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CREDIBILITY

Alabama Newspaper Readers' Perception of Newspaper Credibility

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Alabama Newspaper Readers' Perception of Newspaper Credibility

In an increasingly digital world, whether or not news outlets can continue to maintain their credibility while providing information across various media is a crucial question media organizations are asking themselves. Studies have measured credibility with traditional media, examined how credibility with traditional media carries over to nontraditional forms of news delivery and related contracts to demographics.

Many studies have examined credibility in news. Past research has examined how credibility perceptions relate to demographics, such as gender, income (Johnson & Kaye, 1998), race (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2005), and political party (Pew Research, 2005). Furthermore, some studies have examined credibility and how it relates to frequency of media use (Rimmer & Weaver, 1987; Kiousis, 2001). Some studies observed whether news consumers differed on how credible they perceived news depending on what medium they chose to utilize (Jo, 2005; Gunter, Campbell, Touri, Gibson, 2008).

The goal of the research is to examine how credible Alabama newspaper readers rate their local newspaper and how that's related to news use and wants from that paper as a local news source. Specifically, the study examines whether those who rate their newspaper as higher in credibility see certain types of news delivery as more important and use different delivery forms of the paper than those who rate the local newspaper as lower in credibility. Using what research is already present about credibility, the study will aim to identify trends among Alabama newspaper readers with opinions gathered through a statewide survey of self-identified readers.

Literature Review

The goal of this study is to assess whether or not Alabama newspaper readers who find their newspaper as highly credible differ from those who see it as less credible in their use of that newspaper (frequency of use of different delivery formats) and in their desires for mobile and other digital delivery of news. Research has looked at how different forms media might be perceived as more credible than others. However, hardly any research has been done to examine the issue of credibility and how it is related to what users want in terms of mobile delivery (information received from their newspaper to their mobile devices), therefore, this area merits further study. Now that many news outlets are beginning to use mobile and other alternate digital delivery forms in addition to already producing a print product and a website, it is necessary to examine how the issue of credibility comes into play with each format of a local newspaper. The issue of credibility is examined in the following sections.

Why do news organizations value credibility among audiences and what are they doing to improve it?

According to Pew Research Trends of 2005, "the percentage of Americans who watch TV news on a typical day read the newspaper or listen to radio news decreased significantly from 1994 to 2004. The number watching TV news on an average day fell from 72% in 1995 to 55% in 2002" (Pew Research, 2005, p. 44).

To increase credibility with news organizations, Dave Aeikens, president of the Society of Professional Journalists, suggested in a letter printed in *Quill* that SPJ set the goal of hosting town hall meetings, which would allow news outlets to become more

transparent to news consumers and maintain their trust. The town hall meetings would allow consumers to understand how journalists do their jobs. "We want the town hall meeting to be an open discussion between journalists and people who rely on the news to assist their daily lives," said Aeikens (2009, p. 3). "We hope that journalists will explain how they do their jobs and why it plays a vital role in democracy." Aeikens' argument is based on the premise that if news consumers trust news outlets more, they will use the news outlet more. This research aims to test whether or not that is true.

However, according to the Pew Research Center's Survey reports (2006) on media credibility, the public's rating of print news sources was unchanged from 2004 to 2006. Also, the report concluded that the public's credibility rating of TV and radio had decreased, and the public's credibility rating of the newspaper had decreased from 25% in 2000 to 19% in 2004. The rating had not decreased from 19% in 2006.

Another finding from the Pew Research Center study (2005) pointed out a striking decline in the credibility of daily newspapers. The data found that "two decades ago 16% of Americans said they could believe little or nothing of what they read in their daily paper" (p. 49). In the most recent survey, that number had nearly tripled to 45%. The Pew Research Center also cited that many of the declines in credibility can be attributed to more partisan shifts in the media (2005, p. 42).

What does research reveal about audience perceptions of credibility based on the frequency of media use?

There has been some contradicting evidence in studies regarding the relationship between frequency of media use and perceptions of media credibility. According to

Gunter, Cambell, Touri, and Gibson (2008), people tend to trust news media that they use more often or prefer to use more often (p. 197). "For instance, online news users have been found to trust online news more than television news viewers trust television news and more than newspaper readers trust newspapers," they said, citing Abdulla et al., (2005).

However, Rimmer and Weaver (1987) suggested that the frequency of media use might not indicate that the news consumer finds a particular medium to be more credible. Kiousis (2001) confirmed the findings of Rimmer and Weaver, and found a marginal connection between media use and the perceptions of credibility. Kiousis' data revealed stronger positive correlations between frequency of use and media credibility perception with Internet use and newspaper use, but did not reveal this correlation with television use, which indicates that more news consumers who primarily and frequently turn to the Internet or the print product for their news perceive those outlets to be more credible than those who primarily and frequently turn to the television for news (2001).

What does research reveal about audience perceptions of credibility based on the medium delivering the news?

Types of media use fall into several categories: news consumers might primarily turn to a print product, a news organization's website, television news, social media (Twitter, Facebook, Digg, etc.), or a mobile device, whether through a mobile application developed by a news outlet or text updates directly from the news source or through social media (i.e., Twitter).

One study examined the public's perception of credibility toward the Internet compared with traditional media (Jo, 2005). The study also examined the trust relationship that exists with news consumers and news outlets and how this trust relationship may depend on the source of the news. Jo concluded that news audiences were more likely to trust and perceive as credible a more traditional news source, specifically with negative news reports (2005). Furthermore, the study concluded that trust of a news source and credibility are related, and it concluded that "media source credibility has an influence on the trust relationships" (p. 57). Jo's study found that news audiences trusted traditional media sources when it came to gathering information online over other organizations delivering information, and the study reached the conclusion that "if the public finds a discrepancy of a news story between traditional news story and an organizational statement such as a news release, they are more likely to believe the traditional media source than the organizational source" (p. 73).

The study conducted by Kiousis (2001) hypothesized that television news would be viewed as much more credible than newspapers; however the study, which polled Austin viewers, found that television was not viewed as more credible than newspapers, but rather just the opposite. The study also found that the Internet was perceived as more credible than television. The study, which was done in 2001, did note that ultimately more Internet use would probably increase credibility of the Internet.

Gunter, Cambell, Touri, and Gibson (2008) reviewed how blogs come into play with perceptions of credibility and whether or not blogs can serve as credible news sources. First, they said, research has examined the extent of how blogs have been used. "The volume of traffic blogs attract is indicative of their significance as news providers

on the self-evidence grounds that if they had nothing useful to contribute, no one would use them" (2008, p. 192). The authors also say that the credibility of blogs is indicated by the response of users in terms of "judgments about the accuracy, authority, believability, comprehensiveness, and timeliness of their content" (p. 192). Third, the authors said that the transparency of a blog and the nature of the source behind the blog is another indicator of the user's perception of credibility.

The authors cited many studies comparing the public's perception of credibility with the Internet and other media. They cited Johnson and Kaye (1998) saying that "one of the key observations about the Internet is that information can be uploaded and published without necessarily having to go through a rigorous editorial and fact-checking process" (p. 195). Flanagin and Metzger (2000) argue that major media such as television, radio and newspapers undergo strict editorial processes and facts are checked over and over. Gunter, et. al argue: "This difference raises questions about the veracity of online news from unknown news brands or from sources that deploy uncertain quality control procedures" (p. 195). Gunter et al (2008) said that while the public seems to have generally begun to accept online news as a credible medium, journalists are not in agreement and tend to remain skeptical about the credibility of online sources.

There is a scarcity of studies examining social media and perceptions of its credibility, though because social media is largely housed on the Internet, it seems that many of the conclusions made about credibility and the Internet can carry over to social media. One form of social media is blogging. An experimental study conducted by Greer, Pan, Frank, Hobson, and Soderman (2009) tested a perceptions of credibility of an opinions piece in three different formats: through the *San Francisco Chronicle's* website,

a *San Francisco Chronicle* blog, and a no-name blog. Subjects rated the *Chronicle* blog piece the same way as they did the no-name blog. The brand effect that was seen for the website did not carry over to the branded blog for the *Chronicle.* In other words, blogs were seen as equally credible, regardless of the media source carrying them (2009).

As Twitter has emerged as a worldwide tool for sharing news, news organizations are currently defining ethics and what measures should be taken to preserve news source credibility. A recent American Journalism Review article said that *The Washington Post* had established rules on how its reporters should utilize Twitter. *The Post* established the guideline that reporters should refrain from sharing their personal opinions on political issues on Twitter and status updates so they can be perceived as more credible. The article quotes *Post* Executive Editor Marcus Brauchli saying that doing so is "essential to maintaining our credibility" (Morton, 2010, p. 1).

Though to maintain credibility, it might be necessary to remove opinion from social media as a reporter, a recent post by Amy Gahran on Poynter Online said that "getting involved and entrenched in online communities and social media will now give your future efforts far more credibility and appeal" (Gahran, p. 1). Gahran points out that showing the news audience that reporters can utilize social media will boost a news organization's credibility. "It'll also provide ample insight to help you plan and execute your social media strategy — and probably avoid embarrassing (or costly) missteps" (2009, p. 1). She also says that the social media strategy will keep readers from ignoring news organizations.

What does research reveal about audience perceptions of credibility based on demographics?

General research has indicated that perceptions of credibility can vary depending on different racial backgrounds. One study by Beaudoin and Thorson (2005) concluded that being African-American played a larger role in predicting credibility perceptions of news coverage than being white, while blacks tended to view news coverage of blacks as less credible than non-blacks did (2005). Blacks also saw news coverage of whites as more credible than non-blacks did.

Johnson and Kaye (1998) concluded that studies of the Internet suggested that young women of lower education and lower income were the most likely to judge the Internet as most credible while males of higher education and income tend to be the most critical of the media and rate it as least credible. In their study, they concluded that "females … view the Web as more credible and trustworthy than males" (Johnson & Kaye, 1998, p. 334).

The study by Johnson and Kaye (1998) also examined age. In their study, they found that "age [was] significantly related to credibility judgments" (p. 334). They found that as age increased, "respondents perceiv[ed] online newspapers, news magazines, and candidate literature to be less credible" (p. 334).

There is a divide in the use between the older population and younger population, according to Pew Research (2005). They found that "young people read newspapers and watch TV news — network and cable — at far lower rates than their elders. And the situation is not much better among the not so young. Just 26 percent of people in their 30s

and 40s regularly tune in to the nightly news, far below the number of older Americans who regularly watch network evening news" (2005, p. 45).

According to the Trends Pew Research in 2005, Republicans tend to rate most news organizations far less credible than Democrats. "For years, the credibility ratings of mainstream news organizations have been in decline," the report concluded. "Now this skepticism is taking on an increasingly partisan cast; Republicans give most news outlets far lower ratings for credibility than do Democrats" (2005, p. 43). The report also says that as Pew has measured trust in leading news outlets over time it has consistently noticed partisan differences in credibility. "But the gap is now wider than ever" (Pew Research Study, 2005, p. 50). The report concluded that about half as many Republicans as Democrats said they had a great deal of trust in broadcast networks, NPR, *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* and *The New York Times, Time* and *Newsweek.* (Pew Research Study, 2005, p. 50).

Research Questions

From the research presented in the literature review, we know that public perception of the credibility of U.S. news media has been dropping in recent years. It also is clear from past studies that people who use news in different forms assign varying levels of credibility to the information they receive. Also, we know that news routines differ based on how news is delivered and that traditional print newspapers often have less time to verify accuracy of information in online and other digital delivery forms.

This study seeks to examine how Alabama newspaper readers perceive the credibility of their newspapers in an increasingly digital news delivery environment.

Therefore, the study examines how readers who find their local paper as highly credible differ from those who see it as less credible in terms of use of the newspaper in question (frequency, type) and in their desires for mobile delivery of news. Specifically, the following research questions are posed:

RQ 1: How credible do Alabama newspaper readers who responded to the survey rate their local newspapers?

> a. Do people who connect with the paper more frequently rate it as more credible as those who connect with it less frequently? Does this vary by the way they access the paper (e-mail, print, online, mobile, etc.)?
>
> b. Do people who prefer to connect with the paper in different ways differ in ratings of credibility for their local paper?
>
> c. How do demographics (gender, age, education, income and ethnicity) relate to differences in perception of credibility?

RQ2: How do "high credibility" readers differ from "low credibility" readers? Do they differ on use of the newspaper? Do they differ on what they would like to see in a mobile/online delivery environment?

Method

Choice and defense of method

Because of the vast amount of readers throughout Alabama who we wanted to reach and the specific information we wanted to know about what they want from their newspapers and what they would like to see in the future, a survey was the best method

for collecting this data. Other options for collecting this data would have been interviews with readers and perhaps focus groups; however, because we wanted to be able generalize as much as possible to Alabama newspaper readers, a survey was the best option.

One advantage of survey research is that the cost is reasonably low when considering how many people one can reach with surveys and how much information can be gathered (Wimmer & Dominick, 2008). Furthermore, a lot of data can be collected very easily and surveys are not constrained by geographic boundaries, which would have been a problem had the researchers for this project decided to personally interview readers. The survey conducted is an analytical survey rather than a descriptive survey. According to Luther (2009), unlike descriptive surveys, whose primary purpose is to describe and generalize about a current situation, analytical surveys are meant to explain. "Analytical surveys not only describe situations, opinions, and beliefs but also attempt to understand why they exist," (Luther, 2009, p. 146). In this study, the researchers are attempting to link the construct of credibility with other constructs, including frequency of media use and preferences for information delivered in a mobile or digital format. Therefore, the analytical survey method, while it has limitations, provides the strongest approach to help explore these relationships.

Population and sample

The goal of this study was to learn more about Alabama newspaper readers' uses and preferences in an increasingly digital news environment; therefore, our theoretical population for this study was all newspaper readers in all of Alabama. However, our

available population was those who had Internet access who came upon the survey through their newspaper's website or some other online form.

To reach a convenience sample of readers, we sought out newspapers to put a link to the survey on their website. We first determined what newspapers to contact using the Alabama Press Association member list. While this is a fairly comprehensive list of 123 Alabama newspapers, there are some newspapers that it does not include. Furthermore, we then only contacted 97 APA member papers newspapers that had a web presence because our survey was conducted online through Survey Monkey. Finally, about 25 papers agreed to promote the survey on their website. Therefore, our available population was those who saw the survey posted on newspapers' websites or those who received the sample as it was passed on from person to person starting with the researchers. Those who followed their papers through social media may have reached the survey that way, as some news organizations Tweeted about the survey or posted it in Facebook.

In addition to being linked to from newspaper websites, the researchers promoted the survey through social media and e-mailed it to their Alabama contacts in their address book, as well as encouraged takers of the survey to pass it on for their friends. This is a snowball sampling technique. During the days leading up to when the survey first went live, the researchers invited their Facebook friends to join both a Facebook group and a Facebook event. Researchers also Tweeted the survey to their followers as well as promoted the survey on their blogs. So in addition to the convenience sample from those who took the survey on their newspaper websites, we also had a snowball sample through personal contacts.

Respondents had to have access to the Internet to take the survey. Subjects had to be at least 19 years old and someone who read at least one Alabama-based newspapers at least periodically.

The sample for this survey was a convenience sample, because those who took the survey had Internet access and decided to take the survey after finding it online. According to Luther (2009), a convenience sample consists of subjects who are used in a survey because they are readily available to the researcher (p. 148). One of the limitations of convenience samples is that researchers are unable to generalize to the larger population using such samples (p. 148). Had the survey reached a random sample of newspaper readers in Alabama, the results would allow us to generalize about the Alabama population. However, that approach would be impossible because no complete list of newspaper readers exists. While newspapers have subscriber lists, many more people read newspapers online, buy single copies of the papers, or read copies available through the library, their work or from friends and family members. Therefore, a convenience sample was used, which led to some limitations. Readers of newspapers with higher incomes who have web and computer access were overrepresented, while it is likely that rural readers and those in small towns whose newspaper does not have a website were underrepresented. However, the data did suggest trends and patterns with Alabama newspaper readers. Though using a convenience sample does not really provide external validity, the sampling technique is fine with an analytical survey where the goal is to explore relationships rather than describe characteristics of a population.

Instrument/Operationalization of constructs

The instrument we chose to use for the survey was an online collection form created through Survey Monkey. The main construct of interest in this study was credibility. Credibility is measured with five individual items based on the scale created by Meyer (1988). After identifying the newspaper they read most often, readers were asked the question: "Think about any information you get from the newspaper you previously identified. How strongly do you agree that it is: credible, useful, accurate, complete, and important. On a one to five response format, one indicated that they strongly disagreed while five meant strongly agreed that the information from the newspaper possessed that quality.

Another construct in this study is use of media. Respondents were asked to identify how frequently they used each of the following delivery format from the local paper they identified. Six types of ways were listed for readers to connect with the paper: the printed newspaper, the newspaper's website, e-mail alert, mobile device or application on a smart phone, RSS feed (Google reader feed, Yahoo news feed, etc.), Twitter, and Facebook. Respondents were asked to indicate how often they connected in each way: multiple times a day, every day, a few times a week, less often, never, or not applicable (meaning their paper did not offer that delivery format).

What readers want from their newspaper in terms of mobile and online delivery is another construct in the study. To measure this, respondents were asked the following question: "If the newspaper you previously identified could deliver unlimited information online or through a mobile application, how important would each of the following be for

you?" In a 1 to 5 response format, 1 indicated "not at all important to me" while 5

indicated "very important to me." The following items were listed: breaking local news,

interactive mapping tools, traffic updates, local sports scores/breaking sports news,

weather updates, blogs from columnists/editors/reporters, in-depth local news stories,

timely special offers from local businesses, classified ads from local individuals and

companies.

Finally, respondent demographics were measured. First, respondents were asked

their age and were given the following response choices: Under 19 (Note: you cannot

participate. Please exit the survey), 19-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-49, 50-64, or 65+ years old.

For gender, respondents chose between male and female. For race, respondents were able

to indicate all that applied with the choices of: African-American, Asian-American,

Hispanic, Latino, Native-American, Pacific Islander, White (Caucasian), or Other (those

who indicated other were asked to specify). Respondents were also asked to indicate what

county they lived in. A drop down box with the survey listed each county in Alabama.

Respondents were then asked to identify which term best describes the community they

lived in with the following possible responses: rural area, small community, mid-size

community, large, or urban area.

Next, respondents were asked to indicate their highest level of education: some

high school, no high school degree; high school degree; some college, no college degree;

undergraduate degree; some graduate work, no advanced degree; or advanced degree.

Next, respondents were asked to indicate their current profession with an open response

format, and finally they were asked to best describe their current household economic

status: lower income, lower-middle income, middle income, upper-middle income, or upper income.

Procedure

First we submitted our proposed research to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Alabama and received approval. Then we set up the online survey and contacted newspapers about two to three weeks before the survey was set to go live to gather their support and help promoting the survey to their readers.

Before the survey went live, students in the University of Alabama Journalism Department took the survey and helped the researchers identify issues with the survey before the rest of the respondents took it. Respondents (the pretest sample as well as readers who took the survey once it went live) clicked on the link they received from either their newspaper or through some other form of communication, and after reading through the details listed about the survey, they consented to taking the survey and agreed they were over the age of 19 by clicking next.

Out of all of the Alabama newspapers listed as members of the Alabama Press Association about 25 promoted the survey on their publication's website. The survey was live beginning in mid-March for about one month.

Results

Demographics of the sample

In total 1,046 respondents completed enough of the survey to be used for meaningful data analysis as of the survey closing date of April 18, 2010. Not every

respondent filled out all demographic questions, so the percentages below representing the demographics of the sample are based on the valid answers for each question, which in every case is below the 1,046 total surveys.

Of the 952 respondents who reported their age, most were either in the age ranges of 35-49 (N = 251, 26.4% of the valid responses) or 50-64 (N = 269, 28.3%). Because we recruited some college students, the next largest age category was 19-24 (M = 191, 20.1%), followed by those 65 and older (N = 105, 11.0%). The remaining 135 (14.2%) were between ages 25 and 34.

Respondents were evenly split by gender, with 446 men (51.0% of those who indicated a gender) and 429 women (49.0%). For ethnicity, respondents could check all that applied, meaning the percentages add up to more than 100%. The vast majority of the sample indicated that they were White (91.4%), while only a few identified as African American (7.0%), Native American (1.9%), Hispanic or Latino (1.5%), Asian-American (1.2%), and Pacific Islander (0.3%).

Most reported living in mid-sized communities (49.5%), followed by small communities (20.2%), large urban areas (17.0%) and rural areas (13.3%). In terms of economic status, the majority identified themselves as middle class (45.7%), while a third reported being upper middle class or upper class (33.3%) and a fifth reported being lower middle class or lower class (21.0%). Finally, two thirds of the sample had an undergraduate degree or higher. Of the 962 who indicated an education level, 30.4% had earned an undergraduate degree, 9.4% had done additional graduate work but not earned an advanced degree, and 24.0% had an advanced degree. Another 29.8% had done college undergraduate work but not completed a degree. This number likely was

influenced by the college student recruits in the sample. Only 6.4% said they had not at least attended college. Overall, the sample had relatively high levels of education.

While these demographics do not mirror those of Alabama as a whole, they likely are similar to the demographics of Alabama's newspaper readers, especially those who can be reached through an online mail survey. Still, caution should be exercised in trying to generalize descriptive data in the survey to all Alabama newspaper readers. Further, the relational analyses done below should be viewed in light of the demographics of this convenience sample.

RQ 1: How credible do Alabama newspaper readers who responded to the survey rate their local newspapers?

The first question sought to provide an overall rating of credibility for the convenience sample used in the study. It should be noted that because of the way the sample was drawn (asking for volunteers) the results that simply describe the sample cannot be generalized to all Alabama newspaper readers. Still, the data provide a glimpse of how newspaper readers rate the local paper they read most often in an era where news credibility is seen as under fire.

The five items measuring perceptions of credibility of local newspapers were scored so that higher numbers (one a 1 to 5 scale) indicated higher agreement by the respondent that his or her local newspaper possessed that quality. The means, standard deviations, and percentage of respondents indicating strongest agreement with each item are shown in Table 1.

Table 1:

Ratings of credibility-related items of the local newspaper read most often

Item	Mean	SD	% strongly agree
Credible	3.77	1.043	26.7%
Useful	3.77	1.017	23.5%
Important	3.63	1.035	21.9%
Accurate	3.59	1.017	19.5%
Complete	3.32	1.108	14.7%

As Table 1 indicates, the average scores were all on the positive end of the neutral midpoint of 3 on the "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" scale. The terms "credible" and "useful" scored the highest while "complete" scored the lowest. More than a quarter of the respondents strongly agreed that their paper was "credible," compared with less than 15% who marked that choice for "complete." This finding indicates that the respondents in the sample see their local papers as credible but as lacking in full coverage.

> *a. Do people who connect with the paper more frequently rate it as more credible*
> *as those who connect with it less frequently? Does this vary by the way they*
> *access the paper (e-mail, print, online, mobile, etc.)?*

To test this question (and the ones below) a single "credibility" score was computed for each respondent by averaging the five individual credibility items. This was done because the five items produced a reliable scale (alpha = .94) and clearly were measuring one construct as indicated by reliability and factor analyses. Overall, the

average credibility score was 3.61 (median = 3.8; standard deviation = 94). Once that

score was computed, bivariate correlations were run for each of the measures of

frequency of use and the credibility score. As Table 2 shows, higher credibility is related

to higher frequency of use of the paper in each form except use of the local paper's RSS

feed. The data in Table 2 indicates that as use in all forms goes up, so does credibility.

The relationship between frequency of use and credibility is the strongest for use of the

print newspaper, and is followed by e-mail delivery, Facebook, and mobile. The

relationship between credibility and frequency of use of the newspaper website is weak,

but it still statistically significant. The link between higher ratings of credibility,

therefore, is strongest for the frequent print users, but the relationship also is significant

for almost all ways of connecting with the local newspaper.

Table 2:

Correlations for newspaper use in various forms and perceptions of credibility

Frequency of use/form	Correlation (r =)
Print newspaper	.119***
E-mail	.113***
Facebook	.111***
Mobile	.110***
Newspaper website	.087**
Twitter	.067*
RSS	.041

*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05

b. *Do people who prefer to connect with the paper in different ways differ in ratings of credibility for their local paper?*

To answer this question, respondents were divided into three groups based on their answer to how they preferred to read content from their local newspaper: those who preferred print (449 or 43.6%), those who preferred the website (449, 43.6%), and those who preferred alternative delivery methods: RSS feed, mobile, Twitter, Facebook, or e-mail (132, 12.8%). Next a one-way ANOVA was performed to compare mean credibility scores among the three groups. A significant difference emerged. On average, those who preferred the newspaper website had a significantly lower credibility ratings (M = 3.53) than those who preferred the print paper (M = 3.69) and those who preferred alternate delivery (M = 3.62; F = 3.12, df = 2, 971, p < .05); While all groups saw the paper as credible, it is significant to note that those who prefer the Web version did post lower credibility scores.*c. How do demographics (gender, age, education, income and ethnicity) relate to differences in perception of credibility?*

To examine this question, a regression analysis was run on credibility as a dependent variable with the demographics loaded into the model as independent variables along with the frequency of use of the print and Web version of the newspaper. This was done to see if media use or personal characteristics were more related to variation in credibility scores.

A weak but significant model emerged (F = 9.31, p < .001, R square = .076). As Table 3 shows, education, ethnicity and economic status were not related to variation in credibility ratings. Age and gender were significant predictors in terms of credibility

score variation, however. Younger readers saw the newspaper as more credible than did older people, and women rated their local paper as more credible than did men. Even with the frequency of use of the print newspaper and the newspaper's website factored in, gender and age were still weak by significant predictors of credibility score variation. Age, in fact, was the strongest predictor.

Table 3:

Regression analysis for credibility scores, demographics and frequency of use as predictor variables

Variable	Standardized Beta
Age	-.209***
Gender	-.093**
Ethnicity	.002
Education	-.032
Economic status	.026***
Print version use	.182***
Web version use	.123***

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

RQ2: How do "high credibility" readers differ from "low credibility" readers? Do they differ on use of the newspaper? Do they differ on what they'd like to see in a mobile/online delivery environment?

To examine these questions, users were broken into high credibility (those at the median or above) and low credibility (those below the mean) groups. Next, means were compared for these two groups on the frequency of use scores and on their information wants in a mobile/online delivery environment. For each, higher numbers indicated great frequency of use or greater desires for the information in an online/mobile delivery environment. Not surprisingly, the trend overall, as shown in Table 4, is that those with higher credibility scores tended to use the paper more and see most information as more important to them in an online environment. First, as expected, those who indicated high credibility perceptions also demonstrated that they accessed their news more frequently than those who indicated low credibility perceptions, except for in the case of RSS feeds. The difference was statistically significant, however, only for use of text/mobile alerts and for accessing the newspaper through social media (Twitter and Facebook).

Second, those who rated their local newspaper as higher in credibility also reported seeing all types of information as significantly more important to them in a mobile/online delivery environment. These differences are likely related to the fact that the higher credibility users reported greater frequency of use in mobile/text and social media than those who indicated low credibility.

Table 4:

\Mean score comparisons for readers with low and high credibility scores on frequency of use and wants in an online format

	Low credibility	High credibility	Difference (t =)
Frequency of Use			
Print version	2.69	2.82	1.72
Website	3.31	3.41	1.27
E-mail	1.63	1.78	1.84
Text/Mobile	1.47	1.73	3.39***
RSS	1.80	1.71	1.01
Twitter	1.36	1.52	2.20*
Facebook	1.57	1.80	2.85**
Wants for mobile/online delivery			
Local news	3.75	4.35	8.05***
Interpretive maps	2.20	2.71	6.04***
Traffic update	2.69	3.01	3.53 ***
Local sports	2.56	3.14	6.28 ***
Weather update	3.51	3.97	5.77***
Blogs	2.05	2.55	6.43***
In-depth local news	3.01	3.60	7.12***
Local bus. offers	2.22	2.78	7.01***
Classified ads	1.96	2.32	4.61***

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