

DETERMINANTS OF CONSUMER NEWS PREFERENCE: A STRUCTURAL APPROACH

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Abstract. This study investigates the effects of two important disposition variables, namely, the perceived novelty of the news and perceived bias of the consumers on the preference of news consumption. The choice of news could also be affected by mediating factors of discrete emotions such as anger and anxiety. Anger is a strong negative emotion and steers the consumer to search for additional information to counter this emotion, while anxiety is a mild positive emotion which pushes the consumers to search for additional corroborating information. For this study, a stratified random sampling procedure was employed to select 300 students (100 each) from the Law, Management and Arts faculties of Devi Ahilya Vishwa Vidyalaya (Indore University in India) during January-February 2019. These students were shown six short video news clips on Whatsapp and were then administered structured questionnaires to study the effects of their predispositions towards news and the mediating factors on news preference. A final sample of 239 students answered 16 Likert type questions on perceived bias, novelty, mediating variables and news preference. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) of data revealed that both perceived novelty of the news items and perceived bias of the consumer, directly and through the mediating emotions, affect news preference.

Keywords. *Hostile Media Effect, Recency Effect, Perceived Bias, Perceived Novelty, Selective News Absorption*

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Introduction

News media consumption has been rising steadily in India following the privatisation of news channels. Previously, for many years, the government controlled both print and electronic media and slowly the private news channels emerged and assumed centre stage (Rani, 2013). With the increased competition and astronomical costs of running a satellite TV channel successfully, the programmers and editors of these channels have to keep the news content interesting to retain the viewership (Rani, 2013; Nielsen and Sambrook, 2016). The key ingredients of newsworthiness of any news story have been identified as follows:

Proximity to the news location is the first such criterion. Whether it is print media or electronic media the local, i.e. regional and national events always take prominence over those happening elsewhere in the world. A rail mishap in India has more news value than a similar or even bigger mishap in France or China. Popularity and importance of vernacular print media and regional television prove the importance of proximity.

A celebrity or a well-known political figure (former CM Kumaraswamy throwing a marriage bash during lockdown), a major event (extension of lockdown) or a prominent place (Chernobyl) have a better news value than something out of ordinary or something the audiences are unfamiliar with. We can see this in election rallies where the local leaders don't attract much crowd as the star speaker or the prime minister. Also in television debates, the lead anchors and prominent speakers attract an audience in large numbers which in turn results in higher ratings for the programme. The success of *Larry King Show*, *Larry King Live*, *Oprah Winfrey Show*, Arnab Goswami or Rajat Sharma show underscores the prominence of the host in attracting the audience. *Mann ki Baat* by Indian Prime Minister Modi is yet another example where the personal charisma of the presenter draws the audience.

The currency of the content or the timeliness has a far greater impact than something which happened yesterday or earlier. The news media is ephemeral, has a short life and news vendors have to be on their toes to find new content. The novelty, or even the oddness of the news item, is a key ingredient of news consumption (Mizuno, Ohnishi and Watanabe, 2017). People are attracted and tend to get attracted to something out of the ordinary. News is when something novel happens to break the routine and mundane events of daily life. News consumers are always searching for something strange or bizarre. The coverage of the 9/11 attack on television gathered a massive viewership for this reason.

Unless the event has a direct bearing on the viewers, they might not pay attention. The effect or the consequence of demonetization was so huge on the common public that the news ran for months on TV with viewers searching for additional information on the latest developments. Run of the mill stories, on the other hand, lose their steam very fast.

Conflict is another very important ingredient of newsworthiness and subsequent selection. Consumers look for conflicts, arguments, rivalries, controversies or conspiracies. It is innate human nature to take sides and be prejudiced about any conflicting situation. Stories with conflicts related to religion, gender, wars, human rights, arms race, elections, politics or

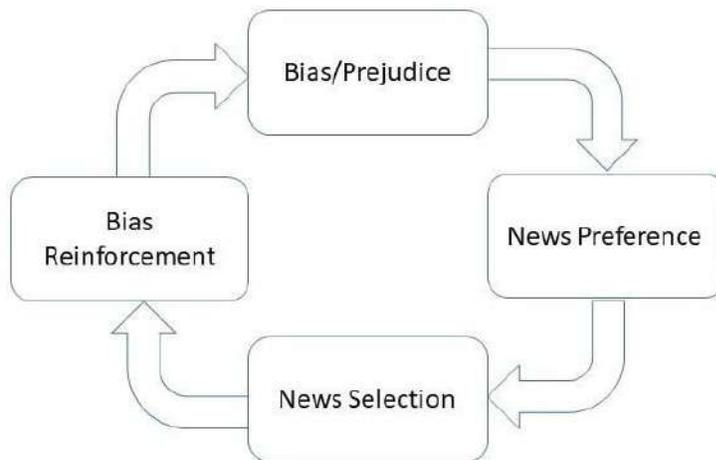
struggles for animal welfare, environment and sustainability issues and stories of human interest connect with the audience at a deeper level. Tales of human suffering such as the holocaust, war crimes, acid attacks, crimes against children and women generate interest and an emotional bond with the news. Similarly, stories depicting great comeback by individuals, corruption stories and sex scandals generate huge human interest in such reporting. Aamir Khan's *Satyamev Jayate* hit a chord with the audience using the emotional connect.

Scandals and scams always make a good and interesting story. Sex scandals, political scandals, stock market scams make people sit up and take notice of what is coming next. The attraction to scandals is only natural to human curiosity. Sting operations have now become norms for some investigative reporting and attract audiences to the stories.

Theoretical Background

While the producers and editors constantly try to produce content which capitalises on one or many of the above-mentioned ingredients, the audiences have their own mechanism of choosing and consuming news content. There is evidence that consumers of news look for the credibility of new content and might consume less dubious content and seek additional inputs from internationally renowned channels with impeccable credibility such as BBC and CNN, among others (Pew Research Centre, 2012). Another important component of news consumption is the predisposition of the viewers to a specific ideological viewpoint (Tsfati & Capella, 2003). The consumers are unwilling to receive or avoid news contradictory to their ideological disposition. Avoiding information contrary to their pre-existing dispositions determines the choice of media selection by the consumers. The hostile media phenomenon in mass media is the tendency of consumers of news to have an antagonistic perception of media that are not conforming to their preconceived beliefs and notions. Audiences experience information inertia and view the unfavourable news coverage of an issue, they strongly identify with, as biased (Gunther & Liebhart, 2006; Huge & Glynn, 2010). This information inertia makes it impossible to take an unbiased view of any news story. The self-feeding polarising mechanism of news telling further reinforces the existing bias and prejudice widening the distance between the opposing parties on a conscientious issue (Figure 1).

Fig. 1. Self-feeding Model of News Bias



Source: (Authors' own construct)

The lightning speed of internet, new electronic and social media have the potential to widely aggravate the problems of selective exposure and absorption of news items, thereby increasing the threat of distorting the principles of news dissemination (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Holbert, Garrett, & Gleason, 2010). This leads the readers of internet bloggers to gravitate to the stories and blog posts with which they find a homologous alignment (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Lawrence, Sides & Farrell, 2010). Stroud (2011) shows that the selective exposure of the consumers of news items contributes to political polarisation.

Klapper (1960) proposed the reinforcement theory, the core definition of which suggests that people get exposed to, absorb or remember information that conforms to their pre-existing beliefs and attitudes. Klapper (1960) argued that people's beliefs, attitudes and ideas are generally influenced by family, schools or religious institutes. The only time when the media can influence people is by introducing some novelty in concept. Klapper (1960) also pointed out that there are certain beliefs or attitudes which mass media is most unlikely to change like one's racial or religious beliefs. Media, therefore, confirms the audience's beliefs rather than creating new ones. Reinforcement theory has three primary mechanisms behind it, namely, selective exposure, selective perception and selective retention. Selective exposure focuses on how people avoid incongruent information and like to encounter information which is rightly going with their predispositions. Even after selective exposure, when people face any discordant message, selective perception follows. It means people skew their perceptions to see what they actually want. The last mechanism is selective retention where people only recall that information which is in congruence with their predispositions.

Confirmation bias is the tendency of news consumers to search, interpret or favour information which actually reinforces one's pre-existing values/beliefs. In the age of social

media, confirmation bias is amplified by the use of filter bubbles where they only get exposed to messages they want to read and skip oppositional viewpoints.

Smith, Fabrigar & Norris (2008) have shown from their work on discriminant exposure to news content that consumers of news have a proclivity to choose agreeable items over the disagreeable items. The news value of a news item depends on the novelty of news (Han, Chock, & Shoemaker, 2009), and homologous identification with the issue has a bearing on further exploration of news for additional information. Media messages are often selected and consumed based on the perceived novelty of their content. A novel, surprising, or even unusual and extraordinary news may attract consumption, as such news items most likely disrupt the normal information processing and lead them to 'sit up and notice' or see it as potentially disruptive information (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015). Lee (2008) demonstrated that deviant, unusual and novel content in news articles fosters selective exposure. Novelty may also lead to a viral explosion of the unusual, novel or bizarre content that has a high social currency value and turns out to be a good talking point (Berger, 2013, 2014). Users and consumers of news are more likely to consume and propagate novel or bizarre news articles and messages (Berger & Milkman, 2012). From the foregoing discussion, we deduce that ideological prejudices or perceived bias of the news consumers and novelty of the news items are two important dimensions that determine subsequent news selection. In this study, we have selected these two as the starting point of news consumption.

Relationship between the consumers' predispositions and subsequent news selection has recognised a moderating effect of emotions such as anxiety and anger (Arpan & Nabi, 2011; Valentino et al., 2008; Matthes, 2011; Brader, Valentino & Suhay, 2004; Kiss, 2012). However, anxiety and anger influence the relevant outcomes differently. According to Affective Intelligence Theory (Marcus, Neuman & MacKuen, 2000), when consumers are surprised or see an unexpected outcome, anxiety is the most frequently experienced emotion.

Anxiety is triggered when the consumers of news are faced with a challenging slant to their beliefs. The resultant anxiety boosts information seeking to reduce the uncertainty (Brader, 2011). Role of anger in studies on Affective Intelligence Theory (AIT) has emerged as another mediating factor leading to the news selection (Ladd and Lenz, 2008).

Though anxiety will boost further information seeking to confirm the novelty value, anger induces confirmation seeking (Valentino, Hutchings, Banks and Davis, 2008). Researchers have found that anger is likely to boost rather reduce interest in seeking additional and relevant information (Arpan and Nabi, 2011; Lazarus, 1991).

We have, therefore, studied not only the direct effect of perceived novelty and perceived bias on news selection, but also the mediating role of the two unrelated emotions of anxiety and anger on follow up information seeking that is likely to be caused from exposure to news content deemed as biased. There is ample compelling proof that mediating factors such as anger and anxiety can influence the news bias arising out of perceptions or prejudices. Built-up

emotions namely anger and anxiety lead the audience to search for additional information which will either negate or reinforce their existing biases. (Arpan & Nabi, 2011).

Literature Review

The involvement of the recipients determines their perceptions. News reporting may be seen as credible or swayed to any side (Gunther, 1998; Gunther & Schmitt, 2004; Lee, 2010). This bias can be reckoned as any type of prejudiced or imbalanced opinion toward a certain contentious issue. People seek social identity which explains their alignment and leaning towards different social clusters grouped about certain common affiliations such as political leanings, corporate identities, religious sects, ethnic or regional groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Such people receive identity bolstering information which cements their bonding with their groups further. Information not confirming the existing bias of the recipients is likely to be rejected, scrutinized closely or simply labelled as biased (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979).

The Effect of Emotion

Emotions of the audiences largely decide the content they would prefer. Emotions further emphasize the follow-up stories that the audience would watch or like to watch. The biased perceptions of the recipients about controversial news stories are inevitable and the viewers might want to have a mental preference or prejudice towards such news stories. This gives them psychological solace and comfort by cognitive identification.

Emotions are psychological and physiological changes happen within the individuals as a result of some external stimuli (Kiss, 2012). Emotions are adaptive responses of humans and can at times take the form of a defence mechanism. Emotions have the capacity to influence the behaviour of the individuals (Marcus, 2002; Kiss, 2012, Damasio, 1994). It has been seen that certain issues like corruption in India gave rise to a level of anger which had a positive correlation with the willingness of the masses to attend public fora, write and subscribe to related blogs, search for corroborating information. These phenomena were observed during the public agitations like India Against Corruption (2011-12) and the Arab Spring (2010-12). It can be inferred that the anger arising out of watching a news item considered as biased, people tend to search for additional information corroborating the former information.

Emotions can moderate the effects of the exposure to a certain news stimulus in such a way so as to affect the demand for subsequent information (Arpan & Nabi, 2011; Matthes, 2011). Research done on political campaigns have shown that anxiety as an emotion has affected the subsequent information search and the political participation (Brader, Valentino, & Suhay, 2004; Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, & Davis, 2008). There is sufficient evidence (Brader, Valentino, & Suhay, 2008; Valentino, Banks, Hutchings, & Davis, 2009; Kiss, 2012) that emotions have an important role in shaping the subsequent information search by the consumers of news. Studies on Hostile Media Effect (HME) have highlighted the effect of emotions, such as anger, whereby a news item might be perceived as biased against a person.

Both anger and anxiety seem to have a considerable effect on the preference of information sought by the consumers of news.

Novelty of the News Items

Subsequent information-seeking behaviour is also induced by the novelty of the news items. Consumers search the environment for unusual or new items of news as they arouse a curiosity level. Need for the novelty of news determines the existence of such media and influences the coverage of news content (Shoemaker, 1996). The big draw in the breaking news section on daily news in electronic media, trending news in social media and banner headlines in print media are all examples of novelty driving the news consumption. The news media highlights the novelty factor as people devour new issues as they are presented.

Research Problem

We have investigated the mediating effects of the two emotions, namely anxiety and anger on the consequent choice of news information. The emotion of anger induces an active response of retaliation whereas the anxiety induces a passive response of trepidation (Lazarus, 1991). Retaliation leads to a search for negative or contra information for launching counterattack while trepidation leads to restoration of homogeneity. Anxiety is aroused due to information void when one's preformed view of a certain issue is subjected to challenge and additional information must be collected to clear the nebulous uncertainty.

We explore the following two research questions:

RP1: For viewers of thought provoking stories, how important are anger and anxiety as mediating factors for the effects of perceived bias leading to their subsequent preference for information?

RP2: How does the perceived novelty of a news item affect the preference of news media through the mediating effects of anger and anxiety of the consumers?

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

The objectives of this research are listed below

- To investigate the effect of perceived novelty of news items on news preference.
- To investigate the effect of pre-existing disposition or bias of the viewer on the choice of news.
- To investigate the stimulating effect of perceived novelty on the recipient of news.
- To investigate the stimulating effect on anxiety of the recipient of news.
- To investigate the mediating effects of anger and anxiety of the viewer on their news preference.

The above mentioned research objectives were explored by way of research hypotheses. The consumers of news will have a predisposition towards a certain type of news content arising out of proximity, prominence of story, characters or even interest of the consumers. A law student or a lawyer, for example, would be more inclined to watch the news items pertaining to legal matters or a news item involving the opinion of leading jurists. A legal issue involving the students is likely to find natural viewership with them. This starting or inherent bias towards a certain kind of news content is likely to have a bearing on the news preference. We formulate the first hypotheses as follows:

H1: Perceived bias has a direct bearing on the news preference.

The novelty or the newness of any news item will have some appeal for all consumers. The reception of the news item will depend upon the freshness or recency of the news item. Terror attacks or natural or human mishaps have a news value due to the novelty. Further, a once in a while event like demonetization, GST rollout or a terror strike has immense news value due to its perceived novelty. We frame our second hypothesis as follows:

H2: Perceived novelty has a direct bearing on the news preference.

News content is seen by different consumer groups complete with their biases. Anger in the consumers may arise out of a preconceived bias towards a channel, speaker or a political leader. A soft corner for Naxalites might induce anger at the government for crushing their legitimate demands. Also, latent anger at the Kashmir militants might induce a similar fresh rage at the militants for causing atrocities on the common citizens. Anger, thus, is induced by the perceived bias as different factions are likely to see the situation from their own opposing lenses. We formulate the third hypothesis as follows:

H3: Perceived bias has a direct bearing on the anger of the news recipient.

The perceived novelty of a news item induces curiosity about the news. The consumers are likely to search and probe further for information to quench the curiosity. The recent bombing and subsequent capture of an IAF pilot in Pakistan raised the anxiety of the people and there was frantic search about additional information about the wellbeing of the pilot. The much talked about event of Brexit has a similar effect on the anxiety level of people. We formulate our fourth hypothesis as follows:

H4: Perceived novelty of a news item has a direct bearing on anxiety of the news recipient.

Election results of the Lok Sabha or the financial results of the companies on National Stock Exchange or Bombay Stock Exchange lead to heightened anxiety among the consumers of news and this further fuels the demand of new preference. This is evident by the jamming of the communication lines and servers transmitting news of such events accompanying the spurt in the anxiety of the consumers. The anxiety, thus, becomes the mediating variable between perceived novelty and the news preference. We formulate our fifth hypothesis as follows:

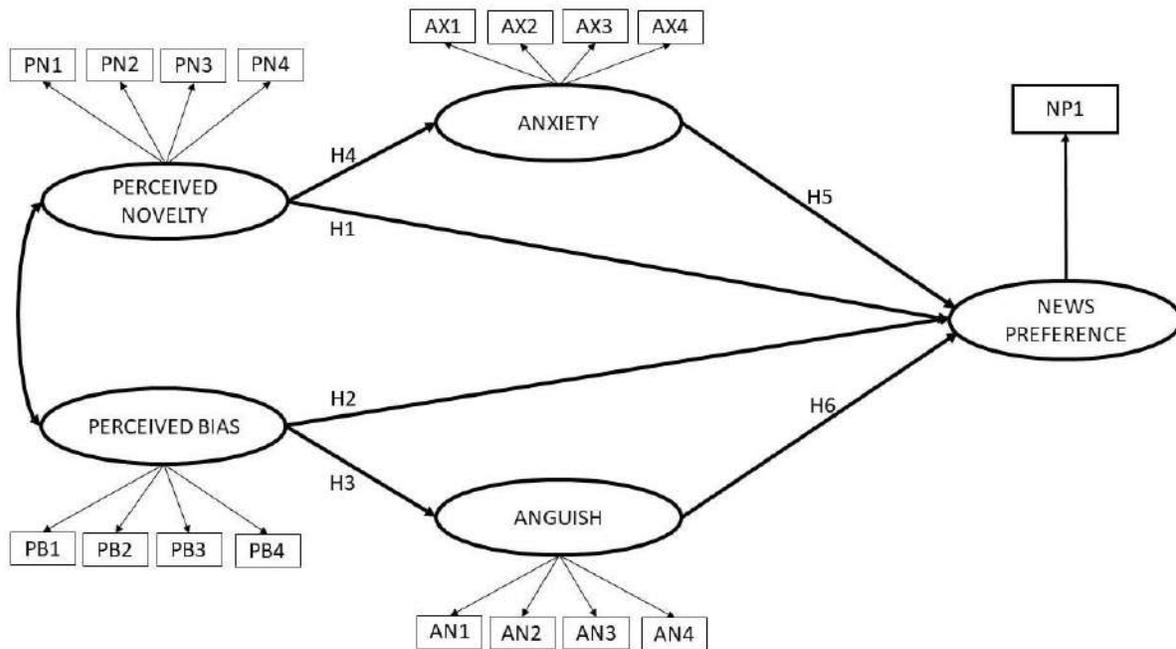
H5: The news preference arising from perceived novelty is mediated by anxiety.

Anger is the negative emotion which, when modified by the existing bias of the news consumers, might affect the subsequent demand for additional information. For example, fake news about innocuous polio vaccination having ulterior motives, mob lynching or some impending ordinance about sensitive issues such as reservations would create a surge in demand for additional corroborating or refuting information. We formulate the sixth hypothesis as follows:

H6: The news preference from perceived bias is mediated by the anger of the recipient.

The six hypotheses are presented in a conceptual structural model in figure 2.

Figure 2: A conceptual structural model



Research method

Sampling Unit, Sampling Process and Sample Size

As the study explores the preference of news and its determinants, it was decided to collect information from the graduate and postgraduate students of Devi Ahilya Vishwa Vidhyalaya (DAVV). These university students are relatively well informed young citizens and are likely to be a good cross-section representing the consumers of news. Individual students were taken as sampling units. Stratified random sampling was adopted as the sampling process. A total of 300 students, 100 each from the three faculties of law, management and arts were selected to take part in the survey and were added to three different Whatsapp groups for study. Data were collected between January 2019-February 2019.

Several thumb rules exist in the literature and statistical textbooks for determining the optimum sample size for factor analysis. Field (2009) suggests using a factor of 10-15 times the number of variables in the study. Habing (2003), on the other hand, relaxes the minimum number of respondents to at least five times the number of variables with the total sample size always exceeding 50 at least. In this study with 16 variables, the sample size of 300 is approximately 20 times the number of variables, which is adequate. The final sample size of 239 is approximately 15 times which is also adequate (Field, 2009).

Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A contained questions pertaining to demographic details while section two contained 16 Likert type questions measuring the predisposition, anger, anxiety and the subsequent choice of news. To have finer responses and to avoid the possibility of overestimation of the mean scores, the questionnaire in this study included forced choice questions with a seven point Likert scale. In this scale, 1 stands for most strongly disagree, 2 for strongly disagree, 3 for disagree, 4 for midpoint or can't say, 5 for agree, 6 for strongly agree and 7 for most strongly agree to the premise in the question item.

The survey was administered on a specially-created Whatsapp group where respondents were exposed to a set of six news stories via Whatsapp link. The tasks were ordered as follows. The participants were exposed to a news story and were then given a questionnaire to indicate their emotional responses, perceived novelty and perceived bias. They were also requested to indicate their subsequent news preferences following the exposure. The study employed six news stories, three each about novel issues and political situations which happened in the month of December 2018 or early January 2019. We included the news stories on the historic removal of CBI chief Alok Verma after indictment by Central Vigilance Commission, Imposition of President's rule in Jammu & Kashmir, Triple Talaq Bill passed by Lok Sabha, Citizenship Amendment Bill passed by Lok Sabha, PM Modi being conferred with the first ever Philip Kotler Presidential award and Congress returning to power in Madhya Pradesh after 15

years with Kamal Nath as Chief Minister. The procedure for each group required approximately 120 minutes. The demand for information following the exposure to a news item was measured by items that probed the respondents about their interest in reading or watching additional material. The participants were shown the caption of a randomly selected news clip and inquired if they were interested in viewing the news clip. Responses were marked on a seven-point Likert type scale with 1 (definitely no) to 7 (definitely yes).

Preliminary Testing of Data

The collected data is coded and fed into SPSS 21 software. A number of tests are applied to ascertain the suitability of the data for further statistical analysis as described below:

Missing/Incomplete Data

Out of the 300 responses collected, only 239 responses were found to be complete and usable in all respects. This translates to approximately 80% which is very good and is due to the controlled method in which the data was collected from the respondents.

For statistical analysis of data using parametric tests, the data must conform to the normality of data, homogeneity of variance, independence of observation and interval data (Field,2009), we carried out these tests, the results of which are presented below:

Test of Normality

The test of normality is a prerequisite for the data to be subjected to several parametric statistical procedures including factor analysis.

The normality of data was tested using the skewness and kurtosis values. West, Finch and Curran (1995) proposed a reference value of absolute skewness value of greater than 2 and a reference value of absolute kurtosis above 7 for substantial departure from normality. The data returned acceptable values of skewness and kurtosis.

Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Levene's test is applied for testing the homogeneity of variance. The significance levels are above 0.05, which confirmed the homogeneity of variance.

Independence of Observations

For this study, the data independence is confirmed by the fact that all respondents have completed the questionnaire individually and independently of other respondents.

Use of Interval Scale

For this study, the use of seven point Likert scale (1-7) confirms the data as interval level data.

Reliability Tests

Table 1 shows the measurement and descriptive statistics of the variables. Cronbach alpha for perceived novelty ($\alpha=0.78$), perceived bias ($\alpha=0.71$), anxiety ($\alpha=0.79$) and anger ($\alpha=0.73$) were all above 0.6. The average variance extracted for the four factors are 0.553 (perceived novelty), 0.479 (perceived bias), 0.512 (anxiety) and 0.637 (anger) respectively.

Validity Tests

The questionnaire was submitted to three professional journalists and two faculty members to ensure face and content validity. The purpose of testing the face validity is to assess whether the questions are clearly phrased in an easy to understand language and measure exactly what they purport to measure.

Multicollinearity Tests

The simplest method of detecting collinearity by checking the correlation matrix which is the starting point of factor analysis. Anomalously high correlations of over 0.90 indicates presence of a strong multicollinearity. Multicollinearity was measured by a recursive process of regressing each variable as dependent variable with other variables as independent variables. Tolerance was defined as the amount of variability of the selected independent variable not explained by the other independent variables. The tolerance thus computed was below the threshold of 0.10 for all variables. This cut-off value of tolerance corresponds to a multiple correlation coefficient of 0.95 [Hair et al. (2009)].

Factorability Tests

A high level of multicollinearity is not desirable, but some amount of multicollinearity is needed for factor analysis because the objective of the analysis is to ascertain interrelated sets of variables. The starting point of factor analysis is a diagnosis of the factorability of the intercorrelation matrix of variables. The correlations ranged between 0.30 – 0.80 and the partial correlations on the SPSS output returned values smaller than 0.5 rendering data suitable for performing factor analysis. The Bartlett test checks for the presence of non-identity matrix and was rejected indicating further suitability for factor analysis. The results of the tests conducted to assess factorability are presented as follows:

1. Inter-item correlations. A visual examination of the correlation matrix does not show any anomalously high (>0.90) value of correlation. Mid ranges for the correlations confirm the factorability.
2. Anti-image correlation matrix diagnosis- The diagonal values of the anti-image correlation matrix are all greater than 0.5 while the off-diagonal values are very small. This confirms the presence of a very good factor structure (Hair et al., 2009).

3. Measures of Sampling Adequacy (MSA): Sampling adequacy is tested using Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index. The data returns a KMO index of 0.865, which is greater than the threshold for excellent adequacy (Field, 2009).
4. Bartlett's sphericity test: The test returned a probability value smaller than 0.05 and ruled out the possibility of an identity matrix. The test results confirmed the factorability of the correlation matrix.

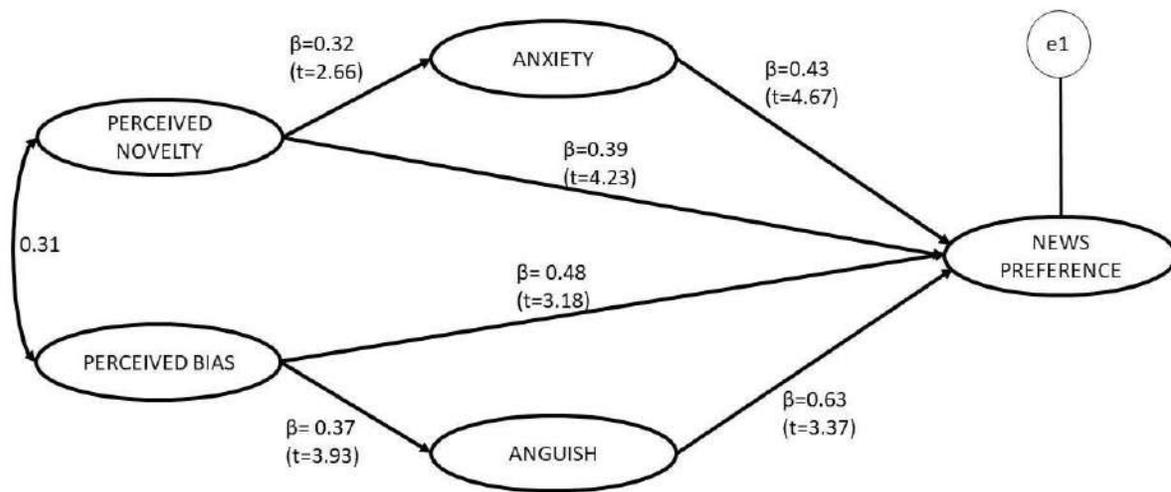
Table 1: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the measurement items

Code	Measurement Item	# Respondents	μ	σ	α	AVE
PN1	Information made me see the bigger picture	239	5.23	2.12	0.78	0.553
PN2	Is news to me	239				
PN3	Introduced a new perspective to my views	239				
PN4	Offered me a new perspective	239				
PB1	Portrayal of politicians was biased against them	239	5.26	2.93	0.71	0.479
PB2	The report was biased against the politician	239				
PB3	The reporting was not balanced.					
PB4	A major chunk of news story was unfavourable	239				
AX1	I am nervous	239	1.97	1.32	0.79	0.512
AX2	I am anxious	239				
AX3	I am tense	239				
AX4	I am worried	239				
AN1	I am irritated	239	1.59	1.09	0.73	0.637
AN2	I am angry	239				
AN3	I am aggravated	239				
AN4	I am furious	239				

Results

A total of 239 respondents completed the study out of which 81 (34%) were females. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 25 years old with a mean of 21.23 years and standard deviation (σ) of 2.85 years. The structural model was tested using SPSS 21 and AMOS 17 packages. The fitted model is presented in Figure 3. The regression coefficients are marked on the model. All the paths are significant at $p=0.0000$ level (Table 2).

Figure 3: Structural Model



The summary of the hypothesis testing is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Hypotheses Testing results

Hypothesis	β Coefficient	t value	P value	Result
H1: Perceived bias has a direct bearing on the news preference	0.39	4.23	0	Accepted
H2: Perceived novelty has a direct bearing on the news preference..	0.48	3.18	0	Accepted
H3: Perceived bias has a direct bearing on the anger of the news recipient.	0.37	3.93	0	Accepted
H4: Perceived novelty of a news item has a direct bearing on anxiety of the news recipient.	0.32	2.66	0	Accepted
H5: The news preference arising from perceived novelty is mediated by anxiety.	0.43	4.67	0	Accepted
H6: The news preference from perceived bias is mediated by the anger of the recipient.	0.63	3.37	0	Accepted

The factor model returned excellent fit indices. CMIN/df= 3.781 satisfies the ideal value of less than 5. Goodness of fit index (GFI) at 0.963, Normed fit index at 0.948, Relative Fit Index at 0.951, Incremental Fit index at 0.978 and Tucker Lewis Index at 0.965 all are above 0.95 which

indicates a very good fit. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) at 0.067 and Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) at 0.0466 further indicate a very good fit.

Discussion

In this study, the conceptual model assumed a causal relationship of the independent variables of perceived novelty and perceived bias on the dependent variable of news preference. This was postulated to understand the mechanism through which the causal variables directly or indirectly affect the outcome. Simultaneously, it was assumed that the news preference also is affected by the mediating variables of anxiety and anger. Judd and Kenny (1981) and Baron and Kenny (1986) have delineated the steps to correlate the causal variables with the outcome.

The causal variable was then correlated with the mediator which in turn was tested to affect the outcome variable. The regression equations were established to compute the direct and indirect effects of the causal variables. The direct effect of the perceived novelty was 0.39 whereas the indirect effect mediated through anxiety was 0.1376. Similarly, the direct effect of perceived bias was computed as 0.48 while the indirect effect mediated by the anger variable was 0.2331. The proportion of indirect to direct effect for the two mediating variables gives some idea of the relative importance of the mediation effect. For anxiety, the proportion of indirect to direct effect was 35.28 percent whereas for the anger it was 48.56 percent. As a mediating factor, the indirect effect of the negative emotion of anger was more pronounced.

All the hypotheses were accepted ($t > 2.58$). It was established that while perceived novelty and perceived bias have a direct effect on the choice of news reference by the consumer, anxiety and anger also have a direct bearing on the news choice. Further anger and anxiety suitably mediate the effect of the perceived novelty and perceived bias of the consumers.

A Sobel test was conducted to test whether the mediator variables carry the influence of the independent variables of anger and anxiety to the dependent variable of news preference (Preacher and Hayes, 2004). Sobel test is a test of assumption of a two tailed z test of the hypothesis that the mediated effect equals zero. Table 3 and 4 present the results of the Sobel test for the mediating effect of anger and anxiety. Also reported are two parallel tests, namely Aroian test and Goodman test for the same hypothesis. In all the cases the p value was found indicating significant mediating effects of the two variables (Chakraborty, Singh and Roy, 2019). As mentioned previously, anger elicits more negative emotions and has higher regression coefficients as compared to the emotions of anxiety. While selective exposure to news can have the deleterious effect of political polarization, it is also known that the similarly aligned media can promote higher and active political participation. (Stroud, 2011). The individual and mediating effect of the emotions namely, fear, joy, anxiety and anger on information-seeking behaviour are the future research areas to work on.

Table 3: Sobel's Test for Anxiety as Mediating Variable

Input		Test Statistic	Std. Error	P value
$\beta_4=0.32$	Sobel Test	2.31141	0.05953	0.02081*
$\beta_5=0.43$	Aroian Test	2.27241	0.06055	0.02306*
$s_4=0.1203$	Goodman Test	2.35248	0.05849	0.01865*
$s_5=0.09207$				

- Significant at $\alpha=0.05$

Table 4: Sobel's Test for Anger as the Mediating Variable

Input		Test Statistic	Std. Error	P value
$\beta_3=0.37$	Sobel Test	2.55867	0.0911	0.01051*
$\beta_6=0.63$	Aroian Test	2.51224	0.09279	0.01199*
$s_3=0.09414$	Goodman Test	2.60776	0.08938	0.00911*
$s_6=0.1869$				

- Significant at $\alpha=0.05$

Conclusion

The study has established causal factors driving the news preference of news consumers. We have established the mediating effects of discrete emotions (anger and anxiety) on the way consumers search for subsequent news items to either quell the anger or calm the anxiety about the news items. The regression factor for perceived bias (0.48) was 20 percent more than that of perceived novelty (0.39) indicating the greater importance attached to the perceived disposition bias of the consumers. The two nebulous starting points for most consumers were their perceived bias about an issue such as their political disposition towards a certain party or their propensity for the novelty of the news item such as alien ships visiting the Earth or the imminent possibility of drug discovery for COVID19.

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