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Judging the Credibility and Professionalism of Citizen Journalism
versus Professional Journalism

Caroline Christiansen Hood

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Judging the Credibility and Professionalism of Citizen Journalism versus Professional Journalism

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Because of the advent of the Internet, traditional journalism is changing. Advanced technology includes the tools for everyone to publish their thoughts, feelings, photos, and videos, allowing individuals to be citizen journalists. This experimental-design study was aimed at discovering the influence of biographies in people's judgments of the credibility and professionalism of news articles. The study involved four treatments 1: professional journalist feature article with professional journalist biography; 2: citizen journalist feature article with professional journalist biography; 3: citizen journalist feature article with citizen journalist biography; and 4: professional journalist feature article with citizen journalist biography. These treatments were used to determine how the 198 study participants judged the work and biography of a traditional journalist compared to the work and biography of a citizen journalist. Study data was acquired through an online survey. A credibility scale and a professionalism scale were used to determine that, based on the articles used in the study, news consumers do not see professional journalists as more credible than citizen journalists, although news consumers do see traditional journalists' content as more professional.

Keywords: journalism, citizen journalism, news credibility, professionalism

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this golden age of news, society is experiencing a time of change, a switch of journalistic powers (Blodget, 2011; Mullins, 2009; Stanley, 2006). According to Kovach (as cited in King, 2008), former curator for the Nieman Foundation, “each generation creates its own new culture of journalism. We are clearly in full creation mode right now” (p. 13). The creation of this new culture of journalism began in 1998 when Matt Drudge, a manager at the CBS Studios gift shop, broke the news of the Monica Lewinsky scandal, sharing the story on the Web before all the traditional news entities. As David Perlmutter (2008) described the situation, “it was the world turned upside down—‘blind chaos in media circles,’ indeed—and the great snowball of the alternative media challenging the mainstream media began” (p. 59).

News has not been the same since Drudge presented the possibility of citizen journalism, the normal everyday person being a source of news and information for the masses. Traditional journalists, considered to be those who are educated, trained professionals and affiliated with credible news organizations, have new competition: citizen journalists, the common citizen walking the streets. According to Ryfe (2007), the work of citizen journalists is “the most significant media revolution since the arrival of television” (p. 725). Perlmutter explained how Drudge changed the news game, stating “since Drudge’s post, big media worry about being scooped not only by their competitors in the large glass-and-steel buildings down the street but by the millions of voices online” (p. 59). Members of the public are no longer just sources of sound bites and interviews for the mainstream media to use; instead, members of the public are creating their own content, making them fierce competition for the media. Today, everyday citizens who

happen to be in the right place at the right time, armed with a cell phone, camera, and Internet access are capable of breaking news stories before the traditional media.

This Internet-driven, user-generated source of information known as citizen journalism has become a recent catchphrase, sending waves of worry throughout the mainstream media. Citizens have stepped, or rather charged, into the news and information realm and are doing quite a good job attracting an absurd amount of attention from the public. According to Knight (2007), citizen journalists are “providing competition through their often eye-witness reports” (p. 117).

Modern technology, combined with recent disasters, has allowed citizens to become a supreme source for information. Cooper (2007) described the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake that resulted in the deadly tsunami as “a turning point for user-generated content. While not the first event to use UGC (user generated content), it was perhaps the first disaster where the dominant images we remember come not from journalists but from ordinary people” (p. 5). Likewise, Potter (2007) explained that the worth of citizen journalists is particularly highlighted during disaster situations: “If it hadn’t been for a cell phone camera, the world would never have seen video of Saddam Hussein’s execution” (p. 66). Citizen journalists played a similar role in July 2005, when London was hit with a series of deadly attacks targeting civilians using London’s Underground public transport system. In the article “Compose Yourself” (2006), the author suggested that citizen journalists fueled the content for this international breaking-news story:

During the terrorist attacks on London’s Underground . . . quite a few people in the wrecked trains took haunting photos with their mobile phones. They then

wirelessly uploaded these to Flickr, a photo-sharing site owned by Yahoo! Other users then “tagged” these photos by attaching labels such as “London Underground” or “bombings” to them so that they could be easily found. (para. 5)

Perlmutter (2008) explained the events that have pushed society into an era being called the golden age of news: “Internet news, the rise of outsiders, the warlike culture of modern politics, and a huge demand for up-to-the-second news to fill Websites and twenty-four-hour news operations of big media have combined to kill the news cycle as we knew it” (p. 59). It is true that journalism is changing. It may no longer only involve trained professional reporters, catchy anchor leads, perfect nut graphs, natural sound, spliced shots of sharp video, in-depth and exclusive interviews, or even multiple source accounts of an event. As King (2008) stated:

The debate is over. Hand-in-inked bibles, horse-drawn carriages, pagers: A few still exist, but they have mostly been overtaken by newer technology. The same is true for the monopoly of the publisher. Journalists no longer control the message.

Today digital publishing is practiced by the masses, and it’s inseparable from the practice of journalism. Newsgathering and distribution has changed forever, and the audience is part of the process. (p. 12)

Justification

The literature indicates that citizen journalism is powerful and is influencing mainstream journalism. Currently, the future of journalism cannot be determined, but for now the literature indicates one thing is certain and that is change. News is a business, and news consumers decide who will be given attention. Conducting the current study will help determine how today’s news consumers view professional journalists and

citizen journalists, particularly regarding credibility and professionalism. This experimental-design study will be conducted to analyze the perceptions of news consumers as they read and then judge four news article treatments consisting of an article, a byline, and a biography. Shaw, Cole, Moore, & Cole, (1981) conducted a similar study to determine the effects of the author's gender when evaluating news stories. Shaw et al. found that "if readers notice a byline—and they may if a story is one which 'ought' to be written by a man or woman—then the sex of the journalist may influence reader evaluations of the story itself. In short, byline sex can become an attribute of the message" (p. 103). The current study will involve using the same concepts found in the Shaw et al. study, but instead of judging the perceptions of the article based upon the gender of the author, the focus of this study will be on judging the perceptions of the article based on the text itself and also the biography attached. Conducting this study will help determine what news consumers use to judge news article standards. Do individuals base the credibility and professionalism of an article solely on the content? Or, does the biography attached to an article influence whether the article is considered credible and professional?

Major changes will continue to occur in journalism throughout the 21st century. Though the current study cannot include an examination of all of the important and timely issues regarding this new phenomenon of citizen journalism and its effects on traditional journalism, conducting this study provided some understanding and answers to how news consumers judge the work of professional journalists and citizen journalists. The focus of the study was on two of the most important elements of traditional journalism: credibility and professionalism.

This thesis begins with a literature review, which will include an examination of the history of news credibility, the measurement of news credibility, and journalistic credibility. This examination will be followed by a discussion of the history and measurements of professionalism, particularly journalistic professionalism. Next, 21st-century journalism will be covered by explaining the elements of journalism, which will be followed by a section on citizen journalism, including definitions, an overview of the technology that led to the advent of citizen journalism, differing views of citizen journalism, and an outline of the benefits and detriments of citizen journalism. The literature review will conclude with a section on source credibility.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

News Credibility

The history of news credibility measures. News credibility research began with a focus on persuasion, with researchers examining source credibility, not news specifically. In the 1940s, Carl Hovland expanded source credibility research when he began exploring the effects of Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* films, World War II propaganda films on audience attitude. Flanagin and Metzger (2000) relayed that Hovland and his colleagues targeted two key elements of source credibility: trustworthiness and expertise. These two elements became the first set of core components for media credibility research for TV, newspaper, and radio news.

The next significant step in media credibility research came in the late 1950s when TV entered mainstream media. The Roper Organization began its media credibility research by examining how TV affected newspaper audiences' perceptions of newspaper credibility. The Roper Organization conducted its research through surveys in which participants were asked whether their opinions of newspapers changed with the advent of TV news and how credible the participants felt traditional newspapers were in comparison to TV news. Flanagin and Metzger (2000) stated that the Roper Questions, as the surveys are called, contain simple questions to gauge where the study participants obtained their news from and which source (TV news or newspaper) they would believe if there were conflicting reports. Carter and Greenberg (1965), Gantz (1981), and Miller, Singletary & Chen (1988) agreed that the Roper Questions are foundational and critical to news credibility studies.

Measuring news credibility. In news credibility studies during the 1960s and 1970s, researchers mainly used and focused on Hovland's two credibility components of trustworthiness and expertise, along with the Roper Questions. In the 1980s, researchers expanded media credibility studies to use multivariate measures, allowing the researchers to focus on specific aspects of journalism, something that previously had not been done. As with any new invention, scales to measure news credibility had to be created. Many researchers developed different measures. Some of the measures corresponded with and built upon one another, but other measures were in conflict. As the process to find plausible media credibility measures continued, researchers concluded that Hovland's two credibility components and the Roper Questions were not enough. Researchers realized that measuring media credibility was a complex task and required an intricate scale.

Once again, the quest began to find an appropriate scale to measure news credibility. Noteworthy findings came from Carter and Greenberg (1965), who discovered that the Roper Questions were biased toward TV news. However, these findings conflict with the findings of Abel and Wirth (1977), who conducted a study on local TV news rather than national TV news, the focus of the Roper Questions. Even with the change of focus from national news to local news, Abel and Wirth found that TV news was perceived as more credible than newspapers. Since the mid-1970s researchers such as Reagan and Zenaty (1979) have tested this study in different geographical areas and obtained the same results. A few years later, Gantz (1981) studied the influence of research methods on prior evaluations of news credibility. He wondered whether the high credibility scores for TV news were a result of the method used. Gantz found that "when

assessed individually, TV's rating was a razor's edge higher than newspapers" (p. 168) but that the lead became more substantial when a hypothetical conflicting report was added. Gantz's research showed that the complexity of credibility measures needed to increase, so that the assessment would involve more than just what is and is not believable.

During 1980s, credibility measures gained the complexity researchers had been striving for. Researchers such as Gaziano and McGrath (1986), Rimmer and Weaver (1987), and Newhagen and Nass (1989) played an integral role in this effort; their research focused on the vast variables that compose news credibility. Gaziano and McGrath set out to discover the different dimensions of credibility. They used a survey method and a factor analysis of the participants' comments to identify 12 items that make up credibility. The items concerned whether newspapers and TV news are fair, are unbiased, tell the whole story, are accurate, respect people's privacy, consider people's interests, are concerned with the community's well-being, separate fact and opinion, can be trusted, are concerned about the public interest, are factual, and have well-trained reporters (Gaziano and McGrath, 1986). These items became mainstream in news credibility research, serving as the foundation for numerous other studies.

Later, other researchers began simplifying Gaziano and McGrath's (1986) 12 credibility variables. Rimmer and Weaver (1987) were among the first to create an abbreviated scale using only 4 of the 12 items: is biased or unbiased, tells the whole story or does not tell the whole story, is accurate or inaccurate, and can be trusted or cannot be trusted. This scale was used to measure the perceived credibility of the news source against use of the medium. Meyer (1988) also simplified the variables identified by

Gaziano and McGrath and developed his own index to measure news credibility. He found that the most universal of Gaziano and McGrath's 12 items are fairness, lack of bias, the willingness to tell the whole story, and accuracy. Meyer claimed his new 5-item scale was superior to Gaziano and McGrath's 12-item scale because his gave a more accurate description of credibility. Meyer's abbreviated scale became the basis for other studies, including research by Newhagen and Nass (1989), who used the scale to indicate that the criteria people use to judge the credibility of newspapers and TV differed. Newhagen and Nass found that the participants' perceptions of credibility were affected by the different technologies used to distribute TV news versus newspapers. The most interesting of all the findings is that newspaper credibility was based on how the company performed as a whole, while the credibility of TV news was based on the on-air talent (Newhagen & Nass, 1989).

Abdulla, Garrison, Salwen, Driscoll, and Casey (2005) adjusted Gaziano and McGrath's (1986) news credibility scale to focus on measuring the credibility of online news. Abdulla et al. compared the key components of news credibility in traditional media sources (print, TV, and radio) and online news sources. The researchers created a Likert-type scale with 12 components: trustworthiness, currency, bias, fairness, reporting the whole story, objectivity, honesty, up-to-date, believability, balance, accuracy, and timeliness. They found the dimensions of the scale to work well for both traditional outlets and online outlets, although the respected outlets placed more importance on different dimensions of credibility. As shown in the literature, many researchers have focused on studying news credibility. When comparing Abdulla et al.'s research to the first research based on Hovland's credibility components, an evolution in the research

method is apparent. The research on credibility began with a simple method but has evolved into more multifaceted methods, allowing for a greater depth of analysis.

Journalistic credibility. Professional journalists have long been in a powerful position, possessing somewhat of a monopoly on accessing and distributing information. Baker (2009) noted the influence of journalists on society:

Communicators are powerful. The information they disseminate or withhold has the power to inform or misinform individuals and the public, to shape their assumptions about truth and reality, and to influence their decision-making, spending, attitudes, votes, choices, behaviors, and lifestyles. (p. 127)

Due to this power, professional journalists have been held accountable for their work. They traditionally have the responsibility to use moral reasoning when creating a story, abide by their respective news organizations' ethical standards, and always seek and share truth when reporting. Brown (2005) noted that the work of a professional journalist is only published after it goes through the checks-and-balances process, whereas the common citizen journalist receives no such editorial advice and does not have the expertise to safeguard the credibility of the information. One of the major concerns professional journalists and news consumers have with citizen journalism is that citizen journalists overlook the importance of the checks-and-balances process and this neglect has the potential to lead to biased and inaccurate information.

Trustworthiness. Ward (2009) explained that “modern journalism ethics was built upon the twin pillars of truth and objectivity. By the early 1900s, journalism textbooks, associations, and codes of ethics cited truth and objectivity as fundamental principles of the emerging profession. Truth and objectivity have long roots in

journalism” (p. 71). He continued by explaining that “at the heart of traditional objectivity is the idea that reporters should provide straight, unbiased information without bias or opinion. The idea is summed up by imperatives to ‘stick to the facts’ and to avoid ‘taking sides’” (p. 73). Craft and Heim (2009) explained that transparency is a valuable part of the picture when seeking truthful reporting. An important element of transparency is for journalists to involve audience members in the conversation. Some professional journalists reach out to their audiences better than other journalists do, but the lack of invitations from journalists to participate is not preventing citizen journalists from their voices being heard. The authentic communication that comes through citizen journalism suggests that society is returning to a libertarian ideal, assuming that the truth is discoverable and the opinions of the public contribute to the search for truth. Smith, who is known for his libertarian ideals (1759) said:

The great pleasure of conversation, and indeed of society, arises from a certain correspondence of sentiments and opinions, from a certain harmony of minds, which like so many musical instruments, coincide and keep time with one another. But this most delightful harmony cannot be obtained unless there is free communication of sentiments and opinions. We all desire, upon this account, to feel how each other is affected, to penetrate into each other’s bosoms and to observe the sentiments and affections which really subsist there. (p. 428)

As the literature indicates, truth is an important element of traditional journalism and in particular is a key element of journalistic credibility. Accordingly, the first two hypotheses in this study regard trustworthiness and overall credibility.

H1: An article written by a professional journalist and featuring a professional biography will score higher on trustworthiness than a similar article written by a citizen journalist and featuring a citizen biography.

H2: Overall, an article written by a professional journalist and featuring a professional biography will score higher on the credibility scale than a similar article written by a citizen journalist and featuring a citizen biography.

Professionalism

The history of measuring professionalism. The first research on professionalism was conducted by sociologists studying occupations and professions. An early contributor was Hall (1968), who was among the first sociologists who conceptualized professionalism in a multidimensional approach. Hall decided to blend structural and attitudinal aspects to provide the basis of professionalism. According to Chan, Chan, and Scott (2007), Hall's "structural approach refers to a 'professionalization' process in four stages—the creation of a full time occupation, the establishment of a training school, the formation of professional associations, and the formation of a code of ethics" (p. 1202). Chan et al. also explained that the focus of Hall's attitudinal aspect is on how "practitioners view their profession and work" (p. 1202).

Since the 1960s, a large amount of research on professionals in organizations has been conducted. Bartol (1979) stated that "a review of major empirical studies reveals that professionalism in the attitudinal sense has been operationalized mainly as a global, unidimensional concept or as one end of a cosmopolitan-local dichotomy" (p. 815). Kerr, Von Glinow, and Schriesheim (1977) criticized previous research and suggested that professionalism should be considered a multidimensional construct. Kerr et al. created a

new scale consisting of five attitudinal dimensions the researchers believed characterize professionalism: desire for professional autonomy, commitment to the profession, identification with the profession, professional ethics, and belief in collegial maintenance of standards.

Soon after Kerr et al. developed their scale, Bartol (1979) conducted a study involving a scale inspired by Kerr et al.'s (1977) scale and Snizek's (1972) criticism of Hall's scale to examine how professionalism can be used to predict organization commitment, role stress, and turnover. Bartol's scale consists of the following subscales: autonomy, collegial maintenance of standards, ethics, professional commitment, and professional identification.

Although researchers do not agree on which scale is most appropriate for judging professionalism, Allison (1986) found that the majority of professionalism research has been conducted through using two approaches, the structural-functionalist approach and the power approach. The decision of which approach to use guides researchers in selecting which scale is most appropriate for the research.

Measuring journalistic professionalism. Beam, Weaver, and Brownlee (2009) explained that the legendary 20th-century publisher Joseph Pulitzer initiated discussions about journalism becoming a profession when he suggested that education and training would improve journalists' social standing. Pulitzer attracted support from columnist Walter Lippmann, who recommended that journalists could increase their professionalism by incorporating objectivity into their work (Beam, Weaver, & Brownlee, 2009). Although discussion of journalistic professionalism began long ago, scholarly research on the professionalization of journalism did not emerge until the

1960s. Scholars interested in researching journalism and professionalism were faced with a major obstacle in the early days, as the foundation of literature concerning professionalism came from sociologists who questioned whether journalism was a profession. Marron (1996) explained that with the limited research performed by sociologists, “even the concept of a journalistic profession [was] questionable given that it [had] been argued convincingly both that journalism [was] a profession and that it [was] not” (p. 37). Further, Beam et al. (2009) stated “that scholarship drew on the work of sociologists who studied occupations and professions, and reflected one of their fundamental intellectual concerns: What are the characteristics of a profession, and does journalism qualify as one?” (p. 278). The goal of the sociologists was to identify the key characteristics that make up professions. They concluded the following about professionalism:

The occupation is organized around a body of knowledge or specialized training. Members of the occupation have considerable autonomy to carry out their work. Members of the occupation are willing to put public service ahead of economic gain. The occupation has an established professional culture that includes organizations or institutions that promote its values, norms, and symbols. The occupation socialized its members through education and training. Members of the occupation produce an unstandardized product. The occupation is usually lifelong and terminal. (pp. 278–279)

Their conclusions led to the development of the traits approach, which became a foundational tactic when studying professions; in particular, the traits approach has been used as the basis of a large majority of the research on journalism as a profession or

semiprofession. Their research also led to the creation of the McLeod-Hawley scale in 1964. (Beam et al., 2009). McLeod and Hawley developed this scale to judge professional orientation in journalism. Their index includes 24 items, 12 of which are related to professional status and 12 that are categorized as nonprofessional. Pollard (1985) explained that the McLeod-Hawley scale was based on the assumption that a professional journalist possessed “a distinct point-of-view which emphasized traditional professional concerns and deemphasized non-professional ones” (p. 22).

George Pollard (1985) explained that the professionalism scale created by McLeod and Hawley solved the common problem in the research field during the 1960s, which regarded discovering a way to clearly determine journalistic professionalism.

According to Pollard:

A professional construct embodies the norms, values and symbols endorsed by newswriters. A fundamental problem with the professional-ideal, however, is conceptualization and measurement: how to determine the level of professionalism extant among newswriters? . . . McLeod and Hawley offered a solution for this problem. They laid the foundation for a series of empirical investigations into the professional orientations of newswriters that acknowledged newswriting as an emerging profession in which practitioners displayed, in varying degree, the characteristics of true professionals. (p. 22)

The scale became a popular foundation to use in studies regarding judging journalistic professionalism. However, as the scale grew in popularity, it began attracting criticism. For example, Henningham (1984) stated that the McLeod-Hawley scale was flawed because it could lead a researcher to identify a highly professional journalist as a

nonprofessional if the journalist ranked nonprofessional job criteria as being equal in importance as professional job criteria. Pollard (1985) rebutted the criticism by explaining that “overall, McLeod and Hawley concluded it was indeed valuable to consider professional orientation because those having such an outlook tend to exhibit distinct patterns of cognitive judgment and different specific attitudes” (p. 22). Beam et al. (2009) praised the McLeod-Hawley scale because objectivity and public service are at the top of all professional values. Beam et al. also credit the scale as being the source of the key indicators used to judge the professionalism of journalism (p. 279).

Journalistic professionalism. Today, the job title of journalist is once again coming into question. However, this time, the debate is not on whether journalism should be a profession; rather, the debate is focused on who should have the right to be called a journalist. Some recent scholars have claimed that when people ask, “Who is a journalist?” there is no clear, defined answer that is based on one’s employment as a journalist. Knight (2007) explained that anyone and everyone has the potential to be a journalist. Woo (2005) alluded to the idea that the title of journalist no longer has legitimate qualifications or credentials:

At its core, the functional definition of journalism is much like the functional definition of a duck. If it looks like journalism, acts like journalism, and produces the work of journalism, then it’s journalism, and the people doing it are journalists. Whoever they are. (p. 1)

These recent definitions of *journalist* do not align with the foundational research on professionalism and other recent scholars who agree with the foundational literature that the title of journalist should be given to individuals who have prepared themselves

for the profession through schooling and training. Singer (2003) stated that credentials were essential for a title to be awarded: “The key role of the professional can be fulfilled only by people with particular training, skills and judgment, and it is crucial that the distinction between practitioner and layperson be clearly recognized by all parties” (p. 148). Singer continued by defining the aspect of cognitive dimension that accounts for much of the professional title, explaining that “this dimension of professionalism incorporates two main components: the body of knowledge and techniques used by professionals, and the training needed to master such concepts and skills” (p. 148). Knight (2008) added to Singer’s conclusions by outlining areas of professionalism that define journalism, including the following:

Established codes of conduct, which can be supervised by journalists associations affiliated with the International Federation of Journalists. Codes of practice defined by employers who can appoint, train and promote journalists. Salaries, which if nothing else encourage continuity. A professional culture stressing accuracy, fairness and perhaps balance. (p. 122)

Further, Knight (2008) highlighted the importance of journalists being educated in their trade: “Journalists should be trained to produce fair and accurate stories about their communities, and if journalism educators make ethics and professional practices the core of their courses, journalists should still be the best equipped to deliver such information” (p. 123). Gerlis (2008) indicated that professional journalists need to separate themselves from citizen journalists to maintain a professional reputation, asserting that “professional—that is, paid—journalists now need to differentiate themselves from

‘amateur’ journalists, and a key element of that is ensuring proper ethical standards are maintained” (p. 125).

Professional journalists are traditionally educated and trained individuals who thrive when discussing complex issues and reporting in-depth stories. Their high-end knowledge of writing, interviewing, communicating, equipment handling, and editing allows journalists to produce and distribute impressive products. Professional journalists are frequently overseen by a series of editors to make ensure the journalists’ reports are true, accurate, and unbiased. Journalism is their passion (as it is for citizen journalists), as well as their job, which keeps journalists on the cutting edge of content and quality. Johnston (2008) suggested that despite the new competition coming from citizen journalists, professional journalists have the skills to continue to be the predominant providers of news and information. He explained that mainstream news stations “have an immense advantage in their staffs of trained reporters, who know how to hunt down facts, check and cross-check them, and organize them into meaningful articles” (p. 41).

It is suggested that the advent of citizen journalism is having an effect on professional journalism. Marshall (2005) argued that citizen journalism “threatens the crucial standards that professional journalists have established” (p. 14). Knight (2007) suggested that the competition coming from citizen journalists provides a platform for the TV news media to retain its place as the powerhouse of information. With the changes resulting from citizen journalism, Gerlis (2007) suggested that now is the time to create a proper definition of the role of professional journalists and that it is increasingly important for journalists to distinguish themselves from citizen journalists by acquiring journalism training and education and maintaining their professional standards. Gerlis’s

suggestions are in line with Bartol's (1979) professionalism scale that suggests: autonomy, collegial maintenance of standards, ethics, professional commitment, and professional identification are the key elements of professionalism, thus leading to the third hypothesis.

H3: An article written by a professional journalist and featuring a professional biography will score higher on the professionalism scale than a similar article written by a citizen journalist and featuring a citizen biography.

Journalism in the 21st Century

Today's world is a world of options. When looking for a hamburger, car, or clothes, there are hundreds if not thousands of options to choose from. The array of options now extends to news and information sources because of technologies such as the Internet, which have led to the advent of mainstream citizen journalism.

Brown (2007) stated that "in today's media supermarket, consumers of what used to be called news (now known as 'content') have many choices. They can, if they choose, rely exclusively on sources that agree with their points of view" (p. 35). According to recent literature, there are apparent benefits and detriments to both professional journalism and citizen journalism. The development of new media tools has created a challenge for mainstream news organizations whose employees are trying to distribute credible information to the masses. Master (2009) stated that the Internet "has blurred the line between opinion and fact and created a dynamic in which extreme thought flourishes while balanced judgment is imperiled" (p. 1). While some citizen journalists are competing well in the news and information game, others are degrading the work of professional journalists. Abdulla et al. (2005) noted that during the past decade, online

citizen journalist news and information has created multiple concerns, including the following:

Fear about public access to private information, but also about publication of rumors online, inclusion of personal and institutional biases, the general levels of trust of online news, and the accuracy of information rapidly posted to Web sites during the cycles of breaking news stories. (p. 147)

Elements of journalism: What is good journalism? In the quest to define what journalism is and who is in the position to create journalism, the basic questions are (a) what is the purpose of journalism and (b) what makes good journalism? The central purpose of journalism, according to Journalism.org (1997), is to “provide citizens with accurate and reliable information they need to function in a free society” (para. 2). According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2006), nine elements of journalism are vital for journalists to fulfill their ultimate purpose of providing the public with valuable, self-governing information:

1. Journalism’s first obligation is to the truth.
2. Its first loyalty is to citizens.
3. Its essence is a discipline of verification.
4. Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover.
5. It must serve as an independent monitor of power.
6. It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.
7. It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.
8. It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional.

9. Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience.
(Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2006, para. 19)

Brown (2005) highlighted a key element regarding the difference between professional journalism and citizen journalism: “A professional journalist’s No. 1 obligation is to be accurate. A citizen journalist’s No. 1 obligation is to be interesting” (p. 42). Hujanen (2009) added the warning that “when pleasing the public becomes the journalist’s primary role and the major reason for the existence . . . they risk the loss of their credibility and the abandonment of any claim to represent the public conscience” (p. 38). Citizen journalists are accused (sometimes deservedly) of being biased, with much of their reporting consisting of opinion. Ward (2009) suggested the following:

A report is objective if and only if it is a factual and accurate recording of an event. It reports only the facts, and eliminates comment, interpretation, and speculation by the reporter. The report is neutral between rival views on an issue.
(p. 73)

Taking a different view, Timbs (2003) asserted the importance of storytelling in creating good journalism: “The heart and soul of journalism is storytelling. Not the inverted pyramid. Not just getting the facts. Not AP style or grammar or sentence structure. Not a gimmicky headline” (p. 24). According to Timbs, any form of content that tells a story is good journalism. He did not praise journalists with mainstream media affiliation or discriminating against those lacking credentials. Timbs proposed that anyone, anywhere can produce sound, valuable journalism if he or she knows how to tell a good story. Thus, it would be fair to say that Timbs supported citizen journalism.

Mosco (2009), on the other hand, argued there is more to journalism and being a journalist than just being able to tell a good story:

Some have argued that the decline in the ranks of journalists as traditionally defined has been offset by the growth of new forms of mainly online journalism, including blogging, citizen journalism, 'I-reporting', and a variety of adaptations from social networking sites. These are admittedly important new developments in story-telling but, aside from a few exceptions, those telling the stories are not journalists. They are not trained in the craft. They are not trained in how to collect and assess information or how to confirm or corroborate what they collect. (p. 350)

To distinguish journalists from non-journalists the leaders of the Society of Professional Journalists created a code of ethics (1996) that they proclaim guides their members' ethical behavior and serves as their society's principles and standards of practice. The code has four main points: Seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently, and be accountable. According to the society, "journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information" (p. 1). These principles are also present in the Radio Television Digital News Association's code (2000), which contains advice specifically for journalists who report online: "Professional electronic journalists should operate as trustees of the public, seek the truth, report it fairly and with integrity and independence, and stand accountable for their actions" (p. 1). Though directed toward professional journalists, it would be beneficial for citizen journalist to follow as well.

Citizen Journalism

What is citizen journalism? As Knight (2007) explained:

Before the World Wide Web, journalism was defined by mainstream news agencies, newspapers, radio and TV's stations. But the Internet has raised questions about who journalists are, what they should do, where they can report from, why they choose particular stories, and even when they report. (p. 118).

There is a complication attached to simply defining who and what a citizen journalist is, because the work being done by citizen journalists varies in quality and content and because citizen journalism is referred to by many different terms, including *user-generated content*, *we media*, *civic journalism*, *community journalism*, *participatory journalism*, *public journalism*, *crowd sourcing*, *amateur footage*, *amateur reports*, and *grassroots journalism*. A few people have tried to define the characteristics of a citizen journalist. Rogers (2008) explained citizen journalists as follows:

Private individuals who do essentially what professional reporters do—report information. That information can take many forms, from a podcast editorial to a report about a city council meeting on a blog. It can include text, pictures, audio and video. But it's basically all about communicating information of some kind. (para. 1)

Rosen (2006) also defined citizen journalists:

The people formerly known as the audience are those who *were* on the receiving end of a media system that ran one way, in a broadcasting pattern, with high entry fees and a few firms competing to speak very loudly while the rest of the population listened in isolation from one another—and who *today* are not in a situation like that *at all* . . . Think of passengers on your ship who got a boat of

their own. The writing readers. The viewers who picked up a camera. The formerly atomized listeners who with modest effort can connect with each other and gain the means to speak—to the world, as it were. (para. 5)

New technology and the citizen journalism movement. The Internet has greatly affected many things, including journalism. According to Courtemanche (2008), “as the old song says, ‘Video Killed the Radio Star,’ and the Internet is killing journalists, or at least news organizations like newspapers and television news shows that no longer provide the same value to their customers”(p. 1). Fernando (2008) targeted modern technology as the promoter and enabler of citizen journalism, suggesting technology was the key to opening the door to this journalistic renaissance. The advent of the Internet has created a forum in which citizen journalists thrive, and these citizen journalists are now threatening professional journalists’ place and position as the “king of news.” The Internet provides a forum for the free flow of information and allows the everyday citizen to use simple new media tools to become a source of information to an endless audience.

Fernando (2008) suggested this shift to citizen journalism took place around 2002, as camera phones and blogs became commercially viable. According to the Nieman Foundation (2005):

With the arrival of the Internet, the ability of non-journalists to publish their words and link them with those of other like-minded scribes has forever altered the balance of power between those who control the means to publish and those who believe they have something they believe is important to say. (p. 2)

Johnston (2008) added that a unique and powerful characteristic of the Internet is that it “provides tools to reach new audiences and to quickly spread important

information” (p. 42). Because of modern technology, individuals have access to fairly inexpensive communication devices, such as computers, cell phones, video equipment, digital cameras, and editing software. As a result, everyday citizens have the tools needed to quickly and successfully share information ranging from everyday life experiences to breaking news events. According to Glaser (2006):

Because of the wide dispersion of so many excellent tools for capturing live events—from tiny digital cameras to videophones—the average citizen can now make news and distribute it globally, an act that was once the province of established journalists and media companies. (p. 1)

Citizen journalism is changing journalism. No longer are professional journalists only faced with fierce competition from rival TV stations or newspapers. Now, the work of citizen journalists is posing a threat to professional journalists’ purpose, place, and, ultimately, industry. According to Leigh (2008), “journalistic skills are not entirely wiped out in an online world, but they are eroded and, most importantly, they cannot be confined any longer to an exclusive elite group” (p. 54). Journalists no longer have the exclusive right of authority and access, nor the exclusive ability to disseminate information to the masses. Now, the once “needy” members of the public have the power to determine for themselves the news and information they will consume and the capability to choose from whom they receive it.

Now, people are taking their own videos and photographs, composing information, and posting the content online; in essence, they are working as reporters and capturing the attention of online audiences. Citizen journalism is a new media phenomenon threatening the traditional media’s monopoly on information, eliminating

traditional media members' position as the all-knowing news authorities, who traditionally presented information to an audience whose only participation was through listening to or reading the content. The efforts of citizen journalists are not coy; in fact, Bowman and Willis (2005) suggested a transformation is taking place in what are now mainstream media outlets. According to Bowman and Willis, media futurists have predicted that by 2021, citizens will produce 50% of the news. Currently, the complete effects of "new media" on traditional media seem impossible to determine, though it is evident the effects have been and will continue to be significant.

Min (2005) suggested the public is forming a revolution to break the barriers between mainstream media's power and the public's voice: "Readers, or news audiences, are no longer passive consumers of news produced by a few privileged, arrogant reporters. They are active producers of the news they will consume" (p. 17). In addition to this change of power, Rosenstiel, Just, Belt, Pertilla, Dean, and Chinni (2007) suggested the Internet has brought about a "decline of appointment news consumption" (p. 183), meaning that news consumers no longer have to wait for the morning paper or the 6:00 p.m. news to get information about current events. Additionally, because of the nonlinear, on demand nature of digital media the audience is no longer required to sit through an entire 30-minute newscast to see the highlights of the latest football game or hear about the results of a foreign election. Rosenstiel et al. (2007) advised broadcast journalists that the first change they will need to make to compete in the news business in the future is to realize that news consumption is no longer a ritual. Further, Rosenstiel stated that "local TV news people are going to have to begin thinking of producing news in a way that accommodates the growing expectation that the latest news will be available

whenever the consumer might want it, not just when a program is airing” (p. 183). This mind-set, which has already become a necessity, has led professional news organization staff to provide their content in traditional formats (daily newspapers, radio broadcasts, and TV broadcasts) as well as in an online format. Marshall (2005) argued that citizen journalism “threatens the crucial standards that professional journalists have established” (p. 14). A report from the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism (2010) shows that the broadcast industry is being forced to undergo an extreme transformation to keep the attention of once loyal viewers and attract new viewers. For professional journalists, this transformation will affect their future careers, and for news consumers this major movement involving new media tools and interactive television will affect how and from whom viewers will receive information.

Differing views of citizen journalism. Articles on citizen journalism contain varying views of the purpose, place, priority, and worth of citizen journalism. Some authors argue citizen-generated content is destroying journalism. According to Leigh (2008), “in the rush to embrace new media we risk destroying the soul of traditional reporting” (p. 54). In contrast, others like King (2008) suggest citizen journalism is enhancing the news process: “The reality is that there are bloggers with passion and expertise on topics that exceeds anything that even the best reporter coming in on assignment could match” (p. 12). Thus, whether citizen journalism is for good or ill is still being debated, but one thing scholars do agree on is that a change is taking place that is having a direct and significant effect on the mainstream media. Johnston (2008) explained the basic adjustments taking place in the news industry since the launch of citizen journalism:

The Web is the kind of technology that changes everything. The economist Joseph Schumpeter called this process “creative destruction,” to explain both its harm and its benefits. In fact, the Internet is growing the audience for news. It is also changing audience expectations, as bloggers and others, not bound by newsroom traditions, explore new ways to report facts and imbue them with meaning. (p. 42)

Benefits of citizen journalism. Citizen journalists thrive on spot news reporting or breaking news such as fires, floods and other unplanned events. The citizen input, ideas and information provided in breaking news situations have enhanced some news content. Citizen journalists are making the kind of video available that has never before been available. Potter (2007) explained that the worth of citizen journalist contributions is particularly highlighted during breaking news and disaster situations:

If it hadn't been for a cell phone camera, the world would never have seen video of Saddam Hussein's execution. The first video of the London subway bombings came in via cell phone, too, not from journalists but from commuters who saw it all happen. With so many camera phones in circulation, it's no wonder major news organizations are now actively soliciting video from ordinary citizens who might have captured something newsworthy. (p. 66)

Another benefit of citizen journalists' contributions was made manifest in the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake that resulted in the deadly tsunami. Of this situation, Cooper (2007) stated:

As Tom Glocer, the head of Reuters pointed out, on the 26 December 2004 none of the Reuters' 2,300 journalists or 1,000 stringers were on the beach the moment

the wave struck. “For the first 24 hours, the best and the only photos and video came from tourists armed with telephones, digital cameras and camcorders. And if you didn’t have those pictures, you weren’t on the story” (p. 5).

In response, to this outpouring of valuable information, news stations are now accepting citizen journalists’ lower-quality videos—something that was frowned upon in the past—when the videos can be used to enhance news story or provide a visual that is otherwise not obtainable. Further, through social media websites, such as Twitter and YouTube, citizen journalists can publish their information, giving news consumers access to a wide variety of information immediately. The power of the Internet’s immediacy continuously ensures its value as an influential information source. This immediacy is something today’s news consumers want and now demand.

Detriments of citizen journalism. Though there are benefits of user-generated content, Cooper (2007) stated it is important to “not forget there are problems with citizen journalism that would be foolish to ignore” (p. 8). One concern is that the title of citizen journalist is used loosely. Essentially anyone can be called a citizen journalist; no education, training, or experience is necessary. The literature suggests citizen journalists are failing in three main areas: accuracy, fact checking (the checks-and-balances process) and credentials.

Cooper (2007) highlighted the lack of accurate reporting and questioned the quality of the reports coming from citizen journalists during the 2004 tsunami:

As Simon Waldman of the *Guardian* pointed out the tsunami showed both the strengths and the weakness of UGC (user generated content). Its strength was the vividness of the accounts and the sheer volume of e-mails, texts, blogs, and video.

Its weakness was the fact that just because you have hundreds of accounts you don't necessarily know exactly what the story is. Eyewitnesses can embellish and misremember. (p. 8).

Sutcliffe (2007) stated in simple terms what he perceived to be the issue: "The problem with citizen journalists—just like all us citizens—is that they're incorrigible sensationalists" (para. 8). Leigh (2008) expressed an even more critical view, stating the content produced by citizen journalists is of little or no worth because citizen journalists do not take the time to produce a high quality, accurate product:

You can get junk food on every high street. And you can get junk journalism almost as easily. But just as there is now a Slow Food movement, I should also like to see more Slow Journalism. Slow Journalism would show greater respect for the reporter as a patient assembler of facts; a skilled craftsman who is independent and professionally reputable; a disentangler of lies and weasel words. (p. 55)

Thurman (2008) found that journalists and editors who reviewed the work of citizen journalists had concerns regarding the quality of the citizen journalists' information because of the lack of the checks-and-balances process: "There was a need to edit material in order to avoid duplication, keep the standards of spelling and grammar high, select material that was newsworthy with broad appeal and ensure balance and decency" (p. 154). Bilal (2009) added to Thurman's ideas by highlighting what he saw as the detriments of citizen journalism resulting from the lack of the checks-and-balances process:

If their writing is deliberately offensive, there's no system of checks to prevent such messages from being distributed. This leads to a host of other problems—copyright theft, irresponsible journalism (we're not journalists, the rules don't apply to us, so we can say whatever we want to whomever we want). With traditional media, their agenda may be defined by their bottom line but they are still subject to rules and regulations of their local journalistic authority. Citizen journalists? No such thing. (para. 20)

Most citizen journalists' stories have no hierarchy, their stories are not edited by professionals, and they are not accountable to anyone if their work is found to be inaccurate. As a result, citizen journalists can say anything about anyone or any circumstance without any serious repercussions. Some critics say the seemingly no-consequence aspects of citizen journalism opens the floodgates to bias, discrimination, and false information.

Knight (2008) addressed the lack of credentials held by citizen journalists: "Journalists were once defined by where they worked; in newspapers, or radio and television stations. The Internet promises everyone can be a publisher. But not everyone has the skills or training to be a journalist; defined by their professional practices and codes of ethics" (p. 123). David Hazinski (2007) suggested it is ridiculous to call someone a journalist who lacks the necessary credentials:

The premise of citizen journalism is that regular people can now collect information and pictures with video cameras and cell phones, and distribute words and images over the Internet. Advocates argue that the acts of collecting and distributing makes these people "journalists." This is like saying someone who

carries a scalpel is a “citizen surgeon” or someone who can read a law book is a “citizen lawyer. . . . Citizen journalism really isn’t journalism, it’s gossip.

Where’s the training, experience, standards and skills essential to gather and report news? It opens up the news flow to the strong possibility of fraud and abuse. (p. 1)

Hazinski’s thoughts and concerns were echoed by a news director (cited by Christiansen, 2009):

There is some value of going to school and getting a degree and working in the business. You learn a profession, and a craft that’s not simple . . . you’re not going to be talking about citizen surgeons, and you’re not going to have one come in skill to it, and a certain craft that is professional. (p. 13)

As citizen journalists continue in their efforts to provide news and information to the public, the research suggests that it would be wise for them to begin implementing core components of journalism starting with accuracy, fact checking (the checks-and-balances process) and acquiring credentials.

Source Credibility

A question important in this discussion is whether names, titles, and experience matter. These elements are the essential components of bylines and biographies, which tell the reader about the writer of an article. The research suggests that bylines and biographies do matter; multiple studies indicate that readers use the byline and biography to judge the value of an article (Goldberg, 1968; Greenberg and Tannenbaum, 1961; Shaw et al., 1981).

Greenberg and Tannenbaum (1961) found that when a byline was placed in a noticeable position, the mere presence of the byline influenced the readers' attitudes toward the views in the article. Goldberg (1968) and Shaw et al. (1981) expanded on Greenberg and Tannenbaum's study by conducting a study on gender in bylines they found that the gender of the author influences the reader's evaluation of the article. For example, while studying scholarly articles Goldberg (1968) discovered that if the author was male, readers evaluated the article content as being more valuable and the author as being more competent. Shaw et al. (1981) studied the effect of a man's name in the byline versus a women's name in the byline to see whether the gender of the reporter influenced the participants' evaluations of the articles. Shaw et al. found that gender does make a difference in readers' judgments of news stories. Shaw et al. (1981) reported that certain article topics received higher ratings when associated with a specific gender. For example, regarding an article on rape, the researchers found that male bylines produced higher reader evaluations regarding the article being accurate, believable, and informed. When the same article was given a female byline, readers evaluated the article as being more interesting and dramatic, which are both stereotypic adjectives. Shaw et al. also used a fashion article and found that when a female byline was used, readers evaluated the article to be more interesting and clear than when a male byline was used. In evaluation of a sports article, the content was judged to be more rational when presented a female bylines was used and more interesting, dramatic, and active when a male byline was used (Shaw et al., 1981).

Miller and Kurpius (2010) found that when judging news content, "the currency of credibility and trust hinges largely on the credibility and trustworthiness of the

information and, particularly, the sources” (p. 140). Miller and Kurpius conducted research on individuals’ perceptions of news sources, particularly regarding source credibility, by comparing television news stories affiliated with official sources and citizen sources. The researchers explained their findings as follows:

For a long time, reporters and scholars have assumed that citizens make a distinction between official and citizen sources. For the first time, this experiment shows that is indeed the case. The gap in credibility is larger than expected, since the experiment carefully chose a relatively equal story frame. . . . To be clear, this sample believed the official sources were significantly more credible, thus validating some researchers’ and journalists’ justifications that official sources add trustworthiness to a story. The citizen sources were viewed as credible, just less so than officials. (p. 149).

Gunter’s (2005) research led to many interesting conclusions regarding newsworthy events and the power and influence of broadcast news reporting. He suggested that individuals place credibility in TV networks or stations, rather than in specific reporters. Because news consumers do not know all of the reporters or anchors on each station, news consumers base their viewing preferences on stations’ reputations (Gunter, 2005). Gunter’s view is interesting because if his view is correct or agreed upon by the masses, the popularity of citizen journalism will not last for long because very few citizen journalists are affiliated with a mainstream news station, thus diminishing their credibility. Miller and Kurpius’ (2010) research supports Gunter’s view. These researchers suggested that one reason for the lower credibility rankings of citizen sources is that citizens lack affiliation with organizations and thus “do not have the titles or

positions that signal credibility in the society” (Miller & Kurpius, 2010, p. 150). Miller and Kurpius further explained that “titles and positions act as placeholders for trustworthiness and credibility” (p. 141).

A goal of the current study is to add to the research on bylines and source credibility by discovering whether readers notice article biographies (containing the authors’ names, titles, education, and experience) and, if so, whether the biographies influence readers’ perceptions of the credibility and professionalism of the articles. This focus leads to the two final hypotheses:

H4: A professional journalist article will score higher in credibility and professionalism when paired with a professional journalist biography than when paired with a citizen journalist biography.

H5: A citizen journalist article will score higher in credibility and professionalism when paired with a professional journalist biography than when paired with a citizen journalist biography.

As previously explained, the purpose of this study is to discover the effects of biographies on peoples’ judgments of credibility and professionalism of news articles. The current study contains five hypotheses. Each of the five hypotheses involves the prediction that news consumers will judge the work of a professional journalist as of higher quality (more credible and more professional) than the work of a citizen journalist. The first hypothesis regards trustworthiness, which is one aspect of the current study’s credibility scale, which was created based on the work of Beam, Weaver, and Brownlee (2009), Johnson and Weidenbeck (2009), Newhagen and Nass (1989), Gaziano and McGrath (1986), and Abdulla et al. (2005). The second hypothesis involves all aspects of

the credibility scale to judge overall credibility. The third hypothesis regards overall professionalism and involves a scale inspired by the work of Hall (1968), Kerr et al. (1977), Snizek (1972), and Bartol (1979). The fourth and fifth hypotheses regard the predictions that articles paired with a professional journalist biography will receive higher scores on the credibility and professionalism scales than articles paired with a citizen journalist biography. These predictions, if proven correct, will indicate that professional journalists are still seen as the superior source for news and information.

Chapter 3: Method

Introduction

With the rise in citizen journalism, this experimental-design study was conducted to determine the influence of an author biography on readers' perceptions of the credibility and professionalism of a professional journalist's news article versus a citizen journalist's news article. By including the element of an author biography, the study expanded upon credibility studies (Beam et al., 2009; Johnson & Weidenbeck, 2009; Newhagen & Nass, 1989; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; and Abdulla et al. 2005), professionalism studies (Hall, 1968; Kerr et al., 1977; Snizek, 1972; and Bartol, 1979), and a news byline study (Shaw et al., 1981).

This chapter includes a description of the sample, variables, and methods used in the study. The sample section contains an outline of how the sample population was selected, as well as an explanation of the demographics of the study participants. The variable section contains discussion of the variables used in the study, including how and why they were selected. The methods section includes an explanation of how and why the four article treatments were created, along with how the survey was executed.

Sample

The sample selected for this study was based on snowball sampling. The study participants consisted of 278 news consumers. The data was collected by using Qualtrics, an online survey software. The participants were sent an e-mail that contained a link to the consent form and survey. By clicking on the link, the participants were taken to the consent form; after agreeing to the consent form, the participants were connected to the survey, which included the article treatments (news articles and biographies) and

questions regarding the article treatments. The survey also included demographic questions regarding the participant's age, gender, and educational level.

Variables

The independent variables in the study consisted of the following four treatments:

1. Professional journalist feature article with a professional journalist biography
2. Citizen journalist feature article with a professional journalist biography
3. Citizen journalist feature article with a citizen journalist biography
4. Professional journalist feature article with a citizen journalist biography

The main dependent variables were credibility and professionalism. Categorized under each main dependent variable were additional dependent variables used to help explain the elements of credibility and professionalism. These other dependent variables were used in the survey as the dimensions on which to judge the credibility and professionalism of the four treatments.

Perceptions of credibility. Credibility was judged by having the participants rate each news article on 17 credibility dimensions using a 5-point bipolar-statement scale. The scale was a combination of Gaziano and McGrath's (1986) scale and Abdulla et al.'s (2005) scale. The scale used for this study included 11 items from Gaziano and McGrath's credibility scale and six items from Abdulla et al.'s scale. Gaziano and McGrath's scale and Abdulla et al.'s scale included some of the same or similar items; in such cases, only one of the items was included in the scale for the current study. For example, one scale included "tells the whole story" and the other scale included "reported the whole story"; the credibility scale developed for the current study included the former

and excluded the latter. Items that were contained in both scales include the following is trustworthy, is biased, is fair, and is accurate. In total, the modified credibility scale created for this study consisted of the following 17 dimensions: is fair, is biased, tells the whole story, is accurate, invades people's privacy, is balanced, is concerned about the community's well-being, does separate fact and opinion, is trustworthy, is concerned about the public interest, is factual, has well-trained reporters, is timely, is up-to-date, is believable, is honest, and is objective. The combination of the Gaziano and McGrath scale and the Abdulla et al. scale provided the variety needed to accurately evaluate the participants' perceptions of the credibility of the four treatments.

Perceptions of professionalism. A modified scale was also used to judge professionalism. The participants judged each news article on 14 professionalism dimensions using a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The scale was based on the work of Hall (1968), Kerr et al. (1977), Snizek (1972), and Bartol (1979) in their professionalism research. The 14 scale dimensions included formal education, professional training, collegial maintenance of standards, professional commitment, professional identification, belief in service to the public, belief in self-regulation, accountability for work, formal code of ethics to which the author abides, hierarchy of authority, presence of rules, professional associations, ethics, and autonomy in work.

The Four Treatments, Manipulation Check, and Survey

The four treatment articles. Two feature news stories were selected from KSL.com (a traditional broadcast news website). A citizen journalist (KSL.com contributor) wrote one article, and a professional journalist (KSL reporter) wrote the

other article. The articles were slightly edited for presentation purposes and to make the articles as similar as possible (e.g., format, font, and article length). The names of the professional journalist and citizen journalist were changed to one hypothetical female name to eliminate bias connected to the journalists' names, reputations, and genders. A headline topped each article, followed by a date and time, and then by a byline with the author's name (the professional journalist byline and the citizen journalist byline were both listed as "By Jane Cole"). Each article concluded with a biography of the journalist. The headline, date and time, byline, and biography were formatted according to a traditional KSL.com news article. Each of the biographies contained information about the author along with the author's contact information. The professional journalist's biography was created to be typical of a professional journalist's biography (talking about the author's academic degrees and professional journalism experience and including the author's professional e-mail address); the citizen journalist's biography was created to be typical of a citizen journalist's biography (focusing on the author's life and hobbies and including a link to the author's blog). The biographies were based on real biographies used by professional journalists and citizen journalists to ensure the biographies accurately represented a professional journalist and a citizen journalist. The only difference in the two articles was that the professional journalist article had a locator line at the beginning of the text and the KSL.com copyright at the bottom of the article, whereas the citizen journalist article did not include these items.

Both articles were feature news stories on saving money. While researching the best type of news article to use to judge the credibility and professionalism of citizen journalists and professional journalists, the researcher decided focusing the content on a

hard news topic would not be fair to the citizen journalist as they typically do not write hard news stories. Thus, the researcher concluded that a feature news article would produce the best comparison because the majority of citizen journalists' articles fall in the feature news genre and this area favors input from experts and non-experts alike. A feature news article highlights the strengths in both forms of journalism (citizen and professional), clearly displaying the unique characteristics of each of the journalistic styles. For example, the citizen journalist's article includes information from an outside source and a personal commentary, without original interviews. In contrast, the professional journalist's article, a typical journalist's article, was well-researched and told someone's story through original interviews.

Manipulation check/pretest. The sample for the pretest was selected based on convenience sampling. The pretest was administered via a paper survey. The 50 participants were contacted in person at multiple venues around St. George, Utah (Dixie State College, the public library, and on the streets of St. George). The participants were diverse in race, gender, age, socioeconomic background, and level of education. The participants were randomly handed one of the two news article treatments that were being tested. Since the independent variable being tested was the difference in the news article treatments (byline, biography and article content) a manipulation check of Treatment 1 (professional journalist feature article with a professional journalist biography) and Treatment 3 (citizen journalist feature article with a citizen journalist biography) was conducted. This test was performed to ensure that the participants recognized the difference between the two treatment bylines, biographies and articles content. This was done to determine whether the participants actually received the treatment.

The first section of the survey contained a consent form and the instructions for taking the survey (including the instruction not to look back at the article while answering the questions). Next, the survey contained one of two news article treatments (25 participants received the citizen journalist feature article/citizen journalist biography treatment, and the other 25 participants received the professional journalist feature article/professional journalist biography treatment). The survey concluded with a questionnaire containing six questions that served as the manipulation check. These questions were pretested to ensure there was enough variance in the answers. The majority of the participants answered the questions correctly. The responses of those who did not understand the treatment were eliminated. Of the participants who received Treatment 1, more than 84% scored perfectly. Of the participants who received Treatment 2, more than 76% scored perfectly.

Slight changes were made to the articles and the survey questions after evaluating the pretest responses. For example, the name in the bylines for Treatment 1 and Treatment 2 were different in the pretest but were made identical in the official survey (Jane Cole). Also, the pretest byline included the author's title (KSL reporter or KSL.com contributor), but this information was deleted because the title of the author was included in the biography. Another change involved the questions used to judge whether the participants read the byline and biography. On the pretest, four questions used; these questions were condensed to one question asking whether the author of the article was a citizen journalist, financial planner, or professional journalist. The participant was also given the option to respond that he or she did not know/remember.

The survey. For the main study, an online survey was administered to participants using Qualtrics, a Web-based survey instrument. Each participant in the experiment was presented with a consent form and then randomly assigned one of the four article and biography treatments. After being randomly assigned, the participants were given a prompt or introduction for the assigned article treatment. The prompt for Treatment 1 and Treatment 2 was as follows: “You are now going to read an article by a professional journalist. Please take the time to read the entire article carefully.” The prompt for Treatment 3 and Treatment 4 was as follows: “You are now going to read an article by a citizen journalist. Please take the time to read the entire article carefully.” The participants then read the assigned news article and biography and evaluated the article by answering a questionnaire about the content in the article and the biography to ensure the participants read the article and biography (the participants were unable to view the article while answering the questions).

If the participants did not answer the questions about the biography and news article correctly, their surveys were not included in the final survey data because the participants were judged as not understanding the treatment. Immediate cognitive recall was measured via three multiple-choice questions in the first part of the questionnaire. The answers to these questions were based on the information in the news article and biography. The participants were then asked to judge the credibility of the news article using a 5-point scale with 17 sets of bipolar adjectives. The participants were then asked to judge the professionalism of the article by using a 7-point Likert scale to rank the article on the 14 dimensions of professionalism. The credibility and professionalism questions were followed by an open-ended question to allow the participants to make any

final statements about the survey. The survey concluded with questions regarding the demographics of the study participants.

The study data was collected to determine whether a relationship exists between the content of the article and the biography attached to the article, in particular, whether the biographies attached to the news articles influenced the participants' perceptions of the credibility and professionalism of the articles.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter contains a description of the survey sample and the results of the research. SPSS software was used to analyze the data through running Cronbach's alpha tests and independent *T*-tests.

Sample Description

At the end of data collection, 278 participants had completed the survey. The participants were 36% male and 64% female. The majority of the participants were 20–30 years old (33% of the participants were ages 20–24, and 23% of the participants were 25–30). The largest educational-level group consisted of individuals with a 4-year college degree (30%). A manipulation check was run to verify the respondents understood the treatment. Based on the check, 80 participants' responses were eliminated, resulting in a total of 198 participants' responses being included in the final survey data..

Analysis Description

Cronbach's alpha tests were used for each of the scales (trustworthiness, credibility, and professionalism) to measure the reliability. All scales were judged to be reliable (trustworthiness = .88, credibility = .912, and professionalism = .930).

The first hypothesis regarded trustworthiness, predicting that a professional journalist article/professional biography treatment would be rated higher in trustworthiness than a citizen journalist article/citizen biography treatment. The researcher conducted a *T*-test and determined that H1 was not supported in the hypothesis testing because there was no difference in the mean score ($p = .294$).

The focus of the second hypothesis was on overall credibility, predicting that a professional journalist article/professional biography treatment would be rated higher in credibility than a citizen journalist article/citizen biography treatment. The researcher

conducted a *T*-test and determined that H2 was not supported in the hypothesis testing because there was no difference in the mean score ($p = .340$).

The third hypothesis related to overall professionalism, predicting that a professional journalist article/professional biography treatment would be rated higher in professionalism than a citizen journalist article/citizen biography treatment. The researcher conducted a *T*-test and determined that H3 was supported in the hypothesis testing. The professional journalist article/professional biography treatment group ($n = 46$) received significantly higher mean scores on professionalism ($m = 72.09$, $SD = 12.91$, $p = .017$) than the citizen journalist article/citizen biography treatment group ($n = 51$, $m = 65.82$, $SD = 12.51$, $p = .017$).

The fourth hypothesis involved the prediction that a professional journalist article/professional biography treatment would be judged as more credible and more professional than a professional journalist article/citizen journalist biography treatment. The researcher conducted a *T*-test and determined that H4-a (credibility) was not supported in the hypothesis testing. In fact, the results indicate the opposite of what was expected. The professional journalist article/citizen biography treatment group ($n = 43$) received a significantly higher mean score ($m = 68.07$, $SD = 9.19$, $p = .037$) than the professional journalist article/professional biography treatment group ($n = 48$, $m = 63.46$, $SD = 11.57$, $p = .04$). Regarding H4-b (professionalism), the researcher conducted a *T*-test and determined that the results were not significant.

The fifth hypothesis contained the prediction that a citizen journalist article/professional biography treatment would be judged as more credible and more professional than a citizen journalist article/citizen journalist biography treatment. The

researcher conducted a *T*-test and determined that H5 was not supported for credibility ($p = .35$) or professionalism ($p = .31$).

Discussion

The current study did not produce the anticipated results; in fact, in one area the results were counterintuitive, validating the opposite of what was expected. The only hypothesis that was supported was H3. This section contains discussion of the findings and possible explanations of the surprising results.

H1 and H2. H1 was not supported. The analysis of the data shows that the respondents did not consider a professional journalist article/professional biography treatment to be more trustworthy than a citizen journalist article/citizen biography treatment. Likewise, H2 was not supported. It is important to note that the articles used were not identical, only similar. The results for H1 and H2 show there was no difference in the mean scores for the two treatments, which suggests that the respondents did not consider a professional journalist article/professional biography treatment to be more trustworthy or credible than a citizen journalist article/citizen biography treatment. These results also suggest that the participants did not see professional journalist article/professional biography treatment to be less trustworthy or credible than a citizen journalist article/citizen biography treatment. The results regarding H1 and H2 were initially surprising. After analyzing and further considering the data, the findings became more understandable, especially when acknowledging the findings of some previous studies. For example, Smith (2009) found that when compared to individuals in other professions, “journalists are ranked as the least trustworthy with just 19 percent believing they tell the truth” (p. 1). Pate’s (2010) findings correspond with the current study’s

findings that the public trusts journalists less than other people: “Journalists and the media aren’t trusted that much at all. In fact people trust their plumbers more than journalists” (p. 1). Maier (2004) highlighted results from a Gallup Poll and noted that “the poll suggests that only 21 percent of Americans believe journalists have high ethical standards, ranking them below auto mechanics but tied with members of Congress” (p. 1). When analyzing the data from the “[State of the News Media 2010](#)” report Rosenstiel (2010) discovered similar findings:

After some years of stability in trust levels relating to the media, just in the last couple years we've seen a rise in distrust again. Much of it actually is from liberals who think that the [media have] become more biased than they were. Earlier levels of distrust rising a decade ago tended to be more among conservatives. Now both sides are angry at us. (para. 10)

The current study’s results are in support of the idea that the public may be losing trust in professional journalists, thus decreasing journalists’ credibility.

The results for H1 and H2 could be connected to the articles selected for the study. It must be understood that the findings from the current study should not be generalized to all work produced by professional journalists and citizen journalists because of the limitations of the study, particularly that only one type of news article was used. The articles used in the study were feature news stories on saving money. The articles were not identical, just similar. These stories were selected rather hard news stories because the feature news category is considered a genre in which experts may not be the only people who can produce good information. Using this type of article allowed the work of professional and citizen journalists to be the most similar in nature. For

example, though the citizen journalist article used in the study did not contain original sources (as the traditional journalist article did), the article contained information from a credible source (Trent Hamm, author of a financial book). Referring to the financial guru automatically gave the article credibility.

Another explanation of the results for H1 and H2 might regard the information in the citizen journalist's biography, which indicated the author was a mother of three children, a role that typically requires the individual to be money conscious. This biography might have contributed to the citizen journalist's credibility on the particular topic of the articles. If a hard news story had been selected for use in the study, the results may have been drastically different because hard news stories require high levels of journalistic skills, such as researching, asking the right questions, and writing—skills and article characteristics that are not usually seen in the work of typical citizen journalists.

H3. H3 was the only hypothesis supported. The results indicate that a professional journalist article/professional biography treatment is considered to be more professional than a citizen journalist article/citizen biography treatment. In other words, the study participants consider journalism a profession, and they recognize the differences between the work and credentials of a citizen journalist and a professional journalist. These findings may be related to the two dimensions of the treatment: the article and the biography. As mentioned previously, the articles used for Treatment 1 and Treatment 3 were similar but not exactly the same. Treatment 1 was written by a professional journalist; thus, the content of the article included research, original interviews, and original thoughts. In contrast, Treatment 3 was written by a citizen journalist; thus, the article contained the ideas of another author and commentary from the citizen journalist.

The content of the articles may have played a major role in the participants' judgment that Treatment 1 was more professional than Treatment 3 because Treatment 1 matched the format used by a professional journalist and Treatment 3 did not.

These results were determined based on the scale that was used to judge professionalism, which consisted of the following items: formal education, professional training, collegial maintenance of standards, professional commitment, professional identification, belief in service to the public, belief in self-regulation, accountability for work, formal code of ethics to which the author abides, hierarchy of authority, presence of rules, professional associations, ethics, and autonomy in work. Most of the items on the scale directly relate to characteristics required in an occupation, such as specialized schooling, training, and affiliation with a professional organization; thus, it is no surprise that the professional journalist article/professional biography treatment was considered to be more professional than the citizen journalist article/citizen biography treatment.

To be a professional journalist, an individual must be hired for such a job, and this task is not easy, especially today. Those hired as journalists in the 21st century must have academic degrees, work experience, and professional affiliations. In contrast, the title of a citizen journalist can be given to or assumed by anyone. The requirements, or lack thereof, clearly demonstrate the differences in professionalism between professional journalists and citizen journalists. It is apparent that the article and the biography associated with a professional journalist scored higher in professionalism than the article and biography associated with a citizen journalist because traditional journalists are just that, professionals who are educated, trained, and paid to do a job.

H4. H4-a (credibility) was not supported. The results indicated that a professional journalist article/professional biography treatment is not seen as more credible than a professional journalist article/citizen biography treatment. In fact, the results indicated the opposite: When an article is associated with a citizen journalist, it is judged as more credible, which is a concerning finding for journalists. It is important to note that although the results show there is a significant difference between the two treatments, the professional journalist article/professional biography treatment still scored high in credibility ($m = 63.46$), just not as high as the professional journalist article/citizen biography treatment ($m = 68.07$). The findings for H4-a may be linked to the ideas outlined for H1 and H2, regarding the public's mistrust of journalists, leading the public to prefer the work of the average citizen, someone members of the public feel they can relate to. This idea leads to another possible reason for the outcome of H4-a, which is that the sample consisted largely of younger individuals, who grew up with online news and information, so they are comfortable with such information. Another reason is that citizen journalism is becoming more accepted because of advancing technology, creating the tools to allow everyone to publish photos, comments, and thoughts. As a result, people are becoming increasingly comfortable with the ideas and information coming from ordinary citizens. One example of this trend is the increasing popularity of blogs.

The results regarding H4-b (professionalism) were not significant. However, the results may indicate that because of the nature of the professional journalist article's content, when judging professionalism it made no difference to the participants whether the professional journalist article was paired with a professional biography or a citizen biography.

H5. H5-a and H5-b were not supported, which leads to the conclusion that the participants did not care who wrote the article because there was no significant difference in the rankings of credibility or professionalism when comparing the citizen journalist article/professional biography treatment and the citizen journalist article/citizen biography treatment. Once again, these findings might be linked to the overall mistrust of journalists and the ever-increasing acceptance of citizen journalists, especially by the large number of younger individuals who participated in the survey.

The results of this study suggest that content is king. The findings also suggest that biographies may not be the best variable to use when judging the credibility and professionalism of news articles. It can be concluded that in certain situations, the author's writing style, the sources used, and the article's style/quality/format contributes to the overall ranking of the article; therefore, the biography is not the only element news consumers use when judging a news article.

Limitations

The first limitation of the study resulted from administering the survey solely over the Internet. This method made it easy for those who are comfortable with and use the Internet often to take the survey but eliminated a large majority of older news consumers who are not comfortable with the Internet. The sample was skewed towards young females. The study may have been enhanced by distributing the survey both online and on paper survey to better include older news consumers. The second study limitation relates to the prior problem, which is the ages of the survey respondents. The majority of the respondents were 20–30 years old, a group of individuals who grew up with and are very comfortable with the Internet. The sample was skewed to this younger generation of

news consumers, who did not grow up reading printed newspapers or waiting to watch the 6:00 p.m. news. Rather, members of this generation are used to obtaining information immediately from the Internet, making them more comfortable with nontraditional sources of news, such as the information from citizen journalists. The results may have been different if the sample demographics were more evenly spread out among age ranges.

Finally, in retrospect it is clear that the study could have been enhanced two ways: adding a few more questions to the survey and increasing the variety of articles that were analyzed by the participants. First, it would have been beneficial to add a few questions to understand the participants' media use, such as the following: How often do you read a daily newspaper? How often do you watch a local TV news broadcast? Answers to these types of questions could have helped identify the typical media use of the survey participants. Second, it would have been advantageous to have the participants analyze a variety of articles (hard news, soft news, sports, etc.) from professional and citizen journalists, not just one feature news article from each type of journalist. By adding an assortment of articles, the result of the study could have been generalized to all areas of journalism (both professional and citizen journalism). Making the outlined enhancements would have resulted in a powerful study.

Suggestions for Future Research

Although the current study did not produce the results to support the hypotheses, the study's findings are significant because they indicate news consumers do not consider professional journalists to be the most trustworthy or credible information sources. This is an interesting phenomenon that will have an effect on the future of news and

information sources. It will be important for future research to be conducted to provide answers to the many questions regarding the effects of citizen journalism on professional journalism because this topic is a relatively new area of study. The following are the four main areas in journalism that need attention.

The first area is to define *citizen journalist* and *professional journalist*. Clear definitions need to be set to highlight the qualifications and educational and professional differences between citizen journalists and traditional journalists. Future research in this area could determine the following: Who are journalists? Are there certain qualifications journalists must meet? If so, what are those qualifications? Must an individual be employed by a news organization to be considered a journalist? Must an individual be educated to be considered a journalist? Clear definitions will help future researchers in their studies and society in general to understand the differences in the sources of news and information, thus helping members of society to be wise media consumers.

The first area is related to the second area of study that needs attention: source credibility. When conducting the current study, it was difficult to find studies dealing directly with the credibility of primary sources (meaning the journalist or author of the text). Future researchers could use the current study as a base from which to examine in more depth the topic of source credibility and to discover the answers to questions such as the following: What characteristics make a source valuable? What makes a source credible? To be considered credible, what characteristics must a journalist/author possess? Is affiliation with a news organization enough to make a source valuable? Is education enough to make a source valuable? Insight into these areas will provide answers to the concerns in the communication industry pertaining to the future of news.

Because news is a business, once it is determined what current and future news consumers want and from whom, it will be much easier for professional journalists to satisfy consumers' desires. Information in these areas could also affect how journalism is taught at universities.

The third point of interest is the future of journalism. As a broadcast journalist, the researcher, along with thousands of current journalists, has a deep invested interest in the future of news. To some journalists, journalism is their life, their love, their livelihood. It is important to conduct research on current and future news consumers to determine what they value in news and information sources. Specific ideas for future studies include the following: Where do 21st-century news consumers turn first for news and information? Why? Do news consumers still value education and professional training in journalists? Or, do they not care who provides information as long as they get the information? Why do people participate in citizen journalism? What types of news or information from citizen journalists do consumers accept? What types of stories do consumers prefer reading from an expert? Answers to these questions will help determine the future of news. This much-needed information may be used to address what the public wants from news and information sources, to determine whether citizen journalists are a source news consumers will continue to rely on or whether blogging and citizen journalism are trends that will fade, and to determine whether consumers enjoy citizen journalist articles for certain types of information but do not accept citizen journalist work for other types of information. The future of journalism is unclear; research into this new phenomenon of citizen journalism will help determine what the future holds for the journalism industry.

The fourth point of interest is the nature of aggregation. The current study's findings may be skewed due to the fact that the article written by the citizen journalist was found to be more credible than the article written by the professional journalist. The reason why this study's actual findings may not be completely correct relates to the nature of aggregation, or rewriting what someone else has already written or published. The citizen journalist article used in the study is basically an aggregate or re-written copy of what Trent Hamm, author of the book *The Simple Dollar: How One Man Wiped Out His Debts and Achieved the Life of His Dreams* wrote. Taking the work of others and regurgitating the information is common in the practice of citizen journalism blogging. Blogging depends on a lot of secondary sources, with no original reporting taking place. This was the case for the citizen journalist article used in this study. After reviewing the citizen journalist article and Hamm's book, it was found that Hamm's book gave numerous money-saving tips and the citizen journalist just selected a few of those tips, threw her name at the top and published the ideas as her own article. The fact that the citizen journalist article, that was just a rewrite of information published by Hamm, was deemed as more credible than the traditional journalists article, that contained original research, interviews and content, leads to a potentially ethical issue dealing with the nature of aggregation, is it plagiarism? According to Collins English Dictionary, the definition of plagiarism is "The unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work, as by not crediting the author" (para. 1). To the citizen journalists credit she did mention Hamm in her article, but does this make her credible? The credibility of this citizen journalist may have been linked directly to the credibility of Hamm. The credibility of

citizen journalists are often borrowed or stolen from credible sources from which the aggregated information was taken from. Recently, the idea of aggregation has developed into a heated discussion among journalists and scholars. It is crucial to the future of journalism that research is conducted addressing the following questions surrounding aggregation: Is taking someone else's work and rewriting it as your own acceptable? Is aggregation plagiarism? How are aggregation and plagiarism different, or are they the same? Should aggregated content be considered journalism? Is aggregation actual journalism? Answers to these questions will be beneficial to society as it will clear the blurred lines between the work and credibility of professional journalists and citizen journalists. Findings in this area could result in regulations regarding content produced and published by citizen journalists, requiring citizen journalists to clearly give credit to the author of the original work they aggregate. Research into aggregation will also be valuable to future scholars researching answers to the previously mentioned areas of defining *citizen journalist* and *professional journalist*, source credibility and the future of journalism.

Conclusion

Although most of the hypotheses were not validated by the data, the goal of the study was achieved through determining the power of biographies when judging the credibility and professionalism of professional journalist articles and citizen journalist articles. The study's findings indicate that the treatments associated with a professional journalist ranked lower in trustworthiness and credibility than the treatments associated with a citizen journalist. When looking strictly at the results regarding professionalism, professional journalists were considered more professional than citizen journalists.

The results show that today is indeed the golden age of news and that a changing of the guard may be occurring in the journalism world because news consumers may no longer view the work of professional journalists as superior to citizen journalists. The findings of this study suggest that citizen journalism is powerful and is influencing the journalism profession. The effects and outcomes of citizen journalism cannot be determined by this study alone; however, this study and other literature indicate one thing is certain regarding the future of journalism: change. As Potter (2007) asked, “Should local TV reporters worry about becoming expendable? I think some businesspeople do think of it as a way to get more content for nothing, and maybe we can get rid of some jobs” (p. 66). However, Potter went on to quote Pappas’ vice president of news development, Desiree Hill, who said, “But there will always be a need for someone’s job to be to gather news and report. . . . We can’t replace reporting with citizen journalism” (p. 66). Cox (2006) explained that being a journalist is not an easy job and depending on citizen journalists alone to provide news and information may not be the wisest of ideas:

No matter how dedicated they (citizen journalists) might be to following a story—and even learning the trade—very few are able to sustain their participation for very long. . . . Reporting, when done well, can be an all-encompassing exercise—in identifying and contacting the best sources (and getting calls returned), in understanding the broader context of the issue being explored, in gathering information through interviews and other research, and in writing a clear and compelling story that fairly represents diverse perspectives. These are not easy tasks for even the most experienced reporters, so it’s not surprising that many citizen journalists find the process vexing and frustrating—given that they

typically have full-time jobs that take up much of their day and most of their energy. (p. 77)

What professional journalists can learn from this study is that they need to build their reputations in the areas of trustworthiness and credibility because currently journalists have an unfavorable reputation, something that should be considered a major problem. The good news for journalists is they are mostly still considered superior to citizen journalists in regard to professionalism. An important finding of this study for news and information consumers is that with the endless options of news and information found online, it is ever more important for news and information consumers to take an active role in evaluating sources. Hayes et al. (2007) explained that “this is an era in which the roles of information producer and consumer are interchangeable—and in which multiple voices can and do claim to be journalistic—each individual must determine what he or she values in a news source and how to assess whether a particular source has fulfilled those desires” (p. 263).

Appendix A: The Four Treatments

Consent Form

Thank you for participating in this research project. The current project is being conducted through Brigham Young University. The focus of the study is news content. You will be reading an article and then responding to a few questions. **Please read the entire text carefully.** When answering the questions, please do not look back at the article. This information will remain confidential and will be reported collectively. Your name will remain confidential and all of your responses will be kept confidential. Your participation should take about 5-7 minutes.

Treatment 1

You will begin by reading an article by a professional journalist. Please take the time to read the entire article carefully.

Click on the link below, read the entire article, and once you are done, come back to this survey and click the "Next" button. [Professional Journalist Article](#)

How you can save \$10,000 a year

May 23, 2011 @ 10:00pm

By Jane Cole

SALT LAKE CITY — Save \$10,000 in a year? Can you do it?

KSL News found a family of modest income, with five kids, who saved more than they dreamt possible. All they had to do was make saving money a top priority.

The Bethers family takes pleasure in life's simple things these days. Sick of living paycheck to paycheck, they've made saving a priority.

"We wanted something to happen that we needed to make happen, and that meant sacrificing now so we'd have something later," explained Nietra Bethers.

It worked. After six months, Gerratt Bethers was bowled over when Nietra told him they had \$12,000 in the bank.

"She told me how much money we had in the bank, my mouth dropped open," Gerratt said. "I couldn't believe we saved that much."

So, how did they do it? Gerratt saves every penny from a second job, but the Bethers' cut way back on spending too.

"She would look at every penny," Gerratt said.

"I, myself, haven't bought new clothes for years — which isn't very fun. I don't like that," Nietra said.

"You wish you could go out and eat, but it's really just better to stay at home — and you have a better meal," Gerratt said.

Does it have to hurt? No, but think about how the little things add up.

For example, your afternoon snack: A soda and chips at the KSL newsroom vending machines costs \$2. If you cut that out for a month, that's \$40; or \$520 a year. In lunches, about \$10 a day adds up to \$2,600 a year.

Think of similar opportunities in cutting your cable bill, your cell phone plan, even double checking for deals on car insurance. It all adds up.

"By keeping track of all those things, you realize where your spending goes. And it is possible (to save)," says Ann House, a bankruptcy prevention expert with the USU Extension program.

Savings can add up at the grocery store too. Paying for convenience, like with baby carrots versus regular ones, can cost almost \$1 more.

At the store, you can save big by using coupons and comparing store brands, which are sometimes more expensive than name brands on sale.

But is taking the time to comparison shop, clipping coupons, doing without the daily snack worth it?

"It's still a big deal for me to make that sacrifice every month," Gerratt said. But his family is dedicated, and you can be too.

It may sound basic, but it's easy for a lot of people to overlook these simple ways to save.

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Jane Cole is a professional journalist who has been working in the news industry since graduating from USC in 1999 with a journalism degree. Jane has vast experience as a journalist as she has covered stories ranging from the 2008 Presidential Election to Hurricane Katrina. Jane has worked for KSL for more than five years.

Email: cole@ksl.com

Treatment 2

You will begin by reading an article by a professional journalist. Please take the time to read the entire article carefully.

Click on the link below, read the entire article, and once you are done, come back to this survey and click the "Next" button. [Professional Journalist Article](#)

6 simple money-saving tips

May 23, 2011 @ 10:00pm

By Jane Cole

Why does it seem that the tighter you grasp your money the faster it flits from your grip? In today's economy, people are struggling to save every precious penny.

After wriggling through his own financial scuffles, Trent Hamm, author of the book "The Simple Dollar: How One Man Wiped Out His Debts and Achieved the Life of His Dreams," discovered some simple tips that helped him save money.

"Each of these tactics (is a) simple little move you can make to improve your financial situation," Hamm says on his website www.thesimpledollar.com. "Some of them take just a few minutes, others might take an hour or two... but they're all incredibly simple – anyone can do them."

Here are 6 of his tips that will help you keep your hard-earned money in hand.

1. **Switch to a bank that respects you.** Banks and credit unions are vying for your business. It doesn't make sense to settle on one that charges huge fees and awards minimal returns. A couple of quick calls to local banks and credit unions can give you powerful information about which institution will best benefit your family dollar.
2. **Master the 30-day rule.** Any time you are considering a non-essential purchase wait at least 30 days before you buy it. This gives you time to decide if you actually want to spend your money on the item or if it was simply a spontaneous desire.
3. **Create a list before you go shopping and stick to it.** Whether it is groceries or school clothes make a detailed list of everything you need before you leave the house. Making a list will not only protect you from impulse buying, it will also help you remember the items you need and keep you from running back to the store later on.

4. **Invite friends over instead of going out.** Eating out is expensive. Going to the movies or the ballet or the Jazz game is expensive too. Instead of heading out for a good time, enjoy an adventure at home. Plan a pot luck dinner or a game night. You will cut costs and still have a great time.
5. **Drink more water.** Drinking water will not only save you big bucks on sodas and juices, according to University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics drinking enough water will improve your overall health. From weight loss to better teeth, the benefits of drinking water are amazing, and to top it off, the liquid is nearly free.
6. **Buy generic items.** When it comes to medications, crackers and shampoo the store brand is often just as good as the name brand product without the hefty price tag. Check the labels. You will find that the ingredients are often identical. Give store brands a try and you can save big over time.

Simple changes in your everyday choices can create big savings.

Jane Cole is a professional journalist who has been working in the news industry since graduating from USC in 1999 with a journalism degree. Jane has vast experience as a journalist as she has covered stories ranging from the 2008 Presidential Election to Hurricane Katrina. Jane has worked for KSL for more than five years.

Email: cole@ksl.com

Treatment 3

You will begin by reading an article by a citizen journalist. Please take the time to read the entire article carefully.

Click on the link below, read the entire article, and once you are done, come back to this survey and click the "Next" button. [Citizen Journalist Article](#)

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Jane Cole is the mother of three children who lives in West Valley City, Utah. She loves to bake, brush teeth and read. You can email her at janec@gmail.com or follow her adventures in motherhood at thecolefamily.blogspot.com.

Treatment 4

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Appendix B: The Survey

Now, we would like to ask you a few questions about the article you just read.

Please do not look back at the article to help you answer the questions.

The author of the article is a

- Citizen Journalist
- Financial Planner
- Professional Journalist
- Don't know (don't remember)

The article you just read suggested that one of the six simple ways to save money was to "drink more water."

- True
- False
- Don't know (don't remember)

The article you just read gave the example of how paying for baby carrots versus regular ones can cost almost \$1 more.

- True
- False
- Don't know (don't remember)

For the next part, we ask you to please judge the article you just read in the following areas.

Click the dot between each pair of words and phrases (with opposite meanings) that best represents how you feel about the article.

Overall, the article was:

- Is fair Is unfair
- Is biased Is unbiased
- Tells the whole story Doesn't tell the whole story
- Is accurate Is inaccurate

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
A belief in self-regulation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accountability for work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A formal code of ethics to which they abide	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hierarchy of authority	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presence of rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Autonomy in work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Now, we ask you to please write any final comments you have about this survey.

Lastly, we ask you to please answer a few simple questions about yourself.

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your age?

- 18 to 19
- 20 to 24
- 25 to 30
- 31 to 37
- 38 to 45

- 46 to 55
- 56 to 64
- 65 years and older

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Less than High School
- High School / GED
- College Freshman
- College Sophomore
- College Junior
- College Senior
- 4-year College Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Professional Degree (JD, MD)

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