THE EFFECT OF PARTISAN MEDIA AND NEWS SLANT ON AMERICANS' PERCEPTION OF CHINA AND CHINESE PRODUCTS: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY IN AN ONLINE NEWS ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

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Research in country image has received both kudos and questioning in the field of international marketing. China’s country image is one of the most intriguing and controversial topics. Based on the three components (i.e., cognitive, affective, and conative) of country image, this study analyzed China’s image in terms of country beliefs, people affect, desired interaction as well as product beliefs and purchase intention.

By integrating priming with the Heuristic-Systematic Model, this research used a 2x2 pretest-posttest experimental factorial design to measure changes in Americans’ perception of China’s image after their exposure to the news stimuli about China from a partisan news website. Two manipulated factors were media partisanship (congruent or incongruent partisan media) and news slant (positive or negative coverage of China). The results did not demonstrate any priming effect of news coverage. However, media partisanship had a significant influence on country beliefs and purchase intention related to China. Significant interaction effects between news slant and media partisanship on country beliefs and desired interaction were also found. In addition, people perceived a congruent partisan media source as more credible than an incongruent source, but are more willing to like and share a positive news article about China than a negative one on social media.

The results advocated a multidimensional approach to country image research and a refined view of news priming effects by taking the heuristic of media source into account. Implications on news media and international marketing were also discussed.
Dedicated to my parents and sister for their endless love, understanding, and support while I am pursuing my PhD in America
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

With the accelerating pace of globalization, the political, economic, and cultural exchanges between different countries are becoming more and more active. Two largest economies in the world, U.S. and China, are also striving to strengthen their ties in various fields including foreign trade, cultural exchanges, business cooperation, and others. Along with increasingly frequent Sino-American interactions, unprecedented changes are taking place. On one hand, starting from the economic reform and opening-up policy in 1978, China successfully transformed from planned economy to market-based economy and brought about booming retailing businesses, huge foreign investments, and thriving manufacturing industry. With its enhanced manufacturing facilities and attractive cheap labor, China has become an outsourcing hotspot for global corporations leading to its export/GDP ratio being around 35% or even higher, in comparison with 8% for the U.S. and 13% for India (Koopman, Wang, & Wei, 2008). As a result, products with the “made in China” label have flooded into the U.S. market despite the fact that many American citizens may have very little or no knowledge about this faraway mystic land in the east called China as well as its geography, history, and culture. On the other hand, the advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in recent years has not only facilitated the ongoing process of globalization, but is also revolutionizing the ways how general Americans consume news and acquire information about foreign countries and international issues.

One significant role information and communication technologies play is a convenient and real-time source of information and news about China. Traced back to the Usenet groups in the mid-1990s (Cohen, 2002), the Internet, as an emerging news medium, has gained its
competitive edge over print news with an overload of information available online (Cao & Li, 2006), decreased cost (Varian, Farrell, & Shapiro, 2004), and enhanced user control (Lin & Salwen, 2006). Since then, online news has been competing with the traditional newspaper business model and continued to gain audiences thanks to the fast growth of Internet users, high-speed bandwidth connection penetrations, and wider coverage of wireless connectivity (Boczkowski, 2004; Savage & Waldman, 2005; Weber & Monge, 2011). A longitudinal study of news consumption (Pew Research Center, 2012) showed that the percentages of Americans who said they used traditional news media (i.e., radio, TV, and newspaper) as a news source yesterday experienced a dramatic decline from 1991 to 2012. Nevertheless, the proportion of Americans who said they read online/mobile news yesterday has jumped from 24% in 2004 to 39% in 2012. A latest report (Newman, 2015) released by Reuters Institute revealed two trends in news consumption. First, mobile devices including smartphones and tablets are surpassing desktop computers as the main devices for browsing online news as about two-thirds of smartphone users in U.K., U.S., and Japan used their cellphones to get news every week. Second, social media, Facebook in particular, are playing an increasingly influential role in the seeking, discussing, and sharing of news.

Therefore, aside from traditional news outlets such as newspapers, TV, and radio, general Americans have two alternative sources from which they can gain information and form their impression about China: one is their experience of purchasing and using made-in-China products; the other is online news media’s coverage about China. The current study concentrated on the representation of China’s country image by U.S. online news media and its consequences.
China’s Image in an American Context

China’s country image is probably one of the most intriguing and controversial topics in the field of international marketing and intercultural communication. This is not only due to the complexity of this issue, but is also because of the dramatic shifts of China’s international profile during the past five decades. The ever-changing nature of China’s profile is consistent with previous literature arguing that the image of a country does not stay stable but fluctuates throughout the years (Dornoff, Tankersley, & White, 1974; Nagashima, 1977; Reierson, 1967). Since China’s image has witnessed its ups and downs on the international stage, a brief overview of the ebbs and flows of China’s image across the American media is necessary before we proceed with the study.

For a long time in the American history, China has never been a main concern in the U.S. media agenda and a majority of American citizens have very little knowledge about China. This situation started to change after World War II when the political and military tension between the United States and the Soviet Union escalated during the Cold War. China, as an ally of the Soviet Union and a member in the socialist camp, was simplistically framed as a rival and threat by mainstream U.S. media (Mann, 1999). Due to China’s war-ravaged struggling economy and Chinese government’s totalitarian governing, news stories about China during and right after the Cold War were predominantly negative, centering on issues such as the ruling of the Chinese Communist Party, corruption of government officials, poverty and crises, Cultural Revolution as well as many other economic and social problems (Bennett & Edelman, 1985; Gans, 1980; Goodman, 1999).

Regardless of many flaws on China’s international image, the Chinese government launched a historic economic reform and opened its gate to the outside world in 1978, which
paved the way for the nation’s successful transition from planned economy to free-market economy (Wei & Liu, 2002). Around the same period, China’s diplomatic relations expanded globally: it was admitted to the United Nations in 1971 and then President Nixon visited China in 1972; in 1978, China was recognized by the United States and the two countries soon established reciprocal trade relations (De Boer, 1980). This change has brought up massive economic, social, and cultural changes at an unprecedented scale and pace in the Chinese society, generating more positive news coverage about China in the western news media than ever. In addition, the Chinese government has spent much effort to improve its relations with major superpowers including the United States with a shifted emphasis from international propaganda to public diplomacy, which has demonstrated some positive effects in boosting China’s international profile (Chang & Lin, 2014). As a result, public opinion about China started to change “in the United States during the period 1967-1979 from emphatically negative to a positive attitude” (De Boer, 1980, p. 267). Since then, the mainstream U.S. media have begun to report China from an increasingly dynamic perspective, depicting it as a country full of hopes and opportunities yet still carrying many social issues. A large quantity of positive news about China focused on its rapid economic growth, development in science and technology, and rich cultural heritage, traditional values and philosophy, emphasis on education, and others. Major events, such as China’s entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, hosting Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 and Shanghai Expo in 2010, have given more positive exposure of China to American audiences and elevated China’s profile as a rising giant who is ready to embrace the world (Chen, 2012).

Despite the fact that China has improved her image greatly on the international stage, unfavorable news stories about China have never stopped emerging and in some periods became
even more dominant than the favorable ones. Negative news coverage of China can be attributed to the following five major issues. First, because the Chinese Communist Party and China’s internal political structure are contradictory to Americans’ political ideology, issues concerning human rights and freedom of speech in China keep feeding western news agencies. Being a single-party state and lacking a genuine election system, China remains as the biggest and easiest target of criticism for its authoritarian political structure (O’Brien & Li, 2000) and is oftentimes compared with its totalitarian neighbor, North Korea. Reports about how the Chinese government treated political dissidents and about its pervasive control of mass media have detracted greatly from the country’s appeal. In recent years, the country’s Internet censorship along with the implementation of the “Great Firewall of China,” as demonstrated in the Hong Kong pro-democracy protest (Park, 2014), showed that the government’s control of speech has never loosened. Second, a series of social and economic issues remained unresolved in China, including overpopulation, skyrocketing housing prices, food safety, wealth imbalance, corruption, and so on. In particular, the poor environment in Chinese factories for well-known U.S. corporations such as Apple Inc. as well as its sub-contractor Foxconn Technology Group (Lee, 2014) has sparked heated debate over the substandard living and working conditions in China and raised the American media’s concern about how much China’s economic growth has contributed to the enhancement of life quality among ordinary Chinese citizens. Third, with a large portion of made-in-China products flooding into the U.S. market, Chinese products gradually gained its name for being extraordinarily cheap in price. As Han and Wang (2012) argued, if it were not for the safety scandals, Chinese products would have represented value for money, or at least average quality at low cost. However, negative news about Chinese products, such as food safety, has tainted Chinese product’s image to a great extent. Fourth, a series of
environmental issues in China have gotten exposed in the U.S. media, including industrial pollution, electronic waste dump, and poor water and air quality. For example, only three of the 74 cities in China have managed to meet the minimum air quality standards in 2014 (Wong, 2014). Fifth, China has been well-known for its tolerance for piracy of intellectual property and as a land generating cheap knock-offs (Rapoza, 2012). Consequently, Chinese people are often accused for lacking originality in creative work. This situation, however, is changing with the Chinese government launching a massive anti-piracy crusade and copyright campaign in recent years (Hui & Fleury, 2015).

Although the U.S. media have been delivering a mixed package of news coverage of China, negative reports about China are still more salient than positive ones, which may have conveyed a more negative than neutral image of China as a foreign country. A survey report (Kohut, 2007) showed that the percentage of U.S. citizens holding favorable opinions about China remained relatively stable, ranging from 42% to 52% in the years of 2005, 2006, and 2007. However, a poll done by BBC (BBC Poll, 2013) indicated that China’s country image has sunk to the lowest point in 2012 after improving for several years since 2005, and a latest Pew Research report (2013) also showed that China’s favorability dropped to 37%. Therefore, it is fair to say that the Chinese government and corporations still have much to do with China’s image if they wish to improve the relationship with the U.S. and expand their market in North America with China as a brand. Many countries have set good examples for China in branding their national identities in the global market. Besides Germany’s engineering and France’s luxury goods and fashion products, Japan has successfully branded itself as a reputed manufacturer of affordable quality automobiles (such as Honda and Toyota), and South Korea has also established its national brand for innovative electronic devices (such as Samsung and
Partisan Media and China

Partisan media, as a popular channel of transmitting important public information about domestic and international issues, may have played an indispensable role in shaping Americans’ opinions or attitudes concerning foreign countries. Since American democracy is built upon the two-party electoral system between Democrats and Republicans, discrepancies often submerge between the two partisan groups when there is a public debate related to foreign policies. For example, Democrats have more favorable opinions about foreign countries including Cuba, China, Egypt, Mexico but Republicans are more positive than Democrats towards only a few countries like Israel (Newport & Himelfarb, 2013). Since these discrepancies could possibly lead to varying inclinations in media coverage of China, a close examination of China’s country image under an American partisan media context would be an intriguing and fresh perspective.

Prior to studying China’s representation in the U.S. partisan media, it is necessary to briefly review the evolving perception of China among the U.S. partisans in the past few years. Partisans’ attitudes towards China have experienced some dramatic changes in the American history. According to a poll conducted by Gallup (Newport & Himelfarb, 2013), Republicans and Democrats viewed China similarly in 2005 with 40% Republicans and 50% Democrats holding a positive view about China. Nevertheless, a 2013 poll (Newport & Himelfarb, 2013) showed that while the percentage of Democrats (52%) viewing China positively has stayed stable, Republicans’ views about China are becoming more negative with only 32% holding favorable opinions about China. Despite the changing attitudes towards China between two
partisan populations, criticism of China has been considered “perennial and bipartisan.”

Although China was never a central issue in the U.S. partisans’ media agenda, it has been a recurring theme in the U.S. party politics, especially during the presidential campaign seasons. As a matter of fact, most U.S. presidential candidates, either Republican or Democratic, had lambasted China as a campaign strategy, including Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama (Dorning, 2015). Prior to the upcoming 2016 presidential election, not only Republican candidates such as Donald Trump attacked China in different occasions (e.g., Dwyer, 2015; Giacomo, 2015), but Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton also criticized China for issues like women’s rights (Merica, 2015). Hillary Clinton even remarked that she was “hunting the Chinese” when addressing the issue of climate change (Rhodan & White, 2015). The China bashing continued to escalate during the 2016 presidential primaries as Donald Trump accused China of “raping America” financially. Democratic candidate Bernie Sanders also called China a currency manipulator and called for boycott of free trade with Beijing (Baker, 2015; Steil & Smith, 2016), which is ironically “reminiscent of Republican candidate Mitt Romney’s stance on Chinese financial policy during the 2012 Presidential campaign” (Baker, 2015). Therefore, as divergent as Republicans and Democrats are in their political views, they seem to be able to find some common ground in the issue of China.

As far as major U.S. news agencies are concerned, three main areas related to China have been the media’s focus, i.e., the economy, society, and politics. Compared to the U.S. news media 10 years ago, reports of China nowadays are becoming more diversified and objective, which may carry either an approving or disapproving tone depending on the specific issue. Despite the increasingly balanced reporting, China bashing stays as a prevalent phenomenon in the Western mainstream media (Terrell, 1996). Liberal and conservative media (such as Fox
News and MSNBC) in the U.S. are no exception, sharing many similarities with other less partisan or nonpartisan media outlets (such as Yahoo News, BBC, and Reuters) in their coverage of China. For China’s economy, most negative news is about China taking away job opportunities from America and posing a threat to the U.S. economy and most positive news is about China’s booming economic growth and being a huge potential market for American businesses. For the Chinese society, more news covers various social problems (such as food safety, environmental pollution, speech/Internet censorship, and poverty) but some news also presents China’s bright future in terms of rapid infrastructure development and technological advancement. For China’s politics, most news appearing in headlines is negative, talking about corruption and malpractices in the Chinese bureaucratic system, the Chinese government’s mistreat of political dissidents, and China’s territorial disputes with neighboring countries.

Asides from conservative media outlets’ China bashing, relatively liberal media outlets such as CNN have also lambasted China harshly in their news coverage. One example is CNN host Jack Cafferty described the Chinese government as “a bunch of goons and thugs” and Chinese products as “junk” on a political program in 2008, which prompted a call for boycott of CNN and an angry demand for an apology in the Chinese community (Yardley, 2008). In this sense, although attitudes towards China can be varied in some issues between liberal and conservative media, it is hardly a dividing central issue that would stimulate a tit-for-tat debate across the U.S. partisan media. It would be interesting to find out how media partisanship could affect people’s judgment of news coverage about a foreign country as an underlying heuristic since very few studies have incorporated the media characteristic of partisanship in analyzing the country image of China.
Theoretical Significance

This study may contribute to the substantial but somewhat unbalanced literature of country image research by providing a few new perspectives from which country image has been insufficiently examined. The majority of previous studies have concentrated either on the formation, dimensions, and measurements of country image (e.g. Cattin, Jolibert, & Lohnes, 1982; Han & Terpstra, 1988; Lala, Allred, & Chakraborty, 2009; Narayana, 1981) or on the preexisting country image’s effect on people’s evaluation of products and other affective or normative results (e.g. Giraldi & Ikeda, 2009; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1993; Percy, 1993; Zaichkowsky & Vipat, 1993). Several studies probed the potential factors that could influence country image by using either qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews (Gotsi, Lopezb, & Andriopoulos, 2011) and case study (Amine & Chao, 2005; Rubini, Motta, & Tommaso, 2013), or survey method (Auruskeviciene, Pundziene, Skudiene, Gripsrud, Nes, & Olsson, 2010; Ganideh, 2012). Among the few country image studies that used experiments or quasi-experiments, most of them treated country image as an independent variable by analyzing its effects on product evaluation (Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2013; Schooler & Wildt, 1968), brand judgment (Liu & Johnson, 2005), brand equity (Hamzaoui-Essoussi, Merunka, & Bartikowski, 2011), compromise and attraction effects (Chuang & Yen, 2007), and conative responses (Brijs, Bloemer, & Kasper, 2011). Nevertheless, these studies are insufficient for scholars who intend to deepen their understanding of media’s priming effect on country image. Since an experiment is the most desirable approach to test a direct causal relationship between two factors (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006), experimental studies investigating the relationship between mass media propaganda and its resulting country image are in great demand and such research targeting at American people’s perception of China and Chinese products are especially scarce. A rare
experiment by Han and Wang (2012) examined how valences of news frames may affect subjects’ perception of the product-country image of “made in China.” Nevertheless, their study only focused on the traditional news media. With the fast growing online news media, it is worthwhile to find out whether online news media will have the same or even greater impact on audience’s perception of a foreign country.

The current study aimed at extending the analysis of media effects on people’s perception of country image to the digital news landscape. By analyzing how people’s impression about a country can be manipulated by online news coverage within a short time frame, it attempted to investigate the mechanism of media effects as advocated by the widely applied priming theory. Regardless of the abundance of research in priming, this study has its specific significance as follows.

First, there is still a great demand for more experiments to examine the priming effect in mass media so as to clarify the ambiguity of this issue. The priming theory was first invented by psychologists as a theory of human cognition based on the network models of memory (Collins & Loftus, 1975) and later introduced into the field of mass media research as a second phase of agenda-setting (Iyengar & Ottati, 1994; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). However, as a mass media theory, priming studies have been delivering inconsistent results. For example, Iyengar and Kinder (1987) claimed priming as “a robust effect” (p. 72) and believed that cable networks can use newscasts to highlight the salience of certain issues as main criteria or standards for evaluating political figures and thereafter influence people’s judgment of presidential candidates. Despite their strong belief, their experiments (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) delivered mixed support, providing evidence for strong priming effects only in some issues. But effects in other issues, such as unemployment, were not as “robust” as they had expected. Other scholars’ studies (e.g.,
Bizer & Petty, 2005; Carpentier, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2008) also delivered mixed findings, calling for more detailed investigation of the effect pattern of mass media priming.

Second, past studies of priming have clustered around the field of traditional mass media, primarily focusing on political communication and other topics. Since the priming theory was born before the rise of digital media, it is no surprise that a majority of literature has grown within the traditional mass media landscape. The traditional media channels examined by media scholars are diverse, ranging from magazines (Walker, 2013), video clips (Coyne, Linder, Nelson, & Gentile, 2012; Langley, O’Neal, Craig, & Yost, 1992), video games (Dill & Burgess, 2012; Yao, Mahood, & Linz, 2010; Yoo & Pena, 2011), and movies (Kendrick, 2010) to TV news (Mastro, Lapinski, Kopacz, & Behm-Morawitz, 2009), commercials (Harris, Bargh, & Brownell, 2009), prime-time TV dramas (Holbrook & Hill, 2005) and late-night comedy (Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005). Priming effect in the digital media and social media, however, remains a fresh ground and deserves a full-scale systematic investigation. Furthermore, many priming researchers have been consistently enthusiastic about the priming effect in the political news agenda. For instance, multiple studies have indicated that excessive exposure to certain issues in news can influence the criteria used by individuals to assess political leaders (e.g., Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Pan & Kosicki, 1997). Other researchers also tried to examine priming related to gender stereotypes (e.g., Roberts & Gettman, 2004; Yao et al., 2010; Yu, Yang, Lu, & Yan, 2014), race and racial perception (Domke, 2001; Mastro et al., 2009; Valentino, Hutchings, & White, 2002), health communication (Ashikali & Dittmar, 2011; Rose, Chrisler, & Couture, 2008). Nevertheless, priming on country image in the context of
international marketing has not been a focus for either mass media researchers or international marketing scholars.

Third, in an attempt to combine the priming theory that addresses information-accessibility with the heuristic-system model that address information-processing, this study expected to overcome the priming theory’s limitation in practicality. It is undeniable that priming has its weakness in that this theory of information accessibility is only capable of dealing with the activation of a single informational cue while, in real life, news readers are most likely to be exposed to multiple cues including news content and media source characteristics. The inclusion of the Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM) may help maximize the priming theory’s explaining power by compensating for its single-route limitation. Information processing models such as HSM (Zuckerman & Chaiken, 1998) suggested that people’s judgment of country image was not only dependent on the systematic cues of the content provided by the news article, but was also affected by different heuristic cues of the media source that offered the coverage. Relevant research has indicated that partisan media, as an increasingly popular outlet for American news readers, are causing a serious tendency of selective exposure (Lavine, Lodge, Polichak, & Taber, 2002; Rickert, 1998) and group polarization (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Jamieson & Cappella, 2008). If these effects of partisan media are real, we may predict that news readers will perceive the source credibility, news accuracy, and news bias of a partisan news outlet differently, depending on its congruency with audiences’ partisanship. Nonetheless, even fewer studies have integrated the heuristic of media source’s characteristics into analysis to explore the possible moderating effect of media source on news coverage’s priming effect. This study aimed at combining the priming effect of news
coverage and the moderating effect of media heuristic, which could provide a deeper understanding of the synergy of news content priming and media source heuristics.

Meaning for Media Industry and International Business

This study has its significance for the industry in that it is conducive to a better comprehension of the dynamics between mass media and country image for international business researchers and marketers. Although there has been an enormous quantity of research regarding the construct of country image and country-of-origin effect, this study will still offer some fresh aspects that have not been sufficiently explored.

First, there has been a relative shortage of research investigating how U.S. online news may affect China’s country image among the general Americans. China was never a major concern for country image researchers as previous literature has been mostly concerned with products from developed economies (e.g., Gürhan-Canli & Maheswaran, 2000; Laroche, Papadopoulos, Heslop, & Mourali, 2005; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1996). Even though more studies of China’s image were conducted in recent years, a majority of them treated China’s image as a relatively stable predictor and analyzed how it factors in consumers’ decision-making process concerning made-in-China products. This type of research does not suffice in an era when a large number of Chinese companies and businessmen are eager to obtain a foothold in the international market. As Jerry Berkowitz of Jerry Berkowitz Consulting has said, "The 'Made in China' brand is now-literally-fatally tarnished, and it will take a Herculean effort by the government of China to step out from behind their self-imposed eight ball and repolish their image as a provider of cheap labor. Until that time, consumers will look for the 'Made in China' moniker … and will shun it" (Williams, 2007). It was not surprising that the Chinese computer
company Lenovo had to downplay its Chinese heritage during its strategic international campaign as a 2008 Beijing Olympics sponsor (Clifford, 2008). Since Chinese goods are constantly stuck with the dilemma of being recognized as cheap in price and inferior in quality, it is a burning issue for Chinese enterprises and marketers to find a way to improve the profile of China. Nevertheless, aside from China, many developed countries with a good reputation in technology, innovation, and product quality have faced similar problems. A recent example is Germany, a country renowned for its reliable advanced engineering technology. In November 2015, the German automobile manufacturer Volkswagen admitted that the company understated the fuel usage and CO2 emission of 800,000 automobiles sold in Europe (The VW Diesel Crisis, 2015). The VW scandal led to the evaporation of 24 billion euros off Volkswagen’s stock value. Although no report has been found on the VW scandal’s impact on Germany’s country image, it is possible that this news could potentially tarnish Germany’s positive image among American consumers and may even jeopardize its well-established automobile market in the U.S.

Compared to Germany, China is a newcomer that has not found its own orientation in the American market yet, which will make the repairing of China’s country image even harder and longer. Such a situation calls for more studies aiming at those factors that would potentially enhance China’s country image, either internally from a Chinese government’s perspective or externally from a Western media’s perspective.

Second, this study may offer useful advice for international marketers on how to resort to digital media channels for country image campaigns. Repairing a tainted country image is a huge long-term project that may take decades at the expense of multiple resources. If marketers and advertisers hope to find the most efficient way to maximize the positive impact and minimize the negative effect, two questions need to be answered, i.e., which media platform is
more efficient (e.g., traditional or digital media) and what factors may moderate the specific media’s impact. With a large portion of U.S. news media transitioning to the cyberspace, it is yet to find out whether the emergent online news platforms will overshadow traditional news media’s impact or suffer from the perceived lower credibility. Contrary to the stereotypical belief that online news is less credible than traditional news, Flanagin and Metzger (2000) discovered that people consider online information as credible as information obtained from TV, radio, and magazines, although newspapers still have a higher credibility rating than Internet sources. Aside from the possible underrated credibility of online media, international marketers should also pay more attention to online news, merely because of its large reach of younger audiences. Since younger online news users are the current and future target population of campaigns and advertising, their opinions and attitudes will most likely represent or even determine the trend of how a foreign country will be perceived in the next ten to twenty years. Several scholars have just begun to examine the potential factors affecting online news’s credibility such as website design sophistication (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007) and the tone and political ideology of a following blog commentary (Thorson, Vraga, & Ekdale, 2010). With the scarcity of research in this field, this study is meaningful in that it may provide some explorative findings regarding how online news media impact people’s perception of China based on the way audiences use digital media and perceive relevant media characteristics.

Third, among the few attempts to analyze the effects of news reports about a foreign country’s image in a partisan media environment, this study provides a unique perspective for international marketing by highlighting the importance of understanding and adapting to the American domestic political culture. It has been suggested that media partisanship may influence the way traditional news consumers navigate, choose, and read news (Sears &
Freedman, 1967). In a political context, it is phrased as “the tendency to craft an information environment that reflects one’s political beliefs” (Garrett, 2009b, p. 677). This tendency is expected to peak in the vast digital territory due to online media’s high level of interactivity. However, this “selective exposure” effect is still under debate as Garrett’s (2009a) study gave no evidence that internet users will avoid news stories that contain information with which they disagree. Furthermore, prior research suggested that media partisanship may affect the perceived credibility of media source as well as the fairness, bias, and accuracy of news coverage from a particular source (Choi, Watt, & Lynch, 2006; Domke, Watts, Shah, & Fan, 1999; Thorson et al., 2010). Yet previous findings were largely based on partisan-relevant issues when asking subjects to evaluate source credibility. This study stepped away from partisan-sensitive issues and instead examined a less partisan-relevant but more business-related issue, i.e., the perception of China as well as its consequences in the U.S. market. Its findings hopefully will offer some insight into how international businesses can utilize American partisan media to optimize the image of a country and its products.
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary goal of this study is to investigate the priming effect of U.S. online media’s news coverage about China on Americans’ perception of China’s country image as well as their willingness to buy Chinese products. Since the political partisanship of a news provider is such a salient feature in the U.S. news industry, it may potentially influence the way how Americans perceive the media’s source credibility, news bias and reach, resulting in a different attitude towards China. Therefore, the current research took into consideration both the news article’s slant and media source’s partisanship in an effort to explore the main effects of each factor as well as any possible interaction effects between them. Prior to the construction of theoretical framework, key concepts including country image and media partisanship will be thoroughly reviewed. As for the theoretical framework, a comprehensive overview of the priming theory and heuristic-systematic model (HSM) is necessary to form a general guideline for the whole experimental design and to pave the way for the development of research questions and hypotheses.

Country Image

Country image is an important construct in international marketing and public relations studies with relevant research that can be traced back more than four decades. Studies of country image originated from scholars’ interest in a product’s “country of origin.” As one of the most popular research topics in international marketing, country of origin has generated more than 500 publications since the 1950s (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2006). The concept “country-of-origin” was first studied by Nagashima (1970), who defined the country-of-origin image as “the picture, the
reputation, the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products of a specific
country” (p. 68). Nagashima (1970) further argued that the image attached to country-of-origin
is a comprehensive construct with variables including representative products, national
characteristics, economic and political background, history, and traditions. With more and more
research contributed to country-of-origin research, many marketing and communication scholars
have tried to modify and enrich its definition by making this term’s dimension more inclusive
and sophisticated. As a consequence, previous literature in this topic appears divergent in
advocating what country-of-origin stands for, leading to confusion and debate in the
interpretation of all prior findings (e.g., Laroche et al., 2005; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009). It
is necessary to sort out all the major definitions and operationalizations related to country-of-
origin and country image.

Conceptualization of Country Image

In order to approach country image in a scientific way, the first and foremost step is to
clarify what country-of-origin (CoO) refers to. After World War I, the Allies required German
products to be labeled country-of-origin marks so that consumers in these countries can avoid
products from their former enemy (Morello, 1984). Therefore, early scholars (e.g., Schooler,
1965; Schooler & Wildt, 1968; Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Nagashima, 1970; Peterson & Jolibert,
1995) believed that a product origin is about the “made in …” product label, mainly standing for
the country where the manufacturing was done. This is probably the most widely accepted
definition of CoO because the “Made in …” label has been used to indicate product origins for
the last 100 years (Morello, 1984). However, this narrow definition is facing more and more
questionings and challenges as a large number of multinational corporations are outsourcing
different portions of their production to multiple foreign countries, especially to the low-cost
locations in Southeast Asia, Mexico, and Eastern Europe. This trend of outsourcing results in a sophisticated situation known as international labor division, which further complicates the consumers’ perception of a product’s country image. For example, North Korean products made by North Koreans under a South Korean manufacturer can be problematic because some countries have law prohibiting “Made in North Korea” products. Many scholars (e.g. Ahmed & d'Astous, 1996; Chao, 1993; Chao, 1998; Insch & McBride, 2004; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993) felt that, with the accelerated pace of globalization, there is a need to decompose country of origin (CoO) into more specific cues such as the country of manufacture (CoM), country of assembly (CoA), country of design (CoD), country of invention (CoI), and many others. Several scholars also put forward the term brand origin (BO) to differentiate it from the country of manufacture (Hamzaoui-Essoussi et al., 2011; Pharr, 2005; Ulgado, 2002). There is no right or wrong among the various decompositions of country image because they all serve the purpose of explicating the complexity of CoO in particular circumstances (Ahmed, Johnson, & Boon, 2004; Saeed, 1994). Yet, an explicitly defined country of origin is necessary for a standardized study to avoid unnecessary confusion.

In terms of the dimensions of the image related to country of origin, an enormous amount of literature and research has discussed this issue. However, as more scholars are adding to the diversity of its denotative and connotative domain, the tendency is that the conceptualization of country image is becoming increasingly complex and so is its measurement. Despite the fact that scholars can benefit from the diversified views about country of origin, the lack of a consistent measurement among numerous researchers detracted from the value of country image research, pressing scholars to continuously refine the measurement of country image (Pereira, Hsu, & Kundu, 2005).
Many scholars (e.g., Agarwal & Sikri, 1996; Han, 1989; Han & Terpstra, 1988; Roth & Romeo, 1992) agreed on the emphasis on the product image of a country, with their research focusing on a country’s product attributes. Nagashima (1970, 1977), as one of the first scholars in the field of country image, gave a product-specific definition and used the dimensions of price and value, service and engineering, advertising and reputation, design and style, and consumer’ profile to study country image. Later scholars have been much influenced by this original definition and followed a strictly narrow sense of country image that consists of product specific information only. For instance, White’s (1979) dimensions are product specific including expense, price, technicality, quality, workmanship, inventiveness, advertising, durability, reliability, selection, serviceability, and brand recognition. Narayana (1981) used the dimensions of quality, recognition, prestige, expensiveness, production form, functionality, and popularity. Cattin et al. (1982) have similar measures of pricing, reliability, workmanship, technicality, and performance. Bilkey (1993) defined country-of-origin image as “buyers’ opinions regarding the relative qualities of goods and services produced in various countries” (p. 19).

Meanwhile, some scholars started to add indirect product-relevant elements to the strictly product-specific country image. Jaffe and Nebenzahl (1984) included technology, marketing, and price as the dimensions; Johansson and Nebenzahl (1986) used only two dimensions of economy and status; Han and Terpstra (1988) argued that country image should cover technical advancements, prestige, workmanship, economy, and serviceability; Han (1990) used the term “country product image” to refer to people’s perception about the overall quality of products made in a given country. Still, these conceptualizations of country image did not totally break away from the product-specific one-dimensional tradition. Hsieh, Pan, and Setiono (2004) proposed that country-of-origin image can be defined at three levels, i.e., overall country image,
aggregate product country image, and specific product country image. Among the three levels, the aggregate product country image is believed to be the most influential in individual’s shopping behavior because it refers to the entire cognitive “feel” associated with a particular country’s products or with the perceived overall quality of the products from a particular country. Several studies (Akaah & Yaprak, 1993; Erickson, Johansson, & Chao, 1984; Laroche et al., 2005) have shown that the aggregate product country image plays an influential role in shaping people’s impression and perception of products made in developing countries, suggesting that people tend to find products made in developed countries more favorable than those made in developing countries.

Other scholars preferred a more comprehensive definition to country image, proposing an overall evaluation of a country’s economy, technology, social and political environment, and so on (e.g., Martin & Eroglu, 1993; Roth & Romeo, 1992; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Roth and Romeo (1992) followed a similar pattern by including a series of dimensions in terms of a country’s production profile, such as innovation, design, prestige, and workmanship. They proposed that country image is consumers’ overall perception of products from a particular country based on their prior experience of the country’s production and marketing strengths and weaknesses (Roth & Romeo, 1992). On the other hand, to achieve a balance between a comprehensive country image and a product-focused country image, some scholars coined the phrase product-country image by combining the two (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993; Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2007; Parameswaran & Pisharodi, 1994). Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) suggested that country image’s dimensions should cover people’s mental representation regarding a nation’s people, products, culture, and national symbols. Martin and Eroglu (1993) also adopted the multidimensional facets of the country image by integrating three dimensions:
politics, economy, and technology. Lala et al. (2009) argued that there are seven dimensions of country image: economic conditions, conflict, political structure, vocational training, work culture, environment, and labor.

**Research in Country image**

Country image has been found to be dependent on many internal and external factors, mostly related to the specific nation’s politics, science and technology, economy, culture, foreign relations, and others. There are four main sources from which people gain knowledge about different aspects of a country and form their attitudes and opinions. First, people refer to their knowledge acquired from personal experience of travelling in foreign countries or interacting with people from these countries. Second, various forms of mass media continuously feed the audiences with a large quantity of information about a country from high school textbooks, to newspapers and magazines, and to today’s Internet. Since a majority of consumers may not have the opportunity to travel to or live in a foreign country, average citizens may rely heavily on the information transmitted by mass media. For instance, international TV networks including BBC, CNN, Fox News, France 24, and CCTV have played an indispensable role in broadening people’s vision about different nations (Ganideh, 2012). Thus, it is highly possible that the way how a specific foreign country is covered by mass media may shape their opinions and attitudes. In other words, country image can be manipulated to a certain extent by the way the mass media cover it (Chung & Woo, 2011). Third, individuals can gain knowledge about a country from their experience of purchasing and using products manufactured in or designed by or imported from that country. It has been suggested that foreign products with good quality can enhance a country’s image in the world. As Heslop and Papadopoulos (1993) claimed, good products can give credit to people who make them, convincing consumers that people from this country have
refined taste and thus are likeable, trustworthy, and admirable. Fourth, people may also acquire knowledge, opinions, and attitudes related to a foreign country from their daily interpersonal contact with family, friends, relatives, and co-workers in their social networks. For example, an individual coming back from a trip to a foreign country will spread the word about that country among his/her family, coworkers, and friends.

Research in country image is of special significance for communication scholars and international marketers (Bloemer, Brijs, & Kasper, 2009; Papadopoulos et al., 2000) because numerous studies have suggested one kind or another of CoO effect. Past research showed that country image not only influences people’s attitude towards a country’s products and their evaluation of the products’ quality (Kalicharan, 2014), but also delivers behavioral outcome related to purchase activities, which may further affect important decision-making processes involving investment in, visits to, and ties with a country (Heslop, Papadopoulos, Dowdles, Wall, & Compeau, 2004). As Giraldi & Ikeda (2009) argued, country image is a stereotype regarding a certain foreign country that consumers rely heavily on to form their evaluation of the products. A couple of studies (Seaton & Vogel, 1981; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1993) suggested that consumers’ perception of a country may affect their price expectations: a poor country image may lead to customers’ higher expectations for lower prices and greater discounts. Roth and Romeo (1992) investigated the synergy of CoO and product category, finding that consumers were more willing to purchase products from a country if this country had highly evaluated dimensions that were important to the product category in question. Understanding of this construct will benefit international marketers in particular since multiple researchers have established a link between a favorable country image and the success of that country’s products abroad (Ryan, 2008; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Zeng, Go, & Kolmer, 2011). Studies in
international business revealed that consumers in general prefer products from developed
countries with a high level of industrialization to products from developing countries because
products from developed countries are usually associated with superior quality (Chandrasen &
Paliwoda, 2009; Ganideh, 2012). Furthermore, possible linkage between country image and
brand image was suggested by Kim and Chung (1997), who claimed that consumer’s perception
of a brand is mostly country specific.

Just like a double-edged sword, not only can country image elevate people’s evaluation
of a nation’s products, but it may also bring negative consequences (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2001).
Dagger and Raciti (2011) discovered that Australian consumers are less willing to buy
automobiles, watches, and stereos from China, Korea, or New Zealand due to their relatively
lower ratings in country image compared to America and Canada. This is the reason many
international companies strategically manipulate their country images: if country image works to
their advantage, a company will highlight its country origin; if country image is disadvantageous,
a company is likely to downplay its country profile (Ahmed et al., 2004). Nevertheless, other
studies suggested that the enhancement of country image may not necessarily improve people’s
evaluation of that country’s products. Chung and Woo’s research (2011) in how 2008 Beijing
Olympics affected China’s image suggested that hosting major sport events may have enhanced
China’s country image, but did not significantly improve people’s opinions about Chinese
products. But it is also possible that such improvement in country image may take longer to
become noticeable.

Among the massive literature with an effort to make sense of the influence of country
image, many recent ones have attempted to go beyond its narrow product-specific conceptual
dimensions and incorporate the resulting emotional and behavioral influences of country image.
It all started with the identification of cognitive, affective, and normative dimensions of country image (Johansson, 1989; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1989; Sauer, Young, & Unnava, 1991; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Later, several researchers (Laroche et al., 2005; Papadopoulos et al., 1988, 1990, 2000) showed their support to this trend and came up with a similar three-dimensional model of country image, which consists of three components: cognitive, affective and conative. As Papadopoulos et al. (1988) and Laroche et al. (2005) claimed, the cognitive component covered the country’s level of industrial and technological advancement, which is close to the product-specific or the narrow product-relevant conceptualization of country image; the affective component included the consumers’ emotional responses towards people of that country, which is similar to attitudes and opinions related to people from a country; the conative component referred to consumers’ level of willingness to interact with a foreign country, which is comparable to people’s motivations and intentions related to communication and interaction with a country. Despite these alternative dimensions that incorporate emotional and behavioral responses into country image, there has been some inconsistencies in delineating between these operationalized components distinctly (Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009). Therefore, further research concerning the conceptualizations and measures of country image is highly in demand.

The current study sticks to the traditional definition of country of origin (CoO), which refers to the place where the product’s manufacturing occurs, i.e., the country of manufacture (CoM). There are two reasons for using the traditional CoO. First, it will make the operationalization and measurement of CoO effect simple without much ambiguity because CoM is the most salient feature of a foreign product explicitly defined by the “Made in …” or “Manufactured in …” label. Second, this traditional definition can provide a clearer picture of the increasingly diversified background information of foreign products by differentiating the
Country of Origin (CoO) effects from the Brand Origin (BO) effects. Due to international outsourcing, more and more products bearing the brand of a company from one country were manufactured in another. It would be advisable not to confuse CoO with BO so that the research can deliver more specific findings about the effects of either origin as well as the potential interaction effects between them.

**Partisan Media**

**History of Partisan Media in America**

To probe the landscape of American partisan media, it is necessary to have an overview of partisans in the American politics. Partisans usually refer to people who can be divided into two or more groups based on their dramatically different attitudes and opinions regarding a controversial topic, usually related to politics. For a long time in the American history, citizens’ political views varied from person to person in regard to a wide range of issues, which did not follow any particular pattern. In other words, there never existed a simplistic political belief system indicating a trend of ideological coherence or consistency concerning multiple political or social issues (Converse, 1964). However, later research (Nie, Verba, & Petrocik, 1976) discovered that there was an increased correlation of various political views among American citizens, suggesting a formation of belief system that could classify people’s political inclination into fewer easy-to-follow patterns. Today’s common practices of classifying Americans into two large partisan groups (i.e., the conservative and the liberal) originated from the single dimension of political views related to government intervention in the economy (Asher, 1980). Afterwards, the classification between conservatism and liberalism extended to a series of broader dimensions covering economic issues, social issues and racial issues (Knoke, 1979). In recent
years, modern definitions of the two partisan groups have included new dimensions such as accepting alternative lifestyles (e.g., LGBT rights and legalization of marijuana) and defying traditional social order (e.g., gender stereotype). Although there are always individuals holding their idiosyncratic personal belief systems, liberal and conservative ideologies form the basic pattern to differentiate between two partisan groups in the U.S. political atmosphere. Based on the dichotomous belief system in dividing individual political ideologies, a handful amount of studies have discovered a similar pattern of discrepancies between liberals and conservatives in regard to their opinions on premarital sex, abortion, homosexuality, gender stereotypes, religion, death penalty, traditional values, government’s role in society, marijuana use, minority groups, and others (e.g., Domke, 2001; Fleming, 2006; Hoffmann & Miller, 1997; Miller, 1992; Miller & Hoffmann, 1999; Minor, 2007).

Partisan media are media outlets that adopt a certain degree of inclination towards one political ideology when reporting news. During the early development of mass media, American news agencies did not bear a strong political inclination and reported news in an either mixed or balanced way. Although print news showed some partisan tendency from the very beginning, arguments over political issues were usually presented in the separate Op/Ed section of newspaper, which to some extent enhanced the neutrality of news coverage (Bennett, 1996; Dalton, Beck, & Huckfeldt, 1998). Broadcasting was more tightly controlled than print news due to the Fairness Doctrine, a policy stipulated by the United States Federal Communication Commission (FCC) in 1949. The Fairness Doctrine required broadcasters to report controversial but important public issues in a manner that was fair and balanced, which had guided the U.S. broadcasting industry for over 30 years (Ruane, 2012). Partisan TV and radio did not emerge until the FCC repealed the Fairness Doctrine in 1987 because the FCC believed that the policy
might stand in the way of freedom of speech and consequently discourage broadcasters from discussing issues of public importance in mass media (Ruane, 2012). Since then, partisan media outlets have grown rapidly and gained increased popularity among news consumers in recent years (Auletta, 2006; Lisheron, 2007). As Inyengar and Hahn (2009) have claimed, both audiences and media channels in the United States are more polarized nowadays than in the past, having a one-sided inclination to echo with either liberalism or conservatism rather than staying neutral. For example, Fox News is considered as a right-wing news channel in the American political arena with a large portion of audience being conservatives and Republicans; MSNBC, on the opposite, is a counterpart and competitor of Fox News, which enjoys a great number of liberals and Democratic viewers (Alterman, 2003; Franken, 2003).

Along with the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) over the years, partisan media are also expanding from the traditional media of newspaper, radio, and television to the digital world. During this transition, partisan media begin to take various forms online. First, there are many major news websites owned and run by either big news conglomerates or Internet portals with well-equipped and professionally trained news teams. These news websites are usually affiliated to a newspaper, a TV/radio station, or a giant media company. Typical examples are MSNBC.com and FoxNews.com, which basically serves as an echo chamber of their TV news. Second, numerous amateur news blogs are built and written by online discussants, bloggers, and social media users. These amateur blogs randomly spread across the digital space, from various discussion boards (e.g., BBS) to the densely populated social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) and various blogging services (e.g., BlogSpot and WordPress). Third, a couple of online news aggregators with an explicit partisanship have emerged and won their popularity among online news readers in the last ten years. Online news
aggregators are typically websites that present news stories collected from other sources and rewritten by bloggers, many of which have a strong political inclination. Despite the fact that their stories are not original and the writers are not professional journalists, quite a few news aggregators have won a certain degree of credibility because many of their bloggers are invitation-only writers who are highly acclaimed specialists in different areas, ranging from politics and sports to economy and academics. Huffington Post and The Drudge Report are two typical examples of popular online partisan news aggregators. Fourth, many professional journalists working for large news agencies also started their personal partisan blogs. Although these blogs usually bear strong personal touch and are not considered as authentic news stories from official news agencies, they offer the audiences alternative perspectives the official news outlets may not be able to provide and yet still hold a considerable degree of sterling news professionalism that could be comparable to official news outlets. As Meraz (2008) has argued, with independent bloggers becoming pervasive in the cyberspace, the most popular ones are always those who take an aggressive stance at the far end of the conservatism-liberalism ideological spectrum.

**The Role of Partisan Media**

Since their emergence, partisan media have been criticized by journalists, politicians, media analysts, political scientists, and communication scholars for their continuous feeding of opinionated one-sided stories and for unfairly favoring in-group candidates as well as attacking their opponents. Although many researchers are concerned about the possibility that partisan media may promote the tendency of group polarization and consequently detract from a dynamic and healthy political atmosphere, Jamieson, Hardy, and Romer (2007) disagreed with this worry,
stating that partisan media play a different and yet conducive role in strengthening a society of democracy.

Mass media, as an intermediary of political information, may have an influence over the audiences by reinforcing their partisan views or changing people’s political disposition (e.g., Bartels, 1993; Noelle-Neumann, 1984; Zaller, 1996). Although partisan media’s potential effects to mobilize or demobilize audiences have been suggested, more direct evidence still lacks to corroborate these effects (e.g., DellaVigna & Kaplan 2007; Hofstetter, 1998; Nir & Druckman 2008; Stroud, 2007). Studies related to partisan media’s effect have focused on selective exposure, group polarization, and hostile media effect. With the advancement of media technology, audiences are provided with an increasingly diverse news media terrain featuring “the technological shift from a low-choice to a high-choice environment that allows people to increasingly customize their media diet” (Hollander, 2008, p. 23). This shift was first demonstrated by more than 100 TV channels after the introduction of cable and satellite television to average American households (Webster, 2006) and later by the huge amount and varied formats of digital news media. Numerous studies indicated that people with strong political preferences are likely to develop homogenous political networks (Mutz, 2006) and exhibit confirmation-biased selective exposure to news content (e.g., Iyengar, Hahn, Krosnick, & Walker, 2008; Knobloch-Westerwick, 2012; Lavine et al., 2002; Rickert, 1998). With the rising popularity of partisan news outlets, some media scholars showed their concern that the political media’s audience has become fragmented and polarized (Sustein, 2001). As a possible consequence of selective exposure to ideologically-oriented cable networks like Fox News and MSNBC, the audience size of the three major networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) evening newscasts has dropped, which may be a sign of extreme group polarization and news
fragmentation (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Jamieson & Cappella, 2008). Studies concerning partisan media also suggested the potential hostile media effect, a tendency for partisans to perceive neutral news coverage as biased. Hostile media effect literature stated that even if news media cover a controversial issue in a comparatively balanced and objective way, partisans who are highly involved in the issue may still think that the coverage is unfairly slanted in favor of the opposition (e.g., Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Perloff, 1989; Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). Further research indicated that hostile media effect may be related to various factors including media’s perceived reach (Gunther & Schmitt, 2004) and group membership salience (Ariyanto, Hornsey, & Gallois, 2007; Reid, 2012). On one hand, group membership salience may suggest hostile media effect is more evident among people with strong political inclination, i.e., partisans. On the other hand, political content presented as a college student’s composition can lead to less perceived hostility among audiences than the same information embedded in a large media outlet, suggesting the perceived reach of a media outlet can magnify the hostile media effect (Gunther & Schmitt, 2004).

Studies of partisan media’s effect mostly concentrated on partisan-relevant controversial topics, a majority of which are politically oriented. The most popular topics in partisan media research include elections (Carter, Fico, & McCabe, 2002; Fico & Freedman, 2008), climate change (Thorson et al., 2010), Iraq war (Luther & Miller, 2005), Mexican immigrants (Gil de Zúñiga, Correa, & Valenzuela, 2012), abortion (Fleishman, 1986; Kim & Pasadeos, 2007), women’s place in society (Fleishman, 1986), aid to minority groups (Fleishman, 1986), and others. The above overview showed that most partisan media research tackled only the key partisan-relevant hot topics, by which the audience can be easily divided into liberals and conservatives. It remains unclear whether media partisanship will also play a role in people’s
attitudinal and behavioral responses towards China, which will be a primary goal of the current study.

**Priming**

**Priming and Its Theoretical Development**

Priming, as an important theory for media effects, can be traced back to psychological research in the late 1960s. Quillian and other researchers (e.g., Collins & Quillian, 1969; Quillian, 1968) tried to model the way human beings store, retrieve, and utilize information after the mechanism of artificial intelligence, claiming that information is stored in a systematic network with concepts linked to each other in a certain way. Later, Anderson (1983) proposed an associative network model of knowledge storage, positing that information is not stored hierarchically in different layers of memory, but connected by numerous nodes that form intricate association between concepts. These preliminary studies paved the way for contemporary research on priming effects (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Klinger, & Roskos-Ewolden, 2007), which heavily relied on the network models of semantic memory.

The network model of semantic memory proposes that concepts are stored as numerous nodes in memory with links connecting them. For example, the word “kitchen” can activate another relevant concept, such as food or cooking. There are two basic assumptions of the network model. The first assumption claimed that the activation of related concepts depends on the intensity of the triggering event. Smith, Shoben, and Rips (1974) attached great importance to the strength of association between concepts and claimed that the strength of association may determine the categorization and interpretation of information. Moreover, Collins and Loftus (1975) further refined the network model as a complicated system with different nodes of
concept linked with each other. According to Collins and Loftus (1975), the distance of the links, measured by the length between nodes, corresponds to the relative strength of association between two related concepts, with concepts in proximity having a strong association and concepts in a long distance weakly associated. Because one node (concept) can activate many other related nodes (concepts), it is believed that frequently activated nodes (concepts) are quickly accessible in our brain. The second assumption claimed that the activation of related concepts are temporary and will dissipate after a period of time. In other words, the activated nodes will return to their dormant state as their activation levels decline and eventually vanish. These two assumptions of network model provided the essential theoretical framework for contemporary priming study centering on media effects. Based on the two assumptions, priming research hypothesized that activation (or priming) of one node/concept leads to the spreading activation of other nodes/concepts, making these activated concepts easily accessible and thus more influential in processing later acquired information. On one hand, the priming effect caused by the spread of activated nodes is mainly determined by the strength of initial activation; on the other hand, the priming effect can only last for a short period and will eventually fade away over time.

One of the earliest priming studies is a classic experiment done by psychologists Srull and Wyer (1979). In their research, participants were asked to complete a sentence unscrambling task that contained violent words such as “hit” or “kick.” After the priming event, participants were asked to join another seemingly unrelated task in which they made judgments about a vaguely described person. The results showed that the priming event activated concepts of aggression and led to more hostile attitude in their judgments. More psychological studies (e.g., Higgins, Rholes, & Jones, 1977; Srull & Wyer, 1980) in the late 1970s were also able to
replicate the priming effects on people’s judgments on later obtained information. Subsequently, a series of studies within the field of media have successfully discovered the priming effects within the theoretical underpinning of network model (Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., 2007; Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Carpentier, 2002). It has been empirically supported that priming can unconsciously affect people’s attitudes by providing environmental cues that are ubiquitous (Bargh, Raymond, Pryor, & Strack, 1995; Dasgupta & Rivera, 2008; Devine, 1989; Nicolas & Skinner, 2012).

**Agenda Setting, Priming, and Framing**

The formation of judgments, decisions, and public opinions has always been the main concern for priming scholars. There are three major theories that deal with the influence of mass media, i.e., agenda-setting, priming, and framing. To study the priming effect, it is necessary to analyze its difference from and relationship with the other two theories due to their interconnectivity. Agenda-setting refers to the transfer of object and attribute salience from mass media to the public sphere, suggesting that audiences tend to attach great importance to these issues highlighted by the mass media in terms of coverage and placement (e.g., Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Craft & Wanta, 2004; Ghanem, 1997; Ku, Kaid, & Pfau, 2003; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Shaw & McCombs, 1977; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004; Weaver, Graber, McCombs, & Eyal, 1981). In a political environment, priming effects refer to the way mass media change the standards and criteria used by audiences to make evaluations of political figures and their activities (Gross & Aday, 2003; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Consistent with the network model of semantic memory, increased exposure to certain issues can enhance the prominence of these issues in audiences’ formation of attitudes towards politicians and the government. In many situations, especially in the field of political life, the priming effect of media is often regarded as
an extension of agenda-setting (Iyengar & Ottati, 1994; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). While agenda-setting focuses on the salience of certain issues in news reports, framing deals with the specific frames used by the media to present the issues (Goffman, 1974; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). Framing is the process of selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient so as to “promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

There has been much theoretical literature and empirical research concerning the three major media effects theories as well as the differences and relationships among them. A common ground that has been reached is that agenda setting can be analyzed at both the issue and attribute levels and priming, as the second level of agenda setting, falls into the level of attribute (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001; McCombs, 2004). Nevertheless, the relationship between agenda-setting and framing is still under heated debate. In general, previous literature can be roughly divided into three camps for the purpose of easy comprehension (Park, Holody, & Zhang, 2012). The first camp argued that framing is identical to the second level of agenda setting, which aims at enhancing the salience of certain attributes in mass media. This view is mainly represented by McCombs and colleagues, who attempted to combine agenda setting, priming, and framing into one theoretical framework (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997) and adopted a two-dimensional analytic scheme (time and space) to study the building and evolvement of media agenda (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Muschert & Carr, 2006). The second camp gave a much broader definition to framing that incorporates a wider range of factors than priming and agenda setting, arguing that agenda setting indeed serves the various functions of framing (Weaver, 2007). In particular, the first-level agenda setting corresponds to the function of problem definition and the second level agenda setting corresponds to the
functions of causal analysis, moral judgment, and remedy promotion (Entman, 2007). As Weaver (2007) has claimed, on one hand, second-level agenda setting and framing do share a lot of similarities if they are not identical because “both are more concerned with how issues or other objects (such as people, groups, organizations, countries, and etc.) are depicted in the media than with which issues or objects are more or less prominently reported”; on the other hand, framing presumably covers a much broader range of cognitive processes than the attribute level of agenda setting does. The third camp “regard(s) convergence of agenda-setting and framing theories as neither feasible nor productive, although they do encourage continued exploration of the relationship” (Park et al., 2012, p. 479). When addressing the “parsimony versus precision” issue, Scheufele (2000) argued that it is beneficial to differentiate the three models of media effects in that agenda-setting and priming are built on theoretical premises that are distinct from framing and that the theoretical statements and hypotheses derived from these premises are also not comparable. Agenda-setting and priming are mainly based on the network model of semantic memory, dealing with the notion of information accessibility. Therefore, agenda-setting and priming are concerned with the process of how the media agenda shapes the audience agenda and thus concentrate on a direct causal relationship between media content and audience’s attitude. Framing, however, is based on the prospect theory, assuming that audience’s interpretation of media content can be manipulated by subtle changes in the wording used in the news reports (Scheufele, 2000). Accordingly, the perspectives of agenda-setting and priming research also differ from that of framing research: agenda-setting and priming scholars are mostly concerned with the public’s evaluation of the performance of political leaders or the government; framing scholars are interested in audiences’ process of judging who are responsible for the cause of and the solution to these social problems. As this debate is still
going on, there is no final answer to the relationship among the three models. However, there are two points communication scholars must keep in mind. First, as Park et al. (2012) have said, much of the debate has been “conceptual and not based on tangible data” (p. 479). Therefore, more empirical evidence is needed to support the argument of the internal relationships between priming, agenda-setting, and framing. Second, although framing studies have become more popular than both agenda setting and priming studies in the past decade, the definition of framing seems to be not as solid and clear as the other two, conceptually or operationally (Weaver, 2007). Oftentimes the dispute over the relationship between agenda setting and framing originated from the disagreement of a shared definition to frames and framing.

**Priming Studies of Media Effects**

Since priming is based on the network model of semantic memory and mainly concerned with how mass media influence people’s opinions and judgments, a majority of priming studies have focused on the evaluation of political leaders and organizations and also delivered more productive results compared to priming studies in other fields (Carpentier et al., 2008). This is because, unlike agenda setting, priming scholars looked beyond the certain salient issues highlighted by the media and examined how audiences use these issues as their criteria to make judgments about politicians and governments (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Based on previous first-level agenda setting research concerning the transfer of issue salience from the media to the public (e.g., Ader, 1993; King, 1997; Ku et al., 2003; McCombes, Lopez-Escobar, & Llamas, 2000; Nelson, 1984; Wanta et al., 2004; Weaver et al., 1981), several studies have found mixed support to the hypothesis that intensive exposure of certain issues can manipulate the attributes by which the society evaluates a political identity. Iyengar and Kinder’s experiment (1987) probed how television news may influence the perceived issue salience by the
public and affect the criteria they use to assess the president. Although significant priming effects were found for some issues, the priming effects for other issues were relatively weak, far from “a robust effect” they expected. By comparing the survey results before and after news coverage of the confirmation of Iran-Contra arms sales, Krosnick and Kinder (1990) found that before the priming event, American people used domestic issues more than foreign affair issues as a standard to judge President Ronald Reagan, but foreign affairs were a better predictor of the overall evaluation of President Reagan after the priming event. Other media researchers (e.g., Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Krosnick & Brannon, 1993; Pan & Kosicki, 1997) investigated the changing opinions about President George H. W. Bush during and immediately after the 1991 Gulf War. Pan and Kosicki (1997) argued that the dramatic drop of Bush’s approval rating was caused by the shifting of issue salience from foreign affairs to domestic economy. As a result of the first-level agenda setting, people began to judge Bush according to his performance on solving economic problems when this issue was repeatedly discussed on mass media, leading to a significant political priming effect against his approval rating. Kim, Han, and Scheufele (2010) successfully replicated the priming effects among South Korean citizens by discovering a close correspondence between prominent issues in television news and important dimensions of presidential evaluation. Aside from traditional news media (e.g., Kim et al., 2010), Moy et al. (2005) analyzed how a particular form of entertainment media, e.g., late-night comedy show, may have influenced the 2000 presidential campaign. Their study indicated a strong tendency for late-night comedy shows to sway audiences’ evaluation of a presidential candidate, especially when the character traits were taken into consideration.

Another field in which priming studies boom is people’s stereotype thinking about a certain group of people, particularly related to a certain ethnic group or other socially oppressed
minorities. Several studies of racial priming theory (e.g., Mendelberg, 2001; Valentino et al., 2002) argued that subtle negative description of a racial minority by mass media could lead to racial prejudice and negative political judgment of that group. In an experiment mixing political and racial issues, Valentino (1999) analyzed the political impact of stereotype-reinforcing news. This study reported that participants’ evaluation of President Clinton’s performance on crime was lower when primed by crime news and his support was lowest if the crime news had minority suspects. Valentino (1999) argued that mass media has the power to activate racial prejudice by intensive stereotypical description of racial minorities in local crime news coverage. A study done by Dill and Burgess (2012) corroborated the hypothesis that black masculinity represented in video games may affect people’s evaluation of black politicians and their pro-black attitudes. Stereotyping the LGBT community is another subject of priming research. Carnaghi and Maass (2008) compared the priming effects of two labels related to homosexuality, one being neutral (i.e., gay) and the other being derogatory (i.e., fag). Their study showed that subjects exposed to the derogatory label reported more negative words in the following free association task than those exposed to the neutral label. Nicholas and Skinner (2012) explored audience’s exposure to speeches that are explicitly derogatory towards gay people and found a significant priming effect of the negative usage of gay on participants’ increased implicit homophobic attitudes. Gender stereotypes were investigated in a study using subliminal affective priming (Yu et al., 2014). The results showed that implicit and explicit occupational gender stereotypes were strengthened by negative affect and decreased by positive affect at the subliminal level.

As the priming theory develops, some communication scholars attempted to apply it to the field of health communication, mainly centering on the effectiveness of health education and
health campaigns. By using a priming experiment, Ashikali and Dittmar (2011) probed the
effects of materialism on women’s thoughts on thin body image promoted by media. The results
indicated that exposure to materialistic advertisements featuring thin idealized female models has
a significant impact on women’s body dissatisfaction, suggesting an intertwining coexistence of
“two prominent ideals of consumer culture: the body perfect and the material good life” (p. 529).

The application of priming theory in marketing and public relations is a relatively fresh
ground. Yoo and Pena (2011) analyzed the effectiveness of in-game advertisement and found
that violence in video games can weaken participants’ brand recall, recognition, and attitudes as
well as their purchase intention, which is consistent with the hypotheses based on the models of
limited capacity and of priming effects. As far as country image is concerned, Brewer, Graf, and
Willnat (2003) adopted a rare approach that combined priming and framing to the analysis of
how news stories may prime people’s evaluation of a foreign country directly or indirectly. In
the indirect condition, the primed news was about an issue in a domestic context, which only
enhanced the cognitive accessibility of that particular issue; in the direct condition, the primed
news presented a frame that linked the issue to a foreign country explicitly. The results
suggested that the media can have the capability of shaping the standards used by people to
evaluate foreign countries. Nevertheless, the influence is not without condition. As Brewer et
al. (2003) pointed out, a direct link between an issue and the country evaluated needs to be
provided for the priming effect to occur as the indirect route failed to deliver any difference.

The Heuristic-Systematic Model

The Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM) is a widely used theory of information
processing and judgment formation developed by Chaiken (1980, 1987). With the continuous
enrichment and contribution by Chaiken and successors in the fields of psychology, sociology, communication, and marketing, this model has demonstrated its increasingly explanatory power and extended its application to various topics concerning attitude, persuasion, and social judgment.

The Mechanism of HSM

In general, the HSM proposes that people adopt two distinct information processing modes before making a judgment and reaching a decision: systematic or heuristic processing (Zuckerman & Chaiken, 1998). By using these two modes, people attempt to form their own attitude and opinions while seeking a balance between the desire to make accurate judgments and the desire to minimize cognitive effort (Chaiken, 1980; Chen & Chaiken, 1999; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Eventually perceivers will choose a route, or both routes if necessary, that best fits their mixed desire to make decisions based on their formed attitude and judgment.

Systematic processing involves a person’s relatively intensive treatment of judgment-relevant information via active and comprehensive rationalized analysis. Heuristic processing, on the other hand, makes use of easily accessible judgment rules, known as “heuristics”, to facilitate the decision-making process. Therefore, the HSM bears much resemblance to several other dual-process models, particularly the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM).

Although the definitions of the two processes seem clear, sometimes it can be tricky to actually identify one of these two modes. Basically, the differentiation between systematic and heuristic processing can be understood as follows. First, systematic processing entails overall and simultaneous analysis of multiple pieces of information and thus requires more cognitive capacity. To process the information systematically, a person needs to take all available information into consideration and, based on their integration and abstraction of a package of
miscellaneous knowledge, to reach an unbiased judgment. Heuristic processing, on the contrary, relies on one limited cue to reach a decision with minimal cognitive demand (Chaiken, 1980; Chen & Chaiken, 1999). Second, systematic processing is based on the actual content of relevant information while heuristic processing, in many cases, may not focus on the judgment-relevant information. For example, people may rely on the length, format, and structure of an article or on the credibility, authority, expertise, or even attractiveness of the person who provides the information to reach a judgment. These heuristic cues are not relevant to the content that people need to form an opinion on, but will distract perceivers from systematic processing. To a great extent, heuristic cues resemble the peripheral cues in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) except that peripheral cues usually do not operate along with central cues concurrently. Third, systematic processing requires perceivers to be equipped with a sufficient amount of knowledge in the related field. In order to process information systematically, a person must have the adequate intellectual capacity to understand the basic knowledge regarding this specific topic. Yet heuristic processing does not require in the perceivers such a comprehensive grasp of knowledge related to a certain field and thus costs much less cognitive effort. For instance, if a shopper needs to make a purchase decision based on a customer review of a camera, he/she should be cognitively capable of understanding the basic technological terms mentioned in the review in order to process all the relevant cues in a systematic way. If the shopper does not have such comprehensive knowledge regarding the technology of photography, a particular cue that he/she can make sense out of will most likely play a crucial role in that person’s final shopping decision, leading to heuristic processing. However, it does not mean processing heuristics demands no cognitive effort at all. Some heuristic processing still entails the perceiver’s ability to recall information (i.e., a good memory)
in terms of availability, accessibility, and applicability of heuristic cues (Higgins, 1996).

A central issue in the HSM that scholars have been striving to solve is what mechanism may determine perceivers to adopt either the heuristic or systematic processing mode in their decision making. A concept that can possibly answer this question is the sufficiency principle (Chaiken, Giner-Sorolla, & Chen, 1996). The sufficiency principle argues that perceivers try their best to seek a compromise between minimizing cognitive effort and fulfilling their desire to make accurate judgments (Chaiken et al., 1996; Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989). Because perceivers are economy-minded information processors with limited cognitive capacity who are constantly guided by the principle of least effort, they are more likely to choose the heuristic processing over the effort-consuming systematic processing in order to minimize cognitive effort (Chaiken, 1980, 1987; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977). However, if a person is highly motivated to deliver accurate judgments but heuristic cues are insufficient to fulfill such need, the person may choose to evaluate a diversity of information comprehensively in order to reach a judgment with more confidence and accuracy. In other words, highly motivated perceivers will engage in systematic processing to reach a certain degree of confidence because this choice of processing mode will cater to their motivation for accuracy (Chen & Chaiken, 1999). This level of sufficiency is measured by the distance from one’s level of actual confidence to one’s desired confidence known as a sufficiency threshold (Chaiken et al., 1996). Although both heuristic and systematic processing can be used to shorten the gap between the two levels, people will not prefer systematic processing unless heuristic processing fails to bridge the gap.

The sufficiency principle suggests that increased motivation can elevate the person’s engagement in attitude-formation process, resulting in a person’s willingness to spend more
cognitive effort. According to Chen and Chaiken (1999), the level or amount of motivation plays a crucial role because higher motivation may contribute to a longer distance between actual and desired confidence by either raising sufficiency threshold or lowering actual confidence or even both. On the other hand, motivation can also be a function of the distance between a person’s actual confidence and desired confidence (Davis & Tuttle, 2012), meaning the motivation to adopt a systematic-processing strategy will increase if the discrepancy between desired confidence and actual confidence becomes larger.

To better illustrate this issue, Chen and Chaiken (1999) developed the multiple-motive framework of the heuristic-systematic model, in which different types of motives act differently on information processing. Three types of motivations were proposed to explain how individuals are driven by different needs and desires when making social judgment, i.e., accuracy motivation, defense motivation, and impression motivation. Accuracy motivation is based on the assumption that perceivers are motivated to hold accurate attitudes and beliefs (Chaiken, 1980, 1987; Chaiken et al., 1996, Chen & Chaiken, 1999). According to Chen and Chaiken (1999), “the hallmark of accuracy-motivated processing is a relatively open-minded and evenhanded treatment of judgment-relevant information” (p. 77). When accuracy motivation is high with sufficient judgment-relevant information and cognitive capacity, people will process information systematically to reduce their judgmental uncertainty. Even if the capacity and motivation are constrained, heuristic cues can still help lessen uncertainty to some degree. Defense motivation alludes to the desire to hold attitudes and beliefs that are congruent with self definitional attitudes and beliefs (Chaiken et al., 1996; Chen & Chaiken, 1998). People may defend their ideas through the selective use of heuristic cues when the motivation or capacity is low. Impression motivation refers to the desire “to express attitudes and beliefs that will address the
specific interpersonal goals arising within different social contexts” (Chaiken et al., 1996, p. 563). Instead of mirroring reality or forming judgments that are consistent with preexisting beliefs, impression-motivated people process information in an effort to meet immediate social goals. Both defense-motivated and impression–motivated people suffer from a selective bias. The above-mentioned three motives form the multiple-motive framework of the heuristic-systematic model.

**Comparison between HSM and ELM**

It must be noted that the Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM) is only one fast growing theory among many dual-process theories that address attitude formation and social cognition in social psychology and communication studies (Chen & Chaiken, 1999). Despite the fact that all the dual-process theories vary in terms of their internal structure and mechanism, they do share one common ground that “social judgments are not always formed on the basis of relatively effortful processing of judgment-relevant information” and “judgments may also be formed on the basis of relatively low-effort processing of more peripheral forms of information” (Chen & Chaiken, 1999, p. 80-81). Whenever choosing HSM as a theoretical framework for research, scholars are often challenged with questions about the possibility of using the alternative dual-process theory known as Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which bears much resemblance to HSM in its basic theoretical assumption and model structure. Therefore, a comparison between the two models are unavoidable.

Among all different information-processing models, the Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM) is most likely to be confused with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) because these two models have many features in common (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986; Petty & Wegener, 1999). First, in terms of the dual process, both “central” and “systematic” processing
requires that the perceivers are highly motivated with adequate cognitive capacity while perceivers with low motivation and weak capacity would prefer “peripheral” or “heuristic” processing. Second, both dual-process models assume that perceivers are guided by the principle of least effort. In other words, unless their motivation is sufficiently high, perceivers are more likely to process the information with minimal cognitive effort, leading to their reliance on “peripheral” or “heuristic” cues. Third, both theories acknowledge the influence of many external factors such as personal relevance, time constraints, and prior knowledge.

Despite the similarities discussed above, Chen and Chaiken (1999) pointed out some major distinctions between the two dual-process theories.

First, they vary in the degree of how exclusive the two processing modes are to each other. The ELM is based on the trade-off hypothesis (Petty, 1994), claiming that perceivers need to choose either the central or peripheral route during their judgment formation, indicating that the peripheral cues will be eventually dominated by the central cues with perceivers’ increased motivation and cognitive ability. In contrast, the HSM supports the co-occurrence of systematic and heuristic processing modes. In other words, heuristic and systematic cues can work together and generate both additive and interactive effects on judgments (Chaiken et al., 1989; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Maheswaran and Chaiken (1991) argued that if there is an inconsistency between heuristic and systematic cues, people under the high task importance condition will adopt both processing modes simultaneously. In this sense, the HSM may have more power in explaining people’s judgment process than the ELM since it allows for potential interaction effects generated by the integration of the two processing modes simultaneously.

Second, the HSM’s multiple-motive framework differs from the assumption of motives in the ELM. The ELM claims that all perceivers are accuracy-motivated while motives other than
accuracy can exert a biasing effect via either a peripheral or central route. Based on ELM, impression motivated people may perceive social cues as more salient and thus rely more on peripheral cues as a criterion for their attitude formation (Chaiken et al., 1996). But the multiple-motive frame of the HSM makes no assumption of such an overriding motivational effect. Instead, the HSM suggests that all the motives and both processing modes are orthogonal dimensions and it is possible that one or more motivation can influence heuristic or systematic or both processing modes (Chen & Chaiken, 1999).

Third, heuristic processing in the HSM is slightly different from peripheral processing in its scope. According to Petty (1994), “the ELM views heuristic processing as just one member of a family of peripheral route processes that have an impact on attitudes when the elaboration likelihood is low” (p. 235). This suggests that peripheral cues are much broader than heuristic cues in the definition. Additionally, Petty (1994) gave an example, claiming that if a perceiver is unmotivated to adopt an issue-relevant information processing and make a judgment based on the way how a person is dressed, this would be an instance of peripheral route to persuasion, but not a heuristic processing mode. It can be inferred from the above discussion that heuristic cues are mostly a summary construct based on generalization or stereotyping of previously acquired knowledge and experience rather than a halo construct. However, peripheral cues not only can be a summary construct, but also a halo construct that relies on irrelevant cues such as attractiveness, likeability, and personality. In this sense, heuristic cues are more limited in its variety than peripheral cues.
Integration of Priming and HSM

One important challenge the current study tackles is to integrate the priming theory and the Heuristic-Systematic Model in one working mechanism to explicate the process of media effects on country image. The priming theory, originally a classic theory in psychology, has successfully transformed into a mass media theory. Regardless of its substantial explaining power in media effects, the priming theory suffers from accusations of lacking practicality because it only deals with one route of information processing. In reality, news readers may resort to two or more cues that compete with each other when making a judgment or decision. In this sense, the integration of a dual-process model and priming can be a solution if the researcher attempts to probe the interaction between news content and source characteristics.

Since it is highly possible that news readers may rely on both news content and media features during their attitude formation about a foreign country, HSM is chosen over ELM due to HSM’s allowance for the simultaneous processing of systematic and heuristic cues. Before we use the integrated model to study news media’s influence on country image, three steps need to be taken. First, we need to justify that news coverage’s influence on China’s country image falls into the scope of the priming theory. Second, this primed news coverage about China is possibly followed by a mode of systematic processing. Third, the primed partisan media may activate an alternative mode of heuristic processing in terms of evaluating news content about China.

Prior to any further construction of theoretical framework related to priming, it is necessary to clarify this study’s theoretical premise in regard to the relationships among priming, agenda-setting and framing. Despite the fact that no consensus has yet been reached due to all the divergent views on this matter, this research took the following position: first, priming is the second level of agenda setting, which falls into the level of attribute (McCombs & Ghanem,
second, the theoretical premises that agenda-setting and priming are built on are distinct from framing (Scheufele, 2000). Previous research by Han and Wang (2012) adopted framing as the major theoretical guideline to examine the news media’s influence on people’s perception of China. But the current study chose priming over framing due to the following reasons. First, the priming theory is mostly applied to investigating the way mass media change the standards and criteria used by audiences to make evaluations of political figures and activities (Gross & Aday, 2003; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) while framing is more often used to analyze how mass media blame a party for or find a solution to certain social issues. Although a foreign country like China is not exactly a political figure, its perception is closely related to the area of foreign policies, which is part of political agenda, and China’s image resembles that of a political figure too. Framing theory usually probes how media use different frames to present an issue in order to define the problem, find the culprit, or recommend a treatment for that issue (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991), which may be less suitable in this case. Second, priming effects, based on the network models of semantic memory, only targets at the immediate effects after subjects’ exposure to news coverage, which can be tested with an appropriate experimental design. The priming theory believes that the priming effects are caused by the spread of activated nodes and thus can only survive within a short period and will fade away over time. This theoretical assumption meets the purpose of this study because the experiment focuses on testing the subjects’ perception of China after their immediate exposure to the news stimuli, suggesting no guarantee for any detected effect to last long after the exposure.

In order to integrate priming with the Heuristic-Systematic Model, it needs to be justified that the priming effect follows a mode of either systematic or heuristic processing. Regardless,
priming and HSM actually deal with two different phases of human cognition. The priming theory is more concerned with the activation and accessibility of certain relevant information due to the changed strength of association between nodes caused by primed stimuli. In other words, the main interest of priming is to find out what piece(s) of information may be activated or become accessible by human brain, which can be one or multiple concepts/nodes within the network of semantic memory. HSM, nevertheless, concentrates on how the activated nodes or concepts are processed, either in a heuristic or a systematic mode. It is also possible that priming activates a pure stimulus-and-response reaction based on random association between two nodes, which may fall into neither heuristic nor systematic processing. For example, the experiment done by Srull and Wyer (1979) showed that, after getting exposed to violent words such as “hit” or “kick,” subjects were more likely to judge a person as more hostile or aggressive in a following unrelated task. In their experiment, the priming effect is caused by simple random associations between two nodes and has nothing to do with either heuristic or systematic processing.

The combination of priming and HSM is justifiable in the field of country image on the premise that country image is a comprehensive generalizing construct. A majority of international marketing scholars have advocated that country image is a multi-dimensional concept that requires an overall perception of a variety of knowledge related to a certain country (e.g., Johansson, 1989; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1989; Lala et al., 2009; Martin & Eroglu, 1993; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Sauer, Young, & Unnava, 1991). Since this study adopted the three-dimensional conceptualization of country image consisting of the cognitive, affective, and conative components (Laroche et al., 2005; Papadopoulos et al., 1988, 1990, 2000), with each component having its own measurement, it is reasonable to expect that a perceiver may
need to process all the relevant cues simultaneously to achieve an accurate assessment of a country. In this sense, a systematic processing mode is likely to occur in evaluating China. In addition, the treatment of information about media characteristics (e.g., credibility, likeability, and others) can be potentially regarded as a heuristic mode of information processing. If the news coverage may encourage the audience to systematically process all relevant cues simultaneously by accessing multiple aspects of information concerning a country, other less relevant cues, such as who provides the news and how the news is provided, may moderate, in one way or another, the systematic processing mode activated by the specific content in a news article.

A hypothesized model of media-influenced country image can be visualized in Figure 1. This new model is based on the priming theory but also integrates the Heuristic-Systematic Model. In general, this model advocates two stages of media influences: in the first stage of priming, both the primed media source and news content activate informational cues that become accessible for audiences; in the second stage of heuristic-systematic dual process, audiences choose to adopt systematic or heuristic routes or both to treat the available information activated by media priming. The systematic route is based on the processing of relevant news content about a foreign country. In the systematic route, when audiences are exposed to slanted news coverage about a country with a strong inclination, their preexisting perception of the country’s image may be challenged, weakened, maintained, or reinforced, which is demonstrated as a news coverage’s priming effect. The heuristic route is based on the processing of less relevant information about media source’s characteristics, such as the credibility, popularity, reach, and political standing of new sources. Once the heuristic cues come into play, the priming effect of relevant media coverage about a foreign country may be moderated or even dominated by the
characteristics of media source. For example, if a person finds a media outlet as credible, the priming effect may be enhanced; if a person finds a media outlet as unreliable, the priming effect may be inhibited or even flipped. Under the influence of the dual forces, audiences form their resulting perception of a country’s image.

**Figure 1.** An integrated model of media-influenced country image
CHAPTER III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

After providing an overview of country image and partisan media as well as summarizing the theoretical framework of priming and the Heuristic-Systematic Model, this chapter will raise a series of key research questions as well as specific hypotheses that guided the whole study.

Since this research’s main concern is Americans’ perception of China’s country image, consistent conceptualizations and measurements of country image are essential to the comparison between different stimulus conditions. Due to the fact that there are many different versions for country image’s conceptualizations and measurements, it seems difficult to find an ideal way to measure country image. Although the initial definition of country image was strictly one single dimension (Nagashima, 1977), which multiple early studies have been based on (e.g., Han, 1989; Johansson et al., 1985; Knight & Calantone, 2000), this research adopted the multidimensional approach to the construct of country image as it has been embraced by numerous recent scholars and demonstrated its validity in different studies. Specifically, this study used the three dimensional construct of country image, consisting of the cognitive, affective, and conative components (Laroche et al., 2005; Papadopoulos et al., 1988, 1990, 2000). According to Papadopulos et al. (1988, 1990, 2000), the cognitive component stands for consumers’ perception of a country’s industrial development and technological advancement; the affective component refers to consumers’ attitudes towards the people from a country; the conative component reflects customers’ willingness or desire to interact with a country. Based on the previous conceptualization, Laroche et al. (2005) replaced the names of the three abstract components with the following easily comprehensible terms: “country beliefs” was used to stand for the country’s industrial development and technological advancement; “people affect” refers
to the consumers’ degree of likeness for people from the country; “desired interaction” denotes
the level of interaction (mainly economic ties) with the country. The development of research
questions and hypotheses related to country image in the current study is based on the
conceptualizations of country image proposed by Laroche et al. (2005) with some minor
revisions. In the revised three-factor model of country image (see Figure 2), two additional
behavioral and attitudinal constructs (i.e., product beliefs and purchase intention) are included as
an extension to the original narrow sense of country image because these two are of great
concern for international marketing researchers.

![Figure 2. The three-factor model of country image](image)

This research focused on how American partisan news websites may affect U.S.
audiences’ perception of China. Therefore, there are two main effects it attempted to investigate.
First, it examined the priming effect of news coverage of China on people’s resulting perception
of China, Chinese people, and made-in-China products. Second, it investigated the potential
moderating effect of media partisanship as a heuristic on how people perceive China and Chinese
people as well as made-in-China products.
Priming Effects of News Slant

The first main purpose of this study is to test the priming effect of news coverage on people’s change in perception of China’s country image. A previous experiment by Han and Wang (2012) has found that when subjects read a news article that emphasized the risks of Chinese products, negative perceptions were elicited in terms of the product and country aspects of made-in-China goods. On the other hand, positive perceptions were activated if subjects were exposed to a news piece highlighting the benefits of Chinese products (Han & Wang, 2012). Based on previous literature, RQ1 to RQ5 and their associated hypotheses were raised to investigate the priming effects of news slant on the cognitive, affective, and conative components of China’s country image (e.g., country beliefs, people affect, and desired interaction) as well as the resulting behavioral and attitudinal measures (e.g., product beliefs and purchase intention).

Laroche et al. (2005) used the term of “country beliefs” to denote the cognitive component of country image, which incorporated a country’s industrial development and technological advancement. The current study aimed to broaden the dimensions of “country beliefs” to a broad field that also covers Chinese companies and economy, which is explained in detail in the “Measures” section of Chapter IV. The first research question and hypothesis were proposed in regard to “country beliefs”.

**RQ1:** Does news slant have any effect on Americans’ country beliefs related to China?

**H1:** Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China will perceive China more favorably than those exposed to the negative coverage.
The affective component stands for the consumers’ emotional responses towards people of a particular country (Papadopoulos et al., 1988), which was labeled “people affect” by Laroche et al. (2005). The second research question and hypothesis aimed at testing people’s emotional response to Chinese people but also included people’s attitudes towards Chinese culture.

**RQ2:** Does news slant have any effect on Americans’ people affect related to China?

**H2:** Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China will perceive Chinese people and culture more favorably than those exposed to the negative coverage.

The conative component refers to consumers’ level of willingness to interact with a foreign country (Papadopoulos et al., 1988), which was labeled “desired interaction” by Laroche et al. (2005). The relevant research question and hypothesis are as follows.

**RQ3:** Does news slant have any effect on Americans’ desired interaction with China and Chinese people?

**H3:** Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China will desire more interaction with China and Chinese people than those exposed to the negative coverage.

Findings from previous country image research indicated that the country of origin associated with products may influence consumers’ assessment of product attributes and consequently their purchase choices (Cervino, Sanchez, & Cubillo, 2005; Kalicharan, 2014; Speece & Nguyen, 2005). These two factors are the main and ultimate concern of business
analysts and international marketers as they are directly related to product’s reputation and sales. Due to their importance and close connection with country image, Laroche et al. (2005) included these two supplementary factors in the three-dimensional model of country image by using the terms of “product beliefs” and “product evaluation.” According to the model (Laroche et al., 2005), the term “product beliefs” refers to “consumers’ beliefs about a product’s intrinsic characteristics such as quality and reliability,” and “product evaluation” denotes consumers’ attitude towards the product “in terms of pride of ownership, liking, and intention to purchase” (p. 100). This study kept the construct “product beliefs” but used another term “purchase intention” to replace “product evaluation.” There are two reasons for this modification: first, “purchase intention” is not as likely to be confused with “product beliefs” as “product evaluation” is; second, “purchase intention” is more focused on the behavioral results of country image and thus draws a clearer conceptual boundary against “product beliefs.”

To further analyze the effects of country image, it is necessary to test the existence of any differences in people’s products beliefs and purchase intention. Hence the following research question and hypothesis related to “product beliefs” were raised.

**RQ4:** Does news slant have any effect on Americans’ product beliefs related to Chinese products?

**H4:** Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China will perceive Chinese products more favorably than those exposed to the negative coverage.

Since several studies have findings suggesting that varying image can influence a consumer's choice process (Percy, 1993; Zaichkowsky & Vipat, 1993), the change in country
image aroused by varying news coverage in mass media (Han & Wang, 2012) may result in
divergent patterns in their decision-making process. For example, an experiment by Cai, Cude,
and Swagler (2004) indicated that consumers were less willing to purchase products from
developing countries than from developed countries. Roth and Romeo (1992) found that
consumers were more willing to buy a car from Japan, Germany, and America than from Mexico
or Hungary. Other research, however, implied that the influence of country image over
consumers’ purchase decision of a nation’s products is not as strong as it has indicated. Several
scholars (Chung, Pysarchik, & Hwang, 2009; Tigli, Pirtini, & Erdem, 2010) argued that this is
especially true in an era of globalization when a product may bear labels of multiple countries in
terms of manufacturing, design, assembly, head office, and even stockholding. To further
explicate this issue, the following research question and hypotheses related to “purchase
intention” were proposed.

RQ5: Does news slant have any effect on Americans’ purchase intention related to
Chinese products?

H5: Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China are more willing to buy
Chinese products than those exposed to the negative coverage.

Main Effects of Media Partisanship

Prior to testing the moderating effect of media partisanship, this study also attempted to
investigate whether the media partisanship would make a difference in commonly studied
heuristic cues associated with the media, i.e., people’s perception of source credibility, news
accuracy, and news bias. One thing we need to be aware of is that media/source credibility and news/content credibility are two different concepts although they are often not clearly differentiated in many circumstances. As a matter of fact, most previous studies related to heuristic processing have focused on media/source credibility rather than news/content credibility. This is because media/source credibility is an indirect source characteristic, which would make the research of news content’s influence more meaningful, but news/content credibility can be somehow considered as a direct measure of the influential power of a news story. In other words, it may be uncertain whether a news story is accurate and unbiased (or not) even if its source is considered extremely credible (or doubtful). However, we can be sure that a news story with no credibility is most likely to be inaccurate and biased. Thus, in a HSM-related context, credibility is mostly construed by scholars as a source feature rather than a content feature because news content’s credibility as a factor that directly affects a news story’s truthfulness can hardly be treated as an irrelevant heuristic.

Past literature has indicated that people do not simply judge news content without considering peripheral media specific cues. As early as in the 80s, Heesacker, Petty, and Cacioppo (1983) have identified source credibility as a heuristic cue to affect people’s evaluation of a message even though they did not use the HSM explicitly. Chaiken and Maheswaran’s (1994) experiment also treated source credibility as a heuristic cue, arguing that it can have an impact on the valence of systematic processing by biasing systematic processing when evidence is insufficient. Other researchers discovered that there is a connection between source credibility and news credibility. For example, Thorson et al. (2010) suggested that the credibility of news content can be affected by source cues of a partisan blog, such as the civil/uncivil tone and the ideological congruency/incongruency of a blogger’s commentary. Specifically, their findings
indicated that participants rated a news story as most credible if it was followed by a blogger’s uncivil commentary expressing a partisan incongruent opinion (Thorson et al., 2010), which was referred to as a contrast effect (Mussweiler, 2001, 2003; Mussweiler, Ruter, & Epstude, 2004). The above literature suggested that perceived differences in source credibility may result in the variation in people’s perception of the message or content conveyed by the source.

Several scholars have begun to incorporate multiple dimensions in measuring source credibility although many of them did not actually differentiate media/source credibility from news/content credibility. The most popular dimensions included trustworthiness and expertise, fairness, bias, incompleteness, concern for community, separation of opinion and fact, and accuracy (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus, & McCann, 2003; Meyer, 1988) as well as the five dimensions of measuring newspaper credibility (fairness, completeness, bias, accuracy, and trustworthiness) as proposed by Meyer’s (1988). Instead of choosing among the multiple versions of measuring credibility, which are yet to be agreed upon, this study decided to use the simple one-dimensional construct to measure source credibility by asking audience how credible the news outlet is. Because the word “credible” is an easily comprehensible term that should make sense to most people in daily conversations, a simple and self-evident scale might make the measurement easier and more accurate.

Since both the tone and the ideological stance of a media source have been found to affect its perceived credibility (Brooks & Geer, 2007; Hamilton & Hunter, 1998; Metzger et al., 2003; Ng & Detenber, 2003), we would expect that partisan media are likely to activate audiences’ awareness of media features such as source credibility, perceived reach, perceived influence, news bias, news accuracy, and others, which can further serve as an optional heuristic cue in processing news coverage about China. Therefore, we would expect that media
partisanship as a source cue can influence perceived source credibility among partisans. Furthermore, as source credibility and news credibility have been found to be correlated, it is highly possible that the congruency/incongruency in political ideology between partisan news readers and partisan news media can affect their perceived credibility of the news content in terms of its accuracy and bias. Therefore RQ6 and its associated hypotheses were posed.

**RQ6**: Does media partisanship activate heuristic cues in people’s evaluation of media source and news content?

**H6a**: Participants exposed to the congruent partisan media will perceive the media source as more credible than those exposed to the incongruent partisan media.

**H6b**: Participants exposed to the congruent partisan media will perceive the news coverage as more accurate than those exposed to the incongruent partisan media.

**H6c**: Participants exposed to the congruent partisan media will perceive the news coverage as less biased than those exposed to the incongruent partisan media.

To test the potential moderating effect of media partisanship on people’s change in perception of China’s country image, RQ7 to RQ11 and their associated hypotheses were raised to investigate the possible influences on the cognitive, affective, and conative components of China’s country image (e.g., country beliefs, people affect, and desired interaction) as well as the resulting behavioral and attitudinal measures (e.g., product beliefs and purchase intention).

**RQ7**: Does media partisanship have any effect on Americans’ country beliefs related to China?
**H7:** Participants exposed to the congruent news media will perceive China more favorably than those exposed to the incongruent news media.

**RQ8:** Does media partisanship have any effect on Americans’ people affect related to China?

**H8:** Participants exposed to the congruent news media will perceive Chinese people and culture more favorably than those exposed to the incongruent news media.

**RQ9:** Does media partisanship have any effect on Americans’ desired interaction with China and Chinese people?

**H9:** Participants exposed to the congruent news media will desire more interaction with China and Chinese people than those exposed to the incongruent news media.

**RQ10:** Does media partisanship have any effect on Americans’ product beliefs related to Chinese products?

**H10:** Participants exposed to the congruent news media will perceive Chinese products more favorably than those exposed to the incongruent news media.

**RQ11:** Does media partisanship have any effect on Americans’ purchase intention related to Chinese products?

**H11:** Participants exposed to the congruent news media will be more willing to buy Chinese products than those exposed to the incongruent news media.
Interaction Effects between News Slant and Media Partisanship

Prior to constructing the hypotheses for the interaction effects, it is necessary to review two important constructs, ethnocentrism (Shimp & Sharma, 1987) and animosity (Klein, Ettenson, & Morris, 1998) in the context of international marketing. Ethnocentrism refers to “the belief among consumers that it is inappropriate, or even immoral, to purchase foreign products because to do so is damaging to the domestic economy, costs domestic jobs, and is unpatriotic” (Shimp & Sharma, 1987, p. 281). Animosity is defined as “the remnants of antipathy related to previous or ongoing military, political, or economic events that will affect consumers’ purchase behavior in the international marketplace” (Klein et al., 1998, p. 90). Despite the fact the two terms are newly introduced in the international marketing research, consumer ethnocentrism and animosity have been indicated to play a role in shaping country image. The Animosity Model of Foreign Product Purchase (Klein et al., 1998, p.92) posited that animosity and ethnocentrism are two antecedents of consumers’ willingness to buy. Unlike consumer ethnocentrism, which is mediated by product judgments, consumer animosity is activated by a product’s country-of-origin and does not process product-specific information such as the quality of goods, but is related to “their hostility toward a target nation and their associated willingness to purchase products from that nation” (Ettenson & Klein, 2005; Klein et al., 1998). The effects of ethnocentrism and consumer animosity have been discovered in the cases of Australian consumers’ hostility towards France due to France’s nuclear tests in the South Pacific (Ettenson & Klein, 1998) and Chinese consumers’ resentment against Japanese products due to Japan’s invasion of China during World War II (Klein et al., 1998).

China’s image in the American society is also likely to suffer from animosity and ethnocentrism. For one thing, China, as a country led by a communist party, has not only
engaged in the Cold War as an ideological enemy against the capitalist countries but also intervened in the Korean War combating the U.S. military in the last century; for another, big corporations’ outsourcing to China has caused the diminishing of working opportunities in America in the last two decades (Peralta, 2014). Taking consumer animosity and ethnocentrism into consideration, we would expect that the negative coverage about China will significantly influence consumer’s perception of China’s image as well as their purchase decision compared to the positive coverage. The effects of negative coverage about China from an ideologically congruent news source can possibly maximize Americans’ feeling of ethnocentrism and animosity. On the other hand, a positive article about China may minimize Americans’ ethnocentric emotion and animosity against China and Chinese products especially if the news comes from a politically congruent partisan media source.

Hence RQ12 to RQ16 and their associated hypotheses were proposed to test the potential interaction effects between news slant and media partisanship on the cognitive, affective, and conative components of China’s country image (e.g., country beliefs, people affect, and desired interaction) as well as the resulting behavioral and attitudidual measures (e.g., product beliefs and purchase intention).

RQ12: Are there any interaction effects between news slant and media partisanship on Americans’ country beliefs related to China?

H12a: Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China in the congruent partisan media will perceive China most favorably.

H12b: Participants exposed to the negative coverage of China in the congruent partisan media will perceive China least favorably.
RQ13: Are there any interaction effects between news slant and media partisanship on people’s people affect related to China?

H13a: Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China in the congruent partisan media will perceive Chinese people and culture most favorably.

H13b: Participants exposed to the negative coverage of China in the congruent partisan media will perceive Chinese people and culture least favorably.

RQ14: Are there any interaction effects between news slant and media partisanship on Americans’ desired interaction with China and Chinese people?

H14a: Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China in the congruent partisan media will have the highest level of desired interaction with China and Chinese people.

H14b: Participants exposed to the negative coverage of China in the congruent partisan media will have the lowest level of desired interaction with China and Chinese people.

RQ15: Are there any interaction effects between news slant and media partisanship on Americans’ product beliefs related to Chinese products?

H15a: Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China in the congruent partisan media will perceive Chinese products most favorably.

H15b: Participants exposed to the negative coverage of China in the congruent partisan media will perceive Chinese products least favorably.

RQ16: Are there any interaction effects between news slant and media partisanship on
people’s purchase intention related to Chinese products?

**H16a:** Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China in the congruent partisan media will have the strongest intention to buy Chinese products.

**H16b:** Participants exposed to the negative coverage of China in the congruent partisan media will have the least intention to buy Chinese products.

### Effects on Social Media Behavior

The study intended to measure participants’ Internet behavior when browsing online news. According to the Uses and Gratifications theory (U&G), the audiences are active media users who select and synthesize certain media content to cater to their own needs and gratifications (Baran & Davis, 1995; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Rubin, 1994). Online news readers, as a type of emerging media users, also adopt news websites to meet their own needs. Since more and more Internet users are becoming members of social media communities, it is worthwhile to investigate how news readers’ interactions with news websites differ in terms of news valence and media source from their use of traditional media. A study of social media users (Yang, Ha, Yun, & Chen, 2015) identified four emphases of social media, i.e., information seeking, information broadcasting, relationship maintenance, and entertainment seeking. Among the four emphases, information broadcasting is directly related to news sharing on social media. Furthermore, most major news websites have integrated social media shortcut buttons on their webpages, offering online news readers a convenient way to like, share, and comment on news articles. By using these shortcut buttons, online news audiences who are also social media users can easily promote the news article they are interested in within their social networks on
Facebook and Twitter. Therefore, these news websites’ social media features are not only designed to increase the interactivity between online news consumers and news websites, but also to increase the virality and impact of news stories among recipients’ family, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances on social media.

SNS-related news activities, such as sharing, liking, and commenting, are different from news selection and reading behavior because these activities are more or less oriented to people in readers’ online social network, which may involve more complicated motivations (Berger, 2014; Huang, Lin, & Lin, 2009). Previous research (e.g., Berger, 2013, 2014; Dibble, 2014; Kim, 2015) showed that people tend to share positive messages more frequently than negative ones because such messages can stimulate recipients’ feeling of joy and happiness and thus may help build the sharer’s positive image and develop harmonious interpersonal relationships within online communities. Since news valence may play an influential role in media users’ social media-based news activities, the following research question and hypotheses were proposed.

**RQ17:** Does news slant have any effect on people’s social media-related news activities such as liking, commenting, and sharing?

**H17a:** Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China are more likely to like the article via their social media accounts than those exposed to the negative one.

**H17b:** Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China are more likely to share the article on their social media than those exposed to the negative one.

**H17c:** Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China are more likely to comment on the article via their social media accounts than those exposed to the negative one.
Since literature of partisan media has indicated the tendency of selective exposure and group polarization among online news readers (Garrett, 2009a; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Stroud, 2007, 2008), it is reasonable to expect that this tendency may even extend to selective liking, commenting, and sharing of news stories in terms of the media source’s political standing. Furthermore, if the hypotheses for RQ6 are true, media users will perceive the credibility of partisan media differently based on its congruency or incongruency with readers’ own partisanship. Previous literature (e.g., Westerwick, Kleinman, & Knobloch-Westerwick, 2013; Winter & Cramer, 2014) has identified media sources and their credibility to be a potential influential factor for selective exposure and information seeking. For instance, Winter and Cramer’s research (2014) indicated that online news readers click more on news links from media sources with high reputation and read texts from sources with good ratings for longer time. Since source cues may potentially affect Internet users’ online news exposure, we would expect that source credibility may also make a difference in audience’s tendency to interact with social media-featured news webpages. In other words, participants might be more likely to interact with the partisan media outlet that is congruent with their own political ideology and, accordingly, more willing to like, share, and comment on a news article embedded in a congruent news website via their social media accounts. Therefore, the following research question and hypotheses were proposed.

**RQ18:** Does media partisanship have any effect on people’s social media-related news activities such as liking, sharing, and commenting?

**H18a:** Participants exposed to the congruent partisan media are more likely to like the article via their social media accounts than those exposed to the incongruent media.
**H18b**: Participants exposed to the congruent partisan media are more likely to share the article via their social media accounts than those exposed to the incongruent media.

**H18c**: Participants exposed to the congruent partisan media are more likely to comment on the article via their social media accounts than those exposed to the incongruent media.

Interaction effects between partisan media and news slant on audience’s social media-based news activities were examined too. We predicted that there are significant interaction effects between news slant and media partisanship on their social media news browsing behavior. On one hand, people may have the tendency to like, share, and comment on positive news about China if it comes from a congruent media source because such news is considered more reliable and can also promote harmonious relationships within social media users’ online networks. On the other hand, people may refrain from liking, sharing, and commenting on negative news coverage about China if it comes from an incongruent news source because such news coverage lacks credibility and may even stimulate negative emotions among social media users’ friends and other online connections, which is not beneficial to their online relationship maintenance. Hence the following research question and hypotheses were suggested.

**RQ19**: Are there any interaction effects between media partisanship and news slant on people’s social media-based news activities such as liking, sharing, and commenting?

**H19a**: Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China in the congruent partisan
media are most likely to like the article via their social media accounts.

**H19b:** Participants exposed to the negative coverage of China in the incongruent partisan media are least likely to like the article via their social media accounts.

**H19c:** Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China in the congruent partisan media are most likely to share the article via their social media accounts.

**H19d:** Participants exposed to the negative coverage of China in the incongruent partisan media are least likely to share the article via their social media accounts.

**H19e:** Participants exposed to the positive coverage of China in the congruent partisan media are most likely to comment on the article via their social media accounts.

**H19f:** Participants exposed to the negative coverage of China in the incongruent partisan media are least likely to comment on the article via their social media accounts.
CHAPTER IV. RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

Research Method

Experiments are the best research method to study media effects including priming because it can test a cause-and-effect relationship between two factors. In order to establish a causal relationship, at least three conditions must be satisfied (Singleton & Straits, 2005). First, there should be a manipulation of one or more independent variables, which divides the participants into different treatment groups. Second, carefully manipulated different experimental conditions (e.g., stimuli) and their effects should occur in a chronological order, with treatment conditions happening first and its influence following after. This time order can make sure the observed effects are actually caused by the corresponding treatments. Third, all other extraneous variables are properly controlled so as to eliminate the possibility that changes in the dependent variables may be caused by other factors. Although some may argue that it is doubtful that researchers can really prove the existence of a causal relationship between two factors, an experiment is still the most reliable way available to empirically prove media effects (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006).

Scant studies have examined how Americans’ perception of China can be affected by the news media, and even fewer have adopted experimental designs. Despite the fact that a decent number of studies related to China’s country image emerged in recent years, a majority of them applied the survey method. Giraldi, Ikeda, and Campomar (2011) used the survey method to probe how Brazilians perceive China and Chinese products, suggesting that Chinese home appliances still bear a negative image in the Brazilian market. The study by Godey and colleagues (2012) also used an online questionnaire to collect responses from seven countries
including China and found out that country of origin played a role in people’s decision making process of buying luxury goods. Han and Wang’s (2012) research, one of the few experimental studies using carefully manipulated news articles, showed mass media’s influence on the product-country image of China. However, their study investigated the traditional media of print newspaper (i.e., New York Times) only.

The above overview suggested that an experimental design is the most suitable and desirable method to test the priming effect of news media (Holbrook & Hill, 2005; Iyengar et al., 1982; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Because the current study focused on the specific online media platform of news websites, an online experiment would be unavoidable to replicate the environment of digital news consumption in real life. Thus the current research used a 2×2 pretest-posttest experimental factorial design. The two factors included news slant in covering China (positive and negative coverage) and media partisanship (congruent media and incongruent partisan media). The pretest and posttest focused on measuring a series of constructs including participants’ perception of China’s country image, online news consumption behavior, and other relevant variables.

**Participants Recruitment**

Participants were undergraduate students enrolled at the main campus of a mid-size midwestern university. The researcher recruited participants in two steps: first of all, the research project was introduced to several communication classes either by the researcher in person or by an instructor of the particular class and then a sign-up sheet was distributed in the class; second, a link to the website along with detailed information about the study and researcher’s contact information were posted on the course’s Canvas page for interested students
to participate. Two forms of rewards were issued to encourage students’ participation: 1) receiving extra credits if the instructor of the course agreed to; 2) entering a lottery for fourteen Amazon gift cards. In order to participate, students either signed up in the class with an effective email address or clicked the pretest website link posted on the Canvas course page. For students recruited during the classes, the researcher sent the link of the pretest to the email addresses students had provided in the sign-up sheets (see Pretest in Appendix A and Appendix C). At least two weeks after the participants completed the pretest, they received a second email (see Posttest in Appendix A and Appendix C) inviting them to participate in a posttest following a stimulus exposure to an experimental news website (see Appendix D). Because it is a 2×2 factorial design, there were four conditions in total with each condition requiring 30 - 40 participants to have a reasonable statistical power. Therefore, the total sample size of recruited participants should be approximately 120 - 160 students. However, because loss of recruited sample is likely to happen in the posttest due to nonresponse and withdrawal as well as failure to pass the manipulation check, extra participants were recruited to ensure a sufficient sample size for each cell. In total, 445 participants were recruited in the pretest.

College students were recruited for multiple reasons. First, college students are heavy Internet users, who may represent active online news readers much better than a general population. Previous literature has identified young student population as active digital news consumers. A survey study of 873 college students across nine universities in the United States showed that nearly 40% of the college students reported reading or watching news online but traditional news media were barely mentioned as a way for them to seek news (Mihailidis, 2014). Goyanes (2014) also found that younger users were more likely to pay for online news than older users. Based on these findings, college students fit the profile of a typical online news
reader and thus may deliver more generalizable results than a sample out of a generic population of all ages. Since young adults are the current and future audience of online news media, the use of student sample is not only justified but also necessary in that attracting young readers has always been the priority of news media (Lauterer, 2006). Second, as far as this study is concerned, probability sampling designs (including simple random sampling and systematic sampling) are not feasible. Both sampling methods require an actual list of the elements composing the target population, i.e., a sampling frame. Nevertheless, it would be hardly possible to obtain a complete list of all online news readers in America because everyone in this country may become a potential online new reader at any time. In this sense, using probability sampling is far from efficient and possible in terms of time and effort as well as the availability of sampling frame. Third, since this study is an experimental design, probability sampling is not as crucial as it is for survey research. Experimental studies target at discovering the potential cause-and-effect relationship between independent and dependent variables. An experiment conducted in a lab or pseudo-lab environment intentionally manipulates most of the extraneous variables. Even with a non-probability sampling method, the findings of an experiment in social science are still generalizable as long as the identification and understanding of a causal relationship between two factors are meaningful for academic or industrial purposes.

**Experimental Procedure**

Participants were asked to participate in an online experiment via a computer connected to the Internet. In order to emulate participants’ natural online news consumption behavior, this study did not ask them to come to a lab to join the study, but to complete the online experiment at any time or location they feel comfortable with, which is supposed to have higher external
validity in terms of the experimental setting. The experiment consisted of two surveys, one pretest and one posttest with the stimulus exposure inserted in between.

For the pretest, participants received an email that provided a link to an online survey (see Invitation Email for Pretest in Appendix A). After clicking the link, participants were led to a webpage showing an informed consent form (see Appendix B). Participants were asked to read the consent form carefully. If they agreed to participate, they could proceed with the experiment by clicking the button at the bottom of the page, indicating that they read the consent form and agreed to take part in the study; if they did not want to participate, they could simply close the webpage. The first survey (see Pretest Survey in Appendix C) served as a pretest before participants’ exposure to the stimulus. Thus it aimed at collecting participants’ demographic information and also measured their political partisanship as well as opinions and attitudes related to various issues of China. The participants were also asked to provide an effective email at the end of the pretest so they can be reached for the posttest. The pretest took approximately 10 - 15 minutes.

Due to the concern of possible confounding interactions between the pretest and posttest, the posttest was not applied immediately following the pretest. Typical interactions between pretest and posttest are mainly caused by order effects, effects that the order of presenting the treatments have on the measurement of a dependent variable (Cozby, 2009). Previous literature (Collie, Maruff, Darby, & McStephen, 2003; Bergh & Vrana, 1998; Pan, Shell, & Schleifer, 1994) indicated that most common confounding interactions include practice effect (performance improvement due to participants’ memory and familiarity with task), boredom effect, and fatigue effect (performance deterioration due to subject’s insensitivity and tiredness after repeated measures). Therefore, a gap of at least two weeks were inserted into the time slot between the
two tests. During the two-week gap, no major news about China hit the U.S. mainstream mass media that could flip Americans’ attitudes about China.

Two weeks after administering the pretest, participants were contacted via email to participate in the posttest (see Invitation Email for Posttest in Appendix A). For the posttest, participants were asked to visit and evaluate a simulated news website. They were told that this news website was newly designed for a major TV news network’s consideration. Because it was a potential website for the news media and still under construction, the web designer wanted to collect people’s opinions about it so that it can increase the chances of becoming an official design for that media agency. After participants clicked the provided link, they would see the website as affiliated to a major TV news network’s official website, which was constructed by the researcher beforehand with treatment conditions carefully manipulated (see Appendix D). Because it is a 2 (media congruency) × 2 (news slant) factorial design, there were four treatment conditions in total: a positive news coverage about China in a liberal news website, a positive news coverage about China in a conservative news website, a negative news coverage about China in a liberal news website, and a negative news coverage about China in a conservative news website. Since the pretest had collected information about the participants’ political partisanship, the participants were randomly assigned to each of the four news websites based on their conservativeness or liberalness: half of the participants received a news outlet that was congruent with their own partisanship; the other half received a news outlet that was incongruent. When a subject visited the news website, he or she would initially see a front page of the news website with a title indicating a popular U.S.-based liberal or conservative news agency (in this case, either “MSNBC.com” or “FoxNews.com”) and a list of article titles featuring photos in the main content area. Most of these news titles reflected a typical political
partisan view towards a controversial topic that is divisive between liberals and conservatives. The news story about China was embedded among the list of news titles. Participants were asked to first check the design of the webpage and then click the story about China to read it for details. After finishing reading the news article about China, participants were led to the next webpage containing a second questionnaire (see Posttest Survey in Appendix C). The posttest recorded participants’ responses to questions about repeated measures of country image as well as other associated variables. The posttest also collected information about their Internet use behavior and asked questions about the manipulation check. The exposure to stimuli and completion of the posttest took approximately 15 - 20 minutes. After finishing the posttest, the participants were led to the final webpage, which showed appreciation for their participation and informed them of the purpose, nature, and other accurate information about this study as part of the debriefing process.

**Factor Manipulation**

**Partisan Media Stimuli**

To build a digital news environment that can best represent real-life examples of partisan media, the research strived to construct the webpages that would resemble the most popular partisan news websites in America.

In order to better simulate a partisan news website, it is necessary to have an overview of the major partisan media outlets in American news industry. Based on the website traffic data provide by the *Alexa.com* (2015), CNN (ranked No. 21 in the U.S.) was identified as the most visited liberal news website with Huffington Post (ranked No. 32 in the U.S.) and MSNBC News (ranked No. 117 in the U.S.) following; Fox News (ranked No. 20 in the news category) was the
most visited conservative news website with Wall Street Journal (ranked No. 112 in the U.S.) and Drudge Report (ranked No. 152 in the U.S.) following. If Huffington Post was chosen as the news outlet in the liberal partisan media condition, neither Fox News nor Wall Street Journal would be a perfect conservative counterpart. Since Fox News is a TV news channel and Wall Street Journal has its physical daily newspaper, both have their own professionally trained reporters, writers, and news production teams behind their official news websites. Huffington Post, however, started as a news aggregator with articles mostly contributed by invited bloggers even though the website began to hire its own journalists later. The Drudge Report would be considered as a conservative counterpart to Huffington in terms of its news source. However, in terms of website traffic as well as website design, the two are far from comparable: the Drudge Report ranked No. 152 in the U.S. in contrast to Huffington Post’s No. 32 in January 2015; while Huffington Post’s website looks just as professional as a major news agency’s website, the Drudge Report’s website design is very simple and primitive, resembling an amateur personal blog.

It might be reasonable to choose CNN.com as the liberal media stimulus and FoxNews.com as the conservative news outlet since the two are comparable in terms of website traffic and cable news popularity. However, in an interview in 2013 with *Broadcasting and Cable* (Hall, 2013), Philip Kent, CEO of the Turner Broadcasting System, explicitly denied the claim that CNN is a liberal news network. Moreover, according to Pew Research Center’s Media Outlets by the Ideological Composition of Their Audience (2014) as shown in Figure 3, CNN’s audiences are not as liberal as those of MSNBC and other media (such as PBS and Washington Post). The report by Pew Research Center (2014) also discovered different media usage patterns between liberals and conservatives: the consistent conservatives tend to converge
around one single news source (i.e., Fox News) as nearly 47% of consistent conservatives use Fox News as their main source for political news; the consistent liberals, nevertheless, are not as unified in their media preference as the conservatives since they tend to resort to a wider range of media outlets including CNN, NPR, New York Times, and MSNBC News. In addition, this report (Pew Research Center, 2014) also showed that MSNBC is the least trusted source among consistent conservatives (75% distrust) while Fox News is the least trusted source among consistent liberals (81% distrust).

**Ideological Placement of Each Source's Audience**

*Average ideological placement on a 10-point scale of ideological consistency of those who got news from each source in the past week...*

Based on the above information, MSNBC might be a more typical example of a liberal news outlet than CNN. Since MSNBC and Fox News are both major cable and satellite television networks with their affiliated official news websites, the experimental design of the current study chose the simulated MSNBC.com website as a liberal media source and the simulated FoxNews.com website as the conservative news outlet.

In the posttest, participants were first asked to evaluate the news website they were exposed to. The top of the news media webpage bore a main title of either “MSNBC.com” or “FoxNews.com” as well as a navigation menu. Below the title and the menu lied a list of 12 news story titles, which were arranged in a structure of four rows and three columns (see Table 1 for the list of titles and Appendix D for webpage design). Among the 12 news story titles, five were partisan-irrelevant topics, six were partisan-relevant controversial topics and one was the news article about China. The five non-partisan news titles covered topics of crime, stock market, Apple Inc., NFL, driver’s safety, as shown in the following short sentences: “The Most Dangerous Cities in the US: FBI Data,” “Stock Market Today: Dow Scores Third Straight Record Close on Jobs Data,” “Apple Reveals Drop in Sales of iTunes Music,” “Scientists Dissected the Brains of 79 NFL Players. What They Found Is Disturbing,” and “Why People Text and Drive Even When They Know It’s Dangerous.” These titles were chosen because they are non-political and bear minimal difference between conservative and liberal views. The five partisan-relevant news titles covered controversial topics including immigration policy, opinions about President Obama, taxes, gay marriage, climate change, and abortion. In the liberal media condition, the titles regarding to the five topics were manipulated to advocate a strong liberal view, as shown in the following short sentences: “7 Promises President Obama Has Successfully Delivered to America,” “Economists Say We Should Tax the Rich at 90 Percent,” “Legalization
of Gay Marriage: An Unstoppable Trend in the History of American Civil Right,” “Why is It So Hard to De-stigmatize Abortion in America?,” “Why is ‘Illegal Immigrants’ a Slur: People Working Hard to Contribute to the Country Are Not Criminals,” and “U.N. Climate Change Report Offers Stark Warnings on Global Warming.” In the conservative media condition, the titles regarding to the five topics were manipulated to express a strong conservative view, as show in the following short sentences: “7 Promises President Obama Has Failed to Deliver to America,” “Economists Say Tax Reform Hurt the Economy More Than We Expected,” “With Gay Marriage Comes Question: The Consequences You May Not Know,” “Abortion Was Never About Personal Choice,” “Crime Rates Are Rising in Texas Due to an Increasing Population of Illegal Immigrants,” and “Researchers Show Measuring Climate Change Needn’t Go to Extremes.” The title for the article about China was embedded among the 11 news titles.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News topics</th>
<th>Liberal media: MSNBC News</th>
<th>Conservative media: Fox News</th>
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<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>The Most Dangerous Cities in the US: FBI Data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Stock Market Today: Dow Scores Third Straight Record Close on Jobs Data</td>
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<td>Music</td>
<td>Apple Reveals Drop in Sales of iTunes Music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>Scientists Dissected the Brains of 79 NFL Players. What They Found Is Disturbing.</td>
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<td>Safety</td>
<td>Why People Text and Drive Even When They Know It’s Dangerous</td>
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<th>News topics</th>
<th>Liberal media stimuli</th>
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<tr>
<td>President Obama</td>
<td>7 Promises President Obama Has Successfully Delivered to America</td>
<td>7 Promises President Obama Has Failed to Deliver to America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>Economists Say We Should Tax the Rich at 90 Percent</td>
<td>Economists Say Tax Reform Hurt the Economy More Than We Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Immigration Policy</td>
<td>Why Is ‘Illegal Immigrants’ a Slur: People Working Hard to Contribute to the Country Are Not Criminals</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Change</td>
<td>U.N. Climate Change Report Offers Stark Warnings on Global Warming</td>
<td>Researchers Show Measuring Climate Change Needn’t Go to Extremes</td>
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News Coverage Stimuli

As mentioned in the “media partisanship stimuli,” participants would see a news website with 12 news titles on one webpage (see Appendix D for webpage design). Although the look of the webpage resembled that of a real major news media’s official website, none of the news titles or any items on the navigation menu had clickable active hyperlinks leading to another page except for the title for the news article of China. After viewing the title list on the webpage, participants were told to locate the news title about China and then click the title to read the full-length article in detail. The title for the article of China was buried at the bottom of the webpage among the other 11 news titles, which was designed for the purpose of maximizing participants’ exposure to all the stimuli for media partisanship.

To increase the external validity of the design, the news article stimuli must resemble a real article in partisan media. In general, there are three types of news media articles on mainstream partisan media websites. The first type is articles reporting current events in a strictly neutral way without any individual subjective input, in other words, news about facts and truth only. The second type is coverage of current events but with slight to heavy interpretation by either editors or reporters who wrote it. The third kind is articles about pure expression of personal opinions on an event or topic, often referred to as “commentaries.” In a narrow sense, only the first type is considered news. Nevertheless, after the repeal of the Fairness Doctrine in 1987, the American society began to encourage the freedom of speech so that mass media are not obligated to report news in a strictly neutral way anymore. Consequently, many news agents, partisan media in particular, tend to report news with some degree of personal interpretation or political inclination, which is referred to as slanted news. During the process of mass media’s digitalization, online news is no exception since almost all major news websites nowadays have
a special section dedicated to the interpretation of news events, political issues, and other popular topics, such as CNN Opinion and Wall Street Journal’s Commentary News. Although some news readers may not consider an article expressing opinions as pure news, news agencies do not often draw a fine line between these two when feeding these articles to their audience. This experiment chose to use commentaries of the China issue as the news article stimuli for two main reasons. First, partisan media are more likely to bundle news coverage with political interpretation than non-partisan news media. Second, it makes more sense to use an opinion piece from a public relations perspective because international marketers cannot control what happens to a country they represent but they have some control over how these events are interpreted by mass media.

Therefore, two articles were designed to express dramatically divergent opinions about the issue of China in either positive or negative way and, accordingly, the title for China’s article was also manipulated into two conditions. In the positive news slant condition, the title was “Three Reasons China’s Rise will Benefit America.” In the negative news slant condition, the title was “Three Reasons China’s Rise will Hurt America.” After clicking on the news title of China, participants would see a webpage with a full-length article, which was manipulated to describe China in either a positive or a negative way. In an effort to increase external validity, the extremely positive or negative opinions about China expressed in the two articles were collected from authentic online coverage about China on partisan news websites and then rewritten and integrated by the researcher as complete new commentary pieces. In the positive condition, the article depicted China as a reliable long-term friend with America and emphasized the point that China’s rise would benefit America. Specifically, it talked about China’s concentration on peaceful development in education and economy, cheap labor that has provided
Americans with quality products at lowest prices, being a potential big market for American tourism and businesses. In the negative condition, the article depicted China as an untrustworthy rival against America and highlighted the opinion that China’s rise would pose a threat to America. Particularly, it discussed about the Chinese market being highly manipulated by its government, China’s cheap labor robbing away jobs from North America as well as harsh criticism of China’s human rights and democracy issues. The tone for both versions of coverage about China had been verified by ten invited readers, who are native English speakers and share similar background with participants recruited for the study. These invited readers were asked to carefully read the articles and then evaluate whether the articles presented China in a positive or negative way. All ten judges gave answers that were consistent with the intended experimental manipulations. After reading the full-length article about China, participants were asked to click the “Next” button to complete the posttest questionnaire.

Web Programming

The entire online experiment, including the online questionnaires (pretest and posttest) and the simulated news webpages, was constructed with the web development software Adobe Dreamweaver CC 2014 under a Microsoft Windows 7 operating system. The webpage coding was written with three main web-programming languages: HTML, CSS, and PHP. The coded files were written and edited locally and then uploaded to a remote web server via SFTP. The web server and domain were rented from a web-hosting company named 1&1 Internet. The webpages for the pretest and posttest as well as the news websites were tested in all mainstream web browsers (i.e., Firefox, Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, and Safari) on both Mac and
Windows computers. In addition, the webpages were also checked for compatibility with mobile devices such as an iPhone or an Android smartphone.

The online questionnaires were coded with PHP scripts to communicate with an online database maintained at the server’s side. Once participants clicked the “Submit” button at the end of each questionnaire, their responses would be automatically recorded and submitted to the online database. After all participants finished the pretest, their pretest responses were analyzed to decide whether a specific participant was a partisan and which partisan he or she should fall under. A number from 1 to 4 was manually input to the online database to assign the participants into one of the four stimulus conditions. For the posttest, a PHP script was written to send an email to all participates who completed the pretest and had left a correct email address. The email contained a dynamic hyperlink to the posttest webpage, which varied from person to person according to the experimental conditions they were assigned to by the researcher in advance.

Measures

In the pretest, a series of questions were raised to collect demographic information about the participants including age, gender, year in college, income, ethnicity, and others. The pretest also collected information about participants’ political ideology by asking their partisanship with a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely liberal) to 10 (extremely conservative) as well as their political party preference (Democrat, Republican, Independence/no preference, or Other Party).

The main measures in the research questions and hypotheses included three core dimensions of country image and two closely related constructs (i.e., product beliefs and
purchase intention). Other measures covered constructs of source credibility, news bias, new accuracy, social media behaviors as well as demographic variables. Each measure consisted of a series of survey questions.

**Country Image**

This study used the three dimensional construct of country image, which is made up of the cognitive, affective, and conative components (Laroche et al., 2005; Papadopoulos et al., 1988, 1990, 2000). Since the measures defined by Laroche et al. (2005) were ten years old, survey questions in this study were slightly modified to keep up with the times and fit the special case of China.

**Country Beliefs:** To conceptualize the cognitive component of country image, Laroche et al. (2005) used the term of “country beliefs,” which refers to the country’s industrial development and technological advancement. This study chose to expand this dimension to make the measurement a bit broader. Therefore, a 5-item scale of “country beliefs” (Cronbach’s α=.755) was developed to measure Americans’ overall impression of China as a country. In particular, participants were asked to rate their impression about five different aspects about China with a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely negative) to 10 (extremely positive). The five aspects included China as a country in general, China’s science and technology, educational system, companies and brands, and economy.

**People Affect:** To conceptualize the affective component of country image, Laroche et al. (2005) used the term of “people affect,” which reflects people’s affective responses to a country’s people. Lacroche et al. (2005) used the three dimensions of “trustworthy or not trustworthy,” “hardworking or not hardworking,” and “likable or not likable.” The current study followed the same scales but also added one more measure, “attitude towards Chinese culture.” Therefore, a
A 4-item scale of “people affect” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .832$) was developed to measure Americans’ emotional responses to Chinese people and culture. In particular, participants were asked to rate how much they agreed with the four statements about Chinese people and culture with a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 10 (strongly disagree). The four statements were “Chinese people are likeable,” “Chinese people are trustworthy,” “Chinese people are hardworking,” and “Chinese culture is appealing.”

**Desired Interaction:** To conceptualize the conative component of country image, Laroche et al. (2005) used the term of “desired interaction,” which refers to the degree of people’s desire to interact with the foreign country. Specifically, Laroche et al. (2005) defined it as “consumers’ willingness to build close economic ties with the target country” (p. 98). The current study expanded the width of this construct beyond economic ties, measuring “desired interaction” with the following four dimensions: people’s willingness to have closer economic ties with China, willingness to have more cultural exchanges with China, willingness to visit China, and willingness to make Chinese friends. Therefore, a 4-item scale of “desired interaction” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .715$) was developed to measure Americans’ desired interaction with China and Chinese people. In particular, participants were asked rate how much they agreed with the four statements about their expected interaction with China with a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 10 (strongly disagree). The four statements were “We should have closer economic ties with China,” “We should have more cultural exchanges with China,” “I am willing to make friends with Chinese people,” and “I am willing to visit China in the future.”

**Resulting Behavioral and Attitudinal Measures**

The constructs of product beliefs and product evaluations are necessary because they are important elements in the three-factor model of country image developed by Laroche et al.
Based on research by Papadopoulos et al. (1988, 2000) and Nagashima (1977), their model of country image used a seven-point bipolar scale to measure these two constructs. The current study followed a similar pattern with some small modifications. As shown in Figure 2, the two constructs “product beliefs” and “purchase intention” were adopted in the three-factor model of country image as resulting behavioral and attitudinal variables. Furthermore, the connotations for the conative component were slightly broadened, which are explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

**Product Beliefs:** A 5-item scale of “product beliefs” (Cronbach’s α=.896) was developed to measure participants’ impression of Chinese products in terms of quality, price, design/workmanship, and durability/reliability. Participants were asked to rate five different aspects about Chinese products with a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely negative) to 10 (extremely positive). The five items were Chinese products in general as well as their quality, price, design/workmanship, and durability/reliability.

**Purchase Intention:** A 4-item scale of “purchase intention” (Cronbach’s α=.828) was developed from and similar to the construct of “product evaluation” by Laroche et al. (2005). The reason to change the term is that “product evaluation” might be a bit misleading if readers are not familiar with the literature. Nevertheless, the term “purchase intention” directly refers to people’s willingness to purchase products from a specific country. Participants were asked to rate how much they agreed with the following four statements with a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 10 (strongly disagree): “I am willing to buy Chinese products in general,” “I am willing to buy Chinese products if I have a choice between same-priced Chinese and American products,” “I am willing to buy Chinese products if I have a choice between cheaper
Chinese products and more expensive American products,” and “I am willing to buy made-in-China products of an American company/brand.”

**Social Media Activities**

Since this study examined a digital environment of online news media with a strong feature of interactivity, it is also the research’s interest to find out if there were any behavioral differences in participants’ interactive activities related to the omnipresent social media platforms. Three social media activities were measured: tendency to click the “like” button, tendency to share the article, and tendency to comment on the article via their social media accounts. Participants were asked to rate how likely they were to like, share, and comment on this news article about China via their social media accounts with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely likely) to 10 (extremely unlikely).

**Manipulation Check**

To make sure the stimuli were effective, a series of questions were asked at the end of the posttest to check whether the participants paid attention to the stimuli including the partisan media source and the news content about China.

To confirm that the participants noticed the specific partisan media, the participants were asked which news website they have just visited in a multiple-choice question. Besides the two manipulated conditions of Fox News and MSNBC, two additional options were provided as possible answers, i.e., Wall Street Journal and Huffington Post. The manipulation check also asked the participants to rate how liberal or conservative the news website they visited was in general. In this way, participants who had no prior knowledge about the news media’s partisanship would be filtered out. In order to confirm that the participants read the news
coverage about China carefully, a multiple-choice question was included to ask participants about the main idea of the article, with two possible choices, i.e., “China is an untrustworthy competitor of American economy” and “China’s growth is benefiting American economy greatly.” Participants who incorrectly answered the above questions were excluded from the final data analysis.
CHAPTER V. RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

After the data collection was finished, the dataset file was downloaded from the online server and then converted into a SPSS-compatible file. The data analysis was conducted with the statistical package IBM SPSS Statistics. A total of 433 participants completed the pretest and a total of 346 participants completed the posttest, with an attrition rate of 20.1%. Among the 346 participants who completed both tests, 175 participants either indicated an ambiguous or inconsistent measurement of their political partisanship or failed to pass the manipulation check.

Demographic Information

Among the 346 participants who completed both tests, 130 (37.6%) were male and 212 (61.3%) were female with four participants (1.2%) who did not identify their gender. The participant’s ages ranged from 18 years old to 63 years old, with an average age of 23.38 years old (SD=8.65). The majority of the participants (n=287, 82.9%) were single with 50 married (14.5%), and five people divorced (1.4%) and four who did not provide information about their marital status (1.2%). As for participants’ ethnicity, a majority were White/Caucasian (n=262, 75.7%) and the rest were minorities (n=84, 23.1%) with 31 Blacks/African Americans, 26 Asians/Pacific Islanders, 10 Hispanics/Latinos. In terms of their political party identification, 132 participants (38.2%) reported to be Democrats and 66 participants (19.1%) reported to be Republicans, with 133 participants (38.4%) claiming to be independent and 15 people (4.3%) identifying themselves with other parties. Participants were also asked to provide information about their monthly disposable allowances after paying for housing, utilities, and basic living expenses: 175 participants (50.6%) have a disposable allowance of under $500 per month; 138
participants (39.9%) have a disposable allowance between $500 and $1,500; 21 people’s (6.1%) monthly disposable allowance is between $1,501-$3,000 and four (1.2%) are at the range above $3,000 per month; eight people (2.3%) did not provide such information.

Among the 172 participants who passed the manipulation check and also show consistency of being either liberal or conservative, 60 (34.9%) were male and 110 (64.0%) were female with two participants (1.2%) who did not identify their gender. The participant’s ages ranged from 18 years old to 54 years old, with an average age of 24.74 years old (SD=8.52). The majority of the participants (n=136, 79.1%) were single with 31 married (18.0%), and three people divorced (1.7%) and two who did not provide the information about their marital status (1.2%). As for participants’ ethnicity, a majority were White/Caucasian (n=146, 84.9%) and the rest were minorities (n=26, 15.1%) with seven Blacks/African Americans, nine Asians/Pacific Islanders and four Hispanics/Latinos. In terms of their political party identification, 81 participants (38.0%) reported to be Democrats and 38 participants (17.8%) reported to be Republicans, with 86 participants (40.4%) claiming to be independent and eight people (3.8%) identifying themselves with other parties. Participants were also asked to provide the information about their monthly disposable allowances after paying for housing, utilities, and basic living expenses: 90 participants (52.3%) have a disposable allowance of under $500 per month; 70 participants (40.7%) have a disposable allowance between $500 and $1,500; nine people’s (5.2%) monthly disposable allowance is between $1,501-$3,000 and two (1.2%) are at the range above $3,000 per month; one person did not provide such information.

In order to get a general idea of the collected sample’s interest in and understanding of topics related to China, the pretest asked participants to report how much attention they paid to news about China in daily life with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (no attention at all) to 5
Testing of Hypotheses

Because it is a 2×2 experimental factorial design, a two-way ANOVA analysis was conducted to compare the mean differences between the four conditions. In total, 172 responses were entered into the data analysis. A total of 43 participants were exposed to a positive story about China embedded in a congruent partisan news website; 42 participants were exposed to a positive story about China embedded in an incongruent partisan news website; 47 participants were exposed to a negative story about China embedded in a congruent partisan news website; 40 participants were exposed to a negative story about China embedded in an incongruent partisan news website. Therefore, for the primed news coverage, 85 participants were exposed
to the positive news article about China and 87 participants were exposed to the negative news article about China. For the partisan media source, 90 participants were exposed to a congruent news website and 82 participants were exposed to an incongruent news website. Because it is a pretest-posttest experiment, the five components of country image (i.e. country belief, people affect, desired interaction, product belief, and purchase intention) were measured twice in both the pretest and the posttest. Before conducting the two-way ANOVA, a change in the posttest from the pretest was calculated for each of the five country image components by subtracting the pretest’s average measurement from the posttest’s average measurement.

**Testing the Priming Effects of News Slant**

Research Question 1 was proposed to test if there was any effect of news slant on Americans’ country beliefs related to China. H1 predicted that exposure to the positive news coverage would lead to more positive perception of China among news readers while exposure to the negative story would lead to more negative perception of China.

In general, participants exposed to the positive article about China witnessed an average negative change of -.047 (SD=1.696) in their opinions about China, compared to the average negative change of -.131 (SD=1.255) for those exposed to the negative article about China (see Table 2). A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze the changes of people’s country beliefs about China between the pretest and posttest as the dependent variable. Table 3 indicated that the difference between participants exposed to the positive coverage about China and those exposed to the negative one was not statistically significant (F=.130, p =.719).

Since the lack of significant news priming effect may be caused by a big portion of sample dropped due to participants’ nonpartisanship, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA
based on all 346 participants who completed both tests was conducted to test the effect of news slant on Americans’ country beliefs related to China. The results showed that there was no significant effect of news slant on country beliefs about China at the p<.05 level with $F(1, 344) = .054$ and $p=.816$. Therefore, H1 was not supported, concluding that there was no significant priming effect of news coverage on people’s perception of China as a country in general.

Table 2 also showed that after reading the positive coverage about China, participants exposed to the congruent partisan media showed an average positive change of .535 (SD=1.503) in their country beliefs about China while participants exposed to the incongruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.643 (SD=1.690). On the other hand, after reading the negative coverage about China, participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.106 (SD=1.338) in their country beliefs about China while participants exposed to the incongruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.160 (SD=1.165). Although the difference of average change in people’s opinions about China as a country was not statistically significant ($F=.130$, $p=.719$) between participants exposed to the positive coverage and those exposed to the negative one, there was a significant difference between participants exposed to the incongruent media and those exposed to the incongruent media ($F=7.856$, $p=.006$, see Table 3).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Congruent Media</th>
<th>Incongruent Media</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$M$ (SD)</td>
<td>$n$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Coverage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>.535 (1.503)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Coverage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>-.106 (1.338)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>.200 (1.448)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 2 was proposed to test if there was any effect of news slant on Americans’ emotional response to Chinese people and Chinese culture. H2 predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage about China would perceive Chinese people and Chinese culture more favorably than those exposed to the negative coverage.

In general, participants exposed to the positive article about China witnessed an average negative change of -.244 (SD=1.322) in their attitudes toward Chinese people and Chinese culture, compared to the average negative change of -.072 (SD=1.087) for those exposed to the negative article about China (see Table 4). A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze the changes of participants’ people affect about China between the pretest and posttest as the dependent variable. Table 5 indicated that the difference occurred between participants exposed to the positive coverage about China and those exposed to the negative one was not statistically significant (F=.995, p=.320).

Since the lack of significant news priming effect may be caused by a big portion of sample dropped due to participants’ nonpartisanship, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA based on all 346 participants who completed both tests was conducted to test the effect of news
slant on Americans’ emotional response to Chinese people and Chinese culture. The results showed that there was no significant effect of news slant on Americans’ emotional response to Chinese people and culture at the p<.05 level with F (1, 344) =1.760 and p=.186. Therefore, H2 was not supported, concluding that there was no significant priming effect of news coverage on participants’ perception about Chinese people and culture.

Table 4 also showed that after reading the positive coverage about China, participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.029 (SD=1.061) in their affect perception about Chinese people while participants exposed to the incongruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.464 (SD=1.527). On the other hand, after reading the negative coverage about China, participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average positive change of -.170 (SD=1.119) in their people affect about China while participants exposed to the incongruent partisan media witnessed an average positive change of .044 (SD=1.050). The difference of average change in people’s opinion about Chinese people and Chinese culture was not statistically significant (F=.995, p=.320) between participants exposed to the positive coverage and those exposed to the negative one; neither was the difference significant between participants exposed to the incongruent media and those exposed to the incongruent media (F=.362, p=.548, see Table 5).

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics with a Dependent Variable: Average Change in Opinion about Chinese People and Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Congruent Media</th>
<th>Incongruent Media</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Coverage</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>-.029</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.061)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.527)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Coverage</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>-.170</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.119)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.050)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>-.103</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.088)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.333)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects with a Dependent Variable: Change in Opinion about Chinese People and Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>6.290(^a)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.097</td>
<td>1.447</td>
<td>.231</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>4.116</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.116</td>
<td>2.840</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Slant</td>
<td>1.442</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.442</td>
<td>.995</td>
<td>.320</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Partisanship</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>.362</td>
<td>.548</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Slant × Media Partisanship</td>
<td>4.515</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.515</td>
<td>3.115</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>243.472</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>1.449</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>254.000</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>249.762</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(a\) R Squared = .025 (Adjusted R Squared = .008)

Note: * p<.05, ** p<.01

Research Question 3 was proposed to test if there was any effect of news slant on Americans’ desired level of interaction with China and Chinese people. H3 predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage about China would desire more interaction with China and Chinese people than those exposed to the negative coverage.

In general, participants exposed to the positive article about China witnessed an average negative change of -.282 (SD=1.271) in their desired interaction with China and Chinese people, compared to the average negative change of -.397 (SD=1.188) for those exposed to the negative article about China (see Table 6). A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze the changes of participants’ desired interaction with China between the pretest and posttest as the dependent variable. Table 7 indicated that the difference between participants exposed to the positive coverage about China and those exposed to the negative one was not statistically different (F=.282, p=.596).

Since the lack of significant news priming effect may be caused by a big portion of sample dropped due to participants’ nonpartisanship, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA based on all 346 participants who completed both tests was conducted to test the effect of news
slant on Americans’ desired interaction with China and Chinese people. The results showed that there was no significant effect of news slant on people’s desired interaction with China at the p<.05 level with F (1, 344) = .000 and p=.993. Therefore, H3 was not supported, concluding that there was no significant priming effect of news coverage on participants’ desired level of interaction with China and Chinese people.

Table 6 also showed that after reading the positive coverage about China, participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average positive change of .151 (SD=.970) in their desired interaction with China while participants exposed to the incongruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.726 (SD=1.396). On the other hand, after reading the negative coverage about China, participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.537 (SD=1.336) in their desired interaction with China and Chinese people while participants exposed to the incongruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.231 (SD=.978). The difference of average change in desired interaction with China and Chinese people was not statistically significant (F=.282, p=.596) between participants exposed to the positive coverage and those exposed to the negative one; neither was the difference significant between participants exposed to the congruent media and those exposed to the incongruent media (F=2.461, p=.119, see Table 7).

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics with a Dependent Variable: Average Change in Desired Interaction with China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Congruent Media</th>
<th>Incongruent Media</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Coverage</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>.151 (.970)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Coverage</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>-.537 (1.336)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>-.208 (1.219)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7  
*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects with a Dependent Variable: Change in Desired Interaction with China*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>18.939</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.313</td>
<td>4.441</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>19.338</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19.338</td>
<td>13.605</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Slant</td>
<td>.401</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.401</td>
<td>.282</td>
<td>.596</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Partisanship</td>
<td>3.497</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.497</td>
<td>2.461</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Slant × Media Partisanship</td>
<td>15.002</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.002</td>
<td>10.554</td>
<td>.001**</td>
<td>.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>238.789</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>1.421</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>277.625</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>257.728</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. R Squared = .073 (Adjusted R Squared = .057)  
Note: * p<.05, ** p<.01

Research Question 4 was proposed to test if there was any effect of news slant on Americans’ product beliefs about China. H4 predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage would perceive Chinese products more favorably than those exposed to the negative coverage.

In general, participants exposed to the positive article about China witnessed an average negative change of -.012 (SD=1.525) in their evaluation of Chinese products, compared to the average negative change of -.087 (SD=1.043) for those exposed to the negative article about China (see Table 8). A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze the changes in participants’ product beliefs about China between the pretest and posttest as the dependent variable. Table 9 indicated that the difference between participants exposed to the positive coverage about China and those exposed to the negative one was not statistically significant (F=.114, p>.05).

Since the lack of significant news priming effect may be caused by a big portion of sample dropped due to participants’ nonpartisanship, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA based on all 346 participants who completed both tests was conducted to test the effect of news
slant on Americans’ product beliefs about China. The results showed that there was no significant effect of news slant on people’s evaluation of Chinese products at the \( p < .05 \) level with \( F(1, 344) = .162 \) and \( p = .687 \). Therefore, H4 was not supported, concluding that there was no significant priming effect of new coverage on participants’ evaluation of Chinese products.

Table 8 also showed that after reading the positive coverage about China, participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average positive change of .074 (SD=1.677) in their product beliefs about China while participants exposed to the incongruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.052 (SD=1.370). On the other hand, after reading the negative coverage about China, participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average positive change of .187 (SD=1.155) in their product beliefs about China while participants exposed to the incongruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.030 (SD=.894). The difference of average change in people’s opinions about Chinese products was not significant (\( F = .114, p = .736 \)) between participants exposed to the positive coverage and those exposed to the negative one; neither was the difference significant between participants exposed to the incongruent media and those exposed to the incongruent media (\( F = .741, p = .391 \), see Table 9).

### Table 8

**Descriptive Statistics with a Dependent Variable: Average Change in Opinion about Chinese Products**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Congruent Media</th>
<th>Incongruent Media</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( n )</td>
<td>( M ) (SD)</td>
<td>( n )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Coverage</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>.074 (1.677)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Coverage</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>.187 (1.155)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>.133 (1.421)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9
*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects with a Dependent Variable: Change in Opinion about Chinese Products*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>1.607&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.536</td>
<td>.313</td>
<td>.816</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>.344</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.344</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Slant</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Partisanship</td>
<td>1.268</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.268</td>
<td>.741</td>
<td>.391</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Slant × Media Partisanship</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.821</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td></td>
<td>168</td>
<td>1.711</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>289.560</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>289.130</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> R Squared = .006 (Adjusted R Squared = .012)

Note: * p<.05, ** p<.01

Research Question 5 was proposed to test if there was any effect of news slant on people’s intention to purchase Chinese products. H5 predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage were more willing to buy Chinese products than participants exposed to the negative coverage.

In general, participants exposed to the positive article about China witnessed an average negative change of -.145 (SD=1.466) in their willingness to purchase Chinese products, compared to the average negative change of -.184 (SD=1.287) for those exposed to the negative article about China. A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media Partisanship) ANOVA was conducted with the changes of participants’ intention to purchase Chinese products between the pretest and posttest as the dependent variable. Table 11 indicated that the difference between participants exposed to the positive coverage about China and those exposed to the negative coverage was not statistically significant (F=.124, p>.05).

Since the lack of significant news priming effect may be caused by a big portion of sample dropped due to participants’ nonpartisanship, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA
based on all 346 participants who completed both tests was conducted to test the effect of news slant on Americans’ intention to purchase Chinese products. The results showed that the effect of news slant on people’s willingness to purchase Chinese products was only marginally significant at the p<.10 level with F (1, 344) =3.521 and p=.061. Therefore, H5 was not supported, concluding that there was no significant priming effect of news coverage on participants’ intention to purchase Chinese products.

Table 10 also showed that after reading the positive coverage about China, participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average positive change of .186 (SD=1.361) in their intention to purchase Chinese products while participants exposed to the incongruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.484 (SD=1.507). On the other hand, after reading the negative coverage about China, participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average positive change of .312 (SD=1.254) in their intention to purchase Chinese products while participants exposed to the incongruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.033 (SD=1.324). Although the difference of average change in people’s willingness to buy Chinese products was not significant (F=2.391, p=.124) between participants exposed to the positive coverage and those exposed to the negative one, there was a significant difference between participants exposed to the incongruent media and these exposed to the incongruent media (F=5.199, p=.024, see Table 11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Congruent Media</th>
<th>Incongruent Media</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Coverage</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>.186</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.361)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Coverage</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>.312</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.254)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>.252</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Testing the Perception of Media Source and News Content

Before testing the possible moderating effects of media partisanship, it is necessary to find out whether exposure to different partisan media outlets led to differences in people’s perception of media source as well as the news article. Research Question 6 was raised to test whether media partisanship could activate heuristic cues during people’s systematic evaluation of news content. To investigate this research question, the three following hypotheses were tested.

H6a predicted that participants exposed to the congruent news website would perceive the media source as more credible than those exposed to the incongruent news website. A two-sample t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in people’s perception of source credibility between participants exposed to the congruent media and those exposed to the incongruent media. Since Levene’s test failed to reject the null hypothesis for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
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<td>5.292</td>
<td>2.852</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.048</td>
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<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>.910</td>
<td>0.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>News Slant</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4.436</td>
<td>2.391</td>
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<td>0.014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Partisanship</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>9.646</td>
<td>5.199</td>
<td>.024*</td>
<td>0.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Slant × Media Partisanship</td>
<td>1.642</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.642</td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td>.348</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
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<td>168</td>
<td>1.855</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>327.589</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. R Squared = .048 (Adjusted R Squared = .031)
Note: * p<.05, ** p<.01
equality of variance (p=.768), we can assume that the variances of the two groups are the same. Therefore, based on the p-value (=.045) for equal variances in Table 13, there was a significant difference in perceived source credibility between participants exposed to the congruent media (Mean=2.670, SD=.994) and those exposed to the incongruent media (Mean=2.350, SD=1.035), with a mean difference of .313 (SD=.155) (see Table 12). The result suggested that participants considered a congruent partisan media outlet as significantly more credible than an incongruent partisan media outlet. Thus H6a was supported.

H6b predicted that participants exposed to the congruent news website would perceive the news coverage as more accurate than those exposed to the incongruent news website. A two-sample t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in people’s perception of article credibility between participants exposed to the congruent media and those exposed to the incongruent media. Since Levene’s test failed to reject the null hypothesis for equality of variance (p=.356), we can assume that the variances of the two groups are the same. Therefore, based on the p-value (=.748) for equal variances in Table 13, there was no significant difference of people’s perception of article accuracy between participants exposed to the congruent media (Mean=2.680, SD=.819) and those exposed to the incongruent media (Mean=2.720, SD=.879), with a mean difference of -.042 (SD=.129) (see Table 12). The result suggested that participants did not consider the news article’s accuracy in a congruent partisan media outlet as significantly different from that in an incongruent partisan media outlet. Thus H6b was not supported.

H6c predicted that participants exposed to the congruent news website would perceive the news coverage as less biased than those exposed to the incongruent news website. A two-sample t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in people’s
perception of article bias between participants exposed to the congruent media and those exposed to the incongruent media. Since Levene’s test failed to reject the null hypothesis for equality of variance (p=.590), we can assume that the variances of the two groups are the same. Therefore, based on the p-value (=.940) for equal variances in Table 13, there was no significant difference in perceived article bias between participants exposed to the congruent media (Mean=3.620, SD=1.066) and those exposed to the incongruent media (Mean=3.630, SD=1.000), with a mean difference of -.012 (SD=.158) (see Table 12). The result suggested that participants did not consider the news article’s bias in a congruent partisan media outlet as significantly different from that in an incongruent partisan media outlet. Thus H6c was not supported.

Table 12

<p>| Group Statistics between Subjects Exposed to Congruent Partisan Media and Those Exposed to Incongruent Partisan Media |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congruent Partisan Media</th>
<th>Incongruent Partisan Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source credibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>2.67 (.994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>2.35 (1.035)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article accuracy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>2.68 (.819)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>2.72 (.879)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article bias</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>3.62 (1.066)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>3.63 (1.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>.110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two-Sample T-test for Equality of Means between Subjects Exposed to Congruent Partisan Media and Those Exposed to Incongruent Partisan Media (Equal Variances Assumed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article bias</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * indicates p<.05
Testing the Main Effects of Media Partisanship

Research Question 7 was proposed to test if there was any effect of media partisanship on Americans’ perception of country beliefs related to China. H7 predicted that participants exposed to the congruent partisan media would perceive China as a country more favorably than those exposed to the incongruent partisan media.

Table 2, presented when testing RQ1, showed that participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average positive change of .200 (SD = 1.448) in their country beliefs of China, compared to the average negative change of -.407 (SD=1.470) for those exposed to the incongruent partisan media. A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze the changes of participants’ general opinions about China as a country between the pretest and posttest as the dependent variable. Table 3 indicated that the difference in the change in people’s country beliefs of China between participants exposed to the congruent media about China and those exposed to the incongruent media was statistically significant (F=7.856, p=.006). Therefore, H7 was supported, concluding that participants exposed to the congruent partisan media perceived China as a foreign country more favorably than those exposed to the incongruent partisan media.

Research Question 8 was proposed to test if there was any effect of media partisanship on Americans’ people affect of China. H8 predicted that participants exposed to the congruent news media would perceive Chinese people and Chinese culture more favorably than those exposed to the incongruent news media.

Table 4, presented when testing RQ2, showed that participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.103 (SD= 1.088) in their people affect of China, compared to the average negative change of -.217 (SD=1.333) for those exposed to the
incongruent partisan media. A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze the changes in participants’ emotional response to Chinese people and culture between the pretest and posttest as the dependent variable. Table 5 indicated that the difference in the change of people’s emotional responses to Chinese people and Chinese culture between participants exposed to the congruent media and those exposed to the incongruent media was not statistically significant (F=.362, p=.548). Therefore, H8 was not supported, concluding that there was no significant effect of partisan media on people’s emotional responses to Chinese people and Chinese culture.

Research Question 9 was proposed to test if there was any effect of media partisanship on Americans’ desired interaction with China. H9 predicted that participants exposed to the congruent news website would desire more interaction with China and Chinese people than those exposed to the incongruent news website.

Table 6, presented when testing RQ3, showed that participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average negative change of -.208 (SD= 1.219) in their desired level of interaction with China and Chinese people, compared to the average negative change of -.485 (SD=1.228) for those exposed to the incongruent partisan media. A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze the changes in participants’ desired interaction with China and Chinese people between the pretest and posttest as the dependent variable. Table 7 indicated that the difference in anticipated interaction with China and Chinese people between participants exposed to the congruent media and those exposed to the incongruent media was not statistically significant (F=2.461, p=.119). Therefore, H9 was not supported, concluding that there was no significant effect of partisan media on Americans’ desired interaction with China and Chinese people.
Research Question 10 was proposed to test if there was any effect of media partisanship on participants’ product beliefs related to China. H10 predicted that participants exposed to the congruent news website would perceive Chinese products more favorably than those exposed to the incongruent news website.

Table 8, presented when testing RQ4, showed that participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average positive change of .133 (SD= 1.421) in their evaluation of Chinese products, compared to the average negative change of -.042 (SD=1.155) for those exposed to the incongruent partisan media. A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze the changes in participants’ product beliefs about China between the pretest and posttest as the dependent variable. Table 9 indicated that the difference in people’s product beliefs between participants exposed to the congruent media about China and those exposed to the incongruent media was not statistically significant (F=2.461, p=.119). Therefore, H10 was not supported, concluding that there was no significant effect of partisan media on participants’ evaluation of Chinese products.

Research Question 11 was proposed to test if there was any effect of media partisanship on Americans’ purchase intention related to Chinese products. H11 predicted that participants exposed to the congruent news website would be more willing to buy Chinese products than those exposed to the incongruent news website.

Table 10, presented when testing RQ5, showed that participants exposed to the congruent partisan media witnessed an average positive change of .252 (SD= 1.300) in their purchase intention of Chinese products, compared to the average negative change of -.232 (SD=1.436) for those exposed to the incongruent partisan media. A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze the changes in participants’ willingness to buy Chinese
products between the pretest and posttest as the dependent variable. Table 11 indicated that the difference in people’s willingness to buy Chinese products between participants exposed to the congruent media and those exposed to the incongruent media was statistically significant (F=5.199, p=.024). Therefore, H11 was supported, concluding that participants exposed to the congruent partisan media were more willing to buy Chinese products than those exposed to the incongruent partisan media.

**Testing the Interaction Effects between News Slant and Media Partisanship**

Research Question 12 was proposed to test if there was any interaction effect between news slant and media partisanship on Americans’ change in country beliefs of China. H12a predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage in the congruent partisan media would have the biggest improvement in their perception of China as a country while H12b predicted that participants exposed to the negative coverage in the congruent partisan media would have the smallest improvement or even setback in their country beliefs about China.

From the interaction plot in Figure 4, we can see that participants exposed to the positive article of China in the congruent news media had the biggest improvement (Mean=.535, SD=1.503) in their perception of China as a country while participants exposed to the positive article of China in the incongruent news media experienced the biggest impairment (Mean= -.643, SD=1.690). Since the interaction term in the two-way ANOVA is statistically significant at the p<.05 level (F=6.547, p=.011, see Table 3), it is concluded that there was a significant interaction effect between media congruency and news coverage. Therefore, H12a is supported, indicating that a positive article embedded in the congruent news media would lead to the biggest improvement about people’s country beliefs about China. The analysis also indicated that a positive article embedded in the incongruent news media led to the largest setback in
people’s country beliefs about China, which was somewhat different from H12b’s prediction that the lowest ratings in China’s country beliefs would come from the negative coverage embedded in the congruent partisan media. Therefore H12b was not supported, indicating that a positive article embedded in the incongruent news media would lead to the largest setback about China’s country beliefs.

![Graph](image)

**Figure 4.** Interaction plot of news slant and media partisanship on opinion about China as a country (Country Beliefs)

Research Question 13 was proposed to test if there was any interaction effect between news slant and media partisanship on Americans’ people affect related to China. H13a predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage in the congruent partisan media would have the biggest improvement in their perception of Chinese people and culture while H12b predicted that participants exposed to the negative coverage in the congruent partisan media would have the smallest improvement or even deterioration in Americans’ people affect related to China.

From the interaction plot in Figure 5, we can see that participants exposed to the negative article of China in the incongruent news media had the biggest improvement (Mean=.044,
SD=1.050) in their emotional responses to Chinese people and culture while participants exposed to the positive article of China in the incongruent news media experienced the biggest setback (Mean=-.464, SD=1.527). Since the interaction term in the two-way ANOVA is only marginally significant at the p<.10 level (F=3.115, p=.079), it is concluded that the interaction effect between media congruency and news coverage on Americans’ people affect related to China was only marginally significant. Therefore, H13a and H13b were not supported, indicating no significant interaction effect between news slant and media partisanship on participants’ change in their emotional responses to Chinese people and Chinese culture.

![Figure 5](image-url)

**Figure 5.** Interaction plot of news slant and media partisanship on opinion about Chinese people and culture (People Affect)

Research Question 14 was proposed to test if there was any interaction effect between news slant and media partisanship on participants’ change in their desired level of interaction with China. H14a predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage in the congruent partisan media would have the biggest increase in their desired level of interaction with China and Chinese people while H14b predicted that participants exposed to the negative coverage in
the congruent partisan media would have the smallest improvement or even setback.

From the interaction plot in Figure 6, we can see that participants exposed to the positive article of China in the congruent news media had the biggest improvement (Mean=.151, SD=.970) in their desired level of interaction with China and Chinese people while participants exposed to the positive article of China in the incongruent news media experienced the largest setback (Mean=-.726, SD=1.396). Since the interaction term in the two-way ANOVA is statistically significant at the p<.05 level (F=10.554, p=.001), it is concluded that there was a significant interaction effect between news slant and media partisanship on participants’ desired interaction with China and Chinese people. Therefore, H14a was supported, indicating that a positive article embedded in the congruent news media would lead to the biggest increase in people’s desired interaction with China. The analysis also indicated that a positive article embedded in the incongruent news media led to the largest setback in the people’s desired interaction with China and Chinese people, which was somewhat different from H14b’s prediction that the lowest desired interaction with China and Chinese people would come from the negative coverage embedded in the congruent partisan media. Therefore H14b was not supported, indicating that a positive article embedded in the incongruent news media would lead to people’s lowest level of desired interaction with China and Chinese people.
Figure 6. Interaction plot of news slant and media partisanship on desired interaction with China (Desired Interaction)

Research Question 15 was proposed to test if there was any interaction effect between news slant and media partisanship on Americans’ product beliefs related to China. H15a predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage in the congruent partisan media would have the largest increase in their evaluation of Chinese products while H15b predicted that participants exposed to the negative coverage in the congruent partisan media would have the smallest improvement or even setback.

From the interaction plot in Figure 7, we can see that participants exposed to the negative article of China in the congruent news media had the biggest improvement (Mean=.187, SD=1.155) in their evaluation of Chinese products while participants exposed to the positive article of China in the incongruent news media experienced the largest setback (Mean= -.052, SD=1.369). Since the interaction term in the two-way ANOVA is not statistically significant at the p<.05 level (F=.051, p=.821), it is concluded that there was no significant interaction effect between news slant and media partisanship. Therefore, H15a and H15b were not supported,
indicating no significant interaction effect between news article and media congruency on the change in people’s evaluation of Chinese products.

![Interaction plot of news slant and media partisanship on opinion about Chinese products (Product Beliefs)](image)

*Figure 7. Interaction plot of news slant and media partisanship on opinion about Chinese products (Product Beliefs)*

Research Question 16 was proposed to test if there was any interaction effect between news slant and media partisanship on Americans’ intention to purchase Chinese products. H16a predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage in the congruent partisan media would have the largest increase in their willingness to buy Chinese products while H16b predicted that participants exposed to the negative coverage in the congruent partisan media would have the smallest improvement or even setback.

From the interaction plot in Figure 8, we can see that participants exposed to the negative article of China in the congruent news media had the biggest setback (Mean=.312, SD=1.254) in their willingness to buy Chinese products while participants exposed to the positive article of China in the incongruent news media experienced the largest setback (Mean=-.484, SD=1.507). Since the interaction term in the two-way ANOVA is not statistically significant (F=.885,
p=.348), it is concluded that there was no significant interaction effect between media congruency and news coverage. Therefore, H16a and H16b were not supported, indicating no significant interaction effect between news slant and media partisanship on the change in people’s willingness to purchase Chinese products.

Figure 8. Interaction plot of news slant and media partisanship on willingness to buy Chinese products (Purchase Intention)

**Testing the Effects on Social Media Activities**

Research Question 17 was proposed to test if there were any main effects of news slant on people’s news browsing activities related to social media in terms of liking, sharing, and commenting activities.

H17a predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage would be more likely to like the article than participants exposed to the negative one on social media. A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze participants’ tendency to like the article on social media as the dependent variable. Tables 15 showed that significant differences occurred between participants exposed to the positive coverage about China (Mean=1.82,
SD=1.082) and those exposed to the negative one (Mean=1.30, SD=.794) with F=13.478 and p=.000. Therefore, H17a was supported, concluding that people exposed to the positive news coverage about China were more likely to like the article on social media than people exposed to the negative coverage.

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics with a Dependent Variable: Average Change in Tendency to Like the Article on Social Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Congruent Media</th>
<th>Incongruent Media</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Coverage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positi(v)e Coverage</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Coverage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Coverage</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>0.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.984</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects with a Dependent Variable: Change in Tendency to Like the Article on Social Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>12.833(^a)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.278</td>
<td>4.741</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>415.997</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>415.997</td>
<td>461.044</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Slant</td>
<td>12.161</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.161</td>
<td>13.478</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Partisanship</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.811</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Slant × Media Partisanship</td>
<td>.942</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.942</td>
<td>1.044</td>
<td>.308</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>151.586</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>.902</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>582.000</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>.902</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>164.419</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>.902</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p<.05, ** p<.01

a. R Squared = .078 (Adjusted R Squared = .062)

H17b predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage would be more likely to share the article on social media than participants exposed to the negative one. A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze the participants’ tendency to share the article on social media as the dependent variable. Table 17 showed that significant
differences occurred between participants exposed to the positive coverage about China (Mean=1.67, SD=1.005) and those exposed to the negative one (Mean=1.36, SD=.835) with F=5.390 and p=.021. Therefore, H17b was supported, concluding that people exposed to the positive news coverage about China were more likely to share the article on social media than people exposed to the negative coverage.

Table 16
Descriptive Statistics with a Dependent Variable: Average Change in Tendency to Share the Article on Social Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Congruent Media</th>
<th>Incongruent Media</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Coverage</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>(.877)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Coverage</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>(.975)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>(.926)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects with a Dependent Variable: Change in Tendency to Share the Article on Social Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>6.434^a</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.145</td>
<td>2.528</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>389.818</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>389.818</td>
<td>459.436</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Slant</td>
<td>4.574</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.574</td>
<td>5.390</td>
<td>.021*</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Slant × Media Partisanship</td>
<td>1.915</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.915</td>
<td>2.257</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>142.543</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>.848</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>542.000</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>148.977</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p<.05

H17c predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage would be more likely to comment on the article via their social media accounts than participants exposed to the negative one. A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze participants’
tendency to comment on the article via social media as the dependent variable. Table 19 showed that no significant difference occurred between participants exposed to the positive coverage about China (Mean=1.86, SD=1.177) and those exposed to the negative one (Mean=1.67, SD=1.138) with F=1.283 and p=.259. Therefore, H17c was not supported, concluding that there was no significant difference in people’s tendency to comment on the article via their social media accounts between people exposed to the positive news coverage about China and those exposed to the negative coverage.

Table 18
Descriptive Statistics with a Dependent Variable: Average Change in Tendency to Comment on the Article on Social Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Congruent Media</th>
<th>Incongruent Media</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Coverage</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.65 (1.021)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Coverage</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.72 (1.155)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1.69 (1.088)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects with a Dependent Variable: Change in Tendency to Comment on the Article on Social Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>5.669a</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.890</td>
<td>1.420</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>531.873</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>531.873</td>
<td>399.694</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Slant</td>
<td>1.707</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.707</td>
<td>1.283</td>
<td>.259</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Partisanship</td>
<td>.944</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.944</td>
<td>.709</td>
<td>.401</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Slant × Media Partisanship</td>
<td>3.167</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.167</td>
<td>2.380</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>223.557</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>1.331</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>763.000</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>229.227</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. R Squared = .025 (Adjusted R Squared = .007)

Note: * p<.05
Research Question 18 was proposed to test if there were any main effects of media partisanship on people’s social media behavior after reading the news in terms of liking, sharing, and commenting activities.

H18a predicted that participants exposed to the congruent partisan media would be more likely to like the article on social media than participants exposed to the incongruent media. A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze participants’ tendency to like the article on social media as the dependent variable. No significant difference occurred between participants exposed to the congruent media (Mean=1.57, SD=.984) and those exposed to the incongruent media (Mean=1.55, SD=.983) with F=.057 and p=.811 (see Table 14 and Table 15). Therefore, H18a was not supported, concluding that there was no significant difference in people’s tendency to like the article on social media between people exposed to the congruent partisan media and those exposed to the incongruent partisan media.

H18b predicted that participants exposed to the congruent partisan media would be more likely to share the article on their social media than participants exposed to the incongruent media. A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze participants’ tendency to share the article on social media as the dependent variable. No significant difference occurred between participants exposed to the congruent media (Mean=1.54, SD=.926) and those exposed to the incongruent media (Mean=1.48, SD=.946) with F=.037 and p=.580 (see Table 16 and Table 17). Therefore, H18b was not supported, concluding that there was no significant difference in people’s tendency to share the article on social media between people exposed to the congruent partisan media and those exposed to the incongruent partisan media.

H18c predicted that participants exposed to the congruent partisan media would be more
likely to comment on the article via their social media accounts than participants exposed to the incongruent media. A 2 (news slant) × 2 (media partisanship) ANOVA was conducted to analyze participants’ tendency to comment on the article via social media as the dependent variable. No significant differences occurred between participants exposed to the congruent media (Mean=1.69, SD=1.088) and those exposed to the incongruent media (Mean=1.84, SD=1.232) with F=.709 and p=.401 (See Table 18 and Table 19). Therefore, H18c was not supported, concluding that there was no significant difference in people’s tendency to comment on the article via social media between people exposed to the congruent partisan media and those exposed to the incongruent partisan media.

Research Question 19 was proposed to test if there were any interaction effects between media partisanship and news slant on people’s social media behavior after reading the news in terms of liking, sharing, and commenting activities.

H19a predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage of China in the congruent partisan media would be most likely to like the article on social media while H19b predicted that participants exposed to the negative coverage of China in the incongruent partisan media would be least likely to like the article on social media. From the interaction plot in Figure 9, we can see that participants exposed to the positive article of China in the incongruent news media had the strongest tendency to like the article on social media (Mean=1.88, SD=1.152) while participants exposed to the negative article in the incongruent news media had the least tendency (Mean=1.20, SD=.608). Since the interaction term in the two-way ANOVA (Table 15) is not statistically significant at the p<.05 level (F=1.044, p=.308), H19a and H19b were not supported, indicating that there was no significant interaction effect between news slant and media partisanship on people’s tendency to like the article on social media.
Figure 9. Interaction plot of news slant and media partisanship on tendency to like the article on social media

H19c predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage of China in the congruent partisan media would be most likely to share the article on their social media while H19d predicted that participants exposed to the negative coverage of China in the incongruent partisan media would be least likely to share the article on their social media. From the interaction plot in Figure 10, we can see that participants exposed to the positive article of China in the incongruent news media had the strongest tendency to share the article on social media (Mean=1.74, SD=1.127) while participants exposed to the negative article in the incongruent news media had the least tendency (Mean=1.20, SD=.608). Since the interaction term in the two-way ANOVA (Table 16) is not statistically significant at the p<.05 level (F=2.257, p=.135), H19c and H19d were not supported, indicating that there was no significant interaction effect between news slant and media partisanship on people’s tendency to share the article on social media.
Figure 10. Interaction plot of news slant and media partisanship on tendency to share the article on social media

H19e predicted that participants exposed to the positive coverage of China in the congruent partisan media would be most likely to comment on the article via their social media accounts while H19f predicted that participants exposed to the negative coverage of China in the incongruent partisan media would be least likely to comment on the article. From the interaction plot in Figure 11, we can see that participants exposed to the positive article of China in the incongruent news media had the strongest tendency to comment on the article via their social media accounts (Mean=2.07, SD=1.295) while participants exposed to the negative article of China in the incongruent news media had least tendency (Mean=1.60, SD=1.128). Since the interaction term in the two-way ANOVA (Table 19) is not statistically significant at the p<.05 level (F=2.380, p=.125), H19e and H19f were not supported, indicating that there was no significant interaction effect between news slant and media partisanship on people’s tendency to comment on the article via social media.
Summary of Data Analysis

This experiment was designed to examine the synergy of news content and media source on China’s country image as well as people’s attitudinal and behavioral changes related to Chinese products in an online news environment. The major findings can be summarized in the following main points (see Table 20).

The first important discovery is that the experiment failed to demonstrate any priming effects of news coverage on people’s evaluation of China. In other words, there was no significant difference in perceived country image of China between people exposed to a positive article about China and those exposed to a negative article.

Second, media partisanship had a significant influence on the cognitive component of China’s country image, although the influence appeared to be statistically insignificant for its affective and conative components. In other words, people exposed to a congruent partisan news...
outlet would perceive China’s image in general (i.e., the cognitive component) as significantly more favorable than those exposed to an incongruent partisan news outlet and also are more willing to buy products made in China. Nevertheless, media partisanship did not lead to any difference in people’s attitude towards Chinese people and Chinese culture (i.e., the affective component); neither did media congruency with audience’s partisan views cause any difference in their desired level of interaction with China and Chinese people (i.e., the conative component). In brief, the factor of media partisanship in terms of its congruency with audience’s political inclination could only influence the cognitive component of country image, which stands for the narrowest sense of country-of-origin effect.

Third, despite news coverage’s statistically insignificant priming main effects, significant interaction effects on country image were found between news slant and media partisanship. In terms of the cognitive component of country image, a positive article embedded in the congruent news media led to the largest improvement in people’s country beliefs of China while a positive article embedded in the incongruent news media led to the largest setback in people’s country beliefs of China. In terms of the conative component of country image, a positive article embedded in the congruent news media led to the biggest increase in people’s desired interaction with China and Chinese people while a positive article embedded in the incongruent news media led to the largest setback in their desired interaction. In terms of the affective component of country image, the interaction term between news coverage and media partisanship is marginally significant (F=3.115, p=.079) at the p<.10 level, only hinting a potential interaction effect between news coverage and media congruency on the change in people’s emotional responses to Chinese people and Chinese culture. The results indicated that, although news coverage may not
influence China’s country image in an explicit way, it can still affect Americans’ evaluation of China indirectly if media partisanship is taken into consideration at the same time.

Table 20

Summary of Effects on China’s Country Image

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Main Effects</th>
<th>Interaction Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News Slant (positive vs. negative)</td>
<td>Media Partisanship (congruent vs. incongruent)</td>
<td>News Slant × Media Partisanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Beliefs</td>
<td>No (H1)</td>
<td>Yes (H7)</td>
<td>Yes (H12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Affect</td>
<td>No (H2)</td>
<td>No (H8)</td>
<td>Marginal (H13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desired Interaction</td>
<td>No (H3)</td>
<td>No (H9)</td>
<td>Yes (H14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Beliefs</td>
<td>No (H4)</td>
<td>No (H10)</td>
<td>No (H15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>No (H5)</td>
<td>Yes (H11)</td>
<td>No (H16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. “Yes” indicates the effect was significant (p<.05); “No” indicates the effect was not significant (p>.05); “marginal” indicates the effect was marginally significant (.05<p<.10).

Besides direct examination of China’s country image, this experiment also aimed at explaining the variations in American people’s perception of products made in China as well as their intention to purchase Chinese products (see Table 20). First of all, slant in news coverage of China did not influence people’s evaluation of Chinese products (i.e., products beliefs); nor did news slant make a difference in people’s willingness to purchase Chinese products (i.e., purchase intention). Second, there was no main effect of media partisanship on people’s evaluation of Chinese products; neither was there any interaction effect between news coverage and media partisanship on people’s evaluation of Chinese products. Third, there was a significant main effect of media partisanship on people’s willingness to purchase Chinese products (i.e., purchase intention). However, no interaction effect on Americans’ purchase intention of Chinese products was found between news coverage and media partisanship.

Furthermore, the study investigated whether the source characteristic of partisan media can affect news readers’ perception of the media as well as the news content. The data showed
that although there were no significant differences in the perceived bias and accuracy of news content between people exposed to the congruent partisan media and those exposed to the incongruent partisan media, media partisanship did influence audience’s perception of the media outlet’s credibility. In particular, news readers regarded the congruent partisan media source as more credible than the incongruent partisan media source.

Lastly, the study explored social media-based news browsing activities in terms of news coverage and media source (see Table 21). First, the findings did not reveal any significant difference in social media activities caused by media partisanship; nor was there any interaction effect between news slant and media partisanship on people’s online news browsing behavior related to social media. Second, slant in news coverage of China significantly affected people’s tendency to like and share the article on social media, but did not make a difference in their tendency to comment on the article via social media. In other words, people are more willing to like the positive news article about China (F=13.478, p<.05) and share it (F=5.390, p=.021) than a negative news article about China on social media. But news slant in reporting China did not make a difference in their commenting activities on social media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 21</th>
<th>Summary of Effects on News Browsing Activities Related to Social Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Predictors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Variables</td>
<td>News Slant (positive vs. negative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendency to like the article</td>
<td>Yes (H17a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendency to share the article</td>
<td>Yes (H17b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendency to comment on the article</td>
<td>No (H17c)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER VI. DISCUSSION

This experiment has several important implications, which not only sheds light on the mechanism of how media effects work in terms of the information-processing models but also adds to our understanding of the “country image” construct. The discussion in this chapter will summarize the effects of news coverage and media partisanship on the cognitive, affective, and conative components of country image as well as their resulting behavioral tendencies. Besides touching on the findings’ theoretical implications related to priming and Heuristic-Systematic Model, this chapter intends to advocate a more comprehensive representation of country image and discusses its significance in international marketing and news media.

Theoretical Implications

Priming Theory

This experiment strives for a better understanding of the information-processing models including priming and heuristic-systematic model. As for the priming theory, the lack of salient priming effects of slanted news coverage can at least give the following several implications.

First, this study’s failure to replicate news priming effects may suggest that country image is less susceptible to the influence of media coverage. Contrary to many early scholars’ expectations, the priming effects of mass media seem more indirect and subtle than salient and robust. The priming effects model is composed of three general elements, long-term memory, active thought, and current stimuli (Kendrick, 2010) and any demonstrated priming effect can be regarded as a result of dynamic interplay of the three elements. However, no matter how strongly the current stimuli have impacted audience’s active thoughts and feelings, the
preexisting knowledge, opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and values stored in their long-term memory may still play an important role in deciding the emergence of priming effects. Since country image is an accumulated comprehensive summary of pre-existing knowledge and opinions about China, audience’s exposure to one single news article seems less likely to change people’s perception of China’s country image over a short period of time, which is believed to be a long-term holistic representation of knowledge, attitudes, and personal feelings related to China. This is consistent with Iyengar and Kinder’s research (1987), which showed some discrepancies in priming effects across different issues. In this sense, country image appears to be a relatively stable construct that remains somewhat resistant to a small dose of news coverage. An alternative explanation would be that American audiences are independent thinkers with their own opinions, who are not as susceptible to media propaganda as we have expected.

Second, because previous studies have showed significant priming effects, the non-effects in the current study indicated that priming effects of media coverage are conditional on various external factors such as media source, news format, audience characteristics, and others. Despite the fact that not enough research has examined the topic of how media may influence China’s country image, one study by Han and Wang (2012) used an experiment to analyze news coverage’s impact on people’s perception of China. Although they adopted a different theory of valence framing, their experimental design is similar to the current study in that one group of participants was exposed to a positive article that described China as “benefits” and another group, to a negative article that described China as “risks.” The results showed that after taking personal relevance, shopping experience, and shopping habits into consideration, the negative coverage led to negative perception and attitude concerning China’s country image whereas the positive one induced positive evaluations. The current study, nevertheless, was unable to
replicate the media effects as in the previous study, which may be caused by the salient presence of media partisanship, implying that media’s priming effect sometimes can be rather modest and may be taken over by less relevant external factors such as media’s source characteristics. Brewer, Graf, and Willnat’s (2003) research suggested that a direct link between an issue and the country evaluated needs to be provided for the priming effect to occur because the indirect route in their study failed to deliver any differences. Since our study provided this direct link by providing a news story that explicitly described issues of China, it can be proposed that the direct link between an issue and the country is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the priming effect to occur.

Third, this study not only improved our understanding of the network models of semantic memory, which serves as a foundation for the priming theory, but also posed a new question the priming theory cannot answer. Previous research by Yoo and Pena (2011) found that violence in video games can impair the effectiveness of in-game advertisements, as predicted by the limited capacity suggested by the information-processing models. On one hand, the current research further corroborated the attribute of limited capacity/accessibility in the network models because the non-existence of priming effects is most likely caused by competing cues of media source’s characteristics, i.e., the news website’s political inclination. On the other hand, the accessibility of information suggested by the results may challenge previous assumptions by the network models. Based on the network models of semantic memory (e.g., Anderson & Bower, 1973; Collins & Loftus, 1975, Collins & Quillian, 1969; Smith, Shoben, & Rips, 1974), information is stored in our long-term memory as a network of concepts (or nodes) that are linked through associative pathways and the distance between two nodes represents the relative strength of association between the concepts. In other words, a shorter length between two nodes indicates
their stronger association and relevance with each other, and two concepts with stronger
association are more likely to activate each other. Contrary to the above predictions, the current
study did not demonstrate any news priming effects on country image but there were significant
effects of media source’s characteristics, suggesting that relevant constructs directly associated
with China’s country image do not necessarily enjoy more likelihood to be activated than less
relevant information. This is contradictory to previous refined priming models arguing that
activation of information is dependent on different strengths of association between concepts and
different ways of categorizing and interpreting information (e.g., Collins & Loftus, 1975; Neely,
1977). Since the priming theory and its foundation, the network models of semantic memory,
are not sufficient in accounting for the activation of peripheral irrelevant cues, the integration of
Heuristic-Systematic Model in this study was justified.

**Heuristic-Systematic Model**

This experiment explored the dynamics between systematic and heuristic processing in
the Heuristic-Systematic Model in an effort to offer a clearer picture of the mechanism of dual-
process models. Essential implications can be summarized as follows.

First, the results suggested that perceivers may rely on both systematic and heuristic cues,
and sometimes solely on heuristic cues, to make judgments or decisions. The data analysis
revealed no main effects of news slant in reporting China, but there were some significant main
effects of media partisanship, which might be caused by the difference in perceived credibility of
the media outlets depending on their congruency/incongruency with audience’s political
partisanship. This indicated that in some circumstances audiences can totally ignore systematic
cues and resort to heuristic cues exclusively when processing excessive information.

Additionally, significant interactions between news slant and media partisanship were discovered
on the cognitive and conative components of China’s country image. These interaction effects suggested that even when relying on heuristic cues in making a decision, audiences may still subconsciously incorporate relevant systematic cues in their final judgment, providing support for the possibility of processing systematic and heuristic cues simultaneously. In this sense, the Heuristic-Systematic Model is probably a more applicable information-processing model than the Elaboration Likelihood Model since ELM is based on the trade-off hypothesis advocating the exclusiveness of two processing modes to each other.

Second, the findings shed light on the role of motivation in the interplay of heuristic and systematic cues, suggesting that the multiple-motive framework (Chen & Chaiken, 1999) may be a better fit for the information-processing models. Prior research has advocated that motivation is a crucial, if not decisive, factor in influencing perceivers’ choice between heuristic and systematic processing although the exact mechanism of its influence was discussed in a relatively ambiguous way and has not been verified by empirical data. The relationship between motivation and the gap between people’s actual and desired confidence appears to be confusingly recursive as previous literature has claimed that higher motivation can lead to a bigger gap between actual and desired confidence (Chen & Chaiken, 1999) and vice versa (Davis & Tuttle, 2012). Nevertheless, one thing has been agreed upon: the stronger people’s motivation is, the more willing they are to choose systematic processing that costs more cognitive effort, as suggested by the principle of minimal effort and the sufficiency principle. Results from this study suggested that a larger discrepancy between desired confidence and actual confidence does not necessarily lead to higher motivation in participants to spend more cognitive effort on systematic processing. This is because participants appeared to rely mostly on the heuristic of media partisanship to process China’s country image when they perceive processing China’s
information as too much work. In this case, the multiple-motive framework raised by Chen and Chaiken (1999) will make more sense as it breaks down motivations into three categories: accuracy motivation, defense motivation, and impression motivation. When participants, mostly young college students, were asked to rate their perception of China’s image, their motivation for accuracy was low because college students generally lack interest and knowledge in this topic and the unrealistic testing of shopping intention was not serious enough. Meanwhile, the salient feature of partisan media may lead to higher defense motivation among partisan audiences. On one hand, accepting an article provided by a politically congruent partisan news source as credible can help partisans reinforce their preexisting political ideological system; on the other hand, partisans may feel better if they discredit the news content from incongruent partisan media, which is a subconscious way to defend their own political partisanship against the media’s conflicting ideological beliefs. This may be the reason that the same positive news about China activated the most favorable evaluations of China in a congruent news website but delivered the worst ratings when embedded in an incongruent partisan news outlet. Furthermore, impression motivation may act heavily on the participants’ social media behavior because impression-motivated people are concerned with maintaining a harmonious social relationship. Since social media activities are automatically posted to their personal pages on social networking sites, news readers might be worried that sharing or liking an article blasting China could make them look less appealing or friendly. Therefore, to achieve the immediate social goal of being likeable and popular, they might be more willing to share a good story about China, resulting in a positivity preference in news readers’ social media-based news browsing activities. However, further studies are needed to corroborate that participants’ defense and impression motivations played a role in their social media-related activities.
Third, the results provided some evidence for the assumption of limited capacity/accessibility in information-processing models and, particularly, the principle of minimal effort and the sufficiency principle in HSM. The assumption of limited capacity/accessibility hypothesizes that perceivers have limited capacity when processing a large amount of information; the principle of minimal effort assumes that perceivers prefer heuristic processing to systematic processing because heuristic processing costs the least cognitive effort (Chaiken, 1980, 1987; Shiffrin & Schneider, 1987); the sufficiency principle suggests that perceivers will turn to systematic processing only if they are highly motivated for accurate evaluation and heuristic processing fails to reach the sufficient threshold of their desired confidence (Chaiken et al., 1996; Chen & Chaiken, 1999). If these assumptions are true, the absence of priming effects by relevant news coverage on China can be explained by two factors. First, lack of pre-existing knowledge and interest concerning the issue of China may raise the bar of required cognitive effort for systematic processing of relevant news content about China. The recruited population are mostly college students in their early 20s, who generally have a low interest in foreign countries, and their knowledge of China is even scarcer. As a result, compared to older generations, their comprehension of news content could be more challenging and demanding. Second, the design of the experiment may not have elevated the participants’ motivation for accuracy high enough. Although the questionnaire asked for the participants’ opinions about China and their intention to purchase Chinese products, there was no simulation of a realistic shopping environment. In other words, the use of survey as a way to measure participants’ purchase intention may not be critical enough to increase their desired confidence level so as to heighten their level of motivation for more accurate judgment about China and made-in-China products. HSM hypothesizes that a perceiver needs to compare the cognitive
effort required to reach the sufficiency threshold with the cognitive effort needed for systematic processing before making a choice between systematic and heuristic routes. On one hand, due to the less realistic design for measuring purchase intention, participants’ motivation for accuracy was relatively low and, as a result, the effort needed for reaching the sufficiency threshold was minimalized. On the other hand, due to young people’s lack of interest and knowledge regarding foreign countries, they would expect to spend much more cognitive effort if they were to choose to systematically process the relevant complicated information about China. Therefore, with expected higher demand for cognitive effort in the systematic route and relatively lower motivation for accuracy, participants are more likely to take the heuristic route by processing the peripheral cues of media outlet’s source features, i.e., media partisanship, to make easier and quicker judgments about China. This again provided strong support for the legitimacy of the principle of minimal effort and the sufficiency principle in the heuristic-systematic model.

**Practical Implications**

**Country Image Studies**

The findings indicated that a multidimensional approach to country image is still preferable in investigating the country-of-origin effect. This is because the three components of country image (e.g. cognitive, affective, and conative) delivered distinct patterns of change as a result of repeated measures. In particular, media congruency only affected the cognitive component of country image, which is the core of country image, but did not influence its affective or conative components. Moreover, the interaction effects between news slant and media partisanship only existed on the cognitive and conative components of country image but not on the affective component. It can be inferred that a country’s level of industrial and
technological advancement as well as people’s general impression about a foreign country is the most susceptible to media propaganda. On the other hand, people’s attitudes and opinions related to people and culture in that particular country is the least likely to be influenced by media coverage. This suggested that American people tend to judge a country’s citizens and culture independently without the interference of their political views and media propaganda. Another surprising finding is American people’s willingness to buy Chinese products seem subject to changes that are independent of their assessment of Chinese products because media partisanship influenced participants’ purchase intention but not their product beliefs related to China. Therefore, only a more sophisticated and comprehensive measurement of country image that comprises all three components can help scholars better investigate the specific roles country image plays in international marketing.

This study supported the assumption that the enhancement of country image is a time-consuming process that may require years of efforts by the government and people of the country. Since the experiment failed to replicate any priming effect of news coverage on China’s country image, it showed that country image is a comparatively steady construct in people’s mind and thus is not so vulnerable that it can be influenced by one-time media coverage. Because country image is audience’s multidimensional perception of a foreign country based on their accumulated information and knowledge acquired via mass media, personal experience, and interpersonal contact over a long period of time, the instantaneous exposure to a positive or negative news story about China is less likely to flip people’s preexisting mental representation about China. As shown in one survey report (Kohut, 2007), the percentage of U.S. citizens with favorable attitudes towards China remained relatively stable between the years of 2005 and 2007 but experienced a gradual but slow increase. Despite the fact that a nation’s international profile
may fluctuate over the years, this study’s data analysis indicated that country image will remain relatively stable with a tendency for slow and gradual change.

The study reconfirmed the potential influence of country image in international marketing although this influence seems to be less explicit and salient than expected. In recent years, country image studies have come under criticism due to various reasons. Several international business scholars claimed that the effect of country image on customers’ perception of products is no longer a major concern. Ulgado and Lee’s study (1998) of American and Korean consumers suggested that people are more likely to incorporate key product attributes instead of the CoO cue in their final stage of making a purchase decision. Usunier (2006) argued that, amid the accelerated globalization in manufacturing and branding as well as reduced use of origin labeling in World Trade Organization (WTO) stipulations, the research of country of origin has essentially lost its relevance in international marketing. Samiee (2010) also criticized CoO research for “its inattention to calls for undertaking studies that are both relevant and ecologically valid” (p. 445). Furthermore, the controversy over country-of-origin effect is particularly highlighted by that fact that many consumers have a limited or even wrong recognition of the brand origin (Samiee, Shimp, & Sharma, 2005). Regardless, a study by Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, and Palihawadana (2011) vindicated the significant role country image plays in affecting people’s purchase intentions after controlling for differences caused by brand familiarity and revealed that country of origin does have an important indirect influence. Similarly, the current study suggested that although changes in people’s opinions about Chinese products did not follow changes in people’s perceived country image of China, there was a possible correlation between China’s image and people’s willingness to purchase made-in-China products. This implied that people’s intention to buy Chinese products can be directly
influenced by their favorable or unfavorable perception of China as a foreign nation even if their general impression about products made in China stays the same in terms of quality, price, design, and reliability. This echoes with the study by Diamantopoulos et al. (2011), indicating research in the country-of-origin effect is still relevant and meaningful in international marketing.

**International Marketing**

If international manufacturers and marketers intend to enter a foreign market, there is no doubt that they should strive to build a good reputation by improving and advertising the design, quality, and reliability of products originated from that country. However, a more important lesson learned from this research is that international businesses should adopt research-driven public relations strategies and launch appropriate media campaign tactics in cooperation with local news media outlets accordingly. In this way, they can enhance the international profile for the country perceived by the audiences in the target market, who are both news consumers and potential customers at the same time.

As far as media outlets in the U.S. are concerned, international marketers must utilize the right partisan media to target the particular audience whose political views are consistent with the media outlet’s partisanship. This is because a positive message of country image will not necessarily achieve people’s enhanced perception of that country unless it is imbedded in a congruent partisan media outlet. In the current experiment, a positive article led to improved assessment of China as a foreign nation only when it was embedded in a congruent media source; it is also the only condition that resulted in audience’s significantly enhanced willingness to purchase Chinese products. On the other hand, the same positive article embedded in an incongruent media source not only failed to improve people’s evaluation of China and Chinese
products, but even caused a dramatic impairment to China’s country image as well as to people’s willingness to purchase products made in China. Therefore, when launching a media campaign for a better country image or better product perception from that country, international marketers must take into account the domestic political atmosphere in the target market and apply the campaign strategies carefully in an appropriate media outlet that is agreeable to the audience. It is advisable to analyze the target audience and then choose proper news outlets cautiously. In other words, it is not only the message conveyed on mass media that matters, but the media platform adopted to broadcast the message also matters.

The study suggested that people’s willingness to purchase foreign products can be affected by their perception of country image even if their evaluation of that country’s products does not change significantly. Since no change was discovered in regard to people’s evaluation of Chinese products, it is fair to infer that the difference in participants’ intention to purchase Chinese products may not be caused by their opinions about goods made in China. Therefore, the direct link between American’s attitudes towards Chinese products and their preference for these products does not necessarily exist all the time. In this aspect, enhancing country image is a burning issue for Chinese companies trying to obtain a foothold in a fresh overseas market especially if consumers in the target market have no prior knowledge whatsoever about new products from China and thus may rely heavily on China’s international profile. After all, a tainted country image can potentially lead to dramatic decrease in people’s willingness to purchase products made in a foreign country even if that country’s products have maintained good quality and competitive price.
**News Media**

This study not only provided some insights into the role of partisan media outlets in forming the American political atmosphere, but also investigated the potential of utilizing partisan media for the purpose of international marketing. These findings are valuable especially because the experiment targeted at partisan media in the digital news landscape, which may be considered as an extension of traditional partisan media (such as the TV channels of MSNBC and FoxNews) to the cyberspace but will most likely become the mainstream political news media in the near future.

First, partisan news readers perceive the credibility of partisan media sources differently based on its congruency although they may not necessarily perceive the credibility of news content differently. As Thorson et al. (2010) stated, “(c)redibility is of practical interest to journalists and news institutions because of the widespread belief that audiences are more likely to read, watch, or listen to news content provided by sources they trust” (p. 292). Their research showed that, although ideological incongruency between blog content and participant’s party identification led to significantly lower credibility ratings, no significant influence was found on the credibility of the news story (Thorson et al., 2010). The current research’s findings replicated the previous results, displaying a significant difference in source credibility caused by media partisanship, but no difference in news content’s bias and accuracy whatsoever. This implied that media source’s credibility does not always flip audience’s judgment of the news story, at least for less partisan-relevant topics such as a foreign country. Therefore, partisan media can still win the trust of audiences who hold an incongruent political ideology with their coverage of non-political news as long as they strictly stick to their work ethics as professional journalists by striving to report news as objectively as possible.
Second, regardless of the differences in perceived credibility for partisan media, news readers did not treat less partisan-relevant news article discriminately in terms of their social media activities of liking and sharing. The experiment did not find any hint that audiences would be significantly more (or less) willing to like, share, or comment on a news story via social media if it was embedded on a politically congruent (or incongruent) partisan news website. This may challenge such claim that the popularity of partisan media will lead to selective exposure and sharing of media content among online news readers with strong partisan identification, resulting in an echo chamber for individuals holding the same political ideology. As Mutz and Martin (2001) claimed, access to partisan media source is correlated with less exposure to alternative opinions. Winter and Kramer (2014) also found that news readers might integrate media source’s cues, such as reputation and credibility, into their decision-making process of news selection. However, the current study did not provide evidence for such a speculation at least for news about China. This discrepancy may be attributed to the possibility that the variation in perceived source credibility between partisans may only make a difference in audience’s selection of highly partisan-relevant news content. Since the profile of a foreign country such as China is far from being on the top of America’s domestic political agenda, news readers’ social media interactions with the news content about China are less likely to be influenced by the partisan-driven source features.

Third, a positivity preference on social media-based news browsing activities was discovered because news audiences are more willing to like and share positive news content on social media compared to negative coverage. Although prior literature has explored the relationship between emotional valence and social transmission of information, a consensus has yet to be reached whether positive news or negative news is more likely to be shared. A
traditional belief is that people tend to distribute negative news more actively, which has not been empirically supported (Godes et al., 2005). As these old sayings go, “bad news travels fast”, “if it bleeds, it leads”, and “no news is good news, and good news is no news.” Nevertheless, Berger and Milkman (2012) investigated how emotionally evocative content may affect social transmission of online content and found out that positive online content is more likely to go viral than negative content. The current experiment showed that the same principle is applicable to the digital world, indicating an inclination among online news readers to like and share positive news about China on social media. This tendency to interact with upbeat news may be associated with the following two assumptions. First, since many people share online content on Facebook and Twitter with an intention to establish their online profiles, positive content can help an individual maintain his/her friendly online identity. This is because good stories can make their family, friends, and acquaintances on social media feel happy and comfortable while bad news may sadden, upset, or even disgust them. Second, positive news sharing can be conducive in building a harmonious online social network while negative news sharing can be a risky behavior that may potentially dampen or damage interpersonal relationships on social media. As for news coverage about China or any other nations, sharing a negative story on this topic can possibly offend some of their friends on social media who come from China or are friends with Chinese people. Based on this finding, media outlets should focus more on reporting positive news if they look forward to increased exposure of their news stories to audiences on social media.
Conclusions

This experiment is one of the few attempts that integrated partisan media into the research of country-of-origin effect. Therefore, its results are meaningful in both political communication and international marketing. The highlights of the findings can be summarized in the followings.

This study justified the treatment of country image as a comprehensive multifaceted mental construct that is relatively stable but may still undergo gradual change under the influence of mass media. Although controversies about the definition and operationalization of country image still carry on, a more complex and inclusive conceptualization seems to offer a clearer and broader picture of country-of-origin effect. The current research adopted a three-factor model of country image, which not only included three core components (i.e., the cognitive, affective, and conative components) but also incorporated resulting attitudinal and behavioral constructs (i.e., product beliefs and purchase intention. The data analysis showed that the combination of news content and media congruency delivered distinct effect patterns in terms of country beliefs, people affect, desired interaction, products beliefs, and purchase intention related to China. First, the cognitive component of China’s country image, i.e., country beliefs, is the most susceptible to media influence as there was a significant main effect of media partisanship as well as a significant interaction effect between media partisanship and news slant. Second, the resulting attitude towards Chinese products, i.e. product beliefs, is the least susceptible to media influence as no main effects or interaction effects whatsoever were discovered. This implies that news readers, who are consumers at the same time, are less likely to rely on news media in their judgment of made-in-China products because they can gain first-hand knowledge directly from personal experiences of using Chinese products or second-handed information via word of mouth.
spread through daily interactions with family, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances in their social network. Third, the conative component of China’s country image, i.e., desired interaction, is only influenced by the interaction between news slant and media partisanship while the resulting behavior towards Chinese products, i.e., purchase intention, is only influenced by the main effect of media partisanship.

The absence of news priming effects indicated that most American partisans, at least among young college students, would rather follow their instinct about partisan media’s credibility than embrace their ethnocentric/patriotic emotions for America or hostile feelings against China. Based on the assumption of limited capacity/accessibility, when excessive pieces of information are competing with one another, perceivers can only process a limited number of them. Since it is advisable to investigate priming effects by integrating various external factors, such as the characteristics of media source, the introduction of dual-process models (i.e., ELM and HSM) into country image priming research is rationalized because it takes into consideration the peripheral/heuristic cues of media credibility. On one hand, partisan audiences tend to have a strong political inclination, leading to their polarized attitudes towards partisan media and divergent views about these media sources’ credibility. On the other hand, slant in reporting China in an either positive or negative way may activate or deactivate consumer ethnocentrism and animosity. However, when both source credibility and consumer ethnocentrism/animosity are accessible and conflicting with each other, the perceiver must juggle between these two cues and decide which cue is more relevant and important to them. As Giraldi et al. (2011) have argued, when consumers process country-of-origin cues, they must make sure this information is more important than other information, like price, the supplier’s reputation, perceived risk, and so on. In the case of partisans’ judgment of China’s country image, it appears that source
credibility activated by partisan media is a more dominant cue than consumer ethnocentricity and animosity. This echoes with a previous study by Jones, Sinclair, and Courneya (2003), which suggested that non-credible sources may prevent people from engaging in careful elaboration of relevant information. It is also consistent with other literatures arguing that credible sources can induce attitude change more effectively than sources with doubtful credibility (e.g., Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; Jones et al., 2003; Perloff & Brock, 1980). Therefore, the prevailing insignificant priming effect of news slant does not necessarily mean that media’s priming effect on country image has ceased to exist anymore, but instead encourages a more practical and refined examination of priming.

This study implied that China’s country image among American partisans is highly liable to the influence of their attitudes towards partisan media, potentially because they consider congruent partisan media as more credible than incongruent media. Statistical analysis showed most variations in the statistical models were caused by the interaction between media partisanship and news slant as well as the main effect of media partisanship. In particular, the positive coverage of China in a congruent partisan news agent led to the most remarkable improvement in people’s evaluation of China and desired interaction with China and Chinese people. But the same positive coverage reported by an incongruent news outlet made the largest dent in China’s profile and people’s desired interaction with China and Chinese people. Interestingly enough, in spite of the difference in perceived credibility of the same media between liberals and conservatives, partisan readers did not perceived the credibility of the same news content embedded in different partisan media to be different accordingly. Therefore, it is fair to conclude that source credibility alone can influence audience’s perception of a foreign
country without interfering with their judgment of the particular news story’s fairness, biasedness, and completeness.

In contrast to audience’s evaluation about China’s image, their social media activities are unlikely to be affected by partisan media’s characteristics such as source credibility. In terms of sharing and liking news coverage about China on Facebook or Twitter, significant effects of news slant in reporting China were demonstrated, but there were no effects of media congruency. In general, audiences displayed the positivity preference, a tendency to share and like positive coverage of China, rather than a preference for news content from a partisan-congruent source. This preference has an important implication: even for partisans, a population who holds extreme political inclinations in the U.S., they are still heavily concerned with how their news browsing activities are viewed by friends and acquaintances on social media. For one thing, because sharing or liking a news story that derogates China may potentially undermine their favorability among friends on social networking sites and eventually jeopardize their positive image in online communities, most partisans would refrain from doing so. For another, partisans are not more likely to share and like a news story from a congruent partisan media source or from a media source that they consider as more credible. Since media partisanship did not influence people’s evaluations of the news coverage’s credibility, it may imply that partisans still judge partisan-irrelevant news coverage objectively without being interfered by their extreme attitudes towards the partisan media source and, as a result their social media activities are not affected by such media source cues either. This finding may alleviate partisan media’s worry that partisans with a strong political ideology that conflicts media’s partisanship would totally discredit the media’s news reports about non-political issues, such as economy, society, sports, science, entertainment,
and others, leading to a reduced exposure to and sharing of their news coverage in such categories on social media.

To sum up, the study delivered ambiguous results in answering the question whether the existence of partisans and partisan media is beneficial or detrimental to the U.S. system of politics and public information. Mutz (2006) has described partisan identification as a double-edged sword and pointed out both its benefit and damage to the American political life: in one way, partisanship may promote common political causes and collective social actions by uniting like-minded citizens; in the other way, partisanship may obstruct information processing by encouraging close-mindedness, bias, and intolerance. Our findings offered similar mixed implications. For one thing, most Americans, even for strong partisans, seemed to be able to think independently when it comes to judging a foreign country and did not solely rely on media’s news feed to evaluate China. Moreover, partisans still perceived less partisan-relevant news content as equally credible regardless of its media source. Partisans also demonstrated no difference in their willingness to like and share the same article on social media regardless of its media source’s partisanship, which is inconsistent with the hypothesis of selective exposure and sharing at least in terms of partisan-irrelevant news. For another, the congruency or incongruency of media partisanship with the audience’s political ideology did prevent partisan news readers from viewing the same news content equally and objectively by distorting their perception of China based on the specific partisan media they are exposed to. The discrepancy of partisan media’s functions in social cognition and public opinions encourages further research, especially in regard to the public’s perception of non-political news from politically sided partisan media outlets.
Limitations

Although this study contributed to our better comprehension of information-processing theories and provided constructive advice for international marketers and business scholars on how to fully utilize country image in media campaign, the findings should be interpreted with caution as the current research, like many other experimental studies, unavoidably has several limitations.

First, this study recruited a student sample from a midsize state university in Ohio, who may not be representative of the general population in America. College students in the U.S. between 18 and 25 are generally less concerned about foreign countries and international issues than older adults. Therefore, it is possible that a large proportion of young people do not attend to news articles about international issues. In addition, the lack of interest among young people in current political affairs does not guarantee their dedicated political stands in party politics as either Democrats or Republicans. This is consistent with Giner-Sorolla and Chiken’s (1994) research, which delivered ambiguous results partially due to the shortage of strong partisans in a college student sample. Due to the potential large proportion of non-partisans in the sample, many participants showed inconsistency in their responses to questions about political inclinations and other participants’ responses are in proximity to the middle ground in the political spectrum of conservativeness and liberalism. As a result, among the 347 participants who completed both surveys, 175 participants were dropped from the final data analysis because their responses indicated that they were either noncommittal or inconsistent in political partisanship. This has caused the sample size entered into the final data analysis to shrink by half. The limitations of a relatively small student sample size, nevertheless, can be compensated by the following aspects. Since it is an experimental design, a smaller sample is usually
sufficient to detect any significant effects. After all, an excessively large sample is not cost-efficient and thus oftentimes not recommended by methodologists. Furthermore, because people who tend to read online news and shop online are typically younger and well-educated, a student sample can better resemble the population under observation than a sample with more senior citizens. Hence the sampling issue should not challenge the validity of the findings. Most importantly, the intention of the study is to tap into the minds of partisans and partisan media. Despite a large drop in sample size, it has been predicted at the design stage of the experiment. In other words, the researcher intentionally recruited a much larger sample in the pretest because it was foreseen that a big portion of the sample would be filtered out due to the fact that partisans are not the most common people in a college student population.

Second, although the experiment simulated a news website of partisan media, it only measured people’s willingness to purchase in a questionnaire but did not construct a realistic environment to test participants’ shopping activities. This can be problematic as people’s self-reported intention to buy Chinese products may differ from their actual purchase behavior. In a survey, respondents may give answers that are socially desirable or politically correct. Although audience’s political partisanship appeared to influence their intentions to buy products made in China, it is unknown whether this influence can infiltrate into people’s actual purchase behavior in a real shopping environment. Therefore, future research should try to measure people’s decision-making process regarding Chinese products by creating a realistic online shopping experience. The same situation goes with the measures of people’s tendency to like, sharing, and comment on the news via social media. Only a more sophisticated research design with realistic measures can provide a full picture of a foreign country and its associated influence in an international market.
Third, the effects discovered in the experiment are generated by the combination between news coverage and media partisanship, which may not follow the same pattern if other factors are taken into consideration. In fact, there are two levels of information processing involved in this experiment. The first level, as illustrated in Figure 1, is the process of media’s influence on people’s perception of China’s country image. At this level, positive or negative news coverage provides judgment-relevant critical information about a foreign country as a systematic cue in the formation of people’s opinions about China while carefully manipulated congruent or incongruent partisan media activate divergent perceived credibility about news sources as a less relevant heuristic. This level is a main concern of the current study. The second level follows media priming, focusing on how country image may affect people’s attitudinal judgment and behavioral decision related to products from a particular country, that is, China. At this level, media-influenced country image of China among audience could play the role of a less relevant heuristic (or a convenient cognitive shortcut) in people’s formation of attitude, evaluation, and purchase decision regarding Chinese products. Although this study also measured participants’ resulting attitude and behavior related to Chinese products, these measures did not strictly investigate the heuristic role of country-of-origin information as the questionnaire did not integrate product-relevant systematic cues of specific product characteristics such as brand origin, product category, retail price, and others. Neither did the data analysis find a valid explanation to the missing link between product evaluation and purchase intention in terms of partisan media’s heuristic effects. Therefore, without the presence of salient product features, we must be careful when applying the study’s findings of product-related attitude formation and decision making to a realistic marketing situation, which can be complicated by an overwhelming amount of product information.
Fourth, the country image of China investigated in this study can only reflect its embodiment in America, but may not be applicable to the representation or interpretation of China’s profile in other countries and regions. Although country image is a relatively stable representation of people’s holistic impression about a foreign country in their long-term memory, this construct is also diverse and dynamic in the sense that people with different nationalities and cultural backgrounds may view the same foreign country in dramatically different ways. In a survey study collected among students from Thailand and America, Amine and Shin (2002) argued that the effect of country image is not absolute for a given country, which may vary according to the nationality of the consumers. An example is that although South Korean products were viewed as cheap with average quality in North America, people from Southeast Asian countries may consider South Korea as a symbol for products with excellent quality and competitive price (Amine & Chao, 2005). Japan went through similar experiences too in the 1950s and 1960s. Therefore, cautions must be used if the findings were to generalize to a different political, economic, and cultural environment beyond America. More research is anticipated to examine the dynamic interplay among news media, domestic politics, and country image as well as their resulting attitudes and purchase behavior related to a foreign country.
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APPENDIX A. PARTICIPANT CONTACTS

Invitation Email for Pretest

Subject line: Invitation to First Online News Study

Dear ________:

You receive this email because you signed up in a class for participating in the online news study. This email provides information about the 1st survey.

To participate, please click the following link for the consent form and 1st survey:
http://mediastudylab.com/onlinenews/consent.php

Upon clicking, you will see an online consent form. If you agree with the consent form, you can click the button at the bottom of the page to complete the 1st survey. The 2nd survey will be sent via email in the last week of April. So please make sure the email you provided in the survey is effective. Please input the correct course name and instructor's name in the 1st survey and a school email is recommended.

Please complete the 1st survey before April 12th to ensure your eligibility for extra credits. I would recommend you to complete this survey by 10th April. Thank you for your contribution to the online news study!

Sincerely

Chen Yang
Ph.D. Candidate
School of Media and Communication
Bowling Green State University
Email: cyang@bgsu.edu
Subject line: Invitation to Second Online News Study

Dear _______

Thank you for completing the 1st survey of online news study. In this email, you are invited to complete the 2nd survey. The link is as follows:
http://mediastudylab.com/onlinenews/intro.php?id=68

If the link isn't clickable or part of the link is cut off, please copy and paste the entire URL into your browser's address bar and press 'Enter'.

As a reward for your participation, you will receive extra credits (if you were recruited in a class that allows extra credits) or enter a lottery for an Amazon gift card ($100, $50 or $10). Since the study is composed of two surveys within a month, you must complete the 2nd survey to be eligible for the reward. If you need extra credits for your participation, you must complete the survey by May 3rd (before final's week.).

Thank you very much!

Sincerely yours

Chen Yang
Ph.D. Candidate
School of Media and Communication
Bowling Green State University
Email: cyang@bgsu.edu
APPENDIX B. CONSENT FORM

Consent Form for Participation in the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze American people’s news consumption behavior in digital media. The study aims at contributing to the credibility, fairness and accuracy of U.S. online journalism. This research project is conducted by Chen Yang, Ph.D. candidate at Bowling Green State University.

The procedure involves filling out two surveys. The first survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes, which will ask your opinions about different issues related to online news websites as well as China. About two weeks later, a second survey will be distributed via email, which will take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete. The second surveys will ask you to evaluate a news website.

You need to be 18 years old or above to participate in this study. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary so you may refuse to participate. Even if you have agreed to participate, you may withdraw from the study anytime during the process. Your refusal or withdrawal will not cause any form of penalty. Neither will it affect your relationship with any staff, faculty or teaching assistant at Bowling Green State University.

To encourage participation, you will be automatically entered into a lottery for one of 14 Amazon gift cards ($100, $50 or $10) once you complete the two surveys. Your chance of winning the gift card is roughly 10% and you can only participate in the study once. If you sign up in a class whose instructor agreed to offer extra credits, you will not be entered into the lottery unless you opt out of the extra credits. That is to say, if both options are available to you, you can only choose one form of reward. A question in the survey will ask you about your option.

Information of this survey data will be kept confidentially. The data will be stored in a password-protected personal computer that is accessible to researchers only. If we publish the results of this study, we will only report the generalization of data without linking the reports to any individuals. The collected data will be used for scholarly purposes only, meaning they might be presented at an academic conference or published in a professional journal. Your name will be collected only for the purpose of assigning extra credits or giving out gift cards and will be stored in a file that is separate from the survey data. To protect your privacy, please clear the internet browser and page history once you are done with each of the surveys.
If you have any questions, please feel free to ask the following sources before participation. If you need more information about this research, please contact Dr. Gi Woong Yun at gyun@bgsu.edu or (419)372-8638 or contact Chen Yang at cyang@bgsu.edu or (419)494-6371. If you have questions regarding the conduct of the study or concerns regarding the rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu.

I have read the above consent form and I agree to participate in this study

If you have read and agree with the consent form, you can click the button above to participate. Otherwise you can simply close the web browser. Thank you for your contribution to the study!

BGSU HSRB - APPROVED FOR USE
IRBNet ID #: 711980
EFFECTIVE: 02/13/2015
EXPIRES: 02/03/2016
APPENDIX C. QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

Pretest Survey

Page 1

The first survey has 2 pages, and this is Page 1.

Please do not close the web browser halfway.

Once you submit this page and move to Page 2 by clicking the button at the bottom, please do not hit the "back" button on your browser.

1. Please rate how much you rely on the following sources to get news updates?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative TV/radio (such as FoxNews)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative newspaper/magazine (such as Wall Street Journal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative news website/blog (such as FoxNews.com or Drudge Report)</td>
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<td>Liberal TV/radio (such as MSNBC or CNN)</td>
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<td>Liberal newspaper/magazine (such as New York Times)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal news website/blog (such as Huffington Post or MSNBC.com)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social media (i.e. Facebook or Twitter)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. In the past 30 days, how many people do you think have visited the followings?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Few people</th>
<th>Some people</th>
<th>Many people</th>
<th>Most people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative news website/blog (such as FoxNews.com)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal news website/blog (such as MSNBC.com)?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. In the past 30 days, how much attention do you think people have paid to the followings?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Slight attention</th>
<th>Some attention</th>
<th>Much attention</th>
<th>Total attention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative news website/blog (such as FoxNews.com)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal news website/blog</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. What is your general impression of the following aspects of China?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally negative</th>
<th>Somewhat negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat positive</th>
<th>Totally positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China as a country in general</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China’s science and technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China’s education system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese companies and brands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China’s economy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Chinese people and Chinese culture?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese people are likeable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese people are trustworthy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese people are hardworking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese culture is appealing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about activities with China?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- We should have closer economic ties with China
- We should have more cultural exchanges with China
- I am willing to make friends with Chinese people
- I am willing to visit China in the future

7. What is your general impression about the following issues related to Chinese products?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of Chinese products in general</th>
<th>Totally negative</th>
<th>Somewhat negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat positive</th>
<th>Totally positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese products in general</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Chinese products</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price of Chinese products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design / workmanship of Chinese products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durability / reliability of Chinese products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements related to purchase of Chinese products?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to buy Chinese products in general</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to buy Chinese products if I have a choice between same-priced Chinese and American products.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to buy cheaper Chinese products compared to more expensive American products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no problem buying made-in-China products by an American company/brand (such as Apple products made in China)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. What is your general impression of the following issues related to China?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Totally negative</th>
<th>Somewhat negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat positive</th>
<th>Totally positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese government and politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights in China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental issues in China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Military power of China

Economic power of China

Page 2

Thanks for completing Page 1 of the survey. Now you cannot go back to the previous page. Please complete Page 2. Questions with * are required.

1. What is your gender?
   Male
   Female

2. What is your age?
   ____ (Put a number to indicate your age)

3. What is your marital status?
   Single
   Married/co-habitating with a partner
   Divorced/separated
   Windowed

4. What is your ethnicity?
   White / Caucasian
   Hispanic or Latino
   Black or African American
   Asian / Pacific Islander – Chinese
   Asian / Pacific Islander – non-Chinese
   Mixed Ethnicity
   Other
5. Are you a full-time college student?
Yes
No (If no, please skip to Q7)

6. What is your class standing? (If you answer this question, please skip to Q8)
Freshman
Sophomore
Junior
Senior
Graduate student
Others

7. What is your education level?
Grade 8 or less
Grade 9-11
High school graduate or equivalent
1 to 3 years of college or technical school
College graduation (4 years)
Attended or completed graduate school

8. Are you an American citizen?
Yes (If yes, please skip to Q10)
No

9. If not a U.S. citizen, which country do you hold citizenship of? _________

10. In the past 30 days, how many people do you think have heard about the following news about China?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Few people</th>
<th>Some people</th>
<th>Many people</th>
<th>Most people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive news about China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative news about China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. How many friends from China (born and raised in China) do you have? 
___________ (Put a rough number here. Use 0 if no Chinese friends)

12. How much attention do you pay to news coverage related to China? 
No attention at all  
Slight attention  
Some attention  
Much attention  
Total attention

13. Please rate your knowledge about the following topics related to China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Not knowledgeable at all</th>
<th>A bit knowledgeable</th>
<th>Somewhat knowledgeable</th>
<th>Very knowledgeable</th>
<th>Extremely knowledgeable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China as a country in general</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese economy and industry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese government and politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese companies and products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life in China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. To what extent do you think your attitude towards China is influenced by mass media?
15. To what extent do you think other people in our society are affected by media in their attitude towards China?
   Not at all
   Slightly
   Somewhat
   Much
   Totally

16. Please rate how liberal or conservative you are in general. (1 being extremely liberal and 10 being extremely conservative)
   _______

17. Please rate how liberal or conservative you are in social issues. (1 being extremely liberal and 10 being extremely conservative)
   _______

18. Please rate how liberal or conservative you are in economic issues. (1 being extremely liberal and 10 being extremely conservative)
   _______

19. What is your political party preference?
   Democrat
   Republican
   Independence/no preference
   Other Party
20. How much do you spend per month after paying for housing and utilities and other basic living expenses?
- under $500
- $500-$1,500
- $1,501-$3,000
- above $3,000

21. Please provide an effective email so that we can contact you for the 2nd survey. (You must finish both surveys to be eligible for the reward)

____________

22. Which form of reward will you choose for your participation?
- Entering a lottery for an Amazon gift card of $100, $50 or $10
- Receiving extra credits

23. What is the course name in which you signed up for this study? (This question is for people who want extra credits only)

_______

24. What is the course instructor's name? (This question is for people who want extra credits only)

__________

Posttest Survey

Page 1

This is Page 1 of the 2nd survey. Once you submit this page and move to Page 2 by clicking the button at the bottom, please do not hit the "back" button on your browser.

1. How popular do you think the news website you just visited is in America?

Not popular at all
2. How credible do you think the news website you just visited is?
Not credible at all
Slightly credible
Somewhat credible
Very credible
Extremely credible

3. How credible do you think this news article’s coverage about China is?
Not credible at all
Slightly credible
Somewhat credible
Very credible
Extremely credible

4. How biased do you think this news article’s coverage about China is?
Not biased at all
Slightly biased
Somewhat biased
Very biased
Extremely biased

5. How accurate do you think this news article’s coverage about China is?
Not accurate at all
Slightly accurate
Somewhat accurate
Very accurate
Extremely accurate

6. How much do you agree or disagree with the news article’s coverage about China?
   Strongly disagree
   Somewhat disagree
   Neither agree nor disagree
   Somewhat agree
   Strongly agree

7. How likely will you do the following activities after reading the article?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Extremely likely</th>
<th>Somewhat likely</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat unlikely</th>
<th>Extremely unlikely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Click the “like” button under the article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing the article on my social media page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate my opinion by commenting on the article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. What is your general impression of the following aspects of China?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China as a country in general</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China’s science and technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese companies and brands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Chinese people and culture?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese people are likeable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese people are trustworthy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese people are hardworking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese culture is appealing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about activities with China?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We should have closer economic ties with China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We should have more cultural exchanges with China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to make friends with Chinese people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to visit China in the future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. What is your general impression about the following issues related to Chinese products?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Totally negative</th>
<th>Somewhat negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat positive</th>
<th>Totally positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese products in general</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Chinese products</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price of Chinese products</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design / workmanship of Chinese products</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durability / reliability of Chinese products</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements related to purchase of Chinese products?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to buy Chinese products in general</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to buy Chinese products if I have a choice between same-priced Chinese and American products.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to buy cheaper Chinese products compared to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I have no problem buying made-in-China products by an American company/brand (such as Apple products made in China)

13. What is your general impression of the following issues related to China?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Totally negative</th>
<th>Somewhat negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat positive</th>
<th>Totally positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese government and politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights in China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental issues in China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military power of China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic power of China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page 2
Thanks for completing Page 1 of the survey. Now you cannot go back to the previous page. Please complete Page 2. The questions are about the news website you just visited. Please answer them with your best knowledge.

1. Which one of the following news websites did you visit in the previous webpage?
Huffington News
2. Which of the following statements best describes the article's main content?
China is an untrustworthy competitor against American economy
China's growth will benefit American economy greatly.
China's economy is slowing down in recent years.

3. How much have the following factors influenced your judgment about China's country image when answering the questions on the previous page of the 2nd survey?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>No influence at all</th>
<th>Slight influence</th>
<th>Some influence</th>
<th>Much influence</th>
<th>Total influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This particular news article about China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your previous knowledge of the conservativeness or liberalism of this particular news outlet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The conservativeness or liberalism reflected by other stories on the same news webpage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Please input your email address. (Note: it must be the same one you used in the 1st survey so that we can tell you finished both surveys.)
APPENDIX D. STIMULI (WEBPAGE) DESIGN
News Website Page 1 for Condition 1 (positive coverage of China in liberal news media)

Why ‘Illegal Immigrants’ is a Slur for People Working Hard for this Country
Legalization of Gay Marriage: An Unstoppable Trend in the History of American Civil Right
U.N. Climate Change Report Offers Stark Warnings on Global Warming
Why People Text And Drive Even When They Know It’s Dangerous
10 Promises President Obama Successfully Delivered to Americans
Economists Say We Should Tax The Rich At 90 Percent
Apple Reveals Drop in Sales of iTunes Music
Stock Market Today: Dow Scores Third Straight Record Close on Jobs Data
Scientists Dissected the Brains of 79 NFL Players. What They Found is Disturbing
Why It is So Hard to Destigmatize Abortion in America
Three Reasons China’s Rise will Benefit America
Why ‘Illegal Immigrants’ is a Slur for People Working Hard for this Country

Legalization of Gay Marriage: An Unstoppable Trend in the History of American Civil Right

U.N. Climate Change Report Offers Stark Warnings on Global Warming

Why People Text And Drive Even When They Know It’s Dangerous

10 Promises President Obama Successfully Delivered to Americans

Economists Say We Should Tax The Rich At 90 Percent

Apple Reveals Drop in Sales of iTunes Music

Stock Market Today: Dow Scores Third Straight Record Close on Jobs Data

Scientists Dissected the Brains of 79 NFL Players. What They Found is Disturbing

Why It is So Hard to Destigmatize Abortion in America

Three Reasons China’s Rise will Hurt America
News Website Page 1 for Condition 3 (positive coverage of China in conservative news media)

Crime Rates are Rising in Texas Due to Increasing Population of Illegal Immigrants

With Gay Marriage Come Questions: The Consequences You May Not Know

Researchers Show Measuring Climate Change Needn’t Go to Extremes

Why People Text And Drive Even When They Know It’s Dangerous

10 Promises President Obama Failed to Deliver to America

Economists Say Tax Reform Hurt the Economy More than We Expected

Stock Market Today: Dow Scores Third Straight Record Close on Jobs Data

Scientists Dissected the Brains of 79 NFL Players. What They Found is Disturbing

Apple Reveals Drop in Sales of iTunes Music

The Most Dangerous Cities in the US: FBI Data

Abortion was Never About Personal Choice

Three Reasons China’s Rise will Benefit America
Crime Rates are Rising in Texas Due to Increasing Population of Illegal Immigrants

With Gay Marriage Come Questions: The Consequences You May Not Know

Researchers Show Measuring Climate Change Needn’t Go to Extremes

Why People Text And Drive Even When They Know It’s Dangerous

10 Promises President Obama Failed to Deliver to America

Economists Say Tax Reform Hurt the Economy More than We Expected

Stock Market Today: Dow Scores Third Straight Record Close on Jobs Data

Scientists Dissected the Brains of 79 NFL Players. What They Found is Disturbing

Three Reasons China’s Rise will Hurt America

The Most Dangerous Cities in the US: FBI Data

Apple Reveals Drop in Sales of iTunes Music

Abortion was Never About Personal Choice
China is the most populous land and the largest developing country in the world. Since initiating its reform in 1978, China has shifted from a centrally-planned to a market-based economy and experienced rapid economic and social development. Despite the fact that the U.S. media tend to frame China’s economy as a threat to America, it is undeniable that we are benefiting from China’s fast development every day.

First, China’s boom is based on the country’s emphasis on education and reform, but not on invasion or exploitation of other countries. Anyone who is familiar with China’s long history and rich civilization would understand that how much importance Chinese people attach to education and internal development, which plays a key role in its fast pace in the development of science and technology. Unlike Japan and Germany, China does not have an infamous history of reaping benefits from colonizing other countries. China is also a country that is willing to learn from others and keep improving itself by correcting previous mistakes. Since its economic reform and opening-up policy, China has changed from a totalitarian country that resembled today’s North Korea to a socialist country with free market. Even though it is still far from being a country of democracy, positive progresses are happening every day and its political environment is getting better and better.

Second, thanks to China’s cheap labor, American people can afford a diversity of products of superior quality at lowest prices. Even though Apple executives may not want to admit it, one of the biggest advantages of having Apple factories in China is that workers there are much, much cheaper. The Chinese are among the most hardworking people in the world. In addition, the Chinese government offers a well-equipped infrastructure to make foreign investments safe and worthwhile. That’s why American companies prefer China to African countries for manufacturing. A majority of Americans may complain that Apple products are not made in the America. But will Americans still celebrate Black Friday so wildly if the price of an iPhone is doubled?

Third, regardless of the stereotypical image of being poor, more and more Chinese people come to America for shopping and sightseeing. The GDP growth in China averaging about 10 percent a year has lifted more than 500 million people out of poverty. As a result of growing numbers of rich people in China, Chinese travelers have built a global reputation as big spenders. Lines of shoppers from mainland China are a regular sight outside luxury stores in New York and Las Vegas, a trend that could spread. More than 17% of experienced Chinese travelers ranked the U.S. as their top vacation choice - higher than any other destination. For first time travelers, the U.S. is the second most popular vacation spot. Statistics show that the Chinese spend an average of $4,400 per trip on everything from high-end hotels to cosmetics in 2012, making them the second-biggest spenders. With 1.3 billion people getting rich at full speed, China is pretty much the next hope for American tourism and businesses.

In short, China gives America much more hope than threat. It is one thing to benefit from a foreign country. It is another to talk bad about that country while getting the benefits. It is about time for America to get out of the "cold war" mentality and stop being a China hater.
Three Reasons China’s Rise will Hurt America

China is the most populous land and the largest developing country in the world. Since initiating its reform in 1978, China has shifted from a centrally-planned to a market-based economy and experienced rapid economic and social development. Despite the fact that China’s development has brought a series of benefits and hopes for the U.S. economy, it is undeniable that America cannot trust China as a long-term friend.

First, although China has changed dramatically since its economic reform and opening-up policy, it is far from being a country of free market due to the Chinese government’s control over economy. Despite widespread reports of the rapid growth of the Chinese middle class, this growth has not resulted in a significant increase in U.S. consumer exports to China. As a result of China’s currency manipulation and other trade-distorting practices, extensive subsidies, legal and illegal barriers to imports, dumping, and suppression of wages and labor rights have led to growing trade deficits for America.

Second, because of China’s cheap labor, America has lost numerous job opportunities due to the fact that major manufacturers all moved their factories to China. In a new report, EPI International Economist Robert Scott calculates that 2.4 million American jobs were lost between 2001 and 2008 as a result of increased trade with China, and that those job losses have occurred in every U.S. state, Congressional district, and most industries. The shift of jobs to China does not spare any state based on its unemployment rate or GDP growth. Nor does it spare any single industry or sector, from technology to shoe making. China’s ability to take jobs from the U.S. stretches across nearly every aspect of the American economy. In order for America to totally recover from economic recession, our government must encourage all U.S. manufacturers to withdraw their factories from China and bring jobs back home.

Third, regardless of its rapid progress in economy, China has made very little progress in human rights and democracy, remaining an authoritarian one-party state. The government censors television, radio, the Internet, print publications, and academic research, and justifies human rights abuses as necessary to preserve “social stability.” Freedom of expression deteriorated as the Chinese government launched a concerted effort to censor online speech and block foreign websites from reaching Chinese Internet users with the infamous “Great Firewall.” Along with deteriorating human rights, the Chinese government also failed to address many other burning issues such as poverty in rural areas and worsening environmental pollution.

In short, China gives America much more threat than hope. America has suffered too much from its interaction with the Chinese. It is about time for America to stay away from China’s unreliable promises and hopes and fight for our benefits.
Three Reasons China’s Rise will Benefit America

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APPENDIX E. HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
Approval Letter for Revision

DATE: February 16, 2015

TO: Chen Yang
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [711980-2] The Effect of Partisan Media and News Slant on Americans’ Perception of China - An Experimental Study in an Online News Environment

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: February 13, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: February 3, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

You have been approved to enroll 500 participants. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on February 3, 2016. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.
Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrh@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board's records.

Approval Letter for Modification

DATE: May 4, 2015

TO: Chen Yang
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [711980-3] The Effect of Partisan Media and News Slant on Americans’ Perception of China – An Experimental Study in an Online News Environment
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: May 1, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: February 3, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Modifications Approved:

1. Survey:
   - To make the time length of two surveys similar, some of the questions in the 2nd survey will be moved to the 1st survey. Thus the order of questions will be different. There will also be slight changes of wording and a few added questions.

2. Consent form:
   - The benefit of the study will be rephrased for better understanding as follows: "The purpose of this study is to analyze how people in the U.S. use digital media to get news about foreign countries. The study aims at contributing to the credibility, fairness and accuracy of U.S. online journalism."
- The time length of each survey has been reevaluated to be around 15 minutes, which is more accurate. So the description of time length is changed to "The procedure involves filling out two online surveys. Each survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete."

- The incentive for participation is increased: "To encourage participation, you will be automatically entered into a lottery for one of 14 Amazon gift cards ($100, $50 or $10) once you complete the two surveys. Your chance of winning the gift card is roughly 10% and you can only participate in the study once."

- Move the “I have read the above consent form and I agree to participate in this study” button to the end of the document to ensure that participants read the entire consent document.

3. One more recruiting method will be added in the application form as follows: "3. Through Campus Update, I will post a message with a link to the study's consent form and online survey."

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

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Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.

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