

## Research impact testimonial

**By Craig Silverman, Media Editor of BuzzFeed News**

I lead a team of reporters and producers at BuzzFeed News focused on investigating online disinformation and other forms of media manipulation. One of our interests is domestic and overseas efforts by the Chinese government and Chinese companies to influence digital conversations. The work of Associate Professor Fu King-wa on Wechatscope has proven essential for at least one published investigation, and my colleagues and I are also planning to collaborate with him and his students on other projects.

Wechatscope and Weiboscope are hugely important projects that provide unique and revelatory insight into the discussion — and censorship — of topics on two of China's most important platforms. Last year, our team worked with King-wa on a project that relied on Wechatscope as the key database for an analysis of discussion about US policy towards China during the trade war, and discussion about the US midterm elections. This resulted in the publication of an article, [“Please Welcome China’s WeChat To The #Resistance.”](#)

Our data journalist gathered a set of 74,4671 articles stored in Wechatscope and then refined these results using keywords related to Vice President Mike Pence’s speech about China, as well as those related to the trade war, President Donald Trump, and the US midterm elections. We ended up with a sample of over 500 posts related to our keywords, which we then translated and analyzed.

This data set enabled us to write a story that showed how the Chinese government’s initial direction to avoid criticism of the Trump administration had eased, and that comments and articles critical of Trump and Pence’s speech were flowing freely on WeChat. This would not have been possible without having access to Wechatscope’s database. We also relied on the expertise of King-wa in helping us review the posts and their related censorship patterns. His experience gathering and analyzing this data is unmatched in the field due to his work on Wechatscope, making him and this project uniquely important for research and reporting on WeChat and Chinese censorship.

Our article was featured in the influential Sinocism email newsletter, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute’s Cyber Policy Digest, and was also shared on Twitter by LIFETIME 視界.

We are now in discussions with King-wa on a project that will track discussion on WeChat around the upcoming Canadian election.