

Casting Credibility: Patterns of Audience Assessment of TV News Programs¹

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This study describes the patterns of television (TV) viewers' assessment of news program credibility by utilizing secondary data from a survey of 1,100 Metro Manila respondents. Through principal component analyses and multiple regressions, the survey reveals that certain attributes of newscasters/reporters, interviewed sources, and news content/programming are significantly associated with three dimensions of news program credibility—competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill. It also finds that viewers within specific demographic attributes tend to give high credibility ratings for TV news programs. Implications on TV news broadcasting in the Philippines are discussed.

Keywords: television, news, credibility, principal component analysis

In 2010 the annual survey of Nielsen Media Research reported that 91% of 2,000 polled respondents obtained information from television (TV), compared to only 65% from radio, 58% from outdoor advertising, 15% for print media, and 9% from magazines. Further, an estimated one-fifth did not read newspapers because TV was their preferred medium. Six years earlier, a Pulse Asia survey reported that 63% considered TV the most credible source of news and information, leaving behind radio (20%) and newspaper (5%). In 1999, TV's credibility rating was only at 53%, with radio at 35%, and newspaper at 27% (as cited by Arao, 2004). Television (TV) continues to be the preferred source of information in the Philippines.

The technological features of a media channel are among the key factors that affect its credibility. Studies have shown that TV's visual nature enhances the audience's perceived trustworthiness, compared to newspapers (e.g., Carter & Greenberg, 1965; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Westley & Severin, 1964; Metzger et al., 2003). Because viewers are able to see the events unfold, it becomes more

personal (Chang & Lemert, 1968; Sargent, 1965; Metzger et al., 2003) and more believable (American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1985; Carter & Greenberg, 1965; Chang & Lemert, 1968; Wilson & Howard, 1978; Metzger et al., 2003). TV's structural limitation is another factor for the medium's credibility lead. Because newspapers tend to report more exhaustively from broader issues, they are perceived to be more inaccurate compared to TV news stories that are usually brief and narrow (Chang & Lemert, 1968; Wilson & Howard, 1978; Metzger et al., 2003).

Because TV and newspaper have different characteristics, audiences also use different criteria when evaluating them: readers assess newspapers as an institution, while viewers assess TV news in terms of its newscasters (Newhagen & Nass, 1989; Metzger et al., 2003). The Broadcast Code of the Philippines by the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP, 2007) writes, "the credibility of news rests upon its sources" (3), advising broadcasting stations to carefully select not only interviewed sources but also *reporters* that deliver news. "Persons who are allowed to handle programs shall have adequate knowledge and competence for the job to insure the integrity and credibility of the broadcast media" (26).

This study aims to learn whether certain perceived attributes of newscasters/reporters are related to the overall credibility of TV news programs. It further examines how news program credibility is associated with the attributes of interviewed sources and quality of news content. Because several factors inherent within the viewers are at play, this study also looks at the patterns of assessment across viewers' socioeconomic profile and viewing habits.

This paper starts by presenting previous studies that expound on the different dimensions of credibility. It then anchors the literature on the context of Philippine TV news. Theoretical and practical implications of the study's findings are discussed, including its consequences to citizen journalism.

Dimensions of Credibility

Aristotle, in his 4th BC treatise *Rhetoric*, referred to source credibility as *ethos*, which consists of three dimensions that he believed are the "perceptual sources of influence on a receiver" (McCroskey & Young, 1981: 24). These three dimensions—intelligence, character, and good will—are referred in modern research literature as *competence* (i.e., qualification, expertise, intelligence, and authoritativeness), *trustworthiness* (i.e., character, sagacity, safety, and honesty), and *goodwill* (i.e., empathy, caring), respectively. Because researchers in the past have only focused on qualification (competence) and character (trustworthiness) in analyzing source credibility, goodwill has been dubbed as

“the lost dimension of ethos/credibility” (McCroskey & Teven, 1999: 90), as it was theoretically subsumed in the first two dimensions.

Several credibility studies on persuasion have proposed additional dimensions of source credibility, including physical attractiveness. David Markham (1968) identified other dimensions of credibility unique to television newscasters, such as “morality, bodily skill, data evaluation, speed and extroversion” (57). However, these were dismissed as mere extensions of the source credibility dimension by McCroskey and Young (1981), who wrote that the said study was just “concerned with personality perception, not source credibility” (28).

Although much of the literature have focused on the source, a similar evaluation type that overlaps with source credibility is message credibility, or “how message characteristics impact perceptions of believability, either of the source or of the source’s message” (Metzger et al., 2003: 302). Miriam Metzger and her colleagues (2003) identified at least four recurring dimensions of message credibility: *message structure*, or the organization of the message; *message content*; *language intensity*, or the use of opinionated and biased language; and *message delivery*, or how the message is communicated by the source. The first three are similar to the three message factors identified by Richard Perloff (2003). Perloff’s first factor, also termed *message structure*, posited that a message’s level of persuasion is affected either by its one-sidedness or two-sidedness, by how the conclusions are drawn, and by situational factors on whether it should be ordered according to primacy (the more persuasive side is presented earlier) or recency (the more compelling argument is presented later). Perloff also termed the second factor as *message content*, saying that the evidence, fear appeal, and framing of the message content affects audiences’ persuasion. Of the third dimension, *language intensity*, Perloff said that the level of persuasion is affected by the proper use of opinionated and powerful language. While Perloff did not elaborate on the fourth dimension (message delivery), he noted that “speech rate can also enhance persuasion when it is relevant to the message topic” (199). Other studies related to the message delivery have concluded that message credibility is higher when there are less delivery flaws, such as vocalized pauses, slips of the tongue, articulation difficulties, among others (McCroskey & Mehrley, 1969; Miller & Hewgill, 1964; Soreno & Hawkins, 1967; Metzger et al., 2003).

Scholars have argued that when people assess credibility, they do not necessarily separate the source from the message. Patrick Wilson (1983) theorized that in relying on second-hand information, people only trust cognitive authorities, or those who “know what they are talking about” (Rieh,

2005: 83). Cognitive authorities are regarded as among the credible sources of information. He further argued that cognitive authority also includes texts or organizations. For example, Wilson proposed four criteria in testing the cognitive authority of texts: *authorship*, wherein a particular medium is deemed credible because of the reputation of its author; *publisher*, wherein the reputation of its publisher, producer or sponsor is considered; *document type*, wherein people usually find reference materials, such as dictionaries, as more credible than other types of publications; and *content*, whose logical and creative structure could confer or deny authority (Rieh, 2005).

Rieh (2000, 2002), in applying Wilson's theory in information science research, found that web users tended to base their assessment of website credibility on both personal experience and other people's judgments. The term "other people" may refer to cognitive authorities, such as "friends, colleagues, doctors or academics" (Rieh, 2005: 84), including media such as "newspapers, journal articles and even television advertisements" (85). When the aspects of quality of these second-hand information seemed inconsistent, like when a text was clearly but inaccurately written, Rieh said that evaluators "rely on credibility, the chief aspect of quality" (85).

Credibility and Cognitive Authority in TV News

This study identifies three elements of TV news program that are critical in examining program credibility: the newscasters/reporters, interviewed sources, and news content.

Newscasters/reporters

Salvii Casino, who is "ABS-CBN's main image man" (Titans of the Times, 1999: 142) because of his work for the network's broadcast image design, said that in the news industry, there is a "conscious business effort to build superstars to whom we can later assign shows that will rate and sell" (Rimban, 1999: 94). This way, TV networks are "able to tell the public that these people are really good and you have to trust us, to believe us," said Casino (95), who retired as ABS-CBN's senior vice-president in 1998. Casino placed importance on the credibility of news programs and its role in increasing viewership ratings, attempting to achieve credibility by packaging news personalities as cognitive authorities.

Aside from perceived cognitive authority, message delivery, a dimension of message credibility, is examined in this study as well. Miriam Metzger and her colleagues (2003) said that perceived credibility is affected by the use of powerful or powerless styles of communication. "A powerless communication style is one that uses such devices as hedges and hesitations, qualifiers, polite

forms, and tag questions, whereas powerful language is more assertive” (304), they wrote, citing Gass and Seiter (1999). In news programs, this took into account the reporter’s ability to read news and appear confident.

Physical appearance of newscasters/reporters is another attribute considered as potentially linked with credibility. A study by Julian (1977) revealed interesting results: a news reporter’s credibility increases when he or she wears casual clothes. As previously discussed, Markham (1968) identified “bodily skill” (57) as a dimension of source credibility, but McCroskey and Young (1981) debunked this as merely “concerned with personality perception” (28). They explained:

We are not arguing that people do not perceive other people’s extroversion, composure, sociability, general size, or for that matter their attractiveness, their similarity, or any of a wide variety of other perceptions. Rather, we are arguing that we must separate those perceptions which are related to source credibility from those which are not... Source credibility is merely a subset of a much larger construct of person perception. (33, 34)

Interviewed sources

Attributes attached to newscasters/reporters, such as cognitive authority, physical appearance and message delivery, are the same attributes applicable to interviewed sources. Message delivery, however, is a trait more relevant for newscasters and reporters than for news sources. News anchors and reporter’s delivery are usually canned and directed by gatekeepers, while that of interviewees are more natural, with appearance mostly facing an interviewer than the camera, or for that matter, the audiences.

A more important difference between newscasters and news sources is found in the nature of their roles. Interviewed sources are themselves part of news; as such, the quality of their message is an important attribute of the news program. Several studies showed that the use of evidence increases the level of message credibility (McCroskey, 1967; McCroskey, 1969; Fleshler, Illardo, & Demoretcky, 1974; Reinard, 1988; Metzger et al., 2003). Rieh and Belkin (1998) concluded that five criteria are used to assess the quality of information: accuracy, comprehensiveness, relevance, reliability, and validity (Metzger et al., 2003). These are the same criteria that editors and gatekeepers of the news program use in selecting which sources will be featured in the news.

News content and programming

The message quality conveyed by the source generally reflects the quality of stories aired in news programs. News reports should be “fair, factual and objective” (KBP, 2007: 2), according to Section 3.a of Part I, Article I of the 2007 Broadcast Code.

Throughout the Code, the contrast between news and opinion, and between news and entertainment were emphasized. Relating to the dimension of language intensity, news reports must use neutral and accurate words, for them not to be far from the truth. This characteristic is not evident in opinion and entertainment segments, which usually utilize colorful language. Recently, however, media critics have been concerned with the blurring divide between news, entertainment, and opinions. Lito B. Zulueta (2008) wrote that the “infotainment” style of presenting news, which integrates information and entertainment into the news format, “removed broadcast journalism from the business of presenting the relevant truth.” He added that “TV journalism has become much like creative non-fiction that breaks the distinction between what’s public and what’s personal, what’s real and what’s ‘dramatized.’”

A final attribute of news content and programming that was also vital in this study was the level of commercialization. Section 11 of Part I, Article I of the Broadcast Code explicitly said that “advertisements must be clearly distinguished from the news” and that ads “in the guise of news are prohibited” (KBP, 2007: 7). Section 8.e also prohibited ads in the form of text crawls during news broadcasts, except during closing credits. Violating these provisions are considered serious offenses. That is why certain news organizations prohibit their talents from commercially endorsing any product or service, to maintain their reputation of editorial independence.

The literature points to the existence of an interrelationship among source and media credibility and cognitive authority within the different elements of news programs. McCroskey and Young’s (1981) source credibility dimensions—competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill—provide conceptual definitions for the credibility of TV news programs. “Competence” here refers to the accuracy, factuality and up-to-datedness, conviction and fearlessness of the news program in handling news reportage to the public; “trustworthiness” refers to the perceived reliability, trustworthiness, believability, and honesty of the TV news program; and “goodwill” refers to the news program’s concern for the community’s well-being, upholding of press freedom, and rendering of true public service. The study then sought to find significant associations between the three dimensions of news program credibility concepts and other factors.

These are discussed in the following research questions.

RQ1: Are there significant associations between the three dimensions of TV news program credibility and the attributes of newscasters/reporters?

This paper first proposed that three attributes of newscasters and reporters, namely, cognitive authority, message delivery, and physical appearance, are significantly related to the competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill of TV news programs. Cognitive authority was conceptually defined as the newscasters/reporters job competence, meeting of viewer's expectations, and easiness to understand; on the other hand, message delivery referred to newscasters/reporters' tone of delivery, diction, enunciation, and pleasantness to be listened to. Physical appearance here generally pertained to how pleasant they are to look at.

RQ2: Are there significant associations between the three dimensions of TV news program credibility and the attributes of interviewed sources?

Three attributes of interviewed sources were considered under this research question: cognitive authority, message quality, and physical appearance. Cognitive authority here was conceptually defined as the interviewed sources' knowledge of the issue, believability, and qualification to talk on the issue; message quality, on the other hand, referred to the accuracy of the sources' account, and how sensible the sources' opinions were relative to the issue or event. Again, physical appearance generally pertained to how pleasant the sources are to look at on cam.

RQ3: Are there significant associations between the three dimensions of TV news program credibility and the attributes of news content programming?

Again, three attributes were identified for news content programming: message quality, bias/intensity, and commercialization. For news content programming, message quality conceptually referred to the variety, importance, relevance, and understandability of the news stories; on the other hand, bias/intensity was conceptually defined as the news program's level of sensationalism,

partiality, and irresponsibility. Meanwhile, commercialization referred to the news program's interest in making profit and extent of commercials shown.

The next two research questions were concerned with the relationship of credibility ratings and the inherent socioeconomic variables of those who made the ratings.

RQ4: Are the ratings of the three dimensions of TV news program credibility dependent on the socioeconomic status (SES) of the viewers who make the assessment?

It was proposed that viewers from certain socioeconomic demographics, identified in this study as sex, age, educational attainment (whether only elementary, high school or college), and income, have tendencies to give higher scores to competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill of TV news programs.

RQ5: Are the ratings of the three dimensions of TV news program credibility dependent on TV viewing habits?

Under this final research question, the study proposed that the competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill scores of TV news programs were dependent on the viewers' habits, such as exposure to TV at night during weekdays, during weekends, and their preferred TV channel, whether ABS-CBN, GMA or others.

Methods

This study utilized secondary data from the viewers' evaluation and reception study of TV news programs by the UP-CMC Department of Communication Research, which asked Metro Manila viewers (N=1,100) to rate from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest, local TV news programs based on several criteria.

Statistical analyses

Relevant ordinal responses from selected survey items were carefully grouped together to represent a variable. This was done by transforming the grouped responses into a single composite score through principal component analysis (PCA). This method reduces a large number of interrelated variables into one or few factors, but still retaining the variation of the original data set. As the PCA results into several principal components, the first component was considered in this study as the composite score representing the new single

variable. It is said that the first few principal components “retain most of the variation present in *all* of the original variables” (Jolliffe, 2002: 1, emphasis original). Related to this, Kaiser’s rule (1960) also states that only principal components with variances greater than 1, as measured by eigenvalues, can be statistically used as factors. To measure the internal consistency or reliability of the composite scores, Cronbach’s alpha (α) was determined.

Through multiple regression, the relationship of composite-score variables was analyzed by combining all identified independent variables into the regression model and determining those that were significantly associated with the dependent variable. Since the model fits only interval-ratio variables, nominal and ordinal variables were transformed into dummy variables prior to the regression analysis. These included variables based on a single ordinal response item.

The succeeding section details how each variable was developed for this study. Statistical analyses were done using the software *Stata*.

Dependent variables

The three dimensions of credibility of the TV news program were the dependent variables of this study. Ordinal ratings for thirteen survey items under “General Assessment of Local TV News Programs” were transformed into three composite scores: “competence” (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.68$; eigenvalue=2.25; $M=-7.81e-09$; $SD=1.50$), “trustworthiness” (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.75$; eigenvalue=2.68; $M=-1.91e-08$; $SD=1.64$), and “goodwill” (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.65$; eigenvalue=1.61; $M=-2.21e-09$; $SD=1.27$). All second components of the three scores had eigenvalues of less than 1, thus not applicable under Kaiser’s rule.

Independent variables (IV)

Attributes of newscasters/reporters. Ordinal ratings for six survey items under “Characteristics of News Anchors and Field Reporters” were transformed into two composite scores: “cognitive authority” or IV01 (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.86$; eigenvalue=2.35; $M=1.04e-08$; $SD=1.53$) and “message delivery” or IV02 (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.89$; eigenvalue=2.45; $M=8.86e-09$; $SD=1.57$). The two scores’ second components had eigenvalues of less than 1, thus not applicable under Kaiser’s rule.

Newscasters/reporters’ physical appearance was based from only one survey item, which rated how “pleasant they are to look at” from 1 to 5. With this, three dummy variables were developed: Rating 3 (14.19%) as IV03, Rating 4 (33.61%) as IV04, and Rating 5 (39.93%) as IV05, all of them with reference to the collapsed Rating 1 and 2 (12.27%).

Attributes of interviewed sources. Ordinal ratings for five survey items under “Characteristics of News Sources” were transformed into two composite scores: “cognitive authority” or IV 06 (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.78$; eigenvalue=2.10; $M=1.35e-08$; $SD=1.45$), and “message quality” or IV07 (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.83$; eigenvalue=1.71; $M=-1.54e-08$; $SD=1.31$). Second components of both scores had eigenvalues of less than 1, thus not applicable under Kaiser’s rule.

Similar with the newscasters/reporters’ physical appearance, only one ordinal item pertained to that of the interviewed sources. Again, three dummy variables were developed: Rating 3 (21.54%) as IV08, Rating 4 (37.60%) as IV09, and Rating 5 (28.51%) as IV10, all of them with reference to the collapsed Rating 1 and 2 (12.35%).

Attributes of news content programming. Ordinal ratings for nine survey items under “Characteristics of Content” and “General Assessment of Local TV News Programs” were transformed into three composite scores: “message quality” or IV11 (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.80$; eigenvalue=2.52; $M=-1.54e-08$; $SD=1.31$), “bias/intensity” or IV12 (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.74$; eigenvalue=1.42; $M=-1.97e-10$; $SD=1.19$), and “commercialization” or IV13 (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.71$; eigenvalue=1.18; $M=-2.62e-09$; $SD=1.09$). Second components of the three scores had eigenvalues of less than 1, thus not applicable under Kaiser’s rule.

Viewers’ SES. Respondents’ sex, 38.34 percent of which was male, was identified as IV14 (where 1=male, 0=female). The respondent’s age ($M=39.24$, $SD=15.79$) was identified as IV15.

More than two-thirds of the respondents (68.16%) graduated with a college degree, while more than a quarter (27.74%) reached up to high school and only 4.1 percent attained only elementary education. Educational attainment was transformed into two dummy variables: those who reached up to high school as IV16, and those who attained college as IV17, both with reference to those who only attained elementary level.

Four out of ten respondents (40.07%) earned only less than ₱15,000 a month. Almost a quarter earned ₱15,000 to ₱24,999 (23.52%) and 23.97% earned ₱35,000 and above while those earning ₱25,000 to ₱34,999 constituted 12.44% of the respondents. Respondent’s income was transformed into three dummy variables: those earning ₱15,000 to ₱24,999 as IV18, those earning ₱25,000 to ₱34,999 as IV19, and those earning ₱35,000 and above as IV20, all with reference to those earning below ₱15,000.

Viewing habits. Viewers’ nighttime TV exposure was operationalized by the respondent’s number of hours of TV viewing from 6:00 PM to 12:00 AM.

Exposure on weekdays ($M=3.26$, $SD=1.69$) and weekends ($M=2.96$, $SD=1.88$) were identified as IV21 and IV22, respectively.

There were slightly more respondents who preferred GMA (43.68%) to ABS-CBN (42.86%), while only 13.46 percent preferred other channels. Respondent's preferred channel was transformed into two dummy variables: preference for ABS-CBN as IV23, and preference for other channels as IV24, both with reference to preference for GMA.

Regression models

Three regression models were developed, each representing the three dimensions of TV news program credibility. The "competence" model's dependent variable was the competence score, while those of the other two models were the trustworthiness and goodwill scores. All three models had the similar sets of IVs, such that

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Competence} \mid \text{Trustworthiness} \mid \text{Goodwill} \\ &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 IV01 + \beta_2 IV02 + \beta_3 IV03 + \beta_4 IV04 + \beta_5 IV05 + \beta_6 IV06 + \beta_7 IV07 \\ &+ \beta_8 IV08 + \beta_9 IV09 + \beta_{10} IV10 + \beta_{11} IV11 + \beta_{12} IV12 + \beta_{13} IV13 + \beta_{14} IV14 \\ &+ \beta_{15} IV15 + \beta_{16} IV16 + \beta_{17} IV17 + \beta_{18} IV18 + \beta_{19} IV19 + \beta_{20} IV20 + \beta_{21} IV21 \\ &+ \beta_{22} IV22 + \beta_{23} IV23 + \beta_{24} IV24 + \varepsilon, \end{aligned}$$

where ε is the error term assumed to be normally distributed with zero mean and a constant variance.

Results

Table 1 shows the results of the three regression models. The independent variables accounted for around two-fifths of the variance in the competence ($R^2=.43$) and trustworthiness ($R^2=.40$) models, and less than a third in the goodwill model ($R^2=.29$). All three models were very highly significant, at $p<.001$ ($F[24, 997]=31.50$ for competence, 27.39 for trustworthiness, and 17.05 for goodwill).

Newscasters/reporters and news program credibility (RQ1)

Only the physical appearance attribute of newscasters/reporters was found to be significantly associated with news program credibility. But surprisingly, the direction of association was generally negative, as those who gave low ratings for the newscaster/reporters' physical appearance gave higher credibility ratings for news programs.

In the competence model, those who rated 3 ($\beta=-0.80$, $p<.001$), 4 ($\beta=-0.89$, $p<.001$) and 5 ($\beta=-0.51$, $p<.05$) for the physical appearance of newscasters/reporters had a tendency to give lower ratings to news program's competence,

Table 1 Regression of TV News Program Credibility on Dependent Variables

	COMPETENCE MODEL BETA	TRUSTWORTHINESS MODEL BETA	GOODWILL MODEL BETA
Constant	0.20 (0.30)	0.67* (0.34)	0.31 (.28)
Newscasters'/Reporters' Attributes			
Cognitive Authority	0.01 (0.06)	.004 (.06)	-.05 (.05)
Message Delivery	0.06 (0.04)	.07 (.05)	.07 (.04)
Physical Appearance: Rating 3	-0.80*** (0.17)	-0.77*** (.19)	-0.64*** (.16)
Physical Appearance: Rating 4	-0.89*** (0.18)	-0.77*** (0.20)	-0.52*** (0.16)
Physical Appearance: Rating 5	-0.51* (0.20)	-0.37 (0.22)	-0.38* (0.18)
Interviewed Sources' Attributes			
Cognitive Authority	0.01 (0.04)	0.04 (0.05)	-0.06 (0.04)
Message Quality	0.30*** (0.05)	0.31*** (.05)	0.21*** (0.04)
Physical Appearance: Rating 3	0.15 (0.14)	-0.18 (0.16)	0.20 (0.13)
Physical Appearance: Rating 4	0.22 (0.15)	-0.09 (0.17)	0.26* (0.13)
Physical Appearance: Rating 5	0.53** (0.17)	0.20 (0.20)	0.34* (0.16)
News Content			
Message Quality	0.19*** (0.04)	0.13** (0.04)	0.17*** (0.03)
Bias/Intensity	-0.29*** (0.04)	-0.35*** (0.04)	-0.24*** (0.03)
Commercialization	0.03 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)

Table 1 (cont.)

	COMPETENCE MODEL BETA	TRUSTWORTHINESS MODEL BETA	GOODWILL MODEL BETA
Viewer's SES			
Sex (1 = Male)	-0.07 (0.08)	0.05 (0.09)	0.001 (0.07)
Age	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.007** (0.003)	0.003 (0.002)
Education: High school only	0.08 (0.18)	-0.04 (0.20)	-0.004 (0.17)
Education: College	0.20 (0.18)	0.06 (0.20)	-0.11 (0.16)
Income: ₱15,000 – ₱24,999	0.02 (0.10)	0.12 (0.11)	0.10 (0.09)
Income: ₱25,000 – ₱34,999	0.06 (0.13)	0.20 (0.14)	0.04 (0.12)
Income: ₱35,000 and above	0.13 (0.10)	0.15 (0.11)	-0.06 (0.09)
Viewer's TV Viewing Habits			
TV Exposure at Night: Weekday	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
TV Exposure at Night: Weekend	0.01 (0.01)	0.003 (0.01)	0.003 (0.01)
Preferred Channel: ABS-CBN	-0.15 (0.08)	-0.15 (0.09)	-0.20** (0.07)
Preferred channel: Others	-0.30* (0.12)	-0.37** (0.13)	-0.30** (0.11)
R-square	.43***	.40***	.29***
Adjusted R-square	.42	.38	.27

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
s.e. in ()

compared to those who rated 1 and 2 for physical appearance. The trend was analogous with the goodwill model, with those rating 3 ($\beta=-0.64, p<.001$), 4 ($\beta=-0.52, p<.001$), and 5 ($\beta=-0.38, p<.05$) for physical appearance also tending to give lower goodwill scores, compared to those who rated 1 and 2 for physical appearance. In the trustworthiness model, only those who rated 3 ($\beta=-0.77, p<.001$) and 4 ($\beta=-0.77, p<.001$) for physical appearance significantly gave lower rate to trustworthiness, compared to those who rated 1 and 2 for physical appearance.

Interviewed sources and news program credibility (RQ2)

Physical appearance of interviewed sources was also found to be significantly associated with news programs credibility. But unlike that of newscasters/reporters, interviewed sources' physical appearance was positively related to news program credibility

Compared to those who rated 1 and 2 for sources' appearance, those who rated 5 had a tendency to give higher rating to program competence ($\beta=0.53, p<.01$); those who rated 4 ($\beta=0.26, p<.05$) and 5 ($\beta=0.34, p<.05$) also tended to give higher rating to goodwill of news program. No association was seen between source's physical appearance and news program's trustworthiness.

While the sources' cognitive authority did not yield significant findings, the quality of the source's message was significantly and positively associated with the news program's competence ($\beta=0.30, p<.001$), trustworthiness ($\beta=0.31, p<.001$), and goodwill ($\beta=0.21, p<.001$). This suggests that quality of opinions given by the interviewed source mattered in increasing news program credibility.

News content programming and news program credibility (RQ3)

Only message quality and bias/intensity were found to have significant relationships with TV news program credibility.

The message quality of news content was positively associated with the news program's competence ($\beta=0.19, p<.001$), trustworthiness ($\beta=0.13, p<.01$), and goodwill ($\beta=0.17, p<.001$). But it should be noted that the message quality of the interviewed source, as discussed in the previous section, produced stronger positive associations than the message quality of news content. This implies that stories attributed to a source, which is a form of evidence, strengthens the credibility of news programs.

It was not surprising that negative associations were revealed between bias/intensity of news content programming and the perceived competence

($\beta=-0.29$, $p<.001$), trustworthiness ($\beta=-0.35$, $p<.001$), and goodwill ($\beta=-0.24$, $p<.001$) of news programs.

Viewers' SES and news program credibility (RQ4)

Only age was found to have a slight negative association with the trustworthiness dimensions of news program credibility ($\beta=-0.007$, $p<.01$). This means that younger viewers slightly tended to trust news programs more than older ones.

Viewing habits and news program credibility (RQ5)

In terms of the viewers' habits, those who preferred GMA were found to significantly give higher rating to news program credibility in general. Those who preferred ABS-CBN ($\beta=-0.20$, $p<.01$) and channels other than the top two networks ($\beta=-0.30$, $p<.01$) generally gave lower goodwill scores than those who preferred GMA. Also, those who did not prefer the top two networks generally gave lower competence ($\beta=-0.30$, $p<.05$) and trustworthiness ratings ($\beta=-0.37$, $p<.01$), compared to those who preferred GMA. These suggest that viewers who did not prefer the top two TV networks maintained higher standards or were more critical of news program credibility.

No significant associations were found between TV exposure and news program credibility rating.

Table 2 summarizes the significant findings of this study. The positive sign (“+”) represents a positive association, while the negative sign (“-”) represents

Table 2 Summary of Significant Findings

	TV NEWS PROGRAM CREDIBILITY DIMENSION		
	COMPETENCE	TRUSTWORTHINESS	GOODWILL
Newscasters'/Reporters' Physical Appearance	-	-	-
Interviewed Sources' Message Quality	+	+	+
Interviewed Sources' Physical Appearance	+	N/A	+
News Content's Message Quality	+	+	+
News Content's Bias/Intensity	-	-	-
Viewers' Age	N/A	-	N/A
Viewers' Channel Preference (GMA as reference)	-	-	-

a negative association, and “N/A” represents no association between the independent and dependent variables.

Discussion

This study sought to examine the following propositions on TV news program credibility: (a) that it is associated with the characteristics of its newscasters/reporters, (b) that it is associated with the attributes of interviewed sources, and (c) that it is related to the quality of news content. It also extended the following propositions on the credibility rating of TV news programs: (d) that it is dependent on the socioeconomic profile of viewers, and (e) that it is dependent on the viewing habits of those who assessed it.

It was found that the physical appearance of newscasters/reporters and interviewed sources were significantly associated with news program credibility, albeit in opposing directions (i.e., news program credibility was associated with more pleasantly looking interviewed sources but less pleasantly looking newscasters). Meanwhile, message quality, both of interviewed sources and news content in general, were also positively related to the program’s competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill in presenting news on TV. As expected, content bias was also found to be negatively associated with news program credibility.

Between the attributes of cognitive authority and physical appearance, only the latter was significantly associated with news program credibility. Though different in directions, the findings suggest that Filipino viewers, at least in Metro Manila, find programs credible not only because the on-camera personalities involved are “thought credible, worthy of belief” (Wilson, 1983: 15), but also because of how they look.

It is usually cited that a source’s physical bearing positively contributes to perceived source credibility (e.g., Markham, 1968; McCroskey & Young, 1981). But this paper’s finding that associated low news anchor physical appearance with high news program credibility will probably open debates on the unique context of Filipinos’ perception. Does this mean that there is no positive correlation between being a good-looking newscaster and a credible journalist?

A phenomenon that is also relevant in this discussion is the reporter’s fluidity in transitioning to TV from print or radio, and vice versa. This is especially pertinent in media organizations that are horizontally and vertically integrated. For example, a radio reporter from DZMM files a report for ABS-CBN TV 2 and ABS-CBNNews.com, all of which are under one management and operations. As such, the radio reporter is made to appear on TV. In this sense, the entry for TV appearance has been “democratized,” accommodating not only physical appearance.

While there was negative association between the newscasters/reporters' appearance and news program credibility, it was the complete opposite regarding the looks of the interviewed sources of news. The respective nature of a reporter and sources are fundamentally different. First, their roles, although complementary, are distinct from each other: the former just delivers the news, while the latter is either part of the news or the news itself. Another difference is the level of diversity of their personalities. Interviewed sources come from different sectors: politics, business, academe, entertainment, sports, and even ordinary citizens. While newscasters and reporters cover these broad sectors, they project a consistent and packaged physical bearing when delivering the news, even when they cover in the field. Lastly, because newscasters and reporters appear regularly, they possess the characteristic of ubiquity. Saving the President of the Philippines and other high-ranking officials, interviewed sources are seldom seen on TV nightly. The public may be bombarded with the same set of sources for a particular issue over time, but when the issue dies down the sources will also be put out of the limelight. These essential factors may be further investigated as possible factors that affect these contradicting results on newscasters and sources' physical appearance with news program credibility.

In sum, results show that high news program credibility is related to perceived high quality of news content, high quality of opinions provided by news sources, and low bias for news stories.

If the future of broadcast news will be found in citizen journalism, then this study's findings imply that ordinary citizens as reporters of news may be received well by viewers, at least, in Metro Manila. As indicated in this study, a credible news program does not necessarily need physically attractive reporters with a booming voice and convincing enunciation. What is more important is that stories should have high relevance, be easily understood, be free from biases, and include sources that provide relevant comments. The emphasis, therefore, should be on producing quality news stories to have an impact on the credibility of news programs. Vergel Santos likens journalism to carpentry: even if one has adequate tools, appropriate skills should still be learned. "Journalism calls, not only for the understanding of certain skills, but the acquisition of certain skills at certain levels... I'm not saying that citizens cannot be journalists. If they train, they might be able to do it," Santos said (Pinlac, 2007).

TV's ubiquity immensely impacts the Philippines, a country where only a "limited section of the population" is functionally literate (Escandor, 2009: 21). Initiatives that aim to develop the Filipinos' level of media literacy should begin by taking into account existing local research and theories on attitudes and behaviors on Philippine media.

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