

THE EFFECT OF SOURCE ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CREDIBILITY

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ABSTRACT

This field experiment sought to examine the effects of a media source on agricultural producers' perceptions of credibility and agricultural advertising influence in a news story. Subscribers to DTN/The Progressive Farmer received one of two possible versions of the same news story in an e-mail survey: one labeled with a farm media brand and one labeled with a mainstream media brand. After reading the story, participants answered a series of questions on the credibility of the story and the likelihood of agricultural advertising influence on it. The source of the story significantly influenced readers' perception of credibility; specifically, readers of the farm media story ranked it as fairer, more trustworthy, and far less biased than readers of the mainstream media story. However, readers' rankings of the accuracy and completeness of the story were not significantly influenced by the source and were perhaps influenced more by the content. Agricultural producers also did not respond differently to questions about advertising influence when reading the news story under different media labels. Respondents did not appear to consider the heightened advertising pressure and influence on farm media that previous research has noted.