Using *newspaper article study* (NAS) as a secondary research method to study the USA-PRC trade war topic

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Abstract:

Newspaper article study (NAS) can be very useful for the various applied business research tasks in general and as a secondary research method in particular. Nevertheless, to be effective as a research method employment, the researcher needs to build up critical evaluation competence to study findings from newspaper article study (NAS). This article draws on the writer's work on newspaper article study as well as the Newspaper Research (NR) literature to point to a learning pathway to strengthen such critical evaluation competence. It also presents some NAS findings on the USA-PRC trade war to support the desirability of taking up this learning pathway toward NAS critical evaluation competence. Finally, the NAS as a secondary research method is also discussed in the context of the agile literature review approach (ALRA) application, which is another academic project of this writer. In this regard, the relevance of the NAS to the ALRA is underlined in this article.

Key words: applied business research, newspaper article study (NAS), Newspaper Research (NR), NAS critical evaluation competence, secondary research method, the agile literature review approach (ALRA), the USA-PRC trade war.

INTRODUCTION

On the subject of applied business research project for MBA students, which the writer has been involved both as a lecturer

and a dissertation project supervisor, the topic of studying newspaper articles as a secondary research[1] method for students' dissertation projects comes up from time to time. This article draws on the writer's work on newspaper article study (NAS) (Ho, 2015) and literature review findings on the newspaper research (NR) literature to elaborate on the newspaper article study (NAS) as a secondary research method. This research method is discussed with an application on the topic of the USA-PRC trade war. Additionally, in the discussion, the newspaper article study (NAS) as a secondary research method in the agile literature review approach of Ho (2019) is considered explicitly.

The basic ideas of newspaper article study (NAS) for employment in an applied business research project, particularly with the agile literature review approach (ALRA)

For Ho (2015), newspaper article study (NAS) can be employed in literature review for an applied business research dissertation project. Nevertheless, to be effective, the NAS has to be done with critical evaluation competence[2]. Critical evaluation competence in newspaper article study can be fostered by having understanding of ideas from journalism, online information services and discourse analysis which shed lights on the quality of newspaper articles as a source of data for analysis (Ho, 2015). Finally, Ho (2015) explained that NAS is relevant to all the generic academic research project content

[1] *Secondary research* "uses primary research sources as a source of data for analysis" and an example of such a source is news articles (Wikipedia, 2019). In this case, the data are secondary data (Saunders *et al.*, 2016: Chapter 8) for the secondary research. For a research method that belongs to a secondary research, such as newspaper article study (NAS), it is called a *secondary research method* in this article.

[2] The NAS *critical evaluation competence* means the intellectual ability to judge with social and methodological awareness the (i) nature, (ii) source(s) of origin, (iii) range of underlying worldviews, (iv) analytical strengths and weaknesses, (v) idea restrictiveness (including cognitive blind spots and hidden agendas) of a reported information and associated viewpoints, and (vi) the range of stakeholders' reactions to newspaper articles.

components, namely, (i) introduction on the academic project, (ii) literature review, (iii) research design, (iv) findings and analysis and (v) conclusions and recommendations. In the table of contents template of applied business research dissertation with the agile literature review approach (ALRA[3]) (Ho, 2018a), newspaper article study (NAS) has been identified as a secondary research method (Ho, 2018b). As a research method employed in the ALRA, it is to be mapped onto the ALRA theoretical framework level 1c (Ho, 2018a), so that (i) the high-level research task the NAS is to serve and (ii) the theory-driven as well as (very often) qualitative data analysis to be applied on the NAS research findings are clear.

All told, NAS can inform all the intellectual tasks throughout an applied business research dissertation project. For such an applied business research project with the application of the agile literature review approach (ALRA), this NAS spans the agile applications 1 and 2 (Ho, 2019). Specifically, in the agile literature review approach (ALRA) employment, the NAS helps the researcher to develop a more complicated understanding on both the problem-situation encountered and the theoretical framework set to be applied in the dissertation project (Ho, 2019). This amounts to saying that it aids in promoting creative holism (Jackson, 2003) in applied business research. Having introduced the basic ideas of NAS for applied business research, notably with the ALRA, the writer now moves on to discuss how the Newspaper Research (NR) literature could inform a more critical use of it as a secondary research method in the next section.

What can be learned from the newspaper research (NR) literature for the newspaper article study (NAS)?

Newspaper article study (NAS), as a secondary research method for applied business research projects, is very valuable

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[3] For further information on the agile literature review approach (ALRA), readers are referred to the Facebook group of *The agile literature review approach group*.

in most cases. Nevertheless, it is vital to be able to make critical evaluation of the findings from the NAS so as to achieve effective applied business research outcomes. In this respect, the researcher has much to learn from the intellectual insights of the academic literature on Newspaper Research (NR). In this section, then, the writer gathered some relevant academic ideas from the *Newspaper Research Journal* (Sage journals) via a brief literature review, which, together, offer to inform the researcher on the nature as well as strengths and weaknesses of newspaper articles as a secondary data source for secondary research. Such knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of a research method, e.g., NAS, is necessary for it to be employed properly and acceptably by a researcher. This knowledge also enables the researcher to evaluate the research method in terms of validity, relevance, cost-effectiveness, credibility and confirmability, etc. Admittedly, different research philosophies[4] favor different research method quality criteria, so the research method quality evaluation often turns out to be a multi-perspective exercise. On top of that, learning from the Newspaper Research (NR) literature enables the researcher to build up over time critical evaluation competence in NAS. The literature review findings on Newspaper Research (NR) are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: The main academic ideas of the Newspaper Research (NR) academic literature via a brief literature review by the writer

Categories of academic ideas in NR	Academic viewpoints and findings gathered from a brief NR literature review by the writer
Category 1: related to the quality of newspaper contents	Idea 1.1: "The foundational model employed here is the economic model of news demand. A central tenet of the model maintains that the number of readers is positively related to product (news) quality. As the number of readers increases, there is increased demand and price elasticity from advertisers who want to acquire that reach. Thus, if quality of content increases circulation and that circulation is associated with increased advertising revenues, we have a completed "virtuous circle.".." (Li and Thorson, 2015).

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[4] For Saunders *et al.* (2016: Chapter 4), research philosophies can be positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, post-modernism and pragmatism.

	Idea 1.2: "News quality has been measured in many ways. One way to measure news quality is in terms of what editors and readers say are important attributes; however, the order of those attributes can vary from market to market" (Li and Thorson, 2015).
	Idea 1.3: "News is far from an independent, value-free output. In recognition of its important social role, journalism is constantly under attack from sources seeking to influence news content. State control and market pressures, for example, exert strong influences on the press across media systems. While news is a form of public service, it is also a commercial product. To pursue both service and sales, news organizations must remain credible in the eyes of sources and audiences" (Tandoc Jr. and Thomas, 2017).
	Idea 1.4: "Despite the frequency with which objectivity is discussed and debated in both scholarship and practice, there is little consensus on a concrete definition of what this concept actually means. It is, as Kovach and Rosenstiel suggest, "one of the great confusions of journalism."... " (Tandoc Jr. and Thomas, 2017).
	Idea 1.5: "... objectivity is believed to have made journalists too reliant on official sources and thus reduced journalism to a conduit for elite perspectives" (Tandoc Jr. and Thomas, 2017).
Category 2: related to newspaper readers	Idea 2.1: "Findings suggest that, cross-sectionally, individuals who spend more time using media have stronger agreement on important public issues within the social groups to which they belong than do those who spend less time using media" (Du and Wong, 2013).
	Idea 2.2: "The agenda-melding hypothesis postulates that mass media provide an agenda and people join a group, although not formally formed, by adopting the mass agenda" (Du and Wong, 2013).
	Idea 2.3: "During their teenage years, millennials did not consume news the way Baby Boomers (those born from 1946 through 1964) or Generation Xers (those born from 1965 through 1980) did as teenagers. Millennials did not depend on news or think being informed about current events was important" (Cannon and Mackay, 2017).
	Idea 2.4: "If citizens were not informed, unscrupulous officeholders might be able to mislead them. Two assumptions of civic-duty research have been that citizens with a strong sense of civic duty to keep informed (1) would seek information from news media about issues facing government and (2) would be more likely to vote than were those who do not accept such a duty" (Cannon and Mackay, 2017).
Category 3: related to the newspaper organizations and their journalists	Idea 3.1: "News organizations have a social responsibility to act in the public's interest, which includes serving as a common carrier of public discussion. This normative role means that journalists will act as a "conversational partner"

	and engage the audience rather than talking at them. Online commenting has taken on a significant role in journalism over the past decade and is frequently used as a space for public opinion" (Wolfgang, 2018). Idea 3.2: "Boczkowski found that while journalists quickly adopted the practice of producing online content, journalists consistently produced similar content and mimicked traditional practices, including antiquated methods of incorporating the audience. Journalists frequently treat the audience as a potential source of information but not as a producer" (Wolfgang, 2018). Idea 3.3: "Journalists see user content as less valuable and frequently relegate it to a separate page. Journalists highlight the differences between professional and audience content to protect professional content and the epistemology of journalism" (Wolfgang, 2018). Idea 3.4: "A small number of elite organizations instead of ordinary citizens, as M. Hindman pointed out, dominate the landscape of news and political information sources" (Lee and Fujioka, 2017). Idea 3.5: "... journalists present themselves as "credible spokespersons of 'real life' events" and ward off accusations of bias. As a consequence, objectivity is a yardstick by which not only the quality of journalism can be measured but one's standing as a journalist altogether" (Tandoc Jr. and Thomas, 2017).
Category 4: related to the political, economic, social and technological trends	Idea 4.1: "Journalists have historically struggled to protect the industry from outside influences such as advertising and public relations, but the audience was traditionally less influential. As news organizations moved online, the relationship with the audience became more egalitarian, since the audience now had the ability to steer news decisions through metrics and had a more effective way to speak back to the organization" (Wolfgang, 2018). Idea 4.2: "While television remains a major news source for all demographic groups, millennials are three-to-four times more likely than adults 60 and older to discover news online and to see it on mobile devices" (Cannon and Mackay, 2017). Idea 4.3: "Digital technologies have empowered citizens to express themselves through multiple online platforms and share opinions with a large auditorium. As a result of the widespread interactive tools available on the Internet, audiences nowadays engage in the creation and dissemination of information. New technologies have enabled them to produce blogs, build websites, publish stories and share posts on social media" (Pantic, 2018). Idea 4.4: "Studies on gatekeeping theory suggest that in a traditional, top-down media environment, multiple

gatekeeping forces limit the range of information available to the public. However, the media landscape has undergone significant changes and is now defined by active audiences who participate in storytelling. As a result of growing usage of the Web 2.0 platform, alternative sources emerge online, supplying the public with information they need and triggering the gate removal process in the media" (Pantic, 2018).

Idea 4.5: "The digital media environment has pushed news organizations to adopt new practices, so they started moving from the era of gatekeepers to a time of interaction with users. Nowadays, news media provide space on their websites for readers to participate in content creation and react to the stories" (Pantic, 2018).

Idea 4.6: "... research has shown that a higher level of news consumption is associated with a greater level of political participation. Also, scholars have examined which types of news sources may contribute to political knowledge. Hollander reported that many earlier studies found that exposure to newspapers predicted a higher level of political participation than does exposure to television; however, more recent ones provided conflicting results" (Lee and Fujioka, 2017).

Idea 4.7: "Bakker and de Vreese reported that reading quality newspaper (versus popular or free papers) is associated with offline active (e.g., protests or demonstrations) and passive (e.g., retrieve books or other information about politics) participation among those ages 16 to 24. They also found that internet news use is positively related to offline active and passive participation. Internet news consumption also positively predicts both online active (e.g., sign online petitions or participate in online polls) and passive (e.g., visit government websites) participation" (Lee and Fujioka, 2017).

Idea 4.8: "Ongoing economic uncertainty, the diffusion of technologies once restricted to journalists, a realignment of the boundaries between journalists and audiences, the proliferation of a multitude of new media actors and the increasing blurring of boundaries between news and opinion mean the contemporary media environment is one where the only certainty seems to be the constancy of change" (Tandoc Jr. and Thomas, 2017).

Referring to Table 1, the academic ideas from the writer's literature review on the Newspaper Research Journal are grouped into four categories: (i) quality of newspaper contents, (ii) related to newspaper readers, (iii) related to the newspaper organizations and their journalists, and (iv) the political, economic, social and technological trends. Together, these academic ideas raise the awareness of researchers doing NAS

on the social impacts, knowledge relevance, quality and biases of newspaper articles as a secondary data source for secondary research. In particular, when conducting newspaper article study (NAS), the researcher needs to ask the following five critical questions (CQs)[5] as a manifestation of NAS critical evaluation competence:

> CQ 1. Who are the gatekeepers of the newspapers and what are their worldviews and material interests?
>
> CQ 2. Who have the power to influence the decisions of the newspapers gatekeepers? What are the sources of power and interests of these influencers of the gatekeepers?
>
> CQ 3. What are the perceived objectivity, transparency and significance of the newspaper articles by what kinds of newspaper readers?
>
> CQ 4. What will newspaper readers readily agree or disagree on the viewpoints of newspaper articles from particular writers/ journalists and newspapers? Why would these readers do so?
>
> CQ 5. How do political, economic, social and technological trends affect dynamically and interactively the considerations, factors and actor behaviors as recognized by critical questions (CQs) 1 to 4 above?

These five critical questions are related and their analytical significance can be understood differently depending on the specific research and sociological paradigm endorsed by the researcher. Regardless, this literature review findings on NR do not specifically point to the content quality of a particular newspaper. It is also not able to nor intended to indicate the relevance of specific newspapers and newspaper articles for meeting specific research objectives of a specific applied business research project. To do so, the researcher needs to apply the agile literature review approach (ALRA) that utilizes NAS as a secondary research method. Studying the Newspaper

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[5] The critical questions (CQs) are formulated based on a reflection on the academic ideas gathered from the writer's brief literature review on some chosen *Newspaper Research Journal* articles (re: Table 1)

Research (NR) literature to master intellectual skills to make use of the five CQs is a pathway to build up critical evaluation competence in NAS, nevertheless - this is the chief proposition of this article. Now, we could take up a brief NAS to examine the topic of the USA- People's Republic of China **(**PRC) trade war and then discuss what the literature review findings on Newspaper Research (NR) remind us intellectually so as to foster a more critical evaluation on the newspaper article findings on the USA-PRC trade war topic.

Studying the USA-People's Republic of China (PRC) trade war topic with the newspaper article study (NAS) method

The writer made use of the Internet search to access some newspaper articles on the topic of the USA-PRC trade war; these newspaper articles were published in 2018 to early 2019. So, these articles are quite recent ones. Most of these them are from the local and regional newspapers, notably the *South China Morning Post*. The gathered reported facts and viewpoints from these newspaper articles are grouped into five categories, namely, (i) directly related to the PRC economy, (ii) directly related to the USA economy, (iii) directly related to other economies, (iv) related to impacts on specific business sectors and companies, and (v) related to indirect and non-economic factors, e.g., the trade war tactics per se. They are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Reported facts and viewpoints (i.e., reported items) in newspaper articles on the USA-PRC trade war topic based on the writer's Internet search

Categories of ideas	Reported facts and viewpoints in newspaper articles
Category 1: directly related to the PRC economy	Reported item 1.1: "Alibaba Group Holding co-founder Jack Ma cautioned China's business and political leaders to prepare for the trade war with the US to last longer and have a bigger impact than most people think. .... China needs to strengthen its economy to deal with the conflict and shift trade relations from the US to regions like Southeast Asia and Africa" (Chen, 2018). Reported item 1.2: "The Chinese have a saying, "crossing the river by

	feeling the stones", which describes a folksy, pragmatic approach to an uncertain situation, whether it is reforming the economy or going on the Long March. When uncharted territory looms, the idea is to take slow, but bold, steps forward – to improvise along the way, adapt and survive. .... In a situation when existing knowledge cannot guide you, only action can reveal the way forward. We have arrived at just such a moment in history. In the past few months, the gulf between the United States and China has widened greatly, even as their trade war rages on. US Vice-President Mike Pence's China speech in October was interpreted as the opening salvo in a new cold war" (Sheng, 2018). Reported item 1.3: "President Donald Trump is succeeding in making China pay most of the cost of his trade war. That's the conclusion of a new paper from EconPol Europe, a network of researchers in the European Union. U.S. companies and consumers will only pay 4.5 percent more after the nation imposed 25 percent tariffs on $250 billion of Chinese goods, and the other 20.5 percent toll will fall on Chinese producers, according to authors Benedikt Zoller-Rydzek and Gabriel Felbermayr" (Pi, 2018).
Category 2: directly related to the USA economy	Reported item 2.1: "President Donald Trump's latest round of tariffs on roughly $200 billion worth of Chinese goods kicked in on Monday, bringing the total amount of Chinese goods faced with tariffs up to approximately $250 billion. In response, Beijing slapped tariffs on another $60 billion worth of US goods. The new tariffs will likely push up prices for US businesses and consumers, according to economists, while also weighing on consumer confidence. It is unclear the degree to which the inflation would weigh on the broader US economy, but most experts expect the tariffs to be somewhat of a drag on growth...... " (Bryan, 2018a).
Category 3: directly related to other economies	Reported item 3.1: "With China already embroiled in trade negotiations with the United States that include discussions about the value of the yuan, Beijing might rationally conclude some degree of yuan strength will be needed to assuage US concerns. If so, an accompanying appreciation of the yuan versus the euro would be unhelpful, leaving China's exporters with a loss of competitive advantage on two major fronts at the same time. "The risks surrounding the euro area growth outlook have moved to the downside on account of the persistence of uncertainties," European Central Bank President Mario Draghi said on Thursday. That day, the currency market pushed the euro down to its lowest level versus the US dollar since December 14. It remains to be seen whether euro weakness will re-emerge as a dominant currency market theme or whether the post-ECB price action was just a fleeting market reaction" (Kimberley, 2019). Reported item 3.2: "In recent weeks, we have been silent spectators of the three-sided spat led by US President Donald Trump with tweets against China and European countries on what is termed a "trade war". This could plunge the world's economy into another deep slump. Many have seen this as a declaration of war – a trade war – through Twitter by Trump. The tweets represent an extremely serious and dangerous trend for the world's economy, especially for developing economies such as those in Africa. This row could very easily escalate and send the capitalist world into a deep depression, as happened in the 1930s. Investors and governments are rattled, to say the least. What worries

me the most is the silence of our leaders in Africa every time the elephants decide to have a go at each other" (Maxon, 2018).

Reported item 3.3: "China will be seeking to step up trade policy coordination with European nations when Vice-Premier Liu He visits Germany next week for financial talks, to help protect it as the trade war with the United States continues" (Wu,. 2018).

Reported item 3.4: "The global trading system could be plunged into crisis and millions of jobs lost unless politicians take steps to ease tensions simmering between many major economies, the World Trade Organisation has warned. Roberto Azevedo, director-general of the WTO, said in a speech in London: "Without action to ease tensions and recommit to cooperation in trade, we could see serious harm done to the multilateral trading system." He added: "The long-term economic consequences of this could be severe. These effects would cause significant disruptions for workers, firms and communities as they adjust to this new reality" (Morrison, 2018).

Reported item 3.5: "Disruptive weather in the first few months of the year is partly to blame for the UK's weaker-than-expected economic performance, the IMF said, while policy uncertainty, including trade tensions between the US and China, have played a role in the tempered global expectations. "Uncertainty over trade policy is prominent in the wake of US actions (or threatened actions) on several fronts, the responses by its trading partners, and a general weakening of multilateral consultation on trade issues", the [IMF] report said" (Cullen, 2018).

Reported item 3.6: "TOKYO: Japan's economy shrank more than expected in the third quarter, hit by natural disasters and a decline in exports, a worrying sign that trade protectionism is starting to take its toll on overseas demand. The contraction in the world's third-largest economy adds to growing signs of weakness globally, with China and Europe losing momentum. Germany is expected to report later in the day that its economy also shrank last quarter. The government stuck to its view that the economy continues to recover moderately, blaming the contraction on typhoons and an earthquake that halted factories and stifled consumption. But some analysts said such one-off factors alone could not explain the downturn, pointing to worrying declines in exports amid slowing Chinese demand and the fallout from escalating global trade friction" (The Economic Times, 2018).

Reported item 3.7: "Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc has a good story to tell global executives he'll meet in Davos this week... "We are ready to grab the opportunity," Phuc said in an interview with Bloomberg TV before departing this week to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland..... Vietnam is quietly positioning itself as a safe haven for manufacturers wary of getting caught in the crossfire of the tariff war between the US and China" (Bloomberg, 2019).

Reported item 3.8: "SEOUL -- South Korea's export-fueled economy is facing a tough year, with overseas shipments set to continue their slide due to a cooling Chinese economy and the simmering trade war. The trade ministry said that South Korea's exports fell 5.8% year on year in

	January to $46.4 billion, after shrinking 1.3% in December. It was the sharpest decline in two and a half years except for September, when it dropped 8.1% due to the Chuseok holidays. Exports to China tumbled 19.1% to $10.8 billion during the same period, dropping for three consecutive months since November. Semiconductors, petrochemicals and petroleum products led the decline" (Kim, 2019).
Category 4: related to the impacts on specific business sectors and companies	Reported item 4.1: "The effects from the US-China trade war and mounting costs of doing business for companies are fuelling investor fears of the likelihood of a "flash crash" in financial markets, analysts have warned. The deteriorating climate, they said, would force cash-strapped firms to offload assets quickly and reduce debt to buffer profit declines next year that could be brought about by the trade war. But these risks would be magnified by the rise of artificial intelligence-driven electronic trading as automation speeds up financial transactions, allowing them to be conducted across multiple markets at the same time" (Yeung, 2018). Reported item 4.2: "Earnings growth at U.S. corporations is being crimped by an escalating trade war between the world's two largest economies, with Caterpillar, Harley-Davidson and Honeywell among a few this week to flag mounting costs from the spat. Beijing and Washington have slapped tit-for-tat tariffs on each other's goods in recent months, sparked by U.S. President Donald Trump's demands for sweeping changes to China's intellectual property, industrial subsidy and trade policies" (Reuters, 2018). Reported item 4.3: "Mr. Trump's use of tariffs as a cudgel to revitalize manufacturing in the United States is forcing changes across large multinational companies, though they may not always be the changes the president seeks. Harley-Davidson and Micron are moving production to factories in Europe or parts of Asia, while other companies have put off expansion plans amid trade uncertainty..... Tim Boyle, Columbia's chief executive, said in a recent interview that there was nothing the president could do to entice the company to make its products in the United States, where costs would be higher and apparel manufacturing expertise has withered through decades of outsourcing" (Tankersley, 2018).
Category 5: related to indirect and non-economic factors, e.g., the trade war tactics per se.	Reported item 5.1: "Prices of US agricultural goods have plummeted since the announcement of tariffs on American crops. Since it is harder for US farmers to sell their goods, supply gluts have become worse, driving down prices. This has hurt US farmers even if their goods are not sold directly to the countries with tariffs. Many countries have targeted US crops with their tariffs to exert not just economic, but also political, pressure on the US, since many farmers are in GOP-held areas won by Trump" (Bryan, 2018b). Reported item 5.2: "China has rallied the support of the biggest developing economies to push back against protectionism as US President Donald Trump threatens to impose tariffs on almost all Chinese imports. China, Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa have agreed to "fight against trade protectionism together" after a meeting during the Group of 20 Summit of finance ministers and central bankers in Buenos Aires.." (Xie, 2018). Reported item 5.3: "Washington's trade war has gained support from

many in the Sinophobic circle of politicians, businesses and lobbyists, who have long complained about Beijing's treatment of foreign businesses, especially those from the US, on issues such as intellectual property protection, forced technology transfer and market access. However, while it is arguable that China's market liberalisation could be faster, it is unfair to say Beijing has blocked most foreign companies. In the tech sector, pundits lament that Facebook and Twitter are blocked in China, but neglect to mention Apple, Amazon, Bing, LinkedIn, eBay and Airbnb are not" (Tse, 2019).

Reported item 5.4: "Ever since the United States fired its first salvo of punitive tariffs at China last March, speculation has been rife that Hong Kong might get caught in the cross-hairs. Trade experts know Hong Kong is too small to be of consequence. The subsequent arrest of Meng Wanzhou, a senior executive of China's tech titan Huawei, and the deluge of charges against her clearly demonstrate that the eldest daughter of Huawei's founder is a much more valuable pawn. The US has been such an important trading and investment partner of Hong Kong that the Legislative Council held an adjournment debate in early December to discuss the economic implications of the US-China trade conflict. Much concern was expressed about Hong Kong possibly losing its "most favoured nation" trading status, yet few fully understood what that status means and the likelihood of losing it in the wake of the US-China trade spat" (Ip, 2019).

Reported item 5.5: "Since the trade war started, a steady stream of Americans, "old friends", as Chinese Vice-President Wang Qishan calls them, has been travelling to Beijing, ostensibly to help China's leaders understand what Trump is really thinking. Most have two things in common: a financial stake in business as usual between the US and China and a disdain for Trump. Their mantra is that "tariffs are bad" and "nobody wins a trade war". But, given the way bilateral trade was heading, the US was on a trajectory to lose the trade peace. Many Americans believe trading with China has diminished US manufacturing competitiveness and harmed its national security" (Boxwell, 2018).

Reported item 5.6: "Departing from a past practice of using a host country's cars for state visits, Xi Jinping rode in bulletproof Chinese-made Hongqi "Red Flag" limousines during his recent three-nation swing through Southeast Asia and the Pacific. The move was seen as an attempt to promote the Chinese brand on the international stage, in line with Xi's own 2012 directive to Communist Party cadres that they eschew foreign wheels in favour of Chinese vehicles. But as the president championed free trade and tried to rally support for China's cause in its trade war with the US, his choice of a home-built car seemed to take on greater significance: a defiant response to the actions and criticism that have been thrown at China by America's outspoken, Cadillac-riding president, Donald Trump" (Liu, 2018).

Reported item 5.7: "The United States and China clashed on Wednesday at a World Trade Organisation meeting with a US envoy accusing Beijing of using the WTO to pursue "non-market" policies and a Chinese official saying it was Washington that was flouting the rule book. US President Donald Trump has outraged US trading partners by

erecting a tariff wall against imports of steel and aluminium – justified by US national security concerns – and has hit Chinese goods with huge tariffs over accusations of stealing US intellectual property..... The Chinese official said the United States had failed to back up its "unfounded" claims about China's economy, which it was using to disguise its own violations of the WTO rule book" (Reuters, 2018).

Reported item 5.8: "Thus far, China and the United States have acted in shortsighted ways. In the US, the current tariff war with China seems to be a feud without a solution, not to mention possible limits on migration and tighter rules for the transfer of information or scientific knowledge that drive innovation. Within China, there are mixed signals. In some sectors, there have been improvements in transparency and harmonising with international norms, and some modest positive steps on intellectual property but, in the opposite direction, there has been renewed support of government subsidised state-owned enterprises and a scrutiny of private enterprise. Neither side is exhibiting a sufficient win-win leadership approach.... " (Beier and Caine, 2018).

Reported item 5.9: "China has not changed unfair and discriminatory practices that prompted US President Donald Trump to impose tariffs on around US$250 billion worth of Chinese goods, Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said on Tuesday. The trade chief made the statement in conjunction with a 53-page update his office released on a report on its investigation into China's intellectual property practices under Section 301 of the 1974 Trade Act. That probe and the initial report from March provided the legal basis for Trump to impose tariffs on nearly half of all imports from China" (Politico, 2018).

Reported item 5.10: "After months of posturing and rising tensions, US and Chinese trade negotiators are finally at the table attempting to deescalate the trade war. President Donald Trump's overwhelming concern is with the bilateral trade deficit, which has led China to offer significant purchases of US liquid natural gas and agricultural products. Some in the administration have far greater ambitions for these negotiations, including increased market access, better intellectual property protections for foreign firms operating in China, and reductions in state subsidies for Chinese firms" (Coflan, 2019).

Reported item 5.11: "... Renee Mu, a currency analyst for DailyFX, agrees. The longer China stays in this trade war, he says, "the more it will lose." Still, America must leave China with some room to "fall." Why? To allow it to lose the war gracefully, and appease nationalistic sentiment at home" (Mourdoukoutas, 2019).

Referring to Table 2, when evaluating the reported items from the USA-PRC trade war newspaper articles, the researcher needs to ask who could be the gatekeepers of the newspapers and their worldviews, what kinds of readers will agree and disagree with the viewpoints underlying the reported items and

how the various political, social, economic and technological trends could affect in a dynamic way the production and consumption of these newspaper article contents. These are critical evaluation questions associated to the five critical questions (CQs) in the previous section. The array of reported items in Table 2 reveals a topic with diversity of viewpoints that endorse different stakeholders' interests. There are also subthemes (e.g., the five categories of Table 2) within the encompassing USA-PRC trade war theme. The researcher now becomes sensitive to the critical evaluation questions (re: the five CQs) after studying the intellectual insights from the Newspaper Research Journal literature (re: Table 1). As a result, the researcher might then be motivated to dig deeper into issues raised by the five CQs by conducting other follow-up investigations. At the same time, by heeding these CQs, the researcher becomes more aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the NAS as a research method. In short, studying the literature of Newspaper Research (NR) strengthens the researcher's NAS critical evaluation competence to study the findings from the NAS as a secondary research method.

From the writer's experience of the literature review and NAS practice, whether the exercise is a literature review (re: Table 1) or a newspaper article study (re: Table 2), it is very often useful to categorize a set of collected findings into a number of logical groups (e.g., the categories in Tables 1 and 2) before a deeper evaluation on the findings is carried out on them. In this regard, the process of category formation is essentially an exploratory endeavor of the researcher. The aim of findings categorization is to impose some form of organization on a large assembly of findings to facilitate a more focused review by the researcher on the nature and relatedness of the findings.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In applied business research projects, including those involving the ALRA application, NAS as a secondary research method can be very useful. When used with NAS critical evaluation competence, newspaper article study (NAS) promotes a more complicated understanding of the problem-situation in a client system being studied by the researcher as well as a more complicated intellectual response to such a problem-situation. Inevitably, the set of reported items from the NAS (e.g., Table 2 on the USA-PRC trade war topic) reveals diversity of viewpoints whose origins and quality need to be studied with NAS critical evaluation competence. On the whole, the article contributes to (i) the understanding of newspaper article study (NAS) as a secondary research method, notably for the agile literature review approach (ALRA) and (ii) the intellectual knowledge required to go through the learning pathway so as to master this secondary research method and, in the long-term, to build up NAS critical evaluation competence.

In this article, the theoretical perspective underlying the NAS and NAS critical evaluation competence is grounded on critical systems thinking (Jackson, 2003) which this writer endorses. As such, a deeper grasp of the line of reasoning in this article can be better gained with critical systems thinking knowledge. The article also refers to the writer's research work on the agile literature review approach (ALRA). Readers are referred to the Facebook group of *The agile literature review approach group* for further details on this subject. Having some knowledge on critical systems thinking and the ALRA enables readers to figure out better the underlying line of reasoning presented in this article. Finally, although NAS is being examined here in the applied business research field, there is no reason that it cannot be employed in other social sciences fields such as Housing Studies.

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