TV Journalists and Social Media Use, *Adaptation to New Media*

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ABSTRACT

Key Words: Convergence, Diffusion of Innovations, Journalists, Multimedia, Newsroom

This study seeks to fill the gap of research regarding adoption of and utilization of new media, specifically social media in local newsrooms in the United States. There have been many studies that look at the relationship between broadcast TV news journalists and adaptation to online news duties. However, little empirical research has been conducted to examine a journalist's adaptation to social media during an average work day. This topic is important as advances in technology constantly change the way a newsroom functions and the speed at which journalists adapt to additional work responsibilities.

The author is conducting a correlational survey on a purposive sample considering the demographics of journalists (age, experience, education) and how these nominal variables impact adaptation to social media use. The target sample includes broadcast journalists only, specifically those who work in an on-air capacity as well as reporters who typically work on sports and weather assignments.

This paper seeks to answer research questions about journalists' adaptation to new media through a survey, support from an extensive literature review, and theoretical framework. Specifically, the author will employ Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory which indicates those who quickly adapt to new media usage are typically highly educated, more open to mass media and display forward social mobility (ROGERS).

This study collects and analyzes information which should contribute to knowledge about the ever-changing job duties of television news journalists. It will also offer insight into an employee's adaptation to new media use. With constant advances in technology and products, industries and organizations will continue to introduce new media into journalists' workloads. Just as newspaper reporters were expected to contribute to broadcast news products in Chicago's Tribune media company in the early 1990s (LAWSON-BORDERS), production companies now employ a director to not only direct but now also shoot and edit commercials. Adaptation to new technology in media seems to be here to stay (GRANT, WILKINSON).

Changes in audience participation and needs impact the television news journalist. Most newsrooms in the United States have adopted a written policy stating journalists must add social media to their daily work load when covering a story. Even network mainstream media has adopted social media such as Twitter as a way to reach audiences. CNN, CBS, ABC and CBS have developed social media pages and regularly try to engage news consumers through the platform regarding the big news stories of the day (TAMBURRI, POHL, YINGLING).

The technological evolution of media is influencing and changing the way news corporations gather and distribute news. A Pew Research Center Internet & American Life Project survey found that in August 2011, 65% of online adults used social networking sites, up from 61% during the previous year. This growth in the social media "audience" is relevant when exploring why news managers seek to converge TV news broadcasting reporting with online platforms and social media outlets. If journalists connect with the audience through another platform, managers hope that action will impact whether the person watches news broadcasts,

thus, potentially boosting ratings. Companies are more likely to purchase advertising from the television news stations with the highest ratings and therefore the largest audience.

Before delving into why news managers want journalists to adapt to distribution of news on social media alongside broadcast and online formats, it is important to consider definitions of convergence as pertaining to adaptation to innovation. “Convergence in journalism means the coming together of journalists and certain types of journalism that have been operating in separate spheres - newspapers, magazines, radio, television and online - to provide quality news in all those different formats (GRANT, WILKINSON).” Another scholar defines media convergence as, “...the realm of possibilities when cooperation occurs between print and broadcast for the delivery of multimedia content through the use of computers and the Internet (LAWSON-BORDERS).” Cooperation seems to be a buzz word amongst TV news managers when they explain the necessity of adaptation to new forms of media while asking journalists to take on more work to adapt to a changing audience (HUANG, HEIDER).

Rogers Diffusion of Innovation Theory offers insight and provides reasoning which can be tested in this example of social media adaptation. In any social or cultural organization, Rogers says there are levels at which different people react to change. Specifically, people react to advances in technology in certain stages. Journalists can certainly fit into this framework regarding the initial use of social media to distribute news.

Theory/framework

The study seeks to answer three research questions and use the Diffusion of Innovations Theory to explain or define potential relationships. Using the structure and definitions of the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, the author hypothesises there are specific types of

relationships between a journalist's age, education level and years of experience regarding adaptation of social media during the work day. Rogers' explained the patterns of adaptation to a new product or behavior through a hierarchy of "adapters" in categories of innovativeness (see figure).



Research Questions

R1: What is the relationship between a journalist's age and their degree of adaptation to social media use? R2: What is the relationship between a journalist's level of education and their degree of adaptation to social media use? R3: What is the relationship between a journalist's years of experience and their degree of adaptation to social media use?

Measurement

The study's purpose is to identify and document patterns among on-air television news journalists' demographics and their frequency of posts on social media sites. The author will consider the relationship between three independent variables and one dependent variable. Independent variables include age, years of experience and level of education. The questionnaire asks for the respondent's age in years and will include a single text box for the answer. Experience will be indicated by the respondent in a single text box and the

questionnaire will specify that the answer should be given in total years. The experience measurement includes the time the respondent has spent as a journalist either reporting or anchoring on television news, disregarding internships.

The dependent variable is degree of adaptation to social media use. Participants will indicate by using a number how many times during an average day they post on different social media sites. These questions will ask how many times a day the respondent posts on Twitter and on Facebook. A question also asks for a "percentage" of the day spent posting on social media sites. A question about access to technology that allows for posting is included to find out whether a journalist has the capability to use social media during the work day.

The questionnaire is currently undergoing a pilot test using the television news stations in Knoxville, Tennessee, (WATE-TV, WBIR-TV and WVLT-TV). The questions establish demographics which work with the Diffusion of Innovation assumptions that a younger, more educated person will adapt to changes and new products more easily.

Hypothesis

H1: The younger a journalist is, the more easily they adapt to new media and will post frequently on social media to distribute news during a typical work day.

H2: The higher the completed education level a journalist has obtained, the more easily they adapt to new media and will post frequently on social media to distribute news during a typical work day.

H3: The more years of experience a journalist has, the more likely they are to adapt to new media and will post frequently on social media to distribute news during a typical work day.

Procedure

Introductory emails were sent to news directors asking for participation in the study by facilitating the author to contact on-air personalities or simply have the news directors forward the link to the survey which will be provided in the first contact.

Adaptation to social media convergence will be measured by the frequency a journalist posts news-centered content to Facebook and Twitter during an eight-hour work day. Adaptation will also be measured by the percentage of workload the journalist indicates they perform while contributing to social media during the day.

The results will be analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean. The statistics can measure on average, for instance, how often a journalist between the ages of 20 and 23 posts to social media during the work day. The average frequency of posting will also be measured taking into account the variables of years of experience and education level.

Statistical tests will also be used to measure where or whether significantly statistical evidence is present between the group means.

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