

Title:

The In-Credible Web

Word Count:

997

Summary:

Do people trust Internet content? Is the incredible Internet - credible?

Keywords:

Article Body:

<http://www.webcredibility.org/>

People are conditioned to trust written words, not to mention images. "I read it in the paper"

In the "brick and mortar" world, credibility is associated with brands. A brand, in effect, gu

The Internet has very few brands (Yahoo!, Amazon) - and some of them are tarnished. Some "old

So, how does one establish or acquire credibility in such a diffuse and anarchic medium?

Enter Stanford University's "Web Credibility Project".

They define themselves thus:

"Our goal is to understand what leads people to believe what they find on the Web. We hope thi

Performing quantitative research on Web credibility.

Collecting all public information on Web credibility.

Acting as a clearinghouse for this information.

Facilitating research and discussion about Web credibility.

Helping designers create credible Web sites."

Examples of current projects:

Timeliness: How does having out-of-date content affect the credibility of a Web site?

Interaction: How does having a personalized interaction with a Web site affect its credibilit

Negative Content: How does displaying negative content associated with a branded web site aff

It is useful to confine ourselves to this definition of trust:

"The subjective belief, perception, or conviction that information provided is true, factual,

Such perception, belief, or conviction are based on:

Past experience in general (with spam, with merchants, or providers, with a similar product ca

Experience with the specific merchant or provider (whether personal or gleaned from other peop

There is little that a merchant can do about the former. The latter is, expectedly, influenced

Professionalism (as evident in Web site design, e-commerce facilities, user-friendliness, navi

Trustworthiness (lack of bias, good intentions, truthfulness, thoroughness, objectivity, exper

Commercial Web sites are less trusted. Cluttered ads, paid subscriptions, e-commerce enabled f

Track record (how veteran is the merchant, past financial performance, credit history, brand n

Selection (how many products are carried, how often is inventory refreshed, etc.);

Advertising (is the company's business sufficiently lucrative to support a campaign?);

Service (good service indicates a reassuring readiness to sacrifice the bottom line to cater t

Full disclosure of rates, prices, privacy policy, security issues, etc.;

Feedback from other users (opinions, reviews, comments, FAQs, support groups, etc.);  
Site rating and certification by trustworthy agencies (like the Better Business Bureau - BBB,  
The Credibility Web discovered that trust in e-commerce is also influenced by idiosyncratic fa

As Web sites proliferate (Google indexes well over 3 billion now) and Web authoring becomes a

Research shows that 75% of all respondents resort to the Internet as a primary information pro

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