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What's More Persuasive? How the Internet and Newspaper Change Opinions

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Running Head: HOW MEDIA SOURCE CHANGES OPINONS

What's More Persuasive?

How the Internet and Newspaper Change Opinions

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Abstract

The Internet has become an integral part of society. While people have been turning to the Internet for their news, newspapers are still a powerful source of information. This study investigates whether the newspaper or Internet is more effective at altering people's opinions. Participants included people ranging from 18-78 years old. After reading a political endorsement that appeared to come from either a printed newspaper or a news website, participants rated their opinions on this candidate. When the message included strong arguments, the source of the article did not have an effect on how well the articles were able to change people's opinions. Conversely, when the message contained relatively weak arguments, people were significantly more persuaded by the newspaper article than the website article. These effects were not moderated by age, income or average time on a computer or reading a newspaper. This shows the overall untrustworthy nature of the Internet despite its growing popularity.

What's More Persuasive? How the Internet and Newspaper Change Opinions

People rely on the Internet for everything. They search for the weather rather than walk outside, send a friend a Facebook wall-post rather than call him on the phone, and do research online instead of making the trip to the library. The Internet is not the only powerful medium, however. Prior to the Internet's popularity, newspapers had always been regarded as the major informant of current events, political candidates and political parties (Kim, 2008). In fact, of all media types, newspaper print and the Internet have been seen as the most similar sources of information. This similarity has been attributed to the similar skills necessary to comprehend both forms of media, such as the ability to judge the source, a high level of literacy and the skill to maneuver through different pages (Bonfadelli, 2002). In recent years, however, these two types of media are drifting apart and newspapers are starting to be put away as people turn to the web for their news.

Since both the Internet and newspapers are powerful methods of information sharing, why are people turning to the web? From 1999 to 2009, the total paid circulation for newspapers has decreased by 22% (NAA, 2010). The obvious reason for this decrease in newspaper sales is people's preference of using the Internet to get their news (Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, 2010). According to a survey, obtaining the news was found to be the second most popular reason why people use the Internet, only following behind emailing (Holmquist, Holsanova, Barthelson, & Lundquist, 2003). In response to this rapid growth in Internet use, many newspapers now produce an online version of their paper (Kim, 2008). So if there is a definite shift in preferred source for information from printed papers to online news sites, are there any

consequences for the change? Even with the massive increase in Internet use for social networking, games and research, is the Internet still too new for people to fully trust it when it comes to the news? Do different types of media change the way people perceive the information presented in them?

As stated earlier, newspapers have always been viewed as a powerful source of information. Previous researchers concluded that newspaper's ability to display a large amount of information in a single edition accounts for its effectiveness at spreading news. Therefore, researchers assumed that the Internet's greater capacity to hold information would make it an even more effective source of news. Additionally, the Internet embraces its users with its interactive nature (Cliff, Kania, & Yaechkel, 1998; Stern, 1999) and allows viewers to have full control of what information they are seeing, giving readers higher motivation to learn this information (Bandura, 1982; Schunk, 1991). For these reasons, researchers assumed that the Internet would be a better source of information than a printed newspaper.

There appear to be many reasons why the Internet should be more effective at informing readers and the trend of turning to the Web instead of printed papers suggests its greater effectiveness. Interestingly, however, studies have found the opposite. Newsprint, rather than the Internet, was found to be better at informing the public on social and political issues. In one study, participants were able to enumerate more topics of articles after having read a printed newspaper compared to an online paper (De Waal & Schoenbach, 2008). Likewise, newspapers, rather than the Internet, were found to be more effective at displaying a particular topic as being important (De Waal & Schoenbach, 2008). Printed newspapers are, in fact, responsible for the public's greater

awareness of different topics and issues. Despite people's preference for the Internet, the research seems to suggest people actually learn more from reading a newspaper. Perhaps the trend towards the Internet is simply an environmental decision, but the cost for cutting down on paper waste is less-effective learning.

The format and the process of using the Internet can explain the findings that people learn a greater variety of information from newsprint compared to online news. Some found that there is simply too much information on the Internet. The greater range of stories actually hurts comprehension as viewers get too distracted on the web and dismiss what they read (Kim, 2008). In fact, one survey found that 70% of the participants felt that the amount of information they can gather from the web is overwhelming (Purcell et al., 2010). The control one possesses when using the Internet might actually be harmful for one's ability to gain information. For instance, one study used eye tracking technology to discover that those who read news stories on the web spend more time scanning – looking for what they want to read – than actually reading any articles (Homquist, et al., 2003). This study also found that readers of the web also scanned significantly more than newspaper readers, who spent most of the time carefully reading. Readers on the Internet are often too busy making the decision of what to read to actually read the articles.

The self-guided nature of the Internet leads to poorer comprehension in other ways as well. The unlimited freedom of the web prevents readers from viewing information that they are not immediately interested in and therefore limits the information they gather (De Waal & Schoenbach, 2008). If one can choose what to read by clicking a link or typing in a keyword, he is very unlikely to stumble upon an article

he does not automatically find interesting. While reading a newspaper, on the other hand,

one is more likely to glance over an article he would not have actively sought out

(Homquist, et al., 2003). Once again, it appears that reading a newspaper is a more

powerful method of learning information than browsing the Internet.

The Current Research

The question remains, does this greater success in sharing information transfer to

changing the opinion of the public? Is there another effect of the different types of

media? Beyond making the public aware of different information, the media have a

powerful role in convincing viewers of particular opinions. Advertisements, of course,

aim purely to alter the public's opinion. So are certain types of media more effective at

influencing audiences? Printed information in any form ought to be more powerful than

broadcasted information since there is greater control by the viewer in terms of length of

time processing the information and choice of what information to focus on (Krugman,

1965). With more freedom, viewers have more time to comprehend the arguments

presented and they can focus on the parts of the advertisement they feel is necessary to

change their opinion. Similarly, one study found that advertisements on a printed poster

or a pop up on the Internet were more powerful than radio advertisements (Nysveen, &

Breivik, 2005).   In this study, participants saw an advertisement for either airline tickets

or a ski resort. Overall, participants rated the product (either the airline tickets or the

resort vacation) as more appealing after viewing the advertisement on the Internet or a

printed poster rather than a radio. Furthermore, participants showed higher attitudes

towards the advertisements from the Internet and printed ads compared to the radio ad.

There were no significant differences between the effects of the Internet and printed

advertisements on participants' opinions, suggesting that visual arguments compared to audio arguments are more persuasive. Therefore, the newspaper, whether online or in newsprint, must be a powerful source of information. So which form is more powerful?

If both the Internet and newspaper are strong at altering the public's view, it is important to investigate which of these news sources is more persuasive. This current study investigates which type of media is more effective at changing the opinions of the reader. Because of all the ways in which the format of the Internet might affect a person's response to the information presented, this current study aims to remove secondary features of the Internet or printed newspaper to find the difference between participants' responses depending purely on the source of information.

Hypothesis 1: Newsprint Is More Persuasive than Internet News

One study found a high correlation between people's preference to reading a printed newspaper and their political knowledge, while there was only a moderate association between reading the Internet and obtaining political knowledge (Kim, 2008). These findings support the experiments previously discussed illustrating that printed papers are better informers on current events. Although these simply measured retention of news story, they suggest that people pay more attention to and encode information viewed in the newspaper over information they read on the Internet. For opinions to be changed, people must first notice and remember the arguments presented. Therefore, better retention from newspaper articles should suggest that printed newspapers are more persuasive than online newspapers when trying to change the public's opinion. Thus, I predict that, overall, people's opinions will change more after having read a persuasive article from a printed newspaper compared to those who have read from an online

newspaper.

Hypothesis 2: Type of Media as a Peripheral Cue

De Waal and Schoenbach (2010) concluded that readers must already believe in the newspaper as a valuable source of information in order for it to be a successful medium for spreading news, pointing out the importance of trusting the media source. The current study will measure how much this blind trust in a type of media affects one's perception of the information presented. Using Petty and Cacioppo's (1981) Elaboration Likelihood Model, this study tests if the source of media alone affects a person's response to the information rather than the content of the media itself. Just as previous studies used celebrities or attractive people as a peripheral route to persuasion, this study investigates if the type of media – newsprint or online news sites – can also be enough to persuade people. Based on previous findings, I predict that participants will be more persuaded by what they read in the newspaper, regardless of the arguments presented, merely because of their perception of the credibility of a printed newspaper. In other words, I predict that people will be more persuaded by the information presented in the newspaper even if it uses weak arguments than information presented in an online newspaper. I believe the peripheral cue of the status of newsprint is strong enough to overpower the need for central routes of persuasion, such as strong, cognitive arguments.

Hypothesis 3: Age as a Moderator

Because younger adults have grown up using the Internet, they are likely more comfortable relying on it for any type of information and trusting it as a dependable source. People from older generations, however, are likely to prefer sources that they are more accustomed to. For instance, when inquiring about information as important as their

children's health, parents prefer other sources to the Internet, despite the easy access and availability to medical information on the web (D'Alessanro, Kreiter, Kinzer, & Peterson, 2004). Overall, older adults trust more traditional sources of information to the Internet (Khoo, Bolt, Babl, Jury, & Goldman, 2008).   Therefore, I predict that older participants' opinions will be altered more after reading from the newsprint compared to the Internet, while younger participants' opinions will not rely on the type of medium they read. Lastly, I believe that older participants' preference for the newsprint will hold true regardless of strength of the argument used in the endorsement, revealing their trust in the more traditional source of a newspaper regardless of the actual arguments used.

PILOT STUDY

For this study, I aimed to create two different political endorsements using strong arguments and weak arguments. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981), the argument-quality manipulation allows for understanding on whether people use central or peripheral route of persuasion while allowing the articles to form their opinions (Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983). The central route of persuasion relies on thoughtful consideration of the content of the arguments presented. Through the peripheral route, people's inferences on the source of information play a crucial part in their being persuaded by the ideas presented (Petty, et al., 1983). Therefore, a person who infers that anything written on newsprint must be reliable will believe what he reads, regardless of the strength of the arguments. In order to assess if the two arguments were truly strong and weak I ran a pilot study.

Method

Participants included 56 undergraduate students at Union College in Schenectady, NY. Participants were found from a website used to recruit participants for psychological research and they were told that the study was about how opinions were formed. Participants received course credit for their participation. Each participant was randomly assigned to the weak argument condition or the strong argument condition, such that there were 28 participants in both conditions. They read the political endorsement according to their condition. They were then asked how compelling they found this argument on a 6 point Likert scale, where 1 = not at all compelling and 6 = very compelling. Participants were then thanked and received their course credit.

Results

An independent samples t-test was conducted to assess whether people's opinions differed as a function of the quality of the argument. The weak argument was rated significantly less compelling ($M = 3.07$) than the strong argument ($M = 4.05$), $t(54) = 3.52, p = .001$. These results show that the arguments are in fact viewed as being either strong or weak and therefore were used in the main study.

STUDY 1

Method

Participants

Participants were approached at a train station in New York's Capital Region and asked to participate in a study about opinions. They were at least 18 years old and therefore eligible to vote to follow the storyline that they were reading an endorsement for a political candidate. Participants received a coupon worth $3.00 to a coffee shop in the train station for compensation for their time. Each participant was randomly assigned

to one of the four experimental conditions. Six participants were excluded for not

following directions and four participants were removed for failing to fully complete the

questionnaire. After eliminating these participants, the final sample included 94 people,

46 male and 48 female. Their ages ranged from 18-78, with a mean age of 37.25 years

old.

Design and Procedure

This study used a 2(Internet or printed newspaper) x 2 (strong argument or weak

argument) between-subject design. All participants read an endorsement for a fictitious

political candidate whom they were made to believe was truly running for the position on

the Board of Education in Wake County, North Carolina. According to the condition to

which the participants were randomly assigned, the endorsement either appeared to be

copied from a printed newspaper article from Raleigh, North Carolina's *News &*

Observer or a printout of its online newspaper, *NewsObserver.com.* These materials can

be found in Appendix A. Furthermore, these endorsements either used strong arguments

or weak arguments for why the reader should vote for this candidate in accordance to the

Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). The verbiage can be found in

Appendix B.

Opinion Towards Candidate

After being exposed to the stimuli, participants were asked several questions

about their opinion on the candidate. They were asked to give their degree of favorable

feelings towards the candidate and their confidence in his capabilities in this position.

The feeling thermometer, a commonly used measure in political psychology and political

science, was used to assess people's opinions on the candidate. The wording was taken

from the American National Election Studies Survey. The question asked, "Based on what you know, please rate Edward Phillips on the following scale. A rating between 50 degrees and 100 degrees means that you feel favorable about Phillips (or confident in his capabilities in this position). A rating between 0 degrees and 50 degrees means that you don't feel favorable towards this person. You would rate him at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly positive or negative towards Edward Phillips." They were then asked their overall opinion of the candidate on a more standard attitudinal measure: a 7 point Likert-scale *(Extremely negative, Very negative, Somewhat negative, Neutral, Somewhat Positive, Very positive, Extremely positive).* Last, they were asked how likely they were to vote for the candidate if they were eligible to vote in the North Carolina election on a 5 point Likert-scale (*Not at all likely, Not very likely, Somewhat likely, Very likely, Extremely likely).*

Need for Cognition

Participants completed a brief need for cognition scale (Bizer, Krosnick, Petty, Ruckr & Wheeler, 2000). The scale asked how much they like handling situations with a lot of responsibility on a 5 point Likert-scale (*Dislike a lot, Dislike somewhat, Neither like nor dislike, Like somewhat, Like a lot).* They were also asked if they prefer simple or complex problems.

Personal Information

Finally, participants answered questions about themselves. Questions asked about their age, gender, race, academic achievement and average annual household income. Furthermore, they were asked about their familiarity with the Internet and newspapers. Participants were asked questions such as *On average, how many hours a week do you*

spend using a question? and *On average, how many days a week do you read a*

newspaper?

After completing the questionnaire, participants received their coupon, were

debriefed and thanked.

Results

Main Analysis

Opinion rating data were submitted to a source by argument strength Analysis of

Variance (ANOVA). There was an effect of the source, $F(1, 90) = 4.99$, $p = .04$, such

that those who read the endorsement from the newspaper rated Phillips higher ($M = 4.84$)

than those who read the endorsement from the Internet website ($M = 4.40$). There was

also an effect of strength of argument, $F(1, 90) = 20.81$, $p < .001$, such that those who

read a strong argument gave Phillips higher ratings ($M = 5.22$) than those who read a

weak argument ($M = 3.63$). These main effects were qualified by a source x argument

strength interaction, $F(1,90) = 4.99$, $p = .04$. Among those who read a strong argument,

there was no effect of source, $t(48) = 0.00$, $p = 1.00$, such that participants who read from

the Internet gave Edward Phillips the same opinion score ($M = 5.12$) as those who read

the printed paper article ($M = 5.12$). However, there was an effect of source for those

who read the weak argument, $t(42) = 4.95$, $p < .001$, such that those who read the printed

paper rated Phillips higher ($M = 5.12$) than those who read the online paper ($M = 3.60$).

See Appendix C for full figures on source x argument strength interaction.

Participants' feeling ratings and opinion ratings for Edward Phillips were highly

correlated with each other, $r(90) = .81$, p $< .001$. However, the feeling thermometer alone

appeared to be a poor measure. The distribution of ratings was sporadic and nearly a third

of people described their feelings at a 50, suggesting they simply indicated the middle number and not the number indicative of their true feelings. The feeling thermometer scores as well as the likelihood of voting for Phillips ratings showed the same basic trend as the opinion ratings, however, the interactions did not reach significance for these two ratings. When feeling ratings were submitted to a source by argument strength ANOVA, there was an effect of source, $F(1, 88) = 4.99$, $p = .03$, such that those who read the article from the newspaper gave Phillips a higher feeling rating ($M = 52.91$) than those who read the article from the Internet ($M = 61.54$). There was also an effect of argument quality, $F(1, 88) = 22.19$, $p < .001$, such that those who read the strong argument gave Philips a higher rating ($M =66.21$) than those who read the weak argument ($M = 38.45$). These main effects were not qualified by a source x argument strength interaction, $F(1, 88) =1.22$, $p = .27$. Similarly, when likelihood to vote ratings were submitted to a source by argument strength ANOVA, there was a marginal effect of the source, $F(1, 90) = 2.72$, $p = .10$, such that those who read the endorsement from the newspaper were more likely to vote for Phillips ($M = 3.00$) than those who read the endorsement from the Internet website ($M = 2.80$). There was an effect of argument quality, $F(1, 90) = 22.79$, $p < .001$, such that those who read the strong argument were more likely to vote for Phillips ($M = 3.33$) than those who read the weak argument ($M = 2.44$). The source x argument strength interaction did not reach significance, $F(1,90) = 1.99$, $p = .16$.. Because these appeared to be weaker measures, only the opinion ratings were used in further analyses.

Further Moderators

Different features about the participants were measured to determine if they further moderated the source x argument strength interaction. Linear regressions with

three main effects - the source, the argument strength and one demographic feature - were conducted. A significant three-way interaction with any of these demographic features would demonstrate the moderation of the argument strength x source interaction found previously. However, none of the three-way interactions conducted reached significance. There was no effect of age ß = 0.42, t (0.27), p = .79, and therefore Hypothesis 3, that younger generations would be more influenced by what they read on the Internet than older generations, was not supported. Furthermore, there was no effect of a participant's income ß = 1.13, t (.83), p = .41, whether the participant owned a computer ß = 0.45, t (0.43), p = .67, or how many days a participant reads a newspaper ß = 0.91, t (0.83), p = .41. The findings that people are more convinced by what they read in a newspaper, regardless of the quality of the argument, is not a moderated by the person's age, income, or frequency of a person's computer or newspaper use.

Discussion

This study was conducted in order to determine how different forms of media affect how persuasive they are to the reader. Since society has become Internet driven, I compared printed newspapers with the Internet. Participants were randomly assigned to read a political endorsement that appeared to come from a printed newspaper or an online paper. Furthermore, they were randomly assigned to read strong or weak arguments for why they should vote for Phillips.

The results supported Hypothesis 1, stating that, overall, a printed newspaper is more effective at altering people's opinions than an online newspaper. After reading a strong argument, people rated Phillips equally in both the newspaper and Internet conditions. However, when the argument was weak, the source of the information was a

factor. Those who read the weak argument from the Internet held lower opinions on

Phillips than those who read the strong arguments from the Internet; however, those who

read the weak argument from the paper rated him just as highly as those who read the

strong argument from the paper. This shows support for Hypothesis 2, that regardless of

the strength of the argument, participants allowed the printed newspaper to form their

opinions. People trusted what they read in the newspaper simply because it came from a

newspaper.

Earlier studies have found that visual information is more persuasive than audio

information (Krugman, 1965; Nysveen, & Breivik, 2005). Furthermore, different types

of visual information are more effective than others. This current study supports previous

findings that newspapers are more powerful than the Internet at sharing information (De

Waal & Schoenbach, 2008; Kim, 2008). However, these previous studies did not

investigate the effect of participants' ages. Since using the Internet is such a fast growing

trend, it is important to understand how younger generations perceive different media.

The current study, therefore, investigated how age affects which type of media is more

persuasive. However, Hypothesis 3, that the age of the participants would moderate these

findings was not supported.

Implications

These findings make an important statement about the way in which people view

the media. Although the Internet is overwhelmingly popular and people are actively

choosing to read their news online rather than in newspapers, they still show a greater

trust in printed papers. Perhaps the Internet is still too new for people to trust. If an

argument is strong, people have no preference of the source of media. It is simply when the argument is weak that the public begins to question the Internet.

Perhaps it is not the novelty of the Internet that leads to a lack of trust in what people read on the web. A previous researcher questioned participants' views on the credibility of different news sources (Kiousis, 2001). He found that people expressed trust in newspapers more than online news sites. While this survey was taken ten years ago, the current results appear to support these findings. Perhaps the freedom of the Internet, and not the novelty of it, will prevent the public from ever truly trusting it. If anybody can post his opinions on the web, people are likely cautious to believe everything they read. People might always associate news sites with blogs and personal opinions, and therefore never view online news as a reliable source. Since the Internet has become such an important part of modern society, it is important to understand its possible limitations.

This effect is not only important for casual newsreaders, but these findings can have important implications for advertisements, campaigns and other news. If someone is trying to share a message, whether its about a new brand of toothpaste, a political rally or how to prevent an illness, he will be more effective by sharing the information in a printed paper rather than online. As this study has shown, people's opinions are more formed by what they read in a newspaper. Therefore the public will be more likely to buy the toothpaste or attend the event after reading an advertisement in the newspaper rather than on the Internet.

Limitations of the Study

Unlike De Waal and Schoenbach (2010) who found no difference between the effects on readers of a printed newspaper compared to readers of the online version of the newspaper, this study found significant differences between readers of these two types of media. However, some people might argue that reading a print out of a single page from the Internet or a copied newspaper article does not accurately represent the experience of reading the news from one of these two sources in real life situations. However, discovering a significant effect solely based on the name of the source strengthens these findings. All extraneous features of the Internet, such as pop ups, links, and search bars, were eliminated. Both stimuli used the same text, were printed in the same size font and came from the same general source. Because of these controlled presentations, one can conclude that the slight addition of the ".com" was powerful enough to change the public's opinion. Simply the name of the source, *News & Observer* or *NewsObserver.com,* and the format of the print indicative of the media type made a difference in how one views the information. Therefore, with the additional differences between newspapers and the Internet, these findings would arguably be even stronger.

Another limitation of the study is the rating measures for Edward Phillips. As discussed earlier, the source x argument strength interaction did not reach significance when using participants' likelihood of voting for Phillips rating as well as the feeling thermometer scores. The likelihood of voting might not have been a good measure since people knew they were never going to vote in a North Carolina election. Because the situation did not relate to them, they did not thoughtfully consider their true likelihood to vote for them. Furthermore, during debriefing, participants commented that they would need to do more research on the candidates to determine whom they would vote for.

Factors other than the strength of the argument and the source of the endorsement appeared to affect their likelihood to vote rating. For the feeling thermometer, the unusual format of the question might have lead to poor results. People are unfamiliar with rating their feelings for a relative stranger on a 100-point scale. Other researchers have also indicated the inaccuracy of the feeling thermometer. It appears that seemingly unrelated factors, such as age and education, are predictive of how someone scores a subject on the feeling thermometer (Wilcox, Sigelman, & Cook, 1989). Although these two factors did not lead to a significant interaction, the opinion rating gave strong enough evidence of the effects found in this study.

Future Studies

Although this current study did not find a moderator, such as age, gender or socioeconomic status, for the effect, future studies might investigate if certain types of people are more likely to follow this trend of showing an overall trust in the newspaper and not the Internet. Perhaps certain personality types are more susceptible to showing a blind trust in the newspaper. Those who show low conscientiousness on the Five Factor Model of personality, for example, might be more likely to allow a newspaper's poor arguments to persuade them. If one has high conscientiousness, on the other hand, he is likely cautious about allowing external factors to change his opinions. Therefore, someone with high conscientiousness would rely on the strength of the argument, regardless of the source of the information, to persuade him. Someone's level of self-monitoring might also be a factor of what source of media is able to form or alter his opinions. High self-monitors might allow any argument on the Internet – including a weak argument - to persuade them in order to follow the trend. In modern society, high

self-monitors might recognize the power of the Internet and use it as a social cue for how to behave and think. Low self-monitors, however, are not concerned about complying with the social norms and will not allow the trend of the Internet to alter their views without a strong argument. These are just a few examples and further research would give better insight into how different personality traits might moderate the effect of media type's ability to persuade the public.

Future research on the actual reasons for the effects found would also be valuable. Studies might investigate if it is simply the novelty of the Internet that prevents people from trusting it as much as more established newspapers. A longitudinal study would show if trust in the Internet increases over time. In fifteen years, will people allow weak arguments on the Internet to change their opinions? Perhaps comparing these effects cross-culturally would also be beneficial. Do people from societies who have had access to the Internet longer allow it to persuade them more than people from societies who just recently gained Internet access? Studies might also explore if it is the nature of the Internet itself that leads to people's skepticism in its arguments. Because the Internet allows for the public to freely share their views, people might assume that anything they read is a personal opinion and not a researched, factual statement. Studies might investigate how different types of websites alter how well they persuade viewers. If people are made aware that a certain article is from a credited online news source and not a personal site, will they allow it to persuade them? Or will people always be cynical about the Internet and its reliability?

Conclusion

This current study suggests the power of a printed newspaper. Regardless of the strength of argument, people allowed a newspaper article to alter their opinions. When the article came from the Internet, however, people processed the arguments more cautiously and only allowed strong arguments to persuade them. Although the source was the same, Raleigh, North Carolina's *News & Observer,* the fact that one article came from its online news site was enough to make a significant effect. Despite the Internet's popularity, a printed newspaper still appears to be the most credited source of information and news.

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APPENDIX A:

Website Stimuli:

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Editorial

WORTH NOTING 'Go back as far as you wa
backyard you're always in the World Series.' –
STAR **JOSH HAMILTON**, WHO GREW UP IN RALEIGH AND PL.

Board of Education Endorsement

After much consideration, we feel that Edward Phillips would be the best choice for the position on the Board of Education in Wake County during the upcoming elections.

Phillips will come to the job full of related experiences, success and thoughtful ideas for the future. Having served in the same position in Johnston County for seven years, Phillips has a thorough understanding of the job, its responsibilities and importance. During these seven years on the job, Phillips' approval ratings remained extraordinarily high. Phillips has lived in Wake County for many years, during which time he served on different committees at the local schools. With a good understanding of how educational systems work and the specific strengths and weaknesses of the Wake County education department, Phillips has many good ideas on how to make our children's education more effective and engaging.

We hope you share the opinion of us and vote for the best candidate for the Board of Education: Edward Phillips.

Newspaper Stimuli:

APPENDIX B

Strong Argument Verbiage:

After much consideration, we feel that Edward Phillips would be the best choice for the position on the Board of Education in Wake County during the upcoming elections.

Phillips will come to the job full of related experiences, success and thoughtful ideas for the future. Having served in the same position in Johnston County for seven years, Phillips has a thorough understanding of the job, its responsibilities and importance. During these seven years on the job, Phillips' approval ratings remained extraordinarily high. Phillips has lived in Wake County for many years, during which time he served on different committees at the local schools. With a good understanding of how educational systems work and the specific strengths and weaknesses of the Wake County education department, Phillips has many good ideas on how to make our children's education more effective and engaging.

We hope you share the opinion of us and vote for the best candidate for the Board of Education: Edward Phillips.

Weak Argument Verbiage:

After much consideration, we feel that Edward Phillips would be the best choice for the position on the Board of Education in Wake County during the upcoming elections.

Phillips will come to the job full of related experiences, success and thoughtful ideas for the future. Having worked as the manager in the largest retail shopping mall in Johnston County for seven years, Phillips has a thorough understanding of holding a job, its responsibilities and its importance. During these seven years on the job, Phillips' performance was assessed each and every year. Phillips has lived in Wake County for many years, during which time he has served as an unpaid volunteer at multiple agencies. With a good understanding of working with lots of people, Phillips has many good ideas on how to make our children's education more effective and engaging.

We hope you share the opinion of us and vote for the best candidate for the Board of Education: Edward Phillips.

APPENDIX C: Source x Argument Quality Interaction

ANOVA Test of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Opinion

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	30.916	3	10.305	8.599	.000
Intercept	1967.908	1	1967.908	1642.036	.000
argqual	24.306	1	24.306	20.281	.000
source	4.993	1	4.993	4.166	.044
argqual*source	4.993	1	4.993	4.166	.044
Error	107.861	90	1.198		
Total	2189.000	94			
Corrected Total	138.777	93			