

CREDIBILITY OF DIGITAL POLITICAL NEWS IN SPAIN: COMPARISON BETWEEN TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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- Dissemination of fake news.



- Traditional media outlets' loss of centrality.



- Credibility of digital news.



- a threat for current democracies.

MAIN OBJECTIVE



To identify the levels of credibility that Spanish citizens assign to political news in the online environment, presented in traditional media formats (digital newspapers and digital television) and social media formats (Facebook and WhatsApp)



NEWS CREDIBILITY

The majority of authors concur in stating that news credibility can be addressed on 3 levels: **source credibility** (that is, the credibility of specific titles), **medium or media credibility** (that is, the credibility of television or newspapers or radio in general, for example) and **content or message credibility** (that is, the credibility of a specific news story)

Kiousis 2001, Bucy 2003, Chung et al. 2012, Blach-Ørsten & Burkal 2014

What are the components of credibility? (Sundar, 1999; Blach-Ørsten and Burkal, 2014)

- Trustworthiness and expertise are the two main sub-dimensions of credibility, especially source credibility. (Bucy, 2003; Chung et al., 2012; Choi & Kim, 2017)
- Hypertextuality and interactivity (Chung et al., 2012).
- *Other dimensions: such as objectivity, impartiality, accuracy, precision or veracity.

THE FACTORS THAT EXPLAIN THE CREDIBILITY ASSIGNED TO NEWS

Different studies have examined the factors that influence the perception of credibility beyond the source, the medium and the content of the news story.

Use and consumption of news practices in general (Roses & Gómez-Calderón 2015) and the **Internet** specifically – especially checking digital newspapers (Go et al. 2016) **affect the credibility levels assigned to news.**

Age has been noted as a factor that conditions the perception of credibility (Roses and Gómez-Calderón, 2015; Bucy, 2003; Johnson and Kaye, 2014)

FORMAT OR GENRE CREDIBILITY

The media credibility is conceptually different from source credibility
(Kiousis, 2001)

- I. **Flanagin and Metzger (2000)** constructed a composite index on the perception of the believability, accuracy, trustworthiness, bias and completeness of the news found in newspapers, radio, television and the Internet.
- II. **Kiousis (2001)** compared the perceptions of the credibility of news items in newspapers, television and online by asking the respondents about their degree of factuality, motivation for money, privacy, community concern and trust.

Genre

The genre is not necessarily a medium, yet nor is it necessarily a source of news. Genre is the different environments in which news can be “embedded” on the Internet - The Internet includes all the news formats of the traditional media along with new ones. (Kiousis 2001; Flanagin and Metzger, 2007; Johnson y Kaye, 2014; Go et al., 2016) .

HYPOTHESES

THE FACTORS THAT EXPLAIN THE CREDIBILITY ASSIGNED TO NEWS

H1.1: The credibility assigned to news in the online environment is associated with a desire to share it via the social media.

H1.2: The credibility assigned to news in the online environment is associated with the interest in the topics covered by the news.

H2: The level of credibility assigned to the news in an online environment is negatively affected by age.

FORMAT OR GENRE CREDIBILITY

H3.1: The credibility assigned to news in the online environment depends on the format in which it is presented (digital newspaper, digital television, Facebook and WhatsApp).

H3.2: Individuals tend to consider news presented in the online environment in formats common to the traditional media (digital newspaper and digital television) as more credible than news in the online environment presented in formats common to the social media (Facebook and WhatsApp).

3. METHODOLOGY

1. National online survey

- i. Inspired by the methodological designs of studies on **credibility** such as those by Hovland and Weiss (1951-1952), Miller and Kurpius (2010) and Weitz-Shapiro and Winters (2016).
- ii. Online panel survey administered by YouGov Spain between 12 and 17 February 2019

Sample

- iii. 1,669 Adult population of Spain
- iv. Weighed by **sex**, **age** and **region** of residence
- v. **49% men** (N=810) and **51% women** (N=859)

3. METHODOLOGY

1. National online survey
2. Four different news formats were assessed

Traditional media

Social media



**Four sets of our news items with exactly the same content were created, but they were presented in the four formats studied.*

3. METHODOLOGY

1. National online survey
2. Four different news formats were assessed
- 3. Four generic news items on topics of political interest**



- i. Real phenomena reported in televised format.
- ii. The original video news stories were edited to eliminate any elements that would enable the source to be identified, and they were attributed to a non-existent TV station with an invented logo.
- iii. To create the written news items, the voiceover of the video news items were turned into writing, and the website of a fictitious digital newspaper was created, as well as a Facebook post and a WhatsApp message also attributed to non-existent media.

3. METHODOLOGY

1. National survey experiment
2. Four different news formats were assessed
3. Four generic news items on topics of political interest
- 4. Four experimental subgroups**

INTRODUCTION (N=1,669)				
Experimental group 1 (N=411)	Experimental group 2 (N=435)	Experimental group 3 (N=414)	Experimental group 4 (N=409)	
Immigration – Digital newspaper	Immigration – Digital television	Immigration – Facebook	Immigration - WhatsApp	Rotations within each group
Feminism – Digital television	Feminism - Facebook	Feminism – WhatsApp	Feminism – Digital newspaper	
LGTBQ - Facebook	LGTBQ - WhatsApp	LGTBQ – Digital newspaper	LGTBQ – Digital television	
Extreme Right- WhatsApp	Extreme Right – Digital newspaper	Extreme Right – Digital television	Extreme Right - Facebook	
Questions on interest in the news items on immigration, feminism, LGTBQ and far right (N=1,669)				



3. METHODOLOGY

1. National survey experiment
2. Four different news formats were assessed
3. Four generic news items on topics of political interest
4. Four experimental subgroups

5. Procedure

- i. The respondents accessed the online survey via link - by YouGov Spain
- ii. They were warned that they had to have their sound activated
- iii. They were presented with the four different news items in the four aforementioned formats. (the combinations of topic and format were randomised)
- iv. Each questionnaire had two questions related to the credibility and the likelihood that they would share it. And four more questions in which they evaluated their interest in the topics covered in the news
- v. Each question was answered using a Likert scale from 1 to 5

4. RESULTS

FORMAT

INTEREST

AGE

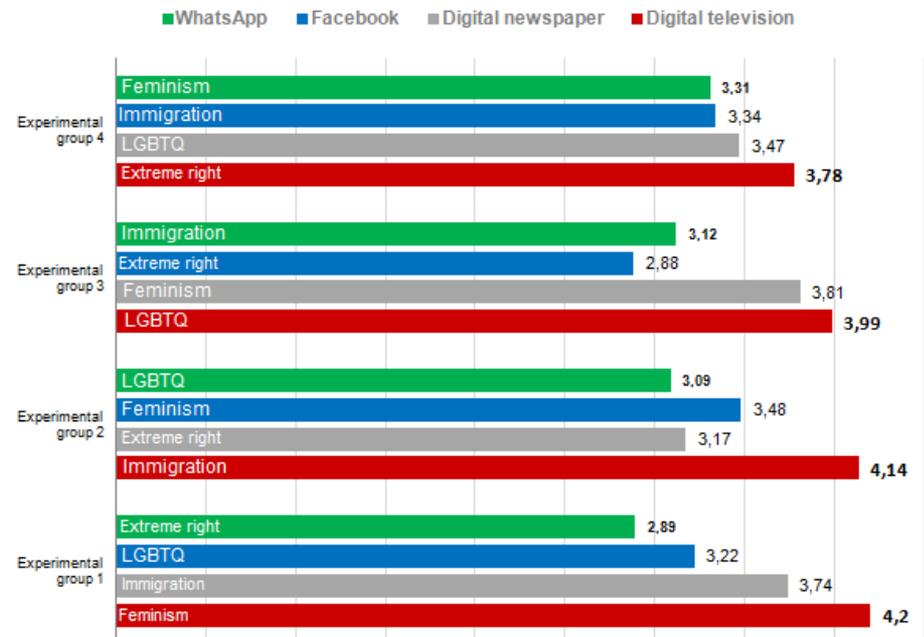
LIKELIHOOD OF SHARING

Individuals tend to consider news presented in the online environment in formats common to the traditional media as more credible than news in the online environment presented in formats common to the social media. *Hypotheses 3.2*

Hypothesis is valid.

1. In the four experimental groups the news items assigned the highest credibility are those presented in digital television format, regardless of the topic addressed in this format.
2. The news items in Facebook and WhatsApp format were assigned lower levels of credibility. (*Likert scale of 1-5: Digital Tv 4.03 (SD: .97); Digital Newspaper 3.54 (SD: 1.11); Facebook 3.22 (SD: 1.19); and WhatsApp 3.08 (SD: 1.22).*)

Mean credibility assigned to the online news by format



4. RESULTS

FORMAT

INTEREST

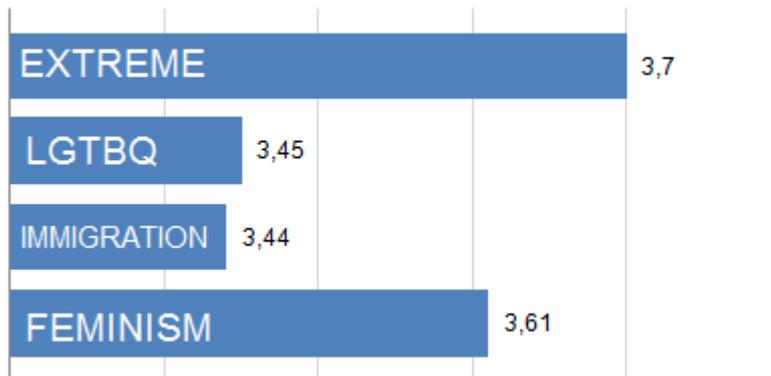
AGE

LIKELIHOOD OF SHARING

The credibility assigned to news in the online environment is associated with the interest in the topics covered by the news. *Hypotheses 1.2*

1. In all cases there is a positive correlation between these two variables
2. Higher interest in a specific topic is associated with assigning higher credibility to the news items that mention it.

Interest in the different news topics



Correlation coefficients of credibility and interest in the topic

TOPIC OF THE NEWS ITEM	<i>r</i>
FEMINISM (N=1669)	.224***
IMMIGRATION (N=1669)	.187***
LGTBQ (N=1669)	.115***
FAR RIGHT (N=1669)	.058*

Note: a Pearson correlation analysis was performed. The correlation analyses are based on a two-tailed test. *** $p < .001$ * $p < .050$

4. RESULTS

FORMAT

INTEREST

AGE

LIKELIHOOD OF SHARING

The level of credibility assigned to the news in an online environment is negatively affected by age. *Hypotheses 2*

Hypothesis is not confirmed

1. The youngest respondents are the ones that tend to assign less credibility to the news items presented compared to older persons, and not vice-versa.

Correlation coefficients of credibility and age

TOPIC OF THE NEWS ITEM	<i>r</i>
FEMINISM (N=1669)	.068**
IMMIGRATION (N=1669)	.165***
LGTBQ (N=1669)	.119***
FAR RIGHT (N=1669)	(.047)

Note: a Pearson correlation analysis was performed. The correlation analyses are based on a two-tailed test. *** $p < .001$ ** $p < .010$

Correlation coefficients of credibility and age

FORMAT OF THE NEWS ITEM	<i>r</i>
Digital television	.058*
Digital newspaper	.063*
Facebook	.101***
WhatsApp	.186***

Note: a Pearson correlation analysis was performed. The correlation analyses are based on a two-tailed test. *** $p < .001$ * $p < .050$

4. RESULTS

FORMAT

INTEREST

AGE

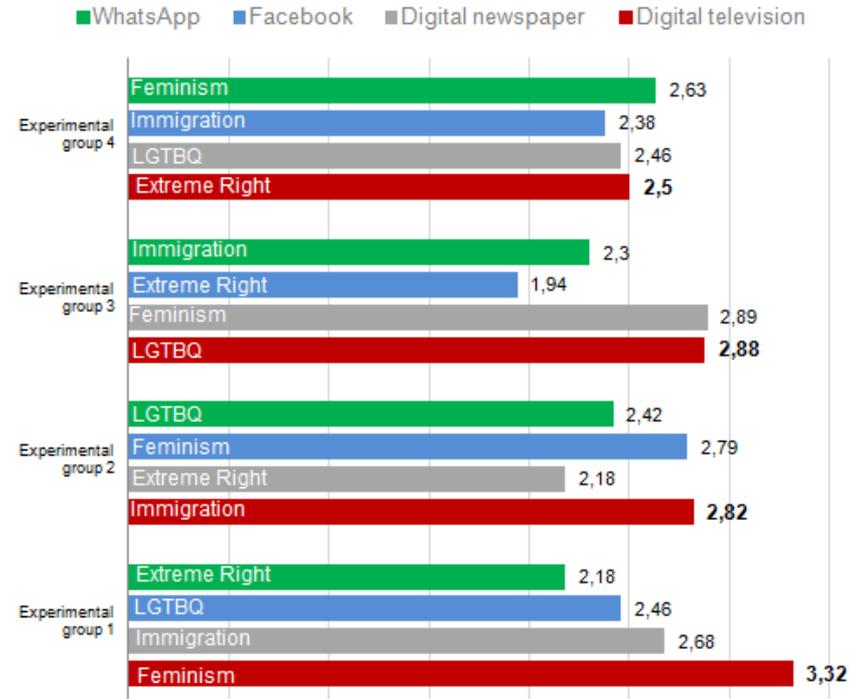
LIKELIHOOD OF SHARING

The credibility assigned to news in the online environment is associated with a desire to share it via the social media. *Hypotheses 1.1*

Hypothesis is valid.

1. ANOVA tests: the willingness to share according to the format show that format matters, just as with assigned credibility.
2. The correlations between interest in the topic and likelihood of sharing the news on the social media are similar to the correlations between interest in the topic and credibility
3. A greater likelihood of sharing generally occurs with formats which are considered more credible, regardless of the topic of the news item. (1-5 Likert scale) 2.87 (DigitalTv); 2.54 (Digital newspapers); 2.39 (Facebook); 2.37 (WhatsApp)

Likelihood to share the news items via the social media, by format



5. DISCUSSION

1. Regardless of the topic addressed by the news items, there is more cautious attitude towards news that circulates in the social media (Facebook and WhatsApp). (Johnson and Kaye, 2014)
2. The credibility associations are stronger between digital television and digital newspapers and between Facebook and WhatsApp, which might indicate that each type of format generates more similar perceptions of credibility.
3. Young people seem to be more critical with online news items, especially when they appear in social media formats, whereas older people show a stronger tendency to assign credibility to this type of news.
4. The “extreme right” topic is the news item in which the respondents expressed the keenest interest, and also the one in which this interest is the least correlated with the credibility assigned, as well as being the only topic in which there is no correlation between age and credibility.
5. The correlations between the age of the respondents and the likelihood of their sharing the news items via the social media showed no conclusive results, (is only statistically significant in the news on immigration and -to a lesser extent-, the extreme right).

THANK YOU

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