

Reference Blindness

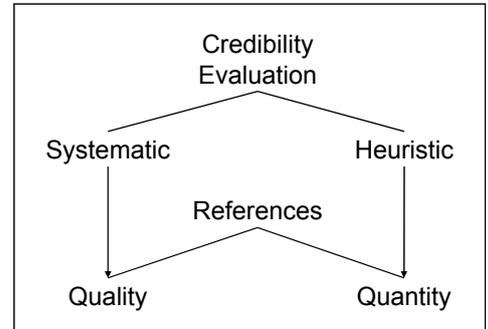
The Influence of References on Trust in Wikipedia

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Introduction

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References have been shown to be a very important indicator of information credibility for college students^[1]. In this study we investigate how references are used in such evaluations, which can be performed systematically or heuristically (according to dual-process theory^[2]). We suggest that these strategies lead to different aspects of the references being noticed. Furthermore, the choice between strategies may depend on trust in the source of the information^[citation needed].



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Method

23 college students performed the Wikipedia Screening Task^[3]. In this task, a Wikipedia article is shown. The participant is asked to evaluate the credibility of this article, without specifying how to do this.

Long list, high quality



Long list, low quality



Short list, high quality



Short list, low quality



The articles were manipulated on quantity (~5 or 25 references) and on quality (original references or references from a different, completely unrelated article).

Results

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- Trust is influenced by reference quality, but only when trust in the source is low.
 - Trust is influenced by reference quantity, but only when trust in the source is high.
- Both strategies (systematic and heuristic) are used, dependent on trust in Wikipedia in general.

- **75%** of the students say they always consider references when evaluating credibility.
 - **75%** did not notice the quality manipulation
 - **60%** did not notice the quantity manipulation
- References are very important for college students, yet they hardly seem to use them in credibility evaluations. We coin this phenomenon *reference blindness*.

References

[\[edit\]](#)

[1] Davies, Paul; Julian R. Brown (Eds.) (July 31 1992). *Superstrings: A Theory of Everything?* (Reprint ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 244. ISBN 0-521-43775-X.

[2] Breuer, T; Ndooundou-Hockemba M, Fishlock V (2005). "First Observation of Tool Use in Wild Gorillas". *PLoS Biol* 3 (11): 380. doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.0030380.PMC 1236726. PMID 16187795.

[3] "Rules of Curling for General Play". Canadian Curling Association. 2007. Retrieved 2010-03-07.