

**PROFESSIONALISM
IN CHINESE-LANGUAGE JOURNALISM:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF JOURNALISTS IN
CHINA AND MALAYSIA**

By

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Audit Bureau of Circulations
ACJA	All-China Journalists' Association
BN	Barisan Nasional
CPC	Communist Party of China
CNKI	China National Knowledge Infrastructure
GAPP	General Administration of Press and Publication
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
KMT	Kuomintang, or the Nationalist
MCIL	Media Chinese International Limited
MPI	Malaysian Press Institute
NUJ	National Union of Journalists
PRC	People's Republic of China
UMNO	United Malays' National Organization
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles

1. Shao Baohui (2012), Knowing only half of Malaysia without reading Chinese-language newspapers, *The Press*, (3), pp.108-110.
2. Shao Baohui & Nik Norma Nik Hasan (2013), Persevering and transforming while facing challenges: The evolution of Malaysian Chinese-language newspapers in the new century. *China Newspaper Industry*, (14), pp.44-46.
3. Shao Baohui & Nik Norma Nik Hasan (2014), Journalistic roles among Chinese-language press journalists in China and Malaysia, *Procedia Social & Behavioral Sciences*.

Conferences

1. Shao Baohui (2011), *The Chinese-language newspapers in the new millennium in Malaysia*, Paper presented at The Seventh International Conference of Media and Communication in Chinese Civilization: Peacefully-developed China and Chinese Language Media: Adaption, Integration, and Innovation, Baoding, China.
2. Shao Baohui (2011), *Changing with times: The evolution of the Chinese-language newspapers and Chinese community in Malaysia*, Paper presented at LANCOMM International Conference on Language and Communication: Embracing challenges in current trends, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
3. Shao Baohui (2012), *More academic research needed: A critical literature review on Malaysian Chinese-language press*, Paper presented at The First Biennial International Conference on Malaysian Chinese Studies: From immigrants to citizenships, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
4. Shao Baohui & Nik Norma Nik Hasan (2012), *Facing challenges: The Chinese-language press as ethnic media in Malaysia*, Paper presented at The 21st AMIC Annual Conference: Forty Years of Media and Communication in Asia: Retrospect, Introspect and Prospects, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

**PROFESIONALISME KEWARTAWANAN
BERBAHASA CINA: KAJIAN PERBANDINGAN TERHADAP WARTAWAN
DI CHINA DAN MALAYSIA**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis situasi semasa tahap profesionalisme kewartawanan pada peringkat individu di China dan Malaysia. Data-data diperoleh daripada wartawan-wartawan yang berkhidmat untuk akhbar bahasa Cina di kedua-dua buah negara. Tiga akhbar bahasa Cina dipilih dari setiap negara berdasarkan hak pemilikan dan perwakilan akhbar-akhbar tersebut. Tiga akhbar tersebut ialah *Beijing Evening*, *Beijing Youth Daily* dan *the Beijing News* yang diterbitkan di Beijing, China, sementara tiga akhbar kajian Malaysia pula terdiri daripada *Sin Chew Daily*, *Kwong Wah Yit Poh* dan *Oriental Daily News* yang diterbitkan di Semenanjung Malaysia. Kajian ini dijalankan menggunakan kaedah campuran. Borang soal selidik digunakan untuk mengumpul data kuantitatif manakala temuramah mendalam dikendalikan untuk tujuan mendapatkan data kualitatif. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa para wartawan dari kedua-dua negara berkecenderungan untuk menilai profesionalisme kewartawanan berdasarkan lima petunjuk utama iaitu peranan kewartawanan, kemahiran, autonomi, komitmen dan sikap bertanggungjawab. Kedua, kajian juga mengenalpasti ciri-ciri persamaan dan perbezaan yang wujud di antara wartawan-wartawan akhbar bahasa Cina di negara China dan Malaysia. Ketiga, kajian ini juga mendapati faktor yang mempengaruhi persamaan dan perbezaan serta tahap profesionalisme kewartawanan di antara wartawan-wartawan akhbar bahasa Cina di kedua-dua negara secara umumnya adalah berpunca daripada struktur organisasi syarikat akhbar dan institusi sosial. Di samping itu, kajian turut meneliti pendekatan yang sesuai untuk meningkatkan tahap profesionalisme para wartawan akhbar bahasa Cina di China dan Malaysia. Hasil kajian adalah selaras dengan hasil

kajian-kajian terdahulu yang menekankan bahawa profesionalisme kewartawanan wujud dalam pelbagai dimensi dan merupakan satu konsep relatif yang ditentukan oleh pelbagai konteks sejarah, politik, ekonomi dan sosial. Selain itu, kajian ini mengemukakan bukti bahawa profesionalisme kewartawanan telah diterima pakai dan disesuaikan ke dalam dunia kewartawanan bahasa Cina. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa wartawan-wartawan akhbar bahasa Cina di China dan Malaysia masih menjalani proses pengikhtisasan kewartawanan.

**PROFESSIONALISM IN CHINESE-LANGUAGE JOURNALISM:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF JOURNALISTS IN
CHINA AND MALAYSIA**

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the current state of journalistic professionalism at individual level in China and Malaysia. Data were collected from the journalists working for Chinese-language newspapers in both countries. Three Chinese-language newspapers from each country were selected according to the ownership and representativeness. The three newspapers in China were *Beijing Evening*, *Beijing Youth Daily* and *the Beijing News* in Beijing; while in Malaysia, the three newspapers were *Sin Chew Daily*, *Kwong Wah Yit Poh* and *Oriental Daily News* in Peninsular Malaysia. This study applies mixed methods. A questionnaire was used for the collection of quantitative data and an in-depth interview for qualitative data. The main findings show that firstly, Chinese-language newspaper journalists from both countries are inclined to acknowledge journalistic professionalism in terms of five primary indicators, namely journalistic roles, expertise, autonomy, commitment and responsibility. Secondly, the findings identify the differences and similarities of Chinese-language newspaper journalists of these two countries. Thirdly, this study discovers the influential factors affecting their differences and similarities as well as journalistic professionalism in general are mainly from press organizations and social institutions. Besides, this study also investigates some suitable approaches to improve Chinese-language newspaper journalists' professionalism in both countries. The results correspond to those of the previous studies which emphasized that journalistic professionalism is a multi-dimensional and relative concept which is determined by different historical, political, economic, and social contexts. In addition, this study

gives evidence that journalistic professionalism has been adopted and adapted in the Chinese-language world press. This study concludes the journalists in both countries are in the midst of professionalization of journalism.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an overview of the study. It introduces the general background of the research topic; provides problem statement, research objectives, research questions, research hypotheses, significance, research scope, definitions, and organization of this study.

1.1 Background of Study

Journalistic professionalism emerged in the western countries in the nineteenth century (O'Boyle, 1968), and particularly nurtured in America (Guo, 1999; Dennis & Merrill, 2006) and it had been a concept central to American journalists since the late nineteenth century (Wu et al., 1996; Beam, 1990). Journalistic professionalism is good to consolidate journalism's credibility and social prestige (Deuze, 2004; Wu, 2009) and to a high degree, it can lead journalists to practice service with "good standards" (Waisbord, 2013) and to reach "the best practices of journalism" (Mustafa, 2010). More importantly, journalistic professionalism is "of central concern to journalism studies" (Waisbord, 2013) and "still one of the forefront research topics" (Wu, 2009), especially in the Chinese-language world.

Although many scholars insisted that journalism should be a profession (Dennis & Merrill, 2006; Schramm, 1957; Waisbord, 2013), whether or not it could be considered a profession had been argued for most of the twentieth century (Dennis & Merrill, 2006; Weaver and et al., 2007). Obviously, different scholars have used with different definitions (Beam, 1990; Qian, 1998) and there is a remarkable lack of consensus about journalistic professionalism (Beam, 1990; Wu, 2009). Just as

Freidson (1994) points out that different people see half a cup of water: some would insist that the cup is half full, while others would argue that it is half empty. Hence, many of the investigations of journalistic professionalism have halted at a compromise settlement that journalism “is *of* a profession but not *in* one” (Schudson & Andson, 2009; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986).

Undoubtedly, journalistic professionalism thrives in liberal capitalism (Clement & Chan, 2007) as well as free society (Wu, 2009). It connects to the democratization of market economics and politics and forms the core values of journalism in democracy (Soloski, 1990; Tuchman, 1978). However, journalistic professionalism as a construct has been widely transported around the world through the power of US and British international news agencies as well as the dominant position of both countries in world affairs (Waisbord, 2013), and through their innumerable institutional links, training programmes and educational curricula provided to many other parts of the world (Golding, 1977). In fact, journalistic professionalism has been widely accepted by journalists as “the excellences to which journalists aspire” in America (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996) and “a ‘common language’ and ideological commitment within the subculture of journalists in various countries” (Lee et al., 1997).

Recently, a rudimentary form of journalistic professionalism has been found to bud in China (Pan & Chan, 2003) and in Malaysia (Liew, 2009). Journalistic professionalism was considered as “a normative and descriptive theory used to analyze journalism system and journalists’ practice effectively” (Pan & Chan, 2005). It is an analytical device for researchers to think about journalism worldwide (Zelizer, 2005). Specifically, journalistic professionalism has also become an insight for China’s journalists to view their craft (Pan et al., 2008). More importantly, relevant research can be expected to function as a force of “liberation” and “construction” in

“pre-professional” countries, especially in China (Lu & Pan, 2002).

Chinese is the language that is most widely-used language in printed newspapers all over the world due to its largest daily circulation (Chen, 2006). Mainly published in China, it also spread widely to many other countries, including Malaysia. China is definitely a Chinese-language “Newspaper Empire” with the largest circulation in the world (Report on Chinese Press Industry, 2005), while Malaysia is always regarded as the country in which there are the most prosperous Chinese-language newspapers area outside China (Peng, 2007; Wu, 2010). To some extent, both countries are typical representatives of the Chinese-language newspapers in the world.

It cannot be denied that circulation figures of paid dailies have been in steady decline for the past few years throughout the world, especially in the developed countries. For example, in America, Philip Meyer, the author of *The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age* (2004), asserted that the first quarter of 2043 would be the newspaper dead moment. However, according to *World Press Trend 2011*, newspapers in Asia-Pacific area was not that bad as those in western developed countries, and in fact, their circulation had increased at the rate of 7% in 2010, and 16% in the past five years.

Despite the fact that the press is becoming the so-called “sunset industry” in developed western countries, China is believed to have ten more years’ prosperity of newspapers (Guo, 2010). China had 1922 newspapers with the total circulation of 40.2 billion copies per year in 2004, and then in 2012, there were slightly fewer newspapers of 1918 but a larger circulation of 48.2 billion copies (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2013). On the other hand, Malaysia has the highest accumulated number of 109

Chinese-language dailies and still maintains the highest of 14 outside China (Peng, 2007; Wu, 2010).

Both China and Malaysia are developing countries in Asia with similarly rapid-pace economic development in recent decades. These two countries have established friendly bilateral relationship since early 1974, and the bilateral trade has reached the best stage in the history—China has become the largest trading nation of Malaysia and Malaysia being the largest trading partner of China in Southeast Asia for five successive years since 2008 (Lean & Guo, 2013). Nonetheless, the Chinese-language newspapers have been operating in different contexts in these two countries.

China was the “cradle” of Chinese people and Chinese civilization. There is no denial that the ancestors of Chinese Malaysians originated from China. According to Wang (2001), the Chinese began to communicate and have trade relationship with Malays at least two thousand years ago. Though the Chinese had trade and even formed diplomatic contacts with the Malays from an early period, they did not permanently settle in the country until after the foundation of the Malay kingdom of Malacca (Purcell, 1967). It was until the nineteenth century that the Chinese started to emigrate in large numbers from southeast China to Malaya which is now called Malaysia. In 1950s, the majority of the local Chinese eventually became citizens of Malaya in 1957, then Malaysia in 1963 (Cui, 2007). Additionally, it is worth noting that the Malaysian Chinese today are descendants of the Chinese immigrants who came to Malaysia in the nineteenth century (Nazaruddin et al., 2003).

Surprisingly, Malaysia was the birthplace of modern Chinese-language press. The *Chinese Monthly Magazine* or *Chashisu Meiyue Tongjizhuan* in Chinese was

published in Malacca in 1815. Though owned by British missionary, published once a month, and lasted for only seven years, it has always been considered as the first modern Chinese periodical in the Chinese world (Ge, 1927; Zeng, 1966; Lent, 1982; Fang, 1992; Yap, 1996). Malaysia is now still publishing *Kwong Wah Yit Poh*, which was started by Dr. Sun Yat-sen and his supporters in Penang in 1910. In fact, the newspaper had merged with *Penang Sin Poh* since 1936, another Chinese-language newspaper started its publication in 1895. Hence, it could be considered as the longest surviving newspaper in the Chinese-language world (Lim, 1995; 2010).

This study focuses on Chinese-language newspaper journalists in China and in Malaysia, where newspapers are still the mainstream media for the Chinese community (Chang, 2011a; Kou, 2006; Siew, 2009). It has to be noted that the Chinese-language press serves the whole nation in China; while in Malaysia, it is vernacular press serving only the Chinese community.

1.2 Problem Statement

Journalists have played more prominent roles in contemporary political systems, especially in those that experienced transformations from authoritarianism to democracy (Weaver, 1998a). China and Malaysia are in the process of economic, social, and even political transformations. In addition, Chinese-language news media and journalists in both countries have been very much impacted by journalistic professionalism emerged in the Western countries (Liew, 2009; Yang, 2013).

However, journalistic professionalism is not just transplanted from one country to another, especially countries with different political, economic, and social settings. It would be important to explore the extent to which journalists begin to take on any

sense of professionalism. Chinese-language newspapers in both countries not only use the same language but also serve similar groups of target audience – the Chinese. By conducting a comparative research on Chinese-language newspaper journalists in these two countries, it is helpful to examine whether and to what extent Chinese-language newspaper journalists have established professionalism in different contexts. More importantly, when the current state of journalistic professionalism in both countries is understood clearly, some suitable suggestions could be provided in order to improve Chinese-language journalism even in the Chinese-language world.

Although journalistic professionalism has become one of the key terms of press reform in China (Li & Zhi, 2011) and there have emerged some studies on journalists, sometimes relating to journalistic professionalism, the majority of the studies were just the monolithic policy annotation, lacking specific framework or scientific methods. It is indicated that journalism research in China remains severely underdeveloped comparatively (Pan et al., 2008). In Malaysia, on the other hand there has been no systematic inquiry conducted on Chinese-language newspaper journalists, especially their journalistic professionalism. The studies related to Malaysian Chinese-language newspapers usually focused on their historical development (Shao, 2012). Besides, no comparative research has been conducted on journalistic professionalism among the Chinese-language newspaper journalists in China and Malaysia. Thus, there is a research gap needed to be filled up.

Secondly, journalists' identity crisis has emerged along with the emergence of the internet. Citizen journalism and digital platforms have undermined journalism as a

profession (e.g. Waisbord, 2013; Witschge & Nygren, 2009; Kur & Essien, 2014). Now, everyone could be a reporter. The Internet paves a way to everyone to be a news reporter through blogs, twitter, Facebook (excluding China) and a lot more types of social media. Everyone is free to “report” any news they may think important to be shared and feedbacks from the audience is inevitable. In news media websites, for example, readers are able to respond, comment and submit their own thoughts in text, audio and video immediately when a piece of news is published. All of these have caused the “boundary lines” between “insider and outsider”, “professional and non-professional”, “journalist and blogger” within journalism gradually obscured and eroded (Schudson & Anderson, 2009). If the internet users in their large numbers are considered all as journalists, then journalism certainly cannot be a profession (Kur & Essien, 2014). To some extent, the fact has given rise to somewhat a crisis of identity of journalists. Hence, journalists should have to provide a particular meaning of their work, to make themselves act differently from “non-professionals”, and to protect and even reconstruct their professional identity in the so-called “information era”.

Thirdly, a crisis of public confidence in the traditional media has also emerged. The Internet, especially social media, has posed challenges and threats on traditional media, especially the press in the world, even though the press has maintained its status as mainstream media in Asia-Pacific area, including China and Malaysia. It cannot be denied that the global circulation of paid dailies around the world have continued to dwindle in recent years. According to the Internet World Stats (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm>), Internet penetration into Asia was

27.5%, while the Internet users have reached 538 million with the penetration of 40.1% in 2012 in China, and in Malaysia, the number of Internet users reached 17.7 million with the penetration of 60.7% in 2012 compared with the number of 3.7 million with the penetration of 15.0% in 2000. The information communication technologies (ICT) have changed the media landscape over the last fifteen years. Some even argued that the newspapers would be replaced by the new media in the near future (Meyer, 2005; Liu, 2006). Indeed, the Internet has broken the media channel monopoly in both China and Malaysia as an alternative one, which could exert pressure on traditional media in terms of timeliness and credibility (Yu, 2003; Zeng, 2010). The periods of owning and controlling the media channels are over and the Internet has also produced a protection for an alternative vision representing an antidote to those disseminated by the traditional media in these two countries. Even though the Internet has not become the mainstream media in both countries, it has proved detrimental to newspapers' "public confidence" as well as journalists' professional status. In fact, journalistic professionalism was considered as the response of newspaper publishers to a "crisis of public confidence" of the commercial press in America (Nerone & Barnhurst, 2003). No matter how much conditions may change, journalism would depend on credibility for its survival through the collective behavior of professional journalists (Weaver et al., 2007). To some extent, journalistic professionalism can help regain newspapers' and journalists' legitimacy.

Fourthly, journalistic professionalism as a concept transferred from the west still remains a stage of being adopted and adapted in China and Malaysia.

Previous research shows that journalists in China really enjoy a better position as media staff and they claim they are working professionally (Lin, 2008; Xiang, 2010; Yu, 2004). At the same time, the Chinese journalists also face severe criticism. In fact, the mass media in China has long been criticized to be part of the ideological machination of the state (Yin, 2002) or ‘a tool of propaganda’ (Moore, 2011), thereby indicating that there is limited space for journalistic autonomy. Chinese-language newspaper journalists are thought to be ‘tamed’ (Xu, 1994) and pressured into “self-censorship” (Bennett, 2011). Some argue that there is even no relatively independent media at present (Fu, as cited in Moore, 2011), and only the Communist Party China (CPC) gets a mouthpiece but the public does not have one (Jiao, as cited in Moore, 2011). In particular, the practice of journalistic ethics among Chinese journalists was not that satisfactory either (Chen et al., 2009; Zheng & Chen, 2004). Media “corruption” has almost become a way of life (Lee, 2005). For example, some journalists would accept bribery in the process of publication or suppression of certain coverage (*you chang xin wen* and *you chang bu wen* in Chinese, namely paid news and paid without disclosure). Meanwhile, a few journalists would sometimes make false coverage to try to get public’s attention and then economic benefits. Although journalistic professionalism is considered by some Chinese scholars as a “flag” to maintain a sustainable development of the newspapers (e.g. Li, 2001, 2002, as cited in Mo, 2003), it has yet become a dominant ideology within the Chinese journalistic community (Lu & Pan, 2002 ; Pan & Chan, 2005).

In Malaysia, Chinese-language newspaper journalists claim they are doing their

work professionally as well (Liew, 2009; Pan, 2003; Siew, 2008; Tay, 2009). For example, Liew (2009) claims that local Chinese-language newspapers subscribe to “the fundamental principles of journalism practiced by all the great newspapers of the world – relentless pursuit of the truth, being ever mindful of the need for objectivity and fairness.” However, the freedom of the Malaysian press might be limited because of the concentration of ownership and the relevant restrictive laws (Lim, 2007; Mustafa, 2005; Wang, 1998). Besides, the poor salary could be the main reason that has caused many capable youngsters lost their interest in joining journalism and newspaper organizations, and even some talented employees quitted their jobs (Chang, 1999; Lv, 2001; Zhu, 1994). There are also some criticisms towards the Chinese journalists in the country, such as poor news writing skills (Kou, 2005; Zhu, 1994), typographical errors (Yap, 2007), less understanding about their professionalism especially journalism freedom (Chang, 2004), and not regarding journalism as profession but just a job for a living or a transient stop to move on to other better jobs (Chang, 1999; Huang, 1994; Mustafa, 2010).

Meyers (2010) is right to point out that how journalism is practiced –via whatever medium– will be up to its practitioners. To some extent, without well-trained and dedicated people practicing journalism, the acclaimed professional status of journalism would be impossible (Kur & Essien, 2014).

When taken together, journalistic professionalism among Chinese-language newspaper journalists in the Chinese world deserves special attention.

1.3 Research Objectives

The general aim of this study is to examine the current state of journalistic professionalism among the Chinese-language newspaper journalists in China and in Malaysia. Specifically, it aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. to determine the Chinese-language newspaper journalists' professionalism in China and Malaysia.
2. to identify differences and similarities of the Chinese-language newspaper journalists' professionalism in both countries.
3. to explore influencing factors behind the Chinese-language newspaper journalists' professionalism in both countries.
4. to identify suitable approaches to improve Chinese-language newspaper journalists' professionalism in both countries.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the aim and objectives of this study, the research questions are posed as below:

1. What is the current status of Chinese-language newspaper journalists' professionalism towards journalistic role, journalistic expertise, journalistic autonomy, journalistic commitment, and journalistic responsibility in China and Malaysia?
2. What are the differences and similarities of the Chinese-language newspaper journalists' professionalism between these two countries?
3. What are the factors influencing the Chinese-language newspaper journalists'

professionalism at individual, communication routine, organizational, social institutional and social system levels in both countries?

4. What are the concerns of the Chinese-language newspaper journalists towards their professionalism in both countries?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

There are eight research hypotheses to be tested for this study as the following:

H1. There is a significant difference between China and Malaysia towards journalistic roles of the Chinese-language newspaper journalists.

H2. There is a significant difference between China and Malaysia towards journalistic expertise of the Chinese-language newspaper journalists.

H3. There is a significant difference between China and Malaysia towards journalistic autonomy of the Chinese-language newspaper journalists.

H4. There is a significant difference between China and Malaysia towards journalistic commitment of the Chinese-language newspaper journalists.

H5. There is a significant difference between China and Malaysia towards journalistic responsibility of the Chinese-language newspaper journalists.

H6. There is a significant difference between China and Malaysia towards professionalism perception of the Chinese-language newspaper journalists.

H7. There is a difference between Malaysia and China for demographic characteristics influencing journalistic professionalism among Chinese-language newspapers journalists.

H8. There is a difference between Malaysia and China for journalistic roles influencing journalistic expertise, autonomy, commitment, and responsibility among Chinese-language newspapers journalists.

1.6 Significance of Study

To a certain degree, this study can be seen as a pioneer research in the Chinese world.

Despite the fact that the term of “journalistic professionalism” has been widely used by a body of journalism employees and scholars in China and Malaysia, very little research has been conducted on the definition of journalistic professionalism. There has been no comparative research conducted on journalistic professionalism among Chinese-language newspaper journalists between these two countries. Additionally, very little research has been done on journalistic professionalism among Chinese-language newspaper journalists in Malaysia, and no systematic inquiries, especially empirical ones, done on journalistic professionalism among journalists in China. Hence, this study is expected to fill the gap in the field. It can help to understand the adoption and adaption of journalistic professionalism in both countries, and to explore how to establish and improve professionalism in these two countries, especially in the Chinese-language world in which political, economic, and social contexts are different from the western countries.

In theory, this study will provide a comprehensive image of the Chinese-language newspaper journalists with their journalistic professionalism in China and Malaysia. It will establish a platform for the understanding of Chinese-language newspaper

journalists' professionalism in these two countries. Additionally, it will identify both similarities and differences of their journalistic professionalism and explore the influential factors behind their journalistic professionalism. More importantly, it will provide a new operational definition of journalistic professionalism. All of the above could contribute significantly to the body of knowledge in the field, and it is also expected to become a reference for future studies.

This study applies mixed-method strategy which consists of questionnaire survey and in-depth interview. It is a fact that journalism research in China remains relatively underdeveloped in terms of specific framework and scientific methods (Pan et al., 2008) and Chinese-language journalism research in Malaysia keeps a relatively rarely-studied stage. In this sense, this study is expected to pave a way for researchers of Chinese-language media, so that they could adopt the methodological framework in their future studies.

In practice, this study will identify the challenges between the journalists and their environments, and accordingly provide suitable approaches to improve journalistic professionalism among newspaper journalists in the Chinese world, especially in China and Malaysia. Evetts (1999) points out, "In everyday usage, the idea of professionalism involves doing work well, doing job well." Therefore, professionally-oriented journalists are expected to make different peoples understand each other, live peacefully and share the prosperity together in a given country or in a globalized world. Hence, this study will benefit the Chinese-language newspaper journalists directly. More importantly, it is expected to benefit directly

Chinese-language journalism in both countries and benefit indirectly each country at large.

Although China is often considered as an emerging superpower, it is sometimes perceived, especially by the West, as a threat to the existing international order (Liu, 2011). Similarly, Malaysian Chinese are blindly believed to continue to hold economic power and considered as the wealthiest community in the country. Furthermore, the economic dominance by the Chinese is seen as the main cause of the economic backwardness of the Malays. In fact, it is not altogether true. Unfortunately, such kind of opinion is over-simplistic and sweeping but still being accepted as the ruling logic (Wang, 2001).

Over the past few decades, more Chinese have newly migrated to many other countries throughout the world and more Chinese-language newspapers have emerged all over the world at the same time (Wang, 2012). Even though Fang (1981) pointed out that overseas Chinese-language journalism had developed into worldwide media about thirty years ago, it is not until now that this becomes a reality. Hopefully, this study is also expected to provide some practical contributions for Chinese-language journalism all over the world.

Under these circumstances, studies on journalistic professionalism among Chinese-language newspaper journalists would be appropriate and necessary.

1.7 Research Scope

An assumption held to underlie all meaningful comparisons should be that the objects being compared are indeed comparable (Blumler et al., 1992). In general, nearly all the Chinese-language newspapers are commercialized newspapers in Malaysia. While in China, by function, the Chinese print media can be categorized into four types: party newspapers, metropolitan newspapers (including evening newspapers), industry papers, and life-service newspapers. Party newspapers in general act as the “mouth and throat” of the ruling party, with their target audience usually the CPC members and governmental servants. Metropolitan newspapers and evening newspapers are published in urban cities with the public being their target audience. Industry newspapers provide certain information for certain industry or groups and life service papers provide life service information for the public.

For this study, metropolitan newspapers in China will be more appropriate to be compared with their Malaysian counterparts because of certain similar characteristics in nature. Although still being supervised and stipulated by the correspondent party newspapers as well as government propaganda sectors, metropolitan newspapers are circulated through the local press market and not through the administrative system which shows a relatively high level of commercialization of print media in China. Similarly, they are usually published in cities, especially big cities, with local public being their target audience. So this study will choose the metropolitan newspapers in China as the counterparts of the Chinese-language newspapers in Malaysia.

As a matter of fact, so many differences exist between various districts in China

due to her large territory. For example, there is a huge cultural discrepancy between northern and southern China. Especially, there are huge economic gaps between the east, the middle and the west of China and this has made journalism industry develop at different levels in different areas, or even in the same area (Guo, 2010). Indeed, journalism industry and journalists are disproportionately concentrated in most developed cities in the coastal provinces, highlighted by Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou (Chen et al., 1998; Lin, 2010). All the newspapers in China are theoretically nationally-distributed; however, almost all the metropolitan newspapers are distributed within certain administrative areas where they are published. To some extent, similar conditions of Chinese-language newspapers exist in Malaysia as well. Hence, this study is inclined to choose metropolitan newspapers from the same area because they are competing with each other in the same press market so that they would certainly show relatively common characteristics and tendency. In doing so, even though the chosen area cannot represent each country at large, it could stand for the country to a high degree. Sequentially, the newspapers chosen could represent certain areas in both countries.

Thus, firstly, certain areas will be chosen to represent the countries respectively. China is a large country with 34 administrative districts (including Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan). However, the press in each administrative district generally has internal homogeneity in Mainland China. Generally, most of the districts have the same press structure including at least one party newspaper, one metropolitan newspaper, and one or more life-service newspapers. Only a few areas along the

eastern coast own a relatively competing press market hosting several metropolitan newspapers competing with each other. In this study, Beijing, the capital and the administrative and cultural centre of China, is chosen to stand for China. Beijing has seven metropolitan newspapers owned by three different media groups.

Malaysia is a federation of thirteen states and three federal territories. It would be difficult to choose just one state to represent the country because Chinese-language newspapers, as the vernacular press in Malaysia, are not published in every state or concentrated in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of the country. Arguably, Peninsular Malaysia could stand for the country at a high degree due to the historical, economical and political discrepancies, and indeed, the former studies related to Malaysia generally focused on Peninsular Malaysia. Coincidentally, there are six Chinese-language dailies owned by three different media groups in Peninsular Malaysia.

Secondly, certain newspapers, which could stand for the print media in certain areas at large, will be chosen in Beijing and Peninsular Malaysia respectively. For this study, the Chinese-language newspapers chosen would be representative selling dailies with relatively large circulation in the given areas. Additionally, each of them should belong to different media groups, respectively.

The seven metropolitan newspapers in Beijing are *Beijing Evening*, *Beijing Youth Daily*, *Jinghua Times*, *Beijing News*, *Beijing Morning Post*, *Legal Evening News*, and *Beijing Daily Messenger*. Among those, Beijing Daily Group owns *Beijing Evening*, *Beijing Morning Post* and *Beijing Daily Messenger*; Beijing Youth Daily Group

controls *Beijing Youth Daily* and *Legal Evening News*; and the other two - *Beijing News* and *Jinghua Times* – are supervised by the Publicity Department of the Beijing Municipal Committee. Accordingly, the three metropolitan newspapers chosen in Beijing are *Beijing Evening*, *Beijing Youth Daily* and *the Beijing News*. *Beijing Evening*, first published in 1958, has the largest circulation in Beijing. It is one of the four largest evening newspapers and the oldest metropolitan newspaper in China. *Beijing Youth Daily* has the largest subscription in Beijing and Beijing Youth Daily Group is China's second biggest newspaper group (after the Guangzhou Daily), which was first allowed to list its business operations in Hong Kong market in 2004 as “part of a broad set of reforms aimed at commercializing China's media industry”. *The Beijing News*, first published in 2003, is the first Chinese newspaper co-founded by media groups from different regions (*Guangming Daily* in Beijing and *Nanfang Daily* Group in Guangzhou) in China and also China's first mainstream newspaper that adapts shareholding system. The regulatory authority of *the Beijing News* has been changed since 2011 and now being supervised by the Publicity Department of the Beijing Municipal Committee.

As to Peninsular Malaysia, the six Chinese-language newspapers are *Sin Chew Daily*, *China Press*, *Guang Ming Daily*, *Nanyang Siang Pau*, *Kwong Wah Yit Poh* and *Oriental Daily News* circulated in Peninsular Malaysia. Among those, Media Chinese International Limited (MCIL), the largest Chinese media group outside China (Siew, 2008), controls two thirds of the six dailies: *Sin Chew Daily*, *China Press*, *Guang Ming Daily*, *Nanyang Siang Pau*. A second company, KTS Group, controls *Oriental*

Daily News in Peninsular Malaysia and the most popular *See Hua Daily* in Sabah and Sarawak, and BSG Property owns *Kwong Wah Yit Poh*. Similarly, three newspapers are chosen in Peninsular Malaysia for this study, and they are *Sin Chew Daily*, *Kwong Wah Yit Poh* and *Oriental Daily News*. To some extent, the three papers are typical and representative because they are in accordance with the given principles: belonging to different media groups with relatively large circulation, and having certain attributes respectively. *Sin Chew Daily*, published in Selangor, is the highest circulated daily among the four language dailies in Malaysia, even “the highest circulated Chinese-language newspaper outside China” (Siew, 2008); *Kwong Wah Yit Poh*, which started in Penang from 1910, is considered as the longest life-span Chinese daily in the country; and *Oriental Daily News*, which started in Kuala Lumpur in 2003, is the latest Chinese-language daily with a rapidly increasing circulation in Peninsular Malaysia.

Specifically, for this study, the target population will be the salaried full-time journalists who are directly responsible for the news items of the chosen newspapers in each country. The journalists will include reporters and editors. Even though the reporter and the editor hold different positions as well as functions in the process of information delivery, they both can be considered as gatekeepers because reporters make significant decisions even earlier than editors in practice (Bass, 1969; Shoemaker, 1991). The individual respondents will be selected based on the proportion of reporters and editors working for the chosen Chinese-language newspapers in the data collection process.

1.8 Definitions

1. Professionalism is usually defined as a set of special characteristics accepted to be essentially professional. There is a lack of consensus about the concepts like profession, professional, and professionalism in sociology (Elliott, 1972; Freidson, 1994; Saks, 2012) and in journalism (Beam, 1990; Wu, 2009). Generally, the extensive body of literature dealing with the topic of professions or professionalism can be categorized into three major strands within the field of professionalism studies: trait approach, power approach and phenomenological approach (Beam, 1990; Qian, 1998). It should be noted that the definition of professionalism for this study is based on the trait approach.

2. Journalistic professionalism is theoretically defined as a set of journalistic characteristics accepted to be essentially professional. For this study, the definition is operationalized as the five characteristics adapted from previous studies: journalistic roles (Johnstone et al., 1976; Weaver et al., 2007), journalistic expertise, journalistic autonomy, journalistic commitment, and journalistic responsibility (Lo, 1995; Nayman, 1973). Specifically, journalistic role refers to journalists' views of journalism's basic purposes (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986). Journalistic expertise means specialized knowledge and skills for the profession. Journalistic autonomy indicates journalists utilizing his/her judgment without outside interference. Journalistic commitment indicates journalists devoting his/her lifetime to the profession. Journalistic responsibility refers to journalists' fiduciary relationship to society (Lo, 1995; Nayman, 1973). In general, professionally-oriented journalists would place

heavy emphasis on public service, expertise, autonomy, commitment and responsibility. Journalistic professionalism is called professionalism of journalism as well in this study.

3. Influencing factors for this study are defined as forces which are able to influence the Chinese-language newspaper journalists' professionalism. The factors may come from various aspects in society and could be explored through five-level model analysis of gatekeeping. The five-level model includes individual, communicational routines, organizational, social institutions and social system levels (Shoemaker, 1991; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

4. China, officially named the People's Republic of China (PRC), has 34 province-level administrative regions, including 23 provinces, five autonomous regions, four direct-controlled municipalities (Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Chongqing), and two mostly self-governing special administrative regions (Hong Kong and Macau). It is the only lawful representative within the United Nations and one of five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Despite the fact that Taiwan effectively exists, the PRC claimed Taiwan is a breakaway province and an indivisible part of China, which has been accepted by the United Nations. It should be noted that this study focuses on the journalists only in Mainland China, excluding Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. Without specification, China refers to Mainland China only in the study.

5. Malaysia consists of thirteen states and three federal territories, which are separated by the South China Sea into Peninsular Malaysia and both Sabah and Sarawak in the

northern rim of the island of Borneo. Sabah and Sarawak were incorporated in Malaysia in 1963 and enjoy special autonomy in terms of issues within the states accordingly. There are some notable differences between these two states and Peninsular Malaysia with regard to politics, economy, culture and population. Without specification, Malaysia refers to Peninsular Malaysia only in the study.

1.9 Organization of Study

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides the general background of the research topic. It introduces the background of the topic, as well as problem statement, research objectives, research questions, research hypotheses, significance of study, research scope, definitions, and organization of this dissertation.

Chapter 2 discusses the press systems in China and Malaysia. It includes a brief profile, its press history and professionalization of journalism in both countries separately.

Chapter 3 is a review of the relevant literature. It begins with the controversy of journalistic professionalism. Then, it discusses the significant previous studies in Western countries, especially in America, and in the Chinese world, especially in China and in Malaysia, respectively.

Chapter 4 outlines the theoretical framework for this study. It relies on the concepts of both professionalism and gatekeeping in journalism, which are discussed in sequence in order to synthesize the objectives and research questions of this study.

Chapter 5 describes the methodology used for this study in sequence. It first

explains the questionnaire survey and the procedure of quantitative data collection of the study. Then, it introduces the in-depth interview method and the detail of qualitative data collection procedure. It also discusses strategies of analyzing the data for the study.

Chapter 6 consists of research findings of the study, including the survey and the in-depth interviews. It presents results of the questionnaire survey, and the similarities and differences of the journalists' professionalism in these two countries. It also explains the reasons behind current status of the journalists' professionalism in the two countries.

Finally, Chapter 7 presents discussions and conclusions of the study. It contains discussions regarding data analysis and conclusions based on the discussions. Then, it deals with some limitations of the study and provides recommendations for future researches related to this topic.