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Mary Elizabeth Wagner

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Viewer's Perception of Local Television

Anchors: A Gender Based Study

(TITLE)

BY

Mary Elizabeth Wagner

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1994

YEAR

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Viewer's Perceptions of Local Television Anchors:

A Gender Based Study

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Running Head: LOCAL

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Abstract

A number of studies conducted by Lin (1992), Meeske (1992), Stone and Lee (1990), and Weinthal and O'Keefe (1984) have examined which variables are rated highest and most prominent by respondents toward television anchors. Professionalism, voice and speech, personal appeal, and attractiveness have been among the top rated variables, but they have never been researched within a single study. This study examines the above variables for local male and female television anchors and discovers which was rated the highest by male and female respondents. Significant findings within this study include male respondents perceive professionalism to be the highest rated variable in both male and female anchors. Results also show that female respondents rated professionalism highest in male anchors and voice, speech and personal appeal highest in female anchors.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

Television anchors are looked upon to deliver the news everyday by millions of people in cities and small towns. Nationally and locally, television anchors are considered news sources, devoting their time to informing the public. While earlier studies (Abbott, 1991, Brosius, 1991, & Kleiman, 1991) and speculations focused on describing the unique structure and standards of the field of television news broadcasting, recent work has centered on individual characteristics of the television anchors themselves.

Lin (1992), Meeske (1992), and Stone and Lee (1990) have shown that audiences rate broadcast journalists highest on the characteristic of professionalism. Professionalism was also rated by the audience as most significant over factors such as voice, knowledge, and trustworthiness.

Weinthal and O'Keefe (1984) found that male television anchors were scored higher by the audience on professionalism while Stone (1974) indicates that 64 percent of the respondents preferred females in front of the camera and 47 percent rated women newscasters as equal to male newscasters. However, Whittaker and Whittaker (1986) conclude that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceived acceptance or effectiveness between male and female television newscasters.

Incorporating likability into their own rating system, Krueger and Fox (1991), Roberts and Dickson (1984), and Shosteck

(1983) assessed audience attitude toward television newscasters. The researchers found that likability (based on the categories of appearance, voice, and speech) has the strongest impact on audience selectivity of a particular news anchor. Markham (1988) and Singletary (1991) found that morality, honesty, sympathy, and competence are the highest favored dimensions rated on the credibility of television news sources. Idsvoog and Hoyt (1977) and Ismach and Dennis (1988) found that television journalists were perceived to be younger, better educated, more conservative, and have more males working in the business than newspaper journalists.

While previous research (Weinthal and O'Keefe, 1994 & Shoesheck, 1993) has centered upon professionalism and attractiveness as leading characteristics of television news anchors, no studies have been conducted incorporating the variables of voice, speech, and personal appeal along with professionalism and attractiveness as means of influencing audience members. The basis of this study is to examine how male and female respondents rate local television news anchors based on the above categories.

Weinthal and O'Keefe (1984) found male respondents rating professionalism as the highest factor in both male and female anchors. However, Shoestech (1983) concluded that male respondents tend to rate female anchors highest on the category of attractiveness, and Stone (1974) reported that most audiences

prefer viewing female anchors over males. The following hypotheses are posed:

H1: Male respondents will rate male anchors higher than female anchors on the category of professionalism;

H2: Male respondents will rate female anchors higher than male anchors on the categories of voice and speech, personal appeal, and attractiveness;

H3: Female respondents will rate female anchors higher than male anchors on the category of professionalism;

H4: Female respondents will rate male anchors higher than female anchors on the categories of voice and speech, personal appeal, and attractiveness; and,

H5: Overall, female respondents will rate each anchor higher on all four categories than will male respondents.

Chapter 2: Method

A total of 200 male and female subjects (100 of each gender) at Eastern Illinois University were surveyed on their perceptions of two male anchors and two female anchors from the four leading news stations in East Central Illinois. Stations and gender of the anchor used from each station include: WICD-TV, Champaign, IL., female anchor; WAND-TV, Decatur, IL., male anchor; WTWO-TV, Terre Haute, IN., female anchor; WCIA-TV, Champaign, IL., male anchor.

The researcher presented the subjects with an eight minute video tape consisting of four, two minute news segments; one segment was from each of the four anchors. In order to eliminate bias, the researcher chose the gender of each anchor by a random sample, from a weeks worth of news from each local station. The anchors were placed alternately on the videotape; therefore, the same gender was never seen twice in a row.

Each subject was asked to view each news segment. Only one segment was seen at a time. Upon viewing each segment, the researcher stopped the tape and asked the subjects to respond to 23 items on a survey relating to the categories of professionalism, voice and speech, personal appeal, and attractiveness. The subject's gender was also noted on the survey. Each subject answered the 23-question survey four times, once for each anchor. For each statement, the subjects based their answers on a five-point Likert scale ranging

from A-strongly agree to E-strongly disagree. The subjects were instructed by the researcher to answer each statement on the survey based on their perception and initial response of the anchor last viewed.

For statements relating to the category professionalism see Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

For the voice and speech statements see Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

For the statements relating to personal appeal see Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

For the statements based on attractiveness see Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

Subjects were given three to five minutes after viewing each segment to complete the survey. (For a copy of the instrument, see Appendix A).

Measuring Instrument

A pilot study was conducted using a non-structured copy of the measuring instrument. (For a copy of the instrument, see Appendix B). The researcher measured the four factors of professionalism, voice and speech, personal appeal, and attractiveness based on both national and local anchors. The results of the pilot study confirmed that the respondents rated local anchors higher than national anchors on all four factors. The researcher employed the same instrument with the variables in a structured form for the present study to determine which of the four factors were perceived as highest and most important in male and female local anchors.

Chapter 3: Results

A factor analysis was conducted on the data to determine the factor structure of the data. A factor analysis was chosen by the researcher as a means of determining statistical significance because it regulates the respondents perceptions and images of the anchors based on the four factors. Male respondents evaluated male anchors, yielding four significant factors.

Insert Table 5 about here

When female respondents evaluated female anchors, four factors were significant.

Insert Table 6 about here

When looking at male respondents and their evaluation of female anchors, five factors were significant.

Insert Table 7 about here

Five factors also loaded when female respondents rated female anchors.

Insert Table 8 about here

Chapter 4: Discussion

A strong case can be made for both the validity and reliability of the measuring instrument used in this study. Because the instrument measured the factors the researcher set out to measure, the validity of the instrument was established. The instrument is also sound in measuring interval reliability because each section of the survey was highly correlated with itself.

Although the overall findings suggest that male respondents perceive professionalism to be the most important factor in both male and female local television anchors, male respondents still rated the male anchors higher than female anchors on the overall professionalism category by 9.2 percent of the variance. The researcher accepts *H1*:. Based on present and past research, male respondents portray professionalism to be the most important factor in both male and female anchors (Weinthal & O'Keefe, 1984).

When it comes to the factors of voice and speech, personal appeal, and attractiveness, male respondents rated attractiveness second to professionalism for the female anchors, while they rated attractiveness third for male anchors. Personal appeal is rated fourth by male respondents toward the female anchors, but rated second, next to professionalism for male anchors. Based on these findings, male respondents feel that attractiveness in female anchors is a more important factor than for male anchors.

Voice and speech were rated second in male anchors and third in female anchors. Shoestech (1983) noted "males tend to rate females higher on the categories of attractiveness and voice and speech" (p 60). My research confirms Shoestech's point on the factor of attractiveness but not voice and speech. Evaluating these conclusions, the researcher accepts *H2*: for the factor of voice and speech and attractiveness, but rejects the hypothesis on the personal appeal factor.

Female respondents followed the same pattern as male respondents, rating professionalism as the highest characteristic seen in the male anchors. For the female anchors, female respondents rated professionalism as the second most important factor. Based on this finding the researcher accepts *H3*: and confirms that both male and female respondents feel that professionalism is the most important factor portrayed in the male anchors. However, unlike the male respondents, the females feel that voice and personal appeal are the most important factors in the female anchors, therefore rating them first. Stone (1974) reports that over one-half of audiences prefer a woman as on-air talent than men because of motherly, personal appeal factors which women portray.

Female respondents rated male anchors lower on the factors of voice and speech, personal appeal, and attractiveness than the female anchors. While the female respondents rated attractiveness fifth for the male anchors, they rated it as the

third important factor for the female anchors. Unlike male respondents who see attractiveness as being a strong factor in female anchors, female respondents find it the least important factor in male anchors. Female respondents feel attractiveness is the third highest factor for female anchors. This led me to believe that both male and female respondents perceive attractiveness to be a leading factor in female anchors. The researcher rejects *H4*:.

When looking at the overall responses, female respondents rated all four local anchors higher on each category of professionalism, voice and speech, personal appeal, and attractiveness than male respondents. This allowed me to confirm and accept *H5*:. Although no specific studies have been found to determine why females rate certain characteristics higher than males, Krueger and Fox (1991), Roberts and Dickson (1984), and Shoestek (1983) found that audiences rate television anchors higher on the characteristics of likability (which classifies attractiveness), voice, and professional attributes than on characteristics such as personality and correct grammar.

Females may feel that the particular categories of professionalism, voice and speech, personal appeal, and attractiveness are the main factors which are looked for in local television anchors; thus giving the female anchors an overall higher rating than men. Male respondents agree by a large standing percentage (46 percent for males, 36.8 percent for

females) that professionalism is the main characteristic in male and female anchors. This may also account for the lower ratings on the other factors. While females rated higher than males on every category, males may not feel that the other factors are of main importance in local television anchors.

A negative factor of unprofessionalism, disturbing voice, lacks good grammar, and not a reliable source was found when both male and female respondents evaluated both male and female anchors. Based on these results, both male and female respondents are critical in their ratings of the anchors based on the negative factors. While male respondents rated the negative factor last for both male and female anchors, female respondents rated the negative factor last for female anchors, but third for male anchors. According to the female respondents' results, male anchors were rated as having a higher level of negative factors than the female anchors.

Limitations

Although 200 respondents is an adequate sample size, more subjects could have increased the validity of this study. The age group used as respondents may also be a limitation. While college students should be in tune to news, not every one may prefer watching local news. An older, more diversified sample may have produced different results.

The local anchors were chosen by a random sample. Respondents may have had a preference over a certain one. This

may have caused biased results.

Due to the fact that some of the anchors chosen for this study may also be weekend anchors, therefore seen more frequently than others, respondents may recognize them, causing a bias in their responses.

This study can be seen as groundwork for how television anchors are perceived through viewer's eyes, however, future research must be conducted to increase the validity and reliability of the study.

Future Research

A future study entailing viewers perceptions of television anchors may include examining and researching anchors from cities all over the country. This will help distinguish if the significant factors of professionalism, voice and speech, personal appeal, and attractiveness are perceived as important factors by people all over and not just from East Central Illinois. This research would also allow for a higher level of reliability and validity on this topic.

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Table 1

STATEMENTS RELATING TO THE CATEGORY OF PROFESSIONALISM

I feel this news anchor is objective.

I feel this news anchor is competent.

I feel this news anchor is knowledgeable.

I feel this news anchor is intelligent.

I feel this news anchor is professional.

Table 2

STATEMENTS RELATING TO THE CATEGORY OF VOICE AND SPEECH

I feel this news anchor has a pleasant voice.

I feel this news anchor used good grammar.

I feel this news anchor speaks well.

I feel this news anchor sounds nice.

I feel this news anchor has a disturbing voice.

I feel this news anchor lacks good grammar.

Table 3

STATEMENTS RELATING TO THE CATEGORY OF PERSONAL APPEAL

I feel this news anchor has a nice personality.

I feel this news anchor is a nice person.

I feel this news anchor is a concerned person.

I feel this news anchor is a reliable source.

I feel this news anchor is an impressive individual.

I feel this news anchor is not a reliable source.

Table 4

STATEMENTS RELATING TO THE CATEGORY ATTRACTIVENESS

I feel this news anchor looks nice.

I feel this news anchor dresses well.

I feel this news anchor has a nice appearance.

I feel this news anchor is attractive.

I feel this news anchor is unattractive.

Table 5

Male Respondents Evaluating Male Anchors

Factor 1	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Professionalism	10.764	46
Sources:		
Objective		
Competent		
Knowledgeable		
Intelligent		
Professional		
Factor 2	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Voice/Appeal	2.055	8.9
Sources:		
Sounds Nice		
Nice Personality		
Nice Person		
Concerned Person		
Factor 3	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Attractiveness	1.565	6.8
Sources:		
Looks Nice		
Dresses Well		
Nice Appearance		
Attractive		

Factor 4	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Negative	1.175	5.1

Sources:

Unprofessional
Disturbing Voice
Lacks Good Grammar
Not A Reliable Source

Overall % of Variance: 66.8

Table 6

Female Respondents Evaluating Female Anchors

	Factor 1	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Sources:	Voice/Appeal	11.489	50
Sounds Nice Nice Personality Nice Person Concerned Person			
	Factor 2	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Sources:	Professionalism	2.356	10.2
Objective Competent Knowledgeable Intelligent Professional			
	Factor 3	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Sources:	Attractiveness	1.537	6.7
Looks Nice Dresses Well Nice Appearance Attractive			

Local

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Factor 4	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Negative	1.159	5

Sources:

Unprofessional
Disturbing Voice
Lacks Good Grammar
Not A Reliable Source

Overall % of Variance: 71.9

Table 7

Male Respondents Evaluating Female Anchors

Factor 1	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Professionalism	8.462	36.8
Sources:		
Objective		
Competent		
Knowledgeable		
Intelligent		
Professional		
Factor 2	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Attractiveness	2.585	11.2
Sources:		
Looks Nice		
Dresses Well		
Nice Appearance		
Attractive		
Factor 3	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Voice/Speech	1.929	8.4
Sources:		
Pleasant Voice		
Uses Good Grammar		
Speaks Well		
Sounds Nice		

Factor 4	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Personal Appeal	1.467	6.4

Sources:

Nice Personality
Nice Person
Concerned Person
Reliable
Impressive Individual

Factor 5	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Negative	1.258	5.5

Sources:

Unprofessional
Disturbing Voice
Lacks Good Grammar
Not A Reliable Source

Overall % of Variance: 68.3

Table 8

Female Respondents Evaluating Male Anchors

	Factor 1	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Sources:	Professionalism	11.764	51.1
Objective Competent Knowledgeable Intelligent Professional			
	Factor 2	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Sources:	Personal Appeal	2.308	10.0
Nice Personality Nice Person Concerned Person Reliable Impressive Individual			
	Factor 3	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Sources:	Negative	1.456	6.3
Unprofessional Disturbing Voice Lacks Good Grammar Not A Reliable Source			

Factor 4	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Voice/Speech	1.219	5.3

Sources:

Pleasant Voice
Uses Good Grammar
Speaks Well
Sounds Nice

Factor 5	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Attractiveness	1.006	4.4

Sources:

Looks Nice
Dresses Well
Nice Appearance
Attractive

Overall % of Variance: 77.1

Local

30

Appendix A

News Anchor Survey #1

NEWS ANCHOR SURVEY #1

DIRECTIONS: PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOW QUESTIONS WITHIN EACH CATEGORY TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY ON THE FIVE-POINT SCALE.

PLEASE ONLY ONE ANSWER PER QUESTION.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE UNDECIDED DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE
A B C D E

1. A-MALE B-FEMALE

PROFESSIONALISM

2. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR IS OBJECTIVE.
3. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR IS COMPETENT.
4. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR IS KNOWLEDGEABLE.
5. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR IS INTELLIGENT.
6. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR IS PROFESSIONAL.
7. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR IS UNPROFESSIONAL.

VOICE AND SPEECH

8. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR HAS A PLEASANT VOICE.
9. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR USES GOOD GRAMMAR.
10. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR SPEAKS WELL.
11. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR SOUNDS NICE.
12. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR HAS A DISTURBING VOICE.
13. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR LACKS GOOD GRAMMAR.

PERSONAL APPEAL

14. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR HAS A NICE PERSONALITY.
15. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR IS A NICE PERSON.
16. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR IS A CONCERNED PERSON.
17. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR IS A RELIABLE SOURCE.
18. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR IS AN IMPRESSIVE INDIVIDUAL.
19. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR IS NOT A RELIABLE SOURCE.

ATTRACTIVENESS

20. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR LOOKS NICE.
21. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR DRESSES WELL.
22. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR HAS A NICE APPEARANCE.
23. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR IS ATTRACTIVE.
24. I FEEL THIS NEWS ANCHOR IS UNATTRACTIVE.

Local

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Appendix B
News Anchor Survey #2

NEWS ANCHOR SURVEY #2

DIRECTIONS: PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY ON THE FIVE-POINT SCALE.
PLEASE ONLY ONE ANSWER PER QUESTION.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE UNDECIDED DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE
 A B C D E

1. Overall, this news anchor presents the story in a professional manner.
2. This news anchor is well informed.
3. This news anchor is attractive.
4. This news anchor is not an impressive individual.
5. This news anchor has a disturbing voice.
6. This news anchor is a reliable source.
7. This news anchor has a pleasant voice.
8. This news anchor lacks information.
9. This news anchor does his/her job better than most of the anchors I've seen.
10. This news anchor is unattractive.
11. Overall, this news does his/her job worse than most of the anchors I've seen.
12. This news anchor has a nice appearance.
13. Overall, this news anchor presents the story in an unprofessional manner.
14. This news anchor is an impressive individual.
15. This news anchor is not a reliable source.
16. This news anchor does not have a nice appearance.