CONSUMER OPINIONS OF ON-LINE NEWSPAPER BRANDS

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Momentous change is taking place in the on-line newspaper marketplace. The definition of online newspapers is in flux, as traditional print outlets distribute their content through new varied venues. The historic printed "brand" (for example the traditional newspaper mast-head, with accompanying text content) is shifting, in both format and content, to a broader "media-brand" concept. At the beginning of this revolution, most newspaper websites looked like fairly simple web-versions of their printed parent vehicles, with similar content and formats. Today, many newspaper websites now feature content treatments once unthinkable, such as user-created content, video clips and the ability to communicate directly with news reporters. Newspaper websites are also redistributing their text and video content on other sites, such as search engines (e.g. Google) portals (e.g. MSNBC,AOL, Yahoo) and video aggregator sites (e.g. YouTube).

These changes may result in consumer confusion. As this content appears in diverse places, does it retain its link to the parent print-media brand? Important ongoing questions need to be answered about how consumers define and relate to these changing newspaper media brands. These issues have profound implications for media measurement and the definition of media brand audiences.

To explore these current issues, Scarborough Research undertook an original research study among American consumers. The focus of the 2007 Scarborough Online Newspaper Usage Study was to explore consumer definitions of, usage of, and opinions about online newspapers, in the context of other online sources of news and in contrast to traditional media. The study used a random digit dial sample from the 48 contiguous USA states (excluding Hawaii and Alaska) to represent a cross section of US consumers. Participants were screened for a minimum age of 18, having used the Internet for news in the past 30 days, and having accessed content for online newspapers in the past 30 days. The study fieldwork took place from August 18 through Sept 1, 2007. Five hundred interviews were completed by phone using CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing), averaging 7.3 minutes each. The fieldwork was completed by the Scarborough Operations Center telephone staff interviewers in Coral Springs, Florida. The response rate to the survey was 32.6%, using Scarborough's syndicated response rate calculation, which is similar to AAPOR 4[i]. The topics investigated in the questionnaire included:

- o Time spend online
- o Use of Internet for News
- o Use of Internet for classified info (homes/jobs/cars)
- o Attention to and Importance of online news sources
- o Opinion of reliability of traditional vs. online news sources
- o Awareness and usage of Blogs
- o Usage of online newspaper content
- o Readership of printed newspapers
- o Usage of news content on mobile devices
- o Newspaper websites used most often
- o Ways use newspaper sites (content, interaction, etc.)
- o Local news sources rely on most
- o World news sources rely on most
- o Variety of news sources trusted
- o Demographic Information

About Scarborough

Scarborough Research is the leading supplier of audience estimates for newspaper readership in 81 local markets across the United States. Scarborough's measurement of printed newspaper audiences is based on a series of questions asked during the telephone interview phase of our syndicated survey. The questions follow the ARF published guidelines for newspaper audience data collection. Respondents are asked on an aided basis about past 7-day reading of daily local and national newspapers, followed by a "when last read" question for each paper they report reading. Respondents who report reading a specific paper "yesterday" are counted in that paper's daily average-issue newspaper audience. Similarly, for Sunday newspapers, respondents are asked about past month reading using an aided list of national and local papers. Those that report "last Sunday" reading of a specific Sunday newspaper are counted in the paper's average-issue audience. Scarborough also measures the websites of newspapers in many markets on an aided basis, and reports their seven-day integrated audience. The integrated audience consists of the weekly unduplicated print and website audience: those who have read the daily or Sunday print paper or visited the newspaper's website in the past 7 days. Scarborough's newspaper audience data from the 81 local market studies are accredited by the Media Rating Council.

Background/Other research

The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press conducted a large and comprehensive study of consumer online and traditional media behavior in 2006.[ii] This study has been conducted periodically for over a dozen years, providing another source of trend data. The 2006 Pew study found that nearly one out of three US consumers (31%) regularly get news online. This contrasts with just 23% in 2000 and less than two percent in 1996, demonstrating the growth of online news as a popular source.

The 2006 Pew study concluded that online news is typically seen as a supplement to traditional sources of news such as newspapers and electronic media (TV and Radio). The main value of online news to consumers was found to be headlines and convenience, with traditional off-line news sources used for detailed, in-depth reporting in the Pew study. The Pew study also found a defining feature of online news not cited for other news sources: the ability to compare and contrast different sources of information. The ability to quickly and conveniently access a variety of online news sources, perspectives and opinions may enable online news consumers to more easily determine their own point of view with regard to current news, rather than limit themselves to any individual traditional media source's take on events.

With regard to the issue of traditional media credibility, the 2006 Pew study found that public skepticism of all news sources has increased steadily since the mid 1980's. The Pew study also found that there was no news outlet that stood out from the rest as a credibility leader. While this study did not specifically examine the credibility of online news sources, it provides a useful context for describing the general climate of questioning of the reliability of news sources by the American public, and its increase over time.

Some other areas of interest from the 2006 Pew study include the way consumers define online newspaper websites. When asked on an un-aided basis to name newspaper websites they visited yesterday, the Pew study found nearly one out of four (24%) named a non-newspaper website, such as CNN.com or MSNBC.com. This illustrates the common blurring of media brand identity that a significant portion of consumers experience when queried about them on an unprompted (un-aided) basis. That finding was echoed in the 2007 Scarborough Online Newspaper Readership and Usage Study.

Other researchers have recently investigated the issue of online media usage and media brand relevance and trust. In July 2007, Steve Outling at Editor and Publisher[iii] reported on a new online service called NewsTrust, which has been developed to allow readers to volunteer to evaluate news sources for important aspects such as their trustworthiness, fairness and usage of sourcing. NewsTrust has emerged in response to the exponentially expanding number of news sources available to consumers online. NewsTrust will provide rankings based on a five star system for online news. The rankings will be generated by "an army of media reviewers". While these volunteer media reviewers do not have to demonstrate any specific expertise to qualify for the task, the site administrators will use a procedure for evaluating the fairness of reviewers, with disincentives for exhibiting bias. This mass user-evaluated content process (with administrative oversight) echoes the procedures used by Digg.com, another site that aggregates news and information from a variety of sources and ranks them on popularity based on user ratings. The contrast, however, is that while Digg.com rates content on popularity, NewsTrust will rate content on trustworthiness and fairness.

While the increasing variety of online news sources is exiting for the consumer, it can also be confusing, as consumers may not be sure whether consumer-generated content (CGC) consisting of articles or other media (e.g. blogs, video or audio content) created by every day consumers, is as reliable, fair and trustworthy as content written by traditional journalists. Journalists, who write for a living, have their individual professional reputations to protect. If they were to publish less than factual stories which were later refuted by reliable sources, their careers could be seriously jeopardized.

Journalists typically follow a more stringent set of rules than consumers when writing articles. They are usually knowledgeable about libel laws, for example, try to avoid biased reporting and frequently check up on facts and verify them with multiple sources when reporting news. Consumer reporters may not do any of those important steps; in fact they may not be aware of the necessity to do so. The question may legitimately be asked if any given piece of consumer generated media falls in the realm of rumor, gossip, or even fiction, as opposed to factual hard news. News Trust is one site that is designed to address this challenge. Time will tell if this site provides a popular solution to this issue. Other sites may emerge. The launch of the NewsTrust site, however, provides more evidence that the issue of confusion and uncertainty about the reliability of online news content is a real issue for the online news consumer.

Scarborough 2007 Online Newspaper Readership and Usage Study Findings

Attention to and Importance of Online News Sources

One of the major findings from the Scarborough online newspaper usage study is that the majority of consumers who use online news sources report that they do not pay attention to the source of news they read online. Sixty one percent of respondents said "Not very often" or "not at all" when answering how often they pay attention to the source (company, writer, editor or publisher) of the news they read or view online. Only one out of five (21.3%) said they "Very Often" pay attention to online news sources, while 17.3% said they "Often" do.

This does not mean that the source of the news content they access online is irrelevant to them, however. When asked about the importance of online news sources to them, nearly two of three respondents (61.4%) said the source of their online news is Very or Somewhat important to them. Very few respondents were undecided for this question. This finding is encouraging for newspaper publishers concerned about the relevance of their online media brands. These two findings are illustrated in Charts 1 and 2 below.

CHART 1

"Thinking about the Internet news you read or view online, how often would you say you notice the source of the news you get online? That is how often do you pay attention to which company, writer, editor or publisher is the source for the news you are reading or viewing online? Would you say you notice the source…?"

Source: Scarborough 2007 Online Newspaper Readership & Usage Study (n=500)

Response choice	% Total Adults Answering
Very Often	21.3%
Often	17.3%
Not Very Often	41.9%
Not at all	19.0%
Don't Know	0.5 %

Respondents who were most likely to say they *Very Often* notice the source of online news include those with college/university or higher education (27.6%), minority respondents (27.0%), and those age 35-54 (25.2%). Minority respondents include those who are Black/African American, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American or multiracial. Heavy Internet users, who spend 20 or more hours online per week, were also more likely to say they *Very Often or Often* notice online news sources (64.3%) than those who use the Internet ten to twenty hours per week (35.1%) or less than ten hours per week (31.0%).

CHART 2

"How important is the **source** of the news to you when looking at news online? That is, how much does it matter you which company, writer, editor or publisher is the source of the news you are reading or viewing online? Would you say it is…?"

Source: Scarborough 2007 Online Newspaper Readership & Usage Study (n=500)

Response choice	% Total Adults Answering
Very Important	27.0%
Somewhat Important	34.3%
Not Very Important	24.4%
Not at all Important	13.5%
Don't Know	0.8 %

Those most likely to say the source of their online news is *Very Important* to them include Men (30.6%, compared to only 23.7% of women), those age 35-54 (35.4%) those with a college/university or higher education (34.6%), and minority respondents (40.5%).

This curious gap in consumers stated importance of the source of their online news, and simultaneous confessed lack of attention to identifying online news sources, invites speculation about the perceptions of consumers who seek news online. Could it be that consumers seek out online primarily the sites of news brands that they trust, and avoid the ones they do not trust, and so they feel it is not so important to verify the source, since they trust the overriding brand that sponsors the site? Or do they have a general perception that if the news is "fit to print" online, it must be reliable? Some additional insight is suggested by other questions the in the study which asked about media trustworthiness.

Perceptions of Accuracy of Online versus Traditional News Sources

When evaluating the accuracy of traditional and online news sources, it appears traditional media still have an edge among US consumers in being perceived as more accurate. Respondents were asked to choose which of two statements came closer to their point of view:

A) "Online news sources are more accurate then traditional news sources such as newspapers, TV and Radio, since Internet news is exposed to so many people who can quickly react to it and dispute errors", or

B) "Traditional news sources such as newspapers, TV and Radio are more accurate than online Internet news sources because they do a better job of checking facts before publishing news."

These statements were rotated in the questionnaire to avoid order bias.

Nearly half of respondents (48.3%) chose statement B as closer to their views, indicating they feel traditional media does have an advantage in accuracy when reporting the news. Less than two out of five respondents (38.3%) chose statement A as closer to their views, while a smaller portion was unsure (12.7%). The people most likely to agree with statement B , traditional media are more accurate, were Women (51.3%), respondents age 18-34 (58,0%), and those with collect/university education levels (55.8%). The profile of those choosing A, online media are more accurate, were more likely to be Males under age 35 (45.7%), those with some college/university education (but not graduates) (44.3%), and minority respondents (49.3%). Those more likely than average to report being undecided about which medium is more accurate include respondents age 55+ (21.2%), and those with college/university or higher education (15.3%).

Given that a large portion of consumers claim that online media news sources are important to them, and the perceived advantage of traditional brands with respect to accuracy in reporting the news, it would seem that media brands which transition from traditional to online media occupy a position in the US consumer's mind that creates an opportunity for leveraging these legacy media brand names, particularly in the context of their reliability as accurate sources of news. However, the finding that the majority of consumers report not paying very much attention to the news source while reading or viewing news online, yet most deem it important, indicates that there may be a missed opportunity for enhanced reinforcement of branding communications by online media news outlets. These findings suggest the possibility that many online news consumers do not notice the media brand of online news sources because it is not featured as noticeably as it might be in the content of online news. In other words, they care where their online news is coming from, but they may not easily be able to identify where it is coming from, due to the current presentation of media-branding on Internet newspaper sites and other Internet news sites.

Definitions of Online Newspapers (un-aided)

The study also examined consumer's un-aided definitions of online newspapers. Without prompting, respondents were asked to name the three online newspaper websites they go to most often. Nearly seven out of ten (67.8%) named an actual online newspaper, such as nytimes.com or usatoday.com, or a local newspaper website, among their top three mentions. Nearly as many (65.6%) incorrectly cited another online news source that does not have a print newspaper analogue, and could not technically be called an online newspaper, such as cnn.com, aol.com, the Drudge report, sports sites, political sites and others. These data are shown in Chart 3 below.

CHART 3

"What are the three online newspaper websites that you go to most often?"
         (Asked un-aided, open-ended method. Results coded by category)

Source: Scarborough 2007 Online Newspaper Readership & Usage Study

Response choice	% Total Adults Answering
Any newspaper website mentioned (net)	67.8%
Local market newspaper website (net)	62.9%
National Newspaper Website (net)	16.2%
Non-newspaper website (Drudge report, sports sites, etc.), (net)	65.6%
Don't Know	7.1%

This indicates that consumer's unaided definitions of online newspapers are perhaps more fluid than imagined, and do not fit the definitions that would necessarily by used by industry insiders. A large majority of consumers (67.8%) do in fact name what insiders would call online newspapers, when asked on an unaided basis about the online newspaper sites they visit most often. However, nearly as many respondents (65.6%) included other non-newspaper online sites in their responses.

Perhaps due to the similarity of formatting and presentation of information by newspaper web sites and other online news sites, the distinction of an online "newspaper" website compared to another online news site is less than sharp in the consumer's view, when asked about un-aided, without specific examples or context (e.g., not asked following questions about print paper readership). This ties into the possibility of less-than-prominent media branding of online content, as suggested earlier. The finding of reported consumer confusion when asking about online newspapers on an unaided basis may also provide support for the method of using an aided questioning format, where the specific newspaper websites are read to the respondent, when measuring online newspaper audiences in consumer surveys. The aided method is in fact the method currently used by Scarborough in our syndicated newspaper audience report, for measuring print newspapers and their online websites, as noted earlier.

Scarborough has previously investigated the issue of respondent confusion when identifying readership and usage of newspaper media brands. Our previous work explored print newspaper readership in the context of distinguishing online and printed editions of specific newspapers. In a paper presented at the 2005 Readership Symposium (Prague) [iv], we reported that adding a simply worded line to the standard newspaper readership question which explained that the question is asking only about reading of printed newspapers, not online newspapers, did not significantly impact the audience estimates for the measured papers. The 2005 paper was based on a study which used an experimental design to isolate the effect of the additional clarifying line in the interview script. The main differences in the current 2007 study and the previous 2005 study are that the current study used *unaided* recall to ask about newspaper website usage, and focused only on online newspapers, while the previous work used the standard aided recall ("read-list") of a list of local and national printed newspapers, and focused on clarifying the readership of the print editions exclusively from their online counterparts. The rationale of using an unaided approach in the 2007 study was to investigate what consumers would report when asked about their usage of online newspapers; to see what media brands they would include in this classification, without prompting.

Ways Consumers Use Online Newspaper Websites

Consumers were asked in the survey about the ways that they utilize online newspaper websites. Questions include typical activities such as checking headlines, finding articles previously seen, and checking the sports and weather. The study also asked about *"Internet 2.0"* (also known as *"Web 2.0'*) activities. These activities are defined as primarily interactive, where the user is actively exchanging information with the site, such as posting comments or photos, and those that take advantage of newer content formats such as podcasts and RSS feed.[v] The definition of 'Internet 2.0' in common current usage is those user activities that go beyond just the "seek and view" behavior that historically has defined most Internet user activity, to participatory activities where multiple users help create the content for the site. The findings of the study with respect to these activities are detailed below in Chart 4.

CHART 4

 "When visiting online newspaper websites, how often do you *<**Read item, Rotate items**>*: Frequently, Infrequently, or Not at All?"

(Base: n= 399, Visit online newspaper website)

Source: 2007 Scarborough Online Newspaper Readership & Usage Study

Response choice	**% Answering "Frequently"**
Check news headlines for breaking news	55.4 %
Check the weather	51.4 %
Find articles seen previously	41.3 %
Check local events and things to do	29.3 %
Check sports scores	24.9 %
Check Classifieds for Homes, Jobs or Cars	24.2%
Download, view or listen to *news* pod casts #	9.5%
Post or reply to comments #	6.1%
Post your own content such as photos, video or text #	3.4%
Use paid services such as news or photo archives #	2.5%
Download RSS feed to view later #	2.4%
Send Email to reporter s#	2.0%
# Net, Any 'Internet 2.0" Activities	59.6%

For an interesting *video* definition of "Internet 2.0," which cleverly demonstrates the interactive aspect of Internet web pages and linked hypertext, in contrast to printed text, please see the following web address: http://youtube.com/watch?v=NLIGopyXT_g&NR=1, or go to www.You Tube.com and search for "Mwesch,"+"The Machine is Us. " + "final"[vi]

As shown in chart 4, checking the headlines and weather were most often reported by more than half of respondents as frequent activities when visiting newspaper websites. Frequently looking for previously seen articles were cited by two out of five respondents, while checking local events, sports scores and classifieds were noted as frequent activities by more than one out of four respondents.

When looked at individually, fewer than ten percent of respondents in the Scarborough 2007 Online Newspaper Readership and Usage study said they frequently participate in any one individual Internet 2.0 activity, showing relatively low usage of each of these interactive features, highlighted in Chart 4. However, when combining a net tally of any of these activities, a majority of consumers, nearly six in ten (59.6%), said they frequently take advantage of one or more of these activities when visiting

newspaper websites. Those respondents most likely to say they frequently participate in Internet 2.0 activities while using online newspaper sites include Men (69.1%, vs. 50.9% of women); particularly Men age 18-34 (73.5%) and those with college/university or higher education (70.6%).

A 2007 content analysis of the online websites of the top 100 US newspapers (ranked by circulation) by the Bivings group found an overall increase in the number of interactive features offered on these sites. For example, the Bivings report found that almost half (49%) of the top 100 online newspaper websites now offer podcasts on their website, compared to only 31% in 2006, and the use of RSS feed by these sites increased 21% since 2006[vii] Given the higher propensity for usage of these features by younger male respondents found in the 2007 Scarborough Online Newspaper Readership and Usage study, newspaper websites may want to continue to grow these offerings to attract and retain the younger online readers that advertisers often seek and who provide a stream of future audience members.

Frequent usage of classifieds for homes, jobs and cars while using newspaper websites was reported by more younger 18-34 year olds (32.8%) than 35-54 year olds (27.9%) and those 55+ (11.9%). Minority respondents were over twice as likely to report frequent usage of classifieds when visiting newspaper websites (44.2% among minorities vs. 24.2% of total adults who visit newspaper websites).

A newer technology feature now offered by many newspaper websites is the ability to access newspaper content using mobile devices, such as a cell phone or personal digital assistant (PDA), for example, a Blackberry, Treo or other handheld device. Since this is still a relatively new phenomena, and the quality of access depends on the particular handset and carrier service used by an individual consumer, we decided to ask a more general question in the Scarborough 2007 Online Newspaper Readership and Usage survey about using these devices to access any news content (as opposed to only online newspaper website content). The study found nearly sixteen percent of respondents (15.7%) who said they have viewed or read news content on a mobile device in the past month. Interestingly, this activity is much more common among younger respondents. While fewer than one in five adults have accessed news content on a mobile device in the past month, over a third of those aged 18-34 have done so (35.1%). In particular, Males under age 35 (42.4%) were more likely than average to access mobile news content, compared to Females under age 35 (27.4%). This activity was also more prominent among those with any college/university education (18.3%) than those with a high school or lower education (12.7%). Minority respondents (43.8%) also reported above average past month mobile news usage.

Those respondents who post comments and replies on blogs were twice as likely than average to report having have accessed news content on mobile devices (30.3% of bloggers used mobile news in the past month, compared to 15.7% of all respondents). Respondents who participate in any Internet 2.0 activities were also more likely to use mobile news in the past month (24.7%).

Usage and Opinions of Blogs

Since weblogs, or blogs, emerged in force on the online media scene about six years ago, they have grown dramatically in number and usage. Blogs are typically defined as websites (or sections of websites) where entries are made by a host or author in journal style and displayed in reverse chronological order. Blogs often provide the ability for users to add commentary or discussion on a particular topic, such as politics or sports. Frequently, an author will write a blog, a reader will post a comment, and other readers will post replies to that comment, and so on. Blogs can be text-only or can include photos, video or audio files.

According to Technorati.com's March 2007 "State of the Blogosphere" report, the number of blogs in existence is approximately 70 million, and after a steady growth that showed the number doubling about every six months, it has since stabilized. Blogs are still growing, however, with approximately 120,000 new blogs created worldwide every day.[viii] In the Scarborough 2007 Online Newspaper Readership and Usage Study, respondents were asked about their familiarity with and usage of Blogs.

Seven out of ten respondents (69.8%) claimed to be very or somewhat familiar with the term "Blog" with slightly less than a third (30.1%) saying they were very familiar and nearly two out of five (39.6%) being somewhat familiar with the term. Respondents most aware of blogs included those with a college/university or higher education level (87.4%), Females under age 35 (85.7%), and all adults 18-34 (77.0%).

Eight out of ten (82.8%) of those who were familiar with the term "blog" have ever read a blog online. Among those who have read blogs, the most common category of blog read was News/Current events (43.9%), followed by entertainment (38.5%), Sports (28.9%), Politics (26.9%), Technology (22.6%), Hobbies (22.2%) and Arts and Culture (20.4%).

People who notice the source of online news very/somewhat often were more likely to be familiar with blogs than those who do not notice online sources. Those who said online news sources were important to them were also more likely to be aware of blogs. These data are shown in Chart 5 below.

CHART 5

"How familiar are you with the term Blog? Are you very familiar, somewhat familiar, not very familiar or not at all familiar with the term?" Source: Scarborough 2007 Online Newspaper Readership & Usage Study (n=500)					
Response Choice	% Total Adults	Notice Online News Source Very/Some-what Often	Notice Online News Source Not Very Often/Not at All	Online News Source is Very/Some-what Important	Online News Source is Not Very/Not At All Impt
Very /Somewhat Familiar with Blogs	69.8 %	78.8 %	63.8 %	76.7 %	58.6 %
Not Very/Not At All Familiar with Blogs	30.2 %	21.2 %	36.2 %	23.3 %	41.4 %

Opinion of Blogs versus Traditional News

Those who have ever read blogs online were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement about blogs:

"Blogs written by everyday people are as reliable for reporting accurate news and information as traditional media like newspapers, television or radio?"

Nearly seven out of ten blog readers disagreed (69.3%), with two out of five disagreeing somewhat (38.5%) and slightly less than a third disagreeing a lot (30.8%). Those most likely to disagree a lot that blogs are as accurate as traditional media were Females under age 35 (50.7%), those with college/university education (40.1%) and 18-34 year olds (38.1%). Notably, these are the same demographic groups most likely to be familiar with the term "Blog", and to post comments on blogs.

Among blog readers, one out of three (33.8%) have ever posted comments or replies to a blog online. Posting comments/replies was more popular among Females under 35 (53.9%), all 18-34 year olds (45.8%) and those with a college/university or higher education level (43.5%). Blog posting was also more common among those who say news sources are very or somewhat important to them (40.7%) and those who do any Internet 2.0 activities while using newspaper web sites (44.0%).

Trust Few or Many News Sources

Other research[ix] has found that one of the perceived advantages of the Internet compared to print news is the convenient accessibility of many varied sources of news in one place. With a few clicks it is possible to access different news sources online from all over the world as well as across the political spectrum.

To get a sense of the perceptions of US newspaper website visitors regarding this issue, respondents who visited newspaper websites or accessed online newspaper content were asked which of two statements best described their point of view:

A) "I trust only a few reliable news sources to give me the truth about what's going on in the world,"
B) "I feel it is necessary to seek out many sources of news to get the truth about what's going on in the world"

These statements were rotated in the questionnaire to avoid bias. Overall, two thirds of respondents (65.4%) chose statement B, many sources, compared to one third (32.4%) who chose statement A, a few sources. Very few respondents were undecided for this question (2.2%).

There was no prominent skew to the demographic profile of those choosing one response over the other, with only two notable groups showing differentiation; younger Females under Age 35, among whom less than half (45.3%)chose B, many sources, while a majority (54.7%) chose A, few sources, and Black respondents, where more than three out of four (76.4%) chose B, many sources, versus less than one out of four Blacks choosing A, a few sources (23.7%). Respondents who chose one statement over the other were not more or less likely to notice the source of the news online, or to say it was important to them. Neither were they more or less likely to say online news sources are more reliable than traditional media news sources.

Conclusions

The highlights of the 2007 Scarborough Online Newspaper Readership & Usage study findings include:

- Regarding consumers definitions of online newspapers, the study reported a large proportion of US consumers do properly name online newspaper website media brands when asked on an un-aided basis about newspaper sites they visit most often. Just as commonly, they report non-newspaper media brands within this set of responses, indicating evidence of confusion and/or lack of clarity among consumers about what constitutes an online newspaper, when not prompted with specific examples such as a list of common newspaper websites. This finding echoes the similar 2006

Pew study finding and provides reinforcement for the idea of using an aided prompt when measuring online newspaper audiences in survey research (as used in the current Scarborough syndicated methodology).

- The study found a contrast between the proportions of US consumers who say the source of their online news is important to them, but who for the most part report they do not pay that much attention to their online news sources. A possible reason may be the commoditization of online news by aggregator and portal sites such as AOL, Google news, yahoo, Topix, MSNBC.com and others, and lack of prominent media branding among online newspaper sites. As newspaper content is redistributed and repurposed online, the parent and legacy media-branding may not be carried through and spontaneously recalled by consumers.

- Consumers with more education were found to be more likely to notice news sources and say they were important to them. They were also found to be more likely to trust traditional media brands for accuracy in news reporting. Since educated consumers have historically formed the core audience for both printed and online newspapers, branding efforts that emphasize the accuracy and trusted nature of legacy print brands in may be effective in sustaining these brands in the online environment,

- The study identified a perception among a majority of consumers that traditional legacy media brands have an edge in accuracy when reporting news. This finding is reinforced by the finding of skepticism among Blog users in the ability of blog creators to report news reliably, compared to traditional media such as newspapers.

- The above findings suggest an opportunity for online newspapers to enhance the prominence of the branding of their parent legacy media brands in their online editions. Making their off-line traditional media brands more closely identified with their online newspaper content may enhance their ability to leverage the strength of their media brands to improve their perception, image and relevance to consumers.

- The study found that when visiting online newspaper sites, interactive "Internet 2.0/Web 2.0" activities are more often pursued by younger consumers. While the current level of participation in any one of these activities is still small, they are much more likely to be reported by younger consumers under age 35. The ability to interact with online newspaper content through capacities such as blogs, RSS feed, mobile content, having a place on the site to allow adding one's own content to the site, such as pictures, videos, reviews, and posting comments, is more likely to be appealing to younger consumers, who disproportionably report participating in these activities while using online newspaper websites.

- Online classified usage is also notably more popular among the under-35 age group. Featuring online classifieds on online newspaper websites may increase their appeal to younger consumers.

- While the study found a small proportion of consumers who access newspaper content using mobile devices such as cell phones and personal digital assistants, this activity is much more popular among younger respondents aged 18-34. Making newspaper content available in these formats may encourage younger people to access it, helping to build a future audience base.

- As newspapers continue to evolve in different versions and formats, whether traditional print versions, Internet, "Web 2.0" or mobile editions, Scarborough, as a leading newspaper measurement resource, will continue to explore and report on consumer reactions to them.

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[iii] Outline, Steve, column writer, Editor and Publisher, 7/30/97

[iv] "Newspaper Readership: Further Investigations on Questionnaire Wording Related to Internet-published Newspapers and its Impact on Newspaper Audience Estimates", Traub, Jane and Lindner, Gregg. 2005 Worldwide Readership Research Symposium, (Prague)

[v] RSS - stands for Really Simple Syndication and is a media delivery format featured on many websites (including newspaper websites) that contains either the summary or full text of content from other sites such as blogs, news headlines or podcasts. Sometimes it is called a web feed or channel. Users subscribe to the feeds via a link and automatically download the updates. Podcast - is a digital media file on the internet, using a syndicated feed to download content for playback on portable media players or PCs. It is a specific type of webcast using a unique web feed where the content is syndicated and has a host. The material is pre-recorded, not real-time, for later download. The Apple ITunes player is a frequently used application for Podcast media formats.

[vi] Michael Wesch, 2007, Assistant Professor of Cultural Anthropology, Kansas State University, "Web 2.0…The Machine is Us/ing Us, final version. www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLIGopyXT_g&NR=1

[vii] American Newspapers and the Internet: Threat or Opportunity? July 19, 2007, The Bivings Group

[viii] Technorati.com, State of the Blogosphere, April, 2007, by Dave Sifry. www.sifry.com/alerts/archives/000432..html

[ix] Pew 2006, ibid (per previous citation)