

UNAIDED AND AIDED BRAND RECALL IN PODCAST ADVERTISING
AN EXPERIMENT IN THE ROLE OF SOURCE CREDIBILITY'S
IMPACT ON BRAND MESSAGE EFFICACY

by

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
with a Major in Mass Communication
May 2019

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my family, friends and colleagues who were there to encourage me every step of this journey.

Thank you to my graduate committee members, Dr. Michael Devlin, Dr. Clay Craig and Dr. Vanessa Higgins Joyce.

Dr. Devlin – Thank you for the insightful feedback and always cheering me on.

Dr. Craig – Thank you for helping me with my experiment, solving technical problems, feeding me crackers whenever I showed up at your office and for making me laugh.

Dr. Higgins – Thank you for your insight in research methodologies. You have converted me into a lover of all things research.

Without your guidance and support, I would not have accomplished this research

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
III. METHODOLOGY.....	20
IV. RESULTS.....	28
V. DISCUSSION.....	31
VI. FUTURE RESEARCH	34
LITERATURE CITED.....	36

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Demographic Data	26
2. Listenership Frequency	27
3. Unaided Recall by Perceived Host Expertise	28

ABSTRACT

Podcasts have gained popularity among advertisers as an effective method for reaching their intended audience. The reason for this popularity is the niche content delivered to targeted audiences. Advertisers find these audiences to be narrowly targeted and therefore brand placement messages can have a greater consumer impact. The present study assesses the role of source credibility on aided and unaided brand recall in podcast advertising. Research measured the perceived credibility of the podcast host (source) in three dimensions: expertise, knowledge and attractiveness. Using four different podcast episode genres, an audio experiment controlled for gender of host, brand placement and length of podcast episode was conducted on 113 college students. Participants rated credibility of the podcast host, attitude towards the brand and purchase intention. Analysis confirmed that host expertise had the strongest impact on unaided brand recall.

I. INTRODUCTION

The first commercial digital recordings of sound began in the 1970s. During the mid-1990s, digital audio files became increasingly available on few websites offering audio subscriptions. Carl Malamud, an American technologist, created the first streaming audio channel called “Talk Radio” in 1993. Malamud hosted the streaming radio program or ‘computer-radio’ program known as, “Geek of The Week.” The show consisted of Malamud interviewing a different computer expert each week, and each episode was recorded for later listening (Bottomley, 2015). At the time of Malamud’s streaming audio talk show, internet technology was in its infancy and the ability to listen en masse had not matured.

Portable digital audio players, known in 1997 as MP3 players, provided music listeners with the capability to download digital audio files onto their MP3 device and listen to music on demand. The logistics of getting the music onto a MP3 player was cumbersome. First, the listener had to own the version of the music, usually by purchasing the music CD. The CD then had to be copied onto the computer and then the digital audio files downloaded onto the MP3 player. The ability to directly download a music digital audio file was made available to the masses via music industry disruptor, Napster, in 1999. On a parallel path, Scott Bourne launched the first Internet only radio network, Netradio.com, in 1995. As streaming technology improved with the advent of HTTP (Hyper Text Transfer Protocol,) online radio became more accessible to listeners.

As a consequence of online radio popularity, podcasts have become a rapidly growing auditory medium after subsequent iterations and failures from previous attempts to aggregate audio content for download.

Podcasts, operationally defined as a digital audio recording of a radio broadcast or independent broadcast made available on the Internet for downloading (Ritter & Cho, 2009), are increasingly being used as a platform for communicating advertising messages (McGowen, 2010). Marketers and advertisers can deliver advertising messages utilizing either brand placements whereby a message is read aloud by the host of the podcast, or as an embedded commercial played before, during or after the podcast content (Winer, 2009). Despite the growing amount of marketing dollars spent on podcast advertising (Haygood, 2007) coupled with increased inquiry pertaining to podcast advertising effectiveness by industry research corporations such as Edison Research (2017), a lack of understanding about which variables increase effectiveness.

Previous studies have researched the role of involvement and source credibility in comparative advertising (Gotlieb & Sarel, 1991), program involvement by the listener as a precursor to advertising effectiveness (Soldow & Principe, 1981), and the examination of the motives of podcast listeners (McClung & Johnson, 2010). The leading podcast advertising industry research company, Edison Research recently published “The Effectiveness of Podcast Advertising” (2019) in partnership with Podcast One, a network of more than 200 podcasts, to study the impact of podcast advertising on five national brands – both known and unknown. Research has also explored how devices are impacting the industry. The Smart Audio Report (2019) indicates a correlation between the rise of in home smart speakers, such as Amazon’s Alexa, and listening to audio

programs.

However, no academic research examining the impact between podcast hosts' perceived credibility and aided and unaided brand recall in podcasts, and subsequent evaluations toward the sponsoring brand, exists. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the causal effects of source credibility on unaided and aided brand recall of brands placed in a podcast among adult audiences. First, this study will examine the extent to which attributes such as podcast host perceived credibility, trustworthiness, expertise and attitude influence brand sponsor recall. Second, this study seeks to determine to which extent perceived credibility of the podcast host impacts aided and unaided brand sponsor recall, as well as subsequent consumer evaluations, namely knowledge, attitude, and likelihood of purchasing the brand.

This study will first discuss the theoretical underpinnings of source credibility and how it has been used to determine advertising effectiveness in traditional media. Next, a review on the origin and uses of podcasts will be supplied. Lastly a review of independent and dependent variables and subsequently highlighting gaps in the literature will be provided.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The efficacy of persuasive communication between the sender of the message and the receiver of the message began in ancient Greece. In the classic work, *Rhetoric*, considered the doctrine of persuasion, Aristotle identified three types of appeals a speaker should consider for persuasion: the speaker, the content of the message and the listener to who is receiving the message, ultimately positing the effectiveness of persuasion is accomplished by delivering a message imparting the speaker as credible (Rapp, 2010). Extending beyond credibility, the modality of persuasion is known as the three ‘proofs’ of persuasive communication, logos, pathos, and ethos (Rapp, 2010). Logos, Greek for word, refers to the clarity of the message’s claim, its logic, and the effectiveness of its supporting evidence. Pathos, Greek for experience, is often associated with emotions, is more broadly an appeal that draws upon the audience’s emotions, sympathies, interests, and imagination. The appeal to pathos encourages the audience to identify with the speaker, to feel or experience what the speaker feels. Ethos, Greek for character, refers to how trustworthy or credible the speaker is and how knowledgeable he is regarding a topic (Rapp, 2010).

Carl Hovland, exploring the influence of the attitude of the audience toward the presenter (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), used Aristotle’s proof ‘ethos’ as the underpinning for examining the persuasiveness of the message efficacy based on the perceived credibility of the source. Future research efforts sought to verify Hovland’s source credibility dimensions of trustworthiness and expertise by adding the third dimension, attractiveness.

Anderson and Clevenger’s (1963) research summary of experimental research

determined that many experiments concerning the influence of ethos' impact on communication were varied in the topics explored. Research by Anderson and Clevenger (1963) showed that the assumption of the majority of research studies showed that the variables of prestige, likeableness, and credibility effects in attitude change vary in political issues, art, and literature evaluations and learning. Research by Pornpitakpan (2002) synthesized research over the past fifty years on source credibility theory research dedicated to determining the 'expertise' and 'trustworthiness' effectiveness in attitudinal change, found, that almost all of the findings suggest that a high-credibility source is more persuasive than a low-credibility source.

Source Credibility Theory

The ethos in persuasive communication forms the genesis as to why researchers seek to understand the credibility of a message source (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2016).

Source credibility theory can predict or help to explain the effectiveness of a message (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2016), suggesting a highly credible source will positively affect the efficacy of a message while a low credible source will negatively affect the efficacy of a message. Researchers have reported that source credibility is dependent on the receiver's perception of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness of the speaker (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; McGuire 1969, Ohanian, 1991).

The credibility of a source is measured by three commonly held dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Expertise refers to an individual's knowledge of a particular subject or field that is far greater than the average person, trustworthiness is the speaker's efficacy in communicating their knowledge or expertise, and attractiveness refers to how likable and attractive the speaker is in physical looks and sound of their

voice (Giffen, 1967). The hierarchy of these dimensions (Pornpitakpan, 2004) in research studies varies according to ‘low credible sources’ and ‘high credible sources.’ Low credible sources score low in persuasion effectiveness and high credible sources score high in persuasion effectiveness. As a result, advertisers frequently seek to engage a high credible source to communicate the advertising message. The purpose of engaging a high credible source versus a low credible source is to create an attitude shift or to persuade the receiver to change political views, buy a product, or remember information. In addition to the perceived expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness of a source is the underlying perceived trust of a speaker by a listener (Giffin, 1967).

Source Credibility Model. The Source Credibility Model derived from the seminal work of Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953, p. 21). This model contends source credibility is the combined effect of “(1) the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions (his ‘expertness’) and (2) the degree of confidence in the communicator’s intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid.” Berlo, Lemert and Mertz’s (1969) research suggested a third dimension of source credibility in addition to Hovland’s (1953) dimensions of expertise and trustworthiness – dynamism. Dynamism is the energy available to the source, which can be used to emphasize, augment, and implement his suggestions.

The concept of credibility was further researched by Gaziano and McGrath (1986). In 1959 and 1961, the Roper polling organization asked about the relative believability of media in their surveys for the Television Information Office, which pointed to an increase in public trust in television compared to newspapers (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986). In Gaziano and McGrath’s (1986) study, participants were asked the

Roper believability question and found similar results; respondents were more inclined to believe television than newspapers (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986).

Advertisement credibility is based on the rationale (Muda, Musa, Mohamed, & Borhan, 2014) that consumers are motivated to appraise the truthfulness of claims in advertisements. The media type – radio, newspaper, television, magazine and Internet – has been found to have significant differences in credibility, which can lead to attitude or perception differences (Moore & Rodgers, 2005). Expanding into digital and mobile platform usage, Stewart and Cunningham's (2017) research showed that consumer trust in advertising increased with the use of mobile technology.

Research evaluating the spokesperson and the media vehicle (the type of advertising medium) effects in advertising showed that the perceived expertise of a spokesperson had a positive influence on the consumer's attitude toward the advertisement, while the status of the media vehicle had no significant impact on the consumer's attitude toward the advertisement in Gallagher et al (2001) research study. The use of humor in a radio setting (Duncan & Nelson, 1985) suggests that the perceived likeability of the advertisement increases the attention paid to the advertisement. The established source credibility model (Hovland et al 1951) tested in determining the credibility of using celebrities as endorsers (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018) delineates the importance of trustworthiness above other source characteristics.

Attractiveness in source credibility is operationally defined as the physical attractiveness (Joesph,1982) of the source. In social sciences, the perception of attractiveness is subjective according to the receiver's likes and dislikes and therefore the construct of attractiveness is determined by the representative sample (Joesph,1982) to be

studied. Should a majority of the sample find favorably that the source is defined as attractive, the source will be defined as having high-level attractiveness. The success of persuasive communication, relying on an attractive communicator, does enhance persuasion and a greater acceptability of the message when the source is male (Snyder & Rothbart, 1971). Attractiveness as an isolated predictor variable in the Snyder and Rothbart (1971) experimental research involving a 5-minute, tape recorded talk advocating lowering the speed limit to a group of college age students did not significantly increase or decrease in participants accurately recalling facts of the message. Personality, physical characteristics and occupation were likely to be perceived accurately simply by hearing a person speak (Allport & Cantril, 1934). Further research by Allport and Cantril (1934) demonstrated that listeners who heard a taped voice without any additional information about the speaker, can assign source credibility ratings that accurately describe the dimensions of the economic status of the speaker.

Attitudes toward advertising itself as a variable in the efficacy of advertising is the subject of research in Mehta and Purvis' (1995) magazine readership of four different types of magazine genres using 5 item battery on an 11-point scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The findings indicated those who 'liked to look at advertising, had a 30% increase in buying interest.'" (Mehta & Purvis, 1995, p. 5).

Source Credibility Applied to Modern Media. The Internet as an advertising medium warranted exploration of source credibility as it relates to communication effectiveness. In an online setting, the interaction between the source and the receiver is primarily written conversation between two people that can neither hear nor see each other (Wright, 2000, p. 45) as of available technology in 1999. The effectiveness of an advertising

message presented in traditional media versus on the Internet (Gallagher et al 2001) as it relates to unaided brand recall was higher in the online version rather than the print version. Further advances in digital technology have allowed for audio and visual experiences that add a new dimension. Traditional media encompasses the media vehicles of television, newspaper, magazines, out of home (OOH) and radio. These traditional vehicles are used to deliver news, entertainment and information to targeted audiences. Within the broadcast programs or printed word are advertisements that communicate a brand's product or service. The newest category, digital media or modern media, incorporates social media i.e., Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, (not exhaustive list of social media available,) websites, smart phone devices, Internet radio and podcasts. Historically, advertisers have used celebrity endorsers to stand out from the pervasive advertising clutter to grab the attention of consumers (Muda et al, 2014) with success in traditional media for brand endorsements; ex: Michael Jordan for Nike, Matthew McConaughey for Lincoln Oldsmobile. Advertisers frequently use celebrity endorsers for the high level of perceived expertise due to the consumer's familiarity, attitude and likability of the celebrity (Muda et al, 2014). Digital media in various formats has amassed a large following due to the nature of the two-way conversation capability within digital media and more specifically; in social media. In a qualitative research study aimed at observing Instagram users' discussions (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2016) and the use of celebrity endorsers for well-known and unknown brands to observe source credibility's impact on consumer behavior. Djafarova and Rushworth (2016) observed that most participants followed celebrities on Instagram and found them to more credible source of information online. Other studies have identified a theme where "participants

valued the opinions of lower-scale ‘Instafamous’ and blogger-type celebrities” (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2016, p. 5) more so than big star celebrities when applied to purchase intent. Big celebrities are known to endorse expensive brands whereby lesser known ‘celebrities’ will endorse affordable brands (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2016), making affordable brands appealing to participants. newer area of research (Fisher et al., 2015) informing source credibility focuses on technology and new media, especially as it is perceived and used by the demographic of 18 – 49- year-olds. Millennials rely heavily on new media to consume their news stories. Fisher et al (2015) found that the gender of the news source had no statistically relevant impact on Millennials’ attitude towards the journalism message delivered via radio. This same study also concluded that the non-journalistic reporters versus journalistic reporters had no differentiation relating to the perceived expertise of the source, thus concluding audiences do not hold the source of the news information as important as the information itself.

Source Credibility in Advertising. The role of advertising is to communicate the value of products and services sold by a business to potential customers with the intention to persuade the potential customer to purchase the product or service of the business. The effectiveness of the advertising message is measured by how influential or persuasive the audience perceives the source of the message to be (Gotlieb & Sarel, 1991). The advertising message must also be delivered through a medium such as; television, newspapers, radio and the Internet. The subject matter of the communicated information impacts the perception of the source such as national news reported on television is a more reliable source (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986).

Previous research on the impact of source credibility finds that persuasion

effectiveness deals with the characteristics of the source and has continued to show an impact in the effectiveness of marketing communications in today's marketing environment (Eisend, 2004). Furthermore, Eisend's (2004) research concluded that source credibility in a person-to-person environment has a greater impact on communication effectiveness than other sources. The evolution of marketing over time represents changes in environmental and socio-temporal context over the years, however, does not diminish the importance of source credibility.

The vehicles in which consumers receive various advertising communication from marketers, especially in the digital realm, will most likely change due to the rapid growth of new technologies (Firat & Venkatesh, 1993).

Endorsements and Brand Placements in Advertising

Endorsements are often used advertising tactic consisting of either celebrity endorser, customer testimonials, professional experts, and/or company presidents (Friedman et al 1976). The advertising strategy of using a peer endorser as the spokesperson for the advertiser has been a popular marketing tactic among advertisers to demonstrate reliability between the brand and the consumer. Peer endorsers are regular people who use a product or service and then go on to tell other potential customers about their experience with the product. The perceived credibility of the endorser and the similarity of the endorser to the recipient can be positively or negatively connected to the recommendations made by the endorser (Munnukka, Uusitalo & Toivonen, 2016).

Research by Munnukka et al. (2016) found that the link between the endorser and the consumer's ability to identify with the endorser leads to an increase in perceived trustworthiness and expertise.

Frieden's (1984) experimental study on print advertising effectiveness of the endorser type and endorser gender impact suggested that objective of the advertising communication should be correlated with the selection of the endorser. Frieden (1984) used the example to demonstrate advertising objectives that a brand awareness campaign could benefit from a celebrity endorser whereas, a more informative or educational campaign message would benefit from an expert of the product being advertised.

Interestingly, the experiment concluded that gender did not affect consumer attitudes when a product was widely known (Frieden, 1984). Frieden, in his earlier 1982 print advertising empirical study, hypothesized that the status of the media vehicle would not affect the consumer's attitude toward the product. The three endorser types; celebrity, expert and everyday consumer, along with high and low prestige media vehicles were tested within college enrolled students. Research by Frieden (1982) confirmed the hypothesis that the status of the print magazine, low or high prestige, did not affect the consumer's attitude toward the brand.

The celebrity is known for high-profile accomplishments, and are often sports figures, actors, or reality TV stars. Examples of celebrity endorsers are musician Beyoncé for Pepsi Cola and basketball pro LeBron James for Nike. In addition to celebrity endorsers, seemingly everyday consumers, or peer endorsers, are utilized when the marketing objective is for the audience to identify with the endorser (Munnukka et al., 2016). The everyday consumer is portrayed as a user of the advertiser's product. The consumer's experience and knowledge of the product serve as the endorsement. The name, occupation and city of residence typically appear within the endorsement (Friedman et al., 1976). Professional experts are known as an authority on a particular

product that is technically complex where the consumer needs to be assured of its functionality (Munnukka et al., 2016). The company president is the leader of the company whose product is being advertised, for example, Steve Jobs' endorsement of the iPhone, iPad and iTunes at various industry conferences.

One study indicated that any of the four endorsement types used in advertising resulted in higher believability ratio than advertisements with no endorsers (Friedman et al., 1976). Previous experimental research sought to explore the differences in source credibility between online and traditional news sources (Fisher, Magee & Baksh, 2015). The findings suggested that highly involved readers did not differentiate between news articles written by professionals compared to consumers (Fisher et al., 2015).

Five decades of empirical research pertaining to the effectiveness of low- credibility versus high-credibility in the message source has produced varying results (Pornpitakpan, 2004). There is evidence that the three different dimensions of source credibility have differential weights. Pornpitakpan (2004) reviewed the McGinnis and Ward 1980 study that revealed that the more trustworthy communicator was more persuasive than the non-trustworthy source regardless of the level of expertise of the communicator. When media modality is factored in, the highly trustworthy source was more credible when the medium was television, and less so when the medium was radio, and written media was the least effective in source credibility.

Brand Placements Compared to Commercials in Television, Radio and Print

Television is the most common medium for brand placements and commercials (Davtyan & Cunninham, 2017) as they account for most of the paid placements in media. On television and radio, commercials are almost always placed in a separate block of

time (van Reijmersdal, 2011) mostly due to the way media is sold to the brand. A brand purchases a set amount of time, 30-second or 60-second timeslots, therefore the commercial must fit in each time slot purchased. In print media, a brand will purchase space within the publication. The page of the publication is divided into specific sizes and then sold off to advertisers. Consumers can easily see the difference between an advertisement and editorial or TV show content. As a result of the astute consumer, the advertising messages are frequently looked over, skipped or ignored. Television and radio programs are made up of many genres that are designed to elicit an emotional response from the viewer. A television show that elicits a positive emotional response (Goldberg & Gorn, 1987) results in greater perceived ad effectiveness.

Brand placements are designed to be less obtrusive within the television show (Davtyan & Cunningham, 2017) while incorporating a brand message within the plot of the television show are more concealed which could give brand placement a credibility advantage. Ginosar and Levi-Faur (2010) defined brand placement as the placement of commercial content into settings that are noncommercial such as movies. In an evaluation of brand placements versus commercials Nebenzahl and Secunda (1993) revealed viewers held increasingly positive attitudes towards brand placement than commercials. Brand placements have a positive impact on attitude towards the brand and purchase intentions (Davtyan & Cunningham 2017) when compared to 30-second commercials versus placing the brand in a television sitcom.

In television and radio, commercials are almost always placed in a separate block of time (van Reijmersdal, 2011) mostly due to the way media is sold to the brand. Television advertising consists of a brand purchasing a set amount of time, either 30-

second or 60-second timeslots. The commercial must then fit into each time slot purchased. Radio advertising is sold in day parts in specific time increments, much like Television. In print media, a brand will purchase space within the publication. The page of the publication is divided into specific sizes and then sold off to advertisers.

Consumers can easily see the difference between an advertisement and editorial or TV show content. As a result of the astute consumer, the advertising messages are frequently looked over, skipped or ignored. In an evaluation of the two formats Nebenzahl and Secunda (1993) revealed viewers held increasingly positive attitudes towards brand placement in movies than towards commercials in movies.

Podcasts

The introduction of podcasts as a new medium for marketers as an effective advertising medium has increased over time (Haygood, 2007; McGowan, 2010). A podcast is an auditory medium, similar to radio, is streamed over the Internet using digital technology. A consumer can download content on-demand and onto their computer, smartphone, or MP3 player. The podcast has arrived in mainstream consumer consciousness in response to the rise of consumer usage of smart phones (Markman, 2015). Early adopters of podcast listening required a manual process of ‘finding, subscribing to, downloading, and uploading podcast onto a listening device’ (Markman, 2015); however, smartphone technology and the increased usage of smartphones has reduced the friction of finding and subscribing to podcasts (Berry, 2015). The launch by Apple of a podcast app that made it easier to download a podcast, and the publication of a spinoff of NPR’s This American Life brought podcast listenership into the stream of media options (McHugh, 2016).

Podcasts represent a significant change in the relationship between the media and their consumers as they provide a strong element of consumer control regarding what is searched for, downloaded, and listened to based on one's motivations and interests (Haygood, 2007). Podcast research has been the subject of media research groups such as the Pew Research Center, Nieman Lab at Harvard University and the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University (McHugh, 2016). Edison Research (2016) reported an increase in monthly podcast listenership from 17 percent to 21 percent among Americans over the age of 12.

The comparison of podcasting as an evolution of radio is a debated construct amongst industry groups in McHugh's (2016) insight study of five senior industry figures. The content of the radio program is a result of another person's choice and determination of relevant and timely information (Reijmersdal, 2011). Podcasts, however, are created without regard to some other people's agenda. Anyone can produce audio content that is informative, educational, or entertaining and use podcast technology to connect their content to consumers (Shapiro, 2016). Although industry group research does not indicate podcasts are likely to be a fad simply disappearing over time, but rather a new relationship model between a listener and audio show host is an increased subject of interest among industry group research (McHugh, 2016).

Panday and Karigar (2009) identified different types of podcasts as public podcasts, personal podcasts, and professional podcasts. The professional podcast can be either educational or corporate (Panday & Karigar, 2009). McHugh (2016) defined podcasts as a new genre of audio storytelling. Nonfictional accounts of intrigue and murder are examples of nonfictional storytelling in podcast series.

The industry research firm, Interactive Advertising Bureau (2017), released their Podcast Playbook and summarized the use of podcasts as a result of the on-demand culture we live in today. Their 2017 research indicates that the listenership of podcasts is increasing and those who do listen to podcasts, do so for several hours per week. There is a gap in academic research that explores why people listen to podcasts, why some podcasts are more popular than others, what the differences are in podcast content and how effective podcasts are in communicating an advertising message. In Markman's (2015) decade long summation of the podcast evolution, there is concern that podcast research is mostly conducted by industry rather than academia.

Podcast Advertising. Podcasts are categorized into genres such as; health and fitness, science and business and are collectively categorized as professional podcasts. It is the professional podcast category (IAB, 2017) where advertisers mostly focus their marketing dollars. Podcasts have caught the attention of advertisers because listeners (Ritter & Cho, 2009) are highly engaged with the content of a podcast. The highly engaged listeners provide marketers with an audience that is narrowly defined by topic. For example, a person who is an entrepreneur may listen to the podcast 'StartUp.' A marketer can make the assumption that only entrepreneurs or start up executives would be listening to this podcast content, therefore, making this audience desirable to an advertiser such as Quickbooks, an accounting software product. The increase in podcast advertising explored by McGowen's (2010) research study found an increased trend in advertising in podcasts since 2007. Statista's (2017) annual survey of podcast listeners above the age of 12 found that 24 percent of the United States population has listened to a podcast in the last month in 2017. The number of podcast listeners who have listened to a

podcast in the last month has increased 21.6 percent from 2008 to 2017 (Statista 2017).

Nielsen's Digital Media Lab (2017) Podcast Sponsorship Effectiveness industry research found that more than half of respondents correctly recalled the brand advertised within the podcast clip and furthermore correlated a positive attitude towards purchase intention. The conclusion of this Nielsen's (2017) research study found that podcast listeners are a 'highly desirable demographic' who are not in opposition of podcast advertisements and who skew towards supporting companies who advertise on podcasts. The effectiveness of podcast advertising will have a significant monetary bearing on the future of the medium (IAB, 2017). As radio advertising changed the way radio was economically structured, so to will podcast advertising change the way podcasts will be economically structured (McDonough, 2012).

Brand Placements Within Podcasts. Ritter and Cho's (2009) study on the effects of brand placements in podcast ads demonstrated that "participants perceived less intrusiveness and irritation from advertising placed at the beginning of a podcast than from advertising placed in the middle of a podcast." Ritter and Cho (2009) go on to recommend "that when advertising is placed on a podcast, it should be placed at the beginning." McClung and Johnson (2010) study suggested that advertisers should consider placing their sponsorships at the beginning and end of the podcast episode. While source credibility has been shown to affect advertisements in several media, it is unclear how these influences brand placements in podcasts are affected, thus warranting examination.

Based on the preceding literature concerning source credibility and endorsements, the following hypotheses are proffered:

H1a: An increase in podcast-hosts' perceived expertise will predict an increase in listeners' brand placement unaided recall.

H1b: An increase in podcast-hosts' perceived attractiveness will predict an increase in listeners' brand placement unaided recall.

1c: An increase in podcast-hosts' perceived trustworthiness will predict an increase in listeners' brand placement unaided recall.

H2a: An increase in podcast-hosts' perceived expertise will predict an increase in listeners' brand placement aided recall.

H2b: An increase in podcast-hosts' perceived attractiveness will predict an increase in listeners' brand placement aided recall.

H2c: An increase in podcast-hosts' perceived expertise will predict an increase in listeners' brand placement aided recall.

Research has also identified potential affect transfers occurring from a sponsoring source to the brand that may influence attitudes towards the brand (Devlin & Billings, 2018). While evidence exists for visual placement (Johar & Pham, 2007), little is understood about source credibility and its influence on the brand knowledge, attitudes, and purchase intentions in the realm of podcast. Therefore, the following research questions are offered:

RQ1: To what extent will source credibility influence knowledge about the brand?

RQ2: To what extent will source credibility influence attitudes about the brand?

RQ3: To what extent will source credibility influence purchase intentions about the brand?

III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research study was to examine the causal effects of source credibility on unaided and aided brand recall in college student audiences ages 18-25. According to the Edison Podcast Consumer Report (2017) 85 percent of podcast listeners have attended college and 44 percent of monthly listeners are between the ages of 18 – 34. The experiment methodology is a controlled study and allowed for control of three independent variables: genre of the podcast, placement of the advertising message and the environment pertaining to multi-tasking while listening to the audio. The research study controlled for how respondents were assigned to the experiment (time slots the respondent signs up for) and which podcast clip the respondent listened to and evaluated.

A post-test only experimental design was used to assess the effect of exposure to brand placement messages in four different podcast genres. The experiment controlled for the length of the podcast, the location of the brand placement and for the style of brand placement. Individuals were randomly assigned to one of four possible experimental conditions differing based on the podcast host and product: 1) Software How-To; 2) Social Sciences; 3) History; 4) Fitness & Nutrition

Procedure

Participants were asked to participate in a research study that involved an auditory experiment held on the Texas State University campus. Participants were recruited via email announcements to faculty in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications' Advertising sequence, requesting faculty to announce the research study with the option of the student earning extra credit for participation. An online scheduling tool, Doodle, was used to confirm student participant in 30-minute time slot increments.

After the participant arrived at the computer lab in Old Main on Texas State University campus, the researcher verified participants time slot and verified that the participant's ear buds or headphones were compatible with the desktop computer. No other listening devices or personal computing devices were allowed. Once the participant was verified, the participant was instructed to randomly choose a computer station to sit at and begin the experiment. The computer screen displayed a Qualtrics online study Informed Consent notice. The participant was instructed to read the Informed Consent, and if they agreed to participate, they clicked on "Begin Survey" on the computer screen. After "Begin Survey" was clicked, the participant was randomly assigned to one of the four conditions.

The experiment began with a 5-minute audio clip of a podcast that represents one of the four randomly selected genres. The brand placement was read aloud by the host at the beginning of each audio file. At the end of the 5-minute auditory portion of the experiment, the participant answered a series of distractor questions and manipulation questions to ensure that the subject has listened to the audio clip such as: "How often do you listen to podcasts?" to disguise the purpose of the study and to confirm the participant listened to the entire 5-minute audio clip. After the distractor questions were answered, participants answered a series of questions that gauged the perceptions of the expertise, attractiveness, and attitude of the podcast host. Next, participants were asked to identify the brand placement (sponsor) they recalled hearing in the stimuli. The next question, participants were shown eight brand placement (sponsor) names, four of which were names of those presented in the study, the other remaining four were foils. Participants were asked to identify the brand placement (sponsor) they recalled hearing in

the podcast episode. Next, they were shown the name of the brand placement (sponsor) that was featured in their stimuli and asked to evaluate the podcast host in terms of expertise, attitude, and purchase intent. Lastly, they were thanked for their participation with an on-screen message informing them that the experiment was complete and to close their Internet browser. The entire participation process lasted an average of 15 minutes.

The study was administered via Qualtrics, a web-based survey tool. The computer randomly assigned one of four audio recordings for the experiment. The online survey consisted of the same 16-20 questions regardless of the audio recording heard in the experiment. No identifying information was collected in Qualtrics such as name, address, major status, student ID, student image or any other information that could connect the participant with a completed survey. The content of the selected podcasts did not contain violent or offensive language.

Stimulus Materials

Podcasts can be downloaded from various platforms such as iTunes, Stitcher and Spotify. As of March 2019 (Winn, 2019) there were more than 660,000 podcasts available for download. Creating podcast episodes for this study was not feasible and therefore recording existing published podcast episodes was explored. The criteria for the host of each podcast episode was to control for the gender of the host, all male, and the style of the brand placement and message within the episode. Hosts were male, incorporated the advertiser into the opening message of the episode and could only have one advertiser per episode. The top 100 podcasts in October 2019, according to iTunes.net, were explored for the control variables. The episodes were recorded and then edited to fit the following protocol: host male gender, advertiser incorporated into

beginning of episode by the host, one advertiser per episode followed by the introduction of the podcast episode and then the content of the episode. As a result of the manipulation checks and the content available at the time of the research study, the four genres and subsequent episode within each genre were deemed to be generalized.

Recruitment of Participants. The research study recruited, via email, participants from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Texas State University enrolled in Spring 2019. A recruitment email was sent to the faculty of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication's Advertising Sequence requesting that they announce the experimental research study in their classes. The demographic criteria for participation was enrollment in Spring 2019 advertising classes and a minimum age of 18.

Variables. Source credibility was measured using four dimensions adapted from Munnukka et al. (2015) endorser and advertising effectiveness research study: attitude, trust, attractiveness, and expertise using a 7-pt Likert scale with 1 being less effective for each measure, and 7 being most effective for each measure. Questions regarding the attitude towards the brand come from an adaptation of the Attitude Toward the Brand Scale (Sengupta & Johar, 2002), which features four, 7-point Likert-type statements intended to measure a consumer's opinion of a certain brand and have previously reported Cronbach's alpha scores of .93 (Sengupta & Johar, 2002). The knowledge portion of the scale is comprised of two separate modified scales from Gurhan-Canli (2003) and Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Hermann (2005). The composite reliability scores by Gurhan-Canli (2003) reported Cronbach's alpha scores of .92 and .96 and the reported reliability scores for Algesheimer and colleagues were .89

Scale Reliability

Each of the scales used in this study were shown to be reliable. The three-item scale to measure attitude towards the content featured scale items: “The content I heard is meaningful to me,” “The content I heard interests me a lot,” and “The content I heard is important to me” exceeded necessary reliability ($\alpha = .90$). The four-item scale to measure host trustworthiness featured scale items: “I feel the podcast host was honest,” “I consider the podcast host trustworthy,” “I feel the podcast host was truthful” and “I consider the podcast host honest” exceeded necessary reliability ($\alpha = .94$). The four-item scale to measure podcast host attractiveness featured scale items: “I consider the podcast host very attractive,” “I consider the podcast host very stylish,” “I think the podcast host sounds good looking,” and “I think the podcast host sounds sexy” exceeded necessary reliability ($\alpha = .90$). The four-item scale to measure podcast host expertise regarding the brand featured scale items: “I feel the podcast host knows a lot about the product,” “I feel the podcast host is competent to make assertions about the product,” “I consider the podcast host an expert on the product” and “I consider the podcast host sufficiently experienced to make assertions about the product” exceeded necessary reliability ($\alpha = .89$). The five-item scale to measure participant knowledge regarding the brand featured scale items: “Compared to most people, I know about this brand,” “I consider myself experienced with this brand,” “I did not know about this brand.” “My knowledge of this brand is inferior” and “My knowledge of this brand is very good” exceeded necessary reliability ($\alpha = .81$). The four-item scale to measure participant attitude towards the brand featured scale items: “I think Stamps.com is a very good product,” “I think Stamps.com is a very useful product,” “My opinion of Stamps.com is very favorable,” and “I have a

positive attitude towards Stamps.com” exceeded necessary reliability ($\alpha = .88$). The four-item scale to measure participants’ purchase intent towards the brand featured scale items: “I would be likely to purchase this product,” “I prefer this product over its competitors,” “I have a desire to use/consume this product,” and “I would not consider buying this product” exceeded necessary reliability ($\alpha = .71$). All items also achieved normality falling in between 1 and -1 in skewness and kurtosis.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection took place on January 27, 2019 and February 2, 2019. One hundred and eighteen participants completed the survey. Two attention filters were incorporated into the survey for added reliability measures, causing five participants who incorrectly responded to the attention filter to be removed from the data analysis.

Audio stimuli was randomly generated in the survey and resulted in 35 participants listening to the Stamps.com brand message, 28 participants listened to the Squarespace brand message, 27 participants listened to the Muse Meditation App brand message, and 23 participants listened to the Microsoft Azure brand message.

Table 1: Demographic Data

Gender		
Male	n = 33	29.20%
Female	n = 78	69.00%
Preferred Not To Answer	n = 2	1.80%
Ethnicity		
White	n = 56	49.60%
Hispanic / Latino	n = 32	28.30%
Black / African American	n = 18	15.90%
Other	n = 4	3.50%
Asian / Pacific Islander	n = 2	1.80%
Native American / American Indian	n = 1	0.90%
Employment Status		
Employed Part Time	n = 51	45.10%
Not Employed	n = 45	39.80%
Self Employed	n = 10	8.80%
Full Time Employed	n = 7	6.20%

Table 1: (cont.) Demographic Data

Ages of Participants		
Age 21	n = 38	33.60%
Age 20	n = 30	26.50%
Age 19	n = 12	10.60%
Age 22	n = 9	8.00%
Age 23	n = 7	6.20%
Ages 24, 25, 26 & 29	n = 3	2.70%
Age 18	n = 2	1.80%
Age 28	n = 1	0.90%
Age 35	n = 1	0.90%
Age 55	n = 1	0.90%

Table 2: Listener Frequency

Number of Podcasts Listened To Per Week		
1 episode per week	n = 37	32.70%
2 - 3 episodes per week	n = 20	17.70%
4 - 6 episodes per week	n = 5	4.40%
7 episodes or more per week	n = 2	1.80%

Of the participants who reported listening to podcasts any number of times per week (n = 64), twenty-five (39.1%) while sometimes performing household chores, 14 (21.9%) sometimes exercised, sometimes (n = 27; 42.25) drove a vehicle, sometimes (n = 11; 17.2%) while working and finally sometimes (n = 13; 20.3%) while studying. Of the participants who reported listening to podcasts any number of times per week (n = 64), 13 (20.3%) most of the time while driving a vehicle, 9 (14.1%) most of the time while doing household chores, most of the time (n = 4; 6.3%) while working and finally most of the time (n = 3; 4.7%) while exercising. The majority of participants reported never listening to podcasts while studying (n = 48; 75%), never listen to podcasts while working (n = 42; 65.6%) followed by never listening to podcasts while exercising (n = 39; 60.9%). Never listening to podcasts while performing household chores (n = 14; 21.9%) and never listening to podcasts while driving a vehicle (n = 8; 12.5%). The participants that listened to podcasts about half the time while performing household chores (n = 13; 20.3%), 8 (12.5%) listened while exercise half the time and 8 (12.5%) listened half the time while driving a vehicle. Finally, 5 (7.8%) listened half the time while working and 1 (1.6%) while studying.

IV. RESULTS

Hypothesis 1a posited as the perceived expertise of the podcast host increased, so too would the likelihood of correctly recalling the sponsor. To test this hypothesis, a binary logistic regression test between unaided recall and perceived expertise variables was conducted. Results indicated 31% of the sample correctly recalled the brand sponsor. An omnibus test of model coefficients was significant, ($\chi^2 (1, n = 113) = 7.837, \rho < .005$), thus supporting Hypothesis 1a and explaining approximately 9.4% of the variance. As shown in Table 3 an increase in participant knowledge by .649 increases the likelihood of correctly recalling a brand sponsor.

Table 3: Unaided Recall by Perceived Host Expertise

Predictor	β	Wald χ^2	ρ	Odds Ratio
Expertise	-.432	7.365	.007	.649

Hypothesis 1b posited as the perceived attractiveness of the podcast host increased, so too would the likelihood of correctly recalling the sponsor. To test this hypothesis, a binary logistic regression test between unaided recall and perceived expertise variables was conducted. An omnibus test of model coefficients was not significant, $\chi^2 (1, n = 113) = 7.837, \rho < .261$, therefore H1b is not supported.

Hypothesis 1c posited as the perceived trustworthiness of the podcast host increased, so too would the likelihood of correctly recalling the sponsor. To test this hypothesis, a binary logistic regression test between unaided recall and perceived expertise variables was conducted. An omnibus test of model coefficients was significant,

$\chi^2(1, n = 113) = 7.837, p < .005$, explaining approximately 4.5% of the variance; however, the coefficient for host trust was non-significant ($p = .064$), therefore H1c is not supported.

Hypothesis 2a posited as the perceived expertise of the podcast host increased, so too would the likelihood of correctly recalling the sponsor. To test this hypothesis, a binary logistic regression test between aided recall and perceived expertise variables was conducted. An omnibus test of model coefficients was not significant, $|\chi^2(1, n = 113) = .761, p < .383$, therefore H2a is not supported.

Hypothesis 2b posited as the perceived attractiveness of the podcast host increased, so too would the likelihood of correctly recalling the sponsor. To test this hypothesis, a binary logistic regression test between aided recall and perceived expertise variables was conducted. An omnibus test of model coefficients was not significant, $\chi^2(1, n = 113) = .017, p < .895$, therefore H2b is not supported. Hypothesis 2c posited as the perceived trustworthiness of the podcast host increased, so too would the likelihood of correctly recalling the sponsor.

To test this hypothesis, a binary logistic regression test between aided recall and perceived expertise variables was conducted. An omnibus test of model coefficients was not significant, $\chi^2(1, n = 113) = .483, p < .487$, therefore H2c was not supported.

A Pearson correlation was conducted to test the relationship between source credibility and the outcome variables of: influence knowledge of the brand, influence attitudes of the brand and influence purchase intentions. To test research question 1, to what extent will source credibility influence knowledge about the brand, a source credibility variable was created based on averaging the three source credibility variables

of; trust, expertise and attractiveness. Overall source credibility had a mean of .425. The result was not significant indicating no correlation between source credibility and knowledge about the brand. Research question 2 asked to what extent will source credibility influence attitudes about the brand? There was a positive correlation between source credibility ($M = 4.43$) and attitude towards the brand ($M = 4.453$, $r = .357$, $\rho = <.000$, $n = 113$). Research question 3 asked to what extent will source credibility influence purchase intentions about the brand? There was a positive correlation between source credibility ($M = 5.43$) and purchase intent towards the brand ($M = 3.57$, $r = .327$, $\rho = <.000$, $n = 113$).

V. DISCUSSION

The aim of this experiment was to examine the causal effects of source credibility on unaided and aided brand recall of brands placed in a podcast episode listened to among adult audiences. The hierarchy of the three dimensions found within source credibility; expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness, determine the efficacy of the communicators' message as Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953) documented in their Source Credibility Model. The results of this experiment confirm that a source perceived to be an expert will lead to a higher percentage of unaided brand message recall than aided brand message recall. Three of the four advertisers in the study; stamps.com, SquareSpace and Microsoft are common advertisers in various media vehicles.

Participants most likely encountered these media vehicles that contained brand advertising prior to the study. This prior exposure to the brand could have contributed to the unaided recall results. The aided recall survey question asking participants to choose the advertiser from a provided list of brands contained foils that were similar in product offerings. For example, usps.com was listed as a foil to stamps.com. Participants could have recalled the product offering correctly, however, the similarity in the brand name choices could have been indistinguishable to the participant.

The dimension of trustworthiness was not supported and could be attributed to the participant not believing that the message delivered by the host to be valid. The dimension of attractiveness was not supported in this study and could be attributed to the participant having low content involvement with the podcast episode. Previous research suggests that spokesperson credibility (Golderberg & Hartwick, 1990) highly perceived

trustworthiness and expertise variables influence attitude change whereas attractiveness of the source is related to the credibility of the advertisers' reputation. Another possibility is that the participants do not place importance on the credibility of the source delivering the information. Research by Fisher et al. (2015) found that young people ages 18 -22 did not place a significant level of importance on the source delivering news on the radio.

This age group gets their news, entertainment and engagement from sources on social media and other Internet sites where the variables of attractiveness and trustworthiness are not differentiated in their perception of credibility. The likeability of the content as a variable may hold greater importance in brand message recall than the credibility of the source.

Podcasts are, like radio, an auditory experience. They feature hosts, stories and topics that appeal to a wide range of listeners. In the case of podcasting the content is increasingly niche and so becomes attractive to advertisers. For example, the podcast "Start Up" discusses the strategies and steps to starting your own business. An implication for the advertising industry is having a new advertising medium that reaches their target audience via smaller podcast audiences and having a positive impact on shifting listener attitude.

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution because of the limitations of this study. First, we did a post hoc analysis concerning the individual brands and the consumer knowledge and attitude toward the sponsor and found that significant differences between the brands occurred. The results showed that advertiser "Square Space" had the highest consumer knowledge ($M = 2.33$; $SD = 1.04$), whereas "Muse" had the lowest ($M = 2.03$; $SD = .97$). This suggests that while source credibility

had an impact on the consumer recall and evaluations, it is plausible that prior knowledge also impacted the results, warranting future study. Secondly, several independent variables in the study were not explored that could have an impact on the results of this study. The credibility of the brand (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999, p. 114) could have impacted the aided and unaided recall. The timing of the identification of the host as an independent variable was not explored. Source credibility experiments (Sternthal, Phillips & Dholakia, 1978) suggest that a highly perceived source should be mentioned in the beginning or middle of the message whereas; a low perceived source identification at the end of the message. Additionally, the advertisers in the study were of varying degrees of product complexity and levels of pricing. Previous data suggests (Frieden, 1982) that the more technical the product and low-priced in nature, the spokesperson should be an expert rather than a typical consumer. Another possibility is the advertisers should consider the number of episodes the podcast has produced, the number of subscribers for the show, podcast website, and podcast social media before determining the potential for advertising efficacy. Current technology does not exist to verify episode listenership. Listening to several episodes with a single host to measure source attractiveness over time would not be feasible. In this study, participants listened once to the audio stimuli and the results indicated no increase in perceived attractiveness nor trustworthiness. This finding could be interpreted as a result of low frequency of listenership. Advertisers should place more emphasis on the subject matter expertise of the host when considering where to place their advertising.

VI. FUTURE RESEARCH

The era of podcast advertising is in its infancy and requires further research to understand the monetary impact of this new medium. Future research pertaining to purchase intent and source credibility should consider the role of intervening variables such as consumer awareness of the brand and credibility of the brand to further explain the perceived expertise of a host read brand message. Advertisers will be able to make better decisions regarding the qualities that make up an ‘expert’ host and intelligently determine where to place their podcast advertising dollars. In this study, unaided brand recall was measured almost directly after exposure to the podcast episode audio clip. Although questions about podcast use were posed first, the questions regarding expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness and brand recall was posed minutes after the exposure. The question is would the listener have the same unaided recall days after exposure? There is an opportunity to measure unaided brand recall several days after exposure to the podcast brand placement message. Future research may target a different segment of the population other than college students such as; Generation X or Millennials. Given the number of podcasts available, the study of host personality and humor could provide further insights into the impact of source credibility on advertising recall.

Several reports concerning podcast listenership and the effectiveness of podcast advertising have been reported by the Pew Research Center and Nielson’s Digital Media Lab. These reports are commissioned by advertisers and podcast networks to further the monetary opportunity of podcasts as a lucrative advertising medium.

Communication theories such as source credibility theory provide the underpinning of academic research and can be built upon over time. This theoretical underpinning is not considered in industry research and cannot be validated due to the proprietary nature of the commissioned research. Further academic research is warranted in the area of podcast advertising to validate its effectiveness within the study of communication theory.

Podcasting is a medium where anyone with a microphone, a computer and something to talk about can create and publish a podcast. The content of the podcast is not vetted through journalistic sources nor held to any standard of reporting third-party protocol or validation. Simply having subject matter expertise could be the only variable of source credibility that matters to this age group.

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