ANTECEDENTS OF WEBSITE CREDIBILITY: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

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 websites they liked and found credible, and websites they disliked or found not to be credible. Questions focused on those elements of each website constituting schema, and the relationship websites had to various parent companies and brands.

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.