

Public Abstract

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Title:Antecedents of Website Credibility: A Qualitative Analysis

Credibility online and in websites has long been studied in an effort to determine the specific factors contributing to a website's perceived credibility. This study expanded on past research focused on website credibility and schema, and explored the relationship between websites and the parent companies and brands associated with them.

Depth interviews were conducted with eight study participants of varying ages. Participants were asked to come prepared to review and discuss a website they liked and found credible, and a website they disliked or found not to be credible. Questions focused on those elements of each website constituting schema, and the relationship websites had to parent companies or brands and the extent to which those companies or brands were well-known.

The study found that schema was an important factor in all websites, whether liked or disliked or viewed as credible or not credible, and therefore was not a key factor in determining perceived credibility. The study also found that in general, websites associated with well-known brands and companies, especially those with outside reinforcers such as advertisements or bricks-and-mortar stores, were perceived as more credible than the websites of lesser-known companies or brands.

This study sheds new light on the relationship between a company or brand and that company or brand's website in terms of perceived credibility. Specifically, the extent to which a company or brand impacts the perceived credibility of a website versus a website's overall schema.