How the Public Identifies Truth and Fact Online
...and a glimpse into mobile

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Questions to answer:

Â What causes people to believe (or not believe) what they find online?
Â How does the public identify truth or factual information online?
Â How do users evaluate credibility of sources?
The primary source of influence is... 

credibility

Research has found the following elements relate to credibility:

- Trustworthiness
- Expertise
- Attractiveness
- Believability
- Dynamism
Fogg’s four types of credibility

- Presumed credibility: Based on assumptions
- Reputed credibility: Based on third-party endorsement
- Surface credibility: Based on simple inspection
- Earned credibility: Based on past experience

Source: Fogg, Stanford Web Credibility Research Project

If you are credible, then you can

- Change

  - Attitudes
  - Behaviors
Four areas of research have been used to determine how people evaluate the perception of truthful or factual information online.

B.J. Fogg’s Web Credibility Project at Stanford University

- Evaluation Strategies
- Design
- Individual Factors
- Context and Content

Four research spokes
Evaluation

What do people take into account when deciding what to believe?
How and when do they attempt to support what they find online?
How does their past experiences and assumptions affect their decision-making?

Source: Fogg, Stanford Web Credibility Research Project
Fogg’s Prominence-Interpretation Theory

Two things must occur:

User notices something (Prominence)  User makes a judgment (Interpretation)

These two conditions impact how people assess credibility online

Five Factors That Affect Prominence

1. Involvement of the user (e.g., motivations)
2. Topic (e.g., news, entertainment)
3. Task of the user (e.g., information-seeking)
4. Experience of subject matter
5. Individual differences (e.g., learning style, etc.)

Source: Fogg, Stanford Web Credibility Research Project
Factors Affecting Interpretation

1. Assumptions in one’s mind (i.e., culture)
2. Skill/knowledge (e.g., news, entertainment)
3. Context (e.g., environment)

Source: Fogg, Stanford Web Credibility Research Project
## Context and Content

- Is the information seeker motivated to find credible information?
- How important is the information to the individual?
- Are time and resources available for evaluating the information?
- What is the content domain of the information (health, news, etc.)?

Source: Fogg, Stanford Web Credibility Research Project

## Weick’s Information Organization

*For Reducing Equivocality*

[Diagram: Double-Interact Loop]

Adjustment \(\rightarrow\) Act \(\rightarrow\) Adjustment \(\rightarrow\) Act

Response \(\rightarrow\) Adjustment \(\rightarrow\) Response
Based on what we’ve seen, what factors do people take into consideration when deciding if something is truthful or factual?

How people evaluate information:

**Accuracy**: Can it be verified offline?

**Authority**: What are the qualifications?

**Objectivity**: How biased is the author?

**Currency**: How up-to-date is the information?

**Coverage**: How comprehensive is the information?

And of course....

Perceived credibility

Stanford Guidelines for Building Site Credibility

1. Make it easy to verify accuracy
2. Show a real organization behind the site
3. Highlight expertise
4. Make contact info accessible
5. Make your site easy to use and useful
6. Use restraint with promotional content
Mobile Technologies:

How does what we’ve learned translate to mobile?

Mobile

- The “one size fits all” approach does not work
- Current technology fails to take into account various stakeholders
- Most mobile-ready sites are targeted toward customer service
An analysis of the mobile readiness and dialogic principles on Fortune 500 mobile websites

Tina McCorkindale & Meredith Morgoch

Public Relations Review, 2013

Why is this important?

- Nearly half of all U.S. adults have a mobile connection to the Internet\(^1\)

- 17% of cell phone users do most of their online browsing on their phone\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Mitchell, Rosenstiel, Santhanam, & Christian, 2012, Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism

\(^2\) Smith, 2012, Pew Internet and American Life Project
Findings

• Only 24% had mobile-ready websites
• Of the sites that had a video, 26% did not work
• Non-mobile sites were more likely to cater to a wide variety of stakeholders; they rated better in terms of media access, dialogic loop, ease of interface, and conservation of visitors
• But, non-mobile websites were frustrating!

Findings

• Mobile-ready websites typically had limited information and targeted consumers
• Mobile offerings must be simple, usable, and credible

.......We have a long way to go!
More research to come...
Questions?

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