ABSTRACT

The study looks through the lens of a special event, i.e., Taiwan's top opposition political leaders' visits to the mainland China, to examine how official media coverage of the government performance affects political trust among the populace. It is argued that this critical case powerfully presented a dramatic moment of meaning construction by official media to prop up nationalistic sentiments. The study dissects the media-constructed political spectacle as well as the means by which official ideology defines reality, creates events, and gives dramaturgical presentations. In parallel, the complex and multi-layered "non-official" Internet discourses on the event enters the spotlight. Through qualitative content analysis, this paper demonstrates how a political event once accepted by the popular discourse as inevitable and part of a traditional and cultural commitment, and gradually teems with cynicism, eventually apathy and indifference, which is an intended method generated by the populace to discredit the media to reduce psychological tension. As a supplement, small-scale interviews were conducted to understand the characteristics and mechanism of concrete variations. To summarize, the major finding is that China's political propaganda has negative effects on people's attitudes even toward the issue on which they once had ideological consensus with the government.