

Abstract

The focus of this master's thesis is online newspaper credibility. Previous research of quantitative nature has indicated that online newspapers are perceived as less credible than other news media channels, and this thesis aims to investigate evaluations and subjective meanings on credibility in order to understand reasons behind these findings. The research question that is to be answered is: *What affects the perceived credibility of online newspapers among young Norwegian adults?*

The sample of the study consists of eight Norwegian news consumers aged 22 to 28 years. Qualitative interviews have been conducted to investigate the informants' news consume, their understanding of credibility as a term, and their perceptions of medium and source credibility, two widely applied approaches within credibility research. The findings are discussed in light of previous research on credibility, media performance and studies on the implications of digitalization and tabloidization of news.

The main findings of this thesis show that news media credibility is closely related to traditional criteria for journalistic quality. The informants have expectations of news media as a complete and accurate source of relevant information contributing to an informed society. Quality demands are important in the evaluation of the credibility of channels as well as sources, and has remained crucial through the development of the digital media environment in which we live in today. In addition to this, the credibility of online newspapers is negatively impacted by what the informants see as increased tabloidization due to the digital news media's search for revenue. Use of clickbait headlines and content that is deemed irrelevant and trivial makes several informants assess online newspapers as less credible than traditional media channels. The emphasis given to tabloidization as negative for credibility is something that has not been widely investigated in previous research. Although some aspects are understood as a feature of online newspapers as a channel, the informants emphasise that the quality, information value, and degree of tabloidization that can be found within individual sources have a bigger impact on their evaluation of credibility. The perception of online newspaper credibility is, then, a product of both the channel that the news are being presented in and the source from which they originate.

Sammendrag

Tema for denne masteroppgaven er hvordan nettavisers kredibilitet oppfattes. Tidligere kvantitativ forskning har påpekt at nettaviser oppfattes som mindre kredible enn andre medium. Denne studien benytter en kvalitativ tilnærming for å utforske evalueringer og refleksjoner knyttet til tillit til nyhetsmedier for å forstå årsaker bak disse funnene. Problemstillingen er som følger: *Hva påvirker oppfatninger av nettavisers kredibilitet blant norske unge voksne?*

Oppgavens utvalg består av åtte norske brukere av nyhetsmedier i alderen 22 til 28 år. Gjennom kvalitative intervju undersøkes informantenes nyhetskonsument, deres forståelse av kredibilitet som begrep, og deres oppfatninger av troverdigheten til kanaler og kilder. Funnene diskuteres i lys av tidligere forskning på mediers kredibilitet, medie kvalitet, og studier som tar for seg hvordan digitalisering og tabloidisering har påvirket nyhetsmediene.

Hovedfunnene viser at nyhetsmediers kredibilitet ses som nært beslektet med tradisjonelle kriterier for journalistisk kvalitet. Informantene har forventninger om at nyhetsmedier skal være en utfyllende og nøyaktig kilde til relevant og viktig informasjon som bidrar til et opplyst samfunn. Oppfyllelse av kvalitetskriteriene er viktige for tilliten til nyhetskanaler så vel som nyhetskilder, og har forblitt viktige i overgangen til det digitale medielandskapet vi lever i. Et annet aspekt som påvirker informantenes evaluering av nettavisers kredibilitet er tabloidiseringen som har gjort inntog som et resultat av digitale mediers søken etter inntekt. Bruk av klikkjag-overskrifter og innhold som anses som irrelevant, som kjendisstoff og annet trivielt innhold, gjør at informantene vurderer nettaviser som mindre kredible enn tradisjonelle kanaler som papiravisen og fjernsynsnyheter. Deres vektleggelse av tabloidisering som negativt for kredibilitet er et interessant funn som ikke har blitt omfattende undersøkt i tidligere forskning. Mens noen av aspektene som påvirker de digitale nyhetenes kredibilitet i negativ retning knyttes til kanalen nyheter presenteres i, ser informantene forskjeller i kvalitet, informasjonsverdi og tabloidisering i den enkelte kilden som mer avgjørende. Oppfatning av nettavisers kredibilitet er dermed et resultat av egenskaper knyttet til både nettaviser som kanal og vurderingen av de enkelte nettavisene.

Preface

This thesis is the result of two years as a student at the master's degree programme in Media, Communication and Information Technology (popularly called MKI) at NTNU. These two years have been very educational, but more than that I have met many great people and had a wonderful time.

However much I have learned through my studies: I owe the best from my days as a student to the Student Society in Trondheim, where I have spent days, nights and mornings with what I believe are some of the greatest people there is. The time I have spent in the student newspaper has not only given me the opportunity to meet lots of new friends, but also the passion for journalism that has motivated this thesis – and hopefully my future career as well.

There are many people around me that deserve thanks. I've received all the support and encouragement that one could hope for. Especially I would like to thank Silje for all her brilliant suggestions and proofreading (you truly are going to be the best teacher) and Ingrid for her help with recruitment of informants (not to mention everything else you have done for me this semester).

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my supervisor Melanie Magin for all the help she has given me. I would not have enjoyed writing this thesis as much as I have if not for your advice.

Tonje Jacobsen
Dragvoll, 5th June 2018

Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction 1**
 - 1.1 Research questions 2
 - 1.2 The importance of credibility 3
 - 1.3 Structure of thesis 4
- 2. Theory 7**
 - 2.1 The digitalization of news media..... 7
 - 2.1.1 The emergence of the internet..... 7
 - 2.1.2 The digitalization of news..... 8
 - 2.1.3 Change in consume and its influence on trust in news 12
 - 2.2 Media performance..... 14
 - 2.3 Credibility as a theoretical construct 16
 - 2.4 Credibility research: two main approaches 19
 - 2.4.1 Source credibility 19
 - 2.4.2 Medium credibility..... 20
- 3. Methodology 23**
 - 3.1 Choice of method..... 23
 - 3.2 Recruitment and selection 23
 - 3.3 Conducting the interviews 26
 - 3.4 Processing and analysing of data..... 29
 - 3.5 Ethical considerations..... 30
 - 3.6 Quality of research..... 30
 - 3.6.1 Reliability..... 31
 - 3.6.2 Validity 32
 - 3.6.3 Generalizability..... 32
- 4. Results 35**
 - 4.1 News consume in a digital media environment..... 35
 - 4.1.1 Digital news consume 35
 - 4.1.2 Selection of sources 36
 - 4.1.3 Motives of news consume..... 38
 - 4.2 Understanding credibility 39
 - 4.2.1 Associations with media credibility 40
 - 4.2.2 Emphasis of dimensions of credibility..... 41
 - 4.2.3 Quality demands, digital literacy and credibility 43

4.3 Medium credibility	44
4.3.1 Perceptions of medium credibility	44
4.3.2 Comparing quality and credibility of online and printed newspapers	47
4.3.3 Reasons for using online news	51
4.4 Source credibility.....	52
4.4.1 Credibility as traditional quality criteria	53
4.4.2 The influence of tabloidization and commercialization on credibility	56
4.4.3 Comparing the influence of source and medium on new credibility	58
5. Concluding discussion.....	61
5.1 Important findings	62
5.2 Limitations of this study	65
5.3 Suggestions for further research	65
6. References	69
Appendices	
Appendix A: Information letter	
Appendix B: Interview guide	
Appendix C: Question form for informants	
Appendix D: Approval from Norwegian Centre for Research Data	

1. Introduction

With the American presidential election campaign in 2016, «fake news» became part of everyday vocabulary. The focus on allegedly biased and lying mainstream media is said to have had repercussions on the credibility of news media in the USA as well as in European countries (Berntzen, 2018). Even in Norway, traditionally known as a «high-trust society» (Moe, Thorbjørnsrud and Fladmoe, 2017), the phenomenon has led to discussions on political means of prevention (Kampanje, 2018).

The term «false news» has been misunderstood and used out of proportions, but it still points to a very real phenomenon: disinformation online, often connected to the emergence of online media (European Commission, 2018). During the 2017 election campaign in Norway, a collaboration with the intent to discover and correct errors and false information from both media and politicians was launched (Waatland, 2017). There is a growing concern about misleading and harmful information being distributed widely online, while alternative news sites are emerging, claiming to be a counterpart to what they see as the one-sided mainstream media (Klungtveit, Skybakmoen, Berg and Nordseth, 2017; Journalisten, 2017). Studies have pointed to the fact that political partisanship and lack of ideological representation in news media leads to distrust in the established media (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy and Nielsen, 2017; Moe, Thorbjørnsrud and Fladmoe, 2017; Knudsen, Iversen and Nygaard, 2018), while increased polarization is a recurring subject in Norway as well as internationally. All these stirrings indicate that neither countries characterized by high trust are safe from the emerging media scepticism. Discussions on the credibility of Norwegian news media comes up frequently (see for instance Hofseth, 2017; Akerhaug, 2017; Brandtzæg and Følstad, 2017; Nybø and Stavrum, 2017). Although there is little agreement to the extent of the decline in trust, recent numbers showing that 49 percent of Norwegians trust news overall «most of the time» (Newman et al. 2017) should perhaps not be considered good news as it indicates that every other Norwegian does not trust news most of the time.

Parallel with this development, the news media business is undergoing severe changes due to digitalization among other developments (see chapter 2.1) that appear to impact overall trust in news media among Norwegian citizens. Most prominent is perhaps the move from print to online media. Several aspects of this have been feared to lead to diminish in quality, and the online newspaper's ability to function as a substitute for printed newspapers in terms of

contributing to an informed society has been questioned (Høst and Vaage, 2010). Even so, online newspapers are now the most used source of information, especially among young adult Norwegians (Slette-meås og Kjørstad, 2016). However, a national survey indicates that online newspapers are perceived as less credible than traditional news media: While 37 percent of Norwegians asked claim that they have much trust in news in printed newspapers, only 22 percent have much trust in news from online newspapers (Medieundersøkelsen, 2018). An international survey shows that 72 percent of people trust in printed newspapers, 69 percent trust in television news, while scarcely 50 percent trust in online newspapers (Berntzen, 2018). These numbers strongly indicate that online newspapers suffer more from lack of trust than other channels both nationally and internationally.

Considering the gap between trust in printed news and online news, it is reasonable to believe that there must be other reasons for the decrease in credibility than journalistic bias, as print and online newspapers are often staffed with the same journalists. Within credibility research, the approach of medium credibility investigates the impact of the channel in which communication is delivered (Kohring and Matthes, 2007). This has not been immensely researched in a Norwegian context, but international studies have found that online newspapers are perceived less credible than print newspapers (Kioussis, 2001; Greer, 2003; Zhou, Zhang and Shen, 2014). The aim of this thesis is to look behind these numbers to identify possible reasons to why people might evaluate online media to be less credible than print media.

1.1 Research questions

The subject of this thesis is news media credibility – understood as the way consumers evaluate the trustworthiness and believability of news media – and particularly the credibility of online newspapers. While there exists numerous quantitative studies on the level of credibility of various news media channels and its possible causes, there are, as far as I know, only very few qualitative studies on perceptions of online newspaper credibility. In this thesis, I investigate what is behind the views news consumers have on news media credibility in order to better understand the challenges that online newspapers seem to be facing. The research question of this thesis is: *What affects the perceived credibility of online newspapers among Norwegian young adults?*

Being qualitative in nature, his thesis does not aim at giving a representative overview of the overall level of trust in media among young news consumers. It does, however, give a contribution to understanding what credibility means for young news consumers and why they evaluate the news media the way they do. By applying a comparative approach to the perceived credibility of online versus traditional newspapers, the goal is to access reasons for the evaluations of print media versus online media and how this might culminate into one of the channels being perceived as more credible than the other. While previous research has focused on medium credibility to explain trust in online newspaper, I argue that the diversity which can be found online and among online newspapers calls for the use of source credibility as well, if one is to understand all aspects that affect the credibility of online newspapers. Source credibility focuses on the origin of a message, which for instance can be an individual, an organization – or a web site (Kohring and Matthes, 2007; Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus and Mccann, 2003). In this case, source credibility is applied to investigate the perceptions of credibility that is related to particular online newspapers rather than the internet as a channel.

The findings of this thesis is the result of eight in-depth interviews with people aged 22 to 28 years. I have chosen to focus on young adults because they are an important current and future consumer group, and because they are experienced with the internet and thereby can give informed answers to enlighten the perceptions of online media credibility. Their internet consume, as well as their news consume and preferences, is presented in chapter 4.1. In addition to their position as digital consumers, this age group is the least likely to pay for news media (Moe and Kleiven, 2016:36-37), thus posing a challenge for online newspapers in creating a sustainable economic income.

1.2 The importance of credibility

As reviewed in the beginning of this chapter, several recent developments can be seen as a challenge to news media credibility. This challenge has been widely recognized, and institutions such as the European Commission and the European Council has launched initiatives that has the purpose to combat the issue of disinformation, false news and distrust in order to maintain the function of mass media (see European Commission, 2018; Council of Europe, 2017).

A credible and wide reaching mass media is a crucial part of combating the negative effects that such phenomena can have on democracy. Credibility is also a basic prerequisite for the news media's ability to contribute to society. If news media is to function as a source of information that makes citizens able to make informed decisions, a basic premise is that the media are believed in what they communicate. As Coleman (2012) writes:

Because citizenship only works on the basis of common knowledge and shared agreement about ways to live, citizens not only need to become informed themselves, but to trust that others around them are similarly civically informed. Unless we can trust the news media to deliver common knowledge, the idea of the public – a collective entity possessing shared concerns – starts to fall apart (Coleman, 2012:36).

In addition to this, credibility is, as CEO of Edelman Trust Barometer Ed Williams puts it, «a matter of commercial survival for the media companies in question»: even though a direct link between trust and willingness to pay for media has not been proven, he argues that it is likely not a coincidence that the country with the severest news media trust crisis is also the country with the population least likely to pay for news (Williams, 2017).

It does not seem as if the internet as an information channel is getting any less overwhelming, complex, diverse and unsure. All the while, the survival of printed newspapers is regarded as uncertain (see for instance Journalisten, 2014), possibly leaving online newspapers to become the most important source of news. If our only news source is going to be online newspapers, in which many do not trust, more knowledge on why newspapers are perceived as credible or not is crucial.

1.3 Structure of thesis

In chapter 2, theories that explain the developments within news media organizations and journalism due to digitalization are presented. With these theories, I seek to enlighten differences between print and online media with possible implications for news media credibility. Further, the tradition of credibility research is reviewed through examinations of credibility as a theoretical construct, as well as two main approaches within credibility research: medium credibility and source credibility. Chapter 3 explains methodological choices and conducts, while chapter 4 presents the findings of this study in light of previous studies and theories presented in chapter 2. In chapter 5, the research questions of this thesis is answered

while findings are summarized, before alternative approaches and further research on the subject is suggested.

2. Theory

The studies presented in this chapter offer framework for understanding the findings of this thesis in regard of media performance, as well as developments in journalism and news media with possible implications for its credibility. This chapter also consists of previous research and theories that map the field of credibility research.

2.1 The digitalization of news media

Journalism and news media business have undergone fundamental changes due to several developments in society and technology. While much can also be pinned to long term social and economic changes (McQuail, 1992:1), this chapter focuses on the impact from new technology and the digitalization of the news media. The severe changes that has occurred have implications for the way journalism is produced, presented and consumed, and I argue that it can contribute to better understanding of how perceptions of online newspaper credibility is formed.

2.1.1 The emergence of the internet

Since the release of the first Web browser in 1994, the emergence of online newspapers has been ever growing. Within a couple of years, most media outlets had established a presence online (Scott, 2005). Numbers from Norway show that there were 156 online newspapers stemming from printed papers in 2000. By 2008 the number had increased to 226 (Høst, 2009), where it has remained more or less stable (Høst, 2018). In the period from 2001 to 2009, the amount of Norwegians who read online newspapers on a daily basis rose from 12 percent to 45 percent (Høst and Vaage, 2010). Recent numbers show that 52 percent of Norwegians between the age of 9 to 79 years visit one or more online newspapers daily (SSB, 2018).

The internet has had a huge impact on the news media business. For one, it greatly lowered distribution and production costs (Scott, 2005). Among other things, this led to anyone being able to produce and publish content, not just the news organizations consisting of reporters and editors. The first Norwegian online newspaper without a printed counterpart, Nettavisen.no, was released in 1996 (Thoresen, 2014) and still exists.

The emergence of the internet with all its possibilities, did, however, not contribute to a story of success. The newspaper circulation in Norway experienced a heavy decline from the middle of the 1990s. This was particularly remarkable for single-copy newspapers and regional newspapers, both traditionally directed towards a broad audience (Omdal, 2012). The situation got even worse in 2004 with the introduction of broadband. Internet became easily accessible for most households, and with internet came access to information online. When smart phones and tablets became more mainstream, newspaper circulation declined even more (Omdal, 2012). Printed newspapers were no longer people's primary source of news, and had to compete with online sources that often offered news for free. The amount of people reading printed newspapers on an average day dropped from 92 percent to 72 percent from 1991 to 2009 (Høst and Vaage, 2010), and is now at an all-time low with 32 percent (SSB, 2018). Despite the decline being smaller than the increase in online readership, it poses a problem as publishers have failed to find a sustainable business model online that allowed them to profit on online readership.

The combination of the consumers' lack of will to pay for content online and the lack of revenue from advertisement sale led to economic difficulties for news media in Norway, as well as in other countries. Among the reasons for this are the overall decrease in readership and the head-to-head competition between enormous amounts of global publishers due to the internet (Pavlik, 2000). Even with a steady growth of online readership, the publishing houses have had a hard time succeeding in making the revenue from online newspapers compensate for the loss of traditional sources of income. The will to pay for news online remained absent for a long time (Krumsvik, 2012), but lately numbers are looking up: one fourth of the Norwegian respondents in Reuters Digital News Report 2017 claimed to have paid for online news the preceding year (Newman et al., 2017).

2.1.2 The digitalization of news

The internet's disruption of the news media and the possibilities presented by the new technology led to several changes in the way journalism is produced, presented and consumed. While hypertext, interactivity and multimedia were the hype words of early research on the technology's impact on journalism (Steenesen, 2011), today we are talking about personalization, algorithms, augmented reality and robot journalism (Newman, 2018).

Pavlik (2000) argues that new technology has impacted journalism in four areas: how journalists do their work, the nature of news content, the structure and organization of the newsroom, and the nature of the relationship between and among news organizations and their publics. Tsfati (2010) says «the very nature of internet as a communication channel does not always easily settle with traditional journalistic norms and practises» (Tsfati 2010:24). He argues that some of the most celebrated qualities of internet can clash with journalistic professionalism, and lists features such as boundlessness, connectivity, and lack of control.

This section focuses on how the digitalization of news media has changed journalism in the sense of how it is presented, what it consists of and how it is consumed. The objective of this is to present developments in digital news media, and examine whether there are severe differences between printed newspapers and online newspapers that can be relevant for the credibility of the channels.

Tewksbury and Althaus (2000) wrote that content of online newspapers mainly mimic the content of their traditional counterparts, but emphasised that there are some important differences in presentation. Although there have been developments in the use of technological affordances when creating and presenting journalism since, some of the features highlighted in their study from 2000 still shape today's online newspapers. One of the features is the change in hierarchy and how salience of news articles is presented: Due to the absence of a limit for the amount of articles that can be fitted into a publication, online newspapers have a large volume of articles available at all times. The presentation of articles on the online newspaper's front page lacks many of the cues of salience that can be found in printed newspapers, where emphasis on the front page, assignment of space and location strongly insinuates what is the most important articles (Tewksbury and Althaus, 2000). In printed newspapers, the front page is a clear and visual presentation of what the editor wishes to emphasise. There still exists some cues on the front pages of online newspapers, such as the time given on top, but freshness is now one of the most important criteria for choosing what the readers will be exposed to (Thoresen, 2014). How this may affect readership is reviewed later in this chapter.

Tsfati (2010) states that the connectivity of online media can be a mean of increasing the credibility of a news article, because one can link to the original source and remove the journalistic interpretation as an intermediary. It also makes it possible for the reader to learn

more about the subject and get a more complete impression. However, the connectivity presented in linking to an original source, for instance a report or amendment bill, will also increase the demands for the journalistic work, as readers can verify information themselves and more easily detect inaccuracy.

The lack of limitations when publishing articles means that editors no longer have to strictly prioritize when selecting which articles to publish (Tsfati, 2010). If articles of less interest and importance are being published exclusively online, it can lead to an overall decline in quality and a gap between online and printed newspapers.

For a long time, content online seemed to be the exact same as in printed media simply shoveled over to the new channel (Tewksbury and Althaus, 2000), but developments in recent years show that journalists are adapting and taking advantage of the new features made possible by online technologies (Tsfati, 2010). In addition to the changes in presentation, it has resulted in journalistic content that is distinctive for online newspapers.

The news criterion have remained widely the same, but we see a much stronger emphasis on speed and newness (Thoresen, 2014). News online is a constant stream of events, and online newspapers are being updated on a minute-to-minute basis. The pressure to produce a large volume of articles in short time has increased, and the numbers of journalists to do the work has decreased. A study from Denmark tracking changes in news production from 1998 to 2008 shows that a journalists had to write three times as many articles (Lund, Willig and Blach-Østen, 2009 in Kuhn and Kleis Nielsen, 2013). A study by the unions Norsk Journalistlag and Norsk Redaktørforening from 2011 shows that one third of journalists felt that the production demand had increased. 21 percent of journalists writing for online papers stated that they had delivered articles which they felt lacked relevant information or sources (Norsk Journalistlag, 2011). For a newspaper to be considered credible, accuracy – even in details such as spelling – could be of importance (Porlezza and Russ-Mohl, 2013).

There are positive aspects with the new reality of news coverage as well. For one, online newspapers have the advantage of being available anywhere at any time, especially considering news reading on mobile devices (Thoresen, 2014). The ability to publish news online allows

newspapers to offer fresh information on occurring events at all times, hence offering something that printed newspapers cannot compete with. Negative aspects of online journalism are not unquestionable: Although some researchers say that the logic and speed of online publishing increase the risk of errors (Flanagin and Metzger, 2000; Russial, 2009), Thoresen (2014) states several examples that contradicts the perception that speed goes on the behalf of accuracy.

Høst and Vaage (2010) write that the content of online newspapers consists of shortened versions of the articles in printed newspapers, and that much of the investigative articles are not published online. In their opinion, online newspapers and printed newspapers cannot be considered as equal services due to this. According to Larsen (2012) certain topics receive more coverage in online newspapers, such as celebrity news, short news articles, and consumer journalism. Another aspect that is new with online journalism is the fact that click rates are crucial for advertisement revenue and that clicks can be measured. The success of an article is evaluated on the basis of how many people have clicked on it, and both reporters and editors are socialized into striving to replicate content that receives high click rates (Thoresen, 2014). Allern (2001) argues that this increased focus on publishing popular content can be damaging for the press as a democratic institution.

Tabloidization of journalism is understood as a higher focus on soft news in the form of scandals, sensationalism and entertainment news, and is often a direct consequence of commercialization of media in search of a larger audience to attract advertisers (Esser, 1999). Tabloidization of the news has been equated with decrease in journalistic standards (Kurtz, 1993). Although the phenomenon did not come with the emergence of online newspapers, it is a feature commonly seen on the internet. Online newspapers have, in resemblance to single-copy newspapers, a bigger need to attract the attention of readers in order to sell than subscriber-based newspapers. Furthermore, we see the emergence of another widely debated feature of online newspapers: clickbaiting. Clickbait is a term used to describe headlines that has the intention to allure readers into clicking the article out of curiosity or emotional response. It can for instance be question-based or forward-referencing headlines (Scaccio and Muddiman, 2016), often misleading or exaggerating. Headlines like this have proven to possibly agitate negative feelings in readers and to have negative impact on the evaluation of the article (Ibid.), and the use of clickbait has been widely criticized (see for instance Kärnborg, 2015; Blom and Hansen, 2015; Chu, 2016).

Another development that can be related to the news media's search for economic revenue in the digital age is the use of alternatives to traditional banners ads that people can block out, and with that the emergence of native ads (Knudsen and Iversen, 2017). Native advertising mimics the content and presentation of editorial content, thus blurring ethical boundaries which journalists have upheld for a long time. Knudsen and Iversen (2017) find that political native advertising have negative impact on readers' trust in political news.

2.1.3 Change in consume and its influence on trust in news

The emergence of internet, online newspapers, smartphones and social media all affect the way people consume news. One aspect thereof is where readers get their news. Social media, and perhaps especially Facebook, have had a major impact on the way people are exposed to news. In 2017, 37 percent of the Norwegian population under the age of 30 said that Facebook was their most important source of news updates (Slettemeås and Kjørstad, 2016). Getting news articles through Facebook could impact what sort of news one reads, as the news feed usually will present articles that suits your interest, rather than the articles that are regarded the most important by the editors in printed and online newspapers. The introduction of new technology has given young people more opportunities to form a news consume independent of that of the older generation (Hagen and Wold, 2009). However, young Norwegians do still read online newspapers: 79 percent listed national online newspapers as the most important source for keeping updated. For printed national newspapers, the number was 21 percent (Slettemeås and Kjørstad, 2016).

There is also a change regarding which device news are being read on. Now, 70 percent of all online traffic go through a mobile device (TNS Gallup, 2018). A report from 2015 showed that 75 percent of people aged 16 to 25 years list the smartphone as their preferred platform to consume news, and the same percentage thinks that short news articles are the most optimal when reading news on their smartphone (Slettemeås and Kjørstad, 2016). Meanwhile, 32 percent said that the smartphone is a suitable platform for longer, in-depth articles (Ibid.). This could mean that consumer preferences are changing due to the technology used to gain access to the news. Like receiving news updates primarily from Facebook, this could lead to a change

in what sort of journalism is being read, and might create a difference in news consume on online newspapers versus print.

As previously mentioned, the presentation of news stories on online newspapers contains far less salience cues than printed papers. Tewksbury and Althaus (2000) argues that readers of online newspapers learn about a wider range of topics than readers of printed papers because they are not directed toward specific subjects. On the downside, this could also mean that fewer people are exposed to important news articles. Tewksbury and Althaus writes that «as a consequence, online news providers may inadvertently develop a readership that is more poorly informed than readers of traditional newspapers about the core events that shape public life» (Tewksbury and Althaus 2000:459). They speculate on how the lack of direction of the reader's attention towards the most important articles might make online news consumption more based on individual interests compared to print media consumption.

Due to this, readers of online newspapers might pay less attention to politically important and high quality articles, as suggested by Prior (2007) as well. At the same time, the readers might be exposed to more content that suits their own interests, which would give a better user experience – but also might lead to a risk of filter bubbles and echo chambers where one is only exposed to content and opinions that resonates with one's own viewpoint (Pariser, 2011; Flaxman, Goel and Rao, 2016).

Previous research has examined the connection between media consume and credibility. Flanagin and Metzger (2000) found that experience with internet correlated positively with the perception of the credibility of internet as an information channel, as did Kioussis (2001), although the effect is moderate. Tsfati (2010) found that the ones with the highest level of trust in media were also the ones using online newspapers the most.

Tsfati and Cappella (2003) found that use of mainstream media outlets, such as daily newspapers and national television news, were negatively correlated with media scepticism, while exposure to political radio shows and political information online correlated positively. They emphasised that the effect for both correlations were weak, and that there is nothing to support a claim that people avoid news which they do not trust. This can also be supported by the fact that the amount of people using news sources daily are higher than the amount of people

claiming to have trust in news media. Tsfatı and Cappella (2003) draw on studies from uses and gratifications research, and argue that trust in media is important when the motivation for news consume is to obtain information about current affairs. If the motivation for use is otherwise, for example the need for entertainment or social needs, trust becomes less relevant and people consume news despite their scepticism (Tsfatı and Cappella, 2003). Similarly, an Australian study found that the wish to be informed correlated stronger with users of traditional printed newspapers, while users of online news sources were «more likely to be motivated by daily habitual online activity rather than out of a sense of ‘duty as a citizen to stay informed’» (Fisher, 2016:2).

Some previous research also question the desirability of complete trust in news media in a time where critical sense is emphasised (Fisher, 2016; Brandtzæg, 2017). Consumers are encouraged to have caution against information online, and today’s online media landscape demands more critical sense than before, as commercial interests take a larger role in news media (Slette-meås and Kjørstad, 2016). At the same time, the new technology applied in news media also demands digital literacy – understanding and competence on the technological and cultural aspects of digital media (Buckingham, 2010). Slette-meås and Kjørstad (2016) emphasise that young media consumers must be able to «identify reasonable platforms, navigate price models, express critical sense in choice of source and understand the complexity in the new converging media formats» (Slette-meås and Kjørstad, 2016:19) (my translation). The Norwegian Media Authority uses the term «digital judgement» about the ability to separate various digital content from one another, including the differentiation between commercials and editorial content, and opinionated versus fact-based claims (Norwegian Media Authority, 2018). Young news consumers might have an advantage when maneuvering the digital media landscape as they are «digital natives» (Prensky, 2001), having grown up with the new technology and lived their entire lives surrounded by it.

2.2 Media performance

It has been feared that digitalization might also impact the quality of news media, a worry often related to increasing audience competition (Davis, 2014 in Van Aelst et al., 2017), financial instability (NOU 2017:7), and the emphasis of speed over quality (Humprecht, 2016).

Media performance research deals with the quality of media based on normative criteria representing values and needs of the society (McQuail, 1992). Although there are not any universal criteria for evaluation (Ibid.), there are several widely applied values or criteria that stem from professional journalism standards, sources setting the objectives of relevant content, and external critics (McQuail, 2015).

One such criteria value is diversity. McQuail writes that media diversity is widely recognized as being performed in three different ways: «by reflecting differences in society; by giving access to different points of view and by offering a wide range of choice» (McQuail, 1992:144). Diversity can be traced along three different dimensions: a political dimension, a geographical dimension and a social/cultural dimension (McQuail, 1992:150). It is regarded as a central element for the media's ability to contribute to citizens being well informed and able to participate in the public discourse of society (Steiner, Magin and Stark, 2018).

The great access to news and information due to the rise of online media has led to both hopes and fears concerning its impact on the diversity of news (Mutz and Young, 2011). However, Redden and Witschge (2010) found that the content and presentation of news in various online newspapers were largely homogenous. Furthermore, online newspapers have proven to not contribute to diversity because people tend to stick to the large, mainstream online newspapers although there exists numerous sources (Newman et al., 2017). Online news media has undeniably led to a larger volume of news articles and a diverse high choice media environment, but it has also become easier for people to avoid political news if they wish to (Prior, 2007). This can negatively impact the news media's ability to perform their function as a source of information relevant for a society's citizens.

Another quality criteria often applied is *objectivity*, which for instance includes balance and accuracy in representation, inclusion of all relevant perspectives, separating fact from fiction and avoiding slant (Boyer, 1981 in McQuail, 1992:184). Objectivity can be seen as the opposite of bias: «systematic tendency to favour (in outcome) one side or position over another» (McQuail, 1992:191). It may be intentionally or not, and it may be hidden or openly performed. Bias can come in the form of open partisanship, unwitting bias, propaganda and ideology (McQuail, 1992:193). The desirability and possibility of full objectivity has been debated. It

has been argued that it merely does not exist, and that proclaimed objectivity has been used to disguise partisanship (McQuail 1992:184). Even so, objectivity is considered an important value for news as a source of information:

Reporting the true account of events is at the core of the professional ideal of journalism and of great importance for trustworthiness and reliability, although considered not to be fully attainable (McQuail, 1992:183).

The potential for audiences to learn about reality is the ultimate criterion of information quality, says McQuail (1992:197). In order for this to be fulfilled, he argues, three features of news account must be present: factualness, accuracy, and completeness. Coverage must be based on facts, contain accuracy in depiction and selection, and offer context and enough information to form an understanding of the circumstances in question (Ibid.).

Also emphasised in media performance is a key term in assessment of the quality of selection of the news: relevance (McQuail, 1992). Relevance is related for instance to the level of significance of topics and stories being covered. As a contradiction to relevance, McQuail names the trivial or superficial, sensational content focusing on «human interest», personalization or entertainment. This sort of content, he writes, is contrary to newsworthy and relevant as it lacks information value (McQuail, 1992:200).

Although values such as diversity, objectivity, impartiality and relevance are deeply rooted in journalistic professionalism and practice, developments caused by the rise of online media has possibly introduced new criteria for evaluation (McQuail, 2015). Following that argument, the way quality and credibility of online newspapers are evaluated might differ from the way traditional media has been evaluated.

2.3 Credibility as a theoretical construct

In social sciences, the term trust has been defined as a lasting relation between two parts that involves the belief that the other part will keep word despite uncertainty or lack of control (Rotter, 1967). Trust is a crucial element in modern society, creating a basis for social order and cohesion in a range of relations and institutions (Kohring and Matthes, 2007). In communication studies, trust is an important part of the evaluation of news media, and its

presence can, as earlier mentioned, be considered necessary for the news media to be able to fulfil its functions in society. A central element of trust in news media is credibility (Tsfati, 2010). The public's trust in the media is an indicator of the credibility of the media. It has been emphasised that trust and credibility does not mutually exclude each other (Self, 1996 in Kohring and Matthes, 2007) and that the two terms often are being used intertwined (Kioussis, 2001).

In this study, the term «perceived credibility» describes the way consumers evaluate the trustworthiness and believability of news media – or simply put, the degree of trust they have in news media.

Credibility research lacks a standardized definition, as well as an agreed and valid way to measure it (Kohring and Matthes, 2007; Fisher, 2016). This has led to several quantitative studies trying to identify the dimensions of credibility empirically through a factor analytical approach. In some of the earliest studies on credibility, Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953) examined how characteristics of the source – being an individual, an organization or other sources of communication – affected whether a message was perceived as persuasive or not. They found that the most crucial characteristics of credibility were trustworthiness and expertise. In 1985, the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ANSE) conducted a study examining the credibility of news media, and newspapers in particular (Gaziano and McGrath, 1986). A factor analysis of 16 items measuring attitudes towards news media resulted in 12 items grouped together to a factor labeled «credibility». The items were as follows: «whether newspapers and television news are fair, are unbiased, tell the whole story, are accurate, respect people's privacy, watch out after people's interests, are concerned about the community's well-being, separate fact and opinion, can be trusted, are concerned about the public interest, are factual, and have well-trained reporters» (Gaziano and McGrath, 1986:454). Although this factor has remained relevant for several later studies (Kioussis, 2001; Tsafi and Cappella, 2003), it was criticized as for being too lengthy (see for instance Meyer, 1988).

The dimensions used in credibility research have continued to vary. On the notion that these are the most commonly applied dimensions in research on the field, both Flanagin and Metzger (2000) and Johnson and Kaye (1998) used a multidimensional concept consisting of

believability, accuracy, trustworthiness, bias, and completeness. Other dimensions applied are for example *how factual a medium is, the extent to which it is motivated by money, whether it invades people's privacy, what is its concern for the community, and whether it can be trusted* (Kioussis, 2001).

The lack of a standardized scale for the measurement of trust in news media has been an item of critical discussion in several studies (Kioussis, 2001; Kohring and Matthes, 2007; Fisher, 2016). Kohring and Matthes (2007) argues that it poses a methodological issue in the field of credibility research because the dimensions applied when evaluating credibility has great theoretical and practical relevance. One could argue that it is problematic to compare results from different studies when the way respondents are asked for their opinion on news media credibility is inconsistent, with some using a multidimensional scale while others ask how much trust one has in media (see for instance Livio and Cohen, 2016).

Kohring and Matthes (2007) set out to develop a standardized multidimensional scale measuring trust in news media. In their research, they use the term «trust» instead of «credibility» in order to be able to «directly link research in the field of mass communication with the sociological theories of trust» (Kohring and Matthes, 2007:232), although the two concepts does not mutually exclude each other in other research on this area. They apply the definition of trust used in social science, and argue that trust is to rely on the selections of others and thereby letting trust replace knowledge and control (Kohring and Matthes, 2007). To trust the news media is to trust journalists' selectivity, rather than objectivity or truth, as one lacks knowledge of this. Trust in news media is, then, the trust in selectivity of topics, trust in selectivity of facts, trust in accuracy of depictions and trust in journalistic assessment. In their research, they find that these four kinds of selectivity are first order factors that can be explained by the second order factor «trust in news media». The model is validated through confirmatory factor analysis. Kohring and Matthes (2007) claim that their scale is the first validated scale of trust in news media. Still, later research has continued to utilize different ways of measuring credibility, and Fisher (2016) argues that there still exists no agreed definition or measurement of «trust in media».

An interesting contribution to the subject is a recent study by Norwegian researchers, who examines what people mean by «trust in media». Their motive is to get a better understanding

of why people answer as they do when asked how much they trust in the media. Using open ended questions, the researchers find that the way most people understand «trust in media» and the dimensions of it is similar to the way academic literature does: unbiased coverage that includes multiple points of view, selection of relevant facts, accuracy, and independence (Knudsen, Iversen and Nygaard, 2018). However, they also find that some respondents think of trust in a way that had not been included in much credibility research: ideological representation. Their mistrust is linked to the feeling that their ideological and political opinions are not represented in the media (Ibid.).

2.4 Credibility research: two main approaches

The field of credibility research can be separated into three different strains: source credibility, medium credibility and the factor-analytical approach trying to identify dimensions in credibility. While source credibility focuses on the messenger, for instance an individual, an organization or a brand, medium credibility on the other hand highlights the impact of the channel in which the message is being presented (Kohring and Matthes, 2007).

Some stress the importance of treating the two latter approaches as individual concepts (see for instance Newhagen and Nass, 1989). Kioussis (2001) also highlights the distinction, but admits that the two approaches share common theoretical framework. He draws on literature from both approaches «to avoid theoretical and empirical confusion» (Kioussis, 2001:383), and argues that perceived credibility is a function of both source and channel characteristics.

2.4.1 Source credibility

Source credibility focuses on the credibility of the source of a message, and the impact of certain characteristics tied to the source (Kohring and Matthes, 2007). Following this, the impact of a message rely on the perceived credibility of the source (Jacobson, 1970).

Early research on source credibility focused on the way in which source characteristics influenced how open people were to change their attitudes towards specific subjects (Hovland, Janis and Kelley, 1953). Through a series of experiments, Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953) discovered that expertise and trustworthiness were crucial characteristics with implications for the persuasiveness of the communicator. Hovland and his colleagues believed that credibility

could be perceived as a certain characteristic related to the source of the message. This contribution laid the groundwork for much of the later research on source credibility, but was criticized for being too simple and without theoretical foundation (see for instance Markham, 1968; Berlo, Lemert and Mertz, 1970). Berlo, Lemert and Mertz (1970) later claimed that source credibility was a multidimensional scale consisting of the following dimensions: safety, qualifications and dynamism (Berlo, Lemert and Mertz, 1970 in Kiouisis, 2001). More recently, credibility research has included the investigation of the credibility of web sites as a source of information, and the effects of aspects such as informativeness, attractiveness, commercial content and structure (Metzger et al., 2003).

2.4.2 Medium credibility

One of the first studies on medium credibility was carried out by Westley and Severin (1964). They wanted to study correlations between demographic variables such as gender, age, education, and socioeconomic status and trust in various mediums. They found that the demographic variables had an impact on whether the respondents found printed newspapers or television to be most credible. For instance, people with higher socioeconomic status tended to give higher credibility ratings to newspapers and lower credibility to television news than those of lower socioeconomic status. More men trusted newspapers the most, while more women trusted television news. While all age groups trusted television more than newspapers, those over 60 years trusted the newspaper less than those of younger age (Westley and Severin, 1964).

Before the Westley and Severin (1964) research, the comparative level of perceived credibility of newspapers and television had been measured via the Burns W. Roper surveys. Every other year from 1959, Roper asked the American population which medium they would trust the most in case of conflicting reporting. The survey shows that television were trusted more than newspapers ever since 1961 (Gaziano and McGrath, 1986). Results from the years 1959 through 1988 show that the amount of people who had the most trust in newspapers remained relatively stable, while trust in television increased. Studies from the same period confirm these findings (Carter and Greenberg, 1965; Abel and Wirth, 1977). Among possible explanations for the advantage of the television, Carter and Greenberg (1965) point to the visual aspect: The television has the ability to describe events without the interpretative intermediacy of the reporter.

The results of comparative medium credibility studies since have been rather inconsistent. Some studies have indicated that newspapers have gained in on television (Johnson and Kaye, 1998; Flanagin and Metzger, 2000) while others upheld that the television is perceived as more credible (Ibelema and Powell, 2001). As internet became public domain, medium credibility research started to include the internet, and online newspapers in particular.

Johnson and Kaye (1998) studies perceptions of credibility towards online sources, such as online newspapers in comparison with traditional print media, among politically engaged informants recruited online. They find that about 7 out of 10 informants considers online newspapers and magazines as «somewhat credible», and that online channels overall are considered more credible than their traditional counterparts, although notably in a sample where use of internet was a prerequisite (Johnson and Kaye, 1998). On the other hand, Kiouisis (2001) find that printed newspapers are perceived as the most credible medium among a selection of Americans, followed by online newspapers. His results indicates that television broadcast news are perceived the least credible. Kiouisis (2001) argues that the introduction of online media could change the way traditional media credibility was considered: that the mere existence of online newspapers has reduced the credibility of television news, while increasing trust in printed newspapers. That online newspapers have less credibility than printed newspapers is also supported by studies done by Greer (2003) and Zhou, Zhang and Shen (2014). Greer (2003) also find that online newspapers with a printed counterpart are deemed more credible than newspapers only existing online.

As mentioned, these studies uses different measurements of credibility, which challenges the ability to conclude on which medium enjoys the most credibility. When taking these studies into consideration, it seems as though online newspapers appears less credible to consumers than printed newspapers.

3. Methodology

In this section, the methodological choices made in this study is presented. By clarifying the methodological and ethical considerations in the collection and treatment of the data, I will ensure transparency that allows the reader to evaluate the quality of this research (Tjora, 2016).

3.1 Choice of method

This thesis uses a qualitative approach to investigate the informants' assessments of news media quality and credibility. Qualitative research methods are suitable for learning about how people experience and understand their lifeworld (Kvale and Brinchmann, 2015). Much existing literature on news media credibility employs a quantitative approach (see for instance Westley and Severin, 1964; Johnson and Kaye, 1998; Flanagin and Metzger, 2000). As earlier reviewed, two main strands of credibility research are the measurements of which channel is considered the most credible among consumers, and the examination of what effect the characteristics of a source have on its credibility. The body of literature on credibility research widely seems to lack studies emphasising the way people understand media credibility (but see Knudsen, Iversen and Nygaard, 2018) and why they evaluate it as they do. Previous research and surveys indicate that people have less trust in online newspapers than other channels (Kioussis, 2001; Greer, 2003; Zhou, Zhang and Shen 2014; Medieundersøkelsen, 2018). In this thesis, I want to look behind the numbers and investigate possible reasons for this finding.

Tjora (2016) emphasises that research method must reflect the goal of a study. I argue that it is effective to apply semi-structured interviews when the purpose of the study is to learn of the informants' perspectives and understanding of media quality and credibility. Semi-structured interviews are favorable when the goal is to access opinions, attitudes and experiences (Tjora, 2016), and by applying open ended questions the informants are allowed to reflect freely upon the subjects based on their own understanding and emphasis.

3.2 Recruitment and selection

Informants were recruited through personal network, with friends proposing the names of acquaintances that might be able to participate. The only prerequisite offered were that they had a minimum of experience with news media and that they were in the right age group. Other

than that, a certain degree of diversity in gender, study programme/occupation, education level and party preference was strived for. The informants were told that the research project was about media evaluations to avoid predispositions that could come from them knowing in advance that the interviews would focus on trust and credibility. This ensured that their responses were based on subjective reflections not shaped by expectations or social desirability (Ringdal, 2013:358). The plan was to recruit a minimum of 10 informants, as 10 to 15 interviews is a normal amount of empirical data for a master's thesis (Tjora, 2016). With respect to the diversity of the sample it would have been important to obtain more informants not undergoing higher education, but this group turned out difficult to reach. This gave me two options: I could stop at eight informants, or I could continue the recruitment and end up with more informants with university education at the cost of the diversity and balance of the sample. This would have given a larger number of informants, but the higher educated could have been even more overrepresented. I decided to stop at eight informants. It is somewhat lower than the ideal number of informants, but gives a more balanced sample. Another reason why I decided to stop the recruitment of informants after eight interviews, was that I had obtained a certain degree of saturation (Tjora, 2016). Due to this, I argue that the quality of the research is good despite the number of informants.

I decided to focus on the age group 20 to 30 years, and ended up with informants between the ages 22 to 28 years. Young adults are heavy users of internet as a medium, and can thus be considered eligible for giving response based on their own experience. Another reason I wanted to focus on this age group is that it is especially important to learn more about how young news consumers judge the quality and credibility of the news media: Young adults are developing the consume and habits that will shape their consume in later life. If the future of news media is online, then it is crucial that this group use and have trust in online newspapers. As for now, people in this age group are the ones least likely to pay for news: Only 32 percent of Norwegian citizens between 20 and 29 years pay for any printed or online newspaper (Moe and Kleiven, 2016:36-37), and these tendencies show that this group poses a challenge for news media businesses. In order to gain economic sustainability, the news media will have to appear attractive and worth their time and money, and so their evaluations are important for the media business and further research on credibility.

Previous research has examined the correlation between level of trust in media and demographic variables such as education (Mulder, 1980; Johnson and Kaye, 1998; Tsfati and Ariely, 2014) and political partisanship (Matthes and Beyer, 2015; Moe, Thorbjørnsrud and Fladmoe, 2017). Due to the qualitative nature of this thesis, the possible effect of such variables will not be included in the analysis. However, I have strived to attain a certain degree of diversity in the sample regarding factors such as gender, political partisanship, education level and study programme/occupation (Table 1). One weakness in the relation to this is that the sample only includes one person who has not started higher education, as earlier mentioned. The sample is not representative due to the low amount of informants, nor is that the intention of qualitative research (Tjora, 2016), but I argue that the diversity of the demographic variables ensures that the sample is eligible for indicating attitudes towards news media credibility among Norwegians aged 20 to 30.

During the interviews, the informants were asked for the amount of time they spend reading news on a daily basis (see chapter 4.1). There is a tendency that informants exaggerate their own news consume (Curran et al., 2012), and this must be taken into consideration. However, most of my informants said that they considered their news consume as average or below average when asked, which could indicate that they did not have a wish to present themselves as heavier news consumers than they are. They were also asked about their preferences regarding various news sources and types of content. On the background of their level of news consume and whether their preferences leaned towards soft news or hard news, I categorized the informants as light, medium and heavy news consumers. This information is included in the following table.

Table 1: Sample

Informant	Age	Gender	Occupation	Education	Party preference	News consume
Informant 1	24	F	Student (teacher)	Bachelor	Centre party	Medium
Informant 2	24	M	Student (social)	Master	Conservative party	Medium
Informant 3	23	M	Student (data science)	Master	Unspecified left/centre	Soft
Informant 4	24	F	Student (Norwegian)	Bachelor	Labour party	Hard
Informant 5	22	F	Student (pedagogy)	Bachelor	Green party	Soft
Informant 6	27	M	Process engineer	Master	Conservative party	Soft
Informant 7	28	M	Sales assistant	Upper secondary level	Centre party	Medium
Informant 8	26	M	Copywriter	Bachelor	Socialist Left party	Hard

3.3 Conducting the interviews

Before beginning the process of recruiting and conducting interviews, I did a test interview to see if there was need for any rephrasing or other changes in the interview guide. I learned that it might be difficult to distinguish the terms medium/channel and source the way they are used in credibility research. To avoid misunderstandings on whether the question was about sources or types of channels, I explained the distinction for the informants and used examples along the interview to help them remember. The test interview also made me aware that it could be beneficial to use the terms «trustworthiness» or simply «trust in media» in addition to «credibility», as the latter might be harder to understand. In academic literature, the terms are sometimes used for different concepts (see for instance Hovland, Janis and Kelley, 1953), but the distinction has no practical implication for this study as trustworthiness is not treated as an individual concept, and the two terms are often used synonymously in everyday communication.

The interview guide listed the most crucial subjects and questions that were to be asked during the interviews. However, as a free and informal conversation is desirable (Tjora, 2016), flexibility was important. The interview guide was not followed thoroughly in every interview. As the interview proceeded and it became clear what the informant found important about the subject, this impacted the use of the interview guide and follow-up questions.

The interview guide (appendix B) was based on existing literature in the sense that two of a total of four parts of it focused on respectively medium and source credibility. The first part of the interview guide asked the respondents to reflect upon their internet use and news consume, and included questions on consume as well as preferences. The next part focused on the concept of credibility, and started with a question on what characteristics the informants associate with the term «news media credibility». I found this question particularly useful as there is no agreed definition of credibility in news media (Kohring and Matthes, 2007; Fisher, 2016). The responses gave a perception of what the informants associate with the term, rather than shaping their understanding of credibility according to a predetermined definition or scale. Cue cards with characteristics that make up the dimension of Gaziano and McGraths (1986) credibility factor were brought out later in the interview. The original list of dimensions consisting of twelve items were shortened to a total of eight items due to the fact that some items have overlapping meanings in daily speech. This was done so that the use of the terms would be as understandable as possible for the informants. The characters they were presented with were *fair, unbiased, tells the whole story, accurate, respect for people's privacy, concern about public interest, separate fact and opinion and well-trained reporters*. The informants were asked to reflect upon and rank the characteristics from most to least important for how they determine media credibility. This allowed me to learn about the way the informants evaluated the importance of dimensions of news media credibility (see chapter 4.2.2). For instance, it became clear that few informants emphasized the amount of experience that journalists had, although this is one of the items found by Gaziano and McGrath (1986). Through the use of the open ended question and the cue cards, I formed an understanding of the informants' perception of what credibility is that is based both on their own premises and on dimensions applied in previous academic research.

The last two parts of the interview guide focused on evaluations of news media credibility. First, the informants were asked to reflect upon the credibility of different mediums, or

channels, and thereafter on different sources within the realm of online newspapers. By applying both the medium credibility and the source credibility approach, I got access to the informants' evaluation on both online newspapers as a channel, and the way they distinguish between different online newspapers, such as VG.no and NRK.no.

When scheduling the interviews, I let the informants determine the time and place for the interviews. Trust is a crucial element in in-depth interviews (Tjora 2016), and it is important to create a comfortable setting. By letting the informants choose where we would meet, I was hoping to create a trusting and relaxed situation. Two interviews were held at the informants' workplace, one informant wished to meet at her home, while the rest were conducted at cafés. We engaged in conversations about everyday subjects such as common acquaintances and study programmes before starting the interview, and all the informants seemed relaxed. I asked them to fill out a short questionnaire (appendix C) which included a section asking them to place themselves on a line ranging from the most right political party (Progress Party) to the most left party (Red Party) represented in the Norwegian Parliament, as well as asking them what party received their vote at the last parliamentary elections. Most respondents freely gave this information, and all but one listed their preferred political party. The form also asked for gender, age, education and occupation, and the answers are included in table 1.

Asking open ended questions allowed for respondents to speak openly about the subject and relating topics, and follow up-questions were important to gain insight in the respondent's reflections while allowing them to interpret the questions themselves to some degree. I believe this gives better insight to their understanding of news media credibility. Even so, I found that most of the informants were thinking of similar topics when asked about news media credibility.

During the interviews I became aware of the fact that some of the informants seemed uncertain of their own knowledge, and I tried to respond in a way that would show them their contribution was appreciated. The informants expressed a varying capability of reflecting upon their media preferences and ideas about credibility. Some of them answered bluntly while others elaborated and offered digressions. The interviews took between 45 minutes and 1 hour and 10 minutes and were recorded using my telephone. All informants were asked about this in advance and

seemed comfortable with it. The phone was placed discreetly on the table between us not to take any attention during the interview.

3.4 Processing and analysing of data

The recordings of every interview were transcribed shortly after the respective interview was conducted. By doing the transcriptions continuously during the interview period, I could get more familiar with the interview guide and improve my interviewing technique. Due to this, it gradually became easier to distance myself from the interview guide and use follow-up questions where it was suitable. When transcribing the interviews, I wrote everything in the Norwegian written language. Use of dialect was not included, mainly because it would have no significance for this study, and because it would be meaningless as the quotes used in the analysis would have to be translated to English. I did, however, try to maintain the phrasing of words and pauses in a way so that the meaning and emphasis of the citations are kept intact in both the Norwegian transcription and the English translation.

When analysing material, coding is a way of systemizing the data in a way that reveals patterns, relevant statements and deviations. Codes can be derived from the empirical data and from predetermined terms (Kvale and Brinchmann, 2015:227). This thesis applies a combination of the two approaches: First, the material was categorized thematically based on the theoretical framework (deductive) with the use of a computer program. During this process, new categories arose that were not predetermined but turned out to be recurring themes in the data material (inductive). After that, the categories were broken into descriptive codes that stayed true to the empirical statements of the informants. This way of conducting the analysis keeps focus on subjects already determined as important while not excluding findings that departs from expectations and preconceived ideas about the field of research.

The analysis resulted in the following overarching categories: Consume, understanding of credibility as a concept, evaluations of medium credibility, and evaluations of source credibility. These categories form the basis of the analysis presented in chapter 4.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical concerns when applying qualitative interviews as method can be related to the presentation and conduction of the data collection (Tjora, 2016). As the research of this study involved retrieving personal information from the informants, I applied and received acceptance for my methods of collecting and processing the data from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (appendix D).

When data from the interviews are presented in this thesis, the informants have been anonymized so that they cannot be identified by the information given. The anonymization is done by excluding names and specificities in education and occupation, as well as other information that came up during the interviews which were considered too specific. Although the content of the interviews were not of a sensitive matter, this was important because the informants were promised so beforehand. The anonymizing can also contribute to openness during the interviews, as well as help avoiding that informants answer due to social desirability (Ringdal, 2013:358).

Before the interviews, the informants were given an information letter about the nature of the study and their rights (appendix A). They were informed that they could withdraw their participation under and after the interviews. During an interview, it is important to ensure that the informant will not endure any harm (Tjora, 2012). This was not an issue during the interviews as the subjects were not of a sensitive nature or in the risk of inducing emotional harm to the informants. The informants were still informed that they could refrain from answering any question they wished to. The informants were also ensured that the sound recordings and the transcriptions of the interviews would be deleted shortly after the project was done.

3.6 Quality of research

In the following chapter, I will discuss the quality of the completion and presentation of this research in regard of three criteria often applied to qualitative research: reliability, validity and generalizability (Tjora, 2016).

3.6.1 Reliability

In order for a research project to be considered reliable, it is important to clarify the role of the researcher (Tjora, 2016). The engagement of the researcher may be a resource or a disturbance. Either way, a fully «neutral» researcher does not exist (Ibid.). Therefore it is important to be transparent about the way my role as researcher and my predispositions may affect the research project.

Much of my motivation for this master's thesis comes from the fact that I work as a journalist and that I have an interest in news media from a journalistic and social science perspective. I have found my experience from the media business to be a resource because I know the ethical standards by which journalists work and the way they strive to maintain credibility. My experience with interviewing could also have contributed to strengthen the quality of the interviews in this study. At the same time, I had to be cautious to not let this color my analysis, for example by not being able to separate between how I have experienced that the work of a journalist is and the way the informants perceive it to be. I believe that the fact that I work as a journalist would have been a problem if it was known to the informants. Some of the informants expressed criticism towards newspapers which I have worked for, and the openness of their evaluations and responses could have been altered if they knew of my connection to the practices we were discussing.

My practical experience with journalism could have had a negative impact if it affected the way I collected and processed the data. As the interview guide is based on previous credibility research, my own predispositions have not been crucial for the subjects and questions brought up during the interviews. When conducting the interviews, I was attentive to the fact that I must not affect the answers of the informants through my asking of questions or my responses. When analysing the data, I chose not to focus on findings that coincided with my beliefs, but rather to emphasise statements and tendencies that were recurring in the interviews and that are suitable for answering the research question. In this way, I believe my predispositions does not affect the result of the research project, although it undeniably is part of my motivation for conducting this study, as well as my basis for understanding the connection between theories on media credibility, practise of the profession and the importance of the subject.

The selections of informants and possible relations between them and the researcher is also of importance for the reliability of the research project (Tjora, 2016). The informants were recruited via personal network, and with one exception I met them for the first time when doing the interview. I found that a common acquaintance was positive for establishing trust, but other than that I had no relation or connection with any of the informants that may affect the results of the study.

On the basis of the circumstances I have described above, I argue that the research project is reliable. I believe that another researcher applying a similar approach on the basis of previous credibility research would receive similar results, although there is room for dissimilarities in the flexible use of the interview guide and follow-up questions. Even so, it must be taken into consideration that the answers depend on the informants and that the sample of this study is not representative. The fact that the findings in this thesis are similar to tendencies and trends seen in previous research (Greer, 2003; Zhou, Zhang and Shen, 2014; Knudsen, Iversen and Nygaard, 2018) also strengthen the reliability of the project, as well as the probability that my role and engagement has not been crucial for the results in this thesis.

3.6.2 Validity

The validity of a research project can be evaluated by the connection between the research question, the choice of data collection method, and the theoretical foundation (Tjora, 2016). Simply put, it is about whether the research question is being properly answered or not.

The thesis question in this project is derived from research in the field of credibility studies: the aim is to investigate perceptions that lies behind the comparative level of credibility for news mediums that has been presented in previous quantitative research. By asking what affects the perceived credibility of online newspapers, the research question emphasise subjective evaluations and experience. As I want to access the opinions of the informants to better understand the views presented in the results of the quantitative research, the use of a qualitative approach is expedient.

3.6.3 Generalizability

Research in social science should be generalizable (Tjora, 2016): valid outside the settings in which this specific project has been conducted. Following the arguments of Payne and Williams

(2005) on moderate generalizability as rendered in Tjora (2016), I argue that the findings of this research project are applicable in certain situations and settings which are to be defined.

The sample of this research project is limited and not representative. Due to the low number of respondents, it is possible that there exist points of view that are not included in this study. Even so, I argue that the sample is diverse concerning demographic variables which makes it a realistic image of people between the age of 20 and 30. Due to that, the results of this study can be an indicator of the attitudes and evaluations of news media credibility that exists among young Norwegians in this age group.

Generalizability will also be limited as news media is a business constantly undergoing development. The findings from this study will therefore not be transferable in an unlimited time period, the same way that findings from studies from earlier decades are not automatically valid in the current or future media environment. Neither will the results be transferable to other countries, as there are great differences in media environment and public sphere between nations with possible implications for media credibility.

4. Results

4.1 News consume in a digital media environment

In this chapter, aspects regarding the informants' use and evaluation of news media will be reviewed as this can be of relevance for the way the informants perceive news media credibility. The first section describes their internet and news media consume. Further, I present their preferences in choice of sources as well as choice of content, and examine the importance of credibility for these preferences.

4.1.1 Digital news consume

Despite the wide range of options available, there are great similarities in the informants' news consume. The informants are all heavy users of the internet. Informant 4 says she has been worried that she might be addicted to internet and her smartphone, while Informant 5 says she is online «just about all my wake hours». All the informants say that they read online news on a daily basis. With only one exception, the informants do not read printed newspapers on a regular basis. Nor do they pay for news, as they feel content with the information available on online newspapers for free.

The time they spend on news differs somewhat, ranging from one informant stating that he spends about 15 minutes reading news on a daily basis, to another saying his news consume probably culminates to about 3 to 4 hours a day. The informants can be categorized into three groups of news consumers based on their answers on how much time they spend reading news, and their preferences regarding hard or soft news. These groups are light, medium and heavy users of online news. Informant 3, 5 and 6 is considered to be soft users, Informant 1, 2 and 7 is considered medium users and Informant 4 and 8 is considered hard users (see table 1).

Like more than 50 percent of Norwegians (Newman et al. 2017), the informants receive news stories through social media. Informant 8 reflected on the importance of social media for news exposure: «The thing is, whenever you are on Facebook, you are always exposed to news. I am not sure everybody is aware of that. So because of that, the time spent on news during a regular day can get very high».

Informant 5 is sure that she would not read nearly as much news if it were not for social media, and Informant 6 mostly reads news that are directed at him on Facebook or other social media. Still, most of the informants claim that they often look up news stories on their own by visiting the front page of online newspapers. Their consume correspond with the fact that most Norwegians under the age of 30 prefer online newspapers as their news source (Slette-meås and Kjørstad, 2016). While the use of social media varies, all informants agree that national online newspapers are their primary source of news. With one exception, the informant's use of printed newspapers is limited. If they do read any printed newspapers, it is usually when «visiting their parents or the dental office» – whenever it is made easily available for them. In addition to not having to pay to get access, availability seems to be the most important reason for why they choose to read news online. As all of them use online newspapers on a daily basis, the consume of the informants appears to be above the national average of everyday use for people between 9 and 79, which says that 52 percent visit online newspapers every day (Norsk mediebarometer, 2018). It should, however, be taken into account that there are probably many non-users among the youngest and oldest respondents of the national survey.

There seems to be some significant differences in the informants' news consume compared to the older generations. All except one of the informants rarely read printed newspapers, except when visiting their parents. One of the informants mentions that her parents and other people their age watch television broadcast news show «Dagsrevyen» several times a day, which she herself has not watched since leaving for university. This illustrates that new technology has led to young people shaping their media consume without much influence from their parents (Hagen and Wold, 2009). Except for the fact that all say that they read news every day, the news consume of the informants is typical for their age group, with online newspapers, social media and mobile devices playing a crucial role.

4.1.2 Selection of sources

The informants visit most of the large online newspapers in Norway, while their use of narrower sources is limited, which is in line with findings from Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2017). Especially VG and Dagbladet are commonly visited. When asked why they use these sources, it becomes clear that most of the informants do not base their selection of sources merely on a conscious evaluation of the source's credibility. One of the informants says VG is the online newspaper she visits the most, because it is «always right there» (Informant 5). She

later names VG as the least credible of the Norwegian online newspapers. For many of them, choice of source simply seems to be a matter of habit.

The public broadcaster NRK is also commonly visited by several informants. They appreciate the lack of paywalls, in addition to what they call a feeling of seriousness: «I feel like they have a different approach to many of their news stories. They seem less tabloid, and I find that comfortable» (Informant 8).

All informants use several online newspapers. This is to be expected due to the diverse supply offered in online media. Some of the informants have reflected upon the importance of a diverse news consume and what McQuail (1992) calls a wide range of choices. One of the informants often use a news aggregator site that collects headlines from several different newspapers:

With a site like this you get news from several different sources, which I believe gives a more wholesome impression. There are differences in the way the newspapers behave, and not all of them are one hundred percent... I'm not sure I would use the word honest, but they need to get clicks, you know, so they tend to exaggerate a bit. (Informant 3)

Their choice of online newspapers also depends on what kind of articles they are looking for. If he wants to read about sports, Informant 7 visits TV2.no, as does Informant 6. VG is a favoured source for fast news updates. «They are often first with short updates, and is quick to update their articles with new info», says Informant 4. However, if she wants more thorough information, she turns to Aftenposten. Informant 3, who can be characterized as a light user, visits Nettavisen.no because they write about subjects he is interested in, such as technology and economics, but would not use them as primary source for news on current events. The informants' online news consume is to a large extent based on individual preferences, as Tewksbury and Althaus (2000) suggested.

The lack of restrictions when publishing online means that there is a wide range of topics available to choose from (Ibid.). Whether the informants choose to use this opportunity or not varies. Informant 8, who is a heavy user of news media, says that he never uses the thematically oriented sections on the online newspapers, but rather scrolls the front page to get a varied selection of stories. Informant 5 thinks the ability to look up specific subjects is one of the advantages with online newspapers:

Printed newspapers have so much content that you have to look through. In online newspapers, you can simply use the search engine to find what you are looking for, and they gather all the articles about specific subjects at the same place. (Informant 5)

If used like this, the ability to choose articles based on preference and the lack of salience cues from the publisher might lead to readers of online newspapers having a more narrow consume while avoiding things they are not interested in (Prior, 2007). Recent discussions have speculated that this, in combination with personalization and algorithm-based access, could lead to echo chambers (Pariser, 2011; Flaxman et al., 2016). However, the fact that the informants use several sources, scan headlines on news aggregators and in some cases even check various sources to compare the stories being told can help decrease the chance of such an effect.

4.1.3 Motives of news consume

Tewksbury and Althaus (2000) worry that the high choice media environment online can lead to people only reading about their own interests, and in that way result in a more poorly informed readership. Prior (2007) also point to the fact that it has become easier to avoid political news if wanted. However, it seems like several of the informants are interested in consuming news about political and current affairs in addition to news stories related to specific interests of theirs. Informant 4 talks about the embarrassment of coming to work and not knowing important events that has occurred. «I've recently learned that is very important to stay informed about what is happening in our society», she says.

Whether the goal of the news consume is to gain knowledge or otherwise seems to have an impact on what sources the informants choose. If she is looking for a quick update on ongoing events, Informant 4 visits VG, but as mentioned earlier she would go other places if she needed more in-depth information. Informant 1 says that if she wanted celebrity news, she would go to a gossip magazine. She dislikes it when that sort of content can be found in newspapers:

I try to avoid VG, I think they have too much commercials and too much... trash. I am not that interested in what Kim Kardashian did last week, I want to learn about important things that are going on around the world.

But educational purposes are not the only motivations for reading news. It is obvious that for some of the informants, news reading is mostly a pastime activity. «It is not really like I search for news because I am looking for an update on what's going on. It is more of a pastime activity» says Informant 3, while Informant 5 explains that the reason that VG is the online newspaper she visits the most, is that she has a habit of checking VG while bored in class.

The pastime function of the online newspapers seems a particularly important motivation for the use of newspapers that the informants describe as tabloid, but Informant 2 believes this aspect is a large part of why he reads any online newspapers:

Online newspapers are constantly being updated. For instance, you have that bar on the top of NRK.no with ongoing updates on what is happening right now – it is always something new. So it is much about killing time.

The ability to publish constant updates could be considered a large benefit over printed newspapers (Thoresen, 2014). As Informant 2 points to, the fact that there is always something new to find is an incentive for using online newspapers and for returning several times during the day.

Most of the informants state that they do read online newspapers which they have little trust in. The online newspapers' function as a pastime activity, rather than just a source of news and information, can be part of the explanation for that: According to Tewksbury and Althaus (2000), the motivation for reading news might impact the emphasis given to credibility. If the target of reading a news source is educational, like the wish to gain information on certain aspects of political or social life, credibility matters more than if it is purely entertainment. Or like Informant 7 states: «If it is about politics, it has to be credible. Like, include two point of views and all that. But if it's sports, it does not matter. You can't lie about who won the game, it is too easy to check up on».

4.2 Understanding credibility

To understand why the informants assess the credibility of different media channels and sources as they do, it is important to understand what they mean by «credibility». Credibility research has for a long time been haunted by inconsistency and critique due to its lack of a standardized

definition and measurement (Kohring and Matthes, 2007; Fisher, 2016). «What does trust in media mean, and why do people answer as they do?» (My translation) Brandtzæg (2017) asks, and argues that, in order to understand the situation for trust in media in our society, it is necessary we learn more about people's interpretations of trust and credibility.

4.2.1 Associations with media credibility

The informants were asked what they associate with credibility or trustworthiness of news media. The answer that occurred the most, was that news stories had to be «truthful». In that, they include criteria such as objectivity, diversity and the completeness of a story. Informant 3 does not think that the media would necessarily lie, but he believes there is a risk of impartiality:

If a newspaper is not objective about a subject, it would be easy for a journalist to twist the story and only present the negative sides of an issue. Like creating his own image of reality without actually lying. (Informant 3)

For Informant 7, credibility is much about journalists being able to keep their own opinions out of a story. Informant 2 is, as he himself calls it, «a big fan of accountability». With that he means that it should be possible to check up on what a newspaper has written. He would like it if the articles included links to information sources such as law data and original articles. Informant 2 does not link objectivity to credibility but thinks it must be okay for journalists to have opinions. However, any bias should be out in the known:

Take Klassekampen, for instance. They are very open about their political stand. And of course, that will affect how much I trust what they write, but at the same time I think it is a good source of information because you know where you have them. It is harder to know what a random journalist from VG thinks about the topics that are being written about. Not knowing whether the journalist belongs on the left or right side of politics makes it less accountable. (Informant 2)

Informant 4, who is a heavy news consumer, is concerned with the media's ability to be informal. She links characteristics such as context, several points of view, and a «relatively objective presentation» to credibility.

Surprisingly, almost all of the informants brings up traits related to tabloidization without it having been a subject earlier in the interview when discussing the meaning of credibility. They are particularly concerned with the use of clickbait headlines.

The informants' elaborations on why clickbait headlines are damaging for credibility point to the fact that news media credibility is linked to an expectation that the news media is to be informal and educational, and not «dumb and unserious», as these sort of headlines are frequently characterized as by them. The use of clickbait headlines seems to be one of the characteristics that the informants most easily recognize, and they are highly aware of these and other visual cues of lack of credibility. The impact of clickbait on online newspaper credibility is further subject in chapter 4.4.2.

4.2.2 Emphasis of dimensions of credibility

The informants were presented with cue cards with characteristics from a study by Gaziano and McGrath (1986) which have been the basis for several other studies examining the dimensions of credibility (see for instance Kiousis 2001; Tsafi and Cappella, 2003). The goal was to gain a deeper understanding of the way the informants evaluate credibility and what characteristics they emphasise.

Most important for the informants' perception of media credibility seems to be the completeness and the accuracy of the content presented in a news story. They connect accuracy to the fact that the information given is truthful, which also includes lack of exaggeration and slant. Informant 8 says he can forgive mistakes, but that intentionally leaving out facts or presenting them in a certain way to promote one particular view is very damaging for credibility. However, repeating mistakes tells of lack of effort, and will have a negative impact no matter how small the errors are. All the informants agree that accuracy is a central dimension of credibility. «The more precise something is described, the more accurate it is, and the more truthful it will be», says Informant 4.

By telling the whole story, the informants mean that all relevant facts must be included. This also involves including several points of view. Informant 1 feels that the media sometimes only presents the dominant view when covering political questions, and other times she feels that it is demanded that she actively seeks out more than one news story to get access to several points of view:

For instance, the wolf debate has gotten a lot of attention. I feel like you have articles with people that are against wolves, and then there are other articles with people that are pro wolf. So they are often separated, and it makes it harder to compare the arguments and make up your own mind. (Informant 1)

When ranking the importance of the characteristics, the informants disagree on the placement of the characteristic «unbiased», which they relate to objectivity. While Informant 8 believes taking a stand in political questions might harm the very idea of the press, most of the others seem to be of the impression that it is impossible to accomplish fully unbiased journalism: «Being unbiased is important, but in reality it cannot be done. The journalists have opinions of their own, and cannot simply turn it off when going to work» (Informant 6).

Interestingly, all the informants agree that the amount of experience that journalists have is not an important part of news media credibility. They never check the byline to see what particular journalist has written a story, and if they did it would not matter whether this was a newly educated or an experienced journalist. This indicates that the informants do not relate media credibility to individual journalists, but rather to a newspaper or channel as a whole.

More surprising is the fact that most of the informants rank «concern for society's best» among the lowest characteristics as well. They do not feel that news stories must have positive implications for the society. «A newspaper, or a source, is concerned with delivering information, and I do not feel like that task go hand in hand with concern for society's best», says Informant 3, while Informant 6 states that we should «let the politicians deal with that».

Overall, there is a common understanding of what media credibility involves and the importance of the different dimensions of it. The informants are mainly concerned with traditional criteria of journalistic quality (McQuail, 1992), as described above, while characteristics such as having well-trained reporters and respecting people's privacy (Gaziano and McGrath, 1986) are regarded less significant. These findings are consistent with those presented by Knudsen, Iversen and Nygaard (2018), and indicate that the informants' perception of credibility correspond with that applied in academic research.

4.2.3 Quality demands, digital literacy and credibility

When asked to evaluate the quality of the different news media channels and sources they use, the informants express high expectations and demands for quality. They are most concerned about tabloidization and the maintenance of traditional news values and criteria for journalistic quality, and are quick to judge news media which do not hold up to their standards. To them, these aspects are not only related to media performance but also news media credibility.

A certain degree of objectivity and the ability to present more than one point of view is emphasised by several informants. These aspects are some of the most crucial criteria for media performance (McQuail, 1992). The informants show media literacy and knowledge of the normative ideals news media are supposed to hold. Although she admits it can be hard to discover without enough knowledge of the subject of the story, Informant 5 says that she sometimes feel like there is a perspective missing. As does Informant 2, who is a heavy user of news media, and often checks up on the facts presented in a story: «For instance, if something sounds either too good or too bad to be true, I google the information given myself to see if what the newspaper has written checks out».

By expressing source criticism, the informant shows understanding of the fact that information online, even in online newspapers, can be unsure. Informant 6 wishes online newspapers would link and refer to their sources more often, so that he could know where their information comes from. Slettemeås and Kjørstad (2016) emphasise that young media consumers must be able to have critical sense when choosing sources that are meant for informational purposes. Most of the informants seem able to do so, as they have a good sense of where to find what sorts of reliable content. Although the ability to recognize it in a story can be discussed, the informants' opinion of what should be present for media to be a source of quality information seems to be in line with media performance criteria presented by McQuail (1992). For instance, Informant 1 is very clear on the fact that she avoids Resett.no – a right wing alternative newspaper with a loose relationship with journalistic standards of ethics which is not included in the Norwegian Press Association's ethical council (Lindebø, 2018) – while Informant 2 would visit the conspiratory alternative website Nyhetsspeilet.no only for entertainment and «to see what is going on in the minds of those that actually believe vaccines can cause autism». Their ability to separate between online newspapers that are good for sports and entertainment news and

online newspapers that are good sources for important information, as reviewed in the previous analysis chapter, is also an expression of media literacy.

Being able to identify what sources are reliable and not becomes even more important in the digital age, as anyone can become publishers online. By avoiding websites like mentioned above and by being aware of the difference between editorial and opinionated content, the informants show that they have digital literacy (Buckingham, 2010) and digital judgement (Norwegian Media Authority, 2018). With this, they are better suited for navigating through the digital media landscape and evaluating whether a source is credible or not. Their knowledge of media is a useful tool when evaluating the credibility of the sources. It has been debated whether total trust in media is desirable in a media environment where critical sense is emphasised (Fisher, 2016; Brandtzæg, 2017). Lack of scepticism could be considered harmful, as a certain degree of scrutiny might be necessary to separate good and bad information sources online. A certain lack of trust in media can be seen as a natural consequence of a generation of digital natives which are taught caution and critical sense, and total trust in media might not be beneficial in a time where fake news, disinformation and biased coverage flourish online.

4.3 Medium credibility

This chapter will present the reflections given by the informants relating to medium credibility. Tracking and comparing the level of credibility for various channels has been a central part of credibility research from its beginning (see for instance Westley and Severin, 1964; Carter and Greenberg, 1965; Abel and Wirth, 1977). In this thesis, the focus is not to determine the specific level of trust that the informants have in different channels, but rather to gain insight in how and why they differ between online newspapers, printed newspapers, and other channels concerning credibility.

4.3.1 Perceptions of medium credibility

Many of the informants believe that television is the most credible channel for news information. Informant 7 thinks television news are better at presenting two sides of a story. The fact that it is such a visual medium makes it harder to leave out important sources, he thinks: «It becomes very obvious if only one side is given the opportunity to speak». Informant 6 thinks television news are credible because they often involve more effort as he sees it and

because seeing something on television, for instance the location related to the news event, makes it more realistic. He also likes that citations cannot be altered, contrary to when the journalist reproduce quotes in writing. The lack of journalistic intermediacy has been pointed to as an explanation for why television is perceived as more credible than written media in earlier research: It seems like for some, the visual presentation of the television news have a positive impact on their trust, that «seeing is believing» (Carter and Greenberg, 1965:32). Other than that, the informants evaluate the channel on the basis of standard quality criteria such as the inclusion of more than one point of view. That television news has such high credibility among young Norwegians is interesting, as it does not reflect the consumer patterns that has been seen in later years: television is having a hard time keeping their audience (Sletteameås and Kjørstad, 2017). Especially young people do not watch traditional TV. The television was for a long time perceived as the most credible source (Carter and Greenberg, 1965; Abel and Wirth, 1977), but it is interesting to see that some of the informants in this thesis also consider it so, as more recent studies has suggested that the television no longer is perceived as most credible (Johnson and Kaye, 1998; Flanagin and Metzger, 2000). The fact that these studies are not from Norway must be taken into consideration as there are differences in the media environment and public sphere with implications for the level trust to various social institutions, including the news media. However, more recent numbers from Norway also show that Norwegians trust information from television and online articles significantly less than information from articles in printed newspapers (Berntzen, 2018).

Some of the informants do not have a clear reason for naming television as the most credible news medium. Informant 8 thinks it has to do with tradition: «Television news, such as Dagsrevyen, is where people are used to getting their news updates. When I first starting paying attention to news, it was through television broadcast». He is not completely sure whether his idea of television news as most credible is correct, but says that is what his «initial feeling» says. This initial feeling or the impact of tradition might indicate that the attitudes towards media credibility is influenced by socialization from home. If so, it is interesting to see that even though the younger generation have created their own consume patterns (Hagen and Wold, 2009), the media consume of their parents is not without significance for their evaluations. Informant 1 also names television news as the most credible, but later she reflects on restrictions that might be negative: «I have much trust in the facts presented on television news, but at the

same time they operate with rather strict time limitations, so it is possible that you will not be presented with the entire picture».

The time limitation, combined with the directness and «spontaneity» of television news coverage, is emphasised by Informant 3, who thinks that the television might be the least credible channel. He thinks printed and online newspapers have an advantage in the way they can process stories before publishing them. The ability to process and edit the news before publishing them is also emphasised by the informants that list the printed newspapers as more credible than online newspapers:

I believe printed newspapers are the most credible. Anything being published there feels thoughtful, the journalists and editors have decided that this is something they want to share with the public. It has earned a place in a channel which they cannot retract it from. (Informant 4)

Informant 2 appreciates the «stability» of printed newspapers. He characterizes them as «more safe» because the coverage does not include what he calls the «reflexes of news coverage in television, radio and online newspapers»:

You cannot immediately print a newspaper and send it out to subscribers. It demands a certain reflection and processing before publishing. When covering an ongoing event, like a terrorist attack, a lot of information being published turns out to be inaccurate. In online newspaper coverage, so much changes while the events unfold. So it is almost like you have to wait for the online newspaper to come the following day to be sure what is right. (Informant 2)

According to Thoresen (2014), the informants are not wrong when they consider speed as a crucial part of online journalism, although it is hard to determine whether there actually is more inaccuracy in online news. It has been argued by some (Flanagin and Metzger, 2000; Russial, 2009), but for instance Thoresen (2014) disagrees. Either way, it is understandable that an audience with the impression that everything is faster paced in online journalism would think so – and this seems to be the case with many of the informants.

The informants are mainly divided between favoring television or printed newspapers, while few of them have very much trust in online newspapers. Informant 5, who is a soft news user, names online newspapers as most credible, but have little to no experience with other channels

according to herself. The other informants which have been characterized as light users does not list online newspapers as most credible even though it is the only channel they use. While television have the highest credibility for some of the informants, Informant 2 and Informant 4 who both are heavy users believes the printed newspaper is the most credible. It is hard to conclude what importance news consume has in explaining why the informants prefer different channels, but in this sample it seems as if there is a connection between high news consume and preferring printed newspapers. Earlier research has also investigated the connection between the level of news consume and the overall level of trust in media (see for instance Tsfati and Cappella, 2003; Tsfati, 2010). As this thesis does not measure the level of trust that the respondents have, it is hard to say whether the use of a medium has an impact on the amount of trust. What can be said, is that there seems to be no obvious connection between high consume and high trust, nor high consume and low trust in this case. Previous research has also suggested that use or experience with a medium can heighten the perceived credibility of this particular medium (Flanagin and Metzger, 2000; Kioussis, 2001). These results cannot be found in the sample of this thesis, as most of the informants state that they have least trust in the medium they use the most. The discrepancy between credibility and consume will be subject in chapter 4.3.3.

4.3.2 Comparing quality and credibility of online and printed newspapers

Even though the results are not unambiguous, there seems to be a general tendency among the informants to see printed newspapers as more credible than online newspapers. In an attempt to better understand why, the informants were asked to compare the qualities and credibility of online and printed newspapers. The goal is to examine whether there are characteristics with the channel and the way news has changed with digitalization that may affect the trust of consumers.

The informants have differing opinions on to what extent the content in online and printed newspaper contrast with each other. One thing they do seem to agree on, is that the volume of articles is larger online. There is no limitations regarding the number of articles that can be posted – what Kioussis (2001) calls the boundlessness of online media. Informant 1 believes this makes it easier for the online newspapers to include more information and context than printed newspapers and television news, which makes the articles more credible. Informant 6 also thinks it is possible for the online newspapers to offer a more complete coverage, but at the

same time he reflects upon the possibility that it will be harder to keep track on important content in the endless stream of new updates.

Informant 2, who is among the informants most sceptical towards online newspapers, believes the constant publishing of new articles can be negative:

It becomes more important to have new content than to have important content. This is one of the differences between online and print: In printed newspapers, the most important content is highlighted. In online newspapers, the newest articles are at the top. (Informant 2)

By prioritizing newness rather than importance, Informant 2 feels that online newspapers are giving the same amount of emphasis to all sorts of content. «It is hard for me to trust the society analysis of someone who seems to believe the outfit of a Kardashian is just as important», he says. This exemplifies Tewksbury and Althaus' (2000) theory that the structure of online newspapers lack salience cues that tell the reader what content the editor regards as important. Informant 2 also feels that this does so that he is exposed to more irrelevant content, which for him is negative for credibility. His view on the relevance of news stories is closely tied to that used in evaluation of media performance (McQuail, 1992), and his understanding of media credibility is related to the idea of news media's obligation to contribute to an informed democracy. He mentions this as one of the main reasons why online newspapers are the least credible channel to him.

Informant 2 feels it is easier to avoid content he has no interest in when reading printed newspapers, because «you know you can simply avoid opening the newspaper on these specific pages». This, he says, gives printed newspapers an advantage over online news. It is interesting that exposure to content he is not interested in makes him perceive a news medium as less credible, and that he feels it is easier to avoid this sort of content on print. Theorists have speculated that the diversity and large volume of news online makes it easier to avoid what you are not interested in when reading online newspapers (Tewksbury and Althaus, 2000; Prior, 2007), but for Informant 2 this does not seem to apply. It might be that it is easier to avoid political news stories online, like Prior (2007) said, but that for Informant 2, who is mainly interested in hard news, the content he wants to read somewhat drowns among what he considers irrelevant content and frequent updates – as was mentioned by Informant 6 as well.

Informant 1 also feels that certain types of content can affect credibility: «I feel that I get a lot of this content from VG.no. A lot of commercials, celebrity news or other things that probably get huge amounts of click. But it is not what I am looking for». Informant 4 believes that online newspapers have more commercials and celebrity news than printed newspapers – a claim repeated by several informants and supported by Larsen (2012) – but believes that the extent of it varies from source to source. It does, however, seem like the fact that some online newspapers have a lot of tabloid content affects the channel as a whole when the informants are asked to reflect upon the credibility of newspapers online. Informant 6 thinks of online newspapers as the least credible channel, but admits it might be because «there are many sketchy online newspapers». Informant 2 says it can be hard to trust information online because «there is so much crap on the internet that you automatically judge it as less credible».

Some of the informants speculate whether the lack of space limitations online means that news media are more selective on what makes the printed newspaper, thus putting only the best stories there. But overall, several informants seem to think there are few differences between the quality of the content online and on print in general. Informant 5's impression is that it is relatively the same, so she prefers online websites because she finds them easier. Informant 3 also experiences that the various channels usually present the same content. When it comes to quality criteria such as completeness and lack of bias, he feels that the news stories online and on print are the same. Yet he believes online newspapers are less credible. Thus, other criteria for evaluating credibility than traditional quality criteria must have an impact as well.

One of the aspects most greatly emphasised by the informants when discussing differences in the credibility of online newspapers and printed newspapers, is the element of speed that is present in online news media. Informant 3, who otherwise finds that online and print have similar content, believes the fact that online newspapers always wants to be the first to publish something heighten the risk of errors and inaccuracy. Accuracy, understood as unfalse and detailed descriptions of events, was emphasised by all informants in their understanding of credibility. Informant 2, who is one of the informants spending most time on news, believes that news stories in printed newspapers are more thoroughly processed, and therefore include less mistakes and more accurate information. Whether this is true or not is hard to determine,

but it has been claimed that production demands has increased without the amount of resources doing the same (Lund, Willig and Blach-Østen, 2009 in Kuhn and Kleis Nielsen, 2013). Either way, the idea of pressed and high speed working conditions and high demands of production is present in the informants perception of online journalism, as well as in examinations of working conditions (Norsk Journalistlag, 2011) and academic research (Flanagin and Metzger, 2000; Russial, 2009).

Another aspect that seems crucial for the way the informants differentiate between the credibility of online newspapers and that of printed newspapers, is, again, the use of clickbait headlines. Clickbait, in addition to celebrity news and sensationalism, is part of the tabloidization of the news (Esser, 1999). The informants seem to agree with the perception that tabloidization leads to a decrease in quality (Kurtz, 1993) and recognize it as a focus on profit that has become more prominent with online newspapers:

The use of misleading headlines is much more widespread online than on print. I think it is a consequence of the fact that you earn by the click and can see how many times an article has been clicked on. You cannot measure the readership of a single article like this on print, so the use of headlines that are supposed to lure you into reading the article becomes more pointless. (Informant 3)

Informant 4 thinks there is a lot of clickbait headlines to be seen on Norwegian online newspapers. She feels annoyed when the only purpose of a headline is to make her click: «I want to actually know what the story is about. If the headline is too stupid, I refrain from clicking on it as sort of a protest». Although the use of clickbait and otherwise misleading headlines seem to be one of the characteristics the informants stress the most, some of them also emphasise that it is not the most crucial aspect for news media credibility. Informant 7 does not let use of clickbait destroy the credibility of the source or channel as a whole, but simply ignores the article in question. Informant 5 admits that she happens to click on these sort of articles when she is bored. That the use of clickbait headlines becomes a subject in each of the interviews, could partially be because it is one of the most visual cues, and thereby an easy way to evaluate news media. It is also a frequently debated subject, and a beloved item of criticism for many (see for instance Kärnborg, 2015; Blom and Hansen, 2015; Chu, 2016). Even if the informants do emphasise traditional quality criteria more than use of clickbait, it is reasonable to believe that this aspect of online newspapers – being as visual, widespread and debated as it is – is part of why online newspaper credibility and quality is perceived as lower

than that of printed newspapers. For some it also seems to be a clear sign that online newspapers are more commercialized than printed newspapers. The implications of commercialization for credibility will be discussed later in this thesis.

4.3.3 Reasons for using online news

There is a surprising incongruity between the consume and the evaluations of media credibility in the sample of this thesis: Even though the informants almost exclusively use online newspapers, they name printed newspapers and television as the most credible channels. In this section I will discuss possible reasons for why they use online newspapers despite this.

When the informants talk about their choice of medium, the fact that online newspaper offer content for free is often emphasised. As mentioned earlier, with one exception none of them pay for news access. If they read articles in online newspapers that are behind a paywall, they have received access in some other way: «I like printed newspapers, but they are not for free and online newspapers are. Most of it, anyway. I am also getting access to a lot more through the arrangement that NTNU has made for their students», says Informant 4, referring to an arrangement that gives students at NTNU access to paywall-content at Aftenposten.no among other online newspapers.

As mentioned earlier, lack of restrictions for non-paying readers seems to be part of the reason why several of the informants use NRK as well, thereby affecting both choice of channel and choice of source. Overall, availability is a large part of why the informants prefer to use online newspapers. It is free of charge, easily accessible and always available. Even more so, now that smartphones have become public domain. Use of smartphones to access online newspapers is widespread (Slette-meås and Kjørstad, 2016) and gives consumers the opportunity to read news whenever, wherever. Informant 2 thinks the consumption of news may have changed as a consequence of this:

Online newspapers are always available because you have it on your phone and on your computer. But printed newspapers are mainly at home, and it becomes something else. It becomes a whole different way of reading news, limited to when you are at home. (Informant 2)

It follows from this that the use of the two mediums may have different functions. For one, people prefer to read short articles when visiting online newspapers with their smartphone (Slette-meås and Kjørstad, 2016). Online news reading is, for many of the informants, a pastime activity. Always accessible, it becomes a useful cure for boring lectures.

The use of news reading as a pastime activity might contribute to explain why online newspapers are most used even though they are not perceived to be the most credible. Tewksbury and Althaus (2000) suggested that credibility is of less importance when use of a medium is motivated by other means than educational ones. One could say that the function of online newspapers have developed beyond being a source of information, hence giving the informants a sense of value despite lack of credibility.

However, the informants do have motivation for keeping informed about current events as well. While some of them state that they use news media for pastime and entertainment only, most of them show interest in keeping informed on current events. The discrepancy between use and trust could then also be explained by their ability to separate between different sources: Although their overall trust in online newspapers is lower than that of printed newspapers or television, they know which sources they trust and single these out when looking up certain types of news and information. Another aspect may very well be that their knowledge and experience with online newspapers makes it easier for them to identify their weaknesses, and thereby scrutinize online newspapers more while printed newspapers and television are protected by a sense of tradition and mythification.

4.4 Source credibility

The previous part of the analysis focused on the way the informants perceive the credibility of different mediums or channels. The following section presents the informants' reflections on the credibility of sources, mainly among online newspapers. To better understand what affects how the informants perceive the credibility of online newspapers, the credibility of respectively online newspapers is discussed on the basis of two aspects that seem to be of great importance to the informants when evaluating credibility: journalistic quality and commercialization of news media.

4.4.1 Credibility as traditional quality criteria

When asked what they associate with the term news media credibility, the informants stress qualities that are traditionally related to media performance. These criteria are associated with medium as well as source in the evaluation of credibility. One criteria value that seems especially important for them, is the completeness of the coverage. Informant 7 talks about Nettavisen.no and Nationen.no as credible because he believes they are thorough and good at including a rich amount of facts to their stories. The same reasons are given from Informant 6 when he names NRK.no as the most credible source. Informant 8 also emphasise completeness and ties it to NRKs position as public broadcaster: «Due to the fact that they have official financing through license payments, and by that is more protected against commercialization, they have the resources to do more in-depth journalism».

Completeness in coverage is crucial if news are going to be a source of knowledge about reality, says McQuail (1992). Following that, the informants emphasis of completeness, or that news media is telling the whole story, can be seen as connected to their wish to be informed by news media. They want to know that they are given all the information needed on the matters the media writes about. Context, which McQuail (1992) relates to completeness, is much appreciated by the informants. Several mention that online newspapers could be more credible if they offered more context to a subject, for instance by linking to related articles, original sources and such. As Tsfati (2010) argues, this is a feature that could have positive effect on online newspaper credibility by allowing the audience to learn about the subject without the journalistic interpretation.

Informant 2, who often checks up on facts presented in news articles, agrees that it is crucial that newspapers include all there is to a story. He refers to an incident where Dagbladet wrote that Donald Trump was angrily yelled at on stage during a debate, giving the impression that he was unpopular among people, but the fact that it was the donors of the opposition that yelled at him was left out. «That made Dagbladet less credible for me. The scary thing is, you can't always know whether something is being left out and you're actually being fooled», says Informant 2. He finds that longer, more in-depth articles are more trustworthy: «NRK is good at telling the whole story. Their articles are often longer than the ones in VG and Dagbladet, and that indicates that they try to show as many sides of a story as possible».

Giving access to several points of view is related to diversity as a media performance criteria (McQuail, 1992). Informant 1 thinks this is especially important in the coverage of political news:

Few people research the policy of political parties themselves, and so media becomes a very important tool for gaining information. If the media does not present a story from more than one side, one loses much of the information that is necessary to make informed choices. (Informant 1)

Diversity is seen as having implications for news media's ability to perform their function in society (Steiner, Magin and Stark, 2018). When the informants are concerned with diversity, they relate it to the fact that all political and social groups should be given the opportunity to express themselves. Informant 1 talks about the importance of giving political parties equal access to media. As does Informant 4, who feels it is damaging for the credibility of a news source when only the large political parties are granted exposure.

An interesting finding is that the informants are rather ambivalent when it comes to the importance of objectivity in journalism. Some of them agree with the view that full objectivity is not possible to achieve (McQuail, 1992):

I once heard someone say that there's always three sides to a story: Two from the two parties involved, and one for those that see things from the outside. And when someone is writing a story, there will always be... At the end, there will always be someone selecting the information that is included. It is impossible to include everything. (Informant 4)

Informant 7 thinks the bigger issue is unintentional ideology that shape news coverage. He stresses the fact that some topics hardly gets any coverage, and thinks it has to do with the political partisanship of the editor. He believes that most online newspapers are as bad at this. Informant 1 thinks it is impossible for journalists to leave out their own opinion, but she dislikes it when it becomes very obvious. She tells of an example where the reporter in a debate on NRK was much harder on the leader of one specific party than the others: «I think he should have done a better job to treat the party leaders equally and give them the same amount of time to answer his questions». She ties this to the reporter's own political stand, and felt that NRK as a source appeared less credible because of it.

Informant 3 thinks it is important to maintain as much objectivity as possible. As does Informant 8, who highlights NRKs ability to be nonpartisan: «In my view, it is easier for a public broadcaster to be nonpartisan than a commercial actor». He believes that Norwegian news media all round is good at remaining objective, but recognizes Nettavisen.no as somewhat partisan: «There is little doubt that this is a conservative newspaper, and I believe it shows in the comments they write, as well as the subjects they choose to cover». Because of this, Nettavisen.no is the least credible news source in his opinion.

What most of the informants seem to agree upon is that partisanship is not a big problem if the journalists and newspapers are open about it. Informant 2 thinks this makes the news sources more accountable. He often suspects that there are political motives behind some of the articles in for instance Dagbladet:

I am not sure whether it is intentional or not, it might just be incompetence. There exists so much bias and ideological blind spots that many journalists don't see that they are acting partisan. For me, it is problematic when I have no idea whether the journalist is voting left or right. (Informant 2)

For this reason, he finds Klassekampen credible. They are open about their stand as a leftist newspaper, and even though he rarely agrees with them, he finds it easier to evaluate the trustworthiness of their articles as he knows where the journalists stand.

A quality criteria that the informants seem especially interested in is relevance. The presence of content that they do not feel is relevant to them or the society as a whole is negative for their perception of a source's credibility. Informant 5 and Informant 1 both point to this when explaining the reasons why VG.no and Nettavisen.no is less credible than NRK.no and Aftenposten.no. They expect that the content of newspapers is newsworthy and of some significance: «They often promote content about mindless issues such as dieting and sexlife. Nobody really needs that sort of content» (Informant 5).

Informant 5 also thinks it is damaging for credibility when sources equal content about trivial subjects and what she perceives as important news stories on for instance foreign affairs: In this way, what Tewksbury and Althaus (2000) calls lack of hierarchy on online newspapers can erupt the sense of relevance.

Informant 1 also talks about why the alternative online newspaper Resett.no has little credibility in her eyes:

I guess it is positive that there exists sources that cover subjects that other news media typically would not. But I question the value of a lot of their coverage. Do we really need to know about gossip rumours regarding the private life of members of the royal family? NRK would never write about such things, but Resett did. I believe newspapers should focus on subjects that has relevance to the public. (Informant 1)

For a newspaper to be credible, the informants seem to agree that they should write stories that contribute to society and the public sphere. Content that is not of relevance, for instance entertainment news, sensationalism and triviality (McQuail, 1992) can be recognized as part of the tabloidization of the media. Tabloidization's impact on perceived credibility is subject in the following chapter.

4.4.2 The influence of tabloidization and commercialization on credibility

I get that they have a job and that they have to make money, but always striving for the articles that will get the most clicks... I think it's wrong, because if all you care about is clicks and profit, the important news stories might disappear. That is not the social mission of news media. (Informant 1)

When talking about what channel they perceive to be the most credible, one of the most recurring subjects were that the informants feel that online newspapers are more focused on profit-making than other channels. They recognized this both in terms of *what* the news media write about and *how* they do it. This became an even more prominent issue when they were talking about the credibility of particular online newspapers.

Surprisingly many of the informants regarded the credibility of VG as low. VG is the largest online newspaper in Norway, and is also frequently visited by many of the informants. Even so, some of them stated that they deliberately do not read VG because they find it too tabloid: «VG is very routinized on clickbait, so I try to avoid them», says Informant 3, while Informant 1 calls VG for a «gossip channel». The tabloid features that comes from commercialization and profit-focus is the basis for negative evaluations of other sources as well: «For me,

Nettavisen.no is the least credible source. They use sensational headlines, and the articles turn out to be nothing. It's a waste of time and often makes me feel like I've been tricked», says Informant 6.

The necessity of clicks for profit and the ability to measure clicks that particular articles receive has, according to Thoresen (2014), socialized journalists into reproducing the same sort of content in large volume. Informant 7 shares this view, and believes this is governing for what stories the online newspapers produce: «Take articles on Sylvi Listhaug. At one point we got new articles by the hour – and people keep clicking. Meanwhile, none of the online newspapers wrote about the Acer case. I don't think many would have clicked on that, and so it is not as profitable for the newspapers». This example is illustrating for the way the informants believe that tabloidization comes at the cost of the social responsibility that news media have to inform citizens on important subjects. They do not appreciate tabloid and sensational content. McQuail (1992) writes that superficial, personalized content can be understood as the opposite of relevance, and as reviewed in the previous section, the informants highly emphasise the relevance of news coverage when evaluating the credibility of news sources.

One specific type of content that the informants express scepticism towards is celebrity news. Informant 2 believes that tabloid news stories on scandals and celebrities are damaging for the source as a whole: «These articles give the entire newspaper an unserious feeling, and it makes me trust them less when it comes to articles that are serious and of high quality as well». As an example, he says that this is often the case with VG.no. Even though she might read stories about celebrities when bored, Informant 5 thinks it makes a newspaper less credible and not somewhere she would go to learn about current affairs. Again we see that credibility becomes more important when the motivation for reading news is to gain information and learn about something (Tewksbury and Althaus, 2000). Informant 8 also expresses higher standards for the sources which he uses to gain information: «I can use Dagbladet and VG for entertainment, but... As a news source, I don't know... I know they work hard to be good at news, but at the same time they have so much garbage content».

Another aspect of newspapers that similar to tabloidization is recognized as connected to commercialization and profit-focus is advertisement. Informant 4 thinks commercials are part of the reason why she regards online newspapers less credible than other channels: «What they

choose to advertise for matters, as well as the volume of advertisement. I feel all online newspapers are as bad at this». With the fall in newspaper circulation, news organisations had to look for other sources of income than user payment and advertisement in printed newspapers (Omdal, 2012). With the late introduction of paywalls and the absence of will to pay for news online, advertisement online became a more crucial way of making profit, and new solutions were developed. Native ads mimicking the form of editorial news articles is one such. Informant 8 dislikes these types of commercials, and says that extensive use of native ads is part of why he regards Nettavisen.no as the least credible online newspaper. Similarly, Iversen and Knudsen (2017) found that native ads in the form of political native advertising had negative impact on trust in political news.

The informants' disregard of tabloidization and commercials is obvious, and they seem to believe that features such as these come at the expense of quality and credibility. They appear sceptical of anything that indicates that the news media's goal is to earn a profit, rather than to contribute to an informed public. The impact of commercialization also seem to be the most important evaluation criteria when the informants name public service broadcaster NRK as the most credible news source: «That they are owned by the government and financed with license money seems like a healthy way to be organized. It keeps them from being commercialized» (Informant 8). They believe this shows in the subjects covered, as NRK to a large extent refrains from writing about celebrities and similar topics. Some of them also stress that the fact that NRK is not dependent on clicks to earn money does that their presentation of articles seems more credible: «They don't have to turn to the flashy, huge headlines to distribute their content. They keep it simple» (Informant 3).

4.4.3 Comparing the influence of source and medium on new credibility

Although the tendency seems to be that online newspapers are perceived as less credible than printed newspapers and television, the extent to which the informants believe the channel a message is delivered in has impact on credibility varies. Some say that it does not matter whether the news are to be found in printed newspapers, online newspapers or other channels: «I do not have distrust in any particular medium. As long as journalists have done a good and thorough job, I see no reason to trust printed newspapers over online newspapers» (Informant 7). They did, however, all seem to agree that there were differences between different online newspapers with implications for their perceived credibility.

Some of the informants that listed online newspapers as the least credible channel reflected upon how the problem was not necessarily with the channel in whole. Informant 4, who named online newspapers as least credible, said that the source is more important when deciding whether news are credible or not. Some newspaper brands are credible to her, regardless of whether they are online or print. Informant 8, who said his initial feeling was that television and printed newspapers were more credible than online newspapers, do not think that he would evaluate news stories on the same subject differently depending on the channel:

If I am reading these articles, I have already passed the initial feeling, the ‘first impression’ I get that for some reasons make me think of online newspapers as less credible. So when I am already reading an article, I think I will see that the channel does not matter (Informant 8).

What is most prominent, is that the informants seem to care the most about the content of a source or a medium. Characteristics tied to the channel in itself, for instance the ability to publish continuously online or the familiarity or reputation of a traditional printed newspaper, is of importance in the way it affects the content of the channel. The most important aspects of their perception of credibility are the characteristics reviewed in the previous sections of this chapter: traditional quality standards and the emergence of tabloidization. The informants do notice some differences in channels in regard to these aspects – for instance, they seem to believe that commercialization is more present online than in printed newspapers. However, their emphasis of source over channel indicate that they recognize larger differences in content depending on the source from which it comes from, rather than what channel it is published in. While some of them say that there are few differences in the credibility of channels, they all have a clear perception of what sources they trust and not. For instance, NRK.no and Aftenposten.no are perceived as credible and does not seem negatively impacted by the fact that they are online, while VG.no and Nettavisen.no is considered less credible than most other online newspapers that the informants talk about. But when the credibility of online newspapers in general is being discussed, the perception of the channel’s credibility is coloured by the fact that there are some «bad eggs» – or as Informant 2 put it: «there is so much crap on the internet that you automatically judge it as less credible».

5. Concluding discussion

The aim of this thesis is to answer the research question *What affects the perceived credibility of online newspapers among Norwegian young adults?* Previous research and surveys has suggested that people have less trust in online newspapers than printed newspapers and other news media channels (Kioussis, 2001; Greer, 2003; Zhou, Zhang and Shen, 2014; *Medieundersøkelsen*, 2018). However, most of these studies are quantitative in nature. The purpose of this study is to investigate attitudes and evaluations of online newspaper credibility in order to better understand why the quantitative studies and surveys result as they do. Moreover, it provides insight into this issue that in Norway so far is scarce.

To answer the research question I conducted qualitative, semi-structured interviews with Norwegians between the ages of 22 to 28 years about their news consume and their evaluations of news media credibility, which turned out to be closely related to media quality. The use of interviews allowed me to access the reasoning behind the informants' opinions in a way that quantitative surveys cannot, and I argue that this contributes to the research field by emphasising the understanding and evaluation of news media credibility on the informants' own premises.

This thesis combines two main approaches of the field of credibility research: source credibility, which relates perceived credibility to the respectively origin of a message, and medium credibility, which examines the impact of the channel in which a message is delivered (Kohring and Matthes, 2007). I argue that the combination of the two approaches is suitable for answering the research question, because it permits the investigation of the effect of both the source and the channel on credibility, hence including more aspects that can be of importance when evaluating the credibility of online newspapers. In order to discuss how perceived online newspaper credibility is formed, I have chosen to use previous literature on credibility research, theories on media performance and studies on the implications of digitalization and tabloidization of news.

In the following section, the most important findings of this thesis is presented. Furthermore, I discuss the limitations of the study, and highlight important questions that should be answered in further research on news media credibility.

5.1 Important findings

The analysis shows that the informants' understanding of news media credibility is consistent with the way the term is applied and understood in academic research, as was also found by Knudsen, Iversen and Nygaard (2018). Although there is no agreed measurement of news media credibility (Matthes and Kohring, 2007; Fisher, 2016), many dimensions are recurring in the body of credibility research. The informants' ranking of dimensions from Gaziano and McGrath's (1986) study show that they emphasise characteristics connected to traditional media performance evaluations (McQuail, 1992) such as completeness, relevance, diversity of points of view, and to some extent objectivity. What is particularly interesting to see, is that the informants give a great deal of emphasis to traits related to tabloidization – a finding that was not expected based on the literature. The quality dimensions, in combination with the impact of tabloidization, seems to be the basis for the evaluations that the informants make of the credibility of both news media channels and sources.

This study does not seek to conclude on what medium is perceived as most credible, but rather to use the comparative medium credibility approach to understand why the informants evaluate the credibility of channels as they do and how this affects their trust in online newspapers. However, the tendency seems to be that online newspapers are perceived as less credible than printed newspapers and television, which was expected because of findings from previous surveys (Medieundersøkelsen, 2018). The major aspects that differ online newspapers from other mediums from the informants perspective are commercialization, the fast pace of online media environment, and what can be referred to as a «gut feeling» that is working against perception of online newspaper credibility. One can argue that this «gut feeling» of theirs is likely to be a result of source criticism and digital literacy, making them highly aware of the potential of disinformation online.

Online newspapers have the image of being more unreliable because of the time pressure that comes from the fact that news stories has to be delivered continuously. Some of the informants believe it decreases accuracy and completeness in news coverage, which is negative for credibility. Another difference between online newspapers and their traditional counterpart is the way commercialization affects the presentation and prioritizing of content. The informants

are well aware of the business model of online newspapers, where revenue to large extent comes from advertisements due to clicks. The use of clickbait headlines and the amount of content that is considered «non-news» – an especially recurring subject is gossip and celebrity news – is of great annoyance to most of the informants, and leads to the perception of online newspapers as more profit-centered than other news channels. Some of the informants expressed concern regarding traits related to tabloidization. These informants saw a connection between commercialization and tabloidization, which in their view comes at the expense of journalistic quality and the news media's ability to contribute to an informed democracy. While the aspects of fast paced publishing, inaccuracy and shallow coverage online has been thematized before (Metzger and Flanagin, 2000; Russial, 2009; Larsen, 2012; Porlezza and Russ-Mohl, 2013), the amount of emphasis given to tabloidization as negative for news media credibility was an unexpected finding which has not been given much attention in former news media credibility research. This illustrates a benefit of the qualitative approach, as aspects not thought of in beforehand can appear relevant in meeting with the informants.

The news channel is shown to be important for the perception of credibility. However, this analysis shows that some think online news credibility depend more on the source of news, rather than the channel. The informants emphasise differences between the credibility and quality of various online sources more than the differences between channels, for instance online newspapers versus print. They have the ability to separate between various online newspapers and to recognize traits that indicate quality and credibility, as well as the opposite. When evaluating the credibility of sources, the basis for their evaluations are consistent with their understanding of credibility: they emphasise traditional journalistic quality criteria, as well as the impact of tabloidization. For instance, VG.no has little trust among most of the informants, because they feel that the newspaper use much clickbait and prioritize tabloid content over hard news. The presence of bias is also stressed: Several informants speculate that for instance VG.no and Dagbladet.no cover what they do and how they do it because of partisanship. However, the informants seem to disagree on whether this is a result of intentional partisan bias or unintentional ideology. On the other hand, NRK.no is by several informants perceived as the most credible source because it is perceived as serious and informative. The informants emphasize this online newspaper's ability to remain objective, relevant and thorough in their coverage. NRK.no is also considered more credible because it appears as if it

refrains from impact of commercialization and tabloidization, such as entertainment news and clickbait headlines.

Previous studies have found that online newspapers are conceived as less credible than printed newspapers and television broadcast news. If this is the case, it is important to understand why. This thesis is a contribution to this understanding. The informants' understanding of credibility is closely related to journalistic quality and tabloidization. They have demands and expectations of a news source as a source of quality information. When online newspapers appear to be less credible than other media channels, it is tied to the fact that speed, online logic and commercialization creates an emphasis on shallow, tabloid content rather than relevant information. Some of the informants think that VG.no is less credible than VG on print, and thus give some significance to the channel in itself. Even so, most of the informants seem to believe that the newspaper itself as the source matters more than whether it is online or print. Thus, most informants highlight the source rather than the channel when discussing online news credibility. This is an interesting contribution that nuances the perceptions of the credibility of online newspapers: Low credibility in online newspapers may not be as much about the online channel in itself, but rather individual sources that can be found within the channel. Thus, it can be said that the perceived credibility of online newspapers is not first and foremost a result of characteristics tied to the channel itself, but a product of how both channel and source affect the ability to deliver relevant, interesting and informative journalism that enables consumers to be informed participants in society.

The impact of technological and other developments on credibility should not be underestimated, and we have seen that affordances of online journalism has led to changes in the way the quality and credibility of news is perceived. With continuous developments related to personalization, use of algorithms and robots, one could expect that the technological aspect of journalism will have an even bigger impact on the way we trust online news media. New standards for evaluating quality might emerge (McQuail, 2015), thus affecting how credibility is perceived as well. However, the ability to deliver in line with traditional journalistic standards is still at the core of news media credibility and probably will be for a long time.

5.2 Limitations of this study

Naturally, the current study has some limitations. First, the number of informants is relatively low. As with any qualitative study, one should be cautious to say that the results of this thesis says something about perceptions of news media credibility or online newspaper credibility among young Norwegians in general. The sample is varied in the sense of gender, party preference, and study programme/occupation. Higher education is somewhat overrepresented due to the fact that lower educated were hard to approach, and I decided to stick with less informants rather than to include more informants in higher education and get a more biased sample. Besides this, the demographic variations in the sample is somewhat typical for the age group 20 to 30 year old Norwegians, and I argue that the results may indicate something about the attitudes towards news media credibility in a demographic group with similar attributes.

This thesis focus on the comparative perceptions of credibility in traditional media and online media with emphasis on traditional quality criteria. Aspects related to technological, societal and political developments have not been included, such as the dominant role of Facebook and other social media, political polarization, and the growing distrust in several social institutions. It is easy to imagine that these aspects might have an impact on online news credibility that should not be ignored if we are to understand the phenomena completely. However, as there is limited qualitative research on online news credibility, especially in a Norwegian context, I argue that the focus on the core role of traditional journalistic quality applied in this study is a valuable starting point for future research in this area.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

The results from this thesis point to some aspects that should be subject to future studies. One such aspect are the informants' reasons for evaluating online newspaper credibility as they do, such as the perception that online journalism is less accurate, less wholesome and more tabloid. The results from this study could be used as the basis for a questionnaire that could be applied in quantitative surveys in an attempt to investigate how representative these findings are for the Norwegian population in general.

As this thesis focuses on Norwegians aged 20 to 30 years, similar studies could be conducted in other age groups to see if the results correspond. Previous research has indicated that there

are differences in trust in media between different age groups (see for instance Ibelema and Powell, 2001). As argued earlier, potential lack of trust towards online newspapers among young consumers can possibly be tied to the fact that they are digital literates who have been socialized into practising source criticism, especially towards information online. Young consumers have an entirely different relationship with internet as a medium, and it could be that other age groups understand and evaluate online news media credibility differently. Another group it could be interesting to examine is news avoiders. Although the extent of their news consume varies, none of the informants in this study can be characterized as non-users. It is possible to imagine that there exists different opinions of news media credibility among those that do not use news media, for instance because it might be so that the ones that are the most skeptical avoid news entirely. It would be interesting to examine the evaluations of non-users as well.

As mentioned earlier, an unexpected finding is the great emphasis given to tabloidization. While the connection between quality and credibility has been subject in earlier studies (see for instance Maier, 2005; Ladd, 2012; Porlezza and Russ-Mohl, 2013), as well as the connection between quality and tabloidization (see for instance Kurtz, 1993), there have been little research on the connection between tabloidization and credibility so far, as far as I know. Studies focusing on this relationship and other ways in which commercialization affects news media credibility could be of interest and of importance to find a solution to the challenge online newspapers seem to be facing.

Future studies on online newspaper credibility should also focus more strongly on technological developments and affordances such as Facebook and other social media, personalization, algorithms and more. With the significant role Facebook has in distribution of news and forming of public opinion, it is sure to have some impact on credibility. The emergence of fake news or disinformation as reviewed in the introduction of this thesis is another topic with great relevance to online credibility which there is a need to learn more about. And how will credibility be affected if news being presented to us are selected by preference-based algorithms rather than publishers?

Technology applied in production and presentation of online journalism is in constant development, and I believe this will have even greater significance in years to come. This continuous change calls for a continuous examination of the effects it has on news media credibility. Although this thesis has interesting results, it is just a small piece of a broad and ever changing picture. More research on news media credibility and relating subjects will be needed to secure the online news media's ability to appear credible and fulfil its role in society as contributors to well-informed citizens.

6. References

Abel, J. D. and Wirth, M. O. (1977) Newspaper vs. TV Credibility for Local News, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 54(2), pp. 371–375. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769907705400223>.

Akerhaug, L. (2017) Tillitskrise, ikke faktakrise, *Minerva*. Available from: <https://www.minervanett.no/tillitskrise-ikke-faktakrise/> (Accessed: 05.05.18).

Allern, S. (2001) *Nyhetsverdier. Om markedsorientering og journalistikk i ti norske aviser*. Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget.

Berlo, D. K., Lemert, J. B., and Mertz, R. J. (1970) Dimensions for Evaluating the Acceptability of Message Sources, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 33(4), pp. 563–576. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1086/267745>.

Berntzen, Ø. (2018) *Tillitstap for vestlige nyhetsmedier etter «fake news»*. Available from: <http://www.tns-gallup.no/kantar-tns-innsikt/tillitstap-for-vestlige-nyhetsmedier-etter-fake-news/> (Accessed: 10.05.18).

Blom, J. N. and Hansen, K.R. (2015) Click bait: Forward reference as lure in online news headlines, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 76, pp. 87–100. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2014.11.010>.

Brandtzæg, P.B. (2018). Medienes ubehag i det polyfaktuelle samfunn, *Minerva*, 94(1), pp. 37–43. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/36221605/Medienes_ubehag_i_det_polyfaktuelle_samfunn (Accessed: 10.04.18).

Brandtzæg, P. B. and Følstad, A. (2017) Kronikk: Tradisjonelle medier har et delansvar for spredning av falske nyheter, *Aftenposten*. Available from: <https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikk/i/p2w3E/Kronikk-Tradisjonelle-medier-har-et-delansvar-for-spredning-av-falske-nyheter> (Accessed: 05.05.18).

Buckingham, D. (2010) Defining Digital Literacy, in Bachmair, B. (ed.) *Medienbildung in neuen Kulturräumen*. Berlin: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, pp. 59–71. doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-92133-4_4.

Carter, R. and Greenberg, B. (1965) Newspapers or Television: Which Do You Believe?, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 42(1), pp. 29–34. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769906504200104>.

Chu, H. S. (2016) Clickbait, the Attention Economy, and the End of Journalism, *Medium*. Available from: <https://medium.com/@hyonschu/clickbait-the-attention-economy-and-the-end-of-journalism-c4f16d2c447d> (Accessed: 15.03.18).

Coleman, S. (2012) Believing the news: From sinking trust to atrophied efficacy, *European Journal of Communication*, 27(1), pp. 35–45. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323112438806>.

Council of Europe (2017) *Tackling disinformation in the global media environment – new Council of Europe report*. Available from: https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/home/-/asset_publisher/RAupmF2S6voG/content/tackling-disinformation-in-the-global-media-environment-new-council-of-europe-report?inheritRedirect=false (Accessed: 13.05.18).

Curran, J., Coen, S., Aalberg, T. and Iyengar, S. (2012) News Content, Media Consumption, and Current Affairs Knowledge, in Aalberg, T. and Curran J. (ed.) *How Media Inform Democracy: A Comparative Approach*. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 81–97.

Esser, F. (1999) ‘Tabloidization’ of News: A Comparative Analysis of Anglo-American and German Press Journalism, *European Journal of Communication*, 14(3), pp. 291–324. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323199014003001>.

European Commission (2018) *Tackling online disinformation: Commission proposes an EU-wide Code of Practice*. Available from: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-3370_en.htm (Accessed: 11.05.18).

Fisher, C. (2016) The trouble with ‘trust’ in news media, *Communication Research and Practice*, 2(4), pp. 451–465. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2016.1261251>.

Flanagin, A. and Metzger, M. (2000) Perceptions of Internet Information Credibility, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77(3), pp. 515–540. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900007700304>.

Flaxman, S., Goel, S. and Rao, J. (2016) Filter Bubbles, Echo Chambers, and Online News Consumption, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 80(1), pp. 298–320. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfw006>.

Gaziano, C. and McGrath, K. (1986) Measuring the Concept of Credibility, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 63(3), pp. 451–462. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769908606300301>.

Greer, J. (2003) Evaluating the Credibility of Online Information: A Test of Source and Advertising Influence, *Mass Communication and Society*, 6(1), pp. 11–28. doi: [10.1207/S15327825MCS0601_3](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0601_3).

Hagen, I. and Wold, T. (2009) *Mediegenerasjonen. Barn og unge i det nye medielandskapet*. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.

Hofseth, A. (2017) Er norske medier i en tillitskrise?, *NRK Beta*. Available from: <https://nrkbeta.no/2017/04/04/er-media-i-en-tillitskrise/> (Accessed: 04.05.18).

Hovland, C., Janis, I., and Kelley, H. (1953) *Communication and persuasion*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Humprecht, E. (2016) *Shaping Online News Performance: Political News in Six Western Democracies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Høst, S. (2009) *Avisåret 2009*. (Avisåret Rapport nr. 14). Volda: Høgskulen i Volda. Available from: https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/153936/arb_241.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (Accessed: 10.02.18).

Høst, S. (2018) *Avisåret 2017*. (Avisåret Rapport nr. 23). Volda: Høgskulen i Volda. Available from: <https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2496177/Rapport%20nr%2086%20HV%20Avis%C3%A5ret%202017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (Accessed: 20.05.18).

Høst, S. and Vaage, O. (2010) *Avislesing ikke lenger for alle*. Available from: <https://www.ssb.no/kultur-og-fritid/artikler-og-publikasjoner/avislesing-ikke-lenger-for-alle> (Accessed: 24.03.18).

Ibelema, M. and Powell, L. (2001) Cable Television News Viewed as Most Credible, *Newspaper Research Journal*, 22(1), pp. 41–51. doi: [10.1177/073953290102200104](https://doi.org/10.1177/073953290102200104).

Jacobson, H. K. (1969) Mass Media Believability: a Study of Receiver Judgements, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 46(1), pp. 20–28. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769906904600103>.

Johnson, T. and Kaye, B. (1998) Cruising is Believing?: Comparing Internet and Traditional Sources on Media Credibility Measures, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75(2), pp. 325–340. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769909807500208>.

Journalisten (2014) *Spår papiravisens død før 2025*. Available from: <https://journalisten.no/moms-erik-wilberg-mediopolitikk/spar-papiravisens-dod-for-2025/144865> (Accessed: 13.05.18).

Journalisten (2017) *Nettavisen Resett lansert mandag*. Available from: <https://journalisten.no/oystein-stray-spetalen-resett-jan-haudemann-andersen/nettavisen-resett-lansert-mandag/278077> (Accessed: 11.05.18).

Kampanje (2018) *Regjeringen vil bekjempe «fake news» med ny lov*. Available from: <https://kampanje.com/medier/2018/05/regjeringen-vil-bekjempe-fake-news-med-ny-lov/> (Accessed: 10.05.18).

Kiousis, S. (2001) Public Trust or Mistrust? Perceptions of Media Credibility in the Information Age, *Mass Communication and Society*, 4(4), pp. 381–403. doi: https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0404_4.

Klungtveit, H., Skybakmoen, J., Berg, T. L. and Nordseth, P. (2017) Dette er de norske nettavisene du bør være på vakt mot i valgkampen, *Filter Nyheter*. Available from: <http://filternyheter.no/dette-er-de-ni-norske-nettstedene-du-bor-vaere-pa-vakt-mot/> (Accessed: 14.05.18).

Knutsen, E., Iversen, M. H., and Nygaard, S. (2018) Dette betyr «tillit til mediene» for folk, *Vox Publica*. Available from: <https://voxpublica.no/2018/03/dette-betyr-tillit-til-mediene-for-folk/> (Accessed: 23.03.18).

Kohring, M. and Matthes, J. (2007) Trust in News Media: Development and Validation of a Multidimensional Scale, *Communication Research*, 34(2), pp. 231–252. doi: [10.1177/0093650206298071](https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650206298071).

Krumsvik, A. (2012) Hvorfor er det så vanskelig å tjene penger på nettjournalistikk?, in Eide, M., Larsen, L. O. and Sjøvaag, H. (ed.) *Nytt på nett og brett: Journalistikk i forandring*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, pp. 55–69.

Kuhn, R. and Kleis Nielsen, R. (2013) *Political Journalism in Transition: Western Europe in a Comparative Perspective*. New York: I.B. Tauris.

Kurtz, H. (1993) *Media Circus – The Trouble with America’s Newspapers*. New York: Random House.

Kvale, S. and Brinchmann, S. (2015) *Det kvalitative forskningsintervju*. 3rd ed. Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.

Kärnberg, U. (2015) *Klickokratien: mediekrisens förste offer är sanningen*. Stockholm: Bokförlaget Atlas.

Ladd, J. (2012) *Why Americans Hate the Media and why it Matters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Larsen, L. O. (2012) Kultur på nett og brett, in Eide, M., Larsen, L. O. and Sjøvaag, H. (ed.) *Nytt på nett og brett: Journalistikk i forandring*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, pp. 250–258.

Lindebø, K. (2018) Nå skal Resett, HRS og Radikal Portal holdes utenfor PFU, *Journalisten*. Available from: <https://journalisten.no/2018/03/na-skal-resett-holdes-utenfor-pfu> (Accessed: 27.05.18).

Livio, O. and Cohen, J. (2016) ‘Fool me once, shame on you’: Direct personal experience and media trust, *Journalism*, 19(5), pp. 684–698. doi: [10.1177/1464884916671331](https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916671331).

Maier, S. (2005) Accuracy Matters: A Cross-National Assessment of Newspaper Error and Credibility, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(3), pp. 533–551. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900508200304>.

Markham, D. (1968) The Dimensions of Source Credibility of Television Newscasters, *Journal of Communication*, 18(1), pp. 57–64. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1968.tb00055.x>.

Matthes, A. and Beyer, J. (2015) Public Perceptions of the Media Coverage of Irregular Immigration: Comparative Insights from France, the United States, and Norway,

American Behavioral Scientist, 59(7), pp. 839–857. doi: [10.1177/0002764215573253](https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764215573253).

McQuail, D. (1992) *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

McQuail, D. (2015) Media Performance, in Mazzoleni, G. (ed.) *The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.

Metzger, M., Flanagin, A., Eyal, K., Lemus, D. and Mccann, R., (2003) Credibility for the 21st Century: Integrating Perspectives on Source, Message and Media Credibility in the Contemporary Media Environment, *Annals of the International Communications Association*, 27(1), pp. 293–335. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2003.11679029>.

Meyer, P. (1988) Defining and Measuring Credibility of Newspapers: Developing an Index, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 65(3), pp. 567–574. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769908806500301>.

Moe, A. and Kleiven, H.H. (2016) *Bruksmangfold. En analyse av nordmenns nyhetskonsum*. (TFoU report 2016:7). Steinkjer: Trøndelag Forskning og Utvikling. Available from: <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/rapport--bruksmangfold,-en-analyse-av-nordmenns-nyhetskonsum/id2538186/> (Accessed: 13.04.18).

Moe, H., Thorbjørnsrud, K., and Fladmoe, A. (2016) Perceptions of journalistic bias: Party preferences, media trust and attitudes towards immigration, in Midtbøen, A., Steen-Johnsen, K. and Thjorbjørnsrud, K. (ed.) *Boundary Struggles*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, pp. 109–134.

Mulder, R. (1980) Media Credibility: A Use-Gratifications Approach, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 57(3), pp. 474–477. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769908005700315>.

Mutz, D. and Young, L. (2011) Communication and Public Opinion: Plus Ça Change?, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 75(5), pp. 1018–1044. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfr052>.

Newhagen, J. and Nass, C. (1989) Differential Criteria for Evaluating Credibility of Newspapers and TV News, *Journalism Quarterly*, 65, pp. 567–574. Available from: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/107769908906600202> (Accessed: 25.03.18).

Newman, N. (2018) *Journalism, Media and Technology Trends and Predictions 2018*. Available from: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/journalism-media-and-technology-trends-and-predictions-2018> (Accessed: 02.04.18).

Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., Levy, D., and Nielsen, R. K. (2017) *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017*. Available from: <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2017/overview-key-findings-2017/> (Accessed: 10.02.18).

Nordiske Mediedager (2018) *Medieundersøkelsen 2018*. Available from: <http://www.nordiskemediedager.no/nyheter/> (Accessed: 10.05.18).

Norsk Journalistlag (2011) *Kvalitetsundersøkelsen 2010*. Available from: https://www.nj.no/no/NJs_arbeid/Nyhetsarkiv/Eldre_arganger/2010/opprinnelig_2010_nb_ikke_slett/Pressemateriell%3A+Kvalitetsundersøkelsen+2010.b7C_xlvOX6.ips (Accessed: 06.03.18).

Norwegian Media Authority (2018) *Mediekompetanse*. Available from: <http://www.medietilsynet.no/mediebildet/mediekompetanse/> (Accessed: 13.04.18).

Nybø, R. K. and Stavrum, K. (2017) Også akademikere har et ansvar for troverdig informasjon, *Aftenposten*. Available from: <https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/i/QzQ4x/Ogsa-akademikere-har-et-ansvar-for-troverdig-informasjon--Nybo-og-Stavrum> (Accessed: 05.05.18).

Omdal, H. (2012) På ryggen av en svart svane, in Eide, M., Larsen, L. O. and Sjøvaag, H. (ed.) *Nytt på nett og brett: Journalistikk i forandring*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, pp. 23–36.

Pariser, E. (2011) *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Pavlik, J. (2010) *The Impact of Technology on Journalism*, *Journalism Studies*, 1(2), pp. 229–237. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700050028226>.

Porlezza, C. and Russ-Mohl, S. (2013) Getting the Facts Straight in the Digital Era, in Peters, C. and Broersma, M. (ed.) *Rethinking Journalism: Trust and Participation in a Transformed News Landscape*. London: Routledge, pp. 45–59.

Prensky, M. (2001) Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants Part 1, *On the Horizon*, 9(5), pp.1–6. doi: [https:// doi.org/10.1108/10748120110424816](https://doi.org/10.1108/10748120110424816).

Prior, M. (2007) *Post-Broadcast Democracy. How Media Choice Increases Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Redden, J. and Witschge, T. (2010) A New News Order? Online News Content Examined, in Fenton, N. (ed.) *New Media, Old News*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 171-186.

Ringdal, K. (2013). *Enhet og mangfold. Samfunnsvitenskapelig forskning og kvantitativ metode*. 3rd ed. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Rotter, J. B. (1967) A New Scale for the Measurement of Interpersonal Trust, *Journal of Personality*, 35(4), pp. 651–665. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6494.1967.tb01454.x.

Russial, J. (2009) Copy Editing not Great Priority for Online Stories, *Newspaper Research Journal*, 30(2), pp. 6–15. doi: [10.1177/073953290903000202](https://doi.org/10.1177/073953290903000202).

Scacco, J. and Muddiman, A. (2016) *Investigating the influence of “clickbait” news headlines*. (Engaging News Project). Austin: The University of Texas. Available from: <https://mediaengagement.org/research/clickbait-headlines/> (Accessed: 15.03.18).

Scott, B. (2005) A Contemporary History of Digital Journalism, *Television & New Media*, 6(1), pp. 89–126. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476403255824>.

Slette-meås, D. and Kjørstad, I. (2016) *Nyheter i en digitalisert hverdag*.

En landsdekkende undersøkelse av ungdom og unge voksnes mediarelaterte praksiser og nyhetskonsumenter via smarttelefon, sosiale medier og nyhetsaggregatorer. (Report nr. 10-2016). Oslo: Forbruksforskningsinstituttet SIFO – Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus. Available from: http://www.sifo.no/files/file80655_rapport_10_2016_sifo_nyheter_digitalisert_hverdag.pdf (Accessed: 19.03.18).

SSB (2018) *Norsk mediebarometer 2018*. Available from: <https://www.ssb.no/medie> (Accessed: 10.05.18).

Steensen, S. (2011) Online Journalism and the Promises of New Technology, *Journalism Studies*, 12(3), pp. 311–327. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2010.501151>.

Steiner, M., Magin, M., and Stark, B. (2018) Uneasy Bedfellows: Comparing the diversity of German public service news on television and on Facebook, *Digital Journalism*, doi: 10.1080/21670811.2017.1412800.

Tewksbury, D. and Althaus, S. (2000) Differences in Knowledge Acquisition among Readers of the Paper and Online Versions of a National Newspaper, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77(3), pp. 457–479. doi: [10.1177/107769900007700301](https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900007700301).

Thoresen, J. (2014) *Nettjournalistikk: Å lage en viktig nettavis*. Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.

Tjora, A. (2016) *Kvalitative forskningsmetoder i praksis*. 3rd ed. Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.

TNS Gallup (2018) *Medietrender 2018: Nye kanaler gir nye muligheter*. Available from: <https://www.tns-gallup.no/kantar-tns-innsikt/medietrender-2018-nye-kanaler-gir-nye-muligheter/> (Accessed: 08.04.18).

Tsfati, Y. (2010) Online News Exposure and Trust in the Mainstream Media: Exploring Possible Associations, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 54(1), pp. 22–42. doi: 10.1177/0002764210376309.

Tsfati, Y. and Ariely, G. (2014) Individual and Contextual Correlates of Trust in Media Across 44 Countries, *Communication Research*, 41(6), pp. 760–782. doi: [10.1177/0093650213485972](https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650213485972).

Tsfati, Y. and Cappella, J. (2013) Do People Watch what they Do Not Trust? Exploring the Association between News Media Skepticism and Exposure, *Communication Research*, 30(5), pp. 504–529. doi: [10.1177/0093650203253371](https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650203253371).

Van Aelst, P., Strömbäck, J., Aalberg, T., Esser, F., de Vreese, C., Matthes, J., Hopmann, D., Salgado, S., Hubé, N., Stępińska, A., Papathanassopoulos, S., Berganza, R., Legnante, G., Reinemann, C., Sheaffer, T. and Stanyer, J. (2017) Political communication in a high-choice media environment: a challenge for democracy?, *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 41(1), pp. 3–27. doi: 10.1080/23808985.2017.1288551.

Waatland, E. (2017) Onsdag kommer de første faktasjekkene fra Faktisk.no: Redaksjonen har sjekket politikerne og valgkampens oppstart, *Medier24*. Available from: <https://www.medier24.no/artikler/onsdag-kommer-de-forste-faktasjekkene-fra-faktisk-no-redaksjonen-har-sjekket-politikerne-og-valgkampens-oppstart/396934> (Accessed: 10.05.18).

Westley, B. and Severin, W. (1964) Some Correlates of Media Credibility, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 41(3), pp. 325–335. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769906404100301>.

Williams, E. (2017) *Why Trust Matters*. Available from: <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/essays/2016/why-trust-matters/> (Accessed: 14.05.18).

Zhou, S., H. Zhang and B. Shen (2014) Comparison of Magnitude Credibility: Whom to Trust When Reports are Conflicting? *The Open Communication Journal*, 8, pp. 1–8. doi: 10.2174/1874916X01408010001.

Appendices

Appendix A: Information letter

Request for participation in research project on

Evaluations on the quality of news media after the internet

Background and purpose

This study aims to investigate how Norwegian news consumers evaluate newspapers and online newspapers in particular. The goal is to identify people's evaluations on quality as well as their trust in and attitudes towards news media, online newspapers in comparison to printed newspapers. **This thesis is part of the master's degree programme in Media, Communications and Information Technology at Department of Sociology and Political Science, NTNU.**

The sample of this study is based on requests via network, and is to consist of people aged 20 to 30 years that to a greater or lesser extent consume news.

What does your participation involve?

Participation in this study involves conducting an interview of circa one hour's duration. You will be asked about your news consume and your experience with printed and online newspaper. Additionally, I would like to receive some information about yourself. You will be asked to fill out a form, and no external sources will be used to gather any information about yourself. This information can be used in the study, but you will not be identifiable.

The interview will be recorded and transcribed. All data is deleted after the completion of the study.

What will happen with the information about you?

All personal information will be treated confidentially. The student and the supervisor of this study are the only one that can access the transcriptions of the interview.

If any of your information or statements are used in the study, you will be anonymized. Your name will not be used at any point. Further information that might be used to identify you, such as what you do or where you live, will be made less specific. You will not be recognizable in the study, and all information that can be traced back to you, included recordings and transcriptions of interviews, will be deleted at the completion of this project 6. June 2018.

Voluntary participation

It is voluntary to participate in this study, and you can withdraw your consent to participate at any time without question.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact the supervisor, Postdoctoral Fellow Melanie Magin of Department of Sociology and Political Science at NTNU by phone: +47 73413277.

This study has been approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

Consent for participation in research project

I have received information about this study, and I am willing to participate

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix B: Interview guide

Start out by repeating information on confidential treatment of recording, transcriptions and other data. Tell informant that there are no right or wrong answers, and that the subject of interest is their personal opinions and evaluations.

Use and consume

Internet use in general:

How much time do you spend on the internet on an average day?

What do you usually do on the Internet on an average day?

News media consume:

Do you consume news?

Where do you get your news?

Do you actively seek out news?

What sort of media do you use?

How much time would you say that you spend on news on an average day?

What sort of subjects do you usually hear about in the news?

Sources:

Which printed newspapers do you read? Why/why do you not read any printed newspapers?

How much time would you say that you spend on printed newspapers on an average week?

Which online newspapers do you read? Why/why do you not read any?

How much time would you say that you spend on online newspapers on a average week?

Which of the papers you read hold, in your opinion, the highest standard? Why?

What is, in your opinion, the biggest difference between online and traditional newspapers?

Did you read more/less printed newspapers in the past? If yes, why did you change that?

Credibility

In general:

When talking about credibility or trustworthiness of the news, people often refer to many different qualities and aspects. What does credibility of the news mean to you?

Write down the characteristics mentioned

Use of cards with credibility items:

What about these characteristics, how are they related to credibility of the newspapers from your perspective?

Could you rank the characteristic from the most to the least important for your opinion of a newspapers credibility?

Why is it so?

Medium/channel credibility:

Which is the most credible media channel from your perspective?

Which is the least credible one?

What are the reasons for these assessments?

If reading reports on the same subject, let's say the election, in an online newspaper and a printed newspaper - which would you believe to be the most credible?

From your perspective, which characteristics must an online newspaper have to be considered credible? And which characteristics would lead to you not finding it credible?

In which way does an online newspaper relate to the characteristics you mentioned earlier, and in which way does a printed newspaper?

Source credibility

Which of the online newspapers you have read do you find to be the most credible? Why?

In which way does this online newspaper fulfil the characteristics mentioned earlier related to your judgement of credibility?

Which of the online newspapers you have read do you consider least credible? Why?

In which way does this online newspaper fulfil the characteristics mentioned earlier?

Concluding questions

In general, how important is the credibility of news media for you?

Is there anything else you think we should talk about?

Appendix C: Question form for informants

Questionnaire for participants in study on news media

This questionnaire is given to informants participating in my master's thesis at Department of Sociology and Political Science at NTNU. The questionnaire asks about demographic and other information about the informant, and could be used along with information from the interviews conducted. Answering is volunteer. All information will be anonymized. This questionnaire is only available for me, and will be destroyed shortly after the interview.

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Male Female Other

City of residence:

Hometown:

Occupation:

Education level (started or completed):

Primary school Upper secondary level Bachelor Masters

Party preference (cross the line at the point that suits you best):

Red party

Progress party

What party did you vote for at the previous parliamentary elections?

Appendix D: Approval from Norwegian Centre for Research Data



Melanie Magin
Dragvoll
7491 TRONDHEIM

Vår dato: 24.01.2018

Vår ref: 57904 / 3 / OOS

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

Tilråding fra NSD Personvernombudet for forskning § 7-27

Personvernombudet for forskning viser til meldeskjema mottatt 19.12.2017 for prosjektet:

57904	<i>Trust in online newspapers - A qualitative study of the level of and/or the factors affecting trust in online newspapers</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Melanie Magin
Student	Torje Jacobsen

Vurdering

Etter gjennomgang av opplysningene i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon finner vi at prosjektet er unntatt konsesjonsplikt og at personopplysningene som blir samlet inn i dette prosjektet er regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. På den neste siden er vår vurdering av prosjektopplegget slik det er meldt til oss. Du kan nå gå i gang med å behandle personopplysninger.

Vilkår for vår anbefaling

Vår anbefaling forutsetter at du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med:

- opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon
- vår prosjektvurdering, se side 2
- eventuell korrespondanse med oss

Meld fra hvis du gjør vesentlige endringer i prosjektet

Dersom prosjektet endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å sende inn endringsmelding. På våre nettsider finner du svar på hvilke [endringer](#) du må melde, samt endringsskjema.

Opplysninger om prosjektet blir lagt ut på våre nettsider og i Meldingsarkivet

Vi har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet på nettsidene våre. Alle våre institusjoner har også tilgang til egne prosjekter i [Meldingsarkivet](#).

Vi tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger ved prosjektslutt

Ved prosjektslutt 06.06.2018 vil vi ta kontakt for å avklare status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Se våre nettsider eller ta kontakt dersom du har spørsmål. Vi ønsker lykke til med prosjektet!

Vennlig hilsen

Marianne Høgetveit Myhren

Øyvind Straume

Kontaktperson: Øyvind Straume tlf: 55 58 21 88 / Oyvind.Straume@nsd.no

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Tonje Jacobsen, tonje.h.jacobsen@gmail.com

Personvernombudet for forskning



Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 57904

FORMÅL

Hensikten med prosjektet er å undersøke hvor kredible nettaviser oppfattes blant norske mediebrukere, og finne årsaker til hvorfor det er slik. Bak dette ligger en forestilling (basert på markedsundersøkelser) om at nordmenn har mindre tillit til nettaviser enn papiraviser.

INFORMASJON OG SAMTYKKE

Du har opplyst i meldeskjema at utvalget vil motta skriftlig og muntlig informasjon om prosjektet, og samtykke skriftlig til å delta. Vår vurdering er at informasjonsskrivet til utvalget er godt utformet, og vi har ingen innvendinger til dette.

SENSITIVE DATA

Studien innebærer potensielt behandling av sensitive opplysninger om politisk og filosofisk oppfatning. Personvernombudet vurderer data til å være relevante og nødvendige for å gjennomføre prosjektet, og har ingen innvendinger til datainnsamlingen.

DATASIKKERHET

NTNU er behandlingsansvarlig institusjon. Personvernombudet forutsetter at du behandler alle data i tråd med NTNU sine retningslinjer for datahåndtering og informasjonssikkerhet.

PUBLISERING

Det fremgår eksplisitt av informasjonen at deltakerne ikke vil være mulig å gjenkjenne ved publikasjon. Du har i meldeskjema opplyst at personidentifiserbare opplysninger publiseres. Vi har lagt til grunn at personopplysninger ikke publiseres, og har derfor endret meldeskjemaet på dette punktet.

PROSJEKTLUTT OG ANONYMISERING

Prosjektlutt er oppgitt til 06.06.2018. Det fremgår av meldeskjema/informasjonsskriv at du vil anonymisere datamaterialet ved prosjektlutt. Personvernombudet gjør oppmerksom på at anonymisering innebærer vanligvis å:

- slette direkte identifiserbare opplysninger som navn og e-post
- slette eller omskrive/gruppere indirekte identifiserbare opplysninger som yrke, utdanning, alder, kjønn
- slette lydopptak

For en utdypende beskrivelse av anonymisering av personopplysninger, se Datatilsynets veileder:

<https://www.datatilsynet.no/globalassets/global/regelverk-skjema/veiledere/anonymisering-veileder-041115.pdf>