Motivated skepticism as a formative factor for credibility measures of television news in India: A Structural Equation Modeling approach

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Abstract

Trustworthiness, accuracy and believability are the most common indicators of news credibility measures. The impact of selective exposure, i.e. audience choosing content similar to their beliefs, on News Credibility is generally not considered in this context. This paper suggests that perceptions of News Credibility are influenced by selective exposure. This means people judge attitude-consistent content and sources as more credible. One explanation for selective exposure is 'Motivated Skepticism': we define a five-item construct for this construct. We hypothesize a Structural Equation Model with the latent construct Motivated Skepticism as a formative factor for News Credibility estimation of Indian television news channels. An online survey of 351 respondents from two Indian cities measures the goodness-of-fit and construct validity of the hypothesized SEM model. News Credibility is reported as a two-factor, second-order structure measured by Message Attributes and Channel Attributes, with Motivated Skepticism as a formative factor.

Keywords
News Credibility, selective exposure, Indian television channels, Motivated Skepticism, SEM.

Introduction
News Credibility is generally measured as an attribute of media content. It is most commonly inferred by measuring a range of perceptions about media

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content, i.e. believability, accuracy, fairness, bias, trustworthiness, ease of use, completeness, reliability, coherence etc. (Chung, Nam, & Stefanone, 2012; Gaziano, & McGrath, 1986). In earlier studies, credibility has also been evaluated in terms of channel attributes (Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus, & McCann, 2003). Other studies have shown more sophisticated ways in which people assess news credibility. For example, news consumers frequently rely on their peers to make news credibility assessments, often through the use of group-based tools (Metzger, Flanagin, & Medders, 2010). Robust scales for measuring message credibility (Appelman & Sundar, 2016) and source credibility (Graham, 2009) are also widely used by news credibility researchers. Most of these earlier credibility measures were a part of an ecosystem where balanced news reporting was the norm and there were fewer choices for the media audience (Stroud, 2011).

The present context of the media ecosystem, especially the socio-technical context, makes it imperative to consider the influence of other factors impacting the perception of news credibility. With the easy availability of a large number of media channels, often with different perspectives on the same issue, the media audience has to make regular choices about the type of content they consume. The *selective exposure* explanation for the choice of content consistent with one's beliefs and preferences, dates back to the 1950s (Sears, & Freedman, 1967). There is also strong evidence that people are interested in opinion-reinforcing political information (Frey, 1986 provides a good summary).

What has changed is that in the last two decades, news media have often tailored their content to appeal to partisan audiences (Stroud, 2011). This phenomenon of channels tuning their content to resonate with particular groups of viewers has been noticed in the Indian context as well (Kadicheeni, 2016).

At the same time, this leads individuals to prefer information sources that are more supportive of their opinions over the ones that do not support their opinions (Mutz, & Martin, 2001). Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance theory is most frequently used to explain such selective exposure. The premise of the theory is that people do not tolerate inconsistency well. Hence, anticipating dissonance people are motivated to defend themselves by seeking out information that confirms their preexisting attitudes and beliefs. The presence of cognitions inconsistent with one's beliefs arouses a state of cognitive dissonance which is experienced as uncomfortable tension. Individuals constantly try to reduce this tension (Cooper, 2007). A number of landmark studies have been conducted in recent times demonstrating this effect (e.g. Knobloch-Westerwick, & Meng, 2009; Garrett, 2009a; Iyengar, & Hahn, 2009).

Dissonance reduction is not just a cognitive mechanism, but a motivational phenomenon as well. It leads to a conscious decision where one seeks confirmation for preexisting beliefs and attitudes. For instance, an experimental study, established that conservatives and Republicans preferred to read news reports attributed to Fox News and to avoid news from CNN and NPR, while Democrats and liberals showed an equal preference for CNN and NPR (Iyengar, & Hahn, 2009). Consumers tend to ignore the differences in news media which they perceive to be hostile to attitudes and beliefs held by them. For instance, Republicans see little difference between MSNBC and CNN, while Democrats would see these channels very differently. At the same time the audience sees the 'putatively neutral' media to favor the opposition.

Much of the research on credibility measures however does not account for the fact that people judge *attitude-consistent* sources and messages as more credible. One of the first studies to suggest that people regard like-minded sources to be fairer and more credible was by Fischer, Jonas, Frey, & Schulz-Hardt (2005).

Another study demonstrated that partisan supporters regard channels airing 'attitude-consistent' content as being neutral (Stroud, Muddiman, & Lee, 2014: 887). In a very important study linking news credibility to selective exposure was by Metzger, Hartsell, & Flanagin (2015). They demonstrated that people judge attitude-consistent and neutral news sources as more credible than attitude-challenging news sources (Metzger, Hartsell, & Flanagin, 2015: 1).

The present paper postulates that a measure for news credibility must also factor in Selected Exposure by the audience to like-minded information. To arrive at a sophisticated explanation for selective exposure, and to identify measurable indicators we begin with the Motivated Reasoning Theory. According to this theory, people are influenced by either '*accuracy goals*' or '*directional goals*' to choose content they want to consume. Those driven by directional goals are more likely to seek like-minded information. Those driven by accuracy goals on the other hand consume all types of information (Kunda, 1990). Directional goals, on the other hand, lead to the use of those resources that are considered most likely to yield the desired conclusion. The goals determine what information will be processed in the reasoning process (Kunda, 1990).

The Motivated Reasoning phenomenon suggests that when one wants to draw a certain conclusion, one feels obliged to construct a rationalization for that conclusion that would be reasonable to a dispassionate observer. In doing so, one accesses only an inclined subset of the appropriate beliefs and rules. The notion that Motivated Reasoning is 'mediated by biased memory search and belief construction accounts for much of the reasoning phenomenon (Kunda, 1990: 492).

Drawing on the work on Motivated Reasoning Taber & Lodge (2006) propose a model of *motivated skepticism* to explain why citizens are 'biased-information processors'. They use three mechanisms of partisan processing, i.e. prior attitude effect, disconfirmation bias and confirmation bias. Following these mechanisms they predict attitude polarization, attitude strength effect and a sophistication effect (Taber, & Lodge, 2006: 757).

In the present study we adopt these concepts as measurable indicators to arrive at a latent measure of Motivated Skepticism. Using a Structural Equation Model we will demonstrate that the Motivated Skepticism is a formative indicator of News Credibility measures. Credibility perceptions are influenced by these choices. The motivated skepticism phenomenon composed of confirmation bias, disconfirmation bias, prior attitude, sophistication effects and polarizing effects leads one to choose more attitude-consistent messages and sources and to avoid attitude-challenging sources and content. This in turn leads one to regard these choices as more credible.

For the News Credibility scale, we use adapt the scale by Abdulla et al. (2005) which is a three-factor construct for News Credibility – *Balance* measured by the indicators 'balanced, report the whole story, objective, fair, accurate'; *Honesty* measured by 'honest, believable, trustworthy', and *Currency* measured by 'up-to-date, current, timely' (Abdulla, Garrison, Salwen, Driscoll, & Casey, 2005).

Figure 1
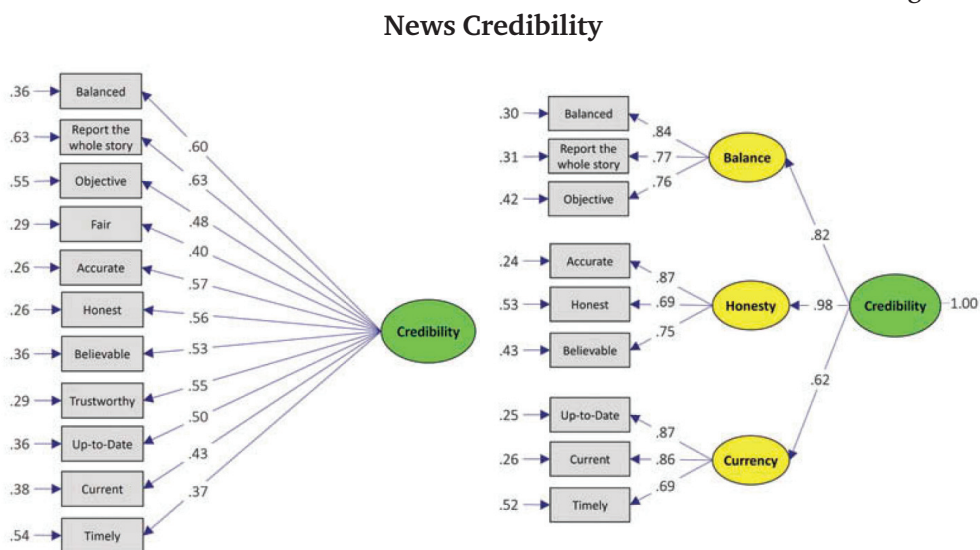
News Credibility

Source: Yale, Jensen, Carcioppolo, Sun, & Liu (2015: 157, 165)

As seen in the figure above, News Credibility has often been hypothesized as a one factor model (all measurable indicators 'balanced, report the whole story, objective, fair, accurate, honest, believable, trustworthy, up-to-date, current, timely' all reflected by the latent variable 'Credibility'. The three-factor model with the latent constructs 'Balance', 'Honesty' and 'Currency' is shown to have a better fit, even more so as a *second-order factor* construct where these latent constructs are reflected by Credibility which is a latent construct. We hypothesize that the measure for News Credibility will be influenced by Motivated Skepticism.

Hypothesis 1: Motivated Skepticism is a formative indicator for News Credibility.

With our approach of examining News Credibility through Motivated Skepticism there is need for a fresh estimation of the factor structures of the News Credibility scales discussed above. This leads us to our research question:

Research Question 1: What are the underlying factors of News Credibility of Television Channels in India?

Motivated Skepticism

We adopt the theoretical basis for the construct of Motivational Skepticism by Taber & Lodge (2006) in their experimental study for evaluating political beliefs. The preference of audiences to choose information slanted toward their political views has been demonstrated in many studies (e.g. Dilliplane, 2011). Selective exposure leads individuals to seek information that supports their attitudes or beliefs. This allows them to defend their attitude, beliefs and behavior. The first element of the motivated skepticism construct is *confirmation bias* – audience is likely to accommodate evidence that supports their prior belief. This confirmation bias exists among liberals and conservatives alike, as partisanship did not moderate the extent of selective exposure to attitude-consistent versus attitude-challenging content. This observation supports an *informational utility* rationale for confirmation bias (Knobloch-Westerwick, Johnson, & Westerwick, 2014).

A related concept defining motivated skepticism is the *Disconfirmation Bias*, when people actively disparage information with which they disagree while accepting compatible information almost without expending any cognitive effort. These biases lead to *attitude polarization* as exposure to the reconfirming information leads partisans to diverge in their attitudes. These biases are particularly pronounced for people with 'knowledge and strong preexisting attitudes' (Taber & Lodge, 2006: 767).

A recent authoritative meta-analysis of studies on selective exposure of information demonstrated that the confirmation bias is smaller when there is support for the *preexisting attitude* or belief. The bias is larger when the information available for selection is regarded to be of high quality. As expected, the confirmation bias is bigger for people with higher commitment to an attitude or belief. This bias was higher for high value relevance of the issue. The bias was larger for those scoring high in closed-mindedness. At the same time, those scoring higher on the confidence scale scored lower in confirmation bias (Hart, Albarracin, Eagly, Brechan, Lindberg, & Merrill, 2009).

Individual characteristics affect the extent to which like-minded information is sought. The certainty with which an individual holds a position influences selective exposure (Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009). A major contributing factor to this defence mechanism is the value system of the individual. If the point of view in the media content is closer to the enduring values of the individuals, the attachment to the view is higher.

Personality differences also determine the extent to which people are motivated to defend their views and behaviors. Those measured on the trait of closed-mindedness, scoring high on the measures of dogmatism or authoritarianism and high on the repression end of the repression-sensitization scale manifest a stronger confirmation bias. At the same time, people who view themselves as unable of contradicting challenging information may be 'more motivated to proactively guard against such threats' (Hart, Albarracin, Eagly, Brechan, Lindberg, & Merrill, 2009: 560).

The process of confirmation bias is impacted by *the perception of the information* itself, i.e. its credibility and refutability (Donsbach, 1991). Earlier studies on selective exposure did not distinguish between motivated exposure to particular channels and the natural consequence of viewers' personal networks.

Whether 'people actively seek out information channels that conform to their beliefs or it is a result of the influence of one's peer group' has not been conclusively proved yet (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009: 21). Whatever be the reasons behind the selective exposure, its existence aided by news algorithms maximizing reach by providing attitude-consistent content is a reality. We describe this as the *Sophistication Effect* in our measure for Motivated Skepticism (see *Figure* below).

Figure 2

Final SEM model for News Credibility
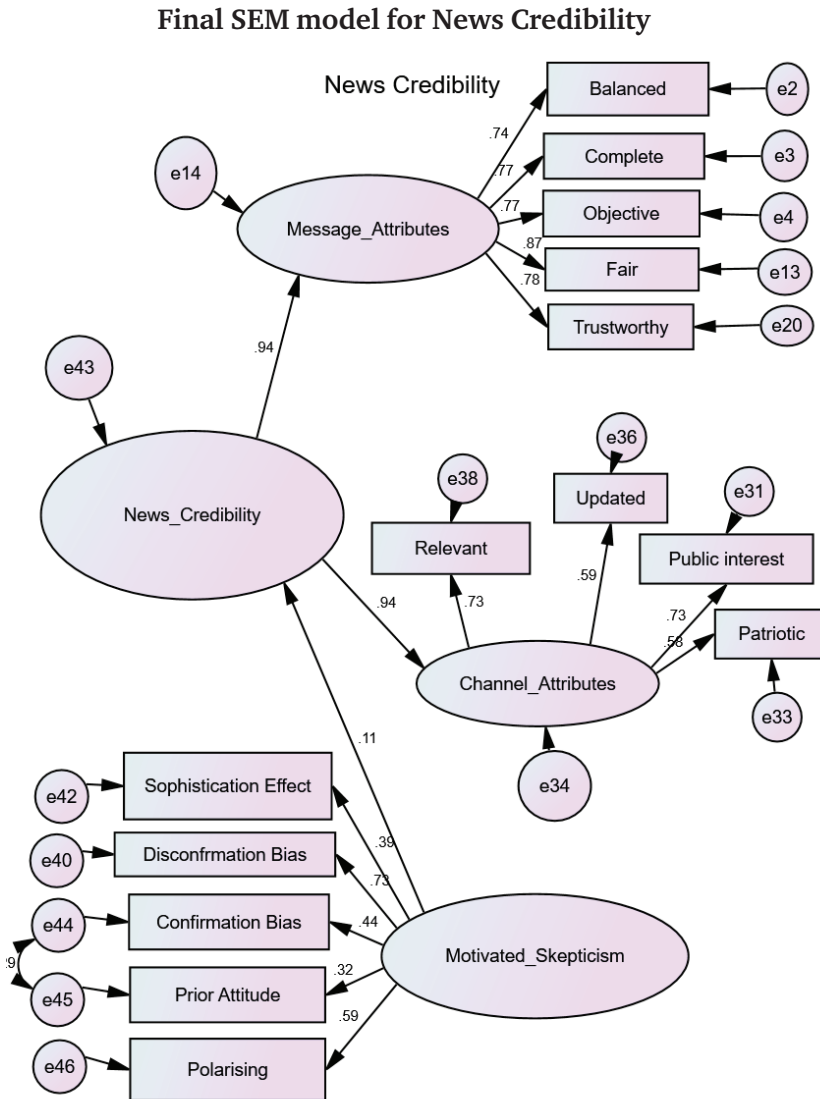
In summary, motivated skepticism helps explains the selective exposure which occurs when one's attitudes are challenged; an affective judgment is called for; one's attitude is strong; the consequences of being wrong are weak; the judgmental task is complex; objective information is not readily available and 'counterarguments come easily to mind' (Lodge & Taber, 2000: 185). We hence define the latent construct of Motivated Skepticism to be reflected by the indicators: Confirmation Bias, Disconfirmation Bias, Prior Attitude and Polarizing

Effect. As discussed earlier, one's decision to choose a particular news source and a news content, especially when partisan choices are available, is an important factor in determining whether the news is regarded as credible. The Selective Exposure to news content is an important formative indicator for News Credibility.

It has also been observed that exposure to attitude-consistent messages is significantly higher than exposure to messages opposed to one's preexisting beliefs and attitudes. At the same time, people who identified themselves as heavy users of media preferred attitude-consistent information more strongly and avoided consuming information opposed to their attitudes and beliefs. Even if they do expose themselves to information on the 'other side' they do not see themselves changing their views in the light of counter attitudinal information. For these reasons, credibility measures need to incorporate the attitude-consistent choices made to selectively expose oneself to certain sources and messages.

Indian television channels

Most commercial television news channels in India are modeled on the American news channels. The 10-billion-dollar television industry in India mostly consists of general entertainment channels. Despite low viewership compared to vernacular channels, the English television news channels are regarded as very influential (FICCI, 2021).

In recent years there has also been a marked polarization of these channels on political lines. For instance, an editor of a prominent news channel, mirroring the realities of other news channels, said in an interview: 'Zee News basically works on the nationalist editorial line. We are portraying ourselves as the nationalist channel. So unfortunately, what has happened is that people have associated nationalism with BJP (the ruling right-wing political party in India)' (Chaudhury, 2016). Some channels have also modeled themselves in format and delivery on Fox News for example (Mailonline India, 2017).

Observers have noted that the media in India, especially television channels is 'a player in Indian politics and elections.' The media does take sides and tends to editorialize news reporting (Hasan, 2014). Against this backdrop it becomes even more important to incorporate sophisticated measures of selective exposure which measure news credibility.

Method

The participants for the research were English-speaking individuals from the Indian cities of Kolkata and New Delhi via online snowball. This was cleared by the institutional review board for responsible research. The online survey was in English, the participants over the age of 18 were invited to complete

the survey by accessing the link that was posted on social media platforms, namely, Facebook[2] Messenger and WhatsApp. The data were mainly collected in September, 2019. A total of 27 incomplete responses were rejected. The total number of respondents, after the rejections were N = 351 (189 females, 53.8 per cent and 162 males, 46.2 per cent), Measures of central tendency for the age variable showed (N = 351, M=27.5, SD=8, ranging from 18-64 years).

The measurement of this Motivated Skepticism can be achieved by three different processes: self-report, behavioral, and physiological measures. The physiological measures are ruled out for Motivated Skepticism as they could only operationalize spontaneous orienting responses to media stimuli and not selective exposure to media units (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015: 87).

The behavioral measures also do not provide immediate insight into the causes of behavior or reports of perception. Self-reporting measures have inherent problems of reliability and validity. Value judgments too may be involved in self-reporting.

A measure of Motivated Skepticism has to incorporate measures through latent, indirect means. One of the statistical tools to measure latent factors with the help of observed variables is that of Structural Equation Modeling. In the present study we propose a SEM approach using observed indicators to measure Motivated Skepticism as a latent construct. These variables ascertain accuracy and direction goals of Motivated Skepticism. Objective questions include 'how likely are you to change channels which air divergent opinions to yours on political issues'; 'do you avoid watching channels which are unfair to some political parties'; 'Do you avoid watching channels which expose only one political group'; do you avoid watching channels which are unfair to some political parties'.

The 11-item news credibility scale by (Abdulla, Garrison, Salwen, Driscoll, & Casey, 2005) was used to measure credibility. Respondents evaluated the content of their preferred television channel on 7-point scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree on the items: balanced, report the whole story, objective, fair, accurate, honest, believable, trustworthy, up-to-date, current, timely. In addition we adopted the three items on the Meyer *Affiliation* subscale along with these 11 items. These were also measured on the 7-point scale: 'watches out after your interest', 'concerned about the community's well-being' and 'patriotic' (Meyer, 1988). We hence started with 14-items to measure the News Credibility. The Meyer Affiliation scale was incorporated since it is theoretically consistent with the Motivated Skepticism approach hypothesized in the present study.

Questions for the Motivated Skepticism factor were: 'I avoid channels which are politically motivated, I avoid watching channels which are unfair to some

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[2] Belongs to Meta company, banned at the territory of the Russian Federation.

political parties, I avoid channels whose political views are biased. Other questions included I don't watch channels biased toward certain political parties; I prefer watching content which supports my political beliefs; I avoid watching channels which expose only one political group. Respondents evaluated these on 7-point scales ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

A Principal Component Analysis with a Varimax (orthogonal) rotation of the 14 items from this attitude survey questionnaire was conducted on the data gathered from the 351 respondents. This popular rotation method assumes that the factors are unrelated. This also results in high factor loadings for a smaller number of variables and low factor loadings for the rest. For reasons of parsimony in the model we begin with a small number of factors through this orthogonal rotation. The first part of the study is hence an exploratory factor analysis to discern the reflective indicators of News Credibility. We have already hypothesized motivated skepticism as a formative factor of News Credibility. The goodness-of-fit of this model – with Motivated Skepticism as a formative factor and the factors identified for News Credibility as reflective factors, through the Exploratory Factor Analysis will be validated through a Confirmatory Factor Analysis model. An examination of the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy suggested that the sample was factorable (KMO=.915).

Table 1

Principal Component Analysis of the News Credibility items, α=.91

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2
Balanced	.750	.093
Complete	.734	.239
Objective	.725	.208
Fair	.831	.210
Accurate	.722	.310
Honest	.779	.194
Believable	.694	.379
Trustworthy	.782	.340
Up-to-date	.432	**.670**
Faster	.125	.882
Latest	.237	**.869**
Public interest		**.514**
Patriotic		**.473**
Well-being		.271

Results

The results show that the subscales suggested by Abdulla, Garrison, Salwen, Driscoll, & Casey (2005) are not replicated in our study. In fact, the two subscales suggested in that study 'Balance' and 'Honesty', load highly onto the first factor here. The items on the currency subscale load highly on the second factor which also demonstrates high factor loadings for the affiliation scale. This fits well with the hypothesis that Motivated Skepticism influences the credibility scales, to the point where it leads to a fresh estimation of the factors. We posit the first factor of the Credibility scale as *Message Attributes*. It has some similarity with attributes of recent studies on Message Credibility (e.g. Appelman, & Sundar, 2016).

The other six items including the three affiliation items can be seen as defining the characteristics of the channel which we define as the *Channel Attributes*. Hence to answer RQ1 we posit that News Credibility scales, in the context of the Indian television channel are a two-factor structure measured by the latent factors, **Message Attributes** and **Channel Attributes**.

The Message Attributes are measured by the observed indicators – Balanced, Complete, Objective, Fair and Trustworthy.

The Channel attributes are measured by indicators – 'Patriotic', 'Looks after public interest', 'Provides updated information' and 'looks after my interest'. With these as reflective indicators for News Credibility, we suggest the following Structural Equation Model, hypothesizing 'Motivated Skepticism' as a formative indicator.

Figure 2 shows the *final* SEM model with the hypothesised **Motivated Skepticism** as a formative factor for News Credibility. In the formative model, the latent construct News Credibility is dependent on the Motivated Skepticism construct. The causality flows, as indicated by the regression weight arrows, from Motivated Skepticism to News Credibility. As already indicated in the SEM model above, News Credibility is a two-factor structure measured by the latent factors '*Message Attributes*' and '*Channel Attributes*'. These are shown as reflective indicators in the above model – the direction is from News Credibility to 'Message Attributes' and 'Channel Attributes'.

The data were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis, with the maximum likelihood estimate method with IBM AMOS 19. The first step in the model estimation was an investigation of the hypothesized model's goodness-of-fit with the sample data. The results of SEM showed that chi-square statistics were significant, $\chi^2(74) = 12.08$, $p = .000$, $\chi^2/df = 1.66$ for the model. This preliminary test indicates significant errors in the hypothesized model. However most scholars agree chi-square is affected by sample size, i.e. larger

samples produce larger chi-squares that are significant even with very small discrepancies between the hypothesised and obtained covariance matrices. It is generally believed that it is difficult to get a nonsignificant chi-square (indicative of good fit) when sample sizes are much over 200 (Kline, 2016).

With a big sample size of 351, the results of SEM analysis revealed an acceptable fit for the hypothesized model as indicated by the standard goodness-of-fit indices. The indices – Comparative Fit Index, Iterative Fit Index, Non Normed Fit Index and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation showed more than reasonable fit of the sample data to the hypothesized model. The significant test for the chi-square to degrees of freedom hence can be safely ignored.

The Comparative Fit Index compared to a saturated model is found to be 0.972, proving that the hypothesized model fits with the sample data excellently. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is found to be 0.044, which means good fit between the research model and the sample data.

The Hoelter value of 300 indicates that our sample size of 351 is adequate for the hypothesized model. All the above goodness of fit indices proves that the hypothesized model (Fig 1) fits well with our sample data, which proves our hypothesis that Motivated Skepticism is a formative factor for News Credibility.

Based on the modifications suggested in the initial hypothesized model by the modification indices and the error covariances, the *Message Attributes* are limited to the observed indicators; 'Balanced', 'Complete', 'Objective', 'Fair' and 'Trustworthy'. The factor Channel Attributes is measured by 'Looks after the Public Interest', 'Patriotic', 'Provides the latest news' and 'Cares for my interests'. The other two indicators were removed in the final confirmatory model shown above.

Table 2

Goodness of Fit tests for SEM model

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	31	123.085	74	.000	1.663
Saturated model	105	.000	0		
Independence model	14	1867.994	91	.000	20.527

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.104	.953	.933	.671
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.652	.404	.313	.350

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.934	.919	.973	.966	.972
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.044	.029	.057	.776
Independence model	.236	.227	.246	.000

Model	HOELTER .05	HOELTER .01
Default model	271	300
Independence model	22	24

Table 3

Regression weights

			Estimate
News Credibility	<---	Motivated_Skepticism	.114
Message_Attributes	<---	News Credibility	.945
Channel_Attributes	<---	News Credibility	.941
Balanced	<---	Message_Attributes	.744
Complete	<---	Message_Attributes	.772
Objective	<---	Message_Attributes	.768
Fair	<---	Message_Attributes	.872
Trustworthy	<---	Message_Attributes	.779
Public interest	<---	Channel_Attributes	.726
Patriotic	<---	Channel_Attributes	.583
Latest news	<---	Channel_Attributes	.587
My interests	<---	Channel_Attributes	.732
Avoid opposing views	<---	Motivated_Skepticism	.729
Avoid politically motivated	<---	Motivated_Skepticism	.387
Prefer supporting content	<---	Motivated_Skepticism	.443
Avoid unfair channels	<---	Motivated_Skepticism	.589
Would change channels	<---	Motivated_Skepticism	.316

Notably all the items in the News Credibility factor exhibit high regression weights (see *Table 3*) confirming the construct validity of the hypothesized model (*Figure 2*). This confirms our primary hypothesis that Motivated Skepticism is a formative factor determining News Credibility Measures.

Discussion

The present study provides one of the first SEM models to incorporate selective exposure measures to define news credibility. It confirms a number of previous studies that people regulate their cognitive inference and decision processes according to the broad motivational patterns of selective exposure (Baumeister, & Newman, 1994).

One very important corollary of this finding is that motivated skepticism has 'echo chamber' effects. It serves to reinforce existing attitudes and opinions, which by default limits the choices available to consumers. This has been seen in a number of earlier studies too. Despite the possibility of a large number of options, people tend to 'isolate themselves from topics and opinions they prefer to avoid' (Iyengar, & Hahn, 2009: 34).

The existence of Motivated Skepticism as a formative indicator for News Credibility also explains why *putatively neutral channels* are regarded low on credibility by those driven by Motivated Skepticism, especially the ones with defence goals if the content does not support their pre-existing beliefs.

Media providing content closer to one's beliefs is regarded as more credible, while those with content divergent from one's beliefs and attitudes are less believable. This has interesting ramifications. For a certain section of the audience, i.e. those with directional goals the media organization can appear more credible, simply by identifying the existing state of opinion of the audience and tailoring content to conform to their opinions. We have already seen this tailoring of content in the American context (Stroud, 2011) and other global contexts (e.g. Lopes da Silva, 2020; de Albuquerque, 2023). A systematic content analysis approach would be required in the context of Indian television channels as well.

Personal commitment to an attitude or belief is an important attribute of the Defence Motivation. Several contributing factors to Motivated Skepticism have been identified, among them are confirmation bias, disconfirmation bias, prior attitude effect, attitude polarization and a sophistication effect. In earlier studies, Motivated Reasoning (a related construct) has been measured by self-reporting (Hart, Albarracin, Eagly, Brechan, Lindberg, & Merrill, 2009). The indirect measure of Motivated Skepticism as a latent construct in our study is justified by the underlying nature of Motivated Skepticism itself.

In the present context our study reveals a two-factor structure for credibility measured by 'Message attributes' and 'Channel attributes'. This is in line with earlier studies which suggested a two-factor structure for credibility (Yale, Jensen, Carcioppolo, Sun, & Liu, 2015). The Message Attributes dimension of this study is similar to the trustworthy dimension seen in a number of credibility measures (Graham, 2009).

An important finding of our study is that the 'expertise' and 'affiliation' are not distinct factors in the news credibility measures of Indian Television channels. The observed indicators of these two latent factors (in other studies) load on to a single factor in our study. In effect 'affiliation' may be seen as a measure of 'expertise' and vice-versa. We have named these as 'channel attributes' – the second reflective factor of the credibility measure, which replicates indicators from the Meyer scale (Meyer, 1988).

Often one is not aware of the cognitive judgment one undertakes to choose media content. A major limitation of the study is that there are theoretical constructs like a lack of media literacy, for example, which can provide a cogent explanation for audience differences of credibility (Claussen, 2004). There is strong theoretical evidence to regard media literacy as a formative indicator of News Credibility. People access only a subset of their relevant knowledge to construct a justification for their desired conclusion, often not realizing that they also possess knowledge to support the opposite conclusion. An important corollary is that people often do not realize that the process of constructing this justification is biased because of their goals: accuracy or defensive.

Self-reporting perceptions of Motivated Skepticism, even indirect latent ones are prone to distortions; hence the Motivated Skepticism scale in the present study needs to be validated in diverse contexts.

An important area that has not been considered is whether the respondents believed that they could see through the media strategy of using systematic techniques to reach out to audiences with attitude-consistent content. Four out of ten respondents in an earlier study in another context believed that 'media bias clouds facts so much that people cannot find out what the facts are' (McGrath, & Gaziano, 1986: 63). A similar survey in the Indian context would be quite useful.

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