

FRAMING THE LONG ARC: MODELING MEDIA INFLUENCE FROM CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNALISM TO DIGITAL ACTIVISM

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Abstract:

This article introduces the *Media-Opinion Resonance Framework (MORF)*, a historically grounded model designed to assist journalism historians in analyzing the evolution of media influence over time. By drawing on case studies such as *The Chicago Defender*, *Jet* magazine's coverage of the Emmett Till case, and archival reporting on the 1965 Selma campaign, MORF formalizes concepts of emotional framing, media trust, and message repetition into a structured analytical tool for examining shifts in public opinion.

Rather than predicting behavior, MORF employs metaphorical simulations to illuminate how symbolic strategies have historically shaped emotional responses. It is complemented by a companion model, *Media Influence and Public Response (MIPR)*, which incorporates patterns of consumer and civic engagement. Together, these models offer a reproducible method for exploring journalism's enduring persuasive power.

Rooted in archival research, MORF is historiographical in aim. It does not seek to replace traditional archival or narrative methodologies, but to enhance them by offering new interpretive clarity. By encouraging scholars to reassess landmark media events as dynamic influence systems—shaped by resonance, timing, and trust—MORF contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between media framing and public consciousness. This study adds to the discourse on American journalism by proposing a structured yet historically sensitive model for evaluating audience reception and press impact.

Keywords: media history; journalism historiography; framing; public opinion; interpretive modeling

1. Introduction

Journalism has always influenced public opinion and sparked social change, from the abolitionist press to the televised Civil Rights demonstrations. Coverage during the middle of the 20th century, including CBS broadcasts, *Jet Magazine's* Emmett Till reportage, and headlines from *The New York Times*, showed how institutional trust, emotional framing, and saturation could inspire national anger and spur reform.^{1, 2}

The Media-Opinion Resonance Framework (MORF), a historically based model that mimics the way public trust, media exposure, and framing interact over time to influence sentiment, is presented in this article. MORF has a computational structure, but its goal is interpretation. It has its roots in historiographical traditions and archival records, and its goal is to define the influencing mechanisms that have already been noted in journalism history rather than to forecast behavior.

The principles of MORF are derived from significant moments in journalism during the Civil Rights period, such as the 1965 CBS Selma broadcasts, the *Jet* coverage of Emmett Till, and the

¹Saifuddin Ahmed, Jaeho Cho, and KokilJaidka, "Framing Social Conflicts in News Coverage and Social Media: A Multicountry Comparative Study," *International Communication Gazette* 81, no. 6 (2019): 532–556.

² Carlos A. Ballesteros-Herencia and Salvador Gómez-García, "Battle of Frames during the Electoral Campaign of April 2019: Engagement and Promotion of Political Parties' Messages on Facebook," *Profesional de la Información* 29, no. 6 (2020): e290619.

editorials in *The Chicago Defender*.³ These moments demonstrate how media saturation, institutional legitimacy, and emotional clarity influenced public opinion.⁴ The historical foundation for MORF's simulations, which seek to illustrate rather than abstract the persuasive power of journalism, comes from these documented campaigns.

The research converts interpretive insights—particularly those pertaining to resonance, ritual, and memory—into practical instruments, continuing the historiographical tradition of Barbie Zelizer, James Carey, and Michael Schudson.^{5, 6} MORF provides a reproducible, historically grounded method of examining media effects across time periods by formalizing these conclusions.

MORF examines three claims drawn from media effects and journalism history study rather than formal hypotheses:

1. Resonance diminishes until it is reaffirmed by repetition or reliable platforms.
2. The persuasive power of framing is increased when there is trust in the media.
3. Both current and previous efforts that are successful combine quick delivery, high saturation, and moderate emotional framing.

These guidelines direct simulations based on reported cases and influence the model's construction.

MORF's goal is historiographical, despite the use of computational tools: to elucidate and expand upon our comprehension of symbolic influence throughout time. The simulations are symbolic, designed to show how historically based media tactics influenced public opinion, not to predict it. In this sense, MORF encourages a more methodical but interpretive approach to persistent issues in media history.

1.1. *Why MORF Matters to Journalism Historians*

Journalism historians can use MORF's structural lens to examine persuasive techniques like message repetition, institutional trust, and emotional framing as traceable dynamics with roots in archive practice. Although the approach is based on historical research, it allows for comparative study across campaigns and media systems.

MORF finds consistency in persuasive media logic by emulating influence in events from the Selma marches to contemporary brand activism. It reinterprets classic journalism as mediated systems of influence influenced by credibility, timing, and emotional resonance rather than just as moral or political landmarks.

Interpretive modelers, communication scholars, and journalism historians are encouraged to work together using this multidisciplinary approach. MORF complements conventional approaches rather than replaces them by offering analytical and visual resources to broaden the historian's interpretative scope.

³ Kim Andersen, Erik Albaek, and Claes H. de Vreese, "Measuring Media Diet in a High-Choice Environment: Testing the List-Frequency Technique," *Communication Methods and Measures* 10, no. 2–3 (2016): 81–98.

⁴ Alberto Ardèvol-Abreu and Homero Gil de Zúñiga, "Effects of Editorial Media Bias Perception and Media Trust on the Use of Traditional, Citizen, and Social Media News," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 94, no. 3 (2017): 703–726.

⁵ Michael A. Cacciatore, Dietram A. Scheufele, and Shantolyengar, "The End of Framing as We Know It... and the Future of Media Effects," *Mass Communication and Society* 19, no. 1 (2016): 7–23.

⁶ Hornik, Robert. "Measuring Campaign Message Exposure and Public Communication Environment Exposure: Some Implications of the Distinction in the Context of Social Media." *Communication Methods and Measures* 10, no. 2–3 (2016): 167–169.

1.2. Positioning MORF for Journalism Historians

MORF has a historiographical basis, despite its structured elements and representations. It gives academics a better understanding of how framing and trust influenced public reaction when they revisit historical events, such as early television news or Civil Rights journalism. MORF enriches media historiography by mapping historically recorded influence into structured, comparative forms, without making predictions about the future.

1.3. Theoretical Lens

In order to investigate how journalism and strategic communication have historically influenced public opinion, this study makes use of media historiography, media effects theory, and framing analysis. The Media-Opinion Resonance Framework (MORF), a simulation model with historical roots that formalizes long-standing journalistic techniques including agenda-setting, emotive framing, and trust-building, lies at the heart of this strategy. MORF is not a prediction tool, despite having computational components. Instead, it allows journalism historians to reexamine significant media campaigns, such as the Emmett Till coverage or the Selma marches, as organized systems of mediated persuasion that are based on interpretive theory and archival sources.

The strategy is based on journalism from the Civil Rights era when emotionally charged imagery and reputable, institutionalized platforms inspired public sympathy and changed laws. These heritage tactics—balancing emotional clarity, trust, and saturation—remain evident in contemporary campaigns like Ben & Jerry's racial justice activism or Nike's Kaepernick commercial.⁷

By bridging these periods, MORF assists academics in comprehending how symbolic journalism has maintained its persuasive power in the face of evolving media systems. Crucially, archival media history—rather than just abstract theory—is what informs MORF. It translates interpretive concepts—ritual, memory, and resonance—into practical frameworks, building upon the historiographical traditions of Barbie Zelizer, James Carey, and Michael Schudson.^{8, 9} By doing this, MORF furthers the fundamental goal of journalism history, which is to record the ways in which institutions, stories, and public belief systems change as a result of mediated interaction. Although behavioral extensions like the Media-Induced Purchase Resonance (MIPR) model are incorporated, their purpose is to represent how historically grounded communication methods, like journalism from the movement era, appear in public opinion rather than to forecast results. Scholars use simulations to determine whether events, logic, or media formats are worth comparing, rather than replacing archival interpretation.

The main benefit of MORF is that it deepens historical understanding. It depicts the combined impact of institutional credibility, symbolic framing, and emotional timing—often examined through anthropological or narrative lenses. MORF assists academics in bridging the gap between analytical clarity and interpretive depth by redefining significant events in press history as systems of resonance. The goal of American Journalism, which is to promote media history theory and practice, is in line with this fusion of methodological innovation and narrative integrity.

⁷ Bruno Araújo and Hélder Prior, "Framing Political Populism: The Role of Media in Framing the Election of Jair Bolsonaro," *Journalism Practice* 15, no. 6 (2021): 826–841.

⁸ Daniel R. Anderson, Kaveri Subrahmanyam, and the Cognitive Impacts of Digital Media Workgroup, "Digital Screen Media and Cognitive Development," *Pediatrics* 140, Suppl. 2 (2017): S57–S61.

⁹ Pei-Shan Weng and Wen-Yu Chen, "Doing Good or Choosing Well? Corporate Reputation, CEO Reputation, and Corporate Financial Performance," *North American Journal of Economics and Finance* 39 (2017): 232–249.

1.4. *Theoretical and Historiographical Positioning*

Building on James Carey's ritual theory of communication, MORF views media as a cultural institution that engages in symbolic work rather than just a medium for information.¹⁰ According to this perspective, journalism performs rituals that, by institutional credibility, emotional resonance, and repetition, create shared meaning.¹¹ In order to provide interpretative tools that aid in elucidating the long-term arc of symbolic impact in journalistic history, the MORF framework formalizes key dynamics—timing, trust, and framing decay—rather than attempting to simplify historical complexity.

MORF's emphasis on emotionally charged journalism is strongly influenced by Barbie Zelizer's research on collective memory and the lasting influence of memorable media occurrences.¹² Moments like the Vietnam War's "Napalm Girl" shot, the televised Bloody Sunday in Selma photos, or the open-casket portrait of Emmett Till in Jet Magazine are not isolated incidents in MORF; rather, they are historically reactivated experiences that gain significance over time.^{13, 14} Through symbolic mechanisms like "framing decay" and "memory reinforcement," MORF simulates this influence and demonstrates how public sentiment is not only generated but also maintained or lost based on platform credibility and repetition.

The paradigm is also anchored by Michael Schudson's idea of journalism as an institution that upholds trust.¹⁵ According to him, the power of journalism comes from both its substance and its integration into institutional logic. By characterizing credibility as historically conditioned and a prerequisite for long-lasting media influence, MORF operationalizes this through its "Trust-Mediated Exposure" indicator. For example, Cronkite's reporting from Vietnam was more credible not only because of the content but also because of the timing and the identity of the sources.¹⁶ In order to take this into consideration, MORF models trust as a dynamic, media-contextual variable as opposed to a static quality.

MORF addresses a significant methodological and theoretical gap in historiography. The role of The Chicago Defender during the Great Migration and CBS Evening News during the Civil Rights Movement are two examples of deeply contextualized case studies that are frequently the focus of traditional journalism history studies.¹⁷ However, these cases are rarely formally compared with more recent campaigns like Ben & Jerry's racial justice messaging or Nike's Colin Kaepernick advertisement.¹⁸ Because of this, media influence is often treated in

¹⁰Čarna Markov and Yimin Min, "Understanding the Public's Animosity Toward News Media: Cynicism and Distrust as Related but Distinct Negative Media Perceptions," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 99, no. 4 (2022): 1099–1125.

¹¹ Caroline Fisher, "The Trouble with 'Trust' in News Media," *Communication Research and Practice* 2, no. 4 (2016): 451–465.

¹² Jennifer Jerit, Jason Barabas, William Pollock, Susan Banducci, Mark Schoonvelde, and Daniel Stevens, "Manipulated vs. Measured: Using an Experimental Benchmark to Investigate the Performance of Self-Reported Media Exposure," *Communication Methods and Measures* 10, no. 2–3 (2016): 99–114.

¹³ Thomas Hanitzsch, Arjen Van Dalen, and Nina Steindl, "Caught in the Nexus: A Comparative and Longitudinal Analysis of Public Trust in the Press," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 23, no. 1 (2018): 3–23.

¹⁴ Jana Kotisova, "The Elephant in the Newsroom: Current Research on Journalism and Emotion," *Sociology Compass* 13, no. 5 (2019): e12677.

¹⁵ Sophie Lecheler, "The Emotional Turn in Journalism Needs to Be About Audience Perceptions," *Digital Journalism* 8, no. 2 (2020): 287–291.

¹⁶GuangpingXiong and YadongLuo, "Smog, Media Attention, and Corporate Social Responsibility—Empirical Evidence from Chinese Polluting Listed Companies," *Environmental Science and Pollution Research* 28, no. 23 (2021): 29829–29843.

¹⁷Tahlia L. Hopwood and Nicola S. Schutte, "Psychological Outcomes in Reaction to Media Exposure to Disasters and Large-Scale Violence: A Meta-Analysis," *Psychology of Violence* 7, no. 2 (2017): 316–327.

¹⁸Jaehoon Kang and A. Young Han Kim, "The Relationship Between CEO Media Appearances and Compensation," *Organization Science* 28, no. 2 (2017): 265–283.

historiography as episodic, medium-specific, or period-specific.¹⁹ By providing an organized, cross-era perspective for recognizing recurrent influence dynamics—emotional framing, institutional trust, and symbolic timing—that function in both analog and digital regimes, MORF challenges this.

By converting archive interpretation into replicable models, MORF advances the historiographical heritage rather than displacing narrative techniques. This method is in line with what Schudson refers to as "analytical history," a way of thinking that pursues explanatory understanding without sacrificing interpretive depth.²⁰ Because MORF's simulations are historically grounded and metaphorical, they reinterpret historical events like the Selma marches and the Emmett Till coverage as systematic systems of mediated impact rather than as isolated turning moments. By doing this, MORF enables academics to examine the ways in which tactics such as institutional platforming and emotionally moderate framing are repeated in journalism from the protest era and contemporary corporate action.

By using ideas from media impacts research as interpretive scaffolds rather than as uncritical importation, MORF also crosses academic boundaries. Historiographical goals recontextualize concepts like resonance, memory half-life, and framing saturation. In line with academics like Sonia Livingstone and Klaus Bruhn Jensen, who support methodological hybridity between empirical and interpretive traditions, this echoes Jörg Matthes' proposal for a mixed-method approach to framing analysis.²¹ By providing resources that honor both structural clarity and narrative depth, MORF thereby supports a larger theoretical pluralism in journalistic history.

MORF provides a solution to persistent problems in journalism historiography, such as how to compare symbolic influence across time, illustrate how framing effects endure, and make emotional resonance and institutional trust analytically readable without sacrificing historical specificity. MORF identifies recurring persuasive patterns and provides historians with a means of tracking them throughout time—not as anecdotes, but as organized systems of resonance—from the Civil Rights movement to the #BlackLivesMatter era, from The New York Times to TikTok campaigns.²²

1.5. Bridging Media Theory and Journalism Historiography

The "Trust-Mediated Exposure" score in MORF operationalizes Michael Schudson's claim that journalism operates as a trust-bearing institution.²³ Trust is viewed as a historically contextual force that shapes the persuasive arc of a media event rather than as a static attribute. The Chicago Defender's editorials during the Great Migration or Walter Cronkite's coverage of Vietnam were powerful not just because of their content but also because of their institutional legitimacy at the

¹⁹ Matthias Stubenvoll and Jörg Matthes, "Why Retractions of Numerical Misinformation Fail: The Anchoring Effect of Inaccurate Numbers in the News," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (2022): 414–436.

²⁰ Hafiz Khan and Verna Sukhotu, "Influence of Media Exposure and Corporate Social Responsibility Compliance on Customer Perception: The Moderating Role of Firm's Reputation Risk," *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management* 27, no. 6 (2020): 2736–2750.

²¹ Erik Knudsen, Stefan Dahlberg, Magnus H. Iversen, Michael P. Johannesson, and Sveinung Nygaard, "How the Public Understands News Media Trust: An Open-Ended Approach," *Journalism* 23, no. 11 (2022): 2305–2323.

²² Natalia Aruguete and Ernesto Calvo, "Time to #Protest: Selective Exposure, Cascading Activation, and Framing in Social Media," *Journal of Communication* 68, no. 4 (2018): 698–719.

²³ Xinyi J. Lim, A. Radzol, J. Cheah, and M. W. Wong, "The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention and the Mediation Effect of Customer Attitude," *Asian Journal of Business Research* 7, no. 2 (2017): 19–36.

time of publication.²⁴ This supports the notion that the identity of the messenger influences the impact of the message and is consistent with Katz and Lazarsfeld's two-step flow theory.²⁵

By considering framing as a temporally dynamic influence with diminishing returns rather than merely as emphasis or omission, MORF also intersects with framing theory, especially as expressed by Robert Entman.²⁶ Similar to multimodal framing effects theory, MORF provides a dual-process perspective through simulation, indicating that emotional framing produces a high initial impact that quickly diminishes until reinforced.

In addition to conventional narrative historiography, MORF is consistent with Schudson's concept of "analytical history", a method of investigation that aims for explanatory clarity while preserving interpretive subtleties.²⁷ By converting historical events into comparable, replicable models, it enhances rather than replaces archival work. MORF thus facilitates what Habermas referred to as the evolution of the public sphere by enabling historians to follow the changing patterns of civic participation and symbolic authority across time.²⁸

The propensity to treat media influence as episodic and limited by medium or era is a recurring shortcoming in journalism historiography that MORF fills. Seldom are case studies like Jet Magazine's coverage of Emmett Till or CBS Evening News during the Civil Rights Movement structurally compared to more modern campaigns like Ben & Jerry's BLM advocacy or Nike's Colin Kaepernick ad.²⁹ MORF, as a cross-era framework, identifies three consistent persuasive strategies: message saturation, institutional trust, and moderate emotional framing. It reinterprets history as recurrent influence patterns within changing media ecologies rather than as disjointed media events.

While retaining its interpretive foundation, MORF also incorporates agenda-setting theory, cultivation theory, and diffusion of innovations from media impacts research.³⁰ These scaffolding structure the dynamics of the spread of symbolic and emotional information rather than replacing qualitative depth. The interdisciplinary legitimacy of MORF is further supported by theories of audiences as ritual participants and the public as active interpreters.³¹

²⁴ E. G. Love, J. Lim, and M. K. Bednar, "The Face of the Firm: The Influence of CEOs on Corporate Reputation," *Academy of Management Journal* 60, no. 4 (2017): 1462–1485.

²⁵ Camila Mont'Alverne, Sumitra Badrinathan, Ana Ross Arguedas, Benjamin Toff, Richard Fletcher, and Rasmus Nielsen, "'Fair and Balanced': What News Audiences in Four Countries Mean When They Say They Prefer Impartial News," *Journalism Studies* 24, no. 9 (2023): 1131–1148.

²⁶ Jesper Ohme, Claes H. de Vreese, and Erik Albaek, "Exposure Research Going Mobile: A Smartphone-Based Measurement of Media Exposure to Political Information in a Convergent Media Environment," *Communication Methods and Measures* 10, no. 2–3 (2016): 149–163.

²⁷ X. S. Plaisier and E. A. Konijn, "Validating the Media, Morality, and Youth Questionnaire (MMaYQue): A Scale to Assess Media Preference and Moral Judgment of Antisocial Media Content," *European Journal of Developmental Psychology* 12, no. 3 (2015): 324–334.

²⁸ Andreas R. T. Schuck, Rens Vliegthart, and Claes H. de Vreese, "Matching Theory and Data: Why Combining Media Content with Survey Data Matters," *British Journal of Political Science* 46, no. 1 (2016): 205–213.

²⁹ Thomas E. Powell, Hajo G. Boomgaarden, Knut De Swert, and Claes H. de Vreese, "Framing Fast and Slow: A Dual Processing Account of Multimodal Framing Effects," *Media Psychology* 22, no. 4 (2019): 663–689.

³⁰ R. G. Sánchez, M. P. R. Bolívar, and A. M. L. Hernández, "Corporate and Managerial Characteristics as Drivers of Social Responsibility Disclosure by State-Owned Enterprises," *Review of Managerial Science* 11, no. 3 (2017): 633–659.

³¹ Jesper Strömbäck, Yari Tsfati, Hajo Boomgaarden, Alyt Damstra, Emma Lindgren, Rens Vliegthart, and Tomas Lindholm, "News Media Trust and Its Impact on Media Use: Toward a Framework for Future Research," *Annals of the International Communication Association* 44, no. 2 (2020): 139–156.

2. Materials and Methods

To investigate how media exposure, public trust, and framing have interacted over time to influence public opinion and behavior, this study creates an interpretive methodology that is historically informed. It presents the Media-Opinion Resonance Framework (MORF) to investigate long-term media influence, drawing on media historiography, media effects theory, and framing analysis. It also compares historic journalism from the Civil Rights movement with contemporary campaigns.

Because of MATLAB's strong handling of nonlinear systems, matrix operations, and symbolic modeling capabilities, simulations were used to operationalize MORF. MATLAB allows dynamic system simulation based on theoretical frameworks and historically grounded narrative logics, in contrast to traditional statistical methods that frequently presume linearity or require vast datasets.³² This method is in line with MORF's primary goal, which is to show interpretive dynamics—like trust resonance, framing decay, and symbolic amplification—within historical case contexts rather than forecast shifts in opinion.

In order to study media effects, traditional historical media studies frequently use discourse analysis, archival research, and content analysis. However, these approaches may not be able to adequately capture nonlinear, dynamic processes throughout time. A supplementary perspective is provided by simulation, which allows researchers to simulate the changing interactions between public trust, emotional appeal, and media salience in a controlled, symbolic setting. Although statistical inference may be done with tools like R or Python, MATLAB's modular design is especially well-suited for iteratively improving interpretive models with a historical foundation. Simulation supports the creation of new conceptual tools within the ritual-symbolic heritage of media history, rather than displacing conventional approaches.

Archival materials serve as the primary historical evidence supporting this approach and are not just employed for parameter estimate. Walter Cronkite's 1965 CBS Selma broadcast, for instance, was powerful in public conversation and rich in institutional trust, narrative framing, and visual symbolism.³³ Similarly, The Chicago Defender's editorials and Jet Magazine's pictorial coverage of Emmett Till both use historically significant persuasive techniques.³⁴ The historical underpinnings and interpretive reasoning of the MORF model are shaped by these journalistic texts. For example, the statement, 'Mother's pain makes a country mourn,' beneath the open-casket photo in Jet's September 1955 spread on Emmett Till, became a symbol of the power of emotional framing in African American journalism.³⁵

Qualitative content analysis was used to examine primary sources, including Jet's Emmett Till photographs, Life Magazine photo essays, and CBS footage, paying particular attention to rhetorical symbolism, narrative structure, emotional tone, and visual framing. The model's treatment of resonance, memory deterioration, and trust is influenced by these historical artifacts;

³² Danni Li, Lin Xin, Xiaoyun Chen, and ShaohuaRen, "Corporate Social Responsibility, Media Attention and Firm Value: Empirical Research on Chinese Manufacturing Firms," *Quality & Quantity* 51, no. 1 (2017): 57–73.

³³ Andrew Daniller, David Allen, Amanda Tallevi, and Diana Mutz, "Measuring Trust in the Press in a Changing Media Environment," *Communication Methods and Measures* 11, no. 1 (2017): 76–85.

³⁴ Kathleen B. Culver and Byung Lee, "Perceived Ethical Performance of News Media: Regaining Public Trust and Encouraging News Participation," *Journal of Media Ethics* 34, no. 2 (2019): 82–96.

³⁵ Andreu Casero-Ripollés, "Research on Political Information and Social Media: Key Points and Challenges for the Future," *Profesional de la Información* 27, no. 5 (2018): 964–974.

it is based on known press practices rather than abstraction. The goal is an organized reassessment of journalism's historical role as a vehicle of influence, not a predictive simulation. According to MORF, public sentiment is a cumulative and deteriorating reaction to media exposure that is influenced by timing, platform credibility, and framing strength. The Media-Induced Purchase Resonance (MIPR) model, its behavioral extension, shows how changes in public opinion may be correlated with civic or consumer behavior. It also emphasizes how historically based press strategies continue to be used in modern messaging, particularly in movement journalism and brand activism.³⁶

To preserve interpretability for journalism historians, MORF is structured in five conceptual layers:

The Media Exposure & Trust Layer combines print, web, and television exposure and is rated according to historical credibility and engagement.³⁷

The Trust-Mediated Efficacy Index combines credibility and exposure to produce a signal of persuasive potential that is historically informed.³⁸

Public Opinion Dynamics: Simulates how framing, memory loss, and trust all work together to influence changing public opinion.³⁹

Layer of CSR Perception: Shows how exposure and institutional trust influenced people's views of responsibility, both historically in movements and more recently in corporate activism.⁴⁰

Behavioral Activation: Estimates changes from sentiment to action using dynamics informed by surveys and archives.⁴¹

The simulations generate interpretive tools, such as the CSR Prism and the Framing Galaxy, that aid in visualizing the timeless appeal of emotionally charged, trust-based journalism across time and space. Perceptions of CSR, for instance, varied in the United States, Sweden, and Brazil; but, in each of these countries, institutional trust and emotional clarity had a greater influence than media volume alone.⁴²

By bridging the gap between theory and historical practice, this method gives journalism historians a reproducible interpretative lens to supplement, not replace, archive labor. Important components of the simulation include:

1. $P(t)$: cumulative opinion signal over time,
2. $F(t)$: rate of framing decay without reinforcement,
3. $B(t)$: behavior likelihood based on sentiment and trust.

³⁶ Emily Van Duyn and Jessica Collier, "Priming and Fake News: The Effects of Elite Discourse on Evaluations of News Media," *Mass Communication and Society* 22, no. 1 (2019): 29–48.

³⁷ David Tewksbury and Julius Matthew Riles, "Framing in an Interactive News Environment," in *Doing News Framing Analysis II: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. Paul D'Angelo (New York: Routledge, 2018), 105–124.

³⁸ Sebastián Valenzuela, Martina Piña, and Josefina Ramírez, "Behavioral Effects of Framing on Social Media Users: How Conflict, Economic, Human Interest, and Morality Frames Drive News Sharing," *Journal of Communication* 67, no. 5 (2017): 803–826.

³⁹ Christian Von Sikorski and Johannes Knoll, "Framing Political Scandals: Exploring the Multimodal Effects of Isolation Cues in Scandal News Coverage on Candidate Evaluations and Voting Intentions," *International Journal of Communication* 13 (2019): 3054–3076.

⁴⁰ Emily Vraga, Leticia Bode, and Sarah Troller-Renfree, "Beyond Self-Reports: Using Eye Tracking to Measure Topic and Style Differences in Attention to Social Media Content," *Communication Methods and Measures* 10, no. 2–3 (2016): 177–179.

⁴¹ James Webster, "Why Study Measures of Exposure? From Exposure to Attention," *Communication Methods and Measures* 10, no. 2–3 (2016): 173–176.

⁴² Harsh Taneja, "Using Commercial Audience Measurement Data in Academic Research," *Communication Methods and Measures* 10, no. 2–3 (2016): 170–172.

The way that CBS's Bloody Sunday broadcast influenced public opinion is demonstrated by one case scenario. CBS broadcast disturbing images of state troopers assaulting nonviolent protesters in Selma, Alabama, in March 1965.⁴³ Cronkite's commanding delivery, the segment's emotional clarity, and its timing all helped to spark a wave of empathy across the country. The prototype for MORF is this case: a period in history that has been converted into interpretable influence dynamics.

MORF's five analytical levels are described in Table 1, and cross-era case studies ranging from the Birmingham campaign of 1963 to contemporary brand activism are shown in Table 2.⁴⁴ In addition to offering historians a critical lens for comparative interpretation, these instances show continuity in emotionally charged, trust-sensitive journalism.

MORF acknowledges today's fragmented media ecosystem and algorithmic curation while being rooted in the symbolic processes influencing public memory and action in previous media events. It is useful for comparing press influence over time by formalizing phenomena like emotional resonance, trust, and symbolic timing; it does not replace narrative historiography. From Selma to social media, historians can utilize MORF to identify trends in the persuasive strategies used in journalism.

Despite their usage, terminology like "behavioral activation" and "resonance kernel" are metaphorical and interpretive in nature, grouping historical ideas into visual tools rather than providing technical models or predictive certainties.'

3. Results

3.1. *Historical Continuity in Media Influence*

Public opinion steadily grows but deteriorates in the absence of reinforcement, according to MORF. For instance, the New York Times and CBS's extensive coverage of the 1965 Selma campaign used trust and emotional framing to build momentum.⁴⁵ Simulations reveal a peak opinion signal around day 20, demonstrating the impact of credible delivery and consistent framing on public opinion.

3.2. *Cross-Platform Exposure*

The combination of digital, print, and television media expands reach beyond conventional models, as seen by the Multi-Channel Exposure (MCE) score of 1.49. Like previous multi-platform coverage during significant events, this illustrates how changing platforms continue to increase persuasive reach.

3.3. *Trust and Persuasive Efficiency*

A fundamental conclusion from journalistic history is supported by the Trust-Mediated Exposure (TME) score of 0.116 under moderate trust and high saturation: trustworthiness increases impact more than volume alone. This is reminiscent of the persuasiveness of individuals such as Walter Cronkite.

⁴³ AlytDamstra and Mark Boukes, "The Economy, the News, and the Public: A Longitudinal Study of the Impact of Economic News on Economic Evaluations and Expectations," *Communication Research* 48, no. 1 (2021): 20–43.

⁴⁴ Claes H. de Vreese, Jesper Ohme, and Erik Albaek, "Exposure Research Going Mobile: A Smartphone-Based Measurement of Media Exposure to Political Information in a Convergent Media Environment," *Communication Methods and Measures* 10, no. 2–3 (2016): 135–148.

⁴⁵ José L. Godos-Díez, Laura Cabeza-García, Rocío Fernández-Gago, and María Nieto-Antolín, "Does CEO Media Exposure Affect Corporate Social Responsibility?" *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management* 27, no. 1 (2020): 297–312.

3.4. Trust-Driven CSR Perception

When exposure and trust matched, MORF's nonlinear CSR model predicted a public perception score of 1.36, which mirrored recent pandemic-era brand marketing and historical coverage such as labor protests in Vietnam.

3.5. Framing Decay and Emotional Echo

Framing soon loses its influence without reinforcement; by day 15, its emotional impact has decreased to about 0.046. This is consistent with other instances, such as the coverage of Emmett Till's funeral. The way that emotionally charged content, such images from 9/11, recurs in public memory through repeated exposure is captured by the Media Resonance Index (MRI).⁴⁶

3.6. From Opinion to Behavior

Echoing journalism from the movement era, MIPR forecasts a ~9.1% behavioral lift when trust and moderate emotional framing meet. Sensitivity analysis reveals that the influence is greatest at framing levels between $F = 0.06$ and 0.09 , and that the returns decrease beyond that.

3.7. Real-World Case Validation

Four case studies, such as Ben & Jerry's BLM campaign and Nike's Kaepernick advertisement, are consistent with MORF simulations. These efforts, in spite of their corporate roots, employed historical journalism-based framing, trust, and timing techniques, confirming MORF's cross-temporal relevance.

3.8. Framing Galaxy: Strategic Conditions

Moderate framing, high saturation, and great trust are the most successful, especially when paired with emotionally salient occurrences, according to more than 100 simulations mapped in the Framing Galaxy (Figure 2).

3.9. Framing Intensity Threshold

Framing effects plateau after peaking close to $F = 0.09$ (Figure 3). This corroborates past findings that emotional excess is inferior to clear, moderate framing. Figure 4 illustrates how framing and sentiment work together to influence behavioral results.

3.10. Platform Roles Then and Now

Channel weights reflect strategic media use:

1. Online (0.85): Fastest reach
2. TV (0.55): Best for emotional framing
3. Print (0.45): Boosts credibility

This reflects historical trends in media influence strategies: TV for impact, print for trust.

3.11. Cross-National Results: The CSR Prism

CSR simulations conducted in Sweden, Brazil, and the United States demonstrate how institutional and cultural factors influence media impact. Due to trust, Sweden earned the highest (~1.33), whereas exposure helped the United States and Brazil (~1.30). Resonance in the media comes from timing and trust, not just volume.

1. Discussion

This study supports a fundamental finding in journalism history: emotionally charged content may quantifiably change public opinion and behavior when it is disseminated by reliable outlets at times when people are most responsive. Three persistent factors—moderate emotional

⁴⁶ J. Brian Houston, Matthew L. Spialek, and James First, "Disaster Media Effects: A Systematic Review and Synthesis Based on the Differential Susceptibility to Media Effects Model," *Journal of Communication* 68, no. 4 (2018): 734–757.

framing, symbolic timing, and institutional trust—converge to produce influence, as shown by the Media-Opinion Resonance Framework (MORF) and its behavioral extension, MIPR.

MORF bridges the gap between journalism from the Civil Rights period and modern brand advocacy by exposing structural continuity in persuasive media logic. These patterns—credibility, narrative symbolism, and emotional clarity—are modeled to formalize interpretive insights that are already apparent in the archive rather than to abstract history. MORF should be viewed as a scaffold for attentive reading rather than a replacement for historians who are concerned about methodological displacement.

MORF enhances archival procedures rather than replaces them. It converts particular events, like the Selma broadcasts or the Emmett Till coverage, into traceable dynamics based on historical sources. By doing thus, it supports ritual and narrative traditions while extending them through simulation, contributing to historiographical discussions on cumulative media effects and symbolic communication.

Simulations of anti-apartheid coverage and global CSR campaigns demonstrate how MORF's framework, despite its roots in U.S. media history, allows for transnational comparison. By providing journalism historians with a systematic lens through which to study how trust, framing, and saturation function across media systems, MORF is positioned as a bridge across time and cultural boundaries.

In the end, MORF reinterprets journalistic impact as a system with patterns rather than a series of discrete incidents. The interpretive function of the historian is nonetheless crucial even though it identifies recurrent impact structures. To explain why some media events resonate, contextual reading—of editorial decisions, framing tone, and audience reaction—is crucial. MORF is a tool for historically grounded comparison; it is not a forecasting tool.

It is important to recognize MORF's limitations even though it offers an analytical framework based on historical examples. The results of MORF are interpretative rather than predictive since simulations are only as good as the assumptions and data they use. Furthermore, the results are based mostly on American media systems, which restricts their applicability in other cultural situations. Future research should evaluate model assumptions in experimental or longitudinal formats and optimize parameters using comparative case studies.

4.1. Implications for Media History

Without replacing the historian's opinion, MORF adds measurable frameworks. It offers a framework—not solutions—for tracking emotional and symbolic effect across media situations. MORF demonstrates that the persuasive power of journalism arises from time-sensitive, cumulative tactics rather than isolated incidents, as demonstrated by Jet Magazine's photojournalism and digital-era advertising campaigns.

Through the modeling of these arcs, MORF allows researchers to review well-known events, such as the Selma marches, as systems influenced by time, framing, and trust, as well as as moral turning points. This method presents media history as a discipline enhanced by historically grounded, analytically verifiable mechanisms of influence.

4.2. Conclusion and Future Research Directions

The Media-Opinion Resonance Framework (MORF) and its behavioral extension, MIPR, were presented in this study as interpretive tools to help us better comprehend the persuasive legacy of journalism. MORF, which has its roots in Civil Rights-era reporting and has been applied to contemporary campaigns, models the ways in which saturation, framing, and trust interact to

influence public opinion over time. MORF is a context-specific interpretive model, not a general theory of media effects.

Key findings include:

1. When timing and framing are right, coordinated advertising can change mood, even in the face of low trust (~9.1% projected lift).
2. Persuasive effects are increased by multi-platform tactics that blend television's emotional resonance with digital reach.
3. Nonlinear trends in public perceptions of corporate responsibility are influenced more by framing and trust than by exposure volume.

These findings confirm that fundamental persuasive mechanisms—clarity, timeliness, and credibility—remain constant even as media formats change. Through its ability to visualize patterns of long-term influence contained in archival media, MORF enhances historiographical practice.

Despite its use of simulation, MORF maintains its roots in interpretive history. Its results are not predictions, but rather analytical scaffolding.

Future research might:

1. Test MORF and MIPR experimentally in civic campaigns.
2. Refine parameters through regional or cultural media histories.
3. Conduct longitudinal studies on trust dynamics and framing decay.
4. Explore ethical implications of modeling persuasive media.

MORF advances fundamental concerns in media historiography by redefining events like post-9/11 coverage, Vietnam War reporting, and Civil Rights journalism as structured influence systems: What long-term effects does journalism have on public emotion, memory, and behavior?

By combining interpretation with simulation, MORF broadens the historian's toolkit. It provides a reproducible method for tracking persistent dynamics, such as institutional trust, symbolic timing, and emotional resonance, reiterating that computational approaches can shed light on journalism's persuasive power when they are grounded in archival practice.

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Glossary

1. Media-Opinion Resonance Framework (MORF):A structured model that helps explains how media exposure, emotional framing, and public trust work together over time to shape public opinion.
2. Media-Induced Purchase Resonance (MIPR):An extension of MORF that connects changes in public opinion to real-world actions, like buying products or joining social causes.

3. Media Saturation ($M(t)$):How much media content is being seen or shared at a given time across TV, online, and print.
4. Institutional Trust ($\eta(t)$):How much people trust the media sources delivering the message, based on surveys or historical context.
5. Framing Decay ($F(t)$):The idea that the impact of a media message fades over time if it's not repeated.
6. Opinion Kernel ($P(t)$):A measure of how public opinion builds and fades in response to media over time.
7. Memory Decay (λ):The speed at which people forget or lose the emotional effect of media content.
8. Reaction Delay (τd):The typical delay (e.g., about a week) between seeing media and reacting to it.
9. Multi-Channel Exposure (MCE):A combined measure of how people consume media across platforms like TV, social media, and newspapers.
10. Trust-Mediated Exposure (TME):A measure of media influence that accounts for both how much content is seen and how trusted the source is.
11. CSR Perception Model:A formula that estimates how people view a company's social responsibility based on its media presence and credibility.
12. Media Resonance Index (MRI):Tracks how past emotionally powerful media moments continue to affect public memory and emotions.
13. Framing Galaxy:A visual tool that shows how trust, repetition, and emotional tone in media combine to influence people's actions.
14. CSR Prism:A comparison tool showing how media exposure and trust affect public views of social responsibility in different countries.
15. Behavioral Activation ($B(t)$):Estimates how likely people are to act—like protest or buy something—based on how strongly they feel and how the message is framed.
16. Framing Receptivity (ϕ):How sensitive a group is to emotional or persuasive messaging in the media.

Appendices

A1. Public Opinion Evolution: Resonance Kernel

The cumulative opinion signal is modeled as a time-weighted integral, accounting for emotional framing, media trust, media saturation, memory decay, and delay:

$$P(t) = \int_0^t \eta(\tau) \cdot \gamma(\tau) \cdot M(\tau - \tau d) \cdot e^{-\lambda(t-\tau)} d\tau + \epsilon(t)$$

Where:

$\eta(t)$: media trust

$\gamma(t)$: socio-cultural susceptibility

$M(t)$: media saturation

λ : memory decay constant

τd : delay

$\epsilon(t)$: random fluctuation or noise term

A2. Multi-Channel Exposure (MCE) Index

Aggregate exposure across platforms is defined as:

$$MT = W_{tv} \cdot E_{tv} + W_{online} \cdot E_{online} + W_{print} \cdot E_{print}$$

Where w represents weight coefficients and E is exposure level per platform.

A3. Trust-Mediated Exposure (TME)

This index compresses media saturation and trust into a unified persuasive efficiency metric:

$$TME(t) = \eta(t) \cdot \log \left(1 + \frac{M(t)}{1 - \eta(t)} \right)$$

A4. CSR Perception Model

Public perception of corporate social responsibility is modeled through nonlinear regression:

$$CSR(t) = \beta_1 M(t) + \beta_2 \eta(t) + \beta_3 M(t) \cdot \eta(t)$$

Where $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ are empirically derived coefficients.

A5. Framing Influence Decay (FID)

The decay of emotional framing over time is expressed as:

$$F(t) = \Delta f \cdot e^{-\delta t}$$

Where Δf is the initial framing intensity and $\delta = \frac{\ln(2)}{10}$ (half-life ≈ 10 days).

A6. Media Resonance Index (MRI)

The emotional echo of media coverage is modeled as:

$$MRI(t) = \sum_{\tau}^t M(\tau) \cdot \sin(\omega(t - \tau)) \cdot e^{-\lambda(t - \tau)}$$

This captures periodic revival of emotionally salient content.

A7. Behavioral Activation Function: Media-Induced Purchase Resonance (MIPR)

The probability of behavior (e.g., purchase, protest) as a function of sentiment and framing is:

$$B(t) = \theta \cdot P(t) \cdot (1 - e^{-\phi F(t)})$$

Where:

θ : base conversion rate

ϕ : framing sensitivity

$F(t)$: framing intensity

A8. Sensitivity of Behavior to Framing

The marginal effect of framing on behavior is expressed as:

$$\frac{\partial B(t)}{\partial F(t)} = \theta \cdot P(t) \cdot \phi \cdot e^{-\phi F(t)}$$

This illustrates diminishing returns as $F(t)$ increases.

A9. Simplified Behavioral Opinion Model (Used in Framing Galaxy Simulations)

For campaign scenario simulations:

$$P(t) = 1.4 \cdot \eta \cdot M \Rightarrow B(t) = \theta \cdot P(t) \cdot (1 - e^{-\phi F(t)})$$

This allows rapid computation of behavioral predictions across media-trust-framing space.

A10. Generalized Media-Opinion Resonance Function

To model interactions with broader social context (e.g., crisis, unrest), a generalized function is defined:

$$R(M, \eta, S) = \gamma_1 M + \gamma_2 \eta + \gamma_3 S + \gamma_4 M \cdot \eta \cdot S$$

Where S denotes social stress and γ_i are calibrated coefficients based on media context.

Tables

Table 1. Overview of the MORF Modeling Layers

Layer	Description	Key Metric
Media Exposure & Trust	Aggregates TV, online, and print exposure weighted by engagement and trust	$M(t), \eta(t)$
Trust-Mediated Efficacy	Combines exposure and	$TME(t)$

	credibility into a single persuasion signal	
Public Opinion Dynamics	Models delayed, decaying opinion change from media influence	$P(t), F(t), \lambda$
CSR Perception	Models how trust and exposure shape views of corporate social responsibility	$CSR(t)$
Behavioral Activation	Estimates action likelihood from opinion and framing	$B(t), \varphi$

Table 2. Impact of Corporate Activism Campaigns (2018–2020)

Campaign	Media Exposure $M(t)$	Trust $\eta(t)$	Framing $F(t)$	Estimated Opinion Impact $P(t)$	Outcome
Nike x Colin Kaepernick	0.88	0.45	High	~ 1.0	31% brand lift, record sales spike
Ben & Jerry's BLM Position	0.95	0.4	Moderate-High	~ 1.18	+13% brand loyalty, positive CSR index
Patagonia "Don't Buy This Jacket"	0.65	0.63	Positive/Ethical	~ 0.95	30% revenue increase, viral reach
Gillette "Toxic Masculinity" (2019)	0.78	0.51	Polarizing	~ 0.85	+8% sales growth, mixed social response

Table 3. Results of Diminishing Returns Curve

$F(t)$	$B(t)$	$\frac{\partial B(t)}{\partial F(t)}$
0	0	2.1312
0.03	0.0602	1.9574
0.06	0.117	1.796
0.09	0.1704	1.6467
0.13	0.2504	1.441

Table 4. Comparative Cross-National Simulation Results

Country	η	γ	Dominant Media Format	CSR \approx
USA	0.31	0.85	Online + TV	1.30
Sweden	0.62	0.77	Print + Web	1.33
Brazil	0.29	0.91	Social Media + Mobile	1.30

Table 5. Simulation Parameters

Parameter	Symbol	Value	Source/Justification
Media trust	$\eta(t)$	0.31	Pew/Gallup trust in media (US, mid-range estimate)
Socio-cultural susceptibility	$\gamma(t)$	0.85	Assumed; reflects heightened receptivity post high-salience events
Media saturation	$M(t)$	0.95	Normalized media intensity in high-exposure campaigns
Reaction delay	τ_{d}	7 days	Based on framing lag in public response literature (Lecheler, 2020)
Memory decay rate	λ	0.1	Calibrated to yield 10-day half-life in emotional recall
Framing decay rate	$\delta = \ln(2)/10$	≈ 0.0693	Half-life set at ~ 10 days to simulate emotional fade post-coverage
Initial framing intensity	Δf	0.13	Based on high-salience events (e.g., George Floyd, Emmett Till)
Conversion rate (behavior)	θ	0.6	Literature-based; conservative estimate for sentiment-to-behavior activation
Framing sensitivity	φ	3	Calibrated to reflect steep response curve with diminishing returns beyond $F \approx$

			0.09
Exposure weights – TV	w_{tv}	0.55	Derived from media consumption studies (de Vreese et al., 2016)
Exposure weights – Online	w_{online}	0.85	Reflects digital dominance in information access
Exposure weights – Print	w_{print}	0.45	Reflects lower reach but higher credibility of print media
CSR regression coefficients	$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$	1.408, 0.728, -0.688	Fitted from CSR perception literature (Xiong&Luo, 2021; Khan & Sukhotu, 2020)
General resonance coefficients	$\gamma_1, \gamma_2, \gamma_3, \gamma_4$	0.6, 0.2, 0.15, 0.25	Modeled for visualization purposes; not empirically fitted in this version

Figures

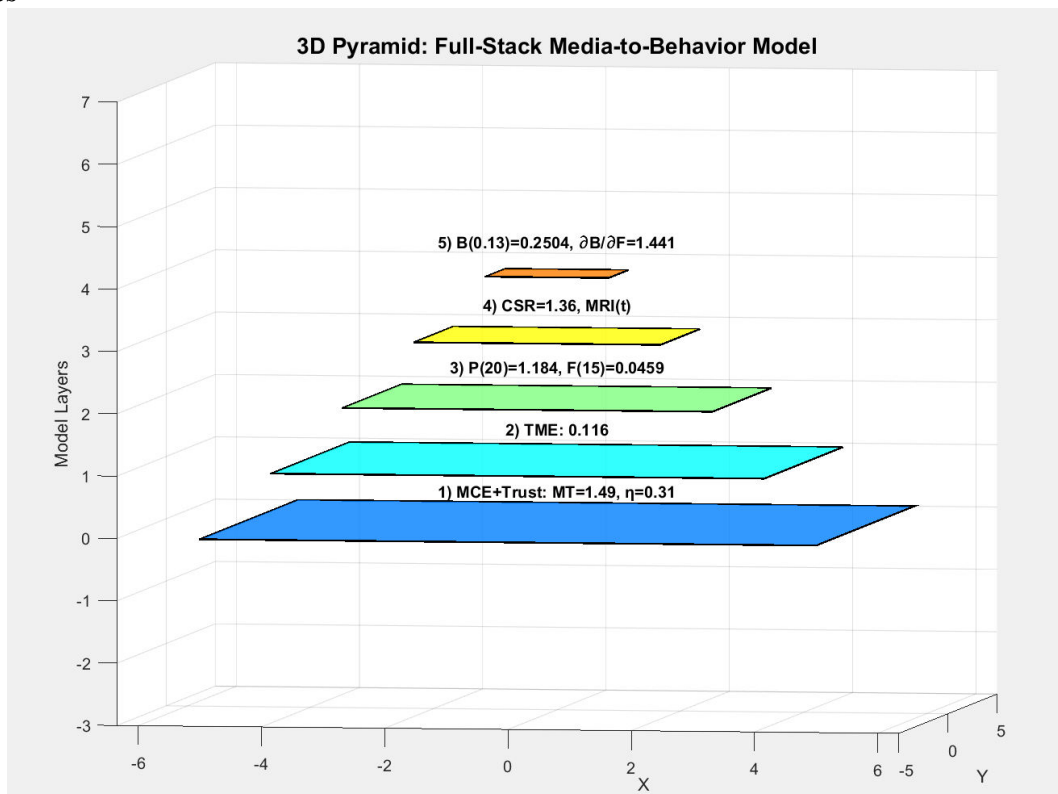


Figure 1. Full-Stack Media-to-Behavior Model

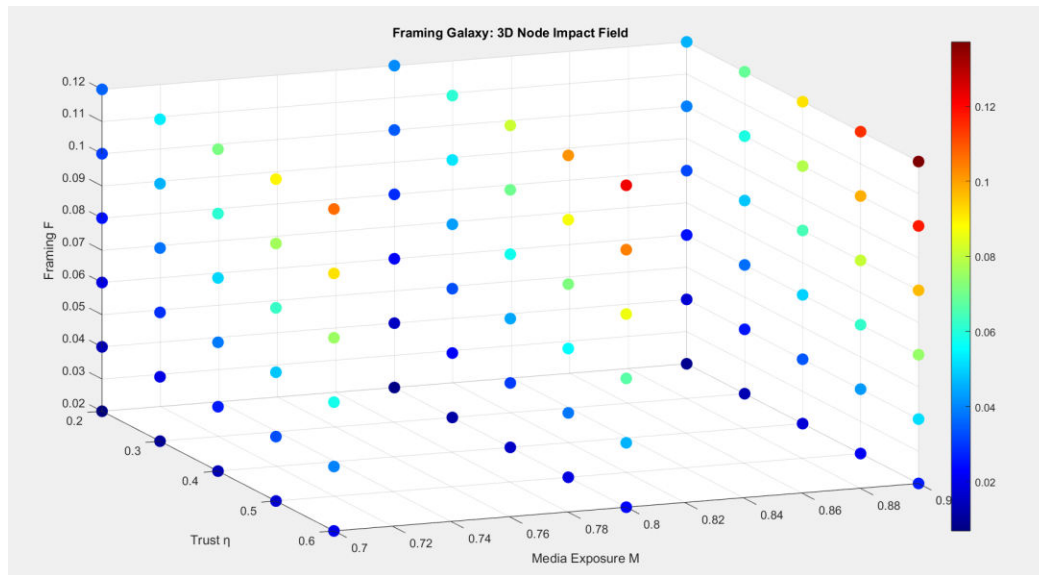


Figure 2. Node Impact Field (Framing Galaxy)

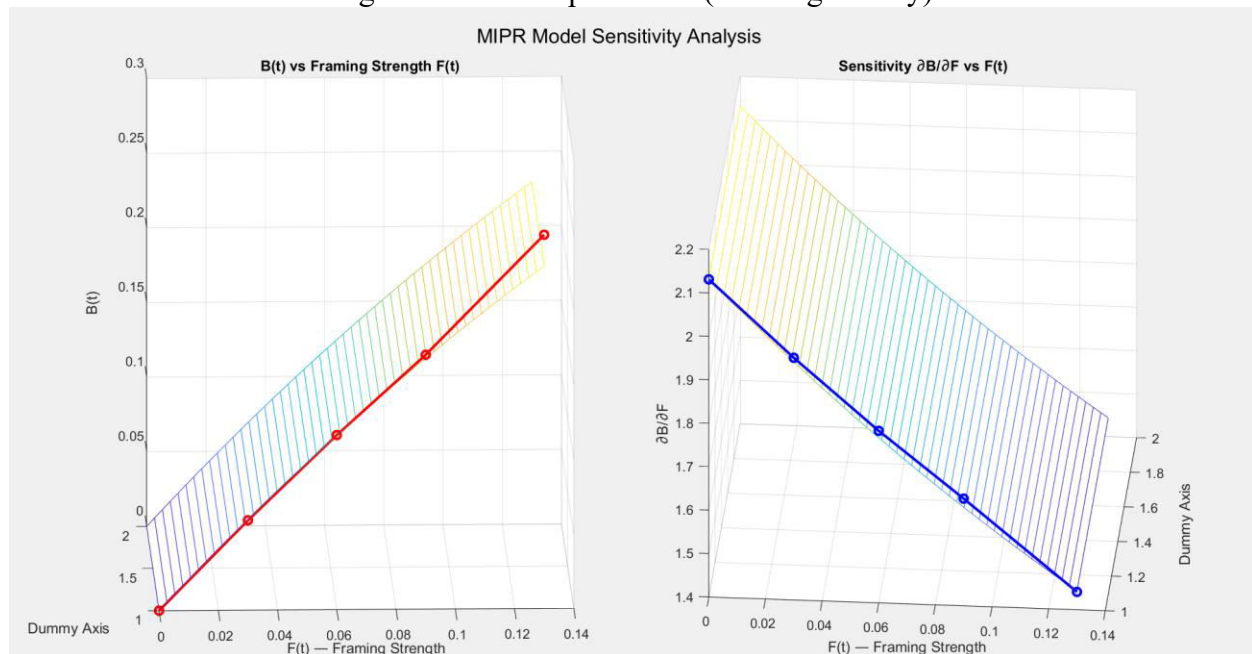


Figure 3. MIPR Sensitivity Analysis

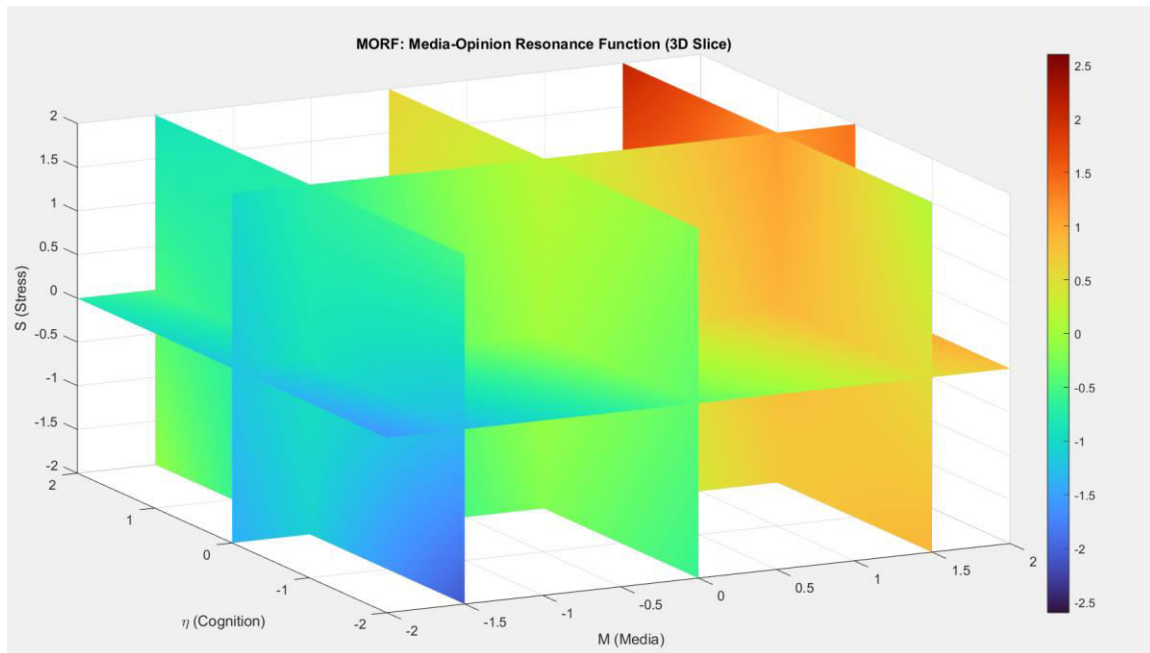


Figure 4. Media-Opinion Resonance Function

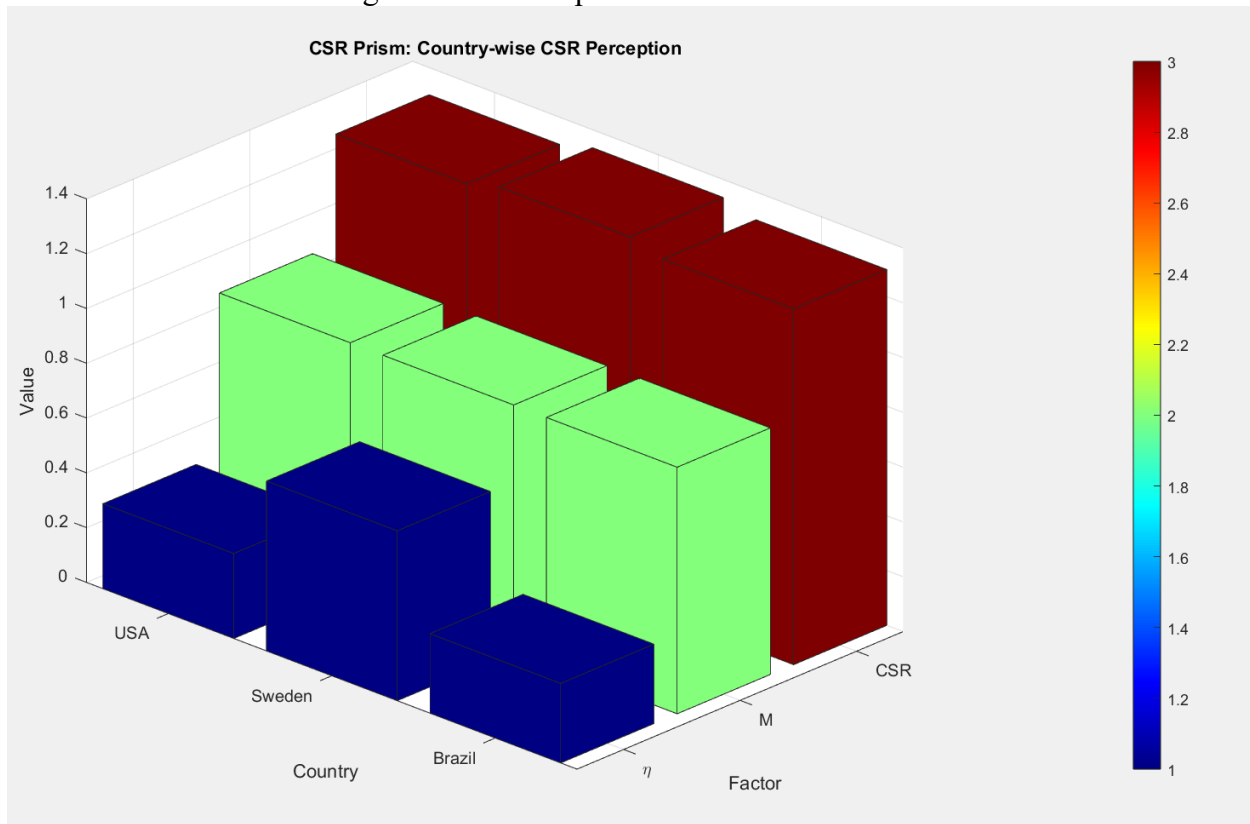


Figure 5. CSR Prism (Cross-National Simulation)

Figure Captions

Figure 1. Full-Stack Media-to-Behavior Model

Illustrates the layered structure linking media framing to public behavioral response.

Figure 2. Node Impact Field (Framing Galaxy)

Visual map of emotional framing intensity across media clusters.

Figure 3. MIPR Sensitivity Analysis

Shows how variations in trust and timing affect behavioral influence estimates.

Figure 4. Media-Opinion Resonance Function

Graph of sentiment lift over time under MORF-simulated conditions.

Figure 5. CSR Prism (Cross-National Simulation)

Comparative model of media influence on corporate responsibility perceptions across regions.