

SPONSORED CONTENT CREDIBILITY
AN INTEGRATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract <p>Traditional media channels are losing their audiences as the public focus has shifted over to the web and its numerous issue arenas. In addition to the public and the publishers, this focus-shift has heavily affected the advertising brands: as conventional advertising is nowadays easily skipped, branded content needs to find new forms that are appealing enough for the consumers to seek out for and share. These new forms of advertising have many names, e.g. content marketing, branded content and brand journalism, and they can all be categorized under a wider umbrella term of Sponsored Content.</p> <p>In this study an integrative literature analysis of topical peer-reviewed scientific literature was performed to map out the consistency of Sponsored Content credibility from the consumer point of view. Study results suggest source credibility and content credibility as the main Sponsored Content credibility layers, while trustworthiness, expertise and aesthetics are suggested as the Sponsored Content credibility dimensions.</p> <p>The study also introduces the Sponsored Content Credibility Model (SCCM) as a tool for perceiving Sponsored Content credibility, and a pattern of 26 variables valid for measuring its credibility.</p>	
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Tiivistelmä <p>Perinteiset mediakanavat menettävät suosiotaan suuren yleisön huomion kohdentuessa lisääntyvässä määrin verkkoon ja sen lukuisiin tapahtuma-areenoihin. Mediakustantajien ja yleisön lisäksi muutos vaikuttaa myös mediassa mainostaviin brändeihin, sillä tavanomaiset mainonnan muodot jäävät verkossa helposti huomiotta. Verkossa julkaistun brändisisällön tulee olla niin kiinnostavaa, että kuluttaja hakeutuu sen luo vapaaehtoisesti ja haluaa myös jakaa sitä. Näillä uudentyyppisillä brändisisällöillä on useita eri nimityksiä, kuten sisältömarkkinointi, brändätty sisältö ja brändijournalismi. Kaikkia näitä määrittävä ja yhdistävä termi on sponsoroitu sisältö.</p> <p>Tämä tutkimus on integroivan analyysin metodologiaa noudattava kirjallisuuskatsaus, jossa käydään läpi tieteellisissä joulaleissa julkaistuja vertaisarvioituja artikkeleita, tavoitteena muodostaa käsitys siitä, minkälaista on uskottava sponsoroitu sisältö kuluttajan näkökulmasta tarkasteltuna, ja miten sisällön uskottavuutta voidaan mitata.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulosten mukaan sponsoroidun sisällön uskottavuuden peruselementit ovat lähteen ja sisällön uskottavuus. Luotettavuus (trustworthiness), asiantuntijuus (expertise) ja esteettisyys (aesthetics) ovat sen ulottuvuudet.</p> <p>Tutkimustuloksina esitetään sponsoroidun sisällön uskottavuutta kuvaava malli, sekä uskottavuusmittaristo, jonka muodostaa 26 muuttujaa.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

The field of media, publishers and advertising is going through a major change as traditional mass publishing channels are losing their popularity (Quinton 2013; Wybenga 2013; Sonderman & Tran, American Press Institute 2014) while social media platforms keep giving births to new ones. Fast development of digital platforms in the web and social media has driven traditional publishers into a position where rapid reworking of business models and adapting organizations to fit the ever-evolving digital reality has become crucial. As publishers, journalists and brands are living in a symbiotic relation where journalists are selling attention to advertisers (Luoma-aho & Nordfors 2009) and advertising income forms an outstanding portion of traditional publisher's income (Sanoma 2013; Hsiang 2005; Ives 2009), the ongoing process affects both advertising and journalism on a deep level.

Global advertising revenue has been on a constant rise since 2010 (Statista 2015). The only exception to the trend is Northern and Central Europe, where an adspend decrease has been created by reactions to Eurozone challenges (Zenith Optimedia 2014). A prime example of this is Finland, where – apart from adspend decrease (Markkinointiviestinnän Toimistojen Liitto MTL 2014) – the situation looks the same as the global picture: percentage-wise the largest share (49,5%) of all media advertising money in Finland is still invested in print, but the decrease is notable: -15,8% from 2012 to 2013. At the same time the marketing utilization of digital media in Finland is on the increase: in 2013 digital media's share was 47,1%, 19,7% of which was invested in web advertising. Total increase of web advertising from 2012 to 2013 was 6,8% (Markkinointiviestinnän Toimistojen Liitto MTL 2014.)

No matter if adspend is on a global increase, still traditional publishers suffer and the print medium shrinks. So where does the money go? More and more to the web. (Zenith Optimedia 2014.) Of the traditional channels television is still going strong and has the biggest global share of all the money invested in advertising,

but Internet contributes to the global annual growth with more than a double sum of dollars as compared to TV. Novel ways of handling and presenting information in the social web and digital channels in general add to the disarray.

Importance of creating true customer engagement has become crucial as in the web traditional advertising is nowadays easily skipped and ignored (Brown, Johnson & Willmott 2013). A strong new trend in web advertising is combining journalistic storytelling traditions with brand messaging. This new viewpoint has many marketing names, most prominently *branded journalism* (Wybenga 2013), *brand journalism* (Brito 2013; Cole & Greer 2013; DVorkin 2012; Edwards 2013; Swenson 2012; Zuk 2012) and *content marketing* (Pulizzi 2012; Sanoma 2012). When monitoring the ongoing debate on various social media issue arenas, it can be observed that marketing agencies and publishers have iterated the terminology even further to suit their clients' needs (DVorkin 2012; Lehto & Moisala 2014). In a wider perspective brand(ed) journalism, content marketing with their neighboring constructs lie under the concept of *Sponsored Content* (Sonderman & Tran, American Press Institute 2014).

As the boundaries of traditional journalism and advertising are being blurred by the increasing flow of Sponsored Content, the possible benefits of developing functional Sponsored Content tools are immense for both brands and publishers. Finding a mutually advantageous framework to combine journalistic tradition with the advertising solutions will potentially benefit everybody: consumers, publishers, journalists and brands. On the other hand, as brands take over and start creating high-quality content that reminisces journalism on their own, media trustworthiness is at risk (van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2010). In the web, where anyone can publish information without editorial gatekeeping, credibility evaluations are left more and more on the shoulders of the consumer.

1.1 Research gap and the aim of the study

Even though the effects of commerciality in relation to message credibility have been examined from various viewpoints (e.g. Friestad & Wright 1994; van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2010; van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2005; Dahlén & Edenius 2007), most studies focus on TV advertising (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal 2012) or comparing the credibility results to traditional media (print) outlets. No

attempt has been made to construct tools to define and measure Sponsored Content credibility.

The aim of this study is to clarify how Sponsored Content credibility is formed from the consumer's point of view, and determine valid measures for evaluating it. This is pursued by performing an integrative literature review (Salminen 2011; Evans 2008; Torraco 2005) on existing studies of source credibility and content credibility concepts, and then applying Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) (Friestad & Wright 1994) to synthesize the results to form a versatile outlook on Sponsored Content credibility and the process of measuring it.

As the outcome of this study a model to define Sponsored Content credibility construct and a measuring pattern for Sponsored Content credibility are synthesized.

1.2 Research implementation

This thesis is a conceptual, qualitative study of the most topical peer-reviewed research literature on various aspects of content credibility and source credibility. PKM is used as the guiding theory (Torraco 2008) to provide the viewpoint for the study.

First the conceptual framework on which the study is based is presented, and then the methodology of the study (integrative literature review) is explained in detail. Integrative literature review was chosen because it provides a practical way to form a general view on a diverse subject (Salminen 2011; Fink 2010; Torraco 2008), and it enables a broad sample of data to be observed from a critical perspective (Salminen 2011).

Following the methodology chapter, the results and findings of the study are presented together with the study material. Finally in the last chapter conclusions based on the study results are drawn, discussion on the subject is opened, and suggestions for future study are made.

2 FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The four main concepts of this study are Sponsored Content, source credibility, content credibility and persuasion. First, the concept of Sponsored Content will be introduced. Looking into the existing literature, issue arena discussions online, and evaluations made by American Press Institute, Sponsored Content was found to be a suitable umbrella term covering the wide scope of new forms of advertising (Sonderman & Tran, American Press Institute 2014).

As Sponsored Content escapes the definitions of both journalism and advertising, looking into its constructs requires diving into the concepts of source credibility and content credibility. Of these two, source credibility is a reasonably straightforward ensemble, while content credibility is a volatile subject with endless possible definitions depending on the standpoint. These concepts are introduced and covered in the following chapters.

Finally, to understand the powers that lie behind commercial advocacy messages, one must look into the concept of persuasion. Persuasion is what advertising basically is, and the functionality of persuasion in this concept has been studied by Friestad & Wright (1994) in their Persuasion Knowledge Model construct. PKM is introduced and the all the key concepts are summarized in the end of this chapter.

2.1 Sponsored Content

Harvey, Gray and Despain (2006) describe sponsorships as the original form of radio and television advertising, “generating more money than all media advertising put together”. Deriving from sponsorship, Sponsored Content is an umbrella term aggregating many new marketing and advertising industry concepts. As stated before, the current terminological incoherence is due to the fact that advertising and journalism still haven’t found the equilibrium, and many agencies seem to find coming up with new patterns a viable way to ensure competitiveness.

To grasp Sponsored Content, one must look into the definitions made in earlier literature and in ongoing industry discussions. The terminology is still evolving and overlapping terms such as *native advertising* and *paid content* are commonly used (Rubel 2013). American Press Institute (Sonderman & Tran, American Press Institute 2014) sees native advertising and Sponsored Content synonymous, while Campbell, Cohen and Junzhao (2014) see native advertising being permission-based and occurring within a social network feed. In this study the concepts are seen mainly synonymous, yet native advertising is seen having a more straightforward selling function, while Sponsored Content is seen being more heavily based on storytelling.

As Uses and Gratifications studies (e.g. Korgaonkar & Wolin 1999; Whiting & Williams 2013) show, consumers seek for diverse forms of media content to find information or entertainment in its many forms. This process is voluntary and mostly deliberate. While seeking for purposeful content, consumers tend to avoid exposure to advertising (Eisend & Küster 2011).

Sponsored Content is defined as material where brand content or messages with persuasive intent are intentionally subsumed into noncommercial journalistic editorial content (Boerman, Reijmersdal & Neijens 2014; van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2007), as a well-balanced mixture of editorial and brand content enhances the possibility of consumer encountering the brand (Roehm, Roehm Jr. & Boone 2004) and makes it impossible for the consumers to skip advertising as the advertising and the actual content are one (Roehm, Roehm Jr. & Boone 2004; Harvey, Gray & Despain 2006). Sponsored Content tends to feel more like editorial content and less like advertising, and while this can be seen advantageous for the

brand, it may be hazardous to the publisher (Rieder 2013; Carlson 2014) as commerciality lowers message credibility (van Reijmersdal et al. 2010). Creating a well-balanced mixture of advertising and editorial content seems to produce desirable results for both advertisers and publishers (van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2005). According to Eisend and Küster (2011) advertisements made to look like editorial material outdo both traditional advertising and publicity (PR) as they combine the best qualities of both: sponsor's control over message and credibility of the perceived source (media).

Although most of the current studies examine Sponsored Content as written articles, the actual formats and platforms for Sponsored Content are numerous and not limited to written articles published on social media, publisher websites or print media (Rubel 2013; Wybenga 2013). Sponsored Content commonly appears in forms of videos published in popular social media channels, or seemingly coincidental occurrences in television or radio shows. Sometimes the ethicality of such incidents can be questioned, as the viewer cannot without a doubt tell whether he is exposed to advertising or not.

Harvey, Gray and Despain (2006) introduce the concept of true sponsorship, where brand's exclusivity and visibility are given extra value, meaning that only the sponsor brand should be visible, and no regular advertisements should be allowed within the context. At the same time they emphasize emotive connection, meaning the content should be perceived as a valuable gift with no strings attached, meaning no product plugs whatsoever should be involved in the content.

In 2013 American Press Institute organized a summit with a number of publishing people they evaluated thought leaders of the field to discuss the terminology and situation in general. After the summit American Press Institute published a white paper where Sponsored Content is defined as "falling close to brand advertising, establishing brand relationships and awareness". As a contrast to Sponsored Content American Press Institute sees display ads as "reminders or point-of-purchase decisions". According to them, Sponsored Content takes the same qualities as editorial content. (Sonderman & Tran, American Press Institute 2014).

Table 1 lists summary of definitions and qualities of Sponsored Content presented in various studies in the order of relevance to the current study.

Concept definition	Concept qualities
<p>“Takes the same form and qualities as publisher’s original content.”</p> <p>“Serves useful or entertaining information as a way of favorably influencing the perception of the sponsor brand.”</p> <p>(Sonderman & Tran, American Press Institute 2014)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● seamless integration to editorial content ● exclusive environment ● either publisher or brand has the editorial control
<p>“the intentional incorporation of brands, products, or persuasive messages into traditionally noncommercial, editorial content” (van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2007; Boerman, Reijmersdal & Neijens 2014)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● seamless integration to editorial content ● brand has the editorial control
<p>“integration of commercial content into editorial content” (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal 2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● seamless integration to editorial content ● brand has the editorial control
<p>“is perceived as giving the user a no-strings-attached gift of valued content. “</p> <p>“There is a single sponsor. There is no advertising for any other brand. It is easy to see the sponsorship credit.”</p> <p>(Harvey, Gray & Despain 2006)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● contributing valuable content to the audience without compensation ● exclusive environment ● brand has the editorial control
<p>“Content wholly produced by the news media but whose creation is in exchange for display advertising placement by the sponsoring brand. Consideration of some kind is made by the brand. Full editorial control rests with the news organization.” (Campbell, Cohen & Junzhao 2014.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● seamless integration to editorial content ● publisher has the editorial control

TABLE 1: Definitions and qualities of Sponsored Content in the order of relevance to the current study

Most studies emphasize Sponsored Content's seamless integration to the editorial content, and all except one study (Campbell et al. 2014) note that brand has the editorial control over the material. The American Press Institute definition extends editorial content in some cases to publisher, referring to cases where the publisher is responsible for content production. In actual fact the brand still has the final editorial control in cases like these. However, in the scenario described by Campbell et al. (2014) the publisher produces ostensibly independent and journalistic content to satisfy the advertiser and thus the brand does not necessarily have direct journalistic control over the outcome. Exclusive environment free from other sponsors or advertisers is seen important by most studies. One study (Harvey et al. 2006) defines sponsoring as providing audience valuable content "no-strings-attached".

In the current study Sponsored Content is seen as entertaining and / or informative editorial content seamlessly integrated to the brand ecosystem. Sponsored Content is not limited to any format, channel or environment and the brand holds the final executive editorial control, although editorial liberties of varying degrees may be given to the content producer and publisher.

2.2 Source Credibility

According to Pornpitakpan (2004) source credibility dimensions are commonly identified as *expertise* and *trustworthiness*. Expertise refers to how qualified the source is to make accurate claims on the subject, while trustworthiness refers to audience perceptions of the source. McGuire (1978 in Pornpitakpan 2004) identifies *source*, *message*, *channel*, *receiver*, and *destination* as the five variables of persuasive communication, and *credibility*, *attractiveness* and *power* as the source variables.

Almost all the source credibility studies from the 1950s to the most recent ones agree that high-credibility sources are more effective in persuasion than low-credibility sources (Pornpitakpan 2004). The results have been consistent ever since Hovland and Weiss (1951) presented their seminal study demonstrating that while factual information is transmitted on an equal level no matter if the source credibility is high or low, opinion changes require high-credibility sources to occur. In study groups the test subjects were subjected to identical article material, indicating one group the material originates from a source the group had found

reliable, while the other group was indicated the source was one they had deemed unreliable.

The study indicated no significant difference in how well the test subjects acquired the factual information whether the source was seen trustworthy or untrustworthy. However, significant differences were seen when examining opinion changes resulting from the information coming from sources of varying degrees of trustworthiness: opinion-change in direction suggested by a trustworthy source was far more common than opinion-change to the direction advocated by a low credibility source. In layman's terms the results can be seen demonstrating the difference between learning and acceptance. A case where a low-credibility source can be favorable over a high-credibility source can be for instance a toothbrush commercial targeted for children. In this case a high-credibility dentist may not relay the message as effectively as a low-credibility child. (Pornpitakpan 2004.)

These findings have been confirmed and expanded by several other scholars, especially on the field of social psychology. Later on the source credibility study scope has been widened to explore for instance the effects of source attractiveness and celebrity endorsers (Mills & Harvey 1972; Horai, Naccari & Fatoullah 1974; Maddux & Rogers 1980) and corporate credibility (Goldsmith, Lafferty & Newell 2000). Considering the field of this study, a relevant observation was made by van Reijmersdal et al. (2010), who pointed out that source commerciality does not determine (lower) credibility of the publication (source), but commerciality of the content does. Parallel observations were made by Austin and Dong (1994) when studying the effects of source credibility on message credibility. They also argue that it is often unclear how much the assessments of source credibility are based on source reputation as opposed to the content and context of the message itself. A conceptual model of how source credibility works on the field of advertising is shown in Figure 1.



FIGURE 1: Source credibility model (Eisend & Küster 2011)

In Figure 1 Advertising / publicity (e.g. Sponsored Content) (1) affects source credibility (2), source credibility affects attitude toward the message (3), attitude toward the message impacts attitude toward the brand (4), and finally attitude toward the brand affects consumer's purchase / behavioral intention (5). The effects on purchase / behavioral intention may be either negative or positive depending on the quality of Sponsored Content, level of perceived source credibility and attitudes toward the message and the brand.

It is also good to keep in mind that most of the studies were conducted prior to the birth of the Internet and social media. These arenas have brought along new sociotechnological dimensions that affect individual credibility evaluations. The vast amount of information readily available in the web has made it challenging for a single person to systematically verify information validity. Some scholars (e.g. Metzger, Flanagin & Medders 2010; Pirolli 2006; Wirth, Böcking, Karnowski & Von Pape 2007) argue that instead of systematic methods individuals use heuristic cognitive processing to cope with the information overload and uncertainty. When using *endorsement-based heuristic* methods, individuals perceive source (and content) credible if others do so as well, without processing the information themselves (Hilligoss & Rieh 2008). This can be seen as a way of harnessing collective intelligence to achieve common evaluations of information using only a requisite amount of cognitive resources to provide optimal outcome for the context. Metzger et al. (2010) call this *satisficing*.

2.3 Content Credibility

As stated earlier, the concept of content credibility is a multidimensional entity that needs to be broken down and examined in well-chosen pieces to get accurate results that serve the current study. This multidimensional approach to credibility studies can be seen as an academic norm (Bucy 2003). In spite of editorial style, Sponsored Content as persuasive advocacy messaging can be seen holding common principles with advertising (i.e. persuasion). This means that advertising credibility is to be examined closer, giving special attention to the unique properties of Sponsored Content.

Van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit (2010) have studied readers' reactions to various mixtures of editorial content and advocacy messaging, and found that the mixture with the most editorial content is the most accepted and appreciated. A similar

idea was presented by Cameron (1994), who argues that messages labeled as advertising are not remembered as well as editorial-labeled messages. This observation is supported by van Reijmersdal et al. (2010), who found that commercial qualities in a customer magazine increase the frequency the magazine content is perceived having persuasive intent, and thus being less credible. Hence from the perspective of the advertiser, disguising the commercial source can be considered an advantage, as audiences generally perceive editorial content more reliable and credible than advertising (Cameron 1994; Pornpitakpan 2004).

Sundar (1999) lists *credibility*, *liking*, *quality* and *representativeness* as the four labels readers use to evaluate and / or describe a news story. Credibility is seen as overall evaluation of the news story objectivity, liking as the affective reaction caused by the story, and quality as an overall measure of news story excellence. Sundar (1999) defines representativeness as a summary judgment for how well the audience sees an individual news story representing the general qualities of the news story genre, as opposed to for instance a fictitious story, while Austin and Dong (1994) use the term representativeness for referring to how well audience experiences the story portrays the issue. Nelson, Wood and Paek (2009) argue that the audience is unable to judge the credibility of the news story without knowing the source, making reasoned decision making difficult.

Content credibility is also affected by the context the message is presented in, as a positively evaluated context improves message credibility (Pelsmacker, Geuens & Anckaert 2002). This can be seen as positive “spill over” from the context to the content as commercial message benefits from the monetary investments made in the context (Lloyd & Clancy 1991; van Reijmersdal et al. 2010). Hargittai, Fullerton, Menchen-Trevino and Thomas (2010) argue that the online information seeking process affects the credibility evaluations of the found content. According to their study, search engine results are highly trusted. This is due to strong search engine brands and routines that have formed around them: over a third of the participants used a search engine name as a verb, as in “I would yahoo it or google it.” This is supported by Edelman Trust Barometer 2015 (Edelman 2015), which shows that search engines are more trusted than traditional media sources.

Also some media literacy scholars (e.g. Britt & Aglinskias 2002; Kuiper, Volman & Terwel 2005) have studied the formation of content credibility conceptions. Media literacy focus tends to be on tackling the obstacles standing in the way of children’s educational process, and while many worthwhile studies have been published on

that subject, the focus of this study lies elsewhere, and thus no deep review of media literature articles is performed.

2.4 Persuasion

Many conceptualizations have been made striving to chart individuals' impressions of advertising. Although media literacy is not at the core of this study, the definition of media literacy as a concept can be seen as a rational starting point when studying how individuals perceive persuasive messages. International Encyclopedia of Communication defines Media Literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages across a variety of contexts" (Livingstone & van der Graaf 2008; Christ & Potter 1998). According to the same source, Media Literacy is associated more specifically with Advertising Literacy.

In this study advertising is seen as a form of persuasion. When taking this approach the function of advertising can be defined as "convincing consumers of the value of the message position, i.e., the product or brand advertised" (Fennis, The International Encyclopedia of Communication 2008). The current study approaches persuasion from the perspective of Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM), created by Friestad and Wright (1994) which is explained in the following section.

2.4.1 Persuasion Knowledge Model

Published in 1994, PKM is still the leading theoretical framework built to understand how person's knowledge affects persuasion attempts (Hibbert, Smith, Davies & Ireland 2007). The goal of PKM is to present how people use their persuasion knowledge to respond to persuasion attempts (Friestad & Wright 1994). Persuasion knowledge involves matters and beliefs involved with a number of advertising-related issues, like assumptions of persuasion goals and tactics, evaluations of how effective and appropriate persuasion is, and assessments of one's own psychological mediators, persuasion coping goals and tactics (Friestad & Wright 1994; Hibbert et al. 2007; Lorenzon & Russell 2012).

The whole of one's persuasion knowledge is accumulated gradually in a life-long process that takes place while striving to understand and cope with persuasion

attempts. The PKM concept is presented in Figure 2, which features all the original PKM elements, but is modified from the original “Target up, Agent down” visualization to “Agent left, Target right” to better convey the process flow.

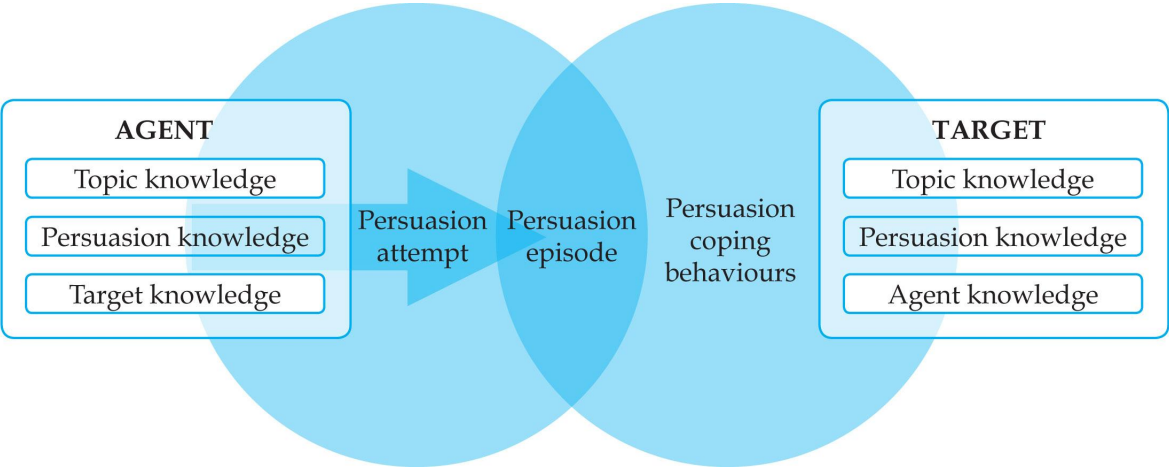


FIGURE 2: Persuasion Knowledge Model (adapted from Friestad & Wright 1994)

PKM uses the term *Agent* to refer to whoever has constructed and planned the persuasion attempt (e.g. a brand) and the term *Target* to refer to the people to whom the persuasion attempt is intended (e.g. potential customers). The term *Persuasion Attempt* is used of Agent’s actions designed to influence Target’s mindset (e.g. publishing Sponsored Content). Target’s *Topic knowledge* is non-persuasion-related information consisting of generic information on the topic content and the context in which it is presented in (Lorenzon & Russell 2012). Target’s *Agent knowledge* is also a non-persuasion-related dimension, which consists of subjective projections of agent’s attributes and competencies (Hibbert et al. 2007; Lorenzon & Russell 2012). PKM stresses the role of *Persuasion knowledge* in persuasion episodes, as persuasion knowledge is often easily accessed and relevant in cases where the amount of topic and / or agent knowledge is limited. Persuasion knowledge consists of general persuasion-related information, based mostly on past experiences of persuasion attempts.

A real-life example of consumer (aka Target) using the three PKM knowledges could be a situation where the Target sees his friend sharing a video in her social media feed. In the past Target has witnessed numerous television advertisements and watched countless videos on various social media platforms, some of which have been persuasive and some not. All his persuasive message encounters have

built him persuasion knowledge, which consists of information on general characteristics and traits used in persuasive messaging.

The video in case seems to be discussing women's rights. No brand logos are visible and the content doesn't seem to follow the traits usually present in persuasive marketing messages, so according to Target's persuasion-related knowledges he is not being exposed to marketing messaging. However, Target's topic knowledge points out that videos about women's rights are usually produced to promote gender equality, and thus have a persuasive agenda. The video does not unveil the source, so the Agent knowledge is left incomplete for the time being. According to PKM, Target will use his general persuasion knowledge to fill in gaps left in either Topic or Agent knowledge. In this case the Agent is unknown, but no malign objectives are perceived, so the Target keeps an open mind.

Halfway the video the Agent is revealed, as the logo of a global female hygiene brand appears on the screen. Target is now forced to reconsider his attitudes toward the content and the source in a process, which PKM calls *change-of-meaning*. According to PKM, people are motivated to form valid attitudes toward Topics and Agents, so if the Target finds his existing Agent or Topic attitudes wrong, he will take measures to correct them. In this particular case the Agent emerges as a commercial actor, but source commerciality does not affect Target's attitudes negatively as long as the content maintains its quality, so that the Target keeps on perceiving the message as non-persuasive and agreeable. This being the case, Target's Agent knowledge and Topic Knowledge evolve in a positive direction.

On a wider scope a persuasion episode consists of the entire perceptible part of Agent's behavior. A persuasion attempt can consist of a single persuasion episode, or it can be a series of episodes (e.g. a multichannel advertising campaign or a series of face-to-face negotiations). Target's persuasion knowledge itself consists of information Target has gathered about the strategies and tactics used in persuasion attempts. This includes ideas about what the Agent is attempting to achieve, as well as ideas about persuasion strategies, and what the Agent is trying to achieve. Target's persuasion knowledge may be seen consisting of beliefs on:

- psychological events that are instrumental to persuasion
- causes and effects of those events
- importance of the events

- extent to which people can control their psychological responses
- temporal course of the persuasion process
- effectiveness and appropriateness of particular persuasion tactics

It must however be noted, that although numerous studies address persuasion knowledge from various angles, no consensus has been reached on the exact texture of persuasion knowledge so far (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal 2012). Even the PKM creators themselves leave some key definitions like the beliefs about psychological mediators open for future research. This reflects the openness and flexibility of the model. PKM does not argue that people use persuasion knowledge to resist persuasion attempts. Quite the contrary, a consumer may come to a conclusion that a particular marketing tactic is used when her needs are accurately understood and respected. Indeed, persuasion knowledge can be used in order to reach any goal that is found important at the moment. This wide scope or individual goals becomes evident for instance when a person switches roles from Target to Agent for counter-persuasive purposes.

The core of PKM for the current study is the idea that consumers are able to use their persuasion knowledge to recognize situations where an Agent directs influence attempts at them, and use that persuasion knowledge to cope with the situation (Friestad & Wright 1994; Campbell & Kirmani 2000). PKM features ideas about the motives, goals and tactics in form of individual's beliefs that may or may not be accurate (Campbell & Kirmani 2000). PKM also introduces the change-of-meaning principle, as described earlier. Change-of-meaning describes what happens when a person perceives Agent's actions he has not previously identified having any persuasive meanings. This may lead to false assumptions; the consumer may for instance interpret certain tactics as concealing product defects. Rodgers (2007) discovered sponsor congruity causing variances in website (e-magazine) sponsor motive perceptions, i.e. the perceptions trended toward skepticism when the sponsor was closely related to the news article topic. This can be seen resulting from change-of-meaning after enough time is spent with a certain persuasion tactic. However, how much time is needed for change-of-time to occur remains unclear.

The learning of persuasion knowledge is a never-ending and contingent process, as while Targets develop their coping mechanisms, also Agents' knowledge about the Target evolve. In short, persuasion knowledge can be seen featuring evaluations of

the influence the agent is trying to achieve and the means the agent is using to do it (Friestad & Wright 1994; Campbell & Kirmani 2000; Lorenzon & Russell 2012).

2.4.2 Persuasion knowledge and audience reactions

Tutaj and van Reijmersdal (2012) have studied the effects of subtle and prominent advertising (Sponsored Content vs. banner ads) in online environment. Results clearly indicate that the audience prefers the subtle approach, finding it less irritating and more entertaining and amusing. These results match up with the PKM predictions: persuasion knowledge is used for ad recognition and the ad message is received with critical presuppositions. The results also show that message format has a big effect on advertising recognition, i.e. the audience's ability to tell the difference between the ad and the rest of the website content.

In the Tutaj and van Reijmersdal (2012) study the persuasive intent of Sponsored Content was not recognized as well as the persuasive intent of banner ad, and also the skepticism towards Sponsored Content was measured much lower than towards the banner ads. It was also shown that the better the audience recognizes the persuasive intent and / or recognizes the message format as advertising, the more irritation it causes. Similarly, more positive advertising value perceptions negatively correlate with ad skepticism. Similar results were obtained by van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit (2010) who found that perceived commerciality has a negative effect on credibility and a positive effect on perceived persuasive intent when studying the effects of magazine commerciality. They argue that magazine commerciality affects audience evaluations indirectly via perceived persuasive intent. Harvey, Gray and Despain (2006) have studied the more traditional sponsorship, and argue that in the sponsoring context the potential positive persuasion effects are due to gratitude the audience feels towards the sponsor. Becker-Olsen (2003) points to the same direction by noting that sponsoring companies create relationships with web communities and intensify the positive reactions they receive by providing relevant and interesting content.

2.5 Summaries of the key concepts

Table 2 presents summaries of the key concepts described in detail earlier. The key issues column lists the most common concept related traits based on the literature, and the summary column lists literature-based summaries of the concepts.

Key issues	Summary
<p>SPONSORED CONTENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seamless integration to editorial content ● Not limited to any platforms or formats 	<p>Entertaining and / or informative editorial content seamlessly integrated to the brand ecosystem. Sponsored Content is not limited to any format, channel or environment and the brand holds the final executive editorial control, although editorial liberties of varying degrees may be given to the content producer and publisher. (adapted from Sonderman & Tran, American Press Institute 2014; van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2007; Boerman, Reijmersdal & Neijens 2014; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal 2012;Harvey, Gray & Despain 2006; Campbell, Cohen & Junzhao 2014)</p>
<p>SOURCE CREDIBILITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High credibility source is reliable ● Perceived source commerciality not relevant to credibility 	<p>Perceived commerciality of the source does not lower source credibility, perceived commerciality of the content does (van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2010). Regardless of high or low source credibility, opinion changes require high-credibility sources to occur (learning vs. acceptance) (Hovland & Weiss 1951). Source credibility dimensions are expertise and trustworthiness (Pornpitakpan 2004).</p>
<p>CONTENT CREDIBILITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Editorial content is reliable ● Perceived content commerciality relevant to credibility 	<p>A mixture of editorial and commercial content where emphasis is on editorial content is the most accepted and appreciated. (van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2010) as editorial content is perceived more reliable and credible than advertising (Cameron 1994; Pornpitakpan 2004). A positively appreciated context improves message credibility (Pelsmacker, Geuens & Anckaert 2002). When searching for content in the web, search engine results are highly trusted (Hargittai, Fullerton, Menchen-Trevino and Thomas 2010).</p>

<p>PERSUASION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived commerciality effects credibility negatively 	<p>Consumers (targets) use topic knowledge, agent knowledge and persuasion knowledge to cope with persuasion attempts made by brands (agents). Brands use corresponding knowledges when creating persuasion attempts. (Friestad & Wright 1994.)</p> <p>Consumers use persuasion knowledge for ad recognition and a recognized ad message is received with critical presuppositions (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal 2012).</p> <p>Perceived commerciality has a negative effect on credibility (van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2010).</p>
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TABLE 2: Summaries of the key concepts in this study

All in all, in Sponsored Content commerciality is not a defect, as long as it is found in the right places and amounts. Content-wise, a balanced mix of editorial content and brand content works best as long as the emphasis is on the former. Platform-wise the commerciality is not an issue: the article may as well be published in a customer magazine or a newspaper as long as the quality stays high and topics are interesting and serving the audience.

3 METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes integrative literature review method, which is explained in the following. An overview and comparison of other types of literature reviews is also performed to further validate the method selection. As a thorough explanation of the research methods used is needed to ensure study reproducibility (Fink 2010), the details of the methodology are openly presented.

3.2 Literature review overview

According to Salminen (2011) the three main categories of literature reviews are descriptive literature review, systematic literature review and meta analysis. Jesson, Matheson and Lacey (2011) narrow definitions down to traditional literature review and systematic literature review. Scholars from other fields of science, such as Green, Johnson and Adams (2006) who have the health sciences viewpoint, use slightly different categorizations, but the main division between a strictly-controlled and a more decision-based methodology apply.

Descriptive review allows scholar discretion, but this comes with an increased risk of bias. Quantitative meta-analysis can be seen as a more objective and systematic review method, as it relies on statistical techniques (Salminen 2011; Green et al. 2006; Fink 2010). Descriptive reviews are however just as reliable as meta-analyses when carried out diligently and systematically (Fink 2010).

The different types of literature reviews according to Salminen (2011) are presented in Figure 3. in which the original Finnish terminology is translated to English.

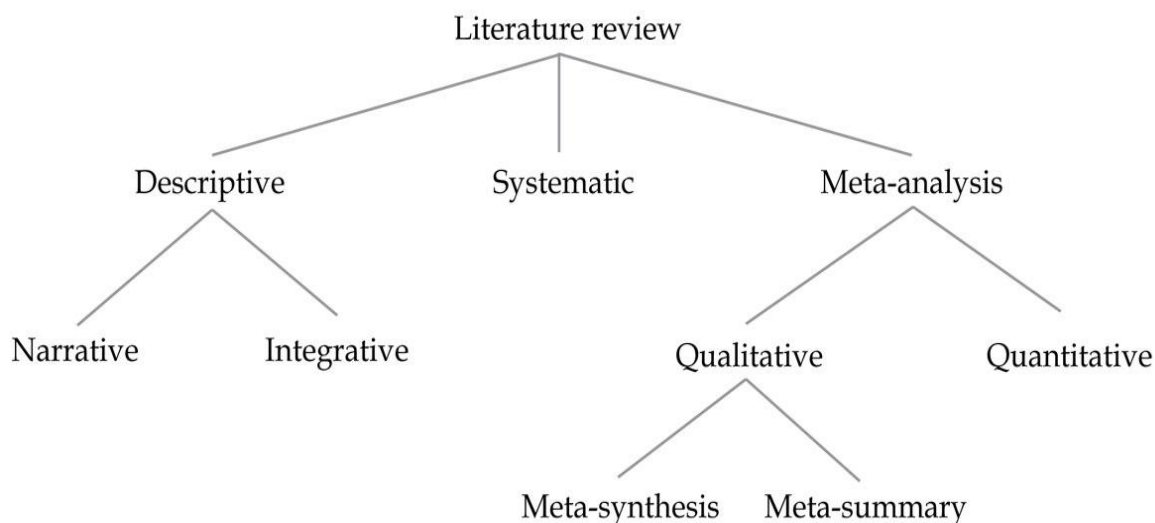


FIGURE 3: Types of literature review (adapted from Salminen 2011)

3.2.2 Integrative literature review

Due to the extent and divergent nature of this study, a systematic approach would not be an appropriate choice for a method (Jesson et al. 2011). Instead, this study builds on the traditional, descriptive viewpoint, leaning onto the methods of integrative literature review, but borrowing tools and customs from the systematic practice. Cronin, Ryan and Coughlan (2008) summarize traditional (descriptive) literature review as a way of putting together a body of literature and drawing conclusions about the matter in question. This contributes to knowledge about the topic, but as Knopf (2006) points out, the gathered knowledge does not equal with truth, but rather with beliefs and confidence certain individuals have on the topic. In practice this means a summary – or a sample – of existing knowledge points out the assertions made in the literature and evaluates how pronounced the support for these assertions is.

Fink (2010) stresses subjectivity as a descriptive characteristic of a low-quality literature review. A subjective review is often idiosyncratic and the article selections are not justified and the material is only partially examined. To reassert

objectivity, finding the right scope is important, and the review should be closely focused on the material directly related to the topic (Torraco 2005; Bearfield & Eller 2008; Cronin et al 2008). Knopf (2006) gives three rules of thumb for a well focused literature search:

- 1) Focus on the leading authorities.
- 2) Focus on recent studies from high-prestige or high-visibility sources.
- 3) Focus on the studies that are most relevant and helpful for your question of interest.

When presenting various types of literature reviews, Salminen (2011) categorizes integrative literature review as a form of descriptive literature review, which is particularly suitable for studies where a wide perspective is needed. Torraco (2008) emphasizes author's responsibilities to critique the reviewed literature, and establish new kinds of comprehension of the topic by various forms of synthesis. This is confirmed by Evans (2008) who adds the wide variety of research designs into the integrative literature review characteristics. In this study, not only one search criterion is used, but an overall picture of a wide field of topics is formed, hence the search results must be carefully evaluated to reach operable results. Integrative literature review fits these requirements best. To increase objectivity and explicitly of the study, the seven-step method from Fink's (2010) systematic model is also implemented. Fink's model is presented in Figure 4, and explained below.

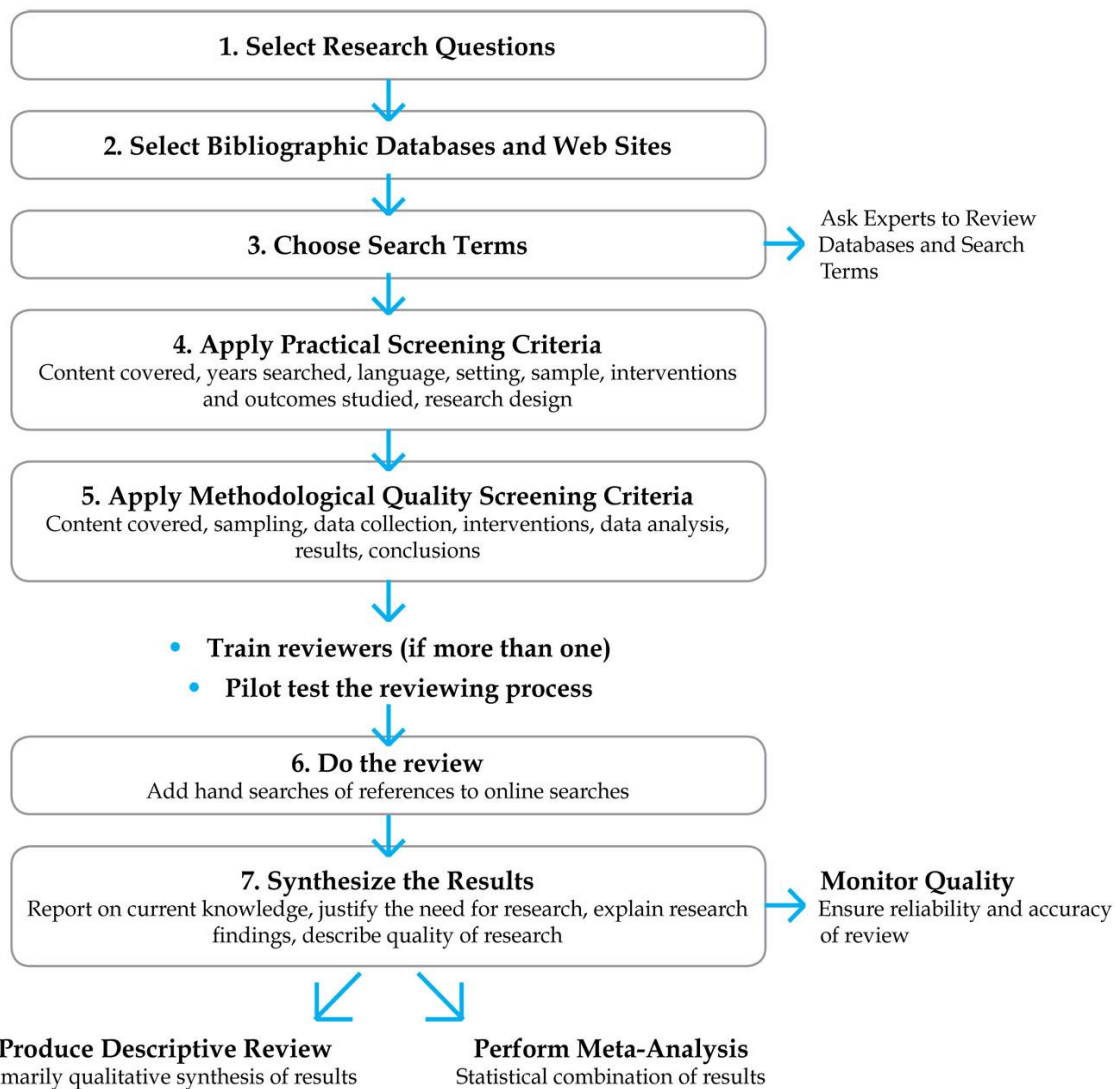


FIGURE 4: The seven-step systematic review model (Fink 2010).

A systematic research process begins with selecting a research question that precisely defines what is being studied and guides the study (Fink 2010). Secondly, bibliographic or article databases, websites and other potential sources are selected. Knopf (2006) suggests studies published in high-prestige outlets such as leading journals in the field of question. Fink (2010) points out that a collage of most important articles can found in various online databases. After the databases are selected, it is time to decide on the search terms. Searching the archives using thesaurus terms usually produces a large amount of articles on a wide range. When the research question is considered enough, the key words derived from it can also produce operable results. Valid database search will produce a plethora of

articles that have to be screened, for a large part of them will probably be unusable due to for instance irrelevancy or unsuitable study coverage. (Fink 2010.)

After practical and methodological screenings, it is time to do the actual review. A standardized form is used for data abstraction. After the material is reviewed and the data abstracted, the results will be synthesized, which means the streams of studied research articles are woven together and interpreted. (Fink 2010; Torracco 2008.)

3.3 Review process

Following the above-presented Fink's model, the review was started by forming the research questions. The aim of the thesis is to study the concept of Sponsored Content credibility, so the research questions are:

- RQ 1. Based on the reviewed literature, how is Sponsored Content Credibility formed from the consumer's point of view?
- RQ 2. Based on the reviewed literature, what are valid measures for evaluating Sponsored Content Credibility?

To ensure that the best practices in database selection and literature searches are used, a Jyväskylä University Library Information Specialist was consulted. As the result, Primo Central Index (PCI) was chosen for the search engine. PCI covers "hundreds of millions of records for books, journal articles, e-books and e-journals, news articles, and much more" (JYKDOK-Finna 2014) and covers all the databases available for University of Jyväskylä. To ensure quality and smooth process flow, only full texts available in online electronic format were included. Communication & Mass Media Complete (CMMC) and Business Source Elite (EBSCO) databases were chosen as the primary sources in case the search needs to be narrowed down, as they provide the widest coverage for Organizational Communication & PR disciplinary. After the main search processes were finished, manual searches on Scopus and Web of Science were run separately to confirm and complement the latest results.

The search preconditions were:

- articles must be in English
- articles must be peer-reviewed
- full text must be available online

Finally, applying the methodological screening criteria the publisher rating of each selected article was checked from The Publication Forum (Julkaisufoorumi) where scientific publications are qualitatively classified on a three-level rating system: 1 = basic; 2 = leading; 3 = top. If the publishing journal was not included in the Publication Forum ratings database, the article quality could not be secured, and such articles were hence dismissed.

To collect diverse literature for the synthesis, five individual PCI searches with separate search terms were performed in December 2014, resulting in a total of 1536 articles. The search phrases and the article results thereof were:

- “content AND credibility”, producing 702 articles
- “media AND credibility”, producing 593 articles
- “advertising AND credibility”, producing 225 articles
- “online AND advertising AND credibility”, producing 21 results
- “sponsored AND content AND credibility”, producing 4 articles

The search term selections were based on observations made on the field of Sponsored Content by following discussions on online issue arenas (Vos, Schoemaker & Luoma-aho 2014) from early 2014 to December 2014. This process is documented in the author’s previous study (Lehto & Moisala 2014). As this study was conducted as a part of a larger research project, collegial discussions held on a regular basis with the other research team members gave valuable input.

All the search phrases were derived from the core fields of the study. Search phrases with boolean operators were used as Sponsored Content credibilities as such haven’t yet developed into academic keywords. Since Sponsored Content is published in various formats and media channels, the searches did not focus on any specific medium, although the dominance of online issue arenas was taken into account when screening the results. All the articles were scanned through during the PCI search phase.

When going through the search results, the main focus was to find articles, which present credibility studies related to the field of Sponsored Content. For instance articles not discussing media related issues were discarded. When performing database searches for literature reviews it is inevitable to come across a large number of search results unsuitable for the study (Knopf 2006; Fink 2010; Jesson et al. 2011). In this case a lot of such articles emerged from the field of health care or medicine, for instance “Nazi Science--The Dachau Hypothermia Experiments” by Robert Berger, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in 1990. The article discusses “the controversy over the use of the results obtained from the experiments performed on prisoners in German concentration camps during World War II”. Although the article fulfills all the search criteria, the article substance does not comply with this study. Yet another example of an unsuitable search result is “Content Relevance and Students’ Comfort with Disclosure as Moderators of Instructor Disclosures and Credibility in the College Classroom” by Paul Schrodt, published in *Communication Education* in 2013. Although the article is available in *Communication & Mass Media Complete (CMMC)* and it discusses themes close to this study, such as trustworthiness, it focuses solely on discourse between college instructors and their students, and is therefore unsuitable for this study.

The articles were explored in two rounds. After the first screening the total number of articles was reduced to 44. During the article explorations high value was put on the relevance of the article content (Jesson et al. 2011) and also variability to get the wide range of different Sponsored Content publishing arenas covered. After the final methodological quality screening (Fink 2010) the number of articles to be reviewed settled down to 23. These articles are presented in the next chapter of this study.

4 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In this chapter the literature of the study is presented by going through the basic characteristics of each article reviewed, and listing the journals where the articles were published in. Finally the literature review results and findings are presented in detail.

4.1 Research material

Sponsored Content credibility is a multidimensional concept that must be measured following a multitude of different paths. The literature of this study consists of 23 peer-reviewed articles published in scientific journals rated in the Publication Forum with a rating of at least 1. Publication Forum refers here to the quality rating system operating within The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies (Publication Forum 2015).

The reviewed articles were published in the following journals:

- American Behavioral Scientist
- Computers in Human Behavior
- Information Processing & Management
- International Journal of Communication
- Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science
- Journal of Advertising
- Journal Of Applied Social Psychology
- Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication
- Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly
- Learning and Instruction
- Mass Communication & Society
- Processing & Management
- Public Relations Review

Table 3 presents the literature reviewed in this study. The articles are listed in alphabetical order of the first author. First the article title and the details of the publication are presented in the leftmost column. The second column describes the article focus, and in the third column the measures the article uses to process the subject are presented. The fourth column lists the main findings concerning credibility in each article, and finally the fifth column states the standpoints (journalism, education, publishing or marketing) of the articles from which the credibility issue is observed. The findings are discussed in the following sections.

ARTICLE	FOCUS	MEASURES	MAIN FINDINGS ON DEFINING CREDIBILITY	STANCE
Austin, E. W. & Dong, Q. 1994. Source V. Content Effects on Judgement of News Believability. Journalism Quarterly 71 (4), 973-983.	the effects of message type and source reputation on judgments of news credibility	1) source truthfulness and message accuracy 2) source expertise and message representativeness 3) source bias and personal perspective	Without exception, situational judgments of news believability were based more on message content than on source reputation.	journalism
Bråten, I., Strømsø, H. I. & Salmerón, L. 2011. Trust and mistrust when students read multiple information sources about climate change. Learning and Instruction 21 (2), 180-192.	what makes student trust or mistrust information they encounter	1) topic knowledge 2) trustworthiness	Information from textbook and official documents were judged more trustworthy. Readers low in topic knowledge were more likely to trust less trustworthy sources	education
Bucy, E. P. 2003. Media Credibility Reconsidered: Synergy Effects between On-Air and Online News. Journalism & Mass Communication	combined / synergistic effects of on-air and online news exposure on media credibility	1) fairness 2) accuracy 3) believability 4) informativity 5) depth	Results indicate that perceptions of network news credibility are affected by channel used. Perceptions of credibility were enhanced when the channel used was consistent with the	publishing

Quarterly 80 (2), 247-264.			news source being evaluated, suggesting a channel congruence effect.	
Chung, C. J., Nam, Y. & Stefanone, M. A. 2012. Exploring Online News Credibility: The Relative Influence of Traditional and Technological Factors. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication 17 (2), 171-186.	which factors affect the credibility of information from Internet-based news providers	1) trustworthiness 2) expertise 3) interactivity 4) hypertextuality 5) multimediality	While traditional dimensions of credibility remain influential, results suggest that the hypertextuality of index-type online news sources is of particular importance. Multimediality and interactivity did not influence credibility perceptions.	publishing
Cummins, R. G. & Chambers, T. 2011. How Production Value Impacts Perceived Technical Quality, Credibility and Economic Value of Video News. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 88 (4), 737-752.	how perceptions of video news credibility, technical quality and economic value are affected by production value	1) perceived credibility 2) technical quality 3) economic value	Viewers recognized variation in production value and judged stories high in production value as more credible than identical stories low in production value.	publishing
Eisend, M. & Küster, F. 2011. The effectiveness of publicity versus advertising: a meta-analytic investigation of its moderators. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 39 (6), 906-921.	whether and under which conditions publicity is more or less effective than advertising	1) source credibility 2) attitude toward message 3) attitude toward brand 4) purchase/behavioral intention 5) cognitive responses	Campaigns that combine publicity and advertising weaken the effects of publicity, whereas advertorials (i.e., advertisements disguised as editorial material) are more effective, since they combine the advantages of both publicity and advertising.	marketing

<p>Flanagin, A. J. & Metzger, M. J. 2000. Perceptions of Internet Information Credibility. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 77 (3), 515-540.</p>	<p>people's perceptions of the credibility of various categories of Internet information compared to similar information provided by other media</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) media credibility 2) verification of Internet information 3) type of information and media 4) Internet experience and demographics 	<p>Respondents reported they considered Internet information to be as credible as that obtained from television, radio, and magazines, but not as credible as newspaper information.</p>	<p>journalism</p>
<p>Haley, E. 1996. Exploring the Construct of Organization as Source: Consumers' Understandings of Organizational Sponsorship of Advocacy Advertising. Journal of Advertising 25 (2), 19-35.</p>	<p>what makes an organization a credible sponsor for issues / advocacy advertising</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) what would make an organization an appropriate sponsor for a public service message 	<p>Central components are consumer's perceptions of the organization, issue and self. The study also confirms the three primary credibility dimensions: trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness.</p>	<p>marketing</p>
<p>Hargittai, E., Fullerton, L., Menchen-Trevino, E. & Thomas, K. Y. 2010. Trust Online: Young Adults' Evaluation of Web Content'. International Journal of Communication (19328036) 4, 468-194.</p>	<p>how the process by which users (young adults) arrive at a website affects the credibility evaluations of the content</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) easiness of source identification 2) easiness of seeing if information is current 3) easiness of seeing if information represents facts or opinions 	<p>The process by which users arrive at a site is an important component of how they judge the final destination.</p>	<p>education</p>
<p>Hilligoss, B. & Rieh, S. Y. 2008. Developing a unifying framework of</p>	<p>how a person constructs, conceptualizes, or defines credibility across a variety of media and</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) construct 2) heuristics 3) interaction 	<p>The construct level pertains to how a person constructs, conceptualizes, or defines credibility. The heuristics level</p>	<p>education</p>

<p>credibility assessment: Construct, heuristics, and interaction in context. Information Processing & Management 44 (4), 1467-1484.</p>	<p>resources with respect to diverse information seeking goals and tasks</p>		<p>involves general rules of thumb used to make judgments of credibility applicable to a variety of situations. The interaction level refers to credibility judgments based on content, peripheral source cues, and peripheral information object cue.</p>	
<p>Johnson, T. J. & Kaye, B. K. 2004. Wag the Blog: how Reliance on Traditional Media and the Internet Influence Credibility Perceptions of Weblogs among Blog Users. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 81 (3), 622-642.</p>	<p>blog user perceived blog credibility as compared to traditional media as well as other online sources</p>	<p>1) credibility of traditional and online sources 2) source reliance 3) political attitudes 4) demographics</p>	<p>Weblog users judged blogs as highly credible—more credible than traditional sources. They did, however, rate traditional sources as moderately credible. Weblog users rated blogs higher on depth of information than they did on fairness.</p>	<p>journalism</p>
<p>Kiousis, S. & Dimitrova, D. V. 2006. Differential impact of Web site content: Exploring the influence of source (public relations versus news), modality, and participation on college students' perceptions. Public Relations</p>	<p>the influence of source (public relations versus news), modality, and participation on perceptions of credibility, salience, attitudes, and general website evaluation</p>	<p>1) perceived credibility 2) salience 3) attitudes 4) website evaluation</p>	<p>The study results show no differences in perceived credibility between a story coming from a public relations or news source in an online environment.</p>	<p>marketing</p>

Review 32 (2), 177-179.				
Lee, H., Park, S., Lee, Y. & Cameron, G. T. 2010. Assessment of motion media on believability and credibility: An exploratory study. Public Relations Review 36 (3), 310-312.	the influence of source and media modality on message evolution.	1) perceived credibility 2) perceived veridicality 3) attitudes towards the news story 4) intentions to pass on the story	If an audience evaluates a story as well produced and believable, they tend to treat the story as credible.	publishing
Metzger, M. J., Flanagin, A. J. & Medders, R. B. 2010. Social and Heuristic Approaches to Credibility Evaluation Online. Journal of Communication 60 (3), 413-439.	use of group- based tools (cognitive heuristics) to evaluate the credibility of information sources online	1) Social information pooling 2) Social confirmation of personal opinion 3) Enthusiast endorsements 4) Resource sharing via interpersonal exchange	most users rely on others to make credibility assessments, often through the use of group-based tools and rather than systematically processing information, participants routinely invoked cognitive heuristics to evaluate the credibility of information and sources online.	education
Miller, A. & Kurpius, D. 2010. A Citizen-Eye View of Television News Source Credibility. American Behavioral Scientist 54 (2), 137-156.	citizen perceptions of news source credibility in both hard and soft television news stories	1) credibility 2) believability 3) trustworthiness	Viewers perceive official sources significantly more credible than citizen sources. No difference was found in credibility on the basis of race.	publishing
Rains, S. A. & Karmikel, C. D. 2009. Health information-	relationships between perceptions of website credibility and both the	1) website credibility 2) attitude about the health topic	The results showed a positive relationship between the presence of	publishing

<p>seeking and perceptions of website credibility: Examining Web-use orientation, message characteristics, and structural features of websites. Computers in Human Behavior 25 (2), 544-553.</p>	<p>structural features of health websites and message characteristics</p>		<p>structural features and perceptions of website credibility as well as a positive relationship between the presence of message characteristics and attitudes about the health topic.</p>	
<p>van Reijmersdal, E. A. 2011. Mixing advertising and editorial content in radio programmes. International Journal of Advertising 30 (3), 425-446.</p>	<p>the effects of radio brand placement on liking, credibility and brand recall and the effects of the combination of brand placement and a commercial</p>	<p>1) radio brand placement and commercial liking 2) perceived credibility of brand placement and radio commercials</p>	<p>Brand placement is more liked and perceived as more credible than commercials, and exposure to brand placement has a stronger effect on brand recall.</p>	<p>marketing</p>
<p>Robins, D. & Holmes, J. 2008. Aesthetics and credibility in web site design. Information Processing & Management 44 (1), 386-399.</p>	<p>the effects of website design visual aesthetics in the perceived website credibility</p>	<p>1) credibility</p>	<p>When the same content is presented using different levels of aesthetic treatment, the content with a higher aesthetic treatment was judged as having higher credibility.</p>	<p>publishing</p>
<p>Rodgers, S. 2007. Effects of Sponsorship Congruity on E-Sponsors and E-Newspapers. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 84 (1),</p>	<p>psychological responses to e-sponsors and e-newspapers as a function of sponsor congruity</p>	<p>1) sponsor congruity 2) memory for sponsors 3) attitude toward sponsors 4) purchase Intentions for sponsored brand 5) memory for</p>	<p>High congruity sponsors benefit from the sponsorship at the expense of the e-newspaper's credibility.</p>	<p>journalism</p>

24-39.		news content 6) perceived credibility of the e-newspaper 7) behavioral Intent for the e-newspaper		
Sinaga, S. & Callison, C. 2008. Credibility of PR practitioners: The impact of professional journalism background on trustworthiness, expertness, and homophily evaluations. Public Relations Review 34 (3), 291-293.	the effect of journalism background to the credibility evaluations of public relations practitioners in regards to expertness and the capability to meet journalistic values and expectations	1) trustworthiness 2) expertness	Having a professional journalism background does not necessarily render public relations practitioners any more trustworthy than not having such credentials, but contributes positively to expertness evaluations.	marketing
Soh, H., Reid, L. N. & King, K. W. 2007. Trust in Different Advertising Media. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 84 (3), 455-476.	consumer trust in different advertising media and the relationship of that trust to media credibility	1) generalized trust in advertising 2) trust in advertising media 3) advertising credibility 4) attitude-toward advertising in general 5) ad media credibility	(1) advertising media are neither especially trusted nor distrusted by consumers; (2) there is variation in consumer trust across different advertising media; (3) trust in specific ad media is differentially associated with education and income; and (4) trust in advertising media and media credibility are correlates, though trust in advertising is distinct and separate from the credibility construct.	marketing
Thorson, K.,	the news story	1) blog credibility	A news story	publishing

Vraga, E. & Ekdale, B. 2010. Credibility in Context: How Uncivil Online Commentary Affects News Credibility. <i>Mass Communication & Society</i> 13 (3), 289-313.	context effects on the news story credibility	2) news credibility	embedded in an uncivil partisan blog post appears more credible in contrast.	
Umeh, K. 2012. Does a Credible Source Also Need a Fearful Audience? <i>Journal Of Applied Social Psychology</i> 42(7), 1716-1744.	the persuasiveness of a message from a high / low credible source, with strong / weak fear content	1) source credibility 2) fear 3) degree of message acceptance (acquiescence, resistance)	There was no evidence of an interaction between source credibility and fear. However, aroused fear and perceived credibility reduced resistance.	education

TABLE 3: Reviewed literature

4.2 Findings

Before the review findings are presented and discussed in detail, the layers and dimensions used in sorting the data are explained. The two main layers of Sponsored Content credibility are source credibility and content credibility, which can again be split into smaller components. A broad approach is needed, as it is often challenging to exactly point out where the dividing line between source credibility and content credibility is drawn (Austin & Dong 1994). This is the case especially when examining content credibility, as in most studies on this field the credibility ensemble often consists unitarily on both content credibility and source credibility. When measuring Sponsored Content credibility as an entirety, it is not necessary to always separate source credibility from content credibility, as the audience does not separate source and content either when making credibility evaluations.

Pornpitakpan (2004) identifies *expertise* and *trustworthiness* as source credibility dimensions, but notes that several more have been proposed in various studies, e.g. *authoritativeness* and *character* by McCroskey (1966) and *safety*, *qualification* and

dynamism by Berlo, Lemert and Mertz (1969). As this study focuses on web content, the message (audio)visual impressiveness cannot be looked down on, and thus Hayley's (1996) palette, which combines previously mentioned expertise and trustworthiness with attractiveness, is used. The term attractiveness has its roots in spokesperson evaluations, and as this study focuses on web publications the term *aesthetics* is used instead. The concept of aesthetics is seen here as a combination of technical and aesthetic resolutions that affect audience credibility judgments. In the following chapters the study findings are discussed from the perspective of abovementioned dimensions.

4.2.1 Trustworthiness and Expertise of Source and Content

The review results show that message credibility is more influenced by content than source (Austin & Dong 1994; Kiousis & Dimitrova 2006; Sinaga and Callison 2008; Lee, Park, Lee & Cameron 2010; Umeh 2012). According to Austin and Dong (1994) journalistic reputation of the source carries basically no significance as compared to the merits of the story itself. Moreover, not only innocuous stories are easily accepted, but also ambiguous and even unbelievable stories are approved without source confirmation. This is supported by Kiousis and Dimitrova (2006), who studied if and how source (public relations versus news), modality, and participation on perceptions of credibility, salience, attitudes, and general website evaluation affect the website's perceived credibility, and found no differences in credibility perceptions between stories supplied by public relations or news sources in online environment. Stimuli used in the Austin and Dong (1994) study were traditional newspaper articles printed on paper, while Kiousis and Dimitrova (2006) ran their experiment entirely in the web. Austin and Dong (1994) explain the result by the young age of the test subjects (college students), while Kiousis and Dimitrova (2006) refer to the blurring of source (ambiguity) on the web. Young age can be seen correlating with inexperience in web usage and reading, which have a proven effect on credibility evaluations as discussed later in this study.

The insignificance of journalistic reputation on message credibility was confirmed by Sinaga and Callison (2008), who studied the effect of professional journalism background to the credibility of a PR practitioner. Their results show that while journalistic background contributes to the positive evaluation of expertness, it does not enhance credibility evaluations. Lee, Park, Lee and Cameron (2010) found no differences in message credibility evaluations when comparing PR messages with

news messages or user generated content with high veridicality. This is discussed by Eisend and Küster (2011) whose meta-analytic structural equation shows that products previously unknown to the target audience (low topic knowledge) tend to make a better impression when introduced via publicity than advertising, as when audience has no prior knowledge, reassurance coming from a high credibility source can be very effective.

Umeh (2012) studied if message persuasiveness varies when it comes from a high or low credibility source, and with a strong or weak fear content, e.g., a news bulletin dealing with serious medical issues. The study results showed that exposing people to persuasive messages is enough to cause attitude shifts, regardless of how credible the source is perceived. Fear does not seem to affect credibility, but a fear factor strong enough boosts acceptance. However, Umeh (2012) argues that source credibility impact on message acceptance is not unchangeable, as many third-party variables affect the outcome, for instance messages discussing issues familiar to the people are more easily accepted, and vice versa. This is in accordance with Carlisle, Feezell, Michaud, Smith and Smith (2010) who found that people tend to accept scientific studies that support their previous views but will easily reject studies with opposing views.

4.2.2 Effects of source ambiguity on credibility

Source ambiguity in the web is discussed by Flanagin and Metzger (2000), who found that people only rarely verify the information sought from the web, and that the least information checking is done by the people with the least experience in using the web – the people who would quite possibly benefit from it the most. Thus the source remains ambiguous and loses ground in credibility perceptions.

However, the type of information affects the inclination to verify information: entertainment material was verified the least when compared to news or reference information. This can be seen as one of the reasons why so called hard news (e.g. breaking news, major issues, man made accidents) are perceived more credible than soft news (messages unrelated to public affairs) as found by Miller and Kurpius (2010). In relation to this Miller and Kurpius (2010) also found that TV news viewers perceive stories with official sources (e.g. government, business leaders) more credible than stories with non-elite sources. This can be seen partly as a result of clear source identification on TV, and partly as a result of additional

credibility created by an official source as compared to credibility of a citizen source.

Metzger, Flanagin and Medders (2010) elaborate this by adding that information evaluated crucial is commonly verified using *central* or *systematic* methods, while less important information is confirmed using *peripheral* or *heuristic* methods. Cognitive heuristics are used to minimize the cognitive effort. Metzger et al. also argue that social information pooling plays an important part in forming credibility evaluations in the web. The more peer testimonials or reviews are available, the more likely the website is evaluated credible, but also a right balance between positive and negative reviews is expected: all positive ratings seem dubious. Other cognitive heuristic factors having a positive effect on credibility are social confirmation of personal opinion, enthusiast endorsements and resource sharing (e.g. web site recommendations) via interpersonal exchange in both online and offline contexts.

Whether the source ambiguity is intentional or not, it can be seen advantageous to getting persuasive messages through as it enhances credibility when directing messages via web directly to stakeholders (Kioussis & Dimitrova 2010). This is supported by many studies, in this review by van Reijmersdal (2011) who studied the effects of radio brand placement on liking, credibility and brand recall and the effects of the combination of brand placement and a commercial. The study found radio brand placement better liked and perceived than radio advertising or the combination of brand placement and commercial. Also the contextual message environment has an effect: Thorson, Vraga and Ekdale (2010) embedded a news story in a biased and uncivil context (blog post) and found that the contrast of the tones made the news story appear more credible.

4.2.3 Effects of audience experience on credibility

The previously mentioned effects of young age and inexperience, as referred to by Austin and Dong (1994), were also studied by Bråten, Strømsø and Salmerón (2011), whose study indicated that prior topic knowledge plays an important part when reader estimates the message trustworthiness: while in general students gave content more importance than source, especially readers with low topic knowledge bypassed significance of a credible source, and in some cases trusted commercial sources more than textbook materials if only the content was seen suitable.

Wineburg (1991) found that individuals with less reading experience (“novice readers”) generally skip checking source information when making judgments about the content credibility. A similar observation was made by Britt and Aglinskias (2002) who found that high school and college students did not pay sufficient attention on sources even when they were specifically advised to do so. In summary: inexperienced readers often ignore source information and rely solely on content when evaluating credibility.

Bucy’s (2003) study results support these findings and add that younger audience members (college students) evaluate both TV and newspaper news stories significantly more credible and informative than older audience members. When a palette of TV, news and web channels was studied, congruence in how the source material was presented in various media enhanced the credibility evaluations of all channels. This observation is supported by Chung, Nam and Stefanone (2012) who found that mainstream news source website credibility benefits from positive offline reputation. A somewhat surprising outcome of Bucy’s above-mentioned study was that the younger audience found TV news more credible than the news presented in the web.

According to Flanagin and Metzger (2000) experienced web users tend to perceive Internet sources more credible than inexperienced users. This is because experienced users more often verify the information and the sources. This observation is supported by Johnson and Kaye (2004), who validate higher traditional media credibility at least partly by the fact that most traditional media users are highly media literate knowing what to trust and what to dismiss. In accordance to this, they also found, that a large majority (almost 75%) of experienced blog users perceive blogs moderately or very credible.

Soh, Reid and King (2007) studied consumer perceptions of trust in five advertising media (TV, radio, newspaper and Internet) and found no significant differences in trust: the mean trust ratings of all five media lay below the neutral point. This strongly suggests general consumer distrust in advertising media. It should however be remembered, that trust and credibility are independent constructs, and in the context of the present study trustworthiness is seen as a subcomponent of credibility.

4.2.4 Effects of aesthetics on credibility

In the web era one new factor having an influence in the credibility judgments is the technical quality and impressiveness of how the material is presented, be it a video or an interactive website - "if it's cool, it's credible". This was studied by Lee, Park, Lee and Cameron (2010), who found that a motion media story perceived as well produced, it is also perceived credible. However, they also argue that in some cases veridical user generated content (UGC) can be perceived highly credible in spite of its technical scarcity.

An important credibility factor is meeting the overall audience expectations. Rains and Karmikel (2009) studied the credibility factors of health websites and found that following the general message characteristics and structural features to what the web audience of such websites is used to affects website credibility evaluations positively. All in all, the more familiar features are present the more credible the website was rated by the study participants.

Cummins and Chambers (2011) studied the effect of production value on the news message credibility and economic value, defining production value as "an element that allows viewers to differentiate content based on the resources devoted to its creation" (Barwise & Ehrenberg 1989 in Cummins & Chambers 2011). According to them, a common conception among media professionals is that viewers are not able to tell the difference between high and low (technical) quality of a audiovisual material. The study results tell a different story: the viewers actually see the difference and also judge the higher production value stories more credible. Younger digital natives seem to be more critical than the older generation that grew up with traditional newspapers. This may suggest that in the future the technical quality and the "wow factor" will grow in importance when judging message credibility. According to Chung, Nam and Stefanone (2012) technical quality perceptions do not extend to common technical website traits such as interactivity, multimodality and hypertextuality, as these don't seem to produce any extra credibility, except for index type news sources (e.g. search engines) that present large collections of news messages from a number of sources. Index type sources' credibility benefits from hypertextuality, as it makes handling large amounts of information easier.

Technical credibility as defined by Cummins and Chambers (2011) can be seen parallel with *surface credibility* as defined by Wathen and Burkell (2002). In their study credibility perception of websites is split in two: evaluation of surface credibility and evaluation of message credibility. According to the study, users start processing the content only after they have deemed the website credible by evaluating that the visual presentation (surface credibility) meets with their expectations of a credible website. When it comes to Sponsored Content on a website, Rodgers (2007) argues that the brand awareness, brand liking and behavioral intent (purchase intent) benefit from congruence, i.e. the Sponsored Content is closely related to the brand, although too close a match can also raise suspicion. This can be seen as a result from reader's persuasion knowledge activating.

Robins and Holmes (2008) studied the effects of website design visual design aesthetics in the website credibility, and found that website content with higher aesthetic levels are perceived more credible. When the same content was presented with different levels of aesthetic treatment, in 90% of cases the content with higher design quality was perceived more credible. It is to be noted, that the survey was conducted using interactions with visual stimuli, while an earlier study (Liu 2004) based on survey gave contrary results. This is recognized by Robbins and Holmes (2008), who consider their eye-movement tracking method more reliable.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter PKM is utilized to synthesize the Sponsored Content Credibility Model, based on the literature review results and previous studies on content credibility and source credibility. Secondly, the results for measuring Sponsored Content credibility are presented, and in the last two sections the study validity is evaluated and suggestions for further study made.

5.1 Sponsored Content Credibility Model

In this section formation of Sponsored Content credibility is discussed, based on the study findings presented above, and synthesized using the PKM as the guiding theory. Jesson et al. (2011) describe literature review synthesis as telling a new story using the data extracted from the source material. As a result, Sponsored Content credibility formation process is mapped to form Sponsored Content Credibility Model (SCCM). The model is presented in the Figure 5, and explained below.

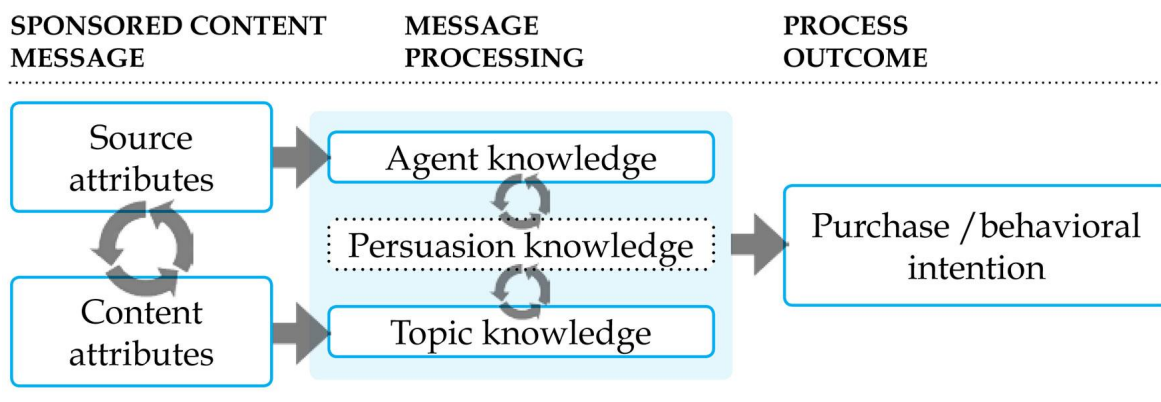


FIGURE 5: Sponsored Content Credibility Model (adapted from Hovland & Weiss 1951; Friestad & Wright 1994; Austin & Dong 1994; Eisend & Küster 2001; Keller 2009)

As discussed in the chapter 2 of this study, Sponsored Content credibility is seen consisting of two main building blocks: source credibility and content credibility. These credibility constructs are not separate entities, but they interact and affect each other. Examining source credibility attributes without content credibility affecting the process is virtually impossible, and the same duality applies when examining content credibility (Austin & Dong 1994). Practically the only occasions where the two can be distinguished are experimental situations, where identical content is presented to separate groups of test subjects with different source cues (e.g. in Hovland & Weiss 1951).

An exception to the rule is a situation where the source is blurred or hidden, deliberately, accidentally or due to information overload in the web. However, source blurring is not relevant to Target's content credibility evaluations, as long as the content is found gratifying. If the source is not blurred, content attributes may either enhance its credibility or diminish, depending on various quality-related factors. Source credibility does not affect Sponsored Content credibility, as long as the content deals with entertainment and / or soft information, and does not touch hard topics, such as breaking news, major issues or man made accidents. (Flanagin & Metzger 2000.)

Target processes the message (content) attributes using Agent, Topic and Persuasion knowledges. Persuasion knowledge plays a central role as an ancillary resource: in addition to holding valuable overall information on persuasion attempts the Target has experienced previously, Persuasion knowledge acts as a general resource the Target uses to complete Topic and Agent knowledges if they are found incomplete, that is when the content source cues are not evident, or the topic is vague or unfamiliar. Similarly elements from Topic knowledge and Agent knowledge are shifted and stored into Persuasion knowledge. Persuasion knowledge, Agent knowledge and Topic knowledge form the basis for Target's attitude toward the brand as the original message source (Eisend & Küster 2001).

The end-result of the message processing is shifting of Target's Purchase / behavioral intent. In Sponsored Content brand exposure is minimal as compared to traditional advertising, and the aim is rarely on pushing Purchase / behavioral intention directly. Instead the usual aim is to make a positive contribution to Target's Agent and / or Topic knowledge(s), and thus enhancing Agent's brand equity, particularly on the field of brand resonance. Brand resonance refers to behavioral loyalty (repeating purchases or corresponding activities), attitudinal

attachment (“love” for the brand), sense of community (kinship with other people associated with the brand) and active engagement (e.g. participating in social media fan clubs). (Keller 2009.)

5.2 Sponsored Content credibility measures

This section looks into the reviewed literature to resolve appropriate variables for measuring Sponsored Content credibility. Selected and combined results based on the reviewed articles are presented, as applicable. The results are listed in Table 4 in the order of relevance to this study. Source related measures are marked with (S) while content related are marked with (C) and combinations respectively with (S + C). The number indicates the number of studies that use the measure in question.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● trustworthiness (S) (5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ believability (S) (1) ● source expertise (S) (3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ message representativeness (C) (1) ○ accuracy (C) (1) ○ informativity (C) (1) ○ depth (C) (1) ● effect on purchase / behavioral intention (S + C) (2) ● source truthfulness (S) (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ message accuracy (C) (1) ● source bias and personal perspective (C) (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ fairness (S) (1) ● easiness of source identification (S) (1) ● easiness of seeing if information represents facts or opinions (S + C) (1) ● easiness of seeing if information is current (C) (1) ● believability (C) (1) ● aesthetics (C) (1) ● technical quality (C) (1) ● perceived veridicality (C) (1) ● intentions to pass the story (S + C) (1)

TABLE 4: Sponsored Content credibility measures

Of trustworthiness and expertise, which originate from Hovland and Weiss (1951) and were supported as the basic source credibility dimensions by Pornpitakpan (2004), trustworthiness is the most common measure in the reviewed literature appearing in a total of five studies (Austin & Dong 1994; Sinaga & Callison 2008;

Miller & Kurpius 2010; Bråten, Strømsø & Salmerón 2011; Chung, Nam & Stefanone 2012). Trustworthiness and expertise appear as a combination in only one study (Sinaga & Callison 2008), which focuses on the effect of journalistic background on credibility. Bucy (2003) operationalizes media (source) credibility as believability, while Miller and Kurpius (2010) see believability as a building block of content credibility, together with honesty and lack of bias. Expertise (aka expertness) appears in three studies (Austin & Dong 1994; Haley 1996; Chung, Nam & Stefanone 2012) referring to the overall source competence in discussing the message topic. Austin & Dong (1994) also discuss message representativeness as one of the measures to test message believability based on message content and context. In their study based on Apparent Reality Assessment (ARA) theory message representativeness works in conjunction with source expertise, as it refers to how well audience experiences the message is portraying the issue. Bucy (2003) discusses expertise using the concepts of accuracy informativity and depth. Hargittai, Fullerton, Menchen-Trevino and Thomas (2010) stress the importance of being able to readily identify the source, topicality and unbiasedness of the information as a part of content credibility evaluation. Bucy (2003) discusses bias using the concept of fairness.

The above-mentioned measures can be seen as universal concepts that are valid with all media formats. When discussing motion media formats and novel web based concepts such as games and interactive sites, credibility evaluations can obtain a positive boost from well executed aesthetical and technical factors: Cummins and Chambers (2011) found a clear correlation between motion media technical quality and credibility, while Robins and Holmes (2008) found it between higher levels of website aesthetic treatment and credibility.

Interestingly Lee et al. (2010) point out the importance of veridicality in credibility evaluations of audiovisual content. Source cues appear to fade out and if the overall look and feel is credible, the message is perceived credible even if the source is not a credible one. The power of veridicality can be apparent in powerful user generated content dealing with serious topic, but lacking technical attributes. Lee et al. (2010) also point out intention of passing the story as one of the credibility factors as a possible credibility manifestation.

Also the context where content is presented matters, as Rodgers (2007) points out. According to her study sponsored content should not be too closely related to the context where it is published, otherwise sponsor's motives will cause skepticism

over time due to change-of-meaning, lowering publisher credibility. Needless to say, sponsor congruity is a challenging factor to measure. Finally, the message effect on purchase or behavioral intent as a credibility measure was discussed in two studies (Rodgers 2007; Eisend & Küster 2011).

All in all, at total of 26 measures (12 source-related, 11 content-related and 3 combined source and content related) suitable for measuring Sponsored Content credibility were presented, the three main categories being trustworthiness, expertise and aesthetics.

5.3 Discussion

This study of Sponsored Content credibility was conducted as a literature review in order to canvass how Sponsored Content credibility is formed from the consumer point of view (RQ1), and what are the valid measures for evaluating Sponsored Content credibility (RQ2). Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad & Wright 1994) was used as the guiding theory to set the viewpoint for synthesizing the results.

As the first outcome of the study the Sponsored Content Credibility Model (SMMC) was created to map formation of Sponsored Content credibility. SMMC pieces together the complex process of how a Sponsored Content message based on source credibility and content credibility ensemble (Hovland & Weiss 1951; Austin & Dong 1994) is delivered, filtered and processed by the consumer using the persuasion knowledges (Friestad & Wright 1994), affecting target's attitude towards the brand on the brand resonance level (Keller 2009), and eventually influencing the purchase / behavioral intention (Eisend & Küster 2001).

The second outcome of the study is a pattern of 26 variables valid for measuring Sponsored Content credibility on a multitude of formats and platforms. General Sponsored Content credibility dimensions were defined as trustworthiness, expertise and aesthetics. The two first mentioned are based on the long tradition of source credibility studies (Pornpitakpan 2004), and the latter was adapted from Hayley's (1996) study to cover the wide scope of Sponsored Content publication formats available today, covering the quality of technical, audiovisual and aesthetic solutions.

Examining the credibility literature it can be summarized that source credibility does not affect content credibility, but the content may affect the source credibility. This imbalance is true largely because people do not tend to verify information sources on the web, especially when the message is not about fundamental issues, and when the audience is inexperienced in either using the web or critically reading texts, or both. Additionally, source cues are easily lost within web content (source blurring), and if the content is rewarding people don't tend to find it worthwhile to verify the sources. However, this may change in the future, as the relative number of digital natives is in a constant increase.

Topical examples of this are the newborn fake news sites, which publish attention-drawing sensational stories that appear authentic, but are instead completely fictitious. These stories attract views through web search engines and social media feeds, and earn money for the publishers via clicks and advertising views. Due to the sheer amount of websites, the responsibility for credibility definitions is left more and more to the individual (Rains & Karmikel 2009).

On the other hand, Flanagin and Metzger (2000) argue that people who are motivated in finding high-quality information will also go through the source validation process. The motivation for source-checking depends also on the quality of news: hard news are validated more eagerly than entertainment material. Credibility expectations vary also depending on the publisher's reputation. The multitude of variables related to credibility results from the subjective nature of the credibility concept. After all, no source or content can be deemed credible, trustworthy or untrustworthy unless a person makes the evaluation based on his or her personal opinions (Berlo et al. 1969).

Web audiences use endorsement-based heuristics, i.e. they rely on credibility evaluations made by other web users instead of familiarizing themselves with the content themselves (Hilligoss & Rieh 2008). This is apparent especially within the blogosphere, where people may feel closeness toward the blogger and accept blogger opinions without much criticism (Johnson & Kaye 2004). Johnson and Kaye (2004) also argue that web should generally be assessed less credible than the traditional media channels, as anyone is able to publish material in the web arenas without publisher gatekeepers keeping a watch. On the other hand free publishing arenas, such as blog portals, may appear more credible to some, as they aren't allegedly controlled by corporate interests. A blog user may experience the blogger as a personal friend or an idol whose opinions are highly valued. Thus the

blogosphere marketing tools may offer excellent channels for closely profiled Sponsored Content.

Previously discussed heuristic methods help individuals minimize the cognitive effort needed for making credibility evaluations while not ensuring story authenticity. Still, minimal cognitive effort might be all that is available when individuals are faced with the online information overload. In fact, Metzger et al. (2010) suggest that the abundance of information without editorial control or gatekeeping may lead to a transition from the traditional single authority model to a model of distributed authorities based on peer networks. This proposition is supported by Edelman Trust Barometer 2015 (Edelman 2015), which shows that in social media and online communities family and friends are the most trusted source, surpassing journalists and NGOs.

5.4 Research evaluation

This traditional literature review was conducted following the guidelines of integrative analysis (Evans 2008; Salminen 2011), adding elements from the systematic approach (Knopf 2006; Fink 2010; Jesson et al. 2011). Integrative analysis was chosen as the method due to the extent of the topic. The chosen method enables examining a wide array of material under different labels, as opposed to a more systematic method. (Salminen 2011). Integrative method also involves using a guiding theory to set the review viewpoint (Salminen 2011; Torraco 2008). In this study Persuasion Knowledge Theory (Friestad & Wright 1994) was used to combine outlooks emerging from various fields of study, namely journalism, education, publishing and marketing. As literature reviews can be criticized for taking on an impossible task of reviewing all the previously released material (Torraco 2005), in this study a deliberate choice was made not to include all the material, but only what was evaluated integral to the study components.

As in qualitative research always, subjectivity poses a challenge for literature reviews, as going through large quantities of data and selecting the appropriate works to be included is not an easy task (Knopf 2006; Fink 2010; Jesson et al. 2011). In fact, subjectivity can not be ruled out as long as researches are conducted by human beings. However, as the author has background information on the study subject via previous study and work history, to a certain extent subjectivity can also be seen as a positive characteristic.

To aid and streamline the process, elements from systematic literature methodology (Fink 2010) were used, as applicable. Also, the research methodology has been explained in detail to ensure openness and transparency in all phases of the study. When it comes to material searches, the searches were not limited to any specific sources, but the diverse PCI search engine was used to extend the searches to all databases available within University of Jyväskylä, including but not limited to Business Source Elite (EBSCO), Communication & Mass Media Complete (CMMC) and Web of Science. PCI search is a novel way of doing searches while most studies until now have used the Nelli portal. The search engine selection was carefully considered together with a Jyväskylä University Library Information Specialist.

The most demanding phase methodology-wise was selecting the search terms, as Sponsored Content is a wide concept, and the definitions vary, but as described in the methodology chapter of this study, the body of previous research (Lehto & Moisala 2014) and support of the TAO research team aided the process. Jyväskylä University Library Information Specialist helped in formatting the actual search phrases. All in all, the search term selections were made using the best resources and discretion available.

An obvious challenge can be seen in repeatability of the study, as other scholars may not have access to the same databases where the literature for this study was searched. Also the database contents are constantly evolving, and different search engines may give different results, even when using the same search terms. However, this is not a major problem, since the general methodology of this study is freely presented, and is thus repeatable.

The study's two main outcomes, Sponsored Content Credibility Model and the pattern of 26 variables valid for measuring Sponsored Content credibility were created with practicality in mind. Understanding and measuring Sponsored Content credibility is not a subject one can grasp in an instant. The study results will hopefully pave the way for improved, more ethical and transparent practices used in marketing brands using Sponsored Content solutions.

5.5 Suggestions for further study

The current study is seminal in attempting to form a general view over Sponsored Content credibility as a whole. The theories utilized in this study are mainly based on the traditional single authority models, where individuals form credibility evaluations by themselves, without peer communication. The same thinking is dominant in the reviewed literature.

Taking the single-authority viewpoint over credibility, credibility evaluations are seen to be based on individuals forming credibility evaluations via lifelong contingent processes of gathering information and experiences, while coping in the crossfire of persuasive messages.

However, results of Edelman Trust Barometer 2015 (Edelman 2015) show, that trust is shifting from traditional media sources towards family and friends. In practice this has been trending for a while: 2006 was the first year when “person like myself” was rated the most credible spokesperson in Edelman Trust Barometer (Edelman 2006), keeping high positions in credibility rankings ever since. In academic research this was observed by Metzger et al. (2010) who stressed the growing importance of social and group-based means in credibility evaluations.

Thus a highly relevant topic for future research would be the shift in credibility evaluations from the current single authority model to a model of distributed authorities based on peer networks: how can the peer networks be defined, narrowed down and operationalized for research purposes, how can the opinions of such networks be affected, and do the traditional models still apply or do they need reworking? The new perspective of endorsement-based heuristic method, where social media likings, shares and discussions play the key role over traditional editorial and corporate authorities can offer almost endless possibilities for future research.

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