Project title:

Image of the New Southbound Policy in the Domestic Taiwanese Media

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Abstract

The present research is concerned with the exploration of the image of the New Southbound Policy as depicted in three Taiwanese periodicals: *Taiwan Review*, *Taiwan Panorama*, and *Taiwan Today*. The textual material gathered for the analysis consists of articles published from January 2016 to May 2024 to correspond with the administration periods of former president Tsai Ing-wen. The methodology is based on the well-grounded approaches from discourse analysis which is used to examine the image of the New Southbound Policy in the domestic Taiwanese periodicals. The purpose of the present study is three-fold: to advance our understanding of presenting the New Southbound Policy in the chosen periodicals, to map the intensity of promoting the policy throughout two administration periods of former president Tsai Ing-wen, and to identify the key subjects related to the New Southbound Policy.

Keywords: discourse analysis, domestic media, New Southbound Policy, Taiwan

1. Introduction

Following the transition of the implemented diplomatic strategy linked to the change of the administration party in the presidential election in 2016, the previous *China-oriented strategy* employed by Ma Ying-jeou as a representative of Kuomintang has been replaced by a more *world-oriented* approach pursued by the Democratic Progressive Party represented by Tsai Ing-wen. The New Southbound Policy, first introduced in 2015 and subsequently launched in 2016, represents a tool for the intensification of the relations not only with countries located in direct proximity of Taiwan including the South-Asian region and ASEAN countries but also stretches up

to Australia and New Zealand with the main objective to foster the exchange and cooperation in various fields including trade, economy, technology, and culture.[1]

Considering the existing discourse in the domestic Taiwanese periodicals, *Taiwan Review, Taiwan Panorama,* and *Taiwan Today*, the objective of the present study is to explore and investigate how the image of the New Southbound Policy is presented through domestic Taiwanese media which publish articles not only in Chinese but also provide their English translations. In order to cover the timespan from the launch of the policy up to the end of the second administration period of president Tsai Ing-wen, the study is based on the articles published from January 2016 to May 2024. The present research contributes to the understanding of the discursive construction of the New Southbound Policy in the media, how it has been introduced to the public concerning the new diplomatic strategy, and what main associations have been made in relation to the policy. The study integrates the close reading and the approaches from discourse analysis to identify the textual elements used for depicting the New Southbound Policy with the objective to analyse its image from a broader perspective.

The study consists of six chapters: introduction providing a brief overview of the studied topic, theoretical framework introducing the selection of methodological approaches used in the study, research questions and objectives used for the textual analysis, methods and time frame of the project, findings summarizing the core results of the textual analysis, and discussion/conclusion part presenting the crucial research output.

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[1] See e.g., Chao, Wen-chih. "Opportunities and Challenges of Taiwan's "New Southbound Policy" under Mainland China's "One Belt, One Road" Initiative". *Prospect Journal* nr. 16 (2016): 79-104; Jamil, Nur S. "Taiwan's New Southbound Policy in Southeast Asia and the 'China Factor': Deepening Regional Integration Amid New Reality." *Asian Affairs*, (2023), DOI: 10.1080/03068374.2023.2208939; Ministry of Economic Affairs, Bureau of Foreign Trade. "Guidelines and Action Plan." Available at: https://www.trade.gov.tw/english/Pages/Detail.aspx?nodeID=4678&pid=754141, last accessed June 10, 2023; Office of the President of the R.O.C. (Taiwan). "*Zǒngtǒng zhàokāi `duìwài jīngmào zhànlüè huìtán tōngguò `Xīn nán xiàng zhèngcè' zhèngcè gānglǐng* 〈總統召開「對外經貿戰略會談」通過「新南向政策」政策綱領〉" [The President Held the "Foreign Economic and Trade Strategic Talks" and the "New Southbound Policy" Outline Has Passed]. Last modified August 16, 2016, available at: http://www.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=131&itemid=37862&rmid=514>, last accessed June 12, 2023.

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of the proposed project will incorporate the well-grounded methodology of discourse analysis with close reading to establish the connections between the New Southbound Policy and the key subjects of its correlation. Discourse analysis examines the language in use in written or spoken form and the function it fulfills in communication,[2] and combines the study of discourse, vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and semantics from the perspective of linguistics.[3] Furthermore, the discourse analysis goes beyond the formal aspects of linguistics and it can be perceived as an interdisciplinary approach that takes into consideration not only the context but also the cultural and social framework.[4] Regarding the context, it is important to take into account assumptions related to the communicative event that is analysed and the possible impact of the text in relation to its interpretation and perception of the readers, therefore an inseparable part of the discourse analysis is the study of the relationship between the used language forms and discourse function.[5] As a result, the use of discourse analysis will facilitate the understanding of language in use from a broader perspective. The close reading of the gathered textual material will enable the identification of the basic content that has been communicated, the overall text organization, and the interconnection of the key subjects of interest concerning the New Southbound Policy.

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[2] See e.g., Brown, Gillian and George Yule. *Discourse Analysis*. *Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1983; Johnstone, Barbara. *Discourse Analysis*. Hoboken : John Wiley & Sons, 2018; Keller, Reiner, Anna-Katharina, Hornidge and Wolf J., Schünemann (eds.). *The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse. Investigating the Politics of Knowledge and Meaning-making*. New York : Routledge, 2018; Widdowson, Henry G. *Discourse Analysis.* Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2007.

[3] See e.g., Fairclough, Norman. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London : Longman, 1995; Fairclough, Norman. *Language and Power*. London : Longman, 1989; Johnstone, *Discourse Analysis*, 2018.

[4] See e.g., Brown, and Yule, *Discourse Analysis,* 1983; Johnstone, *Discourse Analysis*, 2018; Keller, Hornidge and Schünemann, *The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse*, 2018; Widdowson, *Discourse Analysis*, 2007.

[5] See e.g., Cook, Guy. *Discourse*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1989; Štulajterová, Alena. *Selected Chapters from Discourse Analysis.* Banska Bystrica : Belianum Univerzita Mateja Bela, 2015.

3. Research questions and objectives

The main research objective is to advance the knowledge of the New Southbound Policy's image in the selected domestic Taiwanese periodicals. The purpose of the present study is three-fold:

- ➢ to investigate the image of the New Southbound Policy in *Taiwan Panorama, Taiwan Review,* and *Taiwan Today* during two administration periods of the former president Tsai Ing-wen;

- ➢ to quantify the intensity of promoting the New Southbound Policy by collecting articles throughout the indicated time frame;

- ➢ to identify the key subjects related to the presentation of the New Southbound Policy.

To achieve the research objectives (RO), the project addresses the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: What is the image of the New Southbound Policy in the analysed domestic Taiwanese media?
RO1: to identify the textual elements related to the description of the New Southbound Policy in the collected articles;

RQ2: How has the intensity of presenting the New Southbound Policy in the periodicals evolved over time?
RO2: to study the dynamics of the New Southbound Policy's occurrence in domestic periodicals;

RQ3: What are the predominant key subjects associated with the New Southbound Policy in the analysed articles?
RO3: to determine and analyse the broader background of the New Southbound Policy's image based on the key subjects;

4. Methodology and timeline

The research project was divided into three phases as shown in Table 1 below:

Phase 1: Preliminary research	Phase 2: Data exploration	Phase 3: Analysis
❖ Identify the key words used for the search of articles (used keywords: New Southbound Policy, NSP, policy); ❖ Search and gather the articles in the selected periodicals published between 2016 and 2024; ❖ Prepare the collected articles for the language exploration phase.	❖ Close reading of the collected textual material; ❖ Determination of the structures linked to the description of the New Southbound Policy; ❖ Identification and labelling of the key subjects associated with the New Southbound Policy and the time of publication.	❖ Analysis of the New Southbound Policy's image in domestic periodicals; ❖ Determination of the occurrence rate during the indicated time frame; ❖ Examination of the image of the New Southbound Policy based on the key subjects.

Table 1. Research phases

The online query provided on the webpages of the periodicals was used for collecting the relevant articles by using the following keywords: New Southbound Policy, NSP, including its translation (*Xin nan xiang zhengce* 新南向政策). The collected information about the articles were stored and managed in an Excel spreadsheet to facilitate the filtering options.

5. Findings

5.1 Macro perspective on the image of the New Southbound Policy

The present study is based on the data collected from three domestic Taiwanese media: *Taiwan Panorama*, *Taiwan Review*, and *Taiwan Today*. The dataset comprises 104 articles in total which were published online from January 2016 to May 2024. The articles were primarily collected and analysed in their English language mutation to ensure comparable output of the collocational patterns used for describing the New Southbound Policy. Nevertheless, the consistency of the translations and completeness of the language data was ensured by a cross-check search in Chinese for all the relevant articles. As shown in Figure 1, the predominant number of articles can be found in *Taiwan Review* (64%, 67 articles) followed by *Taiwan Today* (24%, 25 articles) and *Taiwan Panorama* (12%, 12 articles).
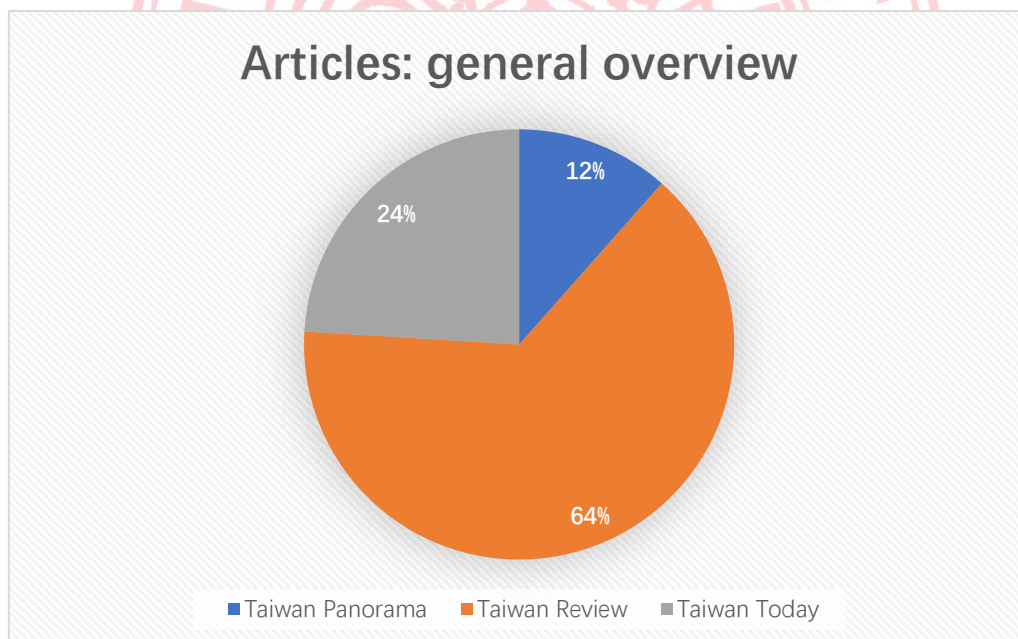
Figure 1. General distribution of articles (2016-2024)

In addition to the general overview of the article's distribution in the chosen media, Figure 2 provides a more complete picture of the publication rates across the years. The highest number of articles, 27 in total, was published in 2017 followed by 14 articles in

2018 and 2020 respectively. Considering the division of the studied time frame based on the administration periods of former president Tsai Ing-wen, it is not surprising that the predominant number of articles corresponds to the first administration period in which the New Southbound Policy was launched and promoted by the government. A significantly lower number of articles was published in the second administration period marked by a decline in 2021 and 2024.
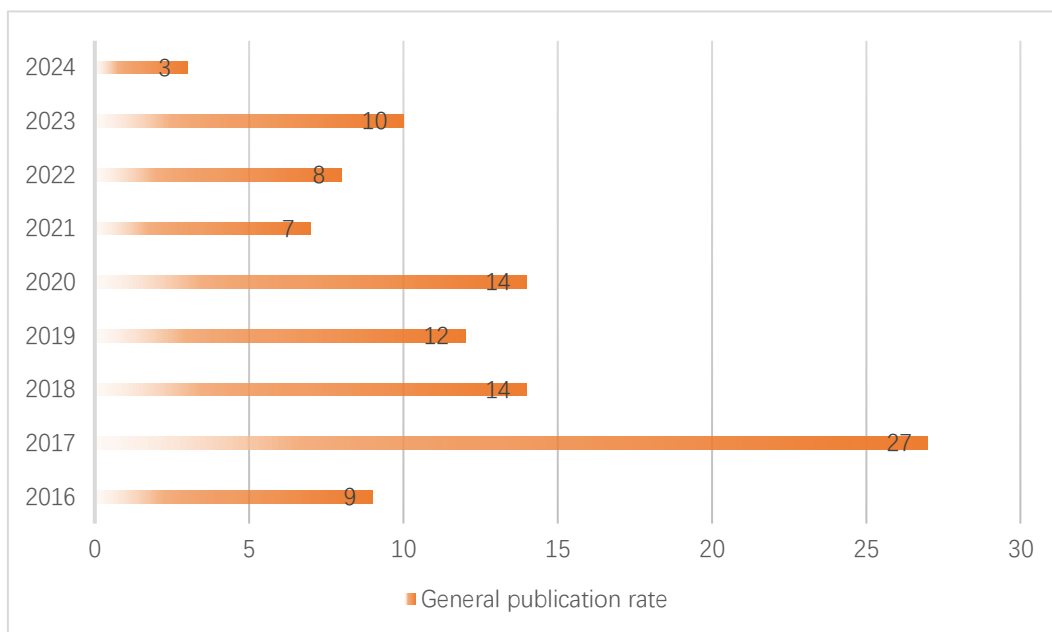

Figure 2. General publication rates (2016-2024)

Figure 3 displays the general preference of the journalists from all three newspapers to either use the name of the policy directly in the title or to avoid it and limit its use to the main text body. As shown in the figure, the majority of the articles (88%, 92 articles) does not include the New Southbound Policy as an "eye-catcher" for readers and the authors opt for other word selection. However, there are 12 articles (12%) mentioning the New Southbound Policy directly in the title.
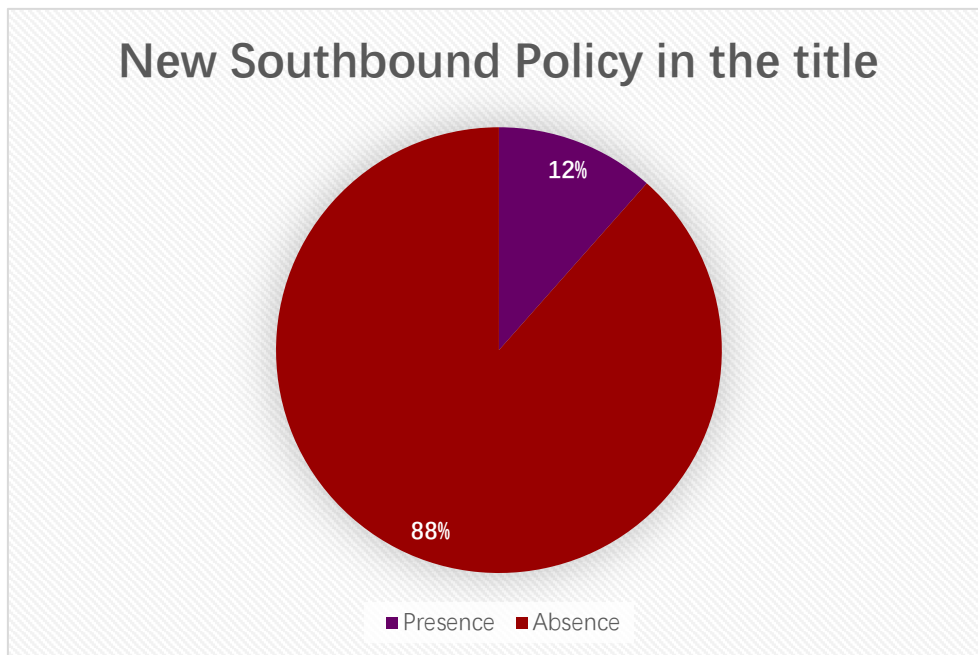
Figure 3. Use of the New Southbound Policy in the titles

In order to gain a better understanding of the New Southbound Policy's presentation in the Taiwanese media, the last variable included in the general overview based on the data from the newspaper's websites is the division of articles according to their main area of interest. Since *Taiwan Panorama*, *Taiwan Review*, and *Taiwan Today* do not have identical categories, the articles comprise seven main areas: politics, economics, society, culture, global outlook, communities, and entrepreneurship (see Figure 4). As displayed in Figure 4, the majority of articles belongs to politics (68%, 71 articles) followed by four categories with an almost balanced number of articles including society (10%, 11 articles), economics (9%, 9 articles), global outlook (6%, 6 articles), and entrepreneurship (5%, 5 articles). There are also two articles that represent the areas culture and communities with 1% respectively.
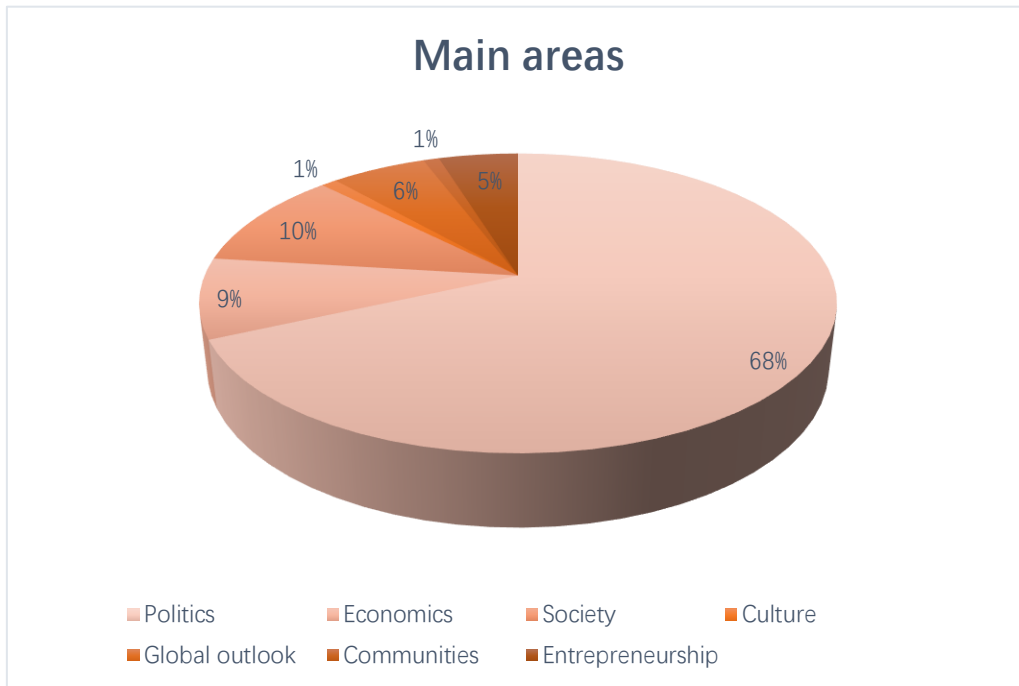
Figure 4. Main areas in all selected media

The category for key subjects was created to facilitate the process of analysis to explore the collocational patterns and combinations referring to the New Southbound Policy and consists of nine categories in total. Considering the nature and purpose of the New Southbound Policy and the government's goals, these categories to a great extent reflect the officially communicated objectives of the policy[6]. As displayed in Figure 5, the top three predominant topics found in the articles are cooperation (37%, 71 articles), business (25%, 48 articles), and education (13%, 25 articles). Because of the fact that the articles are not limited to one main topic and often tend to stress the multifaceted nature of the policy, it was necessary to assign more than one topic to some of the articles. As a result, the total number of the collected articles is lower than the total number of articles based on the key subjects.

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[6] See e.g., Ministry of Economic Affairs, Bureau of Foreign Trade. "Guidelines and Action Plan." Available at: https://www.trade.gov.tw/english/Pages/Detail.aspx?nodeID=4678&pid=754141, last accessed January 10, 2025; Office of the President of the R.O.C. (Taiwan). "*Zǒngtǒng zhàokāi `duìwài jīngmào zhànlüè huìtán tōngguò `Xīn nán xiàng zhèngcè' zhèngcè gānglǐng* 〈總統召開「對外經貿戰略會談」通過「新南向政策」政策綱領〉 " [The President Held the "Foreign Economic and Trade Strategic Talks" and the "New Southbound Policy" Outline Has Passed]. Last modified August 16, 2016, available at: http://www.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=131&itemid=37862&rmid=514>, last accessed January 10, 2025.

The remaining categories with a lower occurrence rate are: tourism (11%, 22 articles), culture (6%, 12 articles), diplomacy (3%, 5 articles), art (2%, 4 articles), medicine/science (2%, 3 articles), and ecology/agriculture (1%, 2 articles, see Figure 5).
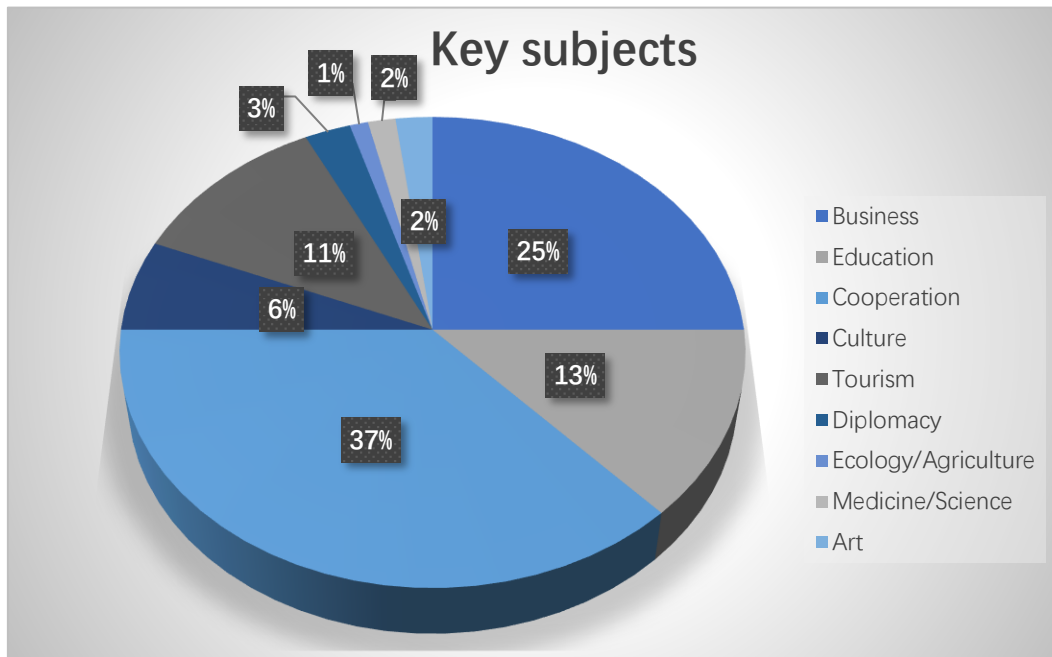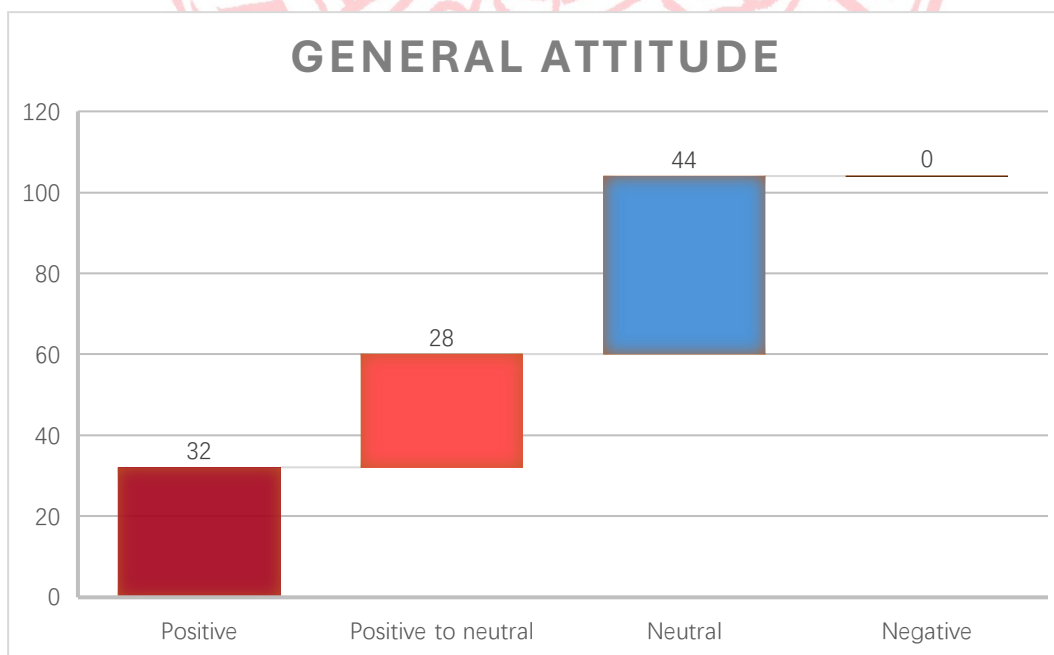

Figure 5. Key subjects in all selected media

Figure 6. Attitude in relation to the New Southbound Policy

Another variable used for the analysis of the textual data was the general attitude of the articles towards the New Southbound Policy. The attitude was assessed based on the selection of collocational patterns depicting the policy. As shown in Figure 6, the predominant category comprising 44 articles is represented by neutral expressions used for informing about the policy followed by positive attitude found in 32 articles and 28 articles expressing positive to neutral attitude towards the policy.

5.2 Micro perspective on the image of the New Southbound Policy

In addition to the general overview of the New Southbound Policy's image in the analysed media, the present section introduces the micro perspective on its image as formulated by the individual newspapers. Figure 7 shows the peak years of publishing articles about the policy as appeared in *Taiwan Panorama*, *Taiwan Review*, and *Taiwan Today*.
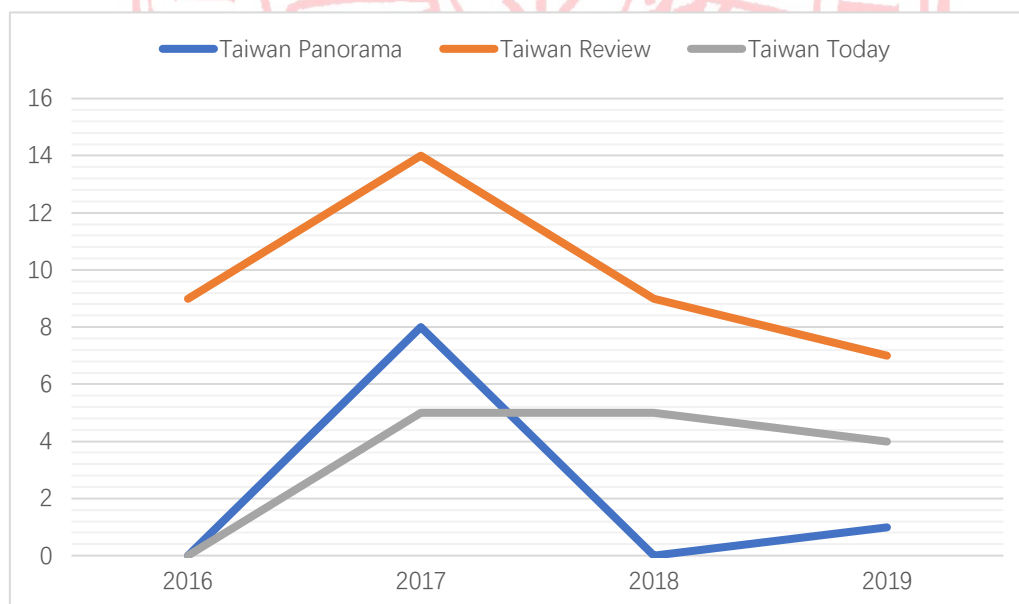

Figure 7. Publication rate in the studied media (2016-2019)

When compared to Figure 2, the most active year for all media is marked in 2017 and certain similarities in the publication rate curve can be found between *Taiwan*

Panorama and *Taiwan Review* from 2016 to 2019 (see Figure 7). It is important to note that from the beginning of the policy's promulgation by the government, the articles in 2016 were only published in *Taiwan Review* (14 articles) and the intensity of article's occurrence declined towards the year 2019.

As Figure 8 shows, the second publication peak can be observed in 2020 in *Taiwan Review* (12 articles). A linear activity throughout the years 2020-2024 can be observed in *Taiwan Today,* whereas absence of articles linked to the New Southbound Policy is found in *Taiwan Panorama* from 2020 to 2022.
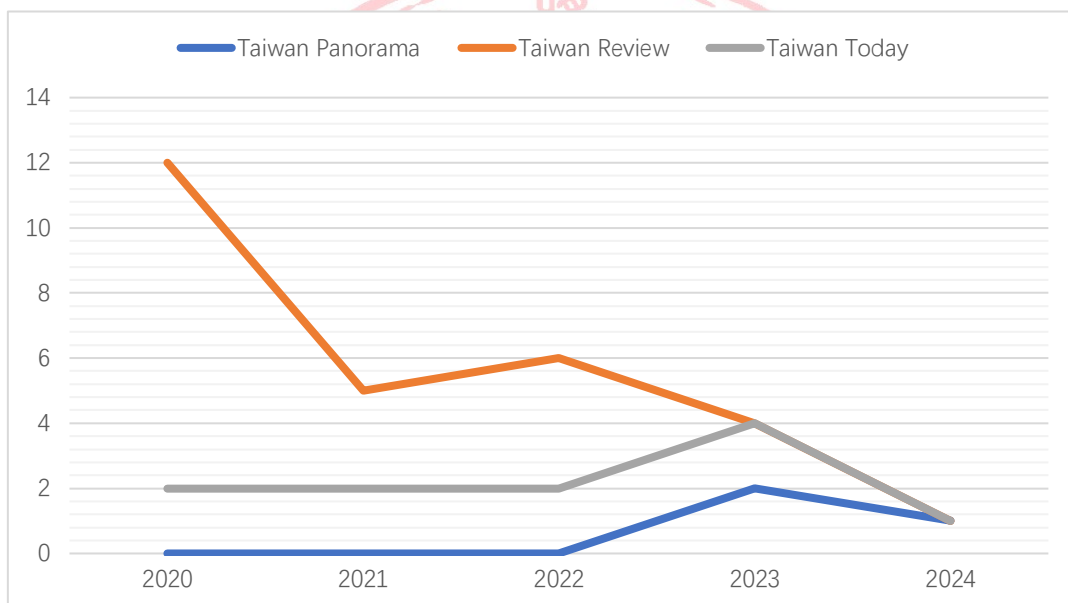
Figure 8. Publication rate in the studied media (2020-2024)

5.2.1   Articles in *Taiwan Panorama*

The section devoted to the image of the New Southbound Policy in *Taiwan Panorama* follows the identical categories as introduced in the opening section of the main research objectives used for the article's analysis. Figure 9 displays the ratio of using or avoiding the name of the policy in the article's title.

As shown in the figure below, the majority of titles (75%, 9 articles) does not contain any reference to the New Southbound Policy in comparison to its absence (25%, 3 articles).
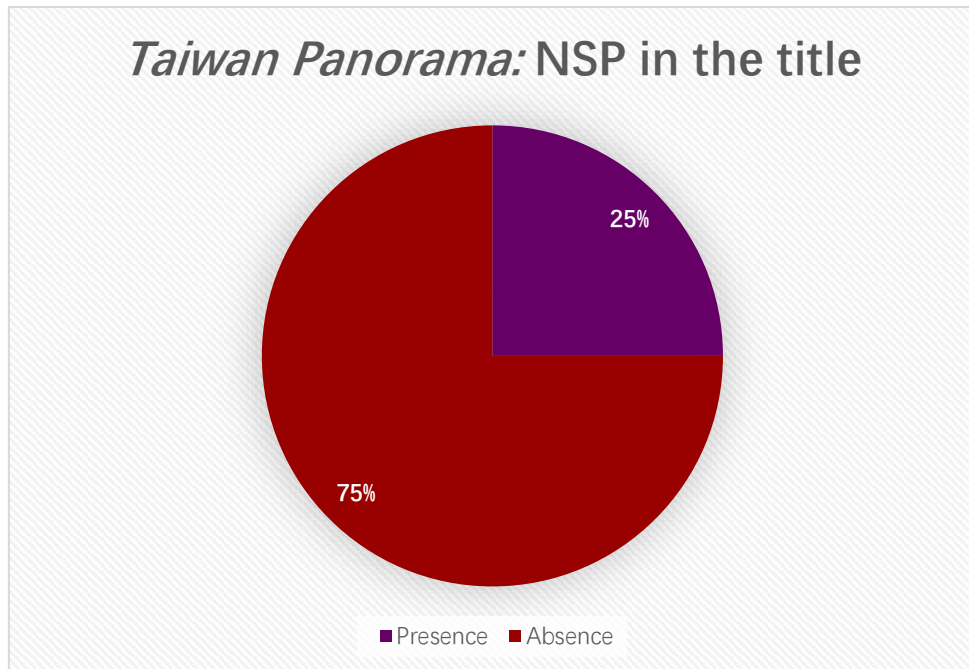

Figure 9. *Taiwan Panorama:* the New Southbound Policy in the title
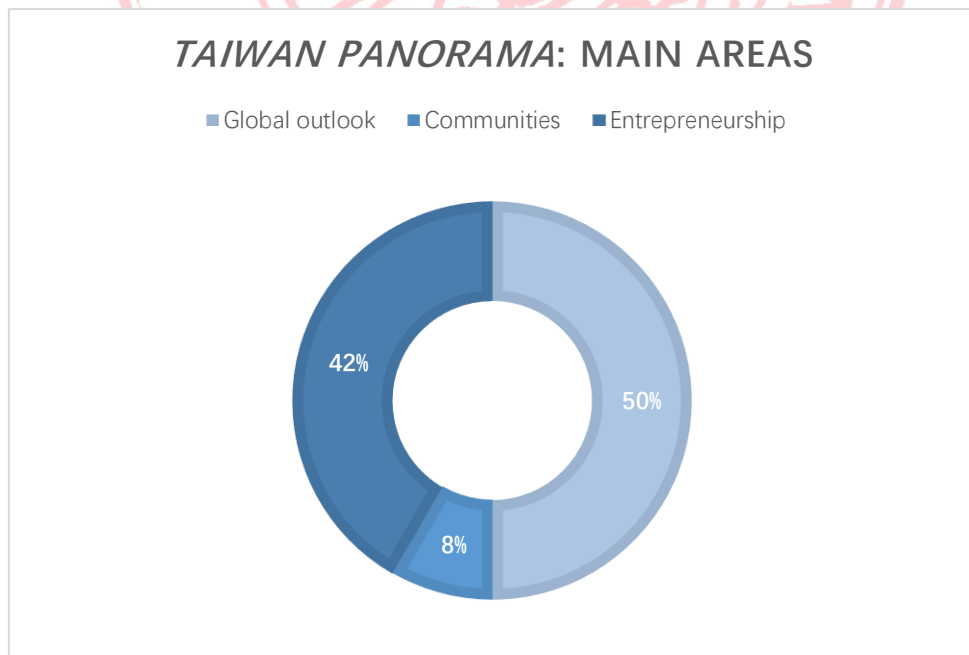

Figure 10. *Taiwan Panorama*: main areas

Figure 10 displays the division of the articles as arranged on the *Taiwan Panorama's* website which comprises three categories: global outlook (50%, 6 articles), entrepreneurship (42%, 5 articles), and communities (8%, 1 article).

Nevertheless, to gain a more profound understanding of the policy's presentation in this newspaper and its primary focus, Figure 11 shows the division of the articles based on the following four categories: business (69%, 9 articles), education (15%, 2 articles), cooperation and art both representing 8% (1 article respectively) of the total number of the collected articles.
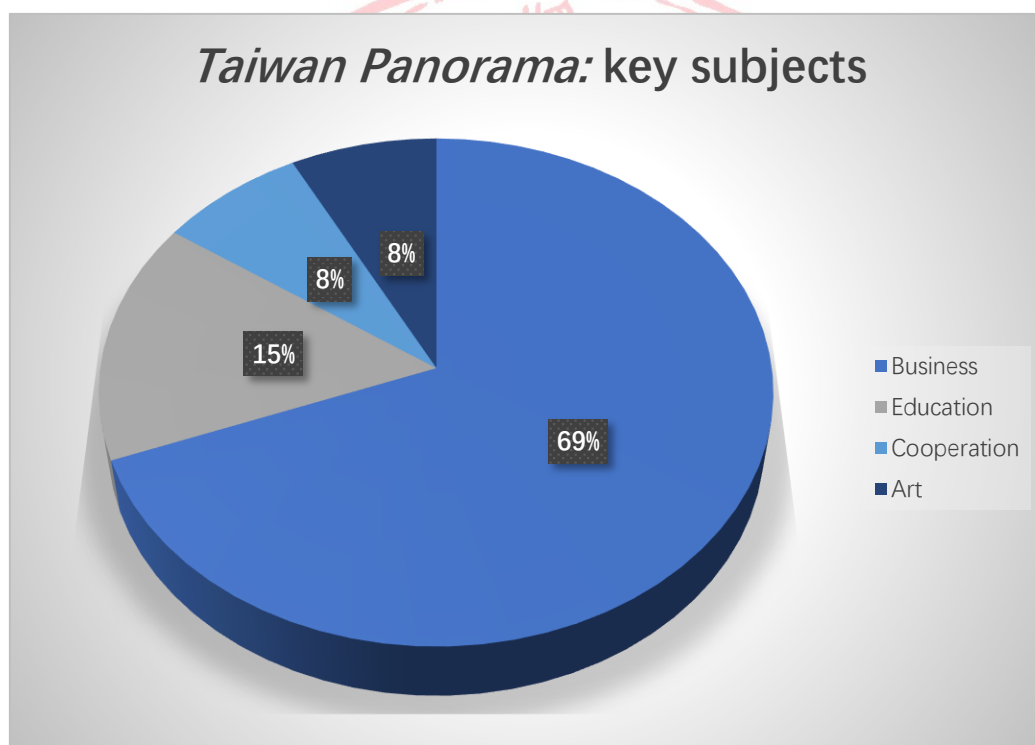

Figure 11. *Taiwan Panorama*: key subjects

Despite the relatively low number of articles in total, two attitude categories, positive (5 articles) and neutral (6 articles), are almost balanced, and there is only one article expressing the attitude on the boundaries of positivity and neutrality (see Figure 12).
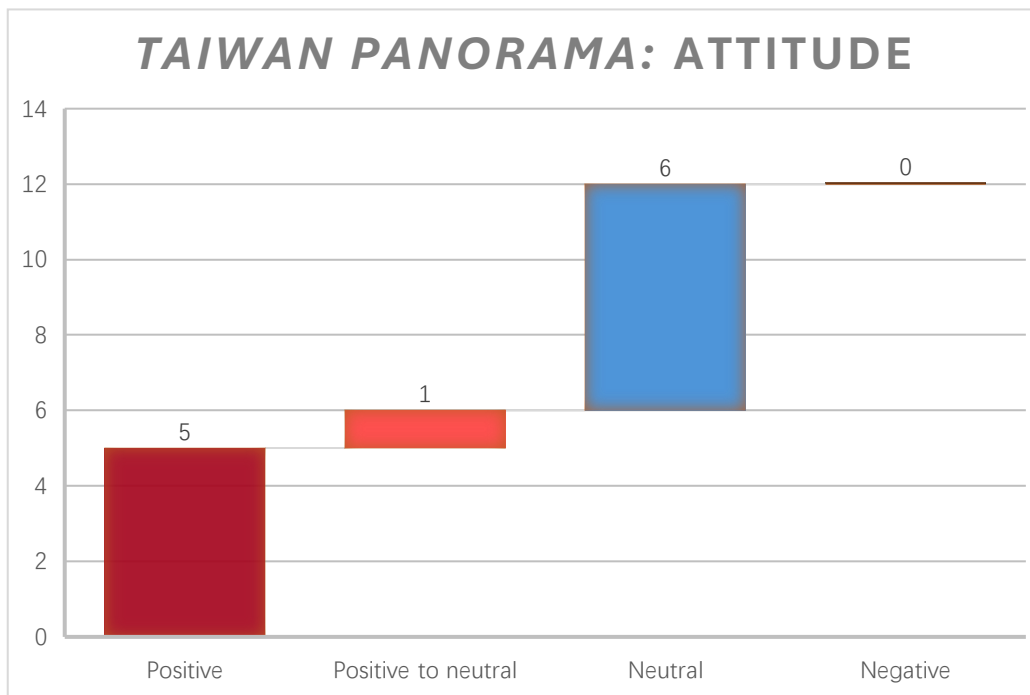
Figure 12. *Taiwan Panorama*: attitude

5.2.2 Articles in *Taiwan Review*

Taiwan Review, with its 67 articles, represents the most active newspaper when discussing the promotion of the New Soutbound Policy among the studied periodicals. Unlike the articles in the *Taiwan Panorama* (cf. Figure 9), there is a complete omission of the policy's reference in the titles as displayed in the figure below.

Regarding the division of the articles according to the categories provided by the *Taiwan Review* (see Figure 14), the predominant category is represented by politics (69%, 46 articles) followed by society (16%, 11 articles), economics (13%, 9 articles), and culture (2%, 1 article).
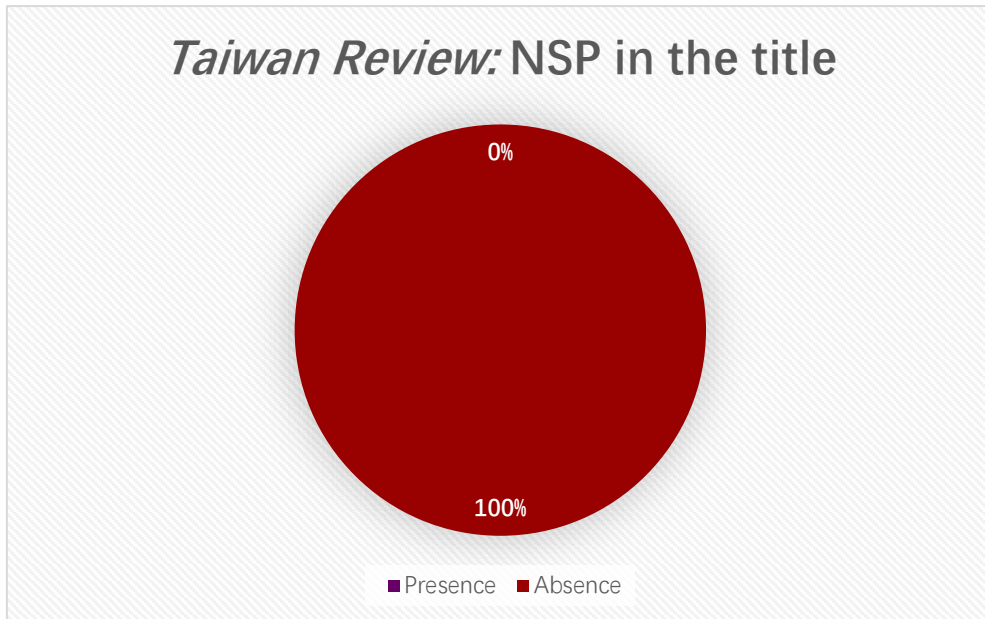
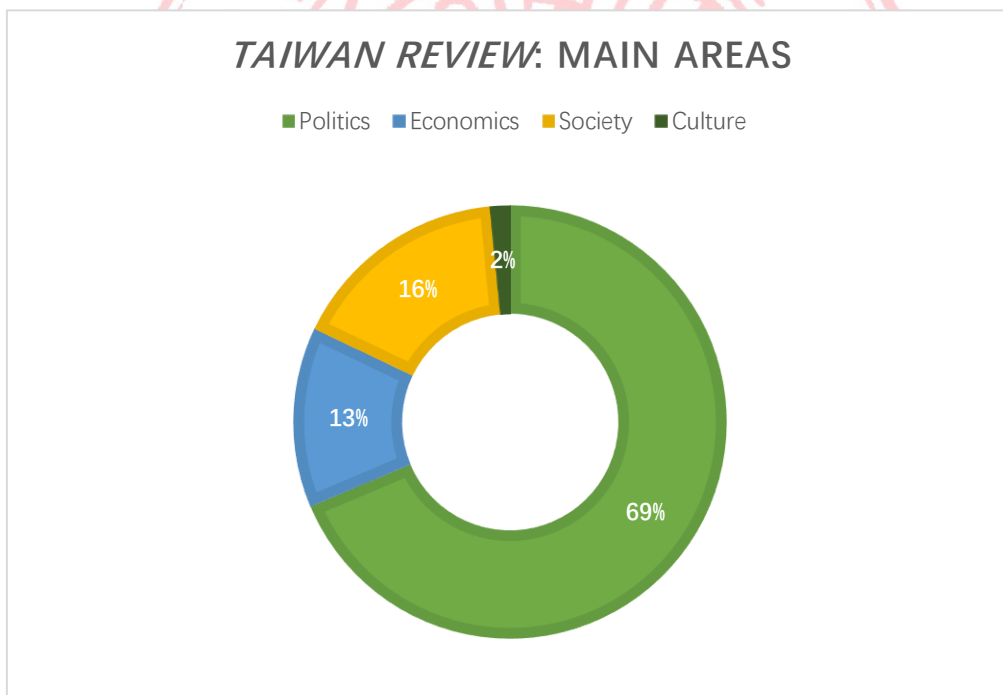Figure 13. *Taiwan Review*: the New Southbound Policy in the title

Figure 14. *Taiwan Review:* main areas

In comparison to *Taiwan Panorama* (cf. Figure 11), the key subjects in *Taiwan Review* are more diversified and comprise eight categories. The most common topic is international cooperation (39%, 51 articles) followed by business (20%, 27 articles) and education (16%, 21 articles).

Less attention is devoted to the remaining five categories: tourism (13%, 17 articles), culture (6%, 8 articles), diplomacy and medicine/science with identical amount (2%, 3 articles respectively). The least predominant category is ecology/agriculture with two articles (see Figure 15).
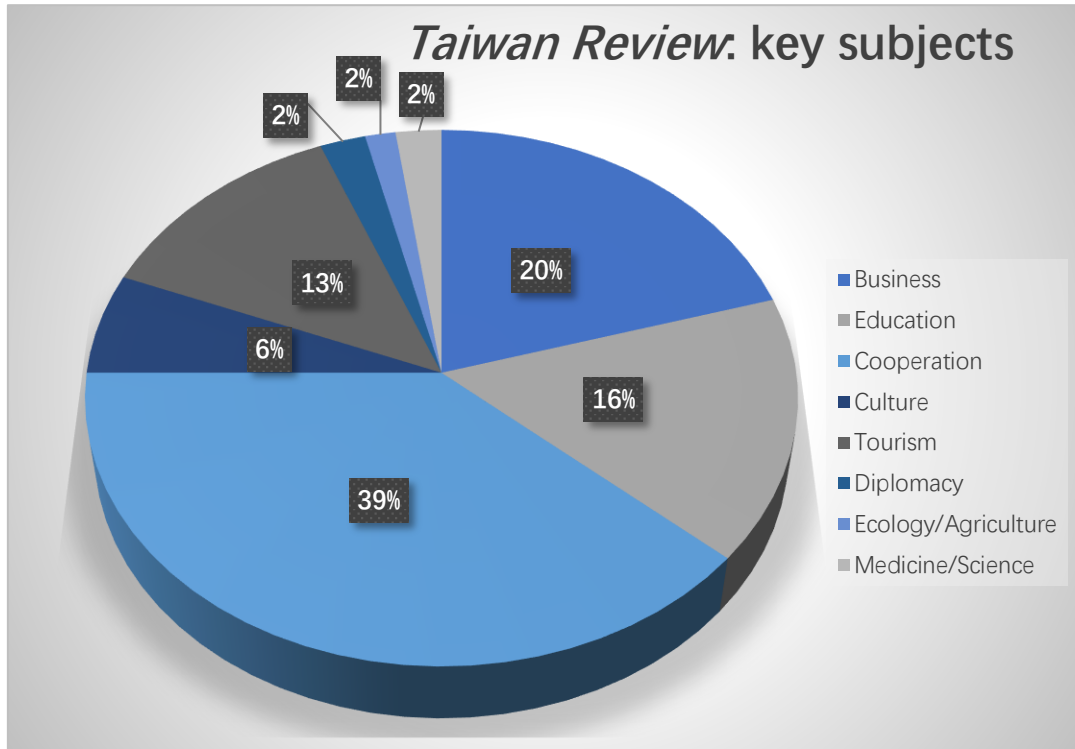

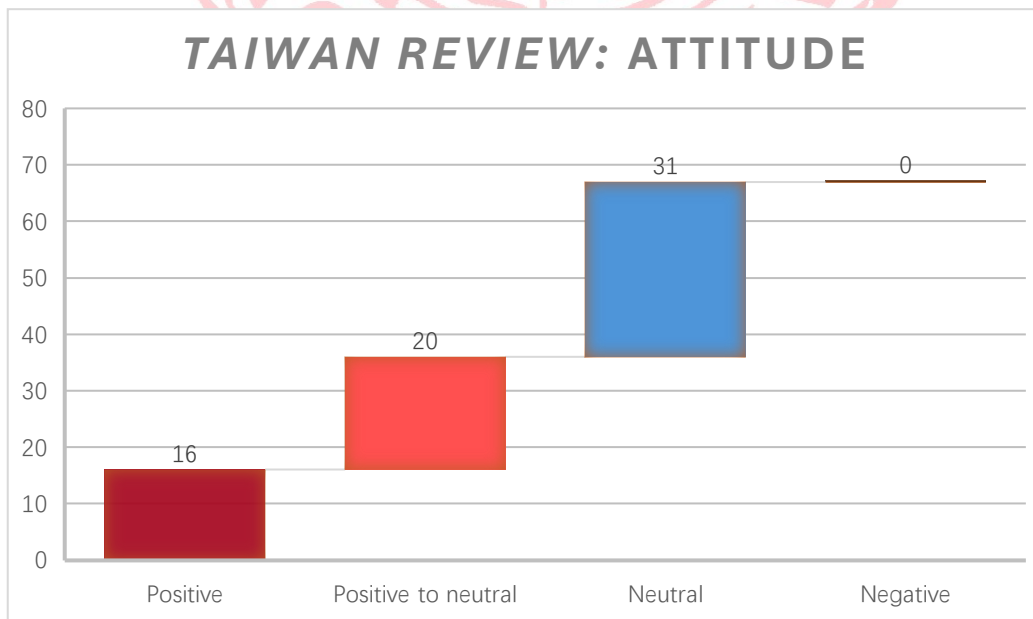Figure 15. *Taiwan Review:* key subjects

Figure 16. *Taiwan Review*: attitude

Lastly, Figure 16 introduces the attitude of the articles towards the New Southbound Policy. As shown in the figure below, the articles mainly describe the policy in a neutral manner (31 articles) or combine neutral expressions with a positive attitude (20 articles) rather than using stronger expressions representing only positive connotations (16 articles).

5.2.3   Articles in *Taiwan Today*

Similarly to *Taiwan Review, Taiwan Today* with a number of 25 articles in total also completely eliminates the use of the New Southbound Policy in the titles (cf. Figure 13 and Figure 17). Moreover, *Taiwan Today* is the only newspaper that assigned the articles to one main area – politics – as shown in Figure 18.
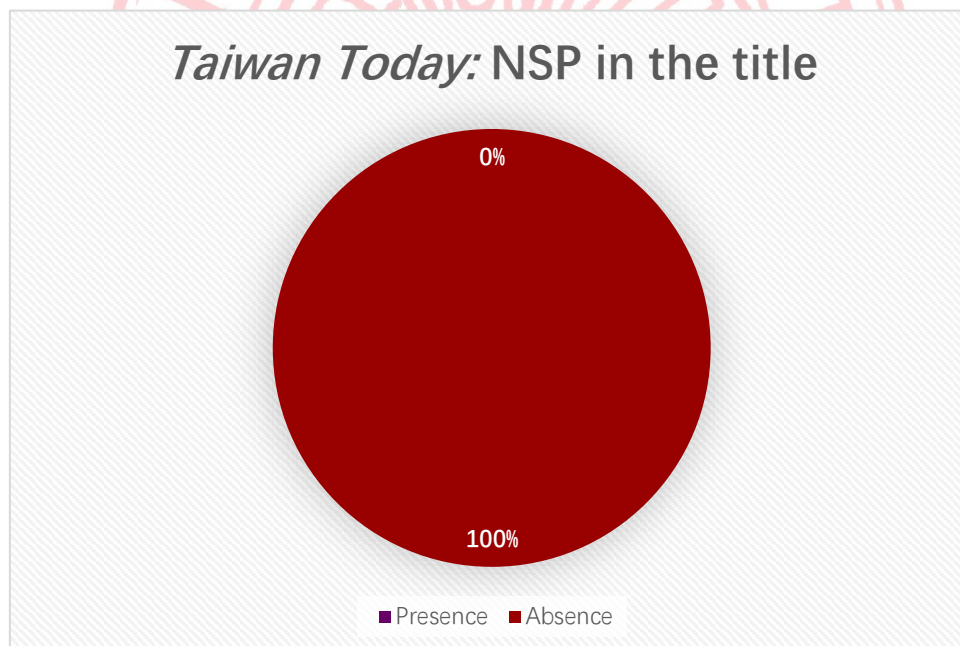

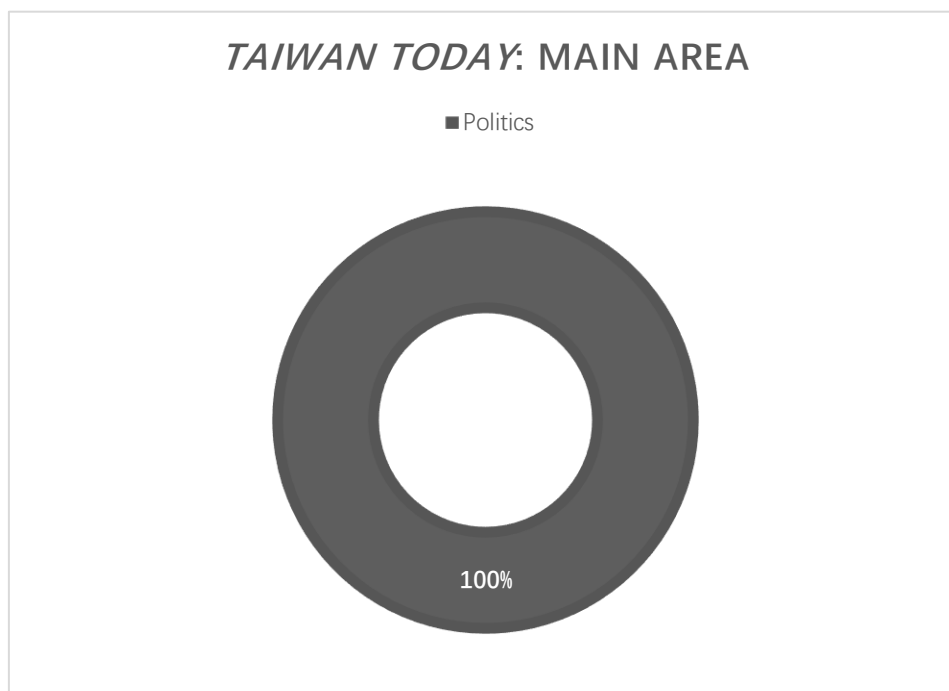Figure 17. *Taiwan Today:* the New Southbound Policy in the title

Figure 18. *Taiwan Today*: main area

Regarding the key subjects, the categorization of the articles is significantly more diversified with several overlapping categories when compared to *Taiwan Panorama* and *Taiwan Review.* Figure 19 displays seven main topics identified within the subcorpus of *Taiwan Today* with two predominant categories: cooperation (40%, 19 articles) and business (26%, 12 articles). The remaining five categories based on their occurrence rate are as follows: tourism (11%, 5 articles), culture (9%, 4 articles), art (6%, 3 articles), diplomacy and education (4%, 2 articles respectively).

The last section of the analysis is devoted to the article's attitude when reporting on the New Southbound Policy. As shown in Figure 20, there is a balance between the neutral and positive-to-neutral attitudes both comprising 7 articles, and the most predominant category is marked in the positive attitude with 11 articles in total.
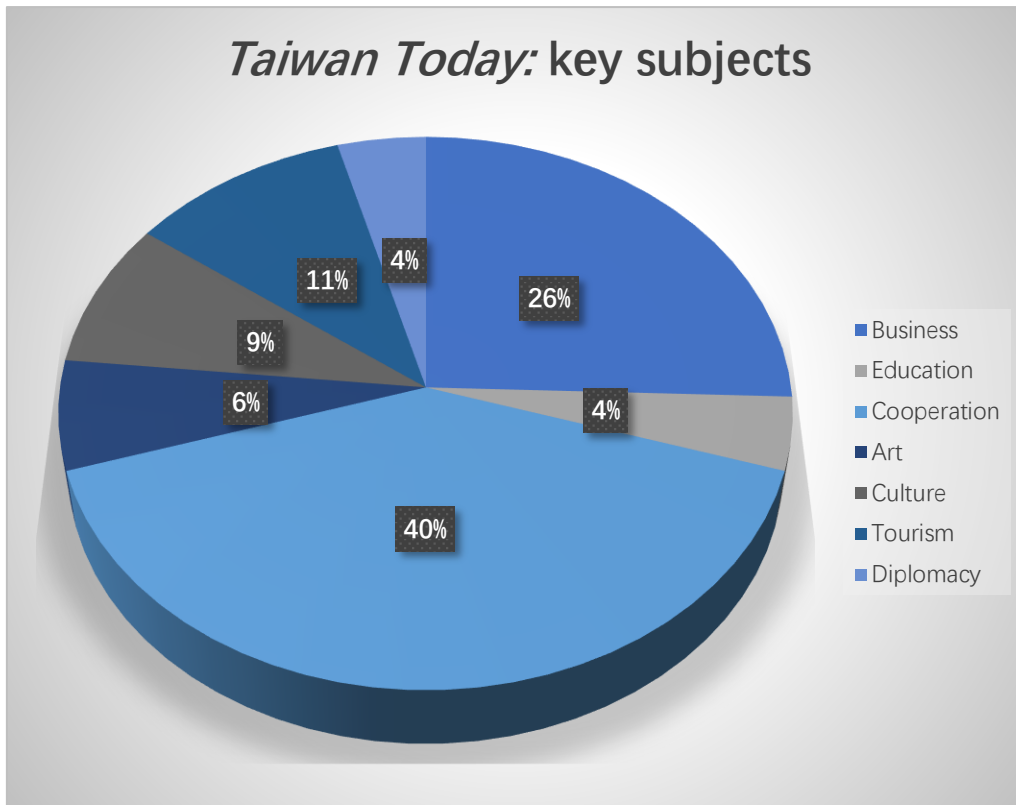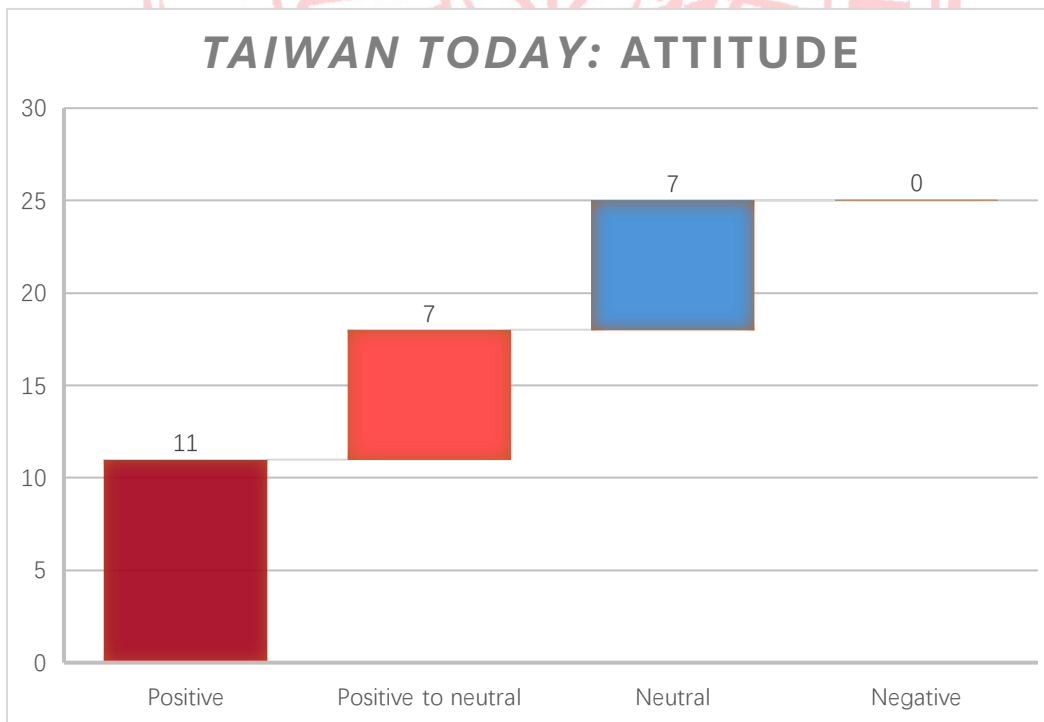
Figure 19. *Taiwan Today*: key subjects

Figure 20. *Taiwan Today*: attitude

6. Discussion and conclusion

Regarding the image of the New Soutbound Policy and the overall attitude used for its presentation in the analysed periodicals, the newspapers inclined to the selection of neutral expressions instead of positive or partially positive and partially neutral collocational patterns (cf. Figure 6). Nevertheless, the comparison of the individual newspapers shows that the preference of neutral expressions over the one-sided positive attitude can be observed in *Taiwan Review. Taiwan Panorama* displays an almost balanced preference between neutrality and positivity whereas *Taiwan Today* gives preference to the positive attitude towards the policy.

Since the time frame for collecting the articles was selected in accordance with the first and second administration period of president Tsai Ing-wen, it is not surprising that the most active year for presenting the newly promulgated initiative is 2017. The remaining years show declining tendencies of informing about the New Soutbound Policy and its progress (cf. Figure 2). The lowest number of reporting entries was found in *Taiwan Panorama* whereas the highest number of articles can be found in *Taiwan Review.*

In addition to the official division of the articles according to the newspaper's thematic sections, the articles were divided into nine key subjects based on the collocational patterns and associations made with the New Southbound Policy (cf. Figure 5). Due to the multifaceted nature of the policy, the articles usually do not report on the policy from a one-sided perspective and their focus is concerned with other key subjects as well, therefore the most frequent key subject was represented by an umbrella term cooperation which might refer to various aspects including business, diplomacy, education or tourism.

These preliminary research findings open up the possibility of conducting a comparative study concerned with the dynamics of the New Southbound Policy's perception in the domestic and international media. Moreover, the collection of the textual material used for the present research might represent a suitable basis for the

creation of a specialized small-scale corpus consisting of media reports and articles related to the perception of the New Southbound Policy that can be used for the purposes of large-scale linguistic analysis in the future to enable the study of the media discourse from a broader perspective.

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