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# CREDIBILITY AND THE USE OF BLOGS AMONG PROFESSIONALS IN THE COMMUNICATION INDUSTRY

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*This study examines use, credibility, and impact on the communication industry of blogs as seen by professional journalists and public relations practitioners. Informed by the uses and gratifications perspective and using an online survey, the study used factor analysis to reveal simplistic blog use categorizations as being either interactive or noninteractive. Results also indicate that those who are labeled "high users" in both factors assign more credibility to the medium. Differences between journalism and public relations professionals were examined.*



With the ever-increasing number of online information sources, credibility has taken the stage to separate the good from the bad. Some assert that the shift in consuming more online news might be based on mistrust of the media themselves.<sup>1</sup> Along these lines, a study recently found that people believe bloggers (5.8%) are more trustworthy than the media (4.4%).<sup>2</sup> Now that audiences are going directly to online sources, those in the communication industry are following suit. Blogs have become watchdogs and critics of the communication industry, and journalists and public relations professionals have taken increased notice.

Joining scholarship on credibility with uses and gratifications, this research examines the paradox facing the communication industry's use of blogs: professionals are increasingly relying on blogs, yet do they consider them credible? This study is the first to compare journalists' and public relations practitioners' blog use and perceived credibility. Furthermore, we explore the relationship between credibility and the perceived impact of blogs on the industry.

Blogs are increasingly cited as a source of information for the public.<sup>3</sup> Previous studies have found a positive link between Internet use and credibility.<sup>4</sup> The Pew Internet and American Life Project reported that 8% of American Internet users write blogs and 34% of those online read blogs.<sup>5</sup> Blogs are credited as an emergent agenda-setting force for breaking news and bringing issues to the media's attention.<sup>6</sup> Further,

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social media have increased media selection and access to opinion leaders.

With the public considering such sources, those in the communication industry—such as public relations practitioners and journalists—must also incorporate them into their work. Public relations practitioners have increased blogs' use in issues management and environmental scanning activities,<sup>7</sup> and journalists have begun to use blogs as story-gathering tools.<sup>8</sup> Yet, evidenced anecdotally through the grim picture many professionals paint of blogs as information sources, it appears those in the communication industry may ascribe less credibility to blogs than the public. Presumably, following trends of Internet adoption and credibility by the communication industry, professionals will learn to judge the quality of the vast amounts of information needed to assess blog credibility.<sup>9</sup>

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## Literature Review

*Uses and Gratifications.* The uses and gratifications theoretical approach can be useful in understanding how communication professionals use emergent communication technology for work. This study focuses on an activity-based (use) approach to understand how the communication industry has integrated blogs.

Uses and gratifications research approaches media through a user-level perspective, focusing on the users as an active audience. For online studies, this concept of an active audience is less disputed than with other media because users must actually go online to access information through a more goal-orientated activity.<sup>10</sup> For instance, people with lower levels of trust in the government were traditionally more likely to use the Internet. As the Internet became a more mainstream source of information, these people moved to using specific online tools (e.g., chat rooms).<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the number of hours a user spends reading and participating on blogs has been found to predict positively the use of blogs for information seeking.<sup>12</sup>

Previous Internet-related uses and gratifications studies found varying motivations driving people to use the Internet.<sup>13</sup> More general studies of the medium report that Internet use provides entertainment and social gratifications for users.<sup>14</sup> Interactive Internet resources typically are driven by social motivations, whereas Internet resource use appears to be driven by informational needs.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Trammell noted that the many uses of a specific Internet tool (e.g., blogs) are driven by different motivations such as users' self-expression, their social interaction in commenting on others' sites, and information needed in linking to others' content on their own blogs.<sup>16</sup> Several scholars concluded that so-called "ordinary bloggers" were motivated by social interaction and the desire to document their lives.<sup>17</sup> Kaye's analysis of blog readers noted that primary motivation was presentation/characteristics, with blog format and the tool itself fulfilling users in a way traditional media did not.<sup>18</sup>

A majority of blog studies—including those informed by uses and gratifications—focus on the blogger rather than the blog reader.<sup>19</sup> Notable exceptions are Kaye's survey of blog readers, which found information

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seeking and media checking as the primary motivations for reading blogs;<sup>20</sup> Johnson and Kaye's study assessing the credibility of different media sources among bloggers;<sup>21</sup> and Trammell's role-based motivation research.<sup>22</sup> As more scholars take on questions of how readers use content on blogs, some have considered questions of organizational use of the tool<sup>23</sup> and credibility issues.<sup>24</sup>

**Credibility.** Just as uses and gratifications assumes that the media consumer is aware of the gratifications obtained from selecting a particular medium, consumers are also able to assess credibility to determine the most appropriate source for information. Studies examining how credible the public views online news,<sup>25</sup> comparing the perceived credibility of online news and traditional news,<sup>26</sup> and investigating how using communication technology influences perceived online news credibility<sup>27</sup> have expanded our understanding of this topic. Measures of credibility are appropriate in a uses and gratification approach because of the audience activity construct described earlier. Research on media credibility within the framework of uses and gratifications was put forward by Greenberg and Roloff.<sup>28</sup> Studies indicate the more often a person views, reads, or listens to a particular medium, the higher he or she tends to rate it in terms of credibility.<sup>29</sup> General Internet users do not find blogs credible, but focusing on those who actually visit blogs raises the number from 12% to 23% saying blogs are credible.<sup>30</sup>

The first study examining blog credibility found that blog users rate traditional news as moderately credible and blogs as highly credible.<sup>31</sup> A national survey of the general public revealed that those with previous blog experience had a higher than average perception of blog credibility.<sup>32</sup> While the reliance (use) and credibility association is not consistent in other areas of Internet research,<sup>33</sup> it has been for blogs. Johnson consistently found reliance on the source (traditional media or Internet) was the strongest predictor of assigned credibility,<sup>34</sup> and credibility is more impacted by blog reliance than motivations.<sup>35</sup> The sum of this research underscores Finberg and Stone's suggestion that experience allows users to better assess specific Internet tool credibility. Interestingly, this credibility among users is believed to stem from the same attributes that might decrease credibility in other media, such as bias and lack of affiliation with a traditional media organization.<sup>36</sup>

**Journalists' and Public Relations' Use of Technology, Blogs, and Online Communities.** Beyond organizational use of media companies migrating content online, journalists themselves adopt technology and online-specific tools as a means to facilitate professional work.<sup>37</sup> Trends show journalists initially rate online information tools as less credible than the general public, but eventually report equal levels of credibility as use increases.<sup>38</sup>

Many journalists regard bloggers as a "mutant breed, viewing them with skepticism and suspicion. In the eyes of many journalists, blogs are poorly written, self-absorbed, hyper-opinionated, and done by amateurs."<sup>39</sup> Bloggers, on the other hand, are calling traditional "journalists' work stagnant, hyper-elitist, and arguing that they spend too much time writing for each other rather than for the public."<sup>40</sup>

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Just as it does in journalism, communication technology plays an important role in the public relations industry. Public relations professionals have embraced the Internet in particular as an important tool to enhance issues management, environmental monitoring, and two-way communication with their publics.<sup>41</sup> Current research on blog use and credibility in public relations is confined to a trade survey conducted by the Public Relations Society of America, which found practitioners and student majors believe that social media (and blogs in particular) present critical credibility and ethical challenges to public relations. Respondents felt challenged by the ability of "citizen journalists" to report instantaneously on an organization and crisis events, thereby making the work of public relations practitioners more complex.<sup>42</sup>

Other studies examined the use of blogs by organizations and their activist publics and can be related to credibility in that scholars have suggested organizations should communicate in conversational human voice on blogs to enhance relationship management strategies.<sup>43</sup> To this end, practitioners embraced blogs as traditional media outlets and offered media credentials to selected bloggers, allowing bloggers to "report" their own first-person accounts of media events.<sup>44</sup>

**RQ1a:** How credible do communication industry professionals find blogs?

**RQ1b:** Is there a difference in the level of credibility assigned blogs between public relations practitioners and journalists?

**RQ2:** Do distinct blogging activities predict perceptions of credibility among professionals?

**RQ3:** Do perceptions of credibility predict the perceived impact of blogs on one's industry?

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## Methods

This study explored the relationship between credibility and blog use among professionals in public relations and journalism via an online multi-page survey.

**Instrument.** First, this study examined credibility through the use of two credibility items identified by Kiousis.<sup>45</sup> The Kiousis items were selected for parsimony and their applicability to blogs and to both communication professions. Using a 5-point Likert-type scale, respondents indicated their agreement with statements asserting blogs were: *factual* and *not to be trusted*. The trust item was reverse-coded so that a higher number indicated more trust in blogs.

Respondents were asked several questions about their professional and personal blog use, similar to other technology integration<sup>46</sup> and uses and gratifications studies.<sup>47</sup> While uses and gratifications research has used a traditional scale to measure motivations, the standardized instrument would not fully encompass the range of professional motivations

one might have for adopting the technology within this industry. Given that uses and gratifications seeks to understand how the audience uses a particular medium and that the professional gratifications reaped are likely standard (efficiency, expansion of sources, etc.), this study approached use from an activity-based standpoint as opposed to a more psychological orientation (motivation). Self-reported blog use questions served as proxies for traditional motivations. Respondents were asked whether they blogged, and those who indicated they blogged were asked follow-up questions about use. All respondents, regardless of whether they blogged, were asked how often blogs were used for professional tasks, such as monitoring clients/issues, day-to-day work, or maintaining one as a part of one's job (i.e., column-related blog, for a client). Other items were adapted from Web use questions asked by Porter and Sallot.<sup>48</sup> These items were measured on a 5-point scale and factor analyzed as described below.

Finally, respondents were asked two questions on how blogs impact the industry: *blogs challenge conventional notions of the industry* and *blogs are not a threat to my industry*. These items were also measured on a 5-point scale with 1 indicating the respondent "strongly disagreed" and 5 "strongly agreed."

**Sample.** Participants were randomly sampled from lists of journalists available in Newslink.org and the Online News Association (ONA) directories and public relations practitioners from the PRSA directory. Researchers employed a stratified sample of newspaper, radio, television broadcast, and online journalists to ensure diverse types of journalism were included. In particular, supplementing the list of journalists collected through Newslink.org, a portal that focuses on traditional news organizations, with journalists selected from the ONA directory helped researchers compile a comprehensive list of traditional and new media journalists.

For the journalists, 1,001 e-mail addresses were randomly selected and sent an invitation to take the survey. Of these, only 952 went to working e-mail addresses. For the public relations practitioners, 1,125 e-mail addresses were randomly selected and invited to take the survey. Of these, only 916 went to working e-mail addresses. The response rate was 19.8% for the journalists ( $n = 189$ ) and 14.9% for the public relations practitioners ( $n = 137$ ), creating a combined response rate of 17.4% ( $N = 326$ ). This response rate is similar to those reported in other Web surveys<sup>49</sup> and those conducted on public relations practitioners.<sup>50</sup> The survey was conducted in early 2006.

Of those who reported gender ( $n = 237$ ), there were nearly equal groups of males ( $n = 122$ ; 51.5%) and females ( $n = 115$ ; 48.5%). The average age of the respondents ( $n = 226$ ) was 42.61 ( $sd = 11.24$ ). They averaged 16.14 years ( $sd = 10.37$ ) in their respective industries. A majority of the respondents held a bachelor's degree ( $n = 149$ ; 62.6%); a third held master's degrees ( $n = 77$ ; 34.4%). Sample demographics were compared to those for each field in general and found to be consistent overall in terms of race, gender, education, job title/role within organization, and other demographic variables.<sup>51</sup>

**TABLE 1**  
*Factor Analysis of Blog Use Items*

Factors	M	sd	Factor Loadings	
			1	2
Read as a Part of Daily News Consumption	2.45	1.26	.83	
Find Story Ideas	2.15	1.17	.82	
Monitor for Story Idea	2.17	1.18	.82	
Use for Timely Information	2.06	1.24	.78	
Read for Alternative Viewpoints	2.43	1.20	.77	
Read for Additional Information on Topic/Issue	2.40	1.15	.77	
Conduct Research	2.07	1.13	.76	
Use in Day-to-Work and Assignments	1.99	1.12	.74	
Monitor Professionally	2.31	1.30	.67	
Issues Identification	2.15	1.19	.66	
Habit	1.70	1.17	.62	
Use for Two-Way Communication	1.63	1.12		.77
Express Ideas or Opinions	1.72	1.14		.75
Communicate with Others	1.73	1.10		.72
Maintain Blog for Client/Organization	1.43	1.00		.63
Eigenvalues			9.30	1.47
Percent of Variance Explained			58.13	9.18

Items: Subjects were asked "How often do you use blogs to/for ..." with 5=very frequently and 1=never.

Note: The item "Use Web site subscriptions" was dropped from the first factor because of a low loading of .31.

## Results

Overall, respondents indicated that they "rarely" to "occasionally" used blogs ( $M = 2.80$ ;  $sd = 1.24$ ). Journalists reported using blogs "occasionally" ( $M = 3.06$ ;  $sd = 1.22$ ) and public relations practitioners reported using blogs "rarely" ( $M = 2.44$ ;  $sd = 1.07$ ). A *t*-test indicated that this difference was statistically significant,  $t(316) = 4.65$ ,  $p \leq .001$ . Regarding how often these professionals write or maintain blogs, 20.2% ( $n = 66$ ) of respondents reported such an active use of blogs, updating them "occasionally" to "frequently" ( $M = 3.64$ ;  $sd = .96$ ). Of those who blog, almost half reported doing so as a part of the job ( $n = 28$ ; 43.8%). A majority of blogging journalists reported maintaining a blog for work ( $n = 52$ ; 27.5%). Fewer public relations practitioners who blogged did so professionally ( $n = 3$ ; 23.1%).

Furthermore, cursory examination reveals a relationship between maintaining a blog and perceptions of credibility among journalism professionals ( $X^2 = 27.17$ , (6, 189),  $p < .001$ ) but not among public relations professionals ( $X^2 = 9.27$ , (6, 137), n.s.).

Principal-components factor analysis of the 16 items measuring blog use<sup>52</sup> (representing motivations) using varimax rotation resulted in load-

**TABLE 2**  
*Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Credibility among Journalists*

Predictor Variables	Block I	Block II	Cum R <sup>2</sup>
Gender	.03	-.02	
Age	-.15	-.17*	
Education	.02	-.02	.02
Blog Use (Surveillance/Research)		.44***	
Blog Use (Interactive Communication)		.30***	.31*** <sup>a</sup>

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is .28

Gender: Dummy-coded with male=0, female=1

Education: high school or GED=1, associate's degree=2, bachelor's degree=3, master's degree=4, doctoral degree=5

Blog use variables: "How often do you use blogs to/for..." with never=1 and very frequently=5

ings on two factors (see Table 1). Factor 1 was "surveillance and research" (Cronbach's alpha = .94) and factor 2 was "interactive blog communication" (Cronbach's alpha = .85). Factor 1 represented a passive, noninteractive use of blogs where communication professionals read blogs both as part of their regular news consumption and to actively research news topics and alternative viewpoints. Alternately, factor 2 represented an interactive, engaging two-way communication use of blogs where professionals actually posted information on or maintained blogs for themselves or for clients. A *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference between journalists' and public relations practitioners' blog use for these two factors. Public relations practitioners used blogs more for surveillance and research,  $t(284) = 3.51, p \leq .001$ ; journalists engaged in interactive blog communication more than public relations practitioners,  $t(284) = 4.00, p \leq .001$ .

**RQ1a** examined the level of credibility communication industry professionals assign blogs. Overall, the mean scores for trust were 2.75 (sd = .98) and 2.23 (sd = .89) for factual nature.

**RQ1b** asked about differences in credibility between the two groups. A *t*-test comparing journalists' to public relations practitioners' assessment of the two credibility items revealed a statistically significant difference in credibility regarding the perceived factual nature of blogs,  $t(277) = 2.24, p < .05$ . Regarding the statement that "blogs are factual," journalists "disagreed" ( $M = 2.34$ ; sd = .87) and public relations practitioners rated that item even lower ( $M = 2.09$ ; sd = .91). Both journalists ( $M = 2.84$ ; sd = .08) and public relations practitioners ( $M = 2.62$ ; sd = .92) "disagreed" with the idea of trusting blogs, but the difference was not significant.

TABLE 3

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Credibility among PR Professionals*

Predictor Variables	Block I	Block II	Cum R <sup>2</sup>
Gender	.18	.16	
Age	-.27*	-.31**	
Education	.01	.06	.07
Blog Use (Surveillance/Research)		.39***	
Blog Use (Interactive Communication)		-.04	.21*** <sup>a</sup>

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is .16

Gender: Dummy-coded with male=0, female=1

Education: high school or GED=1, associate's degree=2, bachelor's degree=3, master's degree=4, doctoral degree=5

Blog use variables: "How often do you use blogs to/for..." with never=1 and very frequently=5

RQ2 examined whether distinct blog use activities predict perceptions of credibility among professionals. To answer this question, two independent hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted, one for journalists and one for PR. Demographic variables were entered in the first block, and the two blog use factors were entered in the second block. Examination of the tolerance and VIF scores testing multicollinearity revealed no high correlations among the independent variables.

As shown in Table 2, the first regression assesses the relationship between journalists' blog use and credibility. Overall, this model accounted for 31% of the variance. In the first block, no variables surfaced as significant predictors. When the two blog use factors were added to the equation, age and both blog use factors—surveillance/research and interactive communication—surfaced as significant predictors of credibility. Among the three predictors, beta coefficients indicate that blog use for surveillance/research was the strongest predictor of credibility among journalists.

Table 3 shows results from the second regression that assesses the relationship between PR professionals' blog use and credibility ( $R^2 = .21$ ). In the first block, age surfaced as a significant predictor of credibility with younger PR professionals more likely to perceive blogs as credible. When the two blog use factors were added, age remained significant, and the blog use for surveillance/research also emerged as a significant predictor. Beta coefficients indicate that blog use for surveillance/research was the stronger predictor of credibility among PR professionals.

RQ3 examines whether perceptions of credibility predict perceived impact of blogs, using two items: challenge of blogs to conventional

TABLE 4

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Blog Impact among Journalists*

Predictor Variables	Block I	Block II	Cum R <sup>2</sup>
Gender	-.05	-.07	
Age	.01	.05	
Education	.01	-.01	.003
Credibility		.42***	.18****a

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is .15

Gender: Dummy-coded with male=0, female=1

Education: high school or GED=1, associate's degree=2, bachelor's degree=3, master's degree=4, doctoral degree=5

Credibility: Level of agreement with strongly disagree=1 and strongly agree=5

notions of industry and threat to industry. An impact scale was created using these two variables (Cronbach's alpha = .71). Overall, respondents believed that blogs would have an impact on their industry ( $M = 7.08$ ;  $sd = 1.31$ ), with journalists ( $M = 7.22$ ,  $sd = 1.37$ ) perceiving a greater impact than public relations practitioners ( $M = 6.84$ ;  $sd = 1.16$ ). We analyzed the results between journalism and PR professionals to identify specific associations using two separate independent hierarchical multiple regressions. Demographic variables were entered in the first block, and the perceived impact scale was entered in the second block. Examination of the tolerance and VIF scores testing multicollinearity revealed no high correlations among the independent variables.

Table 4 shows results from the third regression that assesses the relationship between credibility and perceived impact of blogs among journalism professionals ( $R^2 = .18$ ). In the first block, no variables emerged as significant. In the second block, credibility was the sole significant predictor of perceived impact of blogs.

Table 5 shows results from the fourth regression that assesses the relationship between credibility and perceived impact of blogs among PR professionals. Overall, this model was not significant ( $R^2 = .04$ ).

## Discussion

From a theoretical standpoint, this study underscored the complexity of "use," furthering previous research finding tasks associated with using a particular tool are not one-dimensional. Additionally, this study broadened the understanding of how other variables, such as credibility and impact, play into the perspective. In this regard, the findings illustrate how perception variables and utility of a particular tool influence use.

TABLE 5

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Blog Impact among PR Professionals*

Predictor Variables	Block I	Block II	Cum R <sup>2</sup>
Gender	-.17	-.17	
Age	-.06	-.06	
Education	-.02	-.02	.04
Credibility		-.00	.04 <sup>a</sup>

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is -.01

Gender: Dummy-coded with male=0, female=1

Education: high school or GED=1, associate's degree=2, bachelor's degree=3, master's degree=4, doctoral degree=5

Credibility: Level of agreement with strongly disagree=1 and strongly agree=5

When this study was conducted in 2006 it appears that blog use within the communication industry was slightly ahead of national figures. Even with this higher level of adoption, one might expect more from the communication industry given that the core purpose of blogging is communication. Among the one-in-five respondents using blogs, few professionals themselves write blogs, but many read or interact on blogs. Such findings further previous uses and gratifications blog research that finds many active user roles involved in blogging. In this way, blogs differ from some other media channels. These findings illustrate the variety of activity that can occur within "blog use."

The blog use factor analysis revealed two simplified categories that specify motivations among both journalists and public relations professionals. Interestingly, no differences in the factors emerged between professions. Here, both sets of professionals seemed to either be using blogs for noninteractive surveillance/research uses (e.g., monitoring, issues identification) or interactive uses where the professional maintains a blog and/or interacts with the public through blogs. Noninteractive uses comprised a wide variety of motivations involving information gathering ranging from daily, habitual reading of certain blogs to using blogs to identify pertinent issues or conduct research. More interactive use involved actually blogging to express ideas or to communicate with or actively persuade others.

Differences between the two groups of communication industry professionals provided an interesting look at how each views and uses blogs. First, the use comparison between the two fields is unexpected. Historically, the purpose of journalism is, by definition, telling readers a factual story about what is occurring within one's community. This type

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of work would seemingly find noninteractive surveillance and research use more appropriate. Public relations, also by definition, revolves around relationships practitioners and organizations build with their publics. This would seemingly find more interactive uses appropriate. Yet, the results here are the exact opposite, with journalists favoring interactive uses and public relations practitioners favoring noninteractive uses. It is possible that the media industry's push to host blogs on official sites and public relations' hesitance to embrace the blogging community may be related. Additionally, it is possible that credibility was involved given the assessments each group placed on blog credibility.

While both groups of professionals did not feel blogs are credible, journalists found blogs slightly more credible than public relations practitioners. This may be because of anecdotal instances where bloggers acted as media watchdogs and either brought stories to the forefront of the media agenda or attempted to correct inaccuracies in the press<sup>53</sup> or the fact that many news organizations themselves have blogs. On the other hand, public relations practitioners have been barraged with advice to "beware of the blogs," with anecdotes where bloggers have impacted an organization's reputation.<sup>54</sup> These sentiments surfaced in the PRSA survey.<sup>55</sup> As such, it is reasonable that public relations practitioners feel they have more at stake with blogs and are testing the waters by using blogs primarily for surveillance and research.

Despite these differences, the use of blogs predicted credibility, supporting previous uses and gratifications research. Both journalists and public relations practitioners writing and reading blogs found blogs more credible. Not surprisingly, professionals who regularly used blogs for noninteractive research and surveillance purposes found that information more credible. Therefore, if blog readership continues to increase among communication professionals, blog credibility should increase as well. Younger professionals in both journalism and public relations also tended to find blogs more credible, which points to more credibility assigned to blogs in the future.

The relationship between blog use and credibility may seem simplistic at face value given previous scholarship that reliance leads to credibility. Yet, considering the next step in this investigation—the relationship between credibility and impact on the communication industry—these findings take on greater meaning. Here, only journalists' assessment of credibility predicted the perception of an impact of blogs on one's profession. Perhaps this is because journalists have been asked, perhaps more than practitioners, to incorporate blogs into their work. As such, the paradox that currently exists where journalists do not find blogs credible despite using them increasingly is likely to disappear as blogs become common in the profession, as suggested by previous Internet use trends among journalists. For practitioners, our results bring greater meaning to the PRSA survey finding that the industry believes blogs will and already do have a great impact on the field.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, the findings regarding the difference in blog use among journalists and public relations practitioners leave much to be consid-

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ered. Practitioners appear to be relying on blogs more for non-interactive uses of collecting information, surveillance, and research. They are using blogs passively to keep up-to-date but not really adding their voice to the conversation directly. This is perhaps because public relations practitioners are not the most trusted sources of information,<sup>57</sup> so they turn to journalists and now bloggers to pitch stories in hopes of placement. To put it another way, public relations practitioners use media relations techniques to obtain coverage for their client or organization and obtain an implicit third-party endorsement from journalists who run such items. While blogging from an organizational standpoint can encourage positive relationship management strategies and provide a human voice for an organization,<sup>58</sup> public relations practitioners may still be wary of blogger backlash.<sup>59</sup> Journalists, on the other hand, are extending their traditional role of discussing the news of the day through traditional means and writing work-orientated blogs. The mere act of writing a blog—doing what the journalist has always done—does not challenge the conventions or revolutionize journalism. Yet, the two-way communication that occurs on blogs (e.g., allowing unmoderated feedback) does. Blogs have been considered a tool to help empower the news audience in that they, too, can contribute to news content by expressing their views.

In conclusion, it appears that communication industry professionals are using blogs as extensions of their normal work. While technology enables them to do more than before, blog use does not signal a new era of the professions. While there is not a mandate for using blogs professionally, these professionals believe that blogs will have an impact on the communication industry. Furthermore, as with other media, credibility will likely increase as more communication industry professionals use blogs.

**Limitations.** While this survey did randomly sample communication industry professionals, it is difficult to generalize these findings to two groups of professionals in the industry. Future studies should expand the measure of credibility to a more inclusive list of source credibility constructs, to include believability, fairness, bias, and completeness/depth of information, among others. Furthermore, certain limitations are inherent with online surveys. Measures were taken to limit this as much as possible, but survey abandonment, identity, and reliance on self-report remain limitations here.

**Future Research.** Blog use is in its early stages of development among those in the communication industry. Other studies should further investigate the use of blogs in the communication industry and examine more meaningful links to credibility, use, and perception of blogs, among other variables. To expand on the simplified blog use factors, scholars should develop a more extensive list of motivations for using blogs that expands upon interactive and noninteractive uses. In particular, the two-way communication factor could include numerous other types of communication common on blogs such as commenting, responding to comments, the posting of multimedia, etc. Scholars should examine the integration and evolution of blogs by the communication industry from a diffusion of innovations perspective.

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## NOTES

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