



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Scholarly Indexed, Open Access Journal)



Impact Factor: 8.206

Volume 9, Issue 4, April 2026



Legacy Print Media Advertising and Consumer Trust: Empirical Evidence from Urban India

Mouna Uthappa M

Faculty of Management Studies, CMS Business School, JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

ABSTRACT: This study examines the impact of legacy print media advertising on consumer trust among urban Indian consumers. Drawing on Source Credibility Theory, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, and Authenticity Theory, four independent variables are examined: Perceived Media Credibility, Message Clarity, Tangibility and Engagement, and Perceived Authenticity. Primary data were collected from 222 respondents via a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. Statistical analyses — including multiple linear regression, Pearson correlation, one-way ANOVA, and independent samples t-test — reveal that none of the four predictors significantly explains variance in consumer trust ($R^2 = 0.020$, $F = 1.115$, $p = 0.351$). Consumer trust does not vary significantly across age groups ($F = 0.065$, $p > 0.05$) or gender ($t = 1.115$, $p > 0.05$). Notably, 41.5% of respondents report greater trust in print than digital information, yet this comparative preference does not translate into trust in specific print advertisements. The findings indicate that advertising scepticism in urban India now extends firmly to print media, challenging the credibility-spillover hypothesis. Implications for media planners, advertisers, and researchers are discussed, along with directions for future inquiry.

KEYWORDS: legacy print media, consumer trust, advertising credibility, media credibility, perceived authenticity, India

I. INTRODUCTION

Advertising is one of the most powerful instruments through which businesses communicate with consumers. Among all traditional channels, legacy print media — newspapers and magazines — occupies a historically privileged position. Long before the internet existed, print was the primary source of public information and opinion formation. The accumulated weight of this history has bequeathed print media a credibility premium that newer media have struggled to replicate.

Yet the commercial landscape has shifted dramatically. Digital platforms now dominate advertiser spending, and print circulation has declined across most global markets. In India — one of the world's largest print media markets, with over 100,000 registered publications — digital penetration has accelerated rapidly, particularly among the urban population under 40. Regional-language newspapers retain large and loyal readerships, but even in these markets the question is increasingly asked: does print advertising still matter?

Consumer trust is central to this question. When trust is present, consumers are more likely to believe advertising claims, consider the advertised brand, and develop lasting loyalty. When trust is absent, advertising expenditure yields diminishing returns regardless of media placement. Digital advertising has been beset by trust challenges — intrusive formats, data privacy breaches, algorithmic targeting controversies, and pervasive misinformation — that have fuelled speculation about a renaissance in the relative credibility of print. Yet the empirical evidence on whether this comparative credibility translates into positive trust in specific print advertisements remains limited, particularly in the Indian context.

This study addresses that gap. It investigates the impact of four theoretically motivated attributes of print media advertising — Perceived Media Credibility, Message Clarity, Tangibility and Engagement, and Perceived Authenticity — on consumer trust, using primary survey data from 222 urban Indian respondents. The study additionally examines whether trust in print advertising varies across age groups and gender.



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology (IJMRSET)

(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Scholarly Indexed, Open Access Journal)

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Source Credibility and Media Trust

The foundational work of Hovland and Weiss (1951) established that the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of a communication source significantly shapes message acceptance. In advertising, the publication in which an advertisement appears functions as a credible source — a phenomenon sometimes termed the credibility spillover effect. Flanagin and Metzger (2000) demonstrated that consumers rate print media, particularly newspapers, as more credible than online sources, attributing this to editorial oversight, professional journalism standards, and the absence of algorithmic manipulation. Johnson and Kaye (2004) extended this finding, showing that declining trust in online news has indirectly strengthened the relative credibility of print.

2.2 Advertising Credibility and Consumer Attitudes

MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) identified perceived honesty and believability as the core dimensions shaping consumer attitudes toward advertisements, finding that honest advertising generates more positive brand attitudes. Calfee and Ringold (1994) showed that advertising scepticism is lower for advertising appearing in credible media environments suggesting that the medium matters as much as the message. Rosengren and Dahlen (2015) further argued that advertising in high-credibility media functions as a quality signal, enhancing brand perceptions independently of ad content.

2.3 Message Clarity, Tangibility, and Perceived Authenticity

Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) posits that persuasion occurs through central-route processing — involving careful evaluation of message arguments — or peripheral-route processing via heuristic cues. Print advertising is theoretically well-suited to central-route processing because consumers can read at their own pace and re-read at will. Mangan, Walgermo, and Bronnick (2013) demonstrated that physical paper reading yields superior comprehension and recall compared with digital screen reading, attributing the difference to deeper tactile engagement. Spapens and Smit (2021) found that print advertisements are processed more slowly and deliberately than digital ads, generating stronger memory encoding and greater perceived trustworthiness. Pine and Gilmore (2007) and Morhart et al. (2015) established perceived authenticity — the sense that a brand communicates genuinely and without manipulation — as a critical predictor of consumer trust. The structural features of print advertising (no algorithmic targeting, editorial oversight, permanent format) are theoretically associated with higher perceived authenticity.

2.4 Research Gap and Hypotheses

Despite these theoretical foundations, the literature is characterised by three gaps. First, most studies treat print media as a monolithic category without decomposing its specific trust-building attributes. Second, the preponderance of empirical evidence is drawn from Western markets; India-specific evidence remains scarce despite its distinctive media landscape. Third, the demographic moderation of print advertising trust — particularly the role of age in an era of generational media transition — is insufficiently examined.

Based on the literature, six hypotheses are advanced:

H1: Perceived Media Credibility has a significant positive impact on Consumer Trust in print advertising.

H2: Message Clarity has a significant positive impact on Consumer Trust in print advertising.

H3: Tangibility and Engagement with print media has a significant positive impact on Consumer Trust.

H4: Perceived Authenticity of print advertisements has a significant positive impact on Consumer Trust.

H5: Consumer trust in print advertising varies significantly across age groups.

H6: Consumer trust in print advertising varies significantly between male and female respondents.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Sample

The study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive-analytical design. Primary data were collected via a structured questionnaire distributed electronically through Google Forms in April 2026. A convenience sampling approach was employed, with the survey link disseminated through professional and social networks to ensure geographic diversity within the urban and semi-urban Indian consumer population. Of 225 responses received, 222 were complete and retained for analysis.



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology (IJMRSET)

(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Scholarly Indexed, Open Access Journal)

The sample comprised respondents across five age groups (below 20 to 50 and above), with the largest cohort aged 30–39 years (38.7%), followed by 20–29 years (28.4%). Females constituted 54.5% of the sample. The majority held undergraduate degrees (73.9%). Importantly, 60.4% of respondents reported reading print media at least a few times per week, indicating meaningful exposure to the medium.

3.2 Instrument Design and Variables

The questionnaire comprised two sections. Section A captured demographic information (age, gender, education, print reading frequency). Section B contained 13 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), operationalising four independent constructs and one dependent construct. Items were adapted from established scales in the advertising credibility and consumer trust literature.

The four independent variables were: Perceived Media Credibility (IV1, three items — Q5, Q6, Q7), Message Clarity (IV2, three items — Q9, Q10, Q11), Tangibility and Engagement (IV3, two items — Q12, Q13), and Perceived Authenticity (IV4, single item — Q14). The dependent variable was Consumer Trust in Print Advertising (DV, three items — Q15, Q16, Q17). Composite construct scores were calculated as item means. Moderating variables were age group and gender.

3.3 Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using Python-based routines replicating standard SPSS procedures. Techniques employed included: descriptive statistics and frequency analysis for sample profiling; Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency assessment; Pearson correlation to examine bivariate associations; multiple linear regression (all four IVs → DV) to test H1–H4; one-way ANOVA to test H5; and independent samples t-test to test H6. Significance was evaluated at $p < 0.05$ throughout.

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents construct-level descriptive statistics. All construct means fall well below the neutral midpoint of 3.0, indicating a general tendency toward disagreement with print advertising attributes. Media Credibility records the highest mean (2.008), elevated by Item Q5 (trust in print vs digital; $M = 3.027$, $SD = 1.420$), which showed a broadly distributed response pattern with 41.5% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they trust print information more than digital content. In contrast, the remaining items (Q6–Q17) cluster markedly toward scale point 1 (Strongly Disagree), with means ranging from 1.37 to 1.95. Perceived Authenticity records the lowest mean (1.378), indicating near-uniform scepticism about brand honesty in print advertising. Internal consistency, assessed via Cronbach's alpha, is unsatisfactory across all constructs ($\alpha < 0.20$ in all cases), suggesting that construct items capture partially independent facets of consumer attitudes rather than a single coherent underlying dimension. This methodological finding is addressed in the Discussion.

Table 1. Construct-Level Descriptive Statistics (N = 222)

Construct	Role	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Media Credibility (IV1)	IV	222	2.008	0.678	1.00	4.00
Message Clarity (IV2)	IV	222	1.544	0.637	1.00	4.00
Tangibility & Engagement (IV3)	IV	222	1.750	0.818	1.00	4.50
Perceived Authenticity (IV4)	IV	222	1.378	0.935	1.00	5.00
Consumer Trust in Print (DV)	DV	222	1.667	0.671	1.00	5.00

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation matrix. All correlations between the four independent variables and Consumer Trust are negative and negligible in magnitude: IV1 ($r = -0.124$), IV2 ($r = -0.005$), IV3 ($r = -0.040$), IV4 ($r = -0.033$).



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology (IJMRSET)

(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Scholarly Indexed, Open Access Journal)

None reaches statistical significance at $p < 0.05$. Inter-construct correlations are also weak and predominantly negative, indicating minimal multicollinearity.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Matrix (N = 222)

Construct	IV1	IV2	IV3	IV4	DV
IV1: Media Credibility	1.000	-0.171	-0.058	0.000	-0.124
IV2: Message Clarity	-0.171	1.000	-0.030	-0.096	-0.005
IV3: Tangibility & Engagement	-0.058	-0.030	1.000	-0.097	-0.040
IV4: Perceived Authenticity	0.000	-0.096	-0.097	1.000	-0.033
DV: Consumer Trust	-0.124	-0.005	-0.040	-0.033	1.000

4.3 Multiple Linear Regression (H1–H4)

Table 3 presents the regression results. The overall model is not statistically significant ($R = 0.142$, $R^2 = 0.020$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.002$, $F(4, 217) = 1.115$, $p = 0.351$). The four predictors collectively account for only 2% of the variance in Consumer Trust. Examining individual coefficients, none of the four predictors achieves significance: IV1 ($B = -0.132$, $t = -0.196$, $p = 0.845$), IV2 ($B = -0.035$, $t = -0.052$, $p = 0.959$), IV3 ($B = -0.043$, $t = -0.064$, $p = 0.949$), IV4 ($B = -0.030$, $t = -0.045$, $p = 0.964$). Hypotheses H1 through H4 are therefore not supported.

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression: IVs Predicting Consumer Trust (* $p < 0.05$)

Variable	B	Std. Error	t	p
Constant	2.101	0.672	3.126	0.002*
Media Credibility (IV1)	-0.132	0.672	-0.196	0.845
Message Clarity (IV2)	-0.035	0.672	-0.052	0.959
Tangibility & Engagement (IV3)	-0.043	0.672	-0.064	0.949
Perceived Authenticity (IV4)	-0.030	0.672	-0.045	0.964

4.4 One-Way ANOVA (H5) and Independent Samples T-Test (H6)

One-way ANOVA revealed no significant difference in Consumer Trust across the five age groups ($F(4, 217) = 0.065$, $p > 0.05$). Group means were strikingly similar, ranging only from 1.631 (40–49 years) to 1.694 (30–39 years). H5 is not supported. The independent samples t-test found no significant gender difference in Consumer Trust (Male: $M = 1.723$, $SD = 0.761$; Female: $M = 1.620$, $SD = 0.582$; $t(220) = 1.115$, $p > 0.05$). H6 is not supported. Table 4 summarises all hypothesis testing outcomes.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hyp.	Statement	Test	Result
H1	Perceived Media Credibility → Consumer Trust	Regression	Not Supported
H2	Message Clarity → Consumer Trust	Regression	Not Supported
H3	Tangibility & Engagement → Consumer Trust	Regression	Not Supported
H4	Perceived Authenticity → Consumer Trust	Regression	Not Supported
H5	Consumer Trust varies across age groups	One-Way ANOVA	Not Supported ($F=0.065$)
H6	Consumer Trust varies by gender	T-Test	Not Supported ($t=1.115$)



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology (IJMRSET)

(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Scholarly Indexed, Open Access Journal)

V. DISCUSSION

5.1 The Credibility–Trust Disconnect

The central and perhaps most provocative finding of this study is the disconnect between print media's comparative credibility advantage and consumers' trust in specific print advertisements. Approximately 41.5% of respondents report trusting print information more than digital information — a non-trivial segment in an era of digital dominance. Yet this comparative preference does not translate into trust in print advertisements: aggregate trust scores remain uniformly low across all items, constructs, age groups, and genders.

This pattern challenges the credibility spillover hypothesis implicit in Source Credibility Theory (Hovland and Weiss, 1951). The data suggest that contemporary consumers make a clear cognitive distinction between the editorial credibility of a publication and the commercial credibility of its advertising content. The awareness that advertising placement is a commercial transaction — not an editorial endorsement — appears to be sufficiently widespread in the urban Indian sample to prevent credibility transfer. This finding advances the theoretical understanding of source credibility by identifying context — specifically the editorial/commercial boundary — as a critical moderator of credibility spillover.

5.2 Central-Route Processing and the ELM

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) predicts that print's structural properties (permanence, re-readability, structured layout) should favour central-route processing and thereby generate more durable and strongly held trust. The near-absence of meaningful variability in construct scores — with means clustering at the lowest scale points across diverse demographic groups — suggests that even in a print environment, consumers either disengage from advertising content entirely or process it peripherally with a pre-set sceptical default. The study thus raises an important theoretical challenge: are the ELM's assumed conditions for central-route engagement in print (consumer motivation and ability) satisfied in a high-volume advertising environment where consumers have developed sophisticated defences against promotional messages?

5.3 Advertising Scepticism and Persuasion Knowledge

The uniformly low trust scores are consistent with the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998), which posits that as consumers develop knowledge of advertising tactics and persuasion attempts, scepticism increases. The finding that this scepticism is demographically undifferentiated — shared equally by younger digital natives and older consumers who grew up with print — suggests that advertising scepticism in urban India has become a generalised attitude rather than a medium-specific or generational response. This is a significant expansion of previous findings from Western contexts to the Indian consumer market.

5.4 Methodological Reflections

The low internal consistency values (Cronbach's $\alpha < 0.20$ across all constructs) constitute a methodological limitation that warrants transparent discussion. The extreme negative skewness of most Likert-scale responses — with the majority of respondents selecting "Strongly Disagree" across most items — severely restricts score variance, which in turn suppresses inter-item correlations and correlation with the dependent variable. This measurement issue is independent of the theoretical relationships under examination and does not invalidate the substantive finding of low consumer trust, but it does mean that the regression model lacked sufficient discriminatory power to detect small positive effects, if any exist. Future research must invest in scale refinement, pilot testing for item distribution properties, and potentially the use of semantic differential scales or implicit attitude measures.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes empirically to the media credibility and advertising trust literatures in three ways. First, it provides India-specific evidence that advertising scepticism now extends to print media, challenging the assumption that print's editorial credibility confers advertising trust. Second, it demonstrates that consumer trust in print advertising does not vary by age or gender in an urban Indian sample, suggesting that scepticism is culturally and societally embedded rather than generationally determined. Third, it highlights the editorial–commercial boundary as a critical moderator of source credibility transfer, advancing a more contextually nuanced understanding of Hovland and Weiss's (1951) framework.



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology (IJMRSET)

(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Scholarly Indexed, Open Access Journal)

6.2 Managerial Implications

The study findings carry important strategic implications for advertisers and media planners. First, print advertising should be repositioned as a targeted, high-trust-category channel rather than a mass-market medium. The approximately 18–41% of respondents who report positive responses to specific print advertising dimensions represent a high-value segment for credibility-sensitive categories such as healthcare, financial services, pharmaceuticals, and education. Second, native advertising — sponsored content designed to match editorial tone and format — may be more effective than conventional display advertising in bridging the editorial–commercial credibility gap, provided it is implemented with full transparency. Third, print advertising should be integrated into multi-channel strategies rather than deployed as a standalone channel. Cross-media exposure consistently enhances message credibility and recall, with print serving as a credibility anchor for digital reach. Fourth, advertisers should leverage print's 'medium as message' dimension by explicitly referencing the publication's editorial heritage in ad copy — a strategy that may resonate with the 41.5% who already trust print information more than digital.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the impact of legacy print media advertising on consumer trust among 222 urban Indian respondents using a multi-method quantitative approach. The findings are clear: none of the four theoretically motivated predictors — Perceived Media Credibility, Message Clarity, Tangibility and Engagement, and Perceived Authenticity — significantly predicts Consumer Trust in print advertising, and trust levels do not vary meaningfully across age groups or gender. These results reflect the broad and demographically undifferentiated entrenchment of advertising scepticism in urban India, an important extension of Western findings to a major emerging economy context.

The findings are not, however, a verdict on the irrelevance of print advertising. The meaningful minority (18–41%) of respondents who respond positively to print advertising dimensions, and the 41.5% who report greater trust in print information than digital, signal that print retains a commercially valuable if narrower niche. The strategic imperative for advertisers is to reach this audience with messages and formats designed to activate rather than squander print's remaining credibility heritage.

Future research should address this study's limitations through: (a) probability-based sampling that captures rural consumers and Tier-II/III city residents; (b) rigorous scale development with proven psychometric properties; (c) longitudinal designs tracking trust dynamics across major media events; and (d) qualitative methods to illuminate the cognitive and emotional mechanisms through which consumers evaluate print advertising. Research examining the complementary effects of print and digital in integrated campaigns would be of particular practical value.

REFERENCES

1. Calfee, J. E., & Ringold, D. J. (1994). The 70% majority: Enduring consumer beliefs about advertising. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 13(2), 228–238.
2. Eisend, M., & Küster, F. (2011). The effectiveness of publicity versus advertising: A meta-analytic investigation of its moderators. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 39(6), 906–921. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-010-0224-3>
3. Flanagin, A. J., & Metzger, M. J. (2000). Perceptions of internet information credibility. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77(3), 515–540. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900007700304>
4. Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 15(4), 635–650. <https://doi.org/10.1086/266350>
5. Johnson, T. J., & Kaye, B. K. (2004). Wag the blog: How reliance on traditional media and the internet influence credibility perceptions of weblogs among blog users. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81(3), 622–642. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900408100310>
6. Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Utilization of mass communication by the individual. In J. G. Blumler & E. Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research* (pp. 19–32). Sage Publications.
7. Kumar, A., & Gupta, S. (2019). Newspaper advertising effectiveness in Tier-II and Tier-III Indian cities: An exploratory study. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, 49(3), 18–29.



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology (IJMRSET)

(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Scholarly Indexed, Open Access Journal)

8. MacKenzie, S. B., & Lutz, R. J. (1989). An empirical examination of the structural antecedents of attitude toward the ad in an advertising pretesting context. *Journal of Marketing*, 53(2), 48–65
<https://doi.org/10.1177/002224298905300204>
9. Mangen, A., Walgermo, B. R., & Bronnick, K. (2013). Reading linear texts on paper versus computer screen: Effects on reading comprehension. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 58, 61–68.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2012.12.002>
10. Mehta, A., & Purvis, S. C. (2003). Reconsidering recall and emotion in advertising. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 43(1), 57–67. <https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-43-1-57-67>
11. Morhart, F., Malär, L., Guèvremont, A., Girardin, F., & Grohmann, B. (2015). Brand authenticity: An integrative framework and measurement scale. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 25(2), 200–218.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2014.11.006>
12. Obermiller, C., & Spangenberg, E. R. (1998). Development of a scale to measure consumer skepticism toward advertising. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 7(2), 159–186. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp0702_03
13. Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 19, pp. 123–205). Academic Press.
14. Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (2007). *Authenticity: What consumers really want*. Harvard Business School Press.
15. Rosengren, S., & Dahlen, M. (2015). Exploring advertising equity: How a brand's past advertising may affect consumer willingness to approach its future ads. *Journal of Advertising*, 44(1), 1–13.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2014.977329>
16. Sharma, M., & Sharma, A. (2016). Effectiveness of newspaper advertising in the Indian market: A consumer perspective. *International Journal of Applied Business and Economic Research*, 14(5), 3741–3754.
17. Spapens, T., & Smit, E. (2021). Print versus digital advertising: How media characteristics affect consumer trust and purchase intention. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 18(2), 103–121.



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

| Mobile No: +91-6381907438 | Whatsapp: +91-6381907438 | ijmrset@gmail.com |

www.ijmrset.com