

Second Annual Social Media Technology Conference & Workshop

Howard University

Bowie State University

September 27-28, 2012

Social Media and Intersections between Politics, Culture and Law

P R O C E E D I N G S

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Volume 1

<http://socialmediatechnologyconference.com>

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The Arab Spring and Social Media

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Abstract

It has been more than a year since the world watched the revolutions that shook the Middle East, the revolutions also known as the Arab Spring. There has been extensive material written about the internal factors (corruption, greed, nepotism, despotism) which led to the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Libya and there has been some material written about external factors. This paper explores the connection between the Arab countries that revolted and the use of social media sites, specifically Facebook, which acted as a “voice” for the people. It is hypothesized that Facebook had an impact on the revolutions, an impact that continues today. In addition to data from recent studies, this paper implements a survey which will attempt to gather data from a pool of Arab citizens and will endeavor to understand the respondents’ experiences with social media, revolution, and their perceptions of each.

Introduction

There is no doubt that there are numerous causes of revolutions in the past history. Many factors for the revolutions in the entire history such as Social Injustice, religious, corruption, freedom, human rights, economy, unemployment, and etc. in the past, most revolutions that happened in Europe, America, Africa, and Asia took long time to be succeeded. Now, it might take a few days depends on many reasons. All of Arab Spring nation’s demonstrations had strong reactions from the governments to be in authority. Arabic people especially the youth used social media to spread their voices on the issue all over the world.

All the five nations are republics’ countries but they don’t care about constitution very much. Some presidents had been in power more than thirty years. One of them is over eighty four years old and four of them are more than ninety six years old. In addition, two countries formers leaders had created the revolutions more than thirty years ago. Muammar Gaddafi had created the revolution against the old royal regime and became a president in 1969 (Griswold, 2010). There is a big role for the social media in Arab Spring through people participations on the new media using their computers, laptops, cellphones, etc. They covered most the news and the mistakes from the governments second by second. Social media, especially Facebook, played a big role in the Arab Spring. The revolutions occurred in five countries: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria. All the revolutions succeeded in overthrowing their governments expect Syria, which is still ongoing. There are many factors that fueled the revolutions in the Middle East such as police brutality, voting and election fraud, government corruption, low incomes, and many other issues.

Tunisia

On December 17, 2010, Muhammad Al Boazizy stood in front of his governor's gated house, doused himself with gasoline, set fire to himself. Al Boazizy, a fruit and vegetable merchant from Sidi Bou Zid governorate of Tunisia had his produce business halted by the government, by corrupt state officials. He was told to buy a permit because a mobile cart was illegal without one but he did not have enough funds to complete his paperwork. During this altercation, Fadia Al Hamdi, female police officer, slapped Al Boazizy after he protested the seizure of his goods, and the confiscation of his vehicle. After this confrontation, Al Boazizy was desolate. The poor living conditions, rampant unemployment, high cost of life, and lack of support from the corrupt government were part of the reasons Al Boazizy chose to make a very public display of his suicide. He martyred himself for better rights for Tunisia's people. This was beginning of the "Jasmine Revolution" (Hanley, 2011). Protesters were greeted with tear gas, live ammunition and clubs. Any chance that the protests would fade away was lost on January 8, when the number of police related deaths by gunfire surged from less than 10 to more than 30 (Ali Baba, 2011). President Ben Ali, the Tunisian leader for 23 years, addressed the public and promised punishment to the protestors. This inflamed the public even more. Students were joined by labor unions, lawyers and opposition groups. The government pushed back even further by arresting activists, bloggers, journalists, artists and firing cabinet members who were sympathetic to the protests (Hanley, 2011). On January 13, President Ben Ali lifted censorship bans including the Web, and bloggers and other cyber-activists that had been arrested on January 6th were released from captivity. Tunisian Facebook users (1.6 million social networkers) changed their profile pictures to pictures of the Tunisian flags, either bloody or black flags of mourning. Facebook, Twitter, and the internet in general "helped a great deal in the blossoming of the Tunisian revolution and other countries in North Africa, there are already fears of contagion" (China, 2011). On January 14, Ben Ali and his immediate family fled the country. They attempted to gain refuge in Malta but were refused. They were granted asylum in Saudi Arabia.

Egypt

Time reporters Abigail Hauslohner and Rainai Abouzeid walked among the protesters and felt the blunt and brutal response of the regime's antiriot police. They were both in direct line of tear gas Time photographers, Yui Kozyrev and Dominic Nahr, were both stopped by Egyptian soldiers. On January 31, Nahr was photographing a looted mall and soldiers took all of his camera's memory cards. On February 2, during clashes in Tahrir Square, soldiers grabbed Kozyrev, and an Egyptian secret policeman opened his camera then confiscated his memory card as well. Time continued to cover the Egyptian uprising, and their website had one of the earliest reports of re-emerging public support for Mubarak. In January, their website boasted 22.5 million unique visitors (Stengel, 2011). To recap the fall of another 30 year semi-military leader, on February 1, 2011, Mr. Mubarak announced he would not seek re-election in September. On February 10, he announced he would remain president, but hand over his power to the vice-president. The next day, his vice-president, Omar Suleiman, announced Mubarak was stepping down; the military would run the country. On May 24, it was announced that Mubarak and his two sons would stand trial for the deaths of the protestors.

Yemen

In early 2011, Yemen's unrest began, and Yemeni citizen demanded that President Ali Abdullah Saleh "Get Out." February's anti-government "Day of Rage", was actually a peaceful march of

demonstrators. By midday, the protesters, 20,000 in number, had already drifted home (Holmes & Kibsi, 2011). At the same time, a counter-demonstration in support of Saleh took place. It was also peaceful. Pro-Saleh supporters included tribal loyalists. Anti-Saleh protestors come from all walks of life, but unlike its neighbors, Yemen is mostly rural, and disconnected to some extent. “Here, you can’t mobilize the masses through Twitter” (ibid). Everything had to be done in a grassroots style movement, so the results are low-key. An additional factor contributing to the lack of success is that Saleh was able to watch Egypt’s revolution and Mubarak’s actions and reactions to the revolts. By June, the unrest had become revolution and, after a mortar attack on the presidential compound, a wounded President Saleh took flight. He was admitted to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for medical treatment but there was a degree of uncertainty about the severity of his wounds and his condition (Boone, 2011). Saudis assisted in a ceasefire but it did not last. Even in June, the protesters were “skeptical about Saleh’s whereabouts” and “Saleh is trying to dupe us again. This isn’t the end. There will be more violence. Saleh isn’t done yet” (ibid). An article dated March of this year states that over 2,000 were killed in the uprising. The same article also claims that this “death toll includes unarmed protestors, military defectors, and more than 120 children” (al-Haj, 2012). The same article also estimates that 22,000 people were wounded since the Arab Spring touched Yemen. Saleh had temporarily transferred power to his vice president, Abed rabbo Mansour Hadi before flying to Saudi Arabia for medical help related to his wounds in the rocket attack on his palace. He took most of his family with him on the flight (Londono & Raghavan, 2011). In July of 2011, “Yemeni protestors formed a transitional council of opposition figures to lead effort to try to force President Ali Abdullah Saleh from power” (Ghobari, Sederat, & Piper, 2011). The 17 member council included a former Yemeni president and leaders of opposition groups. Some of them were exiles. The group placed General Adbullah Ali Aleiwa in the position of armed forces commander. “An official from an anti-Saleh coalition of mainstream opposition parties said the Joint Meeting would not support the new council” (ibid). Saleh was gone but different interest groups were still fighting, scrambling for power. Over the next few months, Yemen’s parliament “approved immunity to free President Saleh from prosecution, following through on a deal for him to give up power” (Kasinof, 2012). The Obama administration gave Saleh permission to travel to the U.S. for surgery still related to his wounds in the rocket attack. Despite his security in his home country, Saleh could still be persecuted outside of Yemen, by the International Criminal Court (ibid). In February of this year, “Yemen’s first new president in more than three decades was sworn in” (Kasinof, 2012). The former Vice President, who had received a portion of power last year, “had been chosen as a consensus candidate by the former ruling party, and was confirmed in a one-candidate election” (ibid). Kasinof also claimed (2012) that voter turnout was strong, despite only one candidate on the ballot. President Hadi faces huge challenges in the form of the economy, security and politics. As mentioned earlier, there was also some concern over Saleh’s influence.

Syria

In late January, 2011, protests began in Syria, spurred by the corruption in the Assad regime, which had lasted for 47 years. President Bashar al-Assad inherited the regime from his father in 2000. Poverty affects 14% of the Syrian population, and the employment rate was around 20%. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are not allowed, nor are foreign journalists or the right to speak against the ruling Baath party (Baker, 2011). Activists find themselves imprisoned, tortured or killed for doing so. On Wednesday, March 2, 2011, a small number of dissidents attempted to gather to show their support for Egypt’s Tahrir square protesters but they were soon

attacked by a group of what they assumed were plain-clothes police (ibid). Protestors also attempted to organize something for the fourth and fifth of February, Syria's "Day of Rage". Syria had long had an official, enforced ban on Facebook and other websites where users "can interact with other members outside of Syria" (Social Media, 2011). To assist the users, internet cafes began using proxies to block the ban, but the Syrian government lifted the ban sometime this year. Dissidents claim that it was a ploy (ibid) and, since Iran has allegedly provided the Syrian government with sophisticated equipment capable of spying on the citizens, those activists claim "it was more useful for them (the government) to allow activists to communicate on the site, and then track us (protestors) down using their team of loyalists who search the Internet" (ibid). The protests escalated to an uprising on the 15th of March, 2011. Just three months after they allowed access to social media sites, in May, the Syrian government began to crack down "on protesters' use of social media and the Internet to promote their rebellion" (Preston, 2011). The suppression included turning off electricity and telephone service in neighborhoods with the most unrest. Protestors have been cooperating with those who have already fled the country in exile and using social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter to notify the outside world of the "brutal military crackdown on protesters that has killed more than 700 people and led to mass arrests in the last nine weeks" (ibid). At the current time, this information is more than a year and some months old. There can only be a greater number of deaths since then. Activists began creating fake Facebook accounts under assumed names in order to protect themselves and their families from police detention and abuse. People began sharing passwords with friends "so that if they mysteriously vanished, their friends would delete regime criticisms on their Facebook pages, which were considered enough evidence to detain someone under the country's strict freedom of expression laws (Preston, 2011).

Libya

In early 2011, Libya's uprising began. The rebels were not well armed, and faced setbacks such as a well-armed, well-coordinated military, a determined dictator and loyal supporters. Despite the odds, Libyan protesters and rioters fought for months. A no-fly zone was imposed. Western nations faced public pressure to intervene (The colonel, 2011). President Obama spoke in February, 2011, telling the world "We strongly condemn the use of violence in Libya. The American people extend our deepest condolences...The suffering and bloodshed is outrageous and unacceptable. So are threats and orders to shoot –peaceful protesters and further punish the people of Libya. These actions violate international norms and every standard of common decency. This violence must stop" (Turmoil in Libya, 2011). On March 12th, loyalists ambushed and killed one of Al Jazeera's cameramen who had created inspiring compilations of pan-Arab revolutions and was blamed for inciting more activity by the rebels (The colonel, 2011).. The fighting and violence continued through the summer, and slow progress was made. In the last days of August, one of Gaddafi's sons, Saadi, claimed he was "authorized to negotiate with interim authorities to end the fighting in Libya" (Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, 2011). There was a strong contrast between Saadi's words and those from Saif, another son, one who supported his father and had gone into hiding, into fugitive status with him. He claimed "the resistance continues and victory is near" (ibid). He also promised that his father was fine. During this time, international leaders were heading to Paris to discuss the future of Libya. Despite the offer to negotiate, Libya's interim leaders were not interested in negotiations and they issued an ultimatum to Gaddafi: surrender. Gaddafi's whereabouts were not known during this time, although his wife and three children escaped to Algeria; spouses of the Colonel's children and

their children were in the group and they are allowed into the country based on humanitarian grounds (Saif al-Islam, 2011; Fahim & MacFarquhar, 2011). In early September, Libyan rebels took control of the Red Valley, one of the main defensive lines held by pro-Gaddafi troops (Rebels claim, 2011). Also during this time, war crimes prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo sought assistance from Interpol to help with Gaddafi's arrest; he would be charged for crimes against humanity including murder and persecution (ibid). The National Transitional Council (NTC) feared that Gaddafi would try to escape. Neighboring country Niger assured the NTC that he was not in their country even though a group of other regime officials fled there. Muammar AlGaddafi was killed on October 20, 2011 by revolutionary forces (Ali Baba, 2011). He was initially found in a sewage tunnel in his hometown of Tripoli but there were varying reports about his death. Interim Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril, claimed Gaddafi was shot in the head during a gunfire exchange between pro- and anti-Gaddafi forces. However, cellphone videos posted to social media sites and played on tv stations show that he was already "bloodied and dazed" as he was led to a truck (Sheridan, 2011). Other conflicting reports and gruesome details later surfaced. He had ruled Libya for 42 years, was thought to be aged 69 when he died and was the first leader to be killed in the Arab Spring uprisings. "Photos of his blood-smearred face quickly spread across the region, sending a powerful message to both dictators and demonstrators everywhere, much like photos of former Egyptian ruler Hosni Mubarak being hauled before a court" (Sheridan, 2011). The people of Libya erupted in joy. The next issue facing the country was whether or not the people could unite and work toward governing a country that had yet to know democracy. The first step was to gain security, and then it would be necessary to fill the power vacuum left by Gaddafi. Also, the pro-Gaddafi poisoners would have to be dealt with. The dictator's set of laws no longer applied. It was expected that the interim government would declare the country liberate and begin the process of appointing new government officials and setting a date for elections (ibid).

Methodology

A comprehensive questionnaire was created and then uploaded to Survey Monkey, an online survey service. This particular questionnaire was posted on the pages of the Facebook revolutions. Responses to the questionnaire were to be made within one month. The author just got only 259 individuals responded to the survey. Out of the 259 research subjects who responded to the study, 16.6% of them were from Tunisia, 32.4% came from Egypt, 12.4% came from Libya, 14.5% were from Yemen and 24.1% were from Syria, while the rest were from other countries. 42.2% of the respondents were between 18-25 years old, 47% were between 26 and 35 years old. 63.4% of the subjects were males, while 35.8% of them were females. 44.2% of the respondents were undergraduate students, 29% had graduate degrees, while 3.0% had doctoral degrees. 48.7% respondents were single, 46.1% of them were married. The dependent variable of the study was the Arab Spring. The main independent variable was social media (mainly Facebook). Statistical correlation was used in studying the relationship between these two variables. This method of study was important in determining whether the Arab Spring was in any way influenced by social media. This particular relationship is normally determined using a correlation co-efficient. In order to determine whether the Arab Spring was influenced by social media in any way, the author randomly chose six respondents who had responded to the study. Therefore, the correlation coefficient = $\frac{6(20,485) - (247 \times 486)}{[6(11,409) - (247^2)]} \times$

$[6(40,022)-486] = 0.530$. This correlation coefficient suggests that there is a moderate positive correlation between the two variables. Thus the Arab Spring could have been influenced by social media.

Findings

From the survey made, it was established that 99.6% of the respondents used social media. It is only 0.4% of them which did not use social media. Among those who used social media, it was established that 95.7% of them used Facebook, 64.1% used You Tube, 49.6% used Twitter, 18.0% used LinkedIn, 17.2% used Blog and 2.3% used other forms of social media. The number of hours spent over the social media varied among the users. 31.8% of the users spent between 4 and 6 hours on the different forms of social media. Only 4.7% of the users spent less than 1 hour on the social media. It was found out that in the course of using the social media, 77% of the users posted comments on the various forms of social media, 78.5% liked the comments and postings of other people, 50.8 % of the users used social media in chatting and 76.6% of the users only viewed what other people had posted on the different types of social media. The respondents used different forms of technology to access social media. 82.15% of the users accessed social media though laptops, 36.6% used personal computers, 16.5% used public computers, and 15.2% used the Tablet and 63.8 % made use of the cell phones. 99.6% of the respondents owned cell phones. It is only 0.4% of the respondents who had no cell phones. Among the cell phone users, 75% of them had cell phones with internet (3g or 4g), 26.2% of them had phones without the internet, while 2.3% of the users were not aware whether their phones had internet. Concerning whether they agreed with the Arab revolutions, 45.9% of the respondents strongly agreed with the Arab revolutions, 19.4% of them took a neutral position, while 3.7% strongly disagreed with the revolutions. When asked where they could support the revolution if taken back to this time in history, 33.9% of the respondents argued that they will strongly support it. 4.1% said that they will strongly not support the revolution. It was established that 53.5% of the respondents had participated in one way or the other in the Arab revolutions through various forms of social media, especially through Facebook. It was further established that 33.2% of those who participated in the revolutions did so by joining street protesting. It was also found out that 48.5% of the street protesters were mainly influenced by the social media. When those who participated in the Arab spring were asked whether the revolutions had any impact on their counties, 27.6% of the respondents argued that after the Arab revolution, the condition of their country is better than it was before. 12.1% of the respondents felt that the condition of their country was worse than it was before the revolution, while 21.8% felt that the revolution had no impact at all and that the situation remained the same. When asked whether social media contributed to the success of the Arab spring, 54% of the respondents argued that it played a great role in ensuring that the revolutions succeeded.

Conclusion

The Arab Spring refers to the series of revolutionary uprisings that engulfed the Middle East and North Africa recently. The uprisings were first experienced in Tunisia. As a jobless graduate, Bouazizi was frustrated and disgusted to an extent of deciding to set himself on fire. This action

sparked violent street demonstrations which later on resulted in the overthrowing of the Tunisian president and his government. In fact social media ignited and catalyzed the trend that these demonstrations were taking. Within no time, there were demonstrations in more than 15 Arab countries, including Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and Syria and among other countries. The protestors were demonstrating against unemployment, corrupt regimes, dictatorship, human rights violations and inflation. Up to date, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen have been able to overthrow their governments. In other countries, such as, Syria, the protest is still on. Due to the power of social media, the Arab Spring has been supported by other countries and it has really begun to influence these countries.

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Creating a Social Media Policy for Your Business

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Abstract

While social media have become the go-to marketing tools of businesses, companies must not forget why social media exist in the first place. Individuals use social media to connect, socialize, and network with friends, family members, colleagues, and others around the globe. Thus, the very nature of social media presents an obvious problem for employers. How can companies prevent the misuse of social media by employees in order to protect themselves and to promote the individuality of their workers? This question can be answered by implementing a social media policy. Every social media policy may be different for every company, but each one should be unambiguous and honest for the highest level of comprehension and application by employees. This paper discusses how a social media policy is developed and what key elements make one successful.

Introduction

While social media have become the go-to marketing tools of businesses, companies must not forget why social media exist in the first place. Individuals use social media to connect, socialize, and network with friends, family members, colleagues, and others around the globe. Thus, the very nature of social media presents an obvious problem for employers. How can companies prevent the misuse of social media by employees in order to protect themselves and to promote the individuality of their workers? This question can be answered by implementing a social media policy. Every social media policy may be different for every company, but each one should be unambiguous and honest for the highest level of comprehension and application by employees. This paper discusses what key elements can make a social media policy successful.

Findings

Strategy

Strategy is the first and most important part in developing a social media policy. Without it, the policy will lack clear and definite purpose. A strategy will make the social media policy cohesive and understandable, which in turn should make it easily applicable by employees. Just like its use in strategic management, the strategy should be an overall plan to achieve a specific goal. Each company's situation is different, so the strategy for each of them will be different, too. One way to ensure a sound strategy is to use definitions; social media must be defined. CCH (2011) has stated, "Social media are a constantly changing venue, and many people are not clear about exactly what they are" (CCH, 2011, p. 4). It has suggested making a list of websites that fall

under company policy rather than being overly broad and just using the term “social media.” Once a strategy has been agreed upon and social media have been explained, a social media policy can take its shape.

Company Culture

Company culture dictates how a social media policy is written. Simply stated, a company’s culture is its visions, values, and practices shared by employees (Reh, 2011). The most important thing to understand about the inclusion of culture in a social media policy is that this allows employees to easily adapt to it (Harrison, 2010). Cisco (as cited in National Telephone Cooperative Association, 2010) has concluded that many of its employees ignore policy on a daily basis. The company prevents social media use at work, which has led to employees reconfiguring settings on equipment to allow them to use forbidden sites. It is obvious that banning the use of social media at work conflicts with the company’s culture that states: “Cisco allows people to connect locally and globally. That’s the human network, a place where everyone is connected” (Cisco, 2010, p. 10). In the corporate overview, it acknowledges that employees along with customers are included in this connectivity, which seems to conflict with a complete ban on social media use on company equipment. Integration of company culture in this situation, and in any other, could help employees apply social media policy instead of ignoring it.

Unified Voice vs. Multiple Voices

Perhaps pre-determined by company strategy and culture in some cases, the choice to have a unified voice or multiple voices on social media exists. A unified voice consists of one voice that acts on behalf of the company; it is branded and seen as the company itself (Harrison, 2010). CCH (2011) suggests that someone or a department be defined as the owner of the company’s social media presence, who is responsible for what the company is saying online. Harrison (2010) has conveyed a particularly good reason for having a unified voice: “It enables [a company] to better control the communications representing the organization” (Harrison, 2010, p. 17). Having a unified voice allows the “owner” of a company’s social media presence to oversee employee participation and to shutdown non-compliant groups, pages, and blogs in order to uphold company standards. While this may seem like a very closed approach to developing a social media policy, it still allows employees to participate in social media as long as they adhere to company policy and receive approval from the “owner.” Opposite of this, multiple voices allows many employees to use social media on behalf of the company. The point of this approach is to allow employees to contribute to the company’s online presence on social media. Companies may choose this option in order to increase employee morale by making employees feel valued, to promote conversation within and outside of the company, or to increase brand presence online. However, there are more risks associated with the multiple voices approach. Implementation of a proper monitoring system and proper training of employees must be done as well.

Legalities

Social media use by employees can often become a liability without a social media policy in place. There are numerous cases of employees being fired or sued for statements they made on social media sites (Public Relations Society of America, 2010). That is why it is necessary to include rules or guidelines in a social media policy that help minimize legal risks associated with social media use. Gibbs (2011) potential legal risks have included “compliance problems,

defamation lawsuits, copyright infringement, employment discrimination, and... class-action law suits” (p. 46-48). CCH (2011) has stressed the importance of client confidentiality, attribution to sources of content, and non-personal discussions to aid in preventing legal action. Also, Carrouth (2010) has presented social media policy as a way to protect a business by detailing “common-sense principles that sometimes don’t find their [ways] into the virtual world” (p. 8). According to this article, these principles include protecting company confidentiality and company property, prohibiting employment discrimination and harassment, and defining the use of a company’s computer systems. It is also equally as important to realize that employees do have rights when it comes to social media use, especially in regards to freedom of speech and protected concerted activity. Aspen Publishers (2011) has outlined the National Labor Relations Act established by the National Labor Relations Board, which protects the rights of private-sector employees. The National Labor Relations Act states that it is unlawful for a company to completely ban legitimate communications among employees about the terms and conditions of their employment, which now extends to the use of social media sites. Also, the Federal Electronic Communications Act and some state statutes outlaw any employment action against employees who engage in legal, constitutional activities while they are off duty (Credit Union National Association, 2010). It is recommended that an expert or an attorney review a company’s social media policy before it is implemented (CCH, 2011).

Business Use vs. Personal Use

The majority of a social media policy contains what employees can or cannot do on social media sites. Whether a company chooses to have a unified voice or multiple voices, business use and personal use must be explained. This protects a brand and allows an employee to be his or her self online (Berta, 2009). According to Harrison (2010), any person that identifies him or her self as an employee or uses a company email account for a social media site is a representative of that company. A good rule of thumb, though, that is stated over and over again says that an employee should always indicate when his or her opinions are strictly their own, not the company’s (e.g., Volmar, 2010; Harrison, 2010). This can simply be done by including a statement that acknowledges this, such as “The postings on this site are my own and don’t necessarily represent the philosophy, strategies, or opinions of XYZ company” (Harrison, 2010, p. 17). Another good, simple way for employees’ views to be distinguished from a company’s views is for the employee to always write in first-person. Gibbs (2011) has said that when an employee uses first-person, it will make it clear that the person is not acting on behalf of a company, but rather in a personal capacity. There will always be grey areas when it comes to this. A social media policy must always be flexible in order to accommodate such instances (Harrison, 2010).

Monitoring

The final element that is necessary for a successful social media policy is monitoring. Companies should monitor social media in two ways. They should monitor company pages on social media sites, and they should monitor employee use of these sites (Kane et al., 2009). Monitoring company pages should seem like common sense, but many companies forget that the feedback loop on the Internet takes much less time to complete its cycle than most traditional media do. Kane et al. (2009) have suggested engaging online communities. Internet users do not just talk about companies anymore; they talk to them. Helpful tools that aid in monitoring include Google alerts, Twitter keyword monitors, and Facebook’s Lexicon. When it comes to

monitoring employees' use of social media, things are not as black and white. According to the Credit Union National Association (2010), monitoring has to be carried out in the least intrusive way. Companies should only seek information that is work-related in order to protect their businesses and their employees, and no person should act as someone they are not in order to obtain information (Credit Union National Association, 2010). Kane et al. (2009) have also suggested implementing a core team along with "deputized employees" to monitor employee use on social media sites. In many cases, a company might not have access to someone's Facebook page due to privacy settings. However, a co-worker may be friends with that employee and can monitor that person's posts. This must be disclosed in the social media policy.

Conclusion

This paper has provided some general insight into building an efficient social media policy for any company in any industry. All policies will not be the same, but the elements outlined here-- strategy, company culture, unified voice vs. multiple voices, legalities, business use vs. personal use, and monitoring-- provide the building blocks for a good social media policy. By outlining and explaining these elements, it is easy to see how these are applied to social media policy and how they can continue to improve company policy over time.

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No Business Like Show Business in Online News

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Abstract

Entertainment stories have been popular with readers in the U.S. for many decades, but the adoption of the Internet as a primary tool for consuming news may be changing the way newspaper organizations cover the topic. A content analysis of two constructed weeks' worth of entertainment items from four newspapers and four online-only news organization rivals sharing a common home city indicated entertainment stories are included more frequently online than in print, though there is no significant difference between the online editions of the newspapers and the online-only publications. An examination of the sources used within those items also revealed newspapers used more business sources while online publications used more entertainers as sources, indicating online publications may focus more on entertainers while print publications focus more on the business side of the industry.

Introduction

The Internet has changed the way readers obtain news, giving them unprecedented freedom to view specifically the news they want rather than having to shuffle through the hierarchical structure of the print newspaper. Rather than reading from top to bottom and section to section, online readers now have the ability to scan tabs on a news website for topics that interest them. They can also bypass their hometown news site entirely by entering key terms into a search engine and choosing the publication that best fits their inquiry. One of the most popular topics among online readers is entertainment, with celebrities and industry news topping lists of most-searched items and most-read stories on news websites (Tewksbury, 2003; 2005). New features detailing what news items score page views and new audience methods for finding news online may be prompting more news organizations to alter their content in hope of garnering a spot atop the first page on search engines, potentially leading to more coverage of items that frequently earn those online spots, such as entertainment. However, lingering needs to appeal to print subscribers may lead to differences in content among news organizations with print products and those without. The purpose of this study was to explore potential content differences in newsprint and online as journalists seek to define news in ways that most benefit their organizations.

Entertainment Preferences in Print and Online

Research has revealed print and online readers do not often prefer to read the same topics (Hollander, 2010; Maier, 2010; Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2010; Tewksbury & Althaus, 2000). One study comparing participants' habits when reading The New York Times in print and online revealed online readers selected fewer national, international, and

political items and were less likely to recall events from the news during the study (Tewskbury & Althaus, 2000).

Entertainment stories have been popular with online readers, and stories featuring celebrities have helped drive up page views online. Researchers found Yahoo! News readers enjoy entertainment stories, ranking them third most popular out of nine news topics behind world and national news (Curtain, Dougall, & Mersey, 2008). Entertainment articles can contribute to the growth of a news product in competition with other organizations. A study of three German publications revealed that one news organization featuring entertainment stories displayed greater readership growth during a 10-year period than their hard-news counterparts did (Ludwig, 2000).

Similarly, stories about celebrities and entertainers are often viewed by online newsreaders. One study found items featuring celebrities and odd news were the most-emailed stories (Curtain, Dougall, & Mersey, 2008). Thus, not only do online readers appear to prefer to read stories about entertainers; they share them with others, creating a broader audience for journalists who use entertainers as sources.

Page Views vs. Subscriptions

Online metrics allow journalists to access information about reader preferences in previously unavailable ways, potentially impacting the ways in which they define news. News organizations once found it difficult to gauge reader interest in a given news item, relying solely on polls of readers who may not report their preferences accurately (Bernt, Fee, Gifford, & Stempel, 2000). At best, these surveys offered general feedback on topic preferences. However, online metrics reveal reader preferences and activities in real time. Media organizations now have the ability to monitor users' habits, following their movement through the website and measuring the amount of time spent on each item.

Organizations that publish exclusively online have to appeal to reader preferences to attract page views, which is their only means for attracting advertisers. At the web-only news site Gawker, founder Nick Denton pushed his bloggers to produce news that entertain readers online and attract page views, such as items about scandals, celebrities, and oddities (McGrath, 2010). In a memo to staffers, Denton wrote: "The staples of old yellow journalism are the staples of the new yellow journalism: sex; crime; and, even better, sex crime" (McGrath, 2010, p. 2).

However, newspapers with both print and online editions are charged with the task of appealing to readers with divergent preferences. Newspapers were largely built on paid subscriptions, a revenue model that encourages journalism companies to build stable relationships with readers and employ a long-term perspective in evaluating news choices (Mings & White, 2000). Readers subscribe to the newspaper for news content, and advertisers place their messages in the product based on the promise of reaching subscribers (Doyle, 2009; Martin & Souder, 2009). Although much of the readership has shifted online, most newspaper organizations in 2011 still got a majority of their revenue from print advertising, according to financial statements of publicly traded media companies. In 2011, newspapers lost about \$10 in print advertising revenue for every \$1 they gained online (Lee, 2012). Thus, appealing to print readers with content that interests and keeps them loyal is still a necessity for newspapers.

Theory of the Firm

Differences between newspaper organizations seeking both subscribers and page views and web-only organizations primarily seeking only page views may be predicted by the theory of the firm, which argues that companies will give primacy to their economic interests. The basic tenet of the theory is the assumption that the goal of a firm is to turn a profit (Foss, Lando, & Thomsen, 1999; Hoskins, McFadyen, & Finn, 2002).

Media organizations are no exception to the theory of the firm because most exist to make a profit (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The methods for maximizing profit at newspaper organizations differ from those at web-only organizations. Although both rely on readership figures to attract advertisers, newspaper organizations have been built on long-term goals that include the establishment of a steady base of subscribers while web-only organizations have needed to focus on short-term goals of attracting page views that can fluctuate from moment to moment (Mings & White, 2000). The theory of the firm predicts that these differing methods for prizing long- or short-term goals for attracting readers and advertisers will lead the two types of organizations to differ in how they define news to suit their own economic best interests.

H1a: A greater percentage of the total items in web-only publications will be on the entertainment topic than will those in newspaper publications.

H2: Entertainment items in web-only publications will contain a greater percentage of entertainer sources than will those in either edition of the newspaper publications.

RQ1: Will entertainment items in newspapers contain a higher percentage for a source other than entertainer than those in web-only publications?

Methodology

Four pairs of traditional newspapers and online-only news organizations from different markets that focused on producing local, general interest news content were selected for this study. Organizations selected for this study also used a minimum of three full-time employees to produce news rather than relying mostly on contributors and aggregated content. News organizations in this study also need to produce content a minimum of five days a week, and print organizations selected charge money for a print subscription. These criteria eliminate “shoppers” or weekly organizations from the study, which are limited in their ability to provide a wide range of news coverage.

The four pairs were chosen based on a review of two lists of online news organizations. One list of 61 online-only news organizations in the United States was obtained from the American Society of News Editors (2010) from its study of diversity at online news organizations. The News Frontier Database (2010), an online news site catalog from Columbia Journalism Review, was also used to search for news organizations that meet the criteria of the study. The four organizations selected are not meant to be a census of all comparable organizations, as it is likely that other equivalent pairs exist. However, they should provide sufficient variance to meet standards for empirical social science research as comparable studies have used the same number of organizations or fewer (Maier, 2010; Schaudt & Carpenter, 2009).

The four pairs of organizations selected for this study were: The Bay Citizen and San Francisco Chronicle; Seattlepi and The Seattle Times; New Haven Independent and New Haven Register; and TucsonSentinel and Arizona Daily Star.

As not all of the organizations publish on weekends, two constructed 5-day weeks' worth of news items were collected from three sources: the web-only publications and the print and online editions of the newspapers. News items were examined by three coders to determine the primary topic of the article. Entertainment topics included stories about media, such as movies, television, music, dancing, and various other forms of self-expression (Beam, 2008; Readership Institute, 2003). Entertainment stories also relate to personal activities, such as dining and nightlife (Schaudt & Carpenter, 2009).

Coders also examined the sources within the entertainment items. Each person or document to whom information was attributed was counted as a news source. Thirteen categories were adapted from Mason (2007): government, military/law enforcement, business, person on the street/participant, expert/academic, entertainer, union/advocacy group, victim/defendant/witness, relative/friend, judiciary/legal, non-government /community organization, protester, and athlete.

Findings

H1 proposed a greater percentage for the total items in web-only publications would be on the entertainment topic than will those in both editions of the newspaper publications. Previous studies have found readers often select entertainment topics online, making them appealing for organizations aiming to attract page views. However, the hypothesis was rejected, as there were no significant differences in the presence of entertainment items between web-only and newspaper publications, $\chi^2(1, n = 1965) = .12, p = .728$.

Although there was no significant difference between the web-only and newspaper publications, there was a greater percentage for the news topic online than in print when comparing the printed version of newspapers (6.5%) with the two types of online publications (10.0%), $\chi^2(1, n = 1965) = 7.04, p = .007$.

H2 proposed entertainment items in web-only publications would contain a greater percentage of entertainer sources than will those in either edition of the newspaper publications. Previous research revealed online readers tend to often email stories containing celebrity sources. The hypothesis was supported, as there was a greater percentage of entertainer sources in the web-only publications (63.6%) than in the print (17.2%) and online (18.6%) editions of the newspapers, $\chi^2(1, n = 110) = 16.11, p < .001$.

RQ2 asked whether entertainment items in newspapers would contain a higher percentage for a source other than entertainer than those in web-only publications. Of the entertainment items collected, both the print (27.6%) and online (27.1%) editions of the newspapers contained significantly more business sources than their web-only counterparts (4.5%), $\chi^2(1, n = 110) = 3.96, p < .05$.

Conclusion

Previous research has identified entertainment items, and entertainers specifically, as favorites among newsreaders online. In accordance with the theory of the firm, the results of this study confirm, in part, news producers understand the divergent preferences of print and online readers. The higher proportion of entertainment items online compared to print indicates journalists at both newspapers and web-only publications seek to appeal to online readers' preference for entertainment items, which often prompt spikes in page views for those publications' websites.

The lack of differences among web-only and newspaper organizations indicates newspapers may be diversifying their print and online editions in new ways. The first foray by newspapers online was "shovelware," meaning the content online was nearly identical to that which was in print (Brown, 1999). The differences observed in newspapers between newsprint and online illustrate a shift from this practice, with more unique content occupying both editions that best suits readers on each platform.

Although there were no significant differences in the proportion of entertainment items among the web-only and newspaper organizations, the use of sources in those stories indicates those items may differ below the surface. With their focus on entertainers, web-only publications may recognize online readers' preferences for celebrity news and gossip. Conversely, newspaper publications used more on business sources, indicating a greater focus on the business side of the entertainment industry.

Future studies focused on the nature of entertainment stories could be useful at revealing true differences between web-only and newspaper publications. Studies of the popularity of entertainment items in those publications could also elaborate on which organization is most successful with regard to attracting readers and page views with their entertainment items. Future research could also examine the hierarchy of entertainment items in the print and online news products to determine what kind of emphasis web-only and newspaper organizations place on entertainment items in their publications.

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Kony 2012: How Social Media Promotes Digital Activism

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Abstract

This study will detail the Kony 2012 campaign, examining the successes and weaknesses of social media-based activism. Through a content analysis of 500 tweets, 170 Facebook comments, 180 blog posts, and 100 YouTube video responses, the researchers explored the dialogue surrounding Kony 2012. Findings revealed that the social media sample was mostly positive in regards to the video, with social media users being inspired by the video and moved them to action. Digital activism was evident when users were moved to sign the pledge, buy bracelets, introduce rebel leader Kony to schools, share the video, and raise money for the cause. This study will determine whether or not a social media campaign like Kony 2012 is sustainable once the initial hype surrounding the campaign has alleviated. The results of this case can provide additional context for Kony 2012, along with offering recommendations and best practices to other activist organizations considering using digital technologies for attention and support.

Introduction

On March 5, 2012, activist organization Invisible Children Inc. released a 30-minute documentary about Uganda's Lords Resistance Army leader Joseph Kony to the general public, calling for the rebel leader to be arrested in the hopes of "making Kony famous" and increasing awareness of the issues in Uganda and other parts of Africa. In just six days, the video received more than 100 million views, becoming the most viral video in history (Wasserman, 2012).

The Kony 2012 video has quickly become a fascinating and unique case that demonstrates the power and challenges of using technology to promote a cause. This study details the Kony 2012 campaign, examining the successes and weaknesses of social media-based activism, culminating in both best practices and words of caution for other activist organizations. In particular, the

researchers explored how nonprofit organizations such as the Invisible Children Inc. organization used social media (e.g., Waters, 2009; Waters, Burnett, & Lucas, 2009) and public relations campaigning (e.g., Kim & Johnson, 2012; Solis & Breakenridge 2009) to create digital attractor basins (Sundstrom, Briones, & Janoske, 2011) that promote digital activism (Joyce, 2010) and increase support for the cause.

Methodology

Through a content analysis of 500 tweets, 170 Facebook comments, 180 blog posts, and 100 YouTube video responses, the researchers explored the dialogue surrounding Kony 2012.

The social media search engine Topsy.com, the largest searchable index of Twitter data, was used to gather tweets. Search terms used included Kony, KONY, Kony2012, and KONY2012. Search results were filtered to only include English language tweets, ranging from March 5, 2012 at midnight until April 9, 2012 at 5pm. The top 100 tweets from each week within data collection were gathered, which were determined based on Topsy's relevance filter. 170 comments on the Invisible Children's Facebook page were also collected from March 5, 2012, the date the video was released. Blog posts were gathered through a search for the top 10 blogs in both world and U.S. politics, as ranked by Technorati. YouTube was accessed on April 6, 2012, and searched for the term response to Kony 2012. The first 100 relevant responses were included in the sample. Data was analyzed using a qualitative grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), where the constant-comparative method was utilized to determine codes and categories that emerged from the data.

Findings

Findings from this study revealed that the social media sample was mostly positive in regards to the release of the video. With the campaign, Invisible Children Inc. were able to engage with others via social media, including encouraging supporters to take action offline and documenting their advocacy via social media channels. Social media had a significant amount of power in reaching and impacting individuals, in helping to gain and keep the attention of a wide audience.

Invisible Children, Inc. has faced a number of issues from the general public in relation to their campaign, with some due to the ability for social media to make internal company practices and individual actions more easily known to the public. With so many competing storylines, it became unclear what the media (especially social media), a format that prides itself on having up-to-the-second stories, should be focusing on, causing concerns of legitimacy and potentially causing harm to the stated purpose of Invisible Children, Inc. Responses to the video were often emotional, and some users were also concerned that that emotional response was being manipulated, allowing Invisible Children, Inc. to oversimplify the issue, or even misrepresent the facts and disempower the Africans they were so vocal about trying to save.

The Kony 2012 video can also be understood as a form of digital activism. The video raised awareness of the issues in Africa, a key component of effective advocacy. There were some

concerns of slacktivism, where any advocacy expressed would begin and end with watching the video, or helping someone to feel like they are supporting a cause without actually requiring the individual to have to take action beyond that. The idea that digital activism could make a situation worse speaks to its potential power, which is counter to many criticisms that liking a Facebook status or sharing a link will not change anything. The video also came under fire for the youthful focus, which was seen by many as the “wrong” focus, taking time and attention away from the issue itself.

Conclusion

Generally, Invisible Children’s Kony 2012 campaign was a balancing act of support, action, and criticism. IC’s innate understanding of how to use social media tools as an advantage to reach audiences allowed them to develop and maintain relationships. Opening multiple avenues of discussion, via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs, allowed an astounding number of individuals to be made aware of, respond to, and share the information IC had deemed important. When that information was questioned, those questions were asked via the same channels, ensuring that those both asking and listening were given access to the same information. It also gave IC a deeper understanding of what their audiences wanted, and helped to craft the steps that IC could and should take in the future.

This study deepens understanding on whether or not a social media campaign like Kony 2012 is sustainable once the initial hype surrounding the campaign (or in this case, centered around a video) has alleviated. The results of this case can provide additional context for the Kony 2012 campaign, along with offering recommendations and best practices to other activist organizations considering using digital technologies to garner attention and support. Future social media-based activist campaigns should keep in mind and learn from Invisible Children, Inc.’s balancing act and their willingness to listen and respond to a wide variety of audiences, including those comprised of critical voices, and continue to use social media to do work that will make the world a better place.

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Storify and News Curation: Teaching and Learning about Digital Storytelling

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Abstract

Information curation in today's hypermedia landscape requires forward thinking pedagogy and online tools to encourage students to become empowered researchers and storytellers. The new environment calls for a new approach to researching essential information for critical analysis, inquiry, and exploration. The online tool Storify is a robust storytelling program and can also be utilized in the classroom to teach digital storytelling and research analysis. This paper explores the concept of information curation in pedagogical atmosphere to empower students to examine critical inquiry in the digital age.

Introduction

The availability of the information on the Internet has caused a paradox of news consumption: an overwhelming amount of points of view often leads to information consumers only seeking their specific interests. These avenues of user interest, sometimes very specific, allow the Internet using audience to easily avoid diverse information and opposing viewpoints. Today, youth not only have access to seemingly endless amounts of information, but now also personalize their content and reorganize it in a fashion that best allows them to make sense of a topic, and to share it with peers (Lessig, 2010). In response, educators have been struggling to appropriate sound teaching methods around storytelling, narrative, and critical information consumption, attuned to the digital realities of their students. One such tool that aids in the process of digital storytelling is Storify, an online tool that aggregates content for an informed user to curate information and create a narrative.

Curation, formerly understood as the traditional organization of physical materials, is now an act of Internet users. Organization is no longer simply for daily routines, pastimes or hobbies, but also for news and current affairs. News organizations have adjusted their daily routines to the logic of the web, integrating social media platforms, hypertext, video streams, and segmentation to better interact with audiences (Tewksbury and Wittenberg, 2012). Sites like Pinterest and Tumblr, where users find content from around the web and add them to their interest pages, have become very popular in the past few years. While these curation sites offer a place to aggregate content, the curated content does not often inspire the reader the viewer to become more conscious, but in a place of "aesthetic reverie unencumbered by thought or analysis" (Chocano, 2012). In order to tell a story about news and current events, while also encouraging interactivity,

a dedicated storytelling tool like Storify is necessary.

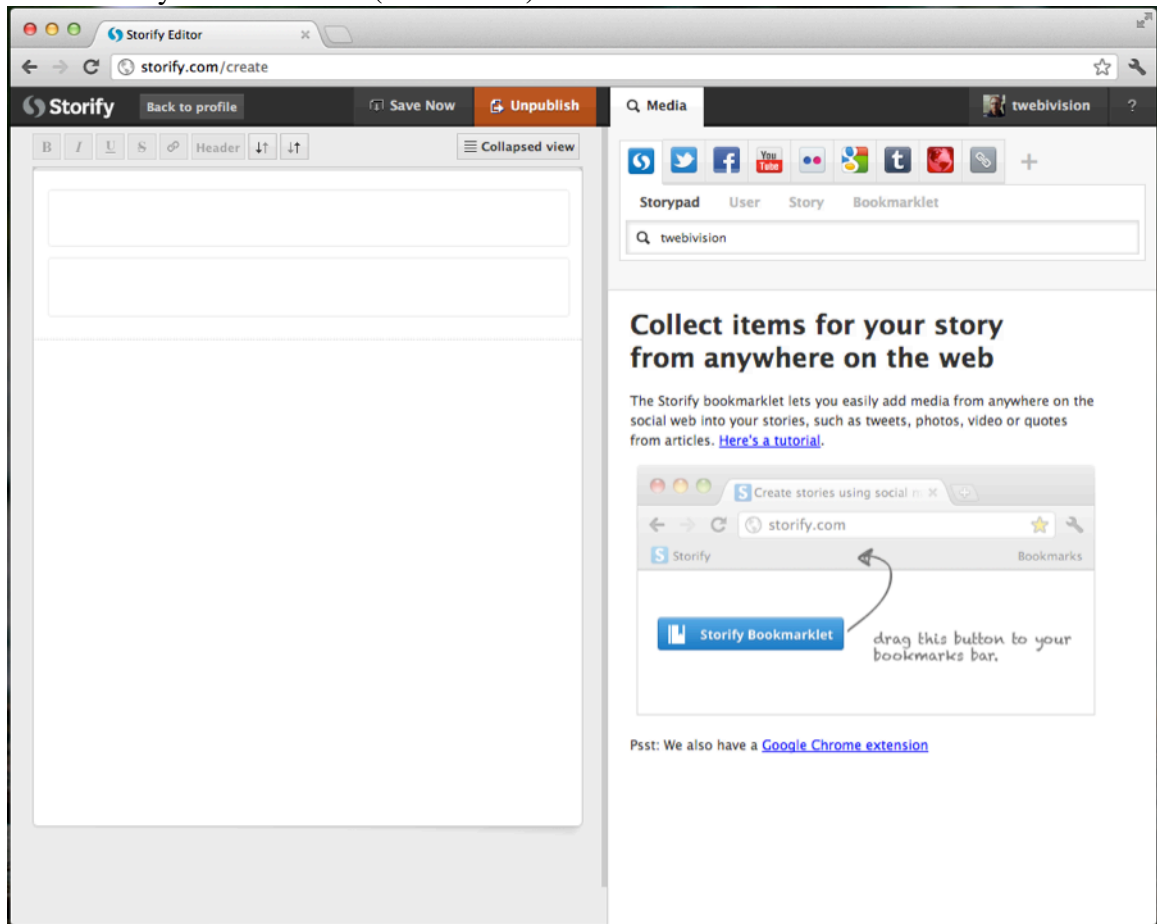
To “storify” is newsroom jargon and slang for adding details and color to the facts reported by the journalist. Traditionally, a journalist gathers the facts necessary to report on a story and the editor asks them to “storify” their work so that it offered a more complete and colorful narrative. In today’s environment, major news outlets compete with hundreds of bloggers and citizen journalists in the attempt to accurately tell a complete story. The pace of reporting has been increased immensely and has become the bane of the corporate media outlets. In the recent past, CNN made an error in online publishing when their main website posted the incorrect front-page results after the Supreme Court ruling on the Affordable Healthcare Act. The page went live with the assumed results and followed by a correction several minutes later. (Fox News’ web site made a similar error.) It seems that in the effort to be first, CNN posted what they believed to be the ruling before finishing reading the document.

Methodology

In the interest of empowering students, educators should focus on the habits of the students’ Internet use as well as the news-reporting environment. Curation is an act of problem solving. Curating information to tell a story creates a sense of responsibility for the curator. Storytelling advances the core media literacy principle of creation. By curating, students can compose a story using content acquired on their search with heightened awareness of purpose and audience (Hobbs 2010). The methods of research and discovery of information as well as evaluating and analyzing content enforces critical thinking skills and creates informed citizens. The Storify software is an appropriate aid for this process.

Storify’s user interface encourages a search and discover method of aggregating content. In the left column is a blank document pre-set with an area for a headline and a subtitle. The right column is a robust search tool that explores Twitter, Facebook, Google, YouTube, Flickr as well as several other previously installed search plugins. All media online is searchable by any user of the web, but the task of the curator is to organize the information into a story in order to share with others in a coherent, nuanced and clear manner. Guided by the teacher, students can access content, analyze and evaluate the messages, create presentations, reflect on findings, and work together in collaborative environments (Hobbs 2010). For example, if a student were to focus on the Kony 2012 viral video campaign, the student should know whether to focus on a positive activism story or a more Meta-Internet reaction story. Once the student has focused their idea, a search through the various sources should begin.

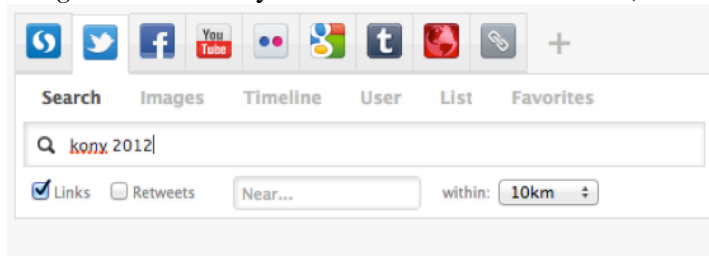
Image One – Storify User Interface (Insert Here)



It is important to note that Storify contains pre-installed filter features on the search results. When searching for any keyword, Storify returns information in chronological order, but also in importance and validity. At the top of the results, a verified news source is more likely to appear than a random blogger. This feature is an aid to students who are aiming to make sure they are sourcing from appropriate locations. Storify's system allows for sourcing on every piece of information as it cannot be added to the story without its source link.

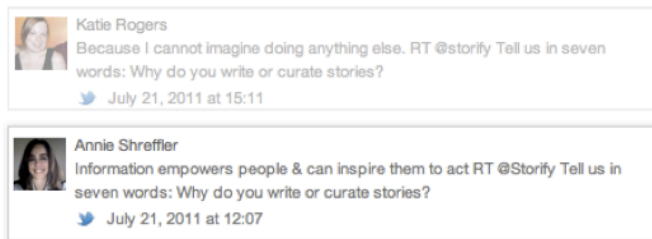
Filtering search results is an important task of the storytelling narrative. When Paul Ryan was selected as the vice presidential nominee for Mitt Romney's campaign, hundreds of tweets, Facebook posts, Tumblr posts, and news articles appeared nearly simultaneously and could become overwhelming to the person searching for information. Storify's strongest search feature is the Google News search that results in only content from news organizations. But creating a digital story means more than posting official news information. A good story includes supporting information in the form of images, tweets, and public posts – all of which can be dragged into the story column.


Image Two – Storify Search Dashboard Feature (Insert Here)



Search    
select a source at the top and search for great social media content.

Add content



 drag the best elements to your story.

The built-in search has a small drawback in its search system: a results page of only the most recent events. Educators should encourage search results from the open web using boolean search terms and getting more precise results. All of which can be added to Storify through the hyperlink button on the far right of the search bar. This feature is important to bring in information from the past to support the evidence in the narrative.

Findings

The fragmented audience of the web is also keen to fact checking and authenticity. The author should make sure to read all the articles posted as well as consider the images used and narrate the story in the text boxes that can be inserted along the timeline. Educators should encourage students to research their work and use their voice in the narration. The lesson of informed citizenry is enhanced through advanced research on a topic. Just as in writing a news article for a print piece, the reading public will be looking to learn from the information the author has presented.

Conclusion

A quality Storify project should have a strong narrative voice and well-researched findings in the

story. When assembled, it should look like a news article, with tweets and articles embedded in the narrative to confirm and support the story. Teachers at all levels of education must be prepared to negotiate the digital realities of their media savvy students as they structure learning experiences around critical inquiry, analysis, and evaluation. Indeed, educators today have a certain responsibility to focus student skills and experience in an exercise of participation with the media surrounding them (Jenkins, 2009). Teaching Storify teaches discovery of the vast amounts of information online, how to filter it, and how to tell a story with a point of view.

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Social Media Use While Watching Prime-Time TV

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Abstract

Social media is playing an increasing role in television viewing. Most prime-time TV dramas now include Twitter hashtags at the bottom of the screen. However, there is little research on the topic. There are two limited studies of linking social media and reality television and only one study specifically analyzes what viewers tweet while watching a TV program. This previous study analyzed about one thousand tweets each from only two programs (a live political event during and a dance competition program). The research shared here is an analysis of thousands of more tweets posted during the showing of several TV dramas. In addition, the present research answers several more key research questions. Answers to these key questions would be of benefit to television scriptwriters and producers as well as advertisers and public relations specialists who seek to understand the viewing behaviors and the mindset of TV viewers.

Introduction

“2012 Is the Year of Must-Tweet TV” proclaimed a recent Reuters article (Shaw, 2012). In the past year, dozens of articles about social media and television viewing have appeared in TV trade publications such as *Broadcasting & Cable* and *MediaWeek*. Also, most prime-time TV dramas now include Twitter hashtags at the bottom of the screen (e.g., #thementalist), encouraging viewers to tweet about the episode.

Literature Review

In a 2009 *Time* article, Steven Johnson described the influence of Twitter on common human conversation. “Injecting Twitter into...conversation [has] fundamentally changed the rules of engagement. It added a second layer of discussion and brought a wider audience into what would have been...private exchange. And it [gives] an afterlife on the Web. Yes, it was built entirely out of 140-character messages, but the sum total of those tweets added up to something truly substantive...” (p. 2).

However, while social media are playing an increasing role in television viewing and social media are adding another layer to our television viewing conversations, there is very little

research on the topic. There are two limited studies linking social media and reality television and only one study specifically analyzes what viewers tweeted while watching a TV program.

This previous research analyzed about one thousand tweets each from only two programs, a live political event during and a dance competition program (Wohn & Na, 2011). This previous study analyzed about one thousand tweets each from only two programs (a live political event during and a dance competition program). The research shared here is an analysis of thousands of more tweets posted during the showing of several TV dramas. In addition, the present research answers several more key research questions. Answers to these key questions would be of benefit to television scriptwriters and producers as well as advertisers and public relations specialists who seek to understand the viewing behaviors and the mindset of TV viewers.

Initial, basic questions of TV tweet studies

RQ1: How frequently do viewers tweet while watching show?

RQ2: How much is tweeted? What is the average length of tweet?

The next level of TV tweet studies

What type of tweets are posted and how many? The tweets can be divided into three, mutually exclusive, basic types: (1) retweets, (2) directed conversation tweets and (3) basic tweets. Retweets were defined in this study as those tweets that begin with “RT @”.

The principle of directed conversation on Twitter, which can include the use of hashtags topics, was also explored by Huberman, et. al. (2008). They found that about 25% of all posts are directed (p. 3). While in this previous research hashtags are included as part of directed conversations in Twitter, for the purpose of the present study, hashtagged tweets and directed (@username) tweets are analyzed separately.¹

In the present study, basic tweets are tweets that are not retweets and not directed tweets.

RQ3: How many retweets?

RQ4: How many directed conversation tweets?

RQ5: How many basic tweets?

Another type of tweet is the tweet which includes a link to additional information.

RQ6: How many are share-a-link tweets?

Huang, et. al. (2010) defined a hashtag as “the specific name for a tag in Twitter. Hashtags derive their name from the fact that they are preceded by the symbol ‘#’, also known as a hash mark, e.g., #nowplaying” (p. 1). They also say that a tagged topic helps to not only filter tweets about a certain topic, but to help users gain awareness of the topic. They discuss individual motivation to participate in such conversations is to see ones tweets in designated stream. “Many of the [hashtags] are constructed in topic-comment format, so people who use Twitter might be

¹ Honeycutt and Herring (2009) conducted a study of collaborative conversation on Twitter and found that the ideal method of conversation is in dyad, or small group format. This is facilitated by the use of hashtags that allow tweets on any particular topic to be identified and followed easily.

interested in skimming a few dozen to a few hundred tweets offering individual (often humorous or insightful) responses” (p. 3).

In terms of hashtagged tweets,

RQ7: How many different hashtags used?

RQ8: What are the most frequent hashtags?

A deeper level of TV tweet studies

Several studies have examined motivations and practices of conversational tweeting.

Diakopoulos & Shamma (2010) stated, “when people tweet live about a media event they are in effect annotating. When mined for their affective content, these annotations can identify parts of the video that gained interest...” (p. 1195). Such studies indicate another level of tweet analysis which attempts to ascertain emotional and intellectual involvement in the program based on what is said in tweets.

As a means of judging the viewers involvement in the story, this present study looks at the degree to which viewers mention main characters.

RQ9: How often are the main characters of the drama mentioned?

Methodology

To answer the above questions, tweets were gathered from the 2012 season finales of five prime-time police or detective dramas across the top four TV networks (*Bones*, *Castle*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *The Mentalist* and *NCIS*). For each drama, a sample 900-1000 tweets were gathered 30 minutes before the drama began, 30 minutes after the drama began (on east coast) and 30 minutes after the drama concluded (on east coast). For each of the five dramas 2700 to 3000 tweets were gathered for over 13,000 tweets total. A computer-assisted content analysis of the over 13,000 tweets resulted in answers to the above questions.

Results

RQ1: How frequently do viewers tweet while watching show?

The results show that most viewers (76%) only tweeted once about the episode. Only 1.4% tweeted 11 or more times. These results were consistent across all dramas (see Table 1). These results fit the long-tail distributions identified by Anderson (2005) and Shirky (2003).

Table 1: Number of Tweets per User

	# users	Number of Times Tweeting										
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11+</u>
<i>Bones</i>	1543	1129	195	73	40	22	21	10	11	12	4	26
<i>Castle</i>	1933	1484	270	78	37	19	16	4	8	6	3	8
<i>NCIS</i>	1823	1452	197	64	28	27	13	8	5	4	4	21
<i>SVU</i>	1585	1161	176	58	44	23	24	5	13	6	4	29
<i>The Mentalist</i>	1461	1149	129	47	39	21	18	11	7	5	6	29
Totals	8345	6375	967	320	188	112	92	38	44	33	21	113
Percentage s		76.4 %	11.6 %	3.8%	2.3%	1.3%	1.1%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.35 %	1.4%

RQ2: How much is tweeted? What is the average length of tweet?

The average length of the tweets ranged from 80 characters to 89.1 characters (see Table 2).

Table 2: Length of Tweets

	<i>Bones</i>	<i>Castle</i>	<i>L&O:SVU</i>	<i>NCIS</i>	<i>The Mentalist</i>
Mean	85.2	84.4	80.0	89.1	85.7
S.D.	33.8	37.6	37.4	36.8	38.1

RQ3: How many retweets?

RQ4: How many directed conversation tweets?

RQ5: How many basic tweets?

The average number of retweets was 28%. The average number of directed tweets was 11% and basic tweets was 61%. This is an approximate 30-10-60 ratio (see Table 3).

Table 3: Type of Tweets

	<i>Bones</i>	<i>Castle</i>	<i>L&O:SVU</i>	<i>NCIS</i>	<i>The Mentalist</i>	min	max	mean
Retweets	35.1%	20.6%	31.9%	31.3%	23.3%	20.60%	31.90%	28%
Directed	8.2%	10.7%	8.2%	13.5%	4.7%	8.20%	13.50%	11%
Basic	56.7%	68.7%	59.9%	55.2%	72.0%	55.20%	68.70%	61%

RQ6: How many are share-a-link tweets?

Approximately 12% of tweets contained a link to additional information (see Table 4).

Table 4: Tweets with Links

	<i>Bones</i>	<i>Castle</i>	<i>L&O:SVU</i>	<i>NCIS</i>	<i>The Mentalist</i>	min	max	mean
with links	12.1%	7.8%	12.5%	14.9%	12.3%	7.8%	14.9%	11.9%

RQ7: How many different hashtags used?

RQ8: What are the most frequent hashtags?

For each drama a few hundred different hashtags were used (see Table 5).

Table 5: Hashtags Used

	<i>Bones</i>	<i>Castle</i>	<i>L&O:SVU</i>	<i>NCIS</i>	<i>The Mentalist</i>	min	max	mean
number of different hashtags	425	391	262	375	257	257	425	342

The most frequently used hashtags fall into three categories: (1) third-party services hashtags, (2) episode-identifying hashtags and (3) hashtags for other shows. Viggle is a third-party app or service which allows viewers to check-in and let others know on Twitter that the viewer is watching a particular show. The tweets are branded with a Viggle hashtag (#viggle). *The Mentalist* tweets had 506 viggle hashtags (#viggle), whereas the other dramas only had between 47 to 83 Viggle hashtags. Some of the most frequently used hashtags were episode-identifying hashtags. In most cases this was the title of the episode converted to a hashtag (e.g., #tilldeathdouspart for *NCIS* was used 903 times). Other frequent hashtags included hashtags for other television dramas, usually on the same network, a sort of cross-promotional tweet.

RQ9: How often are the main characters of the drama mentioned?

The percentage of tweets about main characters ranged from 2.3% for Olivia Benson in *SVU* to 17.4% for Patrick Jane in *The Mentalist* (see Table 6). This result may suggest a stronger audience involvement with the Jane character than with the main characters of other dramas.

Table 6: Tweets about Main Characters

	<i>Bones</i>	<i>Castle</i>	<i>L&O:SVU</i>	<i>NCIS</i>	<i>The Mentalist</i>
Main Character	Bones	Castle	Olivia	Gibbs	Jane
# of mentions	143	156	67	129	477
% of all tweets	4.9%	5.4%	2.3%	4.4%	17.4%

Conclusion

This is a descriptive study. The above results give a snapshot of how often viewers of TV dramas tweet and what they tweet about when watching a drama. Most viewers (about 75%) only tweet once per episode. The average tweet length is about 85 characters. The average number of retweets is about 30%. The average number of directed tweets is about 10% and basic tweets is about 60%, a 30-10-60 ratio. About 12% of tweets contain a link. Hundreds of different hashtags are used, but the most frequent hashtags are third-party service hashtags, episode-identifying hashtags and hashtags for other shows. In terms of audience involvement, main characters are mentioned in 2.3% to 17.4% of the tweets in this study. Some main characters get more attention than others. Further exploration into the tweet data is warranted. Those of us who study TV tweets, we are at the surface. We need to dig deeper. The future reports based on the data gathered for this study will, for example, look closer at the viewer talks about the story in their tweets, what exactly they retweet and what exactly is sent in directed tweets.

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