

Credibility In News Writing

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The credibility of a writer and their ability to provide trusted news at all times, as well as well-researched topics, are some of the qualities that make news appealing to viewers and readers and make them better than their competitors. For writers and publishers to serve their readers well, reporting properly on the topics that really matter to them and delivering news that their readers want to hear and read is what really boosts their credibility in the media industry. (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014)

The credibility of these writers has been compromised over the last few years. Some of these malpractices include:

Plagiarism And Errors

Plagiarized articles or passages are those that were written by someone else, but other writers decide to use that information without authorization. This in itself is a crime and punishable according to law and unethical too. Lifted articles and quotations from other sources reduce the credibility of news written and reported to viewers and readers.

Error Filled Stories

Factual errors made throughout the news they relay to their readers are emblematic of their poor reporting techniques. Whether these mistakes are deliberate or accidental, ignoring them is outright duplicity and compromises their credibility.

Fraud

It is known worldwide that many news organizations lack immunity and liability when it comes to reporting news. The recently concluded appeal in the U.S. Supreme Court on the recovery of damages for common law misinterpretation does not provide on who should be held liable for any sort of fraud that occurs for those newspapers. Generally, fraud is considered illegal and is sometimes referred to as the fraudulent misrepresentation of information. The fraud action requires proof that the statement issued is false. The truth or falsity of the statement must be identified first before any action is taken against the writer or the publisher of the 'false' article.

Some journalists deliberately and willfully misrepresent news accuracy and contents and end up publishing unfit stories all in the name of competition and mainly end up destroying the relationship

between the readers and the media platform used.

Negligence

Recently, many courts have been applying the concept of negligence to regulate the journalist's conduct and also as the standard for fault in any form of defamation actions that involve private figures in society. Mainly, this aspect is used to show that the writers or publisher knew or was in a position to know that the statement they delivered was false or would have caused a wrong impression in the material respect.

The application of the negligence test requires the demonstration of a legal duty by the plaintiff over the defendant so as to presuppose a uniform standard of behavior for the protection of other people from harm caused.

These involvements with the law over avoidable situations are causing the media a lot of trust from their viewers, which is equally hard to earn back once broken or lost.

There is a standard uniform of journalists and editors that is customary for them to create, convey and publish reliable, trustworthy and accurate information to their viewers and readers. The first obligation is truth, which is a fundamental part of either written or unwritten principles or values to be fulfilled in the industry to protect and uphold the credibility of all news writers.

A question recently made headlines on an online media platform on whether newspapers are dying or not. Well, this has been discussed for quite some time now in articles and highlighted by major publishers. It is good to note that in the last few years, newspapers have been termed as traditional media and with the rise of social media, it is only understandable to agree with that notion. However, late year, there was some positive outlook for newspapers as the 'traditional media' still had a bright future ahead. Many publishing companies recorded recommendable increases. These included the Financial Times and a Japanese business publisher, Nikkei.

Despite this relieving news in many newsrooms, the question of what exactly brings down the credibility of newswriting is still yet to be answered. With the change in the whole internet world and the introduction and thriving of other channels of relaying information, it has been really hard for newspaper editors and writers. These include Netflix, YouTube, and television, among others.

The newspaper business has, however, remained relevant in the market for so long. Creating a more defined and more relevant face of the newspaper seems the only way out now. Redefining how the writers and editors do their job while in that newsroom could also help. To improve on their credibility, they may be required to:

Monitoring The Information Revolution

With the massive generation shift of consuming news over the last few decades and the many developments in the whole media industry that have been greatly affected by the new technology, many journalists are really enjoying this change and embracing it positively. It still is a big challenge how they maintain their credibility with all the new changes.

Whether it is the online platforms or the dry magazines, they all have a common determiner of their success, and that is credibility. Regardless of which medium platform is being used to deliver a story, the whole media is always under scrutiny. Many journalists get caught up in the story at hand rather than writing and reporting it as it should be. Very weak sourcing also results in many of their stories being dropped and not approved at all. To have a wider and very important issue to consider: writing and reporting is actually how journalists maintain their credibility,

The whole 24-hour news cycle has created a lot of pressure and conflict between editors, writers and publishers to provide stories with better content over the short period of time provided for them.

Quality Over Quantity

Just like in the old days, to create quality journalism, there is the need to invest more in quality and time. To enhance credibility in journalistic stories, financial investments and timing pressure are key issues to be dealt with. Journalists are becoming more rigorous in their sourcing while trying to protect the safety of those whose anonymity is depended on. Direct interaction between readers, journalists and other media outlets has also increased with the Internet revolution. (Reuters, n.d.)

Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are making consumers of the information stronger than ever. Viewers and readers have been known to have a lot of influence on the kind of stories circulating around. They can share links and buy newspapers, too. Here, the choice between sharing links and buying newspapers will influence the credibility of the writers.

Enhancing Transparency In The Newsroom

Transparency, as well as accountability, is really key when it comes to credibility when writing news. These two are the key aspects of practicing ethical journalism at all times.

Journalists are quickly adapting to the new world of business by applying new frameworks for transparency and accountability all in digital platforms. To enhance and capture the minds of readers fully, research done in newsrooms and other academic literature, some practices related to transparency and accountability are also evolving in five different ways. These are:

- Provide all the reports and sources that support your work.

- Having interactive sessions with the audience.
- Curate and attribute information responsibly.
- Offering disclosures and statements of quality value.
- Correct website and social media errors effectively.

These digital platforms provide journalists with more efficient ways of practicing transparency. With well-established transparency practices that have been adopted in the world, it has really boosted credibility and the quality of news displayed for viewers and readers out there. The value of work and information is standardized, and in the case of any miscommunication, it is easier to trace where and who wrote that particular piece of information. This is not only good for the journalists but also ensures clean competition in the industry as well as maintaining a clean brand. It will also help differentiate journalism from other content on the search web. Basically, in every newsroom, each and every story must show why they deserve the best trust compared to the other writers doing the same story out there. This, however, must be done professionally and observe all required regulations during the competitions involved.

Sharing Their Source Material

Unlike newspapers, televisions and radios, other digital platforms do not suffer time and space constraints, and this freedom gives them an opportunity to disclose their sources of information and make it clear how their contents bring about any relevant changes. The links used are clear proof of the source and provide a clear flow of information without adding any unwanted narratives. For newspapers and other written documents, always show and list all source documents. This will provide a clear roadmap for all the curious readers who may need to verify how you arrived at your story without creating any scandals. It will also help in building credibility.

Show Any Changes To Your Content

In journalism, reporting stories does not always end with publishing them. The stories are updated to accommodate other information, and mostly, these additions are not disclosed, and they can be reviewed many years after their publishing. Using friendly ways to show any revised history of the story will create a better picture for you as a journalist. Unfortunately, this is the one thing many news organizations are neglecting and not putting as much effort as would be required.

Showing clear changes that have been done to the content is again connected with the aspect of transparency that suggests that online, it's important to note when and how the content changes as it continues to exist in the same place, and people may be linking to it. Live blogs have an added advantage as they capture the happenings with full attribution, hence offering transparency and the credibility required in the newsroom. One needs to be clear on the exact nature of the update they are making on their content. The reason for the update must also be indicated clearly to avoid

unnecessary attention.

Media Credibility Measures

There have been a variety of measurements and statistical procedures by researchers in their quests, and they need to understand the credibility of the media well. While many still use traditional means of data collection like phone calls and field experiments, the emergence of new technologies such as online surveys has really changed the whole face of media. There are three main methods used to measure the credibility of the media. These are:

- Trustworthiness- operationalized as honest-dishonest, trustworthy-untrustworthy
- Expertise- qualified-unqualified, skilled-unskilled.
- Dynamism – active-passive, aggressive- meek.

Many journalists and researchers have developed their credibility levels. Rather than measuring and searching for a single scale, they have advanced to credibility scales that can be applicable to both newspapers and online articles. A newspaper's credibility can be measured by how accurate, fair and trustworthy the stories that appear in it are. Investigations on the credibility of news across both traditional and online media have been used to determine the dimensions of news credibility as a threshold to what predicts news credibility.

Many internet users prefer online news, and almost 25% choose international news over watching television and reading newspapers. Therefore, when it comes to rating the credibility of news, it is better to research more on online readers rather than relying on those who depend on television and newspapers for news. Internet is, therefore, an eye opener and has a wider range and many diverse news menus provided to their readers always.

These forms of media have different scales for measuring their credibility. Television news credibility depends on three major factors: balance, honesty and currency. Newspaper news credibility, on the other hand, is affected by the following aspects: honesty, balance and accuracy, while these three key factors analyzed online news credibility: trustworthiness, timeliness and bias. (Reuters, n.d.)

References

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