

THE CREDIBLE BRAND MODEL: THE EFFECTS OF IDEOLOGICAL
CONGRUENCY AND CUSTOMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY ON MEDIA AND
MESSAGE CREDIBILITY

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ABSTRACT

This study proposes and tests the credible brand model (CBM), a model that explicates the processes by which media audiences make credibility judgments about media outlets and their products. The primary postulate of the CBM is that media audiences' perceptions of the media credibility of a media outlet, and by extension the message credibility of its news stories, are dependent on their perception of the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) of the media outlet and the ideological congruency between their personal worldview and the worldview of that media outlet.

A survey was conducted to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions associated with this model. The survey probed respondents' ideological congruency with two media brands (Fox News Channel and CNN) and their perceptions of the media credibility and brand equity of the media outlets.

The data showed strong support for the CBM. The confirmatory model evaluation conducted with Structural Equation Modeling revealed a strong fit between the data and the hypothesized model, with normed fit index (NFI = 0.93), comparative fit index (CFI = 0.96), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.06). In addition, the CBM was a better fit with the data than an alternative model (NFI = 0.88, CFI = 0.92, and RMSEA = 0.08).

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The news media are suffering a credibility crisis: both academic and media industry research consistently show growing audience skepticism about the accuracy, fairness, and trustworthiness of news reports (Kiousis, 2001; Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Gallup, 2004; Pew, 2005). A recent Gallup poll shows that only 44% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of confidence in the media's ability to report news stories accurately and fairly; this figure is substantially lower than the 72% that expressed similar opinion in 1976 (Gallup, 2004). Similarly, a recent Pew Research Center for the People and the Press survey shows that 72% of Americans believe that the press favors one side in politics; 33% believe that the media hurt democracy; while only 19% believe that the media are motivated by the need to keep the public informed (Pew, 2005).

In view of the overwhelming evidence of declining media credibility, media scholars and analysts have suggested several factors that could be responsible for this trend (Hickey, 1998; Altschull, 1996; Merritt, 1998; Altschull, 1995). Some scholars attribute the erosion of public confidence in the media to extra-media factors like the takeover of media institutions by profit-driven corporate America and the consolidation of media conglomerates in a few hands (Bagdikian, 1997; Hickey, 1998). These organizational changes, they argue, shift the focus of journalists and

media organizations from their normative role in a democratic society to profitability indices. Researchers who subscribe to this paradigm argue that the logical outcome of this inordinate focus on profitability is reduced newsroom expenditure, which dovetails into lower news quality, and consequently diminished credibility (Cho, Thorson, & Lacy, 2004; Chen, Thorson, & Lacy, 2004; Meyer, 2004).

Others researchers and media analysts contend that there is a correlation between declining media credibility and declines in public life (Merritt, 1998; Rosen, 1998; Charity, 1995). They assert that the media have largely ignored their role of helping citizens connect to public life and argue that the media's dwindling credibility is due to the chasm between the public and the media (Merritt, 1998). These researchers and analysts maintain that the media can only survive if they abandon their current model of acting as the dispassionate/detached reporter of events and re-emerge as a proactive force for social change (Rosen, 1998; Merritt, 1998; Perry, 2003, Charity, 1995).

Another group of researchers and media analysts see declining media credibility as a product of the media's ideological bias. Some cite research that shows that most journalists hold liberal worldviews and vote for democratic candidates to contend that the media have a liberal bias (Corry, 1996; Goldberg, 2001; Limbaugh, 1993; Maitre, 1994) while others argue that the media are "agents of power" of their owners, who are business moguls and large corporations with conservative viewpoints (Alterman, 2003; Altschull, 1995; Bagdikian, 1997).

The common denominator in these diagnoses is that media credibility is framed primarily as a characteristic of the media, which is dependent on some

action(s) or inaction(s) of media outlets, managers, and professionals. This dissertation, however, departs from this traditional viewpoint and explores media credibility as a negotiation of meanings between media outlets and their audience. Research shows that audiences with different demographic and psychographic characteristics assign different levels of credibility to the media in general, and to specific media outlets (Lee, 2004; Peng, 2005, Gunther, 1992). Additionally, research shows that the strength and favorability of audiences' perceptions of news media outlets affect their perceptions of the credibility of news messages from those outlets (Meyer, 2004; Oyedeji, 2007; Oyedeji, 2008). Thereby, suggesting that audiences' perception of news media credibility is dependent on both audience and media-based factors.

This dissertation, therefore, proposes and tests the Credible Brand Model (CBM), which explicates the process by which media audiences make credibility judgments about news media outlets and their messages (See figure 1.1). The CBM identifies the news credibility judgment process as a negotiation of meanings between news media outlets and their audience, with both parties coming to the table with history: the history of their past interactions and the audiences' perception of the congruency between their personal worldview and the worldview of the news media outlet responsible for the message.

The primary determinant of news media outlets' evaluation in this negotiation is their brand equity: a measure of the strength, uniqueness, and favorability of the meanings associated with a brand in audiences' minds (Keller, 2002). The audiences' personal worldview also acts as a subconscious filter, which influences their

perception of the credibility of news media outlet, and consequently, the believability of their (news outlets') messages (Oyededeji, 2006a).

The primary postulate of the CBM is that news credibility is not solely a media-based concept, which depends on objective indices like news accuracy, community affiliation, and news quality, but is a multidimensional concept that is influenced by the audiences' perceptions of these objective measures, codified as *Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE)*, and subjective measures such as the congruency between audiences' personal ideological views and their perception of the worldview of the media outlet responsible for the news message. CBBE is a measure of consumers' affective disposition and behavioral intention towards a brand.

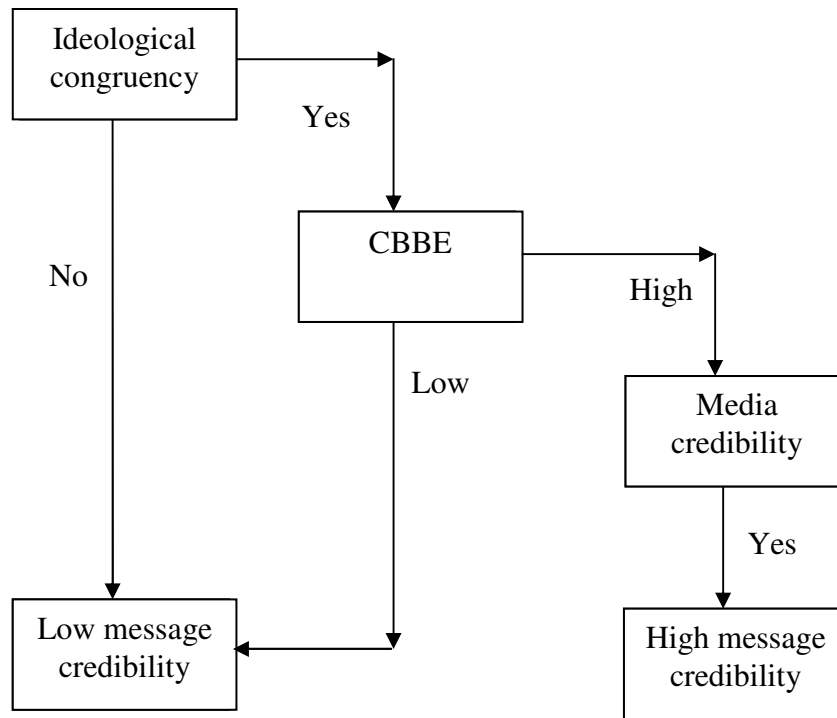
The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) shows that audiences' involvement in issues affects the type and amount of processing they engage in while evaluating messages; and the media credibility literature highlights the roles of audiences' news use and demographics in their perception of media credibility (Petty & Cacciopo, 1986; Meyer, 1986; Gunther, 1992). Therefore, the CBM proposes that: when audiences' involvement, demographics, and news use are held constant, their perception of the media credibility of a news outlet and the message credibility of a news story depends on their prior perception of the brand equity of the news media outlet responsible for the message and the congruency between their personal worldview and the worldview of that media outlet.

This proposition is consistent with earlier research that shows that audiences' ideological views affect their perception of the CBBE of media brands and that CBBE explains a significant portion of the variance (67%) in the media credibility of news

media outlets (Oyedeji, 2007; 2008). The CBM (figure 1.1.) proposes that audiences assign credibility to news media outlets and their messages through a two-stage evaluation process. During the first evaluation stage, audiences subject media messages to the ideological congruency test—a measure of the extent to which the ideological view of the media outlet responsible for the message is similar to their personal ideological view. Media outlets that fail this test are assigned relatively low media credibility and their messages are less likely to be believed while media outlets that have high ideological congruency with audiences are assigned high credibility pending the outcome of the next evaluation stage. During the second evaluation stage, message recipients appraise the brand equity of the news media outlet responsible for the message and assign relatively high media credibility to media outlets with high CBBE and relatively low media credibility to media outlets with low CBBE. The final postulate of the CBM is that news messages from media outlets with high media credibility are more likely to be believed, and vice versa (see figure 1.1).

This dissertation is important because it presents a theory of media credibility that explains the relationships among the concepts that affect audiences' perception of media channel credibility and news message believability. Besides extending the frontiers of scholarly knowledge about the concepts associated with news credibility, this dissertation would also help media managers understand the effects of audience perceptions of their brand on the credibility of their messages, and provide practical insights that could help redress the persistent skepticism of audiences about the media's intentions and professionalism.

Figure 1.1: Credible Brand Model



To test the CBM, a survey was conducted to assess audiences' perceptions of the CBBE and media credibility of two news brands (CNN and Fox News Channel), and the extent to which they perceive that the brands' ideological views mirror their own personal worldviews. Subsequently, the respondents were exposed to two news stories—a political news story and a non-political news story. Each member of two similarly constituted groups of student were exposed to the two news stories ascribed to one of the two news media outlets (CNN and Fox News Channel). The news stories were manipulated such that the first group received the stories with [www.cnn.com's](http://www.cnn.com) byline while the second group received the news story with [www.foxnews.com's](http://www.foxnews.com)

byline. Subsequently, the respondents' opinions of the message credibility of the news stories were measured on a questionnaire and the resulting data analyzed quantitatively.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This dissertation proposes and tests the CBM, a model that explains the process by which media audiences make credibility judgments about news messages. The theory borrows elements from a mass communication theory developed from persuasive communication perspective (ELM), a consumer branding theory (CBBE), and a political science theory (ideology), and integrates them to develop a comprehensive media theory that explains the news credibility process. The primary postulate of the CBM is that audiences' perceptions of news credibility is a function of the interaction between audience-based factors such as CBBE and personal ideology, and media-based constructs such as news media outlets' brand equity, media credibility, and ideological views. This literature review therefore begins with a discussion of the role of news in society, followed by an examination of the theoretical foundations of each of the salient theories, and concludes by using a synthesis of the theories to develop hypotheses and research questions.

News in society

Roshco, (1999, p. 32) observed that “news is more easily pursued than defined, a characteristic it shares with such other enthralling abstractions as love and truth.” The high level of abstraction of the concept (news) often leads to theoretical confusions about its constitutive and operational definitions. Additionally,

stakeholders in the news media industry (media scholars, analysts, and journalists) have different views of the concept. On the one hand, media scholars/analysts see news as the products of journalists and media organizations, and use value-laden words like social construction of reality (Tuchman, 1978), making news (Gans, 1979), and discovering news (Schudson, 1978) to describe the news production process; on the other hand, journalists and media professionals point to their news processes, which they argue limit the influence of personal and organizational values on news messages, as proof that they are mirrors that merely reflect events and issues in society (Harrison, 2006).

Because of the inherent difficulty of defining and conceptualizing news, media scholars and professionals often rely on anecdotes such as, “if a dog bites a man, it is not news; but if a man bites a dog, then it is news”; newsworthiness scales such as timeliness, magnitude, novelty, deviance etc.; and news values such as ethnocentrism, small-town pastoralism etc. (Gans, 1979) to represent the concept. These representations describe news but do not offer a basis for generating an operational definition of the concept and do not explicate the cultural and social contexts that distinguish news from other kinds of communication messages. For this study, I define news as an account of *contemporary events* by organizations and individuals that are *committed to truth* (Harrison, 2006). The key concepts in this definition are ‘contemporary events’ and ‘commitment to truth’.

Contemporary events

News as an account of contemporary events incorporates the role of time and space in defining what is covered and disseminated. News is contemporary in that it is

here (space) and now (time). The time element highlights the fact that news is primarily concerned with current affairs. Although news is often referred to as ‘the first draft of history’, it is not the same as history (DeBeers, 2004), neither is it a prediction of future events. However, news stories often draw on history to help the audience understand the antecedence of covered events/issues and sometimes forecasts the future to illustrate the implications of reported events on the future.

The spatial dimension of news expresses the importance of the proximity of events in the definition of news adopted for this study. News is about events that are relevant to the audience. Events that are closer to audiences are more likely to be relevant to audiences; therefore, one of the most common items in newsworthiness scales is the proximity of events (DeBeers, 2004). This is particularly true of the United States’ news media, whose ethnocentric value leads to persistent focus on news items with direct or indirect US implications (Gans, 1979).

However, technological advancements and globalization have shrunk the world such that proximity has become a relative term. The events of September 11, 2001 offers grim reminders that political/religious events in far-flung places such as Afghanistan and Iraq have real implications for US citizens and the rest of the world (DeBeers & Merrill, 2004).

Commitment to truth

It is a widely accepted philosophical *truism* that truth and objectivity are nebulous concepts that are unattainable; therefore, the ‘commitment to truth’ component of this definition is not an endorsement of the assertion that news is the ‘truth’ or an ‘objective’ representation of actual events. In contrast, it argues that a key

component of news is that its producers are committed to the dissemination of truthful accounts of contemporary events. DeBeers (2004) observed that journalists would rather see their work as a mirror that reflects society while it is actually a portrait drawn by fallible artists who consciously or subconsciously highlight and accentuate certain features. Objectivity entails a total suspension of journalists' value systems, and is therefore an unattainable goal; however, journalists can attain fairness and impartiality by balancing different viewpoint and presenting different sides of issues (DeBeers, 2004)

The 'commitment to truth' concept entails two constructs—accuracy and sincerity (Harrison, 2006). These two constructs are represented in Meyer's (1988) conceptualization of news media credibility. Meyer argued that the 16-item credibility scale presented by Gaziano and McGrath (1986) was not parsimonious and that it contains two distinct concepts. Therefore, he conducted a survey of *Charlotte Observer's* readers and used factor analysis to analyze the resulting data. As predicted, he found two separate constructs—community affiliation, which measures the extent to which news media outlets care about the society they cover, and media credibility, which measures the extent to which news media outlets are considered accurate and trustworthy. Further factor analysis (Oyedeji, 2008) of the Meyer believability scale shows that the concept encompasses two distinct aspects of credibility—accuracy, (consisting of comprehensiveness and accuracy) and sincerity (consisting of trustworthiness, bias, and fairness).

Accuracy. Accuracy represents a commitment to present an accurate representation of events. The process for attaining accuracy involves a certain level of

investigative investment to gather and report the complete story (Harrison, 2006). Investigative investments consists of news outlets' dedication of time, effort, and resources to gather the information required to present all the perspectives and background information required for audiences to gain a comprehensive understanding of issues and events. The accuracy concept entails considerable challenge of time (for broadcast media outlets) and space (for print media outlets).

Sincerity. Sincerity represents a commitment to report what one believes to be true (Harrison, 2006). Inherent in the concept is a commitment to fairness and impartiality. Sincerity on the part of news media outlets helps develop and maintain a trust relationship between the media and its audience. Sincerity remains a critical issue in the relationship between news media outlets and their audience because research shows that declines in audience perceptions of media credibility is based on their distrust of the media's intentions (sincerity) rather than their accuracy (Oyedeji, 2005): audiences believe the media goes the extra mile to gather accurate reports but are doubtful about the media's fairness and sincerity. The sincerity construct implies that journalists covering news stories do not have vested interest in audience perceptions of the actors in the events and do not allow their personal views of the rightness or wrongness of any position to influence their reporting.

Credibility

Human beings have always been interested in the persuasive effects of communication messages. Some of the earliest human literature provides scintillating details of human and divine efforts at persuading other human beings to undertake a course of action or follow a particular code of conduct. For instance, the book of

Genesis in *The Bible* details God's attempt to persuade man not to eat the fruit of a particular tree, the Serpent's effective persuasion of Eve to eat the fruit, and Eve's persuasion of Adam to join in the feast (Genesis 1, 2, 3, King James version).

Persuasion remained a crucial part of human interaction, which was guided by heuristics and rules of thumbs until Aristotle, in *Rhetoric II*, made a series of postulates about the persuasion process. Aristotle argued that effective persuasion depends on the *ethos* (ethics) of the message source (source credibility), the *logos* i.e. the message itself (message credibility) and the *pathos* (passion) of the audience about the message (audience characteristics). Plato and Socrates also made similar postulates about the persuasion process but emphasized the role of source credibility above message and audience characteristics (Self, 1996; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, Aristotle, 1954).

These philosophical postulates provided unique insights into the message credibility process but remained untested (empirically) until early in the 20th century when Carl Hovland and his colleagues at the Yale Program of Research on Communication and Attitude Change commenced scientific inquiry aimed at developing a systematic theory of attitude change and information learning (Hovland, 1951; Hovland & Weis, 1953; Lowery & DeFleur, 1995).

The Second World War provided some of the impetus for the initial scholarly interest in credibility studies: the secondary aim of the studies was to provide research-based support for the war effort by discovering ways to mobilize public opinion in favor of the war, persuade soldier and citizens about the merits of the Allies' position in the war, and motivate soldiers to perform to their utmost abilities (Metzger et al.

2003; Severin & Tankard, 2001).

These early studies were conducted from a stimulus-response message-learning perspective, which was the prevalent scholarly thinking at that time (Self, 1996). The researchers typically conceptualized credibility as a characteristic of message sources, which makes messages ascribed to a high credibility source more credible than a similar message that is ascribed to a low credibility source. The typical dependent variables in these studies were information learning, message retention, and attitude change (Metzger et al. 2003). Credibility studies in mass communication have remained an integral part of the field's body of knowledge, and currently incorporate studies about the source, medium, audience, and message characteristics that influence audiences' perceptions of credibility.

Source Characteristics

Source credibility studies, which evaluate the effects of source characteristics on message believability, were the earliest form of empirical studies on credibility (Self, 1996). Source credibility is the credibility ascribed to a message because of the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of the individual, group or organization communicating the message (O'Keefe, 1990). Source credibility studies have been conducted in interpersonal, organizational, and mass-mediated contexts (Kioussis, 2001). These studies seek to identify which information sources were believed and the characteristics of sources that lead to greater believability (Addington, 1971; Markham, 1968; O'Keefe, 1990).

The initial studies were conducted by Carl Hovland and his colleagues, who conducted a series of experiments to determine the characteristics of sources that have

effects on attitude change and other measured outcomes (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995). These researchers operated from a stimulus-response assumption, which was typical of the notion of communication process prevalent at that time (Self, 1996). The prevalent mass communication scholarly thinking in the 1940/50s when most of the early source credibility studies were conducted is epitomized by Lasswell's (1948, p. 37) conceptualization of the communication process, "who says what in which channel to whom with what effect". The 'who' is the source of the message, the "what" is the message, "in which channel" represents the media, "to whom" refers to the audience, and "with what effect" represents the effects of the message on the audience (Severin & Tankard, 2001). In line with this conceptualization of the communication process, Hovland and his colleagues kept all but one of the factors in the aforementioned model constant and sought to understand the effects of the single manipulated variable on measured message outcomes (Hovland, 1951; Hovland, Lumsdaine, & Sheffield, 1949; Hovland & Weis, 1951; Hovland, Janis & Kelly, 1953).

In one of their classic studies, Hovland and his colleagues exposed different groups of students to a series of messages from high credibility sources and low credibility sources, and measured corresponding changes in respondents' opinions about the subjects of the messages. They found that high credibility sources produced higher attitude changes than low credibility sources, but both high and low credibility sources were equally effective in information learning. A follow-up study four months later showed that information learned from both sources was retained, but the audience had forgotten the sources of the information and the attitude change produced had shifted to about the same level. This unexpected phenomenon was conceptualized as

the sleeper effect (Hovland et al., 1953, Hovland, Lumsdaine, & Sheffield, 1949; Hovland & Weis, 1951).

Based on this series of studies, Hovland and his colleagues concluded that the two dimensions of source credibility are expertise and trustworthiness. Expertise refers to a source's ability to possess accurate information about a subject while trustworthiness refers to audiences' perceptions of a source's motivation and intention to present an accurate representation of a subject or event (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). These two dimensions have been used in hundreds of studies evaluating the effects of source credibility on message outcomes. These studies have found varying levels of support for the positive relationship between source credibility and message believability (Petty & Cacciopo, 1986; Metzger et al, 2003).

Other researchers have also identified additional dimensions of source credibility. Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz (1969) conducted a series factor analysis with data from a survey asking respondents to rate the credibility of different sources and found three dimensions of source credibility: safety, qualification, and dynamism. McCroskey and his colleague (McCroskey, 1966; McCroskey & Jensen, 1975) identified five additional dimensions of source credibility: competence, character, sociability, composure, and extroversion.

Other dimensions of source credibility include attractiveness, familiarity, gender, and race (Brownlow, 1992; Chaiken, 1979, Andsager & Mastin, 2003). Brownlow (1992) found that facial characteristics affect the credibility assigned to sources: baby-faced female speakers generated more trust while mature female speakers were considered more credible in terms of expertise. Beggs, Annas, and

Farinacci (1992) showed that messages from familiar sources are believed even when the audience is aware that the source is lying and Andsager and Mastin (2003) found that female newspaper columnists were considered more credible than their male counterparts. Although there is little or no scholarly consensus about an exhaustive list of source credibility dimensions, (Kiousis, 2001), the most “important” and “enduring” dimensions remain the initial two—trustworthiness and expertise (Yoon, Kim, & Kim, 1998, p. 156).

Source credibility and other mass communication theories. Researchers have incorporated elements of source credibility into other mass communication theories. Petty and Cacioppo (1981, 1986) highlighted the inconsistencies in the results of studies that conceptualized source credibility as a one-dimensional concept. They proposed a dual-route process to information processing (Elaboration Likelihood Model) and argued that information processing takes one of the two routes. The primary proposition of the ELM is that individuals who have motivation and ability to process messages would engage in thoughtful and effortful processing of messages (central processing) while those with low ability or motivation would use cues such as source credibility to process messages (peripheral processing). The ELM will be discussed in more details later in this chapter.

Wanta and Hu (1994) also used elements of the credibility literature in testing agenda setting theory. They saw news media channels as message sources and proposed a model that argues that media credibility produces media reliance. They asserted that audiences who rely on media outlets will have more exposure to those

outlets (media exposure) and would consequently be more susceptible to agenda-setting. They used path analysis to test the model and found support for it.

Hovland's studies provided the theoretical basis and operational definitions for subsequent studies on source credibility. However, other researchers have expanded the definition of source credibility beyond individual message sources to encompass organizations/corporate bodies as message source (organization credibility), media types/media outlets as message sources (media credibility), and media audiences as interpreters of messages (Metzger et al., 2003).

Organizations as message sources. Organization credibility has mostly been explored in consumer marketing and marketing management research. For non-media organizations, the *brand credibility* of products has been shown to affect consumers' perceptions of corporate organizations (Brown, 1998; Brown & Dacin, 1997). Brand credibility is the extent to which a brand is perceived to be credible in terms of three dimensions: expertise (competence, innovation, and market leadership), trustworthiness (dependability and customer relationship), and likeability (Keller and Aaker 1992, Hoeffler & Keller, 2002). Newell and Goldsmith (2001) found that organizational credibility improves consumers' propensity to purchase their products. Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell (2000) showed a correlation between the credibility of organizations and consumers' attitudes towards the brand; Davis (1994) showed that purchase decisions are influenced by consumer's perception of the parent company's good citizenship and their confidence in the corporate brand; Erdem and Joffre (2004) concluded that brand credibility increases the probability of inclusion of a brand in the consideration set.

Medium characteristics

A major source of theoretical and empirical confusion in credibility research is the difficulty of distinguishing the effects of message sources from those of media outlets and the message itself (Kiousis, 2001), and consequently the attendant difficulty of delineating between source, message, and medium credibility. To illustrate the differences among these concepts, consider the case of Brian Williams delivering the evening news on NBC. The newscaster (Brian Williams) is the message source, television is the medium, and NBC is the media channel. The credibility of each of these entities is source credibility, media credibility, and media channel credibility, respectively. Therefore, a source credibility study may seek to contrast the credibility of Brian Williams against that of Dan Rather; a media credibility study may consider the relative credibility of television news versus radio news; while a media channel credibility study may evaluate the relative credibility of CBS News against that of NBC News.

Media credibility research commenced in the 1930s with the development of radio as an alternative news source to newspapers and intensified in the 1950s with the growth of television news (Metzger et al., 2003). As a result of scholarly and public interest in the relative credibility of these message sources, the Roper Institute began to conduct regular surveys to evaluate the relative credibility of media types with a questionnaire that asked respondents, “if you got conflicting or different reports of the same news story from radio, television, the magazines and the newspaper, which of the four versions would you be most inclined to believe – the one on radio or television or magazine or newspaper?” Newspapers initially led the other media in

audience credibility ratings until about 1961 when television took the lead (Self, 1996).

Television remains the most credible media source in Roper Institute's poll despite intellectual arguments about the medium's inaccuracies and penchant for pandering to the lowest common denominator (Mulder, 1980). Academic studies questioning the validity of the Roper Institute's polls emerged soon after television attained the lead in the credibility polls (Metzger et al., 2003). Carter and Greenberg (1965) expressed skepticism at the results of the Roper polls, conducted a partial replication, and found that newspapers are more credible than television in terms of general dependability but television news is more credible when audiences receive conflicting messages. Shaw (1963) also disputed the Roper Institute's methodology, and conducted a survey of college student to test his assertion. He concluded that newspapers are more credible than television news.

Wesley and Severin (1964) took a different approach to the media credibility issue by exploring the possibility that different strata of society may ascribe varying levels of credibility to media types. They argued that demographic and psychographic variables affect perception of credibility and sought to develop a typology of media audiences. They found that the media user likely to assign relatively high credibility to newspapers would be "the man who has had at least some college, resides in an urban area, and has a high-status occupation...and regards himself as middle class," while the media user most likely to trust television more than newspapers is "a farm wife of low income and education...who regards herself as working class," and people who dwell in rural areas and very heavy radio users are more likely to assign high

credibility to radio (p. 334).

Newhagen and Nass (1989) also raised methodological concerns about surveys evaluating the relative credibility of media types. They argued that survey respondents rate television news to be more credible than newspapers because they use different criteria when evaluating the two media types. They concluded that audiences ascribe higher credibility to television because they think about news anchors, who are usually personable and familiar, while evaluating television credibility but use their perceptions of newspapers as faceless monolithic institutions while rating newspapers' credibility.

More recent studies have evaluated the credibility of the Internet relative to other media types. Schweiger (2000) concluded that Internet users and non-users perceive the credibility of the Internet to be similar to that of traditional media types. Johnson and Kaye (1998) also noted that about 86% of respondents believed that the Internet was somewhat, moderately or very credible.

Media credibility measures. Attempts to develop measures for media credibility have also been fraught with theoretical and methodological disagreements. One of the earliest measures was developed by Gaziano and McGrath (1986) who asked 875 respondents to rate 16 bipolar semantic differential items and conducted factor analysis that yielded three factors—social concern, patriotism and a 15-item credibility scale.

Meyer (1988) argued that Gaziano & McGrath's credibility scale was not rooted in theory and disputed the validity of the research instrument, which he argued was susceptible to error because the researchers mishandled the switched polarity

aspect of their semantic differential scale. He replicated their study with a sample of *Charlotte Observers'* readers and conducted factor analysis to analyze the result. Meyer found two factors from the original Gaziano and McGrath (1986) believability scale and called the first factor community affiliation and the second one—a five item scale that measures fairness, bias, trustworthiness, accuracy, and completeness—credibility. Meyer reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .72 for the community affiliation scale and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .80 for the credibility/believability scale. West (1994) tested Meyer's credibility scale and concluded that it was a valid and reliable measure of credibility. Rimmer and Weaver (1987), however, reported a Cronbach's alpha of .90 for the Gaziano and McGrath scale, showing that it is a reliable measure of a single concept. Subsequent studies on the subject (including Wanta & Hu, 1994; Kiouisis, 2001; West 1994) have, however, defaulted towards Meyer's (1988) measure.

Message characteristics

Research on message characteristics focus on the elements of messages that enhance their credibility, and shows that tacky, unorganized messages are generally perceived to be less credible than well-organized ones (Metzger et al., 2003). Boehm (1994) examined the effect of message repetition, to enhance familiarity, on message credibility and concluded that familiarity enhances perception of credibility. Graber (1987) studied the use of cues and spins in television pictures during the 1984 presidential election and found that television pictures had more impact when character rather than issues were illustrated with pictures. Robinson (1987) conducted a study similar to Graber's using televised words and concluded that televised words

had little impact on public opinions about presidential candidates. McCroskey (1969) showed that message characteristics become more important when message sources are not very credible. Sereno and Hawkins (1967) studied the effect of fluency on the credibility of speakers and found that increases in non-fluency decreased speaker's credibility on the competence and dynamism scale but did not affect credibility on the trustworthiness scale. Slater & Rouner (1996) evaluated the effect of message quality on the perceived credibility of message sources, and the attitude change produced. They found that message quality predicted source credibility for expert sources but not for biased sources and that message quality is directly related to attitude change.

Burgoon (1978) conducted a study of newscaster's voices to determine the dimensions of vocal attributes and their effect on credibility. He found three dimensions of vocal attributes: aesthetics/pleasantness (fluency, clarity, & pleasantness), intensity, and variety/rate. He also found that fluency enhanced all measures of credibility, pleasantness enhanced competence-composure and character-sociability, while variety enhanced perceptions of character-sociability and extroversion. Atwood (1966) found a relationship between the credibility of the message delivered and the pre-message and post-message credibility rating of sources. He found that while the act of delivering a low credibility message seemed to reduce the credibility rating of a high credibility source, the reverse did not hold true when a low credibility source delivered a high credibility message.

Audience characteristics

Some researchers adopt the view that message credibility is not entirely a source-based construct but is also contingent on audience characteristics such as

demographic variables (age, gender, education, etc.) and psychographic variable (involvement in issues, personal ideology etc) (Hastorf and Cantril, 1951; Gunther, 1992). The argument behind this perspective is that people with different psychographic/demographic properties may ascribe different levels of credibility to the same message.

Hastorf and Cantril conducted the classic 1951 Hostile Media Effect study to demonstrate this assertion. They exposed a group of Dartmouth's and a group of Princeton's students to the same film of a particularly rough football game between the two schools and asked both groups to record incidents of rule infractions by players from their school and the players of the other school. Both groups reported more rule infractions by the opponent and a few retaliations by their schools' players.

A similar study was conducted by Vallone, Ross, and Lepper (1985) who exposed two groups (a group of pro-Israel partisans and a group of pro-Palestine partisans) to television coverage of the Beirut massacre. The pro-Israel partisans thought the media coverage was biased against Israel while the pro-Palestinian partisans thought the media were biased against Palestine. The scholars concluded that partisans subconsciously process mediated messages that are not overtly in their favor as biased messages regardless of the message itself or the source of the message.

Similarly, Gunther (1992) found that the characteristics of the audience making the credibility judgment have the greatest influence on their perception of media credibility. He analyzed data from the 1985 Association of Society of Newspaper Editors survey and found that the strongest predictors of media credibility for respondents affiliated with one of seven groups (Republicans, Democrats, Catholics,

born-again Christians, Blacks, Hispanics, and labor union members) was their group and issue involvement.

Generally, the literature supports the idea that audience characteristics affect perception of media and message credibility (Metzger, 2003). Johnson (1984) compared the credibility rating of white and black journalists by a black audience and found that the black audience considered white journalists to be more credible than black journalists. Domke, Lagos, Mark, Mead, and Xenos (2000) found that individuals presented with messages from an elite black source were significantly less likely to adopt the perspectives presented by the author than those presented with the same essay written by an elite white source. Andsager and Mastin (2003) found that students enrolled in a northwestern university rated newspaper columnists to be more credible than students enrolled in a southeastern university. They also found that Caucasian students in both universities generally considered White columnists to be more credible than African-American columnists while African-American students rated Black columnists higher than White ones.

Several studies have examined the relationship between demographics and perceptions of media credibility (Wesley & Severin, 1964; Gunther, 1992; Abel & Wirth, 1977; Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Rimmer & Weaver, 1987) These studies generally find that males with high levels of education and income ascribe the lowest credibility to the media while young adults and persons with liberal ideology are more likely to have positive perceptions of media credibility.

Other researchers have studied the relationship between media use and audiences' perceptions of credibility (Wanta & Hu, 1994; Rimmer & Weaver, 1987;

Greenberg, 1966). These studies found that people tend to patronize media outlets they perceive to be credible and generally consider their preferred media to be more credible; therefore, television—the most widely used medium—is often seen as the most credible medium (Greenberg & Carter, 1965).

Summary of the credibility literature

Scientific inquiry into source credibility began with a series of studies by Carl Hovland and his colleagues in the early 20th century. Hovland and his colleagues narrowly defined message sources as an individual presenting a message and concluded that high credibility sources are more effective in producing attitude change. They also identified expertise and trustworthiness as the dimensions of source credibility. Subsequent studies on the subject have broadened the dimensions of source credibility to include safety, dynamism, competence etc. and have made the case for media outlets and organizations as message sources. Subsequently, credibility research has focused on the effects of the four areas of the communication process—source, medium, audience and message characteristics— identified in these early studies on credibility (Metzger et al., 2003).

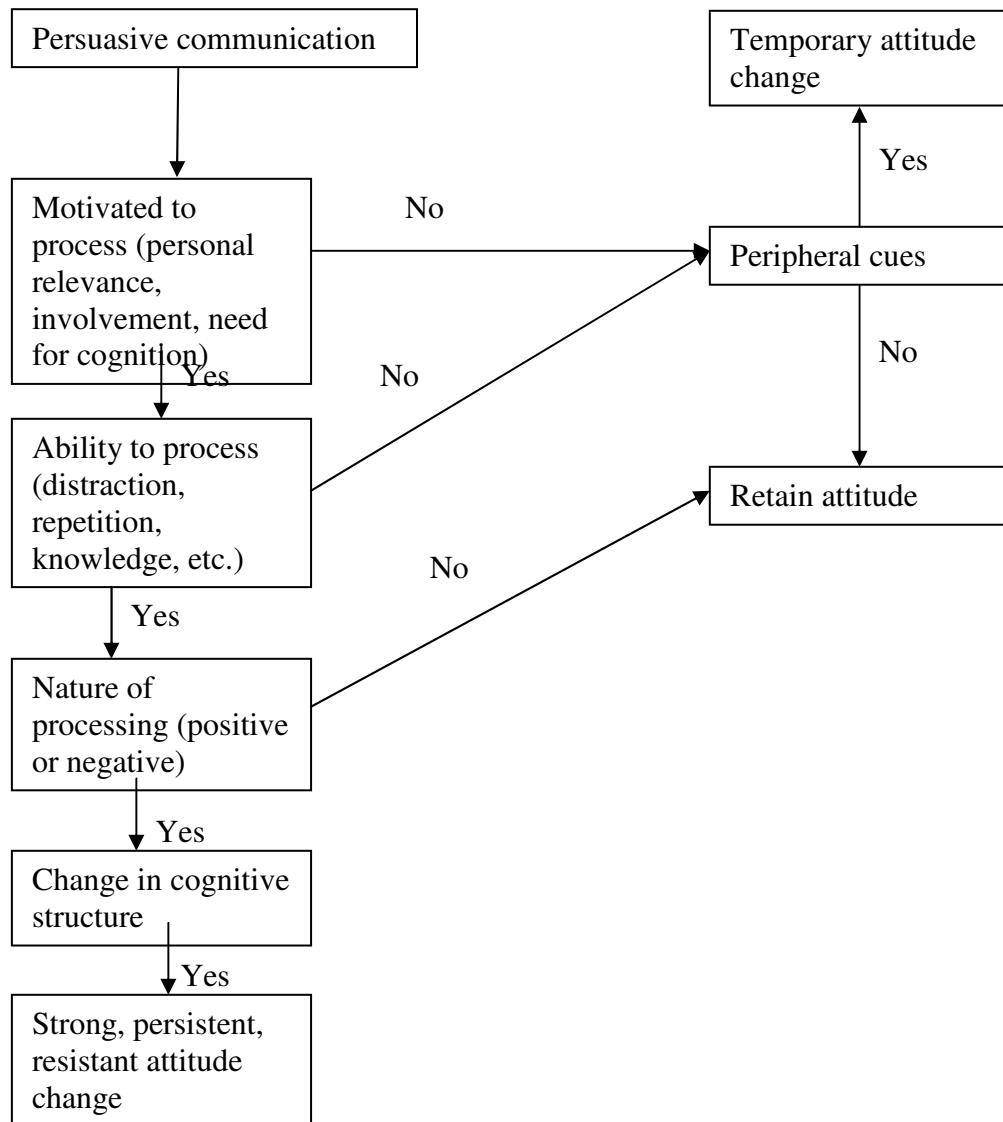
However, there were some inconsistencies in the results observed by researchers applying the source credibility theory to attitude change (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Rhine and Severance (1970) observed no difference in attitude change despite varying levels of source credibility while Sternthal, Dholakia, & Leavitt (1978) reported a negative correlation between source credibility and persuasion. These inconsistencies were cited by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) as justification for an all-encompassing theory of attitude change they called ELM.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

The ELM is a dual-process persuasion model that delineates the roles of several variables in the persuasion process. The model was developed to address inconsistencies, due to situational variables, in the attitude change literature. To make a case for the model, Petty and Cacioppo (1986) noted that “there was surprisingly little concerning if, when, and how the traditional source, message, recipient, and channel variables affected attitude change” and observed that “existing literature supported the view that nearly every independent variable studied increased persuasion in some situations, had no effect in others, and decreased persuasion in some contexts” (p. 2). Therefore, the ELM was proffered as model that explains the roles of multiple variables, under different conditions, in the persuasion process.

The model argues that a single variable can take on multiple roles in the persuasion process and may act to increase or decrease persuasion. The primary proposition of the ELM is the elaboration continuum, which posits that individuals process persuasion messages through two routes. The first, designated as the central route involves effortful and thoughtful elaboration of the quality of arguments in a persuasion message, while the second route, the peripheral route, depends on other strategies that are quantitatively and qualitatively different from central processing to arrive at conclusions about a persuasive message (See Figure 2.1; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Fig 2.1: The Elaboration Likelihood Model



The ELM proposes that individuals who have the motivation and ability to process a persuasive message are more likely to engage in careful and effortful processing of the arguments in the message (central processing) while those who are not motivated or able to process the message are more likely to use peripheral cues such as the attractiveness or expertise of message source, the number of arguments in the message, or other low elaboration methods to evaluate the message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty, Rucker, Bizer, & Cacioppo, 2004). The ELM asserts that attitudes formed through central processing of messages are more persistent, resistant to change, and predictive of behavior than those formed through peripheral processing (Petty, Haugtvedt, & Smith, 1995).

A common criticism of the ELM is that the metaphor, “two routes to persuasion” (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, p. 3), precludes the possibility of simultaneous evaluation of messages using both central and peripheral processing (Stiff, 1986). Petty et al. (2004), however, argued that the elaboration process occurs along a continuum despite the fact that the initial presentations of the model did not explicitly address the possibility of multiple processing of messages. Therefore, varying levels of central and peripheral processing may occur at different stages of the continuum. For instance, individuals with high involvement, motivation, and ability to process a message may evaluate the merit of the message by considering the merit of the arguments in the message (central processing) while considering the credibility of the message source (peripheral processing) at the same time. The researchers, however, asserted that there is a trade-off in the types of processing used for evaluating

messages: as central processing increases, the influence of peripheral cues on message processing decreases, and vice-versa (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

ELM postulates

The ELM has seven postulates:

1. The Correctness Postulate. The first postulate of the ELM agrees with Festinger (1957) that people are motivated to hold correct beliefs and attitudes.
2. The Elaboration Continuum Postulate. The second postulate argues that the two processing “routes” are not dichotomous routes but two ends of a continuum. At the central processing extreme, message processing is entirely thoughtful and effortful, and devoid of the use of peripheral cues, while the opposite holds true for the peripheral extreme. However, there are varying gradations of central and peripheral processing along the continuum between both extremes. Thus, individuals may evaluate messages with varying levels of both central and peripheral processing, simultaneously.
3. The Multiple-Role Postulate. The third postulate states that variable can have multiple roles in the persuasion process. For instance, the attractiveness of a shampoo model can acts a peripheral cue, “I like the shampoo because the model is beautiful”, or as a central processing cue, “the model’s attractiveness is evidence that the shampoo works”.
4. The Objective-Processing Postulate: The fourth postulate deals with situations where people are motivated to attain the ‘truth’ in a situation rather than a predetermined position. In this situation, the fourth postulate states that variables may affect people’s ability and/or motivation to process messages by

influencing the extent to which they scrutinize the merits of the argument in the message.

5. The Biased-Processing Postulate: Variables also affect the nature of thinking in which message receivers engage. Therefore, the fourth postulate posits that variables affect people's motivation and ability to engage in certain kinds of thought processes and may cause them to be biased in their processing of messages. For instance, a person who recently paid a substantial amount of money to purchase a car may be biased in processing negative information about the car to reduce dissonance while audiences that are forewarned about a message source's intentions may be motivated to develop counter-arguments and be more resistant to persuasion.
6. The Trade-off postulate: The sixth postulate asserts that there is a trade-off between people's capacity to engage in thoughtful/effortful processing and their capacity to engage in peripheral processing of messages. Therefore, the more a person processes a piece of information centrally, the less he/she can process it peripherally, and vice-versa. This postulate, however, recognizes the possibility that message receivers may engage in dual processing using both central and peripheral processes, simultaneously.
7. Strength of Attitude Postulate: This postulate states that attitude change via central processing will be stronger, more resistant to counter-arguments, and more predictive of behavior than attitude change from peripheral processing.

Ideology

The role of audiences' worldview in their perception of media messages and media outlets has been studied across mass communication, political science, and social psychology literatures (Gunther, 1992; Hastorf and Cantril, 1959; Lyons & Scheb, 1992; Hinich & Munger, 1994). However, there is little, if any, scholarly consensus about the operational and constitutive definitions of the concept (Lyons & Scheb, 1992; Hinich & Munger, 1994). Some scholars see ideology as a collection of ideas held by individuals and groups, which influence their behaviors and views about the way society should be organized (Lodge, 1976; North 1990); others see ideology as individuals' conscious or subconscious mental processes for simplifying, understanding, and participating in the political world (North, 1981; Enelow & Hinich, 1984); and still other scholars define the concept as dogmatic belief systems by which individuals analyze, justify, and rationalize their behavior and that of institutions (Joravsky, 1970). For this study, however, ideology is conceptualized as "an abstract, integrated view of the political world giving rise to a logical structure of attitudes toward policy issues, political parties, and candidates" (Lyon & Scheb, 1992. p. 573).

This conceptualization links ideology to attitudes (Ajzen, 1988) and fulfils Hinich and Munger's (1994) 3-way test for explicating ideology, which asserts that ideology, when properly explicated, must have implications for (a) what is ethically good or bad (values/policy issues), (b) how resources should be distributed in a society (policy issues), and (c) where power should reside (political parties and candidates).

Measures of ideology. The most common measure of ideological identity is some form of self-placement along the liberal-conservative continuum (Lyon &

Scheb, 1992; Holm & Robinson, 1978). While it can be argued that such continua are oversimplifications of the complexity of political ideology, they are nevertheless valid measures of ideology (van Dyke, 1995). The terms “liberal” and “conservative” are viewed as abstract concepts that summarize a highly constrained set of attitudes (Lyon & Scheb, 1992). These attitudes color citizens’ interpretations of policy issues and provide justifications for their interpretations. Although citizens generally identify their worldview along the liberal-conservative continuum, research shows that they do not always understand the terms “liberal” and “conservative” as conceptualized by researchers (Conover and Feldman, 1981). However, their self-identification along the liberal-conservative continuum affects their political perceptions and behaviors (Levitin & Miller 1979; Holm & Robinson, 1978).

Liberalism and conservatism. Individuals and organizations operating from a liberal point of view advocate availability of political and economic opportunities to all citizens (Van Dyke, 1995). Liberalism espouses “the liberty of the individual; equality, equal treatment, and equality of opportunity; neutrality and tolerance; the role of reason; the usefulness of government; the need for welfare; and taxes” (Van Dyke, 1995, 79). Liberalism stresses individual rights and places limits on government to protect these rights. Citizens with liberal ideologies tend to view government as a necessary evil: an institution that should be relied on when there is widespread consensus on a course of action (Rejai, 1995).

In contrast, conservatism emphasizes a distrust of rationalism, a preference for the known, a cautious approach to change, hostility to government, hostility to taxes, and, in the case of social conservatives, a desire to regulate the moral behavior of

citizens (Van Dyke, 1995). Conservatism tends to glorify a country's tradition; it calls for structures of authority, including political, religious, familial authority, to maintain order and stability (Van Dyke, 1995).

Branding and CBBE

Scholars and analysts in the management and marketing disciplines are showing renewed interest in the concept of brand equity because of its role in organizational profitability and marketing effectiveness (Keller, 2002). Professional interest in the concept have been predominantly utilitarian and includes (a) brand valuations, to facilitate proper appraisal of a brand's value during mergers and acquisitions, and (b) brand analysis, to evaluate the effect of brand equity on marketing effectiveness (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2002). In contrast, scholarly interest on the concept have been geared towards explicating it, defining it operationally, understanding its effects and implications, and making it amenable to basic and applied research (Keller, 2002).

A brand is a name, term, logo, trademark or any other identity designed to identify a product and distinguish it from other products in the same category (Kotler, 1991). The name, term, symbol, and other identifiers are brand identities and the totality of these identities is the brand. Branding, therefore, is the process of explaining the meanings and associations of brands to consumers. Other researchers conceptualize a brand as the added value of brand identities to a product (Farquhar, 1990; Aaker, 1991). The added value often includes brand loyalty, price insensitivity, and positive affective dispositions towards brand. The difference between a product and a brand is that a product fulfils a functional benefit while a brand augments the

value of the product beyond its functional purpose. For example, a pair of sneakers protects the feet from injuries during sporting activities while a pair of Nike sneakers carries the added benefit of the Nike promise of quality and the brand image of shoes that inspire athletes to “just do it” by arousing the surreal athletic achievements of Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods, two of the brand’s prominent endorsers.

The primary purpose of branding is to communicate the tangible and intangible aspects of a brand to its consumers. Based on this perspective, Roellig (2001) defined a brand as “the aggregation of all the physical and emotional characteristics of a company, a product, or service encountered by customers at all points of contact” (p. 40). A brand’s business proposition, which highlights the reasons customers should desire the brand, is communicated through the process of branding.

CBBE is a measure of the intangible added benefit of branding to consumers (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2002). Higher levels of CBBE imply that consumers will react more favorably towards the product, price, promotion, and distribution of a brand than they would towards a generic product in the same category (Keller, 1993). Keller theorized that a brand is said to have “positive (negative) customer-based brand equity if consumers react more (less) favorably to the product, price, promotion or distribution of the brand than they do to the same marketing mix element when attributed to a fictitiously named or unnamed version of the product or service” (p. 8).

CBBE directly affects consumers’ psychological judgment with respect to the brand making them favorably disposed towards paying more and searching further for the product the brand represents (Berry & Biel, 1992). The concept also encapsulates the total value of the brand, consisting of the marketing variables of the brand (price,

product, package, etc.) and the intangible relationship between the brand and the consumer (Blackstone, 2000).

Researchers primarily conceptualize CBBE as consumers' knowledge about the brand and often measure the concept by observing the effects of brand knowledge on consumer behavior towards the brand (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). This theoretical conceptualization is the basis for Aaker's (1991) definition of CBBE as the outcome generated by the marketing activity of a brand that would not have occurred if the product or service were unnamed and Keller's (1993) conceptualization of CBBE as the "differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer's response to the marketing of the brand" (p. 2).

CBBE also affects the profit potential of a brand by making it possible for the brand to attain increased market share and favorable price structures (Aaker, 1991; Berry, 1988). Higher levels of CBBE help brands endure crisis situations like negative press and shifts in consumer tastes (Faquahar, 1990), and provides competitive edge against other products in the same category (Aaker, 1991).

Keller (1993) observed that CBBE is built by increasing consumers' familiarity with the brand and creating a series of favorable, strong, and unique associations to the brand in consumers' memory. Hoeffler and Keller (2002) observed that the power of a brand resides in the minds of the customers and that organizations seeking to build CBBE have to ensure that customers undergo the right type of experiences with their products and services so that the desired thoughts, feelings, and images can be linked to the brand. The consumer's experience with the brand could occur through contact with anyone (salesman, celebrity endorser, receptionist etc.), or

anything (the product, advertisements, etc.) that the consumer can associate with the brand (Urde, 1994).

A key objective of branding activities is to enhance repeat purchase or patronage, because substantially less marketing activities and lower expenditure is required to ensure repeat patronage than to recruit new customers (Knox & Walker, 2001). Strong CBBE helps to moves consumers from prospects, occasional users, or habitual buyers to brand loyalists (Knox & Walker, 2001). Brand loyalty is the:

(1) biased (i.e. non-random) (2) behavioral (i.e. purchase), (3) expressed over time, (4) by some decision-making unit (5) with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and (6) is a function of psychological (decision making, evaluative) process (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978, p. 80).

Kotler et al. (1996) identified brand conviction as the key difference between habitual buying behavior and brand loyalty. He noted that habitual buying behavior is based on availability and brand familiarity. Thus a habitual buyer would switch to another brand if availability is reduced or routine buying behavior is disrupted while a brand loyalist would go the extra mile to find the brand.

In summary, higher levels of CBBE enhance the value of products and services (Fombrun, 1996); improves consumers' disposition towards organizations and their products (Keller, 1993); improves consumers' psychological judgment with respect to a brand, making them favorably disposed towards paying more and searching further for the brand (Aaker & Biel, 1992; Aaker, 1991); and helps organizations attain increased profitability through increased market share and favorable price structures

(Aaker, 1991).

Building CBBE. The process of building CBBE (brand management) encompasses the planning, organization, and control of corporate activities that affect the knowledge and/or image of the brand in consumers' minds (Urde, 1994; Keller, 1993). Davis (2000) described all contacts between the company and its customers as touchpoints, and asserted that touchpoints give organizations an opportunity to improve their CBBE. For a media organization, the touchpoints transcend the actual program, newscast or newspaper, and includes all activities that consumer associate with the brand such as newsgathering processes, recruitment processes, relationship with advertisers, community service, etc. (Secunda, 1994).

Davis (1995) expressed the importance of treating branding as a long-term strategic tool rather than a short-term tactical tool designed to fix a perceived problem. He conceptualized brand management in terms of four key indices: (a) meaning: how companies define their brands, (b) measuring: how companies measure and gauge their CBBE, (c) management: how companies coordinate their branding activities, and (d) mapping: how companies plan for the futures of their brands. He enjoined organizations to have a clear picture of where they want their brand to be over the next five years. This picture, he concludes, has to include the roles that the management of the organization wants the brand to fulfill, the financial goals they want the brand to achieve, and an assessment of the brand's current value and the level of investment needed to move it to where it is envisioned to be.

Low and Mohr (2000) concurred with the long-term strategic effect of branding and found that high relative advertising (branding practices) and low relative

sales promotion (quick-fix sales drives) are associated with higher perceptions of CBBE. Hoeffler and Keller (2002) noted that Corporate Societal Marketing (CSM), marketing activities that have at least one non-financial socially relevant objective, is another important way of building strong CBBE. They noted that CSM builds brand awareness, enhances brand image, establishes brand credibility, evokes brand feelings, creates a sense of brand community, and elicits brand engagement (p. 79).

Keller (1993) stated that CBBE should be considered a multifaceted concept that depends on consumer knowledge structures about the brand. Brand management, thus, revolves around managers' actions to capitalize on these knowledge structures. Keller counseled managers to have a broader view of marketing activities by defining the knowledge structures they want to create; evaluating the various ways available for them to create these knowledge structures; taking a long-term view of branding processes; employing tracking services to evaluate their brands; and evaluating potential candidates for brand extension.

Branding and the Media

Branding and CBBE are relatively new concepts in the field of mass communication (Chan-Olmsted & Kim, 2001). Although the concepts have been used in traditional marketing and management fields for a long time, journalists and media managers remained skeptical about applying branding principles to the media until recent times when the intense proliferation of media vehicles and the attendant fragmentation of audiences have instigated media outlets to seek new ways of differentiating their products to the audience (Brinkley, 1997). Although media managers agree that, "branding is overall a very useful business tool" that "will help

them achieve long-term business success" and "stay competitive", Chan-Olmsted and Kim observed that most of them "did not appear to be very familiar with the brand equity concept" (2001, p. 85 - 86). Similarly, empirical mass communication research on the application of branding principles to the media is in its infancy (Chan-Olmsted & Kim, 2001).

Media organizations are evolving to mitigate the threats of increased competition and audience fragmentation in today's media industry (McManus, 1994). They are seeking ways of determining and catering to the whims of an elusive active audience who has access to more media outlets than at any time during the history of mediated communication (Palmgreen et al., 1985). Attaway-Fink (2004) found that newspaper editors were favorably disposed towards the practice of generating and formatting contents to attract specific target audiences. She observed that, "Through research, editors and publishers have been able to identify the newspaper's most marketable elements. Special sections designed to meet reader interests, whether entertainment or local news, have become elements of the new targeted communication practices used in newsrooms across the USA" (p. 145).

The control of media content has shifted from professional gatekeepers to the audience, as media channels scramble through opinion polls, focus groups, and audience measurement services to understand the content needs and desires of the audience (Webster & Phalen, 1997). Therefore, branding, a strategic management process for identifying a product and distinguishing it from similar goods and services (Aaker, 1991), assumes new importance as media managers seek ways of differentiating their media outlet from the rest of the pack (Chan-Olmsted & Kim,

2001; Lin, Atkin, & Abelman, 2002).

Brand extension, use of an established brand name to develop a product in another category, is another reason media organizations are embracing branding (Ha & Chan-Olmsted, 2001). In view of beckoning opportunities for attracting new audiences and advertisers inherent in new media types, media organizations are beginning to extend their brands by developing new media channels and products with their established brand names. Branding assumes new importance because consumers' acceptance of the brand extension process and patronage of the new product is contingent upon the strength of the parent brand's CBBE (Keller, 1993). Brand extension is particularly attractive to media organizations because leveraging a strong brand name not only substantially improves new products' success potential but also decreases the costs of promoting and distributing them because of audiences' familiarity with and affectivity disposition towards the parent brand (Aaker & Keller, 1990, Lane, 2000). Brand extension also gives media organizations additional income streams, generates new audiences, and serves as a means for media organizations to advertise the parent brand (Ha & Chan-Olmsted, 2001). Furthermore, Balachander and Ghose (2003) found that while new products enjoy consumers' trust and support as a result of their association with the parent brand, the parent brand also derive reciprocal spillover affect from the brand extension process.

To assess the extent of media managers' familiarity with the branding concept, Chan-Olmsted and Kim (2001) conducted a survey of general managers of commercial television stations. They noted that although:

the essence of branding has been applied for years as broadcast televisions

strove to establish identifiable attributes to build audience preference, “branding” as a fairly new management term, represents a different approach in integrating existing knowledge and techniques in media promotion and marketing in the broadcast industry. (p. 77)

The station managers surveyed agreed that branding is important, but associated it with tactical operations, such as local news credibility, network affiliation image, station promotions, and logo design, instead of viewing it as a strategic management process. The researchers found a negative correlation between experience in the industry and perception of the long-term role of branding, thereby suggesting that industry newcomers were more receptive towards the practice of branding, and managers of stations in larger markets had a more positive, long-term view of branding than managers in smaller markets. They concluded that broadcasters “need to ask themselves how they can build a distinctive brand and hopefully leverage their established brand equity” (p. 89) because success in any product or service, including television programming, depends on a well developed and executed strategic plan that gives the consumer valid reasons to purchase/consume the product.

Secunda (1994) conducted a case study of the brand marketing of the Czechoslovakia-based Nova TV. He noted that prior to the introduction of Nova TV all the existing stations were pretty much the same apart from their logo and channel designation, and documented the strategies employed by the management of Nova TV to establish a positive brand image with its two major publics: television audience and advertisers. Secunda noted that the station launched an intensive national advertising campaign, which sought to create favorable brand associations with the station while

establishing a distinction between the Nova brand and the government-controlled competition.

McDowell and Sutherland (2000) used CBBE theory to analyze television program brand equity. They conceptualized program brand equity in terms of sustained market dominance and exceptional audience loyalty. They analyzed a 10-year longitudinal summary of Nielsen sweep report and additional data from Marshal Marketing and Communication, and concluded that each program has its own unique brand equity, which is distinct from the brand equity of the television channel broadcasting the program. They found that higher program equity helped programs build more audience than their lead-in programs' audience size and to recruit more audiences from other sources. The study concluded that program equity affects the number of converts, the number of defectors, and the number of loyalists that a program has.

Lin, Atkin and Abelman (2002) observed that network affiliation and the branding effort of the television networks affect the brand image of local stations, and changes in network affiliations may cause audiences to relate differently to local stations. Ha and Chan-Olmsted (2001) studied enhanced TV features, such as web-based brand extension products for TV networks, and found no relationship between respondent's awareness or rating of the web-based enhance TV contents and their rating of network television program. Although respondents accepted the web-based enhanced TV features as brand extensions of the network station, their knowledge, awareness, and usage of the web-based feature did not induce them to watch the network. The researchers, however, noted the supporting role of the web-based

enhanced features and observed that they offer a way for audiences to interact with and build knowledge structures about the networks.

Chan-Olmsted and Kim (2002) noted that although commercial free-to-air television has lost a substantial part of its audience to cable television, public television had just begun to feel the heat of competition from cable stations with similar programming like Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel and The Travel Channel. They conducted three focus-group sessions to determine the brand images of PBS and five similar stations. Using the words consistently used to describe PBS and similar stations in the focus-group sessions, and words used in Rubel's (1995) study of PBS logo, they developed a measure of brand image with 11 terms – trustworthy, unique, enlightening, variety, relaxed, intelligent, informative, quality, educational, exciting, and responsible. They conducted a survey to determine (a) the brand image of PBS, (b) the value of PBS' brand equity relative to comparable cable channels, (c) PBS' audience quantity and profile, and (d) factors that contributed to audience's attachment to PBS in a multi-channel environment.

The researchers (Chan-Olmstead & Kim, 2002) found that PBS continues to enjoy a positive brand image relative to comparable cable networks and that the popularity of cable networks offering similar programs has not diluted the CBBE of PBS or the growth of PBS membership. They noted that PBS's branding effort has successfully built a strong brand equity, and concluded that "public television continues to enjoy a very positive brand image among its viewers in contrast to comparable cable networks, scoring high in areas of 'quality', 'educational value', and 'trustworthiness'" (p. 315). The researchers, however, found that the PBS brand had

become so linked to its brand image of “quality,” “educational value,” and “trustworthiness” that respondents did not attribute other features such as “exciting” to the brand.

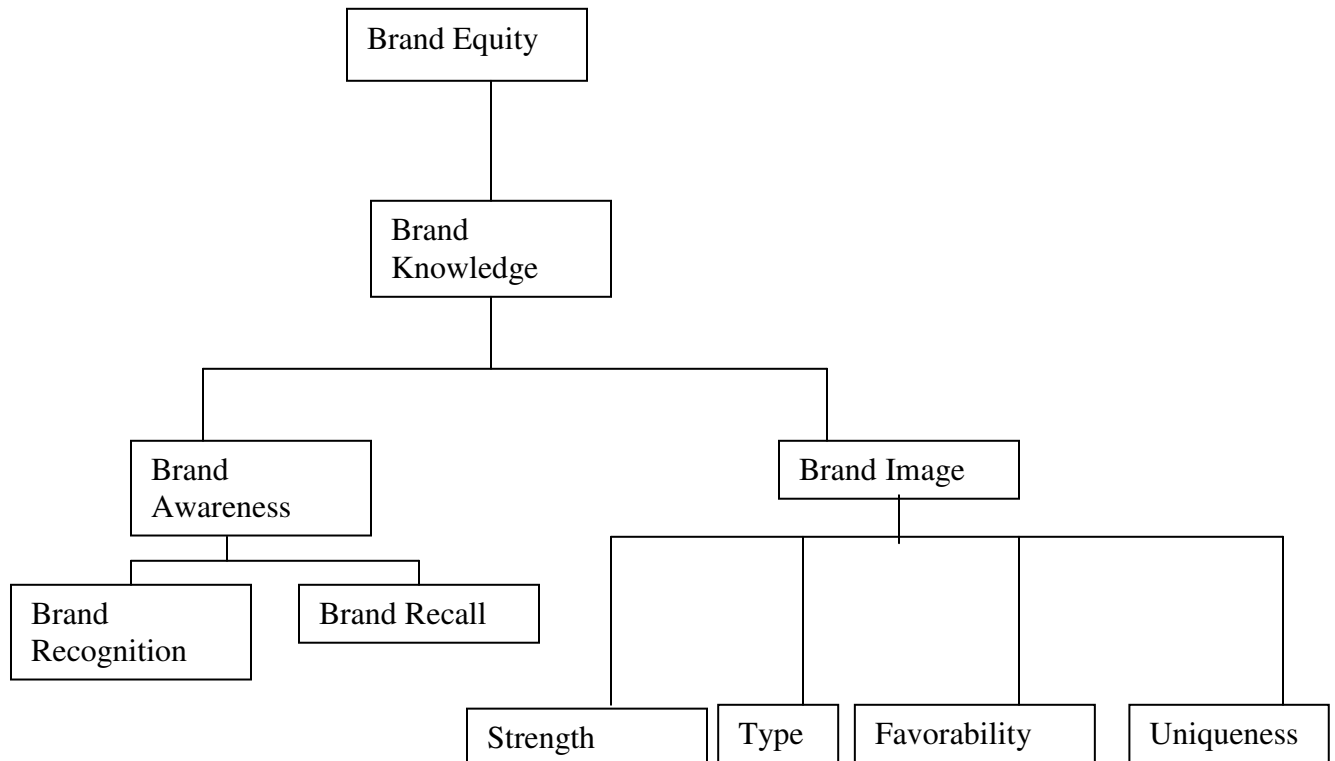
Theoretical Framework for CBBE

Keller’s conceptualization. Keller (1993, p. 2) defined CBBE as the “differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer’s response to the marketing of the brand.” and noted that brand knowledge is central to the theory of CBBE. The three important concepts in this conceptualization are (a) differential effect, (b) brand knowledge, and (c) consumers’ reaction. Differential effect represents the difference between consumers’ reaction to a brand and their reaction to an unnamed or fictitiously-named product in the same category. Brand knowledge refers to consumers’ awareness of the brand and their perception of its image; while consumers’ reaction could be cognitive (e.g. positive or negative attitude) or behavioral (e.g. purchase). For instance, CBBE accounts for the difference between the reaction of audiences to a news item with a *New York Times* byline and their reaction to the same news item with the byline of an unnamed or fictitiously named newspaper. Therefore, a brand is said to have a high CBBE if consumers react more favorably to the product, price, promotion, or distribution of the brand than to a fictitiously named or unnamed version of the product represented by the brand.

Keller saw brand knowledge as the primary source of CBBE. Brand knowledge is a measure of consumers' awareness of a brand and their perception of the strength, favorability, and uniqueness of its brand associations. Brand knowledge has two major components—brand image and brand awareness. Brand awareness is

the ease with which consumers can recall and recognize the brand under different conditions while brand image is the strength, favorability, and uniqueness of the associations linked to the brand in consumers' memories (see figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Keller's conceptualization of CBBE



Brand awareness also has two constructs—brand recall and brand recognition. Brand recall (also called prompted awareness) refers to consumers' ability to mention the brand when prompted by the brand category or the functional need fulfilled by the brand while brand recognition refers to consumers' ability to confirm that they had heard or seen the brand when prompted by the brand name. Brand image's constructs include the types of brand associations, strength of brand associations, favorability of

brand associations, and uniqueness of brand associations in consumers' minds. The three types of brand associations are brand attributes, brand attitudes, and brand benefits. Brand attitudes are the qualitative (favorability) and quantitative (strength) measures of consumers' overall appraisal of a brand, brand attribute are either product-related or non product-related, and brand benefits can be functional (actual uses), experiential (feelings generated from use) or symbolic (status generated from use).

According to the Associative Network Memory Model (ANMM), human memory consists of a series of nodes (knowledge banks) which are connected by links (Collins & Loftus, 1975). Therefore, the stronger the link between two memory nodes, the more easily one node can trigger remembrance of the other node. For instance, if the link between "Coca-cola" and "thirst" nodes is strong, then "thirst" would easily trigger remembrance of the "Coca-cola" brand. Brand meanings are stored as brand awareness and brand image in memory nodes, and branding is the process of strengthening the link between these memory nodes and the identities of a brand within its product category (Keller, 2002). A brand with strong CBBE has strong, favorable, and unique memory nodes associated with the brand in consumers' minds and strong links between the memory nodes and the brand identities/product category (Keller, 2002).

Aaker's conceptualization. Another popular conceptualization of brand equity was proffered by Aaker (1991). Aaker defined CBBE as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers" (p. 15). He

identified five dimensions of CBBE: (a) brand loyalty—a measure of the consumers’ attachment to the brand, (b) brand awareness—consumers’ ability to recall or recognize a brand within its category, (c) perceived quality—consumers’ perception of the quality or superiority of the brand relative to alternatives, (d) brand association—anything linked to consumers’ memory about the brand, and (e) other proprietary brand assets—logos, trademarks, channel distribution, etc. Yoo and Donthu (2001) tested and validated the applicability of four of the five constructs identified by Aaker. They rejected the “other proprietary brand asset” construct and developed a multi-dimensional CBBE measure based on the other four. Aaker noted that CBBE provides value to customers by enhancing their interpretation and processing of brand-related information; developing their confidence in brand choice and purchase decision; and enhancing their satisfaction with the product. He also noted that CBBE provides value to the firm by optimizing marketing effectiveness, instigating brand loyalty, generating competitive advantage, improving the success potential of brand extension and increasing profit margins through favorable price structures.

Summary of the literature

Credibility studies have been part of mass communication research since the inception of scientific inquiry into the communication process (Self, 1996); the ELM was proposed to address some of the inconsistencies in the credibility literature; while branding and brand equity are relatively new concepts in mass communication research (Chan-Olmstead and Kim, 2001).

Credibility has been studied primarily within four domains—source, medium, message and audience characteristics. Source characteristics studies explore the

expertise and trustworthiness of message sources; message characteristics studies evaluate the attributes of messages that make them credible; audience characteristics studies analyze the influence of message receivers' demographic and psychographic variables on the credibility of sources, messages and/or media; while media credibility studies evaluate the effects of media types and channels on audiences' perceptions of message credibility (Metzger et al., 2003; Self, 1996).

Audiences' personal ideological view is one of the major psychographic characteristics that affect perceptions of media credibility and CBBE (Oyedeji, 2007). Ideology not only affects citizens' attitudes towards policy issues, political parties, and candidates but also affects their opinions of news media outlets and consequently their perceptions of the credibility of news from those outlets (Sutton, 2004; Lyon & Scheb, 1992; Oyedeji, 2008). Researchers typically conceptualize audiences' ideological views along the liberal-conservative continuum (Lyon & Scheb, 1992; Holm & Robinson, 1978). The terms "liberal" and "conservative" summarize a consistent set of attitudes that color citizens' interpretations of public issues and provide justifications for their interpretations (Lyon & Scheb, 1992; Conover and Feldman, 1981).

The ELM is a dual-process model that delineates the roles of several variables in the persuasion process. The ELM proposes that individuals who have the motivation and ability to process a persuasive message engage in careful and effortful processing of the arguments in the message (central processing) while those who are not motivated or able to process the message use peripheral cues such as the attractiveness or expertise of the message source to evaluate its credibility.

Branding is a management process for differentiating products within a

product category (Kim and Chan-Olmsted, 2001). A brand is the totality of the name, sign, symbol or logo used to identify and differentiate a product (Kotler, 1991). Brand equity—the product of successful branding—is the outcome generated by the marketing of a brand that would not have occurred if the product were unnamed (Aaker, 1991). Branding affects consumer’s psychological reactions to products, and causes them to react more favorably towards a branded product than an unnamed/unbranded version of the product (Keller, 1993; Aaker & Biel, 1992).

The hypotheses

This study proposes and tests the CBM, which explicates the effects of CBBE and ideological congruency on audiences’ perceptions of media and message credibility. The ELM shows that audiences’ involvement and ability to analyze issues affect the type and amount of message processing they engage in while the media credibility literature highlights the role of audiences’ news use and demographics in their perception of media credibility (Petty & Cacciopo, 1986; Meyer, 1986; Gunther, 1992). Therefore, the three confounding variables indentified in the literature—involvement, news media use, and demographics—were the covariates in the series of analysis for this study.

A multi-stage process was used to test the CBM. The first stage evaluates audiences’ perceptions of Fox News Channel and CNN. A number of anecdotal evidence and industry research suggests that CNN does better on media credibility and CBBE than Fox News Channel (Hickey, 2003; Farhi, 2003; Myers, 2003). However, there is little peer-reviewed scholarly support for that assertion; therefore the first set of research questions explores the differences between the two networks on the

credibility and CBBE concepts.

RQ1: What is the difference between audiences' perceptions of the media credibility of CNN and Fox News Channel?

RQ2: What is the difference between audiences' perceptions of the CBBE of CNN and Fox News Channel?

RQ3: What is the difference between audience's perceptions of the message credibility of the same political news ascribed to CNN versus Fox News Channel?

RQ4: What is the difference between audience's perceptions of the message credibility of the same non-political news ascribed to CNN versus Fox News Channel?

The second stage evaluates the relationship between CBBE and media/message credibility, independent of audience ideological views. Research shows that CBBE and media credibility are positively related (Oyedeji, 2007); therefore, a positive relationship is expected between CBBE and media credibility.

H1: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between audiences' perception of a news media outlet's CBBE and their perception of its media credibility.

Research shows that media credibility and message credibility are positively related (Greenberg & Carter, 1965); similarly, CBBE and media credibility are positively related (Oyedeji, 2007). Therefore, it is logical to expect a positive relationship between CBBE and message credibility. To assess the message credibility construct, two similarly constituted groups were exposed to two news messages (a

political and a non-political message), therefore, it is expected that:

H2: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between audiences' perception of a news media outlet's CBBE and their perception of the message credibility of political news stories from the media outlet.

H3: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between audiences' perception of a news media outlet's CBBE and their perception of the message credibility of non-political news stories from the media outlet.

Oyedeji (2007) showed that ideology is predictive of media credibility especially when media outlets make ideology a part of their branding strategy; similarly, a number of studies spanning mass communication, social psychology, and political science literature show that audiences' ideological views affect their perceptions and choices (Gunther, 1992; Hastorf and Cantril, 1959; Lyons & Scheb, 1992; Hinich & Munger, 1994), therefore it is expected that:

H4: Audiences' perception of the ideological congruency between their own personal worldview and that of a media outlet will be positively related to their perception of the media credibility of that media outlet.

A similar positive relationship is expected between ideological congruency and message credibility.

H5: Audiences' perception of the ideological congruency between their own personal worldview and that of a media outlet will be positively related to their perception of the message credibility of political news stories from that media outlet.

H6: Audiences' perception of the ideological congruency between their own personal worldview and that of a media outlet will be positively related to their perception of the message credibility of non-political news stories from that media outlet.

The final stage takes a holistic approach towards testing the CBM by evaluating the model with SEM and comparing it to a comparative model with the similar variables. The primary proposition of the CBM is that ideological congruency and CBBE are the primary concepts that affect news credibility judgment process, therefore, it is expected that:

H7: When all the variables in the model are considered simultaneously, ideological congruency and CBBE will be the strongest predictors of media credibility.

H8: When all the variables in the model are considered simultaneously, ideological congruency and CBBE will be the strongest predictors of message credibility.

The final analysis was a comparative analysis of the CBM and a similar model. Comparative analysis typically involves the use of statistical methods (in this case, SEM) to explore the explanatory power of similar models in order to confirm or disprove the veracity of an original model. Morgan and Shelly (1994) used this method in proposing and testing the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing, which posits that commitment and trust are the key mediating variables in the relationship between corporate relationship variables and relationship outcomes.

The theory argues that business relationship that exist on pure competition levels are outdated and unrealistic, therefore, organizations need to learn to cooperate and maintain relationships with the four separate entities (suppliers, external customers, internal customers, and other external parties) that have substantial effects on their success.

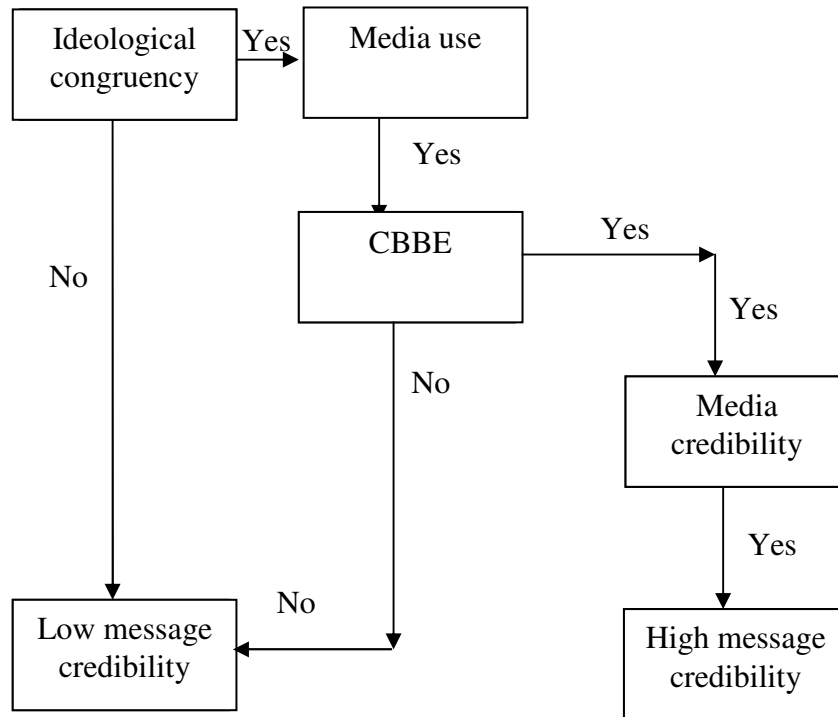
The researchers compared their initial model, which had 13 paths and uses “commitment” and “trust” as key mediating variables, to a rival model, which consists of all the concepts in the initial commitment-trust model but eliminates the roles of “commitment” and “trust” as key mediating variables. The alternative model had 29 paths. The two models had similar explanatory powers (Comparative Fit Index = .959 and .890), therefore, the rival model was rejected in favor of the original because it (the original commitment-trust model) was more parsimonious (13 paths versus 29 paths).

Using similar methods, the CBM was compared to a similar model that proposes an indirect effect of ideological congruency on CBBE, with ideological congruency predicting media use, and media use predicting CBBE (see figure 2.3).

H9: The CBM will fit the data better than the alternative model.

Figure 2.3

Credible Brand Model (alternative model)



CHAPTER 3

Method

This study proposes and tests the CBM, which explicates the effects of CBBE and ideological congruency on audiences' perceptions of media and message credibility. A survey was conducted to probe respondents' perceptions of the CBBE and media credibility of two media brands—Fox News Channel and CNN. Thereafter, the respondents were asked to evaluate the message credibility of two news stories ascribed to the websites of each of the two brands.

Sample and sampling procedure

A sample of 308 students enrolled in journalism classes at the University of Missouri-Columbia was used for this study.

Brand selection

The two brands selected for this study are CNN and Fox News Channel. The two brands have been selected to take advantage of their naturally occurring differences on the two independent variables for this study. According to Keller (2002), CBBE is responsible for the difference between consumers' reaction to two brands in the same product category.

CNN, which commenced operation in 1980, is "the granddaddy of cable news networks" (Hickey, 2003, p. 12). The station has the greatest global reach, the second highest rating and primetime audience, the largest annual revenue of the three major

all-news cable networks in the United States, and is considered sympathetic to liberal views by some analysts (Mediabistro, 2007; Hickey, 2003; Farhi, 2003; Myers, 2003). Fox News Channel joined the cable news industry in 1996, and currently has the highest rating and primetime audience in the cable (Mediabistro, 2007; Collin, 2004). The station also has the second highest revenue, and is considered sympathetic to conservative views (Hickey, 2003; Farhi, 2003).

Research Methods

A survey was designed to measure respondents' opinions on a series of statements derived from the literature on credibility, ideology, and CBBE. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with a series of statements probing their opinion of Fox News Channel and CNN using a 7-point Likert scale. The demographic information—age, sex, and ethnicity—of the respondents was also collected to put the results in perspective. After completing the survey, the respondents were exposed to two news messages from website clones of www.cnn.com and www.foxnews.com. Subsequently, their opinions of the credibility of both messages were measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Two versions of the research instrument were self-administered by the respondents. The only manipulated variable in the instruments was the brand names of the media channels. The survey was executed in March 2008.

Stimulus

Ideology has been studied primarily in the areas of citizens' decisions on political ideas, policy issues, and political personalities (Lyon & Scheb, 1992). Recent research (Sutton, 2004; Peng, 2005), however, shows that ideology also has

implications for news credibility, patronage and other non-political decisions.

Therefore, the stimulus materials were two news stories, one addressing a political issue and the other a non-political issue. The news stories were hosted on websites clones of www.cnn.com and www.foxnews.com. The only difference between the websites was the brand names associated with the news stories.

Two website clones of www.cnn.com were designed for the study, one with a political new story and the other with a non-political news story. Similarly, two website clones of www.foxnews.com were also designed. The two messages were Associated Press (AP) news stories. The political news story deals with Hillary Clinton's victory celebration after winning the Florida Democratic Party presidential primaries, a race in which all the candidates had signed pledges not to compete while the non-political news story reports a research study that showed that the use of ethanol fuel from corn could result in twice as much greenhouse emission as gasoline.

Each member of the two groups of respondents received the two news stories ascribed to only one of the brand. Thus the first group received the political and non-political news stories ascribed to www.cnn.com while the second group received the same stories ascribed to www.foxnews.com.

Conceptual measures

Demographic measures. The demographic measures collected were respondents' age, sex, and ethnicity.

Credibility measures. The credibility index originally developed by Gaziano and McGrath (1986), and modified by Meyer (1988) was used for this study. Meyer's (1988) believability index (Cronbach's alpha = .83) includes five variables—fairness,

bias, accuracy, trustworthiness, and completeness.

Brand equity measures. Yoo and Donthu (2002) developed a theory-based scale to measure CBBE using Aaker's (1991) conceptualization. They adopted four of the five dimensions identified by Aaker (1991) and created a multidimensional brand equity scale consisting of statements measuring brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand association. They excluded the 'other proprietary brand assets' dimension, which consists of patents, trademarks, channel relationship, etc. because it is not a consumer-based measure. The brand equity scale developed by Yoo and Donthu (2002) was used to develop the measures of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand association.

The fifth construct of CBBE, brand image was measured using Aaker's (1997) conceptualization of brand personality. Keller (1993) identified brand image as a construct of brand equity; and brand personality as a construct of brand image. Researchers have treated brand image as consumer's perceptions of brand personality dimensions and have drawn heavily from human attitude measurement research to create universally applicable brand image measurement scales (Malhotra, 1981; Aaker, 1997). These brand personality scales have been used to measure brand image in several marketing and management studies (Faircloth et al., 2001; Kim & Kim, 2004).

Aaker (1997) conducted a factor analysis using 309 non-redundant personality traits from three sources: psychology research, marketing research (including Malhotra, 1981), and other original qualitative research. She identified five brand personality factors—sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, and

reported Cronbach's alpha of .75, .74, .76, .75, and .76, respectively for the items in each factor. The Aaker (1997) scale was used to measure brand personality for this study. The 'ruggedness' factor was removed because it does not apply directly to media channels.

Ideology measure. Researchers have used three distinct approaches to understand and measure citizens' ideological views. The first, pioneered by Campbell, Miller, Converse, and Stokes (1960), uses qualitative coding of respondents' answers to open-ended questions about policy issues, political candidates, and political parties to estimate their ideological views (Lane, 1962; Field and Anderson, 1969). The second approach uses respondents' self-reported levels of agreement to a series of statements about policy issues and political personalities to evaluate their placement on a liberal-conservative scale (Nie, Verba, and Petrocik, 1976). And the third approach uses respondents' ideological self-identification (Holm & Robinson, 1978).

These distinct methodologies probe different aspects of ideological views. The qualitative methodology probes the extent to which respondents consciously think about their ideological views and can articulate their views on abstract issues while the quantitative methodology allows researchers to understand the strength of respondents' attitudes towards issues that are difficult to verbalize. Studies relying on ideological self-placement scales have limited external validity because respondents often muddle up the terms "liberal" and "conservative" (Conover and Feldman, 1981). This study, therefore, adopts the quantitative measure by using respondents' attitudes towards three contentious issues (abortion, gay marriage, and the role of religion in politics) to create an ideology/ideological congruency index.

Media Use measures. Three constructs—attention, exposure, and reliance—consistently used by researchers (Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986; Moy, McCluskey, McCoy, & Spratt, 2004; Sotirovic, 2001) to measure media use was adopted for this study.

Involvement measure. To measure involvement, researchers typically select purposive samples (e.g. student) and manipulate messages about salient issues (e.g. tuition increase). For instance, a message advocating tuition increase in a group of students' current school could be classified as a relatively high involvement message and one advocating tuition increase in a distant school as a relatively low involvement message (Petty & Cacciopo, 1986). However, because of the nature of the subject being explored in this dissertation (news) and the national/international focus of the brands being studied, such manipulation may appear suspicious. Students may find it difficult to believe that national/international news media outlets like CNN and Fox News Channel would cover debates about tuition increases at the University of Missouri. Therefore, the measure of involvement for this study was a statement asking respondents to signify the extent to which they care about the issues and personalities in the stimulus news stories: thereby generating a continuous variable that was used as one of the covariate in the analyses.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This study proposes and tests the CBM, a model that explicates the process by which media audiences evaluate and assign credibility to media outlets and their messages. The primary postulate of the model is that a media outlet's brand equity and audiences' perception of the congruency between their personal worldview and that of the media outlet are the primary factors that influence media and message credibility. A survey was designed to test the hypotheses associated with this model. The survey asked respondents' opinions about a series of statements derived from the literature on CBBE, ideology, and credibility. Two versions of the survey were administered to two similarly-constituted groups: specifically, two different sections of an undergraduate class at the University of Missouri. The only difference between the versions of the surveys was the brand name of the media outlets (CNN and Fox News Channel). The survey also gathered information about respondents' psychographics/demographics, their perceptions of the two media outlets, and their perceptions of the credibility of two news stories (a political and a non-political news story) ascribed to each of the two brands.

A total of 308 surveys were completed by the respondents. Students in section A of the undergraduate class completed 147 of the surveys, which asked respondents' opinions of Fox News Channel and the two news stories ascribed to the website of the

network (www.foxnews.com). The remaining 161 surveys, featuring questions about CNN and the two news stories ascribed to www.cnn.com, were completed by students in section B of the undergraduate class. The average age of the respondents who completed the survey featuring questions about CNN (hereafter, CNN group) was 18.81 with a standard deviation of 0.98 while the average age of the respondents' who completed the survey featuring questions about Fox News Channel (hereafter, FOX group) was 18.89 with a standard deviation of 1.00. The ages of the FOX group respondents ranged from 18 to 26 while that of the CNN group ranged from 17 to 26 (see table 4.1). The difference between the mean ages of the two groups was not statistically significant ($F = .004$, $p = .95$).

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics of respondents' age and ideology

Station Id		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CNN	Age	160	17	26	18.81	.98
	Ideology	159	1	7	4.60	1.57
FOX	Age	147	18	26	18.89	1.00
	Ideology	145	1	7	4.68	1.42

Using the ideological self-identification statement, the two groups were slightly liberal (CNN group mean = 4.60, SD = 1.57, $t = 4.80$, $p < .01$; FOX group mean = 4.68, SD = 1.42, $t = 5.72$, $p < .01$). However, the groups were not ideologically different from one another ($F = .135$, $p = .714$). Twenty eight percent of the CNN group respondents were male ($n = 45$) while 72% ($n = 116$) were female. On the other hand, 36% of the FOX group respondents were male ($n = 53$) while 64% ($n =$

94) were female. Ninety three percent of the CNN group respondents (n = 147) were Caucasians, 1.9% (n = 3) African Americans, 1.9% (n = 3) Hispanic/Latino, 1.9% (n = 3) Asian/Asian American, and 0.6% (n = 1) other. For the FOX group respondents, 87.8% (n = 129) were Caucasians, 5.4% (n = 8) African Americans, 0.7% (n = 1) Hispanic/Latino, 4.1% (n = 6) Asian/Asian American, and 0.7% (n = 1) other.

Variable measurements

The statements measuring media and message credibility were derived from Meyer's (1988) credibility scale. The constructs of brand equity were derived from Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) conceptualizations of brand equity. The statements measuring the brand equity in the survey were derived from Yoo and Donthu's (2001) brand equity scale, with a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, and 7 = strongly agree).

The response categories were coded so that agreement with the statements represented positive perceptions of the brand or higher levels of credibility. For the univariate analyses, conceptual indexes were computed by calculating the mean response to the statements measuring each construct. One sample t-tests were conducted to determine if the statement and index means are significantly different from the midpoint or assumed population mean (4.0). Accordingly, for all variables and constructs, a mean significantly below 4.0 represents disagreement with the statement or construct while a mean significantly above 4.0 represents agreement with the statement or construct.

Answering the research questions and hypotheses

The research questions and hypothesis were proposed in three distinct stages. The first stage (a set of four research questions) explores the differences between the

CNN and Fox News Channel on the concepts salient to this study. The analyses used in this stage are primarily descriptive; they consist of one-sample t-tests and one-way ANOVAs. The second stage (a set of five hypotheses) explores the relationships among the key concepts in the model (media credibility, CBBE, message credibility, and ideological congruency). The primary statistical method used for this analytical stage is hierarchical linear regression. The final stage uses hierarchical linear regression and Structural Equation Modeling to take a holistic look at the proposed model.

Stage 1: descriptives

The four research questions explore respondents' opinions of the two brands (CNN and Fox News Channel) and their perceptions of the differences between the brands on the key concepts in this study. Two sets of analyses were conducted to answer the research questions. The first set of analyses probes the extent to which the opinions of the respondents on each of the statements and construct indexes were significantly different from the assumed population mean (midpoint = 4.0). The primary statistical test used for this set of analyses was one sample t-tests, with 4.0 as the midpoint/assumed population mean. The second set of analyses was conducted with one-way ANOVA tests to evaluate the extent to which respondents' opinions of the two brands are similar or different. The one-way ANOVA tests were conducted with the conceptual indexes as the dependent variables and the station identifiers (CNN = 1, Fox News Channel = 2) as fixed factors.

Media credibility

For this study, media channel credibility is narrowly defined as audiences' perceptions of a news channel's believability, as distinct from the believability of individual journalists and sources, or the content of the news itself (Kiouisis, 2001; Bucy, 2003). The media channel credibility measure for this study includes five statements adapted from Meyer's (1988) credibility scale. The statements in the measure yielded Cronbach's alphas of 0.87 for the CNN group and 0.92 for the FOX group.

The respondents expressed statistically significant positive opinion of CNN on four of the five constructs of media channel credibility. They agreed that the network is fair (mean = 5.23), trustworthy (mean = 5.61), accurate (mean = 5.54), and comprehensive (mean = 5.53). Their opinion on the bias constructs was, however, not statistically significant (mean = 3.91). Overall, the respondents agreed significantly with the media channel credibility construct for CNN (mean = 5.15, see table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Respondents' perceptions of the media credibility of CNN and Fox News Channel

Media credibility statements	Mean	SD	t-value	N
CNN is generally fair in its reports.	5.23**	1.04	14.92	158
I can trust news from CNN.	5.61**	1.03	19.67	158
CNN is not biased.	3.91	1.18	-0.94	158
News from CNN is accurate.	5.54**	0.93	20.89	158
CNN presents comprehensive news reports.	5.53**	0.97	19.94	158
Media credibility index (CNN)	5.15**	0.83	17.75	158
Fox News Channel is generally fair in its reports.	3.46**	1.52	-4.29	145

I can trust news from Fox News Channel.	3.77	1.67	-1.69	145
Fox News Channel is not biased.	2.69**	1.42	-11.16	145
News from Fox News Channel is accurate.	4.32**	1.39	2.74	145
Fox News Channel presents comprehensive news reports.	4.33**	1.44	2.75	145
Media credibility index (Fox News Channel)	3.71**	1.30	-2.75	145

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

In contrast, the respondents expressed statistically significant negative opinions of the media channel credibility of Fox News Channel (mean = 3.71). They expressed negative opinions about the network's fairness (mean = 3.46) and balance (bias: mean = 2.69) but agreed that the network is accurate (mean = 4.32) and comprehensive (mean = 4.33). The trustworthiness measure was not statistically different from the midpoint (mean = 3.77).

The one-way ANOVA test shows that the respondents have statistically significant higher perception of CNN's credibility on all the media channel credibility constructs and the construct index.

Table 4.3: Test of significant difference between respondents' perceptions of the media credibility of Fox News Channel and CNN

Media channel credibility statements	Mean (Fox)	Mean (CNN)	F	S.E	P
Fox News Channel/CNN is generally fair in its reports.	3.46	5.23	142.66	0.09	0.00
I can trust news from Fox News Channel/CNN.	3.77	5.61	136.72	0.09	0.00
Fox News Channel/CNN is not biased.	2.69	3.91	67.56	0.07	0.00

News from Fox News Channel/CNN is accurate.	4.32	5.54	82.26	0.09	0.00
Fox News Channel/CNN presents comprehensive news reports.	4.33	5.53	73.77	0.07	0.00
Media channel credibility index (Fox News Channel/CNN)	3.71	5.15	139.00	0.08	0.00

Brand equity.

The brand equity measures for this study were derived from Yoo and Donthu's (2001) multidimensional brand equity scale and Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. The five constructs of the brand equity concept are perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, and brand personality.

Brand awareness. The brand awareness construct measures the extent to which respondents are aware of the two brands and can distinguish them from other news networks. Because only two statements were used to measure this construct, the bivariate correlation between the responses to the two statements was used as a measure of reliability (FOX group: $r = .46$; $p < .01$, CNN group: $r = .38$; $p < .01$). The respondents rated both brands highly on the brand awareness statements. They were more confident of their awareness of the two brands (Fox group mean = 6.16, CNN group mean = 6.25) than their ability to distinguish the brands from others in the same product category (Fox group mean = 5.89, CNN group mean = 5.88). The respondents agreed that they are equally aware of the two brands: the difference between the construct indexes of Fox News Channel and CNN on the brand awareness index was statistically insignificant (Fox group mean = 6.02, CNN group mean = 6.07, $F(306) = 0.23$, $p = 0.64$).

Table 4.4: Respondents' awareness of CNN and Fox News Channel

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	N
I am aware of CNN.	6.25**	0.75	38.06	159
I can distinguish CNN from other television news networks.	5.88**	1.04	22.70	159
Brand awareness index (CNN)	6.07**	0.75	34.81	159
I am aware of Fox News Channel.	6.16**	1.05	24.71	147
I can distinguish Fox News Channel from other television news networks.	5.89**	1.09	21.11	147
Brand awareness index (Fox News Channel)	6.02**	0.92	26.75	147

Note:

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4.5: Test of significant difference between respondents' awareness of Fox News Channel and CNN

	Mean (Fox News Channel)	Mean (CNN)	F	S.E	Sig.
I am aware of Fox News Channel/CNN.	6.16	6.25	0.82	0.07	0.37
I can distinguish Fox News Channel/CNN from other television news networks.	5.89	5.88	0.02	0.08	0.89
Brand awareness index	6.02	6.07	0.23	0.07	0.64

Brand association. The brand association construct explores the extent to which the respondents recognize the logos, news anchors, and other characteristics of

the news networks. The three-item brand association scale yielded Cronbach's alphas of 0.71 and 0.65 for the CNN and Fox groups, respectively.

The respondents agreed that they could easily recall some characteristics (Fox group mean = 5.43, CNN group mean = 5.22) and the logos (Fox group mean = 5.53, CNN group mean = 5.77) of both brands but found it more difficult to recall the news anchors on the networks (Fox group mean = 4.27, CNN group mean = 4.15). Overall, the respondents agreed that they could recognize some brand associations of the two brands: the difference between the construct indexes of Fox News Channel and CNN on the brand association index was statistically insignificant.

Table 4.6: Respondents' knowledge of CNN's and Fox News Channel's brand associations

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	N
Some characteristics of CNN come to my mind easily.	5.22**	1.30	11.84	160
I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of CNN.	5.77**	1.48	15.12	160
I know some of the news anchors on CNN.	4.15	1.80	1.05	160
Brand association index (CNN)	5.05**	1.22	10.88	160
Some characteristics of Fox News Channel come to my mind easily.	5.43**	1.31	13.18	147
I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of Fox News Channel.	5.53**	1.51	12.19	147
I know some of the news anchors on Fox News Channel.	4.27	1.86	1.73	147
Brand association index (Fox News Channel)	5.07**	1.21	10.73	147

Note:

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4.7: Test of significant difference between respondents' knowledge of Fox News

Channel's and CNN's brand associations

	Mean (Fox News Channel)	Mean (CNN)	F	S.E	Sig.
Some characteristics of Fox News Channel/CNN come to my mind easily.	5.43	5.22	2.02	0.06	0.16
I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of Fox News Channel/CNN.	5.53	5.77	2.06	0.07	0.15
I know some of the news anchors on Fox News Channel/CNN.	4.27	4.15	0.30	0.09	0.59
Brand association index	5.07	5.05	0.03	0.07	0.87

Brand loyalty. The brand loyalty measure consists of three statements (CNN group's Cronbach's alpha = .77, FOX group's Cronbach's alpha = .80). The statements probe the extent to which the networks are the first choice of the respondents, the level of their attachment to the networks, and the level of their loyalty to the networks. In general, the respondents did not express high levels of brand loyalty to the networks. They did not express a statistically significant opinion about their propensity to choose CNN first (CNN mean = 4.34) but agreed that Fox News Channel would not be their first choice for receiving news (FOX mean = 2.68). In addition, the respondents are neither attached (CNN mean = 2.66, Fox mean = 2.14) nor loyal (CNN mean = 3.24, Fox mean = 2.31) to the two brands. The respondents, however, expressed lower level of loyalty to the Fox News Channel brand than the CNN brand. They are significantly more likely to choose CNN first, more attached to the CNN brand, and expressed more loyalty to the CNN brand. In general, the CNN

brand did better on the brand loyalty construct ($F(307) = 54.52, p < .01$) than the Fox News Channel brand.

Table 4.8: Respondents' brand loyalty to CNN and Fox News Channel

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	N
CNN would be my first choice for news.	4.34	1.76	2.42	160
I will not listen to news from other sources if news from CNN is available.	2.66**	1.27	-13.34	160
I am loyal to CNN.	3.24**	1.43	-6.69	160
Brand loyalty index (CNN)	3.41**	1.24	-5.97	160
Fox News Channel would be my first choice for news.	2.68**	1.73	-9.23	147
I will not listen to news from other sources if news from Fox News Channel is available.	2.14**	1.21	-18.69	147
I am loyal to Fox News Channel.	2.31**	1.39	-14.80	147
Brand loyalty index (Fox News Channel)	2.37**	1.23	-16.08	147

Note:

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4.9: Test of significant difference between respondents' brand loyalty to Fox News Channel and CNN

	Mean (Fox News Channel)	Mean (CNN)	F	S.E	Sig.
Fox News Channel/CNN would be my first choice for news.	2.68	4.34	68.89	0.06	0.00
I will not listen to news from other sources if news from Fox News Channel/CNN is available.	2.14	2.66	13.49	0.09	0.00
I am loyal to Fox News Channel/CNN.	2.31	3.24	33.86	0.09	0.00

Brand loyalty index	2.37	3.41	54.52	0.08	0.00
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Brand personality. The brand personality measure was derived from Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. The measure was reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80 for the CNN group and 0.76 for the FOX group. The respondents expressed statistically significant positive perception of CNN's brand personality (CNN brand personality index mean = 4.91). They agreed that the brand is sincere (mean = 4.62), exciting (mean = 4.53), competent (mean = 5.31), and sophisticated (mean = 5.17). In contrast, the respondents' opinion of Fox News Channel's brand personality was not statistically significant (mean = 4.04). They agreed significantly that the brand is not sincere (mean = 3.75) but is exciting (mean = 4.53). They however did not express statistically significant opinion about the brand's competence (mean = 4.10) and sophistication (mean = 3.84).

The respondents' opinion of the brand personality index of CNN was significantly higher than that of Fox News Channel (CNN = 4.91 vs. FOX = 4.04). They agreed that CNN is more sincere, more competent, and more sophisticated than Fox News Channel. However, the difference between respondents' opinion about the two brands on the 'exciting' statement was not statistically significant ($F(305) = 0.14$, $p = .71$).

Table 4.10: Respondents' perceptions of the brand personality of CNN and Fox News Channel

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	N
CNN is sincere.	4.62**	1.01	7.74	158
CNN is exciting.	4.53**	1.18	5.71	158
CNN is competent.	5.31**	1.05	15.79	158

CNN is sophisticated.	5.17**	1.10	13.44	158
Brand personality index (CNN)	4.91**	0.85	13.43	158
Fox News Channel is sincere.	3.75**	1.32	-2.26	147
Fox News Channel is exciting.	4.48**	1.40	4.13	147
Fox News Channel is competent.	4.10	1.49	0.83	147
Fox News Channel is sophisticated.	3.84	1.39	-1.42	147
Brand personality index (Fox News Channel)	4.04	1.07	0.49	147

Note:

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4.11: Test of significant difference between respondents' perceptions of Fox News Channel's and CNN's brand personality

	Mean (Fox News Channel)	Mean (CNN)	F	S.E	Sig.
Fox News Channel/CNN is sincere.	3.75	4.62	41.84	0.07	0.00
Fox News Channel/CNN is exciting.	4.48	4.53	0.14	0.08	0.71
Fox News Channel/CNN is competent.	4.10	5.31	67.57	0.09	0.00
Fox News Channel/CNN is sophisticated.	3.84	5.17	86.89	0.09	0.00
Brand personality index	4.04	4.91	61.74	0.09	0.00

Perceived quality. The perceived quality measure was derived from Yoo and Donthu's (2001) brand equity scale. The measure was reliable, with a Cronbach's alphas of 0.89 for the CNN group and 0.92 for the FOX group. The respondents expressed statistically significant positive perception of CNN's quality (CNN index mean = 5.76). They agreed that the network presents high quality (mean = 5.71), reliable (mean = 5.81), and useful news (mean = 5.78). Similarly, the respondents' perception of Fox News Channel' quality was positive and statistically significant

(mean = 4.29). They agreed significantly that the network presents useful news (mean = 4.68) but did not express statistically significant opinion about the quality (mean = 4.08) and reliability (mean = 4.12) of news from the brand.

The respondents' opinion of the news quality of CNN was significant higher than that of Fox News Channel (CNN = 5.76 vs. FOX = 4.29). They agreed that the quality, reliability, and usefulness of news from CNN is greater than that of news from Fox News Channel.

Table 4.12: Respondents' perceptions of the quality of news from CNN and Fox News Channel

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	N
CNN presents high quality news.	5.71 **	0.96	22.59	160
News from CNN is reliable.	5.81**	0.87	26.41	160
News from CNN is useful.	5.78 **	0.90	25.00	160
Perceived quality index (CNN)	5.76 **	0.82	27.18	160
Fox News Channel presents high quality news.	4.08	1.56	0.64	146
News from Fox News Channel is reliable.	4.12	1.57	0.89	146
News from Fox News Channel is useful.	4.68 **	1.41	5.79	146
Perceived quality index (Fox News Network)	4.29**	1.41	2.52	146

Note:

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4.13: Test of significant difference between respondents' perceptions of the quality of news from Fox News Channel and CNN

	Mean (Fox News Channel)	Mean (CNN)	F	S.E	Sig.

Fox News Channel/CNN presents high quality news.	4.08	5.71	122.86	0.08	0.00
News from Fox News Channel/CNN is reliable.	4.12	5.81	138.63	0.09	0.00
News from Fox News Channel/CNN is useful.	4.68	5.78	67.11	0.06	0.00
Perceived quality index	4.29	5.76	127.34	0.08	0.00

Media Use

Three constructs—attention, exposure, and reliance—consistently used by researchers (Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986; Moy, McCluskey, McCoy, & Spratt, 2004; Sotirovic, 2001) to measure media use were used to derive the measure for this study. The measure was reliable, with Chrobach’s alphas of 0.85 for the CNN group and 0.87 for the FOX group. The respondents agreed significantly that they pay attention to CNN (mean = 4.67) but do not watch it regularly (mean = 3.38) and do not rely on it for news (mean = 3.83). They, also, do not pay attention to Fox News Channel (mean = 3.73), do not watch it regularly (mean = 2.64), and do not rely on it for news (mean = 2.65). The respondents are significantly more likely to use CNN than Fox News Channel.

Table 4.14: Respondents’ use of CNN and Fox News Channel

	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	N
I pay attention to CNN	4.67**	1.38	6.12	160
I watch CNN regularly	3.38**	1.56	-5.08	160
I rely on CNN for news and information	3.83	1.68	-1.27	160
Media use index (CNN)	3.96	1.35	-0.40	160
I pay attention to Fox News Channel	3.73	1.69	-1.90	147

I watch Fox News Channel regularly	2.64**	1.51	-10.94	147
I rely on Fox News Channel for news and information	2.65**	1.59	-10.27	147
Media use index (Fox News Channel)	3.01**	1.43	-8.40	147

Note:

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4.15: Test of significant difference between respondents' use of Fox News Channel and CNN

	Mean (Fox News Channel)	Mean (CNN)	F	S.E	Sig.
I pay attention to Fox News Channel/CNN	3.73	4.67	28.31	0.07	0.00
I watch Fox News Channel/CNN regularly	2.64	3.38	17.62	0.09	0.00
I rely on Fox News Channel/CNN for news and information	2.65	3.83	39.44	0.06	0.00
Media use index	3.01	3.96	35.71	0.07	0.00

Political message credibility

For this study, political message credibility is defined as the believability of a political news message, as distinct from the believability of individual journalists and sources, and media organizations. The political message credibility measure for this study comprises five statements adapted from Meyer's (1988) credibility scale. The statements in the measure yielded Cronbach's alphas of 0.80 for the CNN group and 0.86 for the FOX group. The respondents in the CNN group expressed statistically significant opinion that the political news from the station is fair (mean = 4.54), accurate (mean = 4.95), comprehensive (mean = 4.48), and believable (mean = 5.31) but did not express statistically significant opinion about the level of bias in the story (mean = 3.82). They agreed significantly that the political news from CNN is credible

(mean = 4.62). In contrast, the FOX group respondents expressed statistically significant agreement that the political news ascribed to Fox News Channel was unfair (mean = 3.68) and biased (mean = 3.43), despite the fact that it is accurate (mean = 4.46) and believable (mean = 4.66). They however did not express statistically significant opinion about the message's comprehensiveness (mean = 4.10) and the political message credibility index (mean = 4.07). In general, the respondents ascribed a higher level of credibility to the political news message when attributed to CNN than when it is attributed to Fox News Channel.

Table 4.16: Respondents' perceptions of the message credibility of the political news story

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	N
The news story I just read from www.CNN.com is fair.	4.54**	1.25	5.51	160
The news story I just read from www.CNN.com is not biased.	3.82	1.32	-1.73	160
The news story I just read from www.CNN.com is accurate	4.95**	0.94	12.66	160
The new story I just read from www.CNN.com is comprehensive	4.48**	1.38	4.38	160
I believe the news story I just read from www.CNN.com.	5.31**	1.13	14.66	160
Political message credibility index (CNN)	4.62**	0.90	8.64	160
The news story I just read from www.foxnews.com is fair.	3.68**	1.44	-2.66	145
The news story I just read from www.foxnews.com is not biased.	3.43**	1.50	-4.58	145
The news story I just read from www.foxnews.com is accurate	4.46**	1.29	4.31	145
The new story I just read from www.foxnews.com is comprehensive	4.10	1.54	0.81	145
I believe the news story I just read from www.foxnews.com.	4.66**	1.24	6.41	145

Political message credibility index (Fox News Channel)	4.07	1.13	0.72	145
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Note:

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4.17: Test of significant difference between respondents' perceptions of message credibility of the political news story

Variables	Mean (Fox News Channel)	Mean (CNN)	F	S.E	p
The news story I just read from www.CNN/foxnews.com is fair.	3.68	4.54	31.34	0.09	0.00
The news story I just read from www.CNN/foxnews.com is not biased.	3.43	3.82	5.85	0.06	0.02
The news story I just read from www.CNN/foxnews.com is accurate	4.46	4.95	14.20	0.08	0.00
The new story I just read from www.CNN/foxnews.com is comprehensive	4.10	4.48	5.03	0.08	0.03
I believe the news story I just read from www.CNN/foxnews.com.	4.66	5.31	22.53	0.07	0.00
Political message credibility index	4.07	4.62	22.31	0.08	0.00

Non-political message credibility

For this study, non-political message credibility is defined as the believability of a non-political news message, as distinct from the believability of individual journalists and sources, and media organizations. The non-political message credibility measure for this study comprised of five statements adapted from Meyer's (1988) credibility scale. The statements in the measure yielded Cronbach's alphas of 0.85 for the CNN group and 0.89 for the FOX group. The respondents in the CNN group expressed statistically significant opinion that the non-political news from the network is fair (mean = 4.96), unbiased (mean = 4.38), accurate (mean = 5.14), comprehensive

(mean = 4.86), and believable (mean = 5.23). They agreed significantly that the non-political news ascribed to CNN is credible (mean = 4.91). Once again, the FOX group respondents expressed statistically significant agreement that the non-political news ascribed to Fox News Channel was accurate (mean = 4.35) and believable (mean = 4.3) but did not express statistically significant opinion about its fairness (mean = 4.02), bias (mean = 3.94), and comprehensiveness (mean = 4.26). They also did not express statistically significant opinion about the non-political message credibility index of Fox News Channel (mean = 4.20). In general, the respondents ascribed a higher level of credibility to the political news message when attributed to CNN than when it is attributed to Fox News Channel.

Table 4.18: Respondents’ perceptions of the message credibility of the non-political news story

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	N
The news story I just read from www.CNN.com is fair.	4.96**	1.30	9.34	160
The news story I just read from www.CNN.com is not biased.	4.38**	1.54	3.14	160
The news story I just read from www.CNN.com is accurate	5.14**	1.04	13.85	159
The new story I just read from www.CNN.com is comprehensive	4.86**	1.31	8.26	160
I believe the news story I just read from www.CNN.com.	5.23**	1.23	12.66	160
Political message credibility index (CNN)	4.91**	1.02	11.34	160
The news story I just read from www.foxnews.com is fair.	4.02	1.50	0.17	142
The news story I just read from www.foxnews.com is not biased.	3.94	1.51	-0.50	143
The news story I just read from www.foxnews.com is accurate	4.35**	1.38	2.97	142

The new story I just read from www.foxnews.com is comprehensive	4.26	1.62	1.92	142
I believe the news story I just read from www.foxnews.com.	4.43**	1.51	3.38	143
Political message credibility index (Fox News Channel)	4.20	1.25	1.89	143

Note:

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4.19: Test of significant difference between respondents' perceptions of message credibility of the non-political news story

Variables	Mean (FNC)	Mean (CNN)	F	S.E	P
The news story I just read from www.CNN/foxnews.com is fair.	4.96	4.02	33.82	0.07	0.00
The news story I just read from www.CNN/foxnews.com is not biased.	4.38	3.94	6.42	0.07	0.01
The news story I just read from www.CNN/foxnews.com is accurate	5.14	4.35	32.46	0.09	0.00
The new story I just read from www.CNN/foxnews.com is comprehensive	4.86	4.26	12.45	0.09	0.00
I believe the news story I just read from www.CNN/foxnews.com.	5.23	4.43	26.12	0.09	0.00
Political message credibility index	4.91	4.20	30.12	0.09	0.00

Ideological congruency

The ideological congruency measure was derived from respondents' perception of the congruency between their personal worldview and that of the cable networks: this conceptualization of ideology has substantial support in political science and mass communication literature (Jacoby, 1995; Achen, 1975; Brown,

1970). The statements in the measure yielded Cronbach's alphas of 0.67 for the CNN group and 0.83 for the FOX group.

The respondents in the CNN group expressed ideological congruency with CNN on the role of religion in politics (mean = 4.37). They however felt that CNN's worldview is different from theirs on gay marriage (mean = 3.79) but did not differ significantly from the brand on abortion (mean = 4.02) and the ideological congruency index (mean = 3.87). In contrast, the respondents in the FOX group did not express ideological congruency with the network on any of the issues: the legality of gay marriage (mean = 3.46) and abortion (mean = 3.49), the role of religion in politics (mean = 2.52), and the ideological congruency index (mean = 3.40). In general, the respondents expressed a statistically significant higher level of ideological congruency with CNN than Fox News Channel.

Table 4.20: Respondents' ideological congruency with CNN and Fox News Channel

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	N
I think CNN agrees with my view on gay marriage.	3.79**	0.92	-2.94	159
I think CNN agrees with my view on abortion.	4.02	0.99	0.24	159
I think CNN agrees with my view on the role of religion in politic.	4.37*	1.20	3.79	152
Ideological congruency index (CNN)	3.87	0.72	-2.31	156
I think Fox News Channel agrees with my view on gay marriage.	3.46**	1.48	-4.43	146
I think Fox News Channel agrees with my view on abortion.	3.49**	1.40	-4.43	147
I think Fox News Channel agrees with my view on the role of religion in politic.	2.52**	1.39	-12.69	141

Ideological congruency index (Fox News Channel)	3.40**	1.23	-5.88	146
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Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4.21: Test of significant difference between respondents’ ideological congruency with CNN and Fox News Channel

Variables	Mean (FNC)	Mean (CNN)	F	S.E	p
I think CNN/Fox News Channel agrees with my view on gay marriage.	3.46	3.79	19.62	0.08	0.00
I think CNN/Fox News Channel agrees with my view on abortion.	3.49	4.02	5.50	0.07	0.02
I think CNN/Fox News Channel agrees with my view on the role of religion in politic.	2.52	4.37	14.78	0.06	0.00
Ideological congruency index (CNN/Fox News Channel)	3.40	3.87	16.51	0.08	0.00

Stage 2: Analytical

The second set of hypotheses explores the relationships among concepts salient to this study. This analytical section relies primarily on hierarchical regression analysis to evaluate the effects of the predictor variables (CBBE and ideological congruency) and the control variables (media use, demographics, and involvement) on the dependent variables (media credibility and message credibility).

Hypothesis 1

H1: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between audiences’ perception of a news media outlet’s CBBE and their perception of its media credibility.

The first hypothesis explores the effects of CBBE on media credibility. To test the hypothesis, a hierarchical regression analysis with the control variables entered in

the first stage and the five constructs of CBBE (brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand personality) in the second stage was conducted. The dependent variable was media credibility. As predicted, CBBE explained a statistically significant portion of the variance in media credibility for both Fox News Channel (82%) and CNN (71%) after controlling for the effects of the confounding variables.

For CNN, perceived quality (beta = .58), brand loyalty (beta = 0.20), and brand personality (beta = 0.19) were significant predictors of media credibility. The effect of brand awareness and brand association were not statistically significant. Similarly, the significant predictors of media credibility for Fox News Channel were perceived quality (beta = .59), brand loyalty (beta = 0.30), brand personality (beta = 0.10), and brand association (beta = -.010). Only the effect of brand awareness was not statistically significant. The negative effect of brand association on media credibility for the FOX group is an unexpected finding of this analysis. Contrary to the prediction of the CBBE theory, the more the respondents know about the brand associations (news anchors, logos etc.) of Fox News Channel, the lower their perception of its media credibility.

Table 4.22 - Model summary: regression analysis of CBBE on media credibility

Station	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
CNN	1.00	0.09	0.01	-0.01	0.40	0.76
	2.00	0.84	0.71	0.70	45.28	0.00
FOX	1.00	0.13	0.02	0.00	0.79	0.50
	2.00	0.91	0.82	0.81	77.64	0.00

Dependent variable: Media credibility

Model 1 - Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity, Gender, Age

Model 2 - Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Perceived quality, Brand association, Brand awareness, Brand loyalty, Brand personality

Table 4.23 - Coefficients: regression analysis of CBBE on media credibility

	Model		Beta	T	Sig.
CNN	1.00	Gender	0.03	0.42	0.67
		Age	-0.04	-0.52	0.60
		Ethnicity	-0.07	-0.83	0.41
	2.00	Gender	0.02	0.45	0.65
		Age	-0.06	-1.36	0.18
		Ethnicity	-0.06	-1.39	0.17
		Perceived Quality	0.58	9.73	0.00
		Brand Loyalty	0.20	3.45	0.00
		Brand Awareness	0.02	0.44	0.66
		Brand Association	-0.08	-1.48	0.14
Brand Personality	0.19	2.97	0.00		
FOX	1.00	Gender	0.08	1.00	0.32
		Age	0.11	1.24	0.22
		Ethnicity	-0.02	-0.28	0.78
	2.00	Gender	0.01	0.14	0.89
		Age	0.02	0.48	0.63
		Ethnicity	-0.03	-0.68	0.50
		Perceived Quality	0.59	10.24	0.00
		Brand Loyalty	0.30	5.69	0.00
		Brand Awareness	0.04	0.87	0.39
		Brand Association	-0.10	-2.21	0.03
Brand Personality	0.10	1.71	0.09		

Hypothesis 2

H2: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between audiences' perception of a news media outlet's CBBE and their perception of the message credibility of political news stories from the media outlet.

The second hypothesis predicts that audiences' perception of the message credibility of political news stories will be positively related to their perception of the CBBE of the media outlet responsible for the message. To evaluate the effect of CBBE on message credibility, a hierarchical regression analysis with the demographic control variables entered in the first stage, the involvement control variable entered in the second stage, and the five constructs of CBBE (brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand personality) entered in the third stage was conducted. The dependent variable was the message credibility of the political news story.

As predicted by the hypothesis, audiences' perception of CBBE explained a statistically significant 18% and 46% of the variance in the message credibility of the political news stories ascribed to CNN and Fox News Channel, respectively. Perceived quality (beta =0.28), brand loyalty (beta = 0.20), and brand association (beta = 0.20) were significant predictors of political message credibility for CNN while the significant predictors of political message credibility for Fox News Channel were perceived quality (beta = 0.25), brand loyalty (beta = 0.27), brand awareness (beta = 0.14), and brand personality (beta = 0.18).

Table 4.24 - Model summary: regression analysis of CBBE on political news message credibility

Station	Model	R	R Square	F	Sig.
CNN	1.00	0.15	0.02	1.24	0.30
	2.00	0.17	0.03	1.15	0.33
	3.00	0.42	0.18	3.54	0.00
FOX	1.00	0.14	0.02	0.97	0.41
	2.00	0.31	0.10	3.79	0.01
	3.00	0.68	0.46	12.73	0.00

Dependent variable: Political message credibility
 Model 1 - Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity, Gender, Age

Table 4.25 - Coefficients: regression analysis of CBBE on political news message credibility

Station		Beta	t	Sig.
CNN	Gender	-0.11	-1.40	0.16
	Age	0.00	-0.04	0.97
	Ethnicity	-0.12	-1.62	0.11
	Involvement	0.00	0.04	0.97
	Perceived quality	0.28	2.76	0.01
	Brand loyalty	0.20	2.06	0.04
	Brand awareness	-0.01	-0.10	0.92
	Brand association	0.20	2.16	0.03
	Brand personality	-0.12	-1.08	0.28
FOX	Gender	-0.10	-1.48	0.14
	Age	-0.03	-0.47	0.64
	Ethnicity	-0.03	-0.51	0.61
	Involvement	0.14	1.98	0.05
	Perceived quality	0.25	2.50	0.01
	Brand loyalty	0.27	2.86	0.00
	Brand awareness	0.14	1.79	0.08
	Brand association	0.05	0.60	0.55
	Brand personality	0.18	1.72	0.09

Hypothesis 3

H3: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between audiences' perception of a news media outlet's CBBE and their perception of the message credibility of non-political news stories from the media outlet.

The third hypothesis predicts that audiences' perception of the message credibility of non-political news stories will be positively related to their perception of the CBBE of the media outlet responsible for the message. To evaluate the effect of CBBE on message credibility, a hierarchical regression analysis with the demographic control variables entered in the first stage, the involvement control variable entered in the second stage, and the five constructs of CBBE (brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand personality) entered in the third stage was conducted. The dependent variable was the message credibility of the non-political news story.

As predicted by the hypothesis, audiences' perception of CBBE explained a statistically significant 23% and 44% of the variance in the message credibility of the non-political news stories ascribed to CNN and Fox News Channel, respectively. Perceived quality (beta =0.28) and issue involvement, a control variable, (beta = 0.27) were significant predictors of non-political message credibility for CNN while the significant predictors of non-political message credibility for Fox News Channel were perceived quality (beta = 0.22) and brand loyalty (beta = 0.28).

Table 4.26 - Model summary: regression analysis of CBBE on non-political news message credibility

Station	Model	R	R Square	F	Sig.
CNN	1.00	0.18	0.03	1.71	0.17
	2.00	0.38	0.14	6.20	0.00
	3.00	0.48	0.23	4.85	0.00
FOX	1.00	0.11	0.01	0.54	0.66
	2.00	0.23	0.05	1.82	0.13
	3.00	0.67	0.44	11.63	0.00

Dependent Variable: Message credibility (non-political)
 Model 1: Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age
 Model 2: Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Involvement

Table 4.27 - Coefficients: regression analysis of CBBE on non-political news message credibility

Station		Beta	t	Sig.
CNN	Gender	0.02	0.27	0.79
	Age	-0.14	-1.93	0.06
	Ethnicity	-0.12	-1.65	0.10
	Involvement	0.27	3.63	0.00
	Perceived quality	0.29	3.02	0.00
	Brand loyalty	0.06	0.61	0.54
	Brand awareness	0.03	0.39	0.69
	Brand association	0.06	0.71	0.48
	Brand personality	-0.05	-0.51	0.61
FOX	Gender	-0.05	-0.74	0.46
	Age	-0.07	-1.07	0.29
	Ethnicity	-0.09	-1.38	0.17
	Involvement	-0.08	-1.22	0.22
	Perceived quality	0.22	2.17	0.03
	Brand loyalty	0.28	3.00	0.00
	Brand awareness	0.05	0.66	0.51
	Brand association	-0.05	-0.59	0.56
	Brand personality	0.22	2.00	0.05

Hypothesis 4

H4: Audiences' perceptions of the ideological congruency between their own personal worldview and that of a media outlet will be positively related to their perception of the media credibility of that media outlet.

The fourth hypothesis explores the effects of ideological congruency on media credibility. To test the hypothesis, a hierarchical regression analysis with the control variables entered in the first stage and the three constructs of ideological congruency (ideological congruency on the legality of abortion and gay marriage, and the role of religion in politics) in the second stage was conducted. The dependent variable was media credibility. As predicted, ideological congruency explained a statistically significant portion of the variance in media credibility for both Fox News Channel (23%) and CNN (11%) after controlling for the effects of the confounding variables.

For CNN, respondents' perception of the ideological congruency between the network's and their views of gay marriage was the significant predictor (beta = .25) while ideological congruency on gay marriage (beta = .29) and the role of religion in politics predicted media credibility for Fox News Channel (beta = .28).

Table 4.28 - Model summary: regression analysis of ideological congruency on media credibility

Station	Model	R	R Square	F	Sig.
CNN	1.00	0.09	0.01	0.42	0.74
	2.00	0.34	0.11	3.14	0.01
FOX	1.00	0.13	0.02	0.74	0.53
	2.00	0.57	0.33	11.23	0.00

Dependent variable: Media credibility

Model 1 - Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age

Model 2 - Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Gay marriage (IC), Abortion (IC), Religion (IC)

Table 4.29 - Coefficients: regression analysis of ideological congruency on media credibility

Station	Model	Variable	Beta	t	Sig.
CNN	1.00	Gender	0.01	0.14	0.89
		Age	-0.06	-0.69	0.49
		Ethnicity	-0.07	-0.90	0.37
	2.00	Gender	0.07	0.84	0.40
		Age	0.00	0.03	0.97

		Ethnicity	-0.05	-0.60	0.55
		Gay marriage (IC)	0.25	2.76	0.01
		Abortion (IC)	0.04	0.37	0.72
		Religion (IC)	0.13	1.41	0.16
FOX	1.00	Gender	0.08	0.93	0.36
		Age	0.10	1.23	0.22
		Ethnicity	-0.02	-0.29	0.77
	2.00	Gender	0.08	1.18	0.24
		Age	0.04	0.50	0.62
		Ethnicity	-0.08	-1.13	0.26
		Gay marriage (IC)	0.29	2.84	0.01
		Abortion (IC)	0.06	0.62	0.53
		Religion (IC)	0.28	2.66	0.01

Hypothesis 5

H5: Audiences' perceptions of the ideological congruency between their own personal worldview and that of a media outlet will be positively related to their perception of the message credibility of political news stories from that media outlet.

The fifth hypothesis predicts that audiences' perception of the message credibility of political news stories will be positively related to their perception of the ideological congruency between their personal worldview and that of the media outlet responsible for the message. To evaluate the effect of ideological congruency on political message credibility, a hierarchical regression analysis with the demographic control variables entered in the first stage, the involvement control variable entered in

the second stage, and the three constructs of ideological congruency (ideological congruency on the legality of abortion and gay marriage, and the role of religion in politics) entered in the third stage was conducted. The dependent variable was the message credibility of the political news story.

The fifth hypothesis was only partially supported. Contrary to the hypothesis, ideological congruency was not a significant predictor of audiences’ perception of political message credibility for CNN—ideological congruency on the legality of abortion (beta = 0.15, p = 0.17), gay marriage (beta = -0.12, p = 0.22), and the role of religion in politics (beta = 0.10, p < 0.30). Ideological congruency was however a significant predictor of political message credibility for Fox News Channel Network (F = 5.84, p < .01). The significant predictor of political message credibility was ideological congruency on the legality of gay marriage (beta = 0.26, p < 0.05).

Table 4.30 - Model summary: regression analysis of ideological congruency on political news message credibility

Station	Model	R	R Square	F	Sig.
CNN	1.00	0.16	0.02	1.26	0.29
	2.00	0.18	0.03	1.20	0.31
	3.00	0.26	0.07	1.53	0.16
FOX	1.00	0.15	0.02	1.00	0.39
	2.00	0.31	0.10	3.74	0.01
	3.00	0.48	0.23	5.84	0.00

Dependent Variable: Message credibility (political)
 Model 1: Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age
 Model 2: Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Involvement
 Model 3: Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Involvement, Gay marriage (IC), Abortion (IC), Religion (IC)

Table 4.31 - Coefficients: regression analysis of ideological congruency on political news message credibility

Station	Variables	Beta	t	Sig.
CNN	Gender	-0.12	-1.44	0.15
	Age	0.00	0.03	0.98
	Ethnicity	-0.08	-0.95	0.34
	Involvement	-0.07	-0.75	0.45
	Gay marriage (IC)	-0.12	-1.23	0.22
	Abortion (IC)	0.15	1.38	0.17
	Religion (IC)	0.10	1.05	0.30
FOX	Gender	-0.08	-1.06	0.29
	Age	0.00	0.00	1.00
	Ethnicity	-0.11	-1.47	0.14
	Involvement	0.18	2.17	0.03
	Gay marriage (IC)	0.26	2.33	0.02
	Abortion (IC)	-0.01	-0.06	0.95
	Religion (IC)	0.16	1.41	0.16

Hypothesis 6

H6: Audiences' perceptions of the ideological congruency between their own personal worldview and that of a media outlet will be positively related to their perception of the message credibility of non-political news stories from that media outlet.

The sixth hypothesis predicts that audiences' perception of the message credibility of non-political news stories will be positively related to their perception of the ideological congruency between their worldview and that of the media outlet

responsible for the message. To evaluate the effect of ideological congruency on non-political message credibility, a hierarchical regression analysis with the demographic control variables entered in the first stage, the involvement control variable entered in the second stage, and the three constructs of ideological congruency (ideological congruency on the legality of abortion and gay marriage and the role of religion in politics) entered in the third stage was conducted. The dependent variable was the message credibility of the non-political news story.

Just like the fifth hypothesis, the sixth hypothesis was only partially supported. Contrary to the hypothesis, ideological congruency was not a significant predictor of audiences' perception of non-political message credibility for CNN—ideological congruency on the legality of abortion (beta = -0.07, p = 0.41), gay marriage (beta = 0.13, p = 0.17), and the role of religion in politics (beta = 0.11, p < 0.26). Ideological congruency was however a significant predictor political message credibility for Fox News Channel Network (F = 7.26, p < .01). The significant predictor of political message credibility was ideological congruency on the legality of gay marriage (beta = 0.24, p < 0.05).

Table 4.32 - Model summary: regression analysis of ideological congruency on non-political news message credibility

Station	Model	R	R Square	F	Sig.
CNN	1.00	0.17	0.03	1.55	0.20
	2.00	0.38	0.15	6.24	0.00
	3.00	0.42	0.18	4.48	0.00
FOX	1.00	0.12	0.01	0.61	0.61
	2.00	0.22	0.05	1.77	0.14
	3.00	0.53	0.28	7.26	0.00

Dependent Variable: Message credibility (non-political)
 Model 1: Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age
 Model 2: Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Involvement

Table 4.33 - Coefficients: regression analysis of ideological congruency on non-political news message credibility

Station	Variables	Beta	T	Sig.
CNN	Gender	0.06	0.75	0.45
	Age	-0.12	-1.41	0.16
	Ethnicity	-0.09	-1.12	0.26
	Involvement	0.29	3.62	0.00
	Gay marriage (IC)	-0.07	-0.82	0.41
	Abortion (IC)	0.11	1.13	0.26
	Religion (IC)	0.13	1.39	0.17
FOX	Gender	-0.05	-0.66	0.51
	Age	-0.06	-0.84	0.40
	Ethnicity	-0.16	-2.16	0.03
	Involvement	-0.17	-2.21	0.03
	Gay marriage (IC)	0.24	2.18	0.03
	Abortion (IC)	0.14	1.46	0.15
	Religion (IC)	0.18	1.51	0.13

Stage 3: Modeling

The third stage of analysis takes a holistic view of the CBM by evaluating the mutual effects of CBBE and ideological congruency on media and message credibility.

Hypothesis 7

H7: When all the variables in the model are considered simultaneously, ideological congruency and CBBE will be the strongest predictors of

media credibility.

The seventh hypothesis states that CBBE and ideological congruency would have the most effect, among all the variables considered, on media credibility. To test the hypothesis, a hierarchical regression analysis with the control variables entered in the first stage, media use entered in the second stage, the ideological congruency and CBBE indexes in the third. As predicted, CBBE and ideological congruency were the strongest predictors of media credibility for both Fox News Channel (ideological congruency beta = 0.30, CBBE beta = 0.56) and CNN (ideological congruency beta = 0.14, CBBE beta = 0.68). Ideological congruency however had more effect on the media credibility of Fox News Channel than that of CNN while CBBE had more effect on the media credibility of CNN.

Table 4.34 - Model summary: regression analysis of CBBE and ideological congruency on media credibility

	Model	R	R Square	F	Sig.
CNN	1	0.09	0.01	0.42	0.74
	2	0.42	0.18	7.99	0.00
	3	0.47	0.22	8.39	0.00
	4	0.65	0.42	17.58	0.00
FOX	1	0.13	0.02	0.74	0.53
	2	0.59	0.35	18.51	0.00
	3	0.70	0.49	26.65	0.00
	4	0.77	0.60	33.94	0.00

Model 1 Predictors: (Constant), ethnicity, gender, age

Model 2 Predictors: (Constant), ethnicity, gender, age, Media use

Model 3 Predictors: (Constant), ethnicity, gender, age, Media use, Ideological congruency

Model 4 Predictors: (Constant), ethnicity, gender, age, Media use, Ideological congruency, CBBE

Table 4.35 - Coefficients: regression analysis of ideological congruency and CBBE on media credibility

	Variables	Beta	t	Sig.
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CNN	Age	-0.04	-0.54	0.59
	Gender	0.11	1.68	0.10
	Ethnicity	-0.08	-1.31	0.19
	Media use	-0.12	-1.26	0.21
	Ideological congruency	0.14	2.10	0.04
	CBBE	0.68	7.04	0.00
Fox	Age	-0.01	-0.26	0.79
	Gender	0.10	1.75	0.08
	Ethnicity	0.02	0.36	0.72
	Media use	0.08	0.95	0.34
	Ideological congruency	0.30	5.03	0.00
	CBBE	0.53	6.03	0.00

Hypothesis 8

H8: When all the variables in the model are considered simultaneously, ideological congruency and CBBE will be the strongest predictors of message credibility.

The eighth hypothesis states that CBBE and ideological congruency would have the most effect, among all the variables considered, on message credibility. To test the hypothesis, two hierarchical regression analyses with the control variables entered in the first stage, media use entered in the second stage, the ideological congruency and CBBE indexes in the third were conducted. The dependent variables in the two regression models were (a) the message credibility of the political news story and (b) the message credibility of the non-political news stories.

The eighth hypothesis was only partially supported: ideological congruency was not a significant predictor of message credibility for CNN but was a significant predictor of message credibility for Fox News Channel (both political and non-political news stories).

Table 4.36 - Model summary: regression analysis of CBBE and ideological congruency on political news message credibility

	Model	R	R Square	F	Sig.
CNN	1.00	0.16	0.02	1.26	0.29
	2.00	0.29	0.09	3.48	0.01
	3.00	0.30	0.09	2.88	0.02
	4.00	0.31	0.09	2.52	0.02
	5.00	0.39	0.15	3.77	0.00
FOX	1.00	0.15	0.02	1.00	0.39
	2.00	0.54	0.30	14.44	0.00
	3.00	0.57	0.33	13.40	0.00
	4.00	0.61	0.38	13.56	0.00
	5.00	0.67	0.45	15.84	0.00

Dependent Variable: Media credibility

Model 1 - Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age

Model 2 - Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Media use

Model 3 - Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Media use, Involvement

Model 4 - Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Media use, Ideological congruency

Model 5 - Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Media use, Ideological congruency, CBBE

Table 4.36 - Coefficients: regression analysis of ideological congruency and CBBE on political message credibility

	Variables	Beta	t	Sig.
CNN	Age	0.01	0.11	0.92
	Gender	-0.09	-1.06	0.29
	Ethnicity	-0.09	-1.20	0.23
	Media use	-0.04	-0.33	0.74
	Involvement	-0.03	-0.38	0.71
	Ideological congruency	0.03	0.37	0.71
	CBBE	0.37	3.21	0.00
Fox	Age	-0.05	-0.82	0.41
	Gender	-0.08	-1.27	0.21
	Ethnicity	-0.01	-0.20	0.84
	Media use	0.12	1.13	0.26
	Involvement	0.14	2.04	0.04

	Ideological congruency	0.15	2.01	0.05
	CBBE	0.45	4.34	0.00

Table 4.37 - Model summary: regression analysis of CBBE and ideological congruency on non-political news message credibility

	Model	R	R Square	F	Sig.
CNN	1.00	0.17	0.03	1.55	0.20
	2.00	0.22	0.05	1.94	0.11
	3.00	0.40	0.16	5.41	0.00
	4.00	0.41	0.17	4.93	0.00
	5.00	0.48	0.23	6.02	0.00
FOX	1.00	0.12	0.01	0.61	0.61
	2.00	0.50	0.25	11.09	0.00
	3.00	0.51	0.26	9.59	0.00
	4.00	0.62	0.38	13.71	0.00
	5.00	0.65	0.42	13.91	0.00

Dependent Variable: Media credibility

Model 1 - Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age

Model 2 - Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Media use

Model 3 - Predictors: Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Media use, Involvement

Model 4 - Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Media use, Ideological congruency

Model 5 - Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Media use, Ideological congruency, CBBE

Table 4.38 - Coefficients: regression analysis of ideological congruency and CBBE on non-political message credibility

	Variables	Beta	t	Sig.
CNN	Age	-0.11	-1.42	0.16
	Gender	0.08	1.02	0.31
	Ethnicity	-0.12	-1.57	0.12
	Media use	-0.18	-1.61	0.11
	Involvement	0.26	3.33	0.00
	Ideological congruency	0.09	1.12	0.26

	CBBE	0.37	3.26	0.00
Fox	Age	-0.10	-1.52	0.13
	Gender	-0.04	-0.55	0.59
	Ethnicity	-0.07	-1.09	0.28
	Media use	0.12	1.10	0.27
	Involvement	-0.11	-1.57	0.12
	Ideological congruency	0.31	4.13	0.00
	CBBE	0.34	3.12	0.00

Hypothesis 9

H9: The CBM will fit the data better than the alternative models.

The proposed CBM model and the alternative model were drawn using AMOS

6.0. The models show that:

- a. Ideological congruency predicts CBBE (for the alternative model, media use acts as a mediator of the relationship between ideological congruency and CBBE).
- b. CBBE predicts media credibility.
- c. Media credibility predicts message credibility.
- d. There is some covariance between the constructs of the three concepts (Oyedemi, 2005; 2008).
 - i. For media credibility: there is covariance between the accuracy constructs (comprehensiveness and accuracy), and also among the sincerity constructs (fairness, bias, and trustworthiness).
 - ii. For message credibility: there is covariance between the accuracy constructs (comprehensiveness and accuracy), and also among the sincerity constructs (fairness, bias, and believability).

- iii. For CBBE: there is covariance between the awareness-based constructs (brand association and brand awareness), and also among the perception-based constructs—brand personality, perceived quality, and brand loyalty (figures 4.1 and 4.2 below).

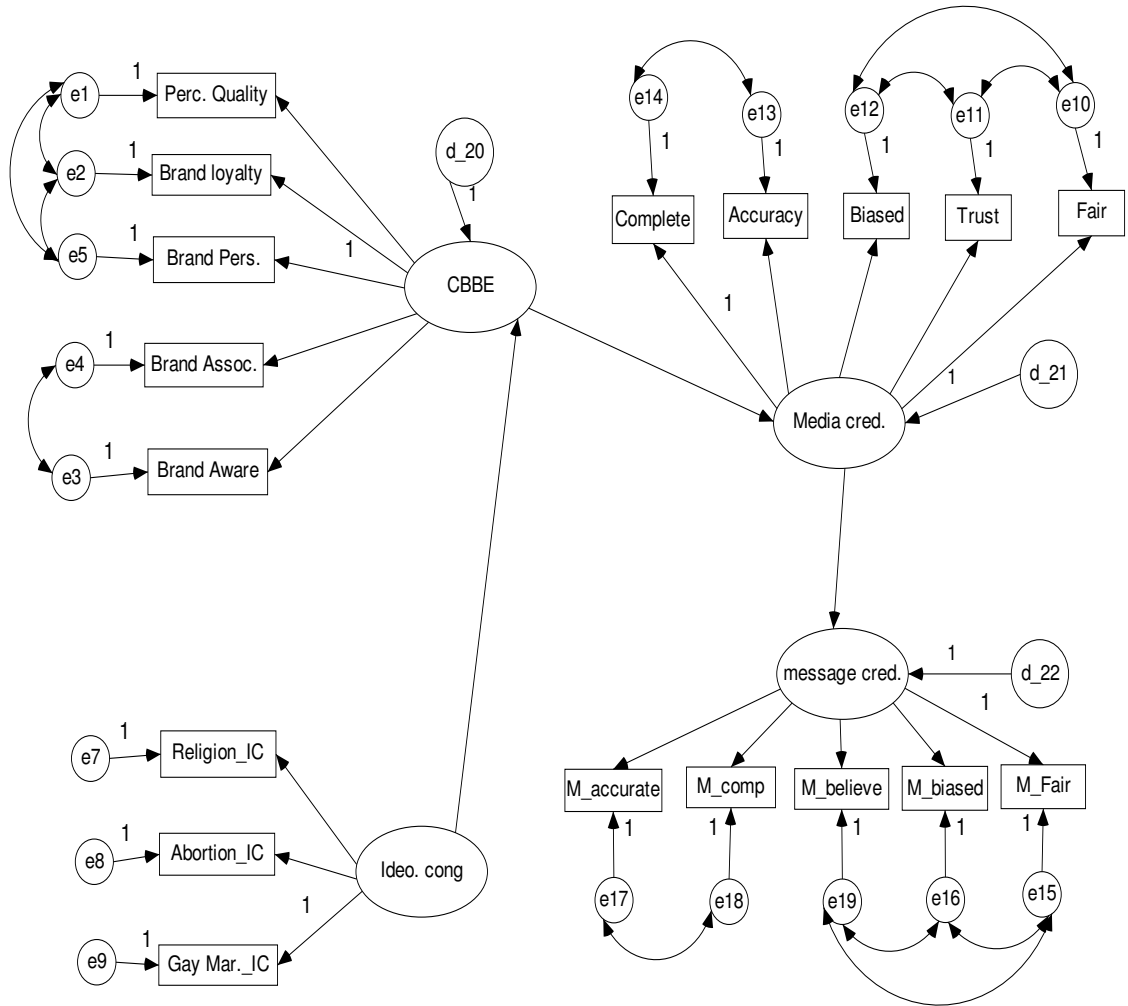
Test of message effects

A test of message effect was conducted to explore the difference between respondents’ perceptions of the credibility of the political and non-political news stories. A repeated-measure ANOVA, with message credibility (political and non-political message credibility) as the within-subject factor, was conducted to test for message effects. The results show that respondents’ perceptions of the two news stories were not significantly different; therefore, the two measures were collapsed into a single message credibility measure.

Table 4.39: Test of significant difference between political and non-political message credibility

Station_id	Effect	Test	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
CNN	Message credibility	Pillai's Trace	0.00	0.70	1.00	157.00	0.40
		Wilks' Lambda	1.00	0.70	1.00	157.00	0.40
		Hotelling's Trace	0.00	0.70	1.00	157.00	0.40
		Roy's Largest Root	0.00	0.70	1.00	157.00	0.40
FOX	Message credibility	Pillai's Trace	0.00	0.18	1.00	140.00	0.67
		Wilks' Lambda	1.00	0.18	1.00	140.00	0.67
		Hotelling's Trace	0.00	0.18	1.00	140.00	0.67
		Roy's Largest Root	0.00	0.18	1.00	140.00	0.67

Figure 4.1: The CBM



Notes:

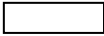




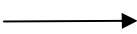
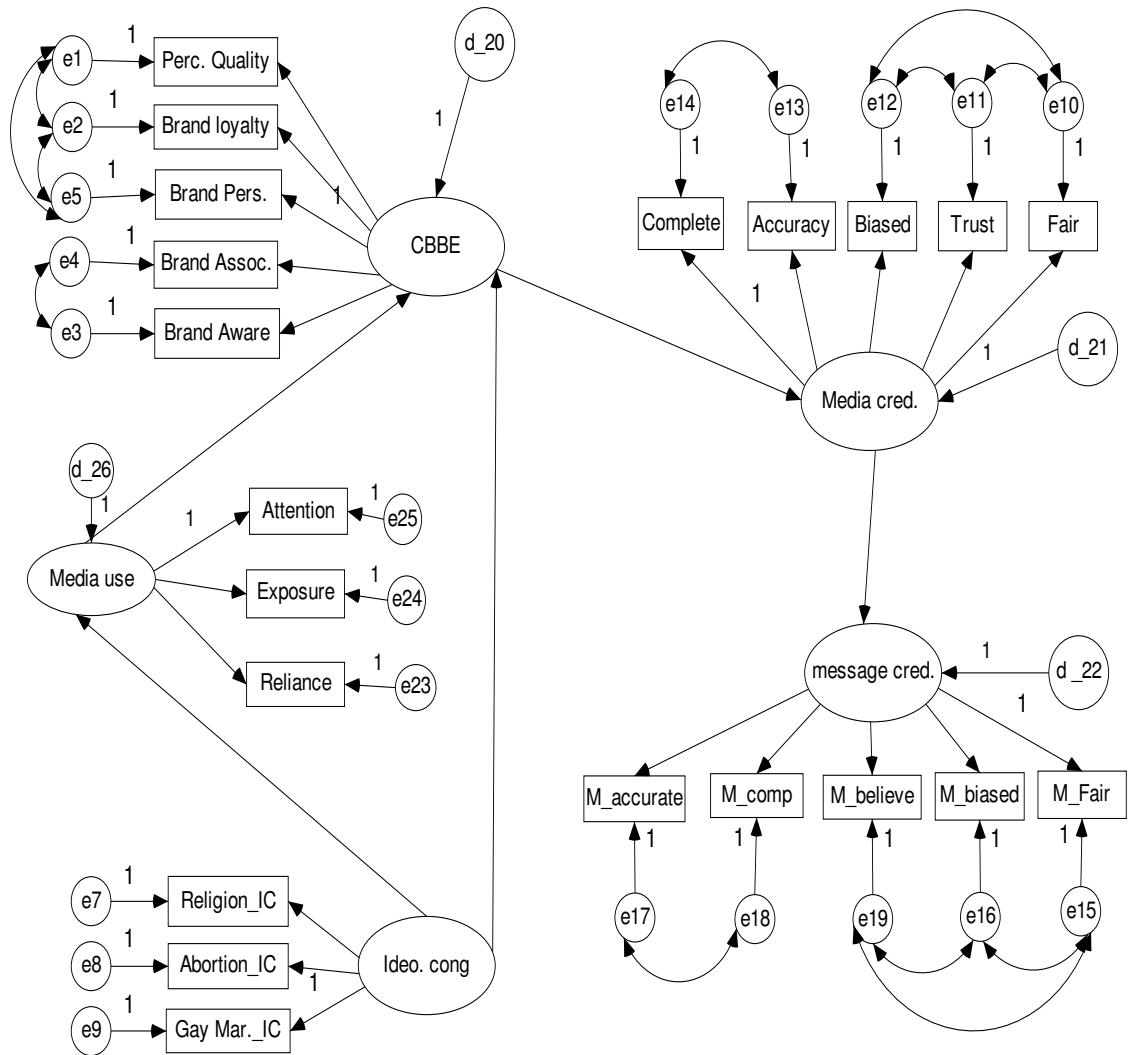





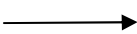
1.  - Observed (measured) variables
2.  - Unobserved (latent) variables
3.  - Measurement error in observed variable(s)
4.  - Residual in endogenous variable(s)
5.  - Covariance
6.  - Path

Figure 4.2: The alternative model



Notes:

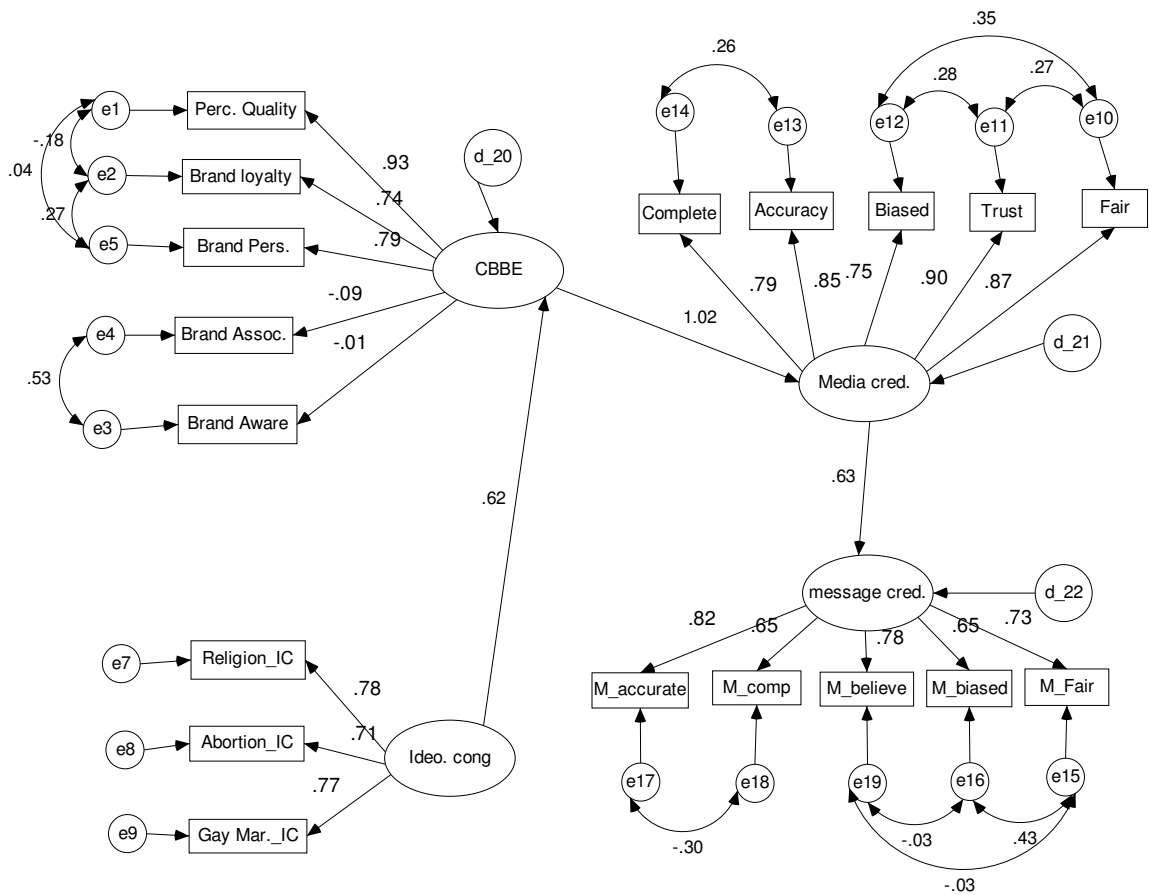
1.  - Observed (measured) variables
2.  - Unobserved (latent) variables
3.  - Measurement error in observed variable(s)
4.  - Residual in endogenous variable(s)
5.  - Covariance
6.  - Path

The models (the original CBM and the alternative model) were analyzed using the maximum likelihood method. Byrne (2001) asserted that the normed fit index (NFI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) are the “practical criterion of choice” (p. 83) for evaluating the fit between the data and a hypothesized model. She also observed that the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), which takes into account the error of approximation in the population, is “one of the most informative criteria in covariance structure modeling” (p. 84). Although there are some disagreements about specific cut-off points (0.90 vs. 0.95), the general consensus is that NFI and CFI between 0.90 and 1.0 are good indicators of a well-fitting model (Byrne, 2001); RMSEA that is equal to or lower than 0.06 is considered a great fit, RMSEA between 0.08 and 0.1 is considered a medium fit, and RMSEA above 0.1 is considered a poor fit (Byrne, 2001).

As predicted by the original CBM ($\chi^2 = 271.81$, $df = 120$, $p < .01$), the normed fit index (NFI = 0.93), the comparative fit index (CFI = 0.96), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.06) indicate a good fit between the data and the model. The alternative model ($\chi^2 = 533.86$, $df = 172$, $p < .01$), with NFI = 0.88, CFI = 0.92, and RMSEA = 0.08, was also a relatively good fit with the data. Therefore, the CBM has a statistically significant better fit with the data than the alternative because of its relatively better goodness of fit indicators and its relative parsimony. The nested model difference test and the chi-square difference tests were not conducted to compare the models because they are not nested models (Byrne, 2001).

The relationships hypothesized by the CBM model were also statically significant (see table 4.52): Ideological congruency predicted CBBE ($y = 0.62, p < .01$), CBBE predicted media credibility ($y = 1.02, p < .01$), and media credibility predicted message credibility ($y = 0.63, p < .01$, see figures 4.3 and 4.4 below).

Figure 4.3: Structural equation model for the CBM

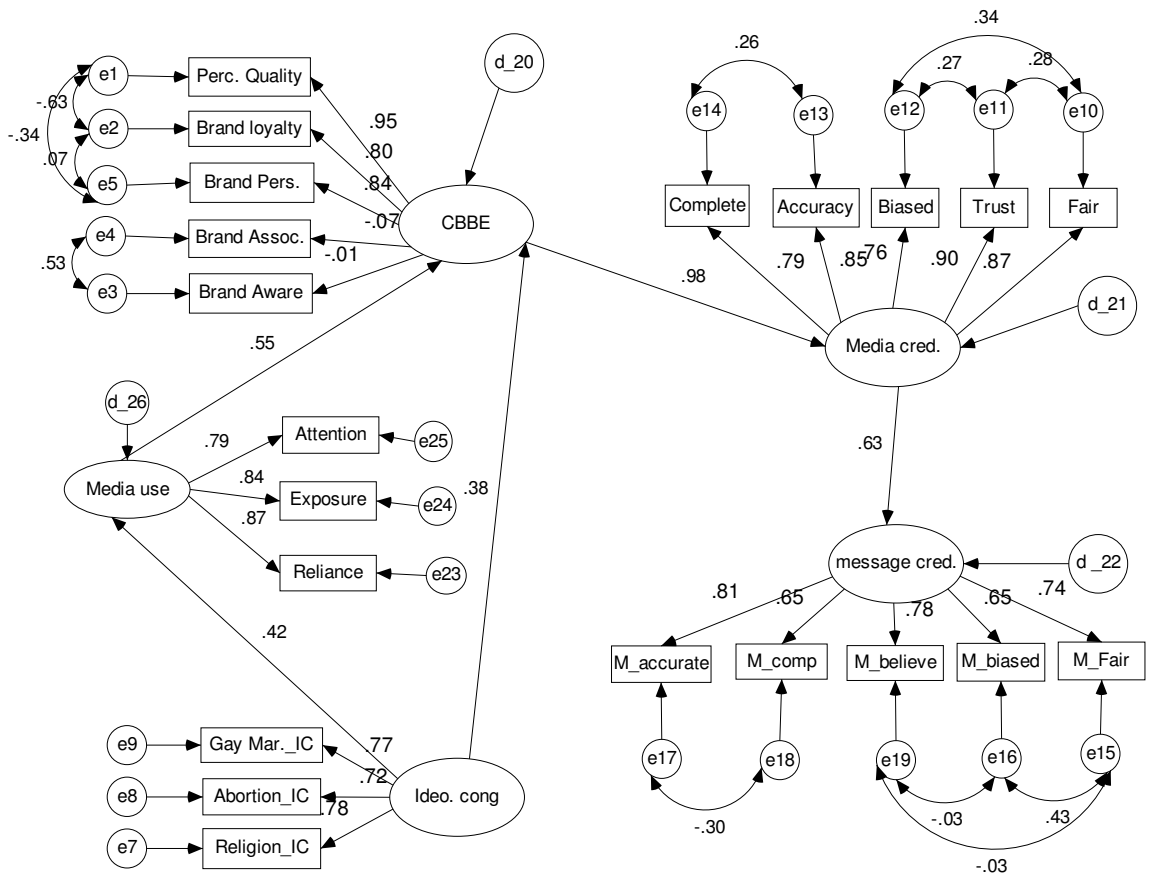


Notes:

Estimate of standardized regression weight

1. When **ideological congruency** goes up by 1 standard deviation, **CBBE** goes up by 0.62 standard deviations.
2. When **CBBE** goes up by 1 standard deviation, **media credibility** goes up by 1.02 standard deviations.
3. When **media credibility** goes up by 1 standard deviation, **message credibility** goes up by 0.63 standard deviations.

Figure 4.4: Structural equation model for the alternative model



Notes:

Estimate of standardized regression weight

1. When **ideological congruency** goes up by 1 standard deviation, **media use** goes up by 0.42 standard deviations.
2. When **ideological congruency** goes up by 1 standard deviation, **CBBE** goes up by 0.38 standard deviations.
3. When **media use** goes up by 1 standard deviation, **CBBE** goes up by 0.55 standard deviations.
4. When **CBBE** goes up by 1 standard deviation, **media credibility** goes up by 0.98 standard deviations.
5. When **Media credibility** goes up by 1 standard deviation, **message credibility** goes up by 0.635 standard deviations.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and conclusion

This study proposes and tests the CBM, a model that explicates the processes by which media audiences make credibility judgments about media outlets and their products. The primary postulate of the CBM is that media audiences' perceptions of the media credibility of a media outlet, and by extension the message credibility of its news stories, are dependent on their perception of the CBBE of the media outlet and their perception of the ideological congruency between their personal worldview and the worldview of that media outlet.

A survey was conducted to test the hypotheses and answer research questions associated with this model. The survey probed respondents' ideological congruency with two media brands (Fox News Channel and CNN) and their perceptions of the media credibility and brand equity of the media outlets. The survey also measured respondents' perceptions of the message credibility of two news stories, a political and a non-political news story, ascribed to each of the brands to assess the effects of ideological congruency and CBBE on message credibility.

The data showed strong support for the CBM. The confirmatory model evaluation conducted with Structural Equation Modeling revealed a strong fit between the data and the hypothesized model, with normed fit index (NFI = 0.93), comparative fit index (CFI = 0.96), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.06).

In addition, the CBM was a better fit with the data than an alternative model (NFI = 0.88, CFI = 0.92, and RMSEA = 0.08).

The implications of the CBM for the theory and practice of mass communication are substantial. Theoretically, the model proffers a new way of thinking about the media credibility process. The effect of ideological congruency on CBBE, and consequently, media credibility shows the increasing impact of audiences' personal worldview on their perception of media products, and challenges the traditional view that media credibility primarily depends on some action or inaction of the news media.

Researchers have typically treated media credibility as a characteristic of news sources, conceptualized as media institutions, journalists, news contents, and news processes (Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Flanagan & Metzger, 2000; Kioussis, 2001, Meyer, 1988; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986). Media credibility studies generally conceptualize the concept as a characteristic of media sources and underrate or neglect the role of the intrinsic attitudes and characteristics of audiences on their perception of media bias/credibility (Kioussis, 2001, Meyer, 1988; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986). Studies in this research track typically evaluate and report the relative credibility of media types (Kioussis, 2001), aggregates of audience perceptions of the media's credibility (Pew, 2005), or audience perception of the media credibility of specific media outlets (Meyer, 1988).

However, a number of recent studies suggest that this 'blame-the-media' mindset may be flawed. For instance, Gunther (1992) found that the characteristics of the audience making the credibility judgment have the greatest influence on their

perception of media credibility and Eveland and Shah (2003) found variations in perception of media credibility among different groups. These studies and the result of this dissertation show that media credibility does not only depend on the characteristic of the media but is also dependent on the demographic and psychographic characteristics of the audience making the credibility judgment. Therefore, the decline in audiences' perceptions of media credibility is as much a product of increasing polarization and partisanship in society as journalistic errors and inconsistencies. Therefore, solving the media credibility involves a two-pronged effort aimed at improving media processes and developing new ways of meeting the news and information needs of a changing citizenry.

The other important relationship in the CBM is the effect of CBBE on media credibility. The application of branding practices to the news media is a recent phenomenon; therefore, theories that explicate the roles of brand equity in mass communication are still being developed. This study extends the frontiers of scholarly knowledge on the subject and proposes a model that would help future researchers understand the effects of CBBE on the news credibility process. Despite the infancy of scholarly research on brand equity and the media, the validation of the CBM suggests that the increasing use of advertisements and other branding practices by news media outlets may actually help improve audiences' perception of the media. Concerted effort by media organizations to define their brands in the minds of news consumers with coordinated branding campaigns and carefully crafted slogans such as CNN's, "the best political team" and "the most trusted name in news," and the New York Times' "all the news that's fit to print" may actually become embedded in news

consumers' subconscious mental processes and improve their perceptions of news media outlets' credibility and trustworthiness.

This dissertation shows that CNN, which consistently touts itself as the “the most trusted name in news” was consistently rated highly by the respondents on all the media and message credibility concepts. A similar relationship was however not found for the “fair and balanced” Fox News Network, which is routinely condemned for its conservative slant by media analysts and scholars. Instead respondents' opinions of the brand confirmed the marketing truism that, “the best way to kill a bad product is to advertise it”. The respondents were equally familiar with the Fox News Channel and CNN brands and their associations (logos, anchors, brand identities etc). However, the more they knew about Fox News Channel's brand associations, the less likely they were to trust the brand. Fox News Channels' conservative tone and ideologically motivated news reports seem to have alienated this group of respondents.

This study found a strong relationship between traditional management's ways of differentiating products and organizations (branding) and news media's differentiation method (media credibility). CBBE explained a statistically significant portion of the variance in media credibility for both Fox News Channel (82%) and CNN (71%) after controlling for the effects of the confounding variables. The relationship between CBBE, a proven profitability index, and media channel credibility suggests that a decrease/increase in CBBE may instigate a similar trend in media credibility, and vice versa.

Media managers and journalists sometimes act as if their goals are dichotomous, with journalists touting the importance of news quality and journalistic

excellence while lampooning media managers' focus on profitability goals, and vice versa. This dichotomous paradigm often results in intra-organization conflicts, which could eventually undermine both media credibility and CBBE goals. This study, however, shows that the two concepts that exemplify exceptional news quality (credibility) and profitability (CBBE) are related. Thus, confirming the congruency of the newsrooms' and the boardrooms' goals. It is important for journalists to realize that newsroom budgets, and consequently excellence in news gathering and reporting, are tied to media outlets' profitability while media managers also need to understand that profitability depends on news quality, which research shows is dependent on newsroom investments.

The constructs of CBBE that have the strongest effect on media credibility are perceived quality and brand loyalty. This finding supports Meyer's (2004) influence model, which predicts a relationship between credibility, news quality, and customer loyalty. Meyer proposed that news quality enhances audiences' perceptions of newspapers' credibility, and subsequently their loyalty to newspapers. Although the research methodology (surveys) used for this study is not appropriate for making causal inferences, it confirms that audiences' perceptions of a news channel's quality and their perceptions of its credibility are strongly related.

Similarly, the relationship between media credibility and audience loyalty is strong and significant. Meyer (2004) asserted that media credibility induces audience loyalty. He stated that, "trust, in a busy marketplace, lends itself to monopoly. If you find a doctor or a used car salesman you trust, you'll keep going back without expending the effort or the risk to seek out alternatives" (p. 43). Securing and

maintaining customer's loyalty is particularly important for media outlets in view of the plethora of media options available to audiences. Media managers seeking loyal audiences would be well served to concentrate on increasing audience's perception of the credibility of their media outlets.

The results of this study also support other studies that show that young people are deserting mainstream media outlets and getting their news from other sources (Sternberg, 1998). The respondents do not consider the cable news networks their primary source of news; they do not rely on them for news and do not consider themselves loyal to the media channels. Can increased media credibility check the exodus of young people from traditional media types? Do the relationships uncovered in this study hold for other age groups? Do the relationships hold for other media types? These are some questions not answered by this study that future researchers should consider exploring.

Perhaps the most important finding of this study is the effect of audiences' prior perception of media outlets on their perception of the credibility of media messages. This result is an urgent wake up call for news media outlets and organizations to address the lingering media credibility crisis. This study found that media audiences do not judge news messages on their own merit but assign credibility based on their (prior) perception of the media credibility of the news outlet responsible for the message; therefore news stories from media outlets that news consumers think are biased and unfair are more likely to be assigned low credibility while similar messages from news outlets they consider trustworthy are more likely to be believed.

The role of the media in a democracy is to give citizens information they need to make decisions on matters ranging from policy issues to consumer goods. The results of this study suggests that declining levels of media credibility may cause citizens to reject truthful and balanced reports from media outlets that espouse ideological views different from their personal views while accepting unfair and untrue messages from news media outlets that share their ideologically views.

The result of this study also validates Harrison's (2004) assertion that media credibility is a two dimensional concept consisting of accuracy (comprehensiveness and accuracy) and sincerity (trustworthiness, fairness, and bias). The respondents' ranked CNN highly on all the measures of media credibility but seemed to differentiate between the accuracy and sincerity of Fox News: they expressed statistically significant positive perception of the brand on the accuracy measures and statistically significant negative perception of the brand on the sincerity measures.

This result suggests that news consumers are becoming increasingly savvy about the effects of media organization's ideological stance on news reports. The long-term effect of audiences' awareness of a media outlet's (Fox News Channel's) ideology-driven news reports on the credibility of the news media are still largely uninvestigated. Do news audiences objectively differentiate between specific media outlets and the news media in general? Or do they use their perception of the worst, or the best, or the most visible news outlet to make generalized judgments about the news media industry? Future researchers should consider exploring the answers to these and other questions that could help broaden scholarly knowledge about the process(es) by

which news audiences make credibility judgments about news messages, their producers, and the news media industry.

The major limitation of this study is that a non-representative sample was used; therefore, future researchers should consider replicating this study with a national representative sample. Additionally, it is important to point out that confirmatory factor analysis methods like the SEM only verify the match (fit) between an hypothesized model and a specific dataset, and is therefore not a conclusive ‘proof’ that any model, including the CBM, adequately describes a particular phenomenon. The development of scholarly theories is a slow, methodical, and incremental process: therefore, this dissertation presents a model that should be subjected to further empirical testing to confirm its veracity.

Appendix A: Experimental Stimulus Material (CNN)

Dear Student:

I am a graduate student working with Dr. Stephanie Craft. I invite you to participate in a research study being conducted under the auspices of the University of Missouri-Columbia entitled “The relationship between the media channel credibility of news media outlets and their brand equity”. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the media channel credibility and brand equity of news media channels.

Your participation will involve completing a questionnaire that should take about 10minutes of your time. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time. The results of the research study may be published, but information about participants will not be used at all. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you as a result of participating in this study and if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any point.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to get in touch with me: Tayo Oyedeji, Tel: 405-308-2400, e-mail: taozp9@mizzou.edu or Dr. Stephanie Craft, Tel: 573-884-9440, e-mail: Crafts@missouri.edu or Campus Institutional Review Board at 483 McReynolds, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211, Tel: 573-882-9585.

Thanks for your consideration.
Sincerely

Tayo Oyedeji

Doctoral candidate

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about CNN, a 24-hour cable news network.

1. CNN presents high quality news.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. News from CNN is reliable.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. News from CNN is useful.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. CNN is generally fair in its reports.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. I can trust news from CNN.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6. CNN is not biased.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7. News from CNN is accurate.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8. CNN presents comprehensive news reports.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9. CNN would be my first choice for news.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10. I will not listen to news from other sources if news from CNN is available.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11. I am loyal to CNN.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12. I am aware of CNN.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
13. I can distinguish CNN from other television news networks.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
14. Some characteristics of CNN come to my mind easily.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15. I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of CNN.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
16. I know some of the news anchors on CNN.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
17. CNN is sincere.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
18. CNN is exciting.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
19. CNN is competent.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
20. CNN is sophisticated.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
20. I think the editorial view of CNN's website (www.CNN.com) mirrors that of the cable station CNN	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
21. My opinion of CNN's website (www.CNN.com) is the same as my opinion of the cable station CNN	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

22. I pay attention to CNN	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
23. I watch CNN regularly	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
24. I rely on CNN for news and information	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
25. There is nothing wrong with allowing gay people to marry.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
26. I think CNN agrees with my view on gay marriage.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
27. Abortion should be legal.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
28. I think CNN agrees with my view on abortion.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
29. Religion has no place in American politics.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
30. I think CNN agrees with my view on the role of religion in politic.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
31. I consider myself:	Very liberal	Liberal	Slightly liberal	Moderate	Slightly conservative	Conservative	Very conservative
32. I think CNN is:	Very liberal	Liberal	Slightly liberal	Moderate	Slightly conservative	Conservative	Very conservative
33. Your age	<input type="text"/>						
34. Gender	Male	Female					
35. Ethnicity	Caucasian/White	African American	Hispanic/Latino	Asian	Other		

Please read the following news story from www.CNN.com, the website of CNN, a 24-hour cable news network, and answer the questions below.

CNN.com POWERED BY Google

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January 30th, 2008

Clinton claims win in Florida

Posted: 12:53 PM ET

Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton claimed victory in a campaign-free Florida presidential primary. Clinton moved quickly to shore up backing in states with looming contests as the potential for a protracted competition for the party's nomination grew ever more likely, making for a bitter battle over delegates to the summer's national convention.


Clinton appeared in this south Florida city Tuesday night for a campaign event before about 1,000 backers, touting a victory in a race in which all the candidates had signed pledges not to compete.


With her lopsided loss to Obama last weekend in the South Carolina primary, Clinton was shopping for a place to claim a win in an effort to break his momentum. "I could not come here in person to ask for your vote, but I am here today to thank you for your votes today," Clinton declared at the kind of noisy rally that Florida Democrats have missed this election season.

Flanked by prominent Florida backers like Sen. Bill Nelson, she did her best to push her message on a night when the spotlight was on the Republicans and their tight race.

36. The news story I just read from www.CNN.com is fair.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
37. The news story I just read from www.CNN.com is not biased.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
38. The news story I just read from www.CNN.com is accurate	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
39. The new story I just read from www.CNN.com is comprehensive	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
40. I believe the news story I just read from www.CNN.com .	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
41. My opinion of Hillary Clinton is generally	Very negative	Negative	Slightly negative	Neutral	Slightly positive	Positive	Very positive

Please read the following news story from www.CNN.com, the website of CNN, a 24-hour cable news network, and answer the questions below.



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January 30th, 2008

Study: Corn ethanol no climate solution

Posted: 12:53 PM ET

WASHINGTON - The widespread use of ethanol from corn could result in nearly twice the greenhouse gas emissions as the gasoline it would replace because of expected land-use changes, researchers concluded Thursday.

The study challenges the rush to corn-based ethanol as a response to global warming, but says there is a future for ethanol from waste products that do not require uprooting land where carbon is already absorbed by trees and plants.

The researchers said that past studies showing the benefits of ethanol in combating climate change have not taken into account almost certain changes in land use worldwide if ethanol from corn — and in the future from other feedstocks such as switchgrass — become a prized commodity.

"Using good cropland to expand biofuels will probably exacerbate global warming," concludes the study published in Science magazine.

42. The news story I just read from www.CNN.com is fair.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
43. The news story I just read from www.CNN.com is not biased.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
44. The news story I just read from www.CNN.com is accurate	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
45. The new story I just read from www.CNN.com is comprehensive	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
46. I believe the news story I just read from www.CNN.com.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
47. I think global warming is one of the most important challenges facing my generation.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Appendix B: Experimental Stimulus Material (Fox News Channel)

Dear Student:

I am a graduate student working with Dr. Stephanie Craft. I invite you to participate in a research study being conducted under the auspices of the University of Missouri-Columbia entitled “The relationship between the media channel credibility of news media outlets and their brand equity”. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the media channel credibility and brand equity of news media channels.

Your participation will involve completing a questionnaire that should take about 10minutes of your time. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time. The results of the research study may be published, but information about participants will not be used at all. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you as a result of participating in this study and if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any point.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to get in touch with me: Tayo Oyedeji, Tel: 405-308-2400, e-mail: taozp9@mizzou.edu or Dr. Stephanie Craft, Tel: 573-884-9440, e-mail: Crafts@missouri.edu or Campus Institutional Review Board at 483 McReynolds, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211, Tel: 573-882-9585.

Thanks for your consideration.
Sincerely

Tayo Oyedeji

Doctoral candidate

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about Fox News Channel, a 24-hour cable news network.

1. Fox News Channel presents high quality news.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. News from Fox News Channel is reliable.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. News from Fox News Channel is useful.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. Fox News Channel is generally fair in its reports.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. I can trust news from Fox News Channel.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6. Fox News Channel is not biased.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7. News from Fox News Channel is accurate.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8. Fox News Channel presents comprehensive news reports.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9. Fox News Channel would be my first choice for news.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10. I will not listen to news from other sources if news from Fox News Channel is available.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11. I am loyal to Fox News Channel.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12. I am aware of Fox News Channel.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
13. I can distinguish Fox News Channel from other television news networks.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
14. Some characteristics of Fox News Channel come to my mind easily.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15. I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of Fox News Channel.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
16. I know some of the news anchors on Fox News Channel.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
17. Fox News Channel is sincere.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
18. Fox News Channel is exciting.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
19. Fox News Channel is competent.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
20. Fox News Channel is sophisticated.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
20. I think the editorial view of Fox News Channel's website (www.Fox News Channel.com) mirrors that of the cable station Fox News Channel	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

21. My opinion of Fox News Channel's website (www.FoxNews.com) is the same as my opinion of the cable station Fox News Channel	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
22. I pay attention to Fox News Channel	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
23. I watch Fox News Channel regularly	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
24. I rely on Fox News Channel for news and information	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
25. There is nothing wrong with allowing gay people to marry.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
26. I think Fox News Channel agrees with my view on gay marriage.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
27. Abortion should be legal.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
28. I think Fox News Channel agrees with my view on abortion.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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30. I think Fox News Channel agrees with my view on the role of religion in politic.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
31. I consider myself:	Very liberal	Liberal	Slightly liberal	Moderate	Slightly conservative	Conservative	Very conservative
32. I think Fox News Channel is:	Very liberal	Liberal	Slightly liberal	Moderate	Slightly conservative	Conservative	Very conservative
33. Your age							
	<input type="text"/>						
34. Gender							
	Male		Female				
35. Ethnicity							
	Caucasian/White	African American	Hispanic/Latino	Asian	Other		

Please read the following news story from www.foxnews.com, the website of Fox News Channel, a 24-hour cable news network, and answer the questions below.

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Clinton claims win in Florida
Wednesday, January 30, 2008

Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton claimed victory in a campaign-free Florida presidential primary. Clinton moved quickly to shore up backing in states with looming contests as the potential for a protracted competition for the party's nomination grew ever more likely, making for a bitter battle over delegates to the summer's national convention.

Clinton appeared in this south Florida city Tuesday night for a campaign event before about 1,000 backers, touting a victory in a race in which all the candidates had signed pledges not to compete.

With her lopsided loss to Obama last weekend in the South Carolina primary, Clinton was shopping for a place to claim a win in an effort to break his momentum. "I could not come here in person to ask for your vote, but I am here today to thank you for your votes today," Clinton declared at the kind of noisy rally that Florida Democrats have missed this election season.

Flanked by prominent Florida backers like Sen. Bill Nelson, she did her best to push her message on a night when the spotlight was on the Republicans and their tight race.

36. The news story I just read from www.FoxNews.com is fair to all parties involved in the issue it addresses.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
37. The news story I just read from www.FoxNews.com is not biased.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
38. The news story I just read from www.FoxNews.com is accurate	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
39. The new story I just read from www.FoxNews.com is comprehensive	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
40. I believe the news story I just read from www.FoxNews.com .	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
41. My opinion of Hillary Clinton is generally	Very negative	Negative	Slightly negative	Neutral	Slightly positive	Positive	Very positive

Please read the following news story from www.foxnews.com, the website of Fox News Channel, a 24-hour cable news network, and answer the questions below.

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Study: Corn ethanol no climate solution
 Wednesday, January 30, 2008

WASHINGTON - The widespread use of ethanol from corn could result in nearly twice the greenhouse gas emissions as the gasoline it would replace because of expected land-use changes, researchers concluded Thursday.

The study challenges the rush to corn-based ethanol as a response to global warming, but says there is a future for ethanol from waste products that do not require uprooting land where carbon is already absorbed by trees and plants.

The researchers said that past studies showing the benefits of ethanol in combating climate change have not taken into account almost certain changes in land use worldwide if ethanol from corn — and in the future from other feedstocks such as switchgrass — become a prized commodity.

"Using good cropland to expand biofuels will probably exacerbate global warming," concludes the study published in Science magazine.

42. The news story I just read from www.FoxNews.com is fair to all parties involved in the issue it addresses.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
43. The news story I just read from www.FoxNews.com is not biased.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
44. The news story I just read from www.FoxNews.com is accurate	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
45. The new story I just read from www.FoxNews.com is comprehensive	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
46. I believe the news story I just read from www.FoxNews.com .	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
47. I think global warming is one of the most important challenges of my generation.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neutral	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

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