# NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION SCANDALS: TESTING A NEW DIMENSION OF MEDIA CREDIBILITY

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## Abstract

In light of the new phenomenon of multiple high profile newspaper circulation accounting fraud scandals in recent years, this thesis sought to examine the relationship between factors that motivate advertisers to buy space and their perceptions of trust and credibility toward newspaper sales departments.

A survey of 82 automobile dealerships in an urban Texas market afflicted by one such circulation overstatement scandal in 2004, that served by *The Dallas Morning News*, sought to determine to what extent purchase motivation variables, such as trust and credibility, were associated with reduced buying as a result. Also sought was a measure of any impact on credibility of the newspaper's image restoration strategy of internal accounting reforms and compensation as restitution.

The response rate to the survey was insufficient to conduct meaningful statistical analysis but provided valuable descriptive conclusions and an argument for future study.