Distribution and Evaluation of News on Portals: How News Use and Engagement Influence Portal News Credibility

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to understand if heterogeneous news is evenly consumed and distributed on portals as it examines people's news use and engagement behaviors and news credibility. Focusing on the four behaviors of news use, i.e., viewing news by keyword search, viewing news from subscribed sources, viewing news from the list of most-viewed news, and reading comments, and the three behaviors of news engagement, i.e., sharing news, 'liking' or 'recommending' news, and posting comments, this study investigates the relation between each of the behaviors and portal news credibility. **Research design, data and methodology:** From 2022 News Audience Survey in Korea, this study conducts a regression analysis to investigate the relations between each behavior and news credibility. **Results**: The results show a positive relation for the former two news use behaviors and the latter two news engagement behaviors, and a negative relation for the latter two news use behaviors. **Conclusions**: The positive relations between active news use and engagement behaviors and portal news credibility indicate that news consumers are more likely to use and engage in attitude-consistent news rather than attitude-challenging news, implying that heterogeneous news is less likely to be consumed and distributed evenly on portals across all news users.

Keywords : Distribution of News, Portal News, Credibility, News Use, News Engagement

JEL Classification Code: C33, D12, E51, R20, R38

1. Introduction

In a highly mediated society as it is currently, news as information and message is distributed and circulated through a ton of diverse media, sources, outlets, institutions and technologies. News can be obtained not only from the traditional media of newspaper, radio and network and cable television, but also from the online newspapers, news portals such as *Naver* and *Daum*, social network services (SNS hereinafter) such as *Facebook*, and video platforms such as *YouTube*. In Korea, over 75% of news users reported

that they had used portal news in 2022 (Korea Press Foundation, 2022). As a majority of news users consume news through news portals, portal news has gained increased attention in the area of media and journalism.

Since portal news is equipped with the unique feature of ubiquity and interactivity in comparison to the more one-way focused traditional mass media, literature in the domain of media studies has given attention to increased user control on news portals. In essence, news consumers can select and use news, i.e., not any news but the news they want, anytime, anywhere. News consumers may exercise different ways of

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selecting and using news, as offered by the varying technological features on the Internet platform, as well as engage in the news they use by 'sharing,' 'liking,' 'recommending,' or 'commenting.' Studies have examined such features of user empowerment and news engagement on news portals as they might serve as a conduit of the democratic norms of public deliberation and participation (Nah & Yamamoto, 2019).

This study aims to further explore the potentials of portal news for providing the democratic condition of the public sphere, where diverse information and opinions are exchanged (Habermas, 1989), by examining the ways in which news is distributed and evaluated by news consumers. It is meaningful to examine the case of Korea since over 70% of news users use portals for news (Korea Press Foundation, 2022). More specifically, in order to examine if heterogeneous news is actually consumed and opinions are exchanged and appreciated on portals, it investigates four different behaviors of news use and three activities of news engagement, and how they influence portal news credibility. From the findings of the analyses, this study draws conclusions about the democratic role of portal news in distribution of diverse news and opinions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Portal News Credibility

News credibility is trust news users hold in news. Essentially, it is the perception held by the subject of credibility for the object of credibility. It is composed of the properties of its own as well as the characteristics attributed to news by the audience (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Gunther, 1992; O'keefe, 2002; Tsfati & Arely, 2014). Most often, the components of news credibility include expertise, trustworthiness, completeness, accuracy (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000), fairness and bias (Meyer, 1988). For the measurement of news credibility, these components tend to be employed as composite measures as news users are asked to evaluate news based on each of a mix of these components. Alternatively, a single direct measure has also been used (Ibelema & Powell, 2011; Schweigner, 2000).

In people's evaluation of news credibility, one of the first considerations might be the quality of news. However, previous studies have reported rather unequivocal conclusions about if higher news quality necessarily entails higher news credibility. Pjesivac and Rui (2014) investigated credibility perceptions among Americans and Chinese and found that they rated news with identified sources, rather than anonymous sources, more credible. Hopmann et al. (2015) found that people were generally less likely to trust news media when they were exposed to game-framed news. While these studies suggest the possibility that higher news quality improves news credibility, other studies have shown the opposite results. Ladd (2012) showed that horse race journalism was not a significant factor influencing the decline of trust in news in the US, a result that was quite unlike the commonly held belief about the negative effect of horse race journalism. Based on these differing research results, it appears that there still needs to be more evidence to draw definitive conclusions about how quality of news influence news credibility.

Apart from quality of news, characteristics of the consumers of news are also explanatory factors of news credibility. Such demographic characteristics of news consumers as age, gender, education have explained news credibility. Age and education were found to be related to credibility in some studies (Flanagin & Metzger, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 1998, 2002). Political attitude characteristics have also been studied as audience factors that influence news credibility. Studies usually have included news consumers' political ideology, partisanship and the strength of ideology. On these characteristics, literature has shown relatively consistent results. Previous research showed that news users tend to evaluate news more credible when they found news in agreement with their own viewpoints, depending on their political ideology or partisanship, i.e., conservative or liberal, Republican or Democrat, while they tend to rate news less credible when the news is in opposition to their beliefs (Kahan et al., 2010; Meyer et al., 2010; Metzger et al., 2020; Oyedeji, 2010). These results are reflective of the strong psychological mechanism of selective exposure prompted by attitude-consistency at work in people's credibility evaluation of news they consume (Garret, 2009; Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009; Stroud, 2008, 2010)

Another factor that might influence credibility of news on portals is the characteristics of the media, i.e., news portals or the Internet. Previous research paid much attention to the ways in which news media on the Internet differed from conventional news media in terms of technology, functionality, usage and content. A study by Chung et al. (2012) focused on the uniquely technological features of interactivity, multimodality and hypertextuality as characteristics of news portals and concluded that hypertextuality contributed to portal news credibility. Johnson and Kaye (2009) suggested that reliance, information-seeking motivation and depth of news coverage predicted credibility of news blogs. They demonstrated that information-seeking motivations and depth of news coverage were the explanatory factors of online media rather than those of traditional news media such as newspaper and television as online news media offered in-depth information and wider user choice and experience and interactivity. These conclusions are supported by Ha and

Lee's research (2011), which examined the frequency of media use and credibility for various traditional and online media and found the strongest relation between the two for Internet news. This result is indicative of in-depthness of news on Internet news positively affecting news credibility.

2.2. Portal News Use

As discussed in the previous section, one of the most striking differences between portal news and news on traditional media arises from the technological features of portal news that offer ubiquity and two-way interaction. News users can view news they want by a simple search of a keyword on a search engine website anytime, anywhere. They can view only the news they want to view rather than going through the entire page of the newspaper starting from the front page, or sitting through the entire news show on television. News users can easily understand what some people think about the news by reading comments posted to the news. The availability of ubiquity and interaction have not only elevated users' news experience to another level, but also shaped the ways in which news consumers use news, react to news and affect opinions of one another. In essence, portal news brought greater choice and higher control of news to users (Thurman, 2011). Nevertheless, not all portal news is actively chosen. Indeed, many portal news users simply browse through portal news sites or view news from a list of news that are 'currently trending' or 'most viewed right now.' Portal news sites provide such lists of popular news based on the number of hits, clicks, views or recommendations, and, in fact, those lists work as one of the traffic drawers for portal news sites. This section discusses literature on active and passive use of news and the ways in which those uses might influence news consumers' evaluation of news credibility.

News consumers' active use of news involves active choice of news. News consumers may actively choose news based on their preferences and information needs. When people choose news to view on portal news sites, it is most likely that they choose news that agrees with their own view rather than news that disagrees (Garret, 2009; Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009; Stroud, 2008, 2010). This is fully explained by the selective exposure thesis, which claims that individuals tend to expose themselves to information that corresponds to their own views and perspectives and avoid information that does not match their beliefs. When encountered counter-attitudinal information, people experience cognitive dissonance, the psychological discomfort and mental burden (Festinger, 1957) that puts people under the pressure to reduce it. In order to avoid or reduce cognitive dissonance, individuals seek out attitude-consistent, rather than attitude-challenging, information, in effect, exposing themselves selectively to contents coherent to their attitudes and existing beliefs. There is a plethora of research results demonstrating and confirming partisanship selective exposure in people's news selection and consumption (e.g., Garret, 2009; Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009; Stroud, 2008, 2010). Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng (2009) found the evidence that news users are more likely to read the news if the headline is in line with their existing political views and values. Stroud (2008) that individuals depend on at least one attitude-consistent news source in their news consumption. Based on the selective exposure thesis, literature on partisan selective exposure has demonstrated that people generally expose themselves to attitude-confirming news.

In terms of how people rate the credibility of the news they choose to consume via selective exposure, there is evidence that people tend to evaluate attitude-consistent information and news sources higher in credibility than attitude-challenging information and sources (Kahan et al., 2010; Meyer et al., 2010; Oyedeji, 2010). This differential credibility perception is explained by the cultural cognition view of human cognition and opinion formation in psychology. It suggests that people process information through the filters of their personal and cultural identities with due considerations of any relations and effect to the values and beliefs corresponding to their identities, and finally form opinions about the information (Kahan et al., 2010). Drawing from this claim, Kahan et al. (2010) concluded that people perceive like-minded sources fairer and more honest than differently-minded sources regardless of the message itself. Johnson and Kaye (2013) also found a similar relation between credibility and partisan selective exposure.

On news portals, people may also select and consume news passively. Sometimes, news users may actively seek out information but another times, they may consume whichever news is available. There is the view that news users can generally bear the user-empowering interactivity offered by online news only to the extent that requires minimal effort with easy use (Harrison, 2006). Indeed, obtaining news still is generally a passive event (Harrison, 2006). As such, not all media exposure is made by a deliberate selection, some media consumptions occur both online and offline through a casual and spontaneous choice dictated by certain conditions such as time, place, demographic attributes, program scheduling and algorithms. Particularly in the mobile media environment, media use has become so easy, convenient, seamless and intuitive that the smartphone is called the fifth limb. Smartphone users carry their device most of the time when they are awake. Sometimes, people may actively use it by seeking out information to achieve specific purposes they have on mind. Another times, people may use it rather passively, for example, check their news feeds or scan through news

portals mindlessly in the metro train or in a long line waiting for their turn, filling the empty time between the times they spend with specific purposes. In order to pass such time, rather than to obtain specific news, people may consume news passively. Research on credibility assessment has argued that, among various motivations for news use, the information-seeking motivation is closely related to higher credibility, i.e., people tend to judge news media more credible if the news was sought after with a specific information-seeking motivation (e.g., Lee & Ahn, 2017; Mulder, 1980). Based on this claim, people's credibility perception of news might not be particularly higher if the news was passively chosen, rather than deliberately sought after.

As discussed, portal news may be used both actively and passively. More actively, people may view news by making a keyword search, or by choosing a news story from a list of news provided by a news source or institution they subscribe to. More passively, people may refer to other people's use of and opinions about news by viewing news from the list of most-viewed news or reading other people's comments to news they viewed. From the discussion above, active choice and use of news is likely to prompt selective exposure, which may lead to higher evaluation of news credibility, while passive use may not necessarily be associated with higher evaluation of news. In order to confirm the influence of different methods of portal news use on portal news credibility, this study poses the following research questions:

RQ 1-1: How is viewing portal news via a key word search related to portal news credibility?

RQ 1-2: How is viewing portal news from subscribed news sources related to portal news credibility?

RQ 1-3: How is viewing portal news from the list of most-viewed news related to portal news credibility?

RQ 1-4: How is reading comments to portal news viewed related to portal news credibility?

2.3. Portal News Engagement

Portal news provides the uniquely technological feature of immediate participation to news. Users can easily share news they view via SNS, show their appreciation of news by 'liking' or 'recommending' the news, or share their opinions about news by posting comments on the sites. The activity of sharing news on portals has been found to be associated with user satisfaction and loyalty to the news source (Lischka & Messerli, 2016), which shows the possibility of increased news credibility of portals. In fact, posting comments on news portals is part of political participation (Nah & Yamanoto, 2019), and lets people understand views of other people regarding current issues rather than those of mainstream press (Rosenberry, 2005). Posting comments

about news has now become part of meaningful journalism discourse (Conlin & Roberts, 2016). Liking and recommending news on portals function as a screening or sorting system for news users on news portals (Thurman, 2011) as well as an indicator of dominant public opinion (Hong & Cameron, 2018). As such, news users' engagement in portal news have been considered to have positive democratic values.

On the other hand, the activities of portal news engagement have also been found to bear counter-democratic outcomes. As for the behavior of sharing portal news, Fletcher and Park (2017) showed that news users whose credibility evaluation of news media were lower tended to engage more in sharing news on portals. For comments, it was found that mere presence of comments alone was associated with lower credibility of news media (Conlin & Roberts, 2016). The study reported that those who posted comments more often tended to show lower levels of credibility, which was indicative of skepticism and cynicism toward online news and the news sources. Waddell (2018) reported that comments could lead to decreased credibility perceptions about news and its importance, particularly when the comments were written in an uncivil language and manner and a negative and hostile tone.

As discussed, these different behaviors of news engagement on news portals can be considered meaningful because actual consumers of portal news perform the filtering, screening and sorting roles to a certain degree in addition to the functions of selection and arrangement of news by editors and algorithms, thereby empowering news users in the control of news they consume. Literature in the area of portal news engagement has proven that the activities of news engagement could contribute to the democratic norms of public deliberation and citizen participation in the formation public opinions through sharing news and comments. At the very same time, studies have also suggested that such news engagement behaviors of sharing news and commenting could lead to decreased levels of trust in news, which could potentially lead to dissatisfaction and distrust in news and discourage public deliberation. Therefore, in order to understand how news is distributed and evaluated on news portals, there seems to be a need to address whether the behaviors of portal news engagement influence portal news credibility. Thus, this study poses the following research questions:

RQ 2-1: How is sharing portal news via SNS related to portal news credibility?

RQ 2-2: How is 'liking' or 'recommending' portal news related to portal news credibility?

RQ 2-3: How is posting comments to portal news related to portal news credibility?
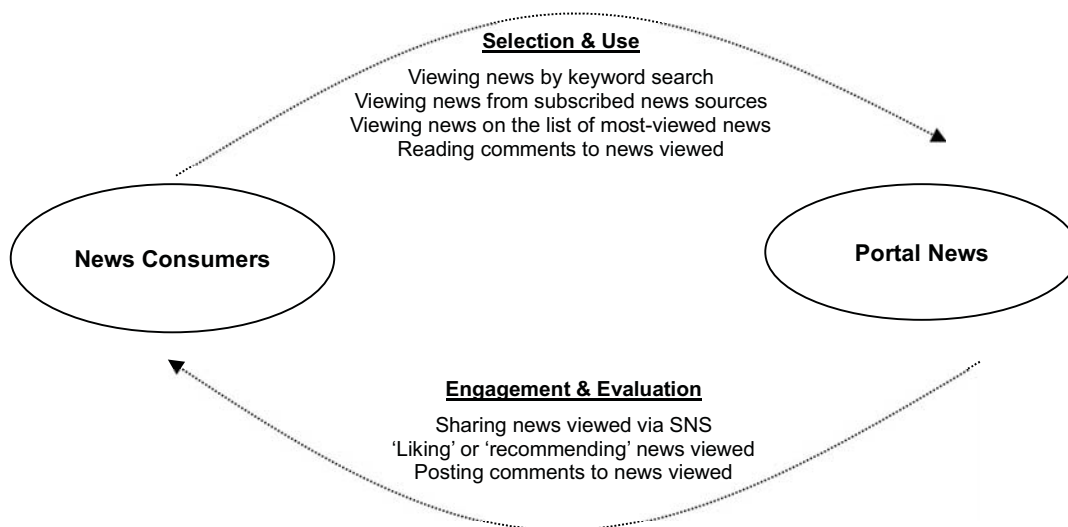
Figure 1: Conceptual framework of distribution and evaluation of news on portals via news use and engagement

3. Methodology

3.1. Data and Analysis

This study analyzes data obtained from 2022 News Audience Survey administered by Korea Press Foundation. The survey, which began in 1984, was conducted by the national institution bi-annually and turned annual in 2010. It includes items about news media use and audience perceptions of news and media. Based upon the number of registered citizens in 2020, the sample was allocated proportionally to each of the 17 metropolitan areas in the country and then stratified at five different administrative district levels in order to represent the population in each district in each level proportionally. The sample for this study was collected between July 28 and October 20, 2022 through face-to-face interviews with all household members of 19 years of age and older in each of the 30,138 households pre-selected to proportionally represent 17 metropolitan areas across the country. The sample had a confidence interval of 95% with a sampling error of ± 4% points, which is reflective of the reliability of the analysis. The interviews resulted in 58,936 individuals, which included 29,288 men and 29,648 women showing the even proportion of 49.7% and 50.3% respectively. Figure 1 present normality of the sample. From the sample, 16.4% was 19 years of age and in twenties, 15.6% in thirties, 18.4% in forties, 19.6% in fifties, 16.4% in sixties and 13.6% in seventies or older. It included 49.4% of individuals with university education or higher, 37.7% with high school diploma and 13% with lower-than-high school education.

The median income of the sample fell between 4,000,000 and 5,000,000 Korean Won.

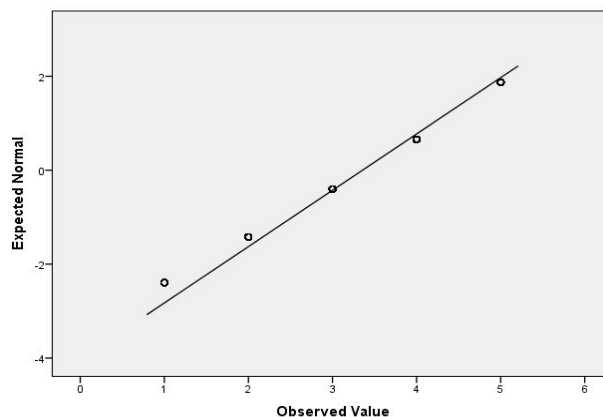In order to explore the research questions, a regression analysis was conducted.

Figure 2: Normal Q-Q Plot of Portal News Credibility

3.2. Variables

Portal news credibility

Portal news credibility is the dependent variable in this study. For the measure, respondents were asked to show how credible they found news and current affairs information on news portals on a scale of 1 (not at all credible) to 5 (highly credible) ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .83$). In this study, credibility is measured by a single item. As discussed earlier, news credibility tends to be measured by a composite variable that is consisted of various dimensions such as fairness, accuracy, unbiasedness, completeness, etc., particularly for certain specific news or media. However, a

single direct measure has been used for evaluating credibility of overall news or of press in the institutional point of view (Kohring & Matthes, 2007; Pjesivac et al.,2016). This study is interested in understanding credibility of overall news on portals, therefore, a single direct measure was considered appropriate for the objective of this research.

Variables of portal news use

Variables of portal news use include items describing four different methods of using portal news. Each item consists of a statement about a behavior of portal news use. Respondents were asked to indicate how often they engaged in the behavior in the past one week on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = never, 2 = not much, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often). The four statements include 'on news portals, I: viewed news via a keyword search' ($M = 3.20, SD = 1.01$); viewed news from the news sources I subscribed to' ($M = 2.39, SD = 1.16$); viewed news from the list of most-viewed news' ($M = 2.78, SD = 1.15$);' and read the comments posted to the news I viewed' ($M = 2.55, SD = 1.07$).

Variables of portal news engagement

Variables of portal news engagement include three items each of which describes a way of news engagement on news portals. Each item is a statement about a news engaging behavior through technological features available on news portals. Respondents were asked to indicate how often they engaged in the behavior in the past one week on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = never, 2 = not much, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often). The statements include 'on news portals, I: shared the news I viewed via SNS or a messenger service' ($M = 1.94, SD = .24$); 'liked' or 'recommended' the news I viewed' ($M = 1.90, SD = .31$); and posted a comment to the news I viewed' ($M = 1.94, SD = .24$).

Control variables

Controls included the variables of demographics, political attitude, frequency of portal news use, and overall news credibility. Controlled demographic variables were gender (male = 1, female = 2), age ($M = 48.50, SD = 15.87$), education (1 = elementary school, 2 = middle school, 3 = high school, 4 = college and 5 = graduate school; $M = 2.37, SD = .71$), and household income (1 = 1,000,000 Korean Won per month or below to 7 = 6,000,000 Korean Won or above; $M = 4.74, SD = 1.75$). For political attitudes variables, political ideology was measured by asking respondents to indicate their political ideology on a five-point scale of 1 (strongly liberal) to 5 (strongly conservative) ($M = 3.03, SD = .80$). Political interest was obtained from respondents' indication of how much they were interested in politics and social issues on a five-point scale of 1 (not at all interested) to 5 (highly interested) ($M = 3.01, SD = .82$). Frequency of

portal news use was measured from responses to a question asking how many days respondents had used mobile news portals in the past one week on a scale of 0 (did not use) to 5 (5 days) ($M = 2.37, SD = .71$).

Overall news credibility

Overall news credibility was also included as part of controls. Previous studies have shown a close positive association of overall news credibility to portal news credibility. It means people tend to trust portal news as much as they trust overall news on media or news in general, which shows the possibility that trust in overall news transfers to portal news credibility and vice versa. In order to investigate the net influence of the variables of portal news use and portal news engagement to portal news credibility accurately, overall news credibility was controlled. The variable was measured by a single direct item asking respondents how credible they found news and current information on a scale of 1 (not at all credible) to 5 (highly credible) ($M = 3.15, SD = .78$).

4. Results

The results of the regression analysis showed an explanatory power of 22% of the sample with most of the variables entered as significant predictors of portal news credibility. From the regression model, it was found that all the four variables of portal news use were significantly related to portal news credibility. However, the relation was positive for active use variables and negative for the passive. For RQ 1-1 and RQ 1-2, using a key word search ($\beta = .10, p = .000$) and viewing news from subscribed news sources on portals ($\beta = .04, p = .000$) were positively related to portal news credibility respectively. On the other hand, for RQ 1-3 and 1-4, viewing news from the list of most-viewed news ($\beta = -.02, p = .000$) and reading comments to news on portals ($\beta = -.02, p = .000$) were found to be negatively related to portal news credibility.

Among the three variables of portal news engagement, two were significantly related to portal news credibility. For RQ 2-1, sharing news via SNS had no significant association ($\beta = -.01, p = .124$). For RQ 2-2 and 2-3, 'liking' or 'recommending' news ($\beta = .02, p = .001$) and posting comments to news on portals ($\beta = .03, p = .000$) were positively related to portal news credibility.

All of the demographic variables were found to be significantly related to portal news credibility. Females tended to have a higher level of portal news credibility ($\beta = .01, p = .028$). The younger ($\beta = -.04, p = .000$), the more educated ($\beta = .02, p = .000$), and the higher the income ($\beta = .02, p = .000$), the higher the level of portal news credibility. In terms of political attitudes, those individuals

who were more politically liberal (β = -.01, p = .001) and more interested in political and social issues (β = .01, p = .021) were more likely to trust portal news.

Table 1: Predicting Portal News Credibility

	Predictors	*b*	*se*	*β*	*VIF*
Controls	Age	.01*	.007	.01	1.03
	Gender	.00***	.000	-.04	1.58
	Education	.03***	.007	.02	1.55
	Income	.01***	.002	.02	1.09
	Political ideology	-.01**	.005	-.01	1.11
	Political interest	.01*	.004	.01	1.08
	Overall news credibility	.44***	.004	.43	1.03
	Frequency of portal news use	.01***	.002	.03	1.11
Portal news use	Viewing news from a keyword search	.08***	.004	.10	1.20
	Viewing news from subscribed news sources	.03***	.003	.04	1.48
	Viewing news from list of most-viewed news	-.02***	.004	-.02	1.78
	Reading comments to news viewed	-.02***	.004	-.02	1.94
Portal news engagement	Sharing news via SNS	-.02	.013	-.01	1.23
	'Liking' or 'recommending' news viewed	.04**	.012	.02	1.48
	Posting a comment to news viewed	.09***	.015	.03	1.38
Adj. R²		.22			

Notes: N = 58,936.   *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Those who used portal news more frequently were also more likely to have a higher level of portal news credibility (β = .03, p = .000). In support of previous studies, overall news credibility showed a strong significant relationship with portal news credibility (β = .43, p = .000).

5. Conclusions and Discussion

The purpose of this research is to understand the ways in which news is distributed and evaluated on news portals through news consumers' behaviors of news use and news engagement. More specifically, this study first examines how certain ways of news use and news engagement may influence news consumers' evaluation of portal news, and then explains how news distributed through some ways than others might be more positively accepted by news consumers.

From the regression analysis, it was found that, among the four different news use behaviors, 'viewing news via a keyword search' and 'viewing news from subscribed news sources' were positively related to portal news credibility. On the other hand, the two activities of 'viewing news from the list of most viewed news' and 'reading comments to news viewed' were rather negatively related to portal news credibility. The positive relations show that the active use of news on portals is more likely to lead to higher credibility evaluation of news on portals. People use a keyword search when they have specific information they seek and this news seeking behavior involves higher informational motivation. As discussed earlier, informational motivation has been found to be positively related to news credibility (Lee & Ahn, 2017; Mulder, 1980), and therefore, this result is in support of previous research. News use through viewing news form subscribed news sources can be interpreted slightly differently than a keyword search. As suggested in the discussion of selective exposure, people subscribe to newspapers and other news media and sources that are in agreement with their own political point of view for the primary reason of attitude-consistency. Attitude-consistency can be achieved through selective exposure, which keeps news users exposed to news that is reflective of the news users' own viewpoints. The two active behaviors of portal news use were positively related to credibility, however, the news they consume is likely to be the information reflective of their own views and preferences than of different, diverse and opposing point of view, a result that is not necessarily conducive to healthier public opinion formation in society.

On the contrary, 'viewing news from a list of most-viewed news' and 'reading comments posted to news viewed' were negatively related to portal news credibility. This result shows that, first, passive use of news could lead to decreased news credibility, potentially due to lower informational motivation, and second, the use of news that is associated with other people's choice and opinions could potentially have a negative influence on news consumers' perception of news credibility. The results of positive relation of active news use and the negative relation of passive news use to portal news credibility demonstrate that news is chosen selectively rather than diversely, that news is distributed and consumed asymmetrically rather than evenly across news consumers of varying viewpoints, and that news evaluation tends to increase when the message agrees with the news consumers' viewpoints rather than when the information presents perspectives that are different from the consumers' own. The results also show that, even though attitude-challenging news is distributed to and used by consumers, there is a likelihood of the consumers' dismissal of the news as they are less likely to trust it. These findings are contradictory to the democratic norms of public

deliberation and participation in the formation of public opinions. Also, they appear to warrant the necessity to revisit the normative role of portal news as press in delivering and distributing news and opinions, thereby nurturing the conditions of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989) for healthy, informed and participative citizenry.

As for the behaviors of portal news engagement, 'liking and recommending news viewed' and 'posting comments to news viewed' were associated with increased credibility, while 'sharing news viewed via SNS' was found to be unrelated. While these results appear to offer some positivity in terms of news credibility, on the flip side of the coin, news users who view news from the list of most-viewed news, some of which is created based on the number of users' 'likes' and 'recommendation,' and who read comments posted to news was found to be associated with lower levels of credibility. The findings suggest that news consumers who actively use news they like only and who engage in news expressing their own thoughts rather than appreciating other users' thoughts are the ones who trust portal news the most. The technological feature of interaction on news portals seems to work one-way in consuming attitude-consistent news and expressing opinions rather than two-ways in exchanging and appreciating diverse and heterogeneous news and opinions. As such, the power of interactivity on news portals has yet to be explored toward a more even distribution of news with diverse perspectives among news consumers in order for society to increase the democratic potentials for more mature public opinion formation through a mix of diverse ideas and public deliberation.

This study attempted to understand the ways in which portal news is distributed and evaluated by news consumers by analyzing how some ways of news use and engagement influence portal news credibility. Primarily, it examined the relationship of portal news use and engagement to credibility. In future research, investigating the flow of news from news portals to consumer use and evaluation and then to re-use of the news would overcome the weakness of this study in indirect observation of news flow. By using the method of structural equation modelling, a closer tracing of news flow would be possible and provide more accurate explanation about the distribution and circulation of news on portals.

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