
DIMENSIONS OF NEWS MEDIA BRAND PERSONALITY

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This study explores the structure of news media brand personality across multiple media outlets including television network news, newspapers, and news magazines. Through a series of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis procedures with an initial set of 229 personality traits that were reduced to the final set of forty-eight items, we found five brand personality dimensions that can be applicable to news media: Trustworthiness, Dynamism, Sincerity, Sophistication, and Toughness. Practical implications for media brand management are discussed.



News organizations are responding to increasing competition by using branding principles from the field of strategic media management.¹ News media brands, applying Kotler's² general definition of brand, can be defined broadly as names, terms, signs, symbols, or any other identities used by news organizations to differentiate themselves from competitors.

From a marketing perspective, the creation of a distinct brand that distinguishes a news organization from its competitors can create a competitive advantage.³ The importance of news media branding has increased exponentially as news organizations place greater emphasis on long-term shareholder value.⁴ The intricacy of the competitive media landscape has also made it more difficult to attract audiences solely on the basis of functional attributes such as the content of the news.⁵ In an environment where different organizations often offer news that is similar, differentiating media brands is necessary for survival.⁶ The use of branding is not new. The three broadcast networks branded themselves based on their well-known anchors such as Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw, and Dan Rather.⁷ However, the emphasis on symbolic attributes or images to build points of differentiation is increasingly critical for all news organizations. For example, an experiment found credibility ratings from consumers were influenced by a newspaper's brand image.⁸

Consumers often focus on differences created by building a strong, favorable, and unique set of brand personalities.⁹ A *brand personality* is

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“the set of human characteristics associated with a brand.”¹⁰ Brand personality is an essential component of consumer perceptions of a product, and those perceptions can build brand equity.¹¹ The concept of brand personality can also help news media companies enhance their value for advertisers. Advertisers, particularly media planners, focus on matching media with the advertiser’s target markets.¹² Advertisers prefer media with a personality that is similar to the advertised product because matching the product and medium can lead to greater advertising effects.¹³

News organizations thus need to be conscious of advertiser interest in finding compatible media. Consumers also prefer brands that are consistent with their self-images and personalities,¹⁴ so a news organization that possesses a well-defined brand personality is more likely to attract audiences that share similar personalities.

There have been previous attempts to capture the perceived images of news media sources/brands,¹⁵ but these focused on a single medium, such as television network news (broadcast and cable news outlets) or newspapers.

This study asks if there are generally applicable brand personality dimensions that exist across news organizations in different media. The study also investigates the brand personalities of different news media. It presents empirical evidence consistent with the theoretical foundations for news media brand personality dimensions, and provides practical guidelines that show how a news media brand can be positioned successfully in today’s highly competitive news media markets.

Literature Review

Economics of Branding. Galbi¹⁶ calls branding critical for news organizations responding to competition from digital communication technologies. Existing organizations must either expand into digital markets or risk long-term declines in advertising revenue. Consumer adoption of radio and television resulted in a shift of ad revenue from print to the newer media, a pattern that is likely to repeat with digital media.¹⁷

Existing news organizations must therefore shift “a significant share of brand-related spending from individual products to higher levels of generality, including new types of transactions and new business areas not closely linked to a particular company.”¹⁸ For example, local newspapers should “build brands identifying themselves as the richest online source of local information and the largest and most active local discussion forums. This is a [sic] idea associated not with a product but with what persons in a particular local area do.”¹⁹

The underlying economic nature of news suggests branding can create specific advantages for both consumers and producers. News, like all media content, is an experience good. Consumers cannot be certain about the value of such goods before they actually access and experience the product.²⁰ Brand equity exists if consumers associate characteristics they desire with a news organization’s brand. These associations suggest what kinds of utility will be available from the organization’s products, reducing uncertainty about decisions to access those products.²¹

News also has relatively high first-copy costs because most production costs are incurred to gather and format information. This creates potential economies of scale as more copies are produced, spreading the initial cost across more and more units.²² Branding can add to these economies if it increases the size of the audience for news. Branding that expands the audience for a news story across different distribution channels, such as print and digital, can also produce scale economies in marketing.²³ Empirical studies of different media show branding can increase audience and revenues.²⁴ However, these studies also show the effects and management of brands is complex. This suggests the success of branding strategies rests in part on a valid understanding of how consumers perceive the brand.

News Media Brand Personality. Drawing on human personality models, Aaker²⁵ developed a conceptual framework to examine how brand personality attributes are structured in consumers' minds. The central tenet is that inanimate objects such as brands can become associated with personality traits through learning and experience, and this association with personality traits provides self-expressive or symbolic benefits for the consumer. Consumers may therefore ascribe human characteristics to non-human entities.²⁶ For instance, human personality traits associated with Harley-Davidson might be described as macho American, patriotism, and freedom.²⁷

Aaker²⁸ suggested there are five brand personality dimensions: (1) sincerity, (2) excitement, (3) competence, (4) sophistication, and (5) ruggedness. Sincerity represents being down-to-earth, real, and honest; excitement represents being daring, imaginative, and contemporary; competence represents being intelligent, reliable, secure, and confident; sophistication represents being glamorous, upper-class, good looking, and charming; and ruggedness represents being tough, outdoorsy, masculine, and western.

Understanding brand personality is important for creating and building meaningful consumer-brand relationships because consumers tend to choose brands that are consistent with their self-images and personalities.²⁹ A well-established brand personality can help leverage a set of unique and favorable brand images,³⁰ and thus enhance the value of brand equity.³¹

Although Aaker's brand personality dimensions³² have been applied in a range of settings, including cultures,³³ tourism destinations,³⁴ and nonprofit organizations,³⁵ few studies have examined the brand personality construct in the context of news media. Chan-Olmsted and Cha³⁶ examined brand personality across television news media, such as CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, CBS News, NBC News, and ABC News. They suggested three dimensions of news media brand personality: competence, timeliness, and dynamism. Competence represents the perceived capability to create a news product (e.g., intelligent, honest, reliable, traditional, analytical, and technical); timeliness represents the delivery of a news product (e.g., up-to-date, contemporary, and experienced); and dynamism represents the lively energy of a news product (e.g., trendy and masculine).

Subsequently, Chan-Olmsted and Cha³⁷ pointed out that personality traits of news media brands are closely bound with the human characteristics of those who deliver the news, such as anchors, reporters, and talk show hosts. However, there still is a need for further testing of the brand personality dimensions because the studies were limited to cable and broadcast news media.³⁸ Additional research can determine if the proposed dimensions of brand personality are applicable to other news outlets, such as print.

Scholars and practitioners also view newspapers or news magazines as media brands.³⁹ For example, the Newspaper Association of America has stressed the brand concept over the past ten years, and urged the print industry to build its own brands.⁴⁰ Wilkinson⁴¹ asserted branding is the hottest topic among today's elite newspaper marketing executives looking to re-connect with readers by emphasizing trust, integrity, and value concepts.

Lee⁴² found newspaper brand association can be divided into three dimensions: a quality dimension, a corporate dimension, and a personality dimension. The personality dimension included "ability with honesty," "refinement with modernity," and "toughness with boldness." The author also pointed out that the dimensions of newspaper brand association significantly influenced the brand equity of newspaper brands.

However, a comprehensive integration of research that explores the overall dimensions of news media brand personality has not been developed conceptually nor thoroughly tested empirically. Accordingly, it is imperative to find general and robust news media brand personality constructs that are applicable across news media outlets representing television and print news media. This leads to the following research question.

RQ: What are the dimensions of news media brand personality that are applicable to multiple news media outlets?

Method

The measures for news media brand personality were constructed based on an experimental process identifying a comprehensive and representative set of personality traits and news media brands, which are described in more detail later. Preceding this, this study followed the measurement development procedure employing both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) procedures.⁴³

News Media Brand Selection. Two criteria were used to select a set of news media brands for this study. First, we selected well-known news media brands to enhance familiarity of the sample of stimuli to all participants. Second, to ensure the brand personality concept applied across media, we selected news media brands from television and print news media. The selection of news media brands was based on an annual report on American journalism conducted by the Project for Excellence in Journalism⁴⁴ and the Pew Research Center's⁴⁵ survey of news media use. The survey examined news media brands in five news categories: (1)

TABLE 1
Eight News Media Brand Groups

<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
NBC News	Local Newspaper A	CBS News	<i>Newsweek</i>
<i>USA Today</i>	PBS News	<i>New York Times</i>	MSNBC
<i>Group 5</i>	<i>Group 6</i>	<i>Group 7</i>	<i>Group 8</i>
ABC News	<i>U.S. News & World Report</i>	CNN	<i>TIME</i>
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	Local Newspaper B	Local Newspaper C	Fox News

broadcast and (2) cable news networks, (3) national and (4) local newspapers, and (5) news magazines. Three popular news media brands were selected from each of the five categories. In addition, one brand (PBS News) in public news media was included to enhance the scope of the study. The sixteen news media brands used in this study are shown in Table 1.

The list does not specifically identify online or radio news media brands. Several widely-known Web sites that provide news, such as CNN.com, nytimes.com, or MSNBC.com, are produced by brands identified in the study. This study examines brand personality differences across media brands, not within those brands. Asking respondents to differentiate between the products produced by each brand is therefore beyond the scope of this study. The study excluded radio because the majority of the radio audience is divided between older fans of talk radio and younger listeners to NPR.⁴⁶ This made it difficult to identify a set of radio news brands that this study's participants were commonly aware of. In addition, we considered public broadcasting's brand image as already included for television news.

Selection of Personality Attributes. Guided by Aaker's brand personality study,⁴⁷ the selection of news media brand personality attributes followed a three-step process. In the first step, we conducted a free-association task to ensure the relevance of the attributes. Twelve male and nineteen female undergraduates at a large southeastern university generated a sample of 164 attributes.

Second, the forty-two original personality traits proposed by Aaker⁴⁸ were incorporated into our inventory because those attributes were compiled and developed from diverse sources such as the "Big Five" personality factors,⁴⁹ and other refined scales used by academicians and practitioners.⁵⁰ We identified twenty-three additional attributes from Chan-Olmsted and Cha's study⁵¹ of brand personality in television news and from McDowell's study⁵² of news media brand images.

To derive a more manageable number of personality attributes, researchers reduced the total of 229 traits to seventy-six traits using online synonym finders. The researchers then conducted in-depth interviews, asking graduate students and faculty members in the department of journalism and mass communication to evaluate the adequacy and relevance of these traits to news media brand characteristics. The sorting showed 153 of the 229 attributes obtained from the free-association task and from the relevant literature were redundant (e.g., intelligent, brilliant); twenty-one were ambiguous (e.g., average, important); fifty-two were irrelevant (e.g., bookworm, egotistical), and four were related to negative connotations (e.g., boring, dull, biased). The study primarily used positively-valenced personality traits because the ultimate objective of the study is to examine how brand personality influences the probability that consumers will approach a particular news organization's products.

In the final stage, we examined face and content validity for the initial set of seventy-six news brand personality traits. Both face and content validity were determined by the subjective judgment of eighteen scholars in the field of journalism and mass communication. The scholars examined the appropriateness of each personality trait in the domain of news media brand personality. They suggested several of the traits (e.g., corporate, western) might not be relevant to the context of news media. This reduced the number of personality traits to forty-eight. This final set of traits was used in the initial EFA to examine the structure of brand personality in various news media.

Sample. The sample for the initial EFA procedure consisted of 444 college students (32.5% male and 67.5% female) enrolled in journalism and mass communication courses at a large university in the southeastern United States. Students enrolled in journalism and mass communication courses are more likely to be familiar with news media outlets than other students. Participants who completed the survey were given extra course credit as an incentive. Respondent ages ranged from 18 to 32 years with an average age of 21.8 years. The most prevalent ethnic group was Caucasian (83.2%), followed by African American (5.7%), Asian (2.4%), and Hispanic or Latino (1.1%).

This study is exploratory research, examining how the construct of brand personality dimension applies across different media. Therefore, a generalizable sample is not required. There is also evidence that college students have some media habits that are similar to other news media consumers. For example, the MRI Index of college students for CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News is 93, 102, and 81, respectively,⁵³ where an index of 100 is the average for the general population. College students are also important to news media organizations interested in attracting young adults, due to their well-documented apathy toward news.⁵⁴

Research Procedure. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which each of the forty-eight attributes described a specific news media brand. Ratings used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not at all descriptive, 7 = extremely descriptive). The data were collected through an online survey. Each participant was randomly assigned to a questionnaire that covered

two of the sixteen news media brands. The sixteen news media brands were grouped into eight sets of two brands. The order of brands across the eight groups was systematically rotated. Thus, eight different versions of the questionnaire were administered from each news media category. A total of 888 cases (444 participants \times 2 news media brands) were obtained for data analysis ($N = 382$ from the television data set and $N = 506$ from the print media data set).

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis. In order to ensure the validity of the study, we followed Aaker's method,⁵⁵ randomly splitting the pooled data set of ratings for all news media categories into two equal samples—an estimation sample and a validation sample. Based on the random half of the pooled data set ($n = 444, 888/2$), we first examined the dimensionability of news media brand personality through EFA using principal component analysis with an oblique factor rotation (i.e., Promax rotation).

Prior to EFA, the fundamental statistical assumptions (e.g., normality) for factor analysis were checked and verified.⁵⁶ The EFA result showed a five-component solution. The adequacy of this solution was determined by using the following criteria: eigenvalues larger than 1, the amount of variance explained by each component, the shape of the scree plot, the factor loading score for each factor (> 0.4), and the meaningfulness of each dimension. The five factors accounted for approximately 65.9% of the total variance and met all the criteria we used.

As shown in Table 2, we labeled the first factor *Trustworthiness*, which was defined by traits such as smart, professional, trustworthy, responsible, informative, and straightforward. The traits that loaded on this factor are consistent with journalistic values of providing comprehensive, accurate reports on the news of the day. Trustworthy news would therefore be expected to have these characteristics. The second factor, named *Dynamism*, included traits such as lively, energetic, edgy, imaginative, and spirited. This appears to distinguish news that is more interesting or exciting from news that, while important, is less compelling. This distinction is well understood by journalists, who refer to the difference between what people need to know and what they want to know. The third factor, *Sincerity*, was defined by traits such as family-oriented, friendly, sentimental, and sincere. This factor appears to reflect an affective dimension of news embodied in a personable style of presentation. For example, many broadcasters use familiar pronouns and other devices to create the impression they are members of their viewers' households. The fourth factor, *Sophistication*, was depicted as glamorous, charming, feminine, and smooth. These appear to represent an explicitly stylistic dimension to the news. This might reflect an interest in attractive formatting for news, such as a well-designed newspaper or magazine. The factor might also reflect an interest in attractive images or information. The last factor, including tough, rugged, and masculine,

was named *Toughness*. This factor appears clear and may be another dimension associated with how news is presented.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis. We next performed CFA using LISREL 8.72.⁵⁷ This analysis used the remaining random half of the pooled data as the secondary holdout sample to be used for validation and prediction. In this study, the overall fit of the measurement model was evaluated by chi-square (χ^2), RMSEA, NFI, NNFI, CFI, IFI, and SRMR, following the recommendation of Hu and Bentler.⁵⁸ The maximum likelihood estimation method was used for the CFA as the normality assumption was met. Fit indices were satisfactory overall: χ^2 (1023) = 3485.08 ($p < .001$), RMSEA = .079, NFI = .95, NNFI = .96, CFI = .96, IFI = .96 and SRMR = .09. Although the SRMR is slightly above the cutoff value of .08, an overall assessment of fit indexes suggests that the five-component model is stable within the holdout data.

Upon confirming the overall fit of the model, researchers examined the reliability and validity of the personality dimensions. For internal reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for all traits of each dimension. Results indicated that all the scales were reliable (Cronbach's alpha for *Trustworthiness* = .97, *Dynamism* = .94, *Sincerity* = .86, *Sophistication* = .89, and *Toughness* = .84). Convergent validity was assessed by examining the factor loading for statistical significance.⁵⁹ Results indicated that all factor loadings were statistically significant ($p < .05$) within an acceptable range (from .56 to .89).

In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) was calculated to check convergent validity. Fornell and Larcker⁶⁰ asserted that AVE should be greater than the recommended .50 to achieve convergent validity. The result confirmed the convergent validity as the AVE values were greater than .50 for all constructs (.538 < all AVE values < .612). Discriminant validity was evaluated by comparing the AVE estimates for each construct with the square of the parameter estimates between the two constructs. According to Fornell and Larcker,⁶¹ discriminant validity is achieved if the AVE of each construct exceeds the square of the standardized correlations between pairs of constructs. All AVE estimates (e.g., .610 and .555 for *Trustworthiness* and *Dynamism*, respectively) were greater than the squared correlations between all constructs (.332 = .109). Thus, both convergent validity and discriminant validity were considered established.

Personality Dimension Scores for Each News Media Brand. One of the significant contributions of our study is to provide news media companies a reliable and valid method to assess their brand personality. The news media brand personality dimensions will help companies understand and monitor their own brand personality structures, and make comparisons with competing companies in regard to the brand personality state. News media companies can also take advantage of our proposed news media brand personality constructs for diagnosing and improving their strategies to attract audiences and advertisers.

In order to examine the usability of our brand personality dimensions, we empirically assessed the current brand personality states of the news media brands in this study. To examine the differences in

TABLE 2

News Media Brand Personality Dimensions for Estimation Sample (N = 444, 888/2)

<i>Traits</i>	<i>Trustworthiness</i>	<i>Dynamism</i>	<i>Sincerity</i>	<i>Sophistication</i>	<i>Toughness</i>
Smart	0.909	-0.039	-0.069	-0.017	0.056
Professional	0.898	-0.045	-0.091	0.031	0.021
Intelligent	0.870	0.095	-0.056	-0.016	-0.070
Experienced	0.867	-0.105	-0.114	0.181	-0.083
Responsible	0.867	-0.079	0.088	0.049	0.021
Trustworthy	0.864	-0.149	0.139	0.031	0.072
Educational	0.835	-0.040	0.038	-0.006	-0.011
Informative	0.825	0.170	-0.117	-0.101	-0.033
Reliable	0.822	0.097	0.108	-0.040	-0.106
Analytical	0.817	0.089	-0.136	-0.042	0.086
Serious	0.812	-0.175	-0.128	0.099	0.037
Hard-working	0.803	0.179	0.006	-0.019	-0.134
Straightforward	0.793	0.086	0.001	-0.141	0.096
Prestigious	0.793	-0.145	-0.127	0.328	-0.008
Enlightening	0.699	0.071	0.062	0.133	0.019
Real	0.640	0.087	0.326	-0.204	-0.032
Honest	0.611	-0.005	0.456	-0.248	0.003
Classy	0.530	-0.069	0.186	0.330	0.074
Trendy	-0.134	0.889	-0.111	0.079	-0.205
Lively	0.047	0.810	-0.025	-0.027	0.120
Energetic	-0.020	0.804	0.002	0.015	0.112
Edgy	-0.111	0.793	-0.100	0.041	0.153
Exciting	0.051	0.786	-0.033	0.016	0.041
Daring	0.062	0.754	-0.202	-0.009	0.057
Contemporary	0.251	0.746	-0.160	-0.049	-0.119
Young	-0.240	0.744	0.245	-0.049	-0.118
Spirited	-0.089	0.724	0.186	-0.039	0.098
Entertaining	0.045	0.721	0.088	0.057	-0.078
Dynamic	0.247	0.706	-0.121	-0.005	0.053
Imaginative	-0.068	0.695	0.217	0.125	-0.143
Unique	0.091	0.648	0.065	0.099	-0.100
Talkative	0.217	0.547	-0.032	-0.065	0.056
Flashy	-0.161	0.492	-0.036	0.237	0.234
Sensational	-0.027	0.424	0.068	0.019	0.270
Family-oriented	-0.035	-0.234	0.842	0.007	0.074
Friendly	0.040	-0.012	0.803	0.152	-0.061
Sentimental	-0.082	-0.025	0.718	0.274	0.029
Down-to-earth	0.032	0.098	0.702	-0.083	0.022
Cheerful	-0.117	0.180	0.694	0.161	-0.043
Sincere	0.487	0.003	0.609	-0.188	0.033
Glamorous	0.105	0.096	-0.071	0.817	-0.049
Good looking	0.218	0.188	-0.064	0.727	-0.064
Charming	0.089	0.061	0.127	0.726	0.041
Feminine	-0.227	0.025	0.269	0.622	-0.066
Smooth	-0.021	0.096	0.140	0.650	0.155
Tough	0.021	0.059	-0.049	-0.029	0.873
Rugged	-0.182	0.062	0.161	-0.012	0.839
Masculine	0.249	-0.018	-0.088	0.043	0.650
Eigenvalue	17.15	7.60	3.35	2.09	1.45
% of variance	35.73	15.83	6.98	4.36	3.02
Cumulative %	35.73	51.56	58.54	62.90	65.92

Note: An estimation sample is derived from a random half of the pooled data (N = 444, 888/2). Factor loadings that are .4 or larger are set in bold.

TABLE 3

Personality Dimension Means of News Media Brands (N = 888)

News Media Brand	Trustworthiness		Dynamism		Sincerity		Sophistication		Toughness	
	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd
NBC News	4.87	1.12	3.82	1.09	3.82	1.03	3.74	1.35	3.59	1.42
CBS News	4.77	1.09	3.59	1.08	3.80	1.05	3.30	1.22	2.96	1.20
ABC News	4.78	1.06	3.53	0.99	4.24	0.94	3.49	1.02	2.69	1.16
CNN	5.12	0.87	3.92	0.81	3.31	1.04	3.27	1.03	3.60	1.06
FOX News	4.40	0.36	3.90	1.05	3.58	1.09	3.11	1.07	4.17	1.18
MSNBC	4.84	0.99	3.62	0.89	3.55	1.08	3.17	1.06	3.30	1.32
<i>USA Today</i>	4.89	1.19	4.17	1.28	4.05	1.17	3.84	1.38	3.36	1.32
<i>New York Times</i>	5.23	1.37	4.13	1.13	3.37	1.29	3.84	1.50	3.48	1.27
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	5.67	1.09	3.27	1.17	2.89	1.05	3.24	1.27	3.73	1.29
Local Newspaper A	4.85	1.09	3.93	1.02	3.99	0.82	3.33	1.02	3.35	1.28
Local Newspaper B	4.36	0.91	3.36	0.84	4.16	0.92	2.98	1.08	3.01	1.10
Local Newspaper C	3.63	1.18	4.30	1.30	3.28	1.22	2.88	1.10	2.62	1.20
<i>Newsweek</i>	4.84	1.15	3.75	1.03	3.54	1.19	3.40	1.13	3.29	1.29
<i>TIME</i>	5.30	1.20	4.38	1.05	3.73	1.09	3.93	1.08	3.33	1.32
<i>U.S. News & World Report</i>	5.10	1.02	3.36	0.89	3.47	1.01	2.99	1.04	3.27	1.16
PBS	4.99	0.91	2.82	1.12	4.93	1.01	2.61	1.33	2.55	1.13

brand personality dimensions among the 16 news media brands, we created a set of summated scales as a composite measure for each dimension, by taking the mean of the items under the same dimension using the pooled data ($n = 880$). Results in Table 3 show the means of each brand personality dimension for each brand. For example, for the *Trustworthiness* dimension, the *Wall Street Journal* ($M = 5.67$, $sd = 1.09$) was perceived to be the most trustworthy news media brand. As for the *Dynamism* dimension, *TIME* ($M = 4.38$, $sd = 1.05$) was thought to be the most dynamic among news media brands. As for the *Sincerity* dimension, PBS ($M = 4.93$, $sd = 1.01$) was perceived to be the most sincere among news media brands. *TIME* ($M = 3.93$, $sd = 1.08$) was also found to be the highest in the *Sophistication* dimension. As for the *Toughness* dimension, FOX News ($M = 4.17$, $sd = 1.18$) was perceived to possess toughness.

After each personality score of news media brands was measured, relationships among brand personality dimensions were examined to verify their relatedness in representing a concept, brand personality. A bivariate correlation analysis showed that all correlations among the five personality dimensions were significant at $p = .05$ level (correlations ranged from .21 to .66, see Table 4). These moderate levels of correlations reflect the oblique relationships between brand personality dimensions suggested in the literature.⁶² The positive correlations imply that brand personality dimensions are interrelated, but the strength of the association varies with the characteristics of each dimension.

In addition, Bonferroni's post hoc test was conducted to evaluate pairwise differences in personality dimension scores among the news

TABLE 4
Correlations among the News Media Brand Personality Dimensions

	Trustworthiness	Dynamism	Sincerity	Sophistication	Toughness
Trustworthiness	1	–	–	–	–
Dynamism	.36*	1	–	–	–
Sincerity	.33*	.45*	1	–	–
Sophistication	.27*	.66*	.44*	1	–
Toughness	.26*	.45*	.21*	.47*	1

* $p < .05$.

media brands. For example, there was a significant difference in the *Dynamism* dimension between the *New York Times* ($M = 4.13$) and *Wall Street Journal* (3.27) ($p < .05$). The difference in the *Sophistication* dimension between ABC News ($M = 3.49$) and PBS News ($M = 2.61$) was statistically significant ($p < .05$). There was a significant difference in *Toughness* between FOX News ($M = 4.17$) and MSNBC ($M = 3.3$) ($p < .05$).

These results are generally consistent with the way each organization presents the news. For example, the *Wall Street Journal* is known as a business newspaper, and uses fewer photographs and graphics than most other newspapers. Respondents may associate the subject and predominance of text with attributes such as “smart” and “serious” included in the trustworthy factor. Fox News, however, often features anchors who aggressively question guests to promote a particular point of view. This is consistent with the “rugged” and “masculine” attributes of the toughness factors. *TIME*, in addition to global news coverage, regularly offers extensive coverage of fashion, entertainment, and the arts. This may explain its high ratings on the sophistication factor that includes “glamorous” and “charming.”

The main research question of this study asked if there are dimensions of news media brand personality that apply across media outlets such as television network news, newspapers, and news magazines. The results suggest the answer is yes, and that news media brand personality is composed of five dimensions: *Trustworthiness*, *Dynamism*, *Sincerity*, *Sophistication*, and *Toughness*.

The emergence of *Trustworthiness* seems to support the notion that people pay more attention to and become more reliant on media they consider credible.⁶³ However, this study suggests consumers may seek more than credibility when they select a source of news. The personality dimension of *Dynamism* included traits such as lively, energetic, edgy, and imaginative. These would all be important to younger consumers, such as those in this study, who have routine access to a dynamic mix of

Discussion

information from traditional and digital media. In a world where interactive formats allow users to easily mix and remix text, sound, and video, consumers are likely to expect news with similar characteristics. This may also be related to the symbolic value that depicts the lively energy of a news product.⁶⁴ The *Sincerity* dimension, including traits like family-oriented, friendly, and sentimental, appears to result from the presentation styles of broadcasters, such as the use of familiar pronouns and other devices that can give the media consumers much friendlier and sincere impressions of news media. The *Sophistication* dimension, including glamorous, charming, feminine, and smooth, seems to reflect a stylistic aspect (i.e., aesthetically well-designed newspaper or magazine) of the news content and delivery setting. The *Toughness* dimension may be important to consumers accustomed to the rough and tumble of conversations in chat rooms and social media sites, where pointed or aggressive comments are common. Toughness may also be associated with efforts by some news anchors or reporters, regardless of gender, to project a confident and aggressive image.

On the other hand, it appears that there can be a delicate distinction in the nature of brand personality traits between different types of news media, such as television and print. Although these two types of news media are similar with regard to their functional nature, i.e., providing news for audiences, broadcast and cable news network reports include images and audio of reporters and anchors. Therefore, the personality of a broadcast network news program can be often regarded as synonymous with the personality of the news program host.⁶⁵ Accordingly, audiences may easily attribute personality traits to television news media brands.

The print news media, such as newspapers and news magazines, can at best offer names or photographs of individual writers and photographers. The presentation of news is dominated by text and still photographs or graphics. This suggests a dimension such as dynamism will be associated with the style of writing or presentation, and not with the personal characteristics of the writer. However, that does not make the dimension less real or useful to a marketing campaign. The dimension is just associated with different characteristics of the medium.

From a practical standpoint, our news media brand personality structure can be helpful for both media companies and advertisers. Using our set of brand personality constructs, media companies can diagnose their news media brand personality structure to see if it matches the brand identity that they are developing in the crowded media marketplace. Thus, the findings will help media companies fine-tune their images to survive the competition by better serving media audiences. Using the personality dimensions, media marketers can make their branding strategies in a more scientific way. For example, as trustworthiness can be considered the most necessary personality for most news media, FOX News, which shows the lowest score (4.40) in trustworthiness, might use such a result to improve its trustworthiness image. On the other hand, CNN, which has the highest trustworthiness score, might try to maintain and leverage its credible image. The marketing slogan of CNN, "The Most Trusted Name in News," is a good example of using news media brand

personality in media branding. Television news companies can feature anchors or reporters who possess the personality images that match the personality dimension emphasized in marketing.

This study also identified personality dimensions that audiences may associate with the style of news reporting presentation developed by print journalists. For example, Table 3 shows that local newspaper C had the second highest score on the dynamism dimension, but its trustworthiness score was the lowest. This suggests the newspaper's marketing could focus on dynamism. The newspaper might also consider ways to improve trustworthiness so that could be added to the marketing mix.

As with all studies that test theoretical concepts, the results of this study are limited by several factors. First, the non-probability samples were drawn from a population of college students aged 18 to 32, which limits the generalizability of our findings. Thus, further research is needed to replicate our study using non-student samples. College students might also be heavy users of online media so it is possible that their perceptions of news media brands examined in this study reflect the Web sites produced by the media outlets identified in the questionnaire. Many traditional news media companies have created Web sites to extend the brand assets developed offline to the Internet.⁶⁶ Moreover, Müller and Chandon⁶⁷ found that consumers exposed to a brand Web site perceive the brand as more sincere and trustworthy than those not exposed. Therefore, the question of how online products affect audience perceptions of each news media brand is a topic deserving additional study. Future studies should look at brand personality within individual companies to see if there is variation across online and offline media.

Second, this study relied on a limited number of news media brand personality traits and focused only on offline media outlets. As shown by the imperfect total variance (65.9%) explained by the five dimensions, future studies need to identify additional representative traits and dimensions that can explain more of the remaining variance. Future research can also test the degree of generalizability and robustness of our findings with more extensive sets of personality attributes capturing news-specific meanings and news media brands that include online media outlets. Finally, this study did not take into account sets of personality attributes that might convey negative connotations to audiences (e.g., biased, false, boring, or dry). However, news media brands may need to embrace negatively valenced attributes because audiences often view news media brands as politically biased or distorting the truth. For example, two-thirds of Americans in one survey⁶⁸ said that news organizations are unwilling to acknowledge errors and are politically biased. Therefore, future research should consider negative personality traits to better understand the news media brand personality structure.

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