What Makes Online Health Information Credible for Older Adults?: An Exploratory Study

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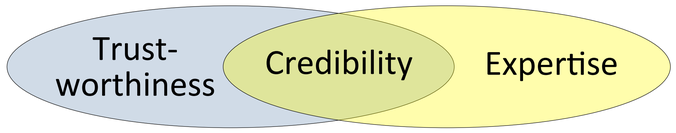
PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Credibility of online health information affects the overall quality of human life.
- The increase in the population of older adults (OAs) and their great interest in health information.
- Higher level of concerns and doubts about the credibility of health-related online resources .
- A few studies have focused on OAs' credibility assessment of online health information.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two Key Dimensions of Credibility (Fogg, 2003; Rieh, 2010; etc.):

- Trustworthiness
- Expertise



Four Types of Credibility (Fogg, 2003)

- Presumed: based on general assumptions
- Surface: based on simple inspection
- Reputed: based on third party's authority
- Earned: based on first-hand experience

METHOD

Data Collection:

- Recruitment sites: OLLI & Tallahassee Senior Center
- Semi-structured interview
- Sample size: 19 older adults (64+ years old)
- From March 23, 2012 to April 5, 2012

Interview Protocol:

- Section A: Demographics
- Section B: Internet Use
- Section C: Web Credibility Markers (57 items based on 7-Likert Scale: -3 to +3)
- Pilot-tested in fall, 2011

Interview Administration:

- Show three examples of health-related websites (e.g., NIH, Zyrtec, and Institute for Integrative Nutrition)
- Each interview lasted for 30-40 min.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What markers increase or decrease OAs' perceived credibility of health-related websites?

RQ2: How do the four types of Web credibility play roles in OAs' credibility assessment?

RESULTS

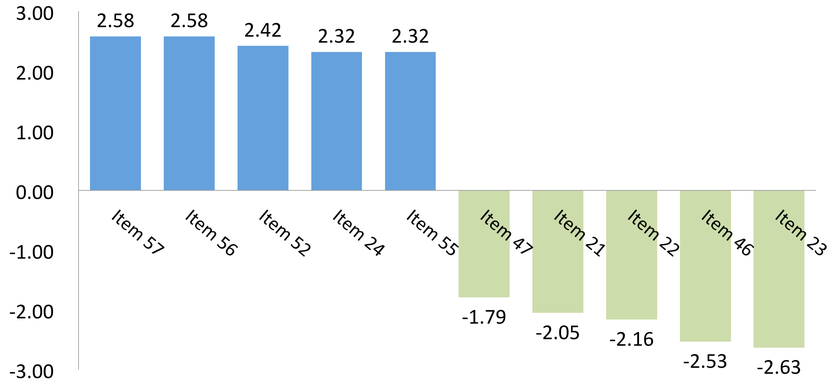
Demographics

- All White Caucasians, speaking English
- Male: 53% / Female: 47%
- Age: M=71.6 / SD=5.5 years old
- 84% have a Bachelor's degree or higher one.
- 74% make $70,000 or more a year.

Internet Use

- 47% use the Internet 1 to 10 hours a week.
- 53% use more than 10 hours a week.
- No one uses fewer than one hour a week.
- 89% have been using the Internet for five or more years.
- 11% have been using the Internet for fewer than five years, but more than 3 years.

Preliminary Findings about OAs' Credibility Markers



Five Most Positive Credibility Markers
Item 57: The site is even-handed in presenting information.
Item 56: The site covers all the different approaches to the issue.
Item 52: The site is complete in the information it provides.
Item 24: The site represents an organization you respect.
Item 55: The site provides information that is neutral.

Five Most Less Positive Credibility Markers
Item 47: The site has a typographical error.
Item 21: The site is rarely updated with new content.
Item 22: The site links to a site you think is not credible.
Item 46: The site automatically pops up new windows with ads.
Item 23: The site makes it hard to distinguish ads from content.

Comments on the Interview Protocol

- Ambiguous terms: "concerned," "sensitive," "even-handed," and "neutral"
- Difficult-to-understand terms: "URL," and ".org"

DISCUSSION

Impacts of the Four Types of Credibility

Presumed	played the most significant role
Surface	regarded as a basic requirement
Reputed	not always influential (*expertise* is required)
Earned	varied depending on personal experience

LIMITATIONS

- Small sample size (n=19) to draw generalizable conclusions
- Skewed sample in terms of ethnicity, education level, income level, and Internet experience

FUTURE RESEARCH

Survey Research

- Data from a larger group of OAs with more diverse ethnicity, education and income levels, and Internet experience
- Conduct a quantitative analysis to examine the relationship among credibility types and related markers

Experimental Research

- Examine the model identified in the previous study (i.e., large survey)
- Ultimately, provide an overall understanding of OAs' credibility assessment of online health information