

Exploring the Antecedents and Effects of Brand Images for Television News: An Application of Brand Personality Construct in a Multichannel News Environment

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Abstract *Adopting the construct of “brand personality,” this article examines the news brands of Cable News Network, Fox News Channel, MSNBC, CBS news, NBC news, and ABC news; investigates the factors influencing their brand images; and assesses the consequences of these brand perceptions. Using the news brand personality dimensions of competence, timeliness, and dynamism, it was found that antecedents such as an audience’s attitude toward an affiliated television network, perceived importance of anchors, and use of television as a news source help shape the brand personality of a network news product. The perceived brand personality of a news outlet, especially along the dimension of competence, also contributes to an audience’s attitude, usage, and loyalty of the news brand.*

Television network news has changed considerably since 1980 when Cable News Network (CNN) transformed the news-viewing universe through the introduction of its 24-hr news channel. With the addition of Fox News Channel (Fox News hereafter) and MSNBC in 1996, as well as the video news content available on the Internet, audiences today are presented with abundant video news choices. The entry of more market contenders means that the old oligopolistic preoccupation of mutual dependency with limited differentiation efforts is no longer sufficient in attracting and retaining news audiences.

Notwithstanding the notion that a news organization has the social responsibility of informing its citizens, commercial suppliers of television news have to acquire enough resources to produce the content products and deliver a profit for their owners. To do so in a market of abundant choices, the news suppliers must strategize and somehow differentiate their products logically through functional attributes such as content features and presentation. However, the proliferation of media outlets and fragmentation of audiences have made it more difficult to attract audiences solely on the basis of product attributes. In other words, these firms also have to contemplate ways of establishing distinctive and

meaningful brand images in the minds of news audiences. For example, Fox News has drawn viewers of certain political ideologies through many of its opinions-based signature programs that tend to project an image of conservatism (Kurtz, 2005; Rendall & Hollar, 2004).

Under the premise that brand management is practiced when there is a need for differentiation in a competitive marketplace (e.g., television news in a multichannel environment; McDowell, 2004), this study attempts to examine television network news as consumer brands, investigate the factors influencing television news’s brand images, and explore the consequences of the differential brand perceptions by applying the marketing construct of brand personality. Brand personality refers to “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (J. L. Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Research has shown that personality associations can be useful differentiation points because established brand personalities, like human personalities, are regarded as enduring and relatively difficult to imitate (D. A. Aaker, 1996). Going beyond the descriptive profiling of television news brand personality, this study aims to explore the antecedents that play a role in the formation of news brand personality and the consequences of brand personality in relation to audiences’ attitude, use, and loyalty of the news brand. Note that the study focuses only on commercial news networks because the financing mechanism of public television and thus its marketing strategies are quite different from those of their commercial counterparts.

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Literature Review

The Network News Market

Broadcast news on CBS, ABC, and NBC had been the dominant television news source in the United States until CNN brought the 24-hr news genre into the news market in 1980 (Farhi, 2003). CNN enjoyed a relatively monopolistic position in the cable news business until the arrival of two competitors, Fox News and MSNBC, in 1996 (Bae, 1999). Today's network news market is essentially composed of two groups of firms (i.e., broadcast-and cable-based groups) that practice various degrees of market differentiation and together face an increasingly fierce competition from online news sources.

The network news industry has witnessed great changes over the past decade. First, the overall audience for broadcast news has dropped significantly. A report on news media conducted by the Pew Research Center (2004) found that the percentage of Americans who regularly tune to nightly broadcast network news declined from 60% in 1993 to 34% in 2004. The trend seems to continue as the three broadcast evening newscasts received a combined ratings record of only 18.9% in November 2005 (Project for Excellence in Journalism [PEJ], 2006). Second, cable news channels appear to be gaining ground on their broadcast counterparts. The increase in the number of viewers for cable news channels has been pervasive since 2002. The overall audience of cable television news (38%) exceeded that of broadcast television news (34%) in 2004 (Pew Research Center, 2004). The collective ratings of cable news continue to grow, gaining 2.8% from 2004 to 2005 with Fox News as the driving force behind the increase (PEJ, 2006). Third, CNN no longer holds a predominant position in the cable news business in terms of ratings and the number of viewers. An annual report on American journalism indicates that Fox News became cable news's leader in ratings and the number of people watching at any given time in 2002. Fox News's average audience in prime time as a leader was 1.5 million viewers in mid-2005, a 9% increase from the previous year. CNN remained in second place, with 721,000 prime time viewers, a 13% decrease from the year before. MSNBC averaged 310,000 viewers in prime time, down 4% from 2004 (Greppi, 2005).

To combat the ever-increasing competition and audience fragmentation, both the broadcast and cable industries have embraced brand management (Bellamy & Traudt, 2000; Chan-Olmsted, 2001; Galbi, 2001; McDowell & Batten, 2005). For example, the three broadcast networks tend to rely on their "star power." Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw, and Dan Rather represented the three broadcast network news outlets for many years. Differentiating news programs by the news hosts seems to have been relatively successful in the past before the

age of cable competition. Brokaw of NBC's *Nightly News* and Jennings of ABC's *World News Tonight* once attracted an average of 34.7 million unique viewers (Hickey, 2003). It has even been suggested that the personality of a broadcast network news program is often synonymous with the personality of the hosts of the program (McDowell, 2004).

As for the cable network news, Bae (2000) found that the three cable news outlets (CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC) competed with each other by differentiating programming, as reflected by their different emphases of program formats. For example, CNN's programming focused on newscasts (33.5%), specialty (40.5%), and talk and interview (25.1%). MSNBC mostly utilized talk and interview (41.9%) and newscasts (32.6%). On the other hand, Fox News heavily relied on talk and interview (88.8%; Bae, 1999). ADT Research's (2002) report on the content of the three cable news networks concluded that whereas CNN is viewed as a newsgathering brand, Fox News is considered an opinion-oriented brand. MSNBC presents a mixture (ADT Research, 2002). It seems that CNN and Fox News have adopted divergent marketing emphases. To position itself differently from the then-leading cable news outlet—CNN—Fox News began as a niche, more tabloid-style, "edgy" brand, seeking to avoid direct confrontation with CNN's journalistic image. Specifically, to develop such an image, Fox News tends to offer flashier television: brighter graphics, crisper presentation, and more opinionated and combative personalities (Farhi, 2003).

Brand Personality Construct

Brand personality is defined as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (J. L. Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Using cognitive psychology as a theoretical base, Haigood (1999) suggested that the human characteristics associated with a brand are connected in consumer memory to many other brand associations and accessed through a cognitive process called *spreading activation*. In fact, very often attributes of a product alone may not be sufficient to build a strong brand (D. A. Aaker, 1996). Biel (2003) pointed out that "functional differences between brands are becoming ever more trivial. As a consequence, the 'soft' concepts of brand personality and brand relationships are more likely to be far 'harder' and more effective in creating brand equity than most marketers realize" (p. 4). By endowing a brand with a unique personality, brand strategists can differentiate brands with similar product attributes (Phau & Lau, 2001). Established brand personalities, like human personalities, are regarded as enduring and relatively difficult to imitate (D. A. Aaker, 1996).

J. L. Aaker (1997) proposed a set of brand personality scale derived from the Big Five human personality traits. She identified five underlying dimensions of brand personality: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. The five core dimensions and their corresponding traits are down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, and cheerful for sincerity; daring, spirited, imaginative, and up-to-date for excitement; reliable, intelligent, and successful for competence; upper class and charming for sophistication; and outdoorsy and tough for ruggedness. It has been suggested that personality traits such as those previously listed are most directly associated with a brand through the transferring of the personalities of the people associated with the brand (e.g., its users or its product endorsers; McCracken, 1989). The Aaker scale has been shown to be stable across product categories and samples of consumers in the United States (Alvarez-Ortiz & Harris, 2002).

Antecedents and Consequences of Brand Personality

Brand personality is ultimately a reflection of a company's efforts (i.e., product attributes, marketing mix) and consumer characteristics (i.e., consumer perceptions of the product, consumer personality). Batra, Lehmann, and Singh (1993) asserted that the antecedents of a brand's personality are the entire marketing mix of the brand, including its price, retail store locations, product formulation, product form, packaging details, symbols, sales promotions, and media advertising. On the other hand, McEnally and de Chernatony (1999) suggested that the preferred personality dimensions of a user can influence the self-congruity with a brand and then reinforce the user's personality on to the brand. The stronger the relation that is built with a brand, the more one is able to achieve congruity between the brand and the self (Phau & Lau, 2001). Govers and Schoormans (2005) also proposed that people prefer products with a product personality that matches their self-image. The greater the congruity between the consistent and distinctive human characteristics of an individual (either actual or perceived) and those of a brand, the greater will be the preference for the brand. An established brand personality may result in consumers having stronger emotional connections to the brand and greater trust and loyalty (Fournier, 1994; Johnson, Soutar, & Sweeney, 2000). Sirgy (1982) further concluded that brand personality increases preference as well as usage. Batra et al. asserted that "consumers buy brands, among other reasons, to define how old or young they are, how masculine or feminine they are, and how upscale or downscale they are" (p. 85). It means that brand personality that reflects consumers' self-characteristics is related to consumers' brand usage. It has also been suggested that consumers embrace

brands that have strong, positive personalities because of their tendency to anthropomorphize nonhuman objects (Freling & Forbes, 2005). Haigood (1999) proposed that humans regard products with favorable personality traits to be more familiar, more comfortable, and less risky than ones without such a distinct personality.

Brand Personality of Television News

Because personality traits like those used by the Aaker scale are most directly associated with a brand through the transferring of the personalities of the people associated with the brand (J. L. Aaker, 1997), and television news content is always delivered by anchors or reporters, there are ample opportunities for a television news outlet to cultivate brand personality. It has been suggested that the personality of a broadcast network news program is often synonymous with the personality of the hosts of the program (McDowell, 2004). Because personality traits are also indirectly developed through associations with product-related attributes (Batra et al., 1993), the way a news program is packaged and presented also offers grounds for personality development. Brand researchers have argued that brand personality includes demographic characteristics such as gender and class (Levy, 1999). From this perspective, it is noteworthy that many television news brands are associated with distinctive audience profiles. For example, Fox News's viewers are more affluent, with a \$64,500 average income among 25- to 54-year-olds versus \$62,000 for CNN and \$59,500 for MSNBC. CNN's viewers are a lot older than the viewers of the other two cable news networks; the median age of CNN viewers is 61.1 years, whereas the median age of Fox News and MSNBC viewers is 57.4 and 52.3 years, respectively (Pew Research Center, 2004). Compared to the CNN audience, Fox News viewers are more likely to follow entertainment-based news stories and enjoy news that shares their personal views, whereas the CNN and broadcast network news audiences prefer news that has more in-depth interviews with public officials (Morris, 2005). Furthermore, Fox News has become much more conservative and more Republican. By contrast, the regular audience for CNN is somewhat more Democratic than the general public and almost identical to the public in terms of ideology (Pew Research Center, 2004). It was found that 35% of Republicans say they are regular Fox News viewers, compared with just 21% of Democrats. On the other hand, 28% of Democrats are regular CNN viewers, whereas only 19% of Republicans say they watch it regularly (Pew Research Center, 2004). It is plausible that audience characteristics influence the perceived brand personality of television news.

Although suppliers of network news spend millions of dollars each year promoting their programs and images,

very little research has been directed toward either identifying brand personalities of news or analyzing the factors affecting these images. In addition, the construct of brand personality has yet to be tested empirically on a media product. Accordingly, the following research questions are examined:

RQ1: What antecedents are related to the brand personality of television network news? Recognizing the importance of perceived brand images in affecting the consumption of news media, we want to take a step further to explore the antecedents that play a role in forming brand personality perceptions. As previously mentioned, firms' efforts and consumer perceptions and characteristics contribute to distinct brand personality. Previous studies investigated how product attributes, which are the results of firms' endeavors, differentiate television news brands (Bae, 2000). For the purpose of this study, we, on the other hand, focus on the influence of consumer characteristics on the differences of brand personality. Therefore, this study does not include any of the firm-related factors such as contents, news presentation styles, or other product attributes for our investigations. As implied by previous brand personality literature, media consumers are likely to choose a news brand that matches their self-images. In other words, an audience's personal characteristics may contribute to its perception of a news brand. In addition, the motivations behind an audience's television consumption are supposed to influence such perceptions as they fundamentally define how a network news brand, along with its associated personality traits, may fulfill individuals' viewing needs. Because previous industry observations also point to the significant role news presenters (e.g., anchors) play in the news consumption process, it is likely that an audience's perceived importance of news anchors may also affect the brand personality of its network news. In addition, theoretically, a news brand may be seen as an extension of its parent network, thus allowing for the transfer of affect and beliefs from one brand to the other (Milberg, Park, & McCarthy, 1997; Park, Jaworski, & Macinnis, 1986).

RQ2: What is the relation between a television network news's perceived brand personality and the audience attitude, usage, and loyalty toward and of the brand?

Because the ultimate utility of a differentiated, positive brand personality is to improve brand attitude, stimulate brand consumption, and increase brand loyalty,

we also review the possible linkage between brand personality and several brand outcomes in the context of television network news, thus validating the utility of such branding strategies in the television news market. Appendix A shows the conceptual model for the investigations.

Research Method

Data Collection Procedure

To assess the brand-related characteristics of television network news as perceived by the audience, we adopted the survey research method for this study. The initial survey instrument was first pretested on a group of 14 undergraduate students. Data were then collected through a national mail survey and a student survey. Using a random sample of U.S. consumers obtained from a leading mailing list company (i.e., a randomly selected list of consumers from a database of 184 million U.S. consumers), a national mail survey of 1,000 adults was conducted in January 2006. Due to the financial restraint, no follow-up mail was sent. Excluding 11 nondeliverable and 10 replied but incomplete questionnaires, a total of 113 surveys were used for the analysis. The response rate from this national mail survey was 12.44%. To examine whether there is a difference between the national sample and students, a sample of undergraduate students was further employed because young generation was known to have different news habits from older generation (Pew Research Center, 2004). A student survey was administered to a convenient sample of 173 undergraduate students from two introductory communications classes at a large southeastern university in February 2006. A total of 165 valid responses from the student sample were used for the data analysis. Because of the different nature of the national random sample and student sample, the results were analyzed separately and compared to address the research questions.

Variable Measures

Brand personality traits and dimensions of television news. Three cable network news brands (MSNBC, CNN, and FOX News) and three broadcast network news brands (CBS, NBC, and ABC) were selected for this study because they are the top three television news outlets in each television news category (Pew Research Center, 2004; PEJ, 2005). A two-step personality traits selection process was implemented to apply the brand personality construct and scale to television news. First, we incorporated a list of news brand images reported by McDowell (2004)

from his free-association brand perception study of three news networks to capture the news-specific traits for this study. Seventeen news-specific terms identified in the McDowell study were added to the 42 original personality traits proposed by J. L. Aaker (1997). A total of 59 traits were included in a pretest questionnaire to assess the traits' applicability in a television news context. In particular, these traits were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all descriptive*) to 5 (*extremely descriptive*) to the extent each trait describes NBC news, CBS news, ABC news, CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC. Note that respondents were asked how each of the brand personality traits describes each of the television news networks in general, not the individual news programs of those television networks. The initial survey was first pretested on a group of 14 undergraduate students. For the sake of parsimony in the final instrument, the list of personality traits was reduced by consulting the means and standard deviations of the six news brands from the pretest. In general, taking the characteristics of a news product into consideration, if a brand personality item showed a mean below 3.0 and standard deviation below 0.2 for all six television network news outlets, the item was removed from the final questionnaire. A total of 28 brand personality items were kept for the final questionnaire.

Principal component factor analyses using a varimax rotation were followed to identify the core dimensions of brand personality for the six television news brands. Using two sets of samples—national and student samples—both factor analyses extracted three factors: competence, timeliness, and dynamism. The resultant personality dimensions explain 76.20% of the variance in the national sample and 67.29% in the student sample.

Specifically, the personality of *competence* represents the perceived capability of news product creation (e.g., personality traits of intelligent, honest, reliable, traditional, analytical, and technical). The second personality dimension, *timeliness*, depicts the “timing” and “seasonedness” of news product delivery. Items loaded heavily on this factor include time-related items such as up-to-date, contemporary, and experienced. Finally, the *dynamism* dimension symbolizes the lively, energetic, exciting images of a news product. This factor includes personality traits such as trendy, masculine, and daring. The news brand study actually confirms the suggestions of various news scholars who identified the factors such as expertise (competence), currency (timeliness), and dynamism (dynamism) as sources to establishing news credibility (Abdulla, Garrison, Salwen, Driscoll, & Casey, 2005; Infante, 1980).

Antecedent: Motivations for watching television. Appendix B contains the constructs and measures for the antecedents and consequences used for this study.

As an audience antecedent to brand personality perceptions, the respondents were asked to rate multiple statements regarding why they watch television. Adopting the scales developed by Lin, Atkin, and Abelman (2002), 18 viewing motivation items were used to measure motivations for watching television. The items represent five factors including boredom relief, moral support, fun, informational learning, and relaxation. Consistent with the scales proposed by Lin et al., we used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) on the statements (alpha for the national sample = .74-.81; alpha for the student sample = .62-.88).

Antecedent: Audience demographic, political, and media profile. For the audience demographic profile, we investigated the respondents' age, gender, highest degree completed, marital status, and total household income. We also asked the participants to identify their political ideology as reflected by political parties. To measure the usage of media including television, radio, newspaper, and the Internet, respondents were asked how often they use each of the media using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very frequently*). To measure the use of media as a news source, using the same scale, respondents were asked how often they use television, radio, newspaper, and the Internet as a news source. We also asked the respondents whether they subscribe to basic cable, pay cable, digital cable, satellite television, and broadband Internet services because such media subscriptions would affect their ability to access a variety of news sources.

Antecedent: Television network affiliation and anchor preferences. To measure an audience's attitude toward a network brand, we adopted the brand attitude scale developed by Cho, Lee, and Tharp (2001). The scale is composed of three 5-point Likert-type statements (i.e., liking, desirable, and satisfactory) designed to measure the general, overall attitude about a particular brand a consumer has been exposed to (alpha for the national sample = .95; alpha for the student sample = .94). Note that only the broadcast networks of NBC, CBS, ABC, and Fox were examined from this perspective for NBC news, CBS news, ABC news, and FOX News. NBC was not evaluated again for MSNBC because it is more directly affiliated with NBC news, and MSNBC actually contains two affiliated brand entities. To investigate the effect of news anchors, on a 5-point scale, the respondents were asked how important news anchors are in their choosing a certain network news outlet.

Brand outcomes: Attitude toward the news brand, brand usage, and brand loyalty. To measure the brand outcome of attitude for a news brand, we used the same attitude

scales used earlier for television network attitude. The respondents' answers on how often they use a certain network news outlet as a news source (*never to very frequently on a 5-point scale*) were used as a gauge for specific network news consumption. We also measured an audience's loyalty toward a news brand using a simple 5-point loyalty scale.

Statistical Analyses

Stepwise multiple regressions were performed to test the link between brand personality and its antecedents and the relation between the three brand personality dimensions and brand-related outcomes. Because there were no prior studies that either explored or examined the antecedents and consequences of brand personality of television news, we chose stepwise multiple regression over hierarchical regression, which requires the researchers to decide the order of variables to enter. In the process of exploring the relation between antecedents and brand personality dimensions, age, household income, political ideology, education level, and marital status were treated as dummy variables because they were categorical variables. Age over 65, income over \$105,000, other affiliation in political ideology, and post graduate in education level acted as reference groups.

Results

Sample

As indicated, the sample analyzed comprised 278 respondents from two populations. The profiles of both samples are illustrated in C. Comparatively, the national household sample had more male respondents (54.9%) than the student sample (26.7%). The national sample was also older—69.1% of those surveyed were at least 45 years old; whereas, understandably, 97% of the student sample was between 18 and 24 years old. Furthermore, the national respondents were very educated, with 77.9 % having completed at least college. Logically, the national sample had more married respondents (76.1% vs. 1.8%) and a higher income level with an average income of \$54,300, whereas the average income for the student sample was \$28,600. In terms of political ideology, the student sample had more self-identified Democrats (41.2% vs. 31.9%).

Comparatively, the national sample and student sample had somewhat different media and news usage patterns. The rankings of media usage frequency for the national respondents were television, radio, the Internet,

and newspaper ($M = 4.12, 3.62, 3.45, 3.29$, respectively). The rankings for the student sample were the Internet, television, radio, and newspaper ($M = 4.71, 3.85, 2.85, 2.65$, respectively). Logically, the two groups also had different preferences for news media. Whereas the national sample used television most frequently as a news source ($M = 4.19$), the students received their news most frequently from the Internet ($M = 4.11$). Whereas the national respondents next went to newspaper, radio, and then the Internet for their news, the students next used television, newspaper, and then radio for their news sources. It is evident that the two groups were divergent in their media preferences when it comes to the Internet as a medium or news source. As for the consumption of specific network news, Fox News, NBC, and ABC in that order were the top three network news outlets used by the national sample. The student respondents, on the other hand, preferred CNN, NBC, and ABC. Although the two groups identified different cable network news brands as their top news choice, they preferred the same top broadcast network news outlets.

Antecedents of Network News Brand Personality

To test the importance of the proposed factors such as audience characteristics, television viewing motivations, perceived importance of news anchors, and attitude toward the affiliated television network in affecting the perceived personality of a network news brand, stepwise multiple regressions of these variables were performed on the three news personality dimensions for each network news brand. The regression analyses for both samples revealed no multicollinearity problems (Variation Inflation Factors [VIFs] = 1.00–1.37).

Table 1 shows the results of the multiple regressions from the national sample. Attitude toward the NBC network, usage of television as a news source, and being a Democrat significantly contributed to the perceived competence of NBC news ($R^2 = .64$). Attitude toward the CBS network, television usage, age in 45 to 54 (negative), and being a Democrat were found to be significant predictors of CBS news's competence ($R^2 = .47$). Attitude toward the ABC network, usage of television as a news source, and pay cable subscription (negative) were also significant antecedents of ABC news's competence ($R^2 = .42$). Importance of anchors, household income less than \$15,000 (negative), and the viewing motivation of fun significantly contributed to CNN's competence ($R^2 = .26$). Attitude toward the Fox network, importance of anchors, and being a Republican significantly affected the perceived competence of Fox News ($R^2 = .57$). Finally, importance of news anchors, usage of Internet as a news source, and gender (female) were found to be significant predictors of MSNBC's competence ($R^2 = .26$).

Table 1. Multiple Regressions of Antecedents for News Brand Personality (National Sample)

NBC News ($R^2 = .64$)	CBS News ($R^2 = .47$)	ABC News ($R^2 = .42$)	CNN ($R^2 = .26$)	Fox News ($R^2 = .57$)	MSNBC ($R^2 = .26$)
Competence					
Attitude toward NBC network (.60**)	Attitude toward CBS network (.54**)	Attitude toward ABC network (.46**)	Importance of anchors (.34**)	Attitude toward Fox network (.63**)	Importance of news anchors (.24*)
Usage of TV as a news source (.33**)	TV usage (.18*)	Usage of TV as a news source (.32**)	Income less than \$15,000 (-.19*)	Importance of anchors (.16*)	Usage of Internet as a news source (.35**)
Democrat (.17*)	Democrat (.21*)	Pay cable subscription (-.19*)		Republican (.17*)	Female (.21*)
Timeliness					
NBC News ($R^2 = .57$)	CBS News ($R^2 = .50$)	ABC News ($R^2 = .45$)	CNN ($R^2 = .20$)	Fox News ($R^2 = .50$)	MSNBC ($R^2 = .14$)
Attitude toward NBC network (.68**)	Attitude toward CBS network (.63**)	Attitude toward ABC network (.52**)	Importance of anchors (.20*)	Attitude toward Fox network (.71**)	TV Usage (.25*)
Usage of radio as a news source (-.17*)	Married (-.21*)	Relaxation (.21*)	Fun (.35**)		Usage of Internet as a news source (.24*)
Female (.18*)	Internet usage (.18*)	Independent (-.20*)			
Independent (-.16*)					
Dynamism					
NBC News ($R^2 = .37$)	CBS News ($R^2 = .46$)	ABC News ($R^2 = .36$)	CNN ($R^2 = .24$)	Fox News ($R^2 = .19$)	MSNBC ($R^2 = .07$)
Moral support (.23*)	Attitude toward CBS network (.32**)	Relaxation (.27*)	Usage of newspaper as a news source (.33**)	Attitude toward Fox network (.30**)	Female (.27*)
Fun (.22*)	Income \$90,001-\$105,000 (-.33**)	Fun (.27*)	Satellite subscription (-.26*)	Independent (-.30**)	
Democrat (.37**)	Usage of radio as a news source (-.23*)	Income \$90,001-\$105,000 (-.32**)	Relaxation (.24*)		
Income \$90,001-\$105,000 (-.24*)	Democrat (.27**)	Democrat (.25*)	Age 45-54 (-.22*)		
Age 45-54 (-.19*)	Age 45-54 (-.25**)	Age 18-24 (.22*)			
	Relaxation (.24*)				

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

In regards to the timeliness news personality, attitude toward the NBC network, usage of radio as a news medium (negative), gender (female), and being an Independent as political ideology (negative) significantly contributed to the perceived timeliness of NBC news ($R^2 = .57$). For CBS news, attitude toward the CBS network, marital status (single), and Internet usage seem to lead to a perception of timeliness for CBS news ($R^2 = .50$). Attitude toward the ABC network, the viewing motivation of relaxation, and being an Independent as political ideology (negative) were significant predictors of ABC news's timeliness ($R^2 = .45$). Importance of anchors and the viewing motivation of fun positively impacted CNN's timeliness dimension ($R^2 = .20$). Finally, attitude toward the Fox network was a significant antecedent for Fox News's timeliness ($R^2 = .50$), whereas television usage and the use of Internet as a news source were significant predictors of MSNBC's timeliness personality ($R^2 = .14$).

In terms of the dynamism personality, the television viewing motivations of moral support and fun, being a Democratic, income ranging from \$90,001 to \$105,000

(negative), and age in 45 to 54 (negative) contributed to the perceived dynamism of NBC news ($R^2 = .37$). Attitude toward the CBS network, income ranging from \$90,001 to \$105,000 (negative), usage of radio as a news source (negative), being a Democrat, age in 45 to 54 (negative), and the viewing motivation of relaxation for watching TV were significant in predicting CBS news's dynamism ($R^2 = .46$). The viewing motivations of relaxation and fun, income ranging from \$90,001 to \$105,000 (negative), age in 18 to 24, and being a Democratic also contributed to the dynamism of ABC news ($R^2 = .36$). For CNN, usage of newspaper as a news source, satellite television subscription (negative), relaxation, and age in 45 to 54 (negative) were significant antecedents of its dynamism personality ($R^2 = .24$). As for Fox News, attitude toward the Fox network and being an Independent (negative) contributed to its dynamism ($R^2 = .19$). Finally, women were more likely to see MSNBC as dynamic ($R^2 = .07$).

Table 2 shows the results of the multiple regressions from the student sample. In terms of the competence dimension, the respondents' attitude toward a news

Table 2. Multiple Regressions of Antecedents for News Brand Personality (Student Sample)

NBC News ($R^2 = .23$)	CBS News ($R^2 = .15$)	ABC News ($R^2 = .17$)	CNN ($R^2 = .18$)	Fox News ($R^2 = .36$)	MSNBC ($R^2 = .14$)
Competence					
Attitude toward NBC network (.39**)	Attitude toward CBS network (.25**)	Attitude toward ABC network (.25**)	Usage of TV as a news source (.30**)	Attitude toward Fox network (.29**)	Age 45–54 (–.25**)
Usage of TV as a news source (.22**)	Usage of TV as a news source (.23**)	Usage of TV as a news source (.18*)	Married (–.23**)	Republican (.41**)	Usage of TV as a news source (.24**)
		Relaxation (.16*)	Independent (.15*)	High school (.17*)	Married (–.16*)
Timeliness					
NBC News ($R^2 = .21$)	CBS News ($R^2 = .15$)	ABC News ($R^2 = .08$)	CNN ($R^2 = .10$)	Fox News ($R^2 = .23$)	MSNBC
Attitude toward NBC network (.32**)	Attitude toward CBS network (.26**)	Attitude toward ABC network (.29**)	Relaxation (.26**)	Attitude toward Fox network (.36**)	None are statistically significant
Relaxation (.17*)	Pay cable (.18*)		Age 25–34 (–.19*)	Republican (.21**)	
Married (–.16*)	Married (–.17*)				
Dynamism					
NBC News ($R^2 = .26$)	CBS News ($R^2 = .18$)	ABC News ($R^2 = .15$)	CNN ($R^2 = .11$)	Fox News ($R^2 = .24$)	MSNBC ($R^2 = .17$)
Attitude toward NBC network (.42**)	Attitude toward CBS network (.21**)	Attitude toward ABC network (.28**)	Usage of TV as a news source (.24**)	Attitude toward Fox network (.48**)	Newspaper usage (.21**)
Usage of Internet as news source (.16*)	Usage of newspaper as a news source (.17*)	Importance of anchors (–.20*)	Newspaper usage (.18*)	Usage of Internet as a news source (.16*)	Radio usage (.19*)
Income \$90,001–\$105,000 (–.22**)	Importance of anchors (–.23**)	Basic cable subscription (–.19*)	Income \$75,001–\$90,000 (–.18*)		Basic cable subscription (–.20*)
Digital cable service subscription (.18*)	Radio Usage (.20*)				Income \$15,001–\$30,000 (–.17*)
					Income \$90,001–\$105,000 (–.16*)

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

brand's parent network continues to be important in predicting the perceived competence of the news brand. Comparing to the national sample, usage of television as a news source was significant for CBS news's perceived competence, as relaxation for ABC news. Age in 45 to 54 (negative), usage of TV as a news source, and marital status (single) were statistically significant for the competence of MSNBC ($R^2 = .14$). CNN and Fox News had totally different sets of predictors here. Whereas usage of television as a news source, marital status (single), and being an Independent were significant antecedents of CNN's competence ($R^2 = .18$), being a Republican, attitude toward the Fox network, and high school graduation as an education level were positive predictors of Fox News's perceived competence ($R^2 = .36$).

As for the timeliness personality attitude toward NBC network, relaxation and marital status (single) were also significant for NBC news ($R^2 = .21$); and as for attitude toward CBS network, pay cable subscription and marital status (single) were significant for CBS news ($R^2 = .15$). Attitude toward the ABC network was the only predictor

of timeliness of ABC news ($R^2 = .08$). Relaxation and age in 25 to 34 (negative) were significant predictors for CNN's timeliness ($R^2 = .10$), and being a Republican and the attitude toward the Fox network were significant for Fox News's timeliness ($R^2 = .23$). No significant predictors were found for MSNBC.

The dynamism dimension seems to present the most divergent results between the two samples. Attitude toward the NBC network, usage of Internet as a news source, income ranging from \$90,001 to \$105,000 (negative), and digital cable subscription significantly contributed to NBC news's dynamism ($R^2 = .26$). Attitude toward the CBS network, usage of newspaper as a news source, importance of anchors (negative), and radio usage were significant predictors of CBS news's dynamism ($R^2 = .18$). Attitude toward the ABC network, importance of news anchors (negative), and basic cable subscription (negative) were significant antecedents of ABC news's dynamism ($R^2 = .15$). Usage of television as a news source, newspaper usage, and income ranging from \$75,001 to \$90,000 (negative) contributed to CNN's dynamism

($R^2 = .11$). Attitude toward Fox network and usage of the Internet as a news sources were significant predictors of Fox News's dynamism ($R^2 = .24$). Finally, newspaper usage, radio usage, basic cable subscription (negative), income ranging from \$15,001 to \$30,000 (negative), and income ranging from \$90,001 to \$105,000 (negative) significantly contributed to MSNBC's dynamism ($R^2 = .17$).

From the perspective of audience demographic antecedents, age and income seem to play a role in affecting perceived news brand personality most frequently, especially in the case of dynamism. As for the motivation antecedents, although not consistent across samples, relaxation and fun motives behind watching television seem to be related to the perceived competence, timeliness, or dynamism of a news brand. The remainders of the motivation (i.e., information learning, moral support, boredom relief) barely play a role in establishing brand personality dimensions for television news. Regarding the factor of political ideology, being a Republican was central in predicting one's perceived positive competence of Fox News across both samples. On the other hand, the Democrat association was generally predictive of the competence and dynamism personality dimensions of broadcast news brands in the national sample. In terms of the factor of parent network brand association, the results from both samples show that an audience's attitude toward a news brand's parent network played a role in his or her perceived competence, timeliness, and dynamism (to a lesser degree) of the television news brand. The national sample further indicates an interesting observation toward the role of anchors. It seems that the respondents were more likely to regard anchors as an important tool in evaluating the competence of a news brand only in the case of cable news brands. Finally, regarding the antecedents of media

usage, preference in using television as a news source, especially in the context of broadcast network news, was predictive of a news brand's competence dimension across the samples.

Consequences of Network News Brand Personality

To assess the relation between an audience's perceived brand personality for network news and his or her attitude and loyalty toward and use of the brand, stepwise multiple regressions were performed using the measures of *attitude*, *loyalty*, and *usage* as the dependent variables and the three personality dimensions as the independent variables. The regression results revealed no multicollinearity problems ($VIFs = 1.00-3.55$).

For the national sample, the personality dimension of competence significantly contributed to all brand outcomes for all news brands as seen in Table 3. It is interesting to note that neither timeliness nor dynamism influenced the national sample's loyalty or usage toward the news brands. The competence dimension was the only factor that influences usage and loyalty of the news brands, whereas the other dimensions influenced attitude toward the news brands. Along with competence, dynamism dimension affected participants' attitude toward ABC news. In addition to competence, timeliness played a significant role in the audiences' attitude toward both CNN and MSNBC.

As seen in Table 4, the student sample presents a somewhat different picture. Nevertheless, the personality dimension of competence was still largely the most significant determinant of attitude, usage, and loyalty. Meanwhile, dynamism appeared to be a more instrumental factor for this younger population. For the attitude toward the news brands, competence and

Table 3. Multiple Regressions of Consequences (National Sample)

NBC News ($R^2 = .71$)	CBS News ($R^2 = .72$)	ABC News ($R^2 = .55$)	CNN ($R^2 = .46$)	Fox News ($R^2 = .64$)	MSNBC ($R^2 = .46$)
Attitude					
Competence of NBCnews (.84**)	Competence of CBS news (.85**)	Competence of ABC news (.64**) Dynamism of ABC news (.19*)	Competence of CNN (.46**) Timeliness of CNN (.26*)	Competence of Fox News (.80**)	Competence of MSNBC (.30*) Timeliness of MSNBC (.40**)
Usage					
NBC News ($R^2 = .55$)	CBS News ($R^2 = .43$)	ABC News ($R^2 = .36$)	CNN ($R^2 = .36$)	Fox News ($R^2 = .52$)	MSNBC ($R^2 = .23$)
Competence of NBC news (.74)**	Competence of CBS news (.66)**	Competence of ABC news (.60)**	Competence of CNN (.60)**	Competence of Fox News (.72)**	Competence of MSNBC (.48)**
Loyalty					
NBC News ($R^2 = .46$)	CBS News ($R^2 = .48$)	ABC News ($R^2 = .28$)	CNN ($R^2 = .29$)	Fox News ($R^2 = .54$)	MSNBC ($R^2 = .21$)
Competence of NBC news (.68)**	Competence of CBS news (.69)**	Competence of ABC news (.53)**	Competence of CNN (.54)**	Competence of Fox News (.73)**	Competence of MSNBC (.46)**

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Table 4. Multiple Regressions of Consequences (Student Sample)

NBC News ($R^2 = .49$)	CBS News ($R^2 = .37$)	ABC News ($R^2 = .37$)	CNN ($R^2 = .35$)	Fox News ($R^2 = .65$)	MSNBC ($R^2 = .40$)
Attitude					
Competence of NBC news (.51)**	Competence of CBS news (.36)**	Competence of ABC news (.34)**	Competence of CNN (.41)**	Competence of Fox News (.64)**	Competence of MSNBC (.33)**
Timeliness of NBC news (.27)**	Dynamism of CBS news (.33)**	Dynamism of ABC news (.33)**	Dynamism of CNN (.27)**	Dynamism of Fox News (.24)**	Dynamism of MSNBC (.37)**
Usage					
NBC News ($R^2 = .34$)	CBS News ($R^2 = .18$)	ABC News ($R^2 = .24$)	CNN ($R^2 = .08$)	Fox News ($R^2 = .31$)	MSNBC ($R^2 = .14$)
Competence of NBC news (.44**)	Competence of CBS news (.42**)	Competence of ABC news (.49**)	Dynamism of CNN (.29**)	Competence of Fox News (.41**)	Competence of MSNBC (.22*)
Dynamism of NBC news (.19*)				Dynamism of Fox News (.21*)	Dynamism of MSNBC (.21*)
Loyalty					
NBC News ($R^2 = .35$)	CBS News ($R^2 = .15$)	ABC News ($R^2 = .22$)	CNN ($R^2 = .23$)	Fox News ($R^2 = .39$)	MSNBC ($R^2 = .23$)
Competence of NBC news (.47**)	Competence of CBS news (.19*)	Competence of ABC news (.20*)	Competence of CNN (.25**)	Competence of Fox News (.45**)	Dynamism of MSNBC (.47)**
Dynamism of NBC news (.18*)	Dynamism of CBS news (.25**)	Dynamism of ABC news (.32**)	Dynamism of CNN (.31**)	Timeliness of Fox News (-.22*)	
				Dynamism of Fox News (.41**)	

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

dynamism were significant for all of the brands except for NBC news (i.e., timeliness replaced dynamism). In terms of actual brand usage, competence was statistically significant for all news brands but CNN, which had dynamism as the only significant predictor. In addition to competence, dynamism was important for the usage of NBC news, Fox News, and MSNBC. For brand loyalty, dynamism and competence were statistically significant, affecting loyalty for all of the outlets except for MSNBC. In fact, dynamism was the only predictor of loyalty for MSNBC. It is interesting to note that all three brand dimensions were predictive of consumers' loyalty toward Fox News.

Discussion and Conclusion

Treating television news as a branded media product, this study explored the antecedents and effects of brand personality in the context of television network news. Regarding the antecedents of the news brand personality, our findings suggest that a network news's parent network (if there is one) possesses considerable transferable brand images that might affect the news brand's perceived personality, especially in the dimensions of competence and timeliness. This observation is consistent with the brand extension literature that points to the value of awareness creation and positive associations from a well-known parent brand to its extended brands

(Milberg et al., 1997). Our other finding that the demographic antecedents of age and income are predictive of the dynamism brand dimension somewhat supports the notion that people generally prefer products with a product personality that matches their self-images, at least in the case of youth, wealth, and images of dynamism. Furthermore, the frequent use of television, especially as a news source, seems to positively relate to an audience's perceived competence of broadcast news brands—that is, it is more likely for those audiences who “choose” the television medium for news to regard broadcast news brands as competent. As the Internet becomes a more formidable competitor to television as a news source, it is plausible that the perceived competency of television network news might gradually decline.

Although broadcast news and Fox News enjoy spillover effect from their parent networks with respect to the brand personality of competence, news anchors tends to play a role in boosting the perceived competence of cable news brands. This suggests that the cable brands have been more successful in using anchors for differentiation purposes. When focusing on specific brands, the impact of the antecedents on shaping brand personality is greater for NBC news and Fox News than for the other news brands, based on the R^2 values. The influence of brand personality dimensions on brand attitude, usage, and loyalty is also more significant for NBC news and Fox News than for the others. It seems that the audiences of those news brands received better congruity between self-image and brand personality, which led to positive

and favorable attitude, usage, and loyalty toward NBC news and Fox News, respectively. Among all six news brands, the variable of political ideology was most relevant for Fox News (i.e., Republican participants tend to see Fox News as more competent and timely), whereas Democrats are more likely to see broadcast network news as competent and dynamic. This finding points to a plausible linkage between Fox News's success in using political ideology as a point of differentiation through its high-profile, opinion-based programs (e.g., *The O'Reilly Factor*) and its overtaking its cable competitor, CNN, in ratings performance. The question now is how a commercial news supplier would balance the needs to differentiate its product and to produce unbiased, quality news content.

The findings also indicate that the viewing motivation of relaxation and fun are the ones that are related to competence, timeliness, or dynamism of news brands. It is interesting to note that the viewing motivation of informational learning, which underlines the logical value of news, does not significantly contribute to any of the personality dimensions of the network news examined. It is possible that television news is no longer the leading source for informational learning. In fact, the utilities of today's network news might very well rest in an audience's desire for relaxation and affirmation of his or her political ideology, whereas a different news medium such as the Internet delivers the informational utility of news.

Regarding the consequences of news personality, our findings indicate that competence is the most important and essential personality dimension that leads to better brand attitude, usage, and loyalty. The observed linkage between these brand outcomes and brand personality dimensions in the context of news are consistent with other brand literature concerning different product categories. Our results further suggest that dynamism plays a more significant role in all brand outcomes for younger audiences, especially for loyalty and for cable news brands. Considering that loyalty means not only repeated use of the brand—which is beyond attitude and usage—but also the potential acquisition of new customers and audiences to the brand through favorable word of mouths, establishing a dynamic personality of television news seems pivotal to attract and retain young viewers. Such a finding also points to the importance of congruity between a consumer's human personality and his or her perceived brand personality of a product in predicting branding effectiveness, as well as cable's ability to cultivate brand images.

Due to its low response rate for the national survey, this study acts as an exploratory study. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution. The study also relied on the pretest from a student group and a previous free-association news study in selecting the

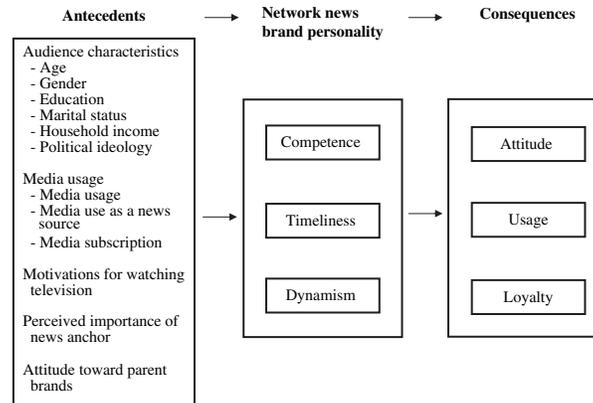
personality traits to examine. Thus, only face validity of these traits was verified in the process. Furthermore, because the participants were asked to rate a long list of personality traits, there might be a risk of fatigue in their responses toward these questions. It is also important to remember that brand personality is a multidimensional construct in that its various dimensions cannot be combined algebraically (Diamantopoulos, Smith, & Grime, 2005). Future research in this area may expand on the list of news outlets to include local television news or to compare news brands across different media platforms (e.g., newspaper, radio, and television). It will also be interesting to examine the perceived differences in brand personality, if any, of a particular news brand between its offline and online outlets (e.g., *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Wall Street Journal Online*). Although the combination of a company's effort and consumer characteristics shape brand personality, this study limited its focus to the consumer aspects in investigating the factors that influence brand personality. Thus, other future studies could further investigate a firm's efforts such as news contents, presentation styles, advertising, and marketing in relation to brand personality. Furthermore, this study also centered on brand personality of television news networks at a firm level. However, individual news programs of a network presumably have different brand personality from its television network at a firm level according to news formats and broadcasting time period. In that respect, future studies can narrow down their focus into brand personality of specific news programs of each news network.

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Appendix A Network News Brand Personality Framework



Appendix B Variables and Their Operational Measures

Variable	Operational Definition
Demographic and political profile	
Age	18–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, 65+ (1–6); dummy
Highest degree completed	Less than high school, High school, College, Postgraduate degree (1–4); dummy
Marital status and gender	Married/unmarried, Male/female (dummy)
Total household income	Less than \$15,000, \$15,001–\$30,000, \$30,000–\$45,000, \$45,001–\$60,000, \$60,001–75,000, \$75,001–90,000, \$90,001–\$105,000, Over \$105,000 (1–8); dummy
Political ideology	Republican, Democrat, Independent, Others (1–4); dummy
TV viewing motivation ^a	
Boredom relief ($\alpha = .76$) ^b ($\alpha = .62$) ^c	There is no one else to talk to. It's there. It makes me feel less lonely. It's a habit.
Moral support ($\alpha = .74$) ^b ($\alpha = .74$) ^c	It confirms my moral and ethical values. So I can get away from my family or others.
Fun ($\alpha = .81$) ^b ($\alpha = .88$) ^c	It reinforces my principles. It entertains me. It amuses me. It's enjoyable. It's exciting.
Informational learning ($\alpha = .79$) ^b ($\alpha = .81$) ^c	It helps me learn things about myself and others. So I can talk with other people about what's on. So I can learn how to do things that I haven't done before. So I can learn about what could happen to me if I am in the same situation.
Relaxation ($\alpha = .76$) ^b ($\alpha = .84$) ^c	It relaxes me. It helps me unwind. It's a pleasure.
Media usage of television, radio, newspaper, and the Internet ^d	
Media as a news source ^d	
Importance of anchors in news choice ^e	
Brand personality ^f	Reliable, hardworking, secure, intelligent, technical, successful, leader like, confident, daring, spirited, up-to-date, contemporary, trendy, masculine, friendly, family oriented, honest, real, upper class, sophisticated, traditional, analytical, dramatic, serious, conservative, experienced, liberal, reputable.
Attitude toward a television network ($\alpha = .95$) ^b ($\alpha = .94$) ^c	This TV network is desirable. This TV network is satisfactory. I like this TV network.
Brand-related outcome ^d	
Attitude toward a news brand ($\alpha = .96$) ^b ($\alpha = .92$) ^c	This network news is desirable. This network news is satisfactory. I like this network news.
Loyalty toward a news brand	I am a loyal viewer of this network news.
Usage of a news brand	How often do you use the news outlet as a news source? ^d

^aFive-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). ^bNational sample. ^cStudent sample. ^dFive-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very frequently*). ^eFive-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*extremely important*). ^fFive-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all describing it*) to 5 (*describing it extremely well*).

Appendix C Sample Characteristics

<i>Demographic Profile</i>	<i>National Survey</i>	<i>Student Survey</i>
Gender		
Male	54.90%	26.70%
Female	45.10%	73.30%
Age		
M	4.26	1.04
SD	1.30	0.28
Education		
M	3.05	2.18
SD	0.73	0.39
Marital status		
Married	76.10%	1.80%
Single	23.90%	98.10%
Total household income		
M	5.43	2.86
SD	2.21	2.76
Political ideology		
Republican	32.70%	29.10%
Democrat	31.90%	41.20%
Independent	33.60%	22.40%
Others	0.9%	7.30%

<i>Newer Media Subscription</i>	<i>National Survey</i>	<i>Student Survey</i>
Basic cable	42.50%	60.00%
Pay cable TV	22.10%	27.30%
Digital cable service	30.10%	21.80%
Satellite TV	24.80%	10.90%
Broadband Internet	44.20%	63.00%

<i>Media Usage</i>	<i>National Survey</i>		<i>Student Survey</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Television	4.12	0.92	3.85	1.03
Radio	3.62	1.20	2.85	1.17
Newspaper	3.29	1.32	2.65	0.95
Internet	3.45	1.50	4.71	0.65

<i>Media News Service</i>	<i>National Survey</i>		<i>Student Survey</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Television	4.19	1.00	3.55	1.15
Radio	3.21	1.27	2.07	1.13
Newspaper	3.31	1.41	3.33	1.11
Internet	3.05	1.60	4.11	1.01

<i>Usage of TV Network News as News Source</i>	<i>National Survey</i>		<i>Student Survey</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
NBC news	2.98	1.38	2.78	1.34
CBS news	2.63	1.34	2.33	1.08
ABC news	2.89	1.37	2.45	1.19
MSNBC	2.08	1.19	2.23	1.29
CNN	2.73	1.41	2.88	1.37
Fox News	3.18	1.49	2.39	1.36

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