

**The Relationships among Audience Loyalty, Perceived Quality, and Media
Credibility of Cable News Networks.**

** Manuscript submitted to the Radio-Television Journalism division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) conference, August 2006.

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Abstract

This study explores the applicability of Meyer's (2004) newspaper influence model to cable television news by investigating the relationships among the audience-based concepts (media credibility, news quality, and audience loyalty) in the model. We found significant correlations among the three concepts and also found significant effects of media credibility and perceived quality on audience loyalty. Audiences' attitudes towards the three major cable news networks (CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News) were also explored.

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The media environment is changing rapidly. New technologies, metamorphoses in ownership structures, political and regulatory shifts, and demographic changes have combined to create a dramatically altered media landscape (Hiebert, 1999). The proliferation of media outlets has created an active audience that selects and tailors their media diets to satisfy specific needs: Americans have become “news grazers, sampling, through the course of the day, a varied media buffet” (Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ), 2005b). As the media environment becomes more fragmentary and complex (Chaffee & Metzger, 2001), it has become increasingly difficult for traditional news media outlets to retain their audiences and attract new ones. Newspaper readership is declining; television network news is losing its viewers; and cable news audiences are stagnating (Brody, 2004). In contrast, alternative news media and online news sources are gaining audiences (Brody, 2004). As these major changes occur, traditional news providers face significant challenges in maintaining their audiences and attracting new ones.

Media credibility is also declining: both academic and industry research consistently show that media audiences are skeptical about the accuracy, fairness, and trustworthiness of news reports (Gallup, 2004; Pew, 2004; Kioussis, 2001; Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). A recent poll conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press survey shows that 72% of Americans believe that the media are biased; 33% believe that the media hurt the democratic process; while only 19% believe that the media’s principal motive is to keep the public informed (Pew,

2005). Similarly, a recent Gallup poll shows a substantial decline in media credibility: from 72% in 1976 to 44% in 2004 (Gallup, 2004).

Some media analysts and scholars see a relationship between declines in media credibility and declining audience patronage (Merritt, 1998; Meyer, 2004). They argue that audiences are departing the mainstream news media because they no longer trust the media to effectively meet their news and information needs. Other scholars blame the media's woes on the conglomeration of media outlets and the attendant consolidation of media ownership (Bagdikian, 2000; McChesney, 2000). They maintain that these changes in media ownership and structure have meant reduced newsroom investment, and consequently lower news quality. Research investigating the assertions of these scholars and analysts shows a relationship among the news quality, media credibility, and the circulation robustness of newspapers (Lacy & Fico, 1991; Cho, Thorson, & Lacy, 2004; Chen, Thorson, & Lacy, 2005; Blakenburg & Friend, 1994; Rosenstiel & Mitchell, 2004). Additionally, research has shown a similar relationship between news quality and audience penetration for local television news (Rosenstiel, Gottlieb, & Brady, 1999; Pertilla & Belt, 2002). However, a relationship among news quality, media credibility, and audience loyalty has not been shown to exist for cable news networks.

This study therefore investigates the relationship among the audiences' perception of the media credibility of cable news networks (media credibility); their perception of the quality of the news on the networks (perceived quality); and their loyalty to the networks (audience loyalty). The theoretical framework for this study is Meyer's (2004) newspaper influence model, which predicts a relationship among the three concepts being

investigated. To test this model, a survey of a narrowly defined cohort of cable news audience was conducted and the resulting data was analyzed quantitatively.

This study is important because it investigates a set of relationships with major implications for the practice and theory of mass communication. Media managers are continually seeking ways of retaining and maintaining their audience in the face of increasing competition from other news media outlets. The relationship explored by this study offers them a model that can be used as a strategic tool for maintaining their audiences' loyalty. Theoretically, this study also extends the frontiers of mass communication theory by applying a theory that was developed for newspapers to cable television news.

Literature Review

Cable news channels

The three major US cable news networks are CNN, MSNBC and Fox News (McDowell, 2004). Twenty-four-hour cable news began when Ted Turner founded CNN in 1980. CNN was the only all-news cable station in the United States until MSNBC and Fox News began broadcasting in 1995 and 1996 respectively (Collins, 2004). MSNBC, the result of a partnership between two corporate giants, Microsoft and General Electric, was initially touted as the major competitor to CNN in the cable news market (Collins, 2004). However, the station did not live up to its early promise, and has consistently struggled for audience share and revenue (PEJ, 2005b). In contrast, Fox News, founded by Australian-born media mogul Rupert Murdoch, has enjoyed significant successes. According to Nielsen ratings, Fox News has had a higher cumulative audience rating than both CNN and MSNBC since 2002 (PEJ, 2006).

The cable news networks operate in a unique climate. Cable television serves a national audience, unlike local television news. Therefore cable networks cannot rely on local news coverage to attract audiences. Cable news networks, unlike newspapers, which often enjoy monopolies (Bogart, 2004), compete directly with one another in the same market. Also, cable news is a 24-hour medium, unlike television network news or newspapers. This reality puts pressure on newsrooms, which have to fill almost fifty times as much airtime as the television networks. The result, noted the PEJ (2006), is news that is often thinly sourced and repetitive.

Some media researchers and analysts maintain that cable news is of low quality: Bae (1999) found that Fox News in particular relied heavily on talk and interview, with little time devoted to other content such as newscasts or specialty segments. Bae observed that Fox News fills 88% of its airtime with talk and interviews; CNN used talk and interviews 25% of the time, and MSNBC used talk and interviews 42% of the time. This reliance on talk and punditry gives cable news a low quality rating when quality is measured using content analysis (Bae, 1999, PEJ, 2005b).

However, in recent time, cable news has performed better than newspapers or network television news in terms of media credibility (Ibelema & Powell, 2001; PEJ, 2006). Although, both MSNBC and CNN have seen recent declines in audience perception of their credibility, Fox News' credibility rating has improved along with its viewership ratings (Pew, 2005; PEJ, 2006).

Finally, the loyalty of audiences to the cable news networks also appears to be waning. Research shows that the proportion of people choosing one of the cable news networks, rather than their local television news, as their primary source for national

news is steadily declining (PEJ, 2006). Cable news, once the most popular choice for people seeking national and international news, is also losing ground to the Internet (PEJ, 2006).

The cable news networks, therefore, face the triple challenges of declining credibility, low perceived quality and diminishing audience loyalty. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships among these three phenomena.

The influence model

Meyer (2004)'s influence model, explains the relationships among quality, credibility and loyalty. The influence model (see Figure 1) posits that news quality positively affects the credibility and societal influence of a news source, which in turn affects circulation/audience size and profitability. Meyer (2004) defines quality in terms of investment in the newsroom, he argues that profit-driven financial strategies adopted by media management have negative impacts on the quality of newspapers, and consequently their credibility, societal influence, and circulation.

Quality, argues Meyer (2004), creates trust. The reader who feels that he or she can trust a media source will use that source more frequently and be loyal to it. Meyer then points out that once a consumer has found a service provider he or she trusts, the consumer has an incentive to stay with that supplier instead of going to the trouble of finding another trustworthy news source. Thus, according to Meyer, news quality and media credibility lead to audience loyalty.

To test this model, Meyer (2004) conducted a study using a group of Knight-Ridder newspapers. He examined the performance and credibility of newspapers in 24 markets in which Knight-Ridder operates. Meyer (2004) found a correlation between

newspapers' credibility scores and their circulation robustness. He concluded that high credibility is associated with robust circulation.

Other aspects of Meyer's (2004) influence model deal with measures of profitability and societal influence. This study, however, will examine only the relationships among news quality, media credibility and audience loyalty: three concepts that are based on audience perceptions and attitudes.

Newspaper research and the influence model

Most of the studies investigating aspects of Meyer's (2004) influence model were conducted on newspapers. Therefore, this section reviews their findings. Lacy and Fico (1991) found a positive relationship between quality and circulation. The authors measured quality by assessing the content of 114 newspapers, using the attributes proposed by Bogart (1989) in his study of newspaper editors. Blankenberg and Friend (1994) conducted a similar study using data from the Inland Press Association and the Newspaper Research Council. The researchers examined the performance of 46 newspapers, comparing investment in the newspapers with market performance. They found a positive relationship between investing in the editorial function (conceptualized as a proxy for news quality) and circulation.

Many other studies also used investment in the newsroom as a proxy for quality and consistently found that a relationship between news quality and circulation/profit (Cho, Thorson, & Lacy, 2004; Chen, Thorson, & Lacy, 2005; Lacy & Martin, 1998). Cho, Thorson and Lacy (2004) compared a group of 27 high-quality newspapers with a random sample of 98 daily newspapers from around the country. They found that investment in newspaper quality was positively related to circulation. Chen, Thorson &

Lacy (2005) studied 1,485 daily newspapers with circulations below 85,000, using Inland Press Association data. They also found a positive relationship between newsroom investment, circulation, revenue and profit.

Lacy and Martin (1998) did not address quality directly. Rather, they theorized that emphasis on high profits would be associated with decline in circulations. They compared a group of 64 newspapers belonging to the Thomson group with a control group of 128 newspapers. They noted that the Thomson group was renowned for its single-minded focus on high profit margins and an associated reluctance to invest in the newsroom. The study found a negative correlation between profit and circulation, suggesting that inordinate preoccupation with high profit, at the expense of quality would lead to lower circulation.

Thus, newspaper research strongly supports Meyer's (2004) influence model, which posits that news quality, media credibility, and circulation robustness are related.

Television research

Very few researchers have investigated the relationships among media credibility, news quality and audience loyalty, similar to the one identified in newspapers research. Rosenstiel, Gottlieb, and Brady (1999) and Pertilla and Belt (2002) analyzed PEJ data and found that news quality was positively associated with higher ratings. The PEJ makes an annual study of twenty cities and records the highest-rated half-hour of television news for two weeks (PEJ, 2005a). Those programs are then coded against a number of quality criteria and assigned a quality score. The researchers evaluated the relationship between the stations quality score and their ratings, based on Nielsen Media Research's three-year ratings trend data. The researchers found that higher levels of quality in local

news broadcasts are associated with higher ratings (Rosenstiel, Gottlieb, & Brady, 1999; Pertilla & Belt, 2002).

Although the aforementioned studies investigated concepts similar to the ones in Meyer's influence model (quality and ratings), they do not explicitly explore media credibility, a key concept in the model. This study, therefore, proposes to explore the three audience-based concepts identified in Meyer's (2004) influence model in a cable television news environment.

In summary, there is a well-established relationship between newspaper quality, circulation, and media credibility (Lacy & Fico, 1991; Cho, Thorson, & Lacy, 2004; Chen, Thorson, & Lacy, 2005; Blakenburg & Friend, 1994). A similar relationship has not been shown to exist for cable television news. Therefore, this study explores the relationships among the concepts for cable television news.

Based on the relationships proposed by the influence model and the findings of the relevant studies reviewed in this study, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a positive relationship among the measures of audience loyalty, media credibility, and perceived quality of CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News.

H2: Audiences' perceptions of media credibility and news quality will affect their loyalty to cable news networks.

The data collected for this study are also useful for understanding audiences' perceptions of the three cable news networks. Therefore, we propose the following research questions:

RQ1: What are audiences' perceptions of the media credibility of CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC?

RQ2: What are the audiences' perceptions of the quality of the news on CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC?

RQ3: How loyal are audiences to CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC?

Method

Sample and sampling procedure

To answer the research questions and test the hypotheses, a survey was administered to a convenience sample of 225 students enrolled in journalism classes at a large midwestern university. A convenience sample was used because this study's primary purpose is to test the relationship among variables and not to make generalizable inferences. A secondary reason for choosing this sample is because news media channels are interested in attracting the college-age audiences (age 18 – 24) because of their well-documented apathy towards news and news-related media contents (Raeymaeckers, 2004; Schechter, 2003). Students enrolled in journalism classes were used because they are more likely to be familiar with the media outlets than their contemporaries in other departments.

Survey instrument

A questionnaire was designed to measure respondents' opinions of media credibility and news quality of the three cable news networks, as well as their loyalty to the networks, using a 7-point Likert scale. Demographic and psychographic information—age sex, ethnicity, ideological view, and media use patterns—of the respondents were also collected, in order to put the results in perspective. A total of 225

surveys (75 for each media channel) were handed to the respondents. The only manipulated variable in the different versions of the questionnaire was the brand name (CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC) of the media channel. Therefore, 75 questionnaires featuring statements measuring opinions about CNN; 75 about MSNBC; and 75 about Fox News were handed to respondents. Each respondent received a randomly selected version of the questionnaire.

Credibility measure

For this study, media credibility has been narrowly defined as audiences' perceptions of a news channel's believability, as distinct from the believability of individual journalists and sources, media organizations, or the content of the news itself (Kioussis, 2001; Bucy, 2003). The credibility index originally developed by Gaziano and McGrath (1986), and modified by Meyer (1988) was used for this study. Meyer's (1988) credibility index (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$) includes five variables—fairness, bias, accuracy, trustworthiness, and completeness.

News quality measure

In general, prior studies have defined quality primarily in terms of newsroom investment or as a composite of news quality measures like community relevance; ratio of staff-written copy to wire service copy; coverage of a broad range of topics; citing multiple sources etc. (PEJ, 2002; Bogart, 1989). However, audience perception of quality is generally acknowledged to be important (Bogart, 2004). Lacy and Fico (1991) defined news quality as “how well the media news product serves the wants and needs of the users of the news product across time” (p. 48), thus concurring with other researchers that maintain the supremacy of audience-based perception indices to qualitative assessment of

news quality (Roberts & Dickson, 1984; Rhee, Kim, & Shim, 2005). This study, therefore, used audience-based perceptions of quality (henceforth referred to as perceived quality) as a measure of news quality.

Audience loyalty measure

Audience loyalty is defined as “the extent to which viewers tend to watch programs from one channel rather than distributing their viewing time across different channels” (Rhee, Kim, & Shin, 2005). Therefore, this study uses self-reported audience loyalty measures rather than circulation or rating figures.

Results

A total of 211 completed surveys were returned (94% response rate); 10 of the completed surveys were discarded because they were completed by respondents outside the 18 – 24 years old cohort. Of the remaining 201 completed surveys, 67 featured questions about CNN; 66 about Fox News; and 68 about MSNBC.

The mean age of the respondents was 20.12, with a standard deviation of 1.49; 66% (n = 133) of the respondents were female and 34% (n = 68) male; 73% (n = 151) of the respondents have cable or satellite television in their current residence, 15% (n = 30) do not; and 10% (n = 20) declined to specify whether they have cable/satellite television or not. The respondents watch cable television news an average of 3.4 hours a week.

Variable measurements

Statement responses were coded on a 7-point scale, with 1 as strongly disagree, 7 as strongly agree, and 4 as neutral, so that agreement with the statements represented positive perceptions of the cable news channel. Means were computed for the responses to each statement and construct index. Subsequently, t-tests were conducted to determine

whether statement means were significantly different from the midpoint (4.0). For all variables and constructs, a mean significantly below 4 represents a disagreement with the statement or construct while a mean significantly above 4 represents an agreement with the statement or construct.

Analysis of key variables

Media credibility. The five statements adapted from Meyer's (1988) credibility scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .87. When the statements are considered as a quotient, the respondents did not express statistically significant positive or negative opinions about the media credibility constructs (mean = 3.93; SD = 1.13; t-value = -.68; p = .49). However, they expressed statistically significant opinions about each of the statements that make up the quotient (see table 1). The respondents rated the networks highly in terms of the competency measures, agreeing significantly that the media outlets are trustworthy (mean = 4.87) and accurate (mean = 4.63), but disagreed significantly with the objectivity measures: they felt that the networks are not fair to all sides of issues (mean = 3.53), are biased (mean = 3.10), and do not present comprehensive reports (mean = 3.55).

Perceived quality. The perceived quality quotient includes statements measuring respondents' perception of the quality, reliability, and usability of the news on each channel (Cronbach's alpha = .78). The respondents had a statistically significant positive perception of the quality of the news on the networks (mean = 4.73). They agreed that the news on the networks is usable (mean = 4.83), of high quality (mean = 4.82), and reliable (mean = 4.55).

Audience loyalty. The audience loyalty quotient measured respondents' loyalty to the networks; their propensity to choose a particular that network first; and the possibility that they would not listen to news from any other source if news that network were not available. A Cronbach's alpha of .79 was computed for the measure. The respondents expressed statistically significant disagreement to the audience loyalty quotient (mean = 2.72) and to all the statements that comprise the quotient: they do not watch the networks exclusively (mean = 2.21), do not consider themselves loyal to the networks (mean = 2.94), and do not consider the networks as their first choice for receiving news (mean = 3.01).

Testing the hypotheses

The central hypothesis of this study is that there is a relationship among the three concepts being investigated—audience loyalty, perceived quality, and media credibility. To test this hypothesis, bivariate correlations were computed between the concepts i.e. between audience loyalty and perceived quality; perceived quality and media credibility; and audience loyalty and media credibility (see table 3). As predicted, the result shows strong to medium statistically significant bivariate correlations among the concepts—perceived quality and media credibility ($r = .769$; $p < .01$); audience loyalty and perceived quality ($r = .494$; $p < .01$); and audience loyalty and media credibility ($r = .532$; $p < .01$).

Three control variables—demographics, media use, and ideology—were used to eliminate alternative explanations for the investigated statistical relationships.

Respondents' age, gender, and ethnicity were used to create a demographics quotient.

Three constructs—attention, exposure, and reliance—consistently used by researchers

(Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986; Moy, McCluskey, McCoy, & Spratt, 2004; Sotirovic, 2001) to measure media use were used to develop the media use quotient; while respondents' attitude to contentious policy issues (abortion, gay marriage, and the role of religion in politics) and political personalities (George W. Bush and John Kerry) was used to develop an ideology index (Nie, Verba, and Petrocik, 1976).

Partial correlations between the concepts—while controlling for demographic variables (age, gender, and ethnicity), media use, ideology, and the three control variables simultaneously—were conducted. The correlations between the concepts were slightly weaker but remained statistically significant, while controlling for each control variable and the three control variables simultaneously (see table 4). Therefore, we accept the first hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between the concepts; and the relationships are not caused by age, gender, ethnicity, ideology, or media use.

The second hypothesis predicts that perceived quality and media credibility would have an effect on audience loyalty. To test this hypothesis, multiple regressions were conducted with perceived quality and media credibility as independent variables and audience loyalty as dependent variable. A statistically significant portion of the variance in audience loyalty was explained by the regression equation ($R^2 = .310$, $F(2, 191) = 42.83$, $p = .001$): perceived quality and media credibility explain 31% of the variance in audience loyalty. Therefore, we accept the second hypothesis.

Answering the research questions

The first set of research questions explores audiences' loyalty and perceptions of the media credibility and quality of the networks. One-way analysis of variance

(ANOVA) was conducted with audience perceptions and loyalty as dependent variables, and media outlets as fixed factors (see table 2). The result shows that the respondents consider CNN (mean = 4.20) to be significantly more credible than Fox News (mean = 3.68); but their opinion of MSNBC's credibility (mean = 3.95) is not significantly different from that of Fox News and CNN. The respondents' perception of the quality of CNN (mean = 5.27) is significantly higher than their perception of MSNBC (mean = 4.64) and Fox News (mean = 4.20). Although the respondents' perception of the quality of Fox News and MSNBC was significantly higher than the midpoint (4.0), there is no significant difference between their opinions of the two networks' quality. There is no significant difference in the respondents' loyalty to the three networks. They did not consider themselves loyal to any of the networks (loyalty to CNN = 2.84; Fox News = 2.61; MSNBC = 2.80).

Conclusion and discussion

This study found statistically significant correlation among three concepts of great importance to cable television news organizations—media credibility, perceived quality, and audience loyalty. The study also uncovered audiences' attitudes towards the three major cable news networks in the United States and found a statistically significant effect of media credibility and perceived quality on audience loyalty.

Meyer (2004) proposed a relationship between audiences' perception of news quality and their loyalty to newspapers. He stated that, "trust, in a busy marketplace, lends itself to monopoly. If you find a doctor or a used car salesman you trust, you'll keep going back without expending the effort or the risk to seek out alternatives" (p. 43). Meyer also stated that the audience's perception of accuracy, readability and other

indicators of the quality of a newspaper increase audiences' perception of the credibility of that newspaper. He proceeded to infer causality by stating that quality produces credibility, and credibility produces audience loyalty (circulation robustness).

The research method (survey) and statistical operation (bivariate correlations) used for this study are useful for determining the strength and direction of conceptual relationships but cannot be used to make causal inferences. Thus this study is not aimed at inferring causality but at investigating the relationships proposed by Meyer's influence model and confirming its applicability to cable news. We found that the relationships proposed by Meyer hold true for cable news. The strongest relationship was between perceived quality and media credibility; followed by the relationship between audience loyalty and media credibility; and the relationship between audience loyalty and perceived quality. All the relationships remained statistically significant while controlling for all the control variables.

The relationship between media credibility and perceived quality suggests that individuals who think that the news from a cable news network is of high quality are also likely to think that the network is credible. Similarly, individuals who think that a network is credible are also likely to have high perception of the networks' news quality. This relationship is particularly instructive in view of the persistent declines in media credibility uncovered in both academic and industry research (Gallup, 2005; Pew, 2005; Kiouisis, 2001; Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). Media managers who want to increase the audiences' perception of the credibility of their media outlet would be well advised to focus the quality of their news reports.

This study also shows that individuals who have higher perceptions of a cable news network's credibility and quality are more likely to be loyal to that network than those who do not. In view of the multitudes of media options available to audiences, maintaining and retaining a loyal audience seems to be an increasingly important strategy for media organizations. The impact of credibility and quality on loyalty provides additional motivation for news media managers to focus on news quality and the credibility of their news reports rather than short-term tactical promotions designed to attract and retain audiences. This study shows that audience loyalty is a product of doing right things, i.e. investing in the newsroom, setting news quality standards, and maintaining the accuracy, trustworthiness, objectivity, and fairness of news reports.

The results also shows that the respondents' perception of CNN's quality and media credibility is significantly higher than those of Fox News and MSNBC, while there is no significant difference in their loyalty to the three networks. Previous research has found a relationship between newsroom investment and news quality for newspapers (Lacy & Martin, 1998; Blankenberg & Friend, 1994). The Project for Excellence in Journalism's (2006) report shows that CNN has the highest newsroom investment of the three media outlets; therefore, it is not surprising that respondents think that its news quality is the highest of the three networks. CNN also has the highest media credibility rating despite Fox News' overt attempts to label itself as the "fair and balanced" alternative to other networks' liberal biased reporting (Collins, 2004). This result is interesting because it shows that media credibility is not necessarily dependent on what a network says about itself or what its competitors say about it, but on the quality of its news products.

The respondents do not consider the cable news networks as their primary source of news. They do not rely on them for news and do not consider themselves loyal to the three media channels. This result is in consonant with media scholars' observations that young people are deserting mainstream media outlets and getting their news from other sources (Raeymaeckers, 2004; Schechter, 2003). A 2004 Pew Research Center for the People and the Press poll showed that 20% of young people aged 18 – 29 received campaign news from the Internet during the 2004 election, while 21% of them received campaign news and information from comedy shows like Saturday Night Live and the Daily Show (Pew, 2004). The results of this study suggest that focusing on news quality and news credibility might be a way for cable news channels to reverse this trend.

There were a number of limitations to this study. The results cannot be generalized beyond the cohort because a non-probability sample was used. Regardless, this study uncovers important relationships with major implications for cable news networks in particular and media outlets in general. Future researcher should consider replicating this study with a random probability sample and extending the study to include other concepts (profitability and societal influence) in the influence model.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1

Descriptive statistics and t-tests on individual statements and construct quotient.

| <i>Variables</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>t-value</i> | <i>df</i> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| Media credibility quotient | 3.93 | 1.13 | -0.68 | 195 |
| CNN/MSNBC/Fox News is fair to all parties involved in any issue | 3.53** | 1.25 | -5.31 | 193 |
| CNN/MSNBC/Fox News is not biased on any issue | 3.10** | 1.42 | -8.87 | 191 |
| CNN/MSNBC/Fox News tells the whole story | 3.55** | 1.49 | -4.75 | 193 |
| News from CNN/MSNBC/Fox News is accurate | 4.63** | 1.39 | 6.47 | 194 |
| I can trust news from CNN/MSNBC/Fox News | 4.87** | 1.5 | 8.23 | 195 |
| Perceived quality quotient | 4.73** | 1.26 | 7.96 | 194 |
| CNN/MSNBC/Fox News presents high quality news. | 4.82** | 1.43 | 8.10 | 194 |
| I can get news that I can use from CNN/MSNBC/Fox News. | 4.83** | 1.48 | 7.92 | 191 |
| News from CNN/MSNBC/Fox News is very reliable. | 4.55** | 1.38 | 5.59 | 194 |
| Audience loyalty quotient | 2.72** | 1.37 | -12.89 | 198 |
| I consider myself to be loyal to CNN/MSNBC/Fox News. | 2.94** | 1.68 | -8.93 | 194 |
| CNN/MSNBC/Fox News would be my first choice for news. | 3.01** | 1.78 | -7.17 | 198 |
| I will not listen to news from other sources if news from CNN/MSNBC/Fox News is available. | 2.21** | 1.42 | -17.72 | 196 |

Table 2**One-way analysis of variance for audience perceptions by media outlet**

| <i>Variables</i> | <i>Media outlet</i> | | | <i>F</i> | <i>df</i> |
|-------------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|----------|-----------|
| | <i>CNN</i> | <i>MSNBC</i> | <i>Fox News</i> | | |
| Media credibility | 4.20a | 3.95ab | 3.68b | 3.48* | 195 |
| Perceived quality | 5.27a | 4.64b | 4.20b | 13.08* | 194 |
| Audience loyalty | 2.84a | 2.80a | 2.61a | 0.53 | 198 |

Note: $df = n - 1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Means with common lowercase letters are not significantly different from one another by Tukey's post-hoc test.

Table 3**Pearson's correlation coefficients between the concepts**

| | Perceived quality | Audience loyalty | Media credibility |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Perceived quality | 1 | .494** | .769** |
| Audience loyalty | | 1 | .532* |
| Media credibility | | | 1 |

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

Table 4**Partial correlation coefficients between the concepts while controlling for demographics, media use, and ideology**

| Media use as control variable | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | Perceived quality | Audience loyalty | Media credibility |
| Perceived quality | 1 | .400** | .737** |
| Audience loyalty | | 1 | .447* |
| Media credibility | | | 1 |
| Demographics as control variable | | | |
| | Perceived quality | Audience loyalty | Media credibility |
| Perceived quality | 1 | .506** | .769** |
| Audience loyalty | | 1 | .532* |
| Media credibility | | | 1 |
| Ideology as control variable | | | |
| | Perceived quality | Audience loyalty | Media credibility |
| Perceived quality | 1 | .489** | .760** |
| Audience loyalty | | 1 | .534* |
| Media credibility | | | 1 |

Ideology, media use, and demographics as control

| | variables | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | Perceived quality | Audience loyalty | Media credibility |
| Perceived quality | 1 | .386** | .707** |
| Audience loyalty | | 1 | .433* |
| Media credibility | | | 1 |

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

Figure 1

Source Meyer (2004)