



Media Reality ✓ Check **QUICK TAKE**

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PUBLIC GIVES ANCHOR AARON BROWN LOW "BELIEVABILITY" SCORE ***CNN TURNS BAD NEWS POLL INTO ALL-DAY MARKETING CAMPAIGN***

Someone at CNN must have thought that this was a good idea, much like when they touted morning anchor Paula Zahn as "sexy" as an unzipped zipper in TV ads. Starting last night, CNN's anchors have been relentlessly pushing the "news" that a certain 24-hour cable news network was ranked most "believable" by the general public.

Mid-morning anchor Leon Harris trumpeted the news at 11:43 EDT this morning: "Now, what television news organization do Americans find most credible? Well, folks, you're watching it. A study released today by the Pew Research Center shows that CNN is holding its lead in credibility over the other major TV news outlets. The Pew survey said, and we quote here: 'Among major TV outlets, the ratings are unchanged or show a slight decline. CNN continues to be rated the most believable television news source.'"

Harris then tweaked his rivals at Fox News Channel: "Sounds to me like we have reported — and you have decided. And we appreciate you."

But what Harris — and Carol Lin last night, plus Bill Hemmer, Daryn Kagan and Jack Cafferty this morning — failed to mention was that CNN's overall "credibility" rating of 37% was lower than it was in earlier polls (42% found CNN credible back in '98, for example). CNN star Aaron Brown ranked near the bottom of broadcast and cable news anchors in terms of "believability" (only Geraldo Rivera was less believable).

The Pew poll was really a public vote of no-confidence in the news media — CNN included. Here's the Pew report: "Public criticism of the news media, which abated in response to coverage of the 9/11 attacks, is once again as strong as ever. The favorable glow from the media's post-9/11 performance has completely disappeared. As the media's focus has shifted away from terrorism, Americans regard news organizations with the same degree of skepticism as they did in the 1990s."

Poll director Andrew Kohut was able to make these points during a live interview with anchor Kyra Phillips at 12:30 pm EDT, but during the next hour Phillips twice repeated the brief, pro-CNN soundbite that her colleagues had been trumpeting all day, leaving anyone who missed her interview in the dark about the poll's anti-media message.

You can read the Pew Center for the People and the Press report, "News Media's Improved Image Proves Short-Lived," at www.people-press.org