

# COMMUNICATION & SOCIETY

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## Miscellaneous

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## Predictors of credibility of online media in the Spanish polarized media system

### Abstract

**Credibility of online news media is facing important challenges: the levelling effect of the digital environment, the changing habits of consumption, polarization of discourses... This scenario makes it relevant to address what features of news brands and news content shape the credibility of contemporary journalism. This article tests a set of items, including journalistic standards, reputation and citizen participation, in order to build predictors involved in credibility judgments. The authors carried on a quantitative survey (n=416), representative of the Spanish online population. Results identified currency of information, inclusion of analysis and context, citation of sources and inclusion of links to primary sources as the most significant predictors of credibility judgements; it also showed that engaged respondents rely on news brand reputation and individual journalists' reputation and do not take into account ideological affinity with editorial lines of media. Participation in the media did not prove to be relevant in shaping aggregated judgments of credibility.**

### Keywords

**Digital media credibility, media trust, media audiences, active audiences, news values, online journalism.**

## 1. Introduction

The institution of journalism is an industry in decline (Anderson *et al.*, 2012). Newspapers show the most visible consequences in their audience indexes and advertising revenue, the economic crisis simply exacerbating trends set by the 'corporatization' of news production (Ryfe, 2013): reduced newsroom teams, hybridization of information and entertainment formats, marketing-driven content strategies, etc. The decline of journalism raises concerns since, traditionally, its role was to

act as the qualified intermediary that provides balanced information for citizens of democratic societies. At present, journalistic voices coexist with a multiplicity of sources: institutions, companies, bloggers, social networks, anonymous leak facilitators, etc. Thus, their traditional intermediary role is challenged, or at least shared. Consequently, the values and privileges of journalism are on debate in society today due to pressures of the market logic –in line with other professions (Freidson, 2001), and to the emergence of new values originated in virtual communities (Surowiecky, 2004; Llamero, 2017).

Journalism embraced professionalism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a strategy to achieve credibility at a time when journalism had low prestige. At present news media experience a new wave of discredit and the trustee model of journalism coexists with

alternatives grounded in different visions of good journalism (Waisbord, 2013). Traditionally, the profession banked on self-regulation to guarantee the fulfillment of the values that legitimate its role on society with the argument of autonomy (Fengler, 2015). But the internet has fostered new relationships between journalists and audiences, contesting the principle of autonomy (Singer, 2007).

Changes in information consumption caused by the development of information technologies reinvigorated research on credibility and resulted in an extant literature that interrogates what psycho-sociological factors impact credibility perceptions (Choi & Stvilia, 2015; Flanagin & Metzger, 2007; Metzger & Flanagin, 2013; Sundar, 2008). However, it is more difficult to find specific studies about the features that have an impact on journalism. In the last decades, scholars have devoted much effort to analyse the current crisis of legitimacy from other conceptual points of view, for example trust, engagement or audience participation (Boulianne 2016; Harbers & Broersma, 2014; Peters & Witschge, 2014; Tsfaty & Capella, 2005). However, we think that credibility is essential for journalism. This article explores the notion of credibility to offer a new perspective for addressing the analysis of the social legitimation of Spanish contemporary journalism, especially online journalism, about which there are not many empirical studies that analyse credibility. The Spanish case is relevant beyond its intrinsic characteristics because it is a polarized media system (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) and the phenomenon of polarization is converging online in hybrid media systems with elements of the liberal and polarized pluralist models (Benson, Blach-Ørsten, Powers *et al.*, 2012).

To extend the literature and contribute to grasp insights, this article revises the debates around the notion of credibility and builds an instrument to be applied in journalism. We measured a set of eight items involved in credibility judgments through a representative survey.

## **2. The role of credibility in journalism**

The theoretical study of credibility has a long tradition that comes from classical rhetoric and interpersonal communication. Therefore, this section reviews the literature from psychology and communication and attempts to define key dimensions to study the particularities of credibility applied to journalism. Researching credibility is very complex because its meaning is ambiguous, polysemic and includes a great variability according to contextual factors. In the fields of communication and psychology, credibility is defined as a subjective judgment based on perceptual variables, which have been measured through an extensive number of items (Choi & Stvilia, 2015; Metzger, 2007). Consequently, audience factors –as demographics, information skills or ideology– would make credibility assessment variable and are essential to model credibility.

The most encompassing definition of the notion states that credibility is the acceptance of the believability of information (Hilligoss & Rieh, 2008; Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953; Tseng & Fogg, 1999). Credibility has been addressed as a function of any communicative act performed through perceptions of the attributes of expertise and trustworthiness, which can be evaluated at the medium (e.g., Internet, television), the source (e.g., website, author), and the message (e.g., news story) levels (Metzger, Hartsell & Flanagin, 2015). The combination of perceptions about the attributes of trustworthiness and expertise distinguishes credibility from the concept of trust because expertise incorporates relatively objective characteristics (e.g. credentials, evidence) (Metzger & Flanagin, 2015). As credibility is a perceptual variable, it has been argued that if we knew how subjects perceive some object as credible, we would be able to apply those mechanisms for all types of credibility assessments regardless of the objects under investigation (Choi & Stvilia, 2015).

Gaziano and McGrath (1986) measured credibility of newspapers and television and proposed the one-factor model for the assessment of news in credibility terms. According to

this model, credibility is the addition of 12 items (fair, unbiased, tells the whole story, accurate, respects people's privacy, watch after readers'/viewers' interests, concerned about the community's well-being, separate fact and opinion, can be trusted, concerned about the public interest, is factual). Other scholars consider credibility as a multifaceted concept with underlying dimensions (Choi & Stvilia, 2015; Hilligoss & Rieh, 2008). Meyer (1988) distinguishes between the dimension of believability (the quality of the truthfulness of information) and the dimension of community affiliation (harmony and leadership status with the newspaper's community), but holds that credibility in some dimensions is quite labile and that too much reliance should not be placed on a single measurement. In some cases a paradox appears: A newspaper can be believed but still be alienated if it advocates positions strongly opposed by a majority in its community or undertakes investigations of editorial positions that run counter to the perceived economic or social interests of the community (Meyer, 1988, p. 567). This paradox has also been detected in Spain wherein audience distrust the media in general terms but they distrust less the information media publish when asked about impartiality, accuracy and truthfulness (Roses & Gómez-Calderón, 2015).

Among audience characteristics that affect the evaluation of information and perceptions of journalism, we found civic engagement apart from demographic characteristics. Authors like Dahlgren (2009), Cappella and Jamieson (1997) or Sartori (1998) pointed out that media consumption produces effects on civic engagement. It is broadly established that civic engagement is the individual and collective actions designed to participate in the public sphere. Those individuals that take part in or are members of political parties, trade unions, NGOs, cultural associations or other volunteering movements fit into the definition of civic engagement. Research found positive correspondence between the use of social networks for informative purposes and indicators of social capital and civic engagement (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung & Valenzuela, 2012). Political attitudes also have correspondence with perceptions of credibility (Carr, Barnidge, Lee *et al.*, 2014; Melican & Dixon, 2008).

As aforementioned, digital media have introduced major changes into the communication landscape that complicate a fully traditional approach to credibility, because of the prominence of internet as a repository of information (Metzger, 2007), the leveling of information quality (Burbules, 2001), or the loss of the gatekeeping monopoly of professional media (Bruns, 2005). One of the major new challenges is participation: scholars of digital culture and cyberculture agree on the phenomenon that media users worldwide feel that participation is necessary to make sense on the mediated world (Deuze, 2006). Audience participation has become a new element of contemporary digital news outlets, fostered by the interactivity that information technologies enable. As a core element of digital culture, participation has been addressed in relation to credibility judgments. It has been celebrated in digital environments as a way of aggregating judgments that would result in a wisdom of crowds (Surowiecki, 2004). Participation is driven in Sundar's MAIN Model of credibility (Sundar, 2008) by the *bandwagon heuristics*, which is defined as a superficial cognitive operation that acts when users think that if others users label a story as good they should think so too. It can be quite powerful in influencing credibility, given that it implies collective endorsement and popularity of the underlying content. Other research contends that users employ diverse credibility assessment strategies that coalesced into four categories: social information pooling, social confirmation of personal opinion, enthusiast endorsements, and resource sharing via interpersonal exchange (Metzger, Flanagin & Medders, 2010).

### **2.1. The Spanish context**

Not only individual traits are determinant for credibility: context emerged as the social, relational and dynamic frame that provides boundaries to individual judgments (Hilligoss & Rieh, 2008). Thus, we have to take into account the structure of the media and journalistic sources into a specific communicative context. The Spanish media ecosystem fits under the

Mediterranean polarized media system, wherein media professionalization is weak and journalism is not strongly differentiated from politics (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). A diversity of opinions, ideologies and perspectives can be found in different media outlets, but not on a single media outlet with internal pluralism. The audiovisual sector is central and the state plays a large role as an owner, regulator, and funder of media, constraining the autonomy of the professionals. These characteristics may influence in traditional measures of credibility that are also standards of journalism as those included in Gaziano's and Meyer's indexes.

Empirical studies in Spain adopted a comparative approach in the perception of credibility at the medium level. In a longitudinal analysis of The Annual Report of Journalistic Profession, Roses (2012) concluded that between 2005 and 2010 35% of the population thought that television was the most credible medium and only around 6% of surveyed people thought that internet was the most reliable medium. Another study found that people consider more credible the media they usually consume and their preferred media (Roses & Farias-Battle, 2012), both factors related to the trustworthiness dimension or affiliation. Thus, it rests uncharted the examination of other aspects related to the reliability of the informative role of journalism. More recently, a survey addressed the study of some variables and found that the Spanish population is uncritical towards media in general terms, but an individual analysis of indicators showed that a majority of users think that media are not impartial, whereas indicators of accuracy and truthfulness were moderately accepted (Roses & Gómez-Calderón, 2015). It also characterized skeptical media consumers as middle-aged men living in large cities in the north of Spain who are distrustful towards inter-personal relationships and watch less TV than the average.

Although digital journalism development in Spain is comparable to other developed countries, very few studies analysed the challenges for credibility that internet has brought. Just a case study focused on economy content found that users do not rely entirely on the journalistic brand to grant credibility to information. Thanks to the hypertextual architecture of the internet both economy experts and average citizens claim to judge credibility by comparing and contrasting the information provided by journalistic media with the information provided by primary sources and alternative news providers (e.g. amateur blogs) (Llamero, 2011).

This study, therefore, addresses the following research question: To what extent do demographic variables, civic engagement, journalistic practices and internet characteristics shape the credibility of online news media in Spain? To test what features impact perceptions of credibility we elaborated an instrument of eight items, with measures included in previous research. The instrument was designed to test traditional measures of the dimensions of trustworthiness and expertise, but also to include features of the current digital environment. Those items were: reputation (Choi & Stvilia, 2015; Fogg, Soohoo, Danielson, Marable *et al.*, 2003; Metzger, Flanagin & Medders, 2010); currency of information (Choi & Stvilia, 2015; Stanford, Tauber, Fogg *et al.*, 2002); affinity with the editorial line (Melican & Dixon, 2008; Meyers, 1988; Metzger, Hartsell & Flanagin, 2015; Roses & Gómez-Calderón, 2015); analysis, context, citation of sources (Llamero, 2011); links to primary sources (Stanford, Tauber, Fogg *et al.*, 2002); inclusion of participatory spaces for audiences (Llamero, 2011). Results of the examination of these items were employed to test the following hypothesis:

H1: A positive opinion about the credibility of news media is conditioned by engagement of the audience and by the demographic variables of age, gender and size of the population of residence.

H2: Users will consider that the journalistic procedures of providing timeliness, interpretative analysis, and citation of sources have a positive effect on their perception of credibility.

H3: Users will consider that the inclusion of links to primary sources has a positive effect on their perception of credibility.

H4: Users will consider that the inclusion of participatory spaces on digital media has a positive effect on their perception of credibility.

### 3. Methodology

The data for this study was gathered through a representative survey of the Spanish population. The survey was conducted in collaboration with the association of media research AIMC, a consortium created in 1988 by media companies and advertisers to measure and monitor audience ratings. Their data has become the standard reference in Spain about media consumption, with a scientific committee that has developed an accurate methodology for representative surveys based on personal interviews delivered to a panel. The sample was of 781 people, interviewed between November 2013 and January 2014 (Table 1). However, only 416 people responded the whole questionnaire –which was split in three sessions–, suitable for analysis. Stratified sampling with subsequent random sampling within each stratum guaranteed the representativeness of the results for the universe of Spanish internet users older than 14. The sample had an error of 4.8% and a confidence level of 95% ( $pq = 50$ ). Moreover, we relied on differences of civic engagement asking respondents if they belonged to a political party, an NGO, a union, or other civic association.

The questionnaire measured the degree of credibility-skepticism towards the eight items of the instrument through a four point Likert scale (1, Not at all; 2, A bit; 3, Quite; 4, A lot). Cronbach Alfa coefficient ( $\alpha = .71$ ) shows consistency of the scale.

**Table 1:** Respondents' distribution by independent variable.

<i>GENDER</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Men (=0)</i>	231	55.5
<i>Women (=1)</i>	185	44.5
	416	
<i>AGE</i>		
<i>Under 20</i>	14	3.4
<i>20-24</i>	36	8.6
<i>25-34</i>	80	19.2
<i>35-44</i>	151	36.3
<i>45-54</i>	73	17.5
<i>55-64</i>	46	11.1
<i>Over 65</i>	16	3.8
	416	
<i>LIVES IN CITIES OF</i>		
<i>Less than 10,000 inhabitants</i>	48	11.5
<i>More than 10,000 inhabitants</i>	368	88.5
	416	
<i>ENGAGEMENT</i>		
<i>YES</i>	137	32.9
<i>NO</i>	279	67.1
	416	

#### 4. Data Analysis

Hypothesis 1 predicted differences of judgements of credibility attributes of news media in relation to demographic variables and engagement. To test it we associated independent variables of gender, size of the population of residence, and engagement to the dependent variables of news-brand reputation, journalist reputation, editorial line affinity, timeliness, citation of sources, inclusion of links, and provision of participatory spaces (see Table 2).

Student's t-test showed significant results when we compared the association between gender and the influence that had the timeliness of information in the perception of credibility [ $t(414) = 2.52, p = .012$ ]. As it can be observed in Table 2, the mean of this variable is higher in women ( $M = 3.02, SD = .71$ ) than in men ( $M = 2.85, SD = .64$ ). Additionally, we implemented a UNIANOVA test to check how the independent variables of gender and engagement interplay with the dependent variable of timeliness. Results point that the effects are at the individual level and the independent variables do not interact [ $F(1, 412) = 1.13, p = n.s.$ ].

**Table 2:** Means and standard deviation to the question: *To what degree do you agree to the statement: I grant credibility to news relying on: a) news-brand reputation, b) journalist reputation, c) timeliness of information, d) affinity of the editorial line with my ideology, e) provision of analysis and context, f) citation of sources, g) inclusion of links, h) provision of participatory spaces?*

	Gender				Engagement				Population			
	Women		Men		No		Yes		< 10000		> 10000	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
News brand	3.04	.802	2.94	.715	2.92	.771	3.12	.708	2.94	.755	2.99	.756
Journalist	3.13	.717	3.16	.646	3.06	.686	3.30	.634	3.10	.692	3.15	6.77
Timeliness of information	3.02	.705	2.85	.644	2.87	.659	3.02	.702	2.98	.601	2.92	.685
Affinity with ideological point of view	2.21	.740	2.19	.772	2.19	.756	2.21	.761	2.08	.613	2.21	.773
Analysis and context	2.83	.791	2.93	.723	2.83	.747	2.99	.762	2.85	.652	2.89	.768
Citation of sources	2.88	.881	3.01	.787	2.86	.834	3.14	.797	2.85	.825	2.96	.833
Links	2.97	.868	3.07	.800	2.96	.826	3.15	.830	3.04	.874	3.02	.827
Participation spaces	2.40	.804	2.34	.823	2.35	.776	2.41	.887	2.23	.831	2.39	.811

When we assigned engagement as a grouping variable, Student's t-test for independent samples gauged significant results in virtually all variables. Engaged respondents attributed a significant influence to: news-brand reputation [ $t(414) = -2.54, p = .011$ ], journalist reputation [ $t(414) = -3.36, p < .001$ ], timeliness [ $t(414) = -2.10, p = .036$ ], inclusion of context and analysis [ $t(414) = -2.05, p = .041$ ], citation of sources [ $t(414) = -3.25, p < .001$ ], and inclusion of links [ $t(414) = -2.19, p = .029$ ]. However, engagement did not intervene significantly in the perception related to the variable of ideological affinity of the respondents with the editorial line of the media, and the inclusion of participation spaces for the audience.

To test the influence of the age of respondents in the assessment of credibility we run an ANOVA test. Results revealed that significant differences exist in the opinion of respondents about the importance of journalist reputation [ $F(6, 409) = 4.66, p < .001$ ] and the inclusion of links [ $F(6, 409) = 2.64, p = .016$ ]. However, *post hoc* Scheffe only showed significant differences over the variable of journalist reputation among the age cohorts: 20-24 years ( $M = 2.78, SD = .797$ ), 45-54 years ( $M = 3.28, SD = .556$ ) and 65 years or older ( $M = 3.65, SD = .493$ ). There are also significant differences between respondents 25-34 years ( $M = 3.01, SD = .738$ ) and 65 or older.

That is to say, middle age adults and older adults are more loyal to particular journalists than young adults are, but they are not so loyal to news brands. The rest of variables do not show differences.

**Table 3:** Answers to the question: *To what degree do you agree with the statement: The timeliness of information, inclusion of analysis and context, citation of sources and links are positive to perceive news media as credible?*

		Not at all	A bit	Quite	A lot
<i>Timeliness</i>	Re-count	9	85	251	71
	%	2.2	20.4	60.3	17.1
<i>Analysis and context</i>	Re-count	10	115	204	87
	%	2.4	27.6	49	20.9
<i>Citation of sources</i>	Re-count	24	82	200	110
	%	5.8	19.7	48.1	26.4
<i>Links</i>	Re-count	19	81	186	130
	%	4.6	19.5	44.7	31.3
Total		62	363	841	398
%		3.7	21.8	50.5	23.9

Regarding hypothesis 2 and 3, Table 3 shows the results with respect to the factors that affect the perceptions of information credibility. If we observe the percentage of the influence level that has timeliness of information, analysis, source citation, and inclusion of links, we can state that results support hypothesis 2 and 3: only 3.7% of the respondents stated that those factors do not condition the credibility of information at all. In general, respondents overwhelmingly considered that timeliness, inclusion of context, and links to primary sources greatly influence positive credibility judgements.

To test H4 we gathered measures about the differences of three attitudes towards editorial lines (different to the ideology of the user, neutral to the ideology of the user, and a shared ideology) in relation with the inclusion of participation spaces (see Table 4). Results confirm H4: the users who prefer a different point of view value positively spaces for participation in the media. As it can be observed in Table 4, respondents that prefer a different point of view score higher in the statement: Spaces for participation in digital media help to gather a more accurate information ( $M = 2.65$ ,  $SD = .745$ ) and a less unbiased global view ( $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = .720$ ). Likewise, ANOVA test revealed that there were significant differences between the preferences of the informative point of view and the respondent positioning to the statement that audience participation fostered unbiased points of view and less ideologically biased news [ $F(2, 413) = 3.73$ ,  $p = .025$ ].

**Table 4:** Means and standard deviation to the question: *Taking into account your preference towards the editorial line of media (different, neutral or shared), do you think that spaces for participation in digital media help to gather a more accurate information and a less unbiased global view?*

	<i>Preferences of informative point of view</i>					
	<i>Different</i>		<i>Neutral</i>		<i>Shared</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Provides accuracy</i>	2.65	.745	2.42	.698	2.57	.800
<i>Unbiased views</i>	3.04	.720	2.60	.805	2.59	.798
<i>Not affect</i>	2.50	.990	2.64	.845	2.78	.752

The *post hoc* Scheffe multiple comparison test revealed that there were significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) in the evaluation of this variable among the users that choose information with a different ideological point of view ( $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = .720$ ) and those who prefer a neutral point of view ( $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = .805$ ) or a shared point of view ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SD = .798$ ). Thereby, users who prefer information with a different point of view positively value the participation of audience in news media as a factor that fosters impartiality.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

This study represents the first attempt to actually measure the opinion of media users about predictors of credibility of online media in Spain and associates them with essential demographic characteristics. Results support the explanation that engaged citizens are the collective that most frequently think journalistic standards (timeliness, analysis, context, and citation of sources) contribute to evaluate the credibility of information and they rely on reputation of brands and individual journalists. This finding is consistent with previous research that pointed media consumption has an impact on civic engagement (Dahlgren, 2009; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Sartori, 1998), but not with the explanation that political attitudes contribute to pre-judge credibility of media (Carr, Barnidge, Lee *et al.*, 2014; Melican & Dixon, 2008), as engaged respondents showed no preference for news media with editorial lines similar to their ideology to judge the news. This way, engaged respondents treated news credibility equally regardless of their distance with the editorial line of any given media outlet. The rest of respondents gauged similar results when asked directly about their ideology and the credibility of news media with strong editorial lines. Thus, although the Spanish media structure is polarized, citizens do not consider ideology affinity to judge their credibility. This finding is in line with another study in the United States that found users consider credible those media that are neutral or challenge their ideology, and nuance threats about the implications of selective exposure due to the polarization of public sphere (Metzger, Hartsell & Flanagin, 2015). The rest of demographic characteristics examined did not have a significant impact, as only genre (woman) was associated at an individual level with the indicator of timeliness of information and age was only associated with the loyalty of middle age adults to individual journalists. Although the city of residence proved to be significant in previous literature (Roses & Gómez-Calderón, 2015), in this study this demographic factor did not show a significant impact. We can only infer that the consumption of internet news is more uniform along the Spanish territory than the consumption of all aggregated forms of journalism.

Spanish media do not inspire a great deal of credibility when people are asked categorically in general terms (Newman, Levy & Nielsen, 2015). However, this study provides room for optimism regarding the possibility for the media to regain trust, as the core standards of their practice –timeliness, interpretative analysis, and citation of sources–, along with a tool of transparency that represent the inclusion of links to primary sources, are considered important indicators to judge news as credible.

Audience participation in online news media remains a moot question because only users who prefer reading news of outlets with different ideology than theirs think that participation fosters accuracy and less biased information. Neither the principle of the wisdom of crowds (Surowiecki, 2004) nor the bandwagon heuristics (Sundar, 2008) seem to have an influence into the Spanish audience. This point demands further research that examines political attitudes and ideologies in relation to shaping the debate of public affairs. Maybe there are other factors involved in considering participation a suitable tool to make credibility decisions, as other researchers also argue that reliability and the interactivity with sources that are inherently collaborative (e.g. social media, talk radio) more strongly predict credibility than interactivity with sources that are more source-to-user based (e.g. CNN, political websites) (Johnson & Kaye, 2016).



### *Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research*

While we believe this study makes some important contributions to the literature on journalistic credibility, like all research it has some limitations. One criticism comes from the selection of attributes of credibility that do not correspond entirely with previous studies that have examined web credibility or, more specifically, journalistic credibility. Attributes such as design, navigability, and factuality, concern with public interests, sensationalism, patriotism or training of reporters could have been included. But we have to mention that there is no agreement in the definition of the construct's core dimensions and some scholars point out that the disagreement could derive from the limitations of factor-analytic methods (for a detailed discussion see Choi & Stvilia, 2015). Credibility assessment is dynamic and contextual, thus as Meyer (1988) argues a single measurement will not provide an accurate picture about the credibility decisions. Those reasons made us consider the set of eight items examined that were commonly present in most of studies about credibility, both in interpersonal communication and in mass communication.

Other criticism relates to the selection of respondents. Although our sample is representative of the Spanish population we did not take into account some personality traits of the respondents, especially regarding their attitude in front of challenging information or their skepticism level in interpersonal communication (Metzger, Hartsell & Flanagin, 2015; Roses & Gómez-Calderón, 2015), but we were constrained by the general scope of our panelists. However, we asked how political affinity with editorial lines of media impacted their assessment of credibility and it showed significant effects on overall credibility and on participation. A deeper examination of the demographic characteristics of users may provide new insights in the cross validation of credibility predictors.

The contemporary media landscape and the political context in Spain are experiencing a great deal of change in the last years. Thus, it is relevant to point out that our data was gathered in 2013 and should be considered in such perspective and taken as a reference point. In light of recent evidence that news consumers combine access to journalistic outlets and social networks to get the news (Guallar, Suau, Ruiz-Caballero *et al.*, 2016), longitudinal research needs to be done to examine the prevalence of journalistic standards for assessing credibility or the emergence of new predictors. That research would benefit from incorporating other methodological approaches to reinforce its validity, especially due to the difficulties of addressing the definition of credibility and the variability across cultures and journalistic systems.

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