

New media fail to click on the reliability scale

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AUSTRALIANS trust the ABC more than its commercial rivals, while supposed "old" media such as newspapers, television and radio fare much better than the internet, a survey of attitudes to media has found.

An Essential Research survey of 1000 people showed that despite the recent protestations of web media proprietors, traditional media is still the dominant source for information on news and current affairs, and is also more highly trusted than its internet counterparts.

The survey found commercial TV news and current affairs was

the most frequently consumed news media, with 87 per cent of people saying they watched at least once a week. Daily newspapers came second, with 72 per cent reading at least weekly.

In contrast, just 28 per cent of people said they accessed blogs at least once a week, but in results that will give some comfort to the mainstream media proprietors behind major news websites, 62 per cent of people said they accessed them at least weekly.

The consumption habits also reflected people's trust of different forms of media. Asked the extent to which they trusted commercial TV news and current affairs, 64 per cent said "a lot" or "some", with daily newspapers closely behind on 62 per cent.

IT'S ALL ABOUT TRUST

FORM OF MEDIA	CONSUME WEEKLY (%)	TRUST (%)
Newspapers.....	72	62
News websites.....	62	49
Blogs.....	28	20
ABC TV.....	58	70
ABC radio.....	38	62
ABC talkback.....	28	45
TV (commercial).....	87	64
Radio (commercial).....	59	54
Talkback (commercial).....	37	38

SOURCE: ESSENTIAL RESEARCH

The affiliation with a major media outlet appeared to bolster the trust in news and opinion websites, which sat at 49 per cent, but internet blogs, which are usually independently run, were trusted by just 20 per cent.

Essential Research's director, Peter Lewis, said the figures showed consumers sought a distinction between news and opinion, which was more prevalent in newspapers than online.

"It gives some encouragement to professional journalists that there is in the public's mind a difference between news and opinion, and as long as that separation remains in the public's eyes, there's always going to be a place for quality journalists," he said.

The data also shows the ABC struggling to match the audience of its commercial rivals, but doing much better in earning the trust of consumers. "You trust the ABC but you don't watch it," was Mr Lewis's characterisation of the results.