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Digital Uncertainty: Exploring Source Credibility in the Context of Generative Artificial Intelligence

Michael Erskine
Middle Tennessee State University, michael.erskine@mtsu.edu

Stoney Brooks
Middle Tennessee State University, slbrooks@mtsu.edu

Sam Zaza
Middle Tennessee State University, sam.zaza@mtsu.edu

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TREO Talk Paper

Michael A. Erskine
Middle Tennessee State University
michael.erskine@mtsu.edu

Stoney Brooks
Middle Tennessee State University
stoney.brooks@mtsu.edu

Sam Zaza
Middle Tennessee State University
sam.zaza@mtsu.edu

Abstract

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), such as ChatGPT, has already disrupted the way we evaluate the credibility of information. The rise of novel AI platforms has led people to question the authenticity of uncited and not easily verifiable information. The public is asked to trust the results of AI blindly. While much Information Systems research focuses on trust, far fewer studies have focused on uncertainty.

Uncertainty is a feeling of skepticism about the truth or information. Similarly, digital uncertainty refers to mistrust about information or communication transmitted digitally, particularly on social media platforms, due to concerns about accuracy, authenticity, bias, or manipulation.

Source credibility theory is a social psychological concept that explains how a communicator's perceived trustworthiness and expertise can influence the effectiveness of their message (Hovland et al., 1961). Source credibility can influence digital uncertainty as more credible sources are likely to be trusted and believed, while less credible sources may elicit more skepticism. Therefore, individuals are more likely to have digital uncertainty when they perceive the source of information as lacking credibility or expertise. Ever-changing digital uncertainty has led individuals to perceive information differently than a decade ago.

Through the lens of source credibility theory, we explore whether digital uncertainty and trust are on opposite sides of the same dimension or if these are independent constructs with their own nomological networks. First, we plan to develop the scale for digital uncertainty, following MacKenzie et al. (2011), since digital trust can be mapped from trust scales that are already well-established (e.g., in the e-commerce and platforms stream of research). The new scale will undergo pilot testing and industry validation. After validation, we will test our scale in our proposed model by surveying an online panel (N=300). All data will be examined using SmartPLS. Expected findings could spur additional research into digital uncertainty and benefit marketing, e-commerce, and cyber security research.

References

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