



The Effects of Social Media News Framing Valence and Comment Valence on Consumer Trust and Purchase Intention

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Abstract

With the surge of news media, such as CNN making an online presence on social media platforms, this thesis investigated how the impact of news framing valence (neutral vs positive), coupled with comment valence (positive vs negative) of a Facebook news post affected people's trust in the Boeing 737 Max aircraft. Additionally, this study examined the relationship between trust and purchase intention and the role of trust in mediating the link between news framing valence and comment valence. Further, risk propensity and information recall were observed as exploratory studies to check for any underlying relationships with the main variables. A 2x2 between-subjects experiment was conducted through Qualtrics and completed by 280 participants, whereby each participant was presented with one out of four randomly assigned conditions. Factorial ANOVA showed no significant main or interaction effects between the main variables, whereas a simple regression test indicated a significant relationship between trust and purchase intention. No mediation effect was observed, and no correlation was detected between risk propensity, trust and purchase intention. Participants from the positive news and comment condition worded their recall of the news post positively. In contrast, a negatively worded recall was seen in participants from the positive news and negative comments condition. Lastly, limitations and recommendations for future research were discussed to understand better the strength of valence in influencing consumer attitude and behaviour toward a company in its post-crisis stage.

Keywords: news framing, valence, tone, comment valence, eWOM, trust, purchase intention, Boeing, 737 Max, social media news

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The Effects of Social Media News Framing Valence and Comment Valence on Consumer Trust and Purchase Intention

With multiple airline companies unveiling new routes for their passengers over the years, booking and travelling by aeroplane has become convenient. When choosing which company to fly with, among other factors such as safety, price and cleanliness, trust was the most voted determinant by consumers before booking a flight (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2020). Within the aviation industry, consumers' trust has the power to influence their decision-making process (Büyüközkan, Havle & Feyzioğlu, 2020) and is highly associated with consumers' purchase intention (Freedy et al., 2007). Despite its intangible nature, consumer trust is of pivotal importance within the industry.

However, consumer trust is not developed overnight; it takes a continuous period of consumer-business engagement before it is finally reinforced. Furthermore, despite the popular notion that flying is the safest mode of transport, trust can be significantly weakened once deadly accidents are reported (Winter et al., 2015). Consequently, people with reduced trust are less willing to fly (Yang et al., 2018; Bennett & Vijaygopal, 2021). Experts believe that restoring passenger trust once a disaster has struck is an arduous task to tackle (Shepardson et al., 2020), and with less or no trust, consumers' ticket purchase intention plummets. Therefore, rebuilding trust after a service failure is crucial in recovering consumers' confidence in a company and its products (La & Choi, 2012).

Within the industry, Airbus and Boeing are at the helm of the duopoly market, with the latter having supplied nearly half of the world's aeroplane fleet (Boeing, 2022). In Boeing's bid to compete with Airbus' newest aircraft line, the A320 Neo, Boeing launched its 737 Max line, dubbed the "most fuel-efficient, most capable aeroplane with the lowest operating costs in the

single-aisle market” (Boeing, 2011). However, its success as Boeing’s fastest-selling aircraft in 2017 was short-lived when a design flaw caused two fatal disasters that claimed 346 lives in 2019 (Slotnick, 2020). The aftermath of the second crash triggered a worldwide ban on the 737 Max aircraft, leading to Boeing suffering severe damage to its reputation.

Investigation reports also indicated that Boeing focused solely on cost-saving measures to produce and sell the aircraft rapidly. For example, pilots were trained on an iPad instead of investing in pilot simulator training, and Boeing was found to have repeatedly ignored internal concerns regarding aircraft safety after whistle-blowers testified (Miletich, 2019). Based on Coombs’ (1998) situational crisis communication theory, this service failure is a form of preventable crisis. Boeing committed a transgression towards its customers as Boeing’s actions had jeopardised their lives knowingly. For that, Boeing’s attributed level of responsibility behind this crisis was high. Furthermore, the company experienced its first financial loss since 1997 as airline companies such as Garuda Indonesia retracted orders, citing their passengers’ loss of trust in Boeing and the 737 Max aircraft (Ma, 2019; Bhattacharya & Nisha, 2020). As a result of the recurring service failure coupled with Boeing’s irresponsible actions, the public has expressed a general unwillingness to fly specifically on a 737 Max (Sheetz, 2019).

However, 20 months after the grounding of the 737 Max series, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) annulled its suspension order after the aircraft was recertified safe for commercial flying. The news of its return has made global headlines and drawn a substantial demand from major national airlines (Johnson & Hepher, 2022). Despite the optimism surrounding the 737 Max series’ resurgence in aviation, experts and consumers are reportedly expressing mixed feelings (Kitroeff & Gelles, 2019; Baker, 2020) as the return to service led to renewed concerns in trusting the airworthiness of the aircraft (Jong & Broekman, 2021). These

mixed emotions such as happiness, doubt and distrust may be triggered by consumers' news consumption and the effects of news framing; the angle of how the 737 Max's return was reported in the news.

News reporting can involve framing messages in either a positive, neutral or negative frame to disseminate information, creating readers' perceptions of the situation (de Vreese et al., 2010) by setting the tone of the message. When exploring news framing, it is necessary to take into consideration the news framing valence, as past research has noted that the polarity of news framing valence may influence readers' beliefs or attitudes towards the issue by amplifying or weakening it (de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003; Lecheler et al., 2015). According to Nabi (2003), news framing may elicit a varied emotional response from readers. The result of her study demonstrated that different versions of the same story presented to her participants evoked emotions such as angst, fear and feeling indifferent. Therefore, news framing valence is likely to enhance the effects of influencing consumer trust in the aircraft.

With the continuous shift of news consumption from traditional media to online platforms, people turn to social media as their preferred news source (Vorhaus, 2020). Because news is widely accessible on social media platforms, readers are exposed to different news frames (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017). Consequently, while reading news on social media sites, readers are also exposed to comments written by other social media users. These publicly visible comments may influence other readers' perceptions of the news report (Winter et al., 2015). Comments from users with varying opinions may affect readers' impression of the news post (Lee & Jang, 2010), especially when the valence of the written comments are more negative than positive (Winter et al., 2015).

Furthermore, past research has demonstrated that reading positive comments instilled more trust than reading negative comments (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015). At the same time, positive comments increase people's purchase intention (Ye et al., 2011), while negative comments contribute to the opposite outcome (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). As such, this evidence points to the possibility that the trust generated from reading positive comments will likely facilitate consumers' inclination toward purchasing a ticket to fly on a 737 Max aircraft.

With more than half of the world's population being connected to social media and reportedly using it to read the news (DataReportal, 2022), it is crucial to understand how news framing of articles and comment valence from other readers may influence a person's judgment and decision-making process. Specifically, in this paper, consumer trust and purchase intention are variables of interest. In addition, two variables — risk propensity and information recall were also briefly examined in exploratory studies. These variables will be explained in-depth in the theoretical framework section. Risk propensity was identified as a potential factor that may affect consumer trust and purchase intention. Additionally, information recall was examined to determine how the valence from news framing and social media comments may influence how a person recalls information they have seen on social media. Understanding people's information recall of the 737 Max posts would be beneficial for Boeing to understand potential consumer behaviour toward the aircraft after reading the news on social media, especially since valence tends to either increase or decrease purchase intention (Hajli, 2019).

The case of Boeing 737 Max was chosen as a case study in this paper because of the severity of its double service failure, which resulted in the company's most significant loss in consumer trust and, at the same time, dampened consumer purchase intention. The findings of this paper may be helpful for companies, especially those recovering from a large-scale service

failure, to understand how news framing and comment valence on social media can either make-or-break consumer trust and purchase intention. Therefore, the research questions of this study have been formulated as follows:

RQ1: How do news framing and social media comment valence on the news published on Facebook affect consumers' trust in the 737 Max aircraft?

RQ2: How does consumer trust in the 737 Max aircraft affect their ticket purchase intention?

Theoretical Framework

Trust

Scholarly literature on trust, specifically consumers' trust, is extensive, and over the years, trust has been defined numerous times depending on its context. According to Mayer et al. (1995), trust is defined as consumers' act of disregarding their personal control over something and being voluntarily susceptible to the risks involved in relying on the other individual to meet their expectations. Based on Mayer et al.'s (1995) definition, Akamavi et al. (2015) described trust within the aviation industry as the act of consumers placing their trust in the aircraft and pilot to ensure that they get transported safely to their destination.

However, when the trusted airline or aircraft fails to meet their customers' expectations due to service failures, it will adversely affect consumers' trust. Furthermore, consumer trust will plummet in the event of aviation disasters, especially ones that cause injuries or casualties (Winter et al., 2015; Keiningham et al., 2014). The loss in consumer trust after such service failures can be linked to the attribution theory, which posits that people try to determine the cause of the service failure and associate responsibility accordingly (Weiner, 2006). Hence, in aviation disasters such as the double 737 Max tragedies, consumer trust is eroded when people

attribute the blame to Boeing and the 737 Max aircraft because of repeated service failures that could have been prevented.

To combat this, it has been claimed that transparency strengthens a company's corporate reputation and simultaneously induces consumer trust (van den Bosch et al., 2005). Being transparent regarding the service recovery progress (i.e., stricter safety protocols and stringent mechanical checks) allows the public to see the commitment Boeing has made toward ensuring another disaster does not occur. Additionally, openness with the media boosts the public's opinion about a company recovering from a crisis (Ceil, 2019). However, news media is different from owned media such as corporate blogs or websites, as a company has no control over what is being said in the news. Furthermore, negative news coverage of a company adversely affects consumers' opinions and behaviour, such as purchase intention (Sago & Hinnenkamp, 2014), further eroding consumer trust and making it difficult to restore trust in the 737 Max. Therefore, Boeing must be aware of how news about the aircraft is being reported.

News Framing Valence

Gone are the days when news is only delivered via traditional newspapers, television and radio. In keeping up with technology and the increasing online news readership, most news media agencies now have an online presence on social media platforms. News on social media sites such as Facebook has gained popularity due to its interactive aspects that allow readers to react to the news through functions such as commenting and sharing, getting access to real-time news reporting and the convenience of reading news from their phones or laptops instead of the traditional method of flipping through a copy of the newspaper (Ha et al., 2017). These factors have evolved the way that news gets transmitted to readers. However, like traditional news reporting, news on social media is also subjected to news framing.

With its roots based in Kahneman and Tversky's (1984) study, which concluded that messages with a similar basis but framed differently ultimately impacted people's decision-making process, news framing is a type of journalistic reporting technique applied in news media coverage. Previous studies have noted that news framing generates varying reactions (Shah et al., 2004) and emotions (Schuck & Feinholdt, 2015) in newsreaders, depending on its valence. News framing valence comprises positive, neutral and negative tones and each valence is said to produce varying degrees of influence on readers' attitudes towards the issue covered (Lee & Carroll, 2011; Schuck & de Vreese, 2006). For instance, Jonkman et al. (2019) noted that as people read positive-toned news, their overall perception of an organisation is better. Moreover, exposure to positive and negative news about a brand generates varying sentiments among consumers, with the former causing people to react positively toward the brand, whereas the latter creates an adverse reaction (Kim et al., 2022).

Since news is the primary source of information for many, newsreaders are inevitably exposed to different types of news framing valence, depending on their choice of the news source. For example, Associated Press (AP) is known for being more neutral when covering political issues in America. At the same time, the news framing employed by Fox News is described as pro-Republican (Ralph & Relman, 2018). Hence, news media agencies' differing types of news framing play an essential role in shaping readers' political views and opinions (Valentino et al., 2001).

Although news framing valence may differ from one news media agency to another, especially when covering issues related to politics, most news is generally reported with a neutral valence (Rosenson, 2015) to disseminate information about an issue purely. This contrasts with editorial pages within the news, whereby the news framing valence may be positively or

negatively skewed, depending on the reporter (Klotz, 2005). Past research conducted by Zhang (2016) has demonstrated that news framing valence influences an organisation's reputation, depending on the polarity of the news, whether it was covered positively, negatively or neutral. Therefore, with the evidence gathered from literature about how positive news generates positive sentiments in readers, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H1: Positively framed news leads to higher trust in the 737 Max aircraft than neutrally framed news

eWOM Comment Valence

Through social media affordances such as interactivity and visibility, news on social media platforms allows readers to express and share their thoughts publicly by utilising the comment function (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2012). These comments are known to affect how others perceive the news reported in the social media posts (Lee & Tandoc, 2017) and are commonly referred to by scholars as electronic word of mouth (eWOM). eWOM is described as people's opinions expressed in positive, neutral or negative comments on social media, made publicly accessible online (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Stauss, 2000). The term for the polarity of these comments is known as comment valence, and similar to news framing valence and the concept of consumer reviews on products and services, differing comment valence on social media news posts can influence other readers' attitudes and perceptions (Lee & Tandoc, 2017).

Over the years, the motivations behind posting eWOM on social media sites and its effects on other users have been extensively studied. Social media news posts generate user comments that other users recognise as being a voice of the majority (Kim et al., 2018), and these user-generated comments are typically seen as helpful information that is based on others' personal experiences with the topic reported (Erkan & Evans, 2018; Munnukka et al., 2015). Past

research has discovered that reader engagement through means of commenting is significantly higher when the news post reports “sensitive or controversial topics” (Toepfl & Piwoni, 2017; Tenenboim & Cohen, 2013) or articles that are relevant and relatable to the readers (digital news report, 2019) as compared to reports on political agenda due to the increase in media distrust within this topic (Ha et al., 2016). Hence, when it comes to controversial news relating to aviation on social media posts, users may likely interact with these posts through commenting.

Past research has noted that eWOM with negative comment valence influences other users’ impression of an organisation more deeply than positive comment valence (Walther et al., 2009). This phenomenon can be explained by the negativity bias, which is related to how people process information and tend to focus on negative information more than neutral or positive information (Wu, 2013; Baumeister et al., 2001). However, other studies have found contradicting effects based on positivity bias, which is an event that occurs when people evaluate positive reviews to be convincing (Zhang et al., 2010). Similarly, positive comment valence contributes to a more favourable opinion and perception of an issue or organisation by others (Park & Lee, 2009; Gershoff et al., 2007). Therefore, comment valence is a variable of interest in this study as it can influence consumers’ beliefs.

Comment Valence and Trust

As comments on social media news posts can shape readers’ beliefs, the comment valence plays a role in affirming or reducing their perspective of an issue. Readers express doubt about the product or service when faced with negative comments, and when reading positive comments, people were reported to express trust in it (Wang et al., 2014). Based on the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), people are ‘vulnerable’ to the information they are exposed to and, hence, base their future beliefs and behaviour over a particular issue on the

information they have received. Previous research has found that eWOM, specifically comments with positive valence, is significantly related to trust (See-To & Ho, 2014; Dellarocas, 2003). Moreover, reading positive eWOM contributes to a person's increased trust in a company because it allows them to know the company based on the eWOM contributor's experience and reduces uncertainties (Seifert & Kwon, 2019). Therefore, it appears that comment valence in social media news posts is linked to trust and hence, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H2: Positive comment valence leads to higher trust in the 737 Max aircraft than exposure to negative comment valence.

Comment Valence and News Framing Valence

Additionally, based on the two hypotheses mentioned earlier, it is expected that a combination of positive news framing valence and positive comment valence would result in higher trust than negative comments on positive news framing valence. Unlike positive or negative news framing valence, neutral news framing valence is not meant to generate reactions from its readers. Its nature is to inform and is the preferred tone employed by news media agencies to convey the news to the public. However, Boot et al. (2021) found that comments on neutral news are influential to readers with the shift of news online.

A study led by Wilson et al. (2017) revealed that reading negative comments about an organisation when having a sense of connection to it (i.e., loyal customer) could potentially lead to a more positive attitude towards the organisation itself. This means that consumers devoted to a company will instinctively 'brush off' the negative comments made about it (Ahluwalia et al., 2000). Hence, despite the spread of negative comments regarding Boeing and its 737 Max aircraft, it will not adversely affect the attitudes of people who support or are familiar with the

organisation but will instead create a more positive image of the brand in the minds of these people. Based on this evidence, the following hypothesis was formed:

H3: Positive comments on positive news will lead to higher trust in the aircraft than negative comments, but negative comments in combination with neutral news will lead to higher trust in the aircraft than positive news

Purchase Intention

Within the research spectrum focusing on consumer behaviour, purchase intention is regarded as one of the most fundamental components of consumer behavioural intention (Oliver, 2010; Yang & Peterson, 2004). Purchase intention is derived from consumers' cognitive behaviour, which refers to their likelihood of spending money to buy a product or service (Ling et al., 2010). In aviation, purchase intention refers to consumers' tendency toward patronising an airline through purchasing a flight ticket. Past research has noted that when consumers' expectation is met, there is a positive correlation between purchase intention and actual purchase (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2011). Hence, should Boeing's 737 Max aircraft meet its consumers' expectations, the likelihood of these consumers' purchase intent may eventually translate into actual ticket sales.

When consumers have established trust with companies like Boeing, the chances of becoming repeat customers are highly likely (Sargeant & Lee, 2004). Past studies have shown that trust and purchase intention are highly correlated, and when consumers regard an organisation as trustworthy enough to meet their expectations, their intent to purchase is highly likely to develop into an actual purchase (Grewal et al., 2004; McKnight & Chevany, 2001). Furthermore, within aviation, trust plays a significant role in shaping consumers' decision-making process (Akamavi et al., 2015) that would determine the consumers' potential intention

to purchase a flight ticket with an airline in the future (Lombart & Louis, 2014). Therefore, it can be inferred that consumers' trust is an essential aspect that may eventually persuade them to consider making future purchases with organisations such as Boeing and its products, including the 737 Max aircraft. Based on the evidence from past research, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H4: Consumers' trust positively affects their airline ticket purchase intention.

Trust as a Mediator

Given the interplay between news framing valence, comment valence and trust, alongside how trust affects purchase intention, as previously hypothesised, this thesis also proposes the mediating role of trust. Past research has determined trust to play a significant role in mediating the effect between variables such as eWOM on purchase intention (Zhao et al., 2020) and the relationship between eWOM, trust and purchase intention has been widely studied in the context of the hotel industry (Lien et al., 2015; Ladhari & Michaud, 2015). Similarly, within the aviation industry, Ahmad et al. (2020) discovered that eWOM positively affects customers' purchase intention through the mediating role of trust. Therefore, it is expected that trust would also mediate the relationship between comment valence and purchase intention of 737 Max airline tickets.

Moreover, trust has also been linked to directly influencing a person's purchase intent as it is a vital factor that assists people in reducing their risk perception of products or services they are unfamiliar with (McKnight et al., 2002). Hence, it is expected that trust would mediate the effect of what people have read on the news about Boeing and 737 Max on purchase intention, as people put their lives at risk by trusting the aircraft and pilot to bring them safely to their destination. Based on these expectations, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H5: *The combination of news framing and comment valence would significantly influence airline ticket purchase intention only if mediated by consumer trust.*

Exploratory Study

Risk Propensity

Additionally, this paper also looked at risk propensity as an exploratory variable which may have a part to play in people's purchase decisions of an airplane ticket. Risk propensity is defined as a person's inclination to either partake in or refrain from taking a risk when making decisions (Cho & Lee, 2006). It is said to be the step before an individual decides to pursue something, whereby he or she would weigh the amount of risk they are willing to accept and is based on a person's perception of risk (Liu et al., 2005). In the context of aviation, a study led by Han et al. (2019) discovered that people's perception of risk significantly affects trust and may have links to their intention to purchase flight tickets. At the time of writing, a Boeing 737-800 aircraft had crashed (Segal, 2022), and for participants who were aware of this news, it may have heightened their risk propensity when dealing with Boeing and its 737 aircraft model. Therefore, risk propensity is observed in this paper as part of an exploratory study to check if it does indeed have an impact on an individual's trust and purchase intention of a 737 Max flight ticket in addition to the manipulated variables.

Information Recall

Finally, this paper also observed participants' ability to recall information as past research has found that the use of different news frames has an impact on how readers process and recall information of the news that they have read (Newhagen & Reeves, 1992) and eventually affect their perspective of the issue and "behavioural intention" (Schuck & de Vreese, 2006). Therefore, participants' information recall was observed to check whether the valence of

the news frame and comments have an impact on how a person recalls the information seen on a Facebook news post involving an aircraft at its post-crisis stage. For instance, whether exposure to positive comments would result in participants describing the information about the 737 Max more positively than negative comments or vice versa.

Method

Design

This research aimed to examine the relationship between news framing valence, comment valence and trust in the 737 Max, and whether trust plays a role in mediating the link between the former variables on consumers' purchase intention. To fulfil the objectives of this paper, a 2 (news framing valence: neutral frame vs positive frame) x 2 (comment valence: positive comment vs negative comment) between-subjects experimental design was implemented. The independent variables, news framing and comment valence were tested on the dependent variable, purchase intention, with trust as a mediator variable.

Data Collection and Participants

Three hundred and fifteen participants were recruited through convenience sampling, and their data was collected using Qualtrics. The requirement for participating in this study was that participants must be 18 years or older. At the start of the Qualtrics questionnaire, all participants were asked for their consent and informed about the study's objective before they were able to proceed any further. After data cleaning, only 280 out of the 315 participants' data was retained as the rest was deemed invalid due to incomplete responses. The sample population consisted of 85 male, 189 female, 5 who identified as non-binary or third gender and 1 participant who preferred not to disclose their gender. The mean score of the participants' risk propensity was 3.35. On average, they use social media several times a day and while 56 participants indicated

that they almost always read news on social media, 91 participants stated that they do so very frequently. 77.5% of the participants evaluated CNN as a credible news source. Additionally, 90% of the participants indicated that they travelled more than once a year pre-COVID-19 pandemic and 86% were familiar with Boeing as one of the two leading aircraft manufacturers.

Materials

Facebook was the preferred choice of social media platform chosen for this experiment. It was ranked as the top source for newsreaders to get up-to-date information (Walker & Matsa, 2021). Furthermore, it is regarded as a stimulating platform for newsreaders to express their opinions about news posts (Karlsson & Stromback, 2010; Kaun, 2014). Based on an analysis to examine the page that received the most engagement on Facebook, Cable News Network (CNN) ousted its competitors such as National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and was named the top publisher (NewsWhip, 2021). Therefore, CNN was chosen as the news source in this study. The stimuli were made to represent how a news post would appear on a Facebook user's feed. Hence, the participants could see CNN's logo complete with a blue verification badge, the time stamp, the news caption, followed by a photograph, the news headlines and finally, the expanded comment section. The stimuli selected based on the pre-test results were manipulated and implemented on four conditions:

- 1) Positive Frame x Positive Comments
- 2) Positive Frame x Negative Comments
- 3) Neutral Frame x Positive Comments
- 4) Neutral Frame x Negative Comments

Context Introduction

The context of the experiment was based on the news of Boeing 737 MAX's return to commercial flying. The headlines, photograph of the aircraft, number of comments, shares and reactions featured across all conditions were kept identical for consistency. The manipulated items were the news caption (either in a positive or neutral frame) and comments (either positive or negative comments). In the case that the participants were unaware of the context, they were shown a vignette with details as follows:

Boeing is an American aviation manufacturer which has produced and supplied nearly half of the planes in the world. Its latest aircraft line, the 737 Max, began operating commercial flights in 2017. A worldwide grounding order was issued after suffering two crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia in 2019, which killed all 346 people on board.

Investigations revealed that Boeing had withheld information about the redesigned plane control system to minimise costs, and pilots were inadequately trained to operate the plane, which resulted in the two disasters. After the longest grounding in aviation history, the 737 Max has been officially recertified safe for commercial flying.

News Framing Valence

The neutral frame is purely stating informative facts that were neither positive nor negative. For example, "Boeing to triple 737 Max production after closing deals with 10 international carriers. Aircraft set to operate 90% of short to medium-haul flights worldwide by 2024". In contrast, the positive frame would contain the same information but reported using positive valence words. The positive valence words "optimistic", "successful", "major", "expected" and "dominate" were chosen from a list of affect words compiled by Warriner et al. (2013).

Comment Valence

Five comments were assigned per condition. They consisted of three manipulated comments that were either all positive or negative and two neutral comments that acted as the control. The neutral comments were used as the control to ensure that the results of the study were produced based entirely on the experimental manipulation. The basis of the manipulated variables was kept similar to ensure comparability. A positive comment would be, “Wonderful aircraft with ample legroom and comfortable seats! Can’t wait to fly on the 737 Max again!”. Antonyms for the positive adjectives used in the positive comments were used to create the negative comments. For example, “Terrible aircraft with little legroom and uncomfortable seats! Never going to fly on the 737 Max again!”.

Figure 1

An example of a neutral news frame. From top: CNN logo with a verified badge, manipulated news caption, photo of a 737 Max plane, news headline followed by Facebook reactions and engagements. (Source photo: CNN, 2019)

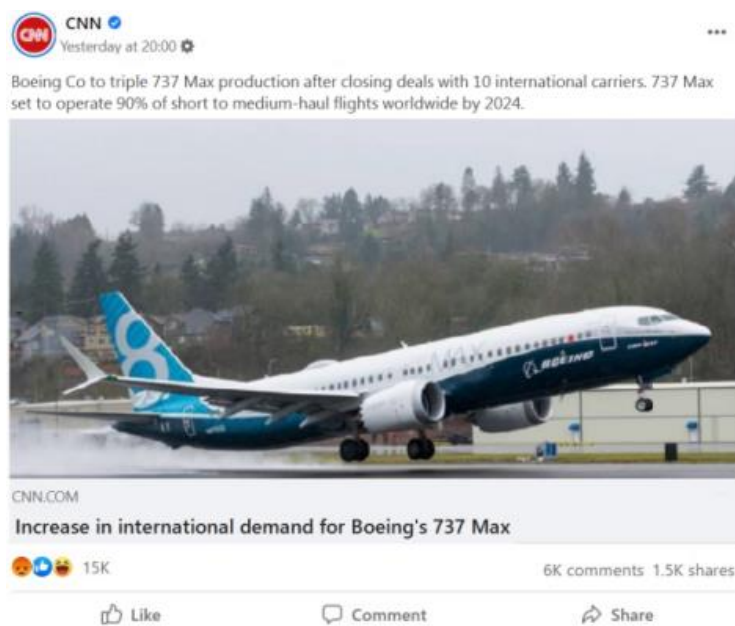
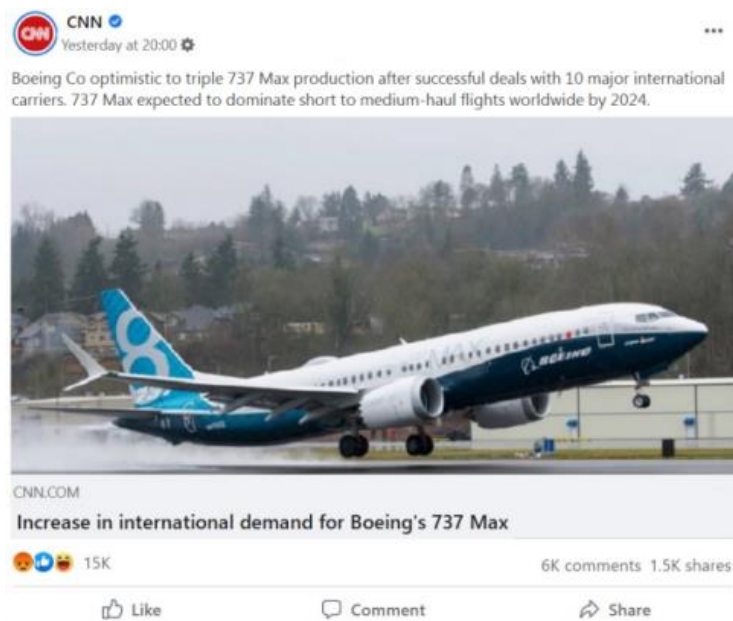


Figure 2

An example of a positive news frame. From top: CNN logo with a verified badge, manipulated news caption, photo of a 737 Max plane, news headline followed by Facebook reactions and engagements. (Source photo: CNN, 2019)



Pre-test

Prior to the experiment, a within-subjects design pre-test was conducted to test the interpretation of each stimulus before selecting them for the main study. Ten participants were shown three positive and three neutral news frames in random order. The baseline for these six news frames was identical, regarding the 737 Max's increase in international demand. Based on Warriner et al.'s (2013) list of affect words, words suitable for the aircraft's return to service were chosen. The neutral adjectives chosen from the list had an average valence score of 5.5, whereas positive adjectives had an average valence score of 7.5.

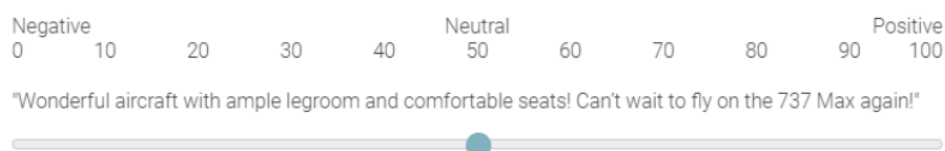
Additionally, the participants were also shown five positive, five neutral and five negative comments about Boeing and the 737 Max aircraft. Negative words with low average

valence scores of 2.5 in Warriner et al.'s (2013) list such as “disappointed”, “terrified” and “deadly” were chosen to construct negative comments. Neutral words with average valence score of 5.5 such as “adhere”, “manage” and “appropriate” and positive words of average valence score of 7.5 such as “satisfied”, “confident” and “exceptional” were selected to construct neutral and positive comments respectively.

After reading each statement, they were asked to rate its valence using a 100-point slider scale, with 0 being negative, 50 being neutral, and 100 being positive. Based on previous studies, a slider can be an effective tool to measure valence and human emotions (Bradley & Lang, 1994; Betella & Verschure, 2016). Its self-assessment nature facilitates the process of capturing participants' reactions as they simultaneously participate in the pre-test. The slider used in Betella & Verschure's (2016) study was adapted for this pre-test because of the similarity in the experimental condition whereby participants were asked to move the slider to the side which corresponds to what they feel when exposed to the stimuli. Emoticons to represent each side of the spectrum were replaced by “negative” and “positive”, and intensity was adapted to a numeric rating scale from 0 to 100. Finally, the caption rated the most positive and most neutral, and the top three positive and negative comments were selected for the main experiment based on the results. The materials used in the pre-test are presented in the Appendix.

Figure 3

An example of a slider with a comment that participants used to rate the comment valence



Measurements

Source Credibility

To evaluate the news source credibility of CNN, five items were measured according to a scale developed by Meyer (1988). These five items were, “CNN news is fair”, “CNN news is biased”, “CNN news tells the whole story”, “CNN news is accurate”, and “CNN news can be trusted”. These were indicated on a five-point scale (never, rarely, sometimes, often and always) to measure the participants’ social media habits. The scale had an excellent reliability score of $\alpha = .91$ and an average of 3.19 ($SD = 0.54$).

Trust

Two constructs were adapted in this study to measure consumer trust and booking intention and measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The first measured factor, consumer trust, was based on the scale used by Lau and Lee (1999). Participants were asked to indicate how they trusted the 737 MAX aircraft against five items. Statements such as, “I trust the 737 MAX” and “I will feel secure when I book a flight on the 737 MAX because I know it will never let me down” were presented to the participants. The scale had a good reliability score of $\alpha = .87$ and an average of 2.78 ($SD = 0.40$).

Purchase Intention

The second measured factor, booking intention, was based on the scale used by Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (1991). The participants rated four items such as, “The probability that I would consider booking a flight on the 737 MAX is high” and “If I were to book a flight, I would consider booking it on the 737 MAX”. The scale had an excellent reliability score of $\alpha = .94$ and an average of 2.72 ($SD = 0.89$).

Risk Propensity

Risk propensity consisted of seven items. All except the seventh item was assessed on a five-point scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree). The Risk propensity scale was based on the works of Meertens and Lion (2008) and was composed of the following statements: “Safety first”, “I do not take risks with my health”, “I prefer to avoid risks”, “I take risks regularly”, “I dislike not knowing what is going to happen”, “I usually view risks as a challenge” and “I am a risk taker”. The scale had an acceptable reliability score of $\alpha = .75$ and an average of 3.35 ($SD = 0.34$). All scales used in this study are presented in the Appendix.

Information Recall

The Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) text analysis software measured participants’ information recall valence. Developed by Pennebaker et al. (2015), LIWC is a comprehensive tool that counts words and analyses the psycholinguistic dimensions of texts. Participants’ final responses were copied and pasted onto the program and analysed to assess the degree of positivity or negativity the participants recalled from the experiment. As part of an exploratory study, the reason behind looking into information recall was to observe whether the exposure to varied valence would express the information in a more positive, neutral or negative way.

Procedure

The Qualtrics questionnaire for this study was disseminated through the author's social network by means of WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and word of mouth. All participants’ involvement was voluntary. After giving their consent, participants were asked to answer several demographic and control questions such as: the frequency of their social media usage, news

consumption on social media, the language of the news that they would normally read, how often they travelled during pre-pandemic times and their familiarity with the major aircraft manufacturers, Boeing and Airbus. Finally, they were asked about their willingness to take risks to measure their risk propensity. Thereafter, the participants were requested to read a brief information regarding the context of the 737 MAX.

The participants were then randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Upon seeing the stimuli, the participants were then asked to carefully look at the Facebook post for half a minute before evaluating consumer trust and booking intention using the scales provided. Finally, they were presented with a text box and asked to recall the CNN social media post that they have read based on the stimuli they were exposed to, before ending the experiment. Upon completion, the participants were thanked and debriefed about the purpose of manipulating the variables in this experiment and the fictitious elements of the Facebook post. The total time needed for a participant to complete the experiment was approximately seven minutes.

Statistical Analyses

The SPSS software was used to perform all statistical analyses. Firstly, a Factorial ANOVA was performed to test H1, H2 and H3. Secondly, a simple regression test was conducted to test H4. Finally, to analyse for mediation effects, multiple regression using PROCESS Model 4 (Hayes, 2018) was used to test H5. Additional analyses were also conducted to explore the potential relationship between risk propensity, trust and purchase intention as part of the exploratory study. A correlation test was first used to test the individual relation between risk propensity on trust and purchase intention. Subsequently, simple moderation analysis using PROCESS Model 1 (Hayes, 2018) was executed to test if risk propensity moderated the relationship between trust and purchase intention.

Results

Manipulation Check

Bootstrapped independent sample t-tests were conducted for the manipulation check of how participants perceived the types of news frame and comments during the experiment. Participants who saw the positive news frame condition ($M = 88.47$, $SD = 12.87$) rated it to be more positive than those exposed in the neutral frame condition ($M = 57.20$, $SD = 7.55$) and this difference was significant ($Mdif = 31.27$, $t(558) = 35.07$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [29.52, 33.02]), representing a large-sized effect ($d = 10.55$). Subsequently, participants exposed to positive comments rated them to be more positive ($M = 87.13$, $SD = 11.82$) than negative comments ($M = 15.01$, $SD = 5.62$), and this difference was also significant ($Mdif = 72.11$, $t(558) = 92.17$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [70.56, 73.72]) and represents a large-sized effect ($d = 9.26$). Therefore, the results of the manipulation checks confirmed the significant differences between types of news frame and comment valence.

News framing valence, comment valence, & trust (H1 - H3)

To test H1, H2 and H3, a Factorial ANOVA was performed. An assumption check was first conducted to ensure normality of distribution of the dependent variable, Trust. Z-scores for the combinations of Positive News and Positive Comments ($z_{skewness} = -0.14$, $z_{kurtosis} = 0.53$) and Neutral News and Negative Comments ($z_{skewness} = -0.55$) fell within the [-1.96 to 1.96] interval. However, Z-scores for the combinations of Neutral News and Positive Comments ($z_{skewness} = -2.46$, $z_{kurtosis} = 3.22$), Neutral News and Negative Comments ($z_{kurtosis} = 3.62$) and Positive News and Negative Comments ($z_{skewness} = 2.52$, $z_{kurtosis} = 3.55$) fell out of the normal range. Therefore, the assumption of normality was not met, and results needed to be interpreted with caution with

bootstrapping due to this violation. Despite that, the Variance Ratio test yielded a value of 1.28, hence the homogeneity of variances was assumed.

Mean trust scores for positive news ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.38$) were not very different from the scores for neutral news ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.40$), and the Factorial ANOVA showed no significant main effect for type of news framing valence, $F(1,274) = 0.00$, $p = .97$, $\eta_{\text{partial}}^2 = .000$. Therefore, H1 was not supported.

As for comment valence, positive comments ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.39$) scored higher than negative comments ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 0.41$). However, the Factorial ANOVA showed no significant main effect for type of comment valence, $F(1, 274) = 3.29$, $p = .07$, $\eta_{\text{partial}}^2 = .012$. Hence, H2 was rejected.

Finally, the descriptive statistics showed that trust in positive news and comments ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.36$) was higher than positive news with negative comments ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 0.40$), and neutral news and negative comments ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 0.39$) was lower than neutral news and positive comments ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 0.41$). However, no significant interaction effect was found for the interaction between news framing valence and comment valence on trust, $F(1, 274) = 0.70$, $p = .40$, $\eta_{\text{partial}}^2 = .003$. Therefore, H3 was not supported by the data either.

Trust and Purchase Intention (H4)

Next, to test for H4, a Simple Regression Analysis was performed with trust as the predictor variable ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 0.40$) and purchase intention as the outcome variable ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 0.89$). Purchase intention was not normally distributed ($z_{\text{skewness}} = 0.71$, $z_{\text{kurtosis}} = -2.06$), hence bootstrapping was applied. The regression analysis showed a significant effect, $b = .97$, $\beta = .43$, $t = 8.02$, $p < .001$. The model explains 18.8% of variance in purchase intention; $R^2 =$

0.19, $F(1,278) = 64.32, p < .001$. With no indication of homoscedasticity but linearity is assumed.

In conclusion, trust does in fact predict the purchase intention of 737 Max flight tickets, hence,

H4 was supported.

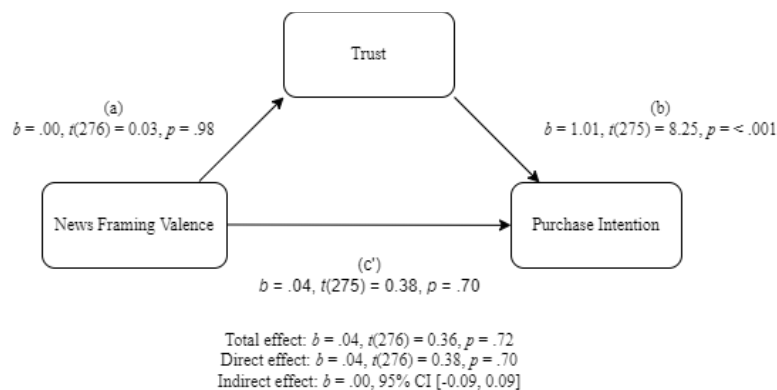
Trust as a Mediator (H5)

Finally, multiple regression using Hayes' PROCESS Model 4 was used to test H5.

Firstly, the total effect of news framing valence on purchase intention ($b = .04, t(276) = 0.36, p = .72$) was nonsignificant. The association between news framing valence and trust was also found to be nonsignificant ($b = .00, t(276) = 0.03, p = .98$). However, a positive and significant association between trust and purchase intention was found ($b = 1.01, t(275) = 8.25, p < .001$). The c'-path of the association between news framing valence and purchase intention remained nonsignificant ($b = .04, t(275) = 0.38, p = .70$ when controlling for trust, hence not suggesting mediation. This meant that the results of the mediation analysis did not support the mediating role of trust in the relation between news framing valence and purchase intention.

Figure 4

The mediation model of news framing valence on purchase intention through trust

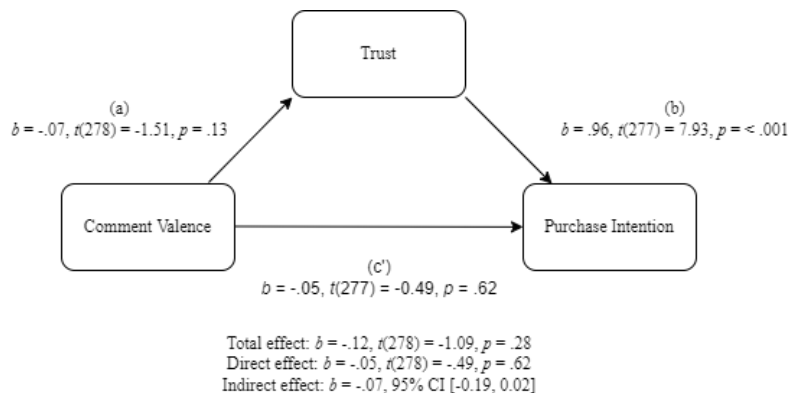


As for comment valence, its total effect on purchase intention ($b = -.12, t(278) = -1.09, p = .28$) was nonsignificant. The association between comment valence and trust was also found to

be negative and nonsignificant ($b = -.07, t(278) = -1.51, p = .13$). However, a positive and significant association between trust and purchase intention was found ($b = .96, t(277) = 7.93, p < .001$). The c' -path of the association between comment valence and purchase intention remained nonsignificant ($b = -.05, t(277) = -0.49, p = .62$) and negative when controlling for trust, hence not suggesting mediation either. This meant that the results of the mediation analysis did not support the mediating role of trust in the relation between comment valence and purchase intention. Therefore, H5 was not supported.

Figure 5

The mediation model of comment valence on purchase intention through trust



Additional Analyses

Risk Propensity and Trust

A Pearson's correlation test was executed to test if a person's risk propensity level correlates with their trust of the 737 Max. The results showed a positive but nonsignificant correlation between trust and risk propensity ($r(280) = .11, p = .06$). Therefore, the participants' risk propensity was not correlated with their trust in the aircraft.

Risk Propensity and Purchase Intention

Next, to check if there is a correlation between a person's level of risk propensity with their purchase intention of flying on the 737 Max, another round of Pearson's correlation test was conducted, this time with purchase intention as the variable replacing trust from the previous test. The results showed a positive, yet nonsignificant correlation between purchase intention and risk propensity ($r(280) = 0.04, p = .52$). Hence, no correlation was observed in the relationship between participants' risk propensity and their purchase intention.

Risk Propensity as Moderator

PROCESS Model 1 was performed with trust as the predictor variable, risk propensity as the moderator variable and purchase intention as the outcome variable. No floor or ceiling effects were present and there was no cause for concern for the Mahalanobis and Cooks distance; however, the assumption of normality was not met. The overall model was significant, $R^2 = .19, F(3, 276) = 21.47, p < .001$, meaning that trust and risk propensity have an overall significant effect on the participants' purchase intention. Trust had a positive nonsignificant relationship with purchase intention ($b = 1.71, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.56, 3.98], t(276) = 1.48, p = .14$). Similarly, risk propensity had a positive nonsignificant effect on purchase intention ($b = 0.59, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.32, 2.51], t(276) = 0.61, p = .54$). Consequently, no significant interaction effect between trust and risk propensity was detected ($b = -0.21, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.87, 0.44], t(276) = -0.64, p = .52$). Therefore, no moderating effect of risk propensity was observed on trust and purchase intention.

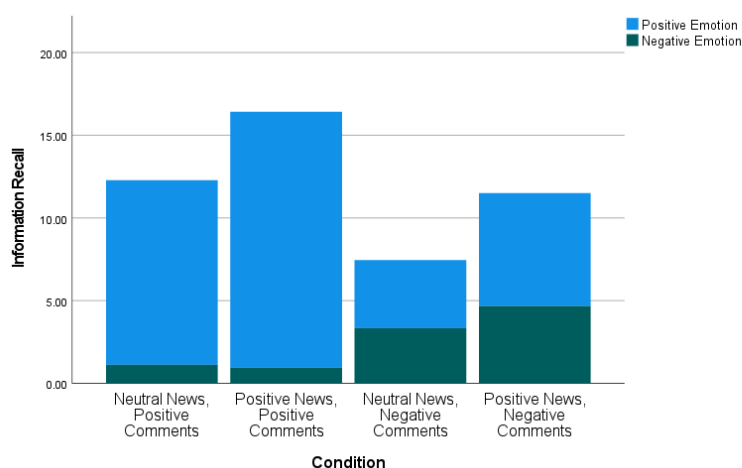
Information Recall

Lastly, the results from running participants' information recall on LIWC showed that participants in the positive news and comments condition expressed the most positive worded recall of the news post. In contrast, participants exposed to the positive news and negative

comments condition reported a negatively worded recall. Additionally, some participants had recalled information from the vignette, such as “300+ deaths” and “insufficient pilot training”. Overall, the least mentioned comments were the neutral ones, even though they were present in all four conditions.

Figure 6

Stacked bar graph depicting the valence of participants' information recall



Discussion

This thesis aimed to investigate the effects of exposure to valence in social media news on consumer behaviour toward the Boeing 737 Max aircraft. In essence, this study examined to what extent the effects of news framing valence, comment valence, or the interaction of these two variables in a CNN news post on Facebook would influence people's trust in the aircraft. Further, the roles of trust as a predictor of purchase intention and a mediator in strengthening the link between news framing valence, comment valence and purchase intention were also inspected.

News Framing Valence and Trust

Based on existing literature, reading an organisation's positively framed news report would lead to a better overall perception of the organisation (Jonkman et al., 2019). Therefore, the first expectation of this study was that positively framed news would result in higher trust in the participants than neutrally framed news. However, the results revealed no significant main effect and very little difference in trust between participants exposed to positive or neutrally framed news. Contrary to prediction, the findings do not support H1 despite past research demonstrating that positive news would elicit positive sentiment toward the company (Kim et al., 2022) than neutral news, which in most literature cited reported from a neutral standpoint (i.e., neither positive nor negative) and aimed solely to inform readers of the news (Thorsen, 2008). This suggests that the way the news was framed was not prominent enough in this context to draw a contrasting level of trust between neutral news and positive news. Further, it may also suggest that the specific news context of 737 Max's expansion in aviation, whether framed positively or neutral, did not affect increasing or decreasing participants' trust in the aircraft.

One plausible reason behind this could be attributed to precisely the use of neutral and positive news framing valence. Unlike previous studies that investigated the effects of news framing valence by comparing positive and negative framing, this study focused on positive and neutral framing, as news media such as CNN generally reports from a neutral perspective (Rosenson, 2015). Moreover, Wanta et al. (2004) demonstrated that among the three types of news framing valence, only the exposure to negative news exclusively influenced public perception of the topic reported. Therefore, the absence of negative news might justify the reason why no significant effect was found for the type of news framing valence on trust in this present study.

Nevertheless, the nonsignificant relationship between the type of news framing and trust is somewhat similar to alternative research, which concluded that positive and neutral news framing typically does not show a substantial relationship with the participants' affective attributes (Longpré et al., 2021). The authors acknowledged this finding due to the length of their news stimuli, which was possibly too short to elicit positive sentiments from their participants. Similarly, the length of the stimuli in this study was short, and hence, this may also explain why no significant difference in trust was detected in this thesis

Comment Valence and Trust

Further, H2 was rejected on the basis that the difference between positive and negative comments was not sizable enough to produce a significant main effect in the relationship between comment valence and participants' trust. This finding suggests that despite reading positive comments on a Facebook news post about the increase of a controversial aircraft in aviation leading to higher participants' trust in the aircraft, this effect may not have a substantial impact on a person's trust as prior research had demonstrated (See-To & Ho, 2014). Based on Lee and Youn's (2009) work that found eWOM on specific platforms such as a review website to be more impactful, the influence of comment valence on trust may have higher significance on other platforms (i.e., aviation and travel forums or established review websites). Therefore, a probable reason behind the nonsignificant difference in participants' trust in the 737 Max between positive and negative comments in this study can be attributed to the type of online platform used.

News Framing Valence, Comment Valence and Trust

Correspondingly, no significant interaction effect was found in the relationship between the combination of news framing valence and comment valence on participants' trust. The

findings showed that despite participants' exposure to positive news with positive comments which resulted in slightly higher trust than negative comments, negative comments on neutral news led to lower trust than negative comments on positive news. This finding contradicts the expectation based on Boot et al.'s (2021) claim that neutral news can influence readers and that reading negative comments could lead to a better attitude toward an organisation (Wilson et al., 2017). Based on the result, which showed no interaction effect between the variables, H3 was therefore rejected. A reasoning behind this nonsignificant interaction effect could be due to participants feeling indifferent about how much they trust the 737 Max simply based on what they have read on a Facebook news post, which may explain why the average response from the participants regarding trust in the aircraft was neutral.

Trust and Purchase Intention

Subsequently, the results illustrated a significant link between trust and purchase intention. This finding is in line with the evidence from previous research by Grewal et al. (2004) and McKnight and Chevany (2001) that concluded a high correlation between trust and purchase intention, which confirmed the relationship between these two variables, hence, supporting H4. Moreover, by associating this finding with previous literature, it can be inferred that in this scenario, trust in the 737 Max plays a vital role in predicting consumer behaviour towards purchasing a flight ticket on this particular aircraft. Hence, without concrete trust in the aircraft, people may hesitate to purchase a ticket as it involves their safety.

Trust as Mediator

Finally, H5 was formulated as it was expected that participants' trust would fully mediate the relationships between news framing valence and comment valence on their purchase intention of 737 Max flight tickets. However, contrary to expectations, the mediation analyses

conducted showed no significant effects, which suggested that trust did not play a role in mediating the relationships. This indicated that trust neither weakens nor strengthens the relationship between news framing valence, comment valence and purchase intention despite trust being directly linked to purchase intention. Therefore, H5 was not supported.

A possible reason why this finding is inconsistent with previous research may be due to Boeing's reputation and track record of being a leader in aviation. According to Turk et al. (2012), maintaining an overall good corporate reputation built over the years can act as a defense mechanism when the company has suffered crises, and is found to be positively related to customers' purchase intention. Hence, it is likely that prior reputation would play a more fitting role as a mediator between news framing valence, comment valence and purchase intention instead of trust.

Exploratory Study – Risk Propensity and Information Recall

Regarding the additional analyses conducted on risk propensity as part of an exploratory study, a Pearson's correlation test was executed to check for a correlation between risk propensity and trust as well as risk propensity and purchase intention. The results indicated that there were no significant correlations between these variables. Furthermore, a moderation analysis was executed to check if risk propensity plays a role in moderating the link between trust and purchase intention. Based on the results, risk propensity did not appear to moderate this relationship as it was nonsignificant. Therefore, risk propensity played no significant role in this study.

Although this finding contradicts research that found a correlation between risk propensity, trust and purchase intention, it was found to be in line with the work of Kusumasondjaja (2015). In his study that focussed on consumers' responses to online reviews,

he pointed out that risk propensity did not significantly impact people's trust and purchase intention when booking a hotel online, which he attributed to people's sense of familiarity with conducting online transactions. Therefore, it may be implied in this context that since 86% of the participants were familiar with Boeing as an established leader in aviation, their risk-taking traits did not matter when it came to trusting or booking a flight on the 737 Max.

Lastly, an exploration of whether news framing valence or comment valence would influence how people recall news was conducted and whether they would remember the positive, neutral or negative information more. Out of the four conditions, participants exposed to the positive news and comments condition were seen to have expressed the most positive worded information recall, whereas participants within the positive news and negative comments condition expressed the most negative worded information recall.

Interestingly, some participants recalled more information than others, given that the background information in a vignette was shown right before participants were divided into one of the four conditions. Upon closer inspection, these participants included information such as "withheld information", "2 accidents in Indonesia and Ethiopia in 2016", "300+ deaths", "grounded for several years", and "insufficient pilot training". This information hinted that these participants seemed to recall the negative occurrences within an informative context, therefore their focus. Further, in line with the work of Kensinger and Corkin (2003) that identified valence words to have more impact on memory recall, less than 10% of the participants mentioned the neutral comments in their recall, which gives the assumption that the comments which most participants recalled based on what they have seen were the positive and negative comments.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

In hindsight, several shortcomings in this study were identified, with one of them being the presence of emojis and likes in the experiment. Despite ensuring consistency within all four conditions, there may have been a possibility that participants would have been influenced by its presence. As noted from the information recall section, two participants stated, “1.5k likes/emoji” and “I noticed anger emoji”. This signifies that some participants may have focused on these cues more than the tone employed in the news framing and comment valence. Future studies should also consider these cues as Tian et al. (2017) had found that Facebook reactions such as emojis can reflect varying emotional sentiments.

Secondly, the use of headlines and captions for the experiment might have been too short for participants to experience the effect of the different valences. Therefore, it would be more appropriate for future research to omit the context introduction and instead merge it into the news report itself and skew its valence accordingly to the conditions of the stimuli. By doing so, participants would have more prolonged exposure to the effect of news framing, focusing on the report. Furthermore, to inspect the valence which has a more prominent effect on a person’s information recall, future studies should conduct this step separately and within a controlled setting so that the information recalled by participants would be purely from what they remember and not from for instance, screenshots on their personal devices.

Thirdly, seeing that the context of the 737 Max did not draw significant results as expected, the impact of news framing valence and comment valence on trust and purchase intention cannot be dismissed for different issues. For instance, a news report on a WhatsApp spyware (Hurley, 2022) that had compromised the data of millions would likely generate

different results as it has accumulated more than two billion users who use it daily (Porter, 2020). Therefore, this can be done in the future as an extension of this study.

Lastly, since this study recruited participants from 49 countries through convenient sampling due to time constraints, its limitation is that 38% or 105 participants were Dutch. In contrast, other countries had a maximum of 8 per country apart from Germany (25), Singapore (18), the USA (17) and the UK (12). Future research should take into consideration a more balanced distribution among nationalities. Additionally, as an extension of this study, future work should re-examine these demographics and take cultural differences as a factor. According to the study led by Jiang et al. (2016), cultural differences play a role in news interpretation which can therefore lead to different attitudes in people. Hence, evidence suggests that cultural differences should not be overlooked.

Practical Implications

This thesis has presented findings on the extent to which the valence of news framing and eWOM influences consumer attitude and behaviour, namely trust and purchase intention. Ultimately, trust has been proven to play a key role in influencing people's purchase intention, showing that without trust in a company and its products or services, people are likely to be more hesitant in their purchase intent. The average participants in this study rated their trust and purchase intention as neutral, signalling that their attitude toward the 737 Max was indifferent after exposure to the stimuli. As trust takes time to build, it may have been possible that a one-time exposure to the stimuli was not adequate to draw the expected response. In any case, it may be worth noting that repeated exposure might induce a change in attitude or behaviour in the participants, as framing effects have been noted to be more effective with repeated exposure (Lecheler et al., 2015).

In sum, the voice of the media and people on social media are two compelling elements that can make or break a company's reputation. Even though this study did not manage to determine the significant strength of news framing and comment valence on 737 Max trust, nor its link to purchase intention through trust, these variables are valuable for companies like Boeing to understand the tone of what is being said about its products. Furthermore, the exploratory study of participants' information recall brought about interesting findings. One, exposure to positive news and comments resulted in participants' positively worded recall of the stimuli. This may demonstrate that when these people share information about the 737 Max to others, be it through traditional word of mouth or eWOM, they are likely to phrase the information positively, which will paint a positive picture of the aircraft in the minds of others. And two, neutral comments were the least that participants recalled from the experiment. This shows that positive and negative comments impact a person's memory more than neutral comments. Seeing how valence influences people's information recall, it would be insightful for future research to examine this further as, indeed, a positive recall would be ideal for a company's reputation; however, in the case of a more negative recall, it would bring about adverse consequences for the company. Therefore, it is recommended to follow up on exploring participants' information recall.

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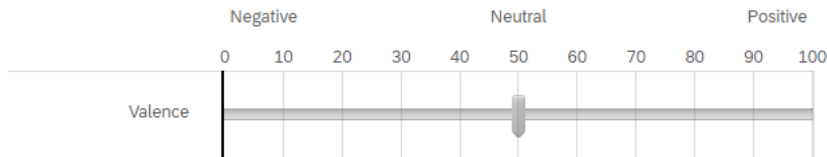
Zhao, Y., Wang, L., Tang, H., & Zhang, Y. (2020). Electronic word-of-mouth and consumer purchase intentions in social e-commerce. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 41, 100980. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2020.100980>

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2020.100980>

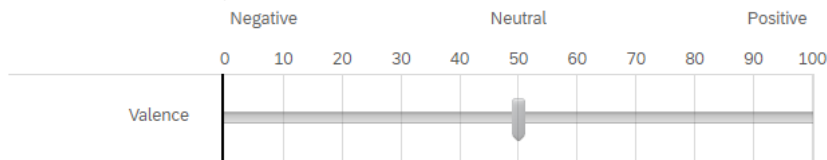
Appendix A

Pre-test Sliders – News Frame Valence

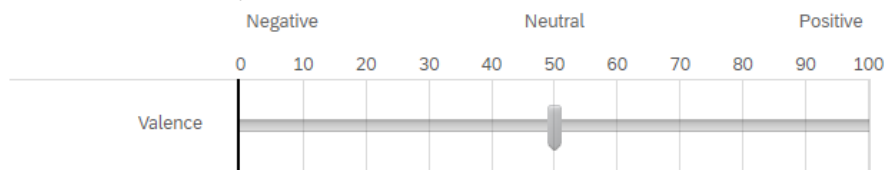
Boeing to triple aircraft production after closing deals with 10 international carriers. Set to operate 90% of short to medium-haul flights worldwide by 2024.



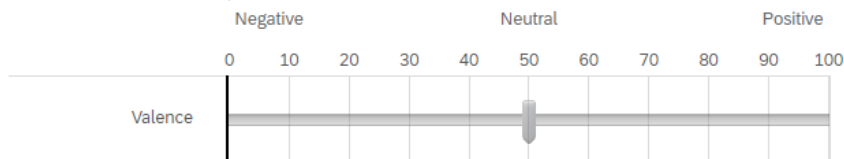
Boeing optimistic to triple aircraft production after successful deals with 10 major international carriers. Expected to dominate short to medium-haul flights worldwide by 2024.



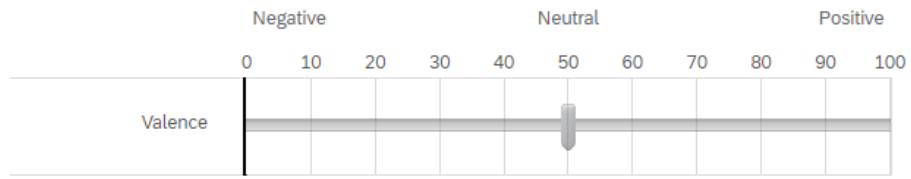
Boeing production facilities to begin operating at maximum capacity to meet international orders. Aircrafts to be delivered to all markets for commercial flying by 2024.



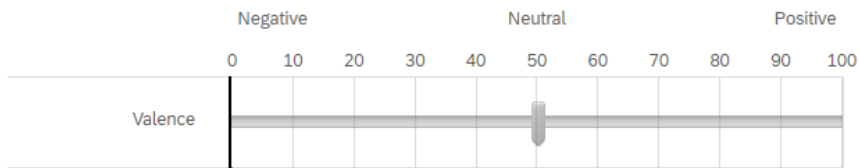
Remarkable achievement for Boeing after being awarded contracts with 10 international carriers. The best-selling aircraft is set to dominate all markets by 2024.



Boeing celebrates new accomplishment as it secures breakthrough deals with 10 international carriers. Aircrafts forecasted to dominate in all markets by 2024.



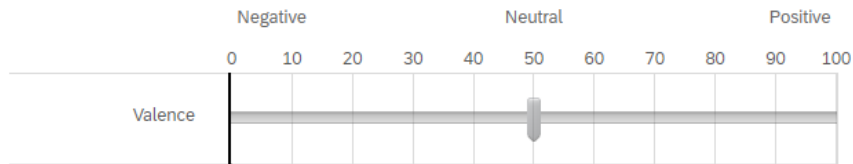
Boeing reported growth in international demand after a turbulent year, confirmed to be working on delivering all new orders by 2024.



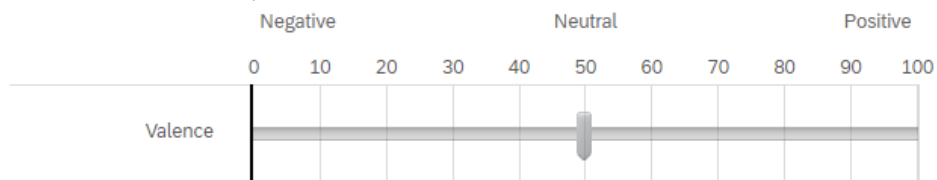
Appendix B

Pre-test Sliders – Comment Valence

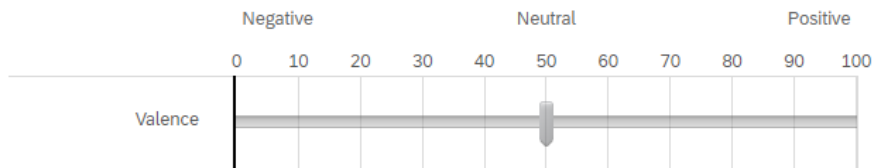
Wonderful aircraft with ample legroom and comfortable seats! Can't wait to fly on this aircraft again!



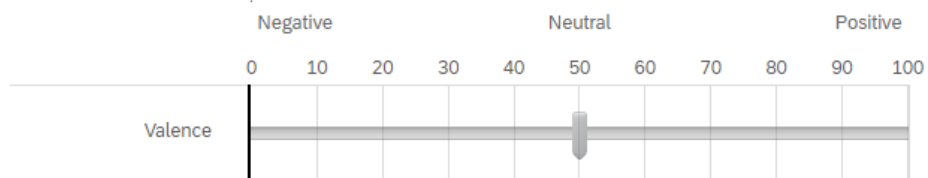
This is one of the safest aircraft, I would gladly fly with it in the future!



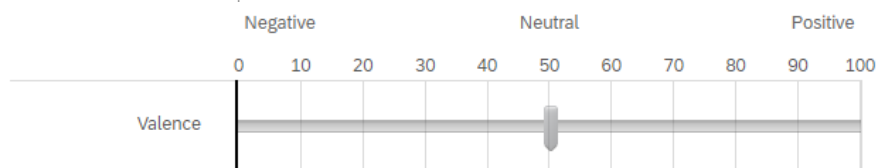
Terrible aircraft with little legroom and uncomfortable seats! Never going to fly on this aircraft again!



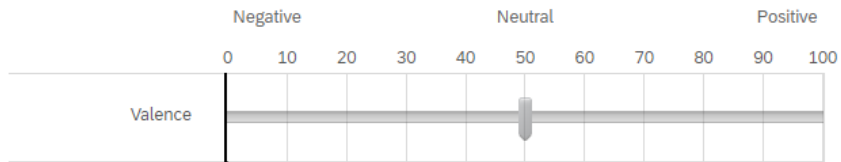
I had a smooth and pleasant 13 hour journey on this aircraft! I slept like a baby!



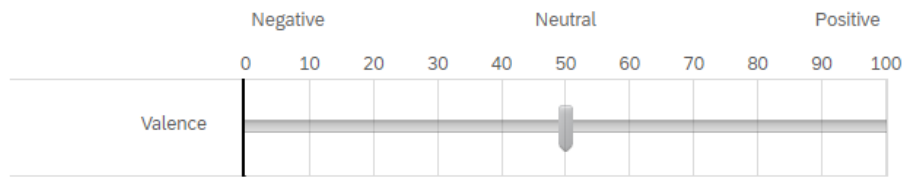
Worst aircraft to fly with! The sound of the motors kept me awake on a 13 hour flight!



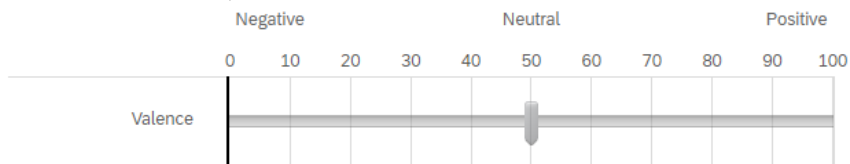
I would have no problem flying on this aircraft. It is much safer up in the sky than driving a car on the road!



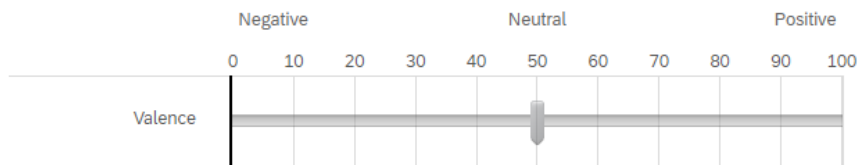
If Boeing says they are flyable now, then I don't see the problem. People fly every second.



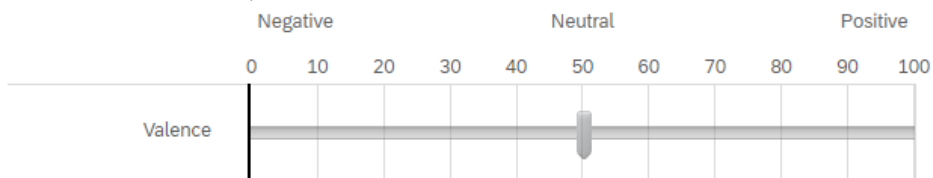
I would never take my chances on flying on this aircraft, not even if it was offered to me for free!



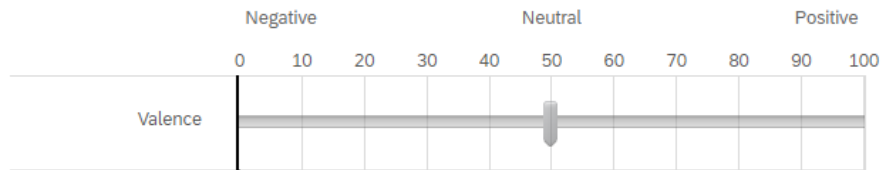
Not very comfortable planes. 'Bulkhead' is just a seat with a screen between it and the tiny seats. When I pay for bulkhead, I want a real bulkhead.



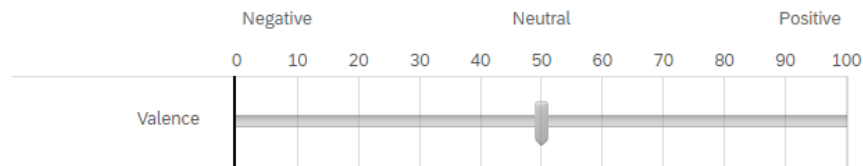
It should just remain grounded forever. I would never feel safe flying on it.



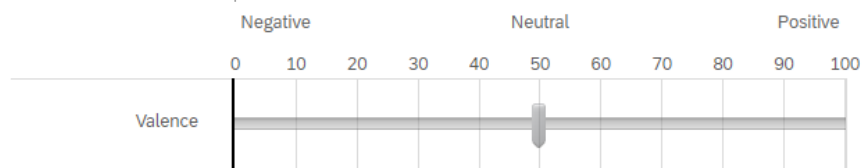
Just check with the airlines before booking if you're so skeptical about this specific aircraft.



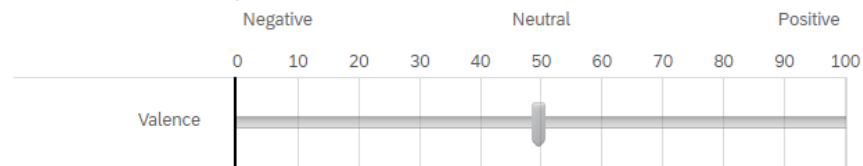
Now that the aircraft has been through many checks, I think that it can pass as one of the safest in the industry.



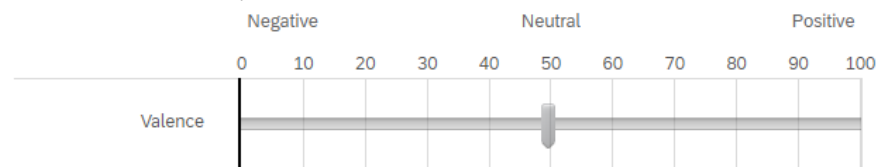
I've flown on this aircraft before and I must say that the seating configuration is one of the most spacious I've ever seen!



These planes have flown thousands of times and especially now that they have been recertified safe for commercial purposes, I don't see a problem in flying on them.



It's probably much safer to fly on this aircraft than on older models which have flown tens and thousands of miles.



Appendix C

CNN News Credibility Scale

Please rate the following statements about Cable News Network (CNN) based on your general perception of it.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
CNN is fair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CNN news is biased	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CNN news tells the whole story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CNN news is accurate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CNN news can be trusted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix D

Risk Propensity Scale

Please rate the following statements based on your risk taking habit.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I put my safety first	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not take risks with my health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prefer to avoid risks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I take risks regularly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I dislike not knowing what is going to happen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I usually view risks as a challenge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am a risk taker	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix E

Trust Scale

Based on the post you have seen, please rate the following statements about the Boeing 737 Max aircraft

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I trust Boeing and the 737 Max	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that I can trust the 737 Max aircraft completely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I cannot rely on the 737 Max aircraft	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will feel secure when I book a flight on the 737 Max because I know it will never let me down	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The 737 Max aircraft cannot be counted to do its job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix F


Purchase Intention Scale

Imagine that you are looking at some flight options for your next travel destination. Based on the post you have seen, please rate the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The probability that I would consider booking a flight on the 737 Max is high	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I were to book a flight, I would consider booking it on the 737 Max	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The likelihood of me booking a flight on the 737 Max is high	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My willingness to book a flight on the 737 Max is high	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix G

Neutral News Frame and Negative Comments



CNN  Yesterday at 20:00 



Boeing to triple aircraft production after closing deals with 10 international carriers. Set to operate 90% of short to medium-haul flights worldwide by 2024.








CNN.COM

Increase in international demand for Boeing's 737 Max


   15K 6K comments 1.5K shares


 Like  Comment  Share


Most relevant 


 Write a comment...   

 **Joey Blanc**
It should just remain grounded forever. I would never feel safe flying on it.
Like Reply 2 h

 **Morgan Lee**
If Boeing says they are flyable now, then I don't see the problem. People fly every second.
Like Reply 2 h




 **Alex Manson**
I would never take my chances on flying on this aircraft, not even if it was offered to me for free!
Like Reply 2 h

 **Jordan O'Donnell**
Just check with the airlines before booking if you're so skeptical about this specific aircraft.
Like Reply 2 h

 **Taylor Adams**
Terrible aircraft with little legroom and uncomfortable seats! Never going to fly on this aircraft again!
Like Reply 2 h

Appendix H

Neutral News Frame and Positive Comments


 **CNN**  Yesterday at 20:00 



Boeing to triple aircraft production after closing deals with 10 international carriers. Set to operate 90% of short to medium-haul flights worldwide by 2024.







CNN.COM


Increase in international demand for Boeing's 737 Max

 15K 6K comments 1.5K shares


 Like  Comment  Share

Most relevant ▾


 Write a comment...   

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Wonderful aircraft with ample legroom and comfortable seats! Can't wait to fly on this aircraft again!


Like Reply 2 h

 **Morgan Lee**
If Boeing says they are flyable now, then I don't see the problem. People fly every second.

Like Reply 2 h

 **Alex Manson**
I had a smooth and pleasant 13 hour journey on this aircraft! I slept like a baby!

Like Reply 2 h

 **Jordan O'Donnell**
Just check with the airlines before booking if you're so skeptical about this specific aircraft.


Like Reply 2 h

 **Taylor Adams**
I've flown on this aircraft before and I must say that the seating configuration is one of the most spacious I've ever seen!


Like Reply 2 h

Appendix I

Positive News Frame and Negative Comments




CNN  Yesterday at 20:00  




Remarkable achievement for Boeing after being awarded contracts with 10 international carriers. The best-selling aircraft is set to dominate all markets by 2024.





CNN.COM


Increase in international demand for Boeing's 737 Max

   15K 6K comments 1.5K shares

 Like  Comment  Share


Most relevant ▾


 Write a comment...   

 **Joey Blanc**
It should just remain grounded forever. I would never feel safe flying on it.
Like Reply 2 h

 **Morgan Lee**
If Boeing says they are flyable now, then I don't see the problem. People fly every second.
Like Reply 2 h


 **Alex Manson**
I would never take my chances on flying on this aircraft, not even if it was offered to me for free!
Like Reply 2 h

 **Jordan O'Donnell**
Just check with the airlines before booking if you're so skeptical about this specific aircraft.
Like Reply 2 h


 **Taylor Adams**
Terrible aircraft with little legroom and uncomfortable seats! Never going to fly on this aircraft again!
Like Reply 2 h

Appendix J



Positive News Frame and Positive Comments



 **CNN** 
Yesterday at 20:00 

Remarkable achievement for Boeing after being awarded contracts with 10 international carriers. The best-selling aircraft is set to dominate all markets by 2024.







CNN.COM
Increase in international demand for Boeing's 737 Max


   15K 6K comments 1.5K shares

 Like  Comment  Share

Most relevant ▾


 Write a comment...   

 **Joey Blanc**
Wonderful aircraft with ample legroom and comfortable seats! Can't wait to fly on this aircraft again!
Like Reply 2 h

 **Morgan Lee**
If Boeing says they are flyable now, then I don't see the problem. People fly every second.
Like Reply 2 h

 **Alex Manson**
I had a smooth and pleasant 13 hour journey on this aircraft! I slept like a baby!
Like Reply 2 h

 **Jordan O'Donnell**
Just check with the airlines before booking if you're so skeptical about this specific aircraft.
Like Reply 2 h

 **Taylor Adams**
I've flown on this aircraft before and I must say that the seating configuration is one of the most spacious I've ever seen!
Like Reply 2 h