

Navigating Truth in Cyberspace: Questioning Online Information Credibility from the Perspective of Egyptian News Consumers

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ABSTRACT: *There is no doubt that Web 2.0 has reshaped every aspect of our lives. Online news media consumers are overwhelmed with a significant amount of information, with the credibility of this information often being suspect. This research examines how Egyptian consumers evaluate the credibility of online news by identifying perceived important factors. A survey collected data from 104 Egyptian online news consumers. The findings indicate that Egyptian online consumers pay more attention to traditional factors when evaluating the credibility of online news. Timeliness is the one technological factor that Egyptian online news consumers consider important in assessing the credibility of online news. Egyptian online consumers believe that international and independent news outlets are more credible than state-owned ones. This study crystallizes the validation process of how Egyptian news consumers evaluate online news, providing insights to help online outlets capture and utilize this understanding, fostering greater trust among online news consumers.*

KEYWORDS *-online news credibility, digital trust, digital information, digital transformation, Egyptian media landscape*

I. Introduction

As the Internet continues to evolve, it is becoming the primary source of news for citizens all over the world. All forms of traditional media (e.g., print and television) face massive disruptions due to increased technology use. Today, citizens across the globe find news information via smartphones, computers, laptops, or tablets at an increasing rate. The growth for Americans getting news online is in double digits, and the same is true for countries such as the Czech Republic, France, Slovakia, Great Britain, Poland, and more (Pew Research, 2020).

However, many challenges have emerged due to this explosion. For example, the news media plays a critical role in public opinion, but more and more of the public is losing trust in traditional media outlets (Pew Research, 2020). The quality of the news content in the media affects the opinion-making process (Rahman, 2014). The Internet allows almost anyone to publish content online, whether true or false, significantly influencing modern journalism (Boczkowski, 2013). “Fake news” has become a widespread, global issue, with 86% of global citizens exposed to fake news, similar to the 80% of Americans who feel the same (Ipsos, 2019).

Another challenge that has been more common in the media landscape, specifically in Egypt, is the excessive government control of all media platforms following the 2011 revolution (Hendy, 2022). Such control exacerbated the lack of transparency over available information; however, there is no doubt that social media is excessively used by Egyptians, with 48.9% active on social media (DataReportal, 2021). The lack of censorship and government oversight on the posted information on the internet poses a question as to how online news consumers assess the credibility of the online information.

Studies of online news sources in the Arab world, including Egypt, have been scarce. However, some research indicates that the public does not trust disseminated information by state-controlled media (Johnson and Fahmy, 2008). In addition, there is a sense that those who use online media find it more believable than traditional media because of its ability to circumvent government censorship and control (Khamis, 2011; Lim, 2012). Other research shows that Egyptian news consumers perceived online media credibility as fair but less high as traditional media (Hamdy, 2013).

Given the confusing Egyptian media landscape, citizens lack the understanding of how to consider information credible. The authors of this paper examine the online media in Egypt, exploring specific factors affecting perceptions of credibility. The literature identifies several factors that affect the perceived credibility of any online news outlet. This study explicitly investigates the Egyptian online news consumers’ perspectives about what essential factors they consider when judging online news credibility and their perceptions of credibility among news outlets.

The paper begins by introducing the topic, framing the problem, purpose and research question. Then, an overview of the literature pertaining to media credibility and the factors affecting media credibility are presented; drawing the proposed hypotheses from the literature review. The third section is the research methodology; outlining the research model, sampling and tools of data collection. While the next part of the paper highlights results of the survey. The final fifth section is conclusions and recommendations.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Web 2.0

In October 1993, Egypt's Supreme Council of Universities and the Information and Decision Support Centre introduced the Internet to its academic institutions. Then, later, in 2002, the government came up with a new initiative to increase Internet penetration across the county. As a result, users now pay very little to access the Internet compared to the previous rates, creating vast changes in the media industry. For example, while TV held a dominant position in the media industry for years, it ended as the Internet took the lead (Burtic and Badulescu, 2014). The Internet has created myriad opportunities for media producers to abandon traditional media formats gradually. Alterations in information and communication technologies have changed traditional media industries' costs, functions, structures, operations, value chains, and markets (Towse, Picard, and Küng, 2008). Moreover, the proliferation of web-based technologies has transformed traditional techniques for generating and exchanging content through the Internet. Social media is a perfect application for this because it enables the creation and distribution of user-generated content (UGC) on multiple interconnected platforms that can *talk* to each other (Tsikerdekis and Zeadally, 2014). Easier accessibility, lower prices, and instant updates are all factors that attract more users to the online world (Omar, 2014), including Egyptian online news consumers, who gradually shifted from traditional print newspapers to other online versions of news acquisition.

2.2 Digital News Media in Egypt

The first Egyptian newspaper to conquer the Internet world was El Gomhoria in 1996. After that, other newspapers took steps to create an online identity. The Internet opened the door for existing governmental and nongovernmental newspapers to have an online presence and allowed activists and the general public to express and speak their minds. Since 2005, blogging has become a blossoming trend among Egyptian Internet users. Egyptian bloggers used the free space provided by the Internet to comment on presidential elections and the people's assembly elections and to highlight human rights violations and police brutality. Any written media in Egypt had to pass through the Ministry of Information for approval. Consequently, several bloggers have faced legal prosecutions from the government (Aref, 2013).

The Internet has, without doubt, played a crucial role in the development of Egyptian citizen journalism, especially during the 2011 revolution. Unpaid news reporting was the primary news source for many people—images and previously banned or blocked information spread over the Internet (Sakr, 2013). The wave of revolutions that swept the Arab world has opened the road for new forms of citizen journalism to rise. These forms satisfied people's pressing need for instantaneous updates about the protests. Moreover, they filled the gap left by traditional news agencies directed by oppressive regimes. Social media websites like Facebook and Twitter allow users to share articles, audio, and videos in their social circles and allow activists to share opinions, photos, and videos to reach a wider audience (Elsayed, 2013; Shalaby, 2021). This kind of journalism is also called participatory journalism. "It is the act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information. This participation intends to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires" (Bowman and Willis, 2003, p. 10). However, with the flood of information on the Internet, trust and credibility became issues as personal biases intertwined with factual information.

2.3 Online Gatekeeping

The role of journalism as the gatekeeper of the news was threatened not just by new technology and competitors but also by its audience (Bowman and Willis, 2003). The act of sharing information, photos, and videos by the audience is not simply the distribution of content, but also individuals add personal biases to the shared content. York (2011) argues that with any form of citizen journalism, false or incorrect information is always a risk. The introduction of online technologies facilitated user-generated content contesting the idea of the journalist as a gatekeeper, transforming it into gate watching or a form of "collaborative filtering" (Lewis, Kauffhold, and Lasorsa 2009, p. 165).

Bowman and Willis (2003) highlight the difference between participatory and traditional journalism. On the one hand, profit-driven organizations create most traditional media content. Their business models focus on broadcasting and advertising. They target profitability and integrity. On the other hand, participatory journalism is created by networked communities that value conversation, collaboration, and impartiality over profitability (2003). Traditional media organizations use citizen-generated materials such as blogs to enhance their coverage. Because covering conflicts is dangerous and expensive, most traditional media now rely on

citizen journalists, who provide first-hand accounts of events (Shalaby, 2021). They also create Facebook pages to post instantaneous news feeds to their subscribers. These feeds save online users the effort of browsing several websites searching for news (Ali and Fahmy, 2013).

In traditional news media formats such as newspapers or television news, there are usually numerous gatekeepers, including journalists, editors, and, in some cases, business owners. On the other hand, web-based information, which lacks professional gatekeepers monitoring content, is criticized. The digital media universe thus is facing a dual challenge: "(1) the overload of information, entertainment, and other offerings that constantly need organizing and (2) the lack of assurance of any uniformity in content quality, which necessitates a continual monitoring of credibility on the part of users" (Spence et al., 2013, p. 77). In this case, online news consumers become the gatekeepers themselves; they choose when and what to read based on their own experiences and judge the credibility of the information available online (Shalaby 2021). Despite the challenges faced by digital media, Shalaby (2021) mentions that younger internet users find online information more credible than older internet users.

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2.4 Social Media and Activism

The proliferation of younger online activists was evident during the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The primary origin was the common resentment toward coverage of the revolution in both state-owned and private media. The Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) and the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights described the Egyptian press coverage of government activities as editorially biased (Dickinson and Gunter, 2013). Such description pushed young activists to launch alternative media outlets using social networks to narrate the proper course of events to everyone (Shalaby, 2021; Solayman, 2011). One of the main calls of the 2011 Revolution was freedom in all its shapes, including freedom of expression. As described by Khamis (2011, p. 6), social media played a critical role in "raising public awareness, testing public opinion trends, rallying support for a political cause, triggering public mobilization, boosting civic engagement, and enabling citizen journalism." Mainstream newspapers and news broadcasters had direct contact with citizens on the ground, who have become designated journalists, covering minute-by-minute events that fed directly into professional channels. Aljazeera channel relied on online citizen journalists during the 2011 revolution as the primary source of information from young activists and protesters on the ground (Shalaby, 2021).

Some journalists and political bloggers were put on trial after they criticized the Egyptian authorities. Although Egyptian law encloses articles that guarantee freedom of expression, this creates limitations with restrictive requirements that impede journalists from enjoying their right to freely discuss issues that might be sensitive to the government (Shaaf, 2015). The Egyptian government was on the losing side by adopting political strategies that shifted public opinion towards the protesters. The cutting of the Internet, the closing of Aljazeera's Cairo office, and the blocking of NileSat transmission contributed to the complete lack of credibility

in any government-supplied information and the popularity and rising credibility of online news information supplied by young activists (Shalaby 2021).

Egypt's current administration introduced laws that limited the freedom of expression even more, such as banning protests (Di Giovanni and Goldberg, 2015). Human rights activists stated that this is the worst state of suppression Egypt has witnessed in decades, with most of Egypt's independent journalists and bloggers silenced. No one is allowed to criticize the system (Di Giovanni, 2016).

Among the most recent laws is the Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Law of 2018, which penalizes any individual, group, or media outlet criticizing the existing regime (AlAshry, 2022). An outcome of this law is the closure of 554 privately owned newspapers and websites under the claim of antiterrorist measures on the part of the government (AlAshry 2022). Freedom of expression and government censorship are two sides of the pole contributing to shaping public opinion. As history has shown, specifically in Egypt, government censorship and poor communication strategies directly affect online information credibility as perceived by Egyptian news consumers.

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2.5 Media Credibility

Credibility is "the qualities of an information source, which cause what it says to be believable beyond any proof of its contentions" (Aqtash, 2010, p. 122). Objects of credibility are categorized as source, media, and message credibility. Perceived source credibility is the judgments made by a perceiver regarding the authenticity of the communicator. Three primary dimensions of source credibility include trustworthiness, expertise, and goodwill, while trustworthiness and expertise have also measured media credibility. Therefore, source and media credibility are interlinked, influencing one another, and cannot be separated.

Since its beginnings in the 1930s, media credibility has been among researchers' most revisited topics. Interest in media credibility persisted over time as new technologies entered the industry. For example, in the 1950s, television news consumption was added to the traditional mass media, compelling researchers to see which medium had greater credibility (Rahman, 2014). Research recently found online news outlets more credible than traditional ones (Johnson and Kaye, 1998). However, a survey by The Pew Research Center (2020) found that 79% of Americans believe news organizations favor one side, up 7% since 2019, while

another study of Nigerian undergraduate students rated mainstream media as more credible than digital (Salaudeen, 2020).

Researchers argue over the most appropriate measures to use when evaluating media credibility. Several measurements of media credibility exist, including a twelve-dimensional measure by Mehrabi et al. (2013). The twelve factors are fairness, accuracy, bias, concern for community, completeness, considering people's interests, respect for privacy, separation of fact and opinion, trust, concern about the public interests, being factual, and being well-trained reporters. Meyer (1988) suggests a five-item measure that includes fair, unbiased, tells the whole story, is accurate, and can be trusted.

2.6 Factors Affecting Online Media Credibility

2.6.1 Traditional vs. Technological Factors.

However, online media credibility must involve a more complex assessment than only traditional media factors (Sundar, 2008) identified above. Additional technological factors presented in the literature include interactivity, multimodality, and hypertextuality (Chung, Nam and Stefanone, 2007). Interactivity is defined as the capacity a medium can carry a dialogue between a message sender and receiver, reflecting the degree to which the reader can interact with news content. For example, many news media allow users to comment on stories published on their websites or social network sites (Ziegele, et al., 2014).

Conversely, multimodality refers to how text, graphics, and images are integrated into the digital content and presented as an integrated whole, not random parts. Multimedia adds valuable context for online news sources. The presence of photos, audio, or video elements measures multimodality. Three levels of multimedia content appear in news stories: Text only for the low conditions, text and pictures for the medium conditions, and video with text and pictures for high conditions (Cassidy, 2007). At the same time the text of the news story provides foundational information about an event, an attached video is designed to draw an individual into the story, in essence, moving the audience into being there (Wise, et al., 2009).

Lastly, hypertextuality refers to connecting to other web pages within the same site or on other websites by clicking on a word, phrase, or image. Hyperlinks add more in-depth information and sources to online stories, adding a richer historical and cultural background (Betancourt, 2014). Findings reveal that individuals exposed to a more extensive array of hyperlinks experienced increased mental effort. This increased mental effort also resulted in greater recognition of story details. Hence, hyperlinks possibly influence how individuals understand a news story (Borah, 2014).

2.6.2. Additional factors

Additional factors affecting online media credibility have been identified in the literature, for example, the presence of advertising, web design, and visitors' media habits. One study indicated that participants pay little attention to ads, but the news organizations' source of the stories positively improved their ratings. In other words, consumers' perception of news is influenced by an advertisement accompanying a story et al., (2008). Other research found that perceived online credibility was higher when a web design offers a balance of video, words, and font size (Wobbrock et al., 2021), and Howe and Tenfel (2014) found the least credibility when factors were at the extremes and higher credibility occurring with a balance.

2.6.3. Demographics.

Demographic characteristics reveal different patterns of relationships with news consumption and credibility perception. Early, Mulder (1980) argued that age alone explains 63% of the variance in media credibility, but gender did not significant effect credibility perception. However, more recent media credibility studies have consistently found an association between age and Internet use with credibility assessment (Kovačić et al., 2010; Weibel et al., 2008). In their book, Metzger and Flanagin (2008) argue that evaluating the credibility of certain online information differs for adults and young adults.

2.6.4. Type and Ownership of Media Outlets.

Researchers argue that international and local news providers exhibit different credibility perceptions to the audience, and Arab audiences perceive Arab state-owned media as less credible than independent or international news platforms (Elareshi and Gunter, 2012). Previous studies have confirmed that international news sources give more credible value than local ones because they create different perceptions among audiences. Arab audiences view international news platforms as more credible than local ones because they believe international reporters are well-trained and are more likely to separate facts from opinions as state-owned ones are more directed by the government's opinions (Gunter and Dickinson, 2013). In Egypt, the audience consists of two groups. The first, represented mainly by young people, perceived the international and pan-Arab media as less biased than the national ones because the Egyptian government did not influence them. The other group trusted local media more. They believe the international media needs more details about local events and does not provide the whole story. This group believes that international organizations are trying to spoil Egypt's image because they focus only on the disadvantages in Egypt (Geniets, 2013).

Moreover, the nationality and type of ownership of the news outlet also affected credibility perceptions. Egyptian news consumers viewed international news outlets differently than national ones and

independent news outlets differently than state-run ones. In the Egyptian context, the nationality of the news outlet is especially significant following the 2011 revolution (Lavie and Yefet, 2022). Web 2.0 facilitated the emergence of many citizen activists, who could communicate exponentially, effectively shaping public opinion and creating a more reliable source of ‘civic journalism’ that actively criticized the Mubarak regime (Lavie and Yefet, 2022).

However, do all these factors matter from the Egyptian news consumers’ perspective? Online news outlets should understand how Egyptian online news consumers perceive the credibility of their online stories to attract more readers and gain the required public trust as a credible news source. These are ambiguous areas that this research further explores. Consequently, this study addresses the overarching question: What factors are perceived as important for online media credibility by Egyptian news consumers? To respond to this question, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: Traditional factors are more likely to improve the perceived online media credibility among Egyptian consumers than technological factors.

H₂: The greater the use of advertising, web design, and visitors' media habits in online news, the more likely the perceived online media credibility among Egyptian consumers.

H₃: Older Egyptian online news consumer is the more likely to perceive online media credible.

H₄: Gender affects the perceived online media credibility of Egyptian consumers.

H₅: Egyptian news consumers believe international media outlets are likely more credible than local governmental ones.

H₆: Egyptian news consumers believe independent media outlets are more credible than governmental ones.

III. Research Methodology

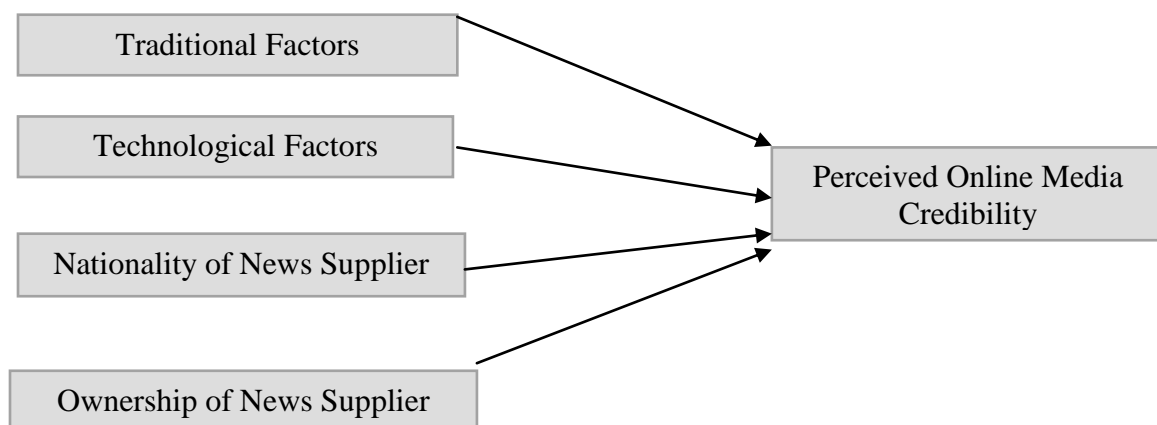
3.1 Research Model

Perceived online media credibility is the dependent variable in the study. The study investigates the number of factors affecting perceived online media credibility, including a group of traditional factors (i.e., fairness, biases, accuracy, trustworthiness and completeness) and technological features (i.e., interactivity, hypertextuality, multimodality, timeliness, quality and quantity of ads and web page design). In addition, the nationality and type of ownership of the online news outlets is shown to affect Egyptian news consumers’ perception of online news credibility. Investigating these factors gives a more well-rounded picture of how readers judge the credibility of online news outlets in Egypt.

3.2. Data Collection Instrument

A survey identified factors that influence the perception of online media credibility. Following Nozato’s (2002) study regarding online news credibility, the survey asked respondents to rate whether both traditional and technological factors contributed to their perceived online news credibility. Participants rated each factor on a 5-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Traditional factors included Meyer’s five dimensions of fairness, level of bias, completeness, accuracy, and trustworthiness, with one additional of timeliness. The technical characteristics of online media include interactivity, multimodality, hypertextuality, the effect of advertising, and website design. Lastly, the ownership type and nationality demographics were identified including local government-affiliated news websites, local independent news websites, international news websites, news aggregation services, and activists' blogs or social media accounts.

Figure 1: Research Model



3.3 Sampling

The population of the study is Egyptian online news consumers. The sample follows the snowball principle. An online version of the survey was created and distributed to personal contacts of the researchers who forwarded the link to their own contacts on social media. The final sample size included 104 Egyptian citizens.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Data

Table 1 highlights the demographics of the total sample. The sample of 104 Egyptian news consumers is a diverse group including 59% male participants with a majority falling under the age of 45, 64% hold some college degree as their highest educational level, and different levels of professional years of experience.

Table 1. Demographic Distribution of Sample

Demographic	N	Percentage %
Total Sample	104	100%
<i>Gender:</i>		
Male	61	59%
Female	43	41%
<i>Age:</i>		
18-24	13	12.5%
25-34	76	73%
35-44	13	12.5%
45-55	0	0%
56+	2	2%
<i>Educational Level:</i>		
No college Degree	38	36%
Bachelor's Degree	43	41.5%
Master's Degree	12	11.5%
Postgraduate Diplomas	11	11%
Doctoral Degree	0	0%
<i>Professional Experience:</i>		
0 – 2 years	0	0%
3 – 5 years	18	17%
6 – 10 years	54	52%
11 – 20 years	16	16%
20+ years	2	2%

4.2 Perceived Online Media Credibility: Traditional vs. Technological Factors

Table 2 identifies the most critical factors affecting the perceived credibility of online news, ranking all traditional and technological factors based on individual means. The effect of technological factors on the perceived credibility of online news is important due to the fact these represent the gap between what online media offers over print. Interestingly, the study indicates that traditional factors are more impactful for Egyptian news consumers than technological ones. One hundred percent of the traditional factors ranked at the top of all factors included in the study, indicating these factors are more influential on the perceived credibility of online news. This supports the hypothesis that traditional factors are more likely to improve the perceived online media credibility among Egyptian consumers than technological factors.

Table 2. Online Media Credibility Factors

Factor	Mean	SD
Traditional Factors		
Accuracy - trad	4.56	0.85
Trustworthy Source - trad	4.56	0.87
Up to Date - trad	4.53	0.76
Complete - trad	4.45	0.91
Fairness - trad	4.23	0.95
Objective - trad	4.22	1.03
Traditional Factors		
Multimedia Support - tech	4.02	0.94
Type of Ownership	3.97	1.05
Hyperlinks - tech	3.93	1.00
Interactive space - tech	3.63	1.18
Quality and quantity of Ads – tech	3.62	1.20
Nationality	3.60	1.09
Web Design - tech	3.54	1.06

The authors investigated the cumulative effect of technological factors compared to traditional ones; therefore, an indicator was created. On the one hand, the traditional factor indicator includes fairness, objectivity, completeness, accuracy, and source trustworthiness (M= 4.4, SD= 0.78). On the other hand, the technological factor indicator includes timeliness, multimodality, hypertextuality, effect of ads and webpage design (M= 3.88, SD= 0.77). A Mann-Whitney Test U test was used to compare the two indicators' strength (Table 3).

As shown in Table 3, the results show a difference between traditional factor indicators and technological ones. The strength of traditional factors is significantly greater than technological factors supporting H1. Hence, rejecting the null hypothesis; technological factors were not as important as traditional ones, as perceived by Egyptian online news consumers.

Table 3. Traditional Factors versus Technological Factors and the Perceived Online Media Credibility among Egyptian News Consumers. (Mann-Whitney U Test)

Indicator	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	p-value
Traditional Factors Indicator	104	130.27	13548	2728.00	8188.00	-6	p<0.0001***
Technological Factors Indicator	104	78.73	8188			2	1

IV is traditional or technological media factors, DV is the perceived online media credibility,* p≤ 0.1, ** p≤ 0.05, ***p≤ 0.01

4.3 Perceived Online Media Credibility: Demographic Factors

The literature review suggests that perspectives about online news credibility differ among age and gender. However, the results show age of Egyptian online news consumers does not have a significant effect. After analyzing the results of the different age categories in the study, no significant differences appeared between the different groups when evaluating online news. Table 4 shows that elderly age groups had higher means of Traditional Factor Scale that is almost significant as the p-value is still greater than 0.05. H3 was not supported.

Table 4. The Relationship between Age and Perceived Online Media Credibility

	Age	n	Mean	Std.	Lower	Upper	Min	Max	F	p-value
Traditional factor	18-24	13	3.92	0.39	3.06	4.78	1.00	5.00	2.90	0.060*
	25-34	76	4.47	0.07	4.32	4.62	1.40	5.00		
	35-44	15	4.49	0.14	4.19	4.80	3.00	5.00		
Technological factor	18-24	13	3.74	0.38	2.93	4.56	1.00	5.00	0.241	0.786
	25-34	76	3.89	0.08	3.74	4.04	2.17	5.00		
	35-44	15	3.93	0.15	3.60	4.27	2.83	5.00		

IV is Age, DV is the perceived online media credibility, * $p \leq 0.1$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, *** $p \leq 0.01$

Similarly, the results of this study show that the gender of Egyptian online news consumers did not have a significant effect on both the traditional and technological factors, as presented in the below T-test results, because the p-value is greater than 0.05 for both scales, as seen in Table 5. Therefore, H4 is not supported; gender has no effect on the the perceived online media credibility of Egyptian consumers.

Table 5. The Relationship between Gender and Perceived Online Media Credibility

	Gender	n	Mean	Std.	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper	T	df	p-value
Traditional factor Scale	Male	61	4.40	0.79	-0.0093	-0.320	0.302	-	102	0.953
	Female	43	4.41	0.78						
Technological factor scale	Male	61	3.93	0.75	0.1166	-0.189	0.422	0.757	102	0.451
	Female	43	3.81	0.80						

IV is gender, DV is the perceived online media credibility, ,* $p \leq 0.1$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, *** $p \leq 0.01$

4.4 Perceived Online Media Credibility: Type and Ownership of Media Outlet

4.4.1 Type of Media Outlet

The literature suggests that whether the news supplier is state-owned or independent along with the nationality of the news supplier can affect the perception of credibility for online news consumers. The authors propose that Egyptian online news consumers believe international media outlets are more credible than local governmental ones. The cumulative percentage for positive answers (agree and strongly agree) for both outlets is calculated to investigate what type the reader finds more credible. Local government-affiliated news websites scored 13.5%, while international news websites scored 64.4%. Therefore, Egyptian news consumers find international news websites significantly more credible than local government-affiliated news websites, as shown in Table 6. Therefore, the findings show a statistically significant difference between the local government-affiliated news websites' credibility and international news websites' credibility, supporting H5

Table 6. Local Governmental versus International News Websites' Credibility

	Government Websites' Credibility		News International Websites' Credibility		Chi Squared	p- value
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent		
Strongly Disagree	46	44.2	5	4.8	80.82	0.000***
Disagree	22	21.2	4	3.8		
Neutral	22	21.2	28	26.9		
Agree	11	10.6	52	50		
Strongly Agree	3	2.9	15	14.4		
Total	104	100	104	100		

IV is type of news outlet, DV is the perceived online media credibility, ,* $p \leq 0.1$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, *** $p \leq 0.01$

4.4.2 Ownership of Media Outlet

In Egypt, local independent media outlets have become venues where civic journalism is practiced. The authors propose that Egyptian online news consumers find local independent media outlets more credible than local governmental ones. Table 7 shows the participants' perceptions of both types of news platforms. Responses show a significant difference between the local government-affiliated news websites' credibility and local independent news websites' credibility. After calculating the cumulative percentage for positive answers

(agree and strongly agree) for both outlets, local government-affiliated news websites scored 13.5%, while local independent news websites scored 22.1%. Therefore, Egyptian news consumers find local independent news websites statistically significantly more credible than local government-affiliated news websites, supporting H6.

Table 7. Local Governmental versus Independent News Websites' Credibility

	Local Government Affiliated News Websites' Credibility		Local Independent News Websites' Credibility		Chi Squared	p- value
Strongly Disagree	Frequency 46	Percent 44.2	Frequency 22	Percent 21.2	16.63	0.00228***
Disagree	22	21.2	20	19.2		
Neutral	22	21.2	39	37.5		
Agree	11	10.6	21	20.2		
Strongly Agree	3	2.9	2	1.9		
Total	104	100	104	100		

IV is ownership of news outlet, DV is the perceived online media credibility, *, $p \leq 0.1$, **, $p \leq 0.05$, ***, $p \leq 0.01$

V. Research Limitations and Future Recommendations

With the Internet conquering each field and transforming each industry, studying its effects on media is important. The Internet has changed how news is produced, filtered, validated, distributed, and received. With this vast amount of information available online and no validation process in place, the credibility of this information has been called into question. The primary purpose of this study was to determine how Egyptian news consumers evaluate the credibility of any piece of news they come across online to help news providers work on gaining readers' trust. Trust is a very nebulous term, that can easily shift, this study highlights several important factors, including the importance of exploring the credibility of information from the perspective of the consumer. In times when public opinion can shape political strategies of governments and countries, understanding the perspective of online information consumers is paramount in determining government communication policies.

Several factors affect the credibility of online news. Some are common to traditional print and online news outlets, while others are specific to online news outlets due to their unique technological features. Results showed that traditional dimensions of credibility remain more influential than technological ones. Egyptian news consumers are more likely to assess the credibility of online news based on its accuracy, trustworthy source, whether or not it is up to date, and whether the information provided is complete, fair, and objective. These are the primary factors they look at when assessing the credibility of online news. Timeliness is the one technological factor that Egyptian online news consumers consider important in assessing the credibility of online news. The study also investigated the credibility of three different categories of online news websites and how perceptions of them differ among Egyptian news consumers. These three categories are international, local independent, and state-run news outlets. Results showed that Egyptian news consumers believe that international online news outlets are more credible than state-owned ones. This research crystalizes the validation process of how readers assess the credibility of the news stories they browse online to help online news outlets capture and utilize it. This can help gain a more comprehensive understanding of people's perceptions of online news credibility and gain the readers' trust.

The results of this study cannot be generalized to the whole population because the sample used is convenient. In addition, results should be cautiously approached as they are based on the societal values of Egypt only, and there are multiple political and situational factors that can affect news credibility and that are country specific.

VI. Practical Implications and Future Research Recommendations

The findings of this paper indicate that in the context of Egyptian online news consumption, aligning the practices of online media outlets with the factors prioritized by Egyptian news consumers outlined in this study increases online credibility as perceived by Egyptian online news consumers. In light of the findings of this research paper, the following practical implications are essential: online news outlets need to maximize the importance of accuracy, trustworthiness, and credible sources of information to increase the readership and reach among Egyptian news consumers. One of the ways to achieve such strategies is by providing transparency of the information sources that will enhance the perceived credibility among Egyptian news consumers.

Investment in timeliness is one technological factor that online news outlets need to consider. One of the ways to accomplish this is through civic journalism relying on citizen-generated content in blogs and Facebook pages. Egyptian news outlets need to invest more in these non-traditional collaborations and online news communities that will create a network of credible on-the-ground citizen journalists.

Given the findings, state-run news media need to think about different ways by which they can enhance the trust of online news consumers. A few methods could include increasing transparency in state-run online news media, promoting editorial independence, and affirming objective reporting. Other practical implications include having well-defined and clear editorial policies communicated to the readers and clear fact-checking procedures. Finally, the online media landscape is ever-changing and needs to continuously monitor and solicit feedback from readers to stay on track with online media perceptions. Continuous improvements of strategies in response to changing perceptions are critical to strengthening and sustaining the trust built among Egyptian online news consumers.

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