

Title: Social media as journalistic tools among political journalists and commentators

Bio: Bente Kalsnes, PhD Candidate, Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo, Norway (bente.kalsnes@gmail.com).

Abstract

Social media services such as Facebook and Twitter have within few years become essential tools for political journalists and commentators. “Hybrid media system” (Chadwick, 2013), “ambient journalism”(Hermida, 2010) and “produsage” (Bruns, 2007) are some of the terms used to explain the transition from analogue to digital media, from traditional to social media. Studies have documented that social media and particular Twitter is used as sources by journalists (Broersma & Graham, 2012, 2013; Wallsten, 2013, Cision, 2011). However, it is still not clear how political journalists and commentators are using digital tools such as Facebook and Twitter to sort information, find sources and frame articles.

In this article, I will analyze how ten Norwegian political journalists and commentators (online, print, TV and radio) use social media as part of their journalistic tool case. The data material is based on semi-structured interviews, and the aim is threefold: First, to describe the purpose and usage of Facebook and Twitter among journalists and commentators. Secondly, to identify if and how social media has changed the journalists’ working routines. Lastly, I will analyze differences in social media practice among political journalists and commentators.

By doing a close-study of political journalists and commentators’ professional use of social media, I intend to explain how they are relating to sources in digital channels, how they analyze and sort relevant information – and as a consequence – describe how the agenda is set in a hybrid media system.

Title: Social Media Usage by Chinese Journalists: A survey analysis on youth journalists in Shanghai

Bio: Dr. Baohua Zhou is Associate Professor at the Journalism School of Fudan University, China. Director of the new media communication master program of Fudan, a research fellow of the Center for Information and Communication Studies and associate director of Fudan's Media and Public Opinion Research Centre (*FMORC*) (zhoubaohua@yeah.net).

Abstract

With the rapid development of social media in China (especially Chinese *Weibo* and *WeChat*), their impacts on journalism have attracted a lot of academic efforts. Although communication scholars have emphasized the significance of this line of research, the empirical studies focusing on the adoption and usage of social media among Chinese journalists and their influential factors are still very scant. Compared to other social contexts, China is somewhat special because of its coexistence of “dualistic discourse universes” (He, 2000), which characterizes contemporary Chinese society as a dualistic discourse system that distinguishes the Party line from grassroots ideologies, the official from the unofficial, and the centralized propaganda from the decentralized mobilization. The emergence of social media in China suggests the possibility of having qualitatively different information and expression from traditional/official media in terms of diversity and alternative content. Will this coexistence of “dualistic discourse universes” encourage Chinese journalists to seek social media as an effective “alternative media” to express their personal opinions on current public issues or post the sensitive or even censored news that they cannot publish on traditional media? To what degree would Chinese journalists like to strategically visualize the “backstage” of journalism, especially part of the news production process, on social media to invite public supervision to evade or fight against state control? Will the three paradigms, “party journalism”, “market journalism” and “professional journalism”, which now co-exist among Chinese journalists, have differential influence on their social media usage and expressive behaviors? What's the relationship between Chinese journalists' professional and personal/private usage of social media and how to make sense of their interplay?

To address these questions, we will analyze a questionnaire survey data on young journalists in Shanghai ($N=535$). We will systematically report the current status of adoption and usage among Chinese journalists from both professional and personal dimensions. We will explore to what degree the social media serve as an “alternative media” for Chinese

journalists to publish and express in the context of “dualistic discourse universes” as well as their articulations with journalistic paradigms. We will also examine the influences of personal socio-demographics, professional positions, individual attitudes towards social media, as well as organizational characteristics. With this empirical study in Chinese context, we hope to make a dialogue with similar studies on social media and journalism from other societies and make better sense of how social media is reconstructing the journalism around the world.

Title: Social Media and the Transformation of post-revolution Egyptian newspapers Public Space

Bio: Ahmed El Gody is a Senior Lecturer in Media and Communication Studies at Örebro University, Sweden (ahmed.elgody@oru.se).

Abstract

The opening months of 2011, the world witnessed a series of turmoil events in Egypt that soon lead to uprisings toppling President Mubarak regime. The Egyptian revolution was, by far, the most media exposed event in the Middle East for journalists/ activists using different forms of media –especially social media- to voice Egyptian opposition to the world. Even with the Egyptian government shutting Internet lines, imprisoning activists, blocking media websites, confiscating newspapers, cutting off mobile communications, and scrambling satellite signals to limit coverage of the events, Egyptian journalists circumvented government pressure to voice their cause online that lead many label the Egyptian uprising as the ‘Facebook’ or the ‘Twitter’ revolution.

Since 2011, the utilisation of social media has irrevocably changed the nature of the traditional public sphere. One can see the Egyptian online society as a multiplicity of networks. Audiences started to provide detailed descriptions of Egyptian street politics, posting multimedia material, generating public interest, and reinforcing citizen power and democracy. This trend changed the way audiences consumed news, with traditional media, (especially independent and opposition) started to access online information to develop their media content and to escape government control.

Indeed, after the first phase of the revolution, social media became a main source for information and political participation. New actors started to invest in creating news portals to attract communities and to enable these communities to interact with each other’s ideas on the one hand and with the ideas of the news portals on the other.

Similarly, several media organisations started to expand their presence to social networks so that, as well as providing news content, they also provided a ‘space’ for interactivity. Social media news sites became the playground for political parties, activists, and groups from various ideologies creating ‘online spaces of flows’ to cater for the emerging needs of the readers. In transitional societies moving towards democracy, such as Egypt, political development is a central topic which journalists mediate with their audience. Indeed,

journalists inform the audience and facilitate informed choices as ‘gatewatchers’, not as watchdog ‘gatekeepers’, in the power struggle between audience, media, and politics.

The aim of this paper is to study how different news organisations (government, opposition, non-partisan) are utilizing social media to establish a sustainable infrastructure for free and public democratic deliberations in the post Egypt revolution. Building on Network journalism theories and empirical material collected, this article aims at utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis and netnography to answer the following research questions: (1) the use of social media by Egyptian news organizations in interacting with audience (2) nature of online discussions in news organizations social media outlets.

Title: UGC within the BBC: how covering the Syria conflict has altered journalistic practices and BBC News' output

Bio: Lisette Johnston is a second year Journalism PhD student at City University London, UK (lissettejohnston@yahoo.com).

Abstract

For much of the Syria conflict, news outlets such as the BBC had been forced to engage with media activists. Even when correspondents can enter the country, this user generated content remains a vital storytelling tool, complementing journalistic 'boots on the ground' as eyewitnesses become media 'producers' (Allan 2013, Bruns 2003). This research examines how user generated content (UGC) has been helped BBC newsrooms understand developments surrounding the Syria conflict and shaped their coverage over the last three years. It also considers how BBC journalistic practices have changed to incorporate this content and feature voices from Syria which were arguably marginalised when events surrounding the conflict began in March 2011.

Using newsroom observations and 25 qualitative interviews, this paper examines how individual roles have changed, and the ways in which BBC departments have adapted to make best use of UGC, which at times is the only resource available to illustrate events inside Syria.

For the past three years the BBC has covered the conflict, often in challenging circumstances. Relationships between BBC departments have been tested, as journalists have developed new practices and verification measures to cope with UGC – all while maintaining the BBC values of accuracy and trust in a pressurised news environment. This paper explores these difficulties, how they have been overcome, and where new relationships could lead to improved workflows and more streamlined ways of using content produced by 'the people formerly known as the audience' (Jarvis 2008).

Following on from other newsroom studies on the use of UGC (Wardle 2008, Harrison 2010, Aday 2013, Robertson 2013), this research suggests that despite frequently relying on this content, BBC editors still have the final say as to what passes through the 'gates' into their final news product. Therefore, despite a changing media ecology, BBC journalism cannot be said to be truly collaborative or 'networked' (Sambrook 2010).