles incorporating imperialism and pluralism at least once a month (2.1%).

Measurement of citizenship and self-citizenship yielded the lowest data against the other performance measures. Reports that included citizenship amounted to 11% of the samples, and information that incorporated self-citizenship comprised 5%. Both the measurements were recorded once (0.42%) in all the samples collected.

**Table 2.** Macau Daily Times monthly benchmarking results (August – December 2019)

	Newspaper collected (N)	Sampled News Articles (n)	Benchmarking Criteria (mean)								
			Positive Argument	Negative Argument	Neutrality	Support Government	Against Government	Imperialism	Pluralism	Citizenship	Self-citizenship
<b>August</b>	21	51	14 (0.28)	20 (0.39)	3 (0.06)	14 (0.28)	17 (0.33)	12 (0.24)	11 (0.22)	9 (0.18)	4 (0.08)
<b>September</b>	21	71	12 (0.17)	20 (0.28)	7 (0.10)	10 (0.14)	6 (0.09)	18 (0.25)	17 (0.24)	7 (0.10)	1 (0.01)
<b>October</b>	21	42	13 (0.31)	11 (0.26)	5 (0.12)	5 (0.12)	7 (0.16)	7 (0.17)	13 (0.31)	3 (0.07)	2 (0.05)
<b>November</b>	20	37	10 (0.27)	9 (0.24)	4 (0.11)	2 (0.05)	4 (0.11)	10 (0.27)	11 (0.30)	3 (0.08)	1 (0.03)
<b>December</b>	18	37	7 (0.19)	14 (0.38)	4 (0.11)	3 (0.08)	5 (0.14)	18 (0.49)	5 (0.14)	5 (0.14)	4 (0.11)
<i>Total</i>	101	238	56	74	23	34	39	65	57	27	12

### 1.1.2 Macau Post Daily

Ninety-nine newspapers were collected, and 148 news articles were sampled for data analysis. MPD recorded a lower percentage rate for most of the performance measures than MDT but demonstrated similar results. Data established that the measurements of imperialism (35%), pluralism (24%), and opposing argument (23%) yielded the highest rates among the sampled articles.

The sampled newspapers recorded the positive and negative sides of the arguments. Similar to the data from MDT, there was a higher percentage rate in the measurement of opposing arguments (23%) than in the measurement of positive arguments (16%) among the samples of MPD. In contrast, about 10% of the sampled articles captured both positive and negative argument measures, depicting a higher amount of data in the balanced reporting of the standards compared to MDT. The neutrality measurement accounted for only 4% of the total sampled articles. Reports indicating neutrality were also found together with the positive and negative arguments in the sampled articles, with a composition of 0.68% of the sampled articles.

Information reports that favour and disfavour the government comprised 10% and 11% of the sampled news articles, respectively. A balanced reporting of information that shows both favour and disfavour regarding the government is found thrice (2.03%) within the samples – discovered twice in August and once in October. MPD demonstrates a higher record of balanced reports on information that support and oppose the government over the data collection period. Although MDT displays a higher percentage of data on the measurements of reports supporting and opposing the government, the differences in balanced reporting between the sample articles are slight.

Measurements of imperialism (35%) and pluralism (24%) were two of the highest recorded criteria in the newspaper over the data collection period. Data analysis also

shows that measures of imperialism and pluralism were recorded together three times in August and once in November, giving a total of 2.7% of the sampled articles.

Measurement of citizenship and self-citizenship yielded a higher amount of data compared to those of MDT. Reports that included citizenship and self-citizenship comprised 22% and 7% of the samples. Both the measurements were recorded twice (1.35%) in all the samples collected.

**Table 3.** Macau Post Daily monthly benchmarking results (August – December 2019)

	Newspaper collected (N)	Sampled News Articles (n)	Benchmarking Criteria ( <i>mean</i> )								
			Positive Argument	Negative Argument	Neutrality	Support Government	Against Government	Imperialism	Pluralism	Citizenship	Self-citizenship
<b>August</b>	21	50	10 (0.2)	14 (0.28)	2 (0.04)	4 (0.08)	12 (0.24)	13 (0.26)	12 (0.24)	11 (0.22)	7 (0.14)
<b>September</b>	20	30	4 (0.13)	7 (0.23)	2 (0.07)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.07)	10 (0.33)	4 (0.13)	9 (0.30)	1 (0.03)
<b>October</b>	21	20	4 (0.20)	7 (0.35)	1 (0.05)	3 (0.15)	2 (0.10)	6 (0.30)	6 (0.30)	4 (0.20)	0 (0.00)
<b>November</b>	20	27	2 (0.07)	5 (0.19)	1 (0.04)	4 (0.15)	0 (0.00)	14 (0.52)	8 (0.30)	5 (0.19)	2 (0.07)
<b>December</b>	17	21	4 (0.19)	1 (0.05)	0 (0.00)	4 (0.19)	0 (0.00)	8 (0.38)	5 (0.24)	3 (0.14)	0 (0.00)
<i>Total</i>	99	148	24	34	6	15	16	51	35	32	10

## 1.2 Discussion

In this part of the article, the researcher discusses the results and draws a conclusion based on the newspaper benchmarking. The discussion focuses on the newspaper and reporting performances as well as biases. The newspaper performance centres on the news coverage and what was published, referring to the content based on the benchmarking criteria. The researcher also discusses possible reasons behind the results produced in this study with secondary sources and the interview conducted in the present research.

Macau Daily Times is more popular between the two English-language newspapers that cover current affairs in the region. According to France Macau Chamber of Commerce (*Partners*, n.d.), Macau Daily Times has a daily circulation of over 17 500 and an average of almost 300 000 hits daily on their official website. In a survey conducted in 2016, studying the opinions of English newspaper readers in Macau, it was found that over 40% of the respondents (n=299) preferred to read Macau Daily Times, while about 16% favoured Macau Post Daily (Li, 2016). In a more recent survey, it was recorded that respondents (n=141) also read Macau Daily Times more than Macau Post Daily (Izidro, 2019). Similarly, Macau Daily Times yielded the highest data in the benchmarking conducted in the current study. Comparable differences between the two newspapers are noted for discussion.

Performance measurements between the two newspapers provided different results from each other. Macau Daily Times had the highest reporting percentage compared to Macau Post Daily. It should also be noted that, out of 200 newspapers collected, no data was extracted from 17 in Macau Post Daily and 3 in Macau Daily Times. The balance of reporting differed as some measurement standards were met in some articles in one newspaper but not in the other. This result indicated that news reporting diverges and may be prompted by different motives and media outlet purposes. For instance, the difference in the number of newspapers collected was due to the differences in each newspaper's observance of unique and local holidays. Thus, the higher percentage of reporting from MDT can be attributed to more newspapers collected due to the frequency of their publications. However, data between MDT and MPD is still comparable, as the difference in the newspapers collected is small.

The benchmarking approach in this study demonstrated how each newspaper reported information to the public. Upon examining the sampled news articles, there is a balanced reporting of positive and negative arguments, as both measurements are often found together. Although neutral reporting is also seen with positive and negative reporting, neutrality is not embraced. From the results, MDT presented a higher frequency of balanced reporting as the sampled articles included positive, negative, and neutral reporting. Conversely, MPD shows a higher record of balanced reporting in terms of including both positive and negative arguments in its sampled articles.

The study results show that MDT and MPD are inclined towards adverse reporting. The high measurement rate of the opposing argument indicates that the English press is free to investigate all kinds of activities. Furthermore, leaning towards adverse reporting depicts the English press as playing a critical role. Objectivity may be questioned, and tension between news media's objectivity and adversarial role may be exploited (Olson, 1994). However, it is noteworthy to consider that the data on the measurement of positive and negative arguments indicates that the reporters cover both points of view in an opinion, and the newspapers did not engage in one side of the argument only. The direction and strength of the newspapers were inferred through the numerical results – a regression study should be conducted further to determine the strength of tendencies in news reports.

Results in reporting supportive and anti-government information are moderate in both newspapers but observable in this quantitative study. Between the two measures,

unfavourable information towards the government records a higher percentage rate in both newspapers, which indicates that the newspapers do not show partiality to the Macau government. It is also worth mentioning that the sampled news articles which reported positive and negative arguments coincided with ideas that supported or opposed the government. In particular, sampled articles captured negative arguments and information opposing the government. To a certain level, the English-language newspapers in this study fulfil their role as watchdog, which can help the media facilitate greater transparency and accountability in governance and thus highlight social problems to inform policy (Norris, 2006).

Nonetheless, it is notable that there needs to be more data on government measurements in benchmarking. This may be attributed to the newspapers' emphasis on economic activities, which are more of their consumers' interest rather than on political matters. A survey conducted in 2016 regarding English-language newspapers showed that some 75% of the readers' interest was in economic and financial news (gaming industry news) and that the readers were essentially professionals and business people (Li, 2016). Since the English-language newspapers were established due to a need brought about by the gaming industry – which ushered in more foreign readers – it follows that there would be fewer reports on governmental matters and more on economic activities among the English press in the region. Therefore, media consumers in the area play a part in news production.

Measurements of imperialism and pluralism are reasonable. Reports of imperialism in this study pointed to the objectives of the press to inform the people rather than push agendas. Imperialism was the most popular report in both newspapers, with MPD showing a higher value for this media measurement and the second-highest measurement in MDT. Imperialism includes different situations such as cultural, political, and commercial – reports of imperialism might be valuable for readers to forecast conditions in Macau. Reports of pluralism in both newspapers are satisfactory as different sources of information and content, voices, and transparency were embraced.

MPD shows a higher amount of data on citizenship and self-citizenship than MDT. Both newspapers show a lower value of reporting citizenship and self-citizenship than the other measurements. The backgrounds of the reporters working in each newsroom may reflect the differences in reporting citizenship. Based on each organisation's sources, MPD has more Chinese reporters, while MDT has more reporters of different nationalities. As



reports of citizenship and self-citizenship usually involve Chinese-speaking locals, it is logical that the newsroom with more Chinese reporters would produce more reports. Additionally, since news on economic conditions is more valuable in the English media, coverage of social issues raised by groups and individuals may be scarce. However, it should also be noted that since there is a high rate of reports on pluralism, sources may come from the diverse communities in Macau.

In each newspaper, there should be more diversity of information. It is appropriate that the media system overall should exhibit a range of output that reflects the diversity of the society, especially in the critical dimensions of the region, politics, religion, ethnicity, culture, and so on (McQuail, 2010). While the existing English-language newspapers in the area demonstrate diversity in their content and reflect the diversity in society, reporting other categories of information is neglected as the newspapers are tailored to a specific market.

### **1.3 Conclusion**

The English-language newspapers are up to standards based on the newspaper benchmarking. The benchmarking results showed the similarities and differences in reporting between Macau Daily Times and Macau Post Daily. The values of the newspapers were also demonstrated. The data collected was sufficient to infer that there is diversity in content among the English press. The quality of reporting among the English-language newspapers is satisfactory to the degree that all benchmarking media measurements were identified. The quantitative study displayed how each newspaper relayed categories of information to the public.

Biased news and compromised reporters were everywhere in the region over the years. Specific political and economic conditions influenced the performance of the press. The results of the newspaper benchmarking offer insight into the performance of the English press under the current media system. To an extent, the content and reporting techniques were determined through the benchmarking methodology by identifying the newspaper performance measures. McQuail (1992) posited that the conditions for media freedom to exist likely are when there are more varied types of media, more separate channels, more diversity of owners and forms of control, and more real media availability to the public. Varied types of English media exist in Macau, with radio, newspapers, and broadcasting resources available. Diversity in newspapers exists because two newspapers have

different ownerships and work independently. Pluralism exists in the region (Simões et al., 2017) and is embraced as results show that each newspaper values transparency and incorporation of other sources in their reporting.

The difference between newspapers is further distinguished in their reporting styles and tendencies, as revealed by research results. Furthermore, the diversity of information is adequate. The benchmarking results further showed the reporting tendencies of the media today. Media freedom should be used to follow an active and critical editorial policy and to provide reliable and relevant information (McQuail, 2010). Research results show more negative reporting and report unfavourable to the government, which displays the newspapers' crucial role in society. However, more coverage of government activities is desirable to inform society of relevant information to advocate for improved social change and prevent newspapers from simply tailoring themselves to the market and readers' interest, which leads to tabloids and a low sense of professionalism (Tong & Lo, 2017).

The benchmarking method is sufficient to investigate the categories of information that infer media freedom. However, the study is limited to the benchmarking performance measures used. Furthermore, a more systematic data analysis is recommended by employing more than one analyst to increase data validity. Additional research should be conducted to determine the varied types of information reported in the English-language newspapers in Macau. Content analysis should also be incorporated to specify the types of situations reported for imperialism and to determine the frequency of the occurrences of the situations. More content analysis is recommended to examine which voices – citizens or non-citizens – in Macau are reported most in the newspapers as diverse communities reside in Macau.

## **2. Interviews towards English media in Macau**

Interviews with media personalities were conducted to understand the conditions of the English media in Macau and to give further insight into the benchmarking results from the quantitative study of this research. The interview will be used to make sense of the English media in Macau – notably, the media's impact on society, freedom, sustainability, and its challenges in Macau. A summary of each interview will be presented as results, and the results will be discussed according to the current study objectives. A conclusion will be made at the end of the chapter.

## **2.1 Results**

The interviews provided a deeper insight into the current situation of English media and its operation in the region. Media freedom involves a comprehensive study of media within the context of society, news organisations, and individuals (McQuail, 2010). A survey of varied characteristics relating to journalism provides a clearer picture of English media under the current media system in Macau. In this study, the interviews also examined media freedom among the English media in the context of a diverse society in predominantly Chinese territory, news organisations led by the Chinese press, and individuals from the perspective of those working in the communication and media field.

Four interviews were conducted among different media personalities from August 2019 to September 2019. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted, which lasted an average of 50 minutes. Each interviewee works in Macau's communication and media field at the time of the interview. Among all four interviewees, their average duration of work in the region is 18 years. All three interviewees work at different English-language media outlets, while one works as a communication consultant.

In this section, all information from the interviews is summarised according to the study objectives by the researcher to facilitate comprehension. For each interviewee, no other information had been added from different sources, not even any commentary from the researcher.

### **2.1.1 Interviewee A from English Media**

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed to the English media. Interviewee A states that the law ensures the freedom of press and expression, which the English media exercises in various media outlets (broadcasting, electronic, newsprint, and magazines). In addition, interviewee A strongly believes that all the different English media outlets in the region are “unbiased, fair, and balanced” as they listen to both sides of the issue. Traditions from the Portuguese and English press to be independent from the government influenced the English media in Macau. “So, we’ve worked hard – from an editorial point of view – not to have to follow the government. We do what we feel is right to do.” (Interviewee A, personal communication, 21 August 2019). Likewise, English media’s independence from the government or any other unauthorised personnel is reflected in their editorial guidelines to serve their audience through delivering information, entertainment, and education in the region.

Notwithstanding, interviewee A distinguishes between freedom of the press and the media outlets' editorial guidelines. For example, the editorial policies of one newspaper may be vehemently opposed to the government, and another is firmly in favour of the government. The freedom of press and expression is exercised so reporters can choose which media outlets to work in. Journalists are not restricted to moving to another media outlet with their preferred editorial guidelines. Thus, the full expression of freedom is applied.

However, some challenges to exercising freedom in the region are found. Journalists from the English-language press need help covering government activities as the government does not operate in English. The government can provide information and translations in English, as English is not Macau's official language. At the same time, interviewee A emphasises that the role of the English press is more than merely to deal with government issues. More specifically, news production about the government is contingent on their market – the audience.

Generally, the market precipitates and sustains the media outlets. As an English media outlet, the market is focused on media consumers whose primary language is English or those who can understand the language. Different English-language media outlets in Macau have different target populations, which is evident in their productions. More precisely, interviewee A described that their media outlet was more focused on other issues in Macau that concern their consumers more, such as labour, transportation, health, etc. To further illustrate the impact of the market on the English media, interviewee A traced its history back to its origins.

An English-language newspaper was started in the mid-nineties before the handover (*Macau Express*), but it was only published for a few months before it closed down. The SARS virus also broke out when the gaming industry was picking up. According to interviewee A, statistics also showed that many foreigners needed help understanding Macau's official languages. In 2003, *TDM* started broadcasting in English to inform people of the SARS outbreak. Hereafter, *Macau Business* was launched in 2004 to accommodate the growing business industry of Macau. Later, other print news such as *Macau Post Daily*, *Macau Business Daily*, and *Macau Daily Times* followed. The need to publish for this new market prompted the English media to publish news accordingly. Therefore, the English media grew because a market emerged among foreigners who didn't speak the official languages but needed to be informed of the circumstances surrounding them.

In addition, the impact of the English media on Macau's society is observable. Besides being a source of information to foreigners living in Macau, the English media in the region interacts with their consumers in English. For example, *Macau Daily Times* has a website that has attracted many readers over the years, where they can post comments and interact with each other. *TDM* has a large following on Facebook, where people often inquire about various issues, such as typhoon news. English media outlets have avenues for people to reach them.

Consequently, partly through this interaction, related news is generated. The English media market further influences the English media outlets in terms of the cultural diversity in Macau. Seeing cultural diversity in the news enables the different communities in Macau to “see a portrait of themselves.” (Interviewee A, personal communication, 21 August 2019). Interviewee A further expressed that their media outlet aims to reflect the region’s cultural diversity in their news as much as possible to make the communities feel more at home.

Although the Macau English media impacts society, it doesn’t affect the region’s economy. However, the economy plays a role in the sustainability of the press. Among the English media, *TDM* is subsidised by the government, while other media outlets depend on commercial revenue. As long as the Macau government has funds, *TDM* will be financially sustained. There is a potential danger for the media that depends on commercial revenues from advertisements, as their revenue is connected to the economy. Interviewee A mentions two outcomes regarding the relationship between Macau’s economy and the English press. “If the economy goes down, we have more things to publish – there are more things to talk about. But I think the two things are linked: if there’s an economic problem, there will always be some effect on the commercial revenue of the newspapers.” (Interviewee A, personal communication, 21 August, 2019).

### **2.1.2 Interviewee B from English Media**

Interviewee B conveyed that the media outlets exercise freedom in Macau on account of the topics that the media can explore without any limitation. Although there has been no pressure from the government or any institution to refrain from publishing, off-the-record comments to be careful about publishing sensitive topics are unavoidable. On the other hand, freedom of the press among English journalists is undermined due to specific barriers encountered.

Language and access to sources are two of the issues that interviewee B cited as challenging in their media outlet. Most of the documents and laws are in Chinese and Portuguese only. Bilingual journalists to assess the documents remedy the language issue, but sometimes there isn't enough information in English to work with. Additionally, delays from government sources are a challenge. "Also, it's tough sometimes to get replies from the government departments. And what we do here consistently is that we never let go. So, we send an email first then call to confirm our inquiries, and if they don't answer after a reasonable time, we insist." (Interviewee B, personal communication, 21 August, 2019). However, interviewee B clarified that the delays vary from department to department. By law, journalists in Macau can access public information, which is not often complied with.

As it is, politics is more difficult for journalists to work on due to the culture in Macau and the nature of the investigation. The democracy in Macau is modest, and there is a constraint for the people in Macau to voice their opinions on political matters. Moreover, some issues, such as alleged corruption cases, may be challenging to investigate. The press is free to probe various topics; however, newspaper operations usually need to be more significant in looking into such cases that take more work to investigate extensively. Nevertheless, there have been many changes, especially in public information in English. When the non-Chinese and non-Portuguese communities grew exponentially, English newspapers in Macau appeared due to the need to accommodate foreigners who came to Macau for business. At the same time, interviewee B recalled that the government was using English newspapers as a source to formulate their communication in English, which is more developed now than before.

Before Macau's handover, according to interviewee B, the Portuguese media was critical because the government translated and summarised every newspaper's main topics for major policy decision-makers. Then, there was a transition period wherein government departments relied on the reporting and opinions of the Portuguese media. Then, the English media started to transmit views of communities other than the Portuguese and other aspects of Macau's society. More developed English media increased Chinese readership among the younger generation. Interviewee B observed that many informed Chinese don't rely much on traditional Chinese media except to have an official stance. The younger generation is more fluent in English. And the English press and Portuguese media sources "to understand the feelings of different communities" (Interviewee B,

personal communication, 21 August 2019). In contrast, some Chinese media outlets “are also coming with the independent reporting more and more” (Interviewee B, personal communication, 21 August, 2019). The impact of English media is influential to the extent that it is regarded by the Chinese in Macau more than before.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the Macau press and the public (citizens) needs to be more balanced as the community is diverse. The press acts as a bridge between communities in Macau and between communities and private and public institutions. According to interviewee B, their media outlet’s newsroom aims to mimic Macau’s society to penetrate all the different communities in the region. The challenge is penetrating the Chinese community as more Chinese journalists in the English media are needed.

In the context of Macau’s economy, there is a relationship between the economy and English media in the region. Although the English media doesn’t affect the economy, there is still a relationship between them as “it’s a dual thing, it’s not always linear” (Interviewee B, personal communication, 21 August 2019). In particular, English-language newspaper operations are affected by revenues. For independent media outlets that the government does not subsidise, they receive support from their sponsors. More advertisements are needed when there is an economic burden in the media industry. From the news perspective, when the economy is better and people are more content, there tends to be less news to cover.

However, the state of the economy should not compromise journalistic ethics. According to interviewee B, some newspapers subsidised by the government don’t fulfil their journalistic endeavour and are like business ventures. While media independence exists in the region, some newspapers only publish their “official line, and not the communities’ voices” (Interviewee B, personal communication, 21 August 2019). The duty and role of journalists is to have critical thinking – not necessarily to take a stance – but to have a critical eye on every issue and to look at everybody as a potential source. No distinction is made between locals and non-locals, origins, religion, or sex. Media outlets are a distinct business in terms of possessing “a social responsibility higher than most of the regular business ventures because we are dealing with the truth, and telling the truth is our business.” (Interviewee B, personal communication, 21 August 2019). Journalists abide by journalistic rules of being neutral in reporting and not taking sides.

### 2.1.3 Interviewee C from English Media

As the media system in Macau reflects the population in the region, there are significantly more resources in the Chinese media than in the English press. Nevertheless, the English media established its media presence after 1999. According to interviewee C, there are currently more readers of English-language newspapers than readers of Portuguese-language newspapers. Furthermore, Chinese readers of English-language newspapers have increased. Freedom of expression and freedom of the press are guaranteed by the law and are demonstrated in each media outlet's editorial guidelines.

Editorial guidelines play a role in how journalists work. Editorial guidelines designate the role of a media outlet in society as well as provide parameters on how journalists should act within said media outlet. Journalists should not act as moral authorities in their reporting but instead report with accuracy, balance, and conciseness. Journalists must include attribution, correct quotations, and appropriate reporting sources. Although journalists are part of society, according to interviewee B, they keep a distance and avoid getting too close to people to prevent bias. News reporting and presentation of views and opinions should be distinguished.

Furthermore, editorial guidelines also influence the news content. Newspapers may have particular editorial bias, which leads the newspaper to focus more on the economy, sports, or entertainment. For example, interviewee C uses an event in August 2019, where a silent protest at Macau Senado Square against Hong Kong police action was allegedly supposed to occur. Interviewee C's media outlet covered the issue because a public event occurred, and it was considered as news. Be that as it may, interviewee C noted that some newspapers refrained from publishing anything regarding the events, and some journalists were even told not to go to the venue. This decision may be due to the newspapers' editorial guidelines or their political opinion (Interviewee C, personal communication, 23 August 2019).

It should be noted that however the editorial guideline is, it is also an expression of freedom. Whether the newspaper's owner, the publisher or editor-in-chief would like to publish, it is their right. Some journalists may complain, but they are free to move to another media outlet, which is *their* expression of press freedom.

On the other hand, journalists in Macau have the freedom to investigate the government, albeit with some unsatisfying results. The Macau government demonstrates transparency with the media through their spokesperson system in bureaus and individual offices. The system works based on interviewee C's conversation with other journalists in their media outlet. However, the journalists struggle to use this system because either the answers



from the spokespersons are not satisfying or they don't receive feedback promptly. Interviewee C indicated that the government and the media have different roles to play in society. Relationships with local communication authorities are helpful when the press receives valuable information from the government's media organisation. Nonetheless, it's normal to have some tension between these two institutions. For instance, each language media has challenges that correspond with the government.

As it is, political matters are challenging to cover. Moreover, "compared to the Portuguese media, it is easier to get information in English than in Portuguese" (Interviewee C, personal communication, 23 August 2019). It is easier for interviewee C and their media outlet to communicate with the local spokespersons as they can speak Chinese. However, a challenge arose among the English media when the communication was in Chinese, but the publication in English was wrongly translated or misquoted. "...we prefer to paraphrase because quoting directly can be a problem. You have one sentence, and you ask to translate and have four different versions. It's a struggle, making English publishing in Macau more difficult." (Interviewee C, personal communication, 23 August, 2019). In addition to political matters, information about economic conditions is difficult to obtain. Representatives from private and corporate companies are wary of being misunderstood or misquoted. However, the representatives may also not want to communicate because they may say something controversial that would upset their superiors. "I had this situation. They said that they didn't say that, but we had it on tape. But I think this is a normal situation." (Interviewee C, personal communication, 23 August 2019). Consequently, the relationship between the Macau press and the public is strained due to the challenges posed by the language barrier in the region among the English media.

Nonetheless, the English media is sustained. Subscription fees and advertising are two of the primary sources of income. However, advertising is more affected than subscriptions when the Macau economy changes. Corporate subscriptions may decrease if their business could be better. But there tend to be fewer ads when the economy could be better. However, the state of the economy does not affect journalistic ethics. What influences the English media is the news agenda and the civil society. Advertorials are still identified as such. Although the competition between the two existing English-language newspapers has commercial effects, the competition is still good due to their diverse content. Interviewee C specified that the news flow influences the content of their media outlet – reporting what happened in reality – and both English-language newspapers have different approaches to reality.

#### **2.1.4 Interviewee D from the English Communications Field**

Interviewee D affirmed that freedom of expression, speech, and press are guaranteed by the law in Macau. Journalists are free to ask and deliver information to the public. There must be control over and between the journalists to do their work. In the opinion of interviewee D, the characteristics of Macau media can be an example for other parts of Asia. “In Macau, information is more difficult to be controlled because they have freedom of the press.” (Interviewee D, personal communication, 23 September 2019). However, journalists have constraints in the English media within the region.

The most challenging impediment for journalists in the English media is the language, which opens up more complex issues. Even though English is a welcome and desirable language in the region, it is not an official language. The relationship between the English media and the local communication authority seems “strong and efficient” (Interviewee D, personal communication, 23 September 2019), but the English media outlets encounter difficulties when they need to translate information released by the government. Furthermore, information is often obtained through sources from people or document records. If a journalist doesn’t speak or understand Chinese or Portuguese, it would be challenging to find sources of information. However, interviewee D pointed out that the English media don't need to have access to information about the government because they have a specific audience in Macau.

The English media has a specific audience among the foreigners that come to Macau. That audience consists of enterprises and companies not based in Macau and those based in a country that speaks English. What defines the content of a media outlet depends on the editorial guidelines and the audience they want to reach. The media is critical in Macau for stability and democracy of opinion. Even though the market for English media is tiny, it’s still important to know what’s happening in society. Interviewee D witnessed that the English-language newspapers provide information support to the non-Chinese-speaking community in Macau. Regardless of the small market size, the English-language media connects non-Chinese speaking communities and Macau.

Relatedly, the English media impacts society if the consumers trust them. English-language newspapers include features that relate to the multi-ethnic communities in Macau. For example, Macau Post Daily and Macau Daily Times incorporate news from the Philippines, Indonesia, and the world. Multiple communities in the region can have access to information, which they can also use to confirm facts. Online news may make

it easier for different communities in Macau to be informed of their home country, but sometimes, information could be clearer, and fake news is rampant. Nowadays, it's easy to access information online, but individuals can double-check the information using the newspapers available to them locally. For instance, "If you see in a magazine that has historical relation with you, you will believe more in what you read than what you see." (Interviewee D, personal communication, 23 September 2019). However, interviewee D noted that the media can only shape society if the society is interested.

On the other hand, the English media can only grow depending on the market. The English media can develop if the number of citizens that live, work, and come to Macau increases to a decent language level so that a niche can be opened. But as of the moment, as reported by interviewee D, the existence of two daily English-language newspapers – with three daily newspapers online with agencies – completes all the market available in Macau. Regarding sustainability, interviewee D noted that the Macau English press survives with advertisements. Precisely, the economic factors and sustainability of the English Macau press depend on their relationship with the casinos. Interviewee D observed that the English media has no difficulties in getting sponsors.

## **2.2 Discussion**

The interviews provided more profound insight into the English media operations in Macau and revealed the extent of media freedom within the region. The sovereignty largely influenced the Macau media; therefore, their roles and impact in society evolved along with the political system. Since the Macau handover in 1999, the English media has established its presence. The effect of the English media is specific to the diverse society of Macau, which has developed over the years. How media freedom is exercised, and the mechanics of English media's sustainability in the present conditions will be discussed. Although media independence exists in the region, the interviews show that challenges specific to the English media are encountered.

### **2.2.1 Impact and Role of English Media in Macau**

Research results show that the communication process of the English media in Macau functions as surveillance, correlating aspects of society in responding to the environment and transmitting the relevant information in the society (Lasswell, 1948). The impact and role of the English media in Macau is distinguishable among the diverse communities in

the region. A niche for the English media is found among the foreigners living and working in Macau. In addition to being a trusted source of information, the English press is also a source of connection to Macau for the foreigners residing in Macau as the media outlets interact with them. The English media inform the multi-ethnic communities in Macau of the issues and circumstances in Macau. They are also educated on the issues that relate to them personally, especially as Macau laws, local economic and social conditions, and news from their home country are reported.

The English media is also a source of information for consumers outside Macau who don't understand Chinese and Portuguese. Interviewee B asserted that English-language newspapers play a significant role in Macau being an "International City" (Interview B, personal communication, 21 August 2019). English-language newspapers are also used to communicate with foreign business counterparts about Macau (Interview C, personal communication, 23 August 2019). This demonstrates that the target audience of the English-language newspapers is not simply the English-speaking communities in Macau but also those who want to learn about Macau in English (Harald Brüning as cited in Li, 2016, p. 26).

Over time, the Chinese readership of English-language newspapers has also increased. Furthermore, as the local younger generation becomes fluent in English, they are more engaged with the English media. News coverage from the Portuguese and English media is widely circulated on social media among the Chinese community as they are more outspoken (Meneses, 2018). The locals using the English media indicates journalism's role as a basis for society-wide public discussion and participation in Macau (McQuail, 2013). However, the English media contributes to shaping society to the extent of society's interests (Interview D, personal communication, 23 September 2019).

The English media is also a source of information for the government. During the Portuguese rule, the newspapers were valuable in informing the government of the situation in Macau. The government relied on the reporting of the Portuguese media until the English media came to provide another perspective (Interview B, personal communication, 21 August 2019). Indeed, Portuguese and English media readers include the governing elites as the government prepares the translated content (Meneses, 2018). The English-language newspapers report information and opinions of other communities and different aspects of the society in Macau, but the other language media does not. Consequently, the information reported by the newspapers and other media contributes

to making informed decisions among policy-makers in Macau (Curran & Hesmondhalgh, 2019; Kennedy & Prat, 2019; Kwong et al., 2015).

The role and impact of the English media in Macau, as revealed by the interviews, align with the observation that the Portuguese and English media is a “critical window through which to observe if Macau is doing well or not vis-à-vis their international counterparts.” (Meneses, 2018). As the media sets the agenda, it shapes the importance of specific news, affecting the government’s decisions and policies and guiding people’s attitudes and trust towards the government (Kwong et al., 2015). On the other hand, the impact of English media in Macau is afforded by the media freedom warranted by the law.

### **2.2.2 Freedom in the English media**

The law ensures freedom of speech, press, and publication in Macau due to the persistent complaints from the Portuguese journalists regarding intimidation and evaluation of Macau media ethics and values intensified during the Macau handover (Deveraux as cited in Wong, 2018, p.17). Thus, it was speculated that, before the handover, the Chinese-language press may have had more investigative freedom than their Portuguese counterparts due to the government’s lack of understanding of the Chinese language (Simões & Mayes, 2019). Simões and Mayes (2019) posited that if the Chinese-language press enjoyed greater investigative freedom before the handover, then there should be an increase in the investigative liberties enjoyed by the Portuguese-language media today. A similar sentiment can be extended to the English-language press.

The English media can investigate all activities and report related news based on the interviews. The government does not control the English media outlets and is more outspoken (Meneses, 2018). Various topics are freely explored in the newspapers and media outlets (Interviewee B, personal communication, 21 August 2019). Interviewee B’s observation supports the report by the U.S. Department of State (2019) that the local media in Macau expresses a wide range of views. Likewise, the freedom of the press makes it hard for information to be controlled in Macau (Interviewee D, personal communication, 23 September 2019).

The media also displays their rights to freedom through their editorial guidelines. The social structures in place affect journalism's conduct and performance at the news organisation's level (McQuail, 2013). The journalists in the region adhere to their media outlet’s editorial guidelines, which aim to serve the audience. A media outlet may choose

the focus of their content and have an editorial bias towards news about the economy, sports, and entertainment, accommodating their target audience. Adherence to their respective editorial guidelines is the media outlets' demonstration of their right to freedom of the press. Similarly, if journalists disagree with the policies, they are free to move to another outlet. The freedom to move "constitutes an excellent opportunity to enjoy that freedom." (Interviewee A, personal communication, 21 August 2019).

### **2.2.3 Challenges to Press Freedom**

Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed to the English media in Macau, but journalists encounter barriers that hinder media activities. While there is no overt oppression and intimidation from the government upon the Macau media, more modern obstacles stand in upholding the free press (Simões et al., 2017; Simões & Mayes, 2019; Wong, 2018). McQuail (2013) asserted that the main conditions relating to freedom of journalism are structural, including an absence of hidden pressures or controls that inhibit publication. Controls that inhibit publication are found in language challenges and access to sources among the English media, hindering the maintenance of the region's free press.

The obstruction to media freedom among the English media in the region involves the language barrier, which is also tied to access to sources. The backgrounds of the journalists in the English media outlets' newsrooms differ. Some newsrooms in the English media lack sufficient Chinese journalists to communicate with sources who do not speak the official languages of Macau. Translating official documents from the Chinese language takes time and requires bilingual journalists. Wong (2018) also reported that Macau media outlets' process of translating information from the Chinese language disrupted reporting and access to sources of information. Again, due to language differences, it is difficult for non-native journalists to obtain information from native sources in the region. Fear of being misunderstood or misquoted is also cited as why sources do not want to speak with the English media. Thus, media activities are restrained, and access to sources is limited.

Relatedly, the present research results identified specific access to sources of information that are challenging to obtain. As stipulated by the law, the media is free to access public information in Macau. However, constraints in undertaking the function of informing restricts journalistic efforts to educate the public. Although a relationship exists between the Macau press and the local communication authority, there is tension. A violation of

journalists' press freedom rights has been recorded as there had been requests for a journalist to "alter content including declarations from interviews, or to cut paragraphs of text that would create a negative impression, to the public or the Executive branch of the government of Macau" (Simões et al., 2017, p. 8).

Additionally, from the English media representatives' perspective, sources from the government don't provide feedback promptly, which hampers journalistic reporting. These results support the study of Rato, Simões, and Flores (2017), where press freedom in Macau was evaluated with an intensive survey among journalists. In the survey, more than 55% of the respondents reported that it was difficult to access the Government as a source of information (Simões et al., 2017). Therefore, the full expression of freedom of the press is deterred.

#### **2.2.4 Sustainability**

Commercial revenues sustain the English print media in Macau. TDM broadcasts news in English and is funded by the government. Sustainability in print media is discussed in more detail as the English press is not subsidised by the government compared to the other language press. The lack of subsidy skews the situation between the language presses (Interviewee C, personal communication, 23 August 2019). Furthermore, Picard (2013) established that the broadcasting media also relied on the reporting of newspapers. The lack of funding among the English press is worth discussing as the study reveals the performance of journalists under this arrangement.

Subscription fees, advertisements, and sponsors support the Macau media (Simões & Ribeiro, 2018). Likewise, the Macau economy supports the English media through advertisements and subscriptions. Particularly, as the English media receives no subsidy from the government, Macau Post Daily and Macau Daily Times receive their advertisement income from local businesses and casinos as well as festival and condolences advertisements, which makes Macau media unique (Li, 2016).

Interviews further reveal a relationship between the press and the casinos to the extent that they are the primary source of advertisement. Kwong and Wong (2017) postulated that patron-client relationships may compromise news media by allowing the incumbents to exercise political control, discourage other ideologies, and foster a monopoly of pro-regime opinions in news media. Since there is no government subsidy for the English press, Kwong and Wong's (2017) argument can't be applied to the relationship between

the media and the government. However, it can be argued that commercial relationships may compromise the news media.

Although commercial relationships are essential to the Macau press, research results show that unauthorised personnel do not affect journalistic output. The benchmarking study showed more negative reporting than positive; there were reports unfavourable to the government, and the measurement of pluralism was high. The newspapers didn't lean towards one side of reporting nor favoured pro-regime opinions in the media. Furthermore, the English media representatives discouraged reporting views and distinguished them from facts. The measurement of pluralism from the benchmarking study showed that different ideologies were considered.

Furthermore, opinions collected from this study's survey showed that the information in English-language newspapers is diverse and includes many sources of information. These results indicate that there is a pluralism of information in the newspapers. Moreover, in the point of view of news, the English media representatives stated that even when there is an economic crisis, this is a source of news for the media outlets.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

The interviews were instrumental in addressing issues within the English media. The operation of the English media in Macau was detailed based on the current study objectives. The interviews revealed an in-depth understanding of how the English press manages a diverse society with other dominant and established language media. Additionally, the intricacies of how the English media works under the current media system and regime were compared.

Overall, the impact of the English media differs between the local and non-local communities. The English media faces language barriers that open up more challenges, such as access to sources, even though English is widely used and accepted in the region (Lijadi, 2014; Moody, 2008). Freedom House, as cited in Rato, Simões, and Flores (2017), proposed that freedom of the press requires four factors to exist simultaneously:

“(i) that the media can systematically cover political stories; (ii) that the safety of journalists is guaranteed; (iii) that the interference of the State in matters of media is minimal; (iv) that the Press is not subject to costly legal or economic requirements” (p.24). Based on these requirements, freedom of the press is restrained because the



English media cannot thoroughly cover political matters due to limited access to sources and information. The English press survives through commercial revenues and performs satisfactorily under this arrangement. However, investigation into various activities may be restrained due to the lack of funding. As more and more people turn to digital media, newspapers are predicted to be outdated (Izidro, 2019).

Over time, the structure of ownership and control over the Macau media changed along with the political system. Compared to Chinese media, English media has less impact on Macau's society. Conversely, the English media is valuable to the English-speaking community in and outside Macau. The English press in Macau establishes a monitorial, educational, and facilitative function among its consumers. Furthermore, consumers of the English media in the region have developed over time. Therefore, English media has the potential to be influential as it positions itself as an 'international lens' within Macau society, and it is a prominent elite newspaper for China to understand the 'true West' that is not limited to the US and UK (Meneses, 2018).

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