



# (Source Credibility)

# Introduction

Since the early days of civilization, humans have been trying to understand reasons why some presentations are more successfully persuasive than others.

# Credibility

A 3D grid of spheres on a yellow background. The spheres are arranged in a perspective view, receding into the distance. The color of the spheres transitions from white on the left to yellow in the middle, and then to dark blue on the right. The grid lines are thin and light gray.

The quality of being  
Believable or  
trustworthy

# Explanation of Theory:

*The Source Credibility theory states that people are more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible.*



# Studies of source credibility

- 1 Baudhuin & Davis 1972 ethos (similar source)
- 2 Baudhuin & Davis 1972 ethos (dissimilar source)
- 3 Berlo et al. 1969 source credibility
- 4 Bowers & Phillips 1967 source credibility
- 5 Deimling et al. 1993 'Glaubwürdigkeit von Fernsehanstalten'
- 6 Falcione 1974 source credibility
- 7 Gaziano & McGrath 1986 media credibility
- 8 Lee 1978 (international newspaper news credibility)
- 9 Lee 1978 (international TV news credibility)
- 10 Lee 1978 local/state newspaper news credibility

# Studies of source credibility

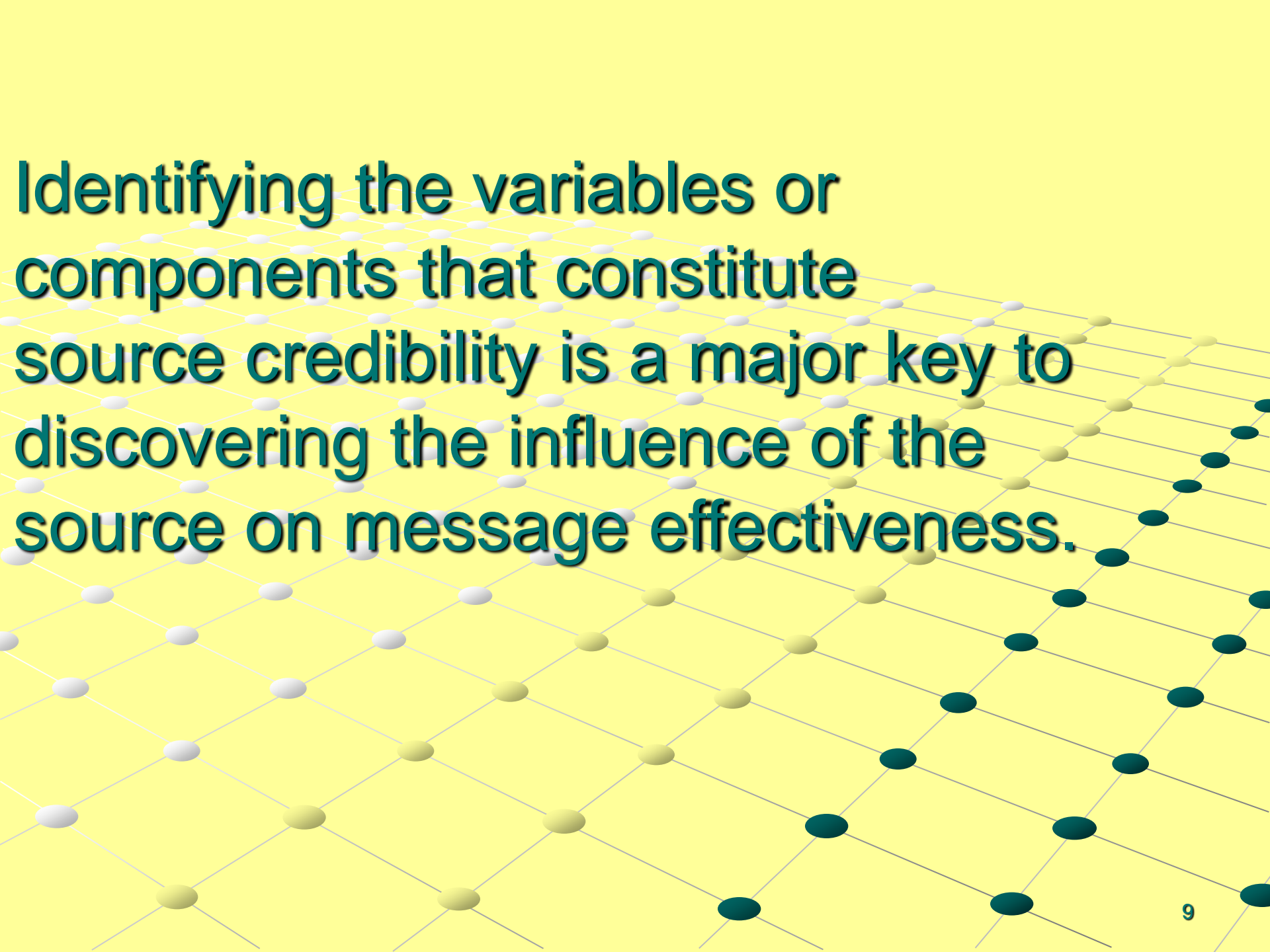
- 11 Lee 1978 local/state TV news credibility
- 12 Markham 1968 television newscasters credibility
- 13 McCain et al. 1977 televised source credibility
- 14 McCroskey 1966 ethos
- 15 McCroskey et al. 1974 teacher credibility
- 16 McCroskey & Jenson 1975 mass media news source image
- 17 Meyer 1988 credibility of newspapers
- 18 Mosier & Ahlgren 1981 information presentation credibility
- 19 Newell 1993 Goldsmith et al. 1999 corporate credibility
- Newell & Goldsmith 2001
- 20 Ohanian 1990 celebrity endorsers' credibility

# Studies of source credibility

- 21 Raman & Haley 1997 organizational source credibility
- 22 Salwen 1987 credibility of newspaper opinion polls
- 23 Simpson 1976  
Simpson & Kahler 1980/81  
source credibility in the selling context
- 24 Singletary 1976 news source credibility
- 25 Tuppen 1974 communicator credibility
- 26 VandenBergh et al. 1981 advertiser credibility
- 27 White 1990 newscaster credibility
- 28 Whitehead 1968 source credibility

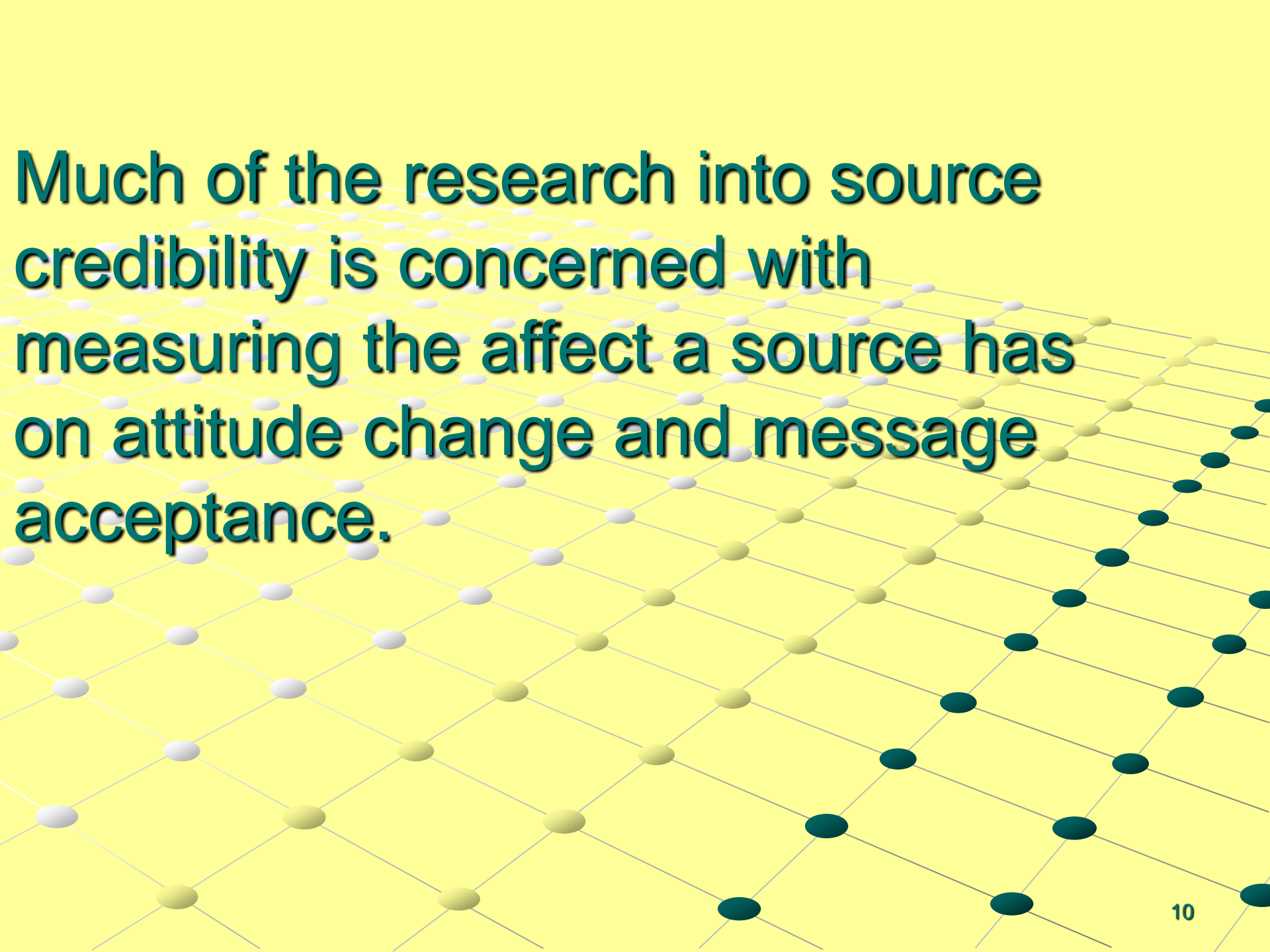
# What qualities constitute credibility?

The difficulties in analyzing the variables involved in credibility research are a major concern in this discipline. Different researchers have varying ideas about what constitutes credibility, and these assumptions may bias or affect the research data. "It is critical to know how a researcher is defining his construct in terms of what qualities he believes constitute credibility." (Reardon 1981)



Identifying the variables or components that constitute source credibility is a major key to discovering the influence of the source on message effectiveness.





Much of the research into source credibility is concerned with measuring the affect a source has on attitude change and message acceptance.



Typical early experiments in this field involved testing subjects concerning their attitudes towards a particular issue. They would then be divided into groups, each group presented with a persuasive message. Groups would receive the message from sources varying in credibility.

# What kinds of factors are involved in assessing credibility?

A communicator who is considered credible by some people might not be considered credible by others. Likewise, the same communicator might be considered credible in certain situations and not in others. Factors such as dress, eye contact and tone of voice might also come into play.

# Dimensions of source credibility

Accuracy/Attractiveness/  
Authoritativeness/Availability/  
Believability (honesty)/Bias  
**Character/ Charisma/Clarity/Competence**  
Competitiveness/Co-orientation/Credibility

# What kinds of factors are involved in assessing credibility?

In fact, the determination of who is and who is not credible is so subjective as to be difficult to accurately quantify. The problem is that credibility is not a single characteristic of an individual, such as age or sex. Neither is it a set of characteristics such as socioeconomic position.



# What kinds of factors are involved in assessing credibility?

Credibility is a set of perceptions about sources held by receivers. Source characteristics like age, sex or socioeconomic status may affect the perceptions that the receiver has, and thus, such characteristics become relevant to the study of credibility." ( Bettinghaus, .(1968)

# Dimensions of source credibility

**Dynamism/expertness/Emotional stability**

**Esteem/Ethic//Expertness/Extroversion**

**Familiarity/Knowledge ability**

**Likeability (attractiveness)/Personal**

**integrity/Presentation/Prestige/**

**Qualification/Sociability/Stability/**

**Trustworthiness**



# Merton (1944 )

**Sincerity of communicator  
contributes to his or her  
credibility.**

Lazarasfeld, Berelson & Guadet( 1944)

Casual & non persuasive  
conversation is effective because  
the recipient does not have the  
critical or defensive mental state.

# Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield (1949)

A message that is perceived to be informational is more effective than those perceived to be manipulative or propagandastic  
(having manipulative intent)

# Hovland, Janis & Kelly(1953)

1-Expertness: A communicator is perceived as a source of valid assertions.

2-Trustworthiness: The communicator's degree of confidence in his or her intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid.

# Things related to communicators expertness

1-Age: The older the communicator, the more expert he is.

2- Position of leadership: Communicator is perceived to have ability to predict social reactions

3- Persons with status, values interest & needs similar to his own. (e. x minister of interior assertions on temporary marriage)



# Similarity

In general, people identify with other people whom they perceive to be similar to themselves in some way, people belong to groups who share similar interest, hobbies, political convictions. They know that they are likely to agree with opinions held by people who are similar to them. "An individual is likely to feel that persons with status, values, interests and needs similar to his own see things as he does and judge them from the same point of view. Because of this, their assertions about matters of which the individual is ignorant but where he feels the viewpoint makes a difference...will tend to carry special credibility." (Hovland, Janis and Kelley, 1953.)



# Dissimilarity

If the message recipient feels that the communicator is a very dissimilar type of person, he or she will also assume the message that person delivers is in disagreement with the recipient's point of view. That message is perceived as less credible than if it had been delivered by a member of the recipient's social group (Larson 1989)

# Appearance

The appearance of a communicator may positively or negatively affect his credibility with an audience. A communicator who is considered to be attractive to his audiences has a better chance of holding their attention, and therefore persuading them to his point of view. Attractiveness is a difficult quality to quantify, although some have tried

# Appearance

Researchers found that perceived height was a factor in source attractiveness: taller persuaders were rated as more believable and more trustworthy than shorter ones." (Larson 1989). Other issues in presentation style and appearance have also been found to be significant variables in determining the credibility of a source.

# Speech & Gender

A polished (perfect) presenter who speaks directly to the audience, making regular eye contact and speaking in a smooth, practiced tone, is generally more successful than one who halts and stutters. Also, the gender of the speaker may have an affect on his or her credibility.

"Gender also influenced acceptance; attractive but same-sex persuaders were rated as having less credibility than attractive but opposite-sex persuaders." (Larson 1989)



# Origin of the message

Differences in effectiveness may sometimes depend upon whether the source is perceived as a speaker who originates the message, an endorser who is cited in the message, or the channel through which the message is transmitted." (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953).

# Origin of The message

In other words, each aspect of the messaging vehicle may have its own perceived level of credibility. A magazine, for instance, may carry with it a certain amount of respect in certain fields. An advertisement for a new breast cancer treatment, for example, might be considered more credible if it appeared in a medical journal than it might if the same article appeared in a women's magazine.

Likewise, a patient testimonial for the same drug is likely to have a different affect on the audience than an endorsement by a famous person who has no personal experience with it. The credibility of a communication can be affected by both the messaging vehicle itself, and the communicator's relationship to the message



# Trustworthiness

According to Carl Hovland, Janis and Kelley, this is partially due to the mental armor an audience member establishes when exposed to different types of communications. When exposed to a sales man, for example, a message recipient has raised certain mental guards against the message; that person has determined that he or she will not be persuaded. When engaged in casual conversation, however, those guards are not up, and messages have a stronger chance of getting through. This is because the recipient perceives no motive on the part of the communicator, and therefore judges the communication to be more trustworthy.

# Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness also relates to the reputation of the communicator. A judge, for example, probably has a better public record for ethical behavior than a criminal. If the same message is presented by these two people, the judge will undoubtedly be perceived as more trustworthy, and therefore is likely to be more persuasive

# Source credibility in marketing

The study of source credibility theory is concerned with reasons why some ads work and others don't. All ads attempt to persuade. Some try to persuade people to buy things, to vote for things, to change their habits. The question has arisen: what force do the communicators themselves bring to bear on the impact of the message? (Bettinghaus, 1968)

# Components of source credibility in marketing communications

(Re-analysis)

The three dimensions can be referred to as the *inclination toward truth*

(the source will tell the truth),

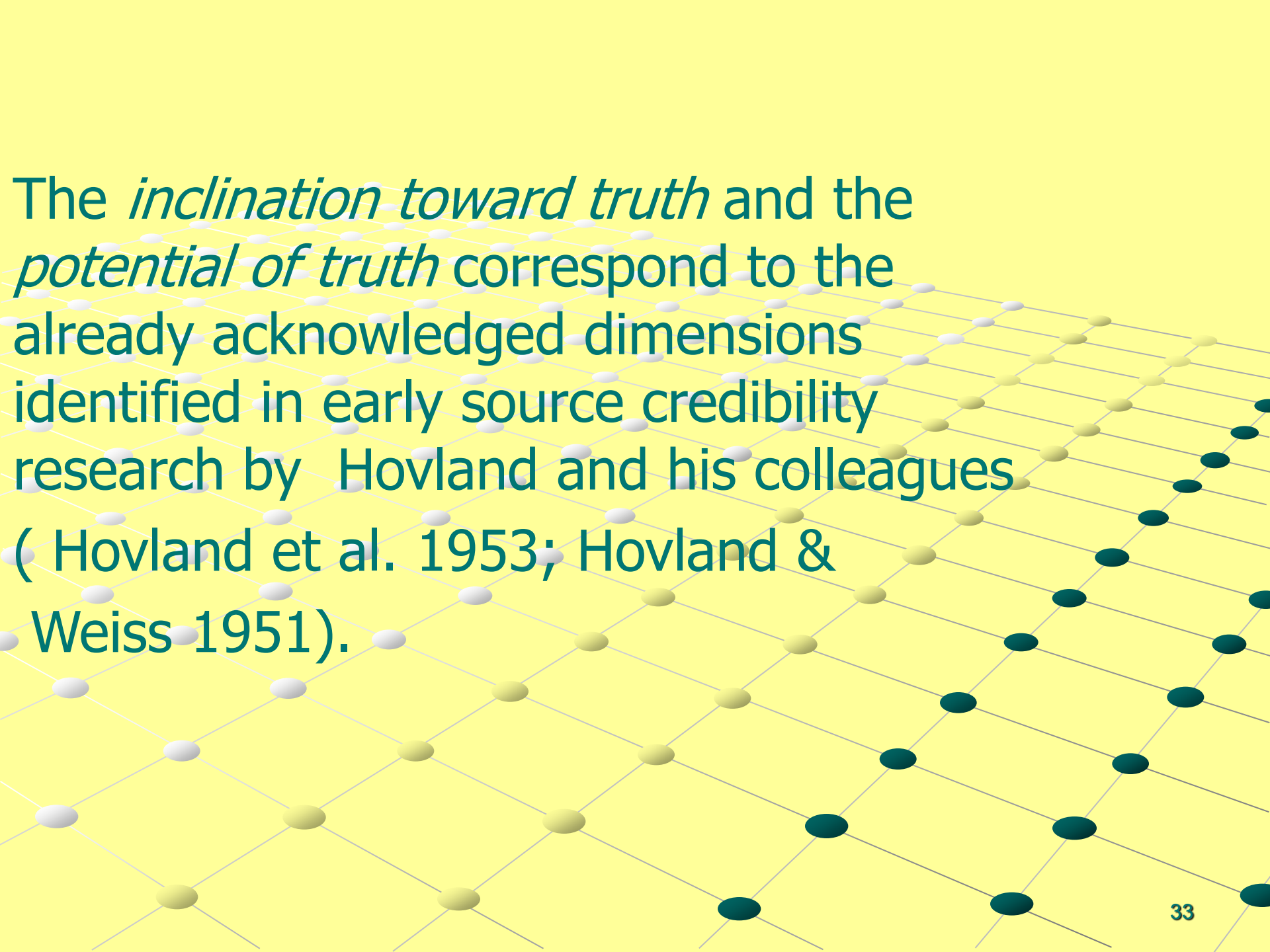
the *potential of truth* (the source knows the truth)

and a *presentation* dimension

(appears to tell the truth)

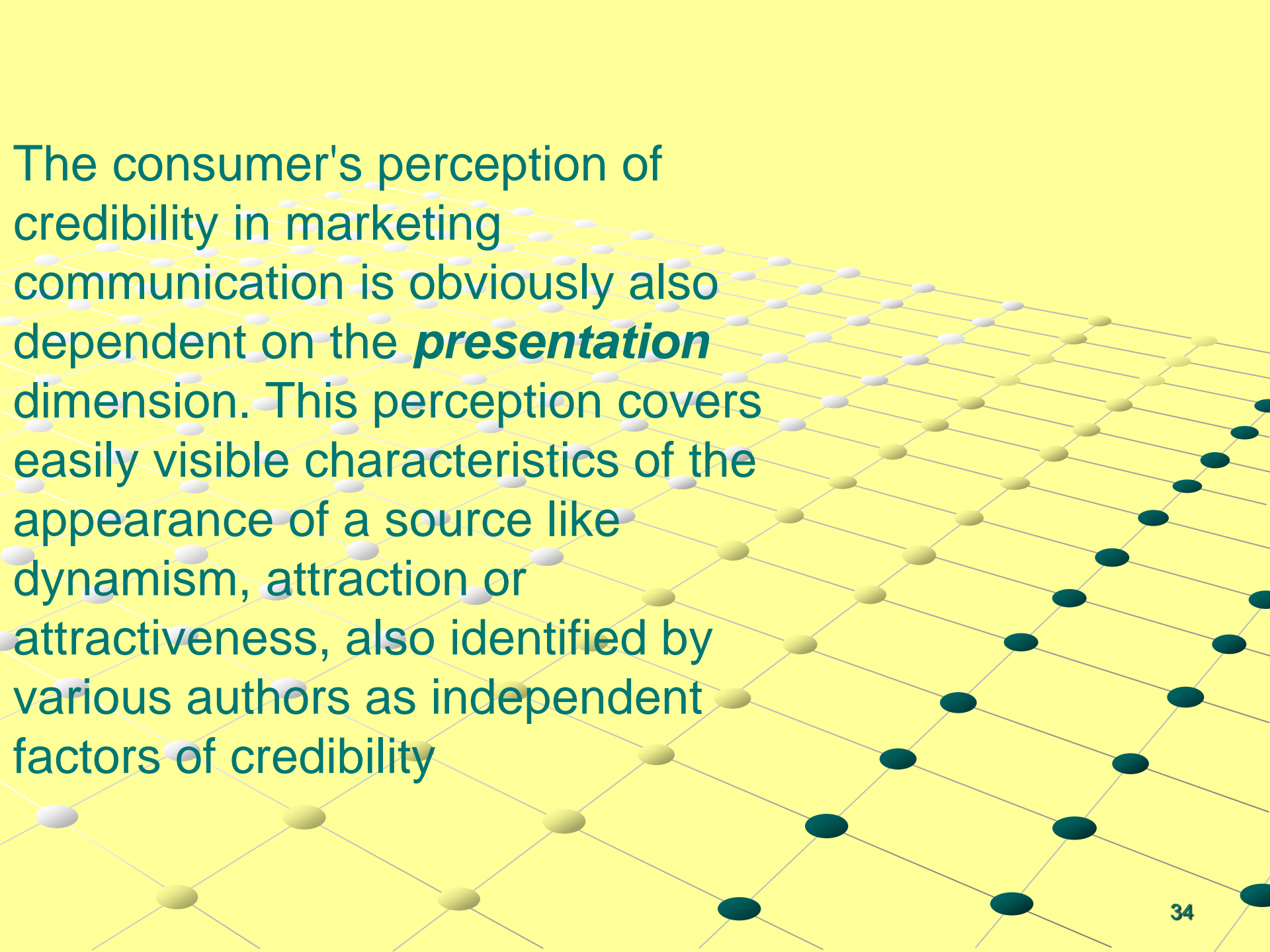
(Journal of Empirical Generalizations in Marketing 2006)



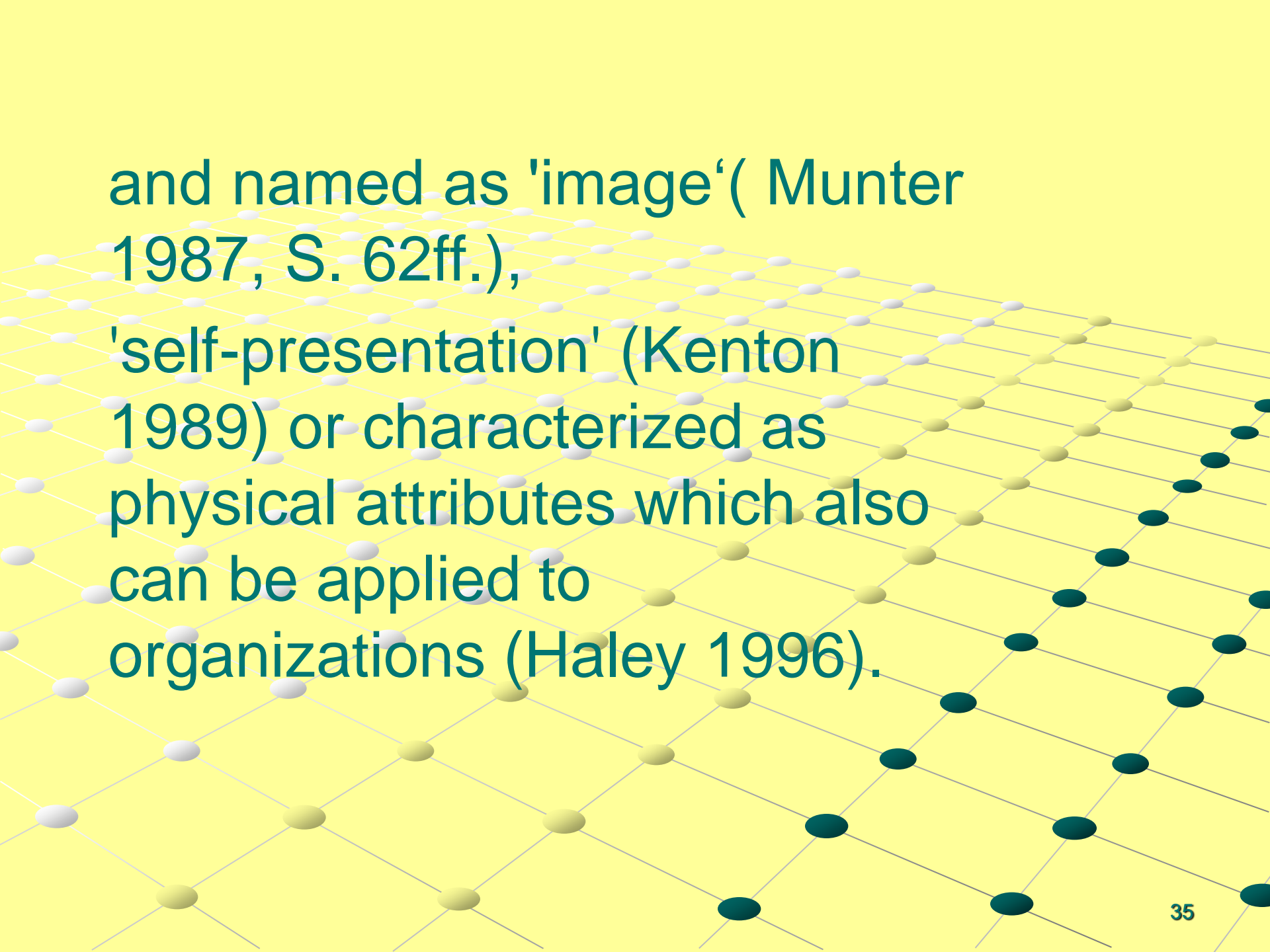
The background of the slide is a 3D grid of spheres. The spheres are arranged in a perspective view, receding into the distance. They are colored in a gradient: white on the left, transitioning through yellow in the middle, to dark blue on the right. The spheres are connected by thin, light-colored lines, creating a mesh-like structure. The overall background is a solid yellow color.

The *inclination toward truth* and the *potential of truth* correspond to the already acknowledged dimensions identified in early source credibility research by Hovland and his colleagues (Hovland et al. 1953; Hovland & Weiss 1951).





The consumer's perception of credibility in marketing communication is obviously also dependent on the ***presentation*** dimension. This perception covers easily visible characteristics of the appearance of a source like dynamism, attraction or attractiveness, also identified by various authors as independent factors of credibility



and named as 'image' ( Munter  
1987, S. 62ff.),  
'self-presentation' (Kenton  
1989) or characterized as  
physical attributes which also  
can be applied to  
organizations (Haley 1996).

A is trying to persuade B that "All Saints" is the best television Series that was ever broadcasted. B is beginning to believe A because B knows all the statistics of how well the Series did when it was played. But, when he begins questioning A about the series specific content, he finds him to be baffled. He later finds out from C that A has never even watched the series himself. This is an example of source credibility working against the persuader. In this example, the person who is being persuaded, B, has found reason to question the integrity of the persuader, A.