

The Credibility of Saudi Media Institution Sites through Social Media from the Perspectives of Saudi Youth

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Abstract

Credibility represents a cornerstone in the ongoing relations between media organisations and their audience. The study examined the perspectives of Saudi youth in terms of the credibility of institutions' social media feeds as a new communication environment, with the aim being to define the dimensions that contribute in recognising such terms. In addition, the study examined the effect of social media websites on participation and the viewpoints of Saudi youth towards the credibility of such institutions. The study found that social media has changed the communication style for youths, as they have become the most popular and prevalent users. About half of the sample (47.5 %) of youth uses social media for more than five hours a day, which represents a long period of time and percentage that exceeds the universal average, and was not expected by the researcher. The attitude of youth towards the credibility of the institutions that use social media is positive. In addition, the dimensions of credibility of the traditional media, which are "trust, personal experience, honesty and objectivity" are important and also form the credibility for the institutions that interact through social media. They still play the same role in the environment of social media along with new dimensions, namely: "the reputation of the institution, presentation on social media, rapidly and easily, transparency of communication, altruism, common values and cooperation." On the other hand, the study concluded that the effect of other users affects the conceptions of the Saudi youth on the credibility of the institutions that use social media. This exceeds the effect of other institutions, since they are seen by a neutral party, and hence there is a risk when some people promote rumours..

Key words: credibility, social media, media organisations

Introduction

Social media platforms provide individuals with multiple IT options, but the information is processed online is more challenging, given the increasing ability to access and create posts and information across social media for free. Accordingly, one of the major issues related to such information in online environments is how people judge the credibility and seriousness of information given through social media? (Bennett, 2013). Therefore, credibility is one of the important issues in mass communication research in general; interest thereof has increased after the emergence of new media and the growth of people who rely on such media as a means to access information. Upon the advent of the internet, researchers raised questions about the accuracy, reliability and adequacy of information provided by web pages, especially as they often allow people to contribute without using their true identities. In this context, the rapid speed of publication may push large news agencies to disseminate information without verifying its authenticity (Blau & Scott, 2003) Yet, there are various websites that are seen by users as neutral ones, managed by commercial corporations that seek to promote their products. For example, Schiller (Rimmer & Weaver, 1987) indicates a popular site that bears the name of a centre to treat anxiety, but was discovered that a pharmaceutical company ran it. Consequently, credibility occupies a very important position within large institutions. They have a basis to establish extended and healthy relationships with the public, and that credibility is a true indicator of how to measure the strengths of these relationships. The importance of credibility increases in light of the adoption of social media as a powerful tool to communicate with the public because of its large spread, the diversity of its tools, the nature of the influential role power it plays in the community and its strong influence on public perceptions.

As such, institutions need to focus on how they stand if discredited and can interact successfully with the public through social networks that have changed the method of communication with the public. In fact, social media enables people to communicate with institutions in a personal and interactive, dynamic and immediate, universal and inexpensive way at any time and without restrictions. Therefore, social networks have superseded traditional media or spokespersons in public relations, asserting that it is a phenomenon that is worthy to be studied (Jackob, 2012). Previous studies on credibility have provided a good foundation for understanding the perceived credibility about the dimensions of the institutions. As such, we as academics and practitioners - with the emergence of networks - need to look again at the credibility of the institutions and the new dimensions associated with the nature of these networks (Poster, 1995). Perhaps there is no institution that can deny the strong impact of social networking on the reputation of their enterprise. For several years, using social media has become the first activity for individuals. In addition, such use has increased through mobiles by 60% since 2012. Moreover, older individuals who were not considered as users of social media have now become more adept in using websites such as Facebook and Twitter (Smith & Kawasaki, 2011).

The intended interaction from and to social networks has reached a peak in recent years, where the public has become more interactive, using social networks to search for information and taking decisions based on the experiences of others (Alpert, 2012). American studies suggest that the 65% of citizens look for local jobs through Facebook, while 70% are likely to buy a commodity they find online. Although Arab studies have not provided such accurate results, indications state that internet users in the Arab world follow the same direction (Treadaway & Smith, 2010). The researcher reviewed studies that were implemented directly on internet use and examined the ones that handled credibility. These studies are arranged as follows:

Kim (2014) aimed to identify the impact of the tactics used by an institution through social media in terms of their credibility with the public. This study concluded that honesty, experience and personal interaction are important dimensions for the credibility of any institution that interacts through social media. Moreover, the study found that the tools that rely on image and video produce a stronger audience who can take decisions based on their interactions.

Hwang (2013) aimed to identify the impact of politicians' use of Twitter to inform people about their credibility. The results showed that such sites positively affect their credibility. Salim (2010) studied internet credibility as seen by the public, in terms of confidence and trust online, without linking between the measure of credibility in terms of news sites, electronic newspapers or blogs. Kim (2014) and Johnson (2009) used the survey method on internet users who have political concerns to monitor the degree of confidence in the information they receive from traditional media and websites and from electronic newspapers published online. The study concluded that independent electronic newspapers won the first rank in the degree of credibility in the research sample. However, the study showed that trust in traditional and electronic sources was a strong indicator of the credibility of electronic sources. Ha and Perks study (2005) aimed at identifying the impact of consumer perceptions of the brand experience online. It showed how trust in a brand can be enhanced through the interaction and design of experiments online.

Problem of the study

In light of the increasing prevalence of websites, and in light of the increasing use of social networks, studies have indicated that such use has become the top activity in the last three years. Also, in the absence of scientific studies that reveal how credible such media sites and institutions are, the research problem becomes evident. We aim to identify the perceptions of Saudi youth about the credibility of media organisation sites across social media, by exploring the dimensions of credibility, and how they differ depending on the quality (platforms) network of communication used. There is also a need to determine the impact of posts made by others on the youth. The credibility of the institutions as well as detecting the activity of the Saudi youth to support institutions can come as an indicator of credibility through a field study on a sample of Saudi youth.

Hypothesis of the study

- The perspectives of Saudi youth on the credibility of media organisations across social media tend to be positive.
- There are differences in the perceptions of Saudi youth on the credibility of media organisations' sites across social media that are attributed to demographic variables.
- There are differences in the perceptions of Saudi youth on the credibility of media organisations sites across social media which are attributed to the nature of their relationship with these websites.

- Other users affect the perceptions of Saudi youth in terms of the credibility of media organisations' sites across social media.
- There are differences in how Saudi youth are influenced by other users in their perception of the credibility of media organisations across social media due to the following demographic variables: age - sex - education level - residence.
- The Saudi youth who interact with media institutions sites across social media are active in supporting them.

Population and sample of the study

The population of the study consists of Saudi youth who interact with institutions across social media. A questionnaire was prepared using Google Drive and sent via e-mail to all groups and individuals across social media and through email. The respondents were asked to convince others and urge them to respond to and cooperate with the researcher by using the snowball method.

First: the spatial domain: The research was conducted on Saudi youth in all regions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, accessed via the internet.

Second: the human domain: The researcher used the sample (snowball 'retina') as the number of participants who responded to the researcher (120).

Third: time domain: The field study was conducted during the period from 5 Rabi' two to 30 Sha'ban 1437 A.H.

Validity and reliability

The researcher presented the survey to specialists in media and social studies, who introduced some adjustments. These were complied with so the questionnaire became valid for the final application.

The reliability of the questionnaire was censured by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the percentage of reliability amounted to (0.730) for each of the dimensions of credibility, as shown in Table (a).

Table (1) the variables of the study in accordance with Cronbach alpha values

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Number of items
Trust	.695	2
Reputation	.705	2
Experience	.714	2
Appearance of the presentation	.917	2
Personality	.704	2
Honesty	.682	2
Speed of relevancy	.702	2
Promoted interaction	.695	2
Altruism	.690	2
Objectivity	.690	2
Cooperation	.709	2
Transparent communication	.686	2
Mutual value	.690	2
Altruism	.695	2
Objectivity	.704	2

This indicates that the questionnaire and all of its dimensions enjoys appropriate reliability and can be used for the purposes of this study.

Statistical treatment of the data

Data was analysed by using SPSS 19 to conduct a number of statistical procedures including:

- Repetitions and percentages for showing the characteristics of the sample.
- ANOVA to test the differences between the means of the variables of the study and a one sample T-retest to compare the means of one sample.

Results

The first hypothesis

Table (2) shows the credibility of media institutions through social media by using t-test for the one sample:

Variable	T - value	Degree of freedom	Moral	Average	SD
The recognition of the Saudi youth for the credibility of the institutions	20.140	119	.000	4,1534	.62736

As the data in the above table shows, the study concluded the truth of the hypothesis, which states that Saudi youth tend to view the credibility of media institutions' websites as positive. In this context, t-value amounted to 20.140, with a freedom degree (119) at (0,000), while the means was 4.1534, knowing that the phrases (completely agree = 5, agree= 4, neutral= 3, against= 2, completely against= 1) mean that the respondents tend to agree on the rule of websites and social media.

The second hypothesis

Table (3) shows the differences between the Saudi youth in their perceptions towards the credibility of the social sites of media institutions according to the demographic variables, using ANOVA:

Variable	Source of variation	Total squares	Freedom degree	SD	F value	Level of significance
Place of residence	Between the groups	.388	1	.388	.987	.323
	Within the groups	46,448	118	.394		
Total	46.837	119				
Age	Between the groups	4,997	1	4.997	14.094	.000
	Within the groups	41,839	118	.355		
Sex	Between the groups	2.982	2	1.491	3.978	.021
	The groups	43.854	117	.375		
	Total	46.837	119			
Educational level	Between the groups		1	4.450	12.415	.001
	4.459					
	With the groups	42.378	118	.359		
	Total	46.837	119			

The study concluded that the hypothesis stated: "there are differences in the perceptions of Saudi youth on the credibility of media institutions social media feeds according to the following demographic variables: age, sex and educational level", as per the following:

Age: F value amounted to 14.094 at (0.000) for the benefit of the age group (26-40 years) who were the most cognitive, with a means of (71.94), followed by the age group (18-25 years) with a means (5980). However, the age group (41-50 years) was least cognitive for the credibility of the institutions (means: 25.25)

Sex: F value was (3.978 at (.21). The difference was for the benefit of females (means: 73.60) while the means for males was (52,64).

Educational level: F value was (12.415) at (0.000) for the benefit of the higher university level, with a means of (62.04) followed by the holders of the secondary school certificate with a means (46.63).

However, the study did not show differences for the variable of residence, as F value was 987 at (0.323).

Third hypothesis

Table (4) shows the conception Saudi youth have about the credibility of media institutions according to their relationships. ANOVA was used to explore this relationship.

Variable	Variation source	Total of SD squares	Degree of freedom	SD	F value	Level of significance
Recognising the credibility of the institutions according to the nature of the relationship	Between the groups	4.459	1	4.459	12.415	.001
	Within the groups	46.837	119			

The study concluded that the hypothesis stated: “there are differences in the conceptions of Saudi youth on the credibility of the media institutions social media sites according to the nature of their relationship with them”. F value amounted to 12.415 at (.001) level. The study showed that the differences for the benefit of the respondents were more accepting to the credibility of the institutions (means: 83.90), followed by the members of the board (means: 62.25) and the employees of the institutions (means: 60.50), then the brand community (beneficiaries from the products of the institutions) (means: 58.16).

Fourth hypothesis

Table (5) shows the level of the influence on the conceptions of Saudi youth on the credibility of media institutions social media sites (using one-sample test).

Variable	T – value	Degree of freedom	Moral	Average	SD
The influence other users have on the reception of Saudi youth and the credibility of social media websites	11.320	119	.000	4.8563	.82863

The study concluded that the credibility of the websites of media institutions through social media was true. F value was (35.162) at (.000 level). This result is consistent with the results of the studies conducted by Parent et al. (2011) and Schauet al. (2009), stating that the other participants are more influential and efficient when inside the community of the brand that contains those who are interested therein.

The fifth hypothesis

Table (6) shows the differences on the influence of Saudi youth by other users (using ANOVA).

Variable	Variation source	Total of SD squares	Degrees of freedom	SD	F value	Level of significance
The educational level	Between the groups	18.758	1	18.758	35.162	.000
	Within the groups	62.960	119	.533		
	Total	81.709	119			
Age	Between the groups	2.982	2	1.491	3.978	.021
	Within the groups	43.854	117	.375		
	Total	46.837	119			
Sex	Between the groups	5.077	2	2.538	3.875	.023
	Within the groups	76.631	117	.655		
	Total	81.708	119			
Residence	Between the groups	.567	1	.567	.825	.366
	Within the groups	81.141	118	.688		
	Total	81.708	119			

The study concluded that the hypothesis stated that “there are differences in the influence of Saudi youth by other users in their conception of the credibility of social media in accordance with the following demographic variables: age, sex and educational level”. The results were as follows:

Age: F value was (3,978) at (0.21 level), as the difference was for the benefit of the age group 26+ years, who had the highest recognition of the credibility of media institutions through social media, with a means of (74.75), followed by the age group (18-25 years) with a means of (57.50), while the age group (41- 50 years) had the least recognition for the credibility of the institutions (with a means of 48.50).

Sex: F value was (3.875) at (0.023), as the difference was for the benefit of females (means: 82.70) while the average for males was (47.18).

The educational level: F value was (35,162) at (0.000). The difference was for those who hold university degrees (means: 71.38) followed by the holders of the secondary school certificate (means: 59.29). However, the study did not show any differences that are attributed to the variable of residence (F value: 987 at .323).

The sixth hypothesis

Table (7) shows the activity of Saudi youth who interact with the websites of media institutions through social media (using one-sample test).

Variable	T value	Freedom degree	Moral	Means	SD
The activity of Saudi youth who interact with the websites of the media institutions	- .631	119	.529	2.9500	.8621

The study concluded that the hypothesis stated: “the Saudi youth who interact with the websites of media institutions become more active through social media”. T value amounted to (- .631), with a freedom degree (119) at moral level (.0529)

The most significant results

- Social media has changed the communication patterns of Saudi youth as they become more prevalent and popular. In this regard, half of the sample (47.5%) used social media for more than 5 hours daily. This is a long period of time and a percentage of which the researcher did not expect, since they exceed the international average (from one to three hours).
- The attitudes of youth towards the credibility of the institutions which use communication networks are positive (T value: 20.140) with a freedom degree of 119 at morality level: 0.00, with an average of (04.1534).
- The dimensions of trust, experience, personality, honesty and objectivity contribute in forming the credibility of institutions that interact through social media. Though these dimensions were studied within the credibility of traditional media means, they are still playing the same role in social media networks.
- The study found that the new dimensions of reputation of the institution, presentation on social media, speed of participation, personal interaction, and transparency of communication, altruism, mutual values and cooperation are important ones in forming the credibility of media institutions through social media.
- The influence of other users on the recognition of Saudi youth to the credibility of the websites of media institutions through social media exceeds the effect of the institutions, since they view them from a neutral side, which reflects a specific experience with the institution. Accordingly, public relations practitioners should employ these influences to expand the scope of participation and efficiency. The risk is embodied when some people promote rumours in the absence of public relations staff.
- Social media platforms have multiple dimensions (Facebook, Google+) followed by mini-blogs such as Twitter, which are the most influential on youth's recognition of the credibility of these institutions. After that we have video platforms such as YouTube and platforms that rely on pictures like Instagram.
- The Saudi youth uses media institutions social media sites with caution. Most youths are not active and do not rely largely on them when taking a decision based on the information received through social media or when they effectively support the issues adopted by the institutions through social media networks.

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