

IS SEEING BELIEVING? THE EFFECTS OF DOCUMENTCLOUD  
LINKS ON PERCEPTIONS OF CREDIBILITY OF NEWS ARTICLES

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ABSTRACT

News media consumption is migrating online, cutting into the business model of traditional news media at a time it has continued to struggle to reverse a decades-long drop in its perceived credibility among consumers.

DocumentCloud was created to help news media publish and annotate source materials online as a supplement for online articles. This research studied whether DocumentCloud could boost credibility perceptions among online consumers of news media, and, if so, with what type of message. It theorized that the mere presence of links would boost credibility perceptions of the accompanying articles.

Three different groups of subjects were tested for effects: a control group, those shown links with a basic message, and those shown links with an educational message. Building upon research in credibility, cognitive processing, and media literacy, this study found slight improvements in credibility perceptions when subjects were shown an educational message with the links, with more pronounced effects seen among subjects who had less formal education.