How Changing Media Formats Impact Credibility and Drive Consumer Action

Julie O’Neil, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Texas Christian University; Member, IPR Measurement Commission

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**Conventional Wisdom Persists**

"**The Real Difference Between PR and Advertising**"

"Advertising is paid media, public relations is earned media. This means you convince reporters or editors to write a positive story...It appears in the editorial section...rather than the “paid media” section where advertising messages appear. So your story has more credibility because it was independently verified by a trusted third party, rather than purchased."

*Forbes 2014*

"Depending on how you measure and monitor an article it is between 10 times and 100 times more valuable than an advertisement. The idea is the believability of an article versus an advertisement..."

Michael Levine, publicist and author of Guerilla P.

"Countless studies report that, next to word-of-mouth advice from friends and family, editorial commentary (usually generated by your friendly, behind-the-scenes PR practitioner) carries far more weight than advertising."

*Steve Cody of Inc. Magazine*
Assumption of Conventional Wisdom

- Journalists serve as gatekeepers. The fact that they choose to write about a product or service implies that they endorse the product or service.

- When a journalist writes favorably about a product or an individual, the product gains public support from the “third-party endorsement” for the message.

- That the endorsement from a journalist is more credible than a paid ad because the journalist is “objective.”
Research to Date


Key Findings of Research

• Majority of research has been conducted with students (Exception Stacks & Michaelson, 2009; Vercic et al., 2008)

• Importance of topic/product involvement (low versus high).
  
  • Persuasion theory (Petty & Cacoppo, 1996): people pay more attention to the message versus the source in high-involvement situations. Conversely, people in low-involvement situations rely on peripheral cues about the source of the message, such as expertise.

• Editorial has a stronger impact on credibility when it was about a low-involvement product (Hallahan, 1999)

• Argument quality - For strong arguments, earned media performs equally to advertising. For weak arguments, advertising performs better (Jo, 2004).
  
  • The extent to which a message has a greater impact on persuasion under conditions of high involvement.
Major Take-Away from Academic Research

There is limited support for the claim that public relations “earned media” is more credible and more effective than advertising.
Rationale for This Study

Evolving media landscape - Social and digital media, native advertising, traditional media transformation

Consumers are searching for information in new way - choosing their channels and feeds

This study revisits the topic of source effectiveness and credibility based upon the popular PESO framework.
Research Questions

1. What sources—paid, earned, shared, and owned—do consumers consult prior to making a consumer purchase? Do these differ for low- and high-involvement products?

2. How much trust do consumers have in sources to provide accurate and unbiased product information? Is there a difference between low- and high-involvement products?

3. What impact do these sources have in terms of creating awareness, knowledge, interest, purchase intent and word of mouth? Is there a difference for low- and high-involvement products?

4. What impact do these sources have on credibility?
Conceptual Framework

Source
- Paid
- Earned
- Shared
- Owned

Product Type
- Low-Involvement
- High-Involvement

Communication Lifecycle
- Awareness
- Knowledge
- Interest
- Purchase Intent
- Advocacy

Credibility
- Believability
- Trustworthiness
- Accuracy
- Bias
- Completeness
Source Classification

- Traditional Ad
- Native Ad
- Traditional News Story
- Blogger
- Company Blog
- Paid
- Earned
- Shared
- Owned
Product Classification

High-involvement
- Smartphone with extended battery life
- Shatter proof
- No-glare screen
- $399

Low-involvement
- CFL Bulb
- Built-in surge protector
- Cost ~$8
Conceptual Framework

Source
- Paid
- Earned
- Shared
- Owned

Product Type
- Low Involvement
- High Involvement

Communication Lifecycle
- Awareness
- Knowledge
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Credibility
- Believability
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## How We Asked the Questions

### Source
- Paid
- Earned
- Shared
- Owned

### Communication Lifecycle
- Awareness
- Involvement
- Involvement
- High
- Involvement
- Low
- Knowledge
- Interest
- Purchase Intent
- Advocacy
- Believability
- Trustworthiness
- Accuracy
- Bias
- Completeness

### Product Involvement
In selecting from many types and brands of smartphones available in the market, would you say that:

- I would not care at all as to which one I buy
- I would care a great deal as to which one I buy

- Do you think the various types and brands of smartphones available in the market are all very alike or are all very different?
  - They are alike
  - They are all different

- How important would it be to you to make a right choice for a smartphone?
  - Not at all important
  - Extremely important

- In making your selection of a smartphone, how concerned would you be about the outcomes of your choice?
  - Not at all concerned
  - Very much concerned
How We Asked the Questions

Source Credibility
This is the advertisement that was paid for by Commando to advertise its smartphone. Would you say that the advertisement is....

Not believable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 believable

Not trustworthy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 trustworthy

Not accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 accurate

Not biased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 biased

Not complete 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 complete

Do you view this advertisement as credible and why or why not? Open-ended
Communications Lifecycle Model

- Awareness
  - Advocacy
  - Intent to Purchase
  - Knowledge
  - Interest and Relevance
Communications Lifecycle Model

Product Awareness
Thinking back to what you just read, place a check in the box by any of the products you remember reading about, whether in an advertisement or a story.

- Exercise and calorie tracker
- Commando smartphone
- Outdoor television
- Wireless waterproof keyboard
- Instant digital camera with built-in printer
- Leash camera strap
- Home security system
- Samsung smartwatch
Communications Lifecycle Model

Product Knowledge

Next you are going to read a series of statements about the Commando smartphone, one of the products you just read about. After you read each statement, indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, or strongly agree.

• The Commando smartphone has an extended battery life of up to more than 2 hours longer than the competition.
• The Commando smartphone comes in three colors: hot pink, aqua blue and neon green.
• The Commando smartphone has a non-glare face allowing for easing reading.
• The Commando smartphone has a shatter and scratch resistant touchscreen make of synthetic sapphire.
• The Commando smartphone is available for $150.
Communications Lifecycle Model

After reading the advertisement about the Commando smartphone, would you say that you are very uninterested, uninterested, neither uninterested nor interested, interested, or very interested in the Commando smartphone.
Communications Lifecycle Model

Purchase Intention
Indicate your level of agreement—whether you strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, or strongly agree—with the following statements about the Commando smartphone.

- If I were looking for this type of smartphone, my likelihood of purchasing the Commando smartphone would be high.
- If I were to buy this type of smartphone, the probability that I would consider buying the product featured would be high.
- If I had to buy this type of smartphone, my willingness to buy the product featured would be high.
Communications Lifecycle Model

Advocacy - Word-of-Mouth Communication
Indicate the likelihood that you would share information about the Commando smartphone based upon the following statements.

- I would encourage friends or family members to buy this smartphone.
- I would recommend this smartphone to someone who asked my advice.
- I would say positive things about this smartphone to other people.
Pre-Tests and Manipulation Check

- Pretest in January 2015 to test perceived level of involvement with 100 participants
- Participants rated the light bulb a mean score of 11.89 (SD= 5.3) and the smartphone a mean score of 22.03 (SD=2.43), indicating they perceive them as significantly different in terms of involvement
- Second pretest was conducted in March 2015 with 125 participants to test questionnaire items
Experimental Design Launched in Summer 2015

- 5 (sources) x 2 (product involvement) between-subjects factorial design

- Five sources includes a traditional advertisement, a native advertisement, a company blog, an independent blog, and an earned news story

- Two product involvements included a high-involvement product and a low-involvement product

- 1,500 participants recruited from a consumer panel participated in the study

- Instructed to read the material presented and then complete a questionnaire measuring awareness, knowledge, interest, purchase intent, advocacy, and credibility

- The survey also included a series of questions about sources consulted and trust in sources when making a consumer product purchase
Traditional News Story - Smartphone
Shatterproof, No-Glare Commando Smartphone with Extended Battery Life

By RAY FLEMING

The buzz being generated by newly released smartphones has manufacturers pulling out all the stops to prove they have what it takes to hang with the big boys. But even flashy newcomers haven't been able to solve the most common smartphone problems as reported in a February 2015 Wired Magazine reader survey.

The number one problem identified in the study is battery life. Internet connections, apps and state-of-the-art software keep smartphones buzzing, batteries drained and users frustrated. Problem number two is a cracked or scratched screen. While smashed smartphones can often continue to function, readers felt that manufacturers should have addressed this common issue by now. Readers felt the same about the third most common problem cited - screen glare from sun or lights. Non-glare screen protectors can be purchased and installed separately, but they can result in air bubbles or hinder touch screen performance.

One newcomer, Commando, is the first smartphone designed to improve on some of the key weaknesses. Commando's extended battery life, more than two hours longer than any handset currently available; its shatter and scratch resistant touch screen made of synthetic sapphire, one of the hardest minerals on earth and its non-glare face, allowing for easy reading in any lighting environment are serious advantages. The trade off is a somewhat heavier and thicker device, with a high price tag.

The Commando performs all the standard tasks you would expect in a smartphone, but it is optimized to support specific environments - like when you’re behind the wheel - really well. Its Auto App logs mileage, tracks MPG, alerts you to prices and locations of nearby gas stations when the tank is low and similar actions. While some of these functions may be available on competitor products or apps, Commando's features are highly refined to really excel at supporting America's love affair with the automobile — and solve the universal issues of battery life, shattered screens and glare in sunlight. Price starts at $399.
Traditional News Story - CFL
Traditional News Story - CFL

Built-In Surge Protector Prevents CFL Failure

By RAY FLEMING

The incandescent light bulb has been around since the late 1800s, but the technology’s dominance is dimming. Due to a law passed by Congress in 2007, tungsten-filament 40- and 60-watt incandescent light bulbs, representing more than 50 percent of the consumer lighting market, can no longer be manufactured in the U.S.

Until the supplies run out, the old bulbs will be available on store shelves, but consumers are already moving to the new technologies, such as compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) that use far less electricity and last longer. CFLs use one-fifth to one-third the electric power and last eight to fifteen times longer.

Switching one bulb can save more than five times its purchase price in electricity costs over the lamp’s lifetime. But not all the reviews are glowing.

A CFL bulb is now available with a built-in surge protector that will eliminate this annoying problem and protect your investment in energy efficient lighting. The cost is about $7.

So, now there is no excuse for avoiding the transition from incandescent bulbs.
Samsung’s New Smartwatch Lets You Make Calls From Your Wrist

A Television Designed for the Outdoors

The Leash Camera Snap

A Gaming Laptop That’s Quick and Costly

Polaroid Develops a New Instant Camera

Togg Pet Trainer

Powerbeats2

COMMANDO SMARTPHONE SOLVES PROBLEMS

Extended Battery Life

Stability + Price

Features:

- Lasts up to 2x longer than most smartphone batteries
- Smart charging management for extended battery life
- Quick charge technology for rapid battery recharge
- Car charging adapter included

Starting at $199
Traditional Advertisement - Smartphone

**COMANDO SMARTPHONE SOLVES PROBLEMS**

**Extended Battery Life**
**Shatter – Proof**
**No-Glare**

**Features:**
- Extended battery life - more than two hours longer than any smartphone currently available.
- Shatter and scratch resistant touch screen made of synthetic sapphire, one of the hardest minerals on earth.
- Anti-glare face for easy reading in sunlight – incorporates antimicrobial technology that kills germs and viruses.
- Car Tracker built-in feature dedicated to supporting you behind the wheel with parking, maintenance and communications.

Starting at $399
Traditional Advertisement - CFL
Improved CFL

- Cost is only $7
- Available everywhere lighting is sold
- Dimmer compatibility
- Instant brightness
- Incandescent-like light quality
- Save on electricity with efficient, long-lasting compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) - now with built-in surge protector to prevent bulb failure
Native Advertising - Smartphone
Native Advertising - Smartphone

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One newcomer, Commando, is the first smartphone designed to improve on some of the key weaknesses. Commando’s extended battery life, more than two hours longer than any handset currently available; its shatter and scratch resistant touch screen made of synthetic sapphire, one of the hardest minerals on earth and its non-glare face, allowing for easy reading in any lighting environment are serious advantages. The trade off is a somewhat heavier and thicker device, with a high price tag.

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Native Advertising - CFL

The incandescent light bulb has been around since the late 1800s, but its technology’s dominance is dimming. Due to a law passed by Congress in 2007, tungsten-filament 40- and 60-watt incandescent light bulbs, representing more than 90 percent of the consumer lighting market, can no longer be manufactured in the U.S.

Until the supplies run out, the old bulbs will be available on store shelves, but consumers are already moving to the new technologies, such as compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) that use far less electricity and last longer. CFLs use one-fifth to one-third the electric power and last eight to fifteen times longer. Switching one bulb can save more than five times its purchase price in electricity costs over the bulb’s lifetime. But not all the reviews are glowing.

CFL bulbs are 4-5 times more expensive than traditional incandescent bulbs, but the price has been dropping. Given that lighting your home accounts for about one-quarter of your electric bill, the energy savings outweigh the higher cost over time. Initial complaints about CFL slow starts to full brightness and incompatibility with dimmers have been addressed and the light quality is now more like that generated by incandescent bulbs. One persistent problem is CFL failure, with bulbs burning out way too soon or even, alarmingly, explosions. This is due to power surges, a frequent but often unnoticed occurrence in your home’s electricity flow.

A CFL bulb is now available from SurgePro, a leader in home electronics, with a built-in surge protector that will eliminate this annoying problem and protect your investment in energy-efficient lighting. The cost is about $7. So, now there is no excuse for avoiding the transition from incandescent bulbs.
Independent Blogger - Smartphone
Samsung’s New Smartwatch Lets You Make Calls from Your Wrist

Samsung has added a new entry to its growing catalog of smartwatches with the debut of its Gear S. Unlike its previous smartwatches, however, this one packs its own 3G data connection, which means it doesn’t have to be tied to your smartphone at all times. That’s a big deal for smartwatches.

Sporting a curved 2-inch display that wraps around your wrist, the Gear S looks more comfortable to wear — and more stylish — than Samsung’s rectangular watches. Still, with a larger display size than its stablemates, the Gear S is fairly bulky. The Gear S is thicker and taller than other Samsung smartwatches, which are already fairly thick and tall.

The big innovation here, though, is that you’ll be able to use the Gear S independently of your smartphone. You can send messages and receive and reply to notifications from their social networks and other apps via the watch’s SVoice controls or its onboard keyboard.

What’s more, you can make and receive calls from the watch. If you don’t want to use the watch’s 3G connection, you can pair it with your smartphone via Bluetooth or jump on an available WiFi connection.

The Gear S also includes turn-by-turn pedestrian navigation, news updates, a heart-rate monitor, and Nike+ Running app integration.

Samsung hasn’t announced pricing for the Gear S yet, but the company did say it will begin selling the watch soon.
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1,500 Participants

**Ethnicity**
- African American (6%)
- American Indian (1%)
- Asian (3%)
- Caucasian (83%)
- Hispanic/Latina (5%)
- Other (2%)

**Education**
- 1% some high school
- 16% high school
- 22% some college
- 10% associate’s degree
- 25% bachelor’s degree
- 5% some graduate work
- 21% graduate degree

**Age**
- 18-25 (13%)
- 26-35 (21%)
- 36-45 (14%)
- 46-55 (15%)
- 56-65 (17%)
- 66 or older (20%)

**Income**
- Less than $20,000 (14%)
- $20,000 to $39,999 (21%)
- $40,000 to $59,999 (16%)
- $60,000 to $79,999 (14%)
- $80,000 to $99,999 (13%)
- $10,000 or higher (18%)
- Prefer not to answer (4%)

50% Male
50% Female
RQ1: What sources do consumers consult prior to making a consumer purchase?

Do these differ for low- and high-involvement products?
When preparing to make a routine product purchase decision, such as a light bulb or hair dryer, how often do you use the following sources for product information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>25% of the time</th>
<th>Half of the time</th>
<th>75% of the time</th>
<th>All of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story in a newspaper or magazine written by a journalist</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(586)</td>
<td>(380)</td>
<td>(283)</td>
<td>(161)</td>
<td>(125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog post from an independent blogger</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(650)</td>
<td>(314)</td>
<td>(274)</td>
<td>(191)</td>
<td>(106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company website, newsletter, blog or catalog</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(465)</td>
<td>(377)</td>
<td>(341)</td>
<td>(215)</td>
<td>(137)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online product reviews written by other consumers</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(259)</td>
<td>(295)</td>
<td>(359)</td>
<td>(377)</td>
<td>(245)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement in a newspaper or magazine</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(480)</td>
<td>(398)</td>
<td>(337)</td>
<td>(189)</td>
<td>(131)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native advertisement (a story written by an advertiser to promote their product, but appearing in the same form and flow as editorial content)</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(684)</td>
<td>(278)</td>
<td>(272)</td>
<td>(178)</td>
<td>(123)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When preparing to make an important product purchase decision, such as a smartphone or laptop computer, how often do you use the following sources for product information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Never</th>
<th>25% of the time</th>
<th>Half of the time</th>
<th>75% of the time</th>
<th>All of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story in a newspaper or magazine written by a journalist</td>
<td>33.6 (515)</td>
<td>28.5 (437)</td>
<td>17.7 (272)</td>
<td>10.9 (167)</td>
<td>9.4 (144)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog post from an independent blogger</td>
<td>38.6 (593)</td>
<td>22.1 (339)</td>
<td>18.8 (288)</td>
<td>12.2 (187)</td>
<td>8.3 (128)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company website, newsletter, blog or catalog</td>
<td>23.5 (360)</td>
<td>26.3 (403)</td>
<td>22.5 (346)</td>
<td>15.6 (240)</td>
<td>12.1 (186)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online product reviews written by other consumers</td>
<td>13.3 (204)</td>
<td>17.5 (268)</td>
<td>25.0 (384)</td>
<td>24.5 (376)</td>
<td>19.7 (303)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement in a newspaper or magazine</td>
<td>30.6 (469)</td>
<td>26.4 (406)</td>
<td>21.5 (330)</td>
<td>12.6 (193)</td>
<td>8.9 (137)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native advertisement (a story written by an advertiser to promote their product, but appearing in the same form and flow as editorial content)</td>
<td>42.9 (659)</td>
<td>19.2 (295)</td>
<td>17.6 (270)</td>
<td>11.7 (179)</td>
<td>8.6 (132)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ2: How much trust do consumers have in sources of information - paid, earned, shared, and owned - to provide accurate and unbiased product information?

Is there a difference between low- and high-involvement products?
When preparing to make a routine product purchase decision, such as a light bulb or hair dryer, how much do you trust the following sources to provide accurate and unbiased product information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Trust Somewhat &amp; Completely</th>
<th>Distrust Somewhat &amp; Completely</th>
<th>Mean Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story in a newspaper or magazine written by a staff reporter</td>
<td>80.3 (1,233)</td>
<td>19.7 (302)</td>
<td>3.5 (.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog post from an independent blogger</td>
<td>67.2 (1,031)</td>
<td>32.8 (504)</td>
<td>2.9 (.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company website, newsletter, blog or catalog</td>
<td>68.3 (1,048)</td>
<td>31.8 (487)</td>
<td>2.98 (.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online product reviews written by other consumers</td>
<td>83.5 (1,282)</td>
<td>16.4 (253)</td>
<td>3.20 (.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement in a newspaper or magazine</td>
<td>60.8 (934)</td>
<td>39.1 (601)</td>
<td>2.93 (.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native advertisement (a story written by an advertiser to promote their product, but appearing in the same form and flow as editorial content)</td>
<td>50.7 (778)</td>
<td>49.3 (757)</td>
<td>2.91 (.78)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When preparing to make an important product purchase decision, such as a smartphone or laptop computer, how much do you trust the following sources to provide accurate and unbiased product information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Trust Somewhat &amp; Completely</th>
<th>Distrust Somewhat &amp; Completely</th>
<th>Mean Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story in a newspaper or magazine written by a staff reporter</td>
<td>76.4 (1,173)</td>
<td>23.6 (362)</td>
<td>2.86 (.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog post from an independent blogger</td>
<td>67.8 (1,041)</td>
<td>32.2 (494)</td>
<td>2.74 (.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company website, newsletter, blog or catalog</td>
<td>67.3 (1,032)</td>
<td>32.8 (503)</td>
<td>2.78 (.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online product reviews written by other consumers</td>
<td>81.8 (1,257)</td>
<td>18.1 (278)</td>
<td>3.03 (.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement in a newspaper or magazine</td>
<td>61.5 (943)</td>
<td>38.5 (592)</td>
<td>2.65 (.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native advertisement (a story written by an advertiser to promote their product, but appearing in the same form and flow as editorial content)</td>
<td>52.2 (801)</td>
<td>47.8 (734)</td>
<td>2.50 (90)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ3: What impact do these sources have in terms of creating awareness, knowledge, interest, purchase intent and advocacy?
### Awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Smartphone Traditional Story</th>
<th>Smartphone Traditional Ad</th>
<th>Smartphone Company Blog</th>
<th>Smartphone Independent Blogger</th>
<th>Smartphone Native Ad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>6.019</td>
<td>6.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>CFL Traditional Story</th>
<th>CFL Traditional Ad</th>
<th>CFL Company Blog</th>
<th>CFL Independent Blogger</th>
<th>CFL Native Ad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.27**</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>6.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $t(298) = 0.0462, p = .48$  
** $t(305) = 1.60, p = .05$
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The compact fluorescent light bulb with built- in surge protector saves electricity.</td>
<td>LB Traditional News Story</td>
<td>4.10 (.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Company Blog</td>
<td>3.94 (.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Personal Blog</td>
<td>3.97 (.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Native Ad</td>
<td>3.90 (.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Traditional Ad</td>
<td>4.06 (.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The compact fluorescent light bulb with built- in surge protector comes in two colors: white and silver</td>
<td>LB Traditional News Story</td>
<td>3.04 (1.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Company Blog</td>
<td>2.91 (1.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Personal Blog</td>
<td>3.04 (1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Native Ad</td>
<td>3.08 (1.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Traditional Ad</td>
<td>3.27 (1.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The built- in surge protector of the compact fluorescent light bulb prevents bulb failures.</td>
<td>LB Traditional News Story</td>
<td>4.06 (.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Company Blog</td>
<td>3.93 (.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Personal Blog</td>
<td>4.01 (.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Native Ad</td>
<td>3.99 (.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Traditional Ad</td>
<td>3.95 (.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The compact fluorescent light bulb with built- in surge protector is dimmer compatible. *</td>
<td>LB Traditional News Story</td>
<td>3.52 (1.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Company Blog</td>
<td>3.54 (.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Personal Blog</td>
<td>3.63 (.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Native Ad</td>
<td>3.52 (.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Traditional Ad</td>
<td>3.82 (.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The compact fluorescent light bulb with built- in surge protector costs $18.</td>
<td>LB Traditional News Story</td>
<td>3.03 (1.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Company Blog</td>
<td>2.72 (1.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Personal Blog</td>
<td>2.88 (1.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Native Ad</td>
<td>2.99 (1.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB Traditional Ad</td>
<td>2.99 (1.29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Commando smartphone has an extended battery life of up to more than 2 hours longer than the competition.</td>
<td>News Story</td>
<td>4.13 (.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company Blog</td>
<td>4.13 (.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Blog</td>
<td>4.15 (1.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native Ad</td>
<td>4.11 (.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional Ad</td>
<td>3.39 (.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commando smartphone comes in three colors: hot pink, aqua blue, and neon green.</td>
<td>News Story</td>
<td>3.13 (1.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company Blog</td>
<td>3.14 (1.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Blog</td>
<td>3.28 (1.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native Ad</td>
<td>3.30 (.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional Ad</td>
<td>3.21 (1.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commando smartphone has a non-glare face allowing for easing reading.*</td>
<td>News Story</td>
<td>4.13 (.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company Blog</td>
<td>4.20 (.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Blog</td>
<td>4.16 (1.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native Ad</td>
<td>4.16 (.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional Ad</td>
<td>3.94 (.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commando smartphone has a shatter and scratch resistant touchscreen made of synthetic sapphire.</td>
<td>News Story</td>
<td>4.10 (.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company Blog</td>
<td>4.07 (.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Blog</td>
<td>4.01 (1.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native Ad</td>
<td>4.08 (.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional Ad</td>
<td>3.94 (.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commando smartphone is available for $150.</td>
<td>News Story</td>
<td>3.01 (1.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company Blog</td>
<td>2.81 (1.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Blog</td>
<td>3.03 (1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native Ad</td>
<td>3.04 (1.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional Ad</td>
<td>3.13 (1.21)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
Interest
After reading the story about the (CFL or smartphone), would you say you very uninterested, somewhat uninterested, neither uninterested nor interested, somewhat interested, or very interested

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>CFL Bulb Mean Score (SD)*</th>
<th>Smartphone Mean Score (SD)**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News Story</td>
<td>3.35 (1.25)</td>
<td>3.21 (1.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Blog</td>
<td>3.21 (1.20)</td>
<td>3.04 (1.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Blog</td>
<td>3.38 (1.30)</td>
<td>3.23 (1.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Ad</td>
<td>3.39 (1.24)</td>
<td>3.08 (1.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Ad</td>
<td>3.57 (1.18)</td>
<td>3.13 (1.46)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $F (4, 760) = 1.67, p = .154$
**$F = (4, 765) = .518, p = .723$
## Purchase Intent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>CFL Mean Score (SD)*</th>
<th>Smartphone Mean Score (SD)**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News Story</td>
<td>10.45 (3.34)</td>
<td>10.48 (3.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Blog</td>
<td>10.06 (3.04)</td>
<td>10.21 (3.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Blog</td>
<td>10.60 (3.19)</td>
<td>10.58 (3.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Ad</td>
<td>10.93 (3.05)</td>
<td>10.57 (3.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Ad</td>
<td>10.53 (3.17)</td>
<td>9.96 (3.45)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale ranged from 1-15; Cronbach’s alpha = .95

* F (4, 760) = 1.49, p = .20  
**F = (4, 765) = 1.00, p = .406
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>CFL Mean Score (SD)*</th>
<th>Smartphone Mean Score (SD)**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News Story</td>
<td>10.40 (3.05)</td>
<td>10.30 (3.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Blog</td>
<td>10.22 (3.05)</td>
<td>9.96 (3.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Blog</td>
<td>10.24 (3.22)</td>
<td>10.52 (3.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Ad</td>
<td>10.39 (3.18)</td>
<td>10.28 (3.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Ad</td>
<td>11.03 (1.18)</td>
<td>9.98 (3.51)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale ranged from 1-15; Cronbach’s alpha = .92

* F (4, 760) = 1.74, p = .138

**F = (4, 765) = .838, p = .501
RQ4: What impact do these sources have on credibility?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>News Story</th>
<th>Company Blog</th>
<th>Independent Blog</th>
<th>Native Ad</th>
<th>Traditional Ad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Believability *</td>
<td>5.66 (1.30)</td>
<td>5.64 (1.23)</td>
<td>5.62 (1.23)</td>
<td>4.46 (1.80)</td>
<td>5.24 (1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust *</td>
<td>5.45 (1.34)</td>
<td>5.39 (1.30)</td>
<td>5.44 (1.3)</td>
<td>5.19 (1.42)</td>
<td>5.73 (1.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy*</td>
<td>5.55 (1.3)</td>
<td>5.51 (1.3)</td>
<td>5.44 (1.26)</td>
<td>5.78 (1.16)</td>
<td>5.51 (1.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-bias</td>
<td>4.46 (1.8)</td>
<td>4.17 (1.8)</td>
<td>4.55 (1.8)</td>
<td>4.73 (1.9)</td>
<td>4.45 (1.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completeness</td>
<td>5.24 (1.5)</td>
<td>5.3 (1.31)</td>
<td>5.31 (1.4)</td>
<td>5.16 (1.4)</td>
<td>5.52 (1.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale*</td>
<td>26.36 (5.4)</td>
<td>26 (5.33)</td>
<td>26.36 (5.39)</td>
<td>25.41 (5.51)</td>
<td>27.71 (5.09)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistically significant at .05 level
### Smartphone Credibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>News Story</th>
<th>Company Blog</th>
<th>Independent Blog</th>
<th>Native Ad</th>
<th>Traditional Ad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Believability</td>
<td>5.72 (1.22)</td>
<td>5.49 (1.40)</td>
<td>5.73 (1.19)</td>
<td>5.62 (1.33)</td>
<td>5.59 (1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust *</td>
<td>5.44 (1.22)</td>
<td>5.16 (1.47)</td>
<td>5.68 (1.26)</td>
<td>5.36 (1.44)</td>
<td>5.26 (1.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>5.56 (1.15)</td>
<td>5.47 (1.27)</td>
<td>5.75 (1.14)</td>
<td>5.44 (1.32)</td>
<td>5.44 (1.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-bias</td>
<td>4.52 (1.78)</td>
<td>4.40 (1.99)</td>
<td>4.57 (1.73)</td>
<td>4.71 (1.9)</td>
<td>4.37 (1.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completeness</td>
<td>5.34 (1.37)</td>
<td>5.33 (1.41)</td>
<td>5.58 (1.23)</td>
<td>5.20 (1.52)</td>
<td>5.32 (1.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>26.57 (5.32)</td>
<td>25.85 (5.4)</td>
<td>27.31 (4.8)</td>
<td>26.33 (5.67)</td>
<td>25.97 (5.66)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant at .05 level*
Open-ended Responses: Do you view this (story/ad) as credible and why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credibility of the source</th>
<th>Smartphone Story</th>
<th>CFL Story</th>
<th>Smartphone Ad</th>
<th>CFL Ad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility of the argument</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"written by a tech journalist for the New York Times”
"a reputable paper I would assume they have reputable journalist”
"author works for a newspaper and is not associated with the maker”
"it was credible but was just an ad”
"It is somewhat credible, at least as much as any advertisement is”

“A lot of research went into development”
"it is comprehensive and seems unbiased”
"writer has probably tested the device…his job to evaluate tech products and report”
“It sounds plausible and practicable”
“credible because it’s very detailed in the explanation of the products features”
Key Points of this Research

The number one source of information for consumers is online product reviews written by other consumers for both low-involvement and high-involvement products. These findings confirm the Edelman’s 2015 Trust Barometer research.

Online product reviews are consulted more often for high-involvement products than low-involvement products.

Native advertising is consulted the least often for product information. Independent bloggers and news stories written by a journalist are not consulted as frequently as online reviews, company blogs, and advertisements.

Consumers have the greatest amount of trust in earned media and the lowest amount of trust in native advertising.

Consumers’ level of trust in sources is greater for a low-involvement product compared to the high-involvement product, thereby supporting persuasion theory and past research.
Key Points of This Research

• The experimental design indicated that source does not impact awareness, knowledge, interest, intent to purchase or advocacy, supportive of prior research.

• There is no support for the claim that earned media is more credible than a traditional news story. Again, this supports past research.

• Interestingly, as noted by the open-ended question, participants more frequently invoked the importance of the argument, or the message, to their perception of source credibility.

• Native advertising fared lower on some elements of perceived credibility compared to traditional advertising for the low-involvement product.

• Product-involvement does not impact perceived credibility.
Implications for PR Practice

• Public relations is not less effective than the other sources in the PESO model in terms of engendering credibility and a call to action. Public relations appears to operate on equal grounds.

• Consumers are increasingly consulting a number of sources for product information—all sources in the PESO model are an important part of the communication lifecycle process.

• Given the changes in the media landscape, the lines between sources are blurring. People may not readily process where they are receiving information.

• As long as there is value in the information presented, people care less about the source and more about the quality of the source/message.

• Moving forward, it is important to focus less on source placement and more on message quality.