

CREDIBILITY CONCERNS FOR ONLINE NEWSPAPERS:
DO REPORTER COMMENTS INFLUENCE PERCEPTIONS OF CREDIBILITY?

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to explore the effects of reporter comments on perceptions of credibility when readers encounter traditional news in an online format. Using a between-groups design, the study enlisted volunteers from a local community college to read three traditional, authoritative news articles. Each article was followed by six comments. Control participants saw comments from readers. Experimental participants saw the same comments manipulated to appear as though half had been written and posted by the author of the article. The study finds no results at a significant level in regard to credibility ratings attached to the reporter, the article or the organization. Results are discussed in regard to social presence theory and media equation theory. A significant effect by age of participants is also discussed.