

Baseball front offices slow to trust independent bloggers, research shows

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Independent bloggers represent the least trusted media type and are the most likely to be turned down for press pass requests, according to the first academic study to assess the sentiments of media-credentialed executives in sports organizations toward new media coverage.

Traditional media outlets, including local TV, radio and newspapers, followed by national sports magazines and newspapers, earned the most trust — and press passes — while online channels earned the least trust. Among online channels, bloggers affiliated with established [media outlets](#), such as the LA Times Sport blog and ESPN.com, earned less trust than [traditional media](#) outlets, but significantly more trust than independent bloggers, who were at the bottom of the trust scale.

"The findings in this study speak to the many cracks in the sports and media relationship that are being revealed with the rise of web-based [communication networks](#)," said Mike Cramer, executive director of the Texas Program in Sports and Media at The University of Texas at Austin, which funded the study. "The Texas Program in Sports and Media is thrilled to be presenting this defining research for the industry. We're looking forward engaging a full spectrum of substantive issues that define the breadth and complexity of the relationship sports and media has with American culture."

Avery Holton, a doctoral candidate in the School of Journalism at The University of Texas at Austin, surveyed 127 professional baseball teams

from every organizational level to measure their "trust" in various media and how they responded to requests for press passes. Team media relations officials were asked to rank their trust in media ranging from the traditional to the non-traditional. Holton developed a "trust index" to provide an unbiased picture of trust. The results showed a large divide between the levels of trust team management places in traditional media and bloggers.

Baseball front offices are starting to harness the power of social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, and they agree that independent bloggers are important to future coverage, but they have been slow to embrace independent bloggers. According to Holton, there is a perception that independent bloggers are mere fans who don't need a press pass to do their job.

"Independent bloggers wanting more access to teams need to continue to advance their credibility through trust and by moving themselves out of the fan category and into the social media arena," said Holton, who has worked as a sports journalist and as a communication director for a Triple A baseball team. "Bloggers may be able to achieve this by delivering original, newsworthy content, beefing up their site to reflect the most current in digital media, tracking and reporting increases in their daily site traffic and interacting with baseball front offices on Facebook and Twitter."

Many independent bloggers, such as MLBTradeRumors.com and Yahoo! Sports, have upward of two million pages views daily and represent some of the Internet's heaviest traffic, yet they rank far behind traditional media on trust and are the most likely group to be rejected (29 percent) for a press pass vs. traditional media (8 percent).

The survey, conducted in spring 2010, was supervised by Associate Journalism Professor Renita Coleman and underwritten by the Texas

Program in Sports and Media at The University of Texas at Austin, which strives to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and research on sports, [media](#) and culture.

Provided by University of Texas at Austin

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